

# Olympian Task

The organisation that will deliver much of the London 2012 Games has appointed its top purchaser. Rebecca Ellinor meets her.

**Do purchasing jobs come any more high-profile than Morag Stuart's? And are many career progressions more meteoric than hers? She is, after all, head of procurement for one of the world's biggest peacetime projects - the London 2012 Olympic Games. And she is only 31.**

The statistics of the event are mind-boggling - 10,500 athletes will compete at 31 venues in 26 sports in front of 500,000 visitors a day. But Stuart is no stranger to large-scale and volatile projects - she used to buy explosives and ammunition - and she is relishing the challenge this presents.

"It's not that different in terms of the skills. I've worked in so many different environments - even though they were all within BAE Systems - that my job is still like a systems engineering role. It just so happens to be in construction."

Her career at BAE includes four years helping to establish an international supply chain for a \$1 billion (£525 million) programme to supply the US Marines with lightweight howitzers. That project took her to Washington DC and New Orleans and, in the eight years she's been in procurement, Stuart has also lived and worked in France and South Africa.

Stuart, who is disarmingly confident and clearly ambitious, joined BAE Systems (then British Aerospace) in 1998 after graduating in business administration from Cardiff University. She started as a trainee buyer at Glascoed Royal Ordnance factory in south Wales where she worked for six months before joining BAE, where she held a variety of roles including, at RO Defence, executive assistant to the managing director - a fast-track scheme working with the board to explore and implement business strategies: "It wasn't really a procurement role, more an overall business role."

From there she went to Washington DC to help set up the supply chain for howitzers and, during the course of the programme, she went from being a subcontract manager to being responsible for the entire supply chain.

"I left when the contracts were in place for full-rate production. Back in the UK I took a role as head of procurement for naval systems in a business unit called Insyte - then a relatively new unit for BAE."

She held that position from January 2005 until May this year. Stuart had no intention of making a move to the public sector, until the announcement that London had won its bid to be the host city for the Games.

"I hadn't planned to move at all, it was purely this position that attracted me," she says.

"When we won the bid, I started thinking about the opportunities with procurement and the Olympics, just knowing what was going to happen."

## FAIR GAMES

Stuart says that although working in the public sector means there are restrictions she has not had to deal with before, the rules facilitate good procurement.

"Everything I've seen so far simply drives towards best practice," she says. "It sends all opportunities to be advertised to the marketplace, so it's an incredibly fair system. It also steers you to settle your procurement criteria upfront - to be very clear about what you want."

The competitive dialogue element of the revised EC procurement directives helped the procurement team to reduce the time it took to find the right delivery partner. This provision enabled the ODA to enter into more detailed discussions at the shortlisting stage.

"It gave us the opportunity to explore the solution in a structured way with all the participants. We issued the same documentation to everyone and ran competitive dialogue over three weeks."

The other great difference in working for a public organisation, of course, is the degree of scrutiny it is subjected to by the press and public. Save for a few questions in the run-up to the award of the delivery partner contract - surrounding possible meetings between HM Treasury and bidders - the 2012 Olympics has so far remained controversy-free.

In July, the Treasury batted the idea of any such meetings away, saying: "Treasury ministers and officials have not had any discussions with the companies and consortia on the shortlist about the delivery partner contract."

But only a few weeks later the department backtracked and said: "As part of regular constituency business, representing the people of East Ham, Stephen Timms has met two organisations involved in bidding for the Olympic Delivery Partnership. This is entirely proper." It added that commercial and contractual decisions on the appointment of the partner were a matter for the ODA and for culture secretary Tessa Jowell.

That decision has now been made and on 30 August, CLM - a consortium made up of engineering company CH2M HILL, construction firm Laing O'Rourke and project managers Mace -

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was named as the successful bidder in the £100 million-plus deal. It runs until 2013.

## LEGAL INTEGRITY

Speaking to SM ahead of the award, Stuart was reluctant to divulge too much about how the contract between the ODA and the delivery partner will operate.

However, some details are clear. "We remain the contracting authority, so we ensure the legal integrity of the process," she says. "I'll have to authorise the spend from a procurement perspective - all spend, even the small things - because it's public money so we have to ensure control of it. There's going to be absolutely no delegated responsibility to the delivery partner with respect to the spending."

Primarily CLM will assist the ODA with the tender process and selection. The two will be co-located and CLM incentivised in terms of delivery, says Stuart, "so it does have to have a boundary where it's responsible for delivering against our objectives".

David Higgins, chief executive of the ODA, says CLM will be paid for hitting targets on health and safety, sustainability, timeliness and good budgeting. The details will be thrashed out during the first 90 days of the deal, as will roles and responsibilities.

"The way in which we want to structure the ODA is keeping some very experienced people - ODA employees - in this process to work on strategy."

Stuart says the ODA will experience a transition period of three to six months as it morphs into a client role and reduces its team of interims and consultants.

Most of the procurement will take place over the next year, and Stuart's message to suppliers is: "Get yourself fit and ready to match up to our requirements - union recognition, sustainability, health and safety, equality and diversity, for example. Companies need to be able to deliver what we're going to need."

## THE WEMBLEY EFFECT

While reports on this project have largely been positive, scepticism remains as to whether the UK can deliver such a project to deadline and within budget. The word "Wembley" is frequently thrown at the ODA, to the frustration of Higgins and chairman Jack Lemley.

At the press conference announcing CLM as delivery partner, Lemley said: "The British construction industry does not deserve the rap it's getting at Wembley. There's a litany of brilliant projects - the Emirates stadium, Javelin trains, the Channel Tunnel high-speed rail link. Wembley is a unique project. We'll get the planning processes right before we hire contractors and designers and then they can perform to this brief - and if they can't they will get fired."

Save for one conference appearance, Stuart has been kept out of the spotlight until now. But her performance in her current role will inevitably and indelibly mark her future, one way or another. Far from being overwhelmed, she sees it as an opportunity and is keen to point out that she won't be doing it alone.

"It's an enormous challenge but I genuinely believe we've got the people here that will help. I look at it as a really good opportunity rather than focusing on the responsibility. We've got the professional capacity to deliver it as a team of people, it's a really enjoyable challenge to have."

*Taken from Supply Management magazine, archived article, Features, 21 September 2006*