

Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee

Oral evidence: Physical Heritage, HC 832

Tuesday 6 October 2020

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 6 October 2020.

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Members present: Julian Knight (Chair); Kevin Brennan; Steve Brine; Clive Efford; Julie Elliott; Damian Green; Damian Hinds; John Nicolson; Giles Watling.

Questions 1 - 99

Witnesses

I: Elsie Owusu OBE, specialist conservation architect, Marvin Rees, Mayor of Bristol, Sonia Solicari, Director, Museum of the Home.

II: Sir Laurie Magnus, Chair, Historic England.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Elsie Owusu, Marvin Rees and Sonia Solicari.

Q1 Chair: This is the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee. Today's hearing is into physical heritage. We are going to be joined by three witnesses in our first panel and one witness for our second panel. Our three witnesses in the first panel are Elsie Owusu OBE, specialist conservation architect; Marvin Rees, the Mayor of Bristol; and Sonia Solicari, Director of the Museum of the Home. Thank you, all three of you, for joining us today. In our second panel we will be joined by Sir Laurie Magnus, the Chair of Historic England.

Before we commence our questioning I am going to ask members whether they wish to declare any interests.

John Nicolson: I am a member of the National Trust for Scotland and I am a trustee of the Spitalfields Trust in London.

Damian Green: I am a trustee of the Godinton House Preservation Trust in my constituency.

Q2 Chair: Thank you. Does anyone else wish to declare any interest? Great, I will proceed. As I say, thank you again for joining us. The first question to kick us off, could you define your interpretation of physical heritage? Elsie, can I come to you first?

Elsie Owusu: Yes. Thank you very much for inviting me to attend this hearing. There are a range of assets, I suppose in technical terms, from the statues—which have been so much a bone of contention—to architecture and public space. In my terms, it is a very wide range of objects, physical objects and also intellectual and historical objects, so the definition is very broad.

Chair: Mr Rees, would you be able to add anything to that from your perspective?

Marvin Rees: I admit it is not something I sit around thinking about, but it is the physical stuff we inherit. That would be stuff that we have built ourselves, but also the natural landscape, our rivers, parks and ancient trees and so forth.

Chair: Sonia, you have the worst one. They have already spoken, but you now have the third one, so can you add anything to that?

Sonia Solicari: Yes, certainly. As we apply it to the Museum of the Home we are thinking about the site, about our buildings and our gardens and all of the things that encase the collections that we house.

Q3 Chair: Elsie, you mentioned intellectual as well as physical. Was that right?

Elsie Owusu: Yes, that is right.

Chair: What do you mean by that?



Elsie Owusu: I mean that most things, certainly in cities and most of our environments, are designed and made by human beings. Most items around us are catalysts for conversations, memories and shelter, so most of our physical and environmental surroundings carry all sorts of meaning. They are not just, if you like, the boxes in which we live. Our houses have meaning for us, our trees—as Marvin mentioned—and countryside have meaning and the way we move around cities, who is included, who is excluded. The stories we tell ourselves about why we live and how we live the way that we live is all encased and controlled and, I suppose, attached to the buildings and the architecture and the public space that we inhabit.

Q4 **Chair:** What you are talking about there is always an ongoing narrative and everything is involved in that narrative.

Elsie Owusu: Yes. There are continuing narratives and overlaying narratives, so a small child walking through a street or riding a bike through a street has one sort of story. A mother taking that child to school has another sort of story. Boys, lads, have one sort of story, so there are many different stories. Some of them overlap and some of them never meet.

Q5 **Chair:** Sonia, controversial physical heritage, for example, related to the slave trade, what are your views in terms of whether or not it is best to ignore, contextualise or remove?

Sonia Solicari: I think those decisions have to be made on a case-by-case basis. Going back to Elsie's point, there are different narratives at stake for different organisations, so there is not one blanket approach. Certainly at the Museum of the Home, obviously we are a museum so we very much want to explain and contextualise heritage, but that can be interpreted in a lot of different ways. I think it would not include moving particular objects, as that is what curators do all the time. We display, we decide what is on display and what is not on display in response to social change, our visitors and so on, so there are myriad ways to approach a subject. Certainly at the Museum of the Home we would like to keep an open mind on this one and explore all the possibilities around how best to interpret contested heritage.

Q6 **Chair:** Marvin, obviously you have a very real and recent experience of this question.

Marvin Rees: Yes. I think there is a subtle but important difference between removing and moving. Removing would suggest to me that it is put into positions of invisibility where the public do not have access. Moving could just be putting it into a different context. I am sure we will get into it. Colston was taken down from a pedestal, and however you think that happened is another question, but it will be available to the public. It is going to go into a museum in which it will be accessible and that will be within the next couple of months. It is important.



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If I can add into the mix something here, at the same time as the Colston statue was pulled down we were going through a process of the Colston Hall being renamed. It is now called Bristol Beacon, which was an orderly process that we announced about two weeks ago. It did not get a lot of headlines because it was so orderly, but involved thousands of people participating in that process. So these things were happening in parallel.

Q7 Chair: What sort of people contributed to that consultation? Was it just normal members of the public? What is the feeling on the ground, so to speak, about that sort of engagement?

Marvin Rees: It was very broad. There are people who have been passionate for decades about Colston's presence within the city, not the presence, because it is not about eliminating that or about not telling the story, it is about how that presence is remembered and recognised and portrayed. People have been very passionate for years, then there were people who were just coming into awareness of it. There are people who are very committed to Colston and the doors for that conversation were open to everyone. As I say, the Bristol Music Trust, who led that process, will testify there were thousands of people who contributed to that process. To make sure that everyone feels respected, whether they get what they want, they do not get what they want or they get what they did not want, it is the integrity of the process that is absolutely essential to me.

Q8 Chair: Elsie, is there widespread discussion in terms of grading physical heritage on its scale in terms of controversy? For example, is something associated with the slave trade infinitely more controversial than maybe something that has a looser connection with the British Empire? Do you perceive there to be grades of controversy, effectively? You have things like the Colston situation in terms of slave trade and the resonance of that and then you may have a looser association with say the British Empire. What do you think of that?

Elsie Owusu: The British Empire surrounds us without us knowing it in many ways. For instance, there is a statue of General Napier in Trafalgar Square that people walk past all the time, not to be confused with the other Napier who said "Peccavi" when he took Sindh, as most schoolboys and schoolgirls know. It is Robert Napier, who led the so-called British Expeditionary Force in 1867 to 1868 into Abyssinia and came away with vast quantities of very precious regalia that are contested at the moment and are going through a process through the Victoria and Albert Museum, the British Museum and other institutions in this country, which is a big conversation going on behind the scenes that has not come to public notice. These conversations are going on all the time and are a catalyst for action and conversation.

When it comes to the fore and becomes contested in public space and shared public space, it should be a place of coming together rather than creating contention. I think it is incumbent on those of us who have the power to do something about it to listen very carefully to what is being



said. I know architects do not have much of a reputation for listening. I think our key skill is that of using our ears maybe rather than using our hands and computers. I think the best thing we can do is, as Marvin says, to listen very carefully to what is being said, to understand and to create a situation where people can share public space with their families, particularly now where so many people are unable to access public space for all sorts of reasons.

I think under the new or different normal what we should be looking at is creating a public space, a shared space, where everyone is comfortable. What is so great about the process that is going on in Bristol is that so many people are involved, so many different views are involved and the solution that is being arrived at seems to be one that everyone or most people can agree. Clearly not everyone is going to get exactly what they want, but I think the process of using Colston as a catalyst is a very instructive and positive one.

Q9 Chair: Do you think effectively everyone's view should be equal or do you think there should be greater emphasis on those perhaps who feel most keenly these sorts of historic wrongs, so to speak?

Elsie Owusu: The important thing is the conversation. I do not see how it is possible to grade people in terms of their importance in the conversation. I think it is a process. The interesting thing about Colston, as I understand it from a wonderful programme that was broadcast yesterday, Kate Williams—who I believe comes from Bristol—was saying that this conversation has been going on for years, if not decades. Certainly the statue that went up in 1895, I believe, was installed decades after slavery had been abolished. I think if an object has been the subject of contention and debate for a very long time, which it has, then it is gratifying to see that people are coming to a conclusion and most, if not all, people can sign up to the result of it. I hope that is true.

Q10 Giles Watling: I absolutely understand what you are saying and it would appear that process is everything here. It is interesting to note that when we talk about individual statues of course there is nothing unusual about this. Statues of Stalin came down on the fall of the Soviet Union, Saddam Hussein was pulled down when he fell and so on, and it happens again and again. There was an interesting comment by Professor Nigel Biggar at the Oxford Union Debate in 2016 when he said, "If we insist on our heroes being pure we aren't going to have any". If you apply certain rules to that then Abraham Lincoln, Churchill and Gandhi could all be victims of perhaps mass protest.

You are saying it is the conversation that is important. I understand that, but the question I have for the panel generally—and I will start with you, Marvin—is attitudes will change. In 50 years' time there will be different statues of different people. Should heritage in public places be threatened every time public attitudes change?



Marvin Rees: I do not see it as a threat. One of the questions we need to ask is what are statues for? I think in some sense people are talking past each other. Some people are arguing that statues are important methods for holding our heritage together and that somehow if statues are moved or removed—however you want to term it—we are undermining our national story and even attacking our sense of identity and national pride. Other people are saying statues are there to celebrate and venerate and make heroes of people. I think if we come to a common understanding of what statues are for then we are in a better position to decide what an appropriate use is of the spaces that we give over to statues.

Then you are on a spectrum. Again, I take the point I do not think anyone is pure. Martin Luther King would be a hero of mine, not pure, and Mandela was not pure. We are not saying that, but there is a point at which you say, moving along the spectrum from purity to doing acts of pretty gross evil, you cross a line. Is it appropriate to use a statue for that individual? There is no mathematical formula to make that judgment, but if we look at someone like Colston and the kidnap of 80,000 people—20,000 people died in transit—you have to have done some pretty good things to counter the tragedy that you have stitched into the lives of those individuals.

Q11 **Giles Watling:** What you are saying is the argument has yet to be resolved as to what these statues and monuments are for?

Marvin Rees: Yes. In the conversations it feels to me that people are talking past each other. What are statues for? If we want them to be a means of telling history, and that is what some people are suggesting, then the next question is are they any good at that? Do they do their job? Because any reasonable person would say, "I may want to use this tool for that job, but if the tool does not do that job then I need to look at whether I need to use a different tool". When we are running a country in a complex world that is prone to division and the twitterisation of human relationships and debates that we have at the moment, if we have a tool that is not doing its job and is further undermining human relationships, then we need to ask questions about whether we need to think about whether that tool should be used for something else and whether we should bring a new tool to do that job that we want it to do.

Q12 **Giles Watling:** I would have thought that they could equally be used to demonstrate in the case of Colston, for instance, here was a man who did this, he got involved in this terrible trade all those years ago, so we need the statue to point him out and say that these people went through this history and were at one point lauded. Would you agree with that?

Marvin Rees: I would struggle with that, to be perfectly frank, for a couple of reasons. One is the statue has been up and we know more about Colston since he has been pulled down than when he was there. I tell you the truth, people do not know that Colston did not even live in Bristol more than nine years of his life. The statue went up 170 years



after he was born. People probably could not even tell you what political party he represented. That is not a party point, by the way. He was a Tory, but I am not making a point there.

People cannot tell you about Colston. The statues have not taught us about his history or the complexities in his character. What people have taken is we have given him a place of honour and therefore he was a person that gave loads of money to the city. The truth is he was very sectarian, he only supported people with specific religious views that were in line with his own, not even in the broad sweep of Protestantism. He did not put any money into the Colston Hall, which I get tweets about now. Of course the hall was built many years after his death, so it has not done that job.

I think too it would be a problem. I do not want to take an absurd example here, but I will. We could take all sorts of evil individuals and say, "Let us put a statue up to make sure that no one forgets the evil they did". That would be an odd situation to end up in.

Q13 Giles Watling: It would. Going back to my original question—and I would like to put it to Elsie—should heritage in public places be threatened every time public attitudes change?

Elsie Owusu: That is not my experience of statues in public places. My experience of statues in public places is that by and large people walk past them, do not notice them and they are part of everyone's daily life. As has just been said, it is when they become a catalyst for a range of issues that the object itself becomes worthy of notice. There are hundreds of statues. Walking in Regent's Park I notice that there are some Greek goddesses perched up high, looking as if they are giving benediction to passersby. I had not noticed them for 25 years, until the Colston issue started, but the statues are not just about the issues themselves. The statues are about the location of works of art in public spaces and how that brings the issues to our attention.

The great thing about this conversation is that potentially we are talking about how statues in the future—not just in the past, but in the future—should represent our hopes, aspirations and fears. Paradoxically, I think the conversation has been a beneficial and very important one, speaking as an architect who is interested in public space.

Q14 Giles Watling: That brings me neatly on to my next question, which I want to ask of Sonia. It does touch on something you referred to earlier, Marvin, about removal or moving of such historic monuments. What is the difference between a statue being placed in a street or then in a museum? Is it because in a museum you can contextualise it? What is the difference?

Sonia Solicari: I think it goes back to that idea of visions of veneration. We have certainly found through the conversations that we have been having around our statue of Robert Geffrye that one of the issues is he is



on a pedestal and he is an object of veneration, because he is within the confines of the museum environment. I think to take the statue from that pedestal and re-contextualise it in another setting within the museum would fundamentally shift how we see that statue. We would be able to tell the story in a much fuller way without that idea that we are in any way celebrating some of the ways in which Robert Geffrye made his money. It is all around context in that respect. We have a complexity, like I said, of being a museum site but having a statue that is operating in public spaces because it is on the front of our building.

- Q15 Giles Watling:** Yes, it is like Napier in Trafalgar Square, it is part of the public furniture and we do not really notice it, but we can tell the story in a museum. Is that what you are saying?

Sonia Solicari: Yes. The statue is very much a fabric of the building in some ways, but in other ways it presides over one of our main spaces, which abuts the street. These are all the considerations that we are thinking about when we are looking at that statue, because although it is in a museum setting—unusually, because a lot of the statues we are talking about are in public spaces—nonetheless it is operating as if it were in a public space and it is operating on a pedestal, so it is to shift the perspective of how people view that statue.

- Q16 Giles Watling:** Thank you very much, Sonia, and to all of you. I would like to move on. We have had the events of the summer and we have had the Colston statue removed. The organisations who make decisions about contested heritage that we are talking about in this case of the Colston statue and so on, are they fit for purpose? Do we need to set up another form of dealing with this sort of contested public monument? I would like to put that to Sonia first.

Sonia Solicari: Obviously the museum is run by a board of trustees. I think that that system should work well, in that for us this decision is something that has to be made with the best interests of the museum and our beneficiaries at its heart. This goes back to my point about a case-by-case basis and each case on its merit. We are not looking at should statues stay up or should statues come down in general. We are looking at a very particular situation that we have within our organisation. My fear at any kind of additional level would be that that decision is not made in the best interests of an organisation that will be dealing with a very particular set of factors.

- Q17 Giles Watling:** That brings me on to a quick question to Marvin and it will be my final question. This is about localism, to a certain extent. You want to make sure, taking the points that Sonia just made, that when you make these decisions it is not a national organisation that makes the decision, but it all reflects back on a local issue. As Mayor of Bristol, would you be happy to take on the responsibility for those sorts of decisions around the heritage around Bristol?



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Marvin Rees: Yes. I desire to take responsibility for the process. I have been very clear, I am not making the decision about what goes on the pedestal in place of Colston and even around the Colston Hall, which is now Bristol Beacon. What we wanted to do was to make space for that conversation to be had. It is not for one person to come in and make the diktat.

For your information, in Bristol we have now set up a history commission and the aim is to bring together professional historians. It is chaired by Professor Tim Cole from the University of Bristol. We have a philosopher on there, the history of trade unions, culture and media. It is a group of academics with the aim of bringing some discipline and I do not want to say dispassion, but take it into the realm of professionalism, but with contributions from the city and with that raw material bring the city conversation into a place where we are better positioned to decide collectively on what we want to remember and how we want to remember it.

Q18 Giles Watling: So you would be able to then avert any sort of public disorder by having the process in place?

Marvin Rees: I certainly think that is a valve to alleviate pressure that builds up. Listening to people and making sure people feel their voices are heard is massively important. Can I just say that I do not think the Colston statue was all about the Colston statue? As I kept saying in a number of the interviews, the issues are a lot more complicated than that, as I am sure you will appreciate. There is a lot that has been built up over the years in terms of the people I saw participating. I think there will be issues of housing and affordable housing, gentrification, feelings of being left behind by the national and the international economy.

We have had a long-running question in the country about what our national identity is. Back to the early 2000s, I remember debates about what it means to be British. This action happened within a context. It is not just the action. I think that the statue in many ways became a focal point for other frustrations with life in modern Britain and some of the challenges in the world.

Giles Watling: Ironically, a symbol. Thank you very much.

Q19 Damian Green: If I can continue on the Colston point and indeed the lessons that other people should draw from it, as you say, it was a dramatic act and, broadly speaking, the consensus around it was, "Okay, remove it, but not that way". Clearly that was not a great advert for Bristol in many ways. Other areas will be grappling with the same sort of issues, so given that the Colston statue was controversial for something like 30 years, why wasn't there a resolution over that very long period in Bristol? There was a conversation about it, but why did it prove so difficult to decide to move it and put it somewhere else, where it could be contextualised?



Marvin Rees: I can account for my period of time since 2016 and give you my reasoning. You would have to talk to other people about the years preceding to get specifics. What I will say is I was around in 2007, the 200th anniversary of William Wilberforce's year to abolish the Slave Trade Act. I made a documentary at the time about how I, as a mixed-race man, made sense of the racial fractures that were being exposed within Bristol. I am going to say it was a very difficult year for the city. It was not equipped to have a conversation about race and Colston came up then obviously because of his heritage and because of the nature of that year, recognising what William Wilberforce and the other Abolitionists achieved in 1807.

When I came in—there is a context to it and I am going to be pretty frank with you—I was the first directly elected black male in a city in Europe. If I come in and the first thing I do is start tackling slave memorabilia in the middle of a Brexit debate that is all about national identity and heritage and against the EU, it is all I would be doing for four years and it would have been a pretty politically naive thing for me to do. I had to make a judgment on how I deployed my limited time and resources.

Secondly, statues are probably more significant by them being there than by being taken away. I have a top 10 list of things I want to get done that includes driving city ambition, but also to tackle racism and poverty, among other things, building affordable homes, childcare, tackling child hunger, transport poverty, work experience and apprenticeships. Removing statues was not on my top 10 list of things to do to tackle racism, so by definition it was not going to be my priority.

What we did do was start the work in a very reasoned way on the Colston Hall, which obviously paid off recently with the announcement of it now being called the Bristol Beacon. That is my account for my time. What went before I think was the status quo. Even about two years ago there was quite a contentious debate over an effort to have a second plaque put on the Colston statue basically setting out his involvement with the transatlantic slave trade. There was quite a heated debate about that plaque, which resulted in the plaque not going on. Again, you can see that where we are today and what we seem to realise today is not where we were even just four months ago in our ability or inability to have a conversation about Colston.

Q20 **Damian Green:** That is interesting because that does seem an obvious way forward, to say peacefully, "There will be people who did bad things" and evil things in Colston's case, "and then used their money for good purposes". I am not particularly talking about Colston here, but generally there will be lots of statues like that around the place. I was on a walk past part of Guy's Hospital and discovered they have boarded up Thomas Guy's statue there because he made some money out of the slave trade, but clearly used it for good purposes and we still use the hospital that he set up.

I will start with Marvin, but I would quite like to hear Elsie's view on this



as well. Can we get to a state in society where we can say through plaques on statues, "This guy" and it is normally a guy, "did bad things but did some good things as well" and contextualise it that way? Or do we think anyone controversial like that has to be put in a museum so we can look at the statue in a different context?

Marvin Rees: Again, I think we have to get quite specific on what we mean by some of the terms. Kidnapping 80,000 people and having some of them thrown overboard from ships to be eaten by sharks so you can claim insurance is not controversial; that is just evil and bad. I think we have to be careful about mixing our descriptions. That does matter, which comes back to my first point, which is we have to decide what statues are for. In Bristol I have said to people, "You can argue for Colston going on a statue if you want, but let us just be honest about what he was. Let us just do good quality history" and when we have done that good quality history, then we are in a better position to make a decision about what we put there.

I am also not nervous that when you start to do these investigations you uncover all sorts of contradictions, complexity and hypocrisies. Listen, I am a fallen human being, full of hypocrisy and contradictions. When you put 60 million-odd people together on an island, we are bound to have these things among us collectively. What I find exciting about this is that the strength of our country is shown by our ability to confront these contradictions and hypocrisies, not to try to come up with a standardisation that in some sense they are not there and then deal with the consequences of that.

Q21 **Damian Green:** Elsie, on that point, do you think that the act of putting a statue in a public place is so obviously an act of congratulation and veneration that if you have people who have done evil things that those statues always ought to be in a museum? Or do you think that can be addressed by what you put around the statue so that people looking at it get as much of the full picture as you can put there, a balanced picture, as Marvin has just suggested?

Elsie Owusu: Putting a statue up in a public space requires all sorts of power, access to resource and the ability to command the political process. What I learned from this is that the important thing is we have to listen and if we listen, how we listen and who we listen to. The important and positive thing about this process is to understand that from young children to the very senior people in our society, everyone is involved and has an interest in our shared public space. Looking forward rather than backward, how do we engage people in the design of our public space to make it a place where we all—or as many people as possible—feel comfortable and understand the meaning of that space?

The many statues that we all walk past every day are potentially a catalyst for us to understand how we are beneficiaries, and many of us—and this is not a gender or ethnicity point—are still affected and many of us living in this country are still beneficiaries of the British Empire.



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Looking forward to the changing political landscape, how are we going to create spaces, architecture and public urban space that is fit for our own purpose, whatever we decide to be? My concern at the moment is that we create mechanisms so that we can listen to people without it getting to a point where—and I am not making a judgment on how the Colston statue was removed—people feel they have to take direct action because that is not good for any of us.

- Q22 **Damian Green:** I think Marvin made the point that you have to take each statue on its merits or each person or proposed statue in the future on their merits. Is it possible to set a national criterion to act on this? Historic England have the job of doing that. Is that intrinsically an impossible job?

Elsie Owusu: I do not think it is impossible if we understand our history, if we understand our shared history. In Regent's Park there is a lovely statue of a so-called wealthy Parsi gentleman. The statue has Queen Victoria's head and it has a beautiful carving of this so-called wealthy Parsi gentleman. It is part of our landscape. It is a water fountain and we all walk past it and admire it. It is not a bone of contention for anyone living in Camden or walking through Regent's Park. I think there are examples of statues that if they are seen, if they are looked at, they become objects of admiration rather than objects of contention. I think those are the examples we should be looking at.

- Q23 **Clive Efford:** Putting Colston in context though, it is right, is it not, that at the time that he was involved in the slave trade there was considerable opposition to it? So this was an individual who was fully aware of the evil that he was doing at that time. We are perfectly entitled, I think, as generations move on, to review whether that person is worthy of a statue in a public place, are we not?

Marvin Rees: Yes. I was thinking back on the point you made earlier on about whether they should be threatened. Again, I am very careful in terms of language. They are not vulnerable people. I do not think the word is "threat" but it should always be up for debate. We would be a pretty turgid country if we ceased to debate how we did things. I think that changing the context does bring debate, but that is when the process becomes important, because you do not just flip-flop on a whim and see which way the wind is blowing and go with it. You have a process that you then have to work through and that is our democratic process. Yes, I think that constant debate about who we are and what we have inherited needs to be live.

- Q24 **Clive Efford:** The statue was Grade II listed in 1977. On the notes that I read it said it was to commemorate 200 years since the Abolition Act, which was 1807. Somebody cannot add up in English Heritage because that was not 200 years, but it seems a strange thing to commemorate the Abolition Act, is it not, by making that statue Grade II listed?



Marvin Rees: Yes. I was quite involved in the Abolition 200 year. I had no idea that 10 years before, it was listed to commemorate it. The other point about the role of English Heritage, going back to the previous question, I think it would be difficult to come out with a hard and fast set of national criteria. There should be some national framework, but it should be very light touch. I think what this speaks to is the role of local authorities not just as the collection of services but as place-makers, building human relationships and helping build a local story.

The role that I would welcome is working with local authorities and properly resourcing them to do some of that place-making role. At the moment we are on the back foot. I am not asking for money here, but we are often on the back foot of adult social care, children's services and so forth. It takes time and resource to create a space for people to engage in a public discussion. It takes time and resource to manage our history commission that can engage with the city, but I think it is time and resource well spent if it gives people a process through which they can express their sense of future, identity and place in the UK rather than in one that comes out in the sort that so many people fear.

Q25 **Clive Efford:** Yes, I was going to come to that. I was struck by an opinion poll that was taken the weekend the statue came down, showing that 53% of people in Britain agreed with the statue coming down, but 40% of those did not agree with the manner in which it was taken down. Is that a challenge to people in positions of authority, to say, "You have to catch up with public opinion here and a decision about that statue and others like it should have been made much earlier"?

Marvin Rees: There is always a challenge to people in authority. About the portrayal of disorder, remember around that day I said, "As a mayor, I cannot condone criminal damage" so I am pretty clear about that, but 10,000 people on the streets of the city and there is one piece of criminal damage. There were no smashed windows; there were no running street pitched battles. It is worth spending some time thinking about that and what that means.

Q26 **Clive Efford:** Yes, it may have been criminal damage. I agree with you we cannot condone it, we cannot have one law for one set of acts and another law for others, but nonetheless that was an act of protest rather than criminal damage. I am not suggesting we cannot apply the law, but there is a statement being made here that the public seem to recognise is the right one, even though it may have been as part of a criminal act. Do you want to comment on that? The point I am putting to you is that there are many moments where social change comes about, which is what Black Lives Matter is all about, which does involve a lot of law-breaking. We cannot condone law-breaking, but at the same time those protests bring about a change that is long overdue. It is a sort of outpouring of people's determination to bring about that change.

Marvin Rees: I recognise that. As I said, I am caught in a position where, as a mayor, I cannot condone criminal damage. But not just as a



descendant of enslaved Africans but as a descendant of white British heritage, I cannot deny that the statue was an affront to me. I recognise the poetry in the historical approach of it being rolled through the streets and thrown into the harbour. I hold these things together at the same time. In the same way I said we are full of complexity, I am full of complexity on this matter. History does tell us that on occasion people have pushed the envelope before their political leaders have.

Chair: Sorry, if I may interject there, we just need to be careful about referencing particular cases, as those matters are sub judice, so just to put that out there now.

Q27 **Clive Efford:** Overall, you think there is a need to review how we assess our approach to heritage. Where we discover or where we begin to appreciate more some of the stories behind the individuals or acts that we are commemorating, we need to focus more on those sorts of issues and their impact on people within our communities today, rather than focusing on that particular moment in history that they are commemorating and hanging on to them and preserving them no matter what. Do you think there is a review, a rethink about how we assess these things that needs to take place in the light of Black Lives Matter and the controversy around the Colston statue?

Marvin Rees: I do. First of all, we need to be clear what statues in public spaces are for. We need to come to understand what they are for, whether they are to celebrate, whether they teach us history. One of our history commission's points is that the Colston statue is a departure point, but it is not the destination. With our history commission we want to talk about, for example, what have we remembered and, by extension, what have we not remembered? That is the point of history, doing a better quality of history for the city of Bristol so that they are in a better position to make a decision about what goes on in our public spaces and we are in a fuller knowledge of who we are. It has to include everyone.

The weekend after the Colston statue was pulled down there was a rally at the Cenotaph. I went to meet the organisers of the rally at the Cenotaph, a mixture of football fans and Hell's Angels. We did not do that publicly, but we have had those conversations to find out what they were thinking. In fact, again the picture was a lot more complicated. It was not just a bunch of far-right activists. They were also people who were feeling that they had lost their city, they had lost their place and we have heard that story played out a lot. This piece about what is the role of our monuments and our statues fits within a broader field. By that I do not mean a one-sentence fix about what it means to be British, but how an understanding of that identity can be dynamic and multidimensional, and how we give everyone a stake in our country.

Q28 **Steve Brine:** Marvin, I think you handled the situation in Bristol really well, just for the record. You handled it very well and I think you have come over very well this morning.



In London you have the Mayor of London with his Commission for Diversity in the Public Realm and yet you have record knife crime statistics, but give him a chance to review what streets are called and he is all over it. I was interested in what you said about your political agenda, which I thought was honest and wise. Is there not a danger that those who shout the loudest seize the agenda, while the majority wonder what the hell is going on? This has probably taken up quite a lot of your time, has it not? Here you are spending another hour with us this morning when the vast majority of the people who elected you—or re-elect you—will probably be making their decision, when that moment of reckoning comes with all the other priorities that you have had instead of on this. Is there not a danger that this has rather dominated the agenda?

Marvin Rees: I get caught in a difficult position on this, because there are a number of things that are at issue at the same time and they are difficult bedfellows. As I said, and I can be quite contrary, to some of the people who have come to see me about it, I said no memo arrived on my desk the day the statue got pulled down telling me that mental health levels for black and Asian people had improved, school attainment was better, rates of poverty and so forth, those real issues of political significance. My push on that front has been that symbolic acts can often be more about the emotional experience of members of privileged groups, oppressor groups, than they are about the socioeconomic status of black people, Asian people, working-class people. That is very dangerous if it is driven like that.

At the same time the statues are important, not by their removal, but by their presence. While their removal may not automatically deliver change, their presence is an ongoing message to some people that they do not matter and that their story is insignificant and that this is a country that is comfortable with celebrating the lives and giving hero status to people who have committed acts of evil. It is a difficult tightrope to walk.

If these symbolic acts lead to substantial policy change—and I have pointed this out to a number of people, someone came to Bristol afterwards and put up his own statue—the Selma Bridge march was attached to real policy, the Voting Rights Act. If the symbolic acts are about real policy change then I think that we mitigate against that danger that all we do is symbolism, which in the end will lead to more cynicism. That is not a criticism of Sadiq Khan, by the way. It is just saying it is a difficult tightrope to walk.

Chair: Do not worry. You are safe. It is fine.

Q29

John Nicolson: Thank you, members, for your evidence. I notice that before the statue came down Historic England's position was, "The best way to approach statues and sites that have become contested is not to remove them but to provide thoughtful, long-lasting and powerful re-interpretation". After the statue came down Historic England said, "We do not believe it has to be reinstated" so the question is how can a statue be important enough to retain but not important enough to reinstate? That is



for Mayor Rees.

Marvin Rees: I had not read that previous quote about it being retained, but it certainly speaks to something I shared earlier on about why it was not moved before, that the world post-removal and some of the assumptions are dramatically different to the world after and the way people have positioned themselves.

Q30 **John Nicolson:** I was going to say, as a Member of Parliament, one of the things we have to do is give tours for constituents who come and ask to be taken around. It is such an impressive place and they always ask you to talk about it. A place where I always stop is a statue with a figure holding a sword. A suffragette chained herself to the sword and the sword had broken when the suffragette was decoupled from the statue. I think it is by far the most interesting thing about the statue and it reflects a particular moment in history. Kids in particular, and schoolgirls in particular, love that story. Is the toppling of the Colston statue not an important part of our history, a memorial to this time that we live in and to the Black Lives Matter movement? In many ways, isn't the toppling the most interesting part of that statue?

Marvin Rees: I think you are right. The statue, having been thrown into the harbour, when it goes on display it will still have the paint on it. I think removing the paint is quite dangerous for it anyway, but it is going to have the paint, it has the dents and scratches and it will be displayed with some of the protest material that was there, maybe even some of the threat letters that came to me in the aftermath of it, of which there were many. The experience of that statue says something about our history at that moment in time and the debate within the country that I think will help future generations understand who we are and what we were going through.

By the way, I would say again no one is trying to rub out history, if I could just take the opportunity. The Bristol Beacon, what we have asked them to do is to commemorate in that building the day the name was changed from Colston. When we look at the history of that, it will be called Bristol Beacon and they will say, "In 2020 the name was changed from Colston". "Why?" "Because ..." and it gives you a gateway into that city's history.

Q31 **John Nicolson:** It is great, the way we are talking about this, and we are talking about this because people have taken direct action. You said earlier on in your evidence they were talking more about this than ever before, that people in Bristol were talking more about this slaver Colston than they ever talked before about him, and most people in Bristol did not know who he was. I think I am the only Scottish Member of Parliament on this Committee. I do not think Scots realised how big Scotland's role was on slavery as part of the empire until this whole debate began.

I will express a view and I invite you to comment on it. I think we should



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be teaching the history of slavery in schools so that children understand that it is a key part of history that they learn, that we did not discover America and we did not bring civilisation to Africa. Children should be taught this and they have not been taught it enough. It is empowering in particular for children who come from BAME backgrounds to learn about their history and the role that the British Empire played.

Marvin Rees: I am conscious of the other guests. I will just say a couple of quick things. I think we should, but we have to be careful about that. As a black person I do not want the sum total of my history to be defined by slavery, so what we need to do is teach it as a factual part of the UK's history and it is stuff that happened.

I also think what some people get confused about is they feel when we talk about this we are trying to get people to feel guilty and bad about it. It is just about doing good quality history. I talk about racism in all its fullness, but I do not go home and give my white mum a hard time for being white. It is just about doing good quality history.

Q32 **John Nicolson:** Thank you very much. Elsie, can I move on and ask you about this question? Sculptors devote their lives to their craft. Do you think we are hearing enough from the voices of artists themselves? They seem to be curiously lacking in this.

Elsie Owusu: As Marvin just pointed out, there was an artist who took direct action, Marc Quinn, and in the dead of night, as I hear it, placed a statue of somebody else on the Colston plinth. I do not think it is quite true to say that we are not hearing from artists. I think the conduit through which artists speak is probably not as loud as I would like. I would like to see more artists on television and on channels other than BBC Four, which is a splendid organ, but I think not as widely watched as I would like.

I would like to see more artists in schools. You made some excellent points about the British Empire, learning about the British Empire and how empires, in plural, worked. That is very important for children and young people and I think artists can play a great role in that, because interpreting empire and understanding empire is something that artists have done for many years, not just through sculptures but also through paintings. In the Houses of Parliament there are some amazing paintings interpreting the British Empire and how that came about and how it was managed. All of that is a catalyst for children to learn about the past and also for us to begin to decide about our future.

How are we going to make public space? How are we going to make shared spaces and buildings that act as something to bring social cohesion and comfort to people's lives, particularly with Covid, where so many people do not have access to public space? How are we going to do that? The Bristol conversation is very important in that process, as are some of the very wise points, if I may say so, that you have just made in your present consultation.



- Q33 **John Nicolson:** That is very kind of you. In Scotland we are having all sorts of debates about this. In Sutherland, for example, there is a statue of the Duke of Sutherland, who presided over the most monstrous of the Highland clearances, where people were driven from their land, some people burned alive in their houses, expelled from their ancestral homes. He decided to commemorate his wickedness with a monumental statue, which many people think should be contextualised, if not removed. In Edinburgh, Professor Geoff Palmer, who is Scotland's first black professor, has publicly opposed, by contrast, the removal of statues relating to slavery. He has backed Edinburgh Council's decision to keep a statue of Dundas up and install a new and more honest plaque so that passersby can read the evil that the man did. He said, "My ancestors had to face the slavers and fight and I think I can face the evil face of a statue and fight". Contemporary technology allows us, for example, to use standpoints so that people can read a digital history of the statue in situ, so to get to the rub of this, statues up or put statues down or a mixture of both?

Elsie Owusu: Conversations, I think. Let us talk. Rodney King said, "Can't we all get along?" and this is about the process of us getting along. I think the blokieness of this conversation, one bloke saying, "I have the money. I am going to put up a statue to myself" and another local bloke saying, "Well, no, I think ..." I mean, let us have some more voices, let us have some female voices, let us have diverse voices, let us have children's voices. When we teach children our history, they should be then able to decide and help us to decide, because it is their future, their planet. Most of us are going to be long gone by the time the next range of statues come into being. Let us open the conversation up to children and young people and allow them to have a say in the future of our public space and our sculptures and statues.

- Q34 **John Nicolson:** I will move on to Sonia Solicari, who is the Director of the Museum of the Home, which most people will know as the Geffrye Museum. Sonia, there has been a bit of a stooshie about your museum and its name. It has been renamed, although I googled it and I am interested it is still called the Geffrye Museum if you search for it online. The façade includes a replica of a statue of Sir Robert Geffrye, who was involved in the slave trade. For those who do not know, this museum is a wonderful museum in Shoreditch, east London, which commemorates domestic architecture through the centuries and, set in a garden, it is a very beautiful building.

Your board of trustees announced that you would have a look and ask the public whether they were in favour of removing that statue. I think I am right in saying, Sonia, that the majority of people said that they wanted the statue removed. However, you did not remove it. Partly that was because you were leaned upon by the Secretary of State. Can you confirm that is the case?

Sonia Solicari: The letters we received from the Secretary of State about contested heritage and the Government approach, one of which is definitely in the public domain, were taken very seriously by the board of



trustees. DCMS is a major stakeholder for us, so alongside the consultation, the Secretary of State's views were taken on board in the decision-making process.

Q35 John Nicolson: You can say that again, because the public said, "We want this statue down" and you kept it up. It takes us back to Colston. If one man—a here-today-gone-tomorrow politician, as Sir Robin Day might have said—can tell you whether or not you can keep up a statue regardless of your public consultation, it makes your public consultation absolutely pointless.

Sonia Solicari: Again, we did feel extremely compromised by that situation. The public consultation was not a listening exercise. It was not designed as a vote. Nonetheless, we had very powerful views coming through that consultation and a rich range of views as well. There were a number of free text fields in the consultation whereby we started to understand some of the reasons behind why people wanted the statue either removed or moved. Yes, the museum should ideally be free to act with integrity and to act in the best interests of its beneficiaries.

Q36 John Nicolson: Did you really want them telling you what to do?

Sonia Solicari: It is highly unusual for the Government to take such a strong view in a matter that would normally be a curatorial decision and one for the board of trustees and then, in the case of a listed building, a decision that would go to the local planning authority and Historic England.

Q37 John Nicolson: Why do you think the Secretary of State got so involved in this? He was basically telling the public that their opinions do not matter. He did not of course want the fact that he had intervened to become public. It is only public because there was a freedom of information request, which is how we know what he thought and you thought and what appears to be a bit of bullying going on. He said, "Removing statues, artwork and other historical objects is not the right approach". How pompous.

Isn't it his job, as we are doing here as members of the Committee, to ask questions, not to tell you, as the person who runs this museum, what the right approach is? He is talking to you as if he is the head teacher and you are naughty people.

Sonia Solicari: The interesting thing for me is that the Government and indeed Historic England have been very clear with their retain and explain policy. Within all of this, what does retain and explain really mean on the ground? Does it mean move it, retain it on the site and explain it elsewhere? Does it mean artistic intervention? We have already talked about artistic interpretation. My main concern with some of the messaging from the Government is where the flexibility is within that. It is not the fact that they have reinforced their policy. It is about how all-encompassing and how blanket that policy is. These decisions should be on a case-by-case basis.



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John Nicolson: Yes. It shows the problem if you rely on Government funds to stay afloat. That is the problem. The Secretary of State can intervene in this way and override the public.

Q38 **Kevin Brennan:** If I could follow up a little bit on that, Sonia, you mentioned that there is one letter in the public domain. Is there other correspondence between the museum and the Secretary of State and the Department about this matter?

Sonia Solicari: Yes. We have received three letters in total since June. One of those letters certainly went to all arm's-length bodies and the other two were just to the chair of the trustees.

Q39 **Kevin Brennan:** Are they marked private and confidential or could they be published? Could we, as the interested Select Committee, see them?

Sonia Solicari: Yes, I am sure they could be seen.

Q40 **Kevin Brennan:** Thanks, I am very grateful. I always thought the job of a Secretary of State was to keep these things at arm's length. Perhaps he should change his title from the Secretary of State for Culture to the Secretary of State for Culture Wars if this is the way he is going to behave.

Sonia Solicari: The situation is a political one. The latest letter, which is in the public domain after it was published in *The Telegraph*, does talk about not responding to politics. The situation has become political and that is the environment in which we are making these decisions. Whereas I would rather that the decision was being made in a purely curatorial context in conversation with our communities and beneficiaries, it has been moved into another domain.

Q41 **Kevin Brennan:** Have you seen at all the approach that the Welsh Government have taken in relation to this controversy? The First Minister made a statement in which he said that there was going to be an audit carried out in response to all of this, the first stage of which will audit Wales's historic monuments and statues and the names of streets and public buildings and identify those sites and names that are associated with the history of black communities in Wales and in particular with the slave trade. Then it will go on to a second phase to determine how we move forward together and address any concerns that it highlights. Thirdly, the statement has gone on to announce further details of a working group to oversee the development of more learning resources in relation to BAME communities, their contributions and experiences in relation to Welsh history. That is the approach that the Welsh Government have taken. What is your view on that sort of approach to this, rather than writing to bodies and telling them what to do with their statues?

Sonia Solicari: An approach that is more iterative and, going back to some of Elsie's points, incorporates conversation along the way is an advisable approach in this very complex situation. We have already



spoken about the Mayor of London's review of statues and street names within London. That process is happening on that level. Indeed, Hackney is also launching a review of street names in that borough. There are pockets of that activity happening. It is not as co-ordinated as what is happening in Wales.

- Q42 **Kevin Brennan:** I do not know if you have ever visited the City Hall in Cardiff. There is a wonderful Marble Hall statue of the heroes of Welsh history. I used to be a city councillor for 10 years and I must confess I never looked properly at each one of the statues. One of them is of Thomas Picton. He served as Governor of Trinidad, where he oversaw an authoritarian and highly brutal regime. He was placed on trial in 1806 for ordering the illegal torture of a 14 year-old mixed-race girl, Luisa Calderon. In an attempt to extract a confession, he suspended her by one arm on a pulley rope set in the ceiling and lowered her on to a spike on the floor, barefoot first, until her entire body weight rested on the spike. He was convicted in 1806 for doing that, but it was overturned because it was found that torture was actually legal under the Spanish law in Trinidad, under which he was deemed to have been operating as Governor.

The Cardiff City Council has decided that it is going to remove that statue from the Marble Hall in Cardiff City Hall. If that were in a place in England, would the Secretary of State's diktat mean that it would be told not to do that?

Sonia Solicari: Yes, I assume so.

- Q43 **Kevin Brennan:** Even though that is a democratic decision taken by a local authority, albeit it is going to consult with Cadw, the equivalent heritage organisation? In effect, the Secretary of State is saying that in no circumstances should you take a decision to remove a statue, you have to leave it in place and contextualise it where it sits. Is that correct? Is that what you have been told?

Sonia Solicari: That is my understanding of the Government's position, yes.

- Q44 **Kevin Brennan:** I have one slightly flippant suggestion to finish. Perhaps we should take all these statues and create a new museum, a museum of disgrace, in which all these statues could be put on display. It might be quite successful. I would go along to the museum of disgrace to have a look at all of these characters in their full glory and set in context. Is that the sort of museum you would quite like to be a director of?

Sonia Solicari: It is an interesting concept. Yes, it is quite an innovative approach to it. Whether it has longevity I do not know, but it has some merit.

Chair: On that note, that concludes our first panel. I wish to thank our witnesses today, Elsie Owusu, Marvin Rees and Sonia Solicari. Thank you very much for joining us.

Examination of witness

Witness: Sir Laurie Magnus.

Q45 **Chair:** I call our second witness, Sir Laurie Magnus, Chair of Historic England. Thank you, Sir Laurie. You are our first physical witness, a major event. There was a small cheer there. Thank you for joining us this morning. What lessons have you learned from the controversy and rumpus over the summer over physical heritage?

Sir Laurie Magnus: This is a very sensitive issue. It arouses a considerable amount of emotion. It has required a lot of time and thought and effort on the part of Historic England to address it.

Q46 **Chair:** That seems a very broad and general comment. What particular lessons have you learned?

Sir Laurie Magnus: To put this in context, we are responsible for championing the historic environment in England. The Covid crisis has placed the heritage sector, which employs something like 500,000 people and involves 1 million volunteers, in real difficulty. There are a lot of organisations facing real difficulty. One priority for us has been addressing that. Another priority has been encouraging Government Ministers to support our efforts to regenerate historic places, which are a dynamic catalyst for regeneration.

Then this issue, which has come full frontal, has required from us a response. Interestingly, at the time of the anniversary of the abolition of slavery in 2007, we changed the list descriptions for roughly 40 statues, including Colston's, to take account of the slavery connections of Colston. But we have not yet had a single formal listed building consent planning application submitted to us to remove a statue.

We have had discussions. We are continuing to have discussions. We are talking to Bristol City Council; we are talking to the trustees of the Museum of the Home; we are talking to a number of others. We are involved in the Mayor of London's Committee and providing consultation and advice to that. There is a lot of discussion going on. That has involved a lot of our people. We wait for a formal planning application to be submitted, but we have not yet seen that happen. We have been giving a lot of advice.

Our position since 2018, which has always been very clear, is that the best way to address contested heritage—about which there is incredible emotion and you heard that in your first session—is to re-contextualise and reinterpret, but leave these statues standing where they are in public spaces. Do not take them away and put them in a museum because people then have to go to the museum. Leave them where they are and re-contextualise them.

There are lots of clever things that one can do, not least just altering the inscription on the plaque by the statue, but also with artistic installations.



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There is not a huge amount of precedent in this country to date, but there are one or two things. The Codrington Library at All Souls, Oxford, has put up a plaque to memorialise Codrington's association with slavery. Things like that can be done. We are very keen to work with owners because ultimately it is the owners of statues who have to make the moves to change them and to work with local authorities, which are the planning authorities that have to approve changes to listed structures, wherever we can.

Q47 **Chair:** Do you still stand by your 2018 decision that it should be re-contextualised rather than moved?

Sir Laurie Magnus: Yes, absolutely.

Q48 **Chair:** Why?

Sir Laurie Magnus: If we do not do that, our collective past is going to be torn away slowly, piece by piece. Our collective past is there. It represents a memorialisation going back hundreds of years. Decisions to place these statues are part of our historic fabric, just like our historic buildings. They were built at a time that reflected the views and values of those who lived at that time. If we start tampering with the historic fabric associated with our collective past because things are contentious, we start changing the basis on which we can understand it. Understanding is really important. It is important that we have a debate about this and that we bring it out.

Q49 **Chair:** You say that, but you have already decided your view.

Sir Laurie Magnus: No, our view is a general view. It is a general position. Every case is different and has to be different.

Q50 **Chair:** Do you accept the idea that some statues would be moved?

Sir Laurie Magnus: It is possible. Statues are moved because of developments. A statue sitting in one place could be moved to another part of an estate because of a new building.

Q51 **Chair:** We are not talking about that. We are talking about highly controversial and contested history.

Sir Laurie Magnus: In the case of controversial statues, our starting point is to retain and explain.

Q52 **Chair:** The position of 2018 is now a starting point? Your position has changed?

Sir Laurie Magnus: No, it has not changed. It remains exactly as it was, retain and explain. We are an adviser in the planning system and we address only listed structures. It might be worth explaining the numbers that we think are involved in this. We deal only with listed structures. If somebody wants to remove a statue, the owner makes an application to the local planning authority. We, as the statutory adviser, are asked to give our views because they have to apply for listed building consent. It



is then up to the local planning authority to make a decision based on our advice and everything else that is put to them.

Q53 **Chair:** But your advice would always be the same, it would always be to re-contextualise?

Sir Laurie Magnus: I cannot say never. It would be different because it depends on the case that might be made to us. Our starting point and our general position is that it is better to retain and explain. It may be that a case would be made for a particular statue and the heritage benefits as opposed to the heritage harm of moving it and it is a well-made case, but we wait to see that.

Q54 **Julie Elliott:** Good morning, Sir Laurie. It is a little strange with me here and you in work, but there we are. These are strange times. Are you more or less pessimistic today than you were in July about the prospects for the heritage sector?

Sir Laurie Magnus: Is that question specifically in relation to physical heritage and this discussion?

Julie Elliott: Yes.

Sir Laurie Magnus: I am a natural optimist. I am very optimistic about the power of heritage, which is a wonderful asset we have in this country that can be used for so many good purposes. This debate, while it has raised a huge amount of emotion and controversy, is positive because it is great that people are talking about this issue and that it is being brought out. As the Mayor of Bristol said, hardly anybody had heard of Colston in Bristol, let alone in the rest of the country. This is great news in many ways.

Q55 **Julie Elliott:** If we look at the physical heritage, have sites been able to adapt to social distancing rules to secure visitor income? Do you know if the physical heritage is at risk today due to the financial difficulties caused by the virus? Could you tell us where we are with those things?

Sir Laurie Magnus: Yes, absolutely. Thank you for raising that. This is the big concern that we have. Of course there are many heritage organisations that rely on visitors who are struggling at the present time. For a long period during the lockdown they were unable to open, then since the lockdown was relaxed they have had to comply with social distancing requirements. That has meant that their capacity has been very significantly reduced, which has meant that their revenue has been reduced. They have not been able to operate catering facilities, restaurant facilities and so on in the way that they would have done.

To give you a case in point, the celebrated—in that it has had a lot of publicity—National Trust said that during the course of this financial year it will lose £200 million out of an overall annual revenue of about £600 million. English Heritage, where I am a trustee, expects to lose half its



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revenue. From roughly £140 million, it has lost about £70 million. Of course we are now getting into the winter.

The costs for heritage are quite considerable. You cannot just mothball places. You have to keep the lights on; you have to keep the heating going; you have to ensure that maintenance continues. You have to insure them and to ensure security because a lot of places have very valuable chattels within their contents.

Q56 Julie Elliott: Are you aware of any physical heritage that is at risk at the moment because of the changes to their financial circumstances?

Sir Laurie Magnus: Yes. A number of organisations are in danger of ceasing to be viable.

Q57 Julie Elliott: Which ones? Could you name a few for us?

Sir Laurie Magnus: If you would forgive me, the problem is that when an organisation gets into financial difficulty, if it becomes publicly known that it is in financial difficulty, it makes it all the more difficult to disclose identity. By mentioning the name, you almost precipitate an insolvency. There are real problems.

I am a member of the Culture Recovery Board, which has been established by the Government to distribute the Culture Recovery Fund. Quite a large chunk of that, I am delighted to say, has been made available for heritage. That is providing a tremendous boost to a number of organisations in the heritage sector, which are going to be able to get relief, not just for revenue to cover the operating costs, but also to provide capital funding to undertake important shovel-ready work on their heritage buildings. That is very welcome and will ensure that a lot of craft skills and so on will be retained.

Q58 Julie Elliott: In July you told us about the vulnerability of craft businesses and the impact on the sector. Are you still concerned about the impact of losing the specialist craft workforce?

Sir Laurie Magnus: Less so now for the current financial year because of the money set aside within the Culture Recovery Fund for work on heritage sites. In fact, there will be an announcement on Friday by DCMS of some of the names of the beneficiaries of that money. I am considerably less concerned for this financial year. Clearly if the impact of Covid continues into the next financial year, some of these problems are going to re-emerge.

Q59 Julie Elliott: It sounds as if what the Government are up to now is helping the situation. Does the sector need anything else from the Department and what does the sector need, looking at the long term, to improve resilience?

Sir Laurie Magnus: That is a wonderful question, because I would love to say that the sector needs a huge dollop of further cash. We at Historic England are currently engaged with 90 Heritage Action Zones across



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England. One is in your constituency, Sunderland. These Heritage Action Zones bring together organisations in local communities, working with local councils, to achieve what I call the heritage trilogy: to bring places back to life, to restore historic buildings and to energise a sense of local understanding of history and community identity. That has the great benefit of then creating places where people are more likely to want to live and where people want to invest and it encourages jobs.

- Q60 Julie Elliott:** Heritage Action Zones are undoubtedly a marvellous thing and I am a big supporter of them but, more specifically, is there anything that could be done to help with the resilience of some of the buildings and some of the physical heritage we have moving out of Covid? The world will be a different place. Is there anything specific?

Sir Laurie Magnus: Historic buildings are wonderful places for dynamic businesses. We find that converted or restored historic buildings brought back to use are wonderful locations for a lot of digital businesses, which are the real dynamic force behind the UK economy.

- Q61 Julie Elliott:** Finally, can you comment on this: yesterday we heard of the closure of many cinemas across the country, Cineworld, Picturehouse and Regal Cinemas. Whereas cinemas is not your business, a lot of these cinemas are in beautiful historic buildings. If they are not being used, they are often iconic architecture and cultural hubs. What effect will this announcement have on the cultural sector with so many cinemas in the future under threat?

Sir Laurie Magnus: You are absolutely right. The heritage and cultural ecosystem is very much interdependent. Inevitably it is going to have an impact. Of course it depends. In the short term maybe not much, but if it endures it will be a real issue. Hopefully the James Bond film will come onstream next year or whenever it is planned, in which case this will be short term.

The point you make about the joined-up nature of the cultural heritage ecosystem is absolutely right. That is why going back to our Heritage Action Zones, being able to work with local businesses, local charities, community groups, arts groups, theatre groups, cinemas and the rest is so important. It brings the community and the economic dynamism of an area together.

- Q62 Damian Hinds:** Good morning, Sir Laurie. Building on the questions that Julie was asking about the financial sustainability of the sector, what has the sector learned in this period of reduced capacity about how to maximise the yield from its assets?

Sir Laurie Magnus: It has learned about the importance of philanthropy and membership and that there is a need to diversify revenue streams so they are not wholly dependent on visitors, retail, catering and so on.

- Q63 Damian Hinds:** Sorry to interrupt you. Have there also been learnings about how to maximise the number of visitors you can have, given the



reduced capacity? That is what I am getting at.

Sir Laurie Magnus: Yes, absolutely. All visitor attractions have been trying to find ways of complying with the social distancing rules and ensuring health and safety requirements are met to maximise visitors. That is difficult for some because they are small buildings with narrow passages. A lot have had to have timed entry. It has caused quite a bit of frustration for some members. I am a trustee of English Heritage. Whenever I have tried to get into an English Heritage site, it is booked up. You have to book quite a long time in advance.

Q64 **Damian Hinds:** Can I ask you a very specific question? I always used to wonder about this, particularly when we had very young children; they are a little bit older now. I have realised that all of these heritage sites need time for maintenance and care and they rely to an extent on volunteers. Why do they open so late in the morning?

Sir Laurie Magnus: That is a good question. You perhaps go early in the morning. You may be a rare—

Q65 **Damian Hinds:** We cannot because they are not open. That is the point. By the time 10 o'clock comes along, if you have a four year-old, half the day is gone.

Sir Laurie Magnus: Yes. They have different opening times. I cannot give you a general answer except that they are pretty responsive to their marketplace. If they felt they could open earlier, I am sure they would.

Q66 **Damian Hinds:** Can I turn now to the more controversial topics we were covering before on contested history? It strikes me that few, if any, people will mourn the departure of Colston from his place in Bristol. A lot of people, wherever they are on the political spectrum with their cultural viewpoint, would acknowledge the conflict that the Mayor was talking about. On the one hand you can abhor mob action and say that this was not the way to do it, but on the other hand you can see the poetry of this individual being cast into the sea, reflecting a wicked act that he did to so many other people.

The question for many people is about how you can ever draw the line once you start this process. Even if it is not removal of structures, even if it is retaining and explaining, how far does it go? Are you talking only about people directly involved in slavery and specific atrocities or about anybody who was involved in our colonial past? Are you talking only about perpetrators or also about beneficiaries? Is it only about those matters or is it about anybody who had a careless attitude towards their employees' safety or was religiously intolerant? What on earth do you do in Northern Ireland? If you start this process, how could you ever know where to stop?

Sir Laurie Magnus: In a way, you have put your finger on it with the way you ended. If you start this process, where do you stop in terms of removal? Explaining history and explaining historical figures is always going to be an ongoing process because you discover more and historians



will put different interpretations on particular individuals. That is why we so strongly take the view that our collective past is what it is. It is our historic fabric. It is the legacy that we have inherited from previous generations.

Rather than removing contentious things, you need to reinterpret them in imaginative ways. You asked the Mayor of Bristol why Colston's statue had not been moved and he answered that nobody could agree. That was the sense I got. That statue stood on its own on a plinth in a square. In 2018 we commissioned an art competition to come up with ideas for the reinterpretation of the Colston statue. One of the ideas, which was exhibited in an exhibition that we organised just across the road from here at the London Fire Brigade building, was of the Colston statue standing in the middle of a slave ship with slaves chained to the deck of the ship. It was a hugely evocative art installation. With modern technology and with the ability to show light installations and so on, that might have been a way of addressing it. We have seen some of this with light technology being adopted in the United States with the challenges to Confederate statues. There are lots of things that could be done to reinterpret and re-contextualise and also to recognise.

Colston was very complex. It is a complex story. He was a brutal slave trader, but also an extraordinary philanthropist. These are painful issues in history that we need to be open to and face up to. People are good and also bad. Of course we also are judging them by the standards of today. We have to acknowledge that 120 years ago when that statue was put up, there were very different moral standards.

Q67 Damian Hinds: Can I ask you about some of the practicalities of it? We heard from the Mayor earlier about the Bristol History Commission, which was a perfectly good initiative. But if you tried to do that on a national scale, where would you begin and where would you ever end?

We get quite a lot of mail—I am sure colleagues have as well—from constituents saying, "Why don't children learn about slavery in school?" I have no idea where the idea comes from that children do not learn about slavery in school. Even in the 1970s and 1980s we learned about slavery in school and kids certainly do today. There is very little specified, as you know, in the national curriculum. With the sole exception of the Nazi Holocaust, it is down to the education system to decide what is learned. Does that system still work? Would it be practical to try to replace it with some sort of official or agreed version, if you like, of our history?

Sir Laurie Magnus: It would be very difficult because I am not sure you would ever agree on the right version of our history. People will always have different views. There will be research that will uncover new facts about people. Archives and letters will be found. The interpretation of history is constantly changing.

There are a number of commissions. The Mayor of London has a commission. There was the commission in Bristol that you heard about.



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There is the commission that Oriel College has set up to consider the future of the Rhodes statue on the front of its grade II façade. We could have lots of commissions.

Q68 Damian Hinds: I have a final question. There is a splendid memorial monument in Highgate Cemetery to Karl Marx at his tomb. Assuming you are going to retain and explain, what should be explained next to Karl Marx's tomb?

Sir Laurie Magnus: I have not visited Karl Marx's tomb and so I am not sure quite what it does say. Last year it was vandalised. I do not know if it is controversial, but—

Q69 Damian Hinds: It would presumably mention Stalin's gulags and the purges. It would mention the Great Leap Forward and all the misery associated ultimately with Marxism. Who would agree? By what process would the words next to Karl Marx's tomb be agreed?

Sir Laurie Magnus: We would look to the owner of Karl Marx's tomb, which I assume—

Q70 Damian Hinds: I think it might be the Communist Party of Great Britain.

Sir Laurie Magnus: It may be. I am not sure. It is Highgate Cemetery and so I suspect it would be owned by the cemetery owner.

Damian Hinds: The party pays for the monument. Anyway, I have no further questions.

Q71 Chair: It is a very interesting point. It seems to me that, as you say, if you did want to contextualise and if it is the view of your organisation that that is the way forward, it is agreeing the type of contextualising, the wording and the way in which it is done.

Sir Laurie Magnus: Yes. A lot of it will be achieved by local discussion and that is what you are seeing developing in Bristol. That is important. But for a national or international figure, you cannot just have a local discussion to resolve what goes on in the case of Karl Marx's tomb or whatever.

Q72 Chair: Some of it would be impossible to do if you were to contextualise something like Karl Marx's tomb. Some of it is impossible.

Sir Laurie Magnus: It would be very difficult. But on the other hand, you can look up digitally the explanation of the background of any historic figure and any listed statue.

Q73 Chair: For the ones that cannot be decided, you would just say, "See Wikipedia". Is that the plan?

Sir Laurie Magnus: We could partly look at Wikipedia. We maintain the National Heritage List for England, which explains the background for listed buildings and listed structures and includes reference to statues. It is a very large archive of documentation, but it is a living archive in that



we encourage members of the public to enrich the list. They can add facts. It has to be factually accurate. They can add facts to list descriptions. Part of the answer to your question on Karl Marx would be to look at the National Heritage List for England and the description of the Marx tomb and enrich it. But it would have to be with facts.

Q74 Clive Efford: How diverse is Historic England in terms of its employees and the people who sit on its decision-making bodies?

Sir Laurie Magnus: It is not diverse enough and it is a work in progress that we are trying to improve its diversity. The Commission, which is the word we use for our board, comprises 17 people, of which seven are women and 10 are men. Only one is from a BAME background. Of our staff, just under 5% are from BAME backgrounds. We have a majority of staff who are women.

We do not think we are diverse enough and we are keen to encourage more diversity in our workforce. The reason as much as anything for doing that is because we are keen to extend our reach to champion underrepresented heritage in this country. There are stories about our history that, frankly, have not had as much airtime as they should have. We recognise that contributors to our heritage over 2,000 years have been through waves of immigration from the Romans, the Vikings, the Normans, the Jews, the Huguenot French and all the way through. We are very keen to bring out the contributions to our heritage from BAME people.

I am particularly delighted that I was able to launch a book of research we produced on our Muslim heritage, particularly mosques in Britain. The first purpose-built mosque in Britain, the Shah Jahan Mosque in Woking, was built only towards the end of the 19th century. This is a remarkable heritage, particularly significant when you think that probably more people now attend mosques in this country each week than attend churches.

Q75 Clive Efford: Given the significance of the British Empire, British heritage and the involvement of people from right across the globe in that, many of those being BAME populations, is it a failing on the part of Historic England that it does not have better representation? This is not a new issue. It has been around for a very long time.

Sir Laurie Magnus: People never like to admit to failure. I would not call it a failure, but we have not done well enough. That is what I would say. We have not done well enough and we want to do better.

Q76 Clive Efford: Why?

Sir Laurie Magnus: It is a work in progress.

Clive Efford: Why is it a work in progress? Why have you not done better?



Sir Laurie Magnus: We are working at it. We have a real commitment to diversity and inclusion and we want to get better. We have a programme that is targeted at attracting apprentices to work not just at Historic England, but also to work in the heritage sector. We specifically target the opportunities to BAME communities, education colleges and so on. In the last year 36% of applications came from BAME applicants. We were absolutely delighted by that, but we appoint on the basis of merit, which is important. Not just at Historic England but across the heritage sector, we are very keen to encourage BAME engagement.

Q77 **Clive Efford:** Historic England describes itself as the body that helps people to celebrate England's spectacular historic environment. How much of England's spectacular historic environment was toppled by protesters in recent events?

Sir Laurie Magnus: If you talk about the Colston statue, nothing has been toppled by protesters.

Q78 **Clive Efford:** Nothing other than the Colston statue?

Sir Laurie Magnus: For me, the historic environment and the words you have just quoted relate to an extraordinary fabric. We have 400,000 listed structures in this country. This Palace of Westminster is just one of those. We have castles and houses. We have an extensive range of places of worship. We have beautiful places. Occasionally there are arson attacks. We have industrial heritage. We have the factories that powered the Industrial Revolution. We have mills. Your question does not really connect. Not much has been toppled by protests. Indeed, most of the 400,000 items on our National Heritage List for England are not controversial, although they may have controversial stories behind them and it is important to bring those stories out.

Q79 **Clive Efford:** The Colston statue was regraded as part of the 200-year anniversary of the Slave Trade Act, which was passed in 1807. Was that an appropriate thing to do? Would you do that today?

Sir Laurie Magnus: When you say we regraded it, in 2007 the list description relating to that statue was altered and I believe it was altered to bring out rather more of the background of Colston's involvement with slavery. It was absolutely the right thing to do and we are intending to do more of that. We are currently conducting an exercise looking at the heritage list, looking at the descriptions of controversial statues and ensuring that they do, as far as possible, represent the facts.

Q80 **Clive Efford:** I have that in front of me on another screen and the reference to slavery was instated as part of that. Was that it, that in 2007 you just altered the statement on Historic England's website? There was no physical change to the presentation of the statue to contextualise the history of Colston?

Sir Laurie Magnus: Let me be clear. The only thing we control is the list and the description on the list. Our advice to the owners of statues that



are controversial is to reinterpret and re-contextualise, but that is something that they have to orchestrate. We are very keen to help them. We are very keen to advise them. We are very keen to try to share best practice from other places, but ultimately it is down to them to do it. We do not own any of these statues. It is for the owner to organise the re-contextualising and so on.

- Q81 Clive Efford:** Do we have the right though to question decisions about heritage, things that happen in a moment in time, like the decision to create a statue of Colston? That could have been an error. Are we right to question that? Why does it become heritage? How many other successful businessmen have gone by in history and did not have statues made that we could equally be discussing if somebody had made the decision to create a memorial statue of someone else? Is it just an accident of history that this happened to him and we have every right to question whether there should be a statue or not?

Sir Laurie Magnus: The listing system has been now running for considerably more than 50 years. For the decision on what should be listed, we make a recommendation. We sometimes make a recommendation about what should be delisted. That recommendation then goes to the Secretary of State or the Heritage Minister at DCMS, who then makes the decision. There are constant changes being made to the National Heritage List. There are frequent new additions and occasionally places get delisted.

To put it in context, which is very important, there are 400,000 listed structures; 370,000 of those are built heritage and 30,000 are scheduled monuments, ruined castles and so on. Within that 400,000, 3,500 are listed entries that mention a statue. The number of named historic statues on our heritage list is about 500. Of those, about 10% have associations with the slave trade. That includes William Wilberforce.

- Q82 Clive Efford:** To finish off, in the light of Black Lives Matter and the whole controversy around the Colston statue, has Historic England rethought now how it evaluates what it has listed? Will it make changes to how it considers these matters in the future?

Sir Laurie Magnus: Yes, absolutely. We are looking, as I say, to change the description on our list. We are very keen to engage with owners of statues that are contentious or controversial because we want to find solutions that enable them to continue to be on public display, accessible and also understandable. We welcome the focus on this and we recognise the emotion behind it. We are keen to help make this end with a positive rather than a negative.

- Q83 Chair:** I have one quick follow-up. Clive asked you a question in terms of regrading. To clarify, was the Colston statue regraded in 2007, yes or no?

Sir Laurie Magnus: No. It continued at grade II.

- Q84 Chair:** It was grade II and it remained grade II?



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Sir Laurie Magnus: Yes, grade II.

Q85 **Chair:** The only thing that changed was the description?

Sir Laurie Magnus: Yes, exactly.

Q86 **Kevin Brennan:** What bothers me is the way that the Secretary of State has waded into all of this with his hobnail boots on. What do you think about it?

Sir Laurie Magnus: The starting point I have is the Secretary of State's letter, which was sent to museums. We are advising on listed statues. The statues that museums have are parts of collections and so we do not have any jurisdiction over them.

Q87 **Kevin Brennan:** But he did say in his letter to museums that the position had been agreed with you.

Sir Laurie Magnus: He drew on the words that we used in 2018.

Q88 **Kevin Brennan:** I see. He had not consulted you before sending the letter to check that you were on the same page? He drew from what was already on the page but he did not directly speak to you at all?

Sir Laurie Magnus: No, he did not ask us to approve the letter or anything like that. The letter went out with the reference to our advice in it.

Q89 **Kevin Brennan:** How would you have felt if you were a trustee of an independent museum if you received a letter like that from the Secretary of State, albeit one that received support from the Department?

Sir Laurie Magnus: In a way, you are asking me a question that is slightly outside my pay grade, if I may use the term. So far as Historic England is concerned, our view on that letter was that of course it upheld the advice we are giving as a general rule when faced with proposals to move statues.

Q90 **Kevin Brennan:** Are you rethinking that advice at all in the light of the actions that have happened? You said a couple of interesting things earlier on. You said that one of the things to remember is—and presumably this is in the context of Colston, but it could apply in other cases—that their statues were erected because when they were erected they reflected the views and values of those who lived at the time. It reflected the views and values of some of those who lived at the time, but of course in the case of that statue and other statues, they were erected at a time before universal suffrage existed in this country. They certainly did not reflect the views and values of a lot of the communities that my background is from at that time.

Sir Laurie Magnus: You put your finger on it. It is the complexity of history. This is part of our historic fabric. It is what we have inherited. What you said is something we need to bring out in a reinterpretation.



- Q91 **Kevin Brennan:** Are there instances in which it would be appropriate to move if there were strong feelings in the community and community support for it and, in doing so, that it did not wreck a work of art of any kind? Context is not just about putting a plaque on it and explaining it. It is about where it is. It is about place. Are there instances where it would be entirely appropriate to relocate a public monument of that kind to another place to reflect the views, as you put it, of people who live at this time and probably the views of most people who lived at that time?

Sir Laurie Magnus: That is why, with the complexity of this, it has to be on a case-by-case basis. You could be right. It could be that a case is made to move a statue if we could say that the heritage harm from it is not significant. But it would then be for the local authority or the planning authority to take a view.

- Q92 **Kevin Brennan:** I am sorry to interrupt, but what I am getting at is that the Secretary of State's letter seems not to leave that wriggle room that you have left there, which is a sensible point to make. His letter seems to suggest that under no circumstances must the Museum of the Home, for example, move this statue that was plonked on the front of the building 100 years ago, a building that is much older than that, because he says so as Secretary of State and, "By the way, if you do move it, watch out in the next funding round".

Sir Laurie Magnus: Yes. The way that process works is if the trustees of the Museum of the Home decided to apply for planning permission to move the statue, our stated position—and we have not opined formally because they have not made an application—is to retain and explain. But it would still be open to the trustees to decide that they wanted to move it and to apply to the local planning authority for the local planning authority to approve the application and let them move it.

- Q93 **Kevin Brennan:** They are not going to do that when they have a gun at their head from the Secretary of State, are they?

Sir Laurie Magnus: That is their call. They are an independent board.

- Q94 **Kevin Brennan:** It is difficult to make an independent call when you have a gun at your head.

Earlier on you said—and I am paraphrasing here a little bit and so forgive me if I express it in this way—that it is all right to move a statue to make way for a new block of flats in certain circumstances. But it seems to me you are saying that it is not all right to move a statue because the person depicted was an evil bastard.

Sir Laurie Magnus: I am just trying to answer that. The issue is that the local authority will make a judgment about the public benefit. We will make a judgment about the heritage harm or the heritage benefit. It may be that we would say, "There is considerable heritage harm in moving this statue". However, the local authority would say, "We need to move it because we need to make way for extending a hospital wing, so the



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public benefit outweighs the heritage harm". That is absolutely standard process in decision-making in the planning system. They could do that.

- Q95 **Kevin Brennan:** Why should the public benefit not also include not wishing to have, in that context and in that particular location, the depiction of somebody who has played a bad role in the history of working people or whatever?

Sir Laurie Magnus: That is something that the local authority can decide. It is not something we can decide because we are only advisers on the heritage harm and the heritage benefit. That judgment that you have suggested would be made is one that the local authority can make. It might make it because it has conducted a local referendum or something. That is the local authority's call. We are only advisers.

- Q96 **Damian Green:** I feel I should spring to the defence of Karl Marx first after that discussion, which is an unusual position for me to be in. Towards the end of his life, Marx said that he was not a Marxist. I think he could see what was going to happen to his ideas in the hands of evil men. Broadly speaking, the history of this country from the mid-18th century to the mid-20th century was about the British Empire. There is a view widely held, particularly in academic circles, that the British Empire was fundamentally evil. Do you fear that if that view holds sway, in the end we will end up losing a large chunk of our history?

Sir Laurie Magnus: I do not, because I am an optimist and I believe in the open-mindedness and open spirit of most people in this country. If we engage in a programme of pulling statues down and trying to erase whole swathes of our collective past, it will lead to a lot of upset and trouble. However, if we can find this way of reinterpretation and re-contextualisation, which is the right way to approach it, we can be assured that those controversial aspects of our history through the 19th century and the rest will stay standing, but with appropriate reinterpretation.

- Q97 **Damian Green:** In practical terms, I asked the question because I was struck by, as I mentioned, the statue of Thomas Guy being boarded up. We are not allowed to look at Thomas Guy in the middle of Guy's Hospital. If that is wrong, presumably we have to rename the hospital. That would be erasing quite a chunk of our history. I assume this is all part of the Mayor's Commission in London.

The other one I have noticed recently from being around parts of London is that the statue of Robert Milligan outside the Museum of London Docklands in Canary Wharf has quietly been removed from its plinth.

Sir Laurie Magnus: That was not listed.

- Q98 **Damian Green:** That is what I assumed. That is a different one. It is no doubt sitting somewhere. Clearly he did bad things. He was involved in the slave trade and made a lot of money, which he then spent on good causes. Indeed, as a separate part of his business enterprise, he set up



the London Docks, which again is a significant part of our national history, let alone London's history. I find it hard to believe that a statue like that will ever be put back, even properly contextualised. It would be quite a brave Mayor of London who said, "Fine, put him back. Just say he did some revolting things and did some good things". It seems to me that there is a one-way ratchet here. Do you fear that?

Sir Laurie Magnus: We at English Heritage are responsible for the Cenotaph. Every time the Cenotaph is vandalised with spray paint or whatever, the cost of cleaning it comes to us at English Heritage. It was boarded up at one point, which provoked quite a lot of condemnation, for obvious reasons. This is an issue for some listed statues. Winston Churchill's statue is another one. It is very important that they are able to stand in the public realm and be appreciated in the public realm without that risk of vandalism. That is a law and order point rather than a heritage point, although they cross over.

Q99 Damian Green: On the heritage point, is the act of having a statue on a plinth in a public place that people look up to almost automatically—whether you have a plaque or whatever contextualisation you put around it—a societal stamp of approval? Do we have to therefore say that if mores have changed so that we do not want those people on plinths anymore, they just have to go, or can we have a more nuanced debate?

Sir Laurie Magnus: I hope we can have a more nuanced debate. On the point on statues on plinths, the point is made that by putting a statue on a pedestal you are pedestalling them. It goes back to what I was saying about our shared collective past.

The other reason for having them on a pedestal is often to hold them up. If you remove them, they have a steel girder that goes up through the legs to hold them on the pedestal. There is a practical reason for putting them on a pedestal as well as the pedestalisation factor.

Chair: Thank you. That brings our session to a close. Thank you very much, Sir Laurie Magnus, Chair of Historic England, for your evidence today.