

MAJOR PROJECTS COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Purpose

The Major Projects Committee is a Sub-Committee of the Departmental Board. Its remit is to consider and provide assurance to the Accounting Officer and the Board on the oversight of major projects, as defined in Appendix 1, as well as other significant/high risk¹ projects, regardless of funding source, within DfI and its Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs). This Committee ensures that a strategic approach is taken to decisions on the Departmental portfolio, and on individual programmes and projects within it, and will ensure that the Accounting Officer and Board are made fully aware of any major risks that could potentially impact on outcomes achieved.

The Major Projects Committee supplements but does not replace existing programme and project management processes, as set out in the Senior Responsible Owner letters of appointment and embedded in standard programme and project management methodologies (e.g. PRINCE2 and Managing Successful Programmes).

Appendix 1 sets out the accepted definitions of Major Projects as those that meet the criteria described by HM Treasury and also those that meet the criteria agreed by the Committee.

It is recognised that some projects are the direct responsibility of ALBs which the Department oversees, while others are delivered by the Department. The Committee considers projects in both categories, ensuring that the full portfolio of programme and projects financed by the Department is considered, that interdependencies are identified, that all programmes and projects align with Ministerial priorities and that there is effective collaboration and shared learning with the work of ALB Boards/sub-Committees.

¹ High Risk is defined as any project that has received a 'High Risk' Risk Potential Assessment (RPA) Outcome.

Membership

Chair: Dfl Non-Executive Board Member (NEBM)

Members: Grade 3 with responsibility for Water and Departmental Delivery
Grade 3 with responsibility for Climate, Planning and Public Transport
Grade 3 with responsibility for Transport and Road Asset Management
Grade 3 with responsibility for Transformation
Dfl Non-Executive Board Member
Director of Finance
Director of Major Projects

Attendees: Permanent Secretary

Secretary: The Committee will be provided with a secretariat function by the Portfolio, Programme & Project Office.

In the absence of the Chair, the meeting will be chaired by the Department's other Non-Executive Board Member.

The Committee may:

- invite other staff or individuals to attend the Committee as deputies, observers or to present a paper;
- co-opt additional members to provide specialist skills, knowledge and experience; and
- with the agreement of the Accounting Officer, procure specialist ad-hoc advice.

Responsibilities

The Committee's objectives are:

- a) to have a strategic overview of the portfolio of major programmes and projects being delivered by Dfl and its ALBs; including awareness of key risks and delivery concerns. Where significant issues arise, the Chair will, by exception, escalate matters to the Board for consideration.
- b) to provide assurance to the Accounting Officer that project milestones and risks are being managed at the appropriate level;
- c) to provide information on the progress of major projects to the Departmental Board in a format and manner that allows the Board to fulfil its responsibilities;

- d) to provide a forum to discuss the Department's major projects including an analysis of the current spend and options for future spend to be presented to Minister for approval;
- e) to support the Committee's oversight and scrutiny functions, Senior Responsible Owners (SROs), project teams, or other relevant stakeholders, will be invited, as required, to attend Committee meetings to provide detailed briefings or "deep dive" sessions on specific programmes/projects or topical areas of interest. These sessions may include consideration of performance, risks, issues, benefits realisation, and lessons learned etc.;
- f) to consider and learn from significant external / internal reviews of major projects (including reviews of projects in other departments and jurisdictions where relevant) including identifying actions to be taken to improve the oversight and management of major projects and learning from best practice.

Meetings

This Committee will meet three times per year, with additional meetings as required. A minimum of four members of the Committee, including at least one NEBM must be present for the Committee to be deemed quorate.

Work Programme

Reporting Requirements

1. At each meeting the Committee will receive a high-level update on all major projects reported as meeting the criteria set out in Appendix 1.
2. Annually a Key Portfolio List will be agreed upon by the Committee, identifying a small number of strategically significant major programmes and projects as priorities for enhanced scrutiny at each meeting. This list can be added to or amended as the year progresses. A more detailed SRO Template will be provided at each meeting for each Key Portfolio Project.
3. An update on Emerging Projects will be provided at each Committee meeting. This will provide a list of early stage or developing projects that may progress to major project status, enabling early visibility of future commitments.

Work Plan

On an annual basis, the Committee will agree its priority areas of focus for the year ahead to guide its programme of work and future deep dives.

Reporting to the Departmental Board

The Committee Chair will forward a report of each meeting to the Departmental Board. By exception, the Chair will report significant matters to the Board, should there be a need to escalate them urgently.

Register of Interests

Members conflicts of interest are recorded on the [DfI Senior Civil Servants \(SCS\), Departmental Board and Sub-Committee Members' Register of Interests](#). The Committee as a whole should consider how matters on which a member may have a conflict of interest will be handled.

Review of Scope

These Terms of Reference will be kept under review and will be formally updated biennially.

Revised July 2026

Appendix 1

Major Project definitions

HM Treasury – Treasury Approvals Process Guidance²

- Whole life costs above one or more of the relevant Delegated Authority Limits (DALs).
- Will likely create pressures leading to a breach in agreed budget and Supply Estimate limits.
- Will likely involve contractual commitments to significant levels of spending in future years for which budgets have not been set.
- May set a potentially expensive precedent.
- Is novel, contentious, or could cause repercussions, elsewhere in the public sector.
- Requires primary legislation,
- It is a statutory requirement to seek HM Treasury consent

Major Project Criteria agreed by Major Projects Committee³

- Capital projects with a total capital value in excess of £20m.
- Revenue projects which fall above departmental limits and for which central government costs will be £20m or more over the project's life.
- Projects irrespective of costs that set precedents, are novel, potentially contentious, could cause repercussions elsewhere in public sector or are potentially politically sensitive.
- Any projects greater than £5m with a 'High' Risk Potential Assessment (RPA) outcome.

² 2. Guidance taken from HM Treasury – Treasury Approvals Process Guidance April 2026 – (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/treasury-approvals-process-for-programmes-and-projects>).

³ Criteria based on guidance from FD (DoF) 11/20 Better Business Cases NI, in relation to the preparation of a SOC (<https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dfp/fddof1120.pdf>). Adapted for a reduction in threshold to £20m and additional bullet point added to capture high risk projects, in agreement with Major Project Committee.