

Good afternoon everyone, and a huge welcome to this Civil Service Live session. The session this afternoon will be on the project delivery profession: the future for major projects following COVID-19. And the objective is to hear more about the work of the project delivery profession in delivering frontline services. In the first part of this session, we'll be sharing some short videos from our annual report launched last week. And then in the second part of the session, you'll have an opportunity to pose questions to Nick Smallwood, Chief Executive of the Infrastructure and Projects Authority in the second half of the session, so please do submit your questions using slido while the videos are being shown. To begin with, we're starting with a video from Nick Smallwood as mentioned the Chief Executive of the Infrastructure and Projects Authority and also head of the project delivery function.

Thank you to everyone who's joined us for this discussion today, it's really great to have such a large number of our community come together like this. And as Alex has already said, we have so much to be proud of government is collectively delivering over 440 billion worth of projects ranging from railways, roads, schools, hospitals and housing to defence, IT and major transformation programmes. And these projects are transforming our country and are some of the biggest in the world. I know this doesn't represent all you're doing, it's just the tip of the iceberg. But delivering major projects is always a challenge, and even more so during these unprecedented times. That's why now more than ever, we need to bring together a step change in the delivery of our major projects. Everyone in the public sector and industry has a part to play in making this happen. So if we take a look at this year's annual report on major projects, it provides a snapshot of the hundred and 25 projects on the government major projects portfolio. Some of these projects are undoubtedly challenging, but they're also the most complex and innovative projects, not just in the UK but often in the world. Just one example is the Department of Health and Social Care's 100,000 Genomes Project, which created the largest database of its kind, it linked genomic and health data for accelerated research. It offered patients with cancer and rare diseases, the chance of improved diagnosis and care, just one of hundreds of projects which came to change the lives of people for the better, and one which has also helped us to respond to COVID-19. The IPA aims to support and improve the delivery of these challenging projects and doing this we need to impact on projects every single day. So we are focusing on three specific areas. The first is people ensuring our people have the tools, competence, skills and behaviours they need to deliver. Performance driving a step change in performance together with industry so that we can meet the future challenges and principles being clear about the principles of delivery and getting the basics right. And whilst they're all linked, as you might imagine, I'm going to focus today a little bit on that last one, principles of project success. I said, we need to get the basics right. I can't stress that enough. There are well understood principles for effective delivery, and we need to make sure that they are widely used and regularly used. As we all know that success or failure of a project is often determined in its early stages, it's much harder to turn a project around further down the line. So let me give you an example. We need to become more consistent at cost estimating with costs against developed benchmark capability. We need to focus much more on quality in the early initiation and development phase. And we need to build a better understanding of risk into our programmes, and use ranges rather than point estimates. Successful project initiation takes time, however, time invested in this stage will be repaid many times over later in the delivery of the project. So that's why we've worked with the heads of professions to create government principles for project success. These principles will act as a quick guide for practitioners and they're designed to help you in your roles and support your deep

expertise alongside the functional standard and other IPA tools and guidance. These principles are part of a wider endeavour to create a consistent culture and world class project performance. One where projects are set up for success and deliver real benefits for people and communities across the UK and do so consistently. But ultimately, we hope that these will help also equip you with the skills to deliver what is necessary. COVID-19 has shown more than ever, that our people are our most important asset. A number of you listening have been involved in the response, and I know you've been completely committed to bringing a project delivery skills to where they've been needed most. Please know that we will continue to support you and how and when you need it. So far, we have trained over 2000 professionals since 2012, on the MPLA, and the PLP, and we have a flourishing pipeline of early talent through our popular project delivery fast stream scheme, but I know there's more we can do to help you and so we're working on it. As we respond to the challenges facing us often at pace, your expert skills have never been more important. So these two areas I've touched on are all part of the bigger picture to drive productivity and resilience and improve performance. The UK government's approach to monitoring our major projects is regarded as world leading. And one of the reasons we've published our annual report today. That's why we're also reviewing our approach to assurance. We want to be more agile, increase our expertise and focus on the outcomes of programmes more. We want to make sure our assurance gives programmes and departments what they need, and our reviews must remain of the highest quality and have the maximum impact on the project's chances of success. So in conclusion, we need to invest in driving skills and capabilities to be more productive whilst adopting the principles for project success. The IPA will continue to give project support and constructive challenge that's fair, accurate, and based on mutual trust and respect, and will continue to be transparent in the way we monitor and track major projects. We're proud that our annual report shines a light on the government's major project delivery performance in this area. Nothing short of world-class project delivery will do. We have much more to do together but we are on the case. Thank you.

Thanks so much to Nick there for setting out the future of the profession and the ambitions for the IPA. And now on to our second video of the day, Richard Gleave, who's the Chief Operating Officer of Public Health England talking about leadership in major programmes and in crisis.

So I want to consider how we learn about leading a major programme from the experience of the past six months of working in a crisis situation. And I want to do that, from my perspective, I'm the SRO of a GMPP programme. And I'm also the deputy chief executive of Public Health England, which has been at the heart of many of the initiatives over the last few months. The GMPP programme that I am the SRO for is the science hub programme. And that's also got a role with COVID. Because the purpose of the programme is to create for the first time in this country, a centre for applied public health science that acts as the Innovation Hub, in the first stages of the response and then as the scientific underpinning to the work that has to go on across the whole of the public sector. So I've been thinking about what are the common skills that we need as leaders in both leading a major programme and in leading the response to what is in effect, the greatest peacetime crisis that we've faced in the past hundred years. And although a programme and a crisis might seem very similar, I've got four similarities that strike me.

First, both are a huge focus for public attention. They're in the public eye, and there's a massive expectation about what they should deliver. Secondly, they both have very specific goals. They are

hugely complex tasks with multiple interdependencies. But success and failure is very obvious to people. Thirdly, to succeed, you need to create an effective temporary organisation, and we need strong leadership team leadership to lead that temporary organisation. And fourthly, the key leadership skill here is about judgement. Because both crises and programmes face a massive time pressure, one is about an instant response to a crisis. The other one is about a timetable over many years sometimes, but that timetable is absolutely crucial in terms of cost and quality. And we're dealing with limited knowledge, there's always more that we would like to know. So I want to talk about two leadership skills that have really struck me in the work that I've been doing in the last few months, both in the programme and in the response, sense making and learning. Sense making, so this is about really understanding what is important not just to you as the leader, but crucially to the team and to the external partners and stakeholders. What's needed to meet the challenge is as much about how people feel in their heart as it is about the rational plan that sits on the page. It was Karl Weick, the management guru who invented sensemaking, who showed that sense making comes out of action. It's not a passive activity to do behind your desk. It's something we need to get out and talk to people and see things. sense making comes from action. And that we need to use all sorts of data in order to do it hard and soft data. There's a second task though, understanding isn't enough, it's about communication too so meaning making is taking this and putting it into a narrative. That means something to motivate the team to to help them go forward. And this skill of combining meaning and sense making is something that's really struck me in the last few months, we have to have a balance between keeping to the plan and revising and adapting the plan. That's the way we handle the uncertainty and the time pressure. So in the COVID-19 response, where the nature of the virus is something that we knew nothing about at the beginning, and we've learned quickly, but our knowledge is still very partial, very incomplete. And it's very easy to have hindsight and say, Oh, if only we had known that or why did they do this? So this ability to assimilate new information, some of which is very sketchy information, and build that into the way which we deliver the services that are needed, we deliver the programme is crucial. And that's what sense making is about. And we've had to redesign our programmes almost on the go. So we are delivering and designing simultaneously and we brought that into our approach around the science hub programme so that we've had to reopen some of the options that we thought had been closed down. And that we've had to actively look at what are the inbuilt flexibilities, the scope for flex without creating huge risk and uncertainty. Proactive learning. One of the things that strikes me in the crisis is that we all say that learning is important, but we don't put aside the time and the space in order to do that properly. And the same happens in the programme even though it might appear that we have more space, and we have more time. We leaders need to lead by example, prioritising the learning that needs to happen. And that learning is something that happens in real time. It's not an activity that gets to left to the end it's too late then it may help other programmes another crisis responses, but actually we need to do it now.

So in the COVID-19 response, one of the things I've learned more about than at any stage in my career is this approach of Red Team, Red Teaming, where you deliberately create an alternative group to help the main delivery team think outside the box, avoid the group think of the main team, like having that challenge, that constructive challenge from a group of colleagues who have a different perspective who aren't in the middle of the response. And so to conclude, sense making and learning are both crucial activities. It's easy for projects to stop making sense or to feel that learning is too much effort. And my experience over the last few months has really shown me that amid all the challenge and the difficulties

of the last few months COVID-19 offers us a chance - offers us a stimulus or a prompt - to improve the way we do major programme delivery. And that's what the country needs, there is going to be a massive renewal and recovery phase and major programmes are going to be at the heart of that. So I hope together we can look at the ways in which going forwards we can use the learning from COVID to make sure our major programme leadership skills are even better than they've been over the past decade. Thank you very much.

Thanks so much to Richard there for some really practical reflections and learnings on leadership, especially from a departments been so impacted the last few months. A final video now is from Stella Okeahialam who is from was actually an IP alumna, but he's now a deputy director at the Defence and Security organisation which is part of the Department for International Trade. There she leads up the operations function.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to be part of this panel and discussion. I am Stella Okeahialam, Deputy Director and Head of Operations at the Defence and Security organisation, part of the Department for International Trade (DIT). So while my role is not a specific project delivery role at the moment, I do like to think that I have project delivery in my DNA, and I often get accused at work and at home of turning everything into a project. But I strongly believe that the fundamentals of project delivery are crucial for a lot of the work that we do in the Civil Service. So reflecting on the impact that COVID-19 and lockdown has had on major projects, it's been a really interesting one. The Department for International Trade doesn't have as many projects as some departments. But COVID-19 has certainly had a huge impact in the way that we operate as a department. It's done more to challenge the ways that we work existing ways of working in the last 12 weeks than ever before. But there's been positives. And some of the positives include as a department, we now have better use of technology, different approaches to the ways that we work. And actually closer attention is being paid to the resilience and well being. And as a project delivery community and wider, I think we've been able to prove just how resilient and adaptable we are. And I think our ability to manage change is probably much greater than we realised, which is a good, a good positive. There's also been challenges. So lots of successful delivery. But clearly some frontline services have been affected by not being able to physically be in the offices and in places of work. And so we might need to think about how we approach things in the future. And again, while some departments have adapted really well to remote working and flexible working and the new technology, we mustn't forget that we are individuals and that the one size fits all approach doesn't always work for everybody so we must remember that. With specific reference to project delivery what I would say is that certainly in the case of DIT some projects, the actual lockdown has accelerated some projects, but it's also raised some issues and concerns for others. So one example to illustrate this would be the working environment and cultural programme which is made up of a number of projects, such as places for growth, growth, smarter working, etc. Before the lockdown, we had a really clear idea where some of these projects were going and ideas for them. But clearly, we're having to reconsider some of those approaches in light of the changes. Smarter working as an example, six months ago, we had concerns about how we would sell smarter working in relation to ways of working and perceptions around flexible working, etc within the department. Well actually COVID-19 has completely changed that. And so while remote working is not the same as smarter working, the elements around how we've used technology, the speed and efficiency with which we have deployed it, and now used completely new technology is to be

applauded, and in many ways will accelerate the smarter working project. On the other hand, one of the projects was to move to a new site, bringing four different sites together into one location. And I think we are really going to have to rethink some of the original plans and approaches. So previously would have been going down the traditional route of trying to keep people in teams thinking about desk ratios, etc. And whereas now we actually have to rethink how we use our spaces. How do we make them collaborative? How do we make them flexible enough so that we can adapt in relation to social distancing, but actually other changes as they evolve. So a completely new set of challenges that we're having to work through, and obviously shifting where the project was before lock down.

So really to conclude, I think post COVID, we have a really good opportunity to look at the system as a whole. And make sure that we just don't go back to how it used to be. And we'll need to spend some time really understanding what the impact has been, what the full implications are, and recognising that it will take a while before we fully understand what we may have missed, and what indeed we need to learn. So I think as sort of a profession and indeed wider, we've got to focus on learning and evolving on a very regular basis. We need to understand what changes we want to keep or what changes we don't want to keep, will be really important. And while not as a direct result of the lockdown I don't think we can afford to ignore the fact that parts of our communities are more impacted by some policies and projects that we deliver. The fact that the BAME community has been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. And obviously the issues raised through recent focus on racial inequality in the UK and abroad should implore us to really reflect, learn lessons and ensure that we improve. We need to actively work towards avoiding unintended consequences of any of our projects and policies on any part of our communities. So finally, I think all the lessons that we learned today and in the future, we really need to understand what they mean for the project delivery profession. The evolution of the profession needs to build on these lessons. And that will be key to improving delivery of major projects as we go forward, and will ensure maximum benefits for all our citizens.

Thank you so much there from Stella, a great final video of the day talking about the professions ability to adapt to new ways of working but also considering some of the learnings we need to take forward in the post COVID environment. And so that's it for the videos for today will now be moving on to the live Q&A session. I know many of you been submitting questions during the video. So Nick will now have a chance to answer some of those. I think we'll start with something relatively easy question for you, Nick. And what do you see is the new skills required for project delivery professionals in the future?

Thanks, Ani. So I don't think it's so much about new skills per say. I think we need to get deeper understanding of some fundamentals around project management. So one of the observations I've made coming fresh into the Civil Service and looking at projects is a lack of conversation around the plus or minus 10% estimate at final business case. We've really got to deeply understand P50, plus or minus 10% estimate, what that means, what can we expect in terms of accuracy, the outline business case, and therefore where do we start at the strategic outline business case and deepen our understanding of what should cost modelling really means. To do that we're working on a benchmarking hub. And we'll be looking to work with departments to build up a database across government that our project professionals can use to help inform them of likely costs and target costs and do a much stronger job of cost estimating. Similarly in schedule. All too often I see target dates put in with no realistic level four plans behind them. Resource loaded level four plans. So getting the

fundamentals of project scheduling right is key. I think risk management is an area we can improve and contract management. And someone once said to me, as a project professional when you get to the final business case approval, really doing is managing the contract once you've placed it with the supply chain, and that's how you deliver the best outcome. All around that of course, we're moving through the fourth industrial revolution. A lot of digital technology available to us. And that really is a new skill that I think the profession needs to understand what's possible, what's not bleeding edge technology, what's available technology that we should be exploiting and using to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the projects, both in the design development as well as the execution phase.

Thanks, Nick. That's really helpful. And I think it linked to this and maybe this is where your nuance at the end came in but one of the questions was do you see increased recruitment exercises to join the project delivery profession following COVID-19? And what skills would be vital for people looking to apply?

Okay, so I pretty much do see we need to fill a gap in our resources. There's anecdotal evidence that we have an under capacity out in the departments to deliver that's either too much ambition. Or actually a looming tidal wave if you listen to the Prime Minister and his ambition to build, build, build, so we are going to have to recruit for sure. We are going to do an exercise with the department to look at capacity across government and see where the gaps really exist. But I know already, if I look at the data in our annual report and the GMPP programme, that we have a number of SRO's who are thinly stretched, they have more than one major project. Same with some of the project directors, and of course, lower down in the organisation we need more project professionals to do a lot of the work around scoping the projects and getting them off the ground in the first place. So huge opportunities in terms of skills. I would certainly like to see more people with proven projects competencies coming into the Civil Service. I think if you listen to CDL's speech, the digital lecture that he gave, you'll see a very very small percentage of the Civil Service come from technical backgrounds. And I think if we want to be able to manage the supply chain better, understand what's needed to deliver projects, we need more project professionals with the skills and demonstrable competencies. So, yeah, it's going to be quite a ride and huge opportunities both inside and outside the Civil Service to join the profession.

Moving on to a slightly different question, how can we raise the profile of benefits management across departments?

That's a great question. The reason we do projects in the Civil Service is hopefully for the benefits of the citizens of the UK. So I think we can always step up and do a better job in benefits realisation. In fact, I think the challenge is going to become even more. As we look to move to net zero by 2050. We look to the levelling up agenda. It's not going to be a simple case of calculating direct benefits against journey times for transport projects or whatever. We're going to have to really skill up in calculating the social benefits, and that's an area that is really challenging and difficult. So I think we're going to have to learn what good practice looks like, help have a dialogue with the departments and work with Treasury on what that looks like. And it's going to be an area of increased focus for the assurance reviews at the various stage gates for approvals to really deeply challenge have we got it right there and huge opportunity to improve on where we are. I don't have all the answers on how we do it yet. I

think we need some help. But certainly an opportunity we need to improve across almost every department, I would say.

Yeah, thanks, Nick. Maybe along the same vein, how can we use risk management processes better so that it becomes less of a paper exercise and becomes a living process that people engage in.

That's a subject dear to my heart. So, the clue's in the title of the question: risk management. So it's not about filling in a spreadsheet, or having a great risk visual. It's about managing risks through the life of the project, and they change over time. I was once project director in the multibillion dollar project which I inherited in a bit of a state actually, it was \$3 billion overspent it was a year late. They had a risk register that ran to 3000 items. And they haven't managed the fundamentals. They just simply had not looked at their top 10 risks and done something about it. And I could talk for an hour on some of the interesting things that I ran into. But if you don't plan and manage risks, I can guarantee you your projects will fail. So being active, proactive, having an honest dialogue, differentiating between an issue, which you need direct action and management on, and a risk, which you can choose to take or mitigate is a fundamental part of project management.

Completely agree. Thank you, Nick. And the next question is, is there a plan to stop the reliance on contractor PMs across the Civil Service and upskill existing civil servants

So let me answer in two ways. I absolutely believe that as the clients of these major projects, we need to have the project management skills in house to deliver them. In a situation where we're short, then contingent labour is always a vehicle that you can use to get really helpful skilled people in short notice to help us. And I think it's likely that that will continue for a long period to come. Where I do have a problem is where we're spending an inordinate amount of money with consultants and contractor resources who maybe don't have the right skills to help our projects, where they'll gladly tell you that they have programme and project leadership to help actually, they don't, they've never built a railway. They've never operated an asset, or whatever. So I think we need to be really choiceful about who we work with in the contract arena. Yes, we'll have a shortage but I do believe we need to step up the game in house and have far more project programme leaders who are true civil servants.

And kind of building on the second part of that question, one of the questions that we have here is could the IPA deliver free PPM webinars or masterclasses during this period in an effort to upskill staff?

Well, nothing comes for free. Someone's got to pay for it somewhere. And we're doing a lot right now. So you probably be aware of the Major Project Leadership Academy, a programme which we currently run jointly with Oxford Saïd Business School, hugely successful, respected globally is probably world leading for our SROs and major programme managers. I think over 500 people, almost 600 people have been through that programme since it started. We run the project leadership programme, over 700 people been through that programme. And we'll continue we're actually in the process of re procuring that right now, and refreshing the curriculum. We're also building a project management framework which will have four levels, where we want to actually not just have that top view of the most senior civil servants and help them skill on the big programmes, but actually take a focus from fast streamers coming in and have a foundation level, a practitioner level and a senior practitioner level,

building to that mastery that you might see at the MPLA and then have programmes appropriate in that space. We're just at the start of that design, it's been basically shared with heads of professions in the departments, the frameworks pretty much agreed. We've got funding to start implementing and really, that will be the foundation of what we're going to call the Government Project Leadership Academy.

That sounds great. Thank you so much, Nick really helpful. And this is a very interesting question. Why do you believe government projects are so often heavily criticised for being over cost and lacking value for money? What do we need to do to improve this view?

Okay, again, we haven't got all afternoon to answer that question. I've been around projects for many, many years. And I can tell you that this government takes on some of the most complex, challenging and difficult projects anywhere on the planet. They are sometimes novel and unique in scope, sometimes on the transformational projects it's incredibly challenging to understand the scale and span of those projects or what needs to get delivered. So not surprisingly, they come with unique challenges. But I don't think we help ourselves when very early in those programmes, we announced a point estimate and appoint cost when the project will be delivered, and we haven't even scoped it. So the starting point is to really ensure that we work with departments and ministers, to preferably not give anything about cost and schedule until we understand what the project is. If we have to say something, make sure we give a range and then do the necessary work prior to final investment case, to develop the projects with what I call best practical front end loading. So it's it's very clear to any project professional that the better job you do of development, there's a direct and statistical link to lower cost and quicker completions. So doing it right is really the only way you can deliver. And we need to learn what right looks like we need to understand what it would take to get our projects to be green rated at the various assurance gates and set them up for success rather than think we can assure success in later in their development. So lots of opportunity to improve on what's quite a robust process we have, but recognising we're working with extremely challenging projects across many, many departments.

Yeah, I couldn't agree with you more there Nick. Linking to that question, where can we find the principles for project success? And can you tell us a little bit more about those?

I can indeed, so project principles were launched when we actually published our annual report last week. So they will become available to all the departments. And it's really the opportunity to start a dialogue in project teams about what those principles really mean in practice and recognise what blockers do you need to address to comply and dear to them? And where do they come from? Well, they came from really experience I've had in my career of recognising that sometimes it's behaviours that determine best outcomes, and not doing the basics right sometimes can end up tripping us all up. So I commissioned a piece of work which has been developed by the project profession, working across the departments and the heads of professions in departments. And I set them a challenge to tell me, what were the eight or so things that we were not practising that were catching us out. And this is basically the conclusion of that work that if we really focused on these eight areas, we would have a major impact on project delivery outcomes. So let me share a few of them with you. So focusing on outcomes, all too often we immediately describe the scope of something we're going to do or build, rather than actually talking about what the outcome and intent of what we're investing in. So I think unless you have the shaping work done to understand what is it you're trying to achieve, as an

outcome, a measurable outcome, then talking about scope is irrelevant. Planning realistically, rather than as I said, giving a calendar date when you deliver something without actually knowing what the scope is. Prioritising the people. All too often we don't put enough resource in early into a project to develop appropriately. We don't recognise good and bad behaviours and build a team for success. And then we need to tell it like it is when it doesn't go well. You know, there's been examples of projects which have perhaps been heading off the rails and given a good, honest conversation I'm sure there's deep expertise across government that could have helped them get to a better place more readily, rather than let them fall off the rails. And then once you've got all that in place, of course, you need to actually control the scope. And again, an observation in government is everyone seems to love to set off, but then continue to change and add to the scope. And whether it's driven by well actually, I had a policy or my minister asked for something, I'm sorry, the role of the project manager is to manage the scope to deliver the outcome. And at certain point in time, you need to freeze that scope, and only change it if it's not going to work, or it's unsafe. To continue to change it, there's almost 100 time cost, you know it goes from the cost of factor 10 when you go into design factor 100 when you're into early construct, factor of 1000 if you've already built it, you're gonna throw it away and do it again. So changes need to be controlled and we don't do that. Managing complexity and risk. Some of the comment I made about risk management, recognising we have complexity, and breaking the project's down into manageable pieces where you have the right support for the supply chain and for government to deliver is hugely important. Intelligent client in that space. So making sure that our approach to the supply chain gives the right level of apportionment of risk between what civil servants can do best, the operator can do best, the arms length body can do best and what the contractors in the marketplace can do best is all part of delivering successfully. But of course, when you've done all that, and you built the project, you need to learn and have a recycle loop. And quite often on our projects in government, although many of them are unique, there are a lot of similarities in terms of the challenges they face. We need to do a much stronger job of learning from experiences and recycling that back into the projects just setting off.

Great. Thanks, Nick.

I hope maybe I can just add Ani I just hope there's a really excited conversation starts around those eight project principles. I think it's a real opportunity for us to increase people's understanding of project delivery and where we the system are allowing our projects to fail. And we the system can change things.

Thanks, Nick. And we can certainly share more information on that as well if people are interested, and just way of timing, we've got a lot of good questions going through. So I'm going to try and get through some of these as well. Are there any plans to draw all PPM staff together as has been done for commercial and comms colleagues, PPM staff and smaller departments would really benefit.

So I'd love to do that. I think we had a very very successful project management forum last year before I joined, I think there were over 1000 people present. And we would have had one in the planning if it hadn't been for the COVID-19 crisis. So I know Fiona and her team have been working with heads of profession, and I've asked, what can we do virtually? What can we do in sub teams? Because I think you're right. There's huge opportunity if you just think about my comment I just made about lessons

learned. I think just getting practitioners together to share experiences, share good practices and share best practices is hugely powerful across the community. So it's something I'm a strong advocate for. I look forward to the day when we can have a world class project forum with everybody around and present in person.

And just kind of staying on this area, somebody has asked PPM is often focused on project managers. What can we do to build skills of specialists, for example, risk benefits planning, and also portfolio office staff?

I think that's a really great point because they are absolutely key elements of delivering successful projects. I think everything from project controls expertise, where you've got cost, schedule, and risk managers, you've got people who understand the digital space, people who really understand what a project managing contract of scope is and making sure our contracts are right. So it's an area that we need to move into. We're not there yet. We're at the highest level sorting out the project delivery professionals framework, but it's an area we're going to have to move into for sure, and an area where specialisms are hugely important to the impact on outcomes.

Thanks Nick somebody from fast stream has posed a question which is also really interesting. Product delivery really interests me and due to my fast stream performance, I've been offered an HEO role in project delivery, is this a discipline where you can realistically learn on the job?

Absolutely, yes. So just by way of background, I've spent 38 years in and around projects, I graduated as a mechanical engineer. I joined a major international company, got involved in projects and I've spent 38 years really every single project is different. Every experience builds on a previous experience, and you can grow your skills. So I actually qualified to deliver mega projects as a director, I also in my career had local, regional and global portfolio roles, which are different and more challenging than just delivering a single standalone project. So it's a real profession where you can grow over time. And that's why we wanted to build in that framework to help the fast streamers get their foundational skills in place, and then quickly move to become true practitioners with the skills that will make a difference on real projects, and then recognise that the senior practitioners, you know, you should be respected across industry. It's sort of chartered status level, and then moving on to mastery, which you really need to deliver some of these hugely complex government projects where stakeholders, planning, approvals, as well as the scope is all quite challenging. So yeah, it's a great place to be. And it's a great starting point, and I've certainly enjoyed all my time around projects.

Thanks, Nick 100% agree, this question is going slightly to COVID-19. And the impact of that, and one of the questions is what projects are going to be paused or brought forward or modified due to the pandemic? And what new projects will there be? So for example, upgrading broadband infrastructure.

So I'm afraid IPA don't get to play in who chooses which projects to go ahead and which stop, but you have seen and heard the Prime Minister talk about build, build, build. So using infrastructure as a vehicle to help the economy recover. Going with that, of course, is a whole wealth of opportunities in hospitals, schools, prisons, building, housing, and so on. And then, of course, in linear infrastructure. And clearly, with so many people working from home, the gigabyte broadband agenda has come into

sharp focus where it really will benefit the whole of the citizens of the UK, if we have smarter broadband. So the challenge we've got is to really recognise how we're going to prioritise across that landscape. And what can we start? And what should we maybe reschedule? That's a live conversation in Treasury right now. The challenge we find is that all the departments have their own priorities and want to carry on doing everything. I think it's going to test the UK Government to really get serious about prioritisation and where they need to, although they want to do everything, they've really got to prioritise what needs to be done this year and next versus what can maybe be put off for a couple of years. So live debate and that I think we're going to see some challenges in the spending round that we'll put this onto quite a spotlight I think.

Yeah, undoubtedly. One very topical question which I have to ask if we have the time and you've spoken about the need to get projects off to a good start. What lessons do you think we can learn from HS2?

Great question. HS2 was left to develop a scope that was never challenged. So one of the challenges that government has is to deliver on an outcome, but it also needs to set some boundaries of about what's realistic and what it can afford. And that conversation never really happened. And so, you know the strategic outline business case to the final business case were years in between. Everyone thinks that HS2 is overspent, it's not overspent anything. It's just come up with the final cost and schedule against the scope for phase one, that all the approval authorities, the environmental lobbies, the local communities required and demanded to get consense to get it approved. No one thought to challenge well actually can we afford that and is there a cheaper way of doing it and would that be acceptable? We've got the fastest train in the world, we've got the deepest cuttings in the world, we've got water free tunnels that in terms of whole life cost is fantastic. But in terms of capital cost, it's very high. So what should we learn from it? We need to learn that we need to do a much better job of that outlining of what the business case really is, what's affordable, and then have appropriate assurance gates and challenges along the way to make sure that we test the benefits are still being realised, the capex is under control, the scope is appropriately framed and controlled, and that we don't wait for the final business case to see that there's a huge surprise.

Thanks, Nick. That's really helpful.

I think we have one last question. So we'll focus on the COVID topic that we were discussing today. And one of the questions that's come through is we've proved that during COVID, we can deliver projects at pace, how do we ensure that we can take that learning into future project delivery?

So you're right, we have but we need to also guard against over optimism. So the nightingale hospitals was a kit out it wasn't the building of a hospital. So that's slightly different. There were no planning consents required to get that done, etc. So moving at pace for sure. But more speed less haste would be my mantra, we need to do the right level of front end loading. And some of our projects have enormously complex planning consents and regulations to be followed. We can undoubtedly get through that much quicker than we've seen in the past. And in fact, that's a challenge for Number 10 right now in terms of can we step up and go faster on this massive build project ambition. And what we've actually seen when we've looked at the data is there's plenty of departments who, through good

planning, are exploiting current legislation and consensus regulations and getting through them months, if not years, quicker than some other departments who just drift from one decision to the next. So I think part of it's on how we react and how we act agile and plan ahead. And certainly my experiences for these larger projects that do have those complex planning regimes, you need to plan for the plan, you need to plan for the planning and approvals as well as the plan for the technical work. And you need to understand where they link and you need to work them in parallel, except when you've got a go no go decision for the technical scope. And I haven't seen that often enough in government projects. So I know we can go quicker. But I wouldn't advocate doing schedule driven projects, we still need to develop them with excellence.

Thanks so much, Nick. That's I'm afraid all we've got time for, but thank you so much for answering our questions. And thank you all for attending today's session. I really hope you've enjoyed it and found it informative. And there's shortly going to be three poll questions asked so that you can evaluate the session and please do that that's incredibly helpful for us. And again, thank you so much for attending and I hope you enjoy the rest of the day. Bye