



Partnering Renewals

The Challenge

Unipart Rail habitually 'goes the extra mile' with its customers by using a deep understanding of the railways to meet and exceed their requirements. This was illustrated in the Wigan to Preston Blockade.

In July 2013 Network Rail undertook a 9 day Blockade to replace four major junctions.

It entailed the renewal of three miles of track, representing an overall investment of circa £18m. Blockades are used infrequently – the last significant one was for the West Coast Renewal – and typically the tracks were returned to use at 50mph. The Wigan to Preston Blockade was completed on time, and returned to use at 80mph – a first for a UK Blockade.

Planning for a blockade is a complex undertaking, and last minute design changes usually add extra complexity. Blockade.

The Solution

Unipart Rail's procurement and supplier management skills within the new OLE Business Unit based at Crewe, meant that all materials were procured, and made available at the right places, at the right time in line with the Blockade's requirements.

As with all projects, the material requirements covered off-the-shelf, made to order and scarce products. This required our Supply Chain experts to manage a wide range of suppliers, and also to identify products already in the supply chain that could be diverted without adversely impacting on other projects.

Regular daily updates to the customer kept the project advised of progress and provided reassurance that the blockade would proceed smoothly with no product supply issues. The scale of the blockade was huge:

With investment by Network Rail of £18m across four sites, The Blockade covered a vast range of track with in excess of 100 men working on each site at any one time.



“SAFETY” - approx 100,000 man hours worked, lots of close calls reported. No incident or accident more serious than a cut finger.

INNOVATION - Wigan Springs Branch Junction opened at 80mph after switch and crossing renewals. This is the first time this has ever been achieved following a Blockade.

POSSESSION HANDBACK - achieved on time

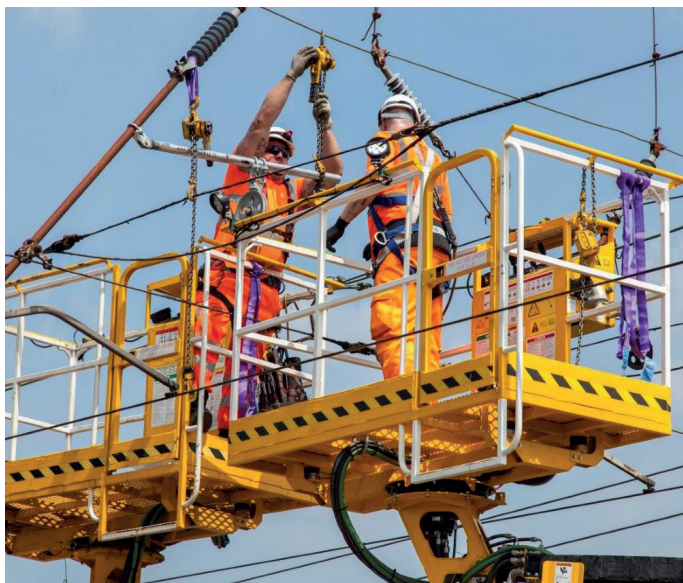
COMMITMENTS TO FREIGHT CUSTOMERS - all freight trains passed through the Blockade as planned. All commitments were delivered.

TIMETABLE - all routes available. All routes open to electric traction. We made a number of other interventions to improve speeds on the route both within and outside the blockade.

WORK - all switch and crossing renewals done. Full yardage of plain line done.

So overall it's the best blockade.....ever!"

Martin Frobisher, Route Managing Director
Network Rail



The Result

Babcock Rail were the installation contractor for Network Rail and through our collaborative relationship with Babcock, Unipart Rail supplied in excess of 350 overhead line components and pre-assembled kits for Balshaw Lane totalling £150K, with over 20 deliveries to designated Rail depots and trackside locations.

Last minute design changes meant that a further 50 lines were supplied and delivered trackside on day one.

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