

HOW MANY TENDERERS ?

- 01** Asking for large numbers of tenders is sometimes seen as good robust procurement. Obtaining such a number is then claimed as
- ¥ indicating a healthy contractor response to advertisements, and
 - ¥ foreshadowing the opportunity to pick the best from a wide selection.
- 02** This is however simplistic. The better that notices and contract documents describe what authorities want, the more likely that contractors who specialise in the work will apply; and the less likely that those who are unsuited to it, or not really interested in it, will do so. Good advanced information about all client expectations therefore tends to reduce the quantity, but increase the quality, of the response. A small field may therefore be big enough for a carefully described contract.
- 03** Tendering is in any case expensive for tenderers, and making them all wait to find out whether they have won disrupts their planning for other contracts which they have already won. The cost and the disruption are a lot to ask of them, in return for only a small chance of winning. Contractors therefore press for simpler application forms and invitations to tender, and for shorter award times.
- 04** This is an understandable reaction, but is not the best solution. Tenderer selection and tender evaluation are getting harder all the time, not easier; and involve assessment of ever more risks. The better bargain, both for clients and contractors, may be to give prospective tenderers a greater chance of winning, by reducing field sizes.
- 05** Besides being unpopular with tenderers for complex contracts, big fields also
- ¥ increase the risk that the most attractive-looking tender will be a fluke
 - ¥ put practitioners in a quandary. Should they
 - tell each tenderer how many others have been invited, thus killing their interest ? Or should they
 - say nothing about the size of the field, and risk tenderers finding this out for themselves later on, and feeling that they had been misled as to their chances of success ?