

# Case Study Sustainable Sourcing



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Water for the North West

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## Overview

We want to showcase great examples of when our suppliers have demonstrated their commitment to our vision and values and upheld the principles of United Supply Chain.

J&K Ross have two framework agreements with United Utilities, one to provide all of our PPE & Workwear requirements and the second framework to provide us with all of our Branded Uniform needs.

This case study will give an overview of the process that was undertaken to procure these frameworks with a specific focus on the sustainability approach taken, outcomes achieved and the views of the successful supplier – J&K Ross.

## Approach

In order to provide great water and more for the North West we need the right tools and equipment to do our jobs, but we also need to keep ourselves and our people safe. This is where our uniform, workwear and personal protective equipment (PPE) comes in. In 2021, we were reaching the end of our existing agreements for these and a strategy was needed to re-procure the goods we needed from 2022 and beyond.

The new frameworks would need to deliver the following:

- **A standard 'off the shelf' colour uniform** - (not specially dyed material) This is essential as it means we can order what ever quantities that are required without excess waste.
- **Price reduction** - Cost saving due to having 'off the shelf' colour uniform items instead of minimum quantity ordering
- **Restricted ordering policy** - to ensure that our employees are ordering the correct PPE, Workwear or Uniform items that are required for their role.
- **Meet sustainable and ethical requirements** - ensuring the correct questions are included within our tender documents to verify our suppliers meet our Sustainable and Ethical requirements.
- **Future proof** - needs to be flexible enough and to allow for potential innovations in sustainable options if the market should develop over the coming years

As part of our approach to addressing modern slavery and human trafficking and as stated in our annual Anti-Slavery and Human Trafficking statement, Workwear and PPE is one of the six key category areas of our supply chain where we believe the greatest potential risk of modern slavery non-compliance lies.

During our procurement process, the commercial team undertook a Sustainability Risk Assessment (SRA) which identified a number of other sustainability areas that were also deemed as high risk.

# Results

Following the outcome of the SRA, the cross functional team concluded that the standard 15% (for a high risk procurement) was not a sufficient weighting for sustainability - given the nature of this procurement and how the market was evolving.

The Commercial team presented a detailed set of weighting options to our internal Corporate Responsibility Panel. Approval was obtained for the sustainability weightings of 25% in the Pre Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) and 24% in the Invitation to Negotiate (ITN) as part of the decision making criteria for the procurement process.

This was the first time in a United Utilities procurement that the PQQ sustainability section received a weighting of 25% indicating to prospective suppliers (bidders) the importance not only of price, quality, capability, experience (amongst many other areas) but, equally considering the suppliers approach to sustainability.

Overall 14 Suppliers completed and submitted a response for this procurement at the PQQ stage. 11 of the Suppliers met our minimum criteria, according to the Tender Documentation and the top 4 applicants by overall score at PQQ stage progressed to ITN Stage.

In the PQQ, our highest % weightings were on Human Rights including the Modern Slavery Act, Commitment to Responsible sourcing, commitment to Social Responsibility and Waste Management.

In the ITN, our highest % weightings were on Human Rights, including the Modern Slavery Act and Waste.



## Outcome

Frameworks for PPE, Workwear and Uniform were successfully awarded to Warrington supplier J&K Ross at the end of 2021 and commenced in January 2022.

Our relationship with J&K Ross continues to grow, meeting on a monthly basis as part of our supplier relationship management process. The company has also signed up to our USC Responsible Sourcing Principles, actively partaking in workshops and conversations with both United Utilities and other suppliers.

As a trusted supplier J&K Ross is always keen to think of innovative new ways that they can help us as a business by either reducing waste, helping reduce our carbon footprint and other efficiencies. They're passionate about mitigating the risks of modern slavery, working closely with their suppliers by monitoring and assessing these on a regular basis.

We hope that they continue to work in this way with us and our supply chain – aiming to become a USC leader in this space.





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### J&K Ross Perspective

J&K Ross has been responsible for supplying PPE to United Utilities for over 20 years. We are a local business based in Warrington and pride ourselves in providing PPE solutions, personal service and above all quality products.

Throughout this period, we recognise that an increasing proportion of the products and clothing we supply is manufactured in East Asia, where both distance and Covid make auditing factories, conditions, and the workforce difficult, regardless of this it is essential that our supply chain checks are both rigorous and robust.

We must be ever vigilant, using not only supplier's third-party audit submissions but also by having access to the latest news through trade bodies such as the BSIF. Only suppliers who meet the highest standards are selected to become part of our supply chain.

In 2017 we issued our first Modern Slavery statement setting out our goal to eradicate it in our Supply Chain. Over the years this has developed into a company policy which aims to mitigate the risks in our Supply Chain.



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### J&K Ross Perspective

Whilst sustainability in the supply chain has become increasingly important to many, we ourselves appointed a Director of Sustainability in 2020 to ensure that this became embedded within our business goals. We found that whilst previous tenders required us to address questions around sustainability, the scoring system did not reflect those who were prioritising this within their operations.

However, in 2021 the UU tender demonstrated how committed they are to this as a business, as they for the first time increased the weighting to 25% of the tender score for the bidder. A large section of this concentrated on Human Rights which included Modern Slavery, Diversity, Equality, Living Wage, Forced and Child Labour. In response to the questions sought by UU we were able to demonstrate and show evidence of our processes, monitoring and mechanisms which we must address issues within our supply chain.

We monitor, assess and work closely with all our supply chain partners as we collectively have a responsibility to do all that we can to achieve zero tolerance to Modern Slavery- we expect our partners to sign up to the same values. Additionally, through mapping of our supply chain we can recognise the potential risks of labour and trafficking.



**“We want to create visibility and will continue to work to motivate our supply chain to improve transparency.”  
- Chris Ross, Chairman, J & K Ross Ltd**

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Read more

United Supply Chain <https://www.unitedutilities.com/corporate/about-us/governance/suppliers/delivering-value/united-supply-chain/>

United Utilities Anti-Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement 2022 - [https://www.unitedutilities.com/globalassets/z\\_corporate-site/responsibility-pdfs/anti-slavery-and-human-trafficking-statement-2022.pdf](https://www.unitedutilities.com/globalassets/z_corporate-site/responsibility-pdfs/anti-slavery-and-human-trafficking-statement-2022.pdf)

Supply Chain Sustainability School - <https://www.supplychainschool.co.uk/>

J&K Ross Video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2CAvz8wEXjl>