

Rail Sector Deal - Midlands Pilot SME Collaboration Challenge - Lightweighting Post Launch Event Information and FAQs

Rail Sector Deal

The Rail Sector Deal is a formal agreement between UK government and the rail industry and forms part of the UK's Industrial Strategy. It sets out some key priorities for the industry that have been translated into a number of workstreams. The Midlands Pilots is one such workstream with Rail Forum Midlands (RFM) taking responsibility for delivering two pilots. One is focussed on apprenticeships and schools engagement and the second on SME resilience and growth through collaboration.

The Rail Sector Deal can be found [here](#)

This challenge has been designed to fit the second pilot; the main purpose of which is to

- a) help SMEs to work together to meet the future challenges of the industry by being able to compete for larger/broader packages of work
- b) provide a UK source to meet OEM, asset manager and tier 1 future requirements which will also assist in providing the reference points for increasing exports
- c) demonstrate that SME's working together provide growth/increased profits/greater security than they would have if they had not worked together
- d) identify the barriers, lessons learnt and provide solutions to those barriers in the form of a road map to assist other SME's and organisations wanting to work collaboratively
- e) encourage key clients within the supply chain to seriously consider alternative options to importing components/assemblies and services providing a good reference point for SMEs trying to grow their exports.

In addition this will provide increased opportunities, potential growth, and greater security for the SME's in the supply chain supporting increased investment in new technologies. The collaborative approach also has the potential to unlock significant funding through a variety of regional and national schemes.

The ultimate goal of undertaking this pilot is to encourage SME's and other organisations to work together collaboratively; demonstrating that collaboration can lead to increased revenues, profitability, productivity and/or new customers.

Definitions

“Project” : For clarity we anticipate a number of collaborative partnerships to emerge working on specific mini “projects” under the overall theme of this challenge. The word “project” in the FAQs that follow refers to these collaborative partnerships.

Clients : for clarity the clients referred to in the FAQs below are those potential ‘end customers’ for any new products or services developed as part of this challenge and that have committed their support to it. At this stage this is Bombardier Transportation, Hitachi, Porterbrook and Siemens. It should be noted that other clients may express interest in getting involved over the coming weeks.

Frequently Asked Questions:

What is Collaboration?

Individual SMEs working together to meet their individual goals. The goals can/may be different for each of the SMEs involved in the “project”.

What is a SME business?

An SME is a business which employs less than 250 people and has an annual turnover of less than £50m. We are very happy to include SMEs that are part of a larger group provided that the engagement with the project is led by the UK based SME.

Are all SMEs able to participate?

Yes provided they have a UK registered address and an operational base/facility in the UK. Collaborative partnerships must be able to demonstrate a significant % of the product/commodity value will be added in the UK to meet the objectives of the pilot.

Do we have to be based in the Midlands to take part?

No. The pilot is being led/delivered by RFM on behalf of the Rail Supply Group. Whilst ideally we would like some SMEs to be Midlands based this is not essential.

Is there a limit to the number of SMEs that can participate in a single “project”

No.

Can RFM assist with finding suitable collaboration partners?

Yes. RFM has considerable knowledge of the rail supply chain as well as links into other similar organisations that operate in other sectors (such as aerospace). We also have strong relationships with other trade bodies in rail. We will provide contacts for potential collaborative partners where requested and may be able to help facilitate introductions in some cases. It is, however, up to individual companies to select who they wish to work with.

Can individual SMEs participate in more than one “project”?

Yes.

Can “projects” include non-SMEs, Universities and other research organisations?

Yes, provided the lead company is an SME.

Are there any aspects of the vehicle that are not in scope?

No. At this stage clients have indicated all areas are up for consideration. We recognise however that this is very broad and therefore we are planning to break this down into four key areas to help SMEs to focus:

- Interiors including HVAC
- Exteriors including bodyshell, doors, couplers, gangways etc
- Bogies and traction
- Electrical and electronic equipment

How do we submit a “project” idea?

There will be a short form to complete when submitting “project” ideas. This will require the details of the SMEs proposing to work in collaboration and a short written outline of the “project”. This will then be shared with the end clients to select those “projects” they would like to invite to a Dragons Den style selection process. The purpose of the Dragons Den is to ensure that there is genuine interest in the proposal on the part of the clients prior to SMEs undertaking more detailed work.

Will all information submitted during the process be treated confidentially?

Yes, any information provided will only be shared with the participating end clients.

Is there a time limit for submitting “project” ideas?

Not at this stage, this is an ongoing process and we expect a continued interest from the SME community. We will arrange additional online Dragon Dens events when appropriate to support this challenge. We envisage the challenge being ‘live’ through into at least the early part of 2021.

We are new to the rail sector, where can we access the relevant rail standards?

All railway standards are available to download free of charge from the RSSB website: www.rssb.co.uk.

Who will own any IPR?

Unless otherwise agreed the IPR will remain with the SMEs participating in the “project”. This is important as we are keen to ensure that SMEs are able to benefit from exploiting any new technologies, products etc. that they develop.

Can SMEs work with more than one end client on the same “project” idea?

Yes however, depending upon the “project” there may be a situation where the end clients also wish to work in collaboration with each other and in such circumstances RFM will endeavour to assist with facilitating suitable working arrangements between all parties.

Can we select the end clients we pitch to in the Dragons Den?

We hope that all the SMEs “projects” would be keen to pitch to all the clients at the same time. However, if there are exceptions to this RFM will work with all parties to facilitate appropriately.

What will be the format for the Dragons Dens pitch?

At this stage we envisage the Dragons Den will be an online event with individual “project” pitches. Our preference is for short video presentations (but with the option of ppt / verbal presentation); ideally with representatives from all the participating SMEs involved. There will also be ample time for Q&A's. As we move forward it may be possible to arrange face to face Dragon's Den event(s).

How will we know if our “project” idea has been successful?

After completion of the Dragons Den pitches the clients will provide feedback to RFM and indicate those “projects” they would like to pursue or have further discussions with. RFM will communicate that information back to the “project”. Successful “projects” will then agree next steps with the clients, RFM will assist with this process if needed.

If our “project” is successful at the Dragons Den what happens next?

This will depend on the specific “project” being taken forward and the client(s) involved. RFM will be working with SMEs and clients over the coming weeks to firm up the details of this process. Some “projects” may be able to attract support from funding organisations or clients themselves. Others may be able to secure support from research establishments, universities etc. Others may not require any of this support.

Is there any funding available as part of the lightweighting challenge?

There is no specific funding available as part of the challenge, however in certain circumstances there may be funding or financial support available from the clients to help develop specific “projects”. There are also a number of funding streams currently available for helping companies develop innovative ideas, we will happily provide the relevant contact details.

Will there be ongoing support available during the “project”?

Yes, this activity is part of a pilot which itself is a workstream within the Rail Sector Deal. The overarching objective is to help SME's work together and bid for larger contracts both here in the UK and in export markets. Feedback, and support where needed to overcome any obstacles, will be an important element of the learning process and help to develop a stronger and more resilient rail sector in the UK.

How will you ensure that clients respond positively to SME offers?

RFM will be liaising closely with the participating clients, Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy and Department for Transport throughout the process and our Rail Sector Deal Champion will also be tracking progress both with clients

and with key government stakeholders. We will also be encouraging SMEs to feedback regularly on their experiences.

Who do we contact for more information or with questions?

In the first instance Robert Hodgson on robert@midlandsrail.co.uk or Elaine Clark on elaineclark@midlandsrail.co.uk . There is also a generic email address you can use: railsectordeal@midlandsrail.co.uk

Questions raised during the launch session 21st July 2020 and subsequent sessions (similar questions may have been asked more than once and may have been linked together)

Do all collaborative ideas have to comply with the current Railway Group Standards?

It would be good if that was the case but that shouldn't be a limitation with coming up with new ideas. If there are good ideas which require sensible changes to the Rail Group Standards we would be prepared to support such discussions with the RSSB as RFM and/or with the support of the clients.

What is more important weight saving or sustainability?

Both are obviously important, lightweight trains will use less energy and will therefore be naturally more fuel efficient. As we know the government is keen to have a green economy and our suggestion would be that any new ideas should be "no worse" than the existing but ideally also helping to meet the green economy goals.

Will there be potential applications for lightweight materials coupled with high temperature capabilities?

The honest answer is not sure, however many rail vehicles do include materials with good thermal and/or insulation properties either as a stand alone product or as part of larger pieces of equipment. It may be useful to know a little more about the materials you provide and existing applications presumably not currently rail related

Is it essential to have IRIS (International Rail Industry Standards) accreditation to supply the UK rail industry?

Different clients may have different standards they expect their suppliers to work to and certain clients may insist upon IRIS accreditation. However it is possible to be a supplier to the UK rail industry without having IRIS accreditation. The usual minimum quality assurance requirement will be ISO 9001 and RISQS (Rail Industry Supplier Quality Scheme) for products which are classified as safety critical such as door systems

We are new to the Rail Industry what are the main barriers to entry?

Understanding the rail industry "geography" and the Railway Group Standards which help maintain a safe railway, both of which RFM can provide assistance with.

How can SME's network with each other so that they can find partnerships to help deliver this challenge?

In the first instance we are asking all those companies interested in participating in this challenge to complete a very brief feedback form which will include key contacts and a brief description of the company activities. Once the feedback forms have been returned we will collate the information and circulate to all those SME's that have shown an interest in the challenge. Due to GDPR we won't be able to circulate all the personal contact details but we will be able to share details if requested.

Will we be able to introduce our company/services to the other SME's interested in the challenge?

Yes, it is proposed that at the start of each of the four follow up sessions all participants will be given the opportunity to say what they do and what type of company(s) they are looking to work with.

Are the clients looking for weight savings for specific rail vehicles and/or bids or is this a medium/longer term challenge?

This is a stand alone challenge and is not limited to any particular project or bids

Will there be support for SME's with potential issues around IPR and commercial sensitivity?

Yes, RFM will help steer or direct the relevant SME's to areas of support to assist with these type of issues

Does the rail industry have an "alternative material handbook" that provides direct physical properties but with lower weights?

The rail industry does not have a standard document that provides that type of information however some of the composite material suppliers may be able to provide data on suitable alternative and lighter weight materials.

Do the clients know how much they can afford to pay to save a kilo in weight as they do in the aviation industry?

This is a question which really needs to be asked directly with the clients, however calculating cost/kg of weight savings is far more variable in the rail industry compared to the aviation industry due to variable loadings, diagrams etc which in the aviation industry they are more constant.

Can we get NDA's signed in advance?

If SMEs believe they need NDA's we would encourage them to discuss this at an early stage with RFM and we will facilitate relevant discussions with clients.

Traditionally, introducing new products and indeed new suppliers into Hitachi, Alstom, Bombardier etc. is very difficult. Are we therefore assured via the process discussed today that each approach that is made will be given a credible review?

Yes. The responses and actions of OEM's and asset managers that have signed up to support the challenge will be very visible to government. Part of the purpose of this pilot is to really flush out these type of barriers and address them.

Will the DfT be involved as well?

Yes. DfT are joint supporters and signatories to the Rail Sector Deal alongside Dept. for BEIS.

Will the Government set lower weight targets for the OEMs to hit when they design new trains? Essentially the weight is driven by the tender document targets set by the government.

At the moment this isn't something that has been discussed, but it is something we could raise with DfT in the future. Looking forward with the focus on sustainability and decarbonisation it is likely that any government requirements in this area would then also favour and support lightweighting.

Link to the Porterbrook Innovation Hub

<https://www.porterbrook.co.uk/news/porterbrook-innovation-hub-open-for-business>

Client Contacts:

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