

Joint Committee on the Palace of Westminster

Oral evidence: [Consultation on the Restoration and Renewal of the Palace of Westminster](#),

HC 870

Monday 7 March 2016

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Members present: Chris Grayling (Chair), Baroness Stowell of Beeston (Chairman), Chris Bryant, Lord Carter of Coles, Lord Deighton, Neil Gray, Lord Laming, Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg, Baroness Smith of Basildon, Lord Wallace of Tankerness.

Questions 55-97

Witnesses: **Mr Hugh Feilden MA (Cantab) DipArch RIBA SCA MAPM**, Chair of the Conservation Advisory Group, Royal Institute of British Architects, **Mr David Hirst CEng FICE**, Chair of the Management Panel, Institution of Civil Engineers, **Ms Lynda Jubb IHBC BCAS FRICS**, Chair of the Building Conservation Forum, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, and **Mr Nick Mead CEng FCIBSE**, President, Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers, gave evidence.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston (Chairman): Good afternoon everyone, and thank you very much for coming to this sitting of the Joint Committee on restoration and renewal of the Palace of Westminster. Before I invite you to introduce yourselves, I have a little bit of housekeeping to get out of the way. Do any of my fellow members of the Committee need to declare any interests before we get started?

Lord Carter of Coles: I am chair of Her Majesty's Government's Property Advisory Panel. Also, in 2009 I wrote a report on operational efficiency that led to the formation of the Government Property Unit.

Q55 Baroness Stowell of Beeston (Chairman): Thank you. My name is Tina Stowell. I am the co-Chairman of the restoration and renewal Joint Committee. Chris Grayling is the co-Chair. Could I ask you to declare whether you have any interests that we need to take account of before we get going?

Mr Feilden: I am on the PED framework for conservation work on the Palace of Westminster, so I work here already.

Ms Jubb: My firm undertook a commission between September and December 2013 for this project.

Q56 Baroness Stowell of Beeston (Chairman): Thank you very much for declaring those interests. I think it is worth my saying for the record that this Committee has no involvement whatever in any procurement decisions to do with the restoration and renewal project, either in the past or now. You have been invited here today to give evidence from the perspective of the organisations you represent or from your professional perspective, and not evidence that is in any way connected to any kind of commercial or financial interests. That is not relevant to this Committee. I am grateful to you none the less.

We want to cover quite a lot of ground in our questions this afternoon. There are four of you, but I do not want you to feel that every time we ask a question, all four of you must answer. If you do know something relevant to the topics we are covering, please indicate that you want to contribute to our discussion. Perhaps the best way to start is to ask each of you to introduce yourselves briefly.

Mr Hirst: My name is David Hirst. I am here to represent the Institution of Civil Engineers, which is a global civil engineering professional organisation of 86,000 members. I am a fellow of the ICE and Chairman of the ICE's risk management expert group. I am managing director of Ainsty Risk, a professional risk management consultancy.

Ms Jubb: My name is Lynda Jubb, and I am here to represent the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. I am the Chair of the Historic Building Conservation Forum. The RICS has 100,000 qualified members globally and 85,000 practising in the UK.

Mr Feilden: My name is Hugh Feilden and I am a partner in Feilden and Mawson architects. I represent the Royal Institute of British Architects and I am the current Chairman of its conservation group.

Mr Mead: Good afternoon. I am Nick Mead and I am the president of the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers. We have 20,000 members globally. Basically, the institution supports engineering to make buildings operate and work correctly.

Q57 Baroness Stowell of Beeston (Chairman): Thank you all very much, and thank you again for giving up some of your time. We want to cover four areas in our discussion with you. First, there is the current state of the Palace and the justification for the works that might form part of restoration and renewal. Secondly, there are the various delivery options—the methods of fulfilling the project that were covered in the options report that we received last summer. Thirdly, we want to talk about the scope—the extent to which we might want to carry out works here at the Palace of Westminster. Finally, we will discuss some of the governance matters. We will focus our questions as far as we can under those four headings.

I will start off with a general invitation to tell us what you believe the current state or condition of the Palace of Westminster to be that would lead us to want to embark on this major project of restoration and renewal.

Ms Jubb: I understand that in 2012, the maintenance backlog was estimated at 40% of the reinstatement value. At that time, that was £1.8 billion. I have crudely indexed that for you, and it now comes to £2.14 billion. If it was 40%, it is probably more than 40% of that now and that is a very substantial maintenance backlog. This could be accounted for by the great complexity of the buildings—their occupation, protection regimes and scale and the procurement regimes that are governing here. A large number of components will be reaching the end of their life cycle. For instance, the Victorian interventions tend to have a life cycle of 100 to 150 years and the mid-20th century interventions have a shorter life cycle, so unfortunately you are facing end of life on a large number of components.

The reporting has been hampered by access. In other words, the full scale of the disrepair is not really known. Access into voids is hampered by asbestos, and away from the normal deterioration that all buildings encounter there has been impact from climate change. For example, most of the churches that we work on have to have major changes to the rainwater disposal systems because the storm surges are so much more intense than what they were designed for. You have a number of factors that are working against you in trying to stay on top of the condition.

My understanding is that, since about the millennium, there has been intensive work to try to catch up on this maintenance backlog, but unfortunately you have reached a point now where you accept that it cannot actually be achieved in the way in which you have been working. That is understandable.

Q58 Baroness Stowell of Beeston (Chairman): Thank you. Does anybody else from the expert panel want to give us their view on the condition of the building?

Mr Mead: My viewpoint will mainly be of the mechanical and electrical services of the building, which generally have a much shorter life than the structures. Over the years of its operation, the building has been repaired and put together piecemeal. We are currently in an age in which the demand for electronics and energy efficient products is probably the greatest it has ever been. A number of the elements of this building are now way behind. Through a company called Environ, which has been doing the maintenance here, I have an awareness of some of the issues with fire alarms and with the pipeworks corroding. It is a real patchwork quilt of services which in the operation of a building like this is critical for loss of power, loss of heat or overheating. Whereas a burnout of a cable may seem insignificant, the consequence is quite major. To have major works done in those areas is now at a critical stage, bearing in mind the aesthetics and heritage of the building, and what is hidden behind. There is a lot of work to be done and it needs to be reviewed carefully.

Q59 Lord Deighton: Can I explore that a little bit further? Could you just run through the risks were we only to attend to these as part of the ongoing maintenance, as has been the historical practice? What could go wrong and what is the likelihood of it going wrong? I know it is a hard question.

Mr Mead: Electrical cables is your first port of call. A life of 15 to 20 years is typical for a cable. You have a number of hidden cables so you do not know what state they are in. The worst consequence is a fire and the catastrophic effect of that, particularly with the

amount of wood finishes in the building. It is also of a more destructive nature. It is the consequence of losing your power in the middle of a debate or losing your lighting. The pipework is of an age when it corrodes from the inside and you will suddenly get a leak, loss of heat, damage to fabric finishes and things like that. Rainwater pipes and drainage get blocked and they were not designed to be easily repaired, so there is disruption of cutting into finishes and rigging up. On fire alarms and security, modern technology is so far advanced in its qualities, speed of reaction and the quality of service that replacing them gives more resilience.

If there was a problem in, say, this room, trying to trace where it is between the main incoming source and the room could require a lot of disruptive work to try to understand where the fault goes, whereas reinstalling those services and managing them on different circuits and with circuit breakers means you can easily and quickly get in and bring them back into use or look at an alternative source.

Q60 Lord Deighton: As a follow-up, you talked about cables typically needing replacement after 15 or 20 years and you talked about the pipework. What is the age profile of what we have here compared with when you would have expected it to be replaced?

Mr Mead: You are certainly well beyond the extent of the recommended life in a lot of areas. Some areas, such as fire alarms, are in excess of 30 years. Some pipework is probably bordering 30 or 40 years. A lot of essential plant is probably at the end of its useful life, if not just from a maintenance point of view then from energy efficiency and so on.

Mr Hirst: I would add that towards the end of the life you get quite a big step up in how those fail. Understanding which one is going to fail is very difficult. What you do know is that the likelihood increases significantly past the end of the design life.

Q61 Chris Grayling (Chair): Can I ask you to roll the clock ahead to 2030? If we have done nothing except routine maintenance, what would you expect our experience to be?

Mr Mead: In terms of routine maintenance, you will find circuits and cables probably fraying and their protective covering beginning to degrade. You will probably see joints leaking on pipework. If you try to isolate anything such as valves they will probably be rusted or frozen, so you will probably find you have to do a lot more cutting in and freezing of pipework to do repairs rather than going to a local isolation point. A valve on a pipe system will probably isolate a large area so that will be disruptive. If you have a problem in one room you might lose heat to 10 or 12 rooms because of the way the system is configured, so a lot of the problem will be the response time for fixing the fault. Routine maintenance-wise, components will probably be old and not on the market, so any modern components will need the system to be modified to accommodate them. Again you will see a cost and time element on that.

Q62 Lord Laming: The picture you portray does not come as a surprise to us, if I may say so. You have seen the delivery options that have been put before us. Recognising

that this is a grade 1 listed building, what do you think will be the most important challenges that we face and what do you think is the most appropriate way to deliver and to overcome those challenges?

Mr Hirst: The big challenge is understanding what is there, and to understand that and to get a clearer view of what works you need full access to the whole building. Without understanding that—Nick Mead was describing the connection to services through the building—it is very difficult to understand what the replacement programme ought to be. So I would say the biggest challenge is understanding the existing services and the condition of the fabric, and having full scope of that.

Q63 Lord Laming: You would need to have access to the whole building, did you say?

Mr Hirst: Particularly for the services side, yes.

Mr Feilden: Do not underestimate—I am sure you don't—the problem of asbestos in this building. As soon as you open up a void and find asbestos, you have to stop everything, tent up and make it safe. If you are doing it bit by bit, that really slows the process down and accelerates and increases the disruption, and you may find yourself doing that again and again, because asbestos is not the only nasty substance around. That is why I personally would recommend going for an option of partial or full decant—simply to have operational effectiveness.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston (Chairman): Before we get into a discussion on the decant options, may I ask Lady Smith if she wishes to come in on this part of our discussion of conditions?

Q64 Baroness Smith of Basildon: You have partially answered the question that I was going to ask, but not entirely. It was really looking at the heritage implications we have here—it is quite a unique building in that sense. In terms of the services that are provided, all of us here have spent some time in the basement and seen the complication of wires and various bits and pieces down there. May we get a sense from you how complicated this is? Is it unusually complicated, or are there lessons that can be learned from other, similar refurbishments? Or is there nothing similar? How unique is this, and how complicated is it?

Mr Feilden: A building is a building; the fact that it is listed or a heritage building makes the approach more respectful and more careful, but we are still dealing with the same problems and issues as in any other building. I would say that this is a unique situation, simply because of the scale of the building. We have probably all worked on large and complex historic buildings, but this is a very big complex to manage.

Mr Mead: I worked on the MOD Whitehall, which was a large government building requiring a large amount of decant and works. One of the main things they found is what we tend to find with buildings this age. You talked about the basement with a mass of wires, but what happens generally with maintenance is if something goes down, they run a new cable and the old cable gets left in, so you will probably find that a third of the cables down there

are actually not doing anything. At the time, it was easier for them to think, “Well, why spend the money ripping it out; we will save that money?” A lot of work was done, so there is a lot of work to be done in tracing. That is very typical with old buildings.

The other thing you will find is that you don’t always know where those cables serve, so when you get a problem, if you go and try to do a repair, you lose more than the area you are in. That is quite typical with old buildings and it was one of the big problems they found with MOD Whitehall. It was easier to know that everything was coming out, rather than just trying to do bits and pieces.

Q65 Baroness Smith of Basildon: So it is quicker doing it as a whole.

Mr Mead: Yes. In my previous employment, I was looking at Canon Row. That was a decanted building, but the security hub was being left in there. The amount of work that has to be done to make sure that you are not taking out the wrong cable, particularly in that case, is probably half the cost of the job, because you just have to have so much manpower to trace every cable through and do all the testing of the circuits to ensure that that part is kept operational. When you are doing your power shutdowns, you have to make sure there is temporary power. Regardless of whether it is a heritage building, any old building with possible continued services going through it is a very complex job.

Q66 Baroness Stowell of Beeston (Chairman): We have inevitably segued into the next part of the discussion, which is about decant options. It would be useful to hear at least one or two of you describe the main risks and opportunities. The options in the report that we received last summer fall into three categories—all in one go; ongoing; and doing it in two or a small number of phases. Would you consider that there are any main risks or opportunities that are exclusive to those different options, and which are worth putting on the record today in clear, simple terms while we are all here?

Mr Hirst: Certainly. As a pragmatic solution to get the job done, option 3 has clear advantages over the other 2 options.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston (Chairman): And option 3 is?

Mr Hirst: Option 3 is a full decant. Emptying the building and allowing the investigation works to be carried out, and providing clear access to a range of contractors over a period of time to do the works, offers the best, simplest and lowest-risk option. It is not without risk—there are still significant risks with that option—but it is the most straightforward option. Option 2, by contrast—

Q67 Baroness Stowell of Beeston (Chairman): Which is the two or three-parts type option?

Mr Hirst: It is the partial decant—one half decants. It would probably include quite a lot of working around existing activities. If you thought of it as a 50:50 split, you would still end up taking up a lot more space to allow the existing activities to carry on. It would be a

very complex activity to manage. It would be quite difficult to co-ordinate and more expensive as a result.

Option 1 is basically the continuation of a maintenance programme but on a larger scale, and not decanting. We would never really see the end of it—that is my opinion—because it would be beyond the working lifetime of most people involved, and the scope of works would necessarily change during the lifetime of that sort of scale of works. Option 3 is best value for money; option 2, which is the partial decant, would be complex, but is a possible way forward; and option 1 is, frankly, a very difficult one to see the end of.

Ms Jubb: I agree. The biggest problem with option 1—I was just thinking about comparable work at the V&A, or Historic Royal Palaces, or National Trust buildings, of which I have direct experience—is that usually you have a closure period, or you have part-closure. Therefore, you have some capacity, in terms of what a decant functions around, but as Nick has pointed out, you would not necessarily be able to isolate them to work on them, even if you had what the report refers to as “swing space”, which sounds quite jazzy, to put some of your functions in.

In that sort of 12-phase programme, which is option 1, you would need a 12th of the building to be void at the moment for you to move into, and as I understand it you do not have that luxury, so I think you are automatically thinking about a substantial decant in order to achieve this work, and all the costs and uncertainty that that brings with it.

What I would say, however, is that if this is a life’s work, it is a life’s work. I think the original refurbishment under Charles Barry took 32 years, and the problem that he had was asking the Members to move between Chambers. I think he had very great difficulty in getting space relinquished in order to do the work and that was the primary cause of delay at that time.

There is precedent for this, of course, in 1941 as well, when the House was decanted over to Church House, and there were similar problems in persuading people to move, and so on. It is very disruptive, but in terms of life safety-risk for construction workers, you have to understand that we are asking people to go into spaces where there is asbestos, and to work in difficult and dangerous conditions. Also, there is the duty of care that the people who are working here have towards you. That relationship is extremely difficult to manage and the costs of getting it wrong are unconscionable.

Q68 Lord Deighton: In terms of the UK industry’s capacity to deliver this project, whether it is at the big end of overall programme management and the significant engineering parts, or the rather specialised trades that might be required to go through the heritage aspects of this work, how well equipped are we to embark on a project of this nature?

Mr Mead: We have a very good recent case with the Olympics.

Q69 Lord Deighton: Not much heritage there.

Mr Mead: No, but in terms of the trades—the plasterers, the builders, the glazing people, the electricians and mechanical engineers—they do the majority of the works. The specialist trades—the masonry and people like that—will obviously need to be looked at. If you had work over a period of time and it was programmed—I know it is climbing slightly on delivery; but if you find you have got a good delivery team set up, so it is programmed well, planned well on paper, I think the industry can cope with it in the UK, not to say there aren't capable companies outside the UK as well.

Mr Hirst: We have moved forward quite a long way in terms of the overall programme management capability and understanding how risks are best managed within a contract structure, and certainly we are better equipped now with the framework agreements to allow risk to be allocated where it can best be managed. In terms of the high-level programme management, I think we are very well equipped to deal with those points in this country. Regarding the trades and the craft skills, I would defer to other colleagues on this panel.

Ms Jubb: I would have thought we were under-capacity in the heritage sector. We do not have capacity to deliver all the work that is required of us, and there is a very substantial investment in skills and capacity building already in the heritage sector. I will give you a bit of a comparison: since 1994, the Heritage Lottery Fund has placed £6.9 billion-worth of heritage funding, most of it match funded. You can understand the impact that a project of this size could have on our sector, and I think we could turn that into a positive and say, "This is an opportunity for us to do skills development and capacity building," but that is not costed in the options.

Mr Feilden: There is certainly an opportunity for adding apprenticeship schemes and training schemes to the delivery programme. This was done in a minor way in the restoration of the Treasury building, and was very successful. I think there is also a considerable opportunity for directed research in the early stages of the programme, in that there is still quite a lot we do not know about how buildings of this type perform—even simple things like the rate of heat loss through the walls and how water vapour moves through the fabric. There is uncertainty as to what the basic physics of those mechanisms are, and that affects how you design and approach the work to the buildings. It is not just at the trade and craft skills level; there is also a research element, and you have a large enough project to make quite a difference to what is going on in the rest of the country.

Q70 Baroness Smith of Basildon: I have two separate questions. I will try one, and if no one else comes back I will go with the other. The first one is about something you said about managing the risk between the different options. I think it was you, Mr Hirst, who mentioned it. Between options 2 and 3—the partial decant and the complete decant—there is obviously an increased cost in the partial decant. I don't know if you could—not quantify in terms of numbers, but proportionally. It wouldn't be double the cost, but roughly how would that work?

The second point is timescales. If you have a whole decant, could it be done more quickly than it could if you try and do it in two halves, or in separate parts? Again, what kind of difference is there in timescales, and do you think the timescales in the original report—the original impact assessment—are realistic?

Mr Hirst: I will take the second point first. It is slightly more straightforward than the first one, Baroness. Overall timescales, from what I have seen in the reports, seem reasonable. Again, a lot of it is unknown, as we don't know what is in the voids and what is hidden. So based on the available information it seems reasonable—the time frames that are available.

In terms of the timescale differences between option 2 and option 3—the full decant in option 3 and the partial decant in option 2—the overall work will be done in a much more effective and efficient way in option 3, having a clearer workspace to go at. While that may not all be needed, in terms of how that work starts and finishes there may be some overlap. They would be moving into the building and moving out of the building in phases in option 3.

In option 2 you would be moving in and moving out of both those options in phases as well, so there will be quite a lot of inefficient working if you are splitting into two phases. The timescales in the report seem similar. In terms of costs, again, it is very difficult to understand, without looking into the detailed nature of the work that is going to be carried out, how those would compare. Clearly, if you have access to and can look at the whole infrastructure of the building, and look at how it works, and make design decisions on that basis, it will be more straightforward—how much it will be very difficult to quantify.

Q71 Baroness Smith of Basildon: Is it easier to deal with unforeseen complications if you have a whole decant, rather than a partial decant, or does it not make much difference?

Mr Hirst: The contractor has more options and more choices on how he works and where he works, and on how it is managed, in a full decant. There is a lot more flexibility in how they can operate within this building.

Mr Feilden: As part of the design team, I would say that if you have the full decant, you have an opportunity to look at the building as a whole and develop building-wide strategies, particularly for the M&E systems, which need to work as a whole. You can also look at how you compartmentalise those systems, because each M&E system has to be commissioned as a whole. If you have something that goes wrong or has to be dealt with, you need to look at how that relates to the operation of the building in future so that your systems align with one another. Does that make sense?

Baroness Smith of Basildon: It does, yes.

Mr Feilden: So if you are doing a partial decant, you lose a certain amount of that ability to have an overall strategy that is coherent. You are doing it in bits, which has a downside.

Mr Mead: The third issue with a partial decant is health and safety. Because of the way the systems are configured, if you still have half the building, or parts of the building, live, you have the potential for live cables and live pipes. If you had a full decant, you would know that you can shut everything down. That is something else that needs to be considered with the operation of it all.

Ms Jubb: I have two small counter-points. I agree entirely about the full decant, but we were chatting before we came in, and we didn't think that any contractor was going to work on the whole building at the same time—there wouldn't be anybody with that kind of capacity—so they would still be working in phases. The partial decant option is not massively shorter than the whole decant, because they would have to work in phases. The other problem you would have is that you would be building concurrent failure into the life cycle. The problem that you have now, where everything wears out in one go, is what you would be facing in future. For a building like this, you would really like to have a look at what happens after the project is complete, because we don't just walk away and do no more maintenance. It is going to need to be ongoing, so part of the future-proofing that you will hopefully be able to build into the project.

Q72 Baroness Stowell of Beeston (Chairman): That is an argument in favour of doing it in two phases.

Ms Jubb: It is a consideration. I don't think it really swings it. It is just something to bear in mind.

Q73 Baroness Smith of Basildon: Could you build in a maintenance programme, a bit like the French do with their roads, where you don't wait for something to wear out but have a rolling programme going through the building? You could plan that in.

Ms Jubb: Yes, and that is very similar to proposal 1, with the 32-year life cycle.

Q74 Baroness Smith of Basildon: No, I meant once you have done the complete refurb you could have a rolling programme of maintenance. You wouldn't have to wait for something to wear out.

Ms Jubb: Yes, it would all be sectionalised, so you could deal with it in parts.

Q75 Baroness Stowell of Beeston (Chairman): Okay, from what you are saying, I think the advantages of doing it in one go are around cost and risk, but by doing it in one go we won't necessarily do it substantially more quickly. The time it would take would be around about the same as if we were to do it in phases.

Ms Jubb: I do not think it would be the same. I would have to have a look at the figures and maybe programme it in more detail. The speed of delivery is not necessarily your only priority.

Q76 Neil Gray: Going back to contractors, how easy would it be, and what possibilities are there, to ensure that contractors are procured from across these isles so that this isn't a London capital project but one that can benefit SMEs across the country?

Mr Feilden: From experience of working here at the moment, the problem is more about the security systems and access to the site. If you are doing the bit-by-bit process and you are having deliveries offsite through security there, it makes it much more difficult for contractors from a long way away to manage, particularly if they are smaller contractors. If you have a partial or a full decant, you have a bigger site area where the contractors can operate, and you can manage the security in that compound in a different way from those parts of the Palace that are still in use. That will have a big impact on how you can deliver and on the sort of contractors who can take on the work. We will come on to SMEs later.

Q77 Baroness Stowell of Beeston (Chairman): Is there something you want to say about SMEs?

Mr Feilden: The security situation makes it quite difficult for small operators to work here, because if you are a two or three-man band getting everybody through the security system and having to have only secure people at the delivery point slows things down in a way that these guys simply are not used to even thinking about, let alone doing. The bigger contractors can manage that more easily, so if you want SMEs involved—I think that is a very good thing to want—you need a way of getting the bigger contractors to help the smaller guys to operate on site.

Ms Jubb: Packaging is the key, because the specialists you need to do work like this are not all in London. You will need to be able to engage with that part of the market place. The heritage sector is characterised by small, independent firms, so in order to access the skills you need, we need some strategy to package the work to make it attractive to them.

Q78 Mr Rees-Mogg: Can I apologise for being late? There was an urgent question in the Chamber that I was listening into. Ms Jubb, I want to follow up on your answer about the under-capacity of the skilled workforce for the heritage aspect and the possibilities for training. Is there a risk that if all of these people are trained, there will not be enough for them to do once the project is completed on the basis of the £6.9 billion of work done under lottery funding over an extended period against what we are doing in a short period? How can that be managed? Does that tie in with your suggestion that the heritage side may need to run rather longer than the wiring and plumbing side?

Ms Jubb: You have nailed it. There is a tension there because we have got an eternal commitment to our historic places, so ideally we would have a smooth supply of work, but the economy and the sector are not like that. We have all got used to project working, so that is how it is, but in undertaking a very large project like this, there is an obligation to think about business continuity for the people who work with you.

I will give you an example. The people who were approached to do the point cloud survey in this building for obvious reasons were asked whether this would form more than a third of that business's turnover, and of course it did. So it presented an unacceptable risk to the business, because you would not put all your eggs in one basket. Those clients who have stayed with the small businesses through and through will not be turned away. They have to

be cared for because they are also curating the historic environment, so I think it is one aspect of your programme that needs some attention.

Q79 Mr Rees-Mogg: It is difficult both ways. If we train people, we will train more than will be necessary, but if we do not, we may stop important heritage work taking place in other projects, because we will suck all of the supply into the Palace of Westminster.

Ms Jubb: Again, you are leading me into dangerous territory, because the RICS—in fact, all of the institutions here—have participated in the “Cut the VAT” campaign. As you know, until 2012, VAT on historic buildings was zero-rated and now it is 20%. A lot of new build is not zero-rated, and that is one of the reasons we have a capacity problem: just for tax reasons it is less efficient to deliver this kind of work.

Mr Rees-Mogg: As you mentioned that, I had better declare a tangential interest: I live in listed properties in both London and Somerset, so I am affected directly by what you are campaigning for.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston (Chairman): We have noted both the declaration of interests and also the effective use of this opportunity to make your point.

Q80 Chris Bryant: Shouldn't we be training lots and lots of people so that there are people to look after Jacob's house? *[Interruption.]* His houses, sorry.

Ms Jubb: It is an overall sustainability issue—

Q81 Chris Bryant: Sorry, I was being slightly facetious. The better point is, as I understand it, the encaustic tiles scheme that has been going on has been quite successful. There was the danger that that company would be rather overwhelmed by the work it was doing and that that would put it at risk if we were to withdraw, but that has been quite successful.

Ms Jubb: No small business is going to turn work away. Nobody wants to do that, but as I say, it imposes a risk and with it is an ethical duty to manage the risk.

If it means that a big project like this comes along and sort of wipes out the sector, that would be irresponsible, so part of our planning for this project has to be around another awful word, “legacy”, and what happens afterwards. Like you say, those who have trained here could be meeting the skills gap. That is a massive opportunity and I hope that that is how it works out. Also, we can be making an exemplar project here about how you build in training and skills sustainability to large programmes.

Q82 Lord Carter of Coles: Can you give a sense of the numbers of people involved in heritage restoration work and the distortion that would occur? How many thousands of people are engaged in it now?

Ms Jubb: I do not know. I can find out.

Q83 Lord Carter of Coles: It is hard to quantify. We have got a general feeling that this will displace, but we have got no sense of how many.

Ms Jubb: There is a workstream inside the Historic Environment Forum around skills and training, and I will get that information for you.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston (Chairman): Does anyone want to pick up anything on this before we move to scope more generally?

Q84 Lord Laming: I have one question, building on what has been said. You have used the word “legacy” a few times. In the way in which we would think of it—not enduring skills or the use of skills, but more in terms of this building—do you think that apart from getting all the pipework, electrics, asbestos and all those things done, we should be thinking of other things that we should be doing alongside this work?

Mr Feilden: Yes, definitely. Conservation is a forward-looking attitude—it is looking at how you manage change. If you are at this point in the building’s history where you need to do a massive amount of work, you should be looking forward at what you can do to improve the performance and longevity of the building. Personally, I think that the way that the building relates to Parliament Square and Westminster Abbey is not good. I think that the security measures, although absolutely necessary, do not help. The experience of visitors coming into the Palace is not as good as it could be if you had more space out in front. I would be asking you very strongly to be looking at the opportunities to make a better pedestrian connection between the Palace, the Abbey and Parliament Square and to look very carefully at how you encourage visitors to enter the building and what that experience is.

I have been to a presentation in your new Education Centre—I declare an interest; my firm designed it—but it was a very positive message that we were given of a target of getting every child of school age through that explanation of what the Palace of Westminster and what parliamentary democracy are about. A very important part of having a world icon and a heritage building is to get as good an explanation and understanding of why it is important and significant to the public at large, and this is your opportunity to do that, big time.

Mr Hirst: I support the point that realising the opportunities requires some clear vision of what is wanted out of the R&R programme, and that gives you the structure in which those opportunities can be realised, but it needs a very clear vision very early on about where we are going and what it will look like in the future. Within that, the opportunities can then be realised, but it does need a good understanding of how the building will work and operate in future. A full decant would enable significant opportunities to be realised within that framework.

Q85 Chris Grayling (Chair): One of the things—this segues nicely into where we are going next—that we are all contemplating is the degree to which we should add bells and whistles to the programme. One of the challenges is that we want to deliver something as

thoughtful as possible with regards to the public financial position, but at the same time you just mentioned the possibility of moving out into the square. Others have suggested modifications to parts of the building, such as the courtyards, and better visitor facilities. That generates two questions. The first is about the practicality of doing that, given the fact that this is an historic, grade I listed building. In engineering terms, can we add bells and whistles sensibly without damaging the overall environment of the building? Secondly, even if we chose to do so, is that defensible in cost terms?

Ms Jubb: When we do very good conservation, we like it when people can't see that we have been there, but in terms of your overall accountability and outreach work, you should be able to show something at the end of this process. It would be a bit disappointing if you came back and it was just exactly like it is now. There are opportunities: you can make sensitive interventions that will improve things for years and generations to come. It is not normal for a building to be static and never change again.

Q86 Lord Wallace of Tankerness: You have a range of knowledge about current issues around disability access. Can you elaborate on how you think we could use this opportunity to improve access and usage for people with a range of disabilities?

Ms Jubb: It is really an M&E question, because it is about lifts and physically moving people with mobility impairments around. But you should also think about other forms of impairment—there is not just physical access but intellectual access as well.

Q87 Lord Wallace of Tankerness: Sight and hearing.

Ms Jubb: Yes, but the meat and potatoes of it is going to be around renewing the systems in a way that is modern and functional for everybody to create an inclusive environment.

Q88 Lord Wallace of Tankerness: You mentioned earlier looking at where we are today in relation to other historic buildings—having to take account of higher rainfall, for example. Is there anything in particular you would ask us to consider in terms of longer-term environmental sustainability?

Ms Jubb: You will obviously be trying to reduce your energy bills, which I think are probably a bit high at the moment, so you should think about using renewable energies and the overall use of energy. I should say at this point that the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors has been involved in doing embodied carbon calculations. You would not necessarily want to meet the same standards as a new building, because this building is inherently efficient. A lot of the stuff that is in here has a long lifecycle and doesn't owe you anything in terms of carbon. Having said that, this place has a reputation for leadership and needs to set an example, so you should aim for the highest possible standard of sustainability. At the same time, it will improve comfort inside the building as well, so there is no conflict in trying to go for that. It is cost-effective and it makes people more comfortable.

Mr Feilden: If you ever have a chance, there is a very good talk given by the National Trust's energy adviser for Wales, where they looked at their energy targets for the next 10 years. I think they achieved 50% of those targets within a year by looking at behaviour, management and maintenance. It startled them as to what they could achieve over an entire estate by having a hard-headed look at how they used it—not leaving windows and doors open when they didn't have to, turning lights out, putting in low-energy bulbs and so on. There were some fairly low-key activities that, spread across the whole estate, had a major effect. I suspect you could find the same effect here.

Mr Mead: On disability and access, there is a lot of M&E there. You have some very heavy doors and things like that, so there would be the opportunity to put in devices that can open the doors, and disabled toilets and so on. A lot can be done in those sorts of areas. In terms of sustainability, a lot of people talk about green generation; you can generate as green as you like, but it is about what you use at the end. Making the building more efficient in its lighting and heating and things like that will have a massive impact on the environment—more so than generating and things like that.

Q89 Chris Bryant: One of the bits of evidence we have had regularly is that there is not enough light—that it is very difficult to see. This room is another example: it is not very well lit now, and for many people with a sight disability it would be difficult to read papers or anything.

I was going to ask you two things each. First, is there any part of the interventions from the 20th century—to use your term—that you would pull down? Quite a lot of building work was added to the original Barry design in the 20th century. Secondly, if you were allowed one significant improvement to the building, what would it be?

Ms Jubb: I would agree with you on the setting. How you experience this building—a lot of people experience this building from outside; actually many more than from inside. I know that this is essentially a mechanical and electrical project to improve the services and the performance of the building itself, but doing something that improves performance and enjoyment outside as well would be a very good addition.

Mr Feilden: It is a minor irritation, but I think you should deal with the two canopied constructions on the rear terrace.

Chris Bryant: Which are freezing in the winter and boiling in the summer.

Mr Feilden: I suspect you don't have permission for them anyway, but that's another story. They obviously fulfil an important function, but I am sure it could be done better than in those. It is something done in a hurry. You really do have an opportunity to do better now.

Chris Bryant: They are temporary.

Mr Feilden: Very temporary.

Chris Bryant: For 40 years.

Q90 Baroness Stowell of Beeston (Chairman): Is there anything else you want to say about the scope of the project before we move in the last couple of minutes to the governance arrangements? Is there anything we have not covered on the scope?

Mr Feilden: I see the need for a very clear vision, and that would be probably led by this Committee. It needs to be at a very senior level. That needs to be expressed very clearly in the brief you give out to the design teams, contractors and tradesmen. That communication of what you are about and where you are going is very important to achieve the right result at the end.

Q91 Baroness Stowell of Beeston (Chairman): That is a helpful segue into the next section on governance. If there was to be a delivery authority, which is something we are considering, one thing I want to find out is how important you feel a sponsor body or some kind of champion would be in order to make the delivery authority effective in its responsibilities. I want to hear a little bit more about how you see the risks and opportunities once we move into the next phase, as well as things we need to think about in the context of governance and things that are important for us to take account of now.

Mr Hirst: To pick up on the vision point and follow that through into governance, I don't think the Palace of Westminster is going to be an easy project for whoever is involved—not just the structure of the buildings and the services, but also the client might be quite challenging. A delivery authority is very important in helping to bridge the gap between the client organisation and the agents delivering that work. It would be no small feat to get that mandate for the delivery authority on paper. It will be a challenge in its own right because there will be many aspects of the operations of these Houses that will be affected, whichever options are taken. There will be elements of decant and elements of work taking place in and around live operations.

The mandate and clear instructions about what that delivery authority is there to do and what authority it has to act in its own name—in terms of extensions of time, reductions of time, changes of scope and changes of budget—are very important, in order to give some leeway to cope with the unexpected and with the risks that are inevitably going to be found with undertaking this project.

That body needs to be advised by appropriate experts, which again is part of how you procure and pull in the expertise for historic buildings and services. That is very important. Having the management structure within a delivery authority to do that is going to be very difficult to put on paper and even more difficult to put into practice.

This is going to be a complex, difficult job that will be challenging to whoever manages it, however it is undertaken, but if the works are going to be undertaken, that cannot be ducked. That mandate has to be thought through very carefully and has to be put down, challenged and put up for scrutiny. It is very important that the delivery authority approach is adopted. That is one step that will take us in the right direction. Understanding what that body's remit is and its ability to make decisions in its own right will be very important.

Q92 Lord Deighton: I have a couple of questions. First, what are the two or three things that we should watch out for? What are the things that nearly always go wrong in big, complicated projects and to which this one might be particularly susceptible? Secondly, remembering the sequence of events, if we go for a decant we are going to need quite a substantial project to get that ready, and then we get into the R&R as well as managing all the stuff we are doing to keep the whole thing going so it doesn't fall over while all of that's going on—so, there are a number of dimensions. How would you structure the project to handle that? Would you put the delivery authority in charge of all of that in a global way, or would you use the people who have been doing it for a while? How would you approach that specific problem?

Mr Hirst: There is a very challenging aspect to the decant programme and the R&R programme. There are different audiences for both. However, in order to undertake the R&R programme, which is what I can comment on, understanding the delivery of the decant is essential. Managing, controlling and assisting the movement of people and their activities out of this place to other locations is integral to undertaking the R&R programme. I think that a single authority needs to capture the decant programme as well as the R&R programme.

Q93 Lord Deighton: And the two or three pitfalls?

Ms Jubb: I agree. One of the hazards that the report doesn't go into very much is the risk of protracted and unseemly dispute. I think that you should build in dispute resolution procedures at the very highest level. I was just looking at a quote from Sir David Higgins. When he was asked about the biggest factor of the Olympic Delivery Authority's success, he said that it was creating a culture "built around respecting other people and diversity of thought." There was a collaborative approach, which I think you should seek to emulate. In fact, if you look back at the pitfalls of the original build process, Sir Charles Barry spent nearly every day in front of one Committee or another having to explain himself and push his project through, yet he was a brilliant delegator. His relationship with Pugin is what achieved this amazing outcome for you. At the end of the day, it is going to be about building good, lasting relationships.

Q94 Lord Wallace of Tankerness: Given that this is a grade 1 listed building and is part of a UNESCO world heritage site, have you got any advice for us about how you would handle the planning issues that might arise?

Mr Feilden: Prepare very thoroughly and involve the people involved. A project of this size will stretch the resources and capacity of your local authority, Westminster. They won't have enough people to deal with this, so you should probably be looking at a planning performance agreement, which is a new legal vehicle whereby in effect you fund a team for them to look at what you are doing. I think it is extremely important that you don't duck out of the planning and building system. You need to lead the country in that because a lot of people find it uncomfortable and restrictive, and it will send a very bad message if you just say, "No, it's not for us. We don't have to do that."

Mr Hirst: It is a very big, complex project. Whether or not it is of strategic national importance takes it into a different realm, and whether that is something that should be

considered by the Joint Committee. It is about understanding whether it is a nationally strategic infrastructure project in its own right. It is worth considering whether that gives you any alternatives and any other options.

Q95 Chris Grayling (Chair): On that point, local planning issues are clearly a challenge. Would it be a sensible approach if it were defined in that way and if we were to use the 2008 Act to do that?

Mr Hirst: Coming at it from a programme management perspective, yes. From a political perspective, I would pass the question back to you.

Q96 Chris Bryant: Still on this planning issue, if we stick with the system we will have those tents on the Terrace, for ever and ever, because that is basically what we have been battling over for 40 years already. That is my anxiety. Lynda, you said that this place is about providing leadership, so what kind of leadership would you like us to show in terms of planning?

Ms Jubb: If it comes to compliance, I think you need to demonstrate the higher standards of compliance. It puts the whole heritage sector at risk if the protective regimes are seen not to work. But making them work is, I think, within your reach, and there is work going on within the Historic Environment Forum at the moment to address those difficulties in local authority delivery and so on. So I would say that you should build that into your programme as part of your overall engagement and collaboration agenda, to ensure that you leave the protection regime enhanced, and not disabled at the end of this.

Q97 Baroness Stowell of Beeston (Chairman): Thank you very much for giving up your time to come and see us this afternoon. We have also received your written submissions, for which we thank you as well. I am very grateful to you for your frankness, and for your insights into the relationship between Pugin and Barry—lessons in history. We have some historians around the table here as well, who will, I am sure, have appreciated that even more than I have.

Thank you very much indeed. If there is anything that we have not covered, or if you want to provide other information that you feel we need, by all means drop us a further line.

Ms Jubb: I promised some statistics. We will send them out.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston (Chairman): Okay. Thank you very much.

That draws to an end the public aspect of our meeting.