



Department for
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Rt Hon Tobias Ellwood MP
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Darren Jones MP
Chair of the Business and Trade Committee

Sarah Champion MP
Chair of the International Development Committee
House of Commons
Westminster
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29 August 2023

Dear Chairs,

I am writing concerning certain matters of interest to the Committees regarding the work of the Export Control Joint Unit (ECJU) which this Department previously committed to keep you updated on.

1. Transformation Programme and progress on the LITE IT system – Latest six-monthly update

It is encouraging to see the Committees on Arms Export Controls (CAEC) taking an interest in the new digital service, Licensing for International Trade (LITE) and the Transformation Programme within the Export Control Joint Unit (ECJU).

In the response provided to you by the Secretary of State for Business and Trade (SoS) dated 12 May 2023, to the letter from the CAEC dated 30 March, SoS stated that the Transformation Programme had closed at the end of December 2022 and although we are continuing to take forward some recommendations, these are very much local to operational teams and our ways of working. As we are not formally reporting against the programme, we will not be providing any updates on the Transformation Programme other than those published in the UK Strategic Export Controls Annual Report.

In that same response, SoS advised that ‘Progress of the LITE project will be detailed in ECJU’s Annual Report due this Summer’. As per our commitment to update you regularly, ECJU will provide another update on LITE approximately 6 months after the Annual Report is published.

ECJU are keen to continue building our positive engagement with the CAEC and in the government response to the CAEC’s report, dated and laid as a Command Paper on 9

January 2023, we committed to providing 6 monthly updates on LITE. Therefore, our first deadline to provide these updates every 6 months became effective on 9 July 2023. Please accept this letter, together with ECJU's Annual Report laid in Parliament on 19 July 2023, as the latest six-monthly update on LITE. We continue to be committed to keep the CAEC updated on the LITE IT system every 6 months.

In relation to the introduction of the new digital service, LITE, SoS invited the CAEC to arrange a demonstration of the system. This will allow ECJU to provide responses to any questions the CAEC have relating to the written correspondence. If this is something you would like to take forward, please contact my officials in ECJU and the relevant arrangements will be made.

You have requested that we share information relating to milestones and objectives for the LITE project as well as a detailed breakdown of costs. Financial year 2022-23 resulted in LITE expenditure of £3.9m, some of the costs include activities from the Transformation Programme as LITE was previously included within that remit. We continue to proceed with budgets agreed within our HMT approved business case which also aligns with our milestones. Please note that 2023-24, Q1 costs are currently under review and are still to be finalised. Please also note that costs and milestones are managed internally using formal project management tools and are reported to the Department for Business and Trade project portfolio team where they are governed.

The vision for the LITE project is:

- LITE will provide a modern digital service that streamlines the application process, automates where possible and supports decision-making through effective use of data. We aim to deliver an efficient, rigorous, and customer-friendly export licensing and compliance service.

As well as providing a new digital service we will be looking at improvements internally and externally to the export licensing control process within ECJU.

In May we reported that we had achieved a key milestone at the end of April by onboarding more exporters to use the private beta service of LITE. We remain on track to deliver against the current plan that will allow us to progress to the next phase of digital service development (Public Beta).

The next milestone was delivered at the end of June whereby LITE;

- Enabled exporters of equipment containing information security features to join LITE;
- Enabled other government departments to provide quicker advice thereby reducing processing times;

We are planning to provide open data on all UK military export licences since 2008 to the public, currently known as the 'searchable database' within the next few months.

The subsequent milestone following June will be December 2023, that will see internal refusals and appeals processes delivered for those applications on LITE where it is applicable. We are also investigating other areas where we can build more functionality into the online system by December 2023. Meeting this milestone will allow LITE to be assessed against the Government Digital Service Standard, with a view to moving into the Public Beta phase. Successful assessment will then mean we open applications for Standard individual export licences (SIELs) to all exporters by the end of March 2024.

As well as opening up more functionality, the intention is to increase the number of exporters as well as applications for SIELs by December 2023, to support the move to the next phase; public beta.

2. **GIAA Report and benchmarking research**

The benchmarking research has been shared with CAEC Committee Clerks separately.

We have been liaising with the GIAA to understand the protocols for sharing their reports and are currently going through the approval process for this.

I hope this information has been useful to you and your members and I welcome the opportunity to continue an open dialogue with the Committees.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Nigel Huddleston', is centered on the page.

Nigel Huddleston MP
Minister of State for International Trade
Department for Business and Trade