

MORRISON UTILITY SERVICES

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KEEPING YORKSHIRE WATER'S PROMISES

Morrison Utility Services is behind much that UK citizens take for granted: its core business is the provision, replacement, repair and maintenance of utility network infrastructure; and water supply is one of its specialisations



Scarborough grid link—bomb
survey through Lisset airfield



Morrison Utility Services (MUS) became an independent business in 2008 following investment by private equity partners Cognetas and Bregal Capital. The company headquarters are in Stevenage, with regional offices in Leeds, Surrey, Bristol and Glasgow. MUS works with blue-chip utility clients in the electricity, gas, water and telecommunications sectors helping them to replace, refurbish and maintain their infrastructure and networks.

With an annual turnover of around £500 million, MUS has some 3,300 employees; and its broadly diversified customer base accounts for contracts worth in excess of £1.55 billion. It is the leading provider of utility services across the four major utility markets in the UK.

In 2010, MUS was awarded a significant contract with Yorkshire Water. The Framework Agreement, part of Yorkshire Water's AMP5 Capital programme, is for five years, with the option of a five-year extension, covering both rural areas and diverse cities such as York, Leeds and Hull. MUS's teams work on all of Yorkshire Water's below-ground clean water infrastructure assets in the region, carrying out investigation works to design appropriate solutions and delivering these solutions.

The contract operates alongside the current MUS Water Services Agreement contract, which undertakes repair and maintenance and metering services in the same region.

“The framework is one of 12 that make up Yorkshire Water’s AMP5 delivery programme and we are offered individual contracts within that framework on an ongoing basis. Yorkshire Water identifies the business need and generates the scheme, and we are then contracted to do that work,” explains Ged Shannon, MUS’s contract director. “The AMP covers planned capital works and improvements, funded out of money allocated by Ofwat, the water industry regulator.”

MUS has a long-standing relationship with Yorkshire Water, working with the water company’s project management and operational teams. “Many of our schemes are on the water network, demanding that we provide an excellent customer experience,” Shannon says. “MUS has a dedicated team whose job it is to minimise the potential for any interruptions to supply and proactively manage the interface with customers. It is an excellent working relationship and they know we go the extra mile to get the job done right first time. That way Yorkshire Water gets its assets on time, within budget and to quality standards.”

This approach is exemplified by the work MUS undertakes to replace old lead service pipes. Ofwat regulates that drinking water



Scarborough grid link—pipelaying adjacent to Lisset air field

contains no more than 10 parts per million of lead, and the water in the network is well below that. MUS has replaced more than 10,000 service pipes in the region and is currently mid-way through a programme to replace a further 4,000 in Leeds.

In Bradford, MUS undertook a £2.5 million project which aims to drastically

reduce the number of bursts on water pipes. Almost 13 kilometres of underground cast iron main up to 100 years old is being replaced with new polyethylene pipe. The project is part of the company’s ongoing £39 million investment to improve the resilience of its 32,000 kilometre network of water pipes in order to reduce bursts and ensure its pipes are more robust to deal with temperature changes. “Water supply projects are logistically demanding and complex,” says Shannon. “We need to work in close co-operation with Yorkshire Water’s operational teams: the mains have to be isolated in certain streets and in some cases traffic flow can be disrupted



Scarborough grid link—Beeford pumping station

“MUS HAS A DEDICATED TEAM WHOSE JOB IT IS TO MINIMISE THE POTENTIAL FOR ANY INTERRUPTIONS TO SUPPLY”

Scarborough
grid link—use of
“spinning bucket”
to grade excavated
material for backfill

so we have to work expediently.”

These delicate operations are very different from the medium and large stream treatment contracts covered by AMP5; but speed is still of the essence. “We are used to delivering fast track schemes as part of the Framework. Last year for example we delivered three major mains engineering projects. The first, started early in 2011, was to lay five kilometres of new main to provide an extra supply to Beverly’s 9,000 properties. Then, to complete the East Coast Pipeline, the 50 kilometre Scarborough Grid Link was installed southward from that town, with

and quality are a given for contractors, so precisely what gives one company the edge over another? In summary: flexibility of approach. “Workload can be variable across the year so the efficient use of resources is always a challenge,” Shannon says. “We do a lot of work with Yorkshire Water to remove those peaks and troughs but in some circumstances we simply cannot influence. The priorities in its capital programmes change, as do the types of schemes it promotes. We have to be flexible and responsive to this.”

MUS smoothes out the peaks and troughs

“WE NEED TO WORK IN CLOSE CO-OPERATION
WITH YORKSHIRE WATER’S OPERATIONAL TEAMS”

a number of road, rail and river crossings. Finally in North Yorkshire a 10 kilometre main between Thirsk and Northallerton was constructed and commissioned in just 10 weeks.

“Yorkshire Water is always focused on the delivery of capital efficiency—how efficiently it delivers the work and invests capital. MUS has a large part to play in delivering schemes efficiently. That is a key business driver for Yorkshire Water—and for MUS as well, because we are working with Yorkshire Water to ultimately deliver value.”

Though among the largest, MUS is not the only company capable of carrying out contracts like this. Delivery to time, cost

in demand by using a mix of direct and supply chain resources, such that peak demands are catered for and in periods of lull the core design and commercial functions are kept fully utilised. High level programmes like AMP5 set the agenda, but when the individual contracts are being awarded, a contractor like MUS needs three things, according to Shannon: a flexible approach to planning, the ability meet timelines and budgets and an almost symbiotic relationship with the client. **BE**

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