

News story: Webinar – 2 May – How to source opportunities on Contracts Finder

Join this 30 minute webinar to get an introduction to Contracts Finder; in particular, how to set up contract alerts, respond to bids, manage opportunities, and make the most of the dispute resolution service if you see terms and conditions you feel are unworkable for small businesses.

Presented by Jo Dale from Crown Commercial Service, who will deliver a few slides to introduce Contracts Finder and then open up for your questions.

Press release: Kathryn Cearn's OBE appointed as Non-Executive Director

Highways England is responsible for operating, maintaining and improving more than 4,300 miles of motorways and main trunk roads throughout England and is delivering the government's £15 billion Road Investment Strategy.

A chartered accountant, Kathryn will join the Board from today (Tuesday 17 April) for three years.

Highways England chairman Colin Matthews said:

I warmly welcome Kathryn to the Board of Highways England. Her strong financial skills and experience will be extremely valuable as we work to achieve the best possible value for taxpayers' money from the government's £15bn investment in England's strategic road network.

Kathryn has extensive senior level experience in both the public and private sectors. Her career has included roles as independent chairman of the Financial Reporting Advisory Board to HM Treasury and as a project director at the UK Accounting Standards Board (now the Financial Reporting Council), as well as working for many years for an international law firm providing finance, audit and corporate governance advice and expertise to leading FTSE companies.

Kathryn holds other non-executive, trustee and advisory appointments, most notably as a member of the External Audit Committee for the International

Monetary Fund, a non-executive director for the UK Supreme Court, a non-executive board member and member of the Audit Committee for Companies House and as a trustee for Royal British Legion Industries.

Kathryn will be paid £25,000 for a minimum of 27 days' work per annum, with an additional £3,000 for chairing a board committee. The remuneration for non-executive and senior executive posts is published in Highways England's annual report each year.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

Consultation outcome: Enrolment of SMETS1 meter cohorts with the Data Communications Company

Updated: Government response published.

A number of energy suppliers are installing first generation (SMETS1) smart meters, using their own data and communications systems to provide smart services. While SMETS1 meters support accurate bills and near real-time energy consumption which enable consumers to realise the benefit of smart metering, consumers may lose smart services on switching to another energy supplier.

The government's long-standing policy for resolving this issue is for all significant populations of SMETS1 meters to eventually be operated via the national data and communications provider, the Data Communications Company (DCC).

This consultation considers the business case for certain cohorts of SMETS1 meters – consisting of Aclara, Honeywell Elster, Itron and Landis+Gyr meters – to be enrolled in the DCC. This is based on a cost-benefit analysis and consideration of security and the technical feasibility of enrolment.

A subsequent consultation will consider the remaining SMETS1 meter cohorts (Secure Meters and EDM1 meters) once there is sufficiently mature information

from existing and prospective service providers and the DCC.

News story: United Kingdom and New Zealand to increase cooperation in the Pacific and on global challenges

During the meeting, which took place at the Churchill War Rooms, Mr Johnson and Mr Peters exchanged views on a wide range of foreign policy issues of concern to both countries, including defence and security challenges and the importance of cooperation to preserve and advance the international rules-based system at a time when it is under stress.

The two foreign ministers also discussed a range of bilateral issues, including future negotiations on a bilateral Free Trade Agreement once the UK departs the European Union in March 2019, and Mr Peters reiterated New Zealand's support for the UK following the attack in Salisbury.

Following the meeting;

UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

The UK is one of the Pacific's oldest friends and we want to play an even more valuable role as a partner to Pacific Island countries. We have agreed that the United Kingdom and New Zealand will co-host a Wilton Park forum on Pacific climate change issues in the United Kingdom in December 2018.

Pacific Island leaders have shone a light on the grave impacts of climate change. This forum will further highlight Pacific challenges and priorities, and show how the Pacific can be an early example for how to develop global responses to climate change.

We both agreed that initiatives taken by Heads of Government and Ministers this week will give new energy and focus to the Commonwealth and underline its continued relevance in promoting a more prosperous and sustainable future.

New Zealand Foreign Affairs Minister Winston Peters said:

Secretary Johnson and I discussed the United Kingdom's plans to scale up its engagement in the Pacific. I made it clear that New Zealand welcomes these plans and offered practical support for the UK's efforts, including potentially through regular dialogue on

Pacific issues, staff secondments, and practical development cooperation.

One example of collaboration will come in late 2019, when New Zealand is due to open a newly-built High Commission in Honiara, Solomon Islands, on a site shared with the British High Commission.

Our discussions also underlined the ongoing strength of the ties between us, as well as the scope that exists for even deeper cooperation in many areas – whether through policy dialogue on priority issues, secondments and exchanges between government agencies, or practical initiatives to work together domestically and around the world.

Further information

Press release: New chairman of HMCTS board appointed

Tim Parker will take up his new position as Chairman of the Board of HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) on 27th April.

The Board is responsible for overseeing the leadership and direction of HMCTS and ensuring that it effectively delivers the aims and objectives set by the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Chief Justice and the Senior President of Tribunals. The Chair provides leadership, vision and direction – ensuring HMCTS is driving forward the Government's £1 billion reform of courts and tribunals.

Tim will bring a wealth of knowledge and experience in business transformation and is currently chairman of the Post Office, Samsonite and the National Trust. He previously spent time as an economist in the Treasury and was chief executive of Clarks, Kwik-Fit and the AA.

His appointment has been made by the Lord Chancellor, Lord Chief Justice and Senior President of Tribunals.

He will formally take up the post at the end of April, following the retirement of Robert Ayling, who has served as Board Chairman since HMCTS was established in 2011. Robert has overseen the design and implementation of the transformation programme for the courts and tribunals service, which will streamline working practices, update and replace currently outdated technology and provide much improved services for users.

Tim Parker, incoming chairman of the Board of HMCTS, said:

I am delighted to be joining HMCTS and look forward to spearheading its programme of reform – bringing courts and tribunals into the digital age and ensuring they are providing the best service possible for the public.

Lord Chancellor David Gauke said:

Tim's expertise will be vital as we deliver our reform and modernisation of the courts and tribunals system – making it more convenient, easier to use, and providing better value for the taxpayer. I would like to place on record my sincere thanks to Robert for his outstanding service to HMCTS and the wider justice system through his chairmanship over the past seven years.

The Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales, Lord Burnett of Maldon, and the Senior President of Tribunals, Sir Ernest Ryder, said:

We congratulate Tim Parker on his appointment, and pay tribute to his predecessor, Robert Ayling who chaired the Board and led the organisation with dedication, integrity and skill for the last seven years. Tim takes up the reins at a critical time and we look forward to working closely with him.