

PERMANENT SECRETARY

D/PUS/5/1/(111)

20 October 2023

**Air Cdre Nick Lowe**

Senior Responsible Owner for the F-35B Lightning Programme

*Sent electronically*

## **APPOINTMENT AS SENIOR RESPONSIBLE OWNER FOR THE F-35B LIGHTNING PROGRAMME**

Dear Nick,

### **Role, Responsibility, Authority and Accountability**

1. **Role.** We are writing to confirm your appointment as Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) of the F-35B Lightning Programme. This letter sets out your responsibility, authority, and accountability in that role as well as the support that you can expect from the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA).
2. **Responsibility.** Your responsibility as SRO is defined in the IPA's guidance on [Project delivery: The Role of the Senior Responsible Owner](#) and in the MoD Project Delivery Centre of Excellence's guidance on [The Role of the Senior Responsible Owner in Defence](#). You are to comply with the [Government Functional Standard for Project Delivery](#) and the [Government Project Delivery Framework](#), and you are expected to follow all relevant IPA guidance on project delivery. In addition, you should take every step to ensure that Ministers, the Accounting Officer and other senior leaders are fully informed of increasing risk or threats to delivery that might be considered capable of undermining the business case at the earliest opportunity even if outside the normal governance line or timings.
3. The programme's objectives, outcomes and benefits are defined in the Programme Mandate; specific delivery requirements are defined within the programme's Business Cases and Approvals; and the assurance requirements are as detailed in the programme's Integrated Assurance and Approval Plan.

4. You are to allocate no less than 50% of your time to your SRO responsibilities and your tenure is expected to last until July 2026. During your tenure, it is anticipated that you will achieve the following outcomes:
  - a. Stand-up of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Front Line Squadron (809 Naval Air Squadron) by December 2023.
  - b. Declaration of Initial Operating Capability of 809 Naval Air Squadron by 01 December 2024.
  - c. Declaration of Full Operating Capability no later than 31 December 2025.
5. **Authority.** The department will grant you the authority you require to discharge your defined responsibilities as SRO, and thus deliver the programme mandate effectively. You are authorised to:
  - a. Lead and champion the programme (including in public).
  - b. In consultation with the programme sponsor, set the overall vision, strategic direction, and key delivery parameters for the programme.
  - c. Determine the overall design of the programme and the temporary organisation that is needed to deliver it.
  - d. Delegate<sup>1</sup> responsibility and authority as required within the programme team (including to those in sponsor, client, and market roles)<sup>2</sup> noting that accountability cannot be delegated.
  - e. Approve business cases (subject to additional approval as required by spending controls)<sup>3</sup>.
  - f. Decide on all matters of disagreement within the programme that cannot be resolved in a timely manner.
  - g. In consultation with the programme sponsor, agree on changes required to any previously determined scope, providing it does not prevent achievement of the Key User Requirement and it remains within the bounds of both the programme mandate and the approved cost, time, and performance envelope.
  - h. Challenge all interfacing projects, programmes and the wider operating environment on matters relating to the effective delivery of the programme.
  - i. Engage directly with all internal and external stakeholders on programme matters.
  - j. Approve the programme's access to risk funding within the approved cost envelope.
6. If you do not have the authority you need to discharge the role effectively, you are to inform us immediately.
7. **Accountability.** You are accountable to the MoD Accounting Officer and Parliament, with oversight provided by Chief of the Air Staff, as the Top Level Budget Holder for the Royal Air Force, for ensuring that the F-35B Lightning

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<sup>1</sup> Noting certain delegations come through other routes

<sup>2</sup> As defined in the IPA Project Routemap.

<sup>3</sup> Authority to approve expenditure is provided through a separate financial delegation.

Programme remains affordable, meets its objectives, delivers the projected outcome<sup>4</sup>, and realises the required benefit as defined in the Programme Mandate. Should you be unable to deliver against the requirement then you should escalate to me, as Accounting Officer, through the Chief of the Air Staff and the Defence Major Programmes Portfolio (DMPP) Sponsor Group. Furthermore, you are to account for the action taken by the programme to Parliamentary Select Committees<sup>5</sup>, and for the programme's adherence to government policy to Ministers<sup>6</sup>. Your accountability is limited to the effective implementation of government policy, not the policy itself.

## **The F-35B Lightning Programme**

8. The Programme is delivering a multi-role, carrier-capable strike asset operated jointly by the RAF and RN, which provides the UK with a survivable, sustainable, expeditionary, 5th Generation air capability that can contribute to the widest possible range of operations. The Lightning Programme is now driving towards Full Operating Capability which realises the ability for the Lightning Force to deploy to a carrier and a deployed operating base simultaneously.

## **Wider Departmental Support and Responsibilities**

9. The programme forms part of the DMPP and the Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP). You must escalate to the DMPP Sponsor Group any RAIDO<sup>7</sup> that threaten the success or viability of the programme and bring any matter that could require an Accounting Officer Assessment to the attention of the Accounting Officer<sup>8</sup>. You must report on the programme via the DMPP's Portfolio Management Reporting System (PMRS), which will be used to inform the Infrastructure and Projects Authority's annual report on the GMPP.
10. The department's delegated spending authority limits apply to your programme. Regardless, where expenditure is novel, contentious, repercussive, or likely to result in cost to other parts of the public sector, HM Treasury approval will be required. If in doubt, advice must be sought from departmental finance colleagues. The process for each programme approval must be agreed with departmental finance colleagues and the HM Treasury spending team, and you are to deliver the programme within the approved limits for your programme. Your financial delegation will be provided separately.
11. The department will assist you in securing the human and financial resources that are necessary to deliver the programme and by ensuring that the operating environment across the MoD and other government departments both enables and

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<sup>4</sup> A robust evaluation plan is key HMT requirement. Advice on providing this can be obtained from Defence Economics.

<sup>5</sup> More information on this is set out in [Giving Evidence to Select Committees - Guidance for Civil Servants](#), sometimes known as the Osmotherly Rules.

<sup>6</sup> As set out in the [Civil Service Code](#).

<sup>7</sup> RAIDO: Risks, Assumptions, Issues, Dependencies and Opportunities.

<sup>8</sup> [Guidance on completing accounting officer assessments](#) for major projects is available from HM Treasury.

promotes effective programme delivery. Any support that you require in this regard is to be requested through Air Command in the first instance and you have access to the DMPP Sponsor Group at any time.

12. Notwithstanding your personal responsibility and accountability for the programme, you are to work collaboratively with all other departmental projects and programmes to manage dependencies and optimise the achievement of the department's wider objectives.
13. As an SRO of a GMPP programme you are required to commence the Major Projects Leadership Academy (MPLA) at the earliest opportunity. Once you graduate the MPLA, you are expected to maintain your continuing professional development as a project leader, including your status as an accredited assurance reviewer. The department's Head of Profession for project delivery is available to support and advise you, as are the IPA. In return, and as part of the department's cohort of major project leaders, you are to support your project delivery colleagues and participate in at least one assurance review of another GMPP every 12-months.
14. We wish you every success in your role as the Senior Responsible Owner of the F-35B Lightning Programme.

Yours sincerely,



DAVID WILLIAMS  
Permanent Under Secretary, Ministry of Defence



NICK SMALLWOOD  
Chief Executive Officer, IPA