



To: Colin Dingwall, Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) for the National Biosecurity Centre – Weybridge Programme

From: Interim Permanent Secretary of Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs and
Chief Executive Officer of the National Infrastructure & Service Transformation Authority

24 July 2025

Dear Colin,

Appointment as Senior Responsible Owner for the National Biosecurity Centre (NBC) – Weybridge Programme

We are writing to confirm the extension of your appointment as Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) of the National Biosecurity Centre - Weybridge Programme, which commenced from December 2021. This letter sets out your responsibilities and the support you can expect from your department and the National Infrastructure & Service Transformation Authority.

As SRO, you are directly accountable to Defra Permanent Secretary and Accounting Officer under the oversight of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State. You will report to the DG Delivery and Group Chief Operating Officer, who will act as the NBC Programme's senior sponsor.

Your programme forms part of the Defra 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 National Biosecurity Centre 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 National Biosecurity Centre Programme.

You are also responsible for ensuring the ongoing viability of the National Biosecurity Centre 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 Defra Executive Committee.

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 National Biosecurity Centre 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 Government Project Delivery's guidance on [the role of the Senior Responsible Owner](#).

You should also make yourself familiar with [The Teal Book](#), Government Project Delivery's code of practice for project delivery, and any further guidance and requirements set by Defra Portfolio Office.

Time commitment and tenure

This will be a full-time role to enable effective delivery of the role and execute your responsibilities in full.

You are required to undertake this role until achievement of the Science Hub pre-construction phase of the NBC Programme, planned for end Quarter 4 2026 to 2027,

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 National Infrastructure & Service Transformation Authority consent.

Objectives and performance criteria

The policy intent supported by this NBC programme is to maintain and strengthen the UK's animal health science capability to respond rapidly to animal diseases as well as protect against the risk these diseases can pose to human health. It seeks to promote the UK's reputation as a world leader in science and animal welfare, as well as protecting the economy, including the trade of livestock, meat and meat products, dairy and animal by-products through good biosecurity and disease management systems. The existing facilities require significant and long-term investment if Defra is to maintain, improve and future-proof the UK's animal health science capability. This is one of the Department's highest priorities.

The objectives of the NBC Programme are:

1. To deliver capability and capacity to meet Defra – and wider government – requirements for emergency outbreak response.
2. To maximise the contribution of Animal Health Science for the benefit of the UK and Global Agricultural Economy, enhancing the UK's international stature post-EU Exit while securing trade and collaboration.
3. To replace non-fit for purpose facilities and infrastructure, including containment facilities, with modern equivalents that meet current and future user requirements and compliance standards.
4. To achieve value for money and cost effectiveness.
5. To create a work environment which facilitates the retention and recruitment of the best scientists, engineers and technicians, as well as opportunities to advance their excellence.

Proposed changes to the project scope which impact on this intent or benefits realisation must be authorised by the NBC Programme Board and Accounting Officer and may be subject to a further level of approval.

Your personal objectives and performance criteria which relate to the NBC Programme are:

- Deliver the objectives and benefits of the National Biosecurity Centre Programme.
- Deliver completion of pre-construction design and approval of the main Science Hub projects and completion of Enabling and Infrastructure works to clear the site footprint, as set out in the NBC Programme Business Case. Assure on-going viability, delivery of resource plans including recruitment and ensure benefits are tracked. Address significant concerns about feasibility, value for money, regularity or propriety to the Accounting Officer.
- Provide overall leadership, decision making and strategic direction. Ensure the direction remains aligned with any changes in political or business priorities.
- Agree and own the programme vision and success criteria with the Programme Director, who you will advise, coach and provide strategic direction.
- Establish and maintain appropriate Governance structures, including for the management of risk and assurance, appoint a qualified Board to deliver the Programme and Chair the Board.
- Build and maintain engagement among all stakeholders to support programme delivery. This includes the Ministerial team, end users of the new capability, Chair of Defra ARAC, HM Treasury, the National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority and the Cabinet Office.

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 NBC 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 department's 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 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 the NBC programme. Information on these controls can be found here: [Cabinet Office controls](#).

Delegated authority

You are authorised to:

- Approve expenditure of up to £125 million in line with your Delegated Authority Letter.
- You should remain within the agreed tolerance limits in the Programme Business Case.

- You are also responsible for recommending 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.

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

As primary owner, you must ensure that the programme secures business case approval from Defra Investment Committee including Cabinet Office 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 National Infrastructure & Service Transformation Authority.

Project or 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 National Infrastructure & Service Transformation 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 National Infrastructure & Service Transformation Authority while it remains on the GMPP and for providing reports and information to the Defra portfolio management office as required. Reporting should include carbon measurement, and other sustainable development goals demonstrating evidence that the project contributes to an overarching environmental strategy and is aligned with defined Net Zero pathways. Information on the programme will be published annually by the National Infrastructure & Service Transformation Authority.

As part of the government's commitment to transparency on major infrastructure projects, you are responsible for publishing on GOV.UK:

1. 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.
2. a summary of the HM Treasury approved full business case.
3. a close-out report after the project or programme has completed.

You are also responsible for registering all planned, live and completed evaluations on the Government Evaluation Registry. [Guidance on using the evaluation registry](#) is available on GOV.UK.

Development and support

As a graduate of the Major Projects Leadership Academy, you are expected to maintain your continuing professional development as a project leader, including your status as an accredited assurance reviewer. 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.

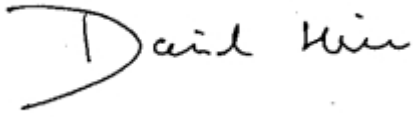
You will be part of the department's cohort of major project leaders who will be expected to support each other, share good practice and lessons learned and to collectively develop solutions. You should liaise with the department's head of profession for project delivery to discuss the maintenance and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

The National Infrastructure & Service Transformation 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.

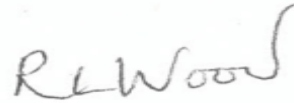
We would like to take this opportunity to wish you every success in your role as SRO.

Yours sincerely,



David Hill

Interim Permanent Secretary, Department for
Environment, Food & Rural Affairs



Becky Wood

Chief Executive Officer, National Infrastructure &
Service Transformation Authority

Confirmation of acceptance of appointment

I confirm that I accept the appointment of Senior Responsible Owner for the National Biosecurity Centre Programme, including my personal accountability for implementation, as set out in the letter above.

Colin Dingwall (signature redacted)

SRO NBC Programme

24 July 2025