

## **NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS COMMISSION**

### **MISSION:**

To promote better preparedness for a major crisis or incident.

### **CONTEXT**

The current COVID-19 crisis shows how major events precipitate and accelerate major long-term changes. As the world enters the second phase of the pandemic, it is clear that our ways of life and much of our societal organisation will be very different. Not only will we be in the midst of a major economic downturn, but longer-term changes in the ways that we work and how our society functions will have been accelerated. Some of our societal norms will have changed permanently. International relations will have been transformed as will the balance between citizens and their governments.

What is more the impact of these changes will fall hardest on the most economically disadvantaged citizens and those from black and minority ethnic communities. There is a real risk that social divisions will intensify and community tensions will increase.

It is the duty of the state to build resilient communities, so that the weakest and most vulnerable members of society are not affected disproportionately by crises and major shocks. This is part of the social contract between the citizen and the state. If that social contract breaks down or if citizens no longer feel they can trust their government, this undermines faith in democracy and democratic structures.

The dramatic impact of COVID-19 demonstrates why nationally and internationally we need to be better prepared to withstand and recover from major shocks. It is clear that societal structures along with our economic and financial systems need to be strengthened so that we can cope with such events in the future.

Pandemic disease has occurred traumatically throughout history and it has been widely recognised as a serious threat in recent years. Indeed, pandemic flu was uniquely in the top tier of the UK's National Risk Register since it was first published a decade ago. The latest (2017) edition showed it as having the highest impact severity and in the highest category of likelihood in the "Hazards, diseases, accidents, and societal risks" matrix. Yet the UK, like many other nations, struggled to respond rapidly and effectively.

However, there are many other serious risks on that National Risk Register: widespread power failure; flooding; adverse terrestrial and space weather; terrorist attacks on crowded places or transport; cyber attacks on infrastructure or services; chemical, biological and radiological attacks; and so on. Whilst response plans for these various hazards will exist, as the recent experience shows these may prove inadequate when faced with the real event.

The UK, like any other nation, needs to be better prepared to deal with unexpected or unprecedented shocks. The National Preparedness Commission is about ensuring that preparedness and resilience receives greater policy consideration and debate. It is not about criticising what has or has not been done in the past, but what

should be put in place for the future. Ultimately, it is ensuring that a society is built that is better able to deal with traumatic events. This will mean investing in resilience and preparedness and recognising a shift from a “just in time” philosophy to one of “just in case”.

### **APPROACH:**

The National Preparedness Commission will be a high-level body that will oversee a programme of work that is intended to be both **strategic**, (recognising that what is needed to be better prepared for many shocks is the same whatever the initiating crisis or incident), and **practical** to encourage immediate action so as to get away from merely “admiring the problem”. It would recognise that the increasing complexity of our society and its systems brings many benefits, but potentially creates its own fragilities. It would not be about criticising what has gone before or denigrating the extensive work that has been done by many entities, but would look at what needs to be done systemically to improve societal preparedness and resilience, drawing on any lessons from the current crisis.

### **SCOPE:**

Better preparedness is needed at –

- National level. This is particularly in respect of the resilience of critical infrastructure (with especial reference to the economy and financial system on which everything else depends) and societal preparedness for a major crisis (eg a pandemic, natural disaster, or a cyber attack causing widespread life-threatening disruption). It would address such issues as:
  - The effectiveness of the Civil Contingencies Act and the local resilience forum network;
  - The availability of Military Aid to the Civil Power (MACP);
  - Ensuring that the financial system and the economy as a whole are robust enough;
  - The regulatory frameworks for utilities and their ability to mandate or encourage greater resilience;
  - The resilience of non-regulated and non-CNI sectors that are nonetheless essential, such as food distribution;
  - National and international supply chain dependencies; and
  - Dependence on satellites.
- Community level. This would cover such topics as:
  - What can be done by local councils (including good practice in local resilience arrangements) and local community networks (and how they can be nurtured);
  - Identification of vulnerable individuals;
  - Role and management of volunteers;
  - The coordination of non-police security personnel; and
  - The role of BIDs.
- Organisational and company level. This work stream would need to recognise the distinction between larger organisations and SMEs. It would cover both internal issues but also the wider responsibility of organisations and companies to other entities. The aim would be to provide guidance on supply

chain issues, managing staffing issues and guidance to staff.

- Individual and household level. This would cover advice to individuals and households and review good practice around the world on the effectiveness of messaging and what works in encouraging societal preparedness.

Another strand is the need for long-term investment in the human capital to deliver a resilient society. This is about educating the next generation of engineers, scientists and designers, as well as re-educate the current generation, in the awareness, understanding and application of resilience as a way of preparing communities and societies for major shocks and stresses. It also encompasses the content of the national curriculum to ensure that all future citizens are educated about being both personally more resilient but also being part of a more resilient society.

Finally, the policy work envisaged would have an international dimension. Some of the issues addressed would be readily transferable to other countries and, whilst institutional arrangements would vary, the same principles would apply. Likewise, other nations have relevant experience in preparedness and resilience from which the UK should learn.

### **GOVERNANCE AND ORGANISATION:**

The activities of the Commission will be hosted by, but independent of, Resilience First with ring-fenced funding from external sponsors.

Intended outputs would be four to six policy papers a year, looking at different aspects of preparedness, along with major roundtable events and seminars (these would be either on an outward-facing basis to raise awareness and promote debate, or on a “Chatham House” basis to develop policy propositions). The aim would also be to provide guides to good practice, highlighting steps that can be taken which are practicable and of proven value.

The Commission itself would comprise senior business leaders, respected academics, figures from civil society and others with expertise in the field. The intention is that it would meet no more than twice a year to provide counsel and advise on the overall direction of the work. It would be supported by a small secretariat. Commission members would be encouraged between meetings to feed in comments and views on the content of the policy papers and good practice initiatives.

Commission members so far confirmed are:

Lord Toby Harris (Chair)  
Gisela Abbam (Chair, British Science Association)  
Lord Victor Adebawale CBE (Chair, NHS Confederation)  
Rt Hon Lord James Arbuthnot (Chair, House of Lords Risk Assessment and Risk Planning; former Chair, House of Commons Defence Committee)  
Stephen Baker (Chief Executive, East Suffolk Council; SOLACE Lead for Civil Contingencies)  
Hanif Barma (Founder, Risk Coalition)  
Dr Ruth Bournemouth (Director of Research, Lloyds Register Foundation)

Elisabeth Braw (Fellow, American Enterprise Institute; former Director of the Modern Deterrence Project, RUSI)  
 Alan Brown (Group Security Director, Tesco)  
 Professor Brian Collins CB FREng (Professor of Engineering Policy, University College London)  
 Stephen Dunmore (Chair, Royal Voluntary Service; former Chief Executive, Big Lottery Fund)  
 Julian Enoizi (Chief Executive, Pool Reinsurance)  
 Lord Jonathan Evans KCB DL (former Director General, MI5)  
 Professor Peter Guthrie OBE FREng (Professor of Sustainable Development, University of Cambridge)  
 Dr Karin von Hippel (Director-General, Royal United Services Institute)  
 Dr Patricia Lewis (Research Director for International Security, Chatham House)  
 Simon Lewis (Head of Crisis Response, British Red Cross)  
 Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser DBE FRS (Chief Executive, UK Research and Innovation)  
 Rt Hon Sir David Lidington KCB CBE (Chair, Royal United Services Institute; former de facto Deputy Prime Minister)  
 Ian Marchant (Chairman, Thames Water)  
 Rt Revd and Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally DBE (Bishop of London; former UK Chief Nursing Officer)  
 Deputy Chief Constable Paul Netherton OBE (Devon and Cornwall Police; NPCC Lead for Civil Contingencies)  
 Sir Kenneth Olisa OBE (Chairman, Restoration Partners; Lord-Lieutenant of Greater London)  
 Professor Lord Martin Rees OM FREng FRS (Astronomer Royal; founder, Centre for the Study of Existential Risk)  
 Rt Hon Lord John Reid (Chair, Institute for Strategy, Resilience and Security at UCL; former Home Secretary)  
 Professor Brooke Rogers OBE (Professor of Behavioural Science, Kings College London)  
 Sir Mark Rowley QPM (former head of UK Counter-Terrorism Policing)  
 Dr David Rubens (Executive Director, Institute for Strategic Risk Management)  
 Basil Scarsella (Chief Executive, UK Power Networks)  
 Dr Fiona Twycross (Deputy Mayor of London for Fire and Resilience)  
 Professor Liz Varga (Professor of Complex Systems, University College London)  
 Professor Alison Wakefield (Chair of the Security Institute; Professor of Criminology and Security Studies, University of West London)  
 Admiral Rt Hon Lord Alan West GCB DSC (former National Security and Cyber Security Minister; former First Sea Lord and Chief of Defence Intelligence)  
 Paul Williams (Head of Operational Risk and Resilience, Prudential Regulation Authority, Bank of England)  
 David Wright FREng (Director, Electricity Transmission, National Grid)

All Commissioners are appointed in their personal capacity and are not representing any particular organisation.