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Toby Perkins MP
Chair, Environmental Audit Committee
House of Commons
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Jan 2025

Dear Toby,

Thank you for inviting me and Minister Doughty to speak at your committee's session on polar science recently. I promised some follow up information on details of the Gateway process for the Antarctic Infrastructure Modernisation Programme (AIMP).

All projects in the Government Major Projects Portfolio follow a structured assurance process throughout the different stages of the project. Detailed information on the Gate review stages can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/infrastructure-and-projects-authority-assurance-review-toolkit>

The most relevant assurance gateways for this stage of the AIMP are Gate 4 (readiness for service) and Gate 5 (operations review and benefits realisation) process.

Gate 4 checks:

- a. The projected business benefit is likely to be achieved and that the project will still deliver the policy/strategic intent.
- b. Ensure the transition to business as usual is supported by the necessary processes and procedures (including financial).
- c. Confirm commissioning procedures have been completed to meet regulatory requirements and users/operators satisfaction.
- d. Confirm plans for training, risk management, future support etc are in place and agreed.
- e. Test arrangements for handover from SRO to operational manager.

Gate 5 checks:

- a. That the strategic requirement for the investment remains and that the strategic objectives/outcomes as set out in the business case have been met.
- b. Consider whether the benefits defined in the business case have been delivered or are on track to be delivered including effective governance to manage and measure future benefits.

- c. Consider whether any changes to outcomes/benefits are correctly ascribed to changing circumstances and that those were properly considered within the project governance arrangements.
- d. Confirm plan to close the project. Record lessons identified and demonstrate process to learn from that activity.

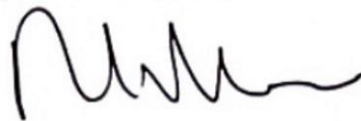
I understand that the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) are planning to complete a Gate 4 review of the new Discovery Building in summer 2026. Responsibility for operating the building will be handed over to BAS in Mar/Apr 2025. NERC then plan to complete a Gate 5 review in summer 2027, to capture both successful handover of the building but also removal of all the buildings and sheds it has replaced and their clear up and transport from Antarctica.

NERC plans to complete a Gate 4 review of the wider AIMP programme in 2032 and a Gate 5 review sometime thereafter.

In the interim, NERC is carrying out DSIT-sponsored Project Assurance Reviews (PAR) of various projects within the AIMP. A PAR of the Future Airbridge Capability project will be undertaken this spring and a PAR was previously completed on the hangar project. Assurance requirements for other projects, such as work completed on the Signy research station, are also being considered.

I hope this information is helpful. I will place a copy of this letter in the libraries of both Houses.

Kind regards



LORD VALLANCE
Minister of State
Department for Science, Innovation & Technology