

# NO TIME TO WASTE IN HUNT FOR HS2 SUPPLY CONTRACTS



by Geraldine Bolton, CBM chief executive

I was delighted by the attendance of our latest HS2 event, on rail infrastructure, which suggests we were right to adopt a sectoral focus for such sessions.

The two-hour format was designed to give members the maximum amount of information in a relatively short period, whilst also creating time for networking opportunities.

Vanessa Good, HS2 Ltd's senior supply chain manager, opened the event with a very useful update on the £55 billion project which will be an engine of growth for our economy for the next 20 years.

Crucially, she made it clear that firms looking to benefit from the vast array of commercial opportunities on offer, must begin their pitch process without delay. By the time you read this, details of the first three 'packages' of enabling works should have been announced, which will together be worth some £900m.

Vanessa emphasised that small and medium-sized companies should not be daunted by the sheer scale of HS2. Around 90% of work on the Crossrail project went to companies based in the UK, and something like 60% of that business was won by SMEs.

It's not just Tier One and Tier Two suppliers who will benefit, there will be significant amount of work awarded to Tier Three, Four and Five suppliers, and they in turn will look to their own supply chains.

Vanessa revealed that the first HS2 line - between London and Birmingham - will require an estimated 1.3m tonnes of steel, and there'll be another 700,000 tonnes in the coming decade, so even one supply contract could transform a company's fortunes.

Unfortunately, EU rules - which will still apply before Brexit is completed - mean HS2 Ltd can't mandate that only British steel is used, but the good news is, as Vanessa made clear, that



- Above: Vanessa Good, HS2 Ltd senior supply chain manager

she and her colleagues can 'encourage' Tier One contractors to cascade opportunities down their existing supply chains.

She also pointed out that the first step for any company wishing to win supply work with HS2 is to register on [www.CompeteFor.com](http://www.CompeteFor.com) which is a free service. A majority of attendees at our event hadn't been aware of that restriction, or even the existence of the portal, so Vanessa's guidance was much appreciated.

Details on contract opportunities for HS2, and other public sector projects, are available via [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) which is updated weekly, so again, members should register with that site to receive the latest information.

Pleasingly, Vanessa stressed her desire to build a relationship with the CBM, and engage with member companies, so we will certainly be asking her to return for another rail infrastructure event.

Our second speaker was Suresh Patel, a business enterprise manager with Birmingham City Council, who specialises in identifying finance and grants for SMEs, and who secured £75m funding for the very successful Green Bridge Supply Chain Programme across the West Midlands.

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- Left: Suresh Patel, business enterprise manager, Birmingham City Council

He also manages the £33m Business Growth Programme (BGP) which assisted roughly 1,000 local companies between 2012 and 2015, to create just over 4,500 jobs, and was the catalyst for private sector investment of £87m.

Suresh is currently working to support SME supply chain companies in three LEP areas; Greater Birmingham and Solihull, the Marches, and Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire, and has held talks with the Black Country LEP in a bid to extend his operational area.

Capital and revenue grants are available for a wide range of projects, and - like Vanessa - Suresh was very willing to provide his contact details, should CBM members wish to learn more about the BGP initiatives; the HS2 Supply Chain Programme, Green Bridge, Business Innovation Programme and The Business Development Programme.

The final session saw David Woakes, group business development manager for Jonathan Lee Recruitment, who are based in Stourbridge, and specialise in the manufacturing and engineering sectors.

He said they'd placed around 750 people in permanent work during the last year, with another 1,200 finding contracts on a project basis.

David reminded members that HS2 supply contracts could cover anything from coach and cab interiors, bogies and sub-systems to seat designs, lifting gear and social media programmes.

The new automated platform doors on the London Underground are synchronised by each train's braking systems, which as he pointed out, offered significant opportunities for designers and manufacturers of sophisticated electro-mechanical units.

His colleague, Philip Delaloye, a senior consultant in the company's rail division, stressed the scope for employers to benefit from transferable skills, saying that (for example) design engineers often moved between JCB, Bombardier and Rolls-Royce Gas Turbines.

So much information was passed on, that I was impressed our members had the energy for a busy networking session which ended the event in buoyant fashion.



- Left: David Woakes, group business development manager, Jonathan Lee Recruitment



- Below : Philip Delaloye, senior consultant, rail division, Jonathan Lee Recruitment

