

Electricity Contracts

The Value of a Procurement Strategy

Energy markets are notoriously volatile and can be effected by trade conditions such as the recent fluctuations in oil prices. As a result of this, when NCC tenders its requirements for electricity supply, potential suppliers will only hold prices open for a couple of hours. This means that a decision needs to be reached very quickly.

Whilst our ESPO energy buyers work very hard and quickly to analyse the various bids, and suggest the most beneficial tender, they still require final authorisation from NCC.

Like most Councils, NCC is not really set up to gather all the decision-makers from all departments, at a moments notice, analyse the various tenders and come to a group decision in a matter of hours.

Therefore, the decision making has tended to rest with Corporate Procurement Unit (CPU) who obviously take into account the advice from the ESPO energy buyers.

A second complication arises when procurement of "green" electricity - electricity from renewable energy sources - is taken into account.

Green electricity is highly sought after and, in general, supply outweighs demand and as a result new blocks of green energy that come onto the market tend to be snapped up very quickly. This means that a premium sometimes has to be paid to procure green electricity.

Whilst NCC has ambitions with regard to sustainability the question was would we be prepared to pay extra for green electricity in relation to brown electricity - which is produced from traditional carbon based fuels?

If we were prepared to pay more for green electricity how much more were we prepared to pay and in what circumstances? What was required here, was a pre-authorised procurement strategy.

In November 2003, Stuart Hutchinson of CPU wrote a paper outlining the problems associated with the electricity tender process. The paper put forward the proposal that NCC establish percentage price parameters (in terms of green electricity in relation to brown electricity) within which we would be prepared to procure green electricity.

©AMEC Border Wind

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Editorial

Welcome to this latest bumper size, full colour edition of **PURCHASING POWER**.

As well as the latest procurement news and usual money-saving tips, this issue focuses on the Freedom of Information Act and, as 'Go-Live' is fast approaching, Oracle iProcurement.

Our lead article focuses on the success achieved by the CPU following implementation of a pre-authorised procurement strategy, with regard to purchasing green electricity.

We also have a feature on procurement in Cultural Services and hope to follow this in future issues with articles from other departments.

This newsletter is also available on the intranet. If you have any interesting articles or news items that could be included in future issues please let us know.

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Electricity Contracts

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If such parameters could be established, then NCC would be in a position to give a mandate to our ESPO energy buyers clearly outlining the terms under which they could procure green electricity on our behalf - without the necessity of seeking authorisation on each occasion. This would allow ESPO to react quickly to tenders and new offers of green electricity.

The paper included some examples of percentage increases and what that would mean in terms of total NCC spend. The paper received the support of the Head of Procurement and with the patronage of Councillor Roy Banham was presented to Alison King's monthly Members meeting in December 2003 and a strategy decision was made for the whole of NCC. This enabled CPU to issue a mandate to the ESPO energy buyers with regard to the procurement of green electricity.

The strategy has been phenomenally successful and has enabled ESPO to react very quickly to electricity tenders that include an element of green electricity. In December 2003 just under 10% of NCC's total electricity usage was green electricity. In March/April 2004 the Public Street Lighting contract was renewed and we were able to obtain 100% of the supply as green electricity.

In August 2004 the contract for the Sub 100 kilowatt-hour sites was renewed and, once again we were able to obtain 100% of the supply as green electricity. On both occasions ESPO were able to react quickly because of the authorised procurement strategy/mandate they had been given by CPU.

In just over eight months, NCC's total percentage of electricity usage supplied from renewable sources has increased from under 10% to over 92%. The UK Government's target for local authorities is 10% by 2010...so, at the moment, NCC is well ahead of the game.

But the good news doesn't end there. The increase in our overall percentage of green electricity has been achieved on a cost-neutral basis. That is to say, at no more cost than we would have had to pay for brown electricity - bearing in mind the general price increases in energy and the fact that climate change levy is payable on brown electricity but not on green electricity.

So, are you still convinced that procurement strategies don't work?

Stuart Hutchinson 01603 222740
Contracts and Procurement Officer

The Gershon Effect

A year ago Sir Peter Gershon was asked to carry out a Review of Public Sector Efficiency, focusing on releasing major resources out of activities which can be undertaken more efficiently into front line services that meet the public's highest priorities.

The recently published review has divided its analysis into six work-streams where potential savings were identified as.

- ◆ procurement of goods and services,
- ◆ back office,
- ◆ transactional services,
- ◆ public service policy,
- ◆ funding and regulation
- ◆ regulation and productive time.

Within the key theme of the procurement of goods and services the broad markets where the greatest potential was identified were:

1. Construction and facilities management of buildings.
2. Social housing.
3. Commodity goods.
4. Social care.
5. Environmental services.
6. Highways.
7. Defence.
8. Police.
9. Education.
10. Health-specific procurement.

These areas are doubtlessly where traditional procurement professionals would focus, but we must not lose sight of the enormous contribution that procurement skills can make to service review and option appraisal of alternative delivery methods of almost everything the Council undertakes to provide.

The Review proposes efficiency savings in local government of 2.5% per annum to deliver £6.45 billion of efficiencies and productivity improvements by 2007/8.

At least half these savings will be cashable, releasing resources into front line services. The review identified examples of good practice but also concluded that there was significant scope for procurement savings by:

- ◆ Improved forward planning with suppliers in terms of aggregation and shifts in demand;
- ◆ Increasing professionalism within public sector through shared resources or enhancement of procurement skills; and
- ◆ Including procurement staff early in the process and allowing dedicated procurement staff to carry out procurement.

The future for procurement in Norfolk County Council

It has been recognised that the implementation of e-procurement can secure savings but also the aggregation of demand through joint contracting and collaboration. We already benefit from such arrangements through ESPO and the Regional Centres of Excellence will provide more opportunities.

We are continuing to support the NVQ qualification in procurement to help raise the procurement skills level in the Council and have more new candidates just starting. We will also be developing other training packages to address the training needs identified in the recent procurement skills audit. We need to make sure we are prepared for the introduction of a 'Licence to Practice' in procurement so that this does not cause disruption to our service provision.

As the effects of savings targets are passed on to departments it will be clear that every financial commitment departments make will need to be based on value for money criteria. As such we anticipate that the procurement community across the council will be very busy as they are called upon to put their skills to best use.

Jane Waring

Head of Corporate Procurement Unit

01603 223395

Alternative Fuel Trials - Schools Roadshow

On Wednesday 7th July Stuart Hutchinson (of CPU) and Dominic Allen (of P&T) presented the very first of the Alternative Fuel School Roadshows at Diss High School.

The idea of these shows is to give an overview of NCC's Alternative Fuel Trials, demonstrate some of the vehicle technologies involved and encourage discussion amongst students about sustainability and pollution issues. A further aim is to link the contents of the Roadshows to the curriculum work that students are undertaking in the areas of Science, Design & Technology and Environmental Studies.

The students were very interested in the vehicles on display and Stuart and Dominic were kept very busy in telling the students about them and demonstrating the additional features on the vehicles. In fact it is fair to say that at some points in the day - morning/afternoon breaks and at lunchtime - we were inundated with student enquiries.



During class times each science class received a group demonstration and were able to ask questions about the NCC trials and alternative fuel technologies.

There was also some time for some fun items. The short vehicle demonstration rides in the Honda Civic IMA hybrid-electric vehicle and the Proton Jumbuck LPG pick-up truck proved very popular, as was the "How many students can you get in the back of a Proton Jumbuck pick-up truck" competition - see photo.

The success of the event was evident from the subsequent letter received from John D'Mello, of the Diss High School Science Department, in which he wrote... "I am just writing to formally express our thanks for bringing the Alternative Fuels Roadshow to Diss High School... Feedback from pupils has been very positive, particularly from some of our least academic boys, so this in itself has made the visit worthwhile". The letter went on to say that Diss High School is considering organising an "Energy Day" and would welcome another visit from the roadshow to tie-in with that event.

The contents of these roadshow visits can be tailored to the individual school's requirements but the aim is always to get students involved

and thinking about the subject (with some fun elements as well) rather than just lecturing students. We are very keen to get the views of the next generation of drivers about these issues and we try to make the

roadshows a two-way process.

Further roadshows are due to take place in the September term and City of Norwich School, Framingham Earl High School, Gt. Yarmouth High School, Notre Dame High School, Sprowston High School and Fakenham College have all expressed an interest in having the roadshow visit their school/college.

Any secondary schools that would be interested in an Alternative Fuel Roadshow visit should contact Stuart Hutchinson, the Project Manager for the NCC Alternative Fuel Trials, on Norwich (01603) 222740.

Procurement in Cultural Services

The profile of procurement has been raised over the last couple of years and the Cultural Services administration team at County Hall has been developed to encompass the corporate aims and objectives.

The Section has a responsibility to manage the procurement of core supplies and arrange contracts to ensure efficient effective purchasing.

An important part of the team's role is to offer professional advice and to support staff in developing and maintaining procurement knowledge, practices and systems.

The team are working to implement joint procurement arrangements for Cultural

Service departments (Libraries, Museums, Arts and the Norfolk Record Office) and to work with other NCC departments to aggregate spend, maximise buying power and contribute to lower overall service costs.

The Cultural Services Procurement and Purchasing team is headed up by Procurement Officer Julie Ward located within Cultural Services Finance and Administration Section in the basement at County Hall.

John Perrott

Head of Finance and Administration –
01603 222054

Julie Ward

Procurement officer – 01603 223342

Norfolk Library & Information – Mobile Library Service

Norfolk Library & Information Service recently took delivery of two new Mobile Library vehicles complete with rear air suspension and purpose built disability lifts. Other safety features include Brigade backeye reversing cameras and Curtis backstops.

These will replace two old vehicles and enhance the fleet of 19 mobiles used across the County. Barry

Secker, Cultural Services Transport Manager, made the procurement in joint working with Highways Contractors. The cost of the vehicles was £80K each.



Mobile Libraries provide a service to rural and sub urban areas of Norfolk, Residential Homes, Sheltered Housing, Day Centres and Schools. Services available include:

- ◆ Immediate choice from around 2500 books including: large print, popular novels, information books, books about Norfolk, talking books.
- ◆ Videos
- ◆ Access to books in other libraries in Norfolk through the request service.
- ◆ Individual visits to readers who are housebound
- ◆ Activities material for care staff in support of recreation programmes.

If you would like further information on the Mobile Library Service please contact 01603 222267.

The Freedom of Information Act

The Freedom of Information Act - to disclose or not to disclose – that is the question!

Normally we would not supply information in relation to contracts and their procurement to anyone who was not authorised to receive it, on the assumption that all contract information is commercially confidential.

This blanket assumption will no longer apply from January, 2005 from when the general public may have a right of access to the Council's information by written request under the Freedom of Information Act.

The onus will be on disclosing information, in the interests of open government, unless we believe it is not in the public interest to do so. In future, on receipt of a request for information, we must examine what information we hold and make a conscious decision – to disclose or not to disclose! We must respond within 20 working days with the information or, alternatively, an explanation of the reason why we will not disclose it.

The Act does not apply to personal information that is still protected under the Data Protection Act. When a FOIA request for information comes into the Council, it will be routed to specially trained departmental information officers – they will manage the actual disclosure or non-disclosure but will come to us and consult with us.

Much of the information we hold belongs to someone else (third parties). For the future, it will be wise to bring the existence of our duties under the Act to third parties' attention **BEFORE** we ask for information, so they are aware we may have to disclose it.

In those circumstances they may decide not to give it to us in the first place - this has implications we will have to work through. As a golden rule we must only ask for really *necessary* information. If we do not hold it, we cannot disclose it!

Where we do decide to disclose information received from a third party, e.g. contract management data, they must be alerted when we propose to disclose it and be allowed to express an opinion about this. In 20 days that is a tall order.

Requests for information can not only be lodged by private individuals but also by individuals on behalf of organisations, including companies. We have no right to question the individual's motives for requiring the information – it is irrelevant to the decision to disclose and we can expect to see competitors of our suppliers trying to obtain information about them and their contracts.

There is some information that is totally exempt from our duty to disclose. From the procurement point of view the most important of these is trade secrets but, beware, this term can only be applied to *real* trade secrets not just to general commercial information.



A good yardstick as to what is a trade secret is:

- ◆ it has never before been disclosed outside the confines of that business;
- ◆ release of it would prejudice their commercial interests
- ◆ you would expect that a court of law, if asked, would prevent a former employee passing it on to competitors

If we hold trade secrets they should be clearly held as such by agreement with their owner and marked in such a way as to ensure they are kept confidential.

- to disclose or not to disclose – that is the question!

Exemption to disclosure can be applied to other sorts of commercially sensitive information that would lead to commercial prejudice. We need not disclose the information if the public interest in the fact that commercial prejudice is caused outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

We also have a common law duty not to reveal information given to us in confidence. We would look for the owner of the information to argue a case for non-disclosure but it must be *our* considered opinion if their arguments are in the public interest. In some cases we may decide it is but be overruled in the long term as requestors for information have the right of appeal to the Government's Information Commissioner.

In the lead-up to January, we need to track and categorise all third party information that we hold in readiness for our first requests for disclosure. We need to ensure information is kept safe but handy and that we know what we have got, where it is held and have formed a view as to whether, if asked, we should disclose it or not.

There may be areas where we can forecast much public interest, e.g. concerns about the environment and economy, contentious procurement routes such as PFI etc so perhaps these are the areas we must tackle first.

Project managers should take responsibility for ensuring all project information is tracked, indexed and categorised. Once confidential material is identified, we must keep our decision under review. What may be commercially confidential at one point in time may not continue to be so. In all cases, the decision to disclose or not can only be based on the facts of each distinct request for information at the time it is made. Where information does not need to be held, it should be safely disposed of (for the minimum retention periods, see Chapter 31 in the Purchasing Guide).

Finally we are not talking just about written information but also electronic information. As we move more and more towards electronic methods of procurement, good file management and the security and indexing of files will become important. More work is being done around the implications of the Freedom of Information Act and this is just a taster of the problems we may face.

Forewarned is forearmed!
Why not start talking now to your departmental information officer and deciding how to manage your procurement information? CPU will be releasing more guidance in due course.



Wendy Baker 01603 223861
Procurement Manager

Lead Departmental Information Officers are:

Name	Dept	Name	Dept
Baldwin John	Finance	Orr Maureen	P&T
Birchall Christine	Communications	Rainger Laurie	SSD
Brett David	Fire Service	Rhodes Roy	E Services Charles House
Brock John	E Services North Wing	Sabec Mick	Education
Chatten Brian	Trading Standards	Smith Yvonne	SSD
Chittock Louise	NPS	Warren Martin	Cultural Services
Collins Howard	Democratic Services	Wilkins-Jones Freda	Norfolk Records Office
Langlands Mark	Communications	Witham Karen	Democratic Services
Metz Louise	Communications	Wymer Catherine	E Services North Wing

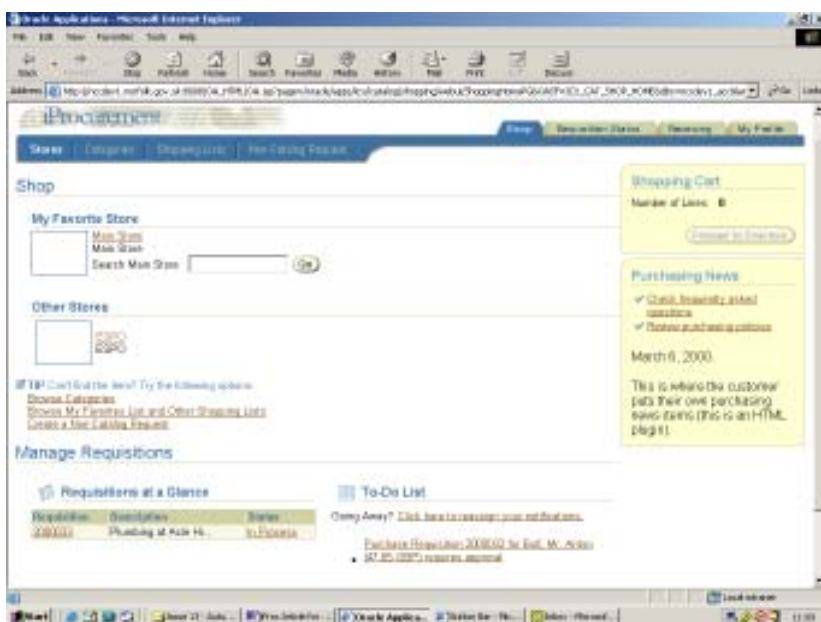
iProcurement and Oracle

It's here! On 4th October, FIMS went live and around 200 people were given access to raise and approve orders using Oracle iProcurement.

Once things have settled down iProcurement will then be rolled out to a further 1200 people to allow everybody to raise orders online.

What does it look like?

Below is a screen shot of the main Oracle iProcurement screen which everybody will see when they log in.



Some of the key areas are:

Requisitions at a Glance – a summary and quick link to requisitions you have raised.

To-do list – if you are an approving officer this will show requisitions that are waiting for you to approve them.

Main Store Search – this is where you will search for items in the catalogues (see later for further details on catalogues)

Non – Catalogue Requests – this is where you will raise an order for items that you cannot find in the catalogues (again see later for further details).

How will you find what you are looking for?

You will start by searching in the search main store field. You could enter the name of the item such as “Temporary Staff” or “Plumbing” or “Furniture”. You can also search by the supplier name such as “Staff Call” or “Daniels” and this will show all items listed against that supplier in the catalogues.

What are the catalogues?

Catalogues are used to provide lists of items that we buy. Most things can be catalogued such as pens, paper, desks, uniforms etc. However, we have also used the catalogues to provide lists of services such as Temporary Staff with an hourly rate. NPS have also catalogued services such as plumbing so that they can quickly and easily raise orders. In this case the unit price is £1 each and NPS will raise an order for say £260 by selecting 260 @ £1 each.

Internal Catalogues are catalogues that we will prepare and load in to the system ourselves. These will only be used if we cannot use the Marketplace.

External catalogues are stored on a Marketplace. This will be known as the East of England and Midlands Marketplace and will be mainly run by ESPO (the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation). Suppliers will add catalogues to this Marketplace for contracts such as those in Dealing Direct. ESPO will ensure that only agreed items and prices are visible to Norfolk CC purchasers.

What if I can't find what I want in the catalogues?

Iprocurement has a facility called a "Non-Catalogue Request". You type in the description of what you want, type in the price and select the supplier.

What happens once I find what I want to order?

Once you have selected your item(s) then you go through a checkout process. This is where you will:

1. Add delivery information such as when the items are needed by and where they should be delivered to
2. Choose which budget should be charged
3. Confirm who will authorise the purchase
4. Add notes to the approver
5. Add notes to the supplier
6. Submit the request for approval

What happens once I've submitted my request for approval?

The approving officer will receive an e-mail detailing your request and can approve, reject or forward on your request. You can monitor the progress of your request and see exactly what has happened to it.

What happens once my request is approved?

For Catalogue Requests, the order will be created and sent to the supplier.

For Non Catalogue Requests a "Buyer" will have to go in to the system to pick up your approved request and create a purchase order. Buyers are spread around the departments to deal with this.

How does the order get to the supplier?

The order can be sent in 4 different ways:

1. XML message – computers talking to computers in a language only they understand! ESPO will receive orders in this way.
2. e-mail many suppliers have provided their e-mail address and the order will arrive in their inbox
3. fax again many suppliers have provided their fax number and the order will churn out of their fax machine
4. print and post some suppliers have said they can only accept printed orders. In these cases, orders will be printed at a central point and posted out

What happens when the supplier delivers the goods, service or completes the work ordered?

You will need to tell the system (tick the box) to confirm that what you ordered has been received.

What happens when the invoice arrives?

The invoice must quote the Purchase Order number. It can then be entered in to the system and the system will check to see if it matches the purchase order and receipt.

If it does match the payment will be made to the supplier within the agreed terms (usually 30 days).

If it does not match, the invoice will be placed "on hold" for investigation and resolution.

Where can I find out more or see more?

Log on to the Intranet and from the front page click on the FIMS link under the Projects section. If you want to see more of the system, look at the Training section where you can access lessons about how to use iProcurement.

Anton Bull 01603 495806
Purchasing Process Manager

NCC Courier Contracts Update

The previous contract for courier services was recently cancelled due to the fact that the provider had encountered some business related problems, which meant they were unable to continue to provide the service.

In the interim period departments were instructed to make their own arrangements with established courier companies, whilst CPU and ESPO organised the re-tendering exercise.

The tender process was completed in June and the new courier contracts for scheduled runs and (where required) ad hoc services started from the beginning of July.

In order to provide a degree of safeguard and risk reduction to NCC, it was decided that the best strategy would be to apportion the requirement between two courier companies. That way if either of the companies should find themselves unable to continue the service (for whatever reason) it would be a relatively simple procedure to ask the other company to pick-up the remaining part of the service.

Hopefully such a situation will not arise but if it were to happen, NCC are now at less risk than they would be if one company were providing all the courier requirements.

As luck would have it, the strategy of utilising two companies also coincided with best value, in as much as we were able to select the two tenders that offered best value for money and then allocate the separate parts of the requirement to whichever of the two companies offered best value for that particular requirement.



Details of the current courier contractors are outlined below. The departments that have regular scheduled runs are aware of the prices involved for their service. The prices shown below for ad-hoc next-day and same day deliveries are the tendered prices for courier services within Norfolk.

For next day deliveries outside of Norfolk prices are available via 24-7 Dispatch on request, but will depend on the nature and size of the shipment.

Stuart Hutchinson 01603 222740
Contracts and Purchasing Officer

24-7 Dispatch

Tel: 01603-760460
Responsible for:

Contacts: Kevin Jackson, Jim Jackson or Richard Jackson
Schedule 1 - School Library Service
Schedule 3 - Education Department (Schools)
Social Services Next Day requirement
Next Day deliveries within Norfolk (<10kg £4.50, 30p per kilo thereafter)
UK Next Day deliveries can be arranged as and when required.

East Express Sameday Ltd.

Tel: 01603-620080
Responsible for:

Contact: Mark Rowland,
Schedule 2 - Education
Schedule 4 - Planning & Transport
Charles House Services
Same Day deliveries within Norfolk (80p per mile)

NVQ awards

Raising the Standards

We are constantly striving to increase the professional standards of procurement across the Council and to this aim we are continuing to support the NVQ qualification in procurement to help raise procurement skills levels.

I would like to congratulate Tim, Jo, Maureen and Wendy in completing their qualifications and attaining their certificates.

This represents considerable effort and dedication on their part and is a substantial achievement.

Jane Waring
Head of CPU



L-R: TIM HOWARD, JO NORTH, MAUREEN DEWATH AND WENDY BAKER

It's teamwork!

After Purchasing Power has been typeset and approved, it then goes into the very capable hands of Norfolk County Council's in-house printers.

Interprint offer a range of print jobs, a high quality service and demonstrate value for money. They are also able to provide departments with a 2% rebate at year-end. This is based on the previous 12 months spend by each department.



L-R: MATT HALL, SUE KELLY, CHRIS HERRIEVEN,
MARK PEARSON AND LEE GRANT

So, not only do you receive competitive prices, your department will also receive an annual rebate!

The Interprint team, pictured left, are always willing to help with any printing queries you may have.

Give them a call on 01603 222124.

Purchasing Power Prize crossword! (compiled by Stuart Hutchinson)

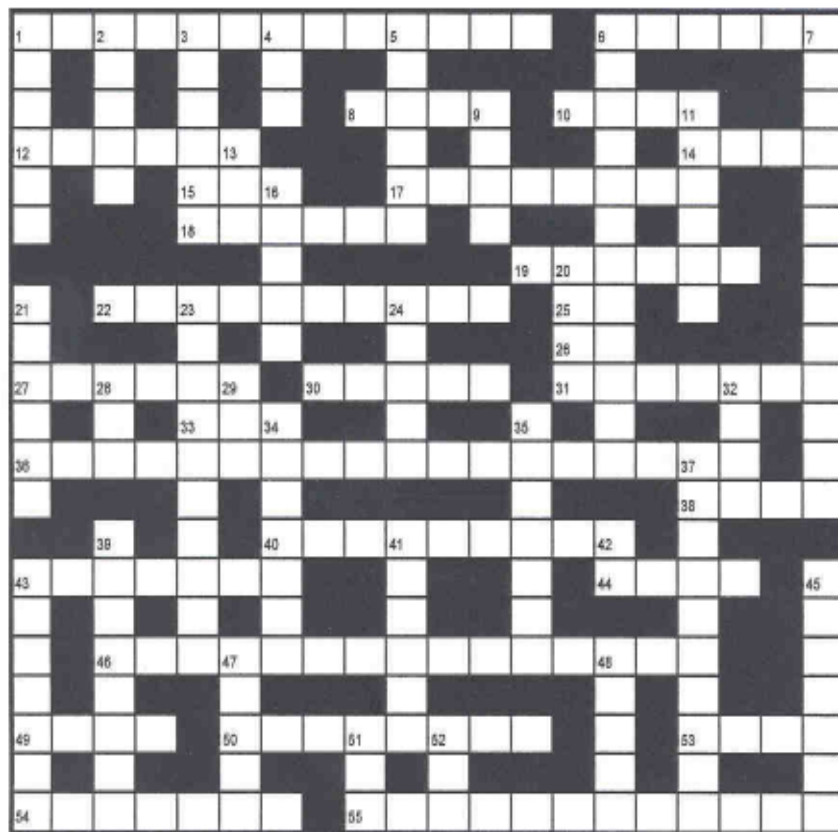
This crossword has a procurement theme but the answers are fairly well known every day phrases, and most can be arrived at by more than one method when examining the clues. Some answers have nothing to do with procurement at all and the clues for those answers have been marked with an asterisk. There are some slightly cryptic clues and some very obvious clues. So, give it a go and you may win yourself a set of "green" tyre pressure caps (see below).

Across

1. Getting the most from your notes (5,3,5)
6. Pump up the volume? That's one for the books (4-2)*
8. None followed by 500 Romans behind Tony Blair - but it's John's office. (4)*
10. The first eleven, or first fifteen for that matter (4)*
12. US City - was it in The Matrix? (6)
14. Professional Accountancy body - half of the current with the other half in reverse (4)
15. Look backward at a Scottish hill - utter rubbish! (3)*
17. About that baggage handler (8)*
18. Does business (6)
19. (and 11. down) There is money to be made at the edge of the page (6,6)
22. Norfolk Broads? (5,5)*
25. Originating from (2)*
26. Alternatively (2)*
27. Revolutionary surrounds joy - best get your money back (6)
30. About that glove - send me payment (5)
31. It's a lottery really (7)*
33. Reverse transport test (3)*
36. Midway-point for outstanding achievement (6,2,10)
38. Cambridgeshire river leaks out, we hear ?(4)*
40. Assessment you may perform on 39 down (9)
43. The person closing the deal on windows? (7)*
44. It's telepathy love, with this consortium (4)
46. Buying a bike (10, 5)
49. Murdoch - No not Rupert (4)*
50. Publicise Edward (8)
53. Good thought (4)
54. Good even roads seem high on noise, initially (7)
55. Beaten financial environment (5, 7)

Down

1. A going concern, being likely to survive (6)
2. Hire rather than buy (5)
3. Previous partner is on the wine (6)
4. Go in reverse with Carbon (3)
5. Commands goods (5)
6. Confused former tea toy - led to Common Market (6,2,4)
7. A foul part of the agreement (7,6)
9. Take back luncheon meat (4)*
11. (see 19 across)
13. Neither (3)*



16. Count (5)
20. The very heart of the formal agreement - deep canal in your mouth (4)
21. Costs that are product related - organise film (6)
23. Dupe farm machinery (10)
24. Beaten again (5)*
28. Cambs/Lincs flatland (3)*
29. In short, Department Of Environment (3)*
32.Simpson joins trading/political community (4)
34. King of the Glen?* (7)
35. Fluctuating state of the rubber band market (7)*
37. Finish it off and achieve this (10)
39. Provider has a drink with incomplete tool (8)
41. Reconsider your study (6)*
42. The definitive French article (2)*
43. Mansell in great form includes offering for money (7)
45. A very singular Local Authority (7)
47. A short musical pairing (5)*
48. It's laughable (5)*
51. Kipling hero (3)*
52. Work the brain and worry the pocket (3)

Completed entries should be returned to the CPU (address below). Closing date is 30th November 2004. 2 lucky winners will be drawn at random from the correct entries and will receive a set of Tyre Minder safety tyre pressure caps. These give an instant visual indication when to put air into your tyres.