



## Meet the Buyer South 2022

<https://www.sdpScotland.co.uk/events-mtbs/>

4 October 2022

Updated: 16 January 2023

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Draft 1.2

## Overview

This report covers the activities and outcomes from Meet the Buyer South 2022, which took place on 4 October 2022 at the Ettrick Riverside Business Centre in Selkirk. The headline partners were South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE), Scottish Borders Council and Dumfries and Galloway Council.

This was the first-ever Meet the Buyer South, following on from the success of national Meet the Buyer and Meet the Buyer North event. The events aim was to support SDP member organisations in the South of Scotland and to give businesses and social enterprises of all sizes an opportunity to meet in-person, with public buyers, private contractors with supply chains, and business support services in the South of Scotland.

## Community Benefit: Social Enterprises

SDP is keen to demonstrate the economic benefit of a Meet the Buyer South event. The Programme worked to involve social enterprises in the event, so they provide sustainable, economic growth back into the community. On the day, cash catering was provided by the social enterprise, the Food Punks, a chef-led project based in the Scottish Borders, teaching cookery, communication, and teamwork skills to young people.



## Supplier Registration and Attendance

In total, 578 suppliers pre-registered interest on the SDP website for the Meet the Buyer South event. There were 239 actual attendees on the day. Of those, 130 attendees were from 105 unique Scottish SME businesses. Of those, 7 were based in Dumfries and Galloway, and 24 were based on the Scottish Borders.

## **Buyer Exhibitions**

Meet the Buyer South exhibitors included the headline partner organisations: Scottish Borders Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, South of Scotland Enterprise, and the Supplier Development Programme.

Additionally, the Scottish Government's Public Contracts Scotland (PCS) team, Historic Environment Scotland, Scottish Procurement Alliance, PfH Scotland, Scotland Excel, Defence and Security Accelerator, ESES Communities, Northern Lighthouse Board and Living Wage Scotland exhibited. Construction sector supply chain contractors that exhibited included BAM Construction, Ogilvie Construction Ltd, hub South West Scotland Ltd, hub South East Scotland Ltd, and Built Environment – Smarter Transformation.

**The post-event survey highlighted that 84% of Scottish SMEs were more likely to bid for public sector contracts after participating in Meet the Buyer South.**

## **Formal Agenda**

The Supplier Development Programme put good practices in place to deliver the first ever Meet the Buyer South event in partnership with the headline partner organisations. The focus was on engaging local SMEs, the third sector and social enterprises in face-to-face, in-person networking with Scotland's public sector buyers.

Speakers included:

- Opening of Meet the Buyer South delivered by Jane Morrison-Ross, Chief Executive of South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE)
- Welcome from Dumfries and Galloway Council delivered by Carolyn Wilson, Chair of Finance, Procurement & Transformation Committee for Dumfries and Galloway
- Welcome from Scottish Borders Council delivered by Cllr Scott Hamilton, Portfolio Holder for Community & Business Development
- Net Zero in the South of Scotland also delivered by Jane Morrison-Ross, Chief Executive of South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE) as proxy for Dr. Martin Valenti, Energy Transition and Green Enterprise Director of South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE)



## Supplier Survey Feedback

An online survey was distributed to all registered suppliers for the Meet the Buyer South event. The survey was live between 10 October to 19 December 2022. Within this time, 47 responses were received.

**The post-event survey highlighted that 84% of Scottish SMEs said they were more likely to bid for public contracts after participating in the event.**

Scottish SME suppliers that responded to the survey also rated the Meet the Buyer South 2022 event as 'excellent' or 'good' in several areas:

- 77% - Messaging and theme on being a South of Scotland event.
- 78% - Representation of public sector buyers and decision makers.
- 76% - rated the overall experience excellent or good.
- 92% of respondents thought the Meet the Buyer South 2022 event demonstrated that public sector procurement is open and transparent, despite challenges in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the current economic challenges.

When considering the Scottish Government's commitment to becoming a Net Zero society by 2045:

- 85% of respondents were aware of the Scottish Government's commitment to achieving a Net Zero society.
- 79% of respondents said they have an existing policy to support a reduction in its carbon footprint, and 72% said they have an implementation plan to reduce its carbon footprint.
- 47% said that carbon reducing/reaching Net Zero targets is a priority right now in 2022 for its business.
- 40% said it is a priority in future business plans.



- 13% said Net Zero is not a business priority.

Some comments from suppliers included:

- “The event was well run and very informative.”
- “Overall, the event was excellent in terms of being able to meet buyers especially within the public sector.”
- “For my first SDP event, I was impressed, everyone seemed very passionate about the event.
- “I thought the staff were really good and helpful.”
- “This was not what I expected from the public sector – rightly or wrongly I had thought it would be a lot stuffier and more formal! But the event was great, everybody was helpful and friendly, and this didn’t just reflect on the public sector but on how Scotland is go-ahead in business in general.”
- “It was a great opportunity to let buyers know who we are and leave our details, as well as gaining contact information with buyers.”



## Exhibitor Survey Feedback

An online survey was distributed to registered exhibitors after the Meet the Buyer South event. This survey was live from between 10 October to 19 December 2022. Within this time, 4 responses were received.

- 100% of buyers said they would participate in Meet the Buyer South in the future.
- 100% of buyers said they would recommend Meet the Buyer South to other public sector buyers, private contractors with supply chains, and business support organisations.

Exhibitor respondents agreed the in-person event helped to:

- 75% - Drive early engagement with SDP member organisations, through collaboration with procurement and economic development to increase the number and breadth of public sector contracts being accessible to the Scottish SME base.
- 75% - Raise the profile of SDP to be recognised and established as the primary tender training programme to support SMEs and third sector in Scotland.
- 75% - Extend SDP engagement with public sector procurement is open and transparent, despite the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 100% - Benefits SMEs as they can talk to the buyers from organisations who commission contracts and want to meet potential suppliers for their works and services.
- 75% - Demonstrate that public sector procurement is open and transparent, despite the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some comments from buyers included:

- “Great opportunity to engage with suppliers.”
- “As it was pretty full on (which is a good thing) there was little recovery time for those exhibiting. A workshop/information session from SDP (or other relevant speaker mid-way in the morning may have helped.”
- “It is a rare opportunity to all be in the same place at the same time and an excellent opportunity for small organisations to be seen and heard as well as understanding how public buyers go about their procurement.”

All feedback from suppliers and buyers is valuable and will be applied to future events organised by the Supplier Development Programme.

## Promotion through the Supplier Development Programme

### Social Media Analytics

The Supplier Development Programme has a robust social media presence on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, which is utilised to promote contract opportunities and engagement event regularly to Scottish businesses. In advance of the Meet the Buyer South 2022 event, SDP promoted the event across its social media channels. The campaign ran from 13 September to 4 October and collectively the posts earned 10,497 impressions (the number of times users saw a post) and 396 engagements (the total times a user interacted with a post).



### Newsletters/Mailings

On 9 August, Meet the Buyer South was announced in SDP's August monthly newsletter which received 107 clicks. The Meet the Buyer South event was also featured in the September monthly newsletter, which received 171 clicks.

On the 30 September, SDP sent out a dedicated mailing to all registered suppliers recapping all the information the suppliers would need to attend the event. The Meet the Buyer South event page received 183 clicks and the agenda page received 51 clicks.

### Media Coverage

SDP arranged for BBC Scotland to attend Meet the Buyer South and conduct interviews with the speakers. These were broadcasted locally the next day; however, the BBC was unable to provide SDP with the footage.

### Contact

More information on the Supplier Development Programme can be found at [www.sdpScotland.co.uk](http://www.sdpScotland.co.uk) and on social media via [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [YouTube](#).