



Home Office

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Service
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Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP
Home Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

09 October 2018

Dear Yvette,

Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP)

You will be aware that the new Emergency Services Network (ESN) aims to provide the emergency services with the most advanced communications system anywhere in the world. This is one of the most challenging programmes across government; it is technically cutting edge while the stakeholder landscape is complex, spanning multiple government departments and the devolved governments. There are in the region of 300,000 users affected by the change.

You will also be aware that the Home Office has been undertaking a comprehensive review of ESMCP, which looked at a full range of options, from continuing with the programme according to the original plan, cancelling the programme or identifying a new way forward.

The review concluded that ESMCP remains the right strategic approach to replacing Airwave and the programme continues to represent good value to money for the taxpayer. The review also concluded there is growing confidence in the technical viability of the solution, particularly given the improved software solution now being deployed. The programme team and governance has also been strengthened. The review concluded however that a new delivery model is needed to ensure that the emergency services benefit from the new network as soon as possible.

The programme plan was previously based on completing the entire solution before users started transition. The review has concluded, however, that a better approach would be to deliver the Emergency Services Network (ESN) through the incremental release of products. This will allow our police officers, fire and rescue crews, paramedics and other users to choose the individual communications tools they want and need, and decide when they want them, rather than having to wait until every element of the new network is built.

The programme team has already begun to put the review's recommendations into practice.

As you will have seen, on 21 September, the Home Office signed Heads of Terms with Motorola Solutions International (MSI) and EE. These Heads of Terms represent a significant milestone in the ESMCP programme reset.

The first ESN products are due to appear around the turn of the year, which will allow the emergency services to start testing and using them. The first of those – a network coverage testing product which we are calling ‘ESN Assure’ - will be delivered to the emergency services by the end of 2018. We expect the first versions of critical voice and data products to be available from early 2019 with the final version of the product available by Autumn 2020

The programme is also proceeding with work to build coverage both in the London Underground, in remote areas (the Extended Area Services project) and with a procurement of an Air to Ground solution.

These planned dates compare with the original plan to start user transition in September 2017 which was subsequently shifted back 9 months as a result of the CR110 contract changes.

The Home Office has negotiated an extension to the Airwave contract to the end of 2022, three years later than provided for in the original contract.

Following the Heads of Terms, Home Office and the suppliers are looking to sign revised contracts at the end of the year. The programme is looking to similar timescales to work up a revised Full Business Case with a revised programme plan and costs.

Clearly the delays in turning off Airwave mean that these costs will continue for longer, increasing costs over the life of the business case. While the cost of the core system provided by MSI and EE have not materially changed, the programme continues to refine the plans and costs for other parts of the solution, including the projects for which the Home Office is directly responsible (eg additional coverage, resilience, Air to Ground coverage and coverage in the London Underground)

The programme will work with users, sponsor organisations and stakeholders across Government to develop a revised Full Business Case with a view to getting this through governance in the New Year.

I will be placing a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nick Hurd". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

RT HON NICK HURD MP
Minister of State for Policing and the Fire Service