

First Witness Statement of Philip Rutnam

Exhibits: PR/1 - 48

Dated: 26 May 2023

**WITNESS EVIDENCE FOR THE UK COVID 19 INQUIRY**

**MODULE 1**

**RESPONSE TO RULE 9 REQUEST TO PHILIP RUTNAM**

**(11 APRIL 2023)**

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**FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF SIR PHILIP McDOUGALL RUTNAM KCB**

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**INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

1. I, **PHILIP McDOUGALL RUTNAM**, provide this statement in my personal capacity and in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 11 April 2023 (“the **Rule 9 request**”).
2. At the outset I confirm my understanding of the overarching purpose of the Rule 9 request. This is set out in the Rule 9 request as being to enable the Inquiry to examine the UK’s emergency preparedness, planning and resilience for a pandemic. This includes whether the risk of a Coronavirus pandemic was properly identified and planned for, and whether the UK was ready for such an eventuality. More broadly, the module will also look at the UK’s preparedness for whole-system civil emergencies, including resourcing.
3. The Rule 9 request seeks information on these matters by reference to my role as Permanent Under-Secretary of State (‘Permanent Secretary’) at the Department for Transport (2012-17) and Permanent Secretary at the Home Office (2017-20).

4. The Rule 9 request is set out under three headings, viz '*Introduction*', '*Cross-UK Government cooperation structures for risk identification, monitoring, planning and preparedness*' and '*Pandemic planning and the UK Biological Security Strategy*'; these headings have been used to structure my witness statement as appropriate.
5. The main timeframe under consideration in Module 1 is from **11 June 2009** (WHO designation of the Swine Flu pandemic) to **21 January 2020** (WHO Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) Situation Report).
6. My witness statement draws upon my experience as a Permanent Secretary in the UK Government, as Permanent Secretary at the Department for Transport (**DfT**) from 23 March 2012 to 5 April 2017 and also as Permanent Secretary at the Home Office from 5 April 2017 to 29 February 2020. I was also Acting Permanent Secretary at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills in 2010 and Director-General there from 2009 to 2012. My other professional experience includes 15 years in HM Treasury ('HMT') (1987-2002), and some years as a member of the Board of Ofcom and in investment banking. I first became a Senior Civil Servant in 1998.
7. My preparation of this witness statement has benefited from the assistance and the knowledge of the dedicated teams in DfT and Home Office formed to support the Covid-19 Inquiry. The teams are able to search Departmental records to support my recollections and provide factual information about government policy and practices. Accordingly, whilst I cannot recollect all the details of departmental policy, processes, and actions, I am satisfied that I am able to provide accurate evidence to assist the Inquiry with the period covered by the Rule 9 Request to the best of my understanding grounded on the information provided by the relevant records and experienced colleagues.
8. The Covid-19 pandemic was a tragedy in the lives of hundreds of thousands of individuals and families in the United Kingdom, and of tens of millions around the world. I wish to express my condolences to all of those who have suffered loss or been bereaved, and my personal commitment to supporting the Inquiry in attempting to achieve its goals.

#### **Statement Structure and Overview**

9. **Section One** provides introductory comments on the themes within the Rule 9 request.

10. **Section Two** of the statement provides an overview of the role of the Permanent Secretary within a UK Government department. **This section corresponds to part 1 (Introduction) of the Rule 9 request.**
11. **Section Three** of the statement outlines, as requested, my reflections on structures within the UK Government for risk identification, monitoring, planning and preparedness. **This section corresponds to part 2 (3 – 10) of the Rule 9 request.**
12. **Section Four** provides a high-level overview of my involvement in the Government's pandemic planning and the UK Biological Security Strategy, and my perspective on the effectiveness of the structures. **This section corresponds to part 3 (11 – 13) of the Rule 9 request.**

#### **SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS**

13. In Section Two, the statement provides an overview of the role of the Permanent Secretary. It emphasises that, while the Permanent Secretary has a wide range of responsibilities, the working relationship between Ministers and officials is central to the good functioning of Government. The Permanent Secretary's role sits at the bridge between the political priorities and personal style of the Secretary of State and the effective running of a large and complex organisation.
14. Section Three first of all describes the general principles of risk management as they were applied in two Government departments, namely DfT and Home Office. It discusses how these departments changed their ability to respond to crises between 2012-20. It also looks at the role of Ministers in relation to risk management, and says that this varies widely depending on the issue and context.
15. Section Three then looks at the management of risks that require a cross-Government response, an area overseen by the Cabinet Office. In response to the Rule 9 request, it identifies some differences between the management of risks related to malicious and non-malicious threats, in particular around governance, oversight and accountability arrangements.
16. Section Four then looks at my own involvement in pandemic planning during this period. As requested by the Inquiry, it also makes some suggestions for improvement in the UK's capabilities. These are based on Sections Two and Three.

## **SECTION TWO: ROLE OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARY**

17. Section Two responds to the first part of the Rule 9 request by providing an explanation of the role of the Permanent Secretary within a UK Government department, including how the role is distinct from other senior civil servants within a UK Government department.
  
18. The Permanent Secretary is the most senior civil servant in a Government department, and thus the most senior permanent professional member of staff. As such, in a major department headed by a Secretary of State such as the Department for Transport or the Home Office, the Permanent Secretary has ultimate accountability to the Secretary of State for the discharge of the functions of all other civil servants in the Department. Those functions include the provision of advice to the Secretary of State on the Department's functions, including its policies, powers, duties and resources; and the implementation of directions received by civil servants from the Secretary of State, including the exercise of powers under delegated authority.
  
19. The Secretary of State is the person responsible for providing direction to the Department, including through issuing instructions to civil servants. The Secretary of State is also the person who is responsible politically for the Department. Political responsibility includes responsibility to Parliament and to Cabinet, and also responsibility for communications with the public at large. The Secretary of State is also, in general, the person in law who exercises the functions of the Department: the Department as a whole does not have a separate legal personality (though some civil servants may have certain statutory functions which are exercised discretely from Ministers, such as Immigration Officers' powers of search and arrest).
  
20. The primary role of the Permanent Secretary in a Ministerial Department is therefore to support the Secretary of State in delivering his or her objectives in support of the Government of the day. It is the role of the Secretary of State to provide political leadership to the Department, and overall direction to its civil servants.
  
21. Government is however a complex entity, and three important points should be added to this general picture.

22. The first is that both Secretaries of State and civil servants exercise their functions within a wider context across Government. A Secretary of State is a member of Cabinet, appointed by and answerable to the Prime Minister, bound by Cabinet collective responsibility, and subject to the Ministerial Code (PR/1 – INQ000188726) which *inter alia* sets standards for Ministers' conduct. The Permanent Secretary, like other civil servants, is bound by the Civil Service Code (PR/2 – INQ000188730), which sets standards for the civil service, for example requiring impartiality, honesty, objectivity and integrity at all times, and is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Civil Service Code within his or her Department.
23. Moreover, the Cabinet Office and the Treasury have very important functions which require individual Government departments to act in certain ways. The Cabinet Office has responsibility for the overall coordination and conduct of Government business through Cabinet, Cabinet Committees, and instruments such as the Codes just mentioned. It also has direct responsibility for certain functions around national security and civil contingencies, as well as some corporate services that operate across Government (such as aspects of HR). The Treasury has very important functions in relation to the planning, management and control of public spending and the use of public funds; in general departments can only properly spend money if they do so with the Treasury's consent.
24. These cross-government frameworks and institutions act as important guides and constraints to Secretaries of State and Permanent Secretaries and to departments in general. Much of the business of Government requires inter-departmental coordination and agreement, and there is often both a political dimension to this (which falls to Ministers) and an official dimension (which falls to civil servants). This is particularly true of things such as the development of new policies, or decisions which have significant new financial implications, or the handling of emergencies which require cross-government coordination. One of the roles of a Permanent Secretary is to provide certain advice to a Secretary of State on complying with these frameworks, but it is obviously for the Secretary of State to decide whether to follow that advice, and indeed whether to seek it in the first place.
25. A second important point relates to the Permanent Secretary's role as the Principal Accounting Officer for his or her department. The role of Accounting Officer is defined by HM Treasury in *Managing Public Money* (PR/3 – INQ000188728) and has its origins in 19th century arrangements to protect against the misuse of public funds. As the Principal Accounting Officer, the Permanent Secretary has a personal responsibility to Parliament

for ensuring that the financial resources of the Department are used appropriately, to a high standard of probity, and that the organisation maintains appropriate systems and controls. This personal responsibility takes the form of accountability to the Public Accounts Committee, which is regarded as the most senior Commons Committee but is attended by officials rather than Ministers. The responsibility of the Principal Accounting Officer extends to subordinate bodies (such as NDPBs) that are under the ultimate control of the Department: each of these organisations will have its own Accounting Officer who is subordinate to the Permanent Secretary.

26. I comment below on what happens if there is a conflict between the responsibility of the Principal Accounting Officer and the instructions given by a Secretary of State.

27. The Permanent Secretary is also often said to have a “stewardship responsibility” for the Department, especially for its long-term health and capability. This statement was included in my performance objectives for a number of years (PR/4 – INQ000188731; PR/5 – INQ000188696), and was certainly an important aspect of how I sought to perform the role. This responsibility does not however have anything like the same status as the role of Principal Accounting Officer, nor are the same mechanisms available to meet this goal.

28. The third important point relates to the way that Government departments operate in practice. This is partly linked to conventions but also to practicalities, and to the preferences and priorities of individual Ministers.

29. In all departments, the Permanent Secretary has lead responsibility for the professional management of the organisation in support of Ministers’ political objectives, including the management of human and financial resources and the systems needed to optimise the use of these and other assets. This is partly a matter of convention and partly by virtue of his or her status as Accounting Officer. It is also linked to the reality that Government departments are large and complex entities, and that Ministers’ primary objectives and responsibilities are political rather than managerial.

30. When I was Permanent Secretary at the Department for Transport it had approximately 15,000 staff, a budget of around £20 billion per annum, a multi-year capital expenditure programme of roughly £150 billion, and responsibility for public corporations with assets of around £400 billion. The Home Office had approximately 35,000 staff, a budget of around £15 billion per annum, and responsibility for the regulation and oversight of organisations employing a further 300,000 or so. Both Departments were also pursuing

highly contentious and technically challenging political objectives, and at the same time responsible for numerous other activities vital to the safety and wellbeing of the nation.

31. Government departments such as these are therefore as complex as any organisation in the United Kingdom. The only effective way to run an organisation of this scale and complexity is through clear structures of accountability and delegation, with clear goals set at the highest level cascading down through the organisation so that ultimately each individual in the organisation knows what is expected of them. It is therefore inevitable that Secretaries of State delegate to officials the great bulk of the decision making and activity that takes place within a department below the most strategic levels.
32. One of the key tasks for senior officials is to ensure that the activities of officials at all levels are consistent with the policies and objectives of Ministers. In practice this requires constant iteration, both because political objectives often need to be clarified but also because they can change frequently, whether in response to a change of Secretary of State or Minister or simply to shifts in the political agenda. External events also frequently throw up new and large challenges.
33. At the same time there is a regular need to ensure that the allocation of resources (human, financial and managerial) is aligned with the priorities of Ministers and the other commitments of the Department, and complies with any requirements from the Treasury and Cabinet Office. This is far from straightforward given the array of functions in a major Government department, and the scope for differences of view within Government and beyond about relative priorities and resources.
34. Individual Secretaries of State can also have very different views about how to exercise their functions. Some prefer to set strategic goals, and seek to focus their own time on a small number of political priorities. Others prefer to make a much wider range of decisions themselves, and not to leave them to junior Ministers or officials. These differences also naturally extend to which decisions are regarded as important, given that priorities will differ as well as styles of working. It is very important that senior officials are able to adapt to the different style and priorities of different Secretaries of State.
35. Experience has shown that the best way to manage a department of state is through strong working relationships between the Secretary of State, the Permanent Secretary, and other senior officials. These strong working relationships promote very good formal and informal flows of information in both directions, a strong sense of common professional endeavour,

and an environment of mutual respect. Difficult issues will still arise in this environment but there is a better chance of resolving these in a way that helps Ministers to achieve their political objectives, and also pay due attention to goals that may have lower political priority, like the long term health and capability of the Department.

36. It is part of the responsibility of a Permanent Secretary to support a constructive working environment of this kind, and also part of the responsibility of a Secretary of State, in line with the Ministerial Code.

### **Limited relevance of Ministerial Directions**

37. Tensions can sometimes arise between the Permanent Secretary's responsibilities as Accounting Officer and the instructions given by a Secretary of State. The great bulk of such issues are resolved through discussion, in which a way forward is found. But if that is not possible, the Permanent Secretary may seek a Ministerial Direction. This is a formal instruction from the Minister to proceed with a course of action despite the Permanent Secretary's reservations. The instruction is made public, though this may be delayed until publication of the relevant year's Annual Report and Accounts for the Department, and there is a corresponding change in the Permanent Secretary's responsibility to the Public Accounts Committee.

38. However, the circumstances in which a Direction may be sought are limited to courses of action that involve spending public funds, such as starting or varying projects or making new financial commitments. It is not possible or not practicable to seek a Direction for the failure to take an action, or a decision not to engage in a certain activity. This mechanism does not exist therefore to support the 'stewardship' function sometimes attributed to a Permanent Secretary.<sup>1</sup>

39. Directions have historically been rare. There is evidence that some Ministers have been very reluctant to issue them, and that seeking a Direction can put a strain on the working relationship just described (for example, see paragraph 3.23 of PR/6 – INQ000188700). In my experience, these and other factors limit the relevance of Directions in the life of a Department. That life revolves instead around the Secretary of State's priorities; his or her working style; the nature of the working relationship with officials; and the pressures of

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<sup>1</sup>The criteria for seeking a Direction are set out in *Managing Public Money* (PR/3 – INQ000188728)



political and other events. These factors will condition the advice that is sought by the Secretary of State, and the advice that is given to the Secretary of State. It is that advice to Ministers – informal as well as formal – that is the principal means by which civil servants and Ministers work together.

### **The Permanent Secretary in relation to other Senior Civil Servants**

40. It is the Permanent Secretary's role as the permanent professional head of a department, as well as his or her role as the Principal Accounting Officer, that distinguish this position from other roles in the Senior Civil Service (SCS). Senior Civil Servants manage and lead the individual functions within the Civil Service for which they are responsible. They are expected to provide expert and impartial advice and support to Ministers and to Parliament. They are expected to uphold the Civil Service Code and its values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality.

41. The other grades in the SCS are:

- Second Permanent Secretary: some larger and more complex departments have a Second Permanent Secretary; this role is subordinate to the Permanent Secretary; the functions vary but may include being deputy to the Permanent Secretary, and/or responsibility for a very large set of functions in the Department;
- Director-General;
- Director;
- Deputy Director.

42. By way of example, when I was Permanent Secretary at the Home Office, the Department had one Second Permanent Secretary, 8 Directors General, 56 Directors, and 242 Deputy Directors, providing leadership to around 35,000 staff.

### **SECTION THREE: CROSS-UK GOVERNMENT COOPERATION STRUCTURES FOR RISK IDENTIFICATION, MONITORING, PLANNING AND PREPAREDNESS**

43. Section Three responds to the second part of the Rule 9 request by providing an explanation of how the UK Government identifies and manages risk. It looks first at the key principles, then at how those principles were implemented inside particular

Government departments, and then at the processes across Government. It also considers the accountabilities of Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, and other senior officials.

### **Risk management in UK Government: general principles**

44. The HMT *Orange Book: Management of Risk – Principles and Concepts* is the key document setting out the framework for risk management in the UK Government (PR/7 - INQ000188727). The framework is intended for all organisations that fall within the scope of *Managing Public Money* which includes non-departmental public bodies, executive agencies, departments that are not headed by Ministers, as well as main Departments. The document sets out a principles-based approach with varying degrees of prescription.

45. The five overarching principles are:

A: Risk management shall be an essential part of governance and leadership, and fundamental to how the organisation is directed, managed and controlled at all levels.

B: Risk management shall be an integral part of all organisational activities to support decision-making in achieving objectives.

C: Risk management shall be collaborative and informed by the best available information and expertise.

D: Risk management processes shall be structured to include: a. risk identification and assessment to determine and prioritise how the risks should be managed; b. the selection, design and implementation of risk treatment options that support achievement of intended outcomes and manage risks to an acceptable level; c. the design and operation of integrated, insightful and informative risk monitoring; and d. timely, accurate and useful risk reporting to enhance the quality of decision-making and to support management and oversight bodies in meeting their responsibilities.

E: Risk management shall be continually improved through learning and experience.

46. The *Orange Book* also sets out in Annex A the responsibility and accountability of a Permanent Secretary (as Accounting Officer) in relation to the management of risk. These responsibilities include:

- Establishing the organisation's overall approach to risk management.
- Establishing risk management activities that cover all types of risk and processes that are applied at different organisational levels.
- Ensuring the design and systematic implementation of policies, procedures and practices for risk identification, assessment, treatment, monitoring and reporting.
- Considering the organisation's overall risk profile, including risk management within arm's length bodies and the extended enterprise.
- Designating an individual to be responsible for leading the organisation's overall approach to risk management.
- Considering periodically whether the organisation's leadership style and human resource policies support the desired risk culture.

47. In discharging these responsibilities the *Orange Book* states that the Accounting Officer should be supported by the organisation's Board and by its Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, and I discuss their role further below.

### **Risk identification and management in DfT and Home Office**

48. It was therefore an integral part of my job as Permanent Secretary to ensure that the departments for which I was responsible had suitable culture, processes, resources and systems in relation to risk management. In practice I discharged this function by trying to ensure that there was an appropriate structure of responsibility in place beneath me, supported by high quality systems and processes, and a culture of continuous improvement.

49. It may be helpful to give some examples by way of illustration. In the Department for Transport, for example, my role involved:

- ensuring that the organisation learned appropriate lessons regarding risk identification and management following the collapse of a major project shortly after my arrival in 2012 (PR/8 – INQ000188691);
- the implementation of a new *Risk Management Policy* in 2013 to apply across the Department (PR/9 – INQ000188703);
- ensuring regular discussion in the senior governance bodies of major risks, and of the Department's approach to mitigating these; for example, the discussion at the

Department's Executive Committee on *Transport Resilience and Natural Hazards* (including human pandemic) in October 2013 (PR/10 – INQ000188705; PR/11 – INQ000188692);

- regular stocktakes of the major risks facing the Department, such as these examples in 2014 (PR/12 – INQ000188693) and 2016 (PR/13 – INQ000188701).

50. The DfT *Risk Management Policy* of 2013<sup>2</sup> sets out in Section 5 the roles and responsibilities of individuals at different levels in the Department for risk identification and management. It states that all employees have responsibility for risk identification and where appropriate mitigation relevant to their work areas. Line managers have responsibility for ensuring that their staff have the skills and understanding appropriate to their role. Senior managers in the Senior Civil Service, and those with certain other specific roles, have responsibility for ensuring that the functions for which they are responsible have embedded and adopted the principles and practices required by the Policy, which is based closely on the Orange Book.

51. It was therefore a fundamental responsibility of the senior staff under my control to ensure that risks were identified, mitigated, and escalated for awareness or action in their area of responsibility. In practice, while I was Permanent Secretary, I would hold the senior staff under my command to account for the identification and mitigation of the risks relating to their objectives. The senior members of staff who reported to me were typically at Director General level and comprised, in sum, all the major functions of each Department, including both the delivery of key policies and public services and corporate functions such as HR, finance and information systems.

52. Each of these senior members of staff had defined performance objectives, which related in turn to the strategic objectives of the Department, as did my own<sup>3</sup>, and so on down the organisational structure. And each of these senior members of staff was expected to show clear personal leadership in relation to risk management in their area of responsibility, and to contribute positively and collaboratively to risk management across the rest of the Department and Government as a whole.

53. Similar arrangements applied at the Home Office in relation to, for example, the policy for risk management and the structures of accountability and responsibility (PR/14 -

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<sup>2</sup> (PR/9 – INQ000188703)

<sup>3</sup> (PR/5 – INQ000188696)

INQ000188732). Risk was discussed on a monthly basis at the Department's Executive Committee, which I chaired, and which was supported in this respect by a Performance and Risk Committee. Risk was also considered quarterly at the Departmental Board (discussed further below and an example of how this was presented is contained in the briefing to the Department's Executive Committee at PR/15 - INQ000188737).

### **Preparedness for crises**

54. In the Departments where I had a senior role, crises were seen as a relatively frequent phenomenon which required high levels of planning, preparedness, organisational resilience and adaptability. This was seen as an integral part of organisational management, and there was a high awareness of the human, social, economic and political costs associated with crises, and of the difference that could be made by an effective response.
55. Lead responsibilities for preparing for crises were accordingly held at a senior level. They were typically structured so that there were some elements that supported the whole department and some that were held in individual work areas.
56. In DfT, for example, a major risk area was transport security: the risk of a terrorist or cyber attack on aviation or the rail system for example. We structured our capability so that there was a central team supporting the whole Department to address these risks, with high levels of specialist expertise in fields such as counter-terrorism and cyber security. In addition we had certain capabilities distributed in the teams responsible for rail, road, sea and air transport. The distributed capabilities had lower levels of specialist expertise but a very strong understanding of the individual transport modes. The central team was led at Director level, overseen by a Director General who had responsibility for transport security in the round. The modal responsibilities were also held at Director level, but these Directors also had non-security responsibilities. The same principles were applied in the Home Office albeit in a different context.
57. One general theme during this period in both DfT and the Home Office was to increase our preparedness for civil emergencies and to reduce any disparity between the arrangements for dealing with malicious and non-malicious threats.

58. Civil emergencies featured as a major part of contingency planning in both departments. DfT, for example, recognised the need to be prepared for a wide range of natural and other civil hazards such as severe weather, wildfires, space weather, coastal flooding, human pandemics, volcanic eruptions, major transport accidents such as rail or air crashes, industrial action, and disruption to cross-Channel travel, which might itself arise for a wide variety of reasons (the following documents contain examples: PR/16 – INQ000188704; PR/10 – INQ000188705; PR/17 – INQ000188711; PR/18 – INQ000188698). The Home Office similarly recognised a wide range of potential civil emergencies, such as major flooding, disasters overseas requiring repatriation, human pandemics, fuel strikes, major fires, cross-Channel disruption, large-scale loss of life at the border, and major policy or operational crises. These existed alongside security-related threats such as conventional terrorism, CBRN risks, hostage-taking and sieges, and public disorder, such as the London 2011 riots (examples of how this range of civil emergencies was recognised in senior fora can be seen in the presentation delivered to ExCo on 26 September 2017 at PR/19 - INQ000188722 and the papers presented at the Departmental Board on 10 September 2018 at PR/20 - INQ000188720).
59. In both DfT and the Home Office important organisational changes were made during this period to strengthen the capability for addressing civil emergencies. In DfT these changes were prompted by a management review in 2013-14. This led to a decision to merge the team responsible for civil contingencies into the team responsible for transport security, with the latter given a wider mandate to ensure the Department was appropriately prepared for the full range of potential emergencies.
60. This change is reflected in, for example, papers from 2016 that show how the Department conducted an assessment of its readiness to handle a wide range of security-related and non-security-related emergencies. The assessment resulted in a gap analysis that then led to a targeted programme of action to improve the quality of its mitigation plans in a number of areas, including human pandemics. The relevant papers are: PR/21 – INQ000188712; PR/22 – INQ000188709; PR/23 – INQ000188710; PR/17 – INQ000188711; PR/24 – INQ000188699; PR/18 – INQ000188698; PR/25 – INQ000188697; PR/26 – INQ000188706; PR/27 – INQ000188707). The unit that conducted this analysis also led DfT's involvement in Exercise CYGNUS in 2016 (PR/28 – INQ000188702).
61. In the Home Office, the Department's experience of the Grenfell Fire in 2017 prompted a review of the arrangements for responding to civil emergencies. I asked Julian Miller, a

former senior official in MOD and the Cabinet Office, to undertake this review. His report in November 2018 recommended that we should build a single integrated capability for responding to major civil incidents but keep this distinct from the similar capability that already existed relating to terrorism and national security incidents (PR/29 - INQ000188733). This was in part to increase the Department's capability to deal with concurrent events. The two teams would however work to similar protocols and standards.

62. This report led to the creation of the Departmental Operations Centre (**DOC**) (PR/30 – INQ000188723). Among other things this provided for the Department to be able to mobilise a civil emergencies response capability of up to 14 people, operating 24x7 on an enduring basis, and with defined leadership roles. The DOC was mobilised in 2019 to prepare for a 'no deal' Brexit. It was also activated on 29 January 2020 to respond to Covid-19. The DOC's primary role was emergency response rather than planning, but there were parallel initiatives in 2018 to improve our planning for disruptive events (the following documents provide examples of these initiatives: minutes from the ExCo meeting dated 20 November 2018 at PR/31 - INQ000188735 and 11 December 2018 PR/32 - INQ INQ000188736; these are also detailed in the paper circulated ahead of the ExCo meeting of 7 February 2020 at PR/33 - INQ000188724).

63. During 2019 a high proportion of the Department's capacity to plan for adverse events was taken up by Brexit preparations, in particular for the contingency of a 'no deal' exit. This is shown for example by the minutes of the Departmental Board meeting in September 2019 (PR/34 - INQ000188734). The priority given to Brexit planning probably reduced our ability to pursue other, unrelated, improvements in risk management in that year. The Department did, however, at all times also retain the capacity to respond to at least two other concurrent major events.

### **Role of Ministers in risk management**

64. The role of Ministers in relation to risk management does not seem to be well defined in the standard guidance documents. Ministers are not mentioned directly in the *Orange Book*, nor is risk management mentioned in the Ministerial Code. The Cabinet Office *Code of Good Practice on Corporate Governance in Central Government* does discuss Ministers and risk management but it does this only in the context of their role as Chair of the Departmental Board; as discussed below, I think that in practice the relevance of the Departmental Board is limited (PR/35 - INQ000188729).

65. Secretaries of State are however plainly politically accountable for the management of risk in their Department. Only they have the democratic legitimacy to make major decisions about which risks to accept and to allocate significant resources to risk mitigation. As soon as things start to go wrong it is plain that Parliament, the public and the media expect Ministers to provide the political leadership needed to lead an effective response.
66. In my experience, risk management is integral to the role of Ministers, and a vital part of the dynamic relationship between Ministers and officials. However, the way in which Ministers perform this role tends to vary a great deal depending on a number of factors, including the type of business in the department; changes in Government priorities over time; and Ministers' own preferences, interests and ways of working. In general, I would expect officials in departments to operate a very structured, consistent and methodical approach to risk management. I would expect Ministers' involvement to vary over time, depending on the significance and urgency of the issue and their own interests and style.
67. Therefore a key judgement for officials to make is to decide which particular risks to escalate to Ministers, and how and when to do this.
68. In some areas of Government business, risk and risk management form one of the central topics of regular discussion with Ministers. The Home Office, for example, had lead responsibility within Government for ensuring that appropriate plans were in place to mitigate various types of national security risk. This required detailed definitions of various scenarios, regular analysis of shifts in threat and potential impact, and decisions on specific mitigation measures. These risks, and risk mitigation plans, were frequent subjects for discussion between officials, the Security Minister, and the Home Secretary.
69. In a broadly similar way, at DfT there was regular discussion with Ministers of the risk of serious disruption to the transport network due to causes such as adverse weather, industrial action, cross-Channel disruption, or various types of malicious threat. There was also discussion of the options for mitigation, and the resource consequences of these options. My experience of defence planning in the 1990s was also of a highly structured, well resourced approach to risk identification and mitigation, which to a large extent drove decision making around resources.
70. In other areas of Government business, I would expect risk management to be integrated more into the discussion of key priorities, rather than treated as a standalone item. For



example, we would have regular discussions with Ministers about major projects such as large rail or road schemes, or the Government's commitment to recruit an additional 20,000 police officers. In cases like these the risks to achievement of the project's goals would be discussed alongside other elements of the project. That said, sometimes particular risks might be so significant as to justify stand-alone papers, meetings and then further action. The risks to air quality linked to the transport system are a good example: these became increasingly prominent in the middle of the last decade, and led to a very large programme of work, with extensive involvement by Ministers.

71. The picture is therefore a fluid one and rather less structured than set out in the standard manuals on risk management. Ministers might be very closely involved in risk management in particular areas, but this would tend to depend on the issue or context, and to relate to something that was recognised by Ministers as a priority. Ministers were less likely to get involved in the generic systems for risk management, seeing that more as a matter for officials, though they would want to be assured that there was such a system and that it was effective.

72. Risks would also be escalated to Ministers by officials for action or information if they were sufficiently serious and/or pressing that they might have a material bearing on their responsibilities, and/or if it was thought likely that the Minister would want to know about them. Because of this fluidity, as a Permanent Secretary, I would expect senior officials to keep the question of Ministers' involvement in risk management under constant review, and to be active in bringing risks and issues to Ministers' attention, both formally and informally depending on context.

### **Example related to Covid-19**

73. This account of Ministers' role in relation to risk management is linked to my earlier discussion of the way in which Government departments work in practice, and the central role played by the working relationship between Ministers and officials. The ability to escalate risks rapidly is a key factor here, together with good quality communication, particularly in conditions of uncertainty.

74. It may help to give an example relevant to Covid-19 to bring to life officials' role in escalating risks to Ministers.

75. As set out in its Corporate Witness Statement for Module 1 (PR/36 - INQ000147708), the Home Office was involved in the UK's preparations for responding to Covid-19 from 9 January 2020, the date on which the WHO notified the existence of the new disease. Steps taken in the Home Office included the activation of the DOC on 29 January 2020 and the declaration of a Critical Incident on 31 January 2020. The Home Secretary and other Ministers were regularly briefed on the situation during the second half of January and first half of February, for example by my readout of a meeting of Permanent Secretaries that I attended on 22 January (PR/37 – INQ000051712).
76. However, by the start of the week beginning 17 February 2020, it was clear to me and to some other members of the Department's Executive Committee that the impact of Covid-19 could be very serious indeed. We were concerned to ensure that the gravity of the situation was grasped fully, including raising awareness that it could dwarf other crises. This assessment was based on observing recent events in Italy; our own high level, illustrative, analysis of the potential impact on the UK; the lack of assurance of any means of preventing the disease spreading; and our own professional experience of other crises.
77. I decided to seek an urgent meeting with the Home Secretary to brief her on the outlook and the need to step up the Department's own preparations. It is unusual for the Permanent Secretary to seek an urgent meeting on an item of business like this, but by no means unknown.
78. The meeting took place on 18 February 2020, and was attended by the Department's Chief Scientific Adviser (Professor Sir John Aston), the Director General Border Force (Paul Lincoln, who had lead responsibility for our pandemic planning), as well as me and others. I advised the Home Secretary that we were increasingly concerned by the outlook for Covid-19; that on plausible assumptions the pandemic could lead to 150,000 additional deaths in the UK; that it could lead to large-scale temporary absences from the workforce of 25-30%; and that overall it could be "bigger than Brexit" in terms of the challenge to the country. I emphasised the uncertainty around the assumptions but said that it was essential that we gear up as a Department for this potential crisis, and in particular that we start to scale up our response to the crisis. We should also increase our engagement with DHSC and the centre of Government, on whom we were dependent for planning assumptions.
79. Paul Lincoln then briefed the Home Secretary on our business continuity plans. The Home Secretary asked various questions about the basis of our plans, and why certain activities

and not others had been selected for deprioritisation. The meeting was cordial and professional. It concluded with some actions around our business continuity plans and our engagement with the centre of Government. I believe these actions were taken forward, though I was not personally able to brief the Home Secretary any further on this issue (the briefing slides and a readout from this meeting are at PR/38 - INQ000052082 and PR/39 - INQ000052085).

## **Role of Departmental Boards**

80. While the *Orange Book* does not refer to Ministers, it does refer to the boards of public bodies (PR/7 - INQ000188727). It describes a number of important roles to be played by those boards, including ensuring there are effective arrangements for governance, risk management and internal control, and that there is a proper framework of prudent and effective controls. This is expanded upon in the *Cabinet Office Code on Corporate Governance*, which sets out a good practice code for the Departmental Board chaired by the Secretary of State (PR/35 - INQ000188729).
81. The *Orange Book* does not differentiate between the boards of public bodies that are statutory (e.g. NDPBs, such as the Disclosure and Barring Service) and the boards of Government departments. But there is an important difference between the two: in the former case, boards bear responsibility for running the organisation, while in the latter boards are only advisory, and the line of responsibility runs, as discussed, from civil servants to the Permanent Secretary to the Secretary of State, and on to Cabinet and Parliament.
82. Departments of State have had boards chaired by the Secretary of State since reforms introduced by the Coalition Government elected in 2010. These boards comprise a number of non-executive members alongside some other Ministers, the Permanent Secretary and some senior officials.
83. In my experience, well-qualified non-executive members of Departmental boards could play a very useful role in supporting risk management in departments. It was very valuable to be able to access the experience and advice of non-executive directors who had senior backgrounds in large and complex organisations that had faced similar challenges in areas like systems development or project delivery, and who brought an impartial and independent perspective. This expertise was accessed in a range of ways. Non-executives chaired the Audit and Risk Assurance Committees of DfT and the Home Office, and non-

executives were also members of key Departmental committees (such as the DfT committee which oversaw major procurements and investments). These non-executives could also play a constructive role in giving informal advice and assurance to the Secretary of State, the Permanent Secretary, and other senior officials.

84. The formal meetings of the full Departmental Board were of more variable value, though risk management was considered alongside other key aspects of organisational management (examples of how organisational risk management was considered at Departmental Board meetings are at PR/40 – INQ000188721; PR/41 – INQ000188708; PR/42 – INQ000188694; and PR/43 – INQ000188695).
85. The role of the Secretary of State is very different from that of the chair of a large corporate board, which seems to be the model taken by the Cabinet Office *Code*. This difference inevitably affected the operation of the Board, as did its advisory and non-statutory nature. In my experience, the most important focus for any Secretary of State is political: namely his or her political priorities, and his or her accountability to Parliament, the Prime Minister, and Cabinet. The time available in the formal Board meetings is also very modest relative to the scale and complexity of the organisation.
86. My experience was that the reality of good risk management lay in the relationship between officials and the Secretary of State. It was a key duty for officials to ensure that good systems for risk identification and mitigation were in place in the Department, and that risks and risk management were escalated to Ministers promptly and effectively. It was equally a key task for the Secretary of State to ensure that he or she helped to create the right environment in which both of these things would happen. Astute and well-qualified non-executives could play a valuable role in bringing these things about, by way of advice and constructive challenge.

## **Risk management across Government**

87. I now turn to my experience of the management of risk across Government, as opposed to its management within individual Departments.
88. As already discussed, many aspects of risk require cross-departmental coordination and collaboration. Much of that takes place within the normal run of departmental business. However, there are some risks that are so significant in their potential impact on the nation

that they need to form part of the National Risk Assessment (NRA) or the National Security Risk Assessment (NSRA). It is a matter for the officials within each Department to identify the risks that they consider may require inclusion within these assessments, working within a process defined by the Cabinet Office. The Cabinet Office was responsible for the preparation of the NRA and NSRA, and for ensuring that across Government as a whole the appropriate processes were in place to identify and manage these major risks.

89. My own understanding of the NRA and NSRA processes was in summary as follows:

- the **Cabinet Office** was responsible for the production of the NRA and NSRA, and undertook periodic reviews with departments to ensure that each assessment was up to date;
- there was a **Lead Government Department (LGD)** for each risk in the assessment; that Department had primary responsibility for ensuring appropriate planning was in place to mitigate the risk, including the planning assumptions that should guide its own preparations and those of other departments;
- **other departments** were responsible for mitigating the consequences of these risks in relation to their own functions and responsibilities, acting in concert with the LGD; I term those 'supporting departments';
- the **Cabinet Office** acted in support of the LGD in relation to each risk; it also had overall responsibility for making sure that the plans cohered, for resolving disputes between departments about roles and responsibilities, and for ensuring that some key underpinning capabilities were in place across Government;
- the **Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS)** in the Cabinet Office performed this role in detail in relation to non-malicious threats, and had some responsibilities for the overall process across both NRA and NSRA; for security-related threats, which were usually at a higher classification, the National Security Secretariat played a bigger role;
- both CCS and the national security functions of the Cabinet Office reported to the **National Security Adviser** to the Prime Minister;
- there was a very important role for local government and local emergency functions, including the police, fire and rescue, ambulance and wider health services, which together formed **Local Resilience Fora**, and were Category 1 responders under the Civil Contingencies Act.

90. Both DfT and Home Office were involved in the Cabinet Office-run processes in relation to both malicious and non-malicious threats. And both DfT and the Home Office were

LGDs for certain risks (such as transport security, in the case of DfT; and counter-terrorism, in the case of Home Office) and supporting departments for other risks (such as pandemic influenza).

91. However, unlike DfT, the Home Office was part of the inner core of departments and agencies responsible for national security, alongside the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Defence, the intelligence agencies, and the Cabinet Office. I therefore had visibility from my time across the two departments of the arrangements for both malicious and non-malicious threats. In particular, following my appointment to the Home Office in 2017, I had good visibility of the cross-government arrangements for addressing malicious threats.

### **Differences between malicious and non-malicious threats**

92. The Rule 9 request asks for my views on the differences between the arrangements for oversight of malicious and non-malicious threats that were operated across Government by the Cabinet Office. I will comment on two principal differences that I observed. These related first to the seniority of oversight and governance arrangements and second to the accountability arrangements across Government. I formed the impression that there were also differences in the resources deployed, but this is more difficult for me to evidence.

93. So far as malicious threats were concerned, these fell clearly within the remit of the National Security Council (NSC). This was chaired by the Prime Minister and met regularly, attended principally by senior Cabinet Ministers. The NSC was supported in turn by a committee of senior officials, the National Security Council (Official), (NSC(O)). This met weekly, was chaired by the National Security Adviser, and its membership was principally at Permanent Secretary level across the main security departments, defence system and intelligence agencies. I was a member of NSC(O) as Permanent Secretary of the Home Office. The remit of NSC(O) was naturally wider than risk management, but did include this topic and the agenda included a reasonably regular review of the main malicious threats on the NSRA, as well as discussion of various foreign policy priorities.

94. As an experienced senior official in Whitehall, I thought it was significant that NSC(O) met weekly and that its attendance was at such a senior level. This helped to ensure a high priority was given to the topics for discussion across all the departments represented, as well as reinforcing both personal accountability for the items presented and a wider

collaborative approach across the national security community in Whitehall. The same can be said *a fortiori* for the role played by the NSC itself. It was undoubtedly significant that this was such a senior Cabinet committee, chaired by the Prime Minister personally, meeting regularly and with a number of senior officials present.

95. The nearest comparable cross-government bodies in relation to non-malicious threats were less prominent in Whitehall, and operated at a lower level of seniority. These governance arrangements were the responsibility of the Cabinet Office. They included a Ministerial sub-committee of the NSC, NSC(THRC). I believe this was usually chaired by the relevant Cabinet Office Minister, who was sometimes of Cabinet rank and sometimes not. It was attended principally by junior Ministers. There was also an official committee, NSC(THRC)(O). I believe this was chaired by the Director of CCS and attended by officials at Director level or more junior representatives on their behalf.
96. For completeness, I should add that I recall that Permanent Secretaries were briefed on civil contingencies from time to time at the weekly meetings that took place on Wednesdays (Wednesday Morning Colleagues, WMCs). There was a briefing at WMCs on 7 March 2018 on the National Risk Assessment, and one on 10 October 2018 regarding pandemic influenza preparedness (agendas and relevant papers for these meetings are at PR/44 - INQ000188717; PR/45 - INQ000188718 and PR/46 - INQ000188719). These were short informational briefings, and WMCs was not a formal governance body.
97. These structures did not change the formal accountability of Ministers or Permanent Secretaries for risk management in relation to either malicious or non-malicious threats. But I do believe they sent a powerful signal across Government in relation to the priority attached to malicious threats such as terrorism and hostile state activity. They also created many opportunities for mutual learning and challenge, and very senior mechanisms for promoting collaboration and the prompt resolution of problems. This signal is in turn likely to have had some effect on the allocation of management and staff time.
98. That said, it is important to recognise that the structures in Whitehall do not exist in the abstract: the structure of Cabinet Committees in particular is a matter for the Prime Minister.
99. My second observation relates to the arrangements for accountability and the way in which these operated across Whitehall.

100. I have already described the different roles of LGDs and supporting departments in relation to risks that appeared in the NRA/NSRA. Given the complexity of the issues raised by many of these risks, and the complexity of Government itself, it was important that there was very clear accountability at official level for ensuring that we were appropriately prepared, and for escalating decisions about further mitigation that might be needed.

101. I can illustrate the accountability arrangements that existed in relation to malicious threats by taking the example of domestic counter-terrorism. As already mentioned, the Home Office was LGD for this risk, with other departments in support: the arrangements for managing this risk had developed significantly following 9/11 and 7/7. The Director General for the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism (now Homeland Security) had personal accountability in the Home Office for the management of this risk, working closely with other parts of Government. Given the salience of this risk, this made the post-holder a high-profile and more authoritative figure across Whitehall. The arrangements to encourage effective cross-Whitehall working in this area were further strengthened further by regular inter-departmental meetings of officials chaired by the Home Secretary or Security Minister. A further helpful change was made in 2018 by the National Security Adviser, when the individuals responsible for certain security risks were designated as Senior Responsible Owners (SRO) of these risks across Whitehall.

102. I do not believe that the accountability arrangements for non-malicious threats had the same level of prominence across Whitehall. I do not recall one individual who was prominent across Whitehall as holding the responsibility for managing the risks related to a particular non-malicious threat.

#### **SECTION FOUR: PANDEMIC PLANNING AND THE UK BIOLOGICAL SECURITY STRATEGY**

103. Section Four responds to the third part of the Rule 9 request by providing an explanation of my own involvement in the UK Government's pandemic planning and preparedness, the seniority of other officials involved in pandemic planning, and my general views on the UK's core EPRR capabilities during this period.

#### **Pandemic planning**



104. Throughout my time as a Permanent Secretary I was well aware that a human pandemic - and specifically an influenza pandemic - was one of the highest risks in the National Risk Assessment. This risk was recognised as one of the most important potential triggers for a civil emergency in numerous papers for senior governance fora at both DfT and the Home Office, alongside a range of other natural and human hazards (documents that contain examples of DfT consideration of this risk are at PR/41 – INQ000188708; PR/10 – INQ000188705; PR/28 – INQ000188702; PR/17 – INQ000188711; PR/27 – INQ000188707; PR/12 – INQ000188693; PR/42 – INQ000188694; PR/43 – INQ000188695; documents that contain examples of HO consideration of this risk are at PR/47 - INQ000188721 and PR/48 - INQ000188737).
105. I was also well aware that the Lead Government Department for the human pandemic risk was DHSC, and that the Cabinet Office had a central role in ensuring appropriate preparations were made across Government. The role of DfT and Home Office in relation to this risk was to ensure that appropriate preparations were made in their own spheres of responsibility, on the basis of planning assumptions and scientific advice that were ultimately the responsibility of DHSC and the Cabinet Office.
106. I was very familiar with this structure of responsibility not least because DfT and the Home Office had Lead Government Department responsibility for other risks in the NRA and NSRA. I was therefore familiar with the responsibility of the LGD to keep the definition of the risk up to date, as the threat evolved, and to ensure frequent coordination with supporting departments around the associated mitigation (including liaison with DHSC on risks such as terrorism).
107. The Home Office's involvement in UK government pandemic planning is outlined in the Module 1 Corporate Witness statement and the Module 1 Chronology (this corporate statement is at PR/36 - INQ000147708 and I understand that the chronology has been provided to the Inquiry separately). This shows that Home Office's involvement was led by officials in the relevant policy and operational directorates of the Department, and that the level of Home Office officials attending cross-government boards depended on the issues under consideration and the need for the relevant expertise.
108. I did not therefore personally attend the Pandemic Flu Readiness Board (PFRB), the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Programme (PIPP), or comparable groups, and nor would I have expected to. As outlined earlier, the role of the Permanent Secretary was to ensure that the right structures and behaviours were in place to manage risk well across

the organisation: the structures for accountability, the systems and processes, the culture that encouraged people to take responsibility for mitigating risk, or escalating it, or both. And in addition an approach of continuous improvement, where there were opportunities for systemic improvement across the Department. Responsibility for the management of individual risks was held at a lower level in the organisation, under the delegated structure that I have already described.

109. My own involvement in pandemic planning and preparedness prior to January 2020 therefore focussed on ensuring that DfT and Home Office had the right capability in place to be prepared for this scenario. The risk of a human pandemic was a factor in the decision to strengthen DfT's capability in relation to civil emergencies in 2013-14. It was also relevant to the decisions taken in the Home Office in relation to the Miller Review in 2017-18 and to the work done at much the same time to strengthen Business Continuity Planning. I believe that each of these decisions helped to increase the preparedness of the respective Departments for a pandemic.

110. The Rule 9 request asks whether the lack of regular Permanent Secretary involvement in boards such as PFRB and PIPP might have affected their effectiveness. I do not think so. Boards such as this need to be attended by the officials who have the direct accountability and authority in their departments, and the relevant expertise: this is very likely to be at Director level and below.

111. What I do find striking is the lack of any more senior official forum, at Permanent Secretary level or equivalent, for reviewing *all* the major risks relating to non-malicious threats, including human pandemics. This is where the contrast between the arrangements for malicious and non-malicious threats becomes telling. The same could be said of the contrast between the role and status of NSC and of NSC(THRC). One risk of these arrangements is that they may have left CCS somewhat isolated in Whitehall.

112. Whilst the Rule 9 request does not ask me about the Biological Security Strategy 2018 (the **Strategy**), I understand that this is one of the matters of interest to the Inquiry. I confirm that I was aware of the Strategy, albeit my involvement was at the high level consistent with my role. I recall receiving briefings as to its development and publication, though at this stage I am not able to provide detail from memory. I am informed that the Home Office will be providing a statement on its behalf which provides the information specifically sought by the Inquiry in relation to the Strategy from the contemporaneous records.

## Potential improvements in EPRR capabilities

113. The Rule 9 request also asks for my views on the UK's core EPRR capabilities relating to civil emergencies before the Covid-19 pandemic, and any thoughts on how they could be improved. I will focus on two areas for potential improvement. I caveat these suggestions by observing that I do not have first-hand knowledge of how Whitehall has changed since 2020.
114. The first would be to adopt a more consistent approach at senior political and official levels to the governance, oversight, and accountability arrangements for risks relating to serious malicious and non-malicious threats. The test for the application of senior time and other resources should relate to the potential for harm to the wellbeing and interests of the United Kingdom rather than whether a threat relates to, say, a potential terrorist attack on the one hand, or a major natural disaster on the other.
115. There would be practical issues to resolve (including different levels of security classification) but the aim should be to raise the standard of planning and preparation for civil emergencies to the same standards as security-related threats. Achieving this would require not just changes in governance arrangements (such as committee structures) but also sharper accountability arrangements, along the lines that I have described for high impact security risks. There would also need to be some additional capability at the centre of Government, and shifts in culture and behaviour in parts of Government. In particular, the boundaries between 'civil' and 'military' and between 'security' and 'non-security' would need to be lowered. If this were achieved, I believe there could be benefits in terms of a greater focus on common factors that support resilience nationally and locally to a wide range of threats. This could be relevant to other issues that we face this century such as climate change and 'hybrid' warfare, which are likely to blur the boundary further between different types of threat.
116. The second area for potential improvement would be to define the respective roles and responsibilities of the Secretary of State and Permanent Secretary in relation to risk management.
117. This is more difficult territory because, as I have described, so much of the functioning of the state depends on the working relationships between Ministers and officials. Absent

a more fundamental restructuring of the way that Government works, no formal definition is likely to prove more powerful than the realities of politics. We should however still think about incremental improvements that might help to drive high standards of performance in risk management across Government on behalf of the nation.

118. One way of thinking about this may be to try to strengthen the accountability of both the Secretary of State and Permanent Secretary for ensuring effective systems and practices in the Department, but to make clear that their accountability is different. The Permanent Secretary's primary accountability is to design, deliver and operate the systems; the Secretary of State's to review, challenge and support. Both would have responsibilities in relation to the culture and conduct that is often critical to success.

119. I would also put more emphasis on the role of non-executives on the Departmental Board, and increase their accountability accordingly. If this were done it would be even more important to ensure that the appointment process selects individuals with the right expertise and qualifications and who can command wide respect accordingly.

120. For my part I would also link this train of thought to the respective roles and responsibilities of all these parties as stewards of the organisation. The systems and behaviours needed for risk management are just one aspect of capability, and all are intimately linked in affecting long-run performance.

### **Statement of Truth**

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings for contempt of court may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief in its truth.

I am content for this witness statement to form part of the evidence before the UK Covid-19 Inquiry and to be published on the Inquiry's website.

Signed:

**Personal Data**

Date: 26 May 2023