



Rt Hon Pat McFadden MP
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Cabinet Office 70 Whitehall London
SW1A 2AS

Mr Matt Western MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

24 February 2025

Dear Matt,

Thank you for your invitation to meet to discuss the Joint Committee on National Security Strategy (JCNSS). I would like to start by congratulating you on your appointment as Chair and to offer my apologies for needing to reschedule earlier this week.

I want to have a productive relationship with the JCNSS and I have asked the appropriate officials to ensure this is upheld. The work you do to scrutinise the structures of national security decision making is an important input to the work of this Government.

I am aware that you requested a hearing with the National Security Adviser (NSA), Jonathan Powell to attend a session titled 'The Role of the National Security Adviser'. Longstanding practice is that Special Advisers currently in post do not give evidence to Select Committees and this is done instead by Ministers or Officials. Therefore, this request has not been judged appropriate in this circumstance. Instead I have directed that the Deputy National Security Advisers (DNSAs) attend this type of public session in place of the NSA. The Cabinet Secretary may also attend alongside them, where appropriate. However, I know that the NSA is also keen to meet you privately, and his office will be in touch to arrange this in due course. I hope this is an acceptable arrangements - the DNSAs are experts in their field, and an integral part of the Government's national security architecture. They support the Prime Minister on key national security issues and - as is the case here - deputise for the NSA when required.

I note that you have requested sight of the National Security Risk Assessment (NSRA). I would like to refer you to the National Risk Register (NRR), which is the external version of the NSRA. This contains information on the Government's assessment of the most serious risks facing the UK and provides the Government's updated assessment of their likelihood and potential impact. The NRR can be found at this address: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-risk-register-2025>.

If committee members require further information on the key judgements of the NSRA, the appropriate Cabinet Office officials would be pleased to offer the Committee a private classified briefing.

Finally, I understand you requested information on the National Security Council agendas and timings. It is a longstanding precedent that information relating to discussions that have taken place in Cabinet and its committees, and how often they have met, is not disclosed. This Government is committed to providing spaces for Ministers to debate freely and frankly in private. This convention applies to engagement with Parliament and Select Committees and the Government routinely rejects requests for this information from other Select Committees. Therefore, whilst this Government is actively pursuing greater transparency with Parliament, this principle of non-disclosure continues to cover this matter.

Thank you for taking the time to write on these matters and I look forward to meeting with you shortly.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Pat McFadden". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Rt Hon Pat McFadden MP
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster**