Public Accounts Committee

Sir Oliver Robbins KCMG CB
Permanent Under-Secretary
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

By email

16 March 2026

Treasury Minute response – The cost of maintaining the FCDO's overseas estate

Dear Permanent Secretary,

Thank you for your response to the Committee's November report on the cost of maintaining the FCDO's overseas estate.

I am pleased to see that you have already made progress on developing the governance arrangements for maintaining the overseas estate and that you are taking action to develop the estates strategy and workforce plan. I look forward to understanding more about the estates strategy and how it will relate to the FCDO2030 programme in due course.

With regards to recommendation 1b, you talked about the Overseas Network Review (ONR) informing the estates strategy, and that the estates strategy will be updated in Spring 2026. However, there were no milestones and timescales for implementation of this strategy.

Recommendation 2b asked you to write to the Committee setting out plans for reducing FCDO's maintenance backlog, prioritising resource and capital funding and achieving efficiencies from the estate. Thank you for your letter of 16 January in which you set out how you will prioritise maintenance funding on a risk basis, and what you expect initial funding to cover. However, it would be helpful to also have clarity on the specific actions that FCDO would take on achieving efficiencies from its estate.

Recommendation 6 asked you to update the Committee on your estate workforce strategy setting out the staff and skills you currently have, what you will need in future and a plan to address any gaps you find. I would be grateful if you could provide the Committee with an update on progress relating to the estate workforce strategy.

I note that you are already planning to write to the Committee **by May 2026** on recommendation 2c. I would be grateful if when you do so you could also respond to the points above.

I am copying this letter to the Comptroller and Auditor General and to the Treasury Officer of Accounts.

Yours sincerely,

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

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