



Sir Philip Rutnam KCB
Permanent Secretary

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Meg Hillier MP
Chair of the Public Accounts Committee

By email

13 February 2018

Dear Meg,

Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP).

I wrote to you on 20 December regarding the Emergency Services Network (ESN) and the publication date of the Infrastructure Projects Authority (IPA) report. In that letter I agreed to give a written progress update on ESN before our appearance at the Committee on 21 February.

This programme is by an order of magnitude the most significant that I am responsible for as Permanent Secretary of the Home Office, and indeed across the emergency services more widely. Ensuring continuity in critical communications is absolutely essential. I am therefore pleased to confirm that agreement has been reached between Vodafone and Motorola on a replacement for the TDM system, ensuring the existing Airwave system can continue beyond March 2020. Other examples of progress since the November hearing are:

- On the network, EE now reports 4G coverage to approaching 90% of the country by geography (I attach some maps setting out progress).
- Following a competitive process, the programme has awarded a contract to Samsung Electronics to provide handheld devices, with testing expected to have completed by the spring.
- The first live demonstration of the ESN capability, linking together the live radio network with Motorola's ESN software, and proving prioritisation for emergency services communications has taken place.
- The performance of the software in testing has improved markedly; a major software upgrade providing the vast majority of functionality is due at the end of February.
- Mobility and load management testing (the ability for the device/service to operate effectively while moving to different locations and under high demand scenarios) began in January; so far 21 tests have been completed with no failures.
- EE's Rapid Response Vehicle (RRV) has passed Vehicle Certification Agency (VCA) Testing. The RRV is a complete remodelling and refit of a standard production vehicle to allow it to operate as a self-sufficient / stand-alone "Mobile Base Station". Production has begun with the first completed vehicles expected in March.
- TfL have now laid 'leaky feeder' cables in almost 100km of tunnels out of a total of 420km in the London Underground.

I am confident that ESN is the right strategic direction, and that significant progress is being made towards delivering it.

The complexity of the overall programme, the number of component projects within it, the amount of dependencies contained and the logistical and technical challenges in completing a fully integrated solution, are extensive.

The team is focusing on two areas; firstly a high level strategic review of the organisational health of the programme, investigating and implementing improvements to our governance, programme management, communications and commercial approach; secondly a large effort on re-planning in order to provide greater certainty to delivery timescales and closing out final technical design details, both of which will facilitate stricter assessments of programme deliverability and costs. Good progress is being made but it will not be possible to give firm dates or costs until this exercise has been completed with consequential commercial discussions with suppliers concluded, an aspect of the programme which has undergone substantial review since the November hearing and has been strengthened conspicuously by the arrival of a new Commercial Director

The review of the programme has led to evaluation of alternative delivery approaches which could see us rolling out capability in a more incremental way. This would give users an earlier opportunity to see and test earlier versions of the functionality and build their confidence in the solution. This alternative approach to delivery involves a substantial amount of work with suppliers and the emergency services, including re-planning and reconsidering the approach to tests and trials. We will be discussing progress at the Major Projects Review Group (MPRG) on 13th March and this should enable us to consolidate the analysis undertaken currently, and offer an assessment of the most viable approach to the overall delivery of ESN.

I am clear that the re-planning and reset work must be approached meticulously, allowing the necessary time to afford a high degree of confidence in the resulting conclusions, notably costs and timescales. I recognise the importance of this information to improve users' confidence in ESN delivery, but this confidence can only be maintained if the work is done comprehensively. I anticipate concluding this work no later than the summer parliamentary recess period.

In the meantime, the re-planning exercise is not distracting the core delivery work, which is proceeding well. Benefits of ESN are already being experienced in a small way. For example;

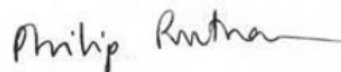
- Provision of mobile coverage to the general public in areas not previously covered by mobile networks; extensions to EE's network as a result of ESN are delivering this now.
- There have already been over 100 genuine 999 calls received through masts in place due to ESN where there was previously no coverage, demonstrating the ability of ESN to help save lives even before roll out is complete.

We are very aware of the points you raise about user uncertainty. We have advised users that transition will not commence during 2018. I addressed the

National Police Chiefs Council recently and discussed progress. I was encouraged by the support for both the programme's objectives and the need for the re-planning exercise. All the Emergency Services users we work with recognise the need for this work to be carried out as quickly as possible, but also thoroughly and in a way that will not compromise public safety in any way.

I hope this letter gives the Committee further reassurance that we are tackling all the issues rigorously and I look forward to updating the Committee further.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Philip Rutnam". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Sir Philip Rutnam
Permanent Secretary