



Public Accounts Committee

Gareth Davies
**Permanent Secretary, Department for Business &
Trade**
Old Admiralty Building
London
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30 January 2026

Accounting Officer Assessment – DRIVE35 Automotive programme

Dear Permanent Secretary,

In November 2025 your department published an Accounting Officer Assessment summary relating to the DRIVE35 automotive programme on the gov.uk website.

The AO Assessment notes your positive view of the programme against the standard assessment tests required as part of Managing Public Money. In particular, you assess that the programme satisfies the regularity test, and that there is sufficient budget allocation through the current Spending Review period.

As part of DRIVE35, I note there is funding available to extend research and development for an additional five years, up to a total of 10 years. This will fall in the new Spending Review period. We are also aware of the urgent intervention in British Steel in April 2025, led by your department. Could you clarify whether the planned funding available for DRIVE35 would be affected by spending on the government's intervention in British Steel and any other such emergency interventions?

I would also be keen to know how you intend to build on learning from the Automotive Transformation Fund which ended in July 2025, and how that has informed DRIVE35's monitoring and evaluation plans. Your assessment notes the wider delivery risk associated with the competitiveness of the UK automotive sector and I would welcome further explanation on how this risk is being managed by the programme.

Yours Sincerely

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown
Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts