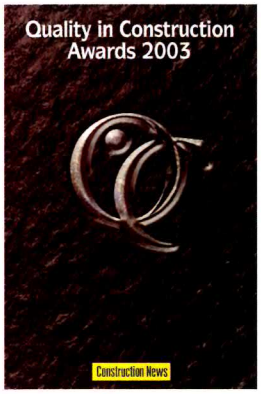
ZECK

Quality and Service – you can rely on!

In cooperation with Windhoff AG (manufacturer of the powered rail vehicle "MPV" on which the catenary installation machine is mounted), **Zeck GmbH** supplied four catenary installation machines to OLE & Distribution Alliance for the renewal of the contact wire of the West Coast Main Line (between London and Manchester).



Since 2001, the machines have been working 6 days a week to the utmost satisfaction of the customer and in June 2002, they were already able to celebrate a first important event: the **500th wire run**.

In the meantime, these catenary installation machines were rewarded the **Quality in Construction Award 2003 for "Research & Development"** (see excerpt of the trade magazine "Construction News" of 26.03.2003).

Research & Development (plant and equipment), sponsored by Intermat

The three finalists in this category varied so enormously in the scope and nature of their projects that the judges were almost at a loss to draw any useful comparisons between them

OLE & Distribution Alliance

This was a remarkable project culminating in the production of a combination of highly specialised machines which, while undoubtedly a piece of construction plant, is far removed from what most people would regard as such.

The train is about 200 m long and comprises a number of discrete components, mainly modified off-the-shelf rail equipment, combined to produce a train that completely revolutionises the renewal of overhead rail power cables. The improvements in productivity and operator safety are enormous and the effect this train will have on the West Coast Main Line is likely to be profound.

The Overhead Line Equipment (OLE) and Distribution Alliance is a joint venture comprising Balfour Beatty Rail, WS Atkins Rail, GT Railway Maintenance and Network Rail (formerly Railtrack). Its incentive for developing the new wiring train was the ambitious renewal programme on the West Coast Main Line: 750 wire runs in two years, or 7.8 runs a week. Existing methods – usually involving the manual installion of cable from the roof of a moving train just a couple of metres away from a live track – were not only very dangerous but also painfully slow.

"We scoured the world to find a piece of equipment to do the job, but there was no one piece of kit. In the end we designed our own solution," says Alliance production manager Terry Walsh.

The Alliance contacted specialist manufacturers – principally the German firm Windhoff, which supplied the engines and most of the rolling stock. An 800 m long replica of the West Coast Main Line track was built at Windhoff's factory to test the train during development.

What the judges said:

"In terms of the magnitude of the achievement, this is phenomenal. How come our rail industry has earned itself such a poor reputation when there's stuff like this going on?"

"A superb application of existing technology."

One of the main criteria for the new train was fast travel speed. With rail privatisation, most of the sidings along the route had been sold off to realise their land values – any re-wiring train had to get off the track quickly at the end of its working day to allow scheduled services to occupy the track, and without the sidings, fast travel speed was vital.

Now fully operational, the new train will complete each single wiring run in 3.25 hours. Not bad compared to the previous average time of 16 hours.

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