



HM TREASURY

CabinetOffice

Major Project approval and assurance guidance

April 2011



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1

Introduction

1.1 The 2010 Spending Review set out plans for around £80 billion of savings in public expenditure. To achieve these, the Government will need to effect a step-change in spending control. On the one hand, this means strengthening arrangements for scrutiny and control of spending, both within departments and by the Treasury. On the other hand, it means focusing this enhanced scrutiny where it is most valuable. In line with these objectives, the Treasury has strengthened its project approval processes.

1.2 Alongside this, the Coalition's Programme for Government makes a clear commitment to achieving better value for money for public spending. This includes a strong will to improve the success and delivery of Major Projects. In line with this aim, the Prime Minister has written to Cabinet announcing the establishment of the Major Projects Authority (MPA) within the Cabinet Office's Efficiency and Reform Group (ERG). The MPA replaces the Major Projects Directorate in the Office of Government Commerce (OGC).

1.3 The aim of the MPA is to bring about the successful delivery of Major Projects across central Government by working with departments to ensure the fitness and quality of Major Projects throughout their life. This will be achieved by introducing revised procedures for the assurance and support of Major Projects, and ensuring they are integrated with strengthened Treasury approval processes. This guidance outlines these revised procedures and sets out how they will work together within an integrated assurance and approval framework.

1.4 The overall process that all Major Projects must follow from 1 April 2011 onwards is outlined in the Integrated Assurance and Approvals Flow Diagram at Annex A. Most of this should not be new; some departments are already following this basic approach. These guidelines will ensure that this good practice is applied consistently across government, and more clearly aligns assurance and approvals processes.

1.5 There is a strong belief within Government and the National Audit Office, that proportionate scrutiny and assurance that is deployed at the right times, will significantly improve Major Project performance.

Definitions

1.6 In this guidance, a Major Project is defined as *"a central Government funded project or programme that requires HM Treasury approval during its life, as set out in Delegated Authority letters"*. It is important to note that there are areas where HM Treasury authority can never be delegated and accordingly, it is assumed that projects which exhibit any of the following characteristics will also be classed as Major Projects:

- could create pressures leading to a breach in Departmental Expenditure Limits, administration costs limits, or Estimates provision;
- would entail contractual commitments to significant levels of spending in future years for which plans have not been set;
- could set a potentially expensive precedent;

- are novel and contentious; or could cause significant repercussions for others;
- require primary legislation; or
- where Treasury consent is a statutory requirement.

1.7 Projects that fall above Cabinet Office limits for ICT, marketing and advertising spend, and consultancy spend, but are not otherwise outside department's delegated authority are not considered Major Projects.

1.8 It is assumed that all Major Projects defined in this way will enter the new Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP). However this may not be appropriate in all circumstances and the exact Major Project Portfolio for each department will be agreed by the Major Project Authority and the relevant HMT spending team, after discussion with the department.

1.9 This guidance covers both projects and programmes that meet the criteria above. However, from this point onwards this guidance will refer only to Major Projects for simplicity. In UK Government PRINCE2™ guidance, projects and programmes are defined as follows:

- **Project:** A temporary organization that is created for the purpose of delivering one or more business products, according to an agreed Business Case.
- **Programme:** A temporary flexible organization structure created to coordinate, direct and oversee the implementation of a set of related projects and activities in order to deliver outcomes and benefits related to the organization's strategic objectives. A programme is likely to have a life that spans several years.

1.10 The provisions set out below are mandatory for all Major Projects.

1.11 Departmental accountability for the delivery of Major Projects is unchanged.

2

HM Treasury project approval processes

2.1 HMT has revised its project approval processes as part of a wider programme of strengthened spending control. These revisions aim to provide a more coherent approvals and assurance framework, and make the tools HMT uses to approve Major Projects more consistent across Government.

2.2 The changes are effective from 1 April 2011. Implications for departments are set out below.

2.3 HMT approval is required for Major Projects at 3 key business case stages:

- 1 Strategic Outline Case (SOC)
- 2 Outline Business Case (OBC)
- 3 Full Business Case (FBC)

Table 2.A: Scope and timing of approval stages, including how HMT approvals relate to MPA assurance processes. MPA assurance will inform HMT approval at each business case stage. More information on MPA assurance processes can be found in Chapter 3.

Treasury Approval Point	Scope and timing	How does the approval point relate to MPA Assurance?
Strategic Outline Case Project initiation stage	All new Major Projects to ensure strategic fit, value for money and deliverability. Approval required before any public commitment is made.	Preceded by at least one of the following: Starting Gate OGC Gateway Review 1 Project Assessment Review (PAR)
Outline Business Case Pre-market stage	All Major Projects to assess all options in detail. Approval required before going to the market/issuing Official Journal of European Union (OJEU) notice.	Preceded by at least one of the following: OGC Gateway Review 2 PAR
Full Business Case Pre-final negotiation stage	All Major Projects pre - spending commitments Approval required before finalising commercial contracts. For projects using competitive dialogue as a procurement route, approval required before close of dialogue.	Preceded by at least one of the following: OGC Gateway Review 3 PAR

2.4 The Treasury's experience is that projects often go off track after Full Business Case stage. The Treasury will therefore agree with the department a set of milestones in addition to these key stages where approval must be sought for each project or programme. The Treasury reserves the right to add further approval milestones where necessary.

2.5 The Department must continue to provide the Treasury and the MPA with details of Major Projects after FBC approval and until the Major Project is operational. Relevant information will at least in part be provided through the regular reporting by Departments to the Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP). More information on GMPP reporting is in Chapter 3.

2.6 HM Treasury continues to consider Major Project approvals in the context of departmental portfolios. This could include the consideration of the affordability and deliverability of departments' portfolio as a whole.

Approval processes

2.7 The Major Projects Review Group (MPRG) continues to scrutinise and approve Government's largest and most complex Major Projects. Updated MPRG guidance can be found at Annex [C]

2.8 The Treasury Approval Point (TAP) process now applies to **all** Departments for **all** Major Projects that do not qualify for MPRG. The process has been made more flexible so that the approach taken is proportionate to the cost/riskiness of the Major Project. TAP had previously been in pilot phase and used for four departments. Updated TAP guidance can be found at Annex [B].

2.9 Scrutiny and approval of Public/Private Partnerships (PPPs) falls in line with Treasury processes and will also be considered under the TAP framework.

2.10 All Major Projects will therefore be approved through one of the following processes, with spending teams deploying varying levels of scrutiny depending on project cost and risk and the Department's track record for managing project spending.

- Major Projects Review Group
- TAP with panel meeting
- TAP without panel meeting

2.11 Treasury will not normally approve Major Projects unless they have an Integrated Assurance and Approval Plan (IAAP) and have complied with that plan. Integrated assurance and approval is the planning, coordination and provision of assurance activities and HMT approval points throughout the lifecycle of a Major Project. Departments are required to submit a draft IAAP for each Major Project for validation by both the MPA and HMT. Please see more detail on IAAPs attached at Annex [A].

2.12 IUK has been established as a unit within HMT with a remit to coordinate the planning, prioritisation and enablement of investment in UK infrastructure, and to improve the delivery of infrastructure projects. It also holds responsibility for Public Private Partnerships (PPP) policy. IUK will support Treasury approval processes and the MPA, particularly in relation to projects in the infrastructure and PPP sectors.

2.13 Please contact your HMT spending team for more information on revised project approvals.

3

Major Project Authority assurance processes

3.1 The MPA has introduced changes to strengthen the assurance framework for Major Projects in central Government. These changes are effective from April 1 2011. Implications for Departments are outlined below.

3.2 The Government Integrated Assurance Framework provides the structure for risk-based, proportionate and fit for purpose assurance provision for Major Projects. Two key components are the Integrated Assurance Strategy (IAS) and the Integrated Assurance and Approvals Plan (IAAP).

3.3 The IAS sets the strategic requirements for assurance provision to ensure agreed and consistent standards across an organisation's portfolio of Major Projects.

3.4 It is mandatory for all Major Projects to have an Integrated Assurance and Approval Plan (IAAP). Integrated assurance and approval is the planning, coordination and provision of assurance activities and HMT and departmental approval points throughout the lifecycle of a Major Project. Departments are required to submit a draft IAAP for each Major Project for validation by both the MPA and HMT. Please see more detail on IAAPs attached at Annex [A].

3.5 The MPA has updated its assurance toolkit. It is now split into 2 categories:

- Planned assurance, which will be included in the Major Project's IAAP; and
- Consequential assurance, which will only be applied to Major Projects in difficulty, as identified by the MPA, HMT or the department.

Table 3.A: Planned assurance tools

Tool	Description
Risk Potential Assessment (RPA) form	Identifies level and nature of project risk and therefore degree of assurance required
Starting Gate Review	Explores deliverability of major new policy and/or business change initiatives prior to public commitment to a project
OGC Gateway Review	Series of assurance "gates" before key project milestones
Project Assessment Review (PAR)	Flexible assurance review that is tailored to stage of project

Table 3.B: Consequential assurance tools

Tool	Description
Assurance of Action Plans (AAP)	Provides assessment of whether the project's action plans are sufficient to resolve issues identified through planned assurance
Case Conference	Integrated planning for recovery of projects at risk or in difficulty
Project Assessment Review (PAR)	Tailored to "deep dive" into known issue areas and/or to support recovery plans
Applied Support	Provision of capability from the Centre in support of recovery
Managed Early Closure (MEC)	Supports controlled and timely termination of projects
Escalation	Timely engagement with higher levels of management and/or Ministers to resolve otherwise intractable problems

3.6 All assurance activities will be tailored to individual Major Projects and will be resourced by civil servants wherever possible. Resource will be drawn from the MPA, departments and from specialists elsewhere such as Infrastructure UK and the Office of the Government CIO. Accredited external reviewers will only be used in exceptional circumstances.

3.7 It is now mandatory for every new policy or business change initiative which could result in a Major Project to go through a Starting Gate review. This must occur at an early stage of planning within the department, **and before any public commitment is made.**

3.8 It is assumed that all Major Projects will enter the new Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP). However this may not be appropriate in all circumstances and the exact Major Project Portfolio for each department will be agreed by the Major Project Authority and the relevant HMT spending team, after discussion with the department. It is mandatory for all projects in the GMPP to report core performance data to the MPA on a quarterly basis. Reporting processes for the GMPP will be piloted before formal guidance on GMPP reporting is issued to all departments in April 2011.

3.9 The MPA may carry out additional reviews and/or consequential assurance for Major Projects that it and/or HMT believe to be a concern, at any time.

3.10 Departments may request support from the MPA at any time for Major Projects that are in difficulty. Allocation of MPA resources to assist Major Projects in difficulty will be prioritised based on level of need.

3.11 MPA assurance review reports, including OGC Gateway reports, will normally be shared with relevant partners in HMT and Cabinet Office, to inform HMT approvals and/or to inform consideration of actions or further assurance requirements.

Further Information

3.12 More detail on all the components of the Government Integrated Assurance Framework described above can be found in the following MPA documents (all version numbers are correct at the time of writing but all MPA guidance will be updated periodically to incorporate lessons learnt and emerging good practice):

- Guidance on Integrated Assurance Strategy and IAAP (v1.0)
- Guidance on Planned Assurance and Approvals (v2.4)
- Guidance on Consequential Assurance and Intervention (v1.3)

3.13 These documents and any future versions or additional MPA guidance will be emailed to departmental PPM Heads of Profession and to “PPM Leaders” with responsibility for their organization’s PPM Centres of Excellence, Portfolio Office or equivalent. Copies can be requested from them, or via MPA-Info@cabinet-office.gsi.gov.uk.

A Integrated assurance and approval

A.1 “Integrated assurance and approval” is the planning, coordination and provision of assurance activities and approval points throughout the “policy to delivery” lifecycle, proportionate to levels of project cost and risk. The overall process Major Projects must follow is outlined in the Integrated Assurance and Approvals Flow Diagram on pg10.

A.2 Integrated Assurance and Approval Plans (IAAPs) are mandatory for all Major Projects, from 1 April 2011. An example IAAP can be found on pg. 11. IAAPs are mandatory for all new Major Projects and for all existing Major Projects (initially on a prioritised basis in discussion with the MPA and HMT). This requirement has a number of benefits:

- Planning all assurance requirements in advance means that Major Projects can ensure that they have a more timely and coordinated assurance regime (this will result in less but more effective assurance).
- Integrating assurance and approvals processes, and scheduling assurance before HMT approval points, will enable Spending Teams to make decisions that are better informed by assurance assessments, including overall delivery confidence.
- Pre-planning of assurance requirements by all Major Projects will enable the MPA to better forward plan resources to meet demand from departments.

A.3 It is mandatory for all Major Projects to submit a draft IAAP to HMT and the Major Projects Authority, following the process below:

Step 1	Starting Gate (for emerging initiatives and potential Major Projects)
Step 2	Submit IAAP to MPA Project Specialist, who will liaise with HMT Spending Team.
Step 3	MPA validates assurance plan (assurance timetable/assurance tools proposed by dept). HMT validates approval timetable and decides level of scrutiny required.
Step 4	HMT and MPA jointly respond to department, agreeing IAAP or requiring changes

A.4 The MPA and HMT Spending Teams will work together in reviewing draft IAAPs, ensuring through discussion with project teams that validated IAAPs appropriately cover both assurance and approvals requirements, and are proportionate to the nature and stage of each project.

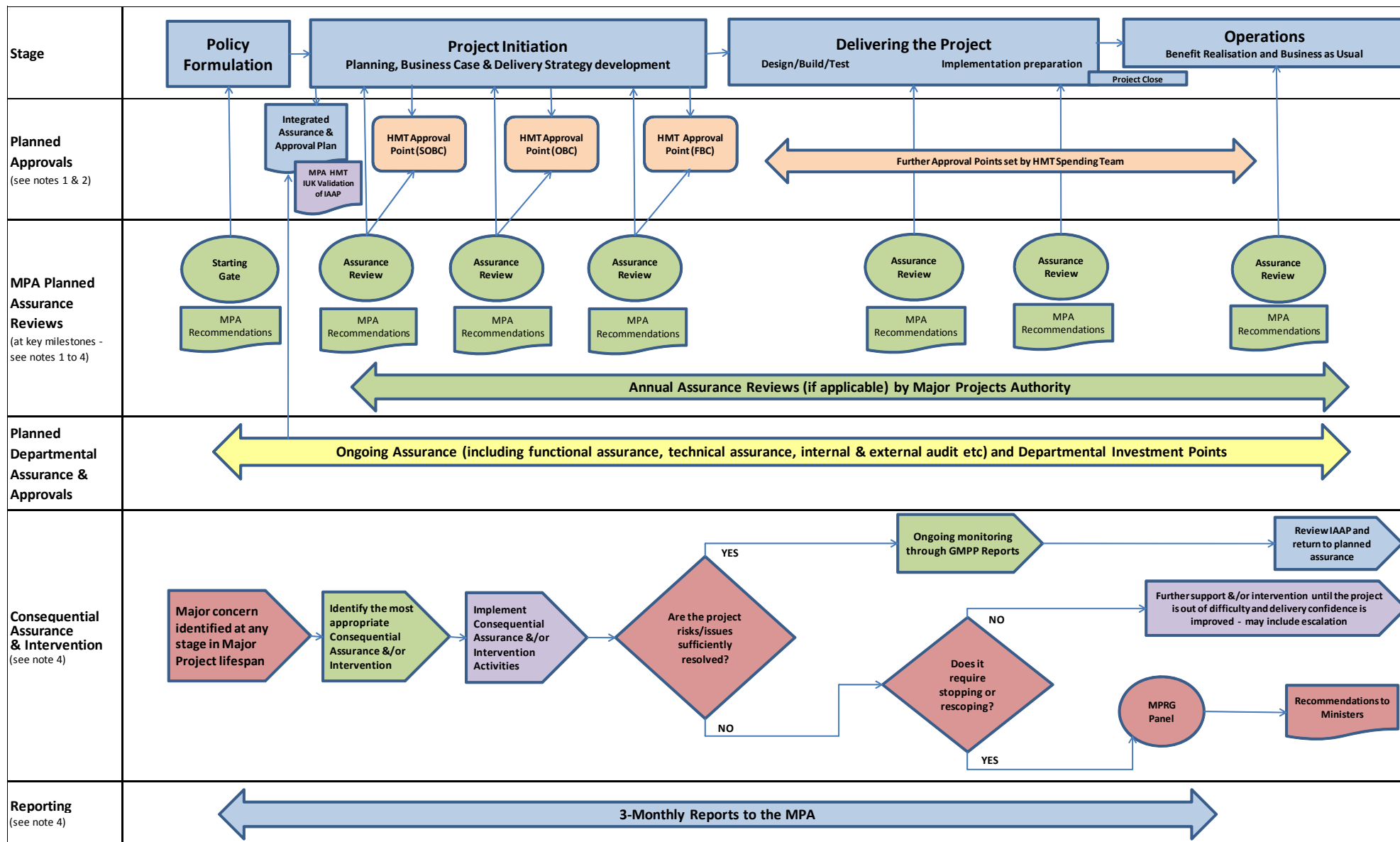
A.5 The IAAP should include a timeline clearly demonstrating the following milestones:

- Assurance review points (including both independent assurance from the MPA and internal departmental assurance and audit reviews)
- Internal departmental approval points
- 3 distinct HMT approval points (SOC; OBC; FBC) and any further milestones required by HMT Spending Team.

A.6 IAAPs are living documents which will change/develop according to the project’s lifecycle – amended IAAPs must also be submitted for re-validation by the MPA and HMT Spending Team.

A.7 Compliance with the agreed IAAP will normally be a condition of HMT approval.

Table 3.C: Integrated assurance and approvals - Lifespan of a Major Project. This is a flexible framework - assurance and approval processes for individual projects and programmes will be decided on a case by case basis.



- Key**
- Project Activity
 - MPA Activity
 - HMT Activity
 - Joint Activity at the Centre
 - Escalation Activity
 - Departmental Activity

- NOTES**
1. For more information on how to plan for integrated assurance and approvals, see MPA guidance on Integrated Assurance and Strategy and IAAPs
 2. The Integrated Assurance & Approvals Plan (IAAP) is periodically updated (after assurance reviews, scope or risk changes) and re-validated by MPA, HMT & IUK (where appropriate)
 3. Assurance Reviews provided will be relevant to the specific approval point or other requirement - either OGC Gateway Review or a Project Assessment Review (PAR)
 4. For more information on the components of this process see MPA guidance documents on Planned Assurance & Approvals or Consequential Assurance & Intervention
- For the latest versions of MPA guidance please contact your organisation's PPM Centre of Excellence/Portfolio Office (or equivalent), or email MPA-Info@cabinet-office.gsi.gov.uk

Table 3.D: Generic example template for an Integrated Assurance and Approvals Plan (IAAP) – shows the range of assurance and approvals activity to consider when building an IAAP. It is not intended that a standard IAAP template is provided as a ‘one size fits all’ approach would not be appropriate.

Assurance/Approval	Primary client	Date Last review	Current FY (show expected start date)											
			A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M
Programme/Project* Milestones														
Approvals	Investment Board													
	HMT approval points (SOC/OBC/FBC/other)													
	Other approvals e.g. ICT													
Independent Assurance														
Starting Gate	Senior Policy Lead													
PAR	MPA/SRO													
OGC Gateway	MPA/SRO													
GMPP Reporting	MPA													
Functional Assurance														
Technical	PM/Board													
Quality	PM/Board													
Information	PM/Board/ISO													
Security	PM/Board/DSO													
Financial (Compliance audit)	PM/Board Audit Committee													
Audit														
Internal	Audit Committee													
External	NAO/PAC													

* delete as applicable

B

Treasury Approval Point guidance

Introduction

B.1 This guidance sets out the purpose and scope of the Treasury Approval Point (TAP) and provides an overview of the TAP process. This guidance has been produced to assist departments in the preparation of a TAP review.

What is the Treasury Approval Point?

3.14 Treasury approval is required for expenditure outside departments' delegated authorities, as defined in departments' delegated authority letters.

3.15 TAP is the process by which the Treasury scrutinises and approves project spending outside delegated authorities. The TAP process has an agreed end date (usually 28 days from when the business case is received) after which HMT will communicate a decision to the department in writing. If deemed necessary by Treasury, there will be a formal panel meeting at the end of the process, chaired by a Treasury Director or Deputy Director, to resolve any remaining issues or queries.

Purpose of Treasury Approval Point

B.2 The TAP process aims to improve the quality of scrutiny of projects by the Treasury to achieve better value for money. The TAP approval process will review those projects that are outside departmental delegated authority but fall below the MPRG scrutiny requirements (usually above £1bn.)

B.3 The TAP process has 5 key principles:

- **Consistency:** TAP will be applied across Whitehall with final decisions being signed off at Ministerial, Treasury Director or Deputy Director level and communicated in writing by HMT.
- **Discrete process:** The TAP process will have an agreed end date, allowing departments to fit the TAP process around their project timelines.
- **Improve VfM:** TAP will focus on VfM and deliverability, in addition to the traditional issues of affordability and economics.
- **Clear Process:** The Treasury and departments will have a much better idea of when a project needs Treasury approval.
- **Green Book:** TAP requires that departments prepare business cases in line with the best practice Five Case Model, as set out in Green Book guidance.

When will a project be reviewed?

B.4 The TAP process, in line with the Green Book business case guidance, approves project business cases at three points. Where deemed appropriate, HMT will set additional approval points in addition to these. The three approval points are outlined in the table below.

Table 3.E: Timings of Treasury approval

Treasury Approval Point	Applicability	How does the approval point relate to MPA Assurance?
Strategic Outline Business Case Project initiation stage	All new Major Projects to ensure strategic fit, value for money and deliverability. Approval required before any public commitment is made.	Preceded by at least one of the following: Starting Gate OGC Gateway Review 1 Project Assessment Review (PAR)
Outline Business Case Pre-market stage	All Major Projects to assess all options in detail. Approval required before going to the market/issuing OJEU notice.	Preceded by at least one of the following: OGC Gateway Review 2 PAR
Full Business Case Pre-final negotiation stage	All Major Projects pre - spending commitments Approval required before finalising commercial contracts. For projects using competitive dialogue as a procurement route, approval required before close of dialogue.	Preceded by at least one of the following: OGC Gateway Review 3 PAR

B.5 The Green Book page of the Treasury website has a range of tools to help support, explain and provide practical assistance for both the creation and the assessment of business cases. This is available at: www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/data_greenbook_business.htm

3.16 The TAP process takes into account MPA assurance. HMT will not normally approve projects if the appropriate assurance processes (as set out in the project’s Integrated Assurance and Approval Plan) have not been followed.

Beginning of the process

B.6 Departments should notify Treasury as soon as a Major Project is recognised internally as a serious option. The initiative should then undergo a Starting Gate, and submit an Integrated Assurance and Approval Plan (IAAP). HMT will use the IAAP and Starting Gate report to decide the level of approval scrutiny the project requires, choosing from a range of tools, which are outlined below. The level of scrutiny will depend on project cost and risk, and the department’s track record for managing project spending.

- Major Projects Review Group (separate guidance attached at annex C)
- TAP decision with panel meeting.
- TAP decision without panel meeting.

B.7 Departments should submit business cases to Treasury for approval once they have been signed-off by internal senior management, including sign off by the department’s finance division. The business case should be accompanied with other significant documentation e.g. an

up-to-date IAAP, the most recent independent piece of assurance, risk register and commercial strategy.

B.8 Spending teams and, where appropriate, various experts will carry out an assessment on the material provided by the department.

B.9 Where appropriate, TAP will coordinate with Cabinet Office and act as a joint approval process for Major Projects for the following Cabinet Office controls, as well as HMT approval. Currently these controls are:

- ICT spend over £5million
- Marketing and advertising spend over £100,000
- For the signing of new leases, renewals of existing leases, the non-exercise of lease break options, any new property acquisitions (including those made through a Public Finance Initiative provider), new build developments, sale and leaseback, and any freehold sales as part of national property controls.
- Spend on a complex or non-standard commercial model (e.g. joint venture) for a service or Business Process Outsourcing.

B.10 Please note that the above only applies to Major Projects. For other items captured by Cabinet Office moratoria, the current process remains.

B.11 Spending Teams will inform departments if a TAP panel meeting is required.

TAP Panel Meeting

B.12 If after assessing the project documentation, the Spending Team needs to seek clarification of any issues arising, a panel meeting will be organised. TAP panel meetings discuss the issues outlined by Spending Teams alongside any further concerns the panel may have with the business case.

B.13 A TAP panel will usually comprise a Treasury Director or Deputy Director (chair); Spending Team representative; MPA representative; IUK representative where appropriate; and General Expenditure Policy Team representative. A maximum of 5 attendees from the project team, including the project SRO and departmental representatives, may attend the TAP meeting.

TAP decision

B.14 The outcome of TAP will be a written communication from the Treasury spending team, or when applicable from the TAP panel Chair, to the department's Accounting Officer, notifying them of the Treasury's decision. Where appropriate, Spending Teams may seek advice from Treasury Ministers before communicating Treasury's decision.

B.15 If you have any queries regarding the TAP process please contact your HMT spending team.



Major Project Review Group guidance

MPRG background

C.1 The Major Projects Review Group (MPRG) was initially established in January 2007 to improve the performance of major projects and to advise HMT Ministers whether projects should proceed. The Chair of the MPRG is Andrew Hudson, Director General of Public Services and Growth in HMT.

The aim of MPRG

C.2 The MPRG process is owned by the Treasury. The MPRG is a pool of experts, from which panels are put together to scrutinise the largest and most complex major government projects. MPRG Panels challenge projects on deliverability, affordability and value for money at key points in the HMT approvals process (SOC; OBC; FBC) and as required at other points during their lifecycle.

- **Deliverability** – The extent to which a project is deemed likely to deliver the expected benefits within the declared cost/time/performance envelope.
- **Affordability** – The extent to which the level of expenditure and financial risk involved in a project can be taken on, given a parent department's overall financial position, both singly and in light of its other funding priorities.
- **Value for money** – The optimum combination of whole-life cost and quality (or fitness for purpose) to meet the users' requirement.

Criteria for selecting projects for MPRG

C.3 HMT approval is required for projects outside departments' delegated authority. MPRG looks at a subset of these programmes, generally those which are highest risk and of concern to HMT Spending Teams.

C.4 Projects are selected for MPRG review according to the following criteria:

- Projects with a whole life cost over £1bn.
- Projects that are high risk and complex in their procurement and delivery of benefits.
- Projects that set a precedent, or are highly innovative
- Other projects 'of concern' (as agreed by Chair MPRG; may be recommended by HMT, MPA).

C.5 Departments' Major Projects are regularly reviewed to establish whether any meet the above criteria, and approval is sought from the MPRG Chair to add identified projects to the MPRG schedule.

Timing of MPRG reviews

C.6 MPRG timing is flexible, and the MPRG may meet at any time should a project become 'of concern.' However projects will generally be reviewed at the following key stages:

- Strategic Outline Business Case stage
- Outline Business Case Stage - before the project goes to tender
- Full Business Case Stage - following receipt of bids but before award of the contract, or in the case of competitive dialogue, before close of dialogue.

C.7 Once a project has been reviewed at any stage by MPRG, the MPRG Panel will decide if and when the project should return to MPRG.

C.8 MPRG may also consider Departmental portfolios of projects and/or Departmental programmes.

The MPRG Panel

C.9 MPRG is usually chaired by the HMT Director General for Public Services and Growth. The Executive Director of the Major Projects Authority (MPA) in the Cabinet Office sits on most of the Panels for continuity and to support the Chair. On occasion the HMT DG Public Services delegates the role of Chair to another HMT Director or to the Executive Director of the MPA.

C.10 The MPRG scrutiny panel for each review consists of (usually) three or four individuals selected from a pool of senior government and private sector experts. For the avoidance of doubt, the MPRG panel members are *not* the "MPA assessment Team". The MPA assessment team produce reports through Project Assessment Reviews, in order to inform MPRG panel meetings.

The role of the MPA in MPRG

C.12 The MPA oversees the technical, operational and assessment aspects of the MPRG process. MPRG secretariat is provided by the MPA, including provision of the project's assurance history and reports.

Overview of the process for an MPRG Review

Purpose and principles of the assessment

C.13 Prior to each MPRG Panel, there is a Project Assessment Review, commissioned by the relevant Deputy Director in the MPA. The aim is to provide evidence, building on existing assurance where appropriate, to inform the MPRG panel on the key issues for discussion at the Panel Meetings,.

Assessment phase

C.14 The assessment team will study previous MPRG outcomes and project documentation, including contract documents at close of dialogue/FBC stage; and will interview key stakeholders. Where available, the assessment team will take into account assurance that has been undertaken by others – e.g. the Department's own assurance, audit and investment decision making processes.

C.15 The assessment team will focus on the investigation and discovery of evidence capture for MPRG. In their report the assessment team will highlight areas as "*noteworthy and positive*" or "**noteworthy and cause for concern**". Further investigation will be made to determine the root causes for the areas of concern and key issues will be identified.

Outputs of the assessment

C.16 Outputs of the assessment phase will typically comprise two papers both produced to a standard template:

- **Assessment team report: Overview of evidence and issues identified:** Produced by assessment team after the Project Assessment Review is complete.
- **Project and department briefing paper:** Brief overview of the project and the department (and agency, if relevant) which should include the SRO's observations about the assessment paper.

MPRG Panel Meetings

C.17 The MPRG Panel meeting is the conclusion of the review. The project team (usually SRO + Programme Director) attends. The aim is a peer-to-peer review, where the Panel engages with the project.

C.18 The formal outcome of the panel is a letter from the panel Chair or HMT Minister, to the department's Permanent Secretary and / or Minister.

C.19 The chair of MPRG makes a decision or makes recommendations to HMT Ministers on the basis of the evidence submitted by MPA and the department, to either:

- Approve the project proceeds on the proposed plan
- Approve the project with conditions, or
- Halt the project's progress

HM Treasury contacts

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