



Cabinet Office

Government response to Preparing for Extreme Risks: Building a Resilient Society

17 March 2022



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Introduction

The Government agrees with the spirit of the House of Lords Risk Assessment and Risk Planning Committee's report *Preparing for Extreme Risks: Building a Resilient Society*, recognises the importance of the Committee's findings, and welcomes their recommendations. Indeed, many of the improvements recommended by the Committee are actions that we have identified separately through our own internal lessons learned exercises and from other reports, such as the NAO report into the Government's Preparedness for COVID-19. We accept many of the Committee's recommendations, and commit to considering others. We have several pieces of work already underway which address these topics, including the forthcoming National Resilience Strategy and review of the National Security Risk Assessment methodology within Cabinet Office, and the Risk Centre of Excellence led by the Government Finance Function. There are two recommendations that we do not accept. This response sets out in turn our response to the recommendations, and the work already underway to deliver important improvements to the way we handle risk.

The recommendations we are accepting cover a wide range of work areas across government, and represent a substantial commitment to implementation of change. These include an increased level of professionalisation, skills and capability building across the risk management community; a greater focus on working with international communities; refreshing the Government's Biological Security Strategy; greater Ministerial oversight of risk within government; appropriate funding for Local Resilience Forums; and improved communications structures and guidance for partners. Some of the Committee's other recommendations are ones that we agree with completely in principle, but that we are already progressing through different avenues to the ones suggested by the Committee, all of which are set out in the below report.

We engaged closely with the Committee on their findings on Risk Assessment and welcome the Committee's recommendations on improving the content and process of the National Security Risk Assessment. We have considered these recommendations alongside a semi-independent review by the Royal Academy of Engineering and work across HMG. In total, several hundred stakeholders from across HMG departments and Arms Length Bodies, Chief Scientific Advisers, agencies, a range of academic groups, parliamentarians and Local Resilience Forums have contributed to the review. The review has recognised the strengths of the NSRA in using a single, consistent methodology to comprehensively assess the most serious malicious and non-malicious risks facing the UK. It has also identified areas for improvement in the way that we assess risks, involved others and share outputs. This response sets out how we'll be taking forward recommendations from this inquiry and our wider review.

For other recommendations, we commit to further consideration over the coming months. Some of the wider structural changes recommended by the Committee, such as an Office for Preparedness and Resilience and a Chief Risk Officer, will fold into a wider program of reform for our internal risk management structures, and the UK's resilience. As we finalise our National Resilience Strategy, we intend to consider the findings of the Committee alongside the findings of other reviews and inquiries, such as the NAO Report

into the Government's Preparedness for COVID-19 and Matthew Rycroft's Crisis Capabilities Review. We also await the findings of the Covid Inquiry.

We are committed to learning lessons from the pandemic and recognises that effective and meaningful risk management must be an integral part of informed decision-making, from policy or project inception through implementation to the everyday delivery of public services, as well as being fundamental to effective preparations for, and responses to, crises. We have taken immediate action to respond to the recommendations on risk management that came out of the Boardman Review and Maude Review. This work is being led by the Risk Centre of Excellence (CoE), within the Government Finance Function in HM Treasury, through the development of a cross-government strategy for improving risk management. This strategy sets out a number of short and long-term actions which will enable the government to raise the bar for the quality of risk management, ensuring that it is made central to government planning, policymaking, service delivery, monitoring, and reporting activities.

Government Response

1. The Government should re-establish the Threats, Hazards, Resilience and Contingencies subcommittee of the National Security Council, or an equivalent Cabinet Committee, ahead of the production of the next National Security Risk Assessment. (Paragraph 70)

The Government **accepts this recommendation** and has already established a new sub-committee for this purpose.

The newly-established NSC sub-committee (National Security Ministers or NSM) is an additional route to the National Security Council for collective agreement and oversight on resilience issues. As the relevant lead Minister, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster would chair the discussion on behalf of the Prime Minister.

2. The Government should establish an Office for Preparedness and Resilience as a non-departmental body, headed by a newly created post of Government Chief Risk Officer. This body would be responsible for producing independent analysis of UK preparedness and monitoring Government preparedness. It would produce assessments of UK resilience, set resilience standards, and conduct audits of UK preparedness. It would have the ability to commission research and establish expert task and finish groups on specific topics to produce expert led reports and assessments. The Office for Preparedness and Resilience should have a standing expert advisory council to provide independent challenge, oversight and strategic direction. It should establish an institutional memory bank, in the form of a digital library, which contains resilience literature and the lessons learned of all major exercises and emergencies. This should be made available to a designated set of users including central Government officials, local responders, the devolved administrations, and parliamentarians. (Paragraph 79)

The Government **agrees with the principle of this recommendation** in strengthening accountability and cross-Government assurance for risk planning, and is already progressing work within existing structures to address the underlying issues identified by the Committee, as set out below.

The Government commits to further consideration of the concepts of an Office for Preparedness and Resilience or a Government Chief Risk Officer, following the outcomes of the Crisis Capabilities Review, led by the Permanent Secretary of the Home Office, and the COVID-19 Inquiry. It will be important for any change to strengthen and complement existing and well tested accountability structures and to avoid unintentionally diminishing the accountability of those most responsible for managing risk.

Following the recommendation made by the House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts in the *Thirteenth Report - Initial lessons from the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic*, the Government made commitments to improve risk management in line with risk recommendations from the Boardman and Maude reviews in a letter of 23 June 2021 to the Committee Chair. These commitments are also relevant to this recommendation. The Government will make quarterly updates

to the PAC on the progress made on delivering these commitments, and will continue to do so until they are fully implemented. In their most recent update to the PAC, the Risk Centre of Excellence within the Government Finance Function in HM Treasury has shared their strategy and a comprehensive delivery plan, including their ambitions to have in place a head of risk management profession by April 2022.

The Government already monitors Government and UK preparedness for risks, through our regular horizon-scanning process. We await the final outcome of the Crisis Capabilities Review and any recommended improvements it presents to the way we monitor and analyse upcoming risks.

The Government will also gain information on emerging technology, horizon scanning and capability assessments through the Technology and Science Insights function being established within the Government Office for Science, which supports the Office for Science and Technology Strategy. The Office for Science and Technology Strategy is led by Sir Patrick Vallance in his role as the National Technology Adviser. He is also the Government Chief Scientific Adviser where he continues to be supported by the Government Office for Science.

The Government Office for Science will undertake a Foresight project exploring the UK's resilience to risks and long-term trends. The project will explore how long-term macro trends and transitions could evolve, such as population ageing, climate change or use of digital technology, and explore how these interact with existing risks in the NSRA or create new risks.

The Government agrees with the principle of greater assurance of UK resilience, and is already progressing work to strengthen our assurance approach of both risk management and preparedness to respond and recover from emergencies and crisis, and adopting an enhanced standards based approach. This will provide greater consistency, and continuous improvement in the interest of rigour, transparency and consistency. This year we intend to pilot approaches that focus on strengthening, cohering and extending standards as a basis for assurance and improvement of public sector emergency preparedness. The focus will be on assurance of collective capabilities and the interoperability and effectiveness of multi-agency and multi-level resilience arrangements.

The Government already commissions expert advice on Resilience matters where appropriate. The Resilience Strategy, which outlines our vision to 2030, is being developed following extensive engagement with resilience professionals, experts and other stakeholders. The Resilience Strategy Call for Evidence recognised the importance of partnership with experts and academics in shaping and delivering a 'whole of society' approach to national resilience. As part of our review of the NSRA methodology, we commissioned a semi-independent review by the Royal Academy of Engineering. We also established the UK Resilience Forum in 2021, facilitating discussion with expert stakeholders from across national, regional and local government; private and voluntary sectors and other interested parties.

The Government agrees that both internal and public-facing repositories of knowledge, encompassing guidance, standards, good practice, lessons identified and supporting material are necessary capabilities, and is currently working to utilise existing platforms for this purpose. We have already launched a Joint Organisational Learning system with JESIP, an online service for Emergency Services and LRFs. We are committed to undertaking a programme of work at the Emergency Planning College (EPC) to synthesise lessons learned of all major exercises and emergencies.

We also have a structure designed as a repository of doctrine and good practice on ResilienceDirect, which we commit to testing by the end of 2022.

3. The Treasury and spending departments must move away from their current practice of disincentivising long-term, preventative spending on risk. To address this, the Government should establish a flexible and evidence-based spending target for spending on resilience. This funding target should be based on the required capabilities and proposed mitigations outlined by the new Office for Preparedness and Resilience which we have recommended in paragraph 79. This should be assisted by an appropriate depreciation register for Critical National Infrastructure which identifies ageing infrastructure. (Paragraph 89)

The Government **agrees with the principle of** investing in resilience, and commits to further work to explore this through the Resilience Strategy. The Resilience Strategy will consider the need for continued long-term focus and investment in addressing risks, as well as our capability to address the common causes and impacts of risks, and systemic vulnerabilities. Investment, including public sector funding models, was a core theme in the Resilience Strategy Call for Evidence.

4. The Government should bolster its skills base in the areas of analysis, emergency planning and project delivery and make more use of systems thinking and Futures techniques when conducting risk assessments and developing policy. This will require offering high quality, targeted training, skill-based allowances, defined career paths, and making use of the full breadth of pay bands where market needs justify this. In developing the requisite capabilities, the Government should ensure it builds and maintains staff diversity. There must be more Ministerial engagement in risk preparedness. The Government should provide guidance and implement training for ministers on planning and crisis response. These skills should also be cultivated and properly organised in broader society to bolster general resilience. (Paragraph 99)

The Government **accepts this recommendation.** We support the professionalisation and up-skilling of staff in the named disciplines, including the Analysis, Science and Project Delivery professions, and also greater sharing between disciplines - including with Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) - to ensure that professionalisation reduces rather than increases disciplinary silos.

A Ministerial training programme is up and running, with a series of masterclasses which include working with data and science in government. We will explore options for integrating emergency planning expertise within the programme to develop ministers' skill in monitoring their department's resilience planning effectively. The College for National Security (CfNS) is in very early stages of establishment, including securing funding and staffing. Once established, it will corral a shared national security curriculum across the government Campus, that includes reference to resilience, and itself delivering a Mid Career Certificate in National Security.

The Government intends to propose, in the Resilience Strategy, the establishment of a UK Resilience Academy to establish competence standards and learning pathways in crisis management and resilience building. The emerging findings of the Crisis Capabilities Review also put a focus on crisis leadership and capability building.

The National Situation Centre has been established to bring digital data, analysis and expertise together for crisis management. SitCen became operational in September 2021 and has been resourced with a diverse range of skilled analysts from across the government analytical function. These include statisticians, operational researchers, economists, actuaries, social researchers, data scientists, and geospatial and intelligence analysts. There remains, however, a challenge to recruit DDaT specialists essential for data ingestion and management given pay competition from the private sector. Activity to attract and retain requisite DDaT skills through the adoption of skills based allowances, defined career pathways and an enhanced learning provision - both for those in the profession and those that draw upon it - is underway, with lessons learned being shared across other professions as appropriate.

The strategy led out of the HMT Risk Centre of Excellence for improving risk management is also relevant to this recommendation. It focuses on the three commitments that Alex Chisholm (Chief Operating Officer for the Civil Service and Permanent Secretary for the Cabinet Office) and Cat Little (Director General for Public Spending, Non-Executive Director and Head of the Government Finance Function), made to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC):

- **Strengthen leadership and enhance credibility** – this includes promoting and embedding good practice risk management processes within departments; continuing to develop principal and emerging risk analysis for the Civil Service Board; and increasing the support for and coordination of reviews that examine actions and plans for the effective management of these risks.
- **Collaborate across boundaries** – this includes understanding and embedding lessons on where risks could be managed better or more transparently to improve business-as-usual service delivery and help us to cope better with future emergency responses; and more collaborative and shared horizon-scanning and risk intelligence that identifies and assesses aspects that may impact on medium-term strategies and delivery within and across departments.
- **Enhance capabilities and drive professionalism** – this includes promoting innovation and increasing confidence to take considered risks through: professionalising risk management; building risk management awareness and knowledge across leaders at all levels of government organisations; and influencing the risk culture of the Civil Service.

The Government Office for Science develops Government's capability across the civil service in Futures, systems thinking and accessing and using scientific advice. The Government Office for Science is working closely with the policy profession, analytical professions, and the Royal Academy of Engineering to embed and promote systems thinking across government. A suite of products are being developed to support civil servants in using systems approaches in their work. These include a civil servant's systems thinking toolkit, bank of case studies, and a guide to weaving systems thinking through policy design, which will be published in 2022.

The Government Office for Science welcomes the Committee's emphasis on skills improvement in Futures and Systems thinking. Since the 2021 Integrated Review committed the Government to improving our strategic capability, including the use of foresight and futures, the Government Office for Science has:

- Designed and delivered a bespoke futures module for the Civil Service Senior Leadership Scheme hosted by Ashridge Management College;
- Incorporated dedicated content on futures skills to the Policy Profession standards required at developing, practitioner and expert level across the civil service;
- Commissioned quarterly training modules in futures tools and techniques from external experts, available free of charge to a cross-Whitehall audience;
- Progressed work to improve access to online learning on futures available to all new entrants to the service, planned for delivery this year.

These build on the Government Office for Science's existing offer of published futures resources, one-to-one professional advice from expert futures practitioners, and sharing best practice in futures and emerging technology through cross-Whitehall networks. The Government Office for Science continues to work with departments and Civil Service HR to develop reward options for high demand skills where market needs justify it.

5. We are encouraged by the inclusion of global risks and international partnerships in the Government's call for evidence for The National Resilience Strategy. The Government must ensure that the strategy clearly outlines how it will engage in international forums and what international agreements it would like to see implemented and refreshed. It should clearly lay out what resource it will devote to these efforts and commit long term funding. In particular, the Research Councils should give additional focus to projects which explore the international dimensions of risks. The Government should work with international partners to establish a global surveillance scheme for disease and establish data sharing agreements to ensure new infectious diseases can be identified rapidly and information about them shared with ease.(Paragraph 107)

The Government **accepts this recommendation.**

The Government commits to addressing the issue of engagement in international forums and international agreements through the Resilience Strategy. Through the Resilience Strategy Call for Evidence, the government has gathered evidence on better understanding global risks and strengthening our multilateral and bilateral relationships. The US, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden and Japan were the most frequently cited examples of countries from which the UK could learn about resilience models. As we use this evidence to develop the Resilience Strategy we will consider how best to leverage our international connections and how to adapt our approach to resilience to account for the interconnected and global nature of the modern risk picture.

International partnerships and frameworks are an important part of improving our ability, and the ability of our partners, to anticipate, prepare, respond to and recover from risk. This includes through NATO 2030 commitments in resilience and in the UK's active role internationally in disaster risk reduction.

The Government has committed to refreshing the Biological Security Strategy. The Covid-19 pandemic has reinforced the importance of international collaboration to detect and control the spread of infectious diseases rapidly. International surveillance is a key pillar of the government's extant Biological Security Strategy, which is being

refreshed as part of the Prime Minister's priority Integrated Review deliverable to review and reinforce the cross-government approach to biological security.

Global health security collaboration is also a core mission of the new UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA). Since the establishment of the UKHSA in October 2021, the agency has built on the foundations of international relationships established by Public Health England (PHE).

The Government is actively supporting the World Health Organisation's (WHO) initiative to develop an International Pathogen Surveillance Network (IPSN), alongside other international partners. The IPSN aims to provide quality, timely and representative data to better inform public health action. HMG's support includes sharing the National Variant Assessment Platform. Dr Jenny Harries OBE, Chief Executive of UKHSA, co-chairs the Implementation Consultation Group (ICG) developing this approach.

6. As part of the quinquennial review of the CCA regulations, due to report by March 2022, the Government should clarify the purpose and duties of the LRFs and should place them on a statutory footing. If LRFs are to take a more active role in emergency response, the training required, and possible liabilities increased by this change should be addressed. The UK Government in its review of the CCA should expand the range of named category 2 responders.(Paragraph 120)

The Government **agrees with the principle of this recommendation**, and the Civil Contingencies Act review will make recommendations for improvements to the legislative framework for local emergency preparedness based on the evidence from the Resilience Strategy Call for Evidence and lessons from recent events and inquiries. HMG is looking beyond the legislative framework and has already committed to consider strengthening the roles and responsibilities of LRFs in the Integrated Review. The Resilience Strategy will help to ensure the system is organised optimally to support resilience across the whole-of society.

7. The Government should improve its communication and engagement with local authorities and LRFs. In particular, the Government should establish a forum for the seamless sharing of information among LRFs, facilitated by central government. This forum would allow for the sharing of completed risk assessments and best practice insights both among LRFs and from LRFs to central government. This forum should meet at least twice yearly. It should be convened before the production of the NSRA to allow LRFs to contribute insights on the methodology and local risk information, and after the NSRA has been produced to allow LRFs to share local risk assessments and prevent duplication.(Paragraph 125)

The Government **agrees with the principle of this recommendation**, and has already commenced work to seek to improve how risk information can be shared more efficiently and widely. We will continue to work with local partners to improve both the local and national risk assessment process.

The Government will continue to use the established LRF Chairs calls led by DLUHC as a means of consistent engagement. The Government recognises the lessons learned from COVID-19 when it comes to information sharing with LRFs, and we will

continue to consider opportunities for improvement, including reflecting on the findings and recommendations of the COVID-19 Inquiry on this topic.

The Government is committed to involving LRFs in the production of the NSRA. The NSRA and other key risk and resilience documents are shared with all LRFs and the recent NSRA methodology review involved the substantial contribution from LRF partners. We will continue to facilitate LRF workshops in support of the NSRA process and develop local risk assessment guidance.

8. The Government should ensure the funds allocated to LRFs are appropriate and sufficient to allow them to carry out the full range of their responsibilities. Ringfenced funding should be allocated to allow LRFs to operationalise the necessary capabilities and standards set out by the Government. (Paragraph 130)

The Government **accepts this recommendation** and has already committed to funding to support LRF activity.

As part of the commitment set out in the Integrated Review to “consider strengthening the role and responsibilities of local resilience forums (LRFs) in England, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) announced £7.5 million per year for 3 years to support LRF activity. This follows a £7.5m funding pilot in 2021/22 and is in addition to the ongoing allocation of funding provided through respective agencies such as the police, fire and local authorities. We recognise the unprecedented demands that have been placed on LRFs in recent years and will continue to work with LRFs to ensure they are appropriately supported.

9. LRFs should be engaged in the production of the NSRA through the forum described in paragraph 125. The CCS should commit to sharing information as a default with LRFs. Information on the consequences of security threats should be provided at a minimum. Wherever possible, to prevent duplication of effort, information should be produced once at a national level and cascaded down to a local level. The Government should produce a single risk assessment template for use by LRFs to limit the duplication of effort and should ensure that information on risks can be directly copied from the NSRA into the local risk assessment. (Paragraph 135)

Noting the response above, the Government **agrees with the principle of this recommendation** and already undertakes to share information by default with LRFs, including on the consequences of security threats.

LRFs are provided with the NSRA in order to develop effective local resilience plans and fulfill their statutory duty to conduct risk assessments (often published as community risk registers) for their areas. To do this, LRFs use the NSRA and the accompanying Local Risk Management Guidance to contextualise the methodology and content to their local areas.

LRFs have been involved substantially in the recent review of the NSRA methodology and are involved in the ongoing assessment process. We will work closely with LRFs to ensure that the NSRA is well understood and usable.

Notwithstanding the principles of subsidiarity, the Government accepts the committee's recommendation to share standardised templates with LRFs for risk assessment. Whilst these will form a guide for their assessments, LRFs should not be limited to only assessing against the criteria used at the national level as there will necessarily be differences between the assessment considerations at the local and national levels, and between different local areas.

10. The UK Government needs to produce an agreed set of communications structures at all levels of seniority, including Ministerial level, to facilitate effective resilience dialogue between central government and devolved administrations. This must be done in consultation with the devolved administrations. This should define the frequency and terms of engagement, at what stage the devolved administrations should be consulted and/or informed and identify key points of contact. (Paragraph 141)

The Government **accepts this recommendation.**

The Government will address the recommendation for a refreshed set of communications structures through a full refresh of the Central Government Concept of Operations (ConOps), which we commit to delivering this year.

The Government recognises the importance of working in partnership across the United Kingdom to understand, prevent, respond to and recover from the risks we face. We recognise the strong value in joint working and that important areas of implementation and consequence management are devolved competences. Devolved colleagues are members of the Resilience Director Generals group which meets regularly to discuss and steer UK resilience activity, supplemented by four nations 'Quad' meetings at Ministerial and official level as mutually agreed. Attendance at the National Security Council sub-committee on resilience (National Security Ministers) is dependent on the topics under discussion, with devolved ministers and officials invited as appropriate.

The NSRA is shared across the UK upon completion and is used by the Devolved Administrations to inform their own risk assessments. Devolved colleagues have been involved throughout the NSRA methodology review and the ongoing NSRA process and will have the complete NSRA shared with them upon completion. Following the methodology review of the NSRA we are looking to improve the transparency of the NSRA as a whole. We are also working in partnership with devolved colleagues on the development of the Resilience Strategy.

11. The Government should work with the UK insurance industry to explore mechanisms which allow for the transfer, management and mitigation of risks which are too large for the private sector to address alone and for which the Government is the insurer of last resort, but may in fact find itself the insurer of first resort.(Paragraph 148)

The Government **agrees with the principle of this recommendation** and the Cabinet Office commits to undertaking discussions with the insurance industry in advance of the publication of the Resilience Strategy.

HM Treasury's current priority remains working closely with insurers, trade bodies and the regulators on what more the sector can do to help businesses and support the ongoing economic recovery particularly where a lack of insurance is proving to be

a barrier. However, we are also learning lessons about the impacts of Covid-19 on the insurance market and the availability of cover. These insights are crucial in achieving our shared objective of ensuring the UK is prepared to mitigate, respond to, and recover from, future major shocks, threats, and challenges. There are a wide range of options that the Government will want to consider in detail in how we tackle this, of which one could be insurance.

HMT has received representations from industry on possible public-private partnership solutions to manage systemic risks. In response, HMT has developed some fundamental policy principles central government may refer to when assessing future propositions:

- Proportionate risk share between the private insurers and government;
- Taxpayers are adequately remunerated for any risk taken on through a guarantee;
- Scheme is not premised upon an unlimited guarantee;
- The scheme improves market outcomes;
- An assessment is undertaken around the suitability of accruing large pools of capital for a specific and contracted purpose, and how these pools are accessed and replenished before, during and after a loss event; and
- Customers fully understand what they are covered for.

We will of course draw on the success of existing schemes, where appropriate parallels can be drawn when considering this option.

12. A statutory duty should be placed on all public and private regulated bodies who operate critical national infrastructure to produce and publish an audited business continuity plan. We encourage Ofgem and BEIS to implement a requirement for the operators of essential services to notify regulators of near misses, with the publication of an annual summary of near miss events. (Paragraph 154)

The Government does **not accept the recommendation**, though it is committed to keeping this issue under review. Lead Government Departments (LGDs) for the critical sectors already work closely with owners and operators to ensure they are planning for relevant risks and encourage the production of business continuity plans. Therefore the Government does not consider it necessary to place a further statutory duty on Critical National Infrastructure (CNI) operators at this point.

BEIS is the LGD that regularly engages with Ofgem and other operators of critical national infrastructure in the energy sectors; a key aspect of this engagement includes encouraging operators to report any significant incidents via existing well-established processes in place. Other LGDs also engage with operators in their respective CNI sectors, as well as related policy areas that affect some CNI operators. For instance, DCMS leads on the Network and Information Systems (NIS) Regulations which require compliance, assessment and reporting on cybersecurity by operators that fall in scope; the NIS Regulations apply to a significant number of CNI operators.

CCS and LGDs are continuing to review existing sector-specific legislation and regulation, and the potential requirement to introduce cross-cutting legislation and regulation with regards to CNI. We will ensure to factor in the recommendation to publish these plans as part of an ongoing review process, however, the potential

security risks of publishing sensitive business continuity plans of CNI operators must be taken into account.

13. The Government should clarify what “have regard to the activities of voluntary organisations” means and outline what best practice in voluntary sector engagement would look like through the production of improved guidance for LRFs. (Paragraph 159)

The Government **accepts this recommendation** and commits to reviewing the guidance to LRFs following the statutory review of the Civil Contingencies Act and supporting Regulations. The current guidance and Community Resilience standard promotes best practice in relation to voluntary sector engagement. Subsidiarity is crucial and decisions need to be made at local level as there is much closer connection to the needs of the individual communities.

The ambition of the Resilience Strategy is far reaching and will consider how all parts of society including the voluntary and community sector can play their part in building collective resilience through better coordination and cooperation.

14. The proposed reservist cadre lacks ambition and is not in line with the views of the voluntary sector. The voluntary sector should be supported to organise existing voluntary forces into a response mechanism. The Government should map existing voluntary capability and use this as the basis of any response. There should be a central coordinating point for a national voluntary response, mapping capability regularly, directing volunteers to under resourced voluntary forces and facilitating better liaison amongst voluntary groups and between the sector and the Government. The Government should be prepared to pay volunteers for days of work missed through participation in any coordinated response to risk events. The Government should consider adding emergency response skills to the post-16 curriculum, with schools and further education colleges providing volunteering opportunities to students. (Paragraph 169)

The Government recognises many of the issues raised by the Committee on this topic but **does not accept the recommendation** that the Government should pay volunteers for days of work missed through participation in any coordinated response to risk events.

The Resilience Strategy will consider how all parts of society can be empowered to play an effective role in UK resilience, considering how sectors are enabled to best contribute to emergency management, and consider a full range of methods and approaches to inform and educate the public about risk and resilience.

In line with the commitment in the Integrated Review, the Government is exploring the idea of a Civilian Reserve cadre. It is proposed that the agile and scalable cadre will be formed of current and former civil servants, with civil service-specific skills, deployed to support government capacity during an emergency. Government plans to undertake a pilot scheme to establish the viability and value-for-money of the proposal. It is not anticipated that the proposed Civilian Reservist cadre will be tied to the work of the wider Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector.

Recognising the importance of utilising skilled volunteers, the Government also launched the NHS Reservist scheme to support the health service during peak times and emergencies.

There is already positive engagement with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS). DCMS has provided support and funding to the The Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership (VCSEP) to (i) deliver a coordinated emergency response through the VCS to Covid-19, coordinating demand and supply of volunteers and collecting and sharing information on unmet needs, (ii) support coordination between government and voluntary organisations, provide access to information and coordinate requests from Government Departments and national charities for strategic deployment of volunteers, and (iii) undertake preparedness activity for other emergencies.

National VCS organisations have been encouraged to connect directly with delivery departments to support national level activity, as well as the more regular engagement with local resilience structures who are best able to utilise capabilities and capacity that VCS organisations can offer.

15. The Government should commit to a biennial publication of a brochure on risk preparedness. This brochure should educate the public on general resilience principles, outline how individuals could improve their preparedness, provide guidance on what to do in an emergency, and signpost further information on resilience. This should be modelled on the Swedish brochure 'If crisis or war comes' and supplement the NRR. (Paragraph 187)

The Government **agrees with the principle of this recommendation** regarding improving public awareness of risk, and will consider the methods we use to do so through work on the Resilience Strategy.

The Resilience Strategy will aim to improve transparency, accessibility and coherence in the way that the UK Government communicates risk. The methods we use to inform, educate and prepare the public for risk and emergencies will be an important aspect of this and a range of options to achieve this effect are currently being assessed.

16. The Government should consider the organisation and provision of a residential, intensive course on national security, resilience and defence for rising leaders in the public and private sectors. The Government should lay a written statement with the findings of its consideration in both Houses within 6 months of publication of this report.(Paragraph 188)

The Government **accepts this recommendation** and commits to considering the organisation of such a course, and publishing a statement of our findings by June 2022. As per our response at paragraph 4, there are a number of Government stakeholders (including GSCU and the College for National Security) developing such courses around the themes identified, building on previous leadership programmes which had private sector components.

17. A Pandemic Concept of Operations should be produced, as well as Concepts of Operations for other major risks, to ensure that the confusion surrounding governance does not arise in future crises. (Paragraph 192)

The Government **agrees with the principle of this recommendation.**

The Government accepts the recommendation to produce a specific pandemic plan, which is already underway as part of the work of the Pandemic Disease Capabilities Board. This Board was established following the recommendations of the Boardman II Review, which the Government accepted.

The Government has already identified some major risks that require specific ConOps due to their unique natures, such as severe flooding, which has its own ConOps in place. For most risks, however, the governance structures set out in the Central Government ConOps are the most appropriate, with specific plans or adjustments put in place as appropriate for the nature of the risk and evolving emergency. As outlined in our response to recommendation 10, we commit to publishing a refreshed ConOps this year.

18. The Biological Security Strategy needs to be renewed, refreshed and implemented, whilst also incorporating the lessons learned from COVID-19. At present, the non implementation of the Strategy represents a significant gap in UK preparedness and should be rectified as a priority. The updated strategy should be published alongside an implementation plan so that its progress can be tracked. Time in both Houses should be devoted to a debate on the refreshed strategy. (Paragraph 195)

The Government **accepts this recommendation**, and is already progressing work on a refreshed Biological Security Strategy.

One of the Prime Minister's priority deliverables in the Integrated Review is to review and reinforce the cross-government approach to biological security, including a refresh of the current strategy. The Government is undertaking a thorough review of the strategy by consulting a wide range of stakeholders across and beyond government to inform its development.

The Government has committed to publishing a refreshed Biological Security Strategy in 2022, which will set out the UK's proposed vision for understanding, preventing, detecting and responding to future biological risks. As part of this work, the Government will re-evaluate the risk landscape and consider emerging priorities since COVID-19 and in light of rapid advances in science and technology. The COVID-19 pandemic has altered the risk landscape and the UK's response capabilities - in some instances capabilities have been improved (for example, mRNA vaccine technology) which have wider potential applications, and in others we must learn lessons from the current pandemic to build a more effective system for handling these complex biological risks.

19. We propose that instead of a simple risk assessment, the UK should produce a 'National Security Risk and Resilience Assessment'. This should place more emphasis on preparedness and resilience. The NSRA as a list of risks is of limited use and should be linked to emergency plans, simulations, capability development and

proposed mitigations. This should be achieved through the following changes:
(Paragraph 225)

- The NSRA must focus more on the outcomes of emergencies. The document should be oriented around common consequences to allow for preparedness efforts which are not overly focused on discrete risks. This should be supplemented by a smaller list of very high-consequence risks or risks for which specialised planning is required.
- Risks should be grouped using Ortwin Renn's categories (box 9) to ensure risks which require similar responses are considered together. We accept that the labelling of these categories may need to change to avoid any confusion.
- Risks should be assessed on an impact-vulnerability matrix, as well as an impact-likelihood matrix.
- Where a risk may manifest in a number of ways, the NSRA should present several scenarios, not just the Reasonable Worst Case Scenario.
- The NSRA should include a number of cascading risk scenarios, whose development has been informed by interdependent infrastructure modelling.
- The NSRA should move to a five-year timeline, with risks refreshed and reassessed annually. Risks which are identified as having a high velocity of change should be assessed more regularly. Chronic risks, chronologically unpredictable risks, low-likelihood risks and the most significant risks should also be accompanied by a long-term assessment of 15 years.
- The Government should act under a presumption of publication, and should publish the content of the Official-Sensitive National Security Risk Assessment except where there is a direct national security risk.
- The data required for emergency response should be identified at the point that a risk is assessed, and all efforts should be made to ensure that data can be accessed from the outset of a crisis.
- The NSRA and NRR should be presented in a more dynamic, data driven web-portal which allows users to visualise the risk summary, access the underlying data and easily navigate to related risks.

The Government **agrees with the principle of this recommendation** and accepts many of the specific recommendations, as set out in turn below.

CCS has led the most substantial review of the NSRA since its inception (in the early 2000s). For the first time this has involved significant input from an external organisation, the Royal Academy of Engineering, and we have worked closely with the Lords committee to ensure their recommendations have been considered.

The NSRA takes a common consequences approach to assessing risk through the development of the National Resilience Planning Assumptions (NRPAs). By looking across the impacts of all NSRA risks, the NRPAs are generated to set a benchmark for building generic capabilities that support resilience against a wide range of risks. This enables us to strengthen generic capabilities that will allow us to tackle a wide range of situations, and having flexible response arrangements based on common consequences also provides some degree of preparedness against unforeseen risks. More specific capabilities are developed where risks are more inherently damaging to the UK, or where they are otherwise required. Following recommendations by this committee and the Royal Academy of Engineering, we will consider the value of taking a more focussed vulnerability approach in the NSRA process. For the next NSRA we will more clearly demonstrate how vulnerability has been taken into account in risk assessments within the current approach.

Through the recent methodology review, CCS has agreed to include multiple scenarios in the NSRA where it would reduce uncertainty and where a different set of impacts and response requirements would occur. Where appropriate, risks will be measured over longer time periods, up to 5 years. This is not possible for all risks, particularly malicious risks where uncertainty of assessment becomes unacceptably high beyond 2 years. This change will be supported by moving the NSRA to a 'live' process where risks are updated on a continuous basis depending on greatest need. Chronic risks will be addressed separately from acute risks within the NSRA using a tailored methodology to reflect their different character and to provide more useful information to planners.

The establishment of the National Situation Centre (SitCen) allows data and analysis to be brought together to monitor and respond to risks identified through the NSRA alongside emerging civil contingency and national security situations. SitCen has structured its data collection around the NSRA risks using a systems approach to visualise connections between risks and the data, analysis and insights related to them available across and beyond government. This foundational capability provides the basis for a dynamic, data driven version of the NSRA. We will look to replicate this digital basis for the next NRR.

Upon completion of the next NSRA, CCS will analyse the spread and categorisation of risks identified and assessed against a number of criteria. As part of this, we will give due consideration to the risk classes set out by Ortwin Renn.

Following the production of the NSRA, CCS will undertake a series of exercises with individuals and organisations from across the resilience and response landscape to better explore the interdependencies between different risks, including cascading and concurrent risks.

Finally, the Government agrees with the principle of sharing as much of the NSRA as possible and recognises the value of doing so. The ambition of the Resilience Strategy is to improve transparency, accessibility and coherence in the way that the UK government communicates risk. Whilst the format and methodology of the NSRA remains under review, the Resilience Strategy will outline the principle that information on risk should be communicated to all those who need it for awareness or action, in a format that is useful for each defined audience.

20. The Government should establish a forum, made up of representatives of trade associations and professional bodies, which should meet in advance of and following the production of the NSRA or twice a year, whichever is more frequent. After five years, the Forum could then meet once a year. This body should be convened by the Office for Preparedness and Resilience and used to ascertain information about business sector capabilities, inform business and industry of risks which may require a response on their part, and allow the Government to seek out best practice. Attention should be paid to ensuring representation from the full breadth of UK business and industry, with a particular focus on the logistics sector. The Government should deliver annual presentations on realistic risk assessment and risk planning to business and industry bodies. (Paragraph 231)

The Government **agrees with the principle of this recommendation**, and commits to delivering it through a new business sub-group of the UK Resilience Forum which exists to strengthen UK resilience by improving communication and collaboration on risk, emergency preparedness, crisis response and recovery. Membership comprises national, regional and local government; private and voluntary sectors and other interested parties to consider risk; provide challenge and insight and help align emergency preparedness activities.

The Government will use this UKRF business sub group to explore communications products around risk, tailored for businesses.

21. At a national level, the Government should involve major voluntary organisations in the production of the NSRA. This is to ensure that the knowledge they possess on risks and levels of community resilience, as well as information on their operational capabilities, can be included. The Government needs to recognise that the voluntary sector possesses many skills that will be crucial to building societal resilience. This should be facilitated through the single point of contact we recommended in Chapter 4. (Paragraph 236)

The Government **agrees with the principle of this recommendation**.

We recognise the important contribution made by the voluntary sector and the benefits of understanding and partnering with voluntary capabilities so they are integrated throughout the emergency management cycle. LRFs are encouraged to engage with voluntary sector organisations during the development of their local risk assessments and response plans, and are best placed to identify how voluntary and non-statutory community service provider capabilities can support emergency management at the local tier.

At the national level, the establishment of the UKRF, with national voluntary sector representatives, will strengthen UK resilience through enhancing cross-sector, multi-agency relationships, and align efforts of stakeholders to upgrade their planning and capability; helping to inform the process of policy development within Government.

Within the NSRA, representatives of the voluntary sector provide an element of challenge as part of our existing external challenge function, for example as part of the Vulnerable Persons Impact Review Group. We will consider how to increase the representation of this sector in the process as we increase the level of transparency around the NSRA.

22. The NRR should, in line with the NSRA, be presented via a dynamic, data driven web-portal which is easily navigated, evolves in response to identified threats and which provides practical, targeted advice to individuals. Its profile must be increased through an active and continuing media campaign, including via social media. This campaign should heighten whenever substantive changes are made to the risk register. It should focus on informing society of the content of the NRR and how they could use the NRR to bolster their personal preparedness. (Paragraph 248)

The Government **agrees with the principle of this recommendation**. We are currently developing our communications plan for the NSRA and NRR and are exploring what options we have to host a live, easy to access version of the NRR. As above, the ambition of the Resilience Strategy is to improve transparency, accessibility and coherence in the way that the UK government communicates risk. The Strategy will outline the principle that information on risk should be communicated to all those who need it for awareness or action, in a format that is useful for each defined audience.

23. When conducting the national risk assessment process, the Government should engage with voluntary and community groups to ascertain information on risks and population level resilience. (Paragraph 249)

Noting the response to recommendation 21 above, the Government **agrees with the principle of this recommendation** and already engages the voluntary and community sector to some degree in the national risk assessment process.

We recognise the important contribution that local knowledge/intelligence offers in the development of local and national risk assessment. Local responders and the voluntary and community sector know their communities and the vulnerabilities of individuals/areas which should be factored into both local and national risk assessments.

The establishment of the UK Resilience Forum (UKRF) will help to strengthen UK resilience through enhancing cross-sector, multi-agency relationships, and improving communication and collaboration to address challenges and identify opportunities. The Forum facilitates constructive discussion with stakeholders including representatives from the Voluntary and Community Sector on the strategic direction set by the Government to improve UK resilience. The Forum acts as a conduit to raise awareness around risks and resilience with its membership and the public; align efforts of stakeholders to upgrade their planning and capability; and help inform the process of policy development within Government.

24. Central government risk planning should be benchmarked against the National Security Risk Assessment (NSRA), with standards of preparation and required capabilities set by the Office for Preparedness and Resilience (see paragraph 79). The CCS should convene cross-departmental working groups to address the most significant cross-cutting risks and to ensure that risk scenarios that cross departmental boundaries have risk plans that cover the full spectrum of possible impacts. These risks should be considered discretely by the Threats, Hazards,

Resilience and Contingencies subcommittee of the National Security Council to ensure that there is ministerial discussion of these risks. (Paragraph 266)

The Government **agrees with the principle of this recommendation**, and is already undertaking a programme of work that will address the points raised by the Committee.

The Government has developed proposals for a standards-based assurance framework that would bring increased consistency and rigour to the development, assessment and improvement of departmental crisis plans and resilience capabilities. A re-energised National Exercising Programme will be a key part of this by testing, confirming and rehearsing departments' plans for emergencies

The Government already benchmarks risk planning against the NSRA, and the Civil Contingencies Secretariat already convenes cross-departmental working groups to address the most significant cross-cutting risks where these have been identified, sitting under the cross-cutting Resilience Officials Working Group, a forum of resilience officials who meet regularly to share a cross-government understanding of near-term risks. In addition to this, CCS convenes a committee of officials every quarter to review and scrutinise the outlook for civil contingency-type risks over the coming six months. The output is shared with senior officials and ministers across Whitehall.

The Civil Contingencies Secretariat also works closely with the National Security Council Secretariat to feed into the Ministerial governance programmes of NSM(O) and NSM meetings where required.

25. A yearly debate on the National Security Risk Assessment (NSRA) should be held by both Houses of Parliament. To ensure more in-depth scrutiny, the Office for Preparedness and Resilience should audit departmental preparedness and conduct deep dives into departmental risk management. These audits should be based on the standards of preparation and required capabilities as set out by the Office for Preparedness and Resilience, with annual reports signed off by ministers and laid before Parliament for debate. They should investigate where there has been a failure to invest in preparedness, and conduct assessments of the cost of such failures. A new Joint Select Committee should be created to scrutinise and democratise the UK's risk planning approach and the work of the CCS. The Committee propose that this should be called the Joint Resilience and Contingencies Select Committee and should have access to all relevant information, including the NSRA. The National Audit Office has the power to investigate the Government's risk preparedness through the lens of public spending. The NAO should continue its valuable work scrutinising risk management in Government. (Paragraph 267)

Noting the earlier response on the Office for Preparedness and Resilience, the Government **agrees with the principle of this recommendation**, accepts some of the recommendation points included, and is already progressing work that addresses the remaining points set out in the recommendation.

The Government accepts the recommendation to hold a yearly debate on the NSRA.

As set out under recommendation 2, the Government agrees with the principle of greater assurance of UK resilience, and is already progressing work to strengthen our assurance approach. We will pilot an approach this year that focuses on

strengthening, cohering and extending standards as a basis for assurance. The focus will be on assurance of collective capabilities and the interoperability and effectiveness of multi-agency and multi-level resilience arrangements.

The Government commits to considering issues of strengthening accountability as part of our work on the Resilience Strategy. As outlined in the Resilience Strategy Call for Evidence, responsibility and accountability are key themes of the developing Strategy. As we develop the substance of the Strategy, we will consider where responsibility and accountability best sit within the resilience system, at central and local levels. This will include consideration of public accountability.

The Government welcomes the scrutiny of both the National Audit Office, and any new Joint Select Committee created to democratise the UK's risk planning approach.

26. The Government should change the name of the Civil Contingencies Secretariat in acknowledgement that the secretariat no longer manages civil emergencies alone. A name should be chosen which reflects its broad portfolio of threats and hazards. The Committee recommend the use of the 'Resilience and Contingencies Secretariat'. (Paragraph 268)

The Government's crisis structures are being considered in full by the Crisis Capabilities Review. The Government commits to updating Parliament on the outcomes of this review when complete.

27. Risk plans must specify how frequently they are to be subjected to exercising or wargaming. The Government must ensure that these testing obligations are met. Exercises should abide by the principles laid out in paragraph 265. These exercises must include involvement by the most senior figures, senior officials and ministers. These exercises must be followed up with a thorough 'lessons learned' process, with these lessons learned published so they can be scrutinised. Scrutiny of lessons learned should be followed up on after one, two and five years. (Paragraph 277)

The Government **agrees with the principle of this recommendation**, including the principles that plans should be tested and that lessons identified should be tracked.

Some contingency plans are already covered by requirements and standards around exercising. For defined local emergency responders, the Civil Contingencies Act requires a plan to include provision for the carrying out of exercises and for the training of staff or other persons, and this is further elaborated in the National Resilience Standards for LRFs. Not all contingency plans are covered by these requirements and standards however, and the Government accepts that the type and timing of validation and rehearsal exercises should be adopted as a required element of all contingency plans.

The Government commits to issuing guidance on the sequencing and effective application of tools such as wargaming, table top, command post and live play exercises to validate plans and prepare people and teams for their roles and responsibilities, as part of the re-activation of the National Exercising Programme.

The Government agrees that improvements are needed to ensure that the right lessons are captured from exercises and operations and then tracked through into

practical improvements (i.e. to be lessons learned). We await findings on this topic from the COVID-19 Inquiry, and Matthew Rycroft's Crisis Capabilities Review.

28. The Government must share all civil contingencies documentation with LRFs, except in cases where there is a national security reason to withhold information. In these cases where national security threat analyses are withheld, at a minimum, information must be given to LRFs to allow them to prepare for the consequences of the materialisation of national security threats. The national preparedness benchmark, developed by the Office for Preparedness and Resilience, should be shared with LRFs along with guidance on translating the specified capabilities and standards of preparation to the local level. (Paragraph 284)

The Government **agrees with the principle of this recommendation**, noting that there are important lessons to be learned from COVID-19 on information sharing and that we await the outcomes of the COVID-19 Inquiry.

We recognise the importance of transparency wherever possible and ensuring LRFs and their consistent members have the information they need to fulfil their critical role in emergency prevention, planning, response and recovery.

The Government continues to seek ways to share information in a timely manner including via ResilienceDirect (the free, secure online platform) and through direct briefing with LRF Chairs. We are committed to working with partners to update the resilience related documentation and build on the National Resilience Standards for Local Resilience Forums published in 2020.

29. The Government should commit to updating all resilience-related guidance on GOV. UK to ensure it is accurate, clear and up to date. (Paragraph 293)

The Government **accepts this recommendation** and commits to reviewing all resilience-related guidance on gov.uk by the end of 2022.

The full suite of resilience guidance on gov.uk has not been updated in several years due to the focus on COVID-19 and materials to support live risks. We intend to review, and update as required, all resilience-related guidance and supporting materials, and re-structure the way it is held and published online to ensure it is accessible to users. This includes the full refresh of the Central Government ConOps, as referenced above.

The Government will update guidance on gov.uk in line with any changes following the quinquennial review of the CCA.

30. The off-site reservoir plan for Toddbrook Reservoir was invaluable during the emergency response to the 2019 incident. Off-site reservoir plans, such as had been voluntarily created for Toddbrook Reservoir prior to the 2019 incident, should be a statutory requirement for reservoirs. (Paragraph 294)

The Government **agrees with the principle of this recommendation**, and commits to considering the recommendation of the Committee alongside the recommendations of the Independent Reservoir Safety Review report published in

May 2021, which was welcomed by Minister Pow. Defra is engaging with the Environment Agency and other stakeholders to explore the Independent Reservoir Safety Review recommendations and how they could be taken forward.

Category 1 Responders have a duty to assess emergency risk as part of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. They should maintain plans to ensure that if an emergency occurs, their functions can be performed to reduce, control, and mitigating its effects. It is mandatory for reservoir undertakers to prepare on-site emergency flood plans for large raised reservoirs and for undertakers to test those plans and their implementation is monitored by the Environment Agency.

It is not currently mandatory to produce off-site plans for reservoir failure. However maintaining, testing and exercising reservoir off-site emergency flood plans is promoted as best practice for Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs) and Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) in collaboration with reservoir undertakers.

Reservoir Flood Maps (RFMs) are available to LRFs through ResilienceDirect to assist with emergency planning to assess risk and plan for contingency, warning and evacuation. The Environment Agency updated the RFMs during 2021, providing 'dry day' and 'wet day' scenarios and maps. The Environment Agency has also published maps for public use, which are available from the Environment Agency website. We have also published information on Reservoir floor risk on gov.uk.



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