



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



Infrastructure  
and Projects  
Authority

To: **David Jones**, Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) for the Terrestrial Natural Capital Ecosystem and Assessment (tNCEA) Programme

From: **Tamara Finkelstein**, Permanent Secretary of Department of Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (Defra) and

**Nick Smallwood**, Chief Executive Officer of the Infrastructure and Projects Authority

Date: 14 August 2023

Dear David,

## **APPOINTMENT AS SENIOR RESPONSIBLE OWNER FOR THE TERRESTRIAL NATURAL CAPITAL ECOSYSTEM AND ASSESSMENT (tNCEA) PROGRAMME**

We are writing to confirm your appointment as Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) of the Terrestrial Natural Capital Ecosystem and Assessment (tNCEA) Programme with effect from the 6<sup>th</sup> of September 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 Chief Scientific Advisor and Director General for Science and Analysis, under the oversight of the Permanent Secretary as accounting officer for of the Department for Environment, Farming and Rural affairs department, and Minister Harrison, Minister for Natural Environment and Land Use.

Your programme forms part of the Defra Major Projects Portfolio, under the oversight of the Chair of the Defra Executive Committee and is included in the Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP).

You have personal responsibility for the delivery of the Terrestrial Natural Capital Ecosystem Assessment 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 Terrestrial Natural Capital Ecosystem Assessment Programme.

You are also responsible for ensuring the ongoing viability of the Terrestrial Natural Capital Ecosystem Assessment 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 the Strategic Programme Board followed by Executive Committee if issues remain unresolved.

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 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 Defra Portfolio Office.

## **Time commitment and tenure**

This role will require 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 Programme close currently planned for 31 March 2025. 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 and Projects Authority consent.

## **Objectives and performance criteria**

The policy intent supported by this Terrestrial Natural Capital Ecosystem Assessment Programme is an enabler to policy, evaluation and decision-making.

The scope of the programme is driven by Defra's policy requirements within our three priority areas of:

- (i) Environment Act Targets and 25-year environment plan.
- (ii) Environmental Land Management Scheme; and
- (iii) Biodiversity Net Gain.

The programme will bring together physical and digital systems, services and policy outputs into new and improved capabilities for how we monitor and understand our natural environment. With such significant change and transformation comes the need for emphasis on people, engagement, and communications. The lens of user-centric, as opposed to process-centric, delivery is key to ensuring success.

Any proposed changes to scope which impacts on this intent or the realisation of benefits must be authorised by the Strategic Programme Board and may be subject to further levels of approval from Executive Committee.

The vision of the Terrestrial Natural Capital Ecosystem Assessment Programme is to deliver a world-class knowledge capability for our natural environment which enables us to enhance our landscapes, improve biodiversity and encourage innovation.

The Programme objectives are to:

- develop integrated, adaptive, and collaborative methods to measure our land and freshwater environments;
- transform the physical and digital infrastructure to underpin, facilitate and present our understanding and decision-making; and
- deliver data-driven, evidence-based insight and understanding to inform ambitious, proactive and sustainable policy decisions across a range of stakeholder / customer communities.

Your personal objectives and performance criteria which relate to the Terrestrial Natural Capital Ecosystem Assessment programme are to:

- develop a compelling programme business case to obtain spend approval for each financial year of the programme through to March 2025;
- ensure the programme remains aligned to the three identified priorities and meets the requirements of Defra's policy makers and operational delivery needs in the most effective and efficient manner possible;
- ensure component projects are commissioned and managed effectively, delivering value for money, and procured in accordance with government guidelines and standards;
- utilise the innovations in measurement and data handling to inform and align the programme to Future Defra;
- enable products delivered by the Programme to be accessible and usable by stakeholders both across Government and externally;
- embed appropriate governance and actively engage with second- and third-line assurance to ensure the programme is well managed and delivered in accordance with Defra and the Government's Infrastructure & Projects Authority standards. This includes registering the programme on the Government's Major Project Portfolio and participating in GIAA and NAO audits as required; and
- develop a clear plan for ensuring the programme delivers the benefits and outcomes anticipated through ensuring outputs are shaped by user requirements and delivered in a manner that optimises their value to customers.

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 Terrestrial Natural Capital Ecosystem Assessment 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 your departments 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 or 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 line with, the specific HM Treasury delegated limits and Cabinet Office controls relevant to Terrestrial Natural Capital Ecosystem Assessment Programme. Information on these controls can be found here: [Cabinet Office controls](#).

## Delegated authority

As the Senior Responsible Owner for the Terrestrial Natural Capital Ecosystem Assessment programme, you are authorised to:

- to approve expenditure in line with your delegated authority, subject to controls put in place by Defra and HMT as part of the business case approval process;
- agree project and programme rescheduling within agreed milestones, but significant rescheduling must be agreed with the Programme Board and if the cost/benefit impact is over £8m with the Strategic Programme Board and then Investment Committee if issues remain unresolved; and
- recommend to the Director General for Science & Analysis at Strategic Programme 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 the Director General for Science & Analysis and the Strategic Programme Board.

## Appointments

You should appoint a full-time programme director to support you in the management of this programme for the duration 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 programme board with appropriate membership and clear terms of reference.

As primary owner, you must ensure that the programme secures business case approval from the Defra Investment Committee 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 Defra 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 Defra portfolio management office as required. 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 officer assessment completed in line with the approval of the Programme 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, and you have agreed to enrol on cohort 36. 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 Defra 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.

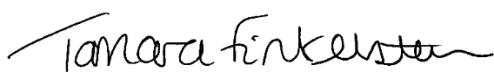
You will be part of the department's cohort of major project leaders who will be expected to support each other, share good practice and lessons learned and to collectively develop solutions. You should liaise with the department's head of profession for project delivery to discuss the maintenance and 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 Defra Portfolio, the Defra Executive 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,



Tamara Finkelstein

Permanent Secretary, Defra



Nick Smallwood

Chief Executive Officer, Infrastructure and  
Projects Authority

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## 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.



David Jones

Deputy Director, SRO for tNCEA Programme

Date