

Sicut Recycled Plastic Composite Sleepers made in the heart of the Northern Powerhouse granted product approval by Network Rail for main line and tunnel applications

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Sicut Enterprises Limited, a Middlesbrough based manufacturer of composite structural products made from recycled plastics, has been granted full product approval by Network Rail for its plastic composite railway sleepers. Approval was granted after a detailed evaluation of several track installations across the UK network, including within the gasworks tunnel as part of the London Kings Cross re-modelling project. This follows earlier approvals by Deutsche Bahn in Germany and the Swedish Transport Authority. Sicut's Recycled Plastic Composite Sleeper also has wide ranging approvals from European metro track operators including London Underground, the Docklands Light Railway and Hamburg Hochbahn.

A 2019 tender identified that Sicut's Recycled Plastic Composite Sleeper offered Network Rail with the best and only proven, high performance, long life and sustainable replacement for creosote treated softwood, enabling it to comply with the European ban on creosote and support the commitments set out in its Environmental Strategy. Subsequent whole life asset modelling by Network Rail has shown that Sicut's Recycled Plastic Composite Sleeper will deliver substantially improved track asset value and reduced embodied carbon through the asset life, not only compared to treated softwood and tropical hardwood, but also compared with concrete.

The use of the Sicut sleeper as an alternative to tropical hardwood will also enable Network Rail to support the Governments COP26 commitment to reverse deforestation as well as make very effective use of over 125 tonnes of waste per km of track.

Importantly, at the end of their useful lives, the Sicut sleeper can simply be recovered and re-used on other track or infrastructure assets or returned for recycling, making them an extremely valuable part of the Circular Economy, but with a cycle measured in decades, not weeks.

William Mainwaring, Chief Executive of Sicut, said:

"After what has been an extremely thorough evaluation lasting well over 2 years, we are delighted to have received Network Rail product approval for our composite railway sleepers. This important approval not only reinforces Sicut's credentials as a manufacturer of high performing structural composites, but also enables Network Rail and other customers to confidently cease using both creosote treated softwood and tropical hardwood within their track infrastructure and deliver against vital environmental and value commitments." He added:

"It is often asked how much extra it must cost to save the planet – Network Rail analysis has shown that by using Sicut's Recycled Plastic Composite Sleeper they can not only substantially reduce embodied carbon in the track infrastructure, but they can also make saving of many times the sleeper cost through the asset life – what's not to like."

John Edgley, Chief Track and S&C Engineer Network Rail, said:

'The use of composite materials for sleepers offer NR, and the UK Railway industry a real opportunity to reduce embodied carbon in the railway and also carbon emissions through a quality product with a long service life. It also supports the UK's drive to reduce carbon emissions and waste in the recycling of plastics that would otherwise be burnt or put to landfill. I'm delighted that Sicut is on board with NR and has made the investment of its composite sleeper plant, based in Middlesbrough, which will provide NR with a secure supply of a much needed 21st century innovative product'.

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