



Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

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Dame Meg Hillier MP
Chair of the Public Accounts Committee
House of Commons
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8 June 2023

Dear Meg,

FCDO: FRAUD AGAINST THE FCDO IN SIERRA LEONE

I need to alert you to an estimated loss of around £2m from our High Commission in Freetown predominantly relating to the procurement of diesel fuel for the High Commission's electricity generators.

Work is ongoing to calculate the amount lost as accurately as possible and to establish the full background as to how the loss took place. Although this work is not finished, I am writing to advise you now in advance of the issue being made public in the FCDO's Annual Report and Accounts for 2022-23.

From the work undertaken so far, we believe a number of Country-Based Staff colluded to circumvent controls. The staff believed to have been involved have been suspended and disciplinary action is ongoing.

Immediate action was taken after the issue was identified. A programme of improvements to controls has already been initiated at the High Commission. I have commissioned a lessons learned review to identify what went wrong, assess roles and responsibilities, and review the application of escalation and supervisory controls. Additional internal audit and investigation follow up work is scheduled for later this year.

We have reported this issue to HMT and the NAO in line with regulatory requirements.

Yours sincerely,
Philip Barton
Philip Barton

Cc: Keith Lloyd, NAO (Keith.Lloyd@nao.org.uk); C&AG@nao.org.uk