



Local firms to bid for slice of £30 million contracts

Local firms in Conwy are being invited to grab a slice of the action when a £30 million housing improvement programme is launched.

Small and medium sized businesses are being asked to attend a “meet the bidders” day when they’ll have a chance to pitch for work.

According to the newly-formed housing association, Cartrefi Conwy, it’s going to be the biggest “fiscal stimulus” of its type every seen in the county and will provide a major boost to the economy.

Cartrefi Conwy took over responsibility for 3,800 properties from Conwy County Council when the tenants voted in favour of the stock transfer last year.

A similar housing renovation programme on Anglesey has led to 96 per cent of the work being done by locally employed people.

Cartrefi Conwy announced have just announced the preferred bidders for contracts worth £30 million over the next four years.

Chief Executive Andrew Bowden told the first ever Tenants’ Conference that the work will bring all Cartrefi Conwy homes up to Welsh Assembly Government Welsh Quality Standard by 2012.

The contract for internal renovations has gone to G Purchase Construction, while the contract for doors and windows has been awarded to Nationwide Doors and Windows and contract for heating has gone to P H Jones Ltd.

In addition there will be external and environmental works to be carried out under the programme.

Mr Bowden said: “We are using new rules and new procurement opportunities to ensure that the contractors working with us will be maximising local job and training opportunities with local employment for local people within the Cartrefi Conwy area.”

The next step, according to procurement expert Martin Smith, of Savills, is to invite local businesses to the ‘meet the bidders’ day.

This follows a successful model currently being used on Anglesey where up to 96 per cent of the housing renovation work for main contractor G Purchase Ltd is now being done by locally employed people.

Terry Phipps, Client Services Manager for West Midlands firm G Purchase Ltd, who have an office in Holyhead, said: “We followed this procedure on Anglesey and almost 300 people turned up there for an employment fair.

“We’re now using 96 per cent local labour and we have even taken some on the books while it was also in the contract to take on a number of apprentices and we have done this as well with four with us so far.

“We will do exactly the same here and we have also been able to provide work for a builders’ merchant on the island which was going to have to lay off staff but now doesn’t have to because there’s so much to do supplying us.

“We have even negotiated special rates for a small electrical supplies firm which they will be able to pass on to their other local customers while a local skip hire firm has actually taken on two extra workers which they wouldn’t otherwise have done.”

Mr Bowden told the conference: “This is a one-off, This amount of money has never, ever been spent by on North Wales authorities, and particularly Conwy.

“We see this as a real opportunity to get that customer care, that real wow factor that is the difference in being a customer of Cartrefi Conwy.

“We have already started that process and have brought with us from Conwy Council the building maintenance unit and in the last six months we have installed 400 new doors at a cost of £150,000.

“We need to ensure homes are heated well and safely and we have put in 60 new central heating systems for £150,000, almost 100 per cent of our properties have had safety checks free of charge to make sure your gas boilers are safe for you and your families.

“Forty homes have been electrically rewired while 800 have been fitted with smoke detectors with remote switches so we can test them.

“That’s just the start of it and we’re working on how we can make the money go further and what further money we can put in.

“We want improvements that are sustainable and not one-off wonders and that’s what we are focusing on – providing quality homes for people in Conwy.”