A Blueprint for Resilience in 2035

Reflections on the Cityforum Conference, London, May 2024

By Stephen Hawker

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Foreword

In an increasingly interconnected and uncertain world, the need for robust resilience has never been more critical. As the Deputy Chief Scientific Adviser for National Security, I often observe that resilience is not a static state, but rather a dynamic process of anticipating, preparing for, responding to, and recovering from a variety of threats and disruptions. Whether facing geopolitical tensions, economic uncertainties, or environmental crises, our ability to adapt and recover is critical.

This report, "A Blueprint for Resilience in 2035," is a timely contribution to our collective discussions on how to navigate these complexities and build a more resilient future. It captures the insights and recommendations from the Cityforum Conference held in May 2024, which brought together experts and thought leaders to address the challenges surrounding national resilience. Those discussions underscored the importance of government, businesses, civil society, and individuals taking coherent action to foster a resilient society; this report will hopefully be of interest to all of those stakeholders.

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> *The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall*
> *- Nelson Mandela*

Introduction

Resilience is the ability to withstand adversity and to recover from difficult events. Geopolitical, economic, and environmental crises make us nervous about the future. Technology is both threatening and a potential lifeline. Historic investment decisions and past policy choices determine the present state of our systems, human capacity, and infrastructure. 90% of the infrastructure we rely on now will still be in use by 2035. Major changes take time; but small adjustments now could still make a disproportionate difference.

In May 2024 Cityforum brought together experts and thinkers in a symposium to build a broader understanding of national resilience; to identify what we can do now to improve the prospects for a sustainable future; and how to build capacity to withstand and recover from the anthropogenic (human-causation) and natural shocks.

Resilience is not a term to set the blood racing or to excite public meetings – at least until things go wrong. We want it, expect it, do not think enough about it. We want to be able to rely on things working, goods and services being available, and for normality to return rapidly after interruptions and shocks. Government is expected to take a precautionary approach to present and future public safety; but confidence has been dented by the experience of Covid and the national mood is dispirited. The search for resilience is complex and risks being crowded out of the political agenda by short-termism.

The challenge is to make resilience a core, normalised, engaging, part of national and policy discourse. The debate must be about the *value* we place on resilience (our future safety and security), how to reflect this in decision making by government, business, non-governmental organisations, and individuals and how to judge success. Resilience is not an end state; but it may be a state of mind.

A threatening world…

The recent National Preparedness Commission (NPC) Report[1] talks of the TUNA world (*turbulent, uncertain, novel, and ambiguous*). Others prefer VUCA (*volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous*) or (my favourite) BANI (*brittle, anxious, non-linear, and incomprehensible*). Whatever adjectives you prefer they all emphasise uncertainty about the future and a sense of greater complexity than faced by previous generations. War on Europe's borders, turbulence in the Middle East and China in imperial mode make the world a tense place. Covid-19 still casts a long shadow, and the world is getting hotter.

If the first duty of government is to keep citizens safe and the country secure (as both government

1 Making it Happen; encouraging government action on preparedness and resilience; National Preparedness Commission; February 2024; https://nationalpreparednesscommission.uk/publications/making-it-happen/

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and opposition have declared), then you might expect to find a strategy for resilience set out alongside those for defence and security. But you would look for the moment in vain (though it is promised in the *Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy*). Covid has increased the salience of resilience, but it has yet to become a driving theme of government or to reach the top of the political agenda. The NPC report suggests making resilience a statutory duty requiring government to report annually to Parliament on progress under scrutiny from the National Audit Office (NAO). Some would argue the need to go further to create an agency analogous to the US Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Risks and uncertainties

Some of the groundwork for a national strategy is in place including the UK Government 2022 *Resilience Framework*[2] which commits to developing a '*wide and strategic approach*' to resilience focusing on prevention and preparation and requiring a 'whole of society approach'. It promises supporting actions (by 2030) including the co-ordination and prioritisation of investment in resilience and greater assurance through the development of standards and regulation. The framework however still feels more technocratic than holistic; and focused on contingency planning and emergency management (both of course vital) rather than the underlying sources of fragility and insecurity. Hopes for prevention could appear hubristic given the scale of the challenges.

The UK *National Risk Register*[3] (NRR) has a longer provenance and becomes in each iteration more sophisticated and extensive (the 2024 edition lists 89 'acute' risks and runs to 192 pages). The NRR also identifies long-term 'chronic risks' including climate change for which a new assessment process is promised. And yet even this does not get us to the *slow-burn* crises (about which David Omand has written[4]) that can simmer under the radar when weak signals are ignored and voices in the wilderness go unheeded. These crises (they are no longer risks) are affecting personal or individual resilience and productivity; and together with the chronic risks are damaging our ability to respond to emergencies (for example the overstretch in the NHS and the armed forces). We are already in the age of the *polycrisis* which requires thinking about and exercising the management of the effects of multiple, overlapping, and inter-related crises and of cascading failure. It must be possible to model this complexity and to test and evaluate our resilience. And risks can be grouped according to the nature of the consequences and therefore the resources and capabilities needed to respond to them.

> *It is better to be roughly right than precisely wrong (John Maynard Keynes)*

The NRR is not a light read and can only do so much without losing clarity and purpose. We can go on polishing, but it is only one part of the picture. Alongside it we need a trusted and connected network of authoritative bodies to analyse, monitor and assess the changing risk, to sound the alarm and to remind us of incremental changes that may take us unnoticed into danger (the boiling frog metaphor). Public sector bodies have been established to monitor, assess, and advise on threats from terrorism and the weather (but not for biosecurity before Covid). And capacity is avail-

2 The UK Government Resilience Framework; December 2022; *https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uk-government-resilience-framework*

3 National Risk Register 2023; UK Government; August 2023; *https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-risk-register-2023*

4 How to Survive a Crisis; Lessons in Resilience and Avoiding Disaster; David Omand; Viking; 2023

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able in independent bodies such as the National Infrastructure Commission and professional bodies and institutions. These resources need to be harnessed more systematically.

But the voice of warning is only useful if someone is listening. It needs to be overwhelmingly clear who is accountable for the response. At present warnings come from a variety of sources – or none; and responsibility for action is diffused. A system of '*Lead Departments*' makes bureaucratic sense but does not inspire confidence. And is it the Minister or the Head of the Department who is accountable – or both or neither? There may be more fundamental questions to address in the relationship between government and Civil Service as has been suggested by the Institute for Government[5] amongst others.

There is no parallel published analysis of the vulnerability of UK systems and infrastructure. We know our infrastructure is ageing and we see daily the consequences of under-investment in our water systems and our roads. The detailed picture of the UK's fragilities is probably best hidden from those who would do us harm. But an annual report (as recommended by the NPC) would be an opportunity to assure the public (or not) that fracture points are known that frailties and vulnerabilities are being addressed, and that learning from previous crises and disasters is being applied.

The future belongs to those who prepare for it today - Malcolm X

The things we worry about in our private lives, that we prepare for and insure against, mostly do not happen. Not all 89 risks on the NRR register will crystallise as imagined or even at all. Risk is not forecasting. We are making estimates of probabilities, impacts and timescales. Similarly for business. Investment in resilience goes to hardening systems, diversification of supply, higher stock levels and other actions that bring cost without immediate return, but which improve prospects of long-term survival and profitability. Hindsight will be cruel to those who fail to prepare, who ignore warning signs but also (and sometimes less deservedly) to those who prepare for the 'wrong' crisis or get the balance wrong between short and long-term risk. But the emphasis still needs to move further towards stewardship (doing the right thing) as well as, or more than compliance (doing things right). We need a better vocabulary to capture and justify the value of resilience. And it needs to be reflected one way or another on the balance sheet. It must be part of our national DNA.

The national mood is self-critical and fears decline. There is no balancing sense of urgency in government and no vision of what resilience needs to look like by 2035 or 2050. We do not know how resilient we are now; nor how much resilience we need. Some sectors have a better handle on their strengths and vulnerabilities than others. But without broad standards, indicators, rankings, ratings, and quantitative measures it is impossible to track overall progress and to hold those responsible (not just government) to account. The insurance industry has methodologies from which we might borrow. FM Global for instance ranks the resilience of the UK business environment as 15th in the world in 2024 (Denmark heads the list). Targets and goals for resilience would help but are of little value if not supported by the capability to deliver.

5 A New Statutory role for the Civil Service; Institute for Government; March 2022; *https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/new-statutory-role-civil-service.pdf*

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It's not all about government….

We expect central government to take ownership of the nation's resilience, to provide direction and leadership and to enable and incentivise others. It cannot do it by itself; and properly identifies the need for a 'whole of society' approach. To make this real requires meaningful engagement and cooperation with a wide range of devolved, regional, local, and individual actors together with regulators, business and other structures and organisations. Local Resilience Forums (LRF) play an important part in arrangements for the preparation and response to crisis; but resilience, as argued here, needs to be much wider than the traditional LRF domain. We need a sense of subsidiarity – that decisions should be taken at appropriate levels and as close to the individual as makes sense. Interventions need to be concentrated on the real problems rather than diffusing energy on finding general (often expensive) solutions to problems that may be specific to areas or groups. Wales has evolved a social partnership model as a way of working with shared values and common purpose. The underlying premise is that more can be achieved through cooperation and collaboration, than through confrontation. The approach requires trust and honesty, and a willingness to compromise in the common good. This may work better in small compass where it is easier to get all the stakeholders into the room. We need to think whether it can be scaled up for other nations and for the UK as a whole.

What about the economy?

> *The economy is the art of making the most of life. The love of the economy is the root of all virtue - George Bernard Shaw*

There have seen early signs of economic growth in the first quarter of the year after a period in which it has been elusive. But despite successive digital revolutions GDP per head is falling and productivity is in the doldrums. A return to the 'golden years' of growth in the post war decades is unlikely. Artificial Intelligence (AI) will bring new jobs and destroy old ones.

Over 9 million people in the UK between 16 and 64 (up nearly 700,000 on pre Covid numbers) are not working or looking for a job. And we have reached record levels of sickness with 2.8 million people signed off work - a doubling of 'sick notes' over the last decade. We are living longer but not into healthier old age and with startling disparities between income groups. A recent comparative study[6] put Britain as the worst of the 28 countries examined for the effects of obesity on workplace absenteeism and productivity. An IPPR report[7] earlier this year said that the UK has the largest health inequalities of any advanced economy and that one in every four economically inactive people live in the unhealthiest 50 local authorities. These figures clearly suggest (as we all think we know) that the key to resilience and a more productive economy lies in improving health and reducing disparities; and getting people back into the workforce productively. But the Health Service itself is suffering a productivity crisis; and just providing more resources is not the answer. But it is a reminder that resilience is ultimately about people. You can have back-ups and workarounds for technology; but if people break then there is no Plan B.

We are still a trading nation, though disrupted by Brexit; and we have become predominantly a ser-

6 Study presented at the 2024 European Conference on Obesity in Venice; Times 12 May 2024; *https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/obese-people-twice-as-likely-to-be-off-work-pgmlvjq86*

7 Healthy Places, Prosperous Lives; IPPR Commission on Health and Prosperity; February 2024; *https://ippr-org.files.svdcdn.com/production/Downloads/Healthy_places_prosperous_lives_Jan24.pdf*

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vice economy. Resilience suggests diversity of supply and the avoidance of over reliance on others. This may therefore moderate a pure form of Ricardian comparative advantage theory. But focusing on what you are good at and for which you have skills and resources; and trading these goods and services with others still makes sense. And we pride ourselves on British innovation and ingenuity but worry that the application and benefits of our ideas fall too often to others. This may result from of theft of Intellectual property by states or criminals; or because ideas fail to get out of the starting gate in the UK and are developed elsewhere. We have a rich research base; but seem poor at start-ups. And we have seen manufacturing decline in the UK without knowing how much this matters or indeed what to do about it. The UK economic structure looks unbalanced – some blame the City and the pursuit of short-term returns. We need a better sense of what the 'right' balance is for the UK economy and of which sectors and technologies we should be betting on.

A clearer answer to these questions would help drive R&D spend, encourage business, and allow a more strategic approach to investment in skills and training. This is of course a big ask – but one we entitled to put to government. If we cannot rely on growth to fund additional investment in resilience, nor can we hope to attract investment and to grow without being, *and being seen to be*, resilient as an economy. This is also surely the time – in the interests of both resilience and economics – for refreshing our relationship with Europe.

Globalisation has created a more connected and interdependent world which is now threatened by insecurities in the Middle East, the ambitions of Russia and China and the efficiencies of just in time have discouraged diversity in supply chains, redundancy, and strategic reserves. For an 'all in this together' approach to work government must give us a true picture of the state of the nation's resilience, warts and all. It must base policy, planning and policy on evidence including its assessments of risk; and it must enable others (particularly regulators) to act in the long-term interest of citizens. This must mean placing greater weight on the future in investment decisions and changes in Treasury rules for policy, project, and programme appraisal (the *Green Book* in which the word resilience does not appear). The market unaided is unlikely to provide resilience.

Climate change, energy security, sustainability, net zero and the green economy

The UK classifies 13 sectors as *critical national infrastructure*[8] (*facilities, systems, sites, information, people, networks, and processes, necessary for a country to function and upon which daily life depends)* including communications, energy, water, food, and health. Renewables as a source of UK energy have risen from 2% in 1991 to more than 40% last year and with less reliance on OPEC countries volatility is less of a problem. But still people suffered when Russia invaded Ukraine. We are till dependent on Europe to supply electricity through interconnectors. Also problematic is the supply of materials and minerals necessary to exploit renewables when the sources of such minerals are highly concentrated and in high demand. These are geopolitical issues as well as an economic.

The green economy has been sold as combining opportunity and mitigation of environmental damage – but in two examples the electric vehicle market is struggling, and take-up of heat pumps is way below target. Progress in decarbonising home heating is slow. Government targets are being missed or redrawn across the green agenda because virtuous intent and green rhetoric have exceeded the capacity to deliver. Such back-tracking undermines support and confidence. Evidence

8 https://www.npsa.gov.uk/critical-national-infrastructure-0

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and competent systems thinking have been neglected in the competition for green credentials.

Nine meals from anarchy - Alfred Henry Lewis

Food is a sector we take for granted. But it takes little to disrupt the supply chain and as we saw during Covid any suggestion of shortages can see shelves stripped bare. The 2020 Agriculture Act requires the government to report to parliament every three years on food security. The first report in 2021 provided data to underpin a UK food security strategy[9] published to little attention a year later and which asserts that there is a high degree of food security in the UK. It offered bold targets on diet including halving childhood obesity by 2030 but said little about resilience in supply. It does not say what food reserves we have in the UK or the impact of a loss of imports. A search of Hansard for emergency food reserves produces a 1951 Parliamentary debate. The Swiss government stockpiles sufficient reserves to cover a four-month failure of imports and is considering extending this to twelve months. Distribution of food is also vulnerable. Simultaneous IT difficulties earlier this year at Sainsbury's and Tesco (who have over 40% of the market between them) gave some a taste of inconvenience. Prolonged IT disruption or other distribution problems would have more profound consequences. Just over half the food on our plates is produced in the UK, but it is less clear how resilient are our systems for distribution and for 'fair sharing' in the event of major shortages. A society without food gets angry.

The Deputy Prime Minister has encouraged us to stock up on battery powered radios, torches and first aid kits as analogue technologies to help us survive digital failures. It is not clear how many follow this advice (I admit to a cupboard full of candles) or go further in stockpiling long life food and water (FEMA recommends a fortnight's supply of water for each member of the family). What else should we be stockpiling (let us call them strategic reserves) at national or individual level? Sweden provides guidance[10] to its citizens on what to do in the case of crisis or war. Is it complacent not to do likewise?

Engagement with the public

Motorway warnings often start so far ahead of an incident that drivers are discounting them before they reach the obstruction. If crises are called too early or cries of wolf are too frequent people will stop listening. Warnings of shortages will guarantee they occur. Transparency, openness, and advance warning are therefore not always simple or effective. Fear will move people physically and emotionally in more extreme circumstances; but needs to be used with caution as a starting point for 'whole of society' engagement where citizens feel their contribution is valued. And messaging needs to be locally attuned. At the national level we need a story to tell. Where better to begin than in schools (as the Finns do) where we already have a PSHE[11] framework. This, according to Government, is intended '*to equip pupils with a sound understanding of risk and the knowledge and skills necessary to make safe and informed decisions*'. This could be broadened if we could agree what a wider resilience curriculum might look like. Some would argue that there is a place for keeping alive the analogue skills that have been displaced by technology (Year 9 map reading anyone?).

9 United Kingdom Food Strategy 2022; *https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-food-strategy/government-food-strategy*

10 If Crisis or War Comes; Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency; 2021; *https://www.msb.se/en/rad-till-privatpersoner/the-brochure-if-crisis-or-war-comes/*

11 Personal Social Health and Economic (PHSE) Education *https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/personal-social-health-and-economic-education-pshe/personal-social-health-and-economic-pshe-education*

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Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off your goal - Henry Ford

The NPC report identifies human barriers to resilience including *optimism bias* (could call it complacency or denial), *confirmation bias* (listening only to voices that agree), and the *NIMTO effect* (Not In My Term of Office) or short-termism. A roll call of flawed decision-making has been laid out for us in past, recent and continuing public inquiries such as Covid, Infected Blood, Grenfell, and the Post Office. If there is one thing these show it is the willingness of people in positions of seniority to disregard evidence that does not fit the corporate narrative. Consensus was prioritised over critical-thinking (*groupthink*) and the critical questions were not asked, or the answers not heard. The business sector is not immune. How often have the dogs on the street known (even if the auditors apparently did not) that an organisation was doomed even while the Board paddled furiously to stay afloat. Add the public sense that corporate and shareholder greed have turned rivers into streams of sewage, and it is unsurprising that public trust has been corroded, the young particularly are disengaged and that trust in leadership is low. Whilst the arguments may present themselves as being about different forms of private, public, and social ownership the real issue is about the outcomes required of them and the levers, regulation, and ownership models to achieve this.

Know your enemy and know yourself and you can fight a hundred battles without disaster - Sun Tzu

Conclusions

Resilience is a term with strong resonance amongst serious thinkers about the future shape of the UK; and is not separable from economic prosperity. There is no absence of ideas or examples of good practice in the UK and overseas. Nor is there a shortage of individual government strategies, announcements, and good intentions. All is not doom and gloom; there are opportunities as well as risks and uncertainties. But if the scale of the threats and the extent of vulnerability is as great as we fear then we need greater energy, focus and direction on resilience. These are not issues for party political division or adversarial positioning, but issues of common good requiring consistency and practical wisdom. We might be able to unite around the following propositions.

- **National resilience needs to be at the top of the government's agenda and on a statutory footing as suggested by the National Preparedness Commission.**
- **A comprehensive assessment of the resilience of the UK is required to provide a baseline for judging change. Government should be required to report annually on progress.**
- **A national resilience strategy is required urgently together with national goals, focusing on reducing vulnerability as well as preparing for and managing crisis.**
- **The national strategy needs to be realistic and affordable; and to address human, health and economic as well as system issues and emergency planning.**
- **The execution of the strategy needs to multi-layered, delegated and collaborative. Citizens need to be a valued part of the solution rather than regarded as part of the problem.**
- **Resilience is not an end in itself but needs to be an integral part of decision-making throughout the economy.**

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And we should set out to answer further questions.

- **How can we set a baseline for UK resilience against which to judge progress? What indicators, measures, ratings, or assessments might help?**
- **How can we be confident that fracture points and areas of greatest stress in our systems and infrastructure are being identified and addressed?**
- **How can we build resilience from the individual upwards as well as top down from government? What should be the narrative and the means of engagement with business and the public?**
- **What is the 'right' balance of service and manufacturing industry in the UK to create a resilient and growing economy?**
- **How can incentives be changed to encourage a longer-term view of investment?**
- **How to we build and encourage individual and personal resilience?**
- **How can we rebuild trust in national institutions and leadership?**
- **Could a social partnership model work to support UK-wide resilience?**

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Cityforum is grateful to the following organisations for their help with the development and support of the '2024 Resilience Round Table - Towards a blueprint for Resilience in 2035 - in association with OCSA':

The National Preparedness Commission (NPC) is an independent and non-political body, whose fundamental objective is to promote policies and actions to help the UK be significantly better prepared to avoid, mitigate, respond to, and recover from major shocks, threats and challenges.

In recent years a series of high-impact events have demonstrated how easily our established way of life can be disrupted by major events. Covid-19 not only brought wide-ranging economic consequences but has changed societal norms and working arrangements including the balance between citizens and their governments. The tectonic plates of geopolitics have also shifted in recent times. Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, coups in former African colonies and events in the Levant have all piled pressure on the post-WWII rules-based world order, while climate change is adding an, as yet uncontrollable degree of uncertainty to governments and societies.

As a result, we face new demands on how we strengthen ourselves, our physical, social and IT infrastructures, and our economic and financial systems, to cope and adapt to whatever arises. Individually and in combination, they affect how we mitigate and prepare to respond to the risks we face as a nation.

The National Preparedness Commission was created to promote better readiness for a major crisis or incident – seeking to achieve this by supporting policy change and other activities that will enable the UK to prevent, withstand, recover and 'build back better' from major disruptions.

The Commission's work is both strategic and practical. Recognising that what is needed to be better prepared for many shocks is the same whatever the initiating crisis or incident, we believe a 'threat agnostic' 'whole system' approach to preparedness is needed alongside the existing focus on specific known risks. We think the time has come to stop merely 'admiring the problem', and to bring decision-makers and experts from different sectors together to tackle issues head on, and harness collective capability and insight.

Preparedness is everyone's business, and it will take the participation of every element of society to respond to the challenge. The National Preparedness Commission is committed to enabling a better-prepared UK.

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BT is a systemically important part of the UK's national connectivity capability and as such enables the broadest range of industries to function and to operate in an efficient manner sharing information with customers, suppliers and internally. The same criticality applies to organisations of state from National Air Traffic (NATS) to UK Policing, Work and Pension, the tax Office, Health services and a myriad of public services around the UK. BT is therefore a vital structurally important part of the UK, ensuring the lights remain working, energy is distributed effectively, and that food is delivered on time to the point of need. BT is vital for lifeblood of the UK Economy, and because of this we regularly review and test our network and the services we provide, to ensure that we have appropriate contingency planning in place alongside effective interventions and resolutions.

Northrop Grumman UK is a growing British business, wholeheartedly committed to supporting the defence and national security of the United Kingdom and its allies. We have a proven track record of delivering advanced solutions to the defence, space and security community, working together to solve their hardest challenges across every domain. We are an industry leader in solutions that harness the latest in data science, machine learning and secure cloud transformation technology, delivered at pace and scale. Drawing on our global scale, we deliver integrated Information Advantage solutions as the key mission-winning discriminator and we are resolutely dedicated to creating, securing and exploiting this for our customers. Operating from more than ten sites across the UK, we sustain employment for more than 5,000 people in the many British SMEs and partners in our supply chain. As a British business we are committed to generating long-term prosperity and social value in the UK, investing in advanced R&D, sovereign IP and exportable solutions driving the creation of high-quality jobs.

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Surevine build secure, scalable collaboration environments for the most security conscious organisations who need to share highly sensitive information; joining people up securely and enabling a real-time response to cyber threats and incidents. Threatvine, built by Surevine, is an information sharing platform designed for secure cross-organisational collaboration and analysis. Threatvine unites financial services and wider critical national infrastructure, law enforcement and academia, moving beyond cyber-security information sharing to collaborative cyber-security intelligence analysis. Threatvine can help minimise risk and reduce fears, by allowing you to work together to be proactive and prepared against cybercrime; keeping you one step ahead of the cyber threat. Threatvine was built for the UK NCSC to power CiSP, the UK's national platform for cyber security information sharing. It was described by the Financial Times at launch as a "secure Facebook for cyber threats." Threatvine's appeal is global, from Japan to Brazil, and it enables compliance with regulations, such as NISD, mandating cyber incident reporting. It uses data integrations, including MISP, to allow enriched data analysis, which combined with the collaboration between people, means you can get real intelligence from your threat intelligence.

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About the Author

Stephen Hawker is a former senior member of the UK intelligence and security community. Since 2006 he has worked as an independent consultant providing insight to government and the commercial sector in the UK and overseas on national security and intelligence issues. He has also served as a member of the Advisory Board of BAE Systems Applied Intelligence. He is a member of the Security Vetting Appeals Panel (SVAP) and the Advisory Council on National Records and Archives (ACNRA).

Stephen has undertaken significant assignments at Board level in the public and private sectors including Capability Reviews of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), benchmarking reviews of overseas security and intelligence services and other capacity building and training in Africa and the Middle East.

In 2011 he undertook an independent international review of security clearance arrangements for the government of New Zealand.

Stephen has been a Non-Executive Director of FCO Services, Chairman of Critical-Link Ltd and an independent member of the FCO Consular Management Board. He was specialist adviser to the House of Lords sub-committee reviewing the EU's Internal Security Strategy in 2011 and one of the 'Critical Friends' advising the Home Office on security arrangements for the 2012 London Olympics.

Stephen serves as Senior Associate of Cityforum and offers guidance across a wide range of its activities.

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cityforum cutting through

Cityforum has been contributing to public policy debate since 1990. The organisation comprises a small, trusted, independent group of experienced individuals, respected for their intellectual honesty, knowledge and extensive contacts spanning the private, public and not-for-profit sectors at all levels. In addition, it works closely with a large network of associates, providing depth, breadth and genuine expertise and practical experience. They include a former Cabinet Minister, a retired Member of the Episcopal Bench, public service officials, military, police, intelligence and security specialists, senior medical figures and business executives, academics, journalists and publishers. They contribute in London and elsewhere to Cityforum events and to the studies we undertake, including interviewing at all levels in organisations and sectors of interest.

From its inception working with the Bank of England on the Basel Accords; with the Reserve Bank of South Africa on the transition from apartheid; hosting and planning with the Scottish Government the Adam Smith Bicentenary; Cityforum has been active in an increasing number of areas that now include collaborations in security, policing, crime and justice, emergency services, critical national infrastructure, cyber, privacy, health and social care, transport, financial services, regulation and energy.

It researches and publishes reports and develops and hosts events in the UK and, where invited, around the world. As part of its bespoke advisory and strategic guidance service the organisation also acts as a ‘candid friend’ to senior public-sector executives, and undertakes studies and reviews, providing sound impartial advice and specialist judgement to assist in meeting the enormous challenges faced by the public service today.

With over 25 years shaping strategic thinking, building understanding and adding value within and between diverse groups, the organisation has a proven track record. Its highly regarded round table discussions and smaller conclaves are well known both for bringing together an enviable mix of decision makers and practitioners and for stimulating new thinking in response to some of the most difficult contemporary public policy challenges. Its reports are succinct and written in readable English rather than in management speak loaded with acronyms.

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