Dawlish, Devon: Powerful storm waves pound the UK south coast

Success Story

Service is our passion

Thales has a strong presence in over 55 countries worldwide. It is through this presence that our customers are always served closely, on-site and in their own language. Our services range from engineering, installation and maintenance through to training and development. Thales UK offers a 24/7 service via our fully stocked warehouses and on call experts. This enables our customers to keep their systems operational, anywhere, anytime.
Below are two examples that demonstrate our dedication and passion to serve one of our biggest customers, Network Rail.

1st example: In February 2014 areas of the United Kingdom were hit by severe flooding. The banks of the river Thames burst and flooded the Great Western Main Line. Under 6 inches of water, all of the track circuits between Twyford and Maidenhead stations were rendered completely useless. This rail route is responsible for transporting thousands of people to London and back each day, without it major UK business would struggle. Network Rail implemented emergency procedures to manually control the trains, but this could only reach a maximum of 35% capacity.

In a superb example of customer-supplier collaboration, Thales engineered and supplied an AzLM Axle Counter System within 24 hours.

This enabled the installation and commissioning of an overlay system, almost instantly returning the line to 100% capacity. Mike Sowden, Route Business Change Director at Network Rail commented: "Many thanks to Thales for the swift response to our issues in Maidenhead. Without doubt, the assistance with producing the design and the supply of the critical axle counter material is excellence in service. To give you an idea of the profile of the issue, the Prime Minister was briefed on progress of the works every day. Mark Carne, Chief Executive of Network Rail was on-site and the Home Secretary was commending everyone for the efforts made. Please pass my thanks onto your team. "

2nd example: In February 2014 the United Kingdom was hit by severe overnight storms. Coastal towns reported waves up to 6 metres in height. Almost 9000 homes across South West England were left without power. Railway operator First Great Western was forced to close lines due to the adverse weather conditions. In Dawlish, Devon, a section under the railway collapsed, leaving the track suspended in mid air. The line was forced to close on February the 4th cutting off all rail services to the area. Existing signaling equipment, including AzL 70-30, which served faultlessly for decades, was washed into the sea. Engineers were on site instantly and despite adverse weather conditions repair works began within days. A temporary sea wall was constructed to enable repairs but this was overcome after only two weeks. Despite the weather and facing an almost impossible task, the engineers were eventually able to rebuild the original sea wall.

In addition to the works at the breach site the engineers repaired dozens of sites, cleared hundreds of tons of debris and restored the signaling system. In parallel to the ongoing civil works, Thales engineered the replacement of the washed out Axle Counter System, upgrading it to the slimline Zp30K with AzLM Evaluators, allowing a return to full operation. The system was delivered, commissioned and connected to the signaling system without issue. On April 4th the railway at Dawlish line reopened. Mike Sowden, Route Business Change Director at Network Rail commented: "Thales did an extraordinary job supporting Network Rail's engineers in their battle to overcome every obstacle thrown at them by Mother Nature in Dawlish. The excellent team working was key for the recovery of the signaling system in Dawlish. Many thanks for the outstanding service."

NetworkRail

Network Rail is the owner and operator of most of the rail infrastructure in the United Kingdom: England, Scotland and Wales. Network Rail owns the infrastructure, including the railway tracks, signals, overhead wires, tunnels, bridges, level crossings and most stations. Network Rail covers 20,000 miles of track. Thales Axle Counter System Az LM was introduced by Network Rail in 2002. Since then more than 8,000 of Thales' rail contacts have been put into service on the tracks of Network Rail.