



## Transforming the delivery of major government projects

### Executive Summary

The Government's Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP) encompasses the largest, most impactful, and highest-risk projects in the UK. Over the next 40 years, these projects will transform infrastructure and public services to support the country's economic growth and international competitiveness, and secure the nation's defence.

The Government's track-record of delivery of these projects, however, has been poor. Typically, just one third of major projects are delivered on time and to budget, resulting in delays to service and infrastructure improvements, Government targets and commitments being missed, and taxpayer money being squandered.

The Cabinet Office's Major Projects Authority (MPA) appointed Deloitte to partner with Oxford Said Business School (OSBS) in designing and delivering a distinctive programme to transform the implementation of Government policy through world-class delivery of major projects.

The resulting Major Projects Leadership Academy (MPLA) was piloted in June 2012 and its resounding success led to an accelerated full roll out: 350 of Government's most senior project leaders have been enrolled on the programme, with over 120 having successfully graduated.

The MPLA has brought a better understanding of the role of leadership, and developed the technical delivery skills and commercial capabilities required in successful project leadership. Most importantly, it has established the capability to set up projects that are more likely to succeed from the outset and several MPLA graduates have identified significant cost savings.

*Designed and delivered by Deloitte, in partnership with Said Business School, the*

## Major Projects Leadership Academy

 has delivered **12** courses training the government's most senior project leaders.

 **350** senior civil servants have enrolled

 with **120+** successfully graduating so far

 and over **86%** of participants rated modules 'good +'

"Deloitte, as a partner to Said Business School, played a major role in the design, set up and delivery of the hugely successful MPLA. They utilised their practical expertise, in helping to deliver major projects, to translate academic research and create a blended approach to programme design. They ensured that MPLA were able to meet the tight timescales and deliver the programme within just three months of the contract being awarded, and enabled a full scale roll out of the programme to meet the commitments outlined in the Civil Service Reform Plan. The MPA are continuing to collaborate with the team, both in the ongoing development of MPLA and in the design of a new suite of offers."

Tony Meggs, the CEO of the MPA

# Project and approach



## The client challenge

The GMPP is a complex and diverse portfolio of hundreds of projects and programmes with a combined spending commitment of over £480 billion – over one third of the UK National Debt or five times the annual government borrowing. These projects are the means by which the government turns 95% of its policy commitments and efficiency improvement initiatives into reality.

Owing to their scale and complexity, delivering major projects is a huge challenge and governments of all hues have had a poor record of success – typically only one third of major projects are delivered on time and to budget, resulting in service and infrastructure improvements being delayed, the Government's commitments not being met, millions of pounds of taxpayer money being squandered and a corresponding loss of public trust.

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In 2011 a significant capability gap across Government was identified, with a study finding that project leaders were operating at just 66% of the required level of skills in major programme delivery.

In his 2003 report, Lord Browne called performance of these projects 'worryingly poor', citing insufficient project leadership training and experience of Project Directors (PDs) and Senior Responsible Owners (SROs) as a primary cause. In 2011 a significant capability gap across Government was identified, with a study finding that project leaders were operating at just 66% of the required level of skills in major programme delivery.

The MPA sought a strategy to build technical and commercial know-how, and to develop leadership and professional capability within Government and Whitehall. It envisioned a programme that would develop project leaders to become world-class at delivering major projects on time and on budget with full benefits, and who would cascade their expertise across Government.

## The solution and objectives

Deloitte, working in partnership with OSBS, was appointed to design and deliver this programme – combining leading academic research with the expertise of leading practitioners honed on successful major projects including the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Together they developed the MPLA, which launched in March 2012, making the UK Government the first to introduce mandatory leadership development across its entire major project portfolio.

The MPLA is designed to transform the implementation of Government policy through world-class delivery of major projects by:

- Returning major project leadership capability to the Civil Service
- Developing project leaders to become world-class at successfully delivering major projects
- Creating a cadre of world-class project leaders, formed into an expert support network
- Elevating the status of project leadership professionalism in central government
- Developing Permanent Secretaries' ability to a) create a corporate environment that supports successful major project delivery, and b) improve the way in which their organisations optimise use of their valuable Project Leader resource.

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# Implementation

## Design

To achieve such a bold vision, the programme had to go beyond teaching project management methodology, technicalities, and leadership and fundamentally rework the development of professional capability. The Deloitte team worked closely with the MPA and OSBS in designing a distinctive programme comprising residential weeks, facilitated action learning, master classes and written assessments. The below diagram provides an overview of the programme:

Deloitte used its expertise in designing leadership programmes for senior executives and public servants and its knowledge of how project leaders work to build a competency framework to identify gaps in desired behaviours. This was used to define the core deliverables of the MPLA and map improvements in behaviours across Commercial and Technical Leadership, and Leadership of Self and Major Projects.

The Deloitte team led the design of the master classes in Organisation Design and Risk Management, adapting tried-and-tested Deloitte methodologies and case studies to create impactful and relevant sessions. Deloitte brought in practitioners with hands-on experience in delivering projects in Organisation Design and managing risk in large-scale programmes, such as the London 2012 Olympics, to facilitate and lend practical focus to the sessions.

Drawing on its practitioner expertise in delivering UK public sector leadership programmes and many of the world's major infrastructure and capital projects, Deloitte managed the programme, establishing a dedicated Project Management Office to coordinate between the MPA and OSBS and serve as the contact point for participants on the programme.

The project team had to overcome a series of challenges including limited MPA-dedicated resources and restricted senior people's availability, at the same time as managing a complex project with multiple, simultaneous, interlocking components. They achieved this and were instrumental in ensuring the MPLA was delivered on time, to specification and within budget, with the first cohort launching just six weeks after contract award.

## Delivery

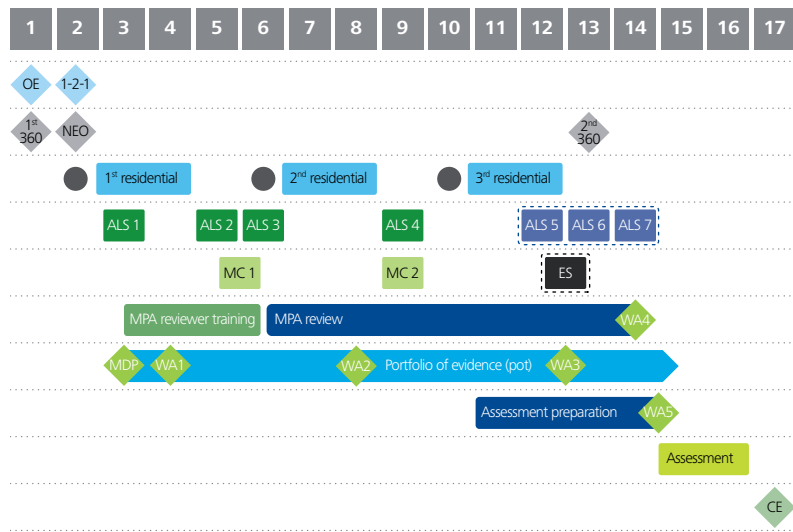
Following a resoundingly successful initial pilot programme, OSBS and Deloitte were asked to accelerate delivery of the MPLA. This acceleration was viewed as the greatest challenge for the MPLA by all parties and delivering it demonstrated the agility of the OSBS and Deloitte partnership and its ability to rapidly scale internal capability. The Deloitte PMO played a key role in managing this increase in volume, effectively tracking activities against plan and coordinating between stakeholders to ensure consistently high-quality delivery.

Since the pilot, the MPLA has launched a further 12 cohorts, going above and beyond the significant commitment outlined in the Civil Service Reform Plan. To date, more than 350 of the Government's most senior project leaders have enrolled on the programme, with over 120 having successfully graduated so far. Deloitte and OSBS have been asked to continue delivery of the programme at a rate of two cohorts per year.

## Project governance and review structures

Deloitte's project team assessed every programme element to ensure they would meet MPLA goals and provide assurance that the design process was capable of delivering compelling content and pedagogy. As a result, the development of the MPLA programme combines cutting-edge research and academic rigour with a practical approach to managing large-scale and complex programmes.

Throughout both the design and delivery phases, the Deloitte team were seen as trusted advisers who could translate academic research and the bold recommendations of the MPLA into practical action. Deloitte's contribution successfully persuaded the client towards a more blended approach to programme design, with increased focus on participant experiences, real-world case studies and an emphasis on building a network of Project Leaders across Whitehall.



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# Outcomes

The MPLA programme is on track to build expert-level capability across Government departments of all sizes and to achieve its aim of returning world-class project leadership capability to Whitehall. The MPLA has cultivated a better understanding of the role of leadership, technical delivery skills, and commercial capability required in successful project leadership and, most importantly, developed the capability to set up projects that are more likely to succeed from the outset.

In order to maintain high standards of delivery, Deloitte examines all aspects of the programme frequently and rigorously reviews feedback from participants. This feedback has been consistently strong, with over 86% of participants rating modules 'good +':

Participants have reported improvement in relationships with stakeholders, more effective governance, and improved management of risk and of the supply chain as a result of insights gained from the programme. The MPLA has also delivered the capabilities and confidence to act decisively at the earliest opportunity when monitoring highlights shortfalls and the need for intervention.

The MPLA has taught SROs and Project Directors to operate as Chief Executive Officers of temporary organisations rather than simply act as large-scale project managers, providing them with the confidence to assume the authority, accountability, and stewardship over the implementation of Government policy.

**“This is the highest-impact development programme in Government bar none.”**

Permanent Secretary 14 September 2015

The MPLA has achieved its aim to build a network of world-class project leaders, with many participants highlighting the power of the growing MPLA network in crossing departmental boundaries, as well as the development of a new language for project delivery, enabling conversations that simply did not happen before. The programme has also equipped participants with a toolkit of skills that enables them to embed MPLA learning for the benefit of their own organisations, extending the impact of the programme beyond its participants.

Several MPLA graduates have identified significant cost savings:

**“The MPLA has undoubtedly taught me some new and relevant concepts and re-enthused me with the power of academic rigour. If the MPLA only makes a small difference to the outcome on this £15bn+ acquisition programme with impacts and further costs reaching 50 years into the future then the leverage is huge.”**

The success of the MPLA has attracted global attention, with other governments emulating its model of training for their leaders of major projects. In 2014 the MPLA received a Silver Award from the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD) in its Excellence in Practice Awards.

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**“I admit to being sceptical as to whether the MPLA would provide the kind of practical help I needed. But after the first residential, I could see that it was going to be a long term investment in my programme, my organisation and ultimately in my career. I seized the chance to reflect, to learn, and to build my black book, and a year on, am regularly referring to elements of the programme. I count myself fortunate to have received this investment, so that I can better lead projects to achieve the best possible outcomes for the public.**

**As more public servants adopt common reference points from the MPLA, we are better able to effect better strategic mobilisation, delivery and management of major programmes. I am grateful to Oxford and Deloitte for their professionalism, genuine interest in our development, and continued accessibility of support.”**

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