

INTERIOR DESIGN

While train manufacturing capability in the UK has dwindled to just one Bombardier plant in Derby, there are several domestic engineering works that can provide rolling stock refurbishing and re-engineering work. Katie Silvester reports

The trend towards shorter rail franchises in the UK has an upside for the train re-fitting industry, as most operators not only re-do the livery on the outside of the rolling stock on taking over a new franchise, but usually refurbish the inside of the trains too. Most franchise agreements contain commitments to re-fit carriages, mainly to create a more pleasant travelling environment, but sometimes to increase capacity by providing extra seats too – and occasionally to create extra capacity by removing seats to make more standing room. Re-engineering old trains can also increase their efficiency and reliability, as well as reducing emissions.

Earlier this year, National Express East Coast completed upgrades of all of its HST power cars, in a project which saw the 30-strong fleet of locomotives refurbished, upgraded and fitted with new high performing engines, installed as part of a £27m investment. The work, carried out by Brush Traction in Loughborough, was financed by National Express and Angel Trains, which owns 23 of the power cars. It includes the installation of new MTU engines.

The power cars, which were first introduced onto the network in the 1970s, now sport new MTU engines, helping the repowered vehicles achieve 15 per cent reduction in fuel consumption. They are also quieter than the previous Valenta engines and have a longer service life. The newly installed engines have a 99.4 per cent reliability rate, so delays caused by technical faults have been virtually eliminated. The MTU engines also produce lower exhaust emissions to comply with new European legislation. National Express East Coast managing director Susan Goldsmith said: 'By extending the life of the HSTs and keeping them fit for purpose, they maintain their iconic status on the UK railway while looking and performing like new trains.'

Meanwhile, a separate venture to re-fit the interior of National Express East Coast's carriages has been taking place at Wabtec Rail in Doncaster. The units are to be completely refurbished, with a view to creating a more comfortable and contemporary interior. Eurostar is already drawing up plans for refurbishing the interior of its fleet, even though the project won't be completed until 2012. The designs will be done by Italian design consultancy, Pininfarina, with the work being carried out by SNCF, which owns the French arm of the company.

Pininfarina will be working on styling and re-engineering the interior, as well as renewing the exterior livery, for Eurostar's 28 trains. British interior design firm The Yard Creative has been subcontracted to draw up plans for the buffet car. The brief is to increase retailing opportunities on the cross-channel journeys. So, in order to talk to passengers and observe their behaviour, Yard Creative researchers made multiple journeys on Eurostar trains to build up an understanding of customers' needs.

A re-engined HST.



Steve James-Royle, creative director of the Yard Creative, says: 'As well as putting together a very good retail offer and giving customers what they want and what they deserve, it's also about trying to create a destination. We just try to look and observe customers in their natural environment and see what they do and what they want. It's dangerous to go in with preconceived ideas of what you think might be happening – you just have to go in with an open mind.'

'The design is very important,' he adds. 'As customers, we make decisions based on either emotional or logical points of difference. If you go out and you have a meal in the evening, depending on whether or not you're in a rush and you just need some fuel to carry on or whether you want a romantic evening, this will affect your choice. And train operators need to be thinking more about things like this. Customers know



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what they want. Do you want to have somewhere you can stand on a train and get some really good food? Or do you want to sit on a cattle-packed aeroplane with your knees up round your ears? These are things that inform our decisions.'

CrossCountry is currently refurbishing its 57 Voyagers in order to provide extra seats and more luggage space. The work is being undertaken by Bombardier and is expected to be completed in the autumn. The project will result in 14 extra seats and 33 per cent more luggage space on 35 four-car trains, as well as 16 extra seats and 27 per cent more luggage space on 22 five-car trains. An extra 842 in total will be available to passengers each day.

All trains will benefit from a dedicated bicycle and luggage storage area, monitored by CCTV.

CrossCountry managing director Andy Cooper says: 'This extra capacity on the Voyagers will make a significant contribution to our commitment to provide up to 35 per cent more seating and additional luggage space across our network.'

The project is part of CrossCountry's franchise commitment to provide more than 4,000 extra seats each day. The operator has already reintroduced two fully re-engineered 542-seat HSTs and refurbished its fleet of 29 Turbostar trains. ■

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