



## **QUARTERLY CONNECT**

**NEWSLETTER 5**

March 2024

“

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feel of SMEs working  
together from year  
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”

**SHAWN ACKERLAY**  
COMMERCIAL MANAGER  
William King Construction





# MEETING OVERVIEW QUARTERLY CONNECT 5

Our latest Swimming with the Big Fish Matchmaker Quarterly Connect Meeting took place on 29th February 2024 at Solomons Europe's Papcastle Depot.

For this event the Matchmaker SMEs invited are currently working towards long term Frameworks with PPP's Key Delivery Partners. Future Quarterly Connect Meetings will be held throughout 2024 where our wider Matchmaker SME community will have the opportunity to attend. More than 50 people attended the latest Swimming with the Big Fish Matchmaker Quarterly Connect meeting at Solomons Europe's Papcastle Depot, and there was a mood of celebration as some significant figures were revealed. They heard how the PPP Enterprise model was taking the Project13 principles to new heights, and that no prior alliance, partnership or

framework in the UK had taken an enterprise approach down to subcontract level like PPP – no framework could boast a potential near fifty, 5 to 10 year subcontract frameworks, on aligned incentivised terms – which combined were likely to create hundreds of local jobs and see inward investment and regeneration in West Cumbria.

**"I am buzzing!"** said Dominic Doig, Managing Director of Solomons Europe. **"This is what Matchmaker is about."**

He was speaking at Quarterly Connect 5, and responding to a presentation by Shawn Ackerlay, Commercial Manager of William King Construction.



Helping high-performing SMEs to secure high value,  
long-term framework contracts on major projects





## I am buzzing!

## This is what Matchmaker is about.

Shawn had outlined how, when his company initially engaged with the Swimming With the Big Fish Matchmaker Service two years ago, it had a turnover of £1.7 million and 38 permanent employees. Now those figures stand at £2.9 million and 46 staff, with a projection that its turnover will rise again, to £4.8 million in 2025.

“One of the biggest things we’ve got out of the Matchmaker Service is an introduction to the team at Sir Robert McAlpine [a Key Delivery Partner],” Shawn said, as he also went on to describe how the initiative had benefitted them on a practical level.

“We got that collective feel of SMEs working together from year one and it’s incredible.”

Some of those practicalities included things like having help on hand from the Programme and Project Partners (PPP) and Matchmaker to deal with the bureaucracy of ‘daunting’ pages of terms and conditions documents, and the feeling of security as part of a wider team.

Shawn added: “One thing I’ve taken from this is that we used to get a package of work and the first question you would ask is ‘how are we going to protect ourselves?’ Now it’s different. It’s a refreshing model and we know, for future work, we are well positioned.”

In addition to the increase in turnover, the William King Construction team has also expanded its office in Cleator Moor’s Phoenix

House, and just signed a lease on additional space at West Lakes.

“Our new employees are predominately white collar,” added Shawn. “We need them to manage everything we have got to do. Our aim is to have 60 employees by the end of next year.”

The company’s expansion is also having a positive impact on the wider community. They’re working with the UTC at Lillyhall to recruit both white and blue collar apprentices. They’re also getting involved with the new Aspire project with Time to Change West Cumbria. That’s helping young people, who have found themselves in a Pupil Referral Unit, to strive for the skills and qualifications which will get them into the construction industry.

“We are a family run business,” concluded Shawn, “and supporting the local community is at the top of what we do.”

Some key stats were also outlined for two more Matchmaker firms – Delkia and LEL Nuclear.

The latter has seen its turnover increase from £0.9 million when it joined Matchmaker, to £1.5 million today, with a projection of £4.5 million by 2025. Its permanent employees have gone from 17 to 21 over the same period, with an anticipated 40 staff on the books by next year, and its apprenticeship opportunities should triple from three to nine.

Meanwhile, Delkia is seeing even greater growth. It too had a turnover of £0.9 million at the start of this process, with the figures now sitting at £7.25 million, and an exciting



projection of £15 million by 2025. Just 13 permanent employees have already become 56, and this should almost double to 100 by next year. Its contractors are increasing too, from 13 originally, to 37 now, and the hope of reaching 50 by 2025.

There are strong socio economic benefits from these companies’ growth too. From giving training opportunities or employing ex-Armed Forces personnel, to upgrading facilities in West Cumbria and making sure to increase spend in the local supply chain, all of these firms have lots going on.

See the Quarterly Connect 5 slide pack for all of the updates and presentations delivered at the event.

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# UPDATE FROM PPP

Five years in, the partnerships are working, and now it's time for the next phase – that was the message from Duncan Elliott, Managing Director of PPP.

He described how, during his career as a civil engineer, he'd only really experienced what he calls true collaboration twice – once in the early 2000s when working with the former Highways Agency, and then now, with Sellafield through PPP. He added: **"I feel like our industry has been banging on about collaboration for decades, but never really meant it or understood the true value that comes with it."**

**"With PPP, thanks to Sellafield Ltd, our blockers are lifted. When I started with PPP we were three years in and the partnership was still maturing and has now moved on from pockets of silo working to integrated delivery. That rockiness is history and we have a partnership with a rock solid foundation that will help us all move forward."**

Detailing three major Sellafield schemes, the SPRS Retreatment Plant (SRP), the Site Ion Exchange Effluent Plant Continuity Plant (SCP) and the Replacement Analytical

Project (RAP), Duncan said they were performing and 'weren't busting budgets': **"That builds even more confidence in us, and in Sellafield."**

But he did acknowledge that there was always room for improvement: **"We are not without challenges. We want to be better over time. If we can get to a place where we know we are not going to harm anybody, we have a sustainable business, and our stakeholders are happy with us, we won't go far wrong. We have to create an environment where people and teams can flourish."**

**"If I ask for one thing, it's that we have to step up and perform in line with our plans. If you say you'll do something by Friday, do it by Friday. That's a very simple premise but if PPP is performing at a high level, no-one will turn it off."**

And he had another easy message for the businesses in the room:

**"We need you. You've got to push us and nip our ankles and make us do the right thing."**





# GROWING FOR THE FUTURE



In his presentation, John Rossiter, PPP Head of Supply Chain, focused on PPP's enterprise commitments and opportunity pipeline.

One of his key points was about how PPP has now built an enterprise of 10 Key Delivery Partners and their SME framework partners to deliver PPP's pipeline of major projects, with attention now turning to the enterprise delivering on its promises and investing in growth. He said: **"Success is saying not only are we delivering major projects well, but our partners are growing, they are employing, and they are delivering for the region. This will put us in a place that's never been seen before."**

Dominic Doig, of Solomons Europe and Matchmaker, said: **"PPP is the ultimate in performance in terms of a model. We really believe in collaboration. SMEs need to take this opportunity and turn it into reality."** We are now at the point of Matchmaker 3.0 and it is going to evolve, according to Ewan Peacock of Solomons Europe and Matchmaker. He added: **"At the moment, KDPs with PPP are working together to set their KPIs. What we are interested in is enterprise and as part of the scope going forward we are going to support that."**

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He went on to talk of the 'Golden Thread' which is needed for everyone to succeed together. He added: **"We will work with KDPs to make sure procurement plans are in place. We will ask KDPs where they are spending their revenue. We have SMEs that they can work with."** **"Matchmaker is in a unique position because we are a trusted intermediary and it is really important that we continue to do that."** **"We are moving in to a new phase that is evolving. SME engagement is key."**

Ben Quitman, of Solomons Europe and Matchmaker, discussed incentivisation and said: **"What PPP is doing is making sure those elements are part of the day job. We want to make sure we all work in the same direction and we are trying to change by putting it in the supply chain procurement plan."** And he said raising Matchmakers' profile was part of the process: **"MPs want to shout about SMEs doing a good job."**

## THE 'GOLDEN THREAD' ALL SUCCEED TOGETHER

Sellafield Limited  
- NDA Targets

PPP – Critical  
Success Factors

KDPs –  
Incentivised Profit  
– KPIs

MM SMEs –  
Incentivised Profit  
– KPIs

MM SME  
Supply Chain

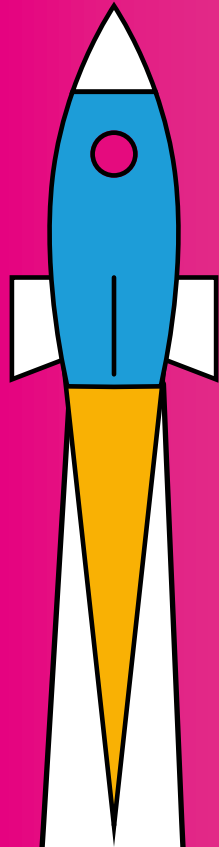
Framework –  
Call-off Notice  
Agreed KPIs (EIP)

KDP SME  
Framework  
Draft Framework  
KPIs (EIP)

Heads of Terms /  
Named in KDP Bid  
Proposed framework  
pledges

Matchmaker  
Profile  
Pledges





# WINNING TEAMS

Some of the Matchmaker SMEs, that have secured long term Frameworks with PPP's Key Delivery Partners, were recognised for their success at the Quarterly Connect event.

In the room were 11 Matchmaker SMEs who have been, or are about to be, awarded Frameworks lasting more than five years – a total of 17 separate Frameworks.

Cumbrian O&M Services, Delkia, ES Steel Solutions, Fox Reinforcement, Mission CX, Oldham Engineering, RC Civils, Stobarts, West Coast Thermal, William King Construction and Wozair were all praised. Shawn Ackerlay of William King Construction, Beeby Bell of Delkia and Adam

Stobart of Stobarts received certificates for their achievement in securing Frameworks.

Those 11 companies have announced a commitment to creating 175 local jobs and 75 apprentices, and invest upwards of £3.5m in local facilities. In addition, a further 22 SMEs will get frameworks, resulting in an estimated further 350 jobs, 150 apprentices and £6 million of investment.





# CAN YOU HELP GROWING WELL?

Paul Cambre, Head of Horticulture at the Growing Well charity, thanked all the businesses who had given time to get their new site in Egremont out of the ground.

It will help around 100 people a year with their mental health, through its therapeutic growing work and support services.

The Sellafeld supply chain and Matchmaker SMEs have given it more than £100,000 of goodwill assistance, helping with everything from demolition to construction and a full range of professional skills.

They would like to hear from anyone who needs assistance with referrals or corporate mental health days or who can offer donations of equipment, supplies, sponsorship or staff time for plumbing or gas engineering.

Email [ben.quitman@solomonseurope.co.uk](mailto:ben.quitman@solomonseurope.co.uk) or [info@growingwell.co.uk](mailto:info@growingwell.co.uk)

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**FOCUS ON SOCIAL IMPACT**

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# SME NEWS

## UPSKILL YOUR WORKFORCE

Woodward SHE Ltd have a rare opportunity to draw down funding from Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership to facilitate the delivery of accredited NEBOSH and IOSH Health, Safety and Environmental management training courses.

Working with Skills Fix, they are applying for funding for three Skills Bootcamps:

- **NEBOSH National General Certificate in Occupational Safety and Health**
- **NEBOSH Health and Safety Management for Construction (UK)**
- **NEBOSH Environmental Management Certificate and NEBOSH Certificate in Fire Safety**

All will be classroom-based training courses delivered in various locations around Cumbria.

Woodward SHE need to demonstrate a local demand for this training to be able to secure the funding. To register an interest, with no commitment, please contact Colette on: [colette@skillsfix.co.uk](mailto:colette@skillsfix.co.uk)

Skills Bootcamps are part of the Government's Lifetime Skills Guarantee, helping everyone gain skills for life. They offer bespoke training solutions to bridge existing skills gaps within high demand sectors.

## MATCHMAKER SME CONTRACT AWARD

NG Bailey, Key Delivery Partners to Programme and Project Partners, have awarded a Process CCTV System contract to ISEC Monitoring Systems AB for the SPRS Retreatment Plant (SRP) project on the Sellafield site.

This turnkey camera system will help deliver the site's decommissioning programme over the next 20 years. This represents the fourth significant contract that ISEC Monitoring Systems has been awarded in the UK over the last two years.

The SRP is the central nuclear waste unit in the UK and will provide safe storage of special nuclear material for at least 100 years. It is one of the first projects to be delivered through the PPP, a 20-year contract awarded to four organisations and the Key Delivery Partners for Sellafield's decommissioning programme.

A turnkey CCTV system is required to allow remote monitoring of the process areas to ensure secure operations for Sellafield operators. The contract covers design, system documentation, procurement, assembly, delivery, and on-site commissioning. NG Bailey will deliver the overall communication system. In terms of ISEC's delivery, the contract value is £964,425.

**We're eager to share your contract wins, news about work you're undertaking with fellow Matchmaker companies and examples of your commitment to investing and growing in the Cumbria region.**

**To share your story in future newsletters, please get in touch with Hazel Duhy at [hazel.duhy@solomonseurope.co.uk](mailto:hazel.duhy@solomonseurope.co.uk)**





# Swimming

with the big fish

**SME MATCHMAKER SERVICE**

Solomons Europe is regularly publishing news and views on the Swimming with the Big Fish SME Matchmaker Service on its website and social media channels.

Visit the website and follow them on the handles below to keep up to date.

Website: [www.solomonseurope.co.uk/blog](http://www.solomonseurope.co.uk/blog)

LinkedIn: @solomons-europe

Twitter: @SolomonsEurope

Facebook: [facebook.com/solomonseurope](https://facebook.com/solomonseurope)



**PROGRAMME &  
PROJECT PARTNERS**  
AT SELLAFIELD

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