

## QUARTERLY CONNECT

NEWSLETTER 4 October 2023

“

**Everyone has been saying this positive change needs to happen for years. We – *this Matchmaker community* – have the chance to be among the first to experience it.”**

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**DOMINIC DOIG**  
MANAGING DIRECTOR  
Solomons Europe



# MEETING OVERVIEW QUARTERLY CONNECT 4



**Swimming**  
with the big fish  
SME MATCHMAKER SERVICE

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



QUARTERLY CONNECT

The room was well and truly packed for a fresh take on the Swimming with the Big Fish SME Matchmaker Service Quarterly Connect meeting.

Focused on networking, either side of programme updates and presentations, Quarterly Connect 4 drew more than 50 people from across Cumbria and from further afield. The format proved a hit with delegates keen on meeting fellow Matchmaker SMEs and catching up with existing contacts. Delegates from Key Delivery Partners and PPP were also in the room to build relationships and provide updates and advice.

Solomons Europe Managing Director, Dominic Doig, kicked off proceedings with an update on the Matchmaker Service. He detailed the growing desire from Government and industry – both locally and nationally – to end transactional, lowest cost wins relationships for collaborative procurement approaches that help build resilient supply chains and empower SMEs to grow and invest and deliver long term local socioeconomic benefits.



**Success will be measured on what will be created in this room – new jobs, apprenticeships, investment and so on.**

Dominic said: “Everyone has been saying this positive change needs to happen for years. We – this Matchmaker community – have the chance to be among the first to experience it. PPP wants to be an industry leader in driving this forward.

“For us the focus is on the longevity of work for SMEs. Success will be measured on what will be created in this room – new jobs, apprenticeships, investment and so on. It is your stories that PPP wants to be able to tell Government and industry to demonstrate a Project 13 enterprise that works. We all want this to happen and we have all got a part to play in making it happen. We are all setting ourselves up to win here.”

Dominic went on to unveil ‘Matchmaker 3.0’ which, in addition to continuing to support new SME

framework negotiations with KDPs, includes supporting microbusiness involvement with both SMEs and KDPs. He also outlined the delivery of an SME supply chain management function that encompasses reviewing and auditing SME performance on call of contracts, measuring KDP performance against commitments and providing support and devising solutions to challenges, such as future project requirements, workload pressures and recruitment.

“If we can demonstrate success here, we can then promote what we have achieved to other Sellafield frameworks and more widely. There’s understandably a lot of interest on what we’re doing. The ecosystem we’re creating here could realise opportunities not just in Cumbria, but further afield.”

Ewan Peacock, Contracts Executive at Solomons Europe, gave an update

on progress on Matchmaker 2.0 – the conversion of Heads of Terms into framework contracts. He said targets of 12 separate KDP/SME frameworks by the end of 2023, and 21 by the end of March 2024, were in place. With another 25 in the pipeline, up to 50 frameworks could be in place by the end of next year.

“That would be amazing,” said Ewan, adding: “There’s a real positive push at the moment. There are plenty of opportunities for other SMEs to support these frameworks, as well as to secure work outside them, directly with PPP or Sellafield, for example.

The real message I want to get across is that we’re here to support everyone in the Matchmaker community, whether that’s with the framework process, commercial challenges, incentivisation, and so on. You just have to get in touch with me and the team.”

Tom Wiseman, Principal Procurement Manager at Altrad Babcock, as part of PPP, ran through an update of the current “in flight” PPP projects, namely the SIXEP Contingency Plant (SCP), Sellafield Product and Residue Store Retreatment Plant (SRP), Replacement Analytical Project (RAP) and Key Delivery Partner (KDP) allocation (see Quarterly Connect 4 slide pack). He also gave an overview of GSAI Fabrication and Manufacturing and the current contract holders, who he described as the “first port of call for the big manufacturing and fabrication jobs”.

The focus then turned to social impact, with Paul Cambre, Head of Horticulture at mental health charity and organic farming enterprise Growing Well, outlining ambitious plans for a new site at Egremont (see separate story on page 12).

Claire Louise Chapman of The Shared Value Business ended the presentations section by exploring how SMEs can build social value into their business. Highlighting the work being done by William King Construction to support homeless people and other businesses developing their workforces through dedicated training centres, she said: “There is a disconnect. SMEs do a lot of great social value activities, but they don’t talk about it. It’s really important to start communicating about this work and to monitor and measure the impact of what you’re doing.

“Government has minimum 10% weighting for social value in tenders, while councils are setting 20% to 30% in some cases. They not only want to see your plans to employ local people, improve skills and upskill in your tender applications, they want to see how you’re supporting the local area and creating community wealth.”

See the Quarterly Connect 4 slide pack for all of the updates and presentations delivered at the event.



A film crew from PPP was also at the event. They captured interviews with SMEs and KDPs ahead of the official announcement of the first batch of SME framework awards, which was made the following day (Wednesday, October 11). Keep an eye out for footage from the day on social media channels.

Process Pipework Services (Ulverston), Shepley Engineers Ltd and PPS Electrical (both in Whitehaven), and Alpha Engineering (Preston) have secured long-term frameworks on the KDP3 Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC), KDP4 Electrical and Instrumentation and KDP5 Mechanical Pipework work packages. The companies will work with PPP's appointed Key Delivery Partners (KDPs) for these packages, Balfour Beatty Kilpatrick, EJ Parker, NG Bailey and Altrad Babcock.

These framework awards have a combined potential value of £51m in the first five years.

Read the full press release from PPP and the response from the Swimming with the Big Fish SME Matchmaker Service at [www.solomonseurope.com/blog/blogs-articles-opinion/2023/10/matchmaker-service-welcomes-first-programme-and-project-partners-sme-frameworks/](http://www.solomonseurope.com/blog/blogs-articles-opinion/2023/10/matchmaker-service-welcomes-first-programme-and-project-partners-sme-frameworks/)



**John Rossiter, Head of PPP Supply Chain and Executive Director at Solomons Europe, hit the road to deliver a presentation at the Britain's Energy Coast Business Cluster's Energy and Engineering Showcase (Wednesday, October 11).**

Delivering a PPP update, he covered the journey so far, and how, having built the enterprise, the current focus is on ensuring the PPP ecosystem delivers on both project delivery and socioeconomic impact. He also gave an update on the progress made by the Swimming with the Big Fish SME Matchmaker Service, provided key information on who to contact and revealed plans to partner with online platform CompeteFor to advertise all PPP related procurements. John also took part in a lively panel debate addressing the question,

“How can procurement strategies be used to benefit SMEs?” with Cliff Woodburn of Cumbria O&M Services (COMS) and BECBC Chief Executive, Dianne Richardson.

Read the key points John made made during the presentation and download the presentation he delivered at [www.solomonseurope.com/blog/blogs-articles-opinion/2023/10/supply-chain-head-delivers-key-programme-and-partners-update-to-becbc/](http://www.solomonseurope.com/blog/blogs-articles-opinion/2023/10/supply-chain-head-delivers-key-programme-and-partners-update-to-becbc/)

# PERSPECTIVES

## QUARTERLY CONNECT 4

**We caught up with SME delegates to ask them what they thought of Quarterly Connect 4 and learn more about the progress they're making in securing work through PPP**



Cliff Woodburn,  
Business Director,  
Cumbria O&M  
Services (COMS)

... on the event

"It's gone really well and the presentations are always good. People are always keen to hear where we are in the procurement phase and some are getting anxious, as there's not a lot of work flowing through the chain, but it sounds like that's coming and is imminent."

... on progress with securing work through PPP

"We have a couple of Heads of Terms (KDP4 Electrical and Instrumentation – Balfour Beatty Kilpatrick and NG Bailey) and we've submitted most of the information we believe is required for the frameworks to be issued. We're waiting for that next stage of the process now."

"The process itself has made us really think about our commercial position. We're being made to think like a large organisation, rather than the small organisation we are – and the start-up business we were a few years ago. We believe we're at the right stage of our growth to do that now, whereas a few years ago the level of scrutiny would have been a little too much for us. It's definitely helped us. I think we're in a position to go through this, not just with PPP, but inside and outside the nuclear sector too. It's helped us."



COMS has joined forces with fellow Matchmaker business PAR Systems and West Cumbria based SMEs Forth and React Engineering to create a new forward-thinking joint venture offering end-to-end engineering services.

Resolve Engineered Solutions aims to create a straightforward and effective route for clients to access key project and engineering skills and is eyeing opportunities not just in Cumbria (including through PPP), but across the UK and overseas.

Each partner contributes a distinct skill: React Engineering offers strategic project planning; Forth provides innovative engineering solutions; PAR Systems brings mechanical handling expertise; and COMS serves as a specialist in pre-operations, commissioning, and integration.

The new venture was officially launched last Thursday (October 12) and will launch a dedicated website [www.resolve-engineered-solutions.com](http://www.resolve-engineered-solutions.com) soon.



Shane Varty,  
Divisional Director,  
West Coast Thermal

... on the event

“It’s good to change things up a bit so it doesn’t get stale. It’s been great to be able to have more time talking to different SMEs so we can build up some different relationships – and not just with the KDPs.”

... on progress with securing work through PPP

“We have two Heads of Terms in place – with EJ Parkers and Balfour Beatty Kilpatrick on KDP3 HVAC – but nothing is set in stone yet. We’re also looking to work on both SIXEP Contingency Plant (SCP) and Replacement Analytical Project (RAP) projects as well, so there’s work to go for and it’s an exciting time.”

Mark Hurley,  
Harrison Network

... on the event

“It’s great to see the room full. The vibe is fantastic and everyone is talking. From a Matchmaker perspective, it’s about building relationships, raising awareness of the services we’re offering and how we can help each other. The fact I can pick up a phone or drop an email, ask a direct question, find out what’s happening or where to go for help or advice – and vice versa – is great. Whether work comes from that today or tomorrow, it’s about having those relationships and knowing what’s out there.”

... on progress with securing work through PPP

“Fundamentally, Harrison Network bring fresh perspectives to leaders of all levels of an organisation who are looking to gain momentum for change – whether that’s from a strategic or operational perspective. We’re not working directly with PPP, but we are with some Tier 1 and Tier 2 organisations that are on the framework from performance, impact and change perspectives.”



# FEEDBACK WELCOME

**How was Quarterly Connect 4 for you?**

**Was it an informative and useful experience? Did you make any valuable connections?**

**Having asked for a type of networking event, did it live up to expectations and is there anything else we could do for future ones?**

We appreciate the time and effort you invest in attending our Quarterly Connect gatherings. We’re always keen to hear your constructive feedback so we can ensure they meet your needs.

If you have something to share, please get in touch with Hazel Duhy at [hazel.duhy@solomonseurope.co.uk](mailto:hazel.duhy@solomonseurope.co.uk) or on 016973 44905.



# FOCUS ON SOCIAL IMPACT

## Appeal for Matchmaker SMEs to support Growing Well's West Cumbria expansion

Matchmaker SMEs have been urged to throw their support behind Growing Well's expansion into West Cumbria. The mental health charity and organic farming enterprise has recently started to transform the former Beck Green nurseries site in Egremont, so it can support 100 people each year from local communities.

Growing Well helps people to rebuild their confidence, learn new skills, and provides support and assistance to help them achieve personal goals, such as returning to work or education. Building on the success of its existing sites at Low Sizergh Farm, near Kendal, and Tebay Services, the revamp of Growing Well's third venture has received funding from Copeland Community Fund, The National Lottery Community Fund and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority.

**"This is a new venture in a new place for us,"** says Paul Cambre, Head of Horticulture at Growing Well.

**"There's a lot of work to be done and we need the support of local businesses to get the site operational and helping people who need our support. It's an exciting time for Growing Well and we have our eyes on further expansion – in Cumbria and elsewhere."**

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**Getting involved is a great way of demonstrating how you're giving back to the local community – something which I know you're all committed to doing.**

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Solomons Europe is currently assisting the Green Beck Nurseries development with project management services through Ben Quitman. He said trades and expertise needed ranged from civils and demolition to gas and electrical engineers – and more. Ben also outlined the timeline of activity and the milestones prior to the site's launch – and the commencement of revenue generation – by June 2024.

He said: "This is a great cause and we're proud to be helping at Solomons. We're hoping that the Matchmaker community can support this excellent and very worthy project. Getting involved is a great way of demonstrating how you're giving back to the local community – something which I know you're all committed to doing. And, of course, it can also be highlighted as an example of social value and CSR in the bids and tenders you submit."

See the Quarterly Connect 4 slide pack for more details on the project.

For further information and to get involved, contact:

Ben Quitman, Project Management Support, Solomons Europe, on 07796 122984 or email [ben.quitman@solomonseurope.co.uk](mailto:ben.quitman@solomonseurope.co.uk)



# FOCUS ON SOCIAL IMPACT

## **Sir Robert McAlpine West Cumbria Strong Foundation Grants programme**

Key Delivery Partner  
Sir Robert McAlpine  
has launched its  
West Cumbria  
Strong Foundation  
Grants programme.

It is making £25,000 available in grants up to £3,000 for community organisations in the region to support projects that drive positive change and generate a positive social and/or environmental impact for generations to come.

Grants are available for organisations seeking funding for new ideas or existing projects. The company is urging local businesses, SMEs in particular, to spread the word and encourage worthy organisations they're currently supporting to submit applications.

For information on the programme and how to apply, go to <https://app.actionfunder.org/fund/311>

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**The deadline for applications is November 11 2023, so don't delay – help spread the word to worthy organisations on the hunt for valuable funding!**

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# MOVING FORWARD



Quarterly Connect 4 proved to be a big success from the initial feedback we have received.

Our next gathering now looks set to take place in early 2024 – with the format and focus still to be determined. Only one KDP package is yet to be awarded – KDP7 Access and Scaffold – so, we will be looking to organise a specific event around this for relevant SMEs to explore opportunities. We may also revisit KDP packages that have already been awarded too.

It is highly likely that we will stage further events with a similar format to Quarterly Connect 4. The opportunity to network and explore opportunities to collaborate is a huge part of building a long-term Matchmaker community, which has the connections and

relationships in place to support PPP packages and beyond.

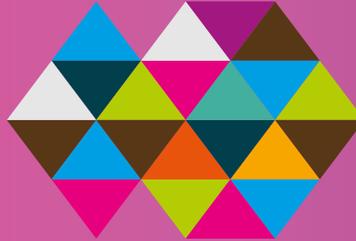
In the meantime, we are on a major push to convert Heads of Terms into framework agreements and hitting the targets revealed at the event. We are also moving into the Matchmaker 3.0 phase, where there will be a focus on measuring and evaluating outcomes from SME-KDP relationships. Agreements and contracts are great – but they need to deliver to achieve PPP's Critical Success Factors. As we have said on numerous occasions, these are critical not “nice to have”. Greater involvement of microbusinesses – particularly those offering professional and ancillary services – to support SMEs and KDPs, and potentially PPP direct, also requires another major push, but one that holds significant potential for growth. Numerous conversations have already taken place on this and plans will be put into place.

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**These are exciting times for those in the Matchmaker community. Thank you for your continued support and playing a part in making it stronger.**

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# 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)



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