

[News story: Public bodies band together on new mobile voice and data procurement](#)

Crown Commercial Service (CCS) is harnessing the buying power of the public sector to reduce the cost to the public purse of purchasing mobile voice and data services.

[Expressions of interest](#) are now being taken from public sector organisations who want to take part in this latest bulk buying project.

The competition will be awarded in March 2018, with customer requirements being gathered between now and December.

The winning supplier will provide mobile voice and data services to the public sector at the most competitive price available – supporting the provision of efficient, effective public services that meet the needs of citizens.

The most recent exercises of its kind organised by CCS have saved customers, including local authorities and NHS trusts, on average 60% compared to their previous bills. The more organisations that take part, the greater the benefits will be.

Niall Quinn, Director of Technology Strategic Category said:

I'd encourage all public sector organisations who are looking to purchase mobile voice and data services to consider joining this aggregation. These projects have a great track record of utilising the buying power of the public sector to leverage the best deals from suppliers, ensuring that public bodies can deliver efficient public services.

Each participating customer will sign their own individual contract with the winning supplier.

How it works

The project is a National Further Competition completed under Lot 6 of CCS's Network Services framework. The chosen supplier will be one of those currently appointed to this Lot.

It will put in place a mobile voice and data services contract offering a high level of flexibility by:

- Establishing a zero line rental model for basic connections, avoiding customers incurring costs from unused lines

- Structuring services as ‘bolt-ons’ which can be added to the basic connection, enabling packages to be built to customer specifications
- 30-day terms for ‘bolt-ons’ to enable customers to change their mix of services during the contract term

Find out more

If you are interested in getting involved please [get in touch](#) – simply tick the aggregation box and quote NFC81.

CCS’s last competition [saved 17 customers over £2.7 million](#).

[News story: CMA reviews Rough gas storage facility undertakings](#)

Rough is a gas field in the North Sea used to store gas in the summer and deliver it in winter when the gas is needed to help meet high demand.

In June, Centrica plc (Centrica) [announced](#) that it intended to close the gas storage facility due to the physical deterioration of the facility which has come to the end of its design life. The closure can only happen if current undertakings required by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) have been removed. This led to Centrica and Centrica Storage Ltd (CSL) – the operator of Rough – requesting a review of its undertakings.

The undertakings, put in place in 2003 and most recently amended by the CMA in 2016, include a requirement to keep CSL, legally, financially and physically separate from its parent company Centrica, and to prevent CSL from discriminating in favour of Centrica or other users of Rough.

They also include an obligation for CSL to sell a specific amount of capacity before the start of each storage year, limiting the amount which can be supplied to Centrica and enabling Ofgem to vary the amount of capacity Centrica is required to offer for sale.

The CMA panel members who will act as decision-makers in the review are: [Martin Cave](#), [Jayne Scott](#), [Jon Stern](#) and [Anne Fletcher](#). The CMA anticipates that the review will be completed before the end of 2017.

Further details, including Centrica and CSL’s request to remove the undertakings can be found on the [case page](#). An administrative timetable will be published shortly.

Press release: Improvements breathe new life into north east park

A partnership project has breathed new life into a local north east park.

The Wear Rivers Trust and Environment Agency have worked together to make improvements to Memorial Park near Stanley.

In the 1950s, Stanley Burn, which flows through South Moor Memorial Park, was diverted into a culvert to make way for a communal paddling pool, which was used for around 15 years and then buried and forgotten.

This new project has now removed the paddling pool and returned the river to its natural channel, creating new high quality habitat for fish and invertebrates while also slowing the flow of the watercourse and increasing flood storage.

Nearby residents of Stanley are also enjoying improved year-round access with a new 300m footpath and two new footbridges. And work is planned in early 2018 to further improve the instream habitat for fish and to naturalise the bankside habitat.

Steve Hudson of Wear Rivers Trust said:

It's great to be involved in a project which offers so many benefits to the local community. By working alongside multiple partners through the Greening the Twizell Partnership, we have managed to improve instream habitat, reduce flood risk and provide new all ability access routes for everyone to enjoy this previously difficult to reach woodland park area.

The project has cost more than £90,000 and is made up of funding from the Environment Agency, Stanley Town Council, Durham County Council and Stanley Area Action Partnership. It's one part of a four-part project in the area which has also included wetland and pond creation and natural flood management measures.

Karen Fisher, Biodiversity Technical Officer with the Environment Agency in the North East, added:

The project has been delivered with Wear Rivers Trust and is an excellent example of partnership working that has delivered multiple benefits.

This includes habitat creation, lengthening the watercourse, new bridges and a seating area, creating a green area for the local community to use.

[News story: Developing and testing 5G services: apply for business funding](#)

Businesses can apply for up to £25 million to explore, develop and test applications and services for the next generation of digital infrastructure.

The [Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport](#) (DCMS) has up to £25 million to invest in projects that support the development of the UK's 5G infrastructure.

5G is the next generation of wireless broadband technology and could offer users connection speeds of up to 100MB or more. It is likely to open up new services and applications in areas such as the Internet of Things and broadcasting.

DCMS funding is part of the government's overall £740 million [National Productivity Investment Fund](#) for digital infrastructure.

The competition was announced yesterday by Minister of State for Digital, Matt Hancock.

Creating 5G testbeds and trials

Projects must contribute to the creation of innovative testbeds and trials in the UK and do at least one of the following:

- explore the potential for 5G to deliver benefits for business
- develop new 5G applications and services
- develop and explore new business models around key 5G technologies
- reduce commercial risks associated with investment in 5G

Competition information

- the competition opens on 23 October 2017, and the deadline for registration is midday on 6 December 2017
- projects must be led by a UK-registered organisation working with partners
- consortiums must be industry-led or have a strong industry component
- we expect projects to last 12 months and for project grants to vary in size between £2 million and £5 million
- details of additional funding for further phases of testbeds and trials will be available as the programme progresses
- businesses could attract up to 60% of their project costs
- a briefing event takes place on 30 October 2017

[News story: UK House Price Index: new data reveals number of cash buyers](#)

Have you ever wondered how many properties were purchased using cash alone? From today, the UK House Price Index (UK HPI) will tell you the answer. You can now access the number of:

- cash sales transactions
- mortgage sales transactions
- registered new build and resold properties

We have found that while cash sales account for between 30% and 40% of all transactions at Great Britain level, there are some variations at regional level. London has the lowest proportion of cash sales (around 25%), while the South West has the highest (around 40%).

All the new sales volume data are available at national, regional, county, local authority and London borough levels, enabling easy comparison with existing data. You can explore the data further through our downloadable data tables or via our [Linked Data API](#).

The introduction of volume information improves the transparency of the number of new build properties registered across the UK. It also provides greater clarity on purchasing trends, helping users to understand the extent of household credit. To understand more about how this data is derived, refer to [Calculating the UK HPI \(section 4\)](#).

We will continue to make enhancements to the data based on user feedback. This includes making all data available in the [Search the UK House Price Index](#) app later this year.

You can help us shape one of the nation's most important indicators. Through our [LinkedIn UK HPI group](#) we are working with users, stakeholders and our partners to enhance the information and data supplied to ensure the index continues to offer maximum public value.

If you would like to share your feedback on the UK HPI, you can register your interest to [join the UK HPI group](#) or [contact us](#) for more information.