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Liverpool ICT upgrade complete

The UK Port of Liverpool claims its recent upgrade to SPARCS 3.7 went so smoothly it "is considered one of the fastest examples of a turnkey TOS solution being deployed correctly first-time within the industry."

The TOS upgrade was part of a £1.1M ICT project that included upgrading the wireless to a spread spectrum network, replacing the GPS position detection system on straddle carriers and implementing a truck booking system called SMART VBS, developed in house by parent company Peel Ports Group.

The project was tackled in stages, with the GPS system installed first, followed by the wireless upgrade and then the TOS upgrade. Liverpool did two weeks of "parallel testing" and "went live from day one with no issues or down time," said David Huck, head of port operations for Peel Ports Mersey.

As well as SPARCS 3.7, Liverpool has implemented Navis Prime Route and Expert Decking. "These advanced software modules will assist in providing more available space on the terminal through dynamic allocation of container slots and automated work allocation to straddle carriers, the benefits of which equate to a 22% increase in available stacking area and productivity enhancements of up to 20%," Peel Ports Mersey said.

The new GPS position detection system is the G-POS real time location system (RTLS) from UK-based International Terminal Solutions Ltd (ITS). "The G-POS system has multi-screen capability where the driver can view his work in a list format or in a map format with MapView. MapView has a graphical view of the yard showing where you are (the equipment) and where your move target is, and this is updated as you move around the yard. We have found that some drivers prefer the map and some the list, so we provide both and the driver can choose" said ITS's Richard Lambert.

ITS has also added a new job step reporting module to G-POS that improves the optimisation process by automatically reporting when a piece of container handling equipment has reached an intermediate step in a container move.

"In the past this tends to have been achieved by the equipment operator manually confirming he has reached the target location in order to get the next job step. Whilst ITS systems have always provided a constant feed of the equipment locations, this has not always been enough for the TOS to identify when the next step is required" ITS said.

The new job step module "allows the equipment-mounted G-POS system to monitor and read the job steps sent from the TOS; it understands where this is in the yard and can relate this to its current location.

"As the equipment is approaching the end of the current step, the on-board G-POS system automatically issues a 'job step completed' report without driver input. The next step is then automatically sent to the driver to allow the smooth transition from one step to another without the driver having to stop or input data whilst the equipment is in motion," ITS said.

Job stepping also helps Prime Route run more effectively by identifying the order in which containers arrive under a quay crane.❏

The Port of Liverpool has implemented job stepping as part of an ICT systems upgrade