



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office



Infrastructure
and Projects
Authority

To: Chris Maule MBE, Senior Responsible Owner for the Echo2 Programme

From: Sir Philip Barton KCMG OBE, Permanent Under Secretary of State, FCDO; and
Nick Smallwood, Chief Executive Officer of the Infrastructure and Projects Authority

1 February 2024

Dear Chris,

APPOINTMENT AS SENIOR RESPONSIBLE OWNER FOR THE ECHO2 PROGRAMME

We are writing to confirm your appointment as Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) of the Echo2 Programme with effect from 2 April 2024. 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 the Echo2 Steering Group, chaired by Adrian Blundell, FCDO's CDIO, and attended by representatives of the FCDO and British Council. The Echo2 programme falls under the oversight of Sir Philip Barton as accounting officer for the FCDO and David Rutley, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the FCDO. Corin Robertson, the FCDO's Director General for Finance and Corporate will routinely represent the Permanent Under-Secretary's interest in supporting and holding you to account as SRO, referring matters to the Permanent Under-Secretary as necessary.

Your programme forms part of the DD&T Portfolio, under the oversight of Corin Robertson as Chair of the DD&T Delivery Steering Board and is included in the Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP).

You have personal responsibility for the delivery of the Echo2 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 the Echo2 Steering Group and, as necessary, to the DD&T Delivery Steering Board.

You remain accountable to Ministers, as set out in the Civil Service Code, and should deliver the programme 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 your appointment, 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 Echo2 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 FCDO's Portfolio Office.

The Echo2 Programme

The Echo2 Programme is delivering the new global communications network for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and the British Council. The programme is shortly to start global deployment and is forecasting a twelve-month delay to programme completion. An Accounting Officer Assessment (AOA) published in November 2023 concluded that the Programme has mitigated this delay where achievable, and that it is expected to deliver its full technical benefits and financial benefits of £119.9m within the budgetary limits of its Full Business Case.

Time commitment and tenure

This role will require at least 30% of your time to enable effective delivery of the role and execute your responsibilities in full. Whilst it would be normal for an SRO to dedicate 50% of their time, we recognise that the Echo2 Programme will be in a deployment phase by April 2024, but you should treat the 30% commitment as a minimum and apply additional time as circumstances require.

You are required to undertake this role until programme closure, which will follow deployment of the solution to FCDO and British Council locations globally. 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 Echo2 Programme has re-procured and will migrate and transform the telecommunications networks and related services to meet the current and future needs of the FCDO and British Council.

The programme underpins the strategic objectives of both the FCDO and British Council by providing a resilient and performant global telecommunications network. In summary:

- The FCDO pursues the UK's national interests and those of British citizens. It safeguards the UK's security, defends our values, reduces poverty and tackles global challenges with our international partners.
- The British Council supports peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and countries worldwide.

The Echo2 Programme contributes to enabling a transition to Net Zero GHG emissions by 2050 by using modern technology to transform and optimise operations and by utilising local internet suppliers to provide connectivity, rather than by using a global supplier. The Echo2 Programme delivers significant ongoing financial, technical and security benefits to both the FCDO and British Council.

Any proposed changes to scope which impacts on this intent or the realisation of benefits approved in business cases must be authorised by the Echo2 Steering Group, the DD&T Delivery Steering Board and further levels of approval, as appropriate.

The strategic objectives of the Programme are set out in its business cases. Some objectives have been completed as the procurements were run, the contracts placed or during the design and test phases. The objectives that are relevant from the date of the appointment are:

- Put in place a global telecommunications network which is as performant and resilient as necessary to enable the delivery of the FCDO and British Council DD&T strategies;
- Deliver a reduction in like-for-like operating costs, as well as an improvement in both bandwidth and resilience within those operating costs;
- Establish control, transparency and assured ongoing value for money;
- Identify ways to improve capability for forecasting for, and funding, future initiatives that will realise ongoing/further telecommunications business benefits;
- Deliver a service which provides the flexibility to change and upgrade solutions, in accordance with technological advancements and evolving ways of working, in such a way that the processes and costs in doing so are structured/controlled;
- Ensure that responsibilities for delivery of the telecommunications services and functions are delineated between suppliers and both the FCDO and British Council in a way that enables efficiency of operation, recognising that there might be benefit in creating new "cross-partner" functions for some aspects of operations;
- Manage suppliers to ensure optimal delivery for the FCDO and British Council. Build and foster a positive relationship with suppliers, ensuring they are not only capable but willing to meet commitments.

These programme objectives, as well as delivering within the programme budget and benefits, will be reflected in your personal objectives.

You are expected to run your programme 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 the Echo2 programme has been agreed as part of the business case 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 Echo2 Programme. Information on these controls can be found here: [Cabinet Office controls](#).

Delegated authority

You are authorised to:

- approve expenditure of up to £5m per item;
- agree programme rescheduling within three months of milestones set out in the Echo2 Q4 2023 baseline plan, but rescheduling beyond that must be agreed with the DD&T Delivery Steering Board; and
- recommend to the Echo2 Steering Group and the DD&T Delivery Steering 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 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 Echo2 Steering Group and the DD&T Delivery Steering Board.

Appointments

You should ensure that there is a full-time programme director to support you in the management of the Echo2 Programme and make other appointments as required for the control and delivery of the programme within your delegated authority.

Governance and assurance

You should pay attention to ensuring effective governance of the Echo2 Programme, including maintaining the Echo2 Programme Board with appropriate membership and clear terms of reference.

As primary owner, you must ensure that the Echo2 Programme remains aligned to the strategic outcomes, costs, timescales, and benefits in line with the approved business cases, as well as monitoring the context within which the Echo2 Programme is being delivered to ensure the business cases remain 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.

An accounting officer assessment for the Echo2 Programme was completed alongside the approval of the Outline Business Case. Full Business Cases were subsequently approved for the Network Service

Integrator and Dynamic Purchasing System. A further accounting officer assessment was completed in October 2023 and 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 Echo2 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 the Echo2 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 DD&T 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.

Echo2 Programme status, reporting and transparency requirements

The Echo2 Programme status at the date of your appointment is reflected in the most recent quarterly return to the Infrastructure and Projects Authority. It 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 Echo2 Programme to the Infrastructure and Projects Authority while it remains on the Government's Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP) and for providing reports and information to the DD&T portfolio management office as required. Reporting should include carbon measurement, and other sustainable development goals demonstrating evidence that the programme contributes to an overarching environmental strategy. Information on the Echo2 Programme will be published annually by the Infrastructure and Projects Authority.

You are responsible for publishing on GOV.UK a summary of any accounting officer assessment completed, if a further accounting officer assessment is required subsequent to those already completed.

Development and support

As SRO of a GMPP programme, you are required to complete the Major Projects Leadership Academy, and you have been confirmed as enrolled on a cohort.

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 FCDO 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 twelve months.

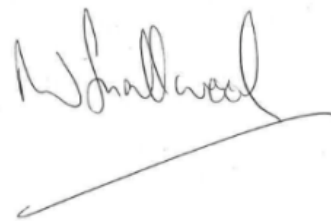
The department will assist you in securing the necessary resources to support the Echo2 Programme, and will set clear guidance, requirements and standards, which align to the [Government Functional Standard on Project Delivery](#), to enable good governance and effective delivery. You will be part of 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 Echo2 Programme's time on the GMPP. The FCDO's DD&T portfolio 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,



Sir Philip Barton KCMG OBE

Nick Smallwood

Permanent Under Secretary of State, FCDO

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 Echo2 Programme including my personal accountability for implementation, as set out in the letter above.



Chris Maule MBE

[15/02/2024]