



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office



Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

From: **Name Redacted**
Team: International Energy Unit
Tel: **Irrelevant & Sensitive**
Date: 20 February 2017

To: Secretary of State Greg Clark

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

Issue **Weekly discussion to consider matters of national security**

Timing / **Tuesday 21 February, 1400 - 1515**
Location

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Agenda 1. NSC(THRC): UK Resilience

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1. NSC(THRC): UK Resilience

Issue

This is the first meeting of NSC(THRC) since 2013 and will focus on planning against the highest rated risks in the National Risk Assessment (the NRA) and, in particular, on preparedness for the highest rated risk, pandemic flu.

Recommendation

Whilst discussion will focus on planning for a flu outbreak, it would be useful to illuminate some of the links between pandemic flu and other risks - particularly relating to the energy sector - so as to ensure impacts are mitigated as part of the UK's planned response.

General lines to take:

- We remain focussed on working collaboratively with industry to address the top risks within the National Risk Assessment (NRA) which affect the energy, civil nuclear, oil and chemicals sectors.
- Pandemic Flu is considered a high priority risk for the energy sector and a high-level of mitigation is in place.
- Whilst supportive of a cross-HMG governance structure to increase the UK's readiness to respond to this risk, additional work must be undertaken in timeframes that align with existing Lead Department work plans to ensure it adds value.

On Risk H23 Pandemic Flu:

- Mitigating this risk is a high priority for the energy sector.
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Tools and procedures have been developed and tested to provide BEIS with frequent updates during an outbreak. This risk is exercised frequently with industry.
- Whilst supportive of the new governance structure, we are keen to ensure that BEIS input into this is proportionate due to the high level of mitigation measures already in place across some sectors (which exceed current planning assumptions).
- A work programme is being established in BEIS to assess the risk exposure of critical chemicals infrastructure and will look to establish proportionate risk management plans as appropriate.

Risk H41 & I&S – Failure of the Electricity Transmission System:

- National Grid has a well-established technical recovery process to recover the National Electricity Transmission System (NETS) from a total or partial shutdown.
- BEIS works closely with National Grid, Ofgem and industry to ensure that this process is delivered swiftly and affordably.

If pushed to understand links between Pandemic Flu and other top risks e.g. H41/

I&S

- The first priority is to agree how quickly electricity supply can be restored. This is a technically complex issue and my officials expect it to be complete in the autumn. This is the first priority and any follow-on work must wait for it.

I&S Inland or Coastal Flooding – if pushed:

- The energy supply sector is well protected against flooding. The National Flood Resilience Review gave it a good assessment as did a coastal flooding review in 2013/14.

Background

The NRA is the Government's assessment of the most significant risks the United Kingdom could face over the next five years, which could result in a civil emergency.

Overall 11 of the NRA risks have been assessed as being likely and/or severely impactful and are therefore considered to be the most serious. BEIS owns two of these:

- H41 Total Failure of the National Electricity Transmission Network. This is assessed to be a low likelihood event, but its impact to the UK if realised is assessed as high, disrupting society and many critical sectors.
- I&S

BEIS teams are working with the security agencies and industry to i) reduce the risks of a total failure and, ii) to ensure there is an effective plan to get the network running again.

Risk H23 Pandemic Flu

The scenario in the NRA is an outbreak of influenza causing up to 750,000 fatalities and work force absence rates of 20-40% for up to 2-3 weeks.

We believe that Minister for the Cabinet Office Ben Gummer and Government Chief Scientific Advisor Sir Mark Walport are the drivers for advocating this risk as the focus of the agenda of this meeting, following the recent exercise - CYGNUS.

DH and CCS are proposing the establishment a new cross-HMG governance group to monitor a work programme over the next 12-18 months to increase the readiness of this risk across all sectors.

Risk H41 & I&S – Failure of the Electricity Transmission System

The failure of the transmission network leads to a national blackout which could take up to 5 days to restore,

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The resilience of the restoration process ('black start') has started to reduce as the number of associated assets falls and the cost to consumers increases as assets become more expensive to replace. BEIS is leading urgent work across the industry to establish an acceptable and affordable level of service; officials are advising Jesse Norman on this.

Remaining Risks

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Background

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