

University challenge

Mace has been appointed as design and build contractor for a new student centre for University College London, which will provide learning and support facilities, a cafe, and space for exhibitions. The project - designed by Nicholas Hare Architects - also incorporates 1,000 study spaces and an enquiries centre. It is valued at £25m by contracts database Barbour ABI. Main construction works are scheduled to begin next summer, with the project set to open by autumn 2018. The appointment is the second major London University project win for Mace in as many months, after the firm was appointed to a pre-construction agreement for the £123m redevelopment of the London School of Economics' Centre Buildings.



Flagship £2.9bn consultants framework delayed until May

Award of major public sector framework now almost three years late

By Louise Dransfield

The government's troubled £2.9bn flagship consultancy framework has been delayed yet again and will now not be awarded until May 2016 - almost three years later than originally intended.

Public sector buying arm the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) issued an update on Monday confirming tendering of its four-year Project Management and Full Design Team Services framework would now begin in January 2016 and would be awarded in May.

In its last major update in August,

the CCS said the framework would go out to tender in "early October" and would go live in March 2016.

The framework was originally meant to go live when its previous iteration expired on 16 June 2013, but has been repeatedly delayed and its management passed between different organisations.

The CCS attributed the latest delay to factoring in "several complex projects" that were also being procured, "including HS2, CrossRail2 (sic) and the Palace of Westminster refurbishment".

CCS added: "As this is a pivotal procurement for the public sector

and our main priority is to ensure the best commercial outcome for both customers and suppliers, we have taken the decision to revise the project timescales to ensure suppliers can provide a quality bid."

In its August update the CCS hugely increased the expected framework value to between £2.3bn and £2.9bn, up from £750m. The framework was also restructured into 23 lots, up from six, to open it up to SMEs.

The CCS took over management of the framework in November 2014, after its procurement partner UK

SBS cancelled the previous 15-month procurement process amid a storm of criticism from firms that missed out on places. The framework was also challenged in the High Court by then-failed bidder Turner & Townsend.

Meanwhile, the pre-qualification stage for a number of advisory services contracts on the £6bn restoration of the Palace of Westminster expired last week.

A parliament spokesperson said invitations to tender will go out on 16 December, with contracts potentially awarded by the end of June.

CITB plans to cut 26 middle manager jobs under new strategy

The CITB has confirmed it is looking to cut 26 "middle manager" jobs as it continues its reorganisation under a new strategy.

The training body said it has entered a period of consultation with staff as it looks to cut its level of middle management, with 188 staff affected. The CITB said it is proposing to make 14% of these redundant, meaning 26 jobs are under threat. The changes will be finalised by "early 2016".

Explaining the job losses, CITB chief executive

Adrian Belton said: "For the past 18 months, CITB has been transforming itself to better meet the needs of industry.

"CITB has been too heavily managed in the past, and so we will simplify teams and structures, establish fewer but more flexible role types, and embed a new, more agile way of working."

The CITB also confirmed it has no plans at the moment to close any of its training centres or regional offices, and that it will assess the scope

for external training before deciding which of its training activities it will stop providing.

The future of the CITB is in some doubt as the government consults over how its proposed apprenticeship levy for large employers will co-exist with the existing construction training levy that funds the CITB.

The CITB insists its future is safe until at least March 2018 under a parliamentary agreement to raise the levy until this date.