Ministry of Justice

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP
Chair of Public Accounts Committee
Houses of Parliament
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Or by email

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30 June 2026

Dear Sir Geoffrey,

Ministry of Justice Follow Up on HMP Dartmoor: Autumn 2025

I am writing with reference to recommendation two from the TM response on Ministry of Justice Follow Up: Autumn 2025, and to notify the Committee that the Department will not meet the current June 2026 implementation date.

Recommendation 2 states that once it has decided on its proposed approach to remediating the Dartmoor site, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) should write to the Committee and set out the following:

1. An assessment of any proposed works against the Accounting Officer tests of regularity, propriety, feasibility and value for money;
2. An estimate of when the prison will be fit for use and how much the remediation will cost.
3. MoJ and HMPPS will continue to assess whether best value for money is served by continuing to spend money on an unoccupied prison or try to negotiate an early exit from the lease by carrying out a full commercial negotiation with proper professional advice.

As you are aware, the Department has been considering the future of HMP Dartmoor since its temporary closure in August 2024, following elevated levels of radon gas in non-accommodation areas.

It is important that our decision on the future of Dartmoor takes into account all available information applied against the four Accounting Officer tests: regularity, propriety, feasibility and value for money.

While much progress has been made, we have not yet reached a final decision. As such, we will be extending the implementation date to October 2026.

The Department will provide a further update to the Committee once a decision has been reached and the associated implementation implications for recommendation 2 have been confirmed. If a decision is reached sooner than October, we will provide a prompt update to the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Dr Jo Farrar CB OBE
Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Justice