



Department for
International Trade



UK Export
Finance

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22 July 2021

Dear Mark,

Thank you for your letter of 7 July in which you asked questions about the Export Control Joint Unit (ECJU) Transformation Programme.

I will address each of your questions in turn.

The reasons for launching the programme were to address systemic and structural gaps identified through various reviews into the Export Control Joint Unit, including the Review conducted by Jonathan Mills, which reported in February 2020:

http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2020-0045/Investigation_into_Export_Licences_Granted_in.pdf

The programme will enhance the capacity and capability of the Export Control Joint Unit and deliver our vision to create an export control function that is recognised as best in class on the international stage, and by domestic stakeholders.

The programme is being run through an internal team, led by Shainila Pradhan as senior responsible officer and director of export controls. It will likely engage consultants on a limited basis where specific tasks would benefit from specialist insight or expertise not easily available internally.

We expect to have completed the programme before the end of the 2022/23 financial year.

This is an internally focussed programme to ensure that the Export Control Joint Unit can operate effectively and meet the demands that it faces, and we will consult our stakeholders as part of this exercise.

The expected costs of the programme are around £3m over the following 12 months (FY 21/22). We expect these costs to be cost-neutral over time as we migrate our current digital licensing platform, SPIRE from being managed by a third-party provider, into a new enhanced service, LITE, which is being implemented as part of the programme through an in-house team of digital, data and the Export Control Joint Unit subject matter experts.

LITE is being designed as a configurable service meaning that future enhancements and features can be built internally. We plan to recycle savings into improving the capacity and capability of ECJU staff. We will automate more of the routine transactions in the licensing process thereby easing the burden on exporters and freeing up staff to do more high value, interesting work that properly draws on their subject matter expertise. LITE will also improve transparency on progress of licensing applications.

The programme will review the licensing processes and there is the potential that there will be some changes to these as a result of the transformation. The programme is not considering changes to the Consolidated Criteria. Similarly, cooperation and information sharing with the EU are outside of the current scope of the programme.

We do not anticipate the programme impacting on the publication of the 2020 Strategic Export Controls Annual Report.

Now that funding is in place for the programme and plans are taking shape, I would be happy for my officials to engage with the Committees on Arms Export Controls on the programme's progress and I understand you have proposed a session that could include such an update in the autumn.

Your sincerely,



THE RT HON ELIZABETH TRUSS MP
Secretary of State for International Trade
& President of the Board of Trade



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7 July 2021

Dear Secretary of State,

The Committees on Arms Export Controls (CAEC) has noted the Government's Defence and Security Industrial Strategy's reference to the Export Control Joint Unit Transformation Programme "to improve transparency and customer experience for exporters and to identify specific bottlenecks where a lack of resource or expertise causes delays". CAEC would be grateful to receive further information on the programme, with particular focus on the following questions:

- What were the reasons for launching the Transformation Programme?
- What are the terms of reference for the Programme?
- Who is running the Programme? Is it being run in-house or have outside consultants been engaged?
- By what date do you expect to have completed the Transformation Programme?
- Which organisations do you expect to consult, and will there be a public consultation?
- What is the expected cost of the Programme?
- Are the outcomes of the Programme expected to be cost neutral or will the Programme look into the possibility of allocating additional funding or resources to the ECJU (for example additional staff)?
- Will the programme examine the ECJU's IT systems and will there be an impact on the move from SPIRE to the new LITE system?
- Do you anticipate that the Programme will result in changes to the ways in which licence applications are processed, both administratively and to the process for assessing the application, for example against the Consolidated Criteria?
- Will the Programme consider the scope for cooperation and information sharing with the EU following the UK's departure from the EU?
- Will the Programme result in any delay to the publication of the 2020 Strategic Export Controls Annual Report?

I am sure you would agree scrutiny of the Transformation Programme is a vital part of CAEC's role. It is therefore disappointing that the Department did not see fit to inform us that it was taking place. I hope that the Department will seek to be more proactive in future in keeping us informed of developments.

It would be helpful if we could have your response by 19 July.

John Lewis

Mark Garnier MP
Chair