

The National Strategy Playbook

Guidance on the cycle
of national strategy



About the 2024–25 Heywood Fellowship



The **Heywood Fellowship** gives a senior UK civil servant the opportunity to explore public service and policy issues outside their immediate government duties. This year's Heywood Fellow, Lucy Smith, argues this is a generational moment for the UK, requiring more outward-looking, future-focused ways of working, and seeks to capture and describe **national strategy as an ongoing practice** — not just setting direction, but continually aligning ambition, state capability and long-term delivery. Follow the Fellowship and its publications at www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/fellowship/heywood-fellowship.

This Playbook is the culmination of the Fellowship — a radically practical and open-source account of what national strategy should look like in the UK. In creating it, the team engaged hundreds of politicians, academics, policymakers, students, pollsters and observers at home and abroad; co-designing a cycle of national strategy to make the UK more long-term, bolder in solutions, and able to mobilise all national capacities, not just central government.

In developing the Playbook, the Fellowship developed the following **discussion papers and evidence**:

- Long-Term, National Strategy: Designing a Contemporary Practice of National Strategy
This paper argues national strategy must be a core state function. Democracies can deliver it through inclusive, adaptative practice, and embedding learning into institutions to align short- and long-term goals.
- Case Study: España 2050
The team reviewed España 2050, Spain's long-term vision, five years after publication — highlighting expert input, ambition, and key lessons: government backing, explicit trade-offs, and cultural change.
- Place: Thinking of National Strategy from the Ground Up
Built on two case studies — industrial transformation in Port Talbot and Cambridge's semiconductor industry — this called for a national strategy to be place-sensitive, uniting efforts to address long-term challenges.
- Project Solarium: A Tool for National Strategy-Making
This investigates the methods chosen by President Eisenhower in 1953 to successfully compete strategic responses to the Cold War; exploring the benefits and challenges in modernising and expanding the method.
- National Capacities: A Model for National Strategy
This paper puts forward a new framework for a systems analysis of the UK, rooted in the interactions of five capacities that determine its national outcomes: the UK's people, means, resources, capital, and institutions.
- UK National Strategy in Historical Perspective: Turning Points and Ideological Developments, 1850–2025
This paper traces the UK's changing approach to national strategy, identifying the priority challenges it faced over seven periods of strategic settlement, and analysing their legacy effects on later policymaking.
- The Practice of National Strategy: Concepts, Global Lessons and their Application
Drawing on visits to and studies of Spain, Ireland, South Korea, Japan, Singapore, Finland, France and the Netherlands, this paper explores the key tenets of an emerging global practice of national strategy.
- How to Train a System: The Tools, Institutions and Mindset to Embed Strategic Practice in the Public Sector
Considering experimental and innovative learning systems to build national strategic capability in the UK.

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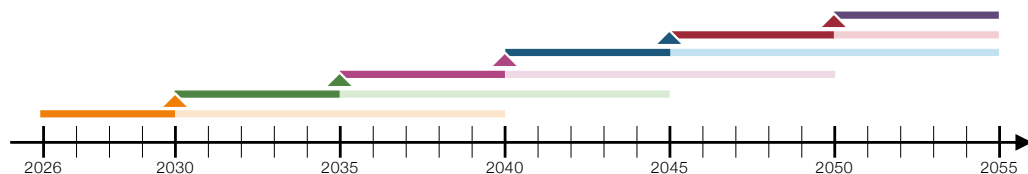
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This is not government policy; it represents the work of the authors. The Playbook is intended to support a proposed national strategy cycle which is an independent creation, based on the research undertaken during the 2024–25 Heywood Fellowship. It posits institutions that would need to exist (but do not yet), actions that would need to take place, and opportunities that could arise from adopting this new practice. Reference to existing institutions does not imply their endorsement. Our intention is that this Playbook demonstrates that such a cycle and practice can be introduced, by setting it out in a practical, step-by-step way. It is offered for discussion and debate, not as a final view.

About this Playbook

We need national strategy. The UK faces generational challenges — shifting international dynamics, climate risk, demographic change, technological disruption and fraying social trust — that demand coherent, long-term responses. Without a dedicated national strategy capability, democracies like ours are outpaced by global peers and risk enduring fragility rather than thriving. A strategic practice — nationally owned, outward-looking, historically informed and adaptive — is essential to give us genuine agency over the future.

A key part of that practice is that it is sustained through a clear routine and cycle that keeps it relevant, ensuring the country regularly reassesses its choices and adapts its approach to changing realities. This **cycle of national strategy** looks 15 years ahead but is reviewed every five, recognising that while many challenges and objectives may endure between cycles, analysis must be updated and change explicitly confirmed.



The **output** would be a national strategy: not an 800-page tome but a guiding framework setting out the five key challenges for the next 15–20 years, the objectives for each and the strategic 'big bets' to achieve them. The **outcomes** matter just as much: renewed collective purpose, a capacity to debate and decide cognisant of trade-offs, more coherent policy, greater resilience, and the legitimacy and agency to shape our future.

This is the **Playbook** that guides that cycle. It sets out the steps, stakeholders, and tools involved, offering choices to suit different contexts. Its open-source method underpins legitimacy and enables all national capacities to take part. While broadly chronological, some of the six stages and 25 sub-stages may need to run in parallel.



Choices
available



Key tool /
method



Key
outputs /
products

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1. The foundations of national strategy

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- 5c. Creating anchor strategies
- 5d. Driving activist change
- 5e. Partnering with the nation's capacities
- 5f. Rapidly adapting and learning

5. Mobilising

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- 6a. Regularly monitoring the success of the national strategy
- 6b. Evaluating the national strategy process; evolving the Playbook
- 6c. The next cycle of national strategy

6. Iterating

Glossary



1. Foundations

2. Diagnosis

3. Pathways

4. Forming

5. Mobilising

6. Iterating

The following terms are used in this Playbook and have specific meanings in the context of national strategy:

3x5 The core framework of national strategy. A selection of the five most salient long-term **challenges** facing the country derived from a diagnosis of our **inheritance** and likely future position; and, for each, the selection and settlement on the **objectives** we should be collectively aiming for; and the **big bets** we are taking to get there. See Annex A for more detail.

Challenges & diagnosis	Strategic objectives	Big bets
1	...	...
2	...	...
3	...	...
4	...	...
5	...	...

Anchor strategies A core set of cross-cutting strategies mandated to flow from the national strategy, providing stability and alignment. Anchor strategies translate national objectives into enduring frameworks for spending, spatial planning, capability, and **national capacities**, guiding departmental, local, and sectoral strategies to align.

Big bets The often-implicit assumptions or core commitments that underpin national policy and shape what is considered possible. Examples include the nuclear deterrent, an NHS free at the point of delivery, or an open economy. Big bets act as the tramlines of policy formation, constraining choices until major inflection points prompt their re-examination.

Challenges The most salient issues or pressures facing the nation that require deliberate, sustained action over a 15–20-year horizon. Challenges emerge from a combination of structural trends, historical context, and the country's strengths and weaknesses. They are selected for their defining importance and relevance — typically around five — and shape the nation's strategic priorities, framing the areas where complex, coordinated responses from the state and society are necessary and possible.

Diagnosis The analytical assessment of the nation's current and future context, combining historical perspective, present strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and an understanding of national capacities and identity. Diagnosis distils this worldview into a structured understanding of the **challenges** the country must address over the chosen strategic horizon, including an assessment of certainty and risk for each factor.

Inheritance The accumulated national capacities, institutions, practices and assumptions handed down from previous strategic periods, shaping what a state believes it can do and constraining or enabling future national strategy-making.

Judgements & assumptions Analytical conclusions about how a theme or issue may develop, reached through evidence review, expert deliberation, and consensus-building among the leaders responsible for those areas. Judgements typically cover the short term (3–5 years), while longer-term conclusions (10–15 years) — **assumptions** — carry lower confidence but are derived in the same way. Together, they provide a shared basis for scenarios, risk identification, and strategic guidance.

National capacities & flotilla The key functional elements of a country — its people, means, resources, capital, and institutions — that collectively enable it to achieve societal outcomes. In national strategy, the stakeholders who control these capacities — across the public, private, and third sector — resemble a flotilla: each can act independently, but the effectiveness of the strategy depends on aligning them so they move in roughly the same direction, ensuring coherent, coordinated pursuit of long-term national goals.

Glossary cont.



National conversation	A structured, participatory process through which government and relevant stakeholders — including those in the flotilla of national capacities — engage the public and/or representative groups to deliberate on competing strategic outlooks, weigh trade-offs, and build shared understanding and legitimacy for long-term national strategy, using a mix of forums, methods, and tools tailored to ambition, principles, and inclusivity.
Objectives	Specific aims derived from a country's strategic purpose that translate the nation's identity, priorities, and citizens' hopes and concerns into actionable targets. Objectives are defined in relation to the key challenges a country faces and the strategic " big bets " chosen to address them, providing (often measurable) milestones to guide long-term national strategy.
Open-source	A transparent and structured approach to decision-making or strategic processes in which the steps, participants, and methods are clearly documented and communicated beforehand, enabling stakeholders — including Parliament and the public — to understand, influence, and assess the legitimacy of the process while ensuring accountability and consistency.
Place-based approach	A non-hierarchical approach to strategy that treats towns, cities, regions, and local actors as sources of ideas and transformative action rather than merely settings for centrally dictated policy. It seeks to harness place-specific strengths and opportunities to shape national priorities and big bets, enabling alignment across multiple levels of governance while respecting local autonomy and ambition.
Scenarios	Structured narratives outlining possible futures. Exploratory scenarios outline contrasting possible developments based on trends, judgements, and assumptions, revealing trade-offs and stimulating debate about common, competing pathways of the future. Normative ones describe desired/undesired futures, serving as benchmarks against which other options are assessed.
Solarium	A structured, high-level process in which a government convenes expert taskforces to develop and analyse multiple alternative approaches to key challenges . Each taskforce explores a distinct set of options, weighing trade-offs, synergies, and deliverability to inform decision-making and support the framing of coherent long-term strategy. See Annex A.
Spatial planning	A coordinated, national approach to organising land use, infrastructure, and development across regions, cities, and local areas to align local plans with national strategy. It uses shared data and frameworks to enable flexibility while ensuring coherence with overarching national objectives and priorities.
Strategic pathways	Coherent, publicly-communicable packages of strategic responses addressing the nation's key challenges by combining alternative approaches and big bets into distinct pathways for the future. Each vision maps challenges, objectives, and trade-offs, supporting national debate, informing decision-making, and enabling collective understanding of long-term outcomes.
Trends	Observable patterns or directions of change in social, economic, technological, environmental, and political factors that shape the context within which a country operates, analysed to anticipate likely developments, identify risks and opportunities, and inform the creation of scenarios , strategic objectives , and long-term policy decisions.

1. The foundations of national strategy

Stage 1 is about establishing the right institutions and governance, and agreeing the principles, timescales and expectations for this strategy cycle. Early, transparent decisions about these choices enable the nation's capacities to contribute effectively. The outputs of this stage are a public and parliamentary announcement of the new cycle and a statement of the principles guiding it.

1. The foundations of national strategy



1a.

The institutions needed are established

National Office of Foresight & Strategy

Advisory Council for National Strategy

Interparliamentary Committee on National Strategy

National Strategy Observatory

1b.

The Office develops the key principles that shape this cycle with the Prime Minister

Statement of principles governing this cycle

1c.

The role and scale of the national conversation is agreed, its nature planned for

Design of a national conversation

1d.

The process is planned in detail with clear timescales and a method made public and shared with Parliament

Detailed plan for the cycle

Announcement of cycle, plans & timescale

2a.

The UK's present, past and future is examined

Review of National Capacities

Focused Historic Analysis

Trends Pack

1. Foundations

2. Diagnosis

3. Pathways

4. Forming

5. Mobilising

6. Iterating

1a. Establishing the institutions and governance



1. Foundations

2. Diagnosis

3. Pathways

4. Forming

5. Mobilising

6. Iterating

The key institutions are as follows:

- The **National Office for Foresight & Strategy**, (the 'Office') is a joint No10–HMT unit reporting to the Prime Minister, responsible for developing the national strategy, governing its implementation, and refreshing the Playbook for each new cycle. Led by an Executive Director, it will draw heavily on secondees from across government and beyond.
- The Office will be overseen by an **Advisory Council for National Strategy**, (the 'Advisory Council'), appointed by the PM for each cycle. Multidisciplinary and senior, the Council should bring the expertise and authority to oversee the Office's work, with members drawn from key national capacities across government, business and society, and should be drawn from across the UK, including devolved and local government perspectives.
- The **Cabinet** of the UK Government will hold ultimate executive decision-making power on all levers held by UK Government.
- All three of these bodies will be held to account in an **Interparliamentary Committee on National Strategy**, (the Committee). Comprising members from the both houses of Parliament and devolved legislatures, the Committee provides Parliament with forward-looking scrutiny and are the country's ultimate stewards of the long-term, ensuring government and other stakeholders are accountable, reviewing the strategy's process and implementation, and maintaining continuity across cycles of national strategy and across administrations.
- The Office will be supported by ad hoc expert groups of practitioners, mainly from outside government (e.g. academia, business), providing technical advice on methodology tailored to the chosen principles. These **expert groups** should also expect to answer questions from the Council to assist it in overseeing the Office. For instance, if a principle focuses on intergenerational fairness, the cycle may require a group on that topic, as well as on public engagement and long-term economic modelling, with membership curated to address intergenerational issues.
- A **National Strategy Methods Observatory**, (the 'Observatory'), based in an academic institution outside government, should be engaged throughout the process, attending meetings, accessing documents, and interviewing to assess the choice and effectiveness of the methods chosen by the Office. It should report promptly and publicly to the Committee following the national strategy's approval and findings should be fed into the design of the next cycle.

These institutions are not only required to deliver and scrutinise a national strategy but should also be conceived as the start of a flotilla of national capacities that will enact and deliver the future national strategy through aligned, incentivised action.

The role of **devolved and local government** will be critical to the success of national strategy. The competence of the devolved governments must be recognised and respected. While there are choices about how to engage them, they should be treated with respect and incentivised to meaningfully engage: kept fully informed and consulted throughout, and feed in their hopes, thoughts and concerns at political and official level.

At this stage, the cycle's strategy on engaging (1) **the public**; (2) **business**; and (3) **civil society** at each stage should be set, guided by the principles. As far as possible, existing groups (*for example, the Industrial Strategy Council, the Civil Society Advisory Group*) should play key parts in the process.



- Format for engagement with devolved / local government.** Decisions should determine which forums update and involve first ministers, mayors and local authorities — *for example, the PM meeting First Ministers while the Deputy Prime Minister engages mayors and the Local Government Leaders' Council* — or devolved governments could take executive roles alongside the UK Cabinet in agreeing the National Strategy.
- How to engage the public.** One option is to establish a Panel of the Public — a group of people selected by lot that the Office can routinely turn to to test prioritisation, salience and communication.

1a. Establishing the institutions and governance cont.



1. Foundations

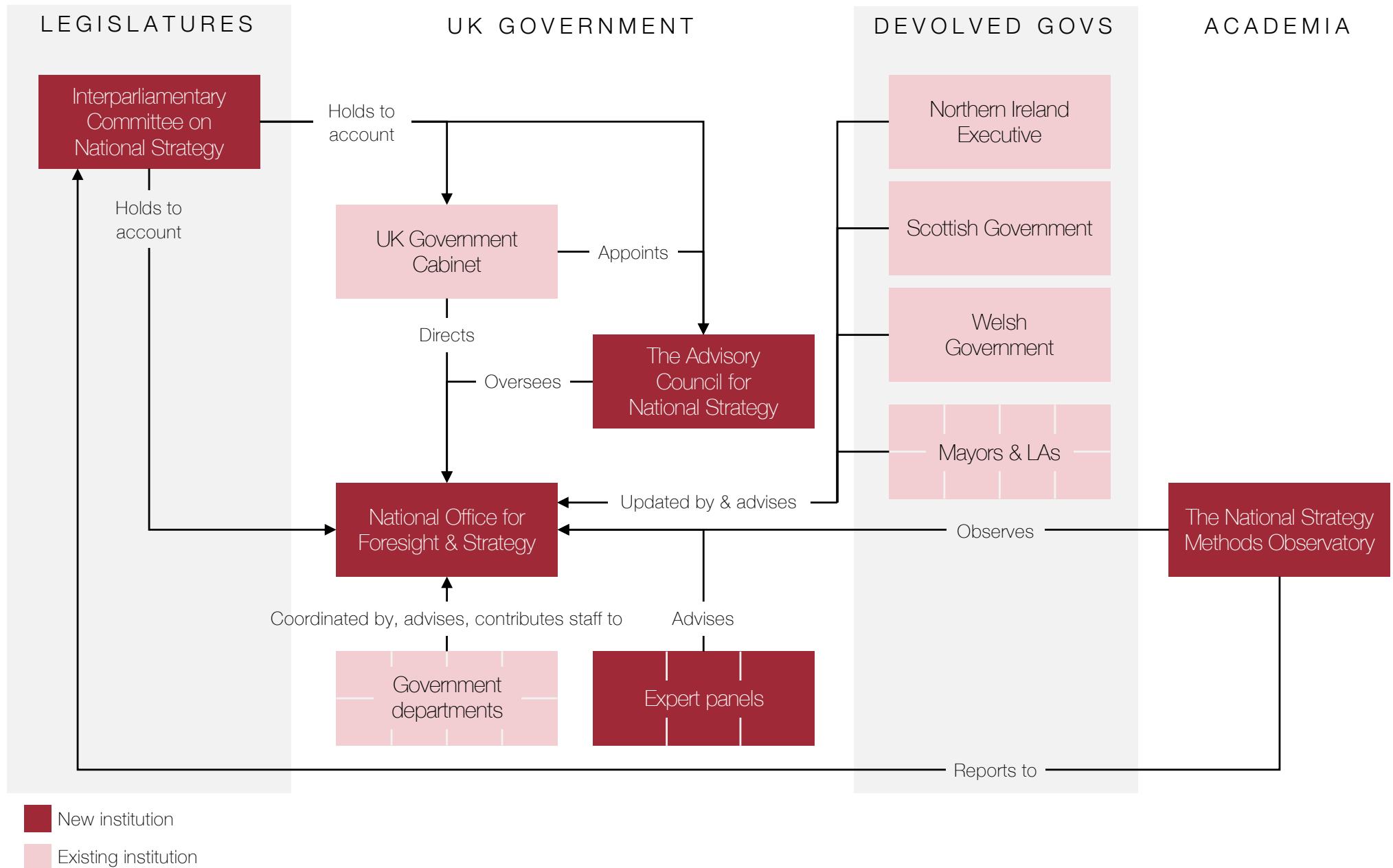
2. Diagnosis

3. Pathways

4. Forming

5. Mobilising

6. Iterating



1b. National Strategy principles



1. Foundations

2. Diagnosis

3. Pathways

4. Forming

5. Mobilising

6. Iterating

The Prime Minister should commission a National Strategy from the Office. They should inform the Interparliamentary Committee of National Strategy. The Office should work with the PM to understand and agree the Government's **purpose and framing** for this cycle of national strategy. For instance, the PM may be keen to frame this cycle focussed on targeting inequality.

The Office should translate that framing into a set of c.10 **principles** which will guide this cycle. These should be specific framings that each translate into methodological implications: the approaches and tools it necessitates, assessments required, stakeholders that need to be involved. *For instance, the Office may, after discussing with the PM, frame the national strategy around intergenerational and regional inequality (cf. gender or income inequality). The principles should reflect this along with the methodological implications — they should seek to define what is meant by intergenerational inequality, what tools or assessments should be done throughout the cycle to assess its impact on intergenerational equality, what public engagement is going to be required to genuinely reflect generational views and positions.*

In addition to any political framings, the Office should ensure these principles describe the relationships this cycle of national strategy will have with five crucial **methodological** questions:

1. evidence
2. public engagement
3. place
4. key groups or themes that form the political framings
5. key countries that should form a reference point for comparison

These principles must be decided at the beginning of the process and must shape all of the choices about how that cycle is done, holding throughout the process.

At every stage of this process including and particularly this one, the **Observatory** should be invited to attend meetings, read documents and interview participants to understand and report on the effectiveness of the methods and techniques chosen and deployed.

The Office should openly **inform the Committee** of the principles chosen early on in the process so that the process is transparent about those framings and so that the Committee can hold the Office, the Government and other stakeholders to account for delivering a cycle rooted in those principles.



→ Statement of principles for this cycle of national strategy

1c. Setting expectations about the national conversation



Consistent with the **open-source philosophy** that ensures legitimacy and enables all national capacities to participate, the Office should inform the public when the Prime Minister initiates a cycle of national strategy, the principles it is working to, the Council's membership, and the nature and timings of the process. The process and its timeline could be communicated via a detailed, cycle-specific iteration of this Playbook, while other information could be shared through the Committee.

The Office should also make decisions about and communicate the nature of the **national conversation** that will form part of the process. Some form of national conversation is required to: ensure the national strategy accurately diagnoses the country's position from diverse perspectives, ensure its choices are rooted in public salience, give it legitimacy that will outlast administrations, and — most importantly — to form a common understanding amongst all of the country's national capacities about the direction we are setting for ourselves and individual roles in that journey.

Regardless of the methods chosen, the following **principles** should be applied to public participation throughout the national strategy process and particularly in this national conversation:

1. **Clear purpose and expectations:** engage the public only for defined goals, not just to fulfil the perceived need to engage or consult. Tell the public what we want and how we will work with them up front and early on (see Stage 1c).
2. **Maximise existing assets:** use existing data, expertise, and forums; undertake new activity with the public only where it fills gaps or informs decisions.
3. **A presumption of action and accountability:** there should be an assumption that the strategy acts on the results or at least accounts for the results; it should benefit participants and wider society, not just extract value for government.
4. **Open and honest:** share facts, trade-offs, and uncertainties with the public, engaging with full and unvarnished evidence.
5. **Innovative and adaptive:** test, learn, and refine methods of engaging the public, tolerating failure to reach better, more innovative solutions faster.
6. **Meet people where they are:** use diverse forums, tools, and media, to reach a diverse public; government-convened forums will often not be the best forums — use trusted intermediaries and find where the debate is happening and engage with it.
7. **Intentionally choose interest representation methods:** choose or focus on specific groups where they will bring particular insight to an issue or problem; consider whether corporatist or pluralist engagements are more valuable.
8. **Tell the story:** produce clear outputs at each stage so champions and politicians can explain and spark wider debate, in more traditional forums.

1c. Setting expectations about the national conversation cont.



There are many choices about the ambition, nature, forum and methodology of that national conversation but the Office **needs to design this now** based on the principles and other wider considerations (including budget, time available etc.) and communicate it to the public as these choices determine wider timelines and expectations. The Office and the Cabinet should be prepared to defend their choices about this national conversation to the Committee who will interrogate these decisions.



- i. **Ambition.** Smaller tweaks to existing national strategies might not require elaborate conversations and should instead focus on rigorous checking that the path we have chosen is the right one. At other times, deep, important conversations might need to be had about the biggest decisions we have in order to change the tenor of public debate and allow for bold, future-oriented decisions to be made.
- ii. **Interlocutors.** Who is it most important to hear from in the national conversation? This is a political decision but should derive from the principles. For example, if the principles demand a focus on intergenerational fairness, considering how to hear the perspectives of different generations will be critical. The Office should consider how to hold different conversations with these different interlocutors.
- iii. **Intermediation.** The national conversation could be held in a corporatist way — through a structured and representative role of intermediary organisations: unions, businesses, devolved and local government; community groups, etc. Or it could be held in a more open-ended pluralist way — speaking more directly to citizens' multiple voices and interests either through mass participation or through targeted engagement: citizens' panels, opinion research, outreach to particular groups. This may depend on the key interlocutors targeted.
- iv. **Nature.** Whether the national conversation is fronted by the PM or an independent commissioner or by more diverse voices is one choice; whether about diagnosis or hard choices (or both) another. Choices here will derive from the principles and choices on intermediation.
- v. **Forum.** At its simplest, a national conversation could be ensuring enough time and publicity for the commentariat to discuss, critique and suggest alternatives to the pathways presented at the end of Stage 3 and for the national strategy to be debated in Parliament, but this might result in only dominant voices being heard. More participative forums could be chosen — a Panel of the Public, local-led discussion groups, and even more innovative digital forums. The forums should match the principles, the ambition and the role of intermediation.
- vi. **Methodology.** Linked to the role of intermediation, forum and ambition are choices about methodology. Many participative ways of holding a national conversation are included in the GO Science's [Futures Toolkit](#). Practitioners must also decide whether engagement happens centrally and directly or through local conversations: the Office may hold roadshows, or they may ask local governments to run place-based discussions, or they may provide toolkits to enable diverse forms of engagement.

1d. Agreeing the timescales



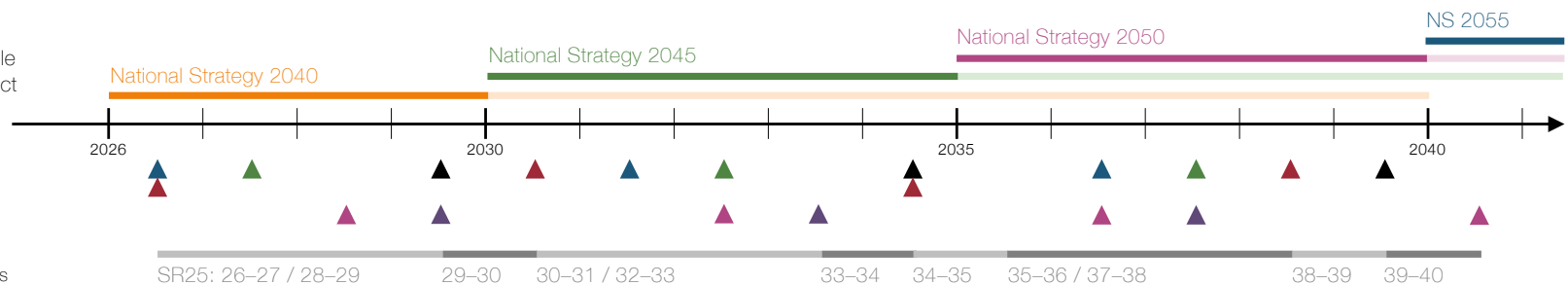
The process of diagnosis, debating and settling a national strategy should take **no more than a year**. Taking longer risks devoting more of the five-year cycle to developing strategy than actually implementing it. The exact timeframe should depend upon:

1. The framing set out in the principles and how complex it is.
2. The degree to which this cycle is a revision of the last or a more significant reframing.
3. The interaction with other political events: spending reviews, elections, international events such as hosting COPs or G7s etc.

Indicative timeline of political events

Assumes all elections held at latest possible date, SRs are three-year unless they conflict with a general election.

- ▲ General election
- ▲ NI Assembly election
- ▲ Scottish Parliament election
- ▲ Welsh Parliament election
- ▲ Cams. & Pet.; Hull & E Yorks.; W. of Eng. mayoral elections
- ▲ Lon. & all other comb. auth. mayoral elections
- Spending reviews



Within this timeframe, the Office should set out the **top-level milestones** and what dates they should be completed by. An indicative list of these milestones is available below. They should ensure that they have booked in structured time for the key principals and forums to engage in the process. The mapping out of these timeframes will require significant decisions about the process up-front: the recency of the last trends pack, the length of time solarium groups will have to prepare their strategic packages, the nature of how they are competed — only internally or with key groups or members of the public, etc.

The Office should **inform the Committee** of the timings of these top-level milestones to enable them to engage properly in the process and hold appropriate hearings and evidence at the right stage.

Indicative list of top-level milestones

- Cycle commencement
- Establishment of the Council
- Publication of the scenarios and the five key focus challenges
- Publication of the pathways of the UK in 15-years' time
- Publication of the draft national strategy
- Agreement of the national strategy in Parliament
- Comprehensive spending review following publication
- National spatial plan following publication

→ Letter to the Committee detailing the start of the process, the principles, top-level milestones

2. Diagnosing the country's challenges looking at its past, present and future

Stage 2 is about diagnosis and scenario-building. Effective national strategy must be rooted in inheritance and comparative analysis, future oriented, and confident with uncertainty. The activities within this stage are designed to capture these important elements of practice, many of which already exist within government but are not currently linked to strategic decision-making. The output of this stage is the selection of five challenges that lay the ground for the formation of national strategy in subsequent stages.

2. Diagnosing the country's challenges looking at its past, present and future



1b. The principles & process for this cycle have been agreed

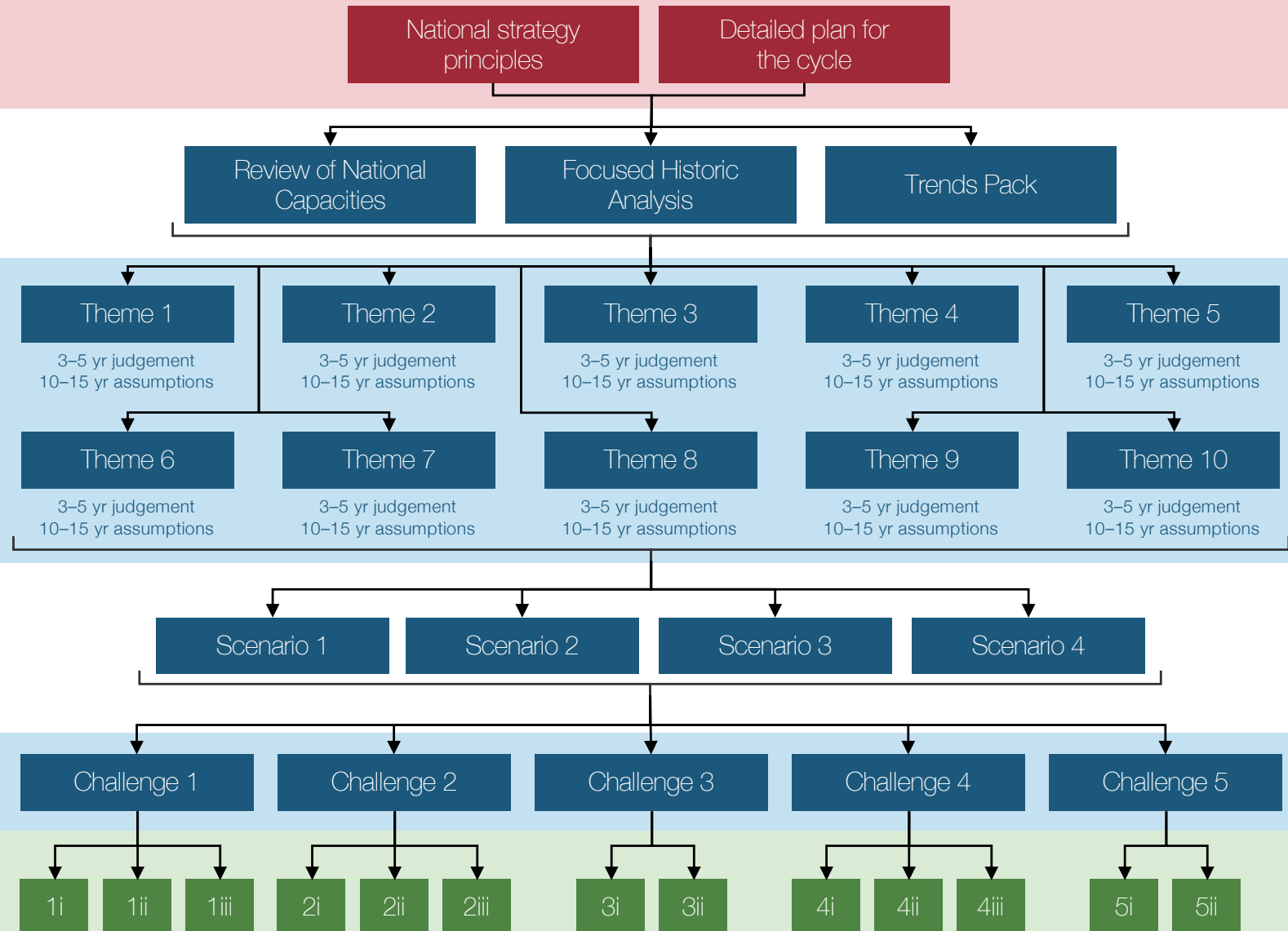
2a. The UK's present, past and future is examined

2c. c.10 themes are selected for further investigation, from which judgements and assumptions are produced

2d. The Office synergise the previous outputs to produce c. four scenarios for the UK in 2040

2e. Five key challenges are distilled from a longlist

3a. For each, 2-3 alternative strategic approaches are developed



1. Foundations

2. Diagnosis

3. Pathways

4. Forming

5. Mobilising

6. Iterating

2a. Forming a view of the present and how we got here



The Office, working with relevant experts within and outside government, should complete an evidence-based study of the UK's current position and its recent history. This study should highlight key national and regional challenges, strengths and weaknesses relative to key international competitors, and consider the potential rationale behind key issues or challenges facing the UK. It should be objective and comprehensive but should not aim for consensus or seek to capture every citizen's lived experience and perspective. This study should be made up of two actions.

1. **Review of national capacities.** The Office for National Statistics, working with others as required, produces a predominantly quantitative review of the UK's national capacities. We define national capacities as the five factors that represent the 'moving parts' of a country like the UK: its people, means, resources, capital, and institutions. This review should collate existing data on a range of metrics, and in some cases capture new data, to understand the position (and in effect, the strength/ health) of key national capacities and track change over time. These data should be sufficiently granular to reveal how national capacities vary, interact and combine across different places — giving policymakers a clearer sense of where strengths lie, where pressures are emerging, and how local conditions shape national outcomes. The national capacity metrics measured each cycle (and potentially at points during each cycle) would broadly stay the same, but there may be some change in the metrics measured over time. For example, several metrics may be chosen to focus on a particular area highlighted by the principles of that cycle. Some metrics may utilise comparisons and international rankings, to highlight the UK's strengths and weaknesses relative to others. The purpose of this review is to identify areas or themes of the country's national capacities that require further attention and potentially a response. The output of this review and its methodology should be published. Given the size and scope of this review, it should only be completed every five years (although many of the metrics will continue to be captured and published as they do now).
2. **Focused historic analysis.** Building on the established principles for this cycle, the findings of the review of national capacities and other inputs, the Office would either coordinate or commission a focused analysis of the UK's history by relevant experts. The scope of the analysis would be determined by the Office and would focus on areas where greater understanding on a particular part of the UK's system is required to consider whether and how best to respond. The analysis would convene and utilise relevant experts from academia and other sectors to identify and discuss the differing views about each issue or theme, with a particular focus on understanding the events and decisions that potentially led to the UK's current position in that area. This analysis should recognise that the UK's history has been lived, interpreted, and institutionalised differently across its nations and regions — and should trace how those place-specific experiences continue to shape national realities today. The analysis should not seek to come to one 'agreed' view but should include the range of views on that subject. The output of analysis should be published. These outputs should be rigorous but also engaging and accessible for those outside of academia.



- i. For the review of national capacities: how exhaustive should the review be; *for instance, how many metrics should be measured?*
- ii. For the focused historic analysis: to what extent should this analysis be independent from government? *For instance, commissioned by government but not approved before publication.*



- Review of the UK's key national capacities, likely in the form of a dashboard that is updated each cycle
- Analysis of the UK's historic and current position across several key areas

2b. Considering what the future might hold



The Government Office for Science (GO-Science), and others across government as required, should assemble a pack of the trends for the future that are most salient for the UK. The reason for their salience could be positive (for instance, an opportunity the UK could take advantage of due to its position or strengths relative to others) or negative (a challenge or a development that presents particular problems for the UK due to its weaknesses or deficiencies relative to others). The pack should also identify and consider key global trends (megatrends) and their potential impact on the UK. The final trends pack should be published.

The process by which trends are identified, explored, tested and then sorted / ranked is critical. In particular, this process should be highly collaborative — engaging relevant experts within and outside of government, but also engaging and seeking input from other key groups across the country (the private sector, specific industry and sector groups, academia, place-based and citizen insights). This enables as broad a range of perspectives on the future to be captured and considered.

It also enables the identification of trends that might be particularly obvious or salient to a particular group or groups but not others — the trends most salient to economists are likely to be different to the trends most salient to different groups of the public, but both have value. The comprehensiveness of this exercise also increases the likelihood of outlier trends or weak signals to be identified, as well as helping to understand in broader terms how the country, and particular groups within it, conceive of the future. There may be cases, however, where the salience of a particular trend by a particular group or in a particular place will need to be balanced or nuanced if the available data provides a different view.

GO-Science is the centre of futures and foresight in Government, with deep expertise and an established approach to identifying and analysing trends with salience for the UK. GO-Science periodically updates its trend analysis and the next release date is 2026. The exact **methodology** for this exercise should therefore be designed and jointly agreed by GO Science and the Office, to ensure it fits well with other elements of the cycle. The agreed methodology should be published ahead of time, particularly the process through which groups outside government and the public will be involved and their inputs utilised. The Observatory should be expected to review this methodology — its design, communication and deployment — throughout this stage.



- i. **Methodology.** What should be the exact process through which this trends pack is generated, and which techniques should be utilised, particularly to engage and understand a broad range of views and outlooks?
- ii. **Concurrency.** Should 2a and 2b run concurrently, or would the output of 2b benefit from the completion of 2a first?
- iii. **Transparency.** How much should be published? How open should the process of engagement be with groups outside government and the public?



→ Trends pack covering the trends that are most salient to the UK for the next 15 years

2c. Considering the factors that might shape the UK in 2040



The Office, working closely with relevant teams across government, should build on the trends pack produced in 2b to create a set of around ten themes, which are each considered in detail by a group of relevant experts from within and outside government. Each group, led by a chief investigator, should consider how their theme may progress over the next 15 years, by reviewing available data and through exploration and discussion. Each group should develop and agree a set of **nested judgements** for the next 3–5 years, and then a broader set of **assumptions** for next 10–15 years. These judgements and assumptions should be published, unless there are security concerns around specific themes.

The purpose of this exercise is to dig deeper into the key themes that are likely to impact the UK over the next 15 years, and develop judgements and assumptions from which scenarios can be constructed in 2d. This process is based on the idea of reaching judgements akin to how the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) do so relating to security, defence and foreign policy. See below for a more detailed overview of the process.

Proposed methodology:

1. From the trends pack and other inputs, including input from the PM and others, around ten **themes are selected** for investigation.
2. For each theme a **group of experts** is recruited, led by a chief investigator. Group members should include subject specialists and leaders of organisations that will impact and in turn be impacted by that theme over the coming 10–15 years.
3. Each group should come to **agreement on their chosen set of judgements and assumptions**. The act of deliberation and seeking consensus (albeit with variable confidence levels) is critical, as it forces decision-making and the exercising of judgement.

The Observatory will likely want to sit in on group meetings where judgements are made and interview group members; and should be enabled to do so.



- i. **Publication.** Judgements and assumptions should be published by default to ensure transparency and show how the scenarios at 2c have been developed, unless there are valid security concerns for particular themes.
- ii. **Participants.** The JIC process is normally carried out within government, but given the broader subject matter, the default should be to involve relevant individuals from outside government. The approach to participants may vary depending on the nature of the subject.



- Judgements: short-term (3–5) horizon, with medium-high confidence
- Assumptions: longer-term (10–15) horizon, with lower confidence

} Focused on the same ten themes

2d. Developing scenarios describing the UK in 2040



Using the outputs from Stage 2 so far (2a, 2b and 2c), the National Office, working closely with the Government Office for Science and others as needed, should produce a set of around 4 **exploratory scenarios** for the UK in 2040. Each scenario should be rooted in the principles, should build off the trends, judgements and assumptions produced, and should be grounded in an understanding of the UK's current position from 2a. Each scenario should use available analysis and information but weave this together to build a clear and engaging narrative.

The purpose of producing scenarios that are exploratory (i.e. outlining a range of possible futures) rather than normative (describing a desired, preferable future relative to other, less desired futures), is to bring the findings from the trends activity at 2b to life in a way that make clearer the differences to the UK in 2040. The scenarios should reveal contrasting worlds — *for instance, one where prosperity comes with greater inequality, another where community flourishes but growth slows, a third where technology accelerates but trust frays, and so on*. In this way, they open space to imagine competing versions of the future and debate which trade-offs we might be willing to accept. Publishing these scenarios enable that consideration and debate to unfold across the country rather than solely within government.



- i. **Publication.** By default, the scenarios should all be published, to ensure transparency of the process and to support wider discussion around the potential futures for the UK and trade-offs required to move closer to one scenario over another. If there are more sensitive areas in which scenarios might be usefully internally to government, these could be developed in addition.



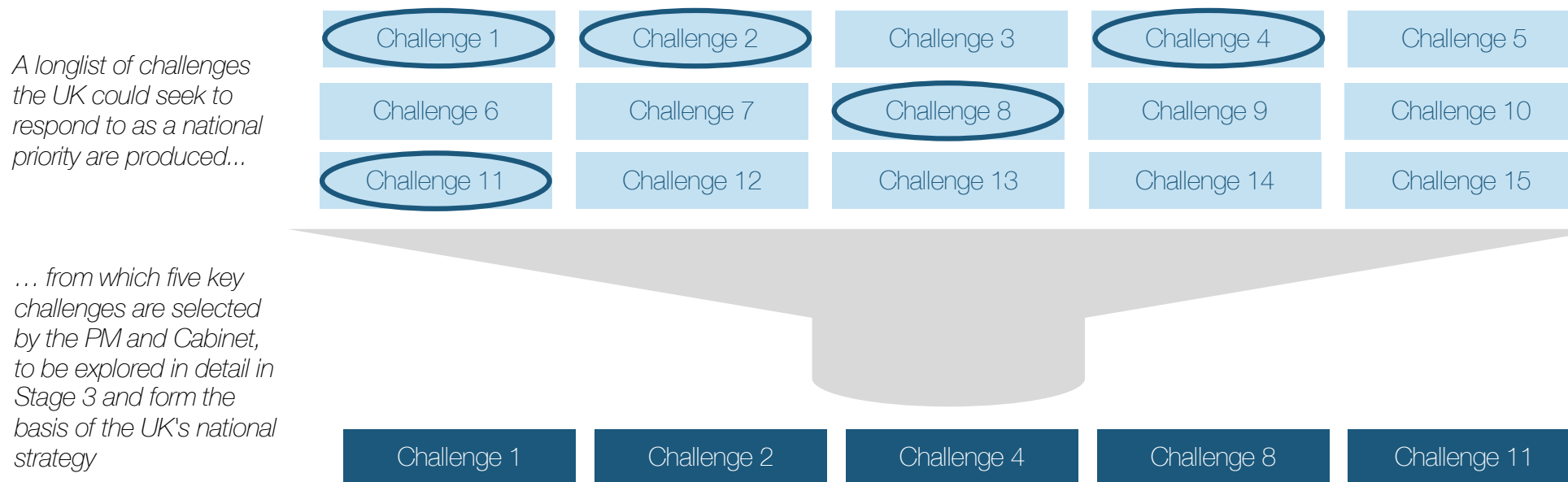
→ Scenarios — four exploratory scenarios to consider how the UK might look in 2040

2e. Framing and selecting the key current and future challenges



Using the outputs produced throughout Stage 2, the Office should develop a list of the key current and future challenges facing the UK. These challenges could be very specific — pertaining to one particular trend or issue — or broader, encompassing several trends and issues from different domains. This list of challenges should be grounded in findings from the previous outputs of Stage 2, including the review of national capacities, the trends pack, and findings from the judgement and assumption exercise. From this list, the Prime Minister and Cabinet chooses the five challenges that the UK should seek to respond to as a top priority over the next 15 years. Potential responses to the five challenges selected are then explored in detail through Stage 3. The output of 2e, and Stage 2 overall, is the selection of these challenges, which will become the basis of the UK's strategic priorities. This selection should be published and explained, alongside explaining publicly the next steps of the process.

The process and methodology by which the five challenges are selected could be designed beforehand, or could be left to the discretion of the PM and Cabinet. This is a point in the process where the PM has significant responsibility, in terms of their ability to select and frame the issues that will be the focus of this cycle of national strategy. But the five selected challenges should be clearly of significant salience to the UK now and / or in the future.



- i. **Methodology.** How prescribed should the process for challenge selection be?
- ii. **Collaboration.** Who else could the PM wish to engage with to support challenge selection to build a shared vision of the realm this cycle of national strategy should occupy? For instance, devolved administration first ministers? The Leader of the Opposition?



→ **Final list of key challenges:** the selected five current and future challenges or issues facing the UK which the national strategy will focus on along with the diagnosis and rationale for selection

3. Competing big bets & developing pathways to the future

Stage 3 is about competing ‘big bets’ as alternative strategic approaches to the key challenges. It uses the ‘solarium’ technique — taskforces are formed to develop and compete bold, distinct strategies for tackling the same challenge, each internally consistent and argued on its own terms — as the key method to understand the coherent choices available, and the trade-offs they require. The output of this stage is a comprehensive menu of strategic options, and — derived from them — three competing pathways to the UK in 2040 for public debate.

3. Competing big bets & developing pathways to the future



2e.

The key five challenges have been distilled

3a.

For each, 2–3 alternative strategic approaches are developed

3b.

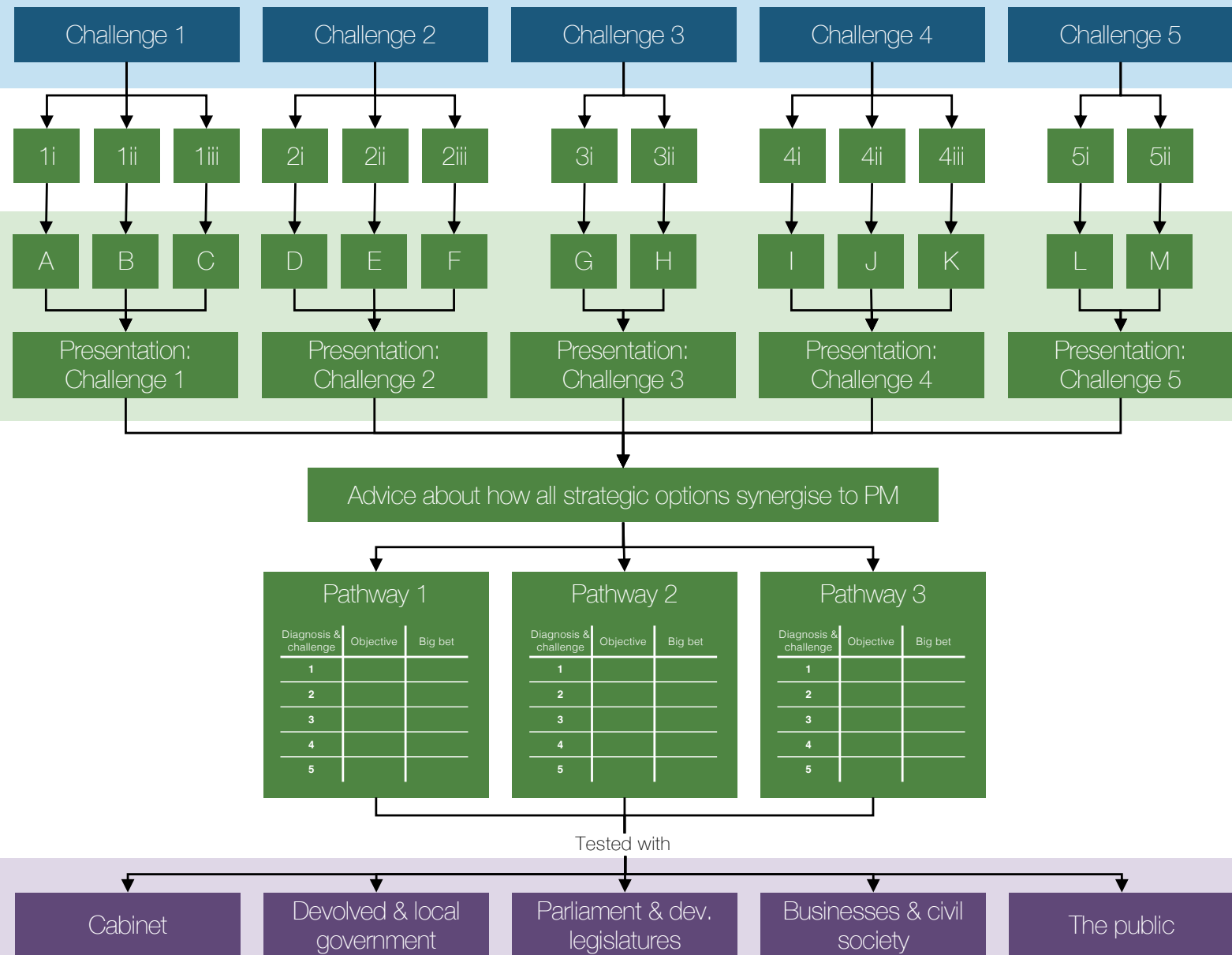
A taskforce for each develops a coherent case for their alternative, focused on trade-offs, and presents to the PM

3c.

The Office synergise the alternatives and develops them into three alternative pathways for the UK in 2040, all focused on the same five challenges

4a.

These pathways are assessed in government and in public



1. Foundations

2. Diagnosis

3. Pathway

4. Forming

5. Mobilising

6. Iterating

3a. Setting up the Solarium



The Office should begin preparing for Stage 3 on an at-risk basis as potential challenges are identified, given the time and pace required. It should work with subject experts across government (central, devolved and local) and beyond to frame alternatives for Solarium: discrete, coherent strategies of the big bets and objectives the UK might set for each challenge, boldly and contrasting rather than points on a scale. For challenges involving devolved competence, it should work with the devolved governments to determine whether Solarium's scope should be UK-wide or exclude devolved areas, recognising they may wish to run their own processes, participate fully, or have greater control over devolved elements. This will help define the scope of both the Solarium and the resulting national strategy.

Still at-risk, the Office should prepare:

1. **Potential taskforce leads and members.** A handful per taskforce, all who emphatically believe in their alternative as the solution. Collectively, they should bring expertise, seniority and credibility, and diverse perspectives around any key principles. *For instance, if the challenge is adult social care and intergenerational fairness a key principle, membership should reflect age diversity alongside industry representation (insurance, social care) and balance government with external voices.* A **contract framework** should cover pay, conditions and commercial sensitivities, followed by due diligence and security clearance.
2. **Data and models required.** Given the short timeframe and need for evidence-based analysis grounded in the Stage 2 trends and scenarios, common datasets and modelling tools should be developed and shared across taskforces. *For instance, population and costing data, comparative country analyses; and a shared analytical framework to assess each alternative's impact on public welfare and finances.*
3. **Resourcing taskforces.** Each challenge should be championed by a Permanent Secretary, providing and mobilising authority and support. Taskforces should have secretariat backing from the Office and draw on an analytical cell using Stage 2 data and sourcing and developing new evidence as needed. Secondments from inside and outside government, including business, would broaden expertise and capacity.

Once Cabinet has chosen the five key challenges (2e), **plans should be finalised.** Taskforce membership should be confirmed and deconflicted. The Office should prepare short strategic business cases, agreed by the Advisory Council, ensuring each alternative is coherent, viable, and distinct. External experts may be used to draft terms of reference for each taskforce setting out timeframes, resources (*datasets, personnel, focus groups available*), hosting arrangements (*for example, a university, local authority, or thinktank*). And expectations for presentations to the Prime Minister, including common analyses (*for instance, on intergenerational wealth*).



- i. **Making taskforce membership public.** While transparency should be the expected norm, some sensitive taskforces may need more discretion with only some members made public or just organisations / professions made public.
- ii. **Taskforce engagement with the public.** The Office should consider whether taskforces should engage the public on their alternative — which challenges most require this, and provide options: for example, for a certain number of focus groups per taskforce.
- iii. **Hosting.** Hosting within government may not be the best option. The Office could partner with universities, thinktanks, devolved or regional governments, businesses etc. to host either all taskforces for a challenge or particular taskforces



→ Terms of reference for each Solarium taskforce

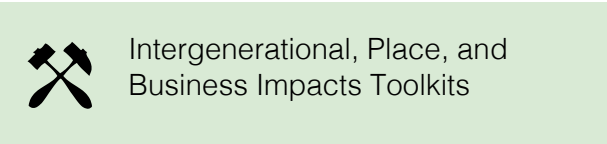
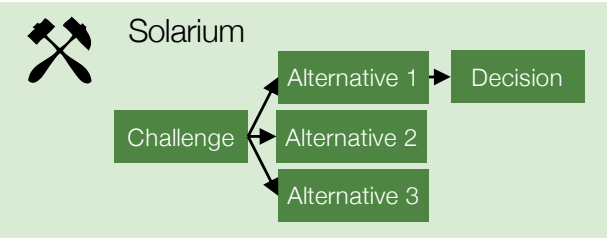
3b. Competing strategic responses to the challenges



The Solarium should open with a **joint conference of all taskforces**. The Prime Minister should welcome and thank members, while the Office explains the rationale for the Solarium and for the chosen challenges, clarifying the tools and training available. The PM should also meet each taskforce lead individually to set out any concerns or questions. The PM and Cabinet Secretary should write a joint letter to the Cabinet and Permanent Secretaries noting that they have commissioned these taskforces and expect departments to fully support them, including timely access to data and expertise, and that the outcome of these competing strategic responses will determine the next spending review.

Solarium groups should develop coherent, **bold alternative approaches** to the defined key challenge, exploring distinct options — objectives and big bets — that push boundaries, test assumptions and highlight trade-offs; analysing data, modelling outcomes, and assessing the societal, economic, and fiscal impacts of their alternative. The Treasury will play their key role in ensuring there is a balanced scorecard and advising upon it. Ultimately, taskforces should **present and make the best case for their alternative** to the PM alongside the other taskforces focused on that challenge, showing not just what can be done but the consequences of each choice, helping make strategic decisions that are bold, feasible, and defensible over the long-term. All taskforces should utilise a set of common toolkits to set out clearly the impacts of trade-offs on areas of common concern — *such as on generational welfare, on places, and business competitiveness* — to allow later synthesis and comparison.

Taskforces should also collate and present the feedback from groups that are impacted by initial trade off decision in 2026, and identify ways to amplify or mitigate these impacts. The Observatory will likely want to shadow particular taskforces and interview taskforce members, analysts, external experts etc.; and should be enabled to do so, being given clearances required to shadow even highly sensitive taskforces.



- i. **Isolation.** The Office should decide the degree to which the taskforces (either focused on the same challenge or other challenges) should be insulated from each other during deliberation. *For example, the taskforces may want to share their reflections with each other intermittently through the process, or the Office could decide to keep them isolated to ensure their internal coherence.*
- ii. **Deliberation.** Solarium leads will have choices on how long they deliberate, what process they follow, the scope and scale of analysis commissioned, the sequencing of engagement, and the framing of options.
- iii. **Initial presentations.** The Office will need to decide whether final presentations to the PM are preceded by presentations of the taskforces to each other, or by more detailed presentations to the responsible Secretaries of State and the Office's Executive Director. They will also need to decide if and how views of wider engagement are fed back to the PM before final presentation.
- iv. **Final presentation.** The Office or leads will need to decide whether taskforces or just leads present to the PM. The Office will need to decide whether this presentation is only to the PM, or whether representatives of devolved and/or local government, the Committee, businesses, and other experts are invited at any of the presentation stages.



→ Presentations to the PM for each challenge in which the taskforces make the best case for their alternative and surface trade-offs

3c. Synergising the strategic responses



The Solarium will produce c.15 strategic packages — one for each of the c. three alternatives for the key challenges — but not every combination of them will be possible. Some responses to one challenge will rule out others; some might synergise well; others will require trade-offs. The Office should **map these interactions** and, working with the Treasury on the scorecard, provide the Prime Minister with advice outlining synergies, reflections on deliverability, alignment with principles, Advisory Council input; any early evidence on what the public’s views might be on these trade-offs. The PM and the Office should discuss this advice with the PM giving initial views to further frame the Office’s work.

Using this, framed by the principles and analysis in Stage 2 (particularly judgements and assumptions), the Office should craft **three different pathways for the UK in 2040**, each addressing the same five challenges but weaving together different combinations of taskforce alternatives into a coherent package. These pathways will be shared publicly to enable a genuine national conversation about trade-offs between objectives and big bets in Stage 4. The purpose is not to select a preferred package yet but to support the Prime Minister in understanding **competing views about these trade-offs**.

Each vision should be summarised in a **3x5 table** with the (i) challenges and diagnoses, (ii) strategic objectives, and (iii) big bets to achieve that them, accompanied by concise commentary on trade-offs within, across, and beyond the challenges the key challenges.

The Office should illustrate **plausible transitions** between 2026 and 2040. Alongside the pathways, one-page summaries of each of the c.15 alternatives should be published along with an analytical annex including common analysis on the impact on chosen areas of common concern, *such as generational welfare, places, and business competitiveness*.

These pathways should be **scrutinised and iterated** at official and political levels, ensuring the three pathways are distinct enough to spark genuine national debate, are genuine enough to maintain the process’ authority, and are politically viable.

Finally, the Prime Minister should thank the taskforces and the Office and **publish the Office’s three pathways for public consultation on equal terms**, enabling a national conversation on trade-offs before a later strategic decision is made.

	The 3x5		
	Challenges & diagnosis	Strategic objectives	Big bets
	1	...	...
	2	...	...
	3	...	...
	4	...	...
	5	...	...

- 
- i. **Unfavoured alternatives.** Even at this stage, it may be evident that the government are not keen on choosing and implementing a particular alternative. The Office and the Prime Minister will need to decide whether to remove this alternative from all three pathways or to include it in order to hold a national conversation on the trade-offs involved. This decision will be a highly political one depending on public mood, timing, political debate etc.

- 
- Summaries of the alternatives considered with key trade-offs and analyses on impact

→ The three pathways of the UK in 2040, featuring packages of alternatives to address the key challenges, are published and laid before Parliament

4. Forming & settling the national strategy

Stage 4 comprises the testing, formation and communication of the national strategy for this cycle through a national conversation. The final output of Stage 3 — competing pathways for the future — are presented to the public for discussion, after which government decides on which strategy should be put forward to Parliament for debate and agreement. The output of Stage 4 is an agreed national strategy for this five-year cycle.



4. Forming & settling the national strategy



3c.

Alternatives are synergised into three, published, competing pathways for the UK in 2040



4a.

These pathways debated in public as part of a national conversation

4b.

&

4c.

The PM, with Cabinet and others as required, deliberate, form and publish the national strategy

4d.

The national strategy is debated and agreed by Parliament

5a.

The national strategy is cascaded through a designed strategic architecture, aligning key resource and anchor strategies, and supported by a portfolio of pioneer projects

Key resource strategies aligned

- Fiscal strategy
- Spatial strategy
- Legislative strategy
- Civil Service capability

Anchor strategies aligned

- Industrial strategy
- National security strategy
- Net zero strategy
- Etc.

Pioneer projects drive immediate, activist change

- Taskforces
- Sprints
- Hackathons
- Innovation funds

1. Foundations

2. Diagnosis

3. Pathways

4. Forming

5. Mobilising

6. Iterating

4a. Testing competing strategies through a national conversation



To begin Stage 4, the Government and the Office should convene a **national conversation** around the three strategic responses published by the Office in Stage 3. This is deliberately intended to constitute a significant reform in how the UK considers and publicly debates different futures and potential pathways, and collectively weighs up the trade-offs required to achieve a particular vision. This national conversation is a critical mechanism for the country to consider different strategic outlooks and then understand the rationale behind the Prime Minister's chosen strategic outlook at Stage 4c.

At a minimum, the Office should **publish the three competing outlooks and supporting detail on equal terms**. This should be accompanied by communication from Government and the Office inviting views and discussion. Government should be clear that it is **in listening mode**, rather than seeking to influence the discussion in support of a particular vision, and that no decision has been made on which vision to pursue. It is to be expected and encouraged that the wider system, including political parties and representative bodies, the media, polling organisations and others, engage in and contribute to this national conversation.

An effective national conversation would involve:

- The PM, Cabinet and the Office engaging **key individuals and groups that represent the country** (i.e. the flotilla), including: opposition parties; devolved, regional and local government; the private sector; community groups; and others.
- The Government and the Office, potentially supported by regional and local government, considering how to best to engage and seek **input from the public at a local level** and in a way that connects the different strategic pathways to the public and to places. This could include town halls, focus groups and other forms of direct engagement. It could also involve newer methods of public engagement and deliberation, such as interactive deliberative tools. Government should also consider whether a more traditional process of consultation is required to ensure everyone can input. See overleaf for some archetypes that could be used.
- Questions that encourage key groups and the public to **reflect on the trade-offs** facing the UK, such as: Through which pathway do you think you'd be better off? Which outlook do you think the UK should pursue, and why? How much would you change your behaviour to support a particular scenario?

Parliament should debate the different strategic pathways via a neutral motion. The Office should also stand ready to engage fully in similar debates in devolved legislatures. The Observatory will independently assess the effectiveness of the national conversation and make recommendations to feed into the next cycle.



- Breadth of engagement:** At its most ambitious, the national conversation could be highly pluralist, seeking views from as many people as possible. Alternatively, it could follow more corporatist routes, relying on representative organisations to speak for their members. Which groups to target, and therefore how, will depend on political appetite and the principles of national strategy. *For example, if intergenerational fairness is a key principle, the national conversation should seek to both compare the perspectives of different generations and explore the diversity of views within each.* These choices will also shape methods and techniques and, commensurately, the time needed.
- Methods:** How should that national conversation allow people to contribute to the conversation, particularly hard-to-reach groups? See the archetypes on the next page. The Office could decide that others — devolved and local governments, MPs etc. — are best placed to conduct their own engagement and support them to do so.

4a. Testing the competing strategic responses through a national conversation cont.



In orchestrating a national conversation around the three strategic pathways presented at the end of Stage 3, the Office must make choices about the objectives, scale and reach of the conversation. The **methods chosen** should always be selected to match the circumstances of the national conversation and its objectives. For instance:

If the national conversation aims to **test some genuinely new and radical ideas** and their potential impacts on diverse groups...

...online deliberation platforms, allow the public to suggest ideas, rank options, comment on proposals, engage in debate, etc.

...and mini-publics or citizens' panels — deliberative conversations convened by local and community leaders — can discuss and engage with these radical ideas, feeding back where consensus can and can't be found.

If the national conversation aims to, instead, identify how to **build legitimacy** for change...

...having a representative panel of the public guiding the Office and the government through the whole process of national strategy, actively involved at each stage and meaningfully part of the decision-making process gives the public the clear sense that this is a national project that reflects their (and not just the government's) views

...citizens assemblies offer a clear and open forum that can work through complex and controversial ideas, finding agreement and settlement, decisively and democratically aiding decision-making

If the national conversation aims to, instead, **build consensus** among some key groups of stakeholders who are critical for long-term delivery...

...more corporatist models such as social partnership can be used to bring even opposing factions round the table to negotiate in a structured way where settlement can be found, binding these representatives (and thereby the groups they represent) to the result.

And if the national conversation aims to **engage a polarised public in some genuine and challenging trade-offs**...

...utilising the Delphi technique — an iterative, feedback-based process of developing consensus — has been shown to reach more consensual, and sometimes more creative, judgements than other methods.

...citizens assemblies, mini-publics and citizens' panels can bring together diverse and polarised groups in reasoned debate, working through trade-offs and settling on balanced outcomes that command broad legitimacy



→ Discussion is held in public and with a broad range of groups, as well as debated in Parliament via a neutral motion

4b. Selecting the objectives & big bets

Following the national conversation, the Prime Minister and Cabinet, supported by the Office, should **consider the range of views** and ultimately **form the strategy** that will be put forward by government for this cycle. The output of this stage is a single completed 3x5 with supporting rationale and underpinning detail.

Given the scale and scope of the national conversation, the Office should provide the PM and Cabinet **a summary of key discussion themes and inputs**, as well as any quantitative and deliberative that has been gathered by government and /or trusted sources. It may also be necessary to provide the PM and Cabinet with additional advice to support final strategy formation.

This point in the process is critical for several reasons. It rests on the assumption that the PM and Cabinet feel supported to make an informed set of decisions about the UK's strategic outlook and national priorities for at least the next five years, and that they are supported to present this outlook in a way that the nation can understand and buy into, even though not everyone will actively support the decisions taken. The open and collaborative nature of the process is an important element of enabling the public to take part in the act of considering different futures and strategic outlooks for the UK, which will support better understanding and support for the chosen strategy.



- i. **Process.** How much should this element of be guided by process, or should it be guided by the needs of the PM and Cabinet?
- ii. **Collaboration.** What role do the devolved administrations, the Committee, and other influential actors play here? How inclusive is the decision-making process?



→ The final national strategy is formed, and made ready for announcement

4c. Communicating the strategy



The government's chosen strategy, and supporting rationale, is published and communicated widely, as well as being laid before Parliament ahead of a debate and vote in Stage 4d. This should be a significant moment. The Prime Minister should personally **present the strategy to Parliament**, and wider communications should highlight the details of the strategy and the process through which it has been developed, particularly its collaborative and transparent nature.

Linking to Stage 4b, the success of this stage, and process overall, rests on the PM, the Office and government as a whole clearly communicating the chosen strategy and reasons for pursuing this strategy over others. Communications should seek to identify areas of the strategy that have come from inputs from the public and key groups, and emphasise how this strategy will positively impact the public. As part of this, the PM, the Office and government will need to outline next steps to the public, including when they can expect to beginning feel the impact of this new approach. There will need to be a balance between promising significant results quickly and not promising any change within the coming five-year period of this cycle.

Narrative is undoubtedly an important part of presenting and communicating the strategy. The PM and government must be able to take the strategic framework produced over Stages 2 and 3 and transform it into a vision and narrative that is clear, engaging, self-coherent, and ultimately persuasive. Although this will ultimately be for the PM, Cabinet and other senior government figures to lead, the Office should support the creation of this vision and narrative however possible. Intelligence gathered about what resonated with the public — and what made groups nervous — as part of the national conversation in Stage 4a should be used to inform this communication.



→ The proposed strategy and supporting rationale is published and laid before Parliament

5. Mobilising transformative change

Stage 5 sets out steps for the rapid adoption of national strategy and mobilisation of national capacities. It includes the translation of national strategy into key resource planning processes, through the selection and integration of 'anchor' strategies, and by creating a portfolio of transformation projects for targeted focus and immediate progress.



5. Mobilising transformative change



4d. The national strategy is agreed by Parliament

Motion debated and adopted in Parliament

The 2040 National Strategy is approved

5a. – 5d. The national strategy is cascaded through a designed strategic architecture, aligning key resource and anchor strategies, and supported by a portfolio of pioneer projects

Key resource strategies aligned

- Fiscal strategy
- Spatial strategy
- Legislative strategy
- Human resource strategies

Anchor strategies aligned

- Industrial strategy
- National security strategy
- Net zero strategy
- Place-based anchor strategies

Pioneer projects drive immediate, activist change

- Taskforces
- Sprints
- Hackathons
- Innovation funds

5e. Mechanisms to foster strong, lasting, two-way relationships with key national capacities are created / adapted

Strong, lasting mechanisms created to support relationship
Delivery Learning Capability

Key national capacities essential for delivery identified

5f. The National School of Government refreshes its programme for improving strategic capability

The School builds strategic capability across the system

6a. The Committee, aided by the Observatory, regularly monitor and hold stakeholders accountable for the national strategy

Observatory annually assessing progress

Committee holding stakeholders to account

- Annual assessments
- Hearings
- Evidence-taking
- Inquiries

1. Foundations

2. Diagnosis

3. Pathways

4. Forming

5. Mobilising

6. Iterating

5a. Creating an architecture for delivery



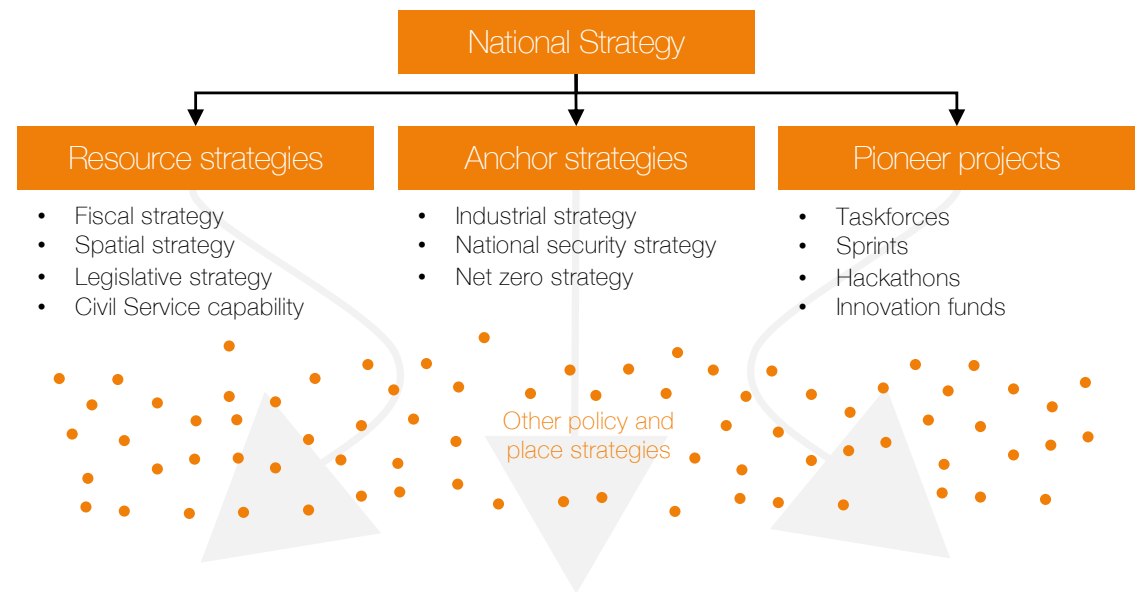
The Office should lead in translating the national strategy into the fundamental business of government by designing and running its **delivery architecture**. The Prime Minister must be visibly at the centre — seeking information; deconflicting; troubleshooting; and simultaneously supporting and holding to account ministers, officials, and external actors. The Office should enable this by organising the necessary routines, data flows, investigations, meetings, and reports.

Because national strategy cuts across siloes, clarifies trade-offs, and focuses national priorities over the long-term, it demands a major redesign of delivery systems. Sitting atop of a **hierarchy of strategies**, it must create strong incentives for alignment and cascade priorities, decisions and methods coherently.

This architecture must cover **governance** and **resources**. Working with partners, the Office should commission core resource strategies to deliver the national strategy: financial (through a reformed Spending Review), spatial (through a new national spatial planning cycle), legislative, and human (via refreshed capability and reform plans). These resource strategies (set out in Stage 5b) should be directly triggered by the national strategy and flow from it.

In parallel, the Office should trigger a handful of ‘**anchor**’ policy strategies in key domains (Stage 5c). The exact mix will depend on the content of the national strategy but the Industrial Strategy, the National Security Strategy and the Net Zero Strategy all likely require revision for alignment with both the national strategy and shorter-term manifesto commitments.

Resource and anchor strategies will deliver medium- and long-term transformational change. In parallel, government should design a [tight] portfolio of ‘pioneer projects’ — time-bound, strategically chosen initiatives that concentrate national capacities and resources behind select priorities relevant to national strategy priorities, building momentum and demonstrating how coordinated action can deliver step-changes on complex challenges and big bets.



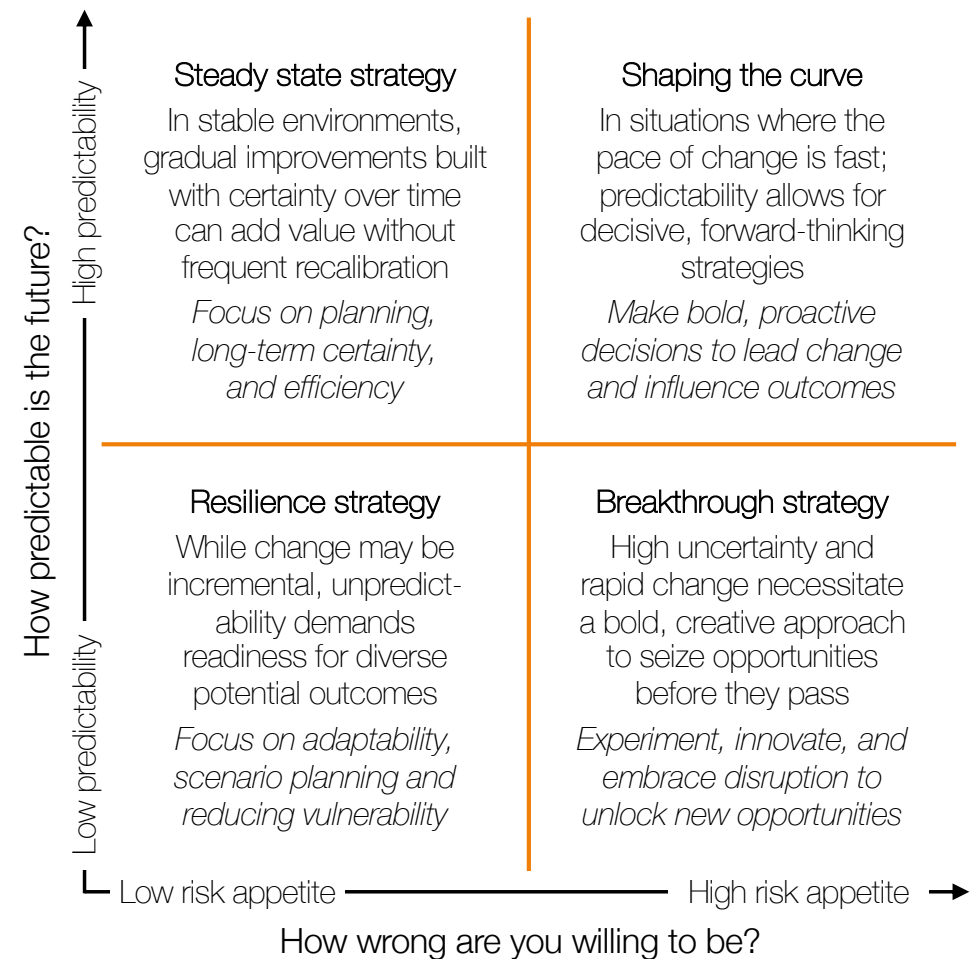
→ A series of strategies designed as a portfolio and iterated across the life of the national strategy that guide central government action and provide strong incentives for alignment for devolved and local government, businesses, civil society and communities.

5a. Creating an architecture for delivery cont.

Crucially, this architecture must not just be a collection of strategies. They should integrate with each other, guided by the hierarchy of the national strategy, but also be understood as a portfolio.

The certainty / risk appetite strategic matrix (see right and in Annex) is a useful way of mapping the portfolio and showing where strategies sit — whether long-term and predictable, short-term and risky, or anywhere in between. This framing does not prescribe that government must pursue a balance across all quadrants; rather, it gives a clear picture of the distribution of strategies and enables choices about where to place emphasis. Some administrations may lean towards safer, more predictable approaches; others may decide to back more ambitious, breakthrough options.

The role of the Office is to ensure that this picture is clear and those choices — about whether to ensure a good spread or to load onto one quadrant — are made in an explicit manner to inform political decisions. Additionally, the Office should put in place monitoring and implementation that can track whether strategies are shifting over time — whether because of delivery progress, political priorities, or changing external circumstances — and adjust accordingly.



→ A series of strategies designed as a portfolio and iterated across the life of the national strategy that guide central government action and provide strong incentives for alignment for devolved and local government, businesses, civil society and communities.



1. Foundations

2. Diagnosis

3. Pathways

4. Forming

5. Mobilising

6. Iterating

5b. Cascading national strategy through resource allocation



Because national strategy sits at the top of a hierarchy, systemic incentives must be reshaped to drive alignment. The state's core resources — money, space, and people — are the first-order levers. Radical reform is needed to structure them around long-term horizons, sharpen their strategic focus, break down siloes, and mobilise the full capacities of the nation in a coherent, whole-of-nation approach.

Fiscal strategy

The UK's fiscal system was last overhauled in the 1990s with the Comprehensive Spending Review. To support a 15-year national strategy, a redesigned fiscal cycle should deliver:

- **Budgets driven by national strategy:** national strategy objectives and big bets will trigger and shape spending cycles, ensuring resources are directed first and foremost to delivering strategic priorities.
- **Certainty and adaptability by horizon:** low-risk functions will receive long-term settlements that provide stability; experimental initiatives will be given full fiscal support but on shorter cycles that allow them to test, learn and adapt quickly.
- **Joined-up envelopes:** funding will be pooled across departments and tiers of government, creating cross-cutting budgets that drive collaboration and delivery of shared national outcomes.
- **Investment with impact:** resources will be concentrated on a small number of high-impact pioneer projects, with staged scaling, sunset clauses and evaluation ensuring money flows to what works.
- **Power to places:** regions and localities gain multi-year budgets to pursue place-based priorities aligned with the national strategy.

Spatial strategy

The UK undervalues its land and seas as strategic resources, yet rising density demands a coherent, long-term approach. A new National Spatial Strategy should deliver:

- **Clarity through spatial intelligence:** a single, authoritative geospatial map will give government, local authorities, and stakeholders shared insight into land and sea assets, infrastructure, hazards, and planned investments, enabling coordinated planning and modelling.
- **Local ownership, national coherence:** local authorities will hold genuine authority over spatial planning, while national priorities are decisively enforced, ensuring local decisions support national strategic outcomes.
- **Long-term direction with adaptability:** nested planning horizons (50, 30, 15 years) aligned with national strategy cycles give certainty while allowing periodic adjustment to new challenges or opportunities.
- **Principle-driven decisions:** shared principles for land and sea use replace negotiation-driven approaches, enabling coherent, predictable decisions at all levels.
- **Strategic investment unlocked:** national levers, like land assembly and dedicated investment funds will rapidly enable national projects and share benefits locally.

Human resource strategies

Delivering a national strategy requires a coordinated and long-term approach to building human capital across the UK, skilled and motivated to deliver on national priorities. As part of this, Civil Service Capability and Reform Plans should be refreshed so that staffing, skills and capabilities in civil service directly support the national strategy and its anchor strategies. Departments should re-examine their structures and staffing — ensuring they are aligned, fit for purpose, and adaptable to change. Beyond government, the UK needs to invest in and mobilise strategic capabilities - developing the talent, partnerships, and institutions needed. Stage 5f explores crafting experimental and innovative learning systems to build this strategic capability in the UK

Legislative strategy

Core objectives and big bets may require statutory change — to unlock resources, regulate markets, or reshape institutions. The government should develop a legislative strategy directly tied to the national strategy to ensure its ambitions are not crowded out by shorter-term or reactive measures. Like the programme supporting a King's Speech, it should map the bills needed to advance priorities, secure parliamentary time, and build momentum and clarity about the way forward.

5c. Creating anchor strategies



The UK already has an ad hoc collection of ‘anchor’ strategies — large, department-led but whole-of-government frameworks that set long-term direction in core policy domains, such as the Industrial Strategy, the National Security Strategy and the Net Zero Strategy. They are intended to guide government activity and provide stability across political cycles. A core, select group of anchor strategies enables coherence and integration.

National strategy, sitting at the apex of the strategic hierarchy, should provide the **organising framework for these anchors** — aligning them with long-term, national priorities; resolving overlaps; and limiting their number so that attention and resources are not dissipated. This clarity would both allow central government to mobilise around delivering the national strategy — reaching across siloes and aligning effort — and also enable external stakeholders to see key priorities and connections between them.

Anchor strategies need not be national in geography. Where a core national objective rests on a specific place — *for example, making offshore wind both a power source and an engineering specialism* — the anchor strategy could be place-based in scope and leadership. *Investment and support might be concentrated to make Inverness a global hub, led by stakeholders such as the Highland Council, but carrying national significance.* In such cases, **place-based strategies should sit alongside other anchor strategies** within the hierarchy.

This framework does not preclude **more targeted policy or place-based strategies**. These can provide valuable direction, but must cohere with national and anchor strategies. Where conflict arises, they should be revised.

A reformed hierarchy of strategies would deliver the following outcomes:

- **Strategies triggered by national priorities:** anchor strategies would be explicitly launched and refreshed in step with each new national strategy, continually reflecting the nation’s top priorities while also accommodating major government programmes or manifesto commitments.
- **Clear national signals:** only a small number of domains would carry anchor strategies, preserving focus, signalling true national priorities, and preventing dilution of attention and resources.
- **Alignment across domains:** anchor strategies would translate high-level national priorities into long-term direction for each focus domain, ensuring consistency both with the national strategy and with each other.
- **Credible delivery horizons:** medium-term plans (5–10 years) within each anchor strategy would chart pathways towards the 15-year national strategy, combining direction with feasible implementation.
- **Joined-up action:** anchor strategies would be co-owned by multiple departments and coordinated with one another, with mechanisms to surface overlaps, reconcile tensions, and enforce coherence.
- **Complementary local strategies:** more targeted or local strategies would be explicitly designed to support anchors; where conflicts occur, anchor strategies would prevail.



→ A small set of anchor strategies, aligned with the national strategy and with each other, giving the UK’s businesses, civil society, educational and cultural organisations and communities clear, stable direction on the policies and incentives they can align with

5d. Activating delivery through a portfolio of pioneer projects



The Office should create a **portfolio of strategically important projects that accelerate delivery** on national strategy priorities and big bet areas. These projects are not substitutes for, or a distraction from, delivery of the resource and anchor strategies. Instead, these are areas of targeted delivery focus — concentrated on a small number of priorities that matter most to the success of the national strategy. These pioneer projects should be backed by the Office and demonstrate how coordinated action — through the alignment of national capabilities and resources — can drive real delivery on complex challenges.

The Office should identify a select number of these priority areas and commit dedicated delivery resources to drive them forward by:

- Establishing **delivery sprints** — time-boxed periods of intense, focused work aimed at achieving specific goals.
- Standing up **cross-functional taskforces** with clear mandates to test solutions, troubleshoot barriers, and coordinate across systems.
- Providing **senior sponsorship** and visibility to ensure these projects receive the legitimacy, attention, and resourcing they need to succeed.

These projects may well target particular geographies, either because they are uniquely able to deliver their outcomes or (like the example of the London Challenge — see right) because the issues they seek to counter are particularly pronounced.

The Office should be open to **new and innovative approaches** in the delivery of these projects, **drawing on existing initiatives** such as the Advanced Research and Invention Agency (ARIA) or local “Test and Learn” policy experiments. The Office could also design **open and inclusive processes to source new ideas** — for example, through hackathons, innovation funds, or open calls.

These portfolio of projects should be published and government held to account for their delivery.

Exemplar pioneer project: London Challenge

The London Challenge (2003–2011) was a government initiative to raise school standards in the capital, aligned with the national priority of “education, education, education.” Its success depended not only on central leadership but on the active contribution of local authorities, school leaders, universities, and community organisations, working together in new partnerships. By harnessing and coordinating these wider capacities, by concentrating resources, and by developing excellent local leadership, London went from one of the weakest-performing regions to among the strongest. The programme shows how a strategically chosen project can spark innovation, mobilise collective effort, and demonstrate change at scale.



→ A focused portfolio of high-impact projects that fast-track delivery on national priorities and big bet areas.

5e. Partnering with the nation's capacities



As a result of the analysis done in Stage 2, the competing of strategic responses in Stage 3, and the national conversation in Stage 4, the government will now have a clear and nuanced picture of which actors and **which of the nation's capacities will be needed to deliver the objectives of the national strategy**. They will also have developed a deeper understanding of the status of the nation's key capacities initially reviewed in Stage 2a: which are in robust health, and which are at a worrying comparative disadvantage compared to our neighbours?

The Office should now adopt or create mechanisms for all the key actors — whether specific communities, particular companies, identified devolved governments and/or local authorities — to be partners in the delivery of national strategy. This is not about maintaining an open ear to all of the nation's capacities; the Office should be strategic about identifying which are the key capacities vital to delivery; and **design how the government is going to foster and maintain a strong, two-way relationship with them**. *For instance, if a key part of the national strategy is focused on strengthening the UK's defence industrial sector, and the big bet was on developing UK defence industrial intellectual capital over and above manufacturing capability, the critical capacities to target are the key universities focused on this area of research as well as R&D-focused defence companies. Creating a strong and regular relationship with these universities and research organisations therefore requires the government to prioritise the Defence Universities Alliance over other, more traditional forums, using it to monitor the health, strengths, and vulnerabilities of these institutions, and building enduring mechanisms for partnership.*

Such a forum helps **create a flotilla of critical actors**, aligning their interests and capacities with the delivery of the national strategy because they see strategic advantage in doing so. Many of these mechanisms may already exist and can be utilised or lightly adapted: for instance, the Growth Advisory Board, the Industrial Strategy Advisory Council and the Joint Civil Society Covenant Council among others.

Throughout, the focus should be on three objectives:

1. Delivery — what do the various involved national capacities need to deliver the national strategy?
2. Learning — what has gone well and what hasn't? Why? And what should we do differently? (See Stage 5c)
3. Capability — how can we best strengthen the national capacities involved in the long-term to make them resilient and powerful?

5f. Rapidly adapting and learning



This Playbook posits that a **National School of Government** ('the School') — or similar institution — will exist with a mandate to lead, coordinate, and be accountable for strategic learning across the system. The School should work with the Office to determine a programme of learning to support the initiation of the National Strategy. It should then remain in dialogue with the Office about this programme in the five years of this national strategy cycle.

The learning programme should enable training for actors and organisations across the 'flotilla' including all levels of government, private and voluntary sector to rehearse strategic delivery and build collective muscle memory through:

- The use of **simulations and case studies** to rehearse how multiple actors within the system can work together to confront big challenges of the state and follow through on big bets (*for example, reimagining a new approach to regulation*), or preparing for future pivots (*for example, the impact of AI and automation on the labour market*). The School can build and curate a repository of case studies, games and simulations including in response to commissions from government or non-government teams working on particular problems or challenges.
- A focus on future challenges by providing **foresight tools and developing future-focused scenarios** enabling multi-disciplinary teams to explore options and choices. The School could also convene periodic symposia – wider debates among politicians, business, government, and academia about potential responses to future challenges.
- Developing a red-team community and **real-time review** disciplines from multi-disciplinary backgrounds and sectors. Strategy teams should be able to access a high-quality environment for testing their approaches with experts from multiple perspectives, in and outside government
- Expertise and a function ready to undertake **rapid post-implementation learning**. The School should be able to support government and Parliament in developing a new approach to rapid learning after an event and curating teams deployable in support of this learning. This may be via networks with experts in universities or the private sector, for example.

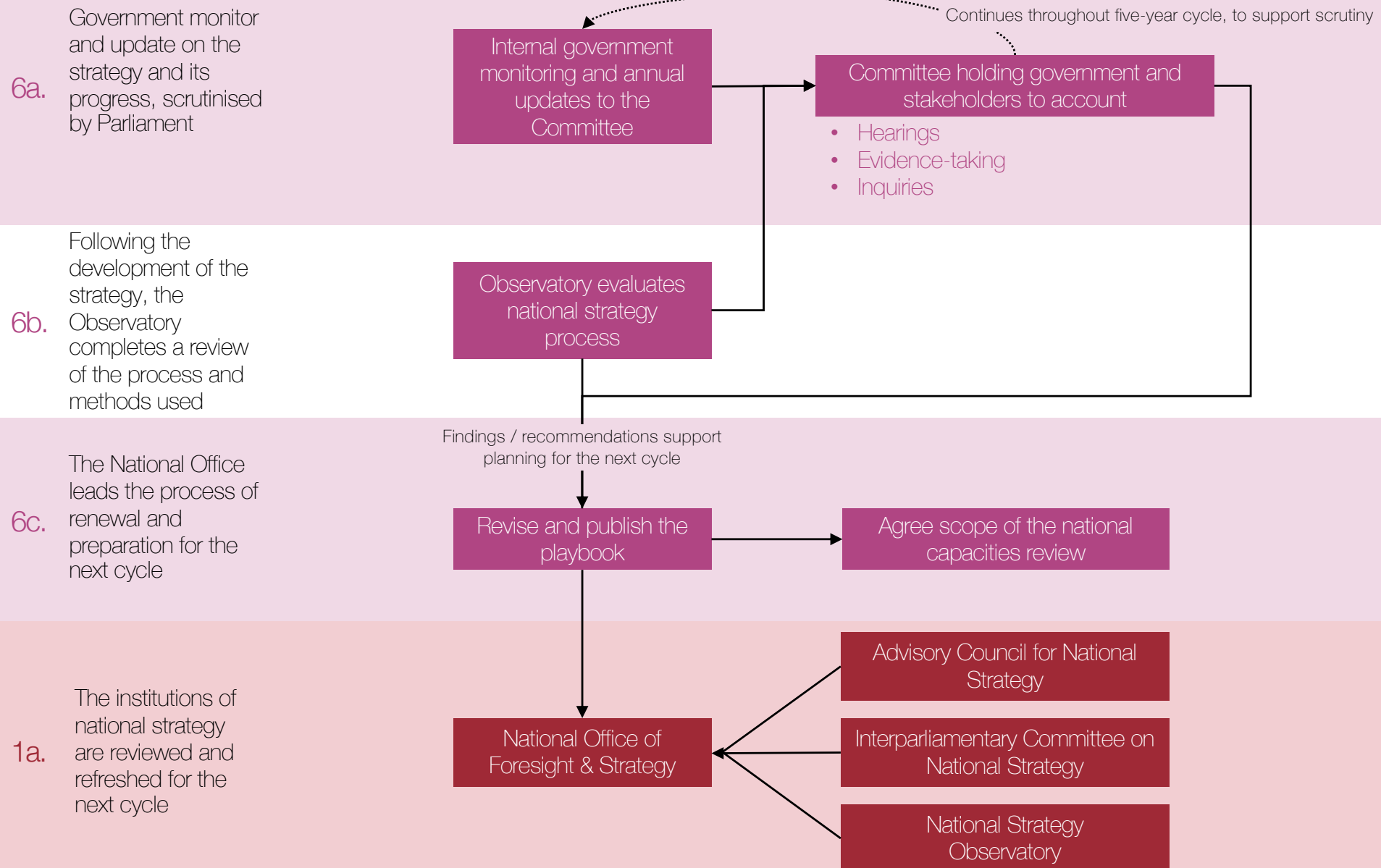


→ A new National School of Government with a clear mandate to lead, coordinate, and be accountable for strategic learning across the system

6. Monitoring & iterating the national strategy

Stage 6 is about monitoring the cycle throughout its life and at its conclusion, and then preparing for the next cycle. To sustain across multiple cycles, the process and practice must allow for adaptation and improvement, particularly in response to instances of underperformance or failure. The final outputs of this stage — an account of this cycle and lessons learned; the proposed indicators for the next review of national capacities, and a revised playbook that takes account of lessons learned — lay the foundations for the next cycle.

6. Monitoring & iterating the national strategy



6a. Regularly monitoring the success of the national strategy



1. Foundations

2. Diagnosis

3. Pathways

4. Forming

5. Mobilising

6. Iterating

Whilst responsibility for coordinating and managing delivery of the national strategy will primarily be the responsibility of the government's delivery apparatus, the Office should retain a role in **monitoring the suitability and effectiveness of the strategy** overall. This should take the form of regular, though relatively infrequent, meetings with the Prime Minister and other senior figures in government to review the strategy set and consider progress to date. These meetings should also consider whether any elements of the strategy require adaptation in response to significant changes in the UK's context (see Stage 5c). Meetings should take place every 6-12 months, with additional meetings by exception. Following these meetings, the Office, on behalf of government, should publish a short update on the strategy and progress to date. This could take the form of a letter from the PM to the Committee, a Written Ministerial Statement, or similar.

The Committee should use the above input from government, alongside other inputs via written and oral evidence, to monitor the strategy and scrutinise government throughout the cycle. Given the PM's ultimate responsibility for the national strategy, this Committee may require the power to call the PM annually, as with the Liaison Committee.

Parliament is best placed to define in detail the role and responsibilities of any Committee in the cycle of national strategy, including the activity that the Committee would seek to undertake during and towards the end of each cycle.



→ Regular monitoring of and updates on the national strategy by government, to enable scrutiny by Parliament

6b. Evaluating the national strategy process

As soon as possible following the development of this cycle's national strategy (i.e. the conclusion of Stage 4), the Observatory should complete a thorough **review of the process and methods** used in development. This review would focus primarily on the process by which this strategy was developed and agreed, and methods used throughout. Whilst the review may seek to provide a view on the process and methods used in relation to the nature of the strategy produced, it will not be possible nor appropriate for the Observatory to provide any judgement or assessment of delivery or impact.

The output of this review should be a **report**. The Observatory's report should be shared with the Office for any factual corrections or discussion, before being finalised and submitted to the Committee.

Building on their findings, as well as any reflections or discussions with the Office and the Committee, the Observatory should then consider what activity or research they can lead to support the **development and improvement of the process and methods** for future cycles. *For example, if a key finding related to the effectiveness of Stage 3, then the Observatory — working with the Office, the National School of Government and others as required — would undertake research and other activity to develop potential improvements ahead of the next cycle.*



i. The Observatory. How best to enable the Observatory to fulfil its role?



→ A comprehensive evaluation of the development of this cycle of national strategy by the Observatory, informing the Committee's scrutiny and improvements for the next cycle

6c. Evolving the Playbook and preparing for the next cycle

To prepare for the next cycle of national strategy, the Office should complete two actions:

1. **Review, revise and update the playbook** to take account of lessons learned, both from within government, the Observatory and the Parliamentary Committee and others. The revised playbook should be shared across government and published before the commencement of the next cycle.
2. **Prepare for the next cycle.** Including engaging key partners within and outside government, and agreeing key elements that will need to be completed early in the next cycle. This includes agreeing the indicators that will be included for the next review of national capacities. As discussed at 2a, the majority of indicators should be retained, but some may be added or removed.



→ A revised playbook, updated for the next cycle of national strategy



Annex A: Tools & methods



1. Foundations

2. Diagnosis

3. Pathways

4. Forming

5. Mobilising

6. Iterating

Solarium	Solarium is a disciplined way to make real strategic choices. It designs and “competes” a small number of fully coherent alternative strategies — each internally consistent, evidence-led, and built around clear big bets — so leaders can select one direction (and explicitly reject others) rather than blend incompatible policies into an unworkable compromise. By forcing each alternative to surface hard trade-offs, risks, costs and delivery paths, Solarium converts disagreement into clarity and momentum. It also co-opts the key protagonists of each view into the work, deepening understanding and building consent for the final decision. The method adapts President Eisenhower’s 1953 “Project Solarium”, which pitted three alternative Cold War strategies against each other in a six-week sprint, culminating in a presidential choice that shaped US grand strategy for years. How it works: a system leader (e.g. the Prime Minister / Cabinet) sponsors a single strategic question and commissions three or more distinct approaches rooted in live schools of thought. An independent panel drafts precise terms of reference to keep the options meaningfully different and internally coherent — no hedging, no mixing. Small, senior taskforces then build the strongest possible case for their assigned alternative: assembling evidence, mapping synergies and conflicts across domains, specifying who does what and when, quantifying costs, and stating the inherent trade-offs. The teams work separately to preserve analytic integrity, run to a tight timetable, and draw on authoritative data and expert witnesses. They present their cases back-to-back to the decision-maker, enabling direct comparison of assumptions, trade-offs and consequences. The process culminates in a formal decision that sets direction and, crucially, records which paths are not being pursued — so the strategy is coherent and durable.
Place Impacts Toolkit	This toolkit sets out a series of stages to support the integration of place into long-term national strategy. It is designed to help policymakers form deeper, more grounded judgements about place as both a context and an asset in strategic thinking. At each stage, the toolkit highlights key factors, dimensions and working practices to consider. By working through these stages, policymakers can ensure that place is treated as a core element in the development and delivery of strategy.
Intergenerational Impacts Toolkit	This toolkit will provide a structured approach to embedding intergenerational perspectives into long-term national policy. It aim is to support policymakers in recognising how decisions made today shape opportunities, risks, and wellbeing across different generations. Rather than treating intergenerational issues as an add-on, the toolkit encourages a mindset where long-term impact and generational equity are central to strategic thinking.
Business competitiveness checklist	A tool should be developed to support the integration of business competitiveness into UK long-term strategy. It should help policymakers to assess how decisions impact UK businesses to grow, innovate, and compete globally. Through clear steps and key considerations, it should ensure business competitiveness considerations are embedded in policy design and delivery.

3x5

A simple framework for long-term strategy made up of our **diagnosis** (both our inheritance and trends), our **objectives**, and **big bets**. A clear strategic framework can be developed by selecting the five most salient on a 15–20-year horizon.

CONTEXTUAL CHALLENGES

Select, from the overall context facing the country, the five most salient challenges on which the country will focus over the next 15 years.

This column is about diagnosis, made up of an understanding of:

- *The current context: threats and opportunities facing the country*
- *The longer-term view: the trends that will shape the country's context over the next 15 years*
- *The inheritance of the country: strengths, weaknesses, relationships etc.*
- *The history of the challenges under consideration*
- *The national psyche, identity, levels of public consensus about now and the future*
- *The level of certainty for each of these factors*

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

For each challenge, the objectives the country should adopt, which it will stick to consistently over the next 15 years

These objectives need to:

- *Imply a choice*
- *Consider how it will build on — or build — legitimacy for stakeholders and the public*
- *Enable the national capacities to mobilise their own efforts as part of this objective — e.g. private sector actors, other layers of governance*

BIG BETS

For each objective, the 'big bets' that are being made in pursuit of the objective — the assumptions that frame our response

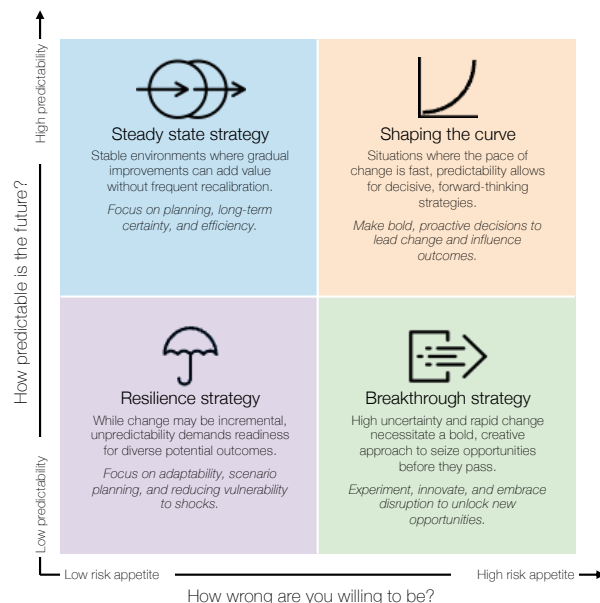
This is made up of an understanding of:

- *'Passive' big bets: the status quo 'bets' the nation has made in relation to these challenges. They may have been implicit in the national life in the country for a long time*
- *'Active' big bets: the big ideas, pivots or resource transfers that should be made to deliver change. These are things that will condition the nation's approach over the time period*
- *An understanding of the roads not taken and who stands to gain or lose from that*

Annex A: Tools & methods cont.



Certainty / risk appetite strategic matrix



The certainty/risk appetite matrix shows that different challenges demand different kinds of strategy rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. When the future is predictable and risk appetite is low, governments often adopt a **steady state** approach, focusing on stability, long-term planning and secure multi-year funding — appropriate for areas like infrastructure, housing, or local finances. Where unpredictability is higher but risk appetite remains cautious, a **resilience** strategy is needed, emphasising adaptability, scenario planning, reserves, and flexible resources, as seen in emergency response but underused for geopolitical and economic shocks. When the future is predictable but the pace of change is fast, governments should focus on **shaping the curve**: making bold, proactive choices to back long-term winners, invest ahead of rivals, and influence global norms, as in the green energy transition. And where uncertainty is high and risk appetite is equally high, governments must adopt a **breakthrough** strategy: bold experimentation, disruption, and rapid scaling of successful pilots, akin to the space race or frontier technologies. Each quadrant sets out a distinct practice of strategy — steady state, resilience, shaping, or breakthrough — matched to how predictable the future is and how wrong policymakers are willing to be.

The National Strategy Playbook is the culmination of the 2024–25 Heywood Fellowship.

The Heywood Fellowship is a visiting fellowship created in memory of Jeremy Heywood, Cabinet Secretary from 2012–18. The purpose is to give a UK Civil Service Permanent Secretary the opportunity to explore issues relating to public service and policy outside of the immediate responsibilities of government duties.

The Heywood Foundation and the Blavatnik School of Government at the University of Oxford, established the fellowship with support from the Cabinet Office. The Fellow is associated with Hertford College, Lord Heywood's former college.

This year's Heywood Fellowship sets out to examine how governments come to a national view of what really matters over longer time horizons, the ways governments can best confront and tackle future problems, and how the configuration, mechanisms and capabilities of the state can best enable the pursuit and delivery of long-term outcomes for citizens.

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