

Mr Paul Fox  
Chief Operating Officer and Director,  
Natural Environment Research Council  
Polaris House  
North Star Avenue  
Swindon  
SN2 1EU

18 March 2015

Dear Paul

### **BIS SRO CHARTER**

Thank you for agreeing to be the Senior Responsible Owner for the New Polar Research Vessel Programme (BIS ref: KI14-12). This is the critical role for the successful delivery of this Programme which is part of the BIS Project Portfolio, visible to the BIS Executive Board, and we are committed to supporting you in it.

As SRO you are ultimately accountable for ensuring that the Programme **delivers its objectives**, and that it is **governed** responsibly, specifically that it is delivered by August 2019 within the agreed budget of £225m. The policy intent supported by this Programme is to enable UK polar scientists to remain at the forefront of environmental research in both the Antarctic and the Arctic. The objective of the Programme is to replace two aging science/logistics support vessels with a new dual role purpose vessel.

You are directly accountable to Professor Duncan Wingham, Chief Executive and Accounting Officer of the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) under the oversight of the Minister of State for Universities and Science. Your accountabilities are set out at Annex A. In return you are empowered to take decisions, and be involved in any discussion of the Programme.

The status of your Programme is reflected in each quarterly Government Major Project Portfolio (GMPP) return to the Major Projects Authority in the Cabinet Office, including baselined and forecast Programme milestones.

### **Our commitment to you**

We will provide support, guidance and empowerment for you to deliver your Programme.

The BIS Board has clarified the mandate of the BIS Board sub-committees such as PFR to make explicit the importance of the SRO role, and the escalation routes and freedoms SROs should have.

For portfolio projects, a Programme Board-approved Programme Initiation Document will constitute recruiting clearance for all internal HR and Finance controls delegated to the Secretary of State.

As SRO you have access to:

- information regarding best practice and corporate materials, and an SRO Guide;
- a growing network of delivery and programme specialists to act as contacts, mentors or sources of assurance at critical stages of the Programme;
- the BIS analyst community, to support you in ensuring that your business case and evaluation regime are robust;
- the BIS SRO leadership programme and the Major Projects Leadership Academy (MPLA). As the SRO of a GMPP Programme you will be expected to enrol on the MPLA, subject to suitable cohort timing. You will be contacted shortly by a member of the MPLA Leadership and Capabilities team to discuss options.

To widen experience and understanding of the role, SROs are expected to become accredited Major Project reviewers and to lead or participate in such reviews for other Government departments, the wider public sector or other areas of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills as appropriate. You may be required to participate in such reviews at least once every 12 months to maintain your accreditation.

To ensure we are listening to the people delivering the BIS Programme and projects, I and Board colleagues meet regularly with our SROs.

In return the department looks to you to do the following:

- Create a Programme culture that is positive, open and focused on delivery;
- Focus closely on stakeholder management, working effectively with your line management as required;
- Establish a programme board to support, advise and provide challenge and stakeholder insight: nevertheless, accountability for the Programme remains with the SRO.
- Own the business case throughout the life of the Programme, and ensure it remains aligned to business need and strategic objectives;
- Make full use of appropriate specialists (analysts, procurement, legal etc) to support delivery of the project;

- Ensure appropriate and creative Programme assurance is scheduled;
- Work with the BIS Secretariat to schedule appropriate engagement with BIS Board formations;
- Formally close the programme with a formal post-implementation review, ensuring that the lessons learned are documented and shared.
- Spend a significant time on the Programme and take part in appropriate training.

It is expected that you will remain in place throughout the Programme.

Please return a signed copy of this letter to the Major Projects Assurance team.



**MARTIN DONNELLY**  
Permanent Secretary  
Department for Business Innovation and Skills

**DAVID BLACKALL**  
Acting Chief Executive  
Major Projects Authority

Name...Paul Fox .....

Signature 

Date: March 2015

Programme...New Polar Research Vessel

## **Annex A – SRO accountabilities**

As SRO you have personal responsibility for delivery of this Programme and will be held accountable for the delivery of its objectives and policy intent; for securing and protecting its vision, for ensuring that it is governed responsibly, reported honestly, escalated appropriately and for influencing constructively the context, culture and operating environment of the Programme.

In addition to your internal accountabilities, you should also be aware that SROs will now be held personally accountable to Parliamentary Select Committees. You will be expected to account for and explain the decisions and actions you have taken to deliver the Programme. In your case this means that from the date of signature of this letter you will be held personally accountable and could be called by Select Committees for delivery of the New Polar Research Vessel Programme.

It is important to be clear that your accountability relates only to implementation: it will remain for the Minister to account for the relevant policy decisions and development.

You should therefore make sure you understand the guidance “Giving Evidence to Select Committees – Guidance for Civil Servants” at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/364600/Osmotherly\\_Rules\\_October\\_2014.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/364600/Osmotherly_Rules_October_2014.pdf). You should also make yourself aware of the Major Projects Authority (MPA) guidance on management of major projects: (<https://www.gov.uk/government/policy-teams/major-projects-authority>).