



Department for  
Business & Trade

## **Driving Research in Investment and Investment in Vehicle Electrification (DRIVE35) – Accounting Officer Advice Summary**

Department for which the accounting officer who made the assessment is responsible: Department for Business and Trade

Project title: DRIVE35 (Driving Research & Investment in Vehicle Electrification)

Main scheme project stage: Full Business Case approved by DBT Investment Committee in April 2025 and by HMT in July 2025.

### **Introduction**

It is normal practice for Accounting Officers to scrutinise significant policy proposals or plans to start or vary major projects and then assess whether they measure up to the standards set out in Managing Public Money. From April 2017, the Government has committed to make a summary of the key points from these assessments available to Parliament when an Accounting Officer has agreed an assessment of projects within the Government's Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP).

This Accounting Officer Assessment was made of the DRIVE35 programme, following its Full Business Case. I have made the assessment as the Accounting Officer for the Department for Business and Trade (DBT).

### **Background and context**

DRIVE35 (Driving Research and Investment in Vehicle Electrification) is a DBT-led programme aimed at transforming the UK's automotive industry. It supports R&D and the commercial scale-up of innovative zero emission vehicle (ZEV) technologies, while unlocking capital investment in ZEVs, batteries, and their wider supply chain – enabling the transformation of the sector.

### **Assessment against the Accounting Officer standards**

#### **Regularity**

DRIVE35 has sufficient budget allocated through the current Spending Review period and spend will be consistent with the Department's ambit. Capital funding is delivered under the Industrial Development Act 1982, the use of which requires that the views of the Industrial Development Advisory Board (IDAB) and HM Treasury (HMT) consent be sought. The R&D funding is delivered under the Higher Education

and Research Act 2017, and the Science and Technology Act 1965, with grants being administered by Innovate UK and the Advanced Propulsion Centre, and subject to DBT and HMT approvals. All grant funding issued under the DRIVE35 will be reviewed to ensure compliance with public law, subsidy control and procurement regulations.

Overall assessment: My assessment is that the regularity test is satisfied.

### **Propriety**

The DRIVE35 Business Case has secured DBT Investment Committee, Accounting Officer, Treasury Approval, CST, and DBT Ministerial approval to launch. Regular assurance and governance activity ensures that the programme is dispensed in a manner that best meets the aims and objectives in the business case. A full monitoring and evaluation plan has been agreed and is being implemented, enabling the programme's impact to be assessed at important intervals over the next 5 years.

Overall assessment: My assessment is that the propriety test is satisfied.

### **Value for Money**

DRIVE35 is structured around three sub-programmes, Innovation, Scale-Up, and Transformation, each targeting a different stage of the technology and industrialisation lifecycle. In appraising the value for money of these options, monetised benefits considered include direct employment in the automotive and battery sectors, indirect employment in their supply chains, and R&D spillover benefits to UK industry. Wider strategic benefits, such as reductions in global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, enhanced UK industrial capability, and improved supply chain resilience, are not monetised within the benefit-cost ratio (BCR) but are integral to the programme's objectives.

This assessment was conducted using established economic appraisal techniques consistent with HM Treasury's Green Book guidance.

Overall assessment: My assessment is that the value for money test is satisfied.

### **Feasibility**

The DRIVE35 programme team is a multi-disciplinary across DBT, Innovate UK, and the Advanced Propulsion Centre. The Innovation and Transformation sub-programmes inherit well-established delivery mechanisms from the legacy APC and ATF competitions, which have undergone multiple assurance reviews. These structures will be further assessed in a Gateway 0 review scheduled for September 2025, led by NISTA-accredited reviewers, with annual reviews planned thereafter.

The Scale-Up Fund (part of the Scale-Up sub-programme) creates a new delivery framework between DBT, Innovate UK, and APC to balance scheme risk with investor needs at this commercialisation stage. Although it carries greater feasibility risk than other sub-programmes, this will be managed through the application and portfolio process.

Securing the benefits of the DRIVE35 programme will also be impacted by the competitiveness of the UK automotive sector. The programme team will maintain engagement with industry to assess this and collaborate with other HMG programmes, such as the ZEV Mandate and the British Industrial Competitiveness Scheme, to align delivery according to industry needs and Ministerial objectives.

Overall assessment: My assessment is that the feasibility test is satisfied.

## **Conclusion**

As the DBT Accounting Officer, I have considered this assessment of the DRIVE35 programme and approved it on [22/08/2025].

I have prepared this summary to set out the important points which have informed my decision. If any of these factors change materially during the lifetime of this project, I undertake to prepare a revised summary, setting out my assessment of them.

This summary will be published on the government's website (GOV.UK). Copies will be deposited in the Library of the House of Commons and sent to the Comptroller and Auditor General and Treasury Officer of Accounts.

Gareth Davies  
Permanent Secretary, DBT

[22/08/2025]