National Infrastructure
& Service Transformation
Authority

The UK Project Assurance Model
Concept Symposium

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Agenda

1. The UK model for Project Assurance
2. Learning from Assurance
3. The future of the UK Assurance framework

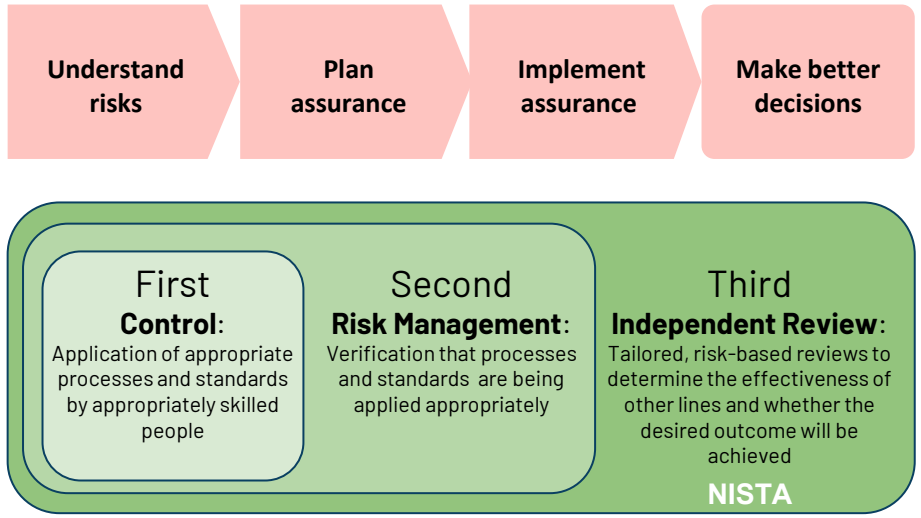
Assurance – a definition…

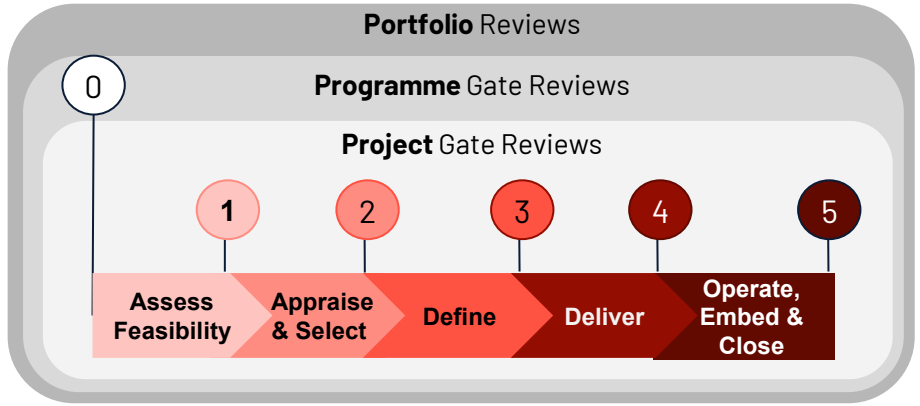
Assurance is the **process of providing**, through a systematic set of actions, **confidence to senior leaders** and stakeholders **that work is controlled and supports successful delivery** of policy, strategy and objectives.

The use of independent reviews has been shown to help to ensure progress is kept on track as well as identify and mitigate risks.

The UK model for assurance aims to improve the chances od successful delivery by:

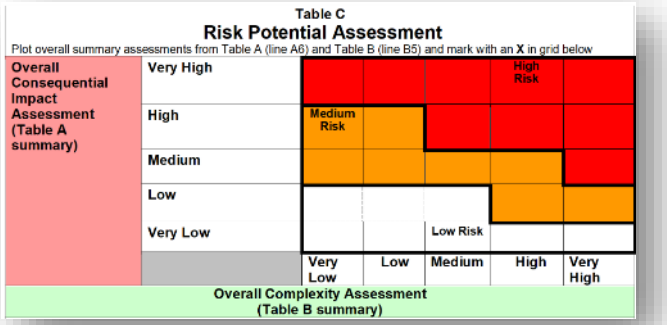
1. Providing expert recommendations to sponsors
2. Informing advice to ministerial investment decision-making
3. Supporting the identification of systemic issues and blockers

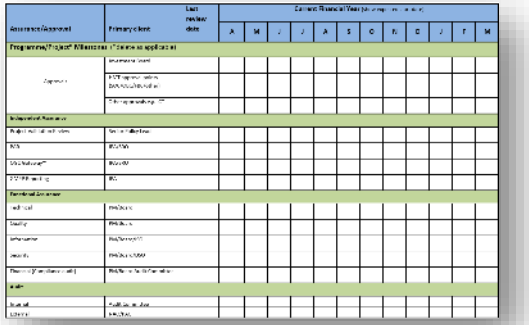


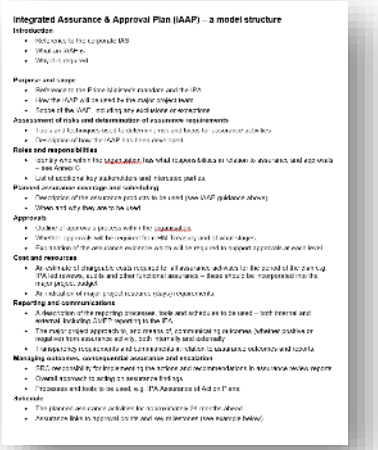


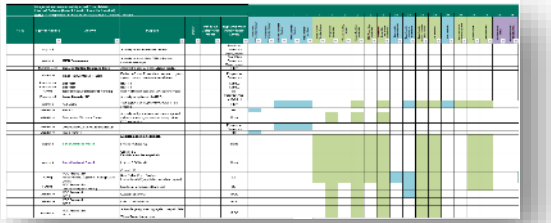
Key Components of the UK Model

1. Risk Potential Assessment
2. Integrated Assurance and Approval Plan
3. Structured Review Methodology
4. Accredited Independent Reviewers

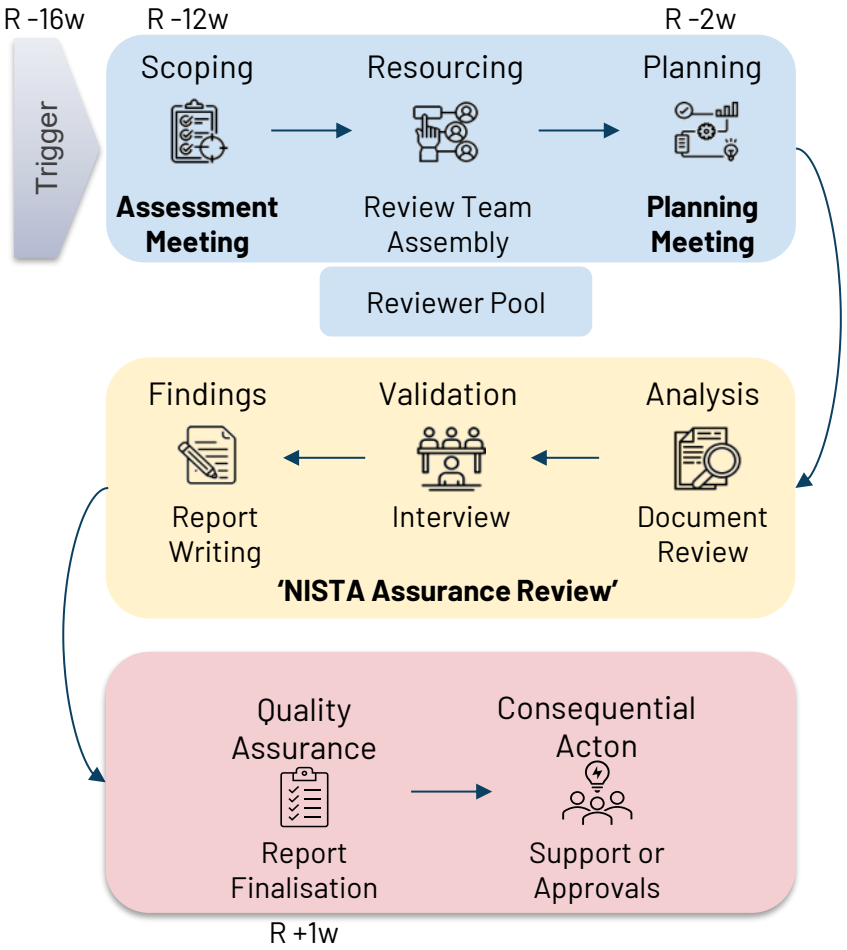




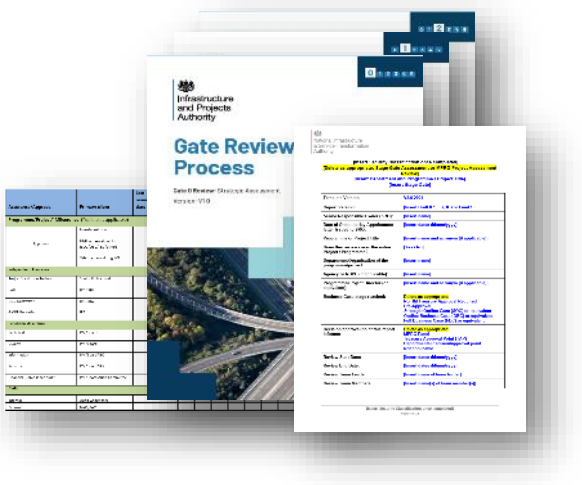




NISTA Independent Reviews



Workbooks, Templates and Guidance:



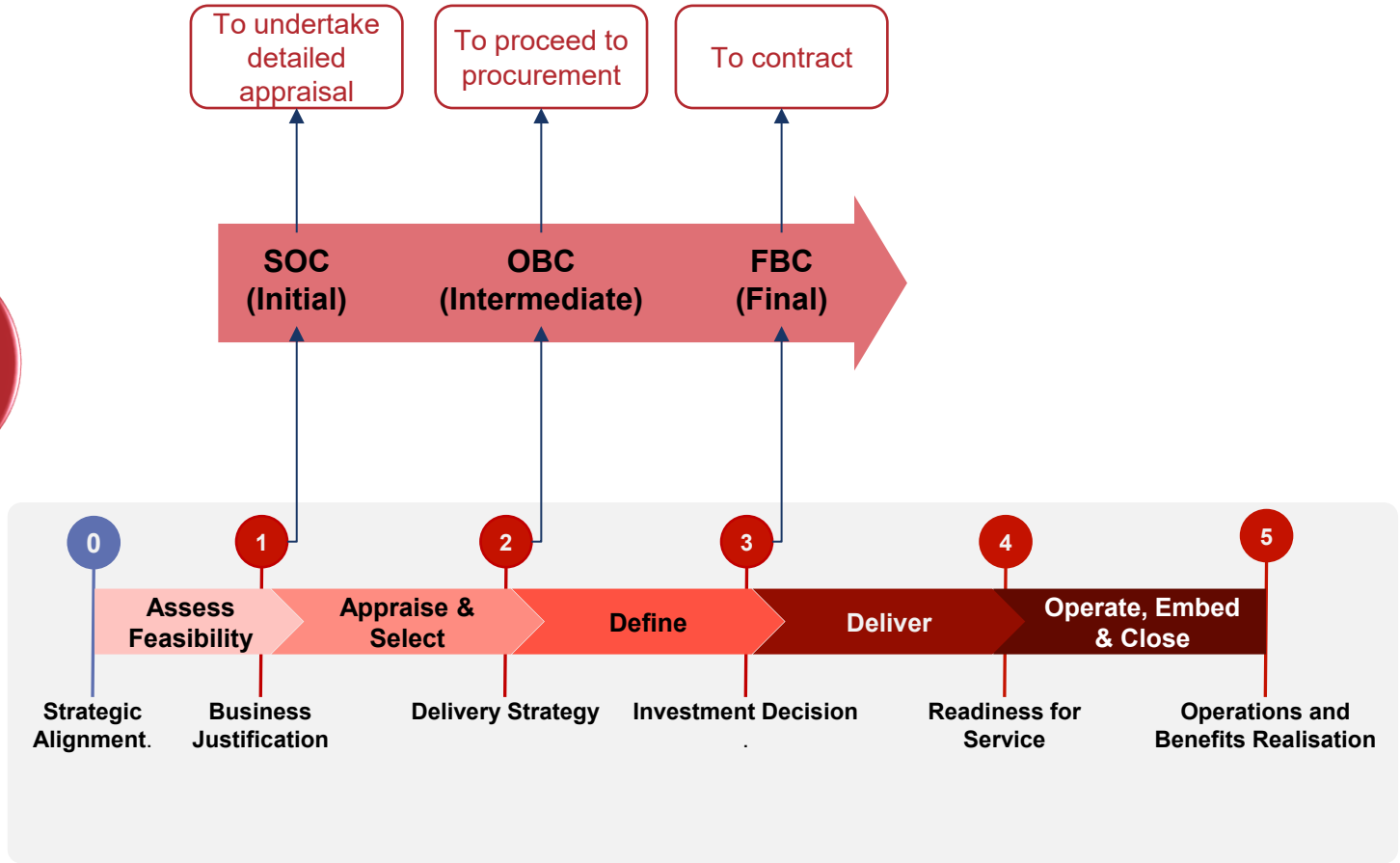
Recommendations:

1. **Critical (Do Now)**
2. **Essential (Do By)**
3. **Recommended**

Stage Gate Assessment:

GREEN	Successful delivery… appears highly likely and there are no major outstanding issues that at this stage appear to threaten delivery ***Ready to proceed to the next stage.***
AMBER	Successful delivery… appears feasible but significant issues already exist requiring management attention. These appear resolvable at this stage ***Can proceed to the next stage with conditions***
RED	Successful delivery… appears to be unachievable. There are major issues which, at this stage, do not appear to be manageable or resolvable ***Should not proceed to the next phase***

Assurance and business case approval

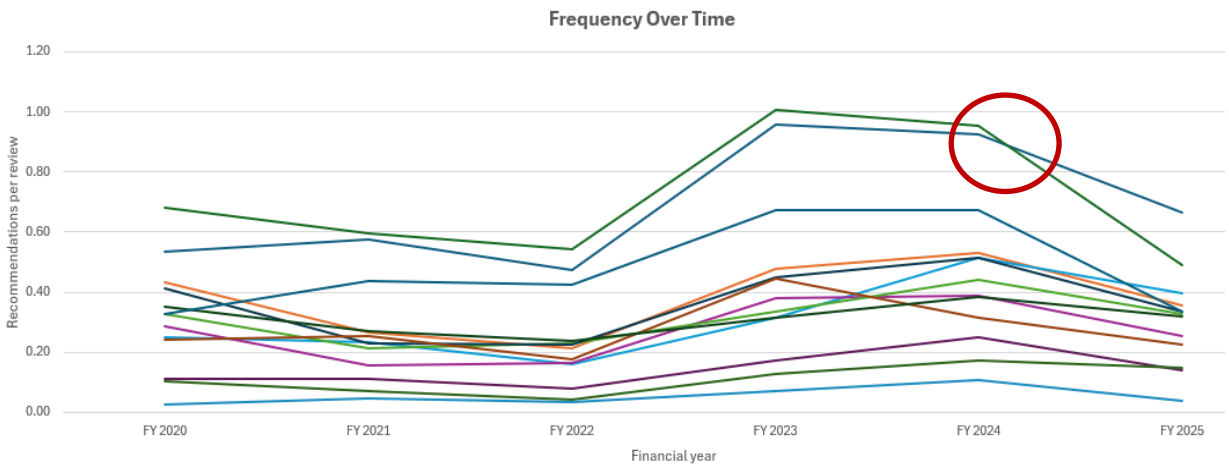


Approval Decisions

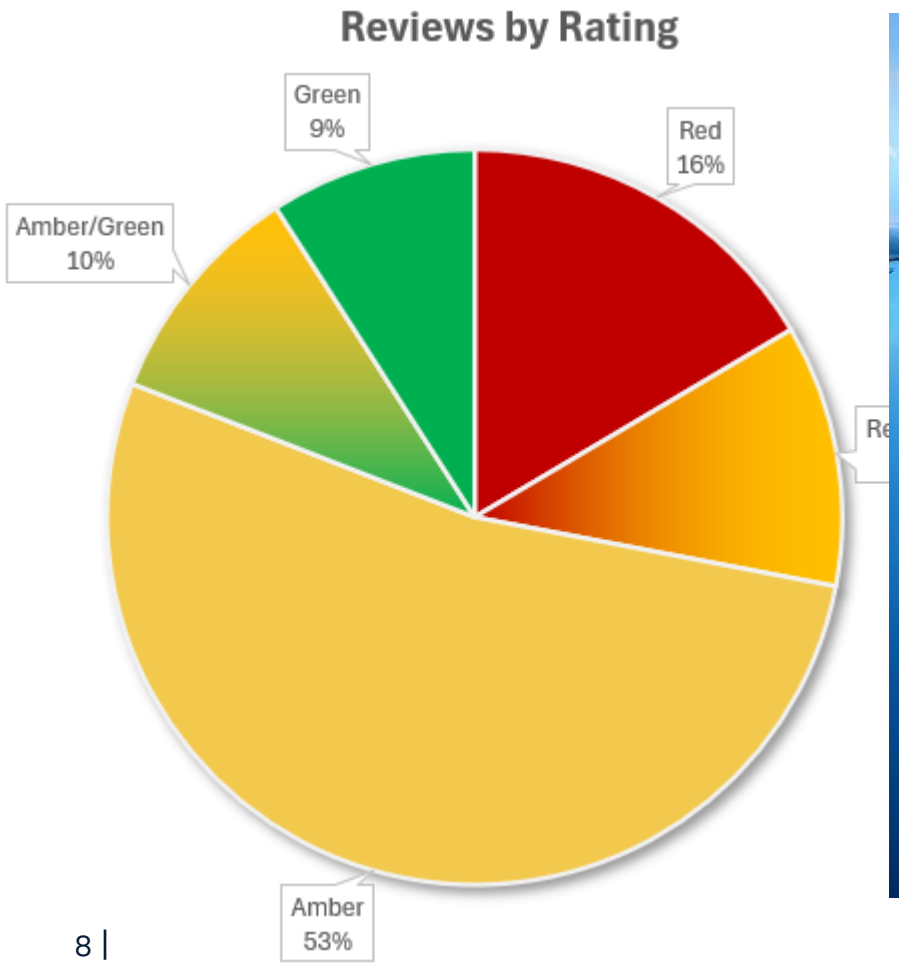
Development Phases

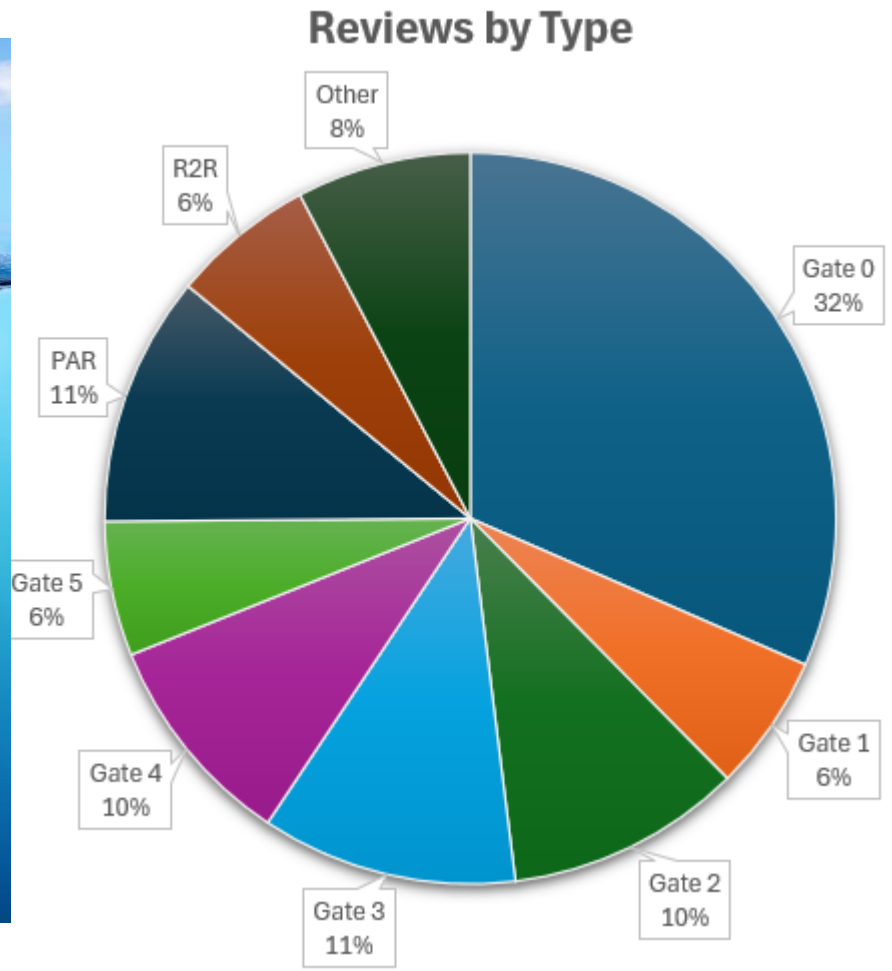
Assurance Reviews

Learning from Reviews



Learning from Reviews





Drivers for reform

Streamline and strengthen major projects assurance and approvals

To enable a more targeted assurance and approvals system for major projects that integrates cross-functional expertise and places greater emphasis on upstream activities

In support of the 10YIS

Support reforms to the spending control and accountability framework

To enable decisions to be taken at the lowest level of accountability, functional expertise being properly embedded in departments, and the robust decisions are made once and well

In support of the OfVM recommendations

Discovery

478
Survey responses

70
Colleagues spoken to

34
Documents reviewed

Main findings

- Assurance activities are heavily approval-focused
- Government and management arrangements do not use assurance to steer delivery
- Inconsistent and underused data undermines assurance activity and potential efficacy
- Assurance activites are constrained by capacity, capability and behaviour
- The current framework is not applied to support a coherent system

Changes the new system will enable

1. **Coherent architecture**
   A codified architecture with clear roles, responsibilities and accountabilities.

2. **Continuous monitoring**
   From heavily point-in-time, approval-based activity to continuous monitoring focused on outcomes, risks and controls, supporting targeted, efficient point-in-time assurance.

3. **Applied earlier**
   Assurance applied earlier and sustained throughout the lifecycle, strengthening support at upstream stages of projects and programmes.

4. **Digitally enabled**
   Activities driven by reliable project data, insights systematically generated, and processes supported by automation and AI wherever suitable.

5. **Skills and capabilities**
   Skills clearly defined with system-level approaches to develop, deploy and track them across users and customers of assurance.

6. **Core enabler of delivery**
   Repositioned as a source of support, encouraging honesty and transparency rather than defensive or risk-averse behaviours.

Summary

1. Strong foundations
2. Shift the emphasis
3. Keep learning and improving

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