



# Bidding for public sector contracts to be made easier

**THE Government is pushing ahead with measures to make public sector contracts easier for smaller businesses to bid for and win, despite the spending squeeze.**

A new, efficient website will be launched next month. Meanwhile, the current [supply2gov.co.uk](http://supply2gov.co.uk) site is set to be closed. It follows complaints from business owners that searches often threw up information that was of little relevance.

Before the public spending cuts, Britain's public procurement market was valued at £160 billion a year. The Office of Government Commerce, the main buying agency, has made a new commitment to greater transparency when handling contracts.

All new central government tender documents worth more than £10,000 will be published on the new website. Those that are above £25,000 will go online from November.

Local government contracts and tenders for expenditure of more than £500 will be published in full from January next year, while local government spending above £500 will also be listed council-by-council from the same date.

A Government spokesman says:

By **JENNY LITTLE**

'We are committed to an aspiration of 25 per cent of public sector contracts to be awarded to small and medium-sized enterprises and to making contracting with Government more transparent, less bureaucratic and faster.'

But Deb Sen, a procurement expert on the trade and industry committee of the Federation of Small Businesses, says: 'This 25 per cent target should be for micro firms with fewer than ten employees and small businesses with fewer than 50 staff.'

'A number of local authorities say that they are already achieving these targets for small and medium-sized firms.'

Sen also believes that public sector cuts could present opportunities for smaller businesses.

'The spending cuts required by the public sector imply that to deliver many goods and services, central and local government will possibly have to look to outsourcing,' she says. 'Many lower value contracts are likely to become available. This presents a great opportunity for micro and small firms.'