



Date 15 October 2020

Meg Hillier MP
Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

SB/C/20/9

House of Parliament Restoration and Renewal Programme

Dear Chair,

We are writing in response to the Public Accounts Committee's report of 28 September 2020 "Restoration and renewal of the Palace of Westminster", and the recommendations highlighted for the Restoration and Renewal (R&R) Programme. We welcome the report from the Public Accounts Committee: the work to save our Parliament buildings for the nation is indeed essential and urgent, and the critical need for restoration and renewal remains. We would like to emphasise again that the purpose of our strategic review is to seek to confirm the optimum way to do this work, as well as to provide certainty about the way forward, alongside both our pledge and statutory obligation to secure value for money.

We would like to take this opportunity to also update you on the progress of our strategic review. As part of our review and following initial feedback from expert stakeholders, Members and both Houses of Parliament, we have now commissioned a respected engineering company to carry out further independent technical work. We are committed to concluding the review this autumn, with findings then considered by the Sponsor Body Board and the Commissions of both Houses in the first instance, and published after it has been considered by Parliamentary authorities.

We welcome the recommendations you have made, and our initial response is below.

Recommendation 1: The Sponsor Body should, within two months, write to us with an overview of the key milestones which need to be completed before building work can commence on restoring the Palace.

Work on the palace is essential and urgent, there are a number of key milestones to be met prior to building work commencing, these are:

- Recommendations from the strategic review and decisions on the agreed way forward
- Approval of the programme's phase 1 expenditure limit
- Creation of outline business case
- Approval of outline business case and phase 2 expenditure limit by both Houses
- Public consultation for planning application
- Planning application submission and achieving planning consent
- Decant facilities construction/fit out
- Full business case approval
- Contract awards
- Decant
 - o People
 - o Heritage assets



- Enabling works/ setting up the site

Recommendation 2: We would hope that the sponsor body in its forthcoming review will fully explain which issues have and are being re-examined, and why; and explain the basis on which decisions will be re-opened in the future.

We can confirm that the strategic review will fully explain the issues it has looked at. It intends to draw a line under various options so there is a clear way ahead.

Recommendation 3: The Sponsor Body should, within three months, provide us with a summary of the survey work planned on the Palace's condition, including timing, and where the significant uncertainties lie.

We accept this recommendation, and will write to you within three months with a summary.

Recommendation 4: The Sponsor Body should, within three months, write to us to:

- Provide us with details on the interdependencies with the Northern Estate Programme and identify projects which are critical to R&R that should be brought under the Sponsor Body's control.

We accept this recommendation, and will write to you within 3 months setting out the key activities and dependencies between the R&R programme and key Parliament led programmes, including the Northern Estate Programme.

It is worth noting that we work closely with our colleagues in In House Services and Estates through the Dependencies Board, which looks across the estate portfolio and identifies both dependencies to manage and existing and upcoming projects and whether they will impact on, or potentially form part of R&R scope going forward.

- Report back to us with details of its arrangements with the Infrastructure and Projects Authority to provide Programme assurance.

We have been working closely with the IPA prior to and since we became a substantive body, and they have already provided much useful insight, support and guidance. We will provide further detail of these arrangements within three months.

Recommendation 5: The Sponsor Body should, within one month, publish details of what it considers are the main risks to building political consensus what (sic) is needed from the Programme and how it will mitigate these.

Our strategic risks and their mitigations are published and updated quarterly as part of our quarterly reporting programme: <https://restorationandrenewal.uk/resources/transparency/the-programme>. The next quarterly report is due to be published in November, we will ensure that this covers the risks to building political consensus on what is needed from the Programme and how it will be mitigated.



HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

RESTORATION & RENEWAL

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Recommendation 6: Within one month, the Sponsor Body should publish an engagement strategy outlining how it will ensure that members of the public are properly informed about the Programme and are able to contribute their views on what they want from a modern parliament building.

The Programme is committed to engaging with the public, whose views and ideas will be an essential part of this renewal. Our public engagement strategy is a key priority, and is under development. An essential pre-requisite for this strategy has been the first phases of listening to and exploring the views of members of the public around the UK. The public engagement strategy is due to go to the Sponsor Body Board for their discussion and approval before the end of this year, and will be published on our website.

We are very happy to meet to discuss any of the above in further detail.

Yours sincerely,

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Sponsor Body

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