

The Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP
Chair, Business and Trade Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

28 April 2025

Dear Liam

Department of Business and Trade 2024-25 Annual Report and Accounts update

1. Following the meeting on 11 February 2025 it was agreed that we would keep you sighted on the progress of the 2024-25 Annual Report and Accounts (ARA) on a monthly basis. This is the second such update.

2024-25 ARA audit timetable finalised to a post-recess laying slot

2. In the March update we confirmed that timetable considerations would be finalised by the time of the April update.
3. While the Department provided the National Audit Office (NAO) with a timetable that led to a pre-recess laying, the NAO has confirmed that, due to laying the 2023-24 ARA in January 2025 and it not being able to begin its planning work until after this, it cannot complete its audit to a pre-recess timeline. The NAO praised the work of the Department noting that it is only due to the work the Department has done to learn lessons from 2023-24 that a September laying date is achievable for the 2024-25 ARA. This was discussed at the [Public Accounts Committee hearing on 7 April 2025](#).
4. The NAO's agreed timetable for the audit of the 2024-25 ARA is detailed in annex 1. It is anticipated that the majority of the audit will be completed by the end of July, allowing the review process to be finalised over the summer. The aim is for the ARA to be authorised for laying by the Permanent Secretary in early September. This timeline ensures that the Comptroller and Auditor General can certify the accounts before Parliament rises for the conference recess in mid-September.

Activity completed to support the 2024-25 ARA audit timetable

5. The financial information for the interim accounts as of 31 December 2024 was designed to facilitate NAO's efficient progression of the year-end audit. Despite a shortened interim audit cycle, the Department successfully delivered all required outputs, meeting the agreed deadlines and maintaining high-quality standards, underscoring the Department's dedication to adhering to a strict accounts production timeline.

6. While the Department's year-end audit will not formally commence until 6 May 2025, we have provided key accounting papers to the NAO ahead of this date, including papers on key areas of judgement such as those for the Post Office Horizon redress schemes.
7. By the end of April, the NAO will present its audit planning considerations to the Department's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC). It will outline its approach to key audit areas, including POL provisions and British Business Bank financial guarantees. We continue to collaborate effectively with the NAO to support its work.

Summary

8. The Department will be audited to a post-recess timeline, aiming to lay prior to the conference recess in September. The Department has met all agreed deadlines with the NAO for delivering high-quality outputs, ensuring that the audit timetable remains on track to meet this date.
9. As the year-end audit formally commences in May 2025, we will update the Committee later in May as to the Department's progress in producing the first version of the accounts and any matters arising from NAO's planning update to ARAC.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tara Smith', written in a cursive style.

Tara Smith

Chief Operating Officer, Department for Business and Trade

Annex 1: High level 2024-25 ARA production timetable

2024-25 ARA compilation timeline

