



Department for  
Science, Innovation  
& Technology



Infrastructure  
and Projects  
Authority

To: **Sarah Connolly**, Senior Responsible Owner  
(SRO) for the **Open Networks Programme**

From: **Sarah Munby**, Permanent Secretary of DSIT; and  
Nick Smallwood Chief Executive, IPA

**12<sup>th</sup> December 2024**

Dear Sarah,

### **Appointment As Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) For The Open Networks Programme**

We are writing to confirm your appointment as Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) of the Open Networks Programme with effect from 22<sup>nd</sup> January 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 Director General for the Digital, Technology and Telecommunications Group, under the oversight of, the Permanent Secretary as Accounting Officer for Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, and the responsible ministers.

Your Programme forms part of the DSIT Digital Infrastructure Portfolio, under the oversight of the Chair of the Delivery and Risk Committee and is included in the Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP).

You have personal responsibility for the delivery of the Open Networks 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 DI Portfolio Board.

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 Open Networks 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 DSIT Project Delivery Function.

### **Time commitment and tenure**

This role will require at least 20% 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 the Programme objectives, set out below, are complete, as currently stands this is March 2025 unless agreed otherwise. 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 Open Networks Programme's R&D objectives - which directly contribute to the objectives of the wider Diversification Strategy that have been agreed with Ministers and therefore mitigation of the security and resilience risks - are to:

- **Accelerate open-interface products and solutions** - ensuring they are truly interoperable, performant, and sustainable - to support our long term vision for a more open and innovative telecoms market.
- **Incentivise and derisk accelerated deployment in the UK** - to encourage and accelerate network operators to adopt and deploy open network solutions.
- **Develop an internationally recognised UK telecoms ecosystem** positioning the UK as a leading global market and focal point for research into open network technology.

As and when objectives change, this will be considered to be reflected in this Osmotherley Letter until such time as the letter is updated.

Proposed changes to the project scope which impact on this intent or benefits realisation must be authorised by the Minister for Digital Infrastructure and may be subject to further levels of approval.

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 Open Networks 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.

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. Information on these controls can be found here: [Cabinet Office controls](#).

The overall capital budgets agreed at SR21 (excluding VAT) for the programmes are:

Financial Year	Approved Budget as per SR21 (£m)
21/22	38.5
22/23	76.1
23/24	86.1
24/25	87.4
<b>Total (22-25)</b>	<b>249.6</b>

### Delegated authority

You are authorised to:

- Approve expenditure each year in accordance with the profile agreed with HMT and the DSIT Director of Finance and as set out in your separate financial delegation letter.
- recommend to the Permanent Secretary 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 Permanent Secretary.

## Governance and assurance

The Open Networks Programme is subject to oversight and decision-making by the Delivery Management Board (twice-monthly, chaired by the Programme Director), the Digital Infrastructure Portfolio Board (monthly, chaired by the SRO) and the Projects Assurance Board (as required, chaired by BDUK).

As primary owner, 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 **DSIT** 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.

*As part of the government's commitment to transparency on major infrastructure projects, you are responsible for publishing on [GOV.UK](#) a summary of the accounting officer 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

Although SROs of GMPP Programmes, are usually required to complete the Major Projects Leadership Academy (MPLA), due to the remaining time of the programme, and given the Programme Director is MPLA qualified it has been agreed that in this circumstance you are not required to fulfil this requirement.

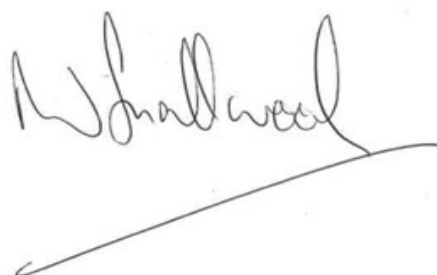
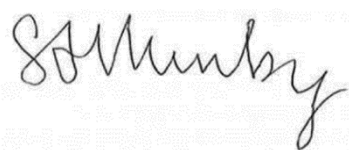
The department will assist you in securing the necessary resources to support the Programme, and will set clear guidance, requirements and standards, which align to the [Government Functional Standard on Project Delivery](#), to enable good governance and effective delivery. You will be part of the department's 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.

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

Yours sincerely,



**SARAH MUNBY**

**NICK SMALLWOOD**

Permanent Secretary,  
Department for Science, Innovation and  
Technology

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 [project/programme], including my personal accountability for implementation, as set out in the letter above.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Connolly'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'S'.

**SARAH CONNOLLY**

04/12/2024