

ANNEX A: HORIZON SCANNING HISTORY

Horizon scanning is conducted to varying degrees across a number of Government departments. A number of reviews have been commissioned over the past 15 years due to the widely held, but not universal, belief that horizon scanning is a beneficial practice. Reviews have been undertaken in an attempt to better centrally coordinate the findings of departmental horizon scanning. This has led to the creation of new units and several forums.

In 2004 the Science and Innovation Investment Framework 2004-2014 was published. This outlined the Government's commitment to establishing a Centre of Excellence in Horizon Scanning, known as the Horizon Scanning Centre (HSC), to be based in the Foresight directorate of the Office of Science and Innovation (now the Government Office for Science). The aim of the HSC at the time was for its output to feed directly into cross-government priority-setting and strategy formation with a science base. The HSC was founded to encourage more effective use of evidence and to provide more context for strategy development in the public sector. One of the HSC projects was to begin the Futures Analysts Network (FAN Club) comprised of futures thinkers from across the public, private, academic and third sectors. Meetings were designed to inform members of good practice in the field of horizon scanning and strategic futures analysis. The FAN Club was disbanded in 2010. The HSC retains a team of 2 people with a wide remit including the facilitation of the Future Intelligence and Security Outlook Network (FUSION) with a steering committee of representatives from national security orientated departments and agencies who decide the topics it should address at its quarterly meetings.

The Horizon Scanning Unit (HSU), the National Security Secretariat (NSSec) and a Horizon Scanning Forum (HSF) were established in 2008 following the Prime Minister's written ministerial statement (22 Jul 2008) which identified that the coordination of horizon scanning needed to be significantly improved. The Horizon Scanning Unit, within the Joint Intelligence Organisation of the Cabinet Office, was launched to '...coordinate horizon scanning activity and improve its overall effectiveness across Government...' ⁱ Alex Allan identified the National Security Strategy (NSS) as a useful place for integrating Government horizon scanning into strategy development and strategic decision-taking. ⁱⁱ

The Horizon Scanning Forum (HSF) of senior officials was launched in Sept 2008. It was to work closely with the Strategic Horizons Unit (the new name for the HSU) to meet the NSS 2008 commitment to '...strengthen the Government's capacity for horizon-scanning, forward planning and early warning.' ⁱⁱⁱ The HSF was to sit quarterly and to act as the main commissioning and coordinating body for national security related horizon scanning work.

In Mar 2010 the SHU was transferred to NSSec Strategy & Projects team. At this point the horizon scanning coordination function within the Cabinet Office ceased to exist.

'A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The National Security Strategy' (Oct 2010) stressed the requirement for horizon scanning in terms of both future risks and alternative futures and our ability to develop and respond to them. This theme was developed by the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) where coordination of horizon scanning was passed to the NSSec. Under the 'Annual Mandate for cross-Whitehall Horizon Scanning' the

NSSec was to assess those horizon scanning products which impacted upon the 10 SDSR priority areas and/or specific National Security Risk Assessment (NSRA) risks, or which identify new risks. The purpose of an annual mandate for cross-Whitehall national security orientated horizon scanning was to ensure work was drawn together in a coherent fashion based on NSC and SDSR-agreed priorities. The cross-Whitehall horizon scanning mandate sat within a wider commitment of the SDSR for increased focus on central coordination and strategic all-source assessment, horizon scanning and early warning. However from Dec 2010, due to budgetary changes, only one individual remained in the Cabinet Office from the original SHU, and this person was not employed in a horizon scanning capacity.

In Apr 2012, the Public Administration Select Committee report once again highlighted concern about the erosion of strategic thinking across the Civil Service. The report stated that that the Future Intelligence and Security Outlook Network (FUSION) was an example of the successful application of cross-departmental strategic thinking. FUSION's primary function is as a knowledge sharing network for DV-cleared horizon scanning practitioners where ideas can be tested, developed and challenged. Its products are shared with workshop attendees and the wider FUSION network. It does not have a directing or co-ordinating function.

Conclusion

Horizon Scanning takes place across Government but there is no longer any central oversight to inform senior leaders of the findings of horizon scanning activity or to coordinate future horizon scanning output. There are a number of networks, FUSION and the Global Futures Group for example, which have some cross-Government representation, however their findings are not centrally managed.

ⁱ See 'Integrating Horizon Scanning into the National Security Strategy' Alex Allen, 21 Oct 2008

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ⁱⁱⁱ See www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmtoday/cmwwms/home.htm