

Speech: Transforming public services through major projects

Good morning ladies and gentlemen.

It's a pleasure to be here with you today for the first Transforming Together conference of the year, and the seventh in its history.

Communities and networks are essential to help us deliver world class projects, and Transforming Together is certainly the place to collaborate with colleagues who are delivering the government's transformation portfolio.

We know that transformation can't be learned from a textbook, so learning from each other is vital. And that's why we are here today.

In that vein, there are three main points I want to cover today:

- to outline the nature and scale of transformation in government;
- to share some of the lessons learned so far on this transformation journey, in particular the need to set realistic objectives, embrace uncertainty and focus on outcomes and people, and;
- to set out the future of transformation.

Scale of transformation

Firstly, the current transformation portfolio.

Collectively we are delivering a set of transformation projects that will realise almost £50 billion worth of long term benefits for government.

This equates to 53 programmes – 34 on the [Government Major Projects Portfolio \(GMPP\)](#) and 19 in early development – spanning 12 government departments and agencies, delivering well into the 2020s.

Not to mention more than 100 new digital services, 20 of which we consider to be 'major' transformations, which means that they are much more than a front-end digital service.

The sheer scope, scale and complexity of this portfolio is extraordinary.

As someone who is relatively new to the public sector, I am staggered at our ambition.

We recently commissioned an international study, which showed how ambitious the UK is compared to other countries like Germany.

These projects will have huge benefits for the general public.

Not only will they generate billions of pounds worth of efficiency savings in government – important as that is – they will transform people's lives for

the better.

They will improve people's experiences when interacting with the state and improve their access to vital public services.

Whether it's Courts Reform, which will create a straightforward online court to resolve disputes from divorces to debt enforcement, making justice swifter and more certain.

Or the Making Tax Digital programme which will enable people to report and calculate their taxes online, saving money and time as well as fundamentally changing the way people interact with HMRC.

The Digital Census programme provides vision for a fully digital Census by 2021. Its ability to enable other transformed services in government should not be underestimated.

Digital Services at the Border will transform the way we ensure safe and efficient movement of people and goods through our borders and the full rollout of e-gates at airports.

The National Crime Agency Transformation will bring together multiple systems across police forces, helping to identify, prevent and tackle organised crime even quicker.

And within the civil service, the cross-government Smarter Working Programmes are already seeing benefits from changing the way we work through better use of technology, improved estates, and flexible working.

It's not just an estates rationalisation programme. It has required big cultural and organisational change for the better.

But, people's lives will only be transformed if we get these projects right and are able to transform ourselves too.

If we deliver these projects as well as they can be delivered.

What is transformation?

One of the challenges we have tackled over the last two years is actually defining transformation and understanding what aspects of delivery we need to target in order to succeed.

Different people have a different understanding of what transformation is.

So we mapped our transformation programmes against a number of important characteristics such as organisational change, policy change and location change – just to name a few.

This has allowed us to understand common themes across what can initially look like very different programmes.

Transformation programmes generally contain a mix of these characteristics

and the most complex, such as Universal Credit or Courts Reform, contain them all.

But containing one doesn't always equal transformation.

It's easy to assume a new digital project is a transformation project. But actually a project can be completely transformative without requiring any new digital services at all. And a digital project may well not be transformational.

Likewise, cost reduction alone almost certainly doesn't equal transformation.

One of our most important pieces of work to date has been the creation of a framework to help initiate transformation projects in the best possible way.

We call it the Seven Lenses of Transformation.

Fundamentally they are seven tests or questions you should ask yourself right at the beginning, and continue to check throughout delivery:

- Vision – do you have a clear and aligned vision of the desired outcome?
- Design – how will the organisation be configured?
- Collaboration – are you collaborating with all affected stakeholders?
- Planning – do you have plans set out in realistic delivery phases?
- Accountability – is it clear who is accountable?
- People – are you supporting people to change the way they work?
- Leadership – have you got the right leadership skills in place?

Lessons learned

Both the [Infrastructure and Projects Authority \(IPA\)](#) and [Government Digital Service \(GDS\)](#) – through our joint Transformation Peer Group (TPG) – have put a lot of work into answering these questions over the last two years.

In doing so, we have learnt a lot of lessons along the way.

I won't go through them all today, but there are four for me that stand out.

The first is to set realistic objectives.

Because it is very difficult to benchmark transformation projects, it is very easy to set wholly unrealistic objectives.

To set up projects for success, it's vital that right from the start you know exactly what you must deliver and you are realistic about what you can deliver.

This might sound obvious, but in huge transformations this can often be the most difficult part to get right.

Many programmes are at risk of failure from having unrealistic expectations at the outset.

Of course be ambitious, but temper this ambition with a healthy dose of realism.

If you think you are falling foul of this already, try to reset your objectives and be clear on what you can realistically achieve.

Also, a 'test and learn' approach could be a useful way of rolling out a project in incremental stages, iterating the service as you go.

The second is to embrace the fact there will always be a level of uncertainty in your projects.

We must understand what that uncertainty is and then learn to manage it. We must consider new ways of managing uncertainty in a portfolio.

This is especially true for transformation projects as it's often very difficult to estimate cost and schedule, in particular for programmes with a long duration.

And accurately specifying benefits of transformation can be even more challenging.

How will the public or organization react to change? How can we account for a project running through multiple parliaments? Or being dependent on a wider set of transformational changes?

Rather than attempting to create false precision, we should try and understand the uncertainty and whether we can live with it.

In my previous sector, we had a systematic and quantitative way of dealing with uncertainty when exploring for oil and gas. I'm not saying their approach can be applied here, but we can, and should, learn lessons from elsewhere.

And if we think the level of uncertainty is large enough to jeopardize a project, we should consider undertaking pilot projects to reduce the uncertainty. Or break up a project into smaller, more manageable components.

All too often in government we are ruthlessly focussed on cost and schedule, while forgetting what exactly we are trying to achieve.

It brings to mind the old Danish proverb, "the operation was a success, but the patient died."

Whether it's transitioning to a new pension age, saving time through online GP appointments or completing new services in court, developing this outcomes view is crucial.

Transformation projects can take an indirect path as they change and evolve. So we need a North Star to guide us. And that is the outcome of what you are trying to achieve.

So, keep your eye on the prize. Adapt as necessary in order to reach your

objective.

And while cost and schedule are important, it's the outcome that really matters.

As I said before, transformation is not about just building new digital interfaces, writing code or shuffling real estate.

It's about improving people's lives. It's about changing the way we work together in government.

Too often we forget about the people who are affected by change – the end users.

Transformation often requires us to engage large teams of people who are impacted in some way by the transformation itself.

Here bringing in multi-disciplinary teams can help. Policy teams can help focus the design on intended outcomes. HR teams can help embed and communicate organisational change.

Dealing with this can sometimes be the hardest part of delivery. But it's the part that matters the most.

Real transformation can't be effected unless we take people along with us on the journey.

I urge you to keep this at the forefront of your mind – especially when times are difficult.

Future of transformation

Having identified these important lessons, the challenge now is to use this new understanding to boost future delivery.

Without a doubt, transformation is still a huge agenda for this government and it will continue to be for a very long time.

EU Exit is forcing us to change the way we work – in a way that will be helpful to the transformation agenda. It's part of the solution, not a problem.

As John Manzioni said just last week in his [speech on transformation](#) at the LSE, "Brexit is an accelerator, not a distraction."

EU Exit provides us with an opportunity to create whole new systems.

For example, it has already allowed us to crystallise our thinking about the Borders programme in a new way. We are thinking about the outcomes differently and it has brought different parts of government together.

The IPA and GDS will continue to help create the right enabling environment across government.

We will tackle processes that make transformation difficult.

We will share our learning more widely, publishing new tools and research.

Our new Major Projects Leadership Academy (MPLA) and Project Leadership Programme (PLP) transformation modules launch formally in April, and will continue to develop.

And we will continue to grow our pool of [Transformation Associates](#) so we have an ever-expanding group of experts on hand.

Conclusion

To conclude, the transformation of government is a huge and ambitious agenda.

We're making great progress in delivering it, but we still have a long way to go.

And we are learning a lot along the way.

Events such as these are crucial to help us share that learning and continue on this transformation journey.

But we must always remember that this is about improving people's lives and improving the way that government works.

So let's keep our eyes firmly on the prize.

Thank you.

[Press release: Rare early Georgian baby house at risk of leaving the UK](#)

A rare early Georgian baby house.

Arts Minister Michael Ellis has placed a temporary export bar on a rare Georgian baby house to provide an opportunity to keep it in the country.

The baby house (later known as a dolls' house) is at risk of being exported from the UK unless a buyer can be found to match the asking price of £65,000 (plus £13,000 VAT).

The house is a rare and magnificent example from the early 18th century, one of only around thirty surviving examples of pre-1760 English baby houses. It descended through the family of William Edward Forster, the Liberal MP who introduced the Education Act of 1870 and was later Chief Secretary for

Ireland.

Jesse Burton's best-selling 2014 book "The Miniaturist" brought baby houses to renewed attention in recent years. The book was inspired by Petronella Oortman's famed baby house, on display at Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum. It was also made into a two-part BBC series, which aired over Christmas last year.

The concept of the miniature house came to England from the Netherlands and Germany in the early 18th century, and was intended for training the young daughters of wealthy families in household management. Miniature furniture, and utensils in silver, pewter and porcelain, were supplied by toy merchants, while girls were encouraged to develop sewing skills by making clothes for the house's dolls.

Due to their intricate and expensive design baby houses were more a training tool than a plaything for children until the early 19th century, when the design was simplified and production increased, resulting in the dolls' houses of more recent times.

Arts Minister Michael Ellis said:

This striking piece is a captivating window into the history of childhood. I hope it can remain in the UK, where it can be studied and admired further.

The decision to defer the export licence follows a recommendation by the [Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest \(RCEWA\)](#), administered by The Arts Council.

RCEWA member Peter Barber said:

This captivating and little altered house in miniature takes us into the elegant eighteenth century home while also shedding unique light on the education of young middle class girls at that time.

The RCEWA made its recommendation on the grounds of the house's outstanding significance for the study of the history and material culture of childhood.

The decision on the export licence application for the house will be deferred until 1 May. This may be extended until 1 August if a serious intention to raise funds to purchase it is made at the recommended price of £65,000 (plus £13,000 VAT).

Organisations or individuals interested in purchasing the house should contact the RCEWA on 0845 300 6200.

An image of the house can be downloaded via our [flickr site](#).

ENDS

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Notes to editors

1. Details of the house are as follows: Probably made between 1720 and 1740. Largely made of mahogany, oak and softwood, and with glazed windows, measuring 204cm high, 135cm wide, and 67cm deep. The maker and early provenance are not known. The piece is in good condition, with numerous small areas of damage and historic repairs, but with minimal losses.
2. Provenance: Possibly with Elizabeth and Sarah Forster at Grove House, Tottenham and thence by descent to; William Edward Forster and thence by descent to; Florence Vere O'Brien and thence by descent to; Elinor Wiltshire; sold to Christopher Gibbs Ltd; acquired by a private collection; Sold at Bonhams, London, 19 November 2009, lot 37 (£43,000 inc. prem.); sold at Sotheby's, London, 23 May 2017, lot 200, The Ballyedmond Collection Sale (37,500 inc. prem)
3. The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest is an independent body, serviced by The Arts Council, which advises the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on whether a cultural object, intended for export, is of national importance under specified criteria.
4. The Arts Council champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. It supports a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. www.artscouncil.org.uk

[News story: Programme: EU-UK Article 50 Negotiations, Brussels, 6-9 February 2018](#)

[unable to retrieve full-text content]UK and EU officials will hold further discussions next week

News story: Captain Dean Sprouting has died

Captain Dean Sprouting.

It is with regret that the MOD must announce the death of Captain Dean Sprouting of the Adjutant General's Corps at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq, on 31st January 2018. He was serving with Black Watch, 3rd Battalion, Royal Regiment of Scotland. The incident is currently under investigation, but we can confirm that it was not the result of enemy activity.

Lt Col Rob Hedderwick, Commanding Officer, The Black Watch, 3rd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland, said:

It is hard to do justice to a man such as Dean Sprouting with simple words. In no time at all he had become an indispensable part of the battalion, not only for his professional expertise but also for his compassionate manner and camaraderie. His intelligence and sharp wit was apparent from the outset; there was an ever-present twinkle in his eye and he would gladly admit that his youth had been full of adventure.

Dean was simply one of those people whose infectious humour and enthusiasm drew others to him. His professional knowledge was second to none and his sage advice already something I had come to rely on. His loss is keenly felt by us all and our thoughts and prayers are with his wife and children whom I know he cherished more than anything else in this world. I am hugely proud and thankful to have known him. He was a very good man.

Warrant Officer Class One Tam Millsip, Visiting Warrant Officer, 51 Infantry Brigade said:

Dean's warm, personable nature was never diluted while conducting his duties and those who he had dealings with were always left smiling after Dean imparted his unique wisdom and outlook on life.

Dean was a tremendously entertaining man to be around. He would bring a great deal of joy and laughter to those around him often at the expense of himself; there was never a boring day spent with Dean and my thoughts go out to his family at this very sad time.

Minister for the Armed Forces Mark Lancaster said:

It is with deep regret that the Ministry of Defence confirms the death of Capt Dean Sprouting of the Adjutant General's Corps, who died earlier this week at Al Asad Air Base in Iraq. Our thoughts are with his family and friends at this very difficult time. An investigation is underway to establish the detail but it is not a result of enemy activity.

Press release: Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Romania in August 2018

Mr Andrew Noble LVO has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to Romania.

Mr Andrew Noble LVO has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to Romania in succession to Mr Paul Brummell CMG who will be transferring to another Diplomatic Service appointment. Mr Noble will take up his appointment in August 2018.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Full name: Andrew James Noble LVO

Married to: Helen Natalie Noble

Children: Four

2014 – 2017 Algiers, Her Majesty's Ambassador

2009 – 2013 Berlin, Deputy Head of Mission, Consul-General and Counsellor (Political)

2007 – 2009 FC0, Director, Security and Estates

2005 – 2007 FC0, Director, Security

2001 – 2005 Athens, Deputy Head of Mission and Consul-General

1998 – 2001 FC0, Deputy Head, Security Policy Department

1994 – 1998 Cape Town/Pretoria, Head of Political Section

1991 – 1994 FC0, Desk Officer then Deputy Head, Security Co-ordination Department

1989 – 1991 FC0, Desk Officer, European Community Department

1987 – 1989 Bonn, Second Secretary (Bilateral relations and Foreign Policy)

1986 – 1987 Attachment to German Foreign Ministry

1983 – 1986 Bucharest, Third later Second Secretary (Political)

1982 Joined Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Further information