



NOTICE OF DETERMINATION
CORE PARTICIPANT APPLICATION
MODULE 7 - THE MICROBIOLOGY SOCIETY

Introduction

1. In my [Opening Statement](#) on 21 July 2022, I explained that modules would be announced and opened in sequence, with those wishing to take a formal role in the Inquiry invited to apply to become Core Participants for each module. On 19 March 2024, the Inquiry opened Module 7 and invited anyone who wished to be considered as a Core Participant to that Module to submit an application in writing to the Solicitor to the Inquiry by 26 April 2024.
2. The Inquiry has published the [Provisional Outline of Scope](#) for Module 7, which states that this Module will consider the policies and strategies developed and deployed to support the test, trace and isolate system by the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations. Further modules will be announced and opened in due course, to address other aspects of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference.
3. On 24 April 2024 the Inquiry received an application from The Microbiology Society for Core Participant status in Module 7.
4. I made a provisional decision not to designate The Microbiology Society as a Core Participant in Module 7, thereby declining The Microbiology Society's application ("the Provisional Decision"), on 16 May 2024. The Microbiology Society was provided with an opportunity to renew the application in writing by 4pm on 23 May 2024.
5. The Applicant did not renew the application by the prescribed deadline. Accordingly, this Notice sets out my final decision on the application.

Application

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

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

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

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

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

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

7. In accordance with the approach set out in my Opening Statement and the Inquiry's [Core Participant Protocol](#), I have considered whether the application fulfils the requirements set out in Rule 5(2) in relation to the issues set out in the Provisional Outline of Scope for Module 7.

Summary of Application

8. The Applicant is The Microbiology Society [TMS], which is a membership charity of over 8,000 scientists with scientific knowledge and expertise in microbes. During the pandemic, it is said that TMS offered a single point of contact to provide and coordinate access to a network of scientists, including those who lead and staff key facilities in universities, industry, hospitals, research institutes and schools. The application details that both of its own volition and at the request of its members, TMS proactively engaged with central government from the outset of the pandemic.
9. In their application, TMS said that its membership comprises an “unparalleled breadth of scientific knowledge and expertise that goes to the heart of the ‘Test’ issues in this

Module.” The point is made that during the pandemic TMS ‘proactively engaged’ with central government and ‘provided assistance’ to the Government’s Office for Life Sciences and advice to the Chief Medical Officer. It is suggested that the TMS ‘drew the government’s attention to existing unused PCR testing infrastructure...’ for the purposes of enhancing testing capability. However, it adds: “All of its offers to assist with/coordinate the use and staffing of these facilities...were either ignored or turned down. TMS does not know why.” It is on this account that the submission refers to TMS having ‘sought to play a direct role in testing strategy’ and, in its view, it is in a position to provide important evidence to the Inquiry. Overall, the application presents the TMS as a prospective governmental resource which was, it is said, underused or not used at all. In consequence, it is contended that opportunities were missed.

Decision for the Applicant

10. I have considered with great care everything that is said in the application. I consider that TMS does not meet the criteria set out in Rule 5 for designation as a Core Participant in Module 7. Whilst I appreciate the Applicant's role and experience in related areas, the application indicates that TMS volunteered information and/or assistance to government bodies for the purposes of addressing the pandemic and that this information and/or assistance was not taken up (i.e. adequately or at all).
11. The Applicant did not therefore play a direct or significant role in the key decision making of policy and strategy in the test, trace, isolate system (Rule 5(2)(a)), despite their range of experience. Similarly, while recognising the interest the Applicant has, it is not a significant interest in the matters for investigation in Module 7 (Rule 5(2)(b)).
12. I am determined to run the Inquiry as thoroughly and as efficiently as possible, bearing in mind the Inquiry’s wide-ranging terms of reference and the need for the Inquiry process to be rigorous and fair. Given the vast numbers of people who were involved with, or adversely affected by, the Covid-19 pandemic, very many people and organisations in this country could potentially have an interest in the Inquiry and not everyone can be granted Core Participant status for the purposes of the Inquiry hearings.

13. Furthermore, it is not necessary for a contributor to the Inquiry's work to be designated a Core Participant. The Inquiry will seek information from a range of individuals, organisations and bodies and, where appropriate, request witness statements and documents. I have asked the Module 7 legal team to liaise with the Applicant to make sure the concerns they have raised are reflected in the Inquiry's investigation.
14. I will keep the scope of Module 7 and the designation of Core Participants under review. My decision not to designate the Applicant as a Core Participant in Module 7 does not preclude it from making any further applications in respect of any later modules. I will consider any future applications the Applicant may wish to make on their merits at the time they are made.

Rt Hon Baroness (Heather) Hallett DBE

Chair of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry

31 May 2024