

MONDAY 13 JULY 2009

Present

Bradshaw, L
Dykes, L
Freeman, L (Chairman)
James of Blackheath, L
Plumb, L
Powell of Bayswater, L
Walpole, L

Witnesses: **Dame Helen Ghosh**, Permanent Secretary, and **Mr David Steele**, Head of Branch, EUIC, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, examined.

Q1 Chairman: We are now in public session. May I first of all welcome the Permanent Secretary, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Dame Helen Ghosh. We are extremely grateful to you and your colleagues for coming. Just before I ask the first few questions, perhaps for the record you would be kind enough to introduce yourself and your colleague.

Dame Helen Ghosh: Indeed, I am Helen Ghosh and I am the Permanent Secretary at Defra, where I have been Permanent Secretary since November 2005.

Mr Steele: I am David Steele. I am in our European Union and International Coordination Division and I supervise the people who do scrutiny in that division.

Q2 Chairman: Perhaps I could set the tone for this afternoon session, which I would anticipate will be around 30 to 35 minutes. We are trying to do our job and you are trying to do your job in the Department, therefore the Committee wants really a joint effort to try and resolve any procedural problems that have arisen, in particular the delay that sometimes occurs in our response and any advice that you can offer as to what the Department is seeking to do to improve procedure and also any advice you have for the Committee. I would just like

for the record to read the following opening statement. Sub-Committee B has very few dealings with Defra but we know from colleagues that our experience on the EMAS dossier has been shared by the Sub-Committee dealing with agriculture and environment and indeed by the Commons European Scrutiny Committee. We wrote to the Minister on 15 October 2008 asking a specific question about the dossier and it was relevant at that time. On 12 May 2009 we received a supplementary explanatory memorandum which did not seem to make any reference to our original question. We wrote again asking for an answer and our Clerk discussed the matter with officials. A month later, on 30 June, we received a reply and a letter dated 30 January. The letter dated 30 January had not been received by us either in hard copy or by email – no-one is casting aspersions as to how that failed to arrive; there could be a number of explanations. The letter had also not been received by the Commons European Scrutiny Committee although it stated that it was copied to them. Therefore it might be more helpful perhaps as a courtesy to the Permanent Secretary if I ask whether she would like to make an opening statement or whether she would like us to proceed with the questions?

Dame Helen Ghosh: Thank you very much, Chairman. I should say first of all I am very grateful, genuinely grateful, to the Committee and to the Clerk for drawing this to my attention, in that it has enabled me to understand what the process is that the Department has been operating, and indeed, to be able to discuss with the team both the improvements that have been made in recent months and plans for future improvement, because I am extremely conscious that Defra is a department which has an enormous amount of European business. We estimate it drives about 80 per cent of our business. We produce around 140 explanatory memoranda every year and, as you know, we have two councils which we attend and lots of meetings, so, reputationally speaking, it is fantastically important to us that we get this right. In terms of our relationships between our Ministers and both Houses of Parliament, it is extremely important that we do. I think one of the overall messages I want to send – and I am

very grateful, Chairman, that you are interested in working with us to improve further – since the, I would have to say, very regrettable slip-ups on that particular issue, the EMAS issue which you have recounted, we have in fact both put in place a new team in the international coordination group and new procedures, some of which Huw Irranca-Davies, our Parliamentary Under-Secretary, talked about to the Commons Scrutiny Committee. Those are in place and we are already seeing improvements. The latest evidence we have up to date or to the end of June – and it still is not good enough, I should say; 80 per cent is still not good enough – is that of our explanatory memoranda are now put in on time compared with 50 per cent for the whole of 2008, which put us at the bottom of the league table, a place I never want to be. There was a slight falling off in June because of the impact of reshuffles and not being quite sure who our ministers are that reduced that down to a performance of 74 per cent within the ten-day period but, even so, if you look at how we are doing in 2009, it is much better than 2008. We look as though we are going to have fewer overrides, which is something about which the committees of both Houses are rightly concerned. Fish and fisheries continue to be a big issue for us in terms of overrides, and indeed debates, and it looks as though we will have more debates, in the Commons, obviously, around our issues this year, which I think is a good sign of parliamentary scrutiny and democracy at work. We think the trajectory is upwards. We are very happy to share with you more detail on how we are achieving that and the plans that David and his team have to improve it. I just want to re-emphasise that I take this very seriously and I am very grateful to you for drawing it to my attention.

Q3 Chairman: Thank you for that opening statement. I wonder if I can just ask two questions from the Chair first. The first one is, I am intrigued by the impact of a reshuffle, and one knows the impact from politicians of Ministers being moved but from the Civil Service could you just take us through how that creates a problem?

Dame Helen Ghosh: Yes. David Steele may want to say more about this. I think it was absolutely the point that we had prepared in this instance – and David may be able to give us examples – explanatory memoranda or follow-up letters in response to questions and they were awaiting a Minister reading them and/or signing them off and, as you will know from your personal experience, the reshuffle happens, it then takes a while for people to get their feet under the desk, to have their initial briefing, to understand some of the points made, and I think we were simply in some cases waiting for somebody to say, “That’s me, this is my portfolio” and to take it forward. I think that is the case, is it not, David?

Mr Steele: Yes, that is the case. I think there are two issues here. One is the submission of explanatory memoranda, and that was particularly affected by the reshuffle, in that the memoranda had been prepared but the relevant incoming Minister was not in place as yet so there was no-one literally to sign a memorandum that had been prepared. In June I think there were 13 outstanding memoranda of that kind. The second issue is to do with answering follow-up questions, where I think we are trying to improve our performance, to make it better, but, there again, the same thing applies, that if there was a follow-up letter, it would have been held up during that period awaiting the incoming Minister to sign.

Dame Helen Ghosh: Yes. I should say, even so – and I will certainly look at the transcript on getting my dates right – that our performance in 2009, in this year, has been much better – still not good enough but much better – so even in June only four of our EMs were more than six days late, that is, 21 per cent, which is slightly better than we were doing across the whole of 2008. We were falling behind there but we were not quite as falling behind as we did in 2008.

Q4 Chairman: Do you believe that ten working days for submitting explanatory memoranda or replying to letters is a reasonable target?

Dame Helen Ghosh: It is obviously the target that we have been set in agreement between, presumably, the Cabinet Office and Parliament. We think it is a reasonable target in most instances, other than for exceptional circumstances. We were indeed discussing this on our briefing session before this Committee: would it ever be possible to get to a situation where I could say to the Committee we could guarantee that we would have them all in within the ten-day deadline? We think that would probably be rash given the circumstances of some of the issues and the complexity of the issues with which we deal but we think that we should be able to show this Committee, and indeed the committees of the other House, by the end of this year a significant improvement. I would like to say best in class but I do not know how fast other departments are improving by the end of 2009.

Q5 Chairman: Can I make one recommendation from the Chair which might be helpful to the Department and that is, if for reasons of a reshuffle, illness on the part of a Minister or complexity in response, there should be a mechanism to alert our concerns, or at least anticipate our concerns, by informing our Clerk that there are good reasons why there is a delay. I think that would help both sides.

Dame Helen Ghosh: Yes, and again, I asked the team, as well as looking into, as it were, the instances of less than perfect performance to look at some of the good performance cases in recent months. If you look at cases like the beef import quotas issue and ozone-depleting substances and integrated pollution and control, in all of those cases, which worked well, one of the key issues was really good relationships between the team in my Department and the clerk to the various committees, and obviously, this will be less so in respect of this Committee because you deal with a comparatively small amount of our business but with your brother or sister the Sub-Committee in the Lords and indeed the Commons Scrutiny Committee we have, I think, weekly contact between our team and the clerks.

Mr Steele: Certainly with the Sub-Committee D team, the person who deals with this work on a day-to-day basis contacts the Clerk at least once or twice a week, according to the flow of business. As you pointed out, we do not deal with your Sub-Committee quite so much and I think the EMAS document is the only document that has come before your Committee recently. However, we would totally agree that good communications between the Department and the clerks is essential to continuous improvement in our performance and I think it would also be helpful if the clerks said, “Is there anything else you want to raise?” when dealing with a particular issue about other correspondence, and if they reminded us “Well, we haven’t had a reply to that letter that we sent in January.” I think that would be tremendously useful to my people if at an informal level they were told that there may be some mystery about why a question from the Committee had not been answered.

Chairman: I think that would be very helpful. I think we will minute that to ourselves but it will be on the record. Our clerks, overworked as they are, I am sure like the civil servants are, will liaise not only with our fellow committees in the House of Commons, because I think there was one instance where the reply went to the House of Commons but we did not get a corresponding piece of information about a First Reading coming up in the Parliament, but also the other way more contact I think would be helpful. I think that would help the Department and it would certainly help us.

Q6 Lord Plumb: My general question I think is perhaps more related to the other Committee, the Committee just referred to, than this Committee. On the other hand, you accept that you have made better progress generally in relation to the work of this Committee during the last year.

Dame Helen Ghosh: Yes.

Q7 Lord Plumb: My concern of course is where your priorities lie. There is a heavy workload ahead and if one looks at that particular list, putting the Rural Payments Agency on a sustainable basis I think is a major exercise, since they are in the middle of the mapping fiasco at the moment. Some people do not seem to realise that farms change in size and fields are different and they change in size too. There seems to be some considerable confusion there. The overhaul of the British Cattle Movement Service, implementing, if we are going to implement, electronic ID, that is a very big problem to deal with or face, and other traceability systems. Then of course we have the major problem of food security, of climate change, of research and development, and of TB vaccination of badgers, which presumably is going to start this next year. That is only part of the list and, when one looks at that and then looks at the budget, a budget which you have on both areas for dealing with these problems, I wonder how on earth you are going to manage in those circumstances and where your priorities lie in dealing with them.

Dame Helen Ghosh: Thank you very much. We have set a balanced and, we think, entirely adequate budget for all those topics, which, as you say, are very important ones to the farming and food industries and on which my Secretary of State, Hilary Benn, issued a very coherent and well-connected statement at Stoneleigh last week, on where we see the future of farming going. All those areas are well resourced. The RPA is well resourced and Jim Fitzpatrick and Hilary have been well engaged with issues around mapping. I will take this opportunity to argue with the point about it being a fiasco. In fact, the NFU is being extremely collaborative on this subject. Many maps are coming back approved. I think there are issues about the EU rules, about, for example, soft and hard boundaries, but we are working very closely in partnership with the industry to make sure we can work those things through, and Hilary is completely committed, as he reminded us, the Management Board, only the other day to not allowing issues around the maps, which is of course a Commission requirement, renewing the

maps, to have any impact on the single payments, which have been going out, as you know, Lord Plumb, faster in each successive year. So I am very confident that we have the budget. We certainly have the administrative budget, of which we have not slightly under-spending but we have made sure in each of the past two years that we have some reserve in place should there be a call on either our programme budget or indeed our administrative budget. In terms of how it will impact on this particular activity, on this particular activity actually David and his team act as a central co-ordinating hub. I think there are two people in the team, not including David. They work very closely with the policy divisions across the Department and relationships between the two are increasingly good. In terms of EU business, when we look forward – and I think this is why we have an opportunity to make sure the improvements we have put in place are refined and we can really get ourselves into a good position for the future – I think the fact that we have a new Commission and a new Parliament means that we suspect that the burdens of business in terms of this Committee and the Commons and Scrutiny Committee D, will in fact in the rest of this year probably be less than in the second half of last year. That does, I suspect, give us all some breathing space in terms of making sure we get these procedures right.

Mr Steele: Yes. Could I add to what Dame Helen said? Some of the issues to which Lord Plumb referred are not necessarily issues of EU parliamentary scrutiny, which is the specific responsibility of my team and the issue being discussed today. For example, some of the very important issues that are referred to, like electronic livestock identification, relate to proposals which are already out there; they have been adopted, so we are not talking about scrutiny issues. The same goes for RPA mapping. They are very important issues but they are not substantially issues of parliamentary scrutiny, which my team is focused on.

Q8 Lord Powell of Bayswater: I just have one small question on your first answer just as a matter of fact. Were all your Ministers reshuffled in that particular reshuffle? Quite often Ministers within a department are interchangeable.

Dame Helen Ghosh: No. Sorry. It is a sign of age, remembering what happened at each reshuffle. At this reshuffle we retained Hilary Benn as Secretary of State and Huw Irranca-Davies as Parliamentary Under-Secretary, which of course in relation to fisheries, which is a subject of enormous interest, particularly in the Commons, is extremely valuable. He is also leading on the Marine Bill in the Commons. We gained Jim Fitzpatrick with the farming portfolio, and Bryan Davies as our 20 per cent House of Lords Minister, replacing Phil Hunt, and Dan Norris, who is our Parliamentary Under-Secretary. So we got two and a fifth new ministers and retained two. So, particularly on the agricultural and environment side, other than Hilary, we did actually get new Ministers.

Q9 Lord Powell of Bayswater: My point is simply that it is not always that difficult to find a substitute Minister to sign something. A reshuffle in itself is not a comprehensive excuse.

Dame Helen Ghosh: No, I agree, and I very much hope that the June performance – I am not sure what business there has been in July – will very much be a temporary blip and, when we look at the year as a whole, I hope we will retain that 80 per cent strike rate.

Q10 Lord Powell of Bayswater: The question I was going to ask is to what degree you have been able to learn from the good practice of other departments in dealing with these issues? We have not really experienced similar problems with other departments, so it would be useful to know to what degree you have studied how they manage it.

Dame Helen Ghosh: The department that we decided in the light of our performance last year to go and look at was the department that performed best in 2008, which was BERR, now BIS, and this is our new system of tracking. (*Document displayed*) This tracks each of the

issues for scrutiny, whether it is EMs or other kinds of activity, follow-up queries. This takes every subject, and I think we have even stolen or borrowed the software that goes with it from BERR.

Mr Steele: Not the software but the inspiration.

Dame Helen Ghosh: So this is a BERR system, which enables David's team to track by colour coding. Curiously, the issues which have successfully passed scrutiny appear in grey but it enables us to track in black, for example, where you have requested follow-up action; in red, cases where we have missed our deadlines; in green, where it is on track to achieve. So what the team can do, if they wish to do it, every morning, they can throw up on their screens all the instances where the Committees have asked additional queries or whether where there was some problem and go straight to the official in charge, the Director, the Senior Responsible Officer, and have a discussion with him or her about progress. This is actually a refined version. When Huw Irranca-Davies talked to the Commons he said that we would be writing a letter to each of the Senior Responsible Officers. In fact, what we are now doing is something that is even better targeted than that, and this is the system that we will be looking at and assessing over the next six months. It has clearly worked well in 2009 and we need to make sure that it can work even better in the future.

Q11 Lord Bradshaw: Following straight on, do we take it that the assurances which Huw Irranca-Davies gave to the Commons European Scrutiny Committee on 11 February have in fact been carried out and that the document which you spoke about is actually showing the overdue cases, and every single overdue case, so that each officer or director responsible is aware of them?

Dame Helen Ghosh: Indeed. As I said, what this demonstrates to us in a number of columns – and I am sure we would be happy to give the Committee an example of one of these – is against a variety of deadlines, whether we have met them, it notes whether we have further

queries, it notes action that is required, and it also has a column with comments: “This was the problem here, and this is what we need to do next.” I think when Huw came and talked to the Commons Scrutiny Committee he said we would write to all SROs on a monthly basis. In fact, we are targeting this data at SROs, and there is an escalation from a relatively junior member of staff if there is any problem to David and then to Chris Whaley, who is sitting behind me, who is the Head of the Unit if it is a more serious problem, and, given my new interest in this topic, I am sure that if in the end there were a serious issue, it would get to me. So we think we have entirely fulfilled Huw’s promises.

Q12 Chairman: I am told that BERR, now BIS, actually circulates the list you are referring to to most of the affected Sub-Committees. I leave as a question to you whether that same procedure – perhaps Mr Steele might be kind enough to correspond with BIS to find out what they do. If that is the case, it might be helpful to both the Department and the Select Committee to have that same information.

Dame Helen Ghosh: Thank you. Yes, we will look into that.

Q13 Lord Walpole: The Committee Office here does publish a document called *Progress of Scrutiny* every fortnight. This lists all the correspondence sent to and received by the Sub-Committees. What use do you make of this document? What steps would you take when you see a letter you thought had been sent is not listed?

Dame Helen Ghosh: Of course we are aware of the list and the team looks at the list. We use this document as the key bit of data for us in the sense that it is more detailed in terms of the whole story. I would be very nervous about relying entirely on somebody spotting... If you take the regrettable EMAS incident, it would require somebody to be clever enough to spot something that was not there, if you see what I mean. Therefore I think what I am keener to have, and this is what David and the team have built, is something that is more all-

encompassing. I do not know whether, David, you want to say anything about precisely what use we make of that list.

Mr Steele: We are aware of the list but, as Dame Helen said, it is not so useful to have a document which asks you to identify what is missing rather than what is there.

Q14 Lord Walpole: But it is not missing: you have had it in the first place, this paper, and you have a document that says it has not arrived.

Mr Steele: I think in those cases it would be helpful if the clerks reminded us of the fact that there is an outstanding letter. Defra does have a huge volume of correspondence and it is not normal practice to contact the recipient of letters to ask whether they have received them. But we quite understand the underlying point here and I think our new system is more active in following up cases. What we are now doing and where we have learned from BERR, BIS, and others, is more active case management and that is how we would pursue those kinds of issues in future.

Q15 Lord Dykes: Further to that, rather like getting the GPS right eventually, although it is a different thing, would not that documentation procedure then take care of that?

Dame Helen Ghosh: If we were to follow the suggestion that the Chairman has made, which would be that we share it in the way that BIS does with the relevant committees, then actually, everyone is working from the same document and, picking up Lord Walpole's point, we would be able to say, "Oh, you think, I notice, on the EMAS case, that you have sent a letter; we do not think we have ever had it." Actually, I think that is an excellent suggestion because it would precisely pick up that point.

Q16 Lord Dykes: Can we just go further into some of these other modalities of this procedure of us all trying to get the system right, allowing for everybody always being

overloaded with a heavy volume of work? As you know, since May 2008 we have been asking for scanned signed copies and Word versions of all ministerial correspondence to be emailed to the Committee Office. We notice that your Department has only done this sporadically, *de temps en temps*. Why has this requirement not been incorporated into Defra's specific scrutiny process? It does not sound too much to ask. Could you ensure that this does happen in the future?

Dame Helen Ghosh: Yes, I am very happy to reinforce the point. We regret the fact that both versions disappeared in terms of the EMAS correspondence. We have reminded staff about the two modalities and, you are quite right, it is not hard work to do it and I know it assists the Committee in terms of putting material on the website if you have a Word version as well as a PDF version. We have reminded staff about that. We think it was – again, I have used the words “temporary blip” rather too often but we think that in the EMAS case it was an unfortunate slip and we will be reinforcing the message about that to our policy teams and obviously the coordinating group will be able to act as longstop on that.

Q17 Lord Dykes: Further to that, of course, and one should not too eagerly assume the full ratification of Lisbon until it actually happens, and we are awaiting the concluding stages of that later on in October and so on, presumably, even though you are all very busy at the moment, the Treaty enactment and the new procedures will increase the traffic a bit at the margin, I would imagine.

Dame Helen Ghosh: Yes, which makes it all the more important that we get the system sorted out now, which is why we are extremely keen to press forward with making sure that our systems are improved over the next six months, while we have, although one should never say this, a relatively quiet period in terms of European business. You are looking nervous, David.

Mr Steele: No, I am not at all nervous. I think we obviously have to take a graduated and proportionate approach to a problem that has been identified. I think the way we have addressed this is that the most urgent problem was submission of EMs on time. Apart from the reshuffle blip, our performance has improved considerably but we will be taking the opportunity of the recess to revisit all our instructions, and we are very grateful for the helpful advice you gave us in relation to BERR/BIS's performance. We are also seeing the Cabinet Office who, as you know, co-ordinate cross-government procedures on this to discuss how across Whitehall we can all do better. We have a few ideas that we will be discussing with them about how we can all learn from each other.

Q18 Lord Dykes: You would presumably then be able to reassure us with the operational confidence that, come Lisbon, as well as ante-Lisbon, things are going to be handled properly because presumably in some way, and it is too early to say how it will work out, the involvement of national parliaments will increase at the margin.

Dame Helen Ghosh: Yes, indeed.

Q19 Lord Dykes: That will include the traffic between departments and parliamentary committees and Parliament as a whole of all member states on these matters, particularly CAP matters.

Dame Helen Ghosh: I am assuming we are a long way away from getting Cabinet Office guidance on how any post-Lisbon arrangements would work.

Q20 Lord Dykes: Indeed, they would have to wait.

Dame Helen Ghosh: Yes, and we should not tread on any potentially dangerous ground there but obviously we would await Cabinet Office guidance.

Q21 Lord James of Blackheath: Dame Helen, this question picks up a thread from both Lord Bradshaw and Lord Walpole. When seven years ago I had occasion to be looking at the structure of various government departments, Defra had 323 separate departments or sub-departments identified by a separate name box on its chart – a somewhat unwieldy structure. Has there been any reorganisation and has there been a cull of these to some extent?

Dame Helen Ghosh: There has been significant reorganisation and in other respects a cull. The Department as a whole is significantly smaller than it was three years ago. We put into effect headcount reductions required by the Gershon efficiency agenda, which saw us lose across the Department around 2,200 posts. At the same time, we took the opportunity to rationalise activity and to reorganise ourselves predominantly into projects and programme-style activity to give us a greater flexibility to move staff and resources – actually, some of the issues that Lord Plumb raised earlier – from one issue to another. For example, recently we have increased resources, and these are not directly analogous but, for example, both the number of people and the amount of money we need to put into TSE testing because of successfully dealing with that animal health issue, we have been able to transfer into other areas. For example, we are now putting more resources and set up a new project team on climate change and its impact on agriculture and our undertaking is to have carbon budgets in relation to agriculture. So we now have a programme and project system that enables us to move resource from one place to another much more easily. We have also made significant reductions in resource that we put into some areas of activity. For example, the animal welfare team, once we got that very successful bit of legislation through a couple of years ago, in fact is now much smaller than it was before. So I think it is a simpler department, it is a smaller department. We will obviously all the time be looking for ways to simplify further the design of the organisation. I think the other thing I would say as a result is we are much better joined up across the Department. There is no longer environment here

and farming here. If you look at Hilary's document he produced last week, we recognise that farmers, for example, are a key part of delivering biodiversity, and that is a story you need to tell across the whole of the Department. Farmers and land managers have a key role to play in pollution, for example, on water and other issues. So we have much more joined-up activity across the Department, which means it is less likely but not impossible that issues fall between bits of the Department.

Q22 Lord James of Blackheath: Has it resulted in a better aggregation in certain areas? For example, we found one department which included nine members of staff dealing with one 3 km stream in Scotland, which was surely part of the greater waterways departmental concern and should not have been a department on its own.

Dame Helen Ghosh: I am puzzled by the fact that we would have a group of people dealing with a waterway in Scotland since actually, as you know, a matter in Scotland is for the devolved Scottish Parliament. The other thing we have done is said Defra, particularly the policy core, is about policy. We need to be absolutely clear what should be done by our delivery agents, whether they are our executive agents, for example Animal Health, or the NDPBs, Environment Agency and Animal Health. Where potentially we had duplication of people doing a delivery activity, licensing racehorse exports, for example, and then second-guessed out there in an executive agency, that does not happen any more.

Q23 Lord James of Blackheath: Last question: in the case of that stream in Scotland, for example, has it been possible for that to be devolved upon Scotland without duplicating it within a wider waterways concern or has it become expressly the same department but now under Scottish control so it has not been duplicated?

Dame Helen Ghosh: I think I would want notice of what the original unit that you describe was. Any control of waterways in England would either be – and I take it by this we mean in relation to use or pollution...

Q24 Lord James of Blackheath: It was a pollution issue really.

Dame Helen Ghosh: In England that would be a matter for the Environment Agency and in Scotland for the Scottish equivalent. If it was use, it would either be the Environment Agency or indeed British Waterways. I am pretty confident that the kinds of changes that we have made mean that, frankly, we do not have the luxury or the people to have someone sitting in Whitehall second-guessing what is happening on a stream anywhere in England and I am sure that is also true in Scotland.

Chairman: If I might conclude this session by asking you, Dame Helen, a couple of points and then making one final point in conclusion, first of all, thank you very much for your frankness and the helpful and co-operative spirit in which you and Mr Steele have helped the Committee. It would be helpful if we could have a specific letter just detailing the actions that you are taking, which you have spelled out in general and sometimes specific terms, but for the record it would be helpful to the Committee if that can be done, including David Steele's specific responsibilities and the two civil servants working with him. Secondly, for the record, I am sure that you would agree that we have a shared responsibility, we to action in a timely fashion our scrutiny but to record what I believe is jointly agreed, that it is the Department's responsibility to use every effort to follow up the flow of documentation. I think the flowchart which BIS is now using, if it could be shared with us, would help both of us. Finally, sitting on my right, to your left, is our new Clerk, Mr John Turner. When I relinquish the chair at the end of this Parliament, not session, I shall leave a note to him asking him to suggest to the Select Committee to return briefly to this issue in 12 months' time so that we can measure the progress made on both our parts. If there are no other

questions from colleagues, this session is now concluded and I would ask colleagues to remain for our private deliberation and scrutiny of other documents. Thank you.