



HM Government

To: Steve Holborow, Senior Responsible Owner for the Falcon Programme

From: Cat Little, Permanent Secretary of the Cabinet Office; and

Becky Wood, Chief Executive Officer, National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority.

2nd December 2025

Dear Steve,

APPOINTMENT AS SENIOR RESPONSIBLE OWNER FOR THE FALCON PROGRAMME

We are writing to confirm your appointment as Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) of the Falcon Programme with effect from 1st April 2025. This letter sets out your responsibilities and the support you can expect from your department and the National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority (NISTA).

As SRO, you are directly accountable under the oversight of the Permanent Secretary Cat Little as accounting officer for the Cabinet Office, and the Minister of the Cabinet Office Nick Thomas-Symonds

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

You have personal responsibility for the delivery of the Falcon Programme and will be held accountable for the delivery of its objectives, policy intent and outcomes. 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 Falcon 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 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 Falcon 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 Government Project Delivery's guidance on [the role of the senior responsible owner](#),

You are expected to run your project/programme in accordance with the [Government Functional Standard for Project Delivery](#), and the requirements of [other functional standards](#) as required, which is mandated for government departments and arm's length bodies to follow. 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 the Cabinet Office.

Time commitment and tenure

This role will require at least 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, planned by 31st December 2026. 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 NISTA consent.

Objectives and Performance Criteria

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

The vision of the programme is 'Falcon will bring transformational change. It will deliver a modern, resilient platform, improve useability and productivity, and make it easier for us to collaborate across government' and its objectives are:

Interoperability

- Delivering the vision - as set out in the Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO) blueprint - across the Cabinet Office and aligning with other government departments.

Security

- Ensuring that the Cabinet Office can enable new ways of working while defending against current and emerging threats.

Transformation

- Providing the platform that will enable and accelerate the transformation of Cabinet Office services and that can exploit advances in AI and other technologies.

Delivery

- Removing operational blockers to the efficient delivery of Cabinet Office and Government policy objectives, programmes and services.

Growth

- Ensuring sustainability and value for money within current Cabinet Office operations.

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

- Programme Reset: Review, restructure, and agree on a new plan with key partners by July 2025. (complete)
- Pilot Completion: Roll out the pilot environment by November 2025. (in progress)
- Full Migration: Complete the full, three-tranche migration of all users by October 2026.
- AI Rollout: Deploy AI tooling to all end-users by June 2026.
- Stakeholder Satisfaction: Achieve a final stakeholder satisfaction score of 7.5+ by November 2026.
- Programme Closure: Close the programme and hand over to live services by December 2026.

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 your project/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 accordance with, the specific HM Treasury delegated limits and Cabinet Office controls relevant to the Falcon Programme. Information on these controls can be found here: [Cabinet Office controls](#).

Delegated authority

You are authorised to:

- approve expenditure within the Falcon Programme Business Case approved by HMT on 17th January 2025 ;
- agree project rescheduling within three months of agreed milestones, but rescheduling beyond that must be agreed with the Executive Committee; and
- recommend to the Chief Operating Officer and the Executive Committee 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 Accounting Officer and the Executive Committee.

Appointments

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 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 CO 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 Programme 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 Cabinet Office portfolio 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 NISTA.

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 NISTA 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 Cabinet Office 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 NISTA.

You are responsible for publishing on GOV.UK a summary of the accounting office assessment completed in line with the approval of the Outline Business Case and summaries of any subsequent assessments should they be required. 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 SRO of a GMPP programme, you are required to complete the Major Projects Leadership Academy, and you have agreed to enrol on cohort 46 in the near future. The Head of Profession in the Cabinet Office can provide further information on the application process.

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 Cabinet Office 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.

NISTA will be available to you for support, advice, and assurance throughout the programme's time on the GMPP.

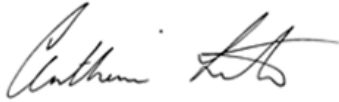
Government Project Delivery

Letter of Appointment for GMPP Senior Responsible Owners

Following approval of the business case and entry onto the Cabinet Office Portfolio, the 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,



Catherine Little

Permanent Secretary, Cabinet Office



BECKY WOOD

Chief Executive Officer, National Infrastructure
and Service Transformation Authority

Senior Accountable Officer for Project Delivery
across Government

CONFIRMATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF APPOINTMENT

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



Steve Holborow

02/12//2025