



Department
for Education



Infrastructure
and Projects
Authority

To: **Anne Spinali** Senior Responsible Owner for the **Lifelong Loan Entitlement (LLE)**

From: **Susan Acland-Hood** Permanent Secretary of **Department for Education** and
Nick Smallwood, Chief Executive Officer of the Infrastructure and Projects Authority

28 July 2022

Dear **Anne**,

APPOINTMENT AS SENIOR RESPONSIBLE OWNER FOR THE LIFELONG LOAN ENTITLEMENT (LLE) PROGRAMME

We are writing to confirm your appointment as Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) of the **LLE programme** with effect from **March 2022**. This letter sets out your responsibilities and the support you can expect from your department and the Infrastructure and Projects Authority.

As SRO, you are directly accountable to **your Director General, under the oversight of the Permanent Secretary as accounting officer for Department for Education, and the Minister of State for Higher and Further Education (The Rt Hon Michelle Donelan MP)**.

Your **programme** forms part of the **DfE Major Projects Portfolio** under the oversight of the Chair of the **Performance & Risk Committee** and is included in the Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP).

You have personal responsibility for the delivery of **the LLE programme** and will be held accountable for the delivery of its objectives, with policy intent and outcomes expected. This encompasses securing and protecting its vision, ensuring that it is governed responsibly, reported on honestly, escalated appropriately and for influencing the context, culture, and operating environment of the **programme**. You are also responsible for ensuring the ongoing viability of the **programme** and recommending its pause or termination if appropriate. Where issues arise which you are unable to resolve, you are responsible for escalating these to **Performance & Risk Committee**.

You remain accountable to Ministers, as set out in the Civil Service Code, and should deliver the project in accordance with the objectives and policy intent as set by Ministers.

In addition to your internal accountabilities, SROs for GMPP projects and programmes are personally accountable to Parliamentary Select Committees. This means that, from the date of this letter, you will be held personally accountable to and could be called by Select Committees to account for and explain the decisions and actions you have taken to deliver the **LLE programme**.

It is important to be clear that your accountability relates only to implementation, within the agreed terms in this letter; it will remain for the Minister to account for the relevant policy decisions and development.

More information on this is set out in [Giving Evidence to Select Committees – Guidance for Civil Servants](#), sometimes known as the Osmotherly Rules. Information on the roles and responsibilities of the SRO are detailed in the Infrastructure and Project Authority's guidance on [the role of the senior responsible owner](#). You should also make yourself familiar with the [Government Functional Standard for Project Delivery](#), the requirements of the Government Project Delivery Framework, and the guidance and requirements for project delivery as set by **the Performance and Major Projects portfolio office**.

Time commitment and tenure

This role will require at least 50% of your time to enable effective delivery of the role and execute your responsibilities in full.

You are required to undertake this role until achievement of **Full Business Case approval**, planned for **April 2023**. You should make sure that you have appropriate knowledge management arrangements in place and could manage an orderly handover to a new SRO when required. Progress towards this will be reflected in your personal objectives. Any changes to the agreed time commitment or tenure of the role, as set out above, will require both departmental and Infrastructure & Projects Authority consent.

Objectives and performance criteria

The LLE was announced by the [Prime Minister in his skills speech](#) on 29 September 2020. It forms part of the Government's "Lifetime Skills Guarantee" (LSG) and responds to recommendations in the [Augar review of post-18 education and training](#).

The LLE is a fundamental overhaul of the student finance system, giving everyone a flexible account to spend on high-quality approved training and learning in FE and HE. From its introduction in 2025 the LLE will provide individuals with a loan entitlement for use over their lifetime. The entitlement will be for the equivalent to four years of full-time undergraduate tuition fees at Approved (fee cap) providers. The entitlement could be spent on approved study at levels 4-6, across Higher and Further education providers. The entitlement could be spent on modules of a course, as well as full years of study to enable more flexible lifelong learning and an alternative to a full three-year degree. Individuals will be able space out their studies across their lifetimes, transfer credits between colleges and universities, and enable more part-time study at less than 25% intensity.

Any proposed changes to scope which impacts on this intent or the realisation of benefits must be authorised by the LLE delivery board and may be subject to further levels of approval.

- The long term vision of the programme is to provide more flexible provision, funding, and access within the Post-18 skills system. The LLE will offer real choice in how and when Post-18 learners study, by broadening access to the student finance system. The LLE will contribute to DfE's objective to drive economic growth through improving the skills pipeline, levelling up productivity and supporting people to work by enabling people to train, retrain and upskill over their lifetimes to respond to changing labour market demands.

Programme aims and objectives are:

- **Transformation of L4-6 funding system** enabling learners to train, retrain or upskill at any stage of their lives.
- **Easier for learners to navigate L4-6 funding and qualification options**, providing parity of access across technical and academic courses (either in full courses or in short modules).
- Incentivisation of **flexible study options** for learners with a long term vision of **modularised courses being the majority offer** at L4-6.
- Credit bearing provision supports flexible, lifelong learning by enabling **credit recognition, transfer and accumulation** between FE and HE providers.
- New LLE funding system encourages higher technical provision to **meet employers' needs** (LLE is an enabler to access funding but will not shift learner attitudes to the current 'degree default' on its own).

Your personal objectives and performance criteria which relate to the **programme** are:

- **To provide overall leadership and strategic direction to the programme;**
- **To be accountable for ensuring that the scope and objectives of the programme remain aligned with the strategic aims of Government and the Department;**
- **To be accountable for the ongoing viability of the programme;**
- **To be accountable for the delivery of the programme objectives and the realisation of agreed benefits;**
- **To be accountable for the oversight of risk across the programme and its effective management;**
- **To be accountable for ensuring that the programme has a proper governance and assurance regime in place at all times;**
- **To engage key stakeholders in support of the achievement of the programme strategic objectives and to communicate a clear vision for the programme.**

You are expected to run your project in accordance with the [Government Functional Standard for Project Delivery](#), the other [Functional Standards](#) as applicable to this **programme** and the requirements of the Government Project Delivery Framework.

Extent and limit of accountability

Finance and Controls

HM Treasury spending controls will apply on the basis set out within the department's delegated authority letter. Where the **programme** exceeds the delegated authority set by HM Treasury, the Treasury Approval Point process will apply, and the details of each approval process must be agreed with your HM Treasury spending team. You should consult departmental finance colleagues on how to go about this.

You should note that where expenditure is considered novel, contentious, repercussive, or likely to result in costs to other parts of the public sector, HM Treasury approval will be required, regardless of whether the programme expenditure exceeds the delegated authority set by HM Treasury. If in doubt about whether approval is required you should, in the first instance, consult departmental finance colleagues before raising with the relevant HM Treasury spending team.

The overall estimated budget, resourcing requirements and tolerances for your project/programme will be agreed as part of the approval process. You will be expected to deliver within these tolerances and report quarterly on these as part of GMPP reporting.

You should operate at all times within the rules set out in [Managing Public Money](#). In addition, you must be mindful of, and act in accordance with, the specific HM Treasury delegated limits and Cabinet Office controls relevant to **the LLE programme**. Information on these controls can be found here: [Cabinet Office controls](#).

Delegated authority

You are authorised to:

- **approve expenditure of up to £10m in each year of this SR period and £5m in future SR periods;**
- **agree project rescheduling within scope of agreed milestones, but rescheduling beyond that must be agreed with your Director General, the LLE delivery board and Investment Committee or Performance and Risk Committee subject to level of scope change; and**
- **recommend to your Director General and the LLE delivery board the need to either pause or terminate the programme where necessary and in a timely manner.**

These authority limits are subject to change and other conditions or tolerances may be set as part of the business case approval and ongoing monitoring processes which you should then operate within.

Where issues arise which take you outside of these authority limits which you are unable to resolve, you are responsible for escalating these issues to your **Director General** and the **Performance and Risk Committee**.

Appointments

You should appoint a full-time **programme** director to support you in the management of this **programme** and make other appointments as required for the control and delivery of your programme within your delegated authority.

Governance and assurance

You should pay attention to ensuring effective governance for your **programme**, including the establishment of a board with appropriate membership and clear terms of reference.

As primary owner, you must ensure that the **programme** secures business case approval from **Investment Committee including CO and HMT**. You should also ensure that the **programme** remains aligned to the strategic outcomes, costs, timescales, and benefits in line with the approved business case as well as monitoring the context within which the **programme** is being delivered to ensure it remains valid.

Where a change impacts the scope, costs, benefits, or planned delivery milestones agreed as part of an agreed business case, you are responsible for following the agreed change request approval process and setting a new, approved, business case baseline.

You should ensure that an accounting officer assessment is completed alongside the approval of the Outline Business Case and that this is published on GOV.UK as part of the government's transparency requirements on major projects. You are responsible for bringing to the attention of the accounting officer any material changes in the **programme** which could require a new accounting officer assessment to be

completed and published. [Guidance on completing accounting officer assessments](#) for major projects is available from HM Treasury.

Although you are directly accountable for this **programme**, you are also expected to support delivery of the department's overall strategic objectives. This means that you are expected to work collaboratively with other SROs and project directors in adjacent projects and programmes and with the **Performance and Major Projects portfolio** management office and portfolio director to manage dependencies, resources, schedules, and funding to support delivery of the overall change the department needs to achieve its strategic objectives.

You should ensure that appropriate and proportionate assurance is in place and agree on the level and frequency of assurance reviews through the maintenance of an integrated assurance and approvals plan. You should develop this plan and its maintenance in collaboration with the Departmental Assurance Coordinator and the Infrastructure and Projects Authority.

Programme status, reporting and transparency requirements

The **programme** status at the date of your appointment is reflected in the most recent quarterly return on the **programme** to the Infrastructure and Projects Authority and is the agreed position as you assume formal ownership of the programme.

You are responsible for ensuring the honest and timely reporting on the position of the **programme** to the Infrastructure and Projects Authority while it remains on the GMPP and for providing reports and information to the **Performance and Major Projects** portfolio management office as required. Reporting should include carbon measurement, and other sustainable development goals demonstrating evidence that the project contributes to an overarching environmental strategy and is aligned with defined Net Zero pathways. Information on the **programme** will be published annually by the Infrastructure and Projects Authority.

You are responsible for publishing on GOV.UK a summary of the accounting office assessment completed in line with the approval of the Outline Business Case and summaries of any subsequent assessments should they be required.

Development and support

As SRO of a GMPP programme, you are required to complete the Major Projects Leadership Academy. You are currently in the process of gaining Chartered Institute Management Accounts (CIMA) qualification and you have expressed an interest, which is supported by the Head of Profession in the DfE, to enrol on a MPLA cohort post completion of CIMA qualification.

To widen experience and understanding of the role, SROs are also expected to become accredited assurance reviewers and to lead or participate in such reviews for other government departments, the wider public sector, and other areas of the DfE as appropriate. Becoming an assurance reviewer and completing a review will form part of your time at the Major Projects Leadership Academy. To maintain your accreditation, you will be required to participate in a review at least once every 12 months.

The department will assist you in securing the necessary resources to support the **programme**, and will set clear guidance, requirements and standards, which align to the [Government Functional Standard on Project Delivery](#), to enable good governance and effective delivery. You will be part of the department's cohort of major project leaders who will be expected to support each other, share good practice and lessons learned

and to collectively develop solutions. You should liaise with the department's Head of Profession for project delivery to discuss the maintenance and development of your delivery and leadership skills.

The Infrastructure and Projects Authority will be available to you for support, advice, and assurance throughout the **programme's** time on the GMPP.

Following approval of the business case and entry onto the **DfE Major Projects Portfolio**, the **Performance and Risk Committee** will provide ongoing oversight and support and will take steps to help resolve and escalate risks, issues or constraints that are acting as a blocker to successful delivery.

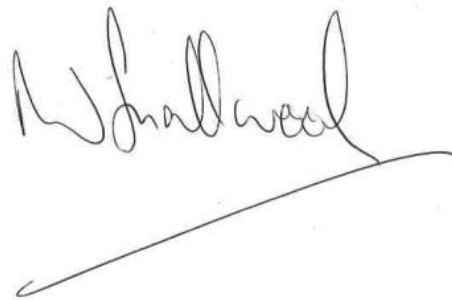
We would like to take this opportunity to wish you every success in your role as SRO.

Yours sincerely,



SUSAN ACLAND-HOOD

Permanent Secretary, Department for Education



NICK SMALLWOOD

Chief Executive Officer, Infrastructure and Projects Authority

CONFIRMATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF APPOINTMENT

I confirm that I accept the appointment of Senior Responsible Owner for the **programme**, including my personal accountability for implementation, as set out in the letter above.



ANNE SPINALI

4 August 2022