

CASE STUDY

Thames Water



STRUCTURAL
SOILS LTD

Background

Thames Water Utilities is the UK's largest water and waste water company; it serves more customers than any other and provides a service throughout large parts of southern England.

Factors such as rising consumer demand and increasingly stringent environmental regulations mean that the company has an ongoing need to maintain and upgrade its fresh water and waste water network and apparatus.

The water regulator, the Office of Water Services, also requires Thames Water to reduce the number of properties registered as being at risk of flooding from sewer overflows by implementing improvements such as increased sewer capacity and by constructing flood-storage chambers. Foremost among planned improvements is the Thames Tideway Tunnel, a major new sewer tunnel, and other upgrades in London that are urgently needed to protect the tidal River Thames from increasing levels of pollution.

In a typical year, Thames Water spends several million pounds on site investigations at hundreds of locations throughout the UK, both directly and through its delivery partners. In recent years, investigations for the Thames Tideway Tunnel have added to this.

To ensure that it obtains high quality, safe, cost-effective and efficient ground investigations, Thames Water has historically procured most of these works through centrally managed framework agreements. These agreements help to establish mutually beneficial relationships with suppliers and provide greater control over quality and reliability.

Contractor performance can be monitored easily, and project costs are more accurately predicted. Furthermore, health and safety performance is improved because staff training and health and safety are made integral parts of the agreement.

To deliver its planned objectives in the five-year asset management period that officially began in April 2015 (AMP6, and onward through AMP7), Thames Water has formed a new procurement and delivery body, eight₂0. New strategic supplier agreements are gradually replacing the framework agreements and a new 'supplier community' ethos is developing.

Framework agreement

In 2005, Structural Soils (an RSK company) entered into a framework agreement to provide site investigation services to Thames Water during AMP4. The duration of the agreement was originally to be five years. However, Thames Water chose to extend the agreement through AMP5 (to April 2015), and Structural Soils continues to provide services under the framework in AMP6 while new strategic supplier agreements for site investigation services are developed. To date, these services have been worth over £6 million since 2005.

Contract management

Structural Soils appointed two senior members of staff to manage the framework, act as the first points of contact for the client, coordinate works undertaken for Thames Water, and ensure that the client's specific technical and procedural requirements were met.

Their duties under the framework agreement included issuing monthly financial and health and safety reports, attending performance review meetings, ensuring that staff members met the client's training standards and maintaining that information on its construction skills database, and that technical reports were issued in a timely fashion. During AMP5, much of the day-to-day interaction and contract management was conducted with Thames Water's delivery partners, each with their own systems, procedures and expectations to meet.



Structural Soils developed a two-hour in-house training course to brief site and project managers on Thames Water's procedures, such as the permit-to-work system and reporting protocols. Many staff and some approved subcontractors were given additional external health and safety awareness training to obtain the client's construction skills passport.

Over time, various internal procedures have been developed at Structural Soils to improve efficiency and performance on projects completed on behalf of Thames Water, such as bespoke training to embed the Triple Zero behaviours of zero incidents, zero harm and zero compromise in staff and subcontractors.

Thames Water requires all its site investigation suppliers, including Structural Soils, to be registered with and assessed by Achilles UVDB and Verify. Structural Soils achieved evaluation ratings of 98% to 100% in all areas in November 2014. The company also employs 60–70 staff members with Thames Water construction skills passports. In addition, Structural Soils manages the Thames Water passports for around 20 other RSK staff and other specialist subcontractors.



Today

Through its position as a framework supplier, Structural Soils continues to deliver services to Thames Water in AMP6, working with existing AMP5 delivery partners and new AMP6 partners to provide high-quality, value for money ground investigations while new strategic supplier agreements are developed. Work for Thames Tideway Tunnel also continues into AMP6. In the first six months of 2015, Structural Soils delivered over £0.5 million of work on behalf of Thames Water. The company looks forward to continuing to deliver on behalf of Thames Water through AMP6 and beyond.

Services provided

- Ground investigation services
- In situ testing
- Geotechnical laboratory testing
- Chemical laboratory testing
- Forensic investigations of ground conditions for existing infrastructure
- Investigation and analysis

Projects

- Public highway sewer upgrades
- Improvements to water treatment works
- Improvements to sewage treatment works
- New reservoir projects
- Forensic investigations into existing infrastructure and ground conditions

For further information, please contact:

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