

Press release: New opportunities for Midlands businesses to deliver UK aid

The Department for International Development (DFID) held its first supplier engagement event today (Friday 3 November 2017) to help local businesses in the Midlands make the most of opportunities to deliver UK aid, following the International Development Secretary Priti Patel's fundamental review of how DFID works with suppliers.

The Minister of State for International Development, Lord Bates, encouraged representatives of over 50 businesses from across the Midlands to compete for DFID business and bring their local expertise and skills to help the poorest people across the world.

By working with DFID, local Midlands businesses will support Global Britain and in turn create jobs for the local economy.

As a result of a review of DFID's work with suppliers, the Department is cutting red tape to boost competition and open up DFID's market to new businesses including small enterprises in the UK and the world's poorest countries. We are also stopping so-called "bid candy" practices, by which large suppliers include smaller businesses to win bids, but then drop them from the contract.

DFID is running regional supplier engagement events – with the first Open for Business event held in collaboration with the Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership in Austin Court, Birmingham – to simplify the application process for DFID contracts to help potential suppliers.

Minister of State for International Development, Lord Bates, said:

The Department for International Development is committed to using the world-leading expertise of British businesses to tackle some of the greatest humanitarian and development challenges the world has ever faced.

I have spoken today with business representatives who want to help deliver UK aid to achieve the best results that UK taxpayers and the world's poorest deserve through the unique skills and expertise the Midlands has to offer.

Ensuring that DFID delivers value for money is a cornerstone of the International Development Secretary's agenda – boosting competition and making it easier than ever for new and smaller businesses to work with us through events like this show we are making significant progress.

Saqib Bhatti, Director for Growing Businesses and representing SMEs at

Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), said:

The West Midlands' LEPs are committed to helping the 160,000 companies in our region to compete and thrive. Today is an important step to equipping this area's suppliers with the information they need to bid for new business opportunities across the world.

We look forward to working with DFID to continue the region's strong economic growth.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

1. In December 2016, the International Development Secretary Priti Patel announced a fundamental review of DFID's management of its contracted suppliers, to ensure greater value for money for taxpayers in the Midlands and across the country. Further information can be [found here](#).
2. This is the first of a number of engagement events DFID will be running across the country, as we want to demystify the process of bidding for work with DFID and help them identify ideas and programmes that they can deliver.
3. The Supplier Review makes it easier than ever for businesses like these to bid to work with us. We have simplified the processes for contract applications which will benefit businesses like those here today.
4. UK aid is untied. Over 80% of DFID's work is delivered through British-registered businesses reflecting the expertise and international competitiveness of the UK marketplace.
5. As a demonstration of the important work DFID has been undertaking in recent months, the Department has been awarded the 2017 Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS) Annual Award for 'Best Contribution to the Reputation of the Procurement Profession'.

[Press release: Binary option companies](#)

placed in provisional liquidation

The companies, Right Corp Limited and Curve Point Limited, operated a website which offered a binary options trading online platform to members of the public.

The website described binary options as being the simplest form of trading, which allows to a trader to place a trade predicting whether an asset will rise or fall over a desired time duration. If the trade is correct, the website stated that the trader will receive the pre-set pay out, but if the trade is incorrect, the trader will only lose the funds placed on that particular trade.

The role of the provisional liquidator is to protect assets in the possession or under the control of the companies pending the determination of the petitions. The provisional liquidator also has the power to investigate the affairs of the companies insofar as it is necessary to protect assets including any third party, or trust monies, or assets in the possession of, or under the control of the companies.

It is understood that clients of the companies have been contacted by individuals who are claiming to be acting on behalf of the "liquidator" of Right Corp Limited. These clients are told that if they were prepared to pay a further amount of money to the purported liquidator, they would be able to recover the sums that they had invested in the companies. Any individual contacted in this manner is advised not to make any such payment and to contact the Official Receiver whose details are given below.

The case is now subject to High Court action and no further information will be made available until petitions to wind up the companies are heard in the High Court on 27 February 2018.

The two companies are:

Right Corp Limited (company number 09815405) – Registered Office: Flat 524, 103 Blackwall Way, London, E14 9RF

Curve Point Limited (Registered in the Marshall Islands) – Registered Office: Trust Company Complex, Ajeltake Road, Ajeltake Island, Majuro, Marshall Islands.

The petitions were presented under s124A of the Insolvency Act 1986. The Official Receiver was appointed as provisional liquidator of the companies on 11 October 2017 by Mr Justice Marcus Smith a Judge of the Chancery Division of the High Court.

Company Investigations, part of the Insolvency Service, uses powers under the Companies Act 1985 to conduct confidential fact-finding investigations into the activities of live limited companies in the UK on behalf of the Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

Further information about live company investigations is available [here](#)

The Insolvency Service, an executive agency sponsored by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), administers the insolvency regime, and aims to deliver and promote a range of investigation and enforcement activities both civil and criminal in nature, to support fair and open markets. We do this by effectively enforcing the statutory company and insolvency regimes, maintaining public confidence in those regimes and reducing the harm caused to victims of fraudulent activity and to the business community, including dealing with the disqualification of directors in corporate failures.

BEIS' mission is to build a dynamic and competitive UK economy that works for all, in particular by creating the conditions for business success and promoting an open global economy. The Criminal Investigations and Prosecutions team contributes to this aim by taking action to deter fraud and to regulate the market. They investigate and prosecute a range of offences, primarily relating to personal or company insolvencies.

The agency also authorises and regulates the insolvency profession, assesses and pays statutory entitlement to redundancy payments when an employer cannot or will not pay employees, provides banking and investment services for bankruptcy and liquidation estate funds and advises ministers and other government departments on insolvency law and practice.

Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct, is [available](#).

The Official Receiver, Public Interest Unit (South), The Insolvency Service, 2nd Floor, 4 Abbey Orchard Street, London WC1B 3SS. Tel: 020 7637 6404 Email: piu.or@insolvency.gsi.gov.uk

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

[Press release: Freeze put on scam heating system company](#)

Xefro Trade Ltd sold its products on the basis of misrepresentations made in promotional material and an investigation by the Insolvency Service found the company misled the public and failed to install systems safely. The company was wound up on 17 October 2017.

The heating system itself was not fit for sale and was described as a "defective and dangerous" product. In some cases the company failed to deliver systems at all despite receiving advance payments.

Potential customers were given comparisons between their current heating systems and the potential savings, suggesting that the Xefro graphene coated radiators could reduce the cost of heating a house by 75% and save 2.05 tonnes of carbon per system per year.

The company falsely stated that these claims had been verified by independent tests but in fact, the cost of operating the Xefro system was more than double and produced almost twice the amount of CO2 emissions of a conventional heating system over a 24 hour period.

The enquiry showed that a number of the company's customers paid deposits of between £100 and £4,000 for the Xefro heaters but that they were either not delivered or, if delivered, were never installed.

Many of those customers who did receive their systems complained about poor workmanship, failure to comply with promised delivery dates or to install the system correctly once delivered. They then found that the 20 year performance guarantee was worthless as they were unable to contact the company and the guarantees were not underwritten by an insurance company.

Alex Deane, Chief Investigator, in Companies Investigations of the Insolvency Service said:

Companies that don't deliver on their promises and make misleading claims should be aware that the Insolvency Service can and will investigate and, if necessary, apply to Court to close them down.

Xefro Trade Ltd was incorporated on 30 January 2015, registration number 09413716. Its registered office is at The Quadrant, Green Lane, Heywood, Manchester OL10 1NG. The company's directors were Martin Benson, Michael Drohan (until 30 June 2016) and Peter Nabridnyj (until 25 June 2015).

The winding-up order was pronounced by Deputy District Judge Watkin on 17 October 2017 in the High Court, with Lucy Wilson-Barnes appearing for the Secretary of State and no representation for the company.

The petition to Wind-up the company was presented to the High Court on 2 August 2017, under the provisions of Section 124A of the Insolvency Act 1986 following confidential enquiries by Company Investigation under Section 447 Companies Act 1985, as amended. The winding-up order was made on 17 October 2017. Company Investigations, part of the Insolvency Service, uses powers under the Companies Act 1985 to conduct confidential fact-finding investigations into the activities of live limited companies in the UK on behalf of the Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

Further information about live company investigations is available [here](#)

All public enquiries concerning the affairs of the company should be made to: The Official Receiver, Public Interest Unit, 2nd Floor, 3 Piccadilly Place, London Road, Manchester, M1 3BN. Tel: 0161 234 8531 Email: piu.north@insolvency.gsi.gov.uk

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

[Press release: Dstl victory at Women in Defence UK Awards 2017](#)

Three women from the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) were nominated in several categories at the Women in Defence UK Awards, with one, Jenni Henderson, taking home the Promotion of Gender Balance Award.

Cat Little, Civil Service Director General Finance, was among those presenting awards in front of more than 200 guests at the Plaisterers' Hall, London.

Jenni, Dstl's former Transformation Director, said:

I am absolutely thrilled. It's been a pleasure to promote gender balance at Dstl, and the accolade is in recognition of everyone at Dstl who strives to create an equal working environment for all.

This year's awards saw a 75 per cent increase in the number of nominations. [Women in Defence UK](#) exists for a community of people who wish to promote the value of women in defence, aiming to encourage women to succeed authentically, share experience, build networks and encourage talent at all levels to join the defence sector.

Acting Chief Executive David Marsh said:

It was a great evening and fascinating to hear about the work of all the nominees. I am very proud that we had 3 finalists from the lab across the various categories and I am thrilled that Jenni has been recognised for promoting gender equality. Jenni has worked hard to promote and role model gender balance across Dstl and Defence and the award is recognition of her leadership.

Also nominated from Dstl were Professor Isobel Norville, a finalist for the Emerging Talent Award, and Professor Joann Prior, for Most Collaborative Award.

Press release: OTS publishes its first review of VAT

The Office of Tax Simplification (OTS) will shortly publish a report setting out a range of proposals for simplifying VAT.

After over 40 years, the tax is showing its age. What was meant to be a simple tax has become highly complex and it has not kept pace with changes in society.

Angela Knight CBE, Chair of the OTS board, said:

This report presents an opportunity to start addressing the many anomalies of VAT. The tax is awash with layers of complexity reflecting both its evolution over the last 45 years and aspects of the Purchase Tax that VAT replaced. For small businesses, this report will propose ways of simplifying many irritating administrative technicalities and kick off a debate about the registration threshold.

Paul Morton, OTS Tax Director, said:

This report will flag up the effects of the registration threshold, how entry into the VAT system might be smoothed and many other areas where simplification would be beneficial, particularly the complex and often subjective boundaries between those supplies which are standard rated and those which fall within the reduced or zero-rates or which are exempt. In addition, there will be opportunities to build on the good work of the last few years in improving the administrative aspects of the running of the VAT system.

The OTS's core recommendations will include:

- that the government should examine the current approach to the level and design of the VAT registration threshold, with a view to setting out a future direction of travel for the threshold, including consideration of the potential benefits of a smoothing mechanism
- that HMRC should maintain a programme for further improving the clarity of its guidance and its responsiveness to requests for rulings in areas of uncertainty
- that HM Treasury and HMRC should undertake a comprehensive review of the

reduced rate, zero-rate and exemption schedules, working with the support of the OTS

The most significant issue identified in the report is the VAT registration threshold – the turnover level above which a business must enter the VAT system and charge VAT on its sales. At £85,000 the UK has one of the highest levels in the world.

By enabling many small businesses to stay out of the VAT system the high threshold is a form of simplification, but it's an expensive relief, costing around £2bn per annum, and evidence strongly suggests that many growing businesses are discouraged from expanding beyond this point. The report looks at options for reducing the current 'cliff edge' effect resulting in a very visible bunching of businesses just before the VAT threshold, and an equally large drop off in the number of businesses with turnovers just above the threshold. Also examined are the advantages and disadvantages of lowering or increasing the threshold.

VAT has many 'quirks'. For example, it is well known that a Jaffa cake is a cake (zero-rated) rather than a chocolate-covered biscuit (taxed at 20%). Less well known is that while children's clothes are zero-rated, including many items made from fur skin, items made from Tibetan goat skin are standard-rated. And a ginger bread man with chocolate eyes is zero-rated but if it has chocolate trousers it would be standard rated. VAT zero rates cost over £45bn per annum to maintain. EU law limits options to make changes in this area but there is a longer-term opportunity to significantly improve the efficiency, simplicity and fairness of the UK VAT system.

The report also

- makes recommendations for improving the day to day administration of the tax, including better and more accessible guidance and a less uncertain penalty system. This would particularly benefit small businesses
- considers specific areas of technical difficulty, including the partial exemption regime, the capital goods scheme, the option to tax and other special schemes

Notes for editors

The OTS is the independent adviser to government on tax simplification, challenging tax complexity to help all users of the tax system; it does not implement changes – these are a matter for government and for Parliament.

This report takes a wide-ranging look at the potential for VAT to be simplified, based on feedback from over 80 trade associations, businesses, professional bodies and individuals.

The report is expected to be published on 7 November.

VAT was introduced in 1973 on entry of the UK into what is now the European Union. VAT is the third largest source of tax revenue collected by HMRC after income tax and National Insurance Contributions, raising £120bn in 2016-17 which amounted to 22.5% of all taxes.

The partial exemption regime covers businesses that make a mixture of taxable and exempt supplies and thus cannot reclaim all VAT that is charged to them.

The capital goods scheme monitors the use of certain capital assets over periods of 5 or 10 years, in case the use changes: changes of use alter the tax that can be reclaimed.

The option to tax regime allows a business to make certain supplies of land taxable, which would otherwise be exempt, thus allowing it to reclaim VAT charged to it.

The £2bn cost for the threshold is an estimation based on the difference between the current threshold of £85,000 and the EU minimum threshold of €10,000.

The OTS team is led by Chairman Angela Knight CBE and Tax Director Paul Morton and has a small staff drawn from HM Treasury, HM Revenue and Customs and the private sector.

The OTS works to improve the experience of all who interact with the tax system. It aims to reduce the administrative burden – which is what people encounter in practice – as well as simplifying the rules. Simplification of the technical and administrative aspects of tax are each important, both to taxpayers and HMRC.

Press enquiries only please contact Ed Rowley, OTS Press Officer – Phone 03000 585 028