



# Swimming with the big fish

## SME MATCHMAKER SERVICE

ISSUE 3 February 2023

Welcome to the  
third Swimming  
with the Big Fish  
SME Matchmaker  
Service newsletter,  
delivered by  
Solomons Europe.

## MATCHMAKER ENQUIRIES

We're always here to help the SMEs like you who have registered with us. If you have any enquiries about PPP packages, who to contact or generally need help, we are always on the end of a phone or email.  
**Hazel Duhy, Project Co-ordinator**  
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## STAY CONNECTED

Keep up to date on the Matchmaker Service through Solomons Europe's website and social media channels.  
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# MAKING THINGS HAPPEN

We're excited to see the evolution of the SME Matchmaker Service, and while we've achieved so much supporting both SMEs and Key Delivery Partners (KDPs) during this time, in many ways the journey is just beginning.

We have strong foundations in place – 36 Heads of Terms have been agreed between SMEs and KDPs containing significant pledges on new jobs, apprenticeships, investment in offices and facilities, commitment to local supply chain spend and social impact activities that will make a difference to the people of West Cumbria. All of these are linked to the Programme and Project Partners' five Critical Success Factors. As the name makes clear, these are critical. They're not nice to have. They're not pie in the sky.

The real job is now converting these commitments into reality. It's time to make things happen. Speaking at the Quarterly Connect 2 meeting towards the end of 2022, I told those gathered that we're now into the Matchmaker 2.0 phase. This is where we build on the foundations laid and proactively support the SME framework negotiations and framework awards. This is how we can create a positive and lasting legacy. Our next challenge will be the ongoing support to measure and evaluate progress against the social impact targets, ensuring incentivised profits in frameworks are geared towards enabling and leveraging desired outcomes.

 **Click here to see the presentation and follow-up newsletter from the meeting**

In 2023, our focus will be firmly fixed on converting Heads of Terms into framework contracts. The contracts that will give SMEs the security and confidence to make the investments PPP wants to see. For me, this is the most exciting period. Without question it will be a challenge as we continue to adapt to this new way of working – but a way that holds so much promise for businesses and the community. This marks the start of a period where we can start to make a real difference. That said, we will continue to support those packages that are not as advanced, and there are significant opportunities for SMEs as you'll see in this newsletter.

It's not all about SME long term frameworks. We hope to be able to support a myriad of ad hoc SME



procurements, several of which may be significant in value and duration. Further, with delays to some of the major PPP projects, the Matchmaker team will focus efforts on bringing other non KDP/PPP opportunities to the table to ensure delays don't affect the SMEs' abilities to progress their aspirations.

We will be holding our third Quarterly Connect meeting on March 30th. As with the previous meetings, we will be homing in on developing relationships between confirmed KDPs and SMEs relevant to their particular work packages. This is to ensure conversations remain focused on developing relationships that will bear fruit.

While we'll notify all registered SMEs and microbusinesses with information on the event, you may not receive an invite. The process is naturally moving in two directions – SMEs relevant to mechanical, electrical, instrumentation, control and automation procurements (MEICA), and those that are focused on building and civil works. Please, rest assured that if you're not invited, you're not missing out. You will be targeted to attend more relevant events going forward. The opportunities are ongoing and will be for a long time. We are, and will, continue to work hard on your behalf. That is our pledge to you.

**Dominic Doig, Managing Director, Solomons Europe**

## MATCHMAKER 2.0 UPDATE

The Matchmaker team has been hard at work since the last Quarterly Connect session doing exactly what we said we'd do – helping to get our first SME Frameworks over the line.

We've been working closely with SMEs and KDPs to progress SME Frameworks on the earlier and more mature packages of work. We've been supporting some of the first SMEs that went through the Matchmaker Service process, including AVRS Systems, COMS, Delkia and Liftech Engineering amongst others.

Current activities include working closely with the SMEs to build up auditable commercial backup in support of contract inclusions for Corporate Overhead and Hourly Rates. This can be complex, as the build up to these figures must be in line with the NEC4® drafted terms and conditions. Good progress is being made.

We are also developing incentivised profit KPIs aimed at maximising returns for maximum social impact - more jobs, apprenticeships and local investment means more margin. Our work has been varied, but with a steely focus on reviewing and negotiating the commercial aspects of these frameworks. Our target remains to help make sure that the first batch of SME Frameworks is in place in the first quarter of 2023.

Understandably, we'll be taking a phased approach to how we'll facilitate these contract negotiations during the year, given KDP packages have come on line at different times. While we're committed to doing everything we can to bring success, the Framework contracts will need to be agreed between the KDP and SME.



Over the coming weeks we'll be calling around SMEs targeting work on the earlier KDP frameworks that have already been awarded over the last 18 months, namely KDP3 Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC); KDP4 Electrical and Instrumentation; and KDP5 Mechanical Pipework, to update them on progress and next steps. We'll be focusing on these packages at our Quarterly Connect 4 meeting currently planned for May.

In the meantime, we have Quarterly Connect 3 to look forward to in March (see right for more details) and we're looking forward to seeing some of you there. It's been an extremely positive start to 2023 – and long may that continue.

**Ewan Peacock, Contracts Executive, Solomons Europe**



We'll be back at our Papcastle Depot, Cockermouth, next month for the third Quarterly Connect gathering.

This first meeting of 2023 will focus on recently awarded KDP8 Concrete Structures, Groundworks and Blockwork and KDP9 Building Fit-out. We'll be welcoming Sir Robert McAlpine to give an overview of KDP8 and the opportunities for SMEs to get involved. Following our new format for these meetings, relevant SMEs will have the chance to speak directly to key decision makers during 1-2-1 sessions. Those who attended the first Quarterly Connect will remember a presentation from Seddon Construction fresh from being awarded the KDP9 package. They will give an update on progress so far, highlight opportunities and also hold 1-2-1 meetings. Invites will be issued to businesses that have expressed an interest in KDP8 and KDP9. If you do not receive an invite, then you are not missing out. Space is limited and there will be plenty more opportunities to engage with Sir Robert McAlpine and Seddon. We have built strong relationships with both during the pre-qualification and ITT stages and look forward to supporting them throughout this process. Look out for "save the date" and official invites in your inbox over the next few weeks for the meeting at our Papcastle Depot offices on Thursday, March 30th.

## SME NEWS



The owners of West Cumbria based RAF Engineering have set their sights on further growth after marking their five-year anniversary at the helm.

Since taking over and renaming Hudson Swan back in 2017, Aneta Gibka and Rafal Gibki have doubled the workforce to 16, including taking on one apprentice from Lakes College, Lillyhall, each year. They have also invested heavily in new machinery and manufacturing software to drive innovation, quality and output, serving clients that include TSP Engineering, James Fisher Nuclear, Iggesund and Tata Steel.

Rafal says: **"We started the business at quite a hard time because first we had Brexit, then Covid-19 and then Putin decided to go to war in Ukraine, which put up steel prices significantly. Now we are looking to just grow the company steadily."**

The ambitious SME now has its eye on securing work through PPP having received a silver grading from the Matchmaker Service. RAF Engineering's pledges include the creation of 1-2 new FTE jobs each year, alongside the recruitment of 2-3 apprentices if they secured a five-year contract worth around £1m annually. The company would also expand its existing facilities at Workington, commit to 70% local

**SHARE YOUR SUCCESS** We're eager to share your contract wins 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 Luke Diccio at [luke.diccio@solomonseurope.co.uk](mailto:luke.diccio@solomonseurope.co.uk)

## PROGRESS TO DATE IN NUMBERS



Questionnaires completed	113
SMEs profiled	88
Gold awards	43
Silver awards	41
High Growth Potential grades awarded to microbusinesses	4
Bronze awards	18
PAS SME/microbusiness (PAS) included in the Matchmaker Directory	7
% of companies achieving Gold/Silver/High Growth grade	78
SMEs/microbusinesses engaged with ITT KDP bidders	90
Heads of Terms agreed between Key Delivery Partners and SMEs with support from us	36
KDP3 Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC)	4
KDP4 Electrical & Instrumentation	12
KDP5 Mechanical Pipework	10
KDP8 Concrete Structures, Groundworks and Blockwork	5
KDP9 Building Fit-out	5

## FRAMEWORK AWARDS SO FAR

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE!



**KDP3 HEATING, VENTILATION AND AIR CONDITIONING (HVAC)**  
Balfour Beatty Kilpatrick and EJ Parker Technical Services

**KDP4 ELECTRICAL AND INSTRUMENTATION**  
Balfour Beatty Kilpatrick and NG Bailey

**KDP5 MECHANICAL PIPEWORK**  
Balfour Beatty Kilpatrick and Doosan Babcock

**KDP9 BUILDING FIT-OUT**  
Seddon Construction

**KDP2 STEELWORK**  
Severfield Nuclear & Infrastructure and William Hare

**KDP8 CONCRETE STRUCTURES, GROUNDWORK AND BLOCKWORK**  
Sir Robert McAlpine

Just because frameworks have been awarded doesn't mean SMEs have lost the chance to potentially secure work. These frameworks are long-term, so the opportunities to get involved are ongoing. If you're interested in supporting any of the packages listed above, then contact Hazel and we'll endeavour to make the right connections.