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Plymouth-based rail safety company wins The Queen's Award for Innovation

Vortok International, the technically advanced company which received a "Railway Oscar" in 2008 for its clever engineering, has won another and much coveted award. It is to be presented with The Queen's Award for Innovation.

Vortok's team of 20 has developed equipment and products for the worldwide railway industry, helping it to improve the quality of the track, signalling and electrification by reducing costs and wastage and, most importantly, making it safer. The company exports its products to more than 35 countries and recently moved into larger premises in Plymouth.

The Queen's Award is for a special product called a Stressing Roller, which has replaced three separate pieces of equipment previously required to carry out the same work. Rail track has to be carefully stressed before it can carry trains. Unless the work is carried out properly, the track can buckle on a hot day with potentially dangerous consequences. The radical new Stressing Roller saves some two hours for every rail-stressing operation, improves the quality of the finished job and has removed the risk of track workers injuring their hands.

The innovative design has helped companies in Australia, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, France, Norway, South Africa, Sweden, the United States and the United Kingdom. Significantly, it has also been successful in Saudi Arabia.

Managing Director Richard Robertson says that this award *"is a good news story for the whole British rail industry. Network Rail soon saw the advantages of this product and their support and feedback was crucial and this is now a British export success. The recognition implied by The Queen's Award will help us to win new customers overseas where the UK continues to enjoy a great reputation in railway innovation"*. This award also reflects the contribution of the Technical Director, Richard Bointon who said *"Vortok has come to be regarded as something of a "design house" within the railway industry. The company is known and respected for its ability to solve the engineering problems experienced daily by track workers, through a combination of innovative design, a thorough understanding of the commercial needs of the railway industry and broad experience of developmental engineering in all sectors."*

Improved safety for track workers has been central to Vortok's developments. This was acknowledged in 2002 with another national Safety Award from the UK Railway industry for its safety barrier, now used in the UK and overseas.

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

Innovative product development is at the heart of Vortok's philosophy and, over the last decade, it has been transformed from a one-product company to having a catalogue containing more than 65 unique designs with more under development. Proven products in use include equipment for track renewals and maintenance, electrification and signalling. New modern materials have been introduced to enhance product performance.

Current developments include more variants of the Stressing Rollers and equipment for Europe's new train control systems. Vortok is proud to be working with many prestigious companies around the world such as Deutsche Bahn, SNCF, Siemens, Thales and Network Rail in the UK.

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