



Department of Infrastructure

Transport and Road Asset Management CoPE

Case Studies 2025/2026

Supply Chain Resilience and Human Rights in Public Procurement

Supply Chain Resilience

The Department for Infrastructure – Transport and Road Asset Management (DfI TRAM) CoPE is the hub for procurement activity within DfI TRAM. The CoPE undertakes all tendering activities for works, supplies and service contracts (valued >£50k) across the following categories:

- Major Works Projects (projects estimated at >£5m)
- Engineering Consultants*
- Surfacing, Structures and Minor Works/Active Travel Projects (£50k to £5m)
- Road Maintenance and Small Works
- Streetlighting
- Fleet*
- Traffic Information and Control Centre
- Operations and Maintenance Supplies and Services
- General Supplies and Services
- Training

*DfI Rivers functions also covered

DfI TRAM recognises that the delivery of a reliable public service, through the maintenance and development of the road network, is dependent on a robust and resilient supply chain. Within Northern Ireland, the road construction industry is largely supported by a relatively concentrated base of local companies, with materials typically sourced locally. However, TRAM also acknowledges the valuable role and opportunities for larger contractors operating across Great Britain, Ireland and mainland Europe, who contribute to the delivery of major works projects, consultancy frameworks, and other large-scale procurements.

To align with PPN 03/21, which highlights the importance of resilience in the consideration of supply chain for critical products, the CoPE has developed a bespoke Supply Chain Resilience Policy. The policy has been formally integrated into the internal Works, Supplies and Services Quality Management Systems (QMS), ensuring that its implementation is embedded in daily operations for TRAM CoPE staff.

As required by the PPN, DfI TRAM CoPE have put a mapping process in place to monitor the supply chain criticality assessments. The CoPE has embedded resilience planning throughout its procurement and contract management processes. Something which is particularly apparent in its approach to the RAM frameworks.

RAM Frameworks

In 2025–26, DfI TRAM began the rollout of its new suite of RAM Frameworks. Following market consultation on roads construction and related transport and civil engineering works valued at up to £5 million, as well as road maintenance activities, DfI TRAM CoPE published its Procurement Enhancement Programme (PEP) strategy and programme in March 2023.

This strategy introduced a suite of eleven RAM Frameworks covering all roads maintenance and improvement works with values up to £5 million.

The Frameworks are central to delivering an efficient, value-for-money procurement route for road asset management across Northern Ireland. They have been designed to enhance certainty within the supply chain through longer-term planning, early contractor involvement, and a clearly defined pipeline of work. This approach is intended to strengthen supplier confidence and support a resilient and competitive local construction industry.

DfI TRAM CoPE is currently progressing with RAM Surfacing B, Structures, Road Restraint Systems and Improvement Projects Frameworks with the aim of awarding these in the next 12 months.

Within these Frameworks DfI TRAM has introduced several practices to reinforce resilience within the supply chain. These include:

1. **Framework Award Restrictions:** To deliver supply chain resilience and maintain long-term competition, DfI TRAM places market share limitations at both Programme level and Framework level. These are known as the Framework Award Restrictions (the Restrictions). The Restrictions are on the award of Primary Supplier and Reserve Supplier positions at Framework level for the Measured Term Contract (MTC) Lots and on the award of Primary and Reserve Supplier positions at the Divisional and Regional (Northern Ireland) level in relation to MTC Lots. These vary per Framework. MTCs will deliver works valued up to £750,000 (excluding VAT).
2. **Project Lots:** Several RAM Frameworks include a Project Lot. Projects of between £750,001 and £5,000,000 (excluding VAT) in the Contract Areas covered by the Framework will be procured and awarded as Project Contracts following mini competitions conducted by DfI TRAM.
3. **Reserve Suppliers:** Each lot awarded from the Framework has a reserve supplier. If the Primary Supplier has their MTC suspended/terminated, then subject to capacity and the restrictions set out within the framework documents, DfI TRAM reserves the right to award the MTC firstly to the Reserve Supplier.

4. Emergency Works Procedure: The Framework allows emergency work to be delivered by the next highest-ranked supplier on the Lot list (who already has a live MTC on another Lot), as long as they have sufficient capacity.
5. Works Backlog Procedure: The Framework also allows DfI TRAM to reallocate work orders. If a backlog builds up because work hasn't been completed on time, DfI TRAM can issue a notice to transfer work to another supplier on the framework.

Major Works Civil Engineering Frameworks (MWCEF)

DfI TRAM continued its procurement enhancement through PEP 2. Following extension engagement with industry, it produced a finalised procurement strategy for delivering roads and civil engineering projects valued between £5 million and £450 million through a Major Civil Engineering Works Framework.

This strategy identifies Sustainable Delivery as a key objective of the new Major Works Civil Engineering Frameworks (MWCEF) and includes:

- Supporting a strong, competitive, and sustainable road construction industry supply chain in Northern Ireland;
- Aligning with the requirements and objectives of the draft Climate Action Plan, ensuring consistency with wider sustainability and decarbonisation goals; and
- Delivering Social Value by maximising social, economic and environmental outcomes throughout the procurement lifecycle.

To achieve these aims a multi lot framework will be established. Dividing a framework into lots offers several valuable benefits including engaging a wide range of companies of varying sizes to maximise competition and make use of the available market capacity. A multi lotted framework will support efficient procurement, contract flexibility, delivery resilience, support continual improvement and value for money.

Workshare limits will also be introduced as part of the framework to promote a balanced supply chain and prevent supplier dominance.

Work is ongoing to develop and deliver this Framework and it is currently scheduled for award in early 2027.

Human Rights in Public Procurement

The Department for Infrastructure – Transport and Road Asset Management (DfI TRAM), at any time, has approximately 300 live contracts. In 2025-26 alone it procured 77 contracts with an estimated value of approx. £367m.

DfI TRAM has been consistently cognisant of human rights requirements and considerations throughout its procurement activities, recognising the importance of embedding these principles across the works, supplies and services that it delivers.

Our standard contract documents require Suppliers to make several declarations which are focused on ensuring fair employment, human rights obligations and safety for staff. These declarations include:

- A statement of compliance with fair employment, equality of treatment and anti-discrimination legislation;
- A statement on fair working practices including paying the real Living Wage for workers, equality of opportunity and diversity for workers, fair recruitment, appropriate learning and development for workers and secure employment avoiding the use of exploitative employment practices;
- A statement on prompt payment of the subcontractor in accordance with the provisions of the Construction Contracts (NI) Order 1997;
- A statement confirming their position in relation to Article 64 (unqualified person) of the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) 1998 Order;
- A statement acknowledging their role in managing hazards associated with the contract, and competency to undertake the role of Principal Contractor as required under the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2016;
- A statement confirming compliance with the Authority's Supplier Code of Conduct; and
- A statement acknowledging their obligations under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and associated human rights legislation.

In addition, the introduction of PPN 05/21 Human Rights in Public Procurement in 2021 brought cognisance and focus to this.

PPN 05/21 mandates the actions that we must take to incorporate human rights considerations into contracts. Given the scale of works undertaken by DfI TRAM, we recognise that this affords us the opportunity to promote the respect and protection of human rights and prevent violations across our contracts and the roads construction industry.

The CoPE has developed a bespoke policy which has been formally integrated into the internal Works, Supplies and Services Quality Management System (QMS), ensuring that its implementation is embedded in the day-to-day operations of TRAM CoPE staff.

The policy requires a Human Rights risk assessment to be undertaken at an early stage of pre-procurement. This assessment identifies potential risks within the relevant area of operation, assigns an appropriate risk level to the procurement opportunity, and sets out the actions required in response to the level of risk identified.

Contract specific human rights risk assessments have been conducted for several awarded and on-going contracts, including the RAM Interim Surfacing, Structures and Road Restraint System Frameworks and Creenagh Bridge Replacement. These assessments identified a low level of associated risk, particularly in relation to the Contractor's Staff and end-users' impact.

Ongoing Major Works projects including Enniskillen Southern Bypass, Lagan Pedestrian Footbridge and A1 Road Improvements Scheme have all been assessed as having a medium risk associated. The associated risk and mitigation measures have been detailed within the relevant contract documents. As the Human Risks policy is now integrated into the procurement process, these assessments will continue to be undertaken on upcoming procurements.

Following the Procurement Act 2023, TRAM Procurement staff have undertaken targeted training regarding the Act, which included Supplier Exclusion. Further to this, other training initiatives are available to CoPE Staff, such as Tackling Modern Slavery in Supply Chain through the Government Commercial College and the NICS Introduction to Human Rights available on the LINKS. The CoPE has four MCIPS qualified staff who have undertaken the CIPS Ethics Training. Furthermore, the four MICPS trainees have access to the training within their curriculum as part of their professional development.