



Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy

House of Commons · London · SW1A 0AA

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Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP
Deputy Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
London SW1A 2AS

14 June 2023

Dear Deputy Prime Minister,

UK Resilience

As you may be aware, my Committee held an evidence session in March on UK Resilience, questioning expert witnesses on the Government's approach to building national resilience, including its Resilience Framework and the Integrated Review Refresh.¹

Witnesses praised the progress achieved in some areas, but we also heard a number of concerns about the Government's approach, about which we would welcome further information from you. Many of these build upon recommendations made in our previous reports, as well as the 2021 report of the Lords' Select Committee on Risk Assessment and Risk Planning.²

1. Prioritisation and urgency

Witnesses voiced concern that the Government's approach to resilience lacks the necessary urgency to ensure that the UK is better prepared for shocks over the next decade. The publication of a Framework, in contrast to the Integrated Review's commitment to a "comprehensive national resilience strategy",³ prompted witness concerns that resilience had been downgraded as a Government priority.⁴ The Framework itself acknowledged that the Government had not yet agreed on a working

¹ Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy (JCNSS), [UK Resilience](#), oral evidence session, 27 March 2023. Witnesses were: Elisabeth Braw, Senior Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), and member of the National Preparedness Commission; James Ginns, Head of Risk Management Policy at the Centre for Long-Term Resilience; Lord Harris of Haringey, Chair of the National Preparedness Commission; Rois Ni Thuama, Head of Cyber Governance for Red Sift.

² House of Lords Select Committee on Risk Assessment and Risk Planning, Report of Session 2021–22, [Preparing for Extreme Risks: Building a Resilient Society](#), HL 110

³ HM Government, *Global Britain in a competitive age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy*, [CP 403](#), March 2021, p. 88, para 4.1.8

⁴ [Q1](#) [James Ginns, Lord Harris]



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definition of resilience activities and capabilities, nor mapped current UK Government resilience capabilities.⁵

1. By what date does the Government plan to have translated the objectives outlined in the Resilience Framework into clear plans with specific, measurable outcomes?
2. By what date does the Government plan to have completed its mapping of existing resilience capabilities? We would welcome an update on progress by the end of the year, in private if necessary, as well as the output of this analysis.

2. The Government's resilience and risk management architecture

We have previously raised concerns that the Government's risk management and resilience activities suffer from unclear lines of accountability, along with a lack of co-ordinated central leadership.⁶ We have called on the Government to implement the 'three lines of defence' (TLOD) model of risk management, considered best practice in the private sector, which could significantly improve accountability and oversight.⁷

The Government has made some improvements in this area, including convening a new NSC (Resilience) subcommittee and pledging to clarify roles and responsibilities within the Lead Government Department model of risk ownership.⁸ However, witnesses argued that these reforms fail to address fully the issues with existing models, expressing doubts that the Resilience Director in the Cabinet Office is sufficiently empowered (or senior enough) to impel departmental Directors General to prioritise resilience.⁹ They also echoed our calls for the Government to institute a TLOD model.¹⁰

3. Why has the Government not yet introduced a TLOD model of risk management, in line with this Committee's recommendation and private sector best practice?
4. To reflect the priority and seniority that this topic requires, will the Government consider elevating the Resilience Director to Director General level?

3. Local Resilience Forums (LRFs)

The Resilience Framework commits to "consider[ing] the best way to develop a means of stronger assurance of LRF collective delivery in England".¹¹ It is not yet clear, however, whether the resulting mechanisms will address our witnesses' concerns about

⁵ [The UK Government Resilience Framework](#) December 2022, paras 165–66.

⁶ JCNSS, First Report of Session 2019–21, [Biosecurity and national security](#), HC 611 / HL 195, para 98; JCNSS, First Report of Session 2021–22, [The UK's national security machinery](#), HC 231 / HL 68, paras 117–25. House of Lords Select Committee on Risk Assessment and Risk Planning, Report of Session 2021–22, [Preparing for Extreme Risks: Building a Resilient Society](#), HL 110, paras 252–56

⁷ [Q1 \[James Ginns\]](#); see also JCNSS, First Report of Session 2021–22, [The UK's national security machinery](#), HC 231 / HL 68, paras 120–25.

⁸ HM Government, [The UK Government Resilience Framework](#), December 2022, para 26

⁹ [Q1 \[Lord Harris\]](#)

¹⁰ [Q2 \[James Ginns\]](#)

¹¹ HM Government, [The UK Government Resilience Framework](#), December 2022, para 73



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the variability of LRF performance across the country, and the lack of a central regime for monitoring their effectiveness.¹²

5. Over which timescale, and in which areas, is the Government piloting the new Chief Resilience Officer leadership role, and how will it judge the success (or otherwise) of this initiative?
6. Will the Government pursue central oversight and assessment of the consistency of LRF performance, in addition to local democratic accountability? If so, how?

4. Building resilience in UK organisations: the role of regulation and insurance

The Resilience Framework commits to reviewing existing regulatory regimes, but witnesses voiced concerns about the lack of enforceable regulations on resilience – particularly cyber security – arguing that many UK organisations are failing to invest (despite the long-standing existence of voluntary schemes such as Cyber Essentials, and the requirements set out in the NIS regulations).^{13,14}

Witnesses also argued that the Government should establish a re-insurer – akin to Flood Re – to enable better protection against state-backed harms, such as cyber-attacks. The Resilience Framework notes that the Government will explore ways to support the insurance industry.¹⁵

7. Has the Government considered introducing enforceable mandatory cyber security standards for regulated sectors, particularly for CNI operators?
8. The Government has committed to reviewing how it can better support the insurance industry in risk areas in which the market is currently failing to provide adequate cover. By what date does the Government plan to have completed this exercise? We would welcome an update by the end of the year.

5. ‘Whole of society’ approach

Witnesses welcomed the Government’s emphasis on taking a ‘whole of society’ approach to resilience, but stressed the need for it to do more to engage directly with citizens,¹⁶ building on the recently-introduced system of Emergency Alerts.

9. What further plans does the Government have to communicate directly with the public on resilience and preparedness, before the next crisis occurs?

¹² [Q10](#)

¹³ HM Government, [The UK Government Resilience Framework](#), December 2022, paras 123–24

¹⁴ Rois Ni Thuama ([Q1](#)) pointed out that “42% of the top 100 law firms in the UK have conformed with National Cyber Security Centre best practice, eight are quite good, and 50 have no protection at all” and that, of 371 unique Government department internet domains, only 38% had conformed with the Government’s own Minimum Cyber Security Standard.

¹⁵ HM Government, [The UK Government Resilience Framework](#), December 2022, paras 182–84

¹⁶ [Q11](#) [Elisabeth Braw, Lord Harris]



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We would welcome a full response to this letter by Tuesday 4 July. It is our intention to publish this letter and your response, but some information could be provided to us in private if required.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Beckett

Dame Margaret Beckett DBE MP

Chair