

GOVERNANCE PROJECT



Annex 3 – What problem are we trying to fix?

- A.3.1. It has become increasingly evident (over many years) that the systems and practices of governance in the UK have not been functioning well – falling well short of the high standards expected by the public. The problems have been widely debated and analysed (see the bibliography provided on the Commission website). They include a fall in standards of integrity in public life, weak controls on mis/abuse of power, poor decision making and implementation, and consequent damage to our national reputation. Taken together these problems threaten the quality of our democracy.
- A.3.2. There are many reasons why this has occurred. They include: the traditionally loose nature of constitutional structures in the UK, based on precedent, convention, trust and tradition rather than clarity and enforcement; the stresses imposed by recent events and personalities (in the context of the economic and social shocks arising from the financial crisis, Brexit and Covid); the increasingly complex and interconnected nature of decision making in a world with rapid technological advancement; and the rate of change in political and economic circumstances, not least in a social media environment.
- A.3.3. There is therefore a need for new measures, drawing on principles of good governance, to provide appropriate checks and balances in the system, clarity about the rules, suitable enforcement mechanisms, and incentives towards the responsible exercise of power and the taking of good decisions in the wider national interest (rather than personal or narrow factional interests).