



# Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

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

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20 July 2022

*Dear Dame Meg,*

Thank you for your letter of 29 June 2022 in which you raised a number of questions in relation to the Accounting Officer (AO) assessment I approved on 28 April 2022 for the Hera Programme.

As you noted, the AO assessment was issued in April 2022 following the decision, in September 2021, to delay the "Go Live" date (which had been planned for November 2021). The primary reasons for delay were a combination of technical issues encountered through testing global banking integrations and the wider organisation needing more time to be ready for the new service.

Following the decision to delay, we re-planned the programme in full. The AO assessment was only issued once we had completed a thorough assurance exercise and gained confidence that the revised plan was achievable. I also wanted to understand the impact on the Full Business Case (FBC). As well as providing a revised timetable, the exercise also confirmed that the Hera Programme could still deliver within the overall FBC forecast of £102m. It did, however, determine that there will be a reduction in net benefits from £140m to £126m.

I can confirm that, as was previously the case, the Hera Programme will be deployed in two releases. The first release, for ex-FCO staff, was deployed, as per the revised plan, this month. The second release, for ex-DFID staff, is planned to be deployed later this year, in November.

As with any complex and challenging programme, it continues to carry risks, primarily in respect of resourcing to deliver the programme. While the FCDO has been successful in mitigating the risks associated with the first release, there are still outstanding risks to mitigate in relation to the November release. With strong oversight and control, we expect to ensure the remaining phase of the programme continues to deliver within the bounds of the approved FBC.

I can confirm that we are working with the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) to accelerate publication of the AO assessment on the Gov.UK website.

*Yours sincerely,*  
*Philip Barton*  
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