



Department  
for Transport

# **Department for Transport Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Action Plan**

December 2025

Department for Transport  
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# Foreword

## Ministerial statement

Foreword from Simon Lightwood MP, Department for Transport (DfT) Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE)<sup>1</sup> Minister

I am delighted to be the inaugural Department for Transport VCSE Minister. VCSEs have an impact in their local areas and their contribution to economic growth should not be understated, helping to make the economy more innovative, resilient and productive. They can open up opportunities for people to engage with their community, foster belonging, enrich lives, and are the source of much of the innovation we need to deploy into our programmes in transport. As the VCSE Minister, I will focus on reducing barriers to VCSE participation in the Department for Transport's programmes, improving contracting practices, and encouraging VCSEs to bid for Government contracts.

## VCSE Crown Representative statement

Claire Dove CBE, VCSE Crown Representative, Cabinet Office

In my role as the Crown Representative for the VCSE sector, I act as an intermediary between government and the charity and social enterprise sectors to champion the Public Services (Social Value) Act and to promote improvements in commissioning and procurement practices. As part of this, I am very keen to work with all government departments to share best practice and to promote the benefits of working with VCSE organisations.

Having worked closely with the DfT I am looking forward to supporting DfT making renewed progress with VCSEs and seeing them increase the amount of business they partner with VCSEs on. This action plan builds on previous achievements and will help DfT to deliver on their ambitious plans for VCSE engagement.

I very much look forward to continuing working with my departmental colleagues to help support them in achieving these targets.

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<sup>1</sup> any organisation (incorporated or not) working with a social purpose. This ranges from small community-based groups/schemes, through to larger registered charities and social enterprises, public service mutuals and cooperatives that operate locally, regionally and nationally. This term is often interchangeable with the terms 'third sector' or 'civil society' organisations

# Introduction to the Department for Transport

DfT works with our Executive Agencies (EAs), Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs) (together the "DfT Group") and partners to deliver the transport network that gets people and goods to where they need to be. We do this by working with delivery partners to plan and invest in transport infrastructure to keep the UK on the move. The DfT is amongst the highest spending government departments with total procurement spend in 2022-23 of c. £20bn<sup>2</sup>.

## Why we've created this Action Plan

DfT is committed to improving its understanding of VCSE organisations in its sectors and the markets it operates in, with the aim of increasing VCSE appetite to participate in procurements and reducing barriers to entry. VCSEs can play a vital role in the delivery of public services, and many have strong links to the communities they serve. Their knowledge and connection to local areas helps them to create compassionate, responsive and efficient public services.

The Government supports charities and social enterprises by evaluating the social value created in a supplier's bid, ensuring contracts are awarded on the basis of not only prices, but also the potential supplier's social impact. The [Public Services \(Social Value\) Act](#), the [Social Value Model \(PPN 06/20\)](#) and the ability to [reserve below threshold procurements for VCSEs and SMEs \(PPN 11/20\)](#) all illustrate the government's commitment to providing VCSE organisations with much deserved recognition while ensuring that the additional social benefits that can be achieved in the delivery of contracts is taken into account.

The new [Procurement Act 2023](#) (PA23) introduced new Regulations to support the VCSE sector by:

- Introducing new flexible procedures to enable better procurement outcomes.
- Strengthening requirement for pre-market engagement by public authorities.
- Establishing a central digital platform so all opportunities will be visible in one place and a streamlined approach will be adopted to ensure common supplier information can be submitted more efficiently and effectively.

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<sup>2</sup> FY 2023/24 spend with VCSEs data will be available December 2025.

- Increasing transparency so there is greater visibility of commercial pipelines.
- Enabling greater supplier feedback by requiring public bodies to provide bid assessments.
- Strengthening prompt payment provisions.
- Placing a new duty on public authorities to have regard to the particular barriers facing small businesses.

This simpler and more flexible commercial system will benefit suppliers of all sizes, including charities and social enterprises who will be able to keep track of upcoming opportunities, tender notices and visibility of planned procurements over a rolling 18-month time horizon.

# Overview of VCSEs in Department for Transport

The Government's 2025 National Procurement Policy Statement<sup>3</sup> (NPPS) requires Departments to consider how to create opportunities for VCSE participation in commercial opportunities:

'Contracting authorities should drive economic growth and strengthen supply chains by giving SMEs and VCSEs a fair chance at public contracts, creating high quality jobs and championing innovation.'<sup>4</sup>

The NPPS includes a measure for all central government departments to set a two-year target for direct spend with VCSEs (from 1 April 2026) and report results annually. The DfT VCSE Champion will work with DfT Group to set a realistic stretching target based on previous performance and commercial pipeline information. Once the target is approved by the DfT Heads of Procurement and the DfT VCSE Minister the information will be published in the VCSE Action Plan.

DfT Group direct spend with VCSEs for financial year (FY) 2022/23 was £24mn, 0.12%. This will provide a baseline to measure DfT direct spend performance in future FYs. Annually, DfT will collate and report on key supplier spend with VCSEs (indirect spend). As a result of social value created by enhanced spend and engagement with the UK-wide VCSE sector, the plan will support delivery of the Government's manifesto pledge and the Secretary of State's 5 strategic priorities<sup>5</sup>.

They are:

- Improving performance on the railways and driving forward rail reform
- Improving bus services and growing usage across the country

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<sup>3</sup> [National Procurement Policy Statement - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Kickstart economic growth – The Labour Party](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Transport Secretary sets out 5 key priorities to deliver the biggest overhaul to transport in a generation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

- Transforming infrastructure to work for the whole country, promoting social mobility and tackling regional inequality
- Delivering greener transport
- Better integrating transport networks

## Barriers to participation

This section provides an overview of key barriers faced by the VCSE sector. [The Perspective Economics research report](#) provided crucial evidence-based insight into the barriers to entry and growth potential for VCSEs<sup>6</sup>.

VCSEs share their perceived barriers to working with DfT, other government departments and Strategic Suppliers at the DfT Supplier Events. We have highlighted the key supply and demand barriers below, as these were aspects that were factored into developing the DfT VCSE Action Plan.

Supply Side Barriers (VCSE Suppliers Experience)	Demand Side Barriers (Commissioners Experience)
Challenging digital landscape which impacts ability to access portals, to find opportunities, and to keep up with increasingly digitised services	Commissioner understanding of the VCSE sector is varied
Some VCSEs are hesitant to participate with procurement, citing contract flexibility / increased marketisation / level of risk / resource required / previous experiences	Existing partnerships with the sector are varied and few commissioners have a comprehensive strategy in place to collaborate with the sector
There are a number of concerns around lack of accountability, payment, and transparency within the supply chain	Data sharing challenges often mean it is hard for commissioners to identify needs within a region / the sector's capability to address these needs

In light of this, DfT Group will focus on addressing current barriers to entry for VCSEs by:

- Reserving in-scope contracts for SMEs/VCSEs and by location.

<sup>6</sup> Please note, the barriers outlined in this section have been identified through both the systematic review of existing literature, as well as strategic engagement with 29 consultees.



- Enhancing transparency of contract and training opportunities for VCSEs through the VCSE Supplier Events.
- Identifying and resolving barriers for VCSEs through the DfT VCSE Working Group.
- Providing updates on VCSE friendly policy to commercial and procurement specialists at the Commercial Knowledge Network and Commercial Forums.
- Collaborating with trade associations and Social Enterprise UK to identify VCSEs UK-wide and their sectors.

## Prompt Payment

The Department complies with the Chartered Institute of Credit Management's Prompt Payment Code. While our standard terms and conditions for the supply of goods and services specify payment within 30 days of receipt of a valid invoice, we aim to pay 90% of valid invoices within five working days of receipt. In 2023/24, DfT paid 93.01% of undisputed supplier invoices within the 5-working day target and 99.15% within the 30-day target.

In November 2023, Cabinet Office introduced Procurement Policy Note (PPN) 10/23 which set out how, from 1 April 2024, prompt payment performance by suppliers to VCSEs were to be considered in the procurement of major Government contracts with an anticipated contract value above £5 million per annum. To ensure consistency across DfT Group the following initiatives were introduced:

- The DfT VCSE Champion and Policy Leads have delivered training and guidance for the DfT Group via our Commercial Knowledge Networks (which brings commercial professionals together across the DfT Group).
- The DfT VCSE Champion is monitoring commercial pipeline information and Contracts Finder to identify potential in-scope contracts, to date all procurements have been compliant.
- Training and guidance provided by the DfT VCSE Champion to the supply chain, trade associations and other key stakeholders at the DfT VCSE Working Group and at the Strategic Supplier Working Group. To ensure understanding of the policy measures and compliance when bidding for contracts.

## Reserved contracts

Public Procurement Notice (PPN) 11/20<sup>7</sup> sets out two options for reserving below threshold procurements:

- Reserve the procurement by supplier location; and/or
- Reserve the procurement for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises (VCSEs).

The Department has formed a Reserved Contract Working Group, consisting of members from EAs, ALBs and other Government Departments. Together we have created a Reserved Contract Action Plan which commits the DfT to measuring the effectiveness of the PPN. This was achieved by running a Pilot to identify potential opportunities to award Reserved Contracts, mitigate potential challenges to our approach, test the proposed approach and ensure a consistent process across DfT Group. The Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) ran a successful procurement exercise utilising PPN 11/20 and the Light Touch Regime<sup>8</sup> that resulted in an award to a local small business. MCA have identified potential in-scope opportunities for more pilots.

Guidance and lessons learned workshops will be hosted to encourage more DfT Group commercial teams to utilise PPN 11/20 and offer on the shoulder support.

## The Procurement Act 2023

In October 2023, the Procurement Bill<sup>9</sup> achieved Royal Assent becoming the PA23. The PA23 will make it simpler for VCSEs and other new entrants to public sector supply-chains to bid for public contracts.

The DfT VCSE Champion chairs a DfT VCSE Working Group (VCSEWG) whose members include EAs, ALBs, trade associations and other government departments. The VCSEWG will monitor compliance to the objectives set out in PA23 and cascade how the measures affect the VCSE communities through the DfT VCSE Working Group.

## Departmental supplier events

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### DfT Group Meet the Buyer Events

The DfT VCSE Champion on behalf of the DfT Group is running a series of Regional Meet the Buyer VCSE roadshows across the UK to highlight opportunities and encourage participation in our supply chains.

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<sup>7</sup> [PPN 11/20: Reserving below threshold procurements](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Light Touch Summary Document - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Procurement Act](#)

The initial VCSE event was held in Birmingham on 16 November 2023, where the Mayor of the West Midlands made the keynote address. The programme is continuing in 2025/26 following very positive feedback from the VCSE community. Please see Table 1 for future events.

**Table 1**

Location	Date
Liverpool	Jan-26

DfT Group are collating feedback on barriers to working with Government and the VCSEWG has responsibility for identifying opportunities to remove barriers to VCSE participation in our competitions.

## Our spend with VCSEs

### Category analysis

DfT Group spend with VCSEs is either direct (from the DfT Group to the VCSE) or indirect (from the DfT Group to a Tier 1 prime contractor, who contracts with the VCSE or another larger company that contracts with the VCSE). In FY 2022/23, DfT Group spent circa £20bn, of which £8.9bn (44%) was in the construction sector (Table 2). DfT spend is made up of complex capital projects in the roads and rail construction and maintenance sector. The projects are predominantly of high value where there are fewer opportunities for VCSEs to directly contract with DfT Group entities; our focus across the DfT Group is therefore to identify VCSE opportunities within the supply chains of the main Tier 1 contractors.

As a result, it is essential to create opportunities for VCSEs in the supply chain by increasing engagement between DfT Group, key suppliers (especially tier 1 and 2 suppliers) and VCSEs. The DfT VCSE Supplier Events and the DfT VCSE Working Group will provide the platforms to enable the sharing of innovative ideas, resolving barriers for VCSEs and create engagement opportunities.

**Table 2 – DfT Group Procurement Expenditure FY 2022/23**

DfT Group Procurement Expenditure FY 2022/23	
Construction	£8.9 bn
Professional Services	£8.1 bn
Energy and Fuels	£956 m
IT	£750 m
Facilities	£338 m
Industrial Services	£162 m
Vehicles	£118 m

## Our direct spend with VCSEs for FY 2022/23

- Total procurement spend circa £20bn
- Direct spend with VCSEs circa £24mn
- Direct spend with VCSEs 0.12%

Indirect spend with VCSEs was not requested for FY 2022/23. DfT Group will collaborate with their supply chain to ascertain their indirect spend for 2023/24 and feedback issues to the Crown Representative.

## Action plan

This is the first iteration of a VCSE action plan for DfT Group. The purpose and ambition of this plan is to create a foundation of best practice to be adopted and improved in the future.

Action	Benefit to VCSEs	Milestones
VCSE Supplier Events	Enhance transparency and demystify how to work with DfT Group and its supply chain	Ongoing events throughout FY 2025/26
Improve data	Collaboration with SEUK to collate direct spend with VCSEs and enhance the data collection process for indirect spend with VCSEs	March 2026
Set incremental spend targets with VCSEs.	As set out in NPPS to increase spend and engagement with VCSEs	March 2026
Provide guidance and training to the VCSE community	Understanding and transparency of the measures set out in the Procurement Policy Notes	Ongoing events throughout FY 2025/26

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and DfT Group on new policies.

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DfT Reserve Contract Working Group	Identifying and reserving in-scope contracts for SMEs/VCSEs and by location.	Quarterly
DfT VCSE Working Group	Identifying and resolving barriers for VCSEs through the DfT VCSE Working Group. Collaborating with trade associations and Social Enterprise UK to identify VCSEs UK-wide and their sectors.	Quarterly
Provide VCSE friendly policy information to DfT Group	Regular updates to procurement and commercial specialists at the Commercial Knowledge Network and Commercial Forums to ensure policy is adhered to and a consistent approach.	Ongoing events throughout FY 2025/26

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Ownership of this plan sits under the DfT VCSE Minister, DfT Group Commercial Director and the DfT VCSE Champion. We will ensure effective implementation across the department by the DfT VCSE WG with regular monitoring of progress.

We will proactively seek and act on feedback from the VCSE sector to continuously improve our understanding of VCSEs and how we can better support the sector going forward.

This action plan is a 1-year plan, which we will review and update as appropriate based on the commitments outlined above.

## Annex

### Links to departmental commercial opportunities and market engagement events

#### Direct opportunities

To view DfT procurement process and pipeline click the link below.

[Department for Transport procurement process - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/procurement)

Our commercial pipeline is refreshed every 3 months.

It contains a forward look for up to 5 years for projects and anticipated procurements valued at £2,000,000 or more.

[View our pipeline of potential activities.](#)

Search and apply for contract opportunities on [Contracts Finder](#) and [Find a Tender](#).

#### Joining frameworks / DPS

Search the Crown Commercial Service [commercial agreement pipeline](#) for upcoming agreements.

#### Joining a supply chain

As **illustrated in the Category Analysis (Table 2)** section above. The Department's highest proportion of spend is in construction where sub-contracting opportunities for VCSEs are through our Tier 1 suppliers. Sub-contracting opportunities are advertised on [Contracts Finder](#).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> [Procurement Policy Note 01/18: Supply Chain Visibility - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

The Department are hosting UK-wide VCSE Events where our Strategic Suppliers attend to network with VCSEs to demystify how to work with and win contracts.

For information on future events please contact [GCDSMELead@dft.gov.uk](mailto:GCDSMELead@dft.gov.uk)

Further information on [how to do business with our department](#)



## Helpful resources

VCSE Business Hub: A dedicated space to help VCSEs looking to work with the government. Here you will find links to other departmental action plans and centralised guidance on bidding for government work. [Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise business hub - GOV.UK](#)

VCSEs: A guide to working with government: VCSE Crown Representative Claire Dove has commissioned this [guidance document](#) for VCSEs looking to work with central and local government.

Contracts Finder: Register with [Contracts Finder](#) to keep updated on new and upcoming contracts worth over £10,000 with the government and its agencies.

Public Procurement Review Service: If you have a concern you'd like to raise about the procurement process or a problem with payment on a public contract you can let us know via the [Public Procurement Review Service](#), and they will investigate for you.

Government's Prompt Payment Policy: To find out more about the measures introduced by the government to tackle late and unfair payment practices in the public sector click [here](#).

## Social Media

[Department for Transport \(DfT\), United Kingdom | LinkedIn](#)

## Key Contacts

Robert Vaughan, DfT Small Business and VCSE Champion

[GCDSMELead@df.gov.uk](mailto:GCDSMELead@df.gov.uk)

## Case Studies

### Maritime and Coastguard Agency

#### Calder

We are and have always been advocates of the use of VCSEs, ensuring that we continue to work closely with and grow our already vast portfolio of venues within this sector.

Calder's priority is always to find venues that are the right fit for our customer. Our system however is programmed to search for venues in a priority tier order, with VCSEs being highlighted first, before moving to other venue sector types such as SME and commercial properties. This ensures that if a venue from this sector fits the brief it will be highlighted first to the Consultant.

The team are encouraged through education of VCSE venues to be committed to utilising these venues for our customer. This is proven by our figures from last year, where Calder' actually confirmed 6638 bookings at VCSE venues, which was 33.3% of everything that we booked.

This is endorsed when looking at the top venues used by Calder's last year, 4 out of our top 10 venues were VCSE's, with first and third place both being venues from this sector. These venues along with many others have all been visited personally by members of our team to further their education within the sector.

We are continuously adding to and growing our portfolio of venues, through venue engagement and education, and also by talking to our customers on the ground and gaining recommendations of any VCSE's they are aware of, especially in some of the more remote locations.

Calder's commitment to the use of VCSE's is proven when we look at DFT's trends in using these venue types, with DFT as a whole having over 42% of bookings operating into VCSE venues in the last 12 months.

## APS

Following up on the Birmingham forum where VCSEs expressed interest in accessing Government tier one suppliers and government spend APS are embarking a range of activities to engage VCSE and progress these programs.

### Current engagement activities

The aim is to go beyond simply adding suppliers to our rosters and look at ways to foster collaboration and support the growth of these organisations.

This action plan is taking shape based on the feedback received from VCSEs.

We're currently working on:

- Identifying suitable suppliers: We're developing criteria to identify suppliers that align with our service needs.

### Engagement efforts

We're actively engaging with potential VCSE suppliers:

- RNIB & RBLI ([britainsbravestmanufacturing.org.uk](http://britainsbravestmanufacturing.org.uk)): Meetings are scheduled in the coming week to discuss what is possible with these organisations in detail.
- Social Impact - Growth Hub ([gmworkforcehub.org.uk](http://gmworkforcehub.org.uk)): A meeting with Laura Kay is scheduled for next week to explore potential opportunities.
- GM Local Infrastructure Organizations ([gmworkforcehub.org.uk](http://gmworkforcehub.org.uk)): We're investigating if these organizations can fulfil any indirect procurement needs or offer other forms of support.
- Public Marketplace (PMP): We'll discuss with the PMP team about highlighting VCSEs as suppliers on the platform. We also plan to collaborate with APS marketing to develop strategies to encourage VCSEs to join PMP.

### Next steps

The aim is to provide a clearer plan with concrete next steps in the future.

In addition, MCA has the following case study we would like to advise you of:

### HMCG driver development and assessments

His Majesty's Coastguard is over 200 years old, growing and changing over time to meet both the needs of the communities they serve and also the UK's international responsibilities, delivering a life-saving service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

A principal objective is to continue the development of the organisation and its voluntary membership, who give up their time to train and respond to incidents. It is these volunteers that we are looking to support and develop in their driving-related roles.

Upon completion of a competitive procurement exercise, HMCG has secured the services of three partners who shall work within our communities, to deliver and assess HMCG driving standards, ensuring a national common approach to Driver Induction, and Light Vehicle on Road Driving Assessment. Identifying training needs/support requirements and recording them in a common format.

These partners are familiar with the DVSA's "National Standard for Driving Cars and Light Vans" and that the weighting of any shortcomings is in line with "Carrying out Driving Test - Examiner Guidance".

The MCA encouraged bids from VCSEs in addition to suppliers from the local areas in which the requirements were being competed in and we are pleased to advise one of the three contracts awarded was to a VCSE.

## National Highways

National Highways defines Social Value as "the benefits that National Highways and its supply chain deliver for people, the environment, and the economy", ensuring that they deliver the maximum value to the communities they work in as they operate, maintain, and enhance the Strategic Road Network to ensure that they leave a lasting legacy.

The National Highways Social Value Plan aims to not only achieve but exceed their ambitious objectives, looking for innovative ways to deliver differently and maximise the positive impact they have on communities through delivery of schemes and their procurement activity

National Highways have developed 29 metrics, to hold ourselves accountable we have dedicated a specific metric to measuring spend across this sector.

Our work drives economic growth, and this is central to the way we deliver social value. We believe that supporting economic prosperity makes our network an enabler of business and helps the country's businesses and economy to grow. Spending money with Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises (VCSEs) deliver a huge amount of social value, because of the nature of the organisations and the way they reinvest their profits back into social causes.

As part of our economic prosperity efforts, we endeavour to create opportunities for voluntary organisations, charities and social enterprises, directly contributing to economic growth across these sectors. We ensure all opportunities are open to all types of suppliers: major contractors, small and medium enterprises, and voluntary, charitable and social enterprises, as a result, creating a more diverse supply base that deliver a significant amount of social value. Our efforts also improve awareness of VCSEs, who help disabled and disadvantaged individuals from a range of backgrounds into meaningful work, enabled these organisations to bid for contracts typically out of reach.

The VCSE sector plays an increasingly significant role for National Highways. When trying to task their supply chain with working with the VCSE sector, feedback they received said that working with this sector was difficult as they didn't respond to tenders in the appropriate manner, they didn't provide quotations on time and talking to the right people about the size of the opportunity was difficult.

National Highways wanted to provide a quick and simple route for themselves, other government bodies and their supply chain to use to access the skills of VCSEs, not least:

- Assisting the disabled and disadvantaged to integrate into the labour market.
- Provide meaningful employment, training, and support for the those who would otherwise be excluded. (e.g. veterans, former offenders, the homeless)
- Make it easier for us all to buy from social enterprises.
- Reducing the time taken to go to market in certain categories.
- Increasing the spend placed with social enterprises and SMEs.

National Highways launched the Social Enterprise Dynamic Purchasing System (SEDPS) in August of 2023. A five-year framework that allows social enterprises to easily bid for government contracts by providing access to a pool of potential buyers across various government departments and supply chains. In turn, it is a marketplace designed to make it easier for public bodies to purchase goods and services from socially focused organisations.

Suppliers on the DPS are predominantly VCSEs or SME organisations that run on a not-for-profit basis. It is only available to companies, organisations, or consortia/joint ventures whose surpluses are reinvested for that purpose or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners.

In its first 16 months (to end December 2024) the SEDPS has grown to 11 categories featuring 67 approved suppliers with a committed spend of £2.1m.

The SEDPS strives to make membership a straightforward and flexible process for VCSEs. To become a member, suppliers complete a simple 3 question Selection Questionnaire:

- Part 1 of the SQ contains questions in relation to organisational details, the bidding model, and subcontracting arrangements. This included a reduced financial standing requirement and a light-touch contract.
- Part 2 enables them to self-certify that there are no mandatory/discretionary grounds for exclusion.
- Part 3 contains questions related to supplier suitability for the DPS. Crucially, applicants are able to answer this question by written submission, a pre-recorded video or by arranging an interview. They can choose the option with which they are most comfortable and feel best-able to put across how they achieve the SEDPS objectives.

Part 3 of the application has been deemed as innovative as this is the first government application process that is fully accessible by all, offering neurodiverse options. This was brought about as several of the initial cohort of entrants on the SEDPS were founded by people with a neurodiverse background. Their feedback on the process to apply led to a change in process by National Highways.

To identify and onboard these VCSE's to the SEDPS National Highways led extensive market engagements including online events outside of normal hours, to ensure that volunteers that often take on the bidding activity for VCSEs could attend. They also conducted hundreds of supplier 121s and a specialised social media campaign. To ensure the message was heard in a consistent manner National Highways also developed "How-to" guides, narrated PowerPoints, and video demonstrations to support applications.

Every month social enterprises are invited to present at the Supplier Group (including RBLI, The People's Kitchen and Beating Time). This has led to opportunities for VCSEs to co-present at several events including the Government Commercial Function Conference and Highways UK, reaching over 1000 attendees.

Furthermore, National Highways are working with the Wild Plant Conservation Charity (Plantlife International) under the guise of the Meadow Makers project, which goes beyond caring for the 3% of grasslands that remain in the UK and will work with third-party landowners to deliver restoration and creation on species-rich meadows. Plantlife, in partnership with National Highways, will restore 500 hectares across 100 sites. This will enable us to deliver 1000 biodiversity units.

Our intention is that the project will enable a rolling programme to be set up, identifying sites and engaging landowners, delivering habitat improvements, and returning for monitoring and evaluation. This will be delivered in a sustainable way and will enable new sites to be identified to keep the momentum of habitat restoration going over the long term. In FY 2023/24, £8.8m was paid out via The Wild Plant Conservation Charity to landowners across the UK.

National Highways also have various other charities that we work with, where we are developing schemes in particular areas, that equate to circa £1m per annum. An example of this is the Huntingdon Freemans Charity where we've worked with them for the A428 project and companies such as Driver First Assist CIC that deliver DFA courses at our training centre in Moreton in the Marsh.



## National Highways and its Supply Chain Case studies:

### Case study 1:

#### Signs of changing lives...

An army of over 100 veterans and people with disabilities are making 1000 road signs each week for use on England's motorways and major A-roads for National Highways.


The Royal British Legion Industries (RBLI) is leading this through its social enterprise, Britain's Bravest Manufacturing Company (BBMC), employing more than 100 people – 70% of whom are veterans and people with disabilities. BBMC reinvests 100% of its surplus, providing greater employment opportunities to its beneficiaries.

Jeff Blizard (pictured) is one of those people. Jeff, a former soldier in the Queens Infantry, was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and was out of work for 10 years. BBMC has supported Jeff on his journey back to full time employment making road signs in the factory.

Thanks to the support from National Highways and some of their key suppliers, committed to spending £600,000 with BBMC, the factory has been able to significantly expand its operations and improve the lives of the people it supports. Their Permanent Road Sign business has increased by 30% and their Temporary Road Sign business by 80%.

This support has also enabled them to invest in state-of the art machinery which is faster and more energy efficient and commit to become a Real Living Wage Employer which will have a lasting impact on people across RBLI.

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### Case study 2 - Amey

At Amey, Social Value is part of business as usual, embedded into everything that we do every day. We are firmly focused on empowering the local communities that we service and supporting sustainable economic growth that delivers long lasting impacts beyond our presence in the area.

#### Background

RBLI is a national veterans charity supporting the Armed Forces, people with disabilities and people who are unemployed. RBLI's social enterprises produce a wide range of items, from road and rail signs, wooden products such as pallets and fruit bins, as well as printing and fulfilment services. 100% of the surplus generated by this commercial activity is re-invested to either provide further employment opportunities to veterans or support the wider charity's aims of providing welfare, housing, and employment to the country's most vulnerable veterans.

Amey have successfully partnered with RBLI for over 15 years producing high-quality signs used on Amey Highways and Rail accounts. The partnership has enabled increased social enterprise spending and contributions in social value to the economy.

The key objectives of the Amey's partnership with RBLI are to provide industry-leading products and services whilst genuinely effecting long-term positive change for those who need it most, mainly veterans and people with disabilities. The partnership focuses on providing employment and training opportunities through RBLI's social enterprises.

The decision to partner with RBLI is aligned with Amey's commitment to support veterans into employment. Over the past 15 years, we have invested £4.3m with the RBLI and its

social enterprises. Support for the use of RBLI is driven from senior Amey leaders who have committed to a pledge led by National Highways.

Amey worked with National Highways to further develop their Social Enterprise Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS). We advertised opportunities / the need for signage across our strategic highways contracts and subsequently awarded these works to RBLI.

To facilitate the delivery of the 2023 target, procurement processes have been amended on Amey Strategic Highways contracts (Area 7, 10, 12 and SBIM) to make RBLI the default supplier of signage in the first instance. This has resulted in a spend of more than £4.3m with RBLI and their social enterprises across the partnership and more than £730k in social value to the economy. The partnership has enabled RBLI to create five more employment opportunities every year to veterans and people with disabilities, through its social enterprises.

Demonstrating how businesses can come together to create high quality products, our partnership with RBLI has resulted in the successful procurement and production of road signs. RBLI have produced 26,000 signs for Amey Highways and Rail network.

### **National Highways Testimonials:**

#### **Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Representative, Claire Dove CBE:**

“National Highways are leading the way on social value and have been on an incredible journey over the last 3 years. The introduction of their DPS for Social Enterprises is both innovative and is really driving excitement within the sector. Being a champion for VCSE’s for many years, I am only too aware of the barriers to entry for these VCSE’s and this DPS really improves access for them not just for National Highways and their supply chain but also across government delivering more social, economic and environmental benefits through procurement.”

Claire Dove, Crown Representative for VCSEs

#### **James Fletcher, Corporate Partnerships Manager at Royal British Legion Industries:**

“The significant financial pledge from National Highways and their supply chain partners is key to helping us at RBLI to create jobs for veterans to produce signs at our social enterprise Britain's Bravest Manufacturing Company. The SEDPS is just one of many ways National Highways lead the way in supporting VCSEs and embracing our shared commitment to social value.”

James Fletcher, Corporate Partnerships Manager at RBLI

#### **Head of Commercial at Welsh Government, Paul Griffiths:**

“Having spent many years championing the work of Social Enterprises and the commercial and social value they can bring to Public Sector Procurement, I was thrilled to hear about the Social Enterprises DPS that’s being delivered by National Highways. It represents a step change in scale in terms of working with social enterprises. Encompassing both direct



contracting and supply chain opportunities it has a key role to play in helping organisations deliver and quantify truly social procurement solutions”.

Paul Griffiths, Head of Commercial at Welsh Government

**Social Enterprise who successfully joined the DPS, Drop the Mask CIC:**

“Drop the Mask Productions CIC were worried about filling out a lot of information on the SEDPS forms online, as our company was founded on supporting employment within our company for neurodiverse persons. So, a lot of the technical and what seemed legal information was quite daunting. But when we were stuck, we were able to email and ask for a support meeting to help understand what we did not comprehend properly and get direction of how to complete some other tasks, and how to download forms, sign and attach back within emails in SEDPS. The process was well worth it in the end. Because now when a tender is raised, it is really simple, and we have the confidence to put together and send our tender quote with ease and no stress. The support from the SEDPS team has been outstanding.”

Drop the Mask CIC