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Award

CETUS Trials and Evaluation

Submarine Delivery Agency

UK5: Transparency notice - Procurement Act 2023 - [view information about notice types](#)

Notice identifier: 2025/S 000-015189

Procurement identifier (OCID): ocds-h6vhtk-050312

Published 15 April 2025, 11:32am

Scope

Description

To undertake Trials and Evaluation (T&E) to de-risk underwater autonomy and demonstrate military utility through payload tests. CETUS will be the UK's largest military Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV), which is a new experimental vessel, originally intended to be Navy operated however now planned as Commercially operated within a GOCONO model. CETUS will support the Navy operation with deep maintenance and payload operation.

Contract 1

Supplier

- [M Subs Ltd](#)

Contract value

- £10,500,000 excluding VAT
- £12,600,000 including VAT

Above the relevant threshold

Earliest date the contract will be signed

2 June 2025

Contract dates (estimated)

- 30 June 2025 to 29 May 2026
- Possible extension to 31 May 2028
- 2 years, 11 months, 1 day

Description of possible extension:

It is intended that this contract will be directly awarded in accordance with section 41 and Schedule 5 paragraph 6 of the Procurement Act 2023 to M Subs Ltd. The contract is intended to be let for one year with the option for extension of up to two years, allowing the Authority sufficient time to understand the system and its use.

Main procurement category

Services

Options

The right to additional purchases while the contract is valid.

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CPV classifications

- 73430000 - Test and evaluation

Participation

Particular suitability

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SME)

Other information

Conflicts assessment prepared/revised

Yes

Procedure

Procedure type

Direct award

Special regime

Defence and security

Direct award justification

Defence and security - necessary to enhance or maintain operational capability, effectiveness, readiness for action, safety or security of the armed forces

The SDA require Trials and Evaluation (T&E) to be undertaken using the CETUS vessel that is currently being developed by M Subs. T&E is required to de-risk underwater autonomy and demonstrate military utility through payload testing. As the sole designer and manufacturer of CETUS, M Subs hold all technical and proprietary knowledge of the vessel's form and function, and as such are uniquely positioned to safely operate the vessel in the execution of trials.

Initial trials are a repeat of S201 trials XLAUV trials previously performed by M Subs on a smaller vessel within Project Manta), which M Subs delivered through the DASA Open call (competitive) contracting. Knowledge of these trials is advantageous in allowing these activities to be repeated consistently and efficiently.

While there are alternative commercial operators of AUVs, none currently hold the necessary system knowledge to operate this unique system appropriately. Choosing an alternative supplier risks delay, increased cost, or higher system risks (e.g. of system damage) while this knowledge is gained. This would impede development of this capability, which the Authority has a military imperative to advance.

Once the initial trials have been undertaken there will be greater scope for the Authority to compete longer term operation of the system once it is better understood by all parties allowing a meaningful competition to be undertaken. Separate to the operation of CETUS, the Authority intends to competitively seek different payloads from the open market in the coming years, allowing a broad range of suppliers to participate in advancing military capability within this project.

Supplier

M Subs Ltd

- Companies House: 05874602

42 Sisna Park Road

Plymouth

PL6 7FH

United Kingdom

Email: brett@msubs.com

Website: <https://www.msubs.com/>

Region: UKK41 - Plymouth

Small or medium-sized enterprise (SME): Yes

Voluntary, community or social enterprise (VCSE): No

Contract 1

Contracting authority

Submarine Delivery Agency

- Public Procurement Organisation Number: PBHX-4625-LVPD

Abbey Wood

Bristol

BS34 8JH

United Kingdom

Email: nicole.hoult101@mod.gov.uk

Website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/submarine-delivery-agency>

Region: UKK12 - Bath and North East Somerset, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire

Organisation type: Public authority - central government