



**NOTICE OF DETERMINATION  
CORE PARTICIPANT APPLICATION**

**MODULE 2 - SECRETARY OF STATE FOR LEVELLING UP, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES**

**Introduction**

1. In my [Opening Statement](#) on 21 July 2022, I explained that Modules would be announced and opened in sequence, with those wishing to take a formal role in the Inquiry invited to apply to become Core Participants for each module. On 31 August 2022, the Inquiry opened Module 2 and invited anyone who wished to be considered as a Core Participant to that Module to submit an application in writing to the Solicitor to the Inquiry by 23 September 2022.
2. The Provisional Outline of Scope for Module 2 provides that this module will examine the decision-making by the UK Government during the Coronavirus pandemic. Further modules will be announced and opened in due course, to address other aspects of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference.
3. On 23 September 2022 the Inquiry received an application from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities ("SSLUHC") for Core Participant status in Module 2.
4. I made a provisional decision not to designate the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities ("SSLUHC") as a Core Participant in Module 2, thereby declining the SSLUHC's application ("the Provisional Decision"), on 13 October 2022. The SSLUHC was provided with an opportunity to renew the application in writing by 12pm on 20 October 2022.
5. The Applicant did not renew the application by the prescribed deadline. Accordingly, this Notice sets out my final decision on the application.

## Application

6. Applications for Core Participant status are considered in accordance with Rule 5 of the Inquiry Rules 2006, which provides:

*5.—(1) The chairman may designate a person as a core participant at any time during the course of the inquiry, provided that person consents to being so designated.*

*(2) In deciding whether to designate a person as a core participant, the chairman must in particular consider whether—*

- (a) the person played, or may have played, a direct and significant role in relation to the matters to which the inquiry relates;*
- (b) the person has a significant interest in an important aspect of the matters to which the inquiry relates; or*
- (c) the person may be subject to explicit or significant criticism during the inquiry proceedings or in the report, or in any interim report.*

*(3) A person ceases to be a core participant on—*

- (a) the date specified by the chairman in writing; or*
- (b) the end of the inquiry.*

7. In accordance with the approach set out in my Opening Statement and the Inquiry's [Core Participant Protocol](#), I have considered whether the application fulfils the requirements set out in Rule 5(2) in relation to the issues set out in the Provisional Outline of Scope for Module 2.
8. I have taken into account all of the information which the Applicant has relied upon. The fact that I have not, in making this determination, referred to every matter which is set out in the application does not mean that I have not considered it. The summary below is intended to capture what appear to be the most important points made in support of the application.

## Summary of Application

9. This application is made by the SSLUHC. The application is made on the basis that SSLUHC played, or may have played, a direct and significant role in relation to the matters to which Module 2 relates, namely the Department for Levelling Up, Housing

and Communities (“DLUHC”) provided operational support to FCDO and DHSC in the repatriation of UK nationals and provided the liaison function between Central and Local Government in order to enable the two-way provision of information and advice in relation to emerging Covid-19 issues.

10. From September 2021 DLUHC became responsible for ensuring that the Covid-19 response delivered by the UK Government was effective UK-wide, taking into account the approaches taken by the Devolved Administrations and the devolution settlements. DLUHC also played a direct role in advising and supporting Local Government in relation to the initial and subsequent Covid-19 response. Details of the range of areas across which DLUHC provided this support are given in the application.
11. The application further states that the SSLUHC has a significant interest in the matters to be examined in Module 2, in particular in relation to future pandemic civil contingency planning, the engagement and support of local communities and the protection of at-risk and vulnerable groups. DLUHC would have a significant interest in ensuring any recommendations made by the Inquiry on matters within its functions can be fully assessed and implemented.

### **Decision for the Applicant**

12. I have considered with great care everything that is said in the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (“SSLUHC”)’s application. Having done so, in my discretion, I consider that the SSLUHC does not meet the criteria set out in Rule 5 for designation as a Core Participant in Module 2 and, therefore, I have decided not to designate the SSLUHC as a Core Participant in Module 2.
13. I do not consider that the Applicant played a direct or significant role in core political and administrative decision-making in the context of Module 2 (Rule 5(2)(a)), instead noting that it played an operational role supporting the FCDO and DHSC, a liaison role as between central and local government and was responsible for ensuring UK wide delivery of the Covid-19 response including importantly the devolved nations. Similarly, while the Applicant has a significant interest, it will be appreciated that many government departments, organisations and individuals share that significant interest.

14. Furthermore, I do not consider, in any event, having regard in particular to the need to manage the Inquiry effectively and efficiently, that its interest in decision making by the UK Government is sufficiently significant as to grant it Core Participant status in this Module. I am determined to run the Inquiry as thoroughly and as efficiently as possible, bearing in mind the Inquiry's wide-ranging terms of reference and the need for the Inquiry process to be rigorous and fair. Given the vast numbers of people who were involved with, or adversely affected by, the Covid-19 pandemic, very many people in this country could potentially have an interest in it and not everyone can be granted Core Participant status for the purposes of the Inquiry hearings.
15. In my Opening Statement, I said that I will publish more information about the issues intended to be covered by later modules in the coming months. The applicant is encouraged to consider making an application for Core Participant status in a future module likely to deal directly with Core Participant status in relation to future modules which are of relevance to them.
16. It is also not necessary for an individual or organisation to be a Core Participant in order to provide evidence to the Inquiry. The SSLUHC may have relevant information to give in relation to matters being examined in the Inquiry and the Inquiry will be reaching out in due course to a range of individuals, organisations and bodies to seek information, to gain their perspective on the issues raised in the modules and, where appropriate, to ask for witness statements and documents.
17. For all of those reasons, having considered all of the information provided by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities ("SSLUHC"), in light of the Provisional Outline of Scope for Module 2, I consider that the SSLUHC did not play a direct and significant role in relation to the matters sought to be investigated in Module 2, nor does the SSLUHC have a significant interest in an important aspect of the matters to which Module 2 relates. I have therefore decided that the SSLUHC should not be designated as a Core Participant in Module 2 and I confirm that this is my final decision.
18. I will keep the scope of Module 2 under review. My decision not to designate the SSLUHC as Core Participants in Module 2 does not preclude it from making any further applications in respect of any later modules. The SSLUHC may wish to

consider applying for Core Participant status in relation to future modules likely to deal more directly with the matters which have been referred to in the application. I will consider any future applications the SSLUHC may wish to make on their merits at the time they are made.

**Rt Hon Baroness (Heather) Hallett DBE**

**Chair of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry**

**26 October 2022**