

HS2 begins search for track systems suppliers

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HS2 today began the search for the specialist contractors that will deliver around 280km of state-of-the-art high speed track that will enable the UK to run some of the world's most frequent and reliable long distance rail services.

Following on from the government's recent approval for the civil engineering elements of the project, today's announcement unlocks more opportunities for Britain's construction and engineering sector.

The new contract opportunities cover the design and build of the complex track systems between London, Birmingham and Crewe, where HS2 trains will join the existing West Coast Mainline. The winners will also take a lead role in managing and coordinating the complex interfaces between the track and other elements of the rail systems.

Contracts covering rail, switches and crossings and pre-cast slab track systems will be awarded separately - with the track systems suppliers coordinating the design and installation.

The start of the formal procurement process for this first set of rail systems contracts marks an important new phase in the HS2 project, with the winning bidders set to arrive on site once the tunnels, bridges, viaducts and earthworks are complete.

HS2 Ltd's Procurement and Commercial Director, David Poole said: "Rail systems are some of the most important parts of the HS2 project - the high tech equipment and systems that will allow our trains to

deliver an unparalleled service in terms of speed, frequency and reliability.

“The launch of this new procurement contest is an important milestone for the project, and a significant opportunity for the industry and the wider supply chain. At the peak of construction, HS2 will support around 30,000 jobs and contracts like this will provide a real boost for employers across the supply chain, helping to boost skills and provide opportunities for years to come.”

Six more sets of rail systems contracts are due to be launched later in the year, covering signalling, the overhead catenary that will provide power to the trains, mechanical and electrical systems, high voltage power supplies, communications systems and the depot and control centre at Washwood Heath in Birmingham.

Four separate track packages will be awarded:

- Lot 1 – Phase One (Urban – London and Birmingham) – £434m
- Lot 2 – Phase One (Open Route – Central) – £526m
- Lot 3 – Phase One (Open Route -North) – £566m
- Lot 4 – Track – Phase 2a – £431m

In order to reduce long term costs and improve performance, the track will be set onto concrete slabs instead of the ballast commonly used on the UK rail network. This approach – known as slab track – is commonly used on metro systems and some international high speed rail lines, and will allow for a higher frequency of service with less maintenance.

The winning bidders will also be responsible for the design, installation and testing of switches and crossings, managing construction logistics and co-ordination, and supporting the testing and commissioning phase. They will also act as Construction Design and Management (CDM) Principal Contractor for the trace and be responsible for logistics and consents co-ordination.

Shortlists for track are expected towards the end of the year, with contract awards in 2022.

Photo credit: HS2 Ltd