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ABB motor controls keep sewage recycling process running

The first of a new type of sewage treatment plant is being kept running 24/7 with the assistance of ABB Drives Alliance member Slater Drive Systems.

The company has supplied £100,000 of motor control equipment as part of the plant, which is the only one of its kind in the UK. Built and operated by sewage recycling specialist Agrivert on behalf of Northumbrian Water, the plant operates as a single processing line without the benefit of a backup line, so reliability is the key requirement.

Based at the Howdon Sewage Treatment Works on Tyneside, the Agrivert plant relies on the company's new processing technology to dewater and lime treat sewage sludge to produce a sterile, low-odour cake that can be used as agricultural fertiliser. While other sewage recycling plants typically operate with an entire processing line on standby in case of breakdowns, Agrivert and Northumbrian Water needed to keep the Howdon plant as compact and economical as possible, so a single-line approach was adopted.

With sewage entering the plant constantly, it's crucial to keep the process working 24 hours a day, seven days a week. "The plant has now been running problem free for around 19 months and has already processed over a million cubic metres of sewage sludge," says Alexander Maddan, managing director of Agrivert. "We chose this control equipment because reliability is paramount and we get that from ABB and Slater Drive Systems."

The equipment includes 32 ABB motor starters, 8 ABB variable speed drives and associated control gear, all assembled into a custom-built motor control centre panel by Newcastle-based Slater Drive Systems. The equipment controls the motors that move sludge around the site and run the centrifuge dewaterer.

Slater Drive Systems also holds the maintenance contract for the motor control centre, complete with 24-hour call out and a four-hour response time. "If something goes wrong it's urgent for us to get a rapid reaction. We need a supplier that can provide the right backup and we've been very pleased with Slater Drive Systems and ABB," says Maddan.

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Caption: Northambrian Water's Howden Sewage Treatment works now includes the first of a new type of sewage treatment plant built by Agrivert which is being kept running 24/7 with the assistance of ABB Drives Alliance member Slater Drive Systems.

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