SAMPLE // PRELIMINARY REPORT

The Preliminary Report

A complete preliminary report, disguised, as it was delivered 3 working days after one 90-minute session with the sponsoring executive. This is the document, not a summary of one.



BEFORE YOU READ IT

What This Is, and Why We Publish It

Most firms describe what they would produce. This is the thing itself: a real preliminary report, disguised the way every case we publish is disguised, so you can judge the work rather than the brochure.

What has been changed	The client name, the country, the dates, the size of the business and the exact figures. The sector, the mechanism, the sequence and the order of magnitude are unchanged, because without them the document teaches nothing.
How it was produced	One 90-minute session with the executive who would sponsor the work, plus 4 documents read beforehand. Delivered in writing 3 working days later.
What it concluded	That an investigation was warranted, and what it would cost. About a third of preliminary reports conclude the opposite, and those are written with the same care.
What it costs	The first meeting has no fee. If it finds nothing worth investigating, there is no report and nothing to pay. If it finds something, the report costs US$2,500, deducted from the investigation fee if you go ahead.

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01 // THE POSITION

An Investigation Is Warranted

The Group is running 2 different definitions of plant availability. Operations plans maintenance against one, and Commercial contracts against the other. Neither function is in error, no document reconciles the 2, and the maintenance programme has been relaunched 3 times against a number it could not meet.

On the evidence from one session and 4 documents, this is an alignment condition rather than a resourcing problem, and it is findable. We recommend an investigation across all 5 defences, covering the generation business and the services arm, over 12 to 14 weeks.

What this is based on

- One 90-minute session with the Chief Operating Officer, who would sponsor the work, held on 12 February.
- Board papers for the 2 most recent quarters, covering the maintenance programme.
- The current organisation chart and the delegated authority schedule.
- The internal review of the first programme relaunch.

> This document rests on one session and 4 documents. It is a position, not a finding. Section 08 sets out what an investigation would have to establish before any of this could be written as fact.

02 // WHAT WE ARE CONFIDENT ABOUT

3 Things

CONFIDENT

2 definitions of availability are in active use

Operations plans against technical availability, measured after planned outages. Commercial contracts against declared availability, which is what is offered to the offtaker. The 2 numbers differed by 6 to 9 percentage points in each of the 4 quarters shown in the board papers.

Source: the 2 board papers, read against each other, and described independently in the session.

CONFIDENT

No document reconciles them

Both numbers are reported, in different packs, to different committees, on different cycles. No paper among the 4 documents shows both figures on the same page.

Source: the 4 documents, and confirmed in the session as far as the sponsor is aware.

CONFIDENT

The same remedy has been applied 3 times

The maintenance backlog programme was launched in 2022, relaunched in 2023 with more resource and relaunched again in 2025 with a changed reporting line. Performance improved for about 2 quarters after each relaunch, then returned to its previous level.

Source: the internal review, with dates confirmed in the session.

If adding resource were the fix, it would have held after the second relaunch.

03 // WHAT WE ARE NOT CONFIDENT ABOUT

2 Things

NOT ESTABLISHED

Whether the gap is known and tolerated, or genuinely unseen

These have different causes and different fixes. If the 2 teams know and have adapted around it, the condition sits in escalation. If they do not, it sits in communication. One session with one executive cannot tell us which, and the answer changes the intervention substantially.

NOT ESTABLISHED

Whether the offtake penalties are the largest cost, or the smallest

Penalties are visible and counted. Deferred output and faster wear on the equipment are neither, and in comparable cases the invisible costs have been the larger number by some margin. We have not seen enough to say so here.

> These 2 are named deliberately. A preliminary report that is equally confident about everything has not been tested by the person writing it.

04 // THE 5 DEFENCES

Scored on What Was Heard

Each defence is scored on the evidence from the session and the documents, not on what the Group says about itself. The longer the bar, the wider the gap.

Strategy Wide gap	**Gap 4 of 5**	The Group's stated priority is availability. 2 functions are working to 2 different measures of it, both in good faith and both able to show they are meeting their target. The strategy document does not say which measure governs.
Communication Wide gap	**Gap 4 of 5**	Both figures are reported accurately and separately. The reporting is not at fault. The missing piece is a document that carries both. The sponsor did not know the size of the gap before the session.
Trust Holding	**Gap 2 of 5**	The internal review named the difference in an annex. It was raised and written down, and the person who raised it is still in post and has since been promoted. Raising a problem here does not appear to cost anything. That is a real strength, and it narrows where the condition can be.
Accountability Partly open	**Gap 3 of 5**	Each relaunch had a named owner and a date. No relaunch had an owner for the reconciliation itself, because it is nobody's deliverable. Ownership exists for the programme, not for the cause.
Escalation Wide gap	**Gap 4 of 5**	The annex is the test case. A correct observation was recorded and did not travel. There is no sign it was suppressed, and no sign anyone had to act on it within any period. The route existed. The deadline did not.

04 // THE 5 DEFENCES, CONTINUED

Where the Gaps Line Up

Strategy, communication and escalation are open in the same place: reconciling the 2 numbers has no owner, no document and no deadline. Accountability is partly open. Trust is holding.

3 defences open at a single point is the pattern that makes an investigation worth running. It is also why the 3 relaunches did not hold. Each one strengthened accountability, the defence that least needed it.

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3 relaunches strengthened the one defence that was already working.

05 // WHAT THE CONDITION IS COSTING

Built in the Session, Conservatively

These figures were built with the sponsor in the session, from the Group's own numbers, taking the lowest defensible figure at each step. They are indicative and would be rebuilt properly in the first phase.

Component	Basis	Monthly
Offtake availability penalties	The Group's own figure, 4-quarter average	**US$1.4m**
Deferred output	Unserved capacity at the contracted rate, low case	**US$1.9m**
Unplanned maintenance premium	Reactive against planned cost, the Group's own ratio	**US$0.6m**
Programme cost, spread over time	3 relaunches over 4 years	**US$0.3m**
Total	**Low case**	**US$4.2m**

Assumptions, named

- Deferred output is priced at the contracted rate, not the spot rate. Spot would raise it.
- Faster wear on the equipment is left out entirely. It is real, and we cannot size it from here.
- No management time is counted in any line.
- The 4-quarter average smooths one quarter with an outage that may be unrelated.

> US$4.2m a month is the low case. The point of this number is not precision. It sets the order of magnitude against which the cost of an investigation should be read.

06 // WHAT AN INVESTIGATION WOULD EXAMINE

Scope

In: the defences	All 5, across the generation business and the services arm. Trust scores low and would still be examined, because a defence that is holding is worth confirming.
In: the record	Board and committee papers across the 4 years and all 3 relaunches. The delegated authority schedule and its revisions. Maintenance planning documents and the offtake reporting pack. The internal review in full, including annexes.
In: the sessions	The executive team and the layer below, about 18 people, 90 minutes each, with the same questions for everyone and nothing attributed. Both functions, and the finance team that reports both numbers.
Out: technical	Plant engineering, maintenance method and whether the technical availability figure is calculated correctly. If a technical review is needed, it should be separate work by a firm that does it.
Out: people	No assessment of any individual and no recommendation about anybody's employment. Blame sits outside the terms of reference, in writing.

The question the investigation has to answer

Which of the 2 availability numbers did each decision-maker believe was in charge when they took each decision, and what were they working from when they believed it?

07 // IF NOTHING CHANGES

The Pattern, Extended

This is not a warning. It is the pattern of the last 4 years carried forward, on the Group's own figures.

1 **A fourth relaunch within about 18 months.**

The cycle so far has been about 2 years, and the current programme is at the point where the previous 2 were replaced. A relaunch costs US$1.8m on the Group's own figures, plus about 9 months of management attention.

2 **It will improve results for about 2 quarters.**

Each previous relaunch did, for a reason: the attention itself closes the gap for a while. The missing document would close it for good.

3 **The credibility cost compounds.**

Each relaunch of the same programme makes the next one harder to fund and harder for the operating teams to take seriously. The internal review recorded this after the second.

4 **The condition shows itself only when something fails.**

Neither number is wrong, both are reported correctly, and no routine report shows the gap. Something has to go wrong for it to surface, as it did in each of the 3 earlier cycles.

> At US$4.2m a month, 18 months to the next relaunch is US$75m, before the relaunch itself.

08 // RECOMMENDATION

What We Propose, and What It Costs

RECOMMENDED

An investigation: 5 defences, 2 business units

12 to 14 weeks. It ends with a findings report, an alignment register and a costed plan to fix the cause. Fee: US$68,000, fixed at scoping. It does not vary with the number of days worked.

DO NOW

One page, before the work starts

A single monthly page showing technical and declared availability side by side, with the gap and its cause. It costs nothing, needs no decision above the Chief Operating Officer and will change what the executive team looks at within one cycle. We recommend it whether or not the investigation goes ahead.

NOT RECOMMENDED

A fourth relaunch of the maintenance programme

On the evidence, the programme is not the problem. A fourth relaunch would cost US$1.8m and produce the same 2 quarters.

The 4 conditions

- The Chief Operating Officer sponsors the work and can act on what it names.
- Blame sits outside the terms of reference, in writing.
- No restructuring of the areas in scope during the first phase.
- The Group receives the whole findings report, including the uncomfortable parts.

Timing

COULD START	FIRST PHASE COMPLETE	FINDINGS REPORT	REGISTER AND HANDOVER
Within 3 weeks of approval	Week 3	Week 11	Weeks 13–14

Prepared by FranklySpeaking. Confidential to the addressee. It rests on one session and 4 documents, and nothing in it should be treated as an established finding. Reference PR-114.

AFTER THE SAMPLE

What Happened Next

The Group put the single monthly page in place within 3 weeks. The gap was 7.4 percentage points in the first month it was measured. The investigation went ahead and found 2 further conditions the preliminary report had not reached.

What your version would look like

- The same sections, in the same order.
- Your own numbers, built with you in the session, at the low end of what is defensible.
- Your 5 defences scored on what is heard, not on what is claimed.
- One recommendation, which may be that no investigation is needed.
- In your hands within 3 working days.

What it costs

The first meeting has no fee. If there is nothing worth investigating, we say so and you pay nothing. If there is something, the preliminary report costs US$2,500, deducted from the investigation fee if you go ahead.

Start with 90 Minutes

With the executive who would sponsor the work. Questions, not a presentation. A clear answer at the end, whichever way it goes.

Book the first meeting | Take the 4-minute check