

## **FAQs for the Major Projects Authority**

### **What is the Major Projects Authority (MPA) and why was it established?**

The MPA is a newly created central authority and will work in collaboration with central Government Departments to help get firmer control of Government's Major Projects both at the individual and the portfolio level. It aims to significantly improve the success rate of Major Projects across Central Government.

The MPA will be a partnership between the Cabinet Office and Treasury and has a clear, enforceable mandate from the Prime Minister for the oversight and direction of Major Projects funded and delivered by central government. The mandate is the government's response to the recommendations in the recently published NAO report "Assurance for High Risk Projects" and from the Major Projects Review undertaken by the over the summer by the Efficiency and Reform Group.

The MPA was formally launched by the Minister for the Cabinet Office on 9th February. The MPA will be operational as of 1st April 2011.

### **What is a Major Project and which projects will be included in MPA's scope?**

A Major Project is a central government project or programme that requires HM Treasury approval. The MPA are currently working with departments to identify which projects will be 'Major' Projects and how their projects and programmes are managed for assurance and approval purposes. The MPA will compile a Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP) and report on them regularly to ministers.

### **What authority does the MPA have and how will the MPA make a difference?**

The power of the Mandate is not just that it is required by the Prime Minister, but that the collaboration between Cabinet Office and Treasury means that approval will not normally be granted if suitable assurance is not being carried out, or will be granted under strict conditions regarding future assurance. The MPA will work closely with each Department to agree how the requirements can best be implemented in their environment.

The Major Projects Authority will be supported by the introduction of a compulsory Integrated Assurance framework which will cover the life of each Major Project from policy development to benefit delivery. The MPA will use a range of assurance tools (including Gateway Reviews) to assess a project's performance and viability.

### **How will the MPA be resourced?**

The MPA has a skilled team of projects specialists who have extensive assurance review experience across a wide range of subject matters. The MPA's Project review teams will also include accredited Civil Service reviewers with appropriate experience and specialist skills sourced from across government.

### **How will MPA meet the needs of the Government's transparency agenda?**

In order to meet the Government's transparency agenda Department's will collaborate with the MPA to publish an Annual Report on Major Projects which will be published by December 2011.

### **How will the MPA build up the project management capability in departments?**

The MPA's mandate gives it the authority to work with departments to build capability in project and programme management. This should include nominating suitably senior and experienced officials to act as reviewers of (others') high risk projects and programmes at least once every 12-18 months.

### **Will the role of the MPA now make it accountable for Major Project spend and delivery?**

No, whilst the MPA has control and oversight of Major Projects it has an assurance and support function working collaboratively with the department owning the project. Ministers and departmental accounting officers remain accountable for the projects delivery and the expenditure they control.

### **Is the MPA an NDPB or a Quango?**

No, the MPA is not an NDPB or a new Quango. It is a partnership between the Cabinet office and the Treasury forms part of the Efficiency and Reform Group located in the Cabinet Office. It will utilise existing resources within the Cabinet Office and the Treasury. The MPA assurance reviews will be carried out by Civil Service Reviewers who will be independent from the project or programme under review.

### **Who will head up the MPA?**

David Pitchford is the Executive Director of the MPA. The Major Projects Authority will report to the Efficiency and Reform Group Board which is chaired jointly by the Minister for the Cabinet Office and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

### **How did you decide which projects to include in the Major Projects Review (MPR)?**

Over 200 Major Projects were considered and 31 projects were looked at in depth for the assessment reviews. The selection criteria for the projects reviewed were:

- All high value Projects including ICT (over £50m) where potential savings could be significant;
- High value Projects where the impact on Government is deemed to be High Risk;

- Projects where significant savings were apparent;
- Projects where the financial and reputational risk to Government was unclear; and
- Projects of particular concern to Ministers or HMT

### **What was the outcome of the MPR?**

Of the Projects reviewed: twenty-three projects reviews resulted in recommendations on the re-scoping and restructuring of projects to generate significant savings; eight were escalated for further scrutiny resulting in the termination of two projects and the re-scoping of three others.