

Public Accounts Committee

Restoration and Renewal Programme: memorandum from the Clerks July 2026

Status of the Restoration and Renewal Programme

1. As the recent National Audit Office (NAO) report (Session 2026-27, HC 32)¹ makes clear, the Restoration and Renewal (R&R) Programme is at a critical stage. The Programme has developed through a series of decisions taken over many years and across several Parliaments. The Act of Parliament establishing the Programme came into law in 2019 and although much necessary work has been carried out since then to develop designs for the Palace restoration works, survey the building, and engage with political stakeholders, political direction is now needed from both Houses to move the Programme into delivery.
2. The R&R Client Board (the two House Commissions meeting jointly) set out a pragmatic way forward in its costed proposals report, published in February 2026.² The Client Board is seeking approval from Parliament to reduce the number of delivery options being considered from four to two. It is also asking Parliament to authorise a seven year, £3 billion capped package of initial works (known as the “phase one works”) to allow the Programme to progress while the delivery options are developed further.
3. The NAO is right to highlight there are risks to value-for-money in delaying a decision on the Programme; we are particularly concerned about this as Accounting Officers for the Programme and given our legal obligations as Corporate Officers under the Parliamentary Buildings (Restoration and Renewal) Act 2019 (“the 2019 Act”). Successive reports make clear that the Palace is in urgent need of work, and further delay increases the risk of failure. The R&R Client Team and the R&R Delivery Authority estimate that each year of delay corresponds to an additional £320 million to £420 million on top of the overall cost of delivering the Programme—with the figure increasing the longer the Programme goes on.³ Parliament currently spends around £1.5million a week on maintenance of the Palace, including major refurbishment projects. This is forecast to increase to around £2 million a week between 2026 and 2030.
4. As the NAO points out, delays or re-opening of decisions will also have wider consequences which cannot be readily quantified, such as further design costs and the need for Strategic Estates to deliver maintenance projects which it cannot delay further. Delays in decision-making could also impact the confidence of the supplier market in the Programme’s deliverability, potentially reducing the number and/or quality of bidders for the work, and increasing the amount suppliers charge because of perceived risk.

¹ National Audit Office report, *Restoration and Renewal of the Palace of Westminster: 2026 update*, HC 32

² committees.parliament.uk/publications/51442/documents/285576/default/

³ This figure comes from a combination of inflation, maintenance costs, developing options that may not be used and management costs of the R&R Delivery Authority.

5. As Corporate Officers we strongly support the NAO's conclusion (p 11):

*"The Restoration and Renewal Programme addresses a clear and urgent need to reduce risks to the Palace of Westminster. **There is no way forward that does not incur cost and risk, with inaction itself being a choice with serious consequences.** The Client Board's costed proposals provide Parliament with the information it needs to decide on how to proceed, and the phase one works are a sensible approach to keeping the Programme moving forward while longer term plans are developed."*

6. We also support the conclusion of the R&R Client Board in its costed proposals report (p 97):

"It is not sustainable to continue to put many millions of pounds regularly into maintaining ageing infrastructure whilst not fundamentally addressing the underlying issues. Progress is urgently needed and, if we have to spend money on Parliament's estate, we should do so with the intent of making this a safer, more efficient, resilience and accessible legislature for the UK".

Key issues and challenges

7. In this section we address key current issues and challenges relating to the Programme, which have emerged since the publication of the R&R Client Board's report in February 2026.

Political decisions by the Houses and impacts to Programme of delay

8. The most pressing and immediate issue with the Programme relates to the scheduling of the parliamentary debates to allow Members of both Houses to provide the necessary political direction for the Programme, following the publication of the R&R Client Board's report in February. Although parliamentary approval for these recommendations is not legally required (unlike a decision to move into 'phase two' of the Programme, which under the 2019 Act requires Members of both Houses to approve the proposals for the work and its funding), the R&R Client Board proposed that the Houses be invited to approve its recommendations. The timetabling of the debates is a matter for the Government.
9. Ahead of the costed proposals publication, the programme assumed that parliamentary debates would be held by Easter recess (March 2026). The programme information in the costed proposals report was based on this assumption. As of late June 2026, however, debates had not yet been scheduled.
10. There are cost implications of any delays to the parliamentary debates. If debates take place in July 2026, additional costs are between £100 million and £135 million (compared to the original assumption of debates being held by Easter recess). If debates take place in December 2026, additional costs are between £223 million and £288 million, and if debates take in early/mid 2027 additional cost are more than £479 million. These costs include ongoing maintenance and the impact on inflation on overall programme costs.⁴

⁴ These costs are broadly in line with the overall costs of delay published in the costed proposals report which stated each year of delay would cost c.£70m in additional maintenance costs and unnecessary work to develop options and between £250m and £350m in inflationary costs on the overall cost of the programme.

11. In addition, many activities in the programme plan are dependent on the outcome of the parliamentary debates. There are two Programme workstreams which are on the critical path and significantly impact progression of the programme through the proposed phase one works and which are currently linked to the outcome of the debates.
12. First, the acquisition and fit out of the House of Lords temporary accommodation project. For the workstream on the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre (QEII) there will be a delay to the timeline and therefore overall programme schedule of four months compared to the information presented in the costed proposals report if debates take place in July. The R&R Delivery Authority is working to mitigate this delay, but the day-for-day delay impact continues to accumulate on the whole Programme. If the debates were held after the summer recess, more significant risks are expected to materialise as, in particular, the procurement timelines would be impacted by expiration of relevant Crown Commercial Framework arrangements. Clear direction is required by late 2026 to avoid an additional 9-12 month delay.
13. Second, the procurement of 'strategic partners' to deliver the Palace works and manage the overall programme. The strategic partners are required to develop the submission for town planning and heritage consents of the Palace scheme, which is a critical step to enable construction work. Any delay to the appointment of the strategic partners will delay the Palace timeline. Opportunities to mitigate this delay are limited because, without clear direction from the Houses, potential bidders could be either deterred from participating or price in additional risk, reducing overall value for money.
14. These risks and impacts were communicated to the R&R Client Board in June 2026. Programme teams have continued to identify changes in approach which could mitigate some of these impacts where possible. However, not all impact can be contained.

Engagement with Members and the wider parliamentary community

15. We recognise that finding consensus from Members about this Programme is not, and has never been, straightforward. There remain mixed views amongst Members about the Programme, which is evident from the significant engagement carried out by the R&R Client Team. In the new Parliament alone, there have been over 850 interactions with Members of both Houses, including 1-to-1 consultative briefings, R&R Palace tours, exhibitions, engagement stands and presentations to committees and groups. As of June 2026, 44% of current sitting MPs have been engaged with directly about the Programme and 35% of current members of the House of Lords.⁵
16. There remains a diversity of views amongst Members of both Houses on the way forward for the Programme. There are strong advocates and detractors for both recommended options in the R&R Client Board's report ('full decant' and 'enhanced maintenance and improvement plus' (EMI+))—key information about the two options is set out in Annex A). The R&R Client Team has heard feedback from Members who, based on any information they have seen, argue that full decant is the best way forward for the Programme. However, the team has equally heard

⁵ This engagement did not necessarily take place in this Parliament.

feedback from Members for whom leaving the Palace is politically untenable. Others have called for the Programme to be paused and refocused following the publication of the report.

17. There is frustration expressed by many Members at the perceived lack of progress and delays on the Programme (with the resulting accumulating costs) and a desire to get on with the works. There are health and safety concerns—both about the risks of staying in the Palace during works and also concerns about safety of the Palace in its present state before works begin.
18. Some Members are concerned about the costs of the Programme and how they can be justified to the public or concerned that the proposed improvements to the Palace could be perceived as ‘gold-plated’ or excessive. Members are interested in the plans for temporary accommodation, their locations, and whether the facilities provided would be sufficient.
19. These are all legitimate issues and concerns—we respond to some of them later in this memorandum in the section on “Areas of concern”—and the Programme is working hard to answer Members’ queries and provide additional information ahead of the parliamentary debates through its engagement and communications with Members.
20. Nevertheless, we strongly agree with the NAO’s conclusion that “the Client Board’s costed proposals provide Parliament with the information it needs to decide on how to proceed, and the phase one works are a sensible approach to keeping the Programme moving forward while longer term plans are developed.”
21. As Corporate Officers, and Accounting Officers for the Programme, we are keen that Members have opportunity to debate the Client Board’s recommendations as soon as possible so the Programme has clarity on the way forward and to avoid unnecessary delay and cost.
22. We should add that there has also been good engagement with others in the parliamentary community. In this Parliament, the Programme has had over 3,700 engagement interactions with other members of the parliamentary community including staff of the Houses and Members’ staff (but excluding Members). Over 1,300 of these parliamentary passholders have attended R&R Palace tours and over 500 have attended briefing sessions on R&R. There are also regular presentations to staff teams, all staff “town halls”, House Administration senior leadership teams, and office manager briefings. Trade unions and staff associations representing House and Members’ staff have received bespoke briefings, tours and Q&A sessions; trade unions have described the engagement carried out for the Programme as “exemplary”. Trade union representatives have also been invited to meetings of the R&R Programme Board to discuss current progress and give feedback. More than 120 journalists have been taken on an R&R Palace tour in the past two years.

House of Commons temporary accommodation

23. The Commons Building and Infrastructure Portfolio (CBIP) is the programme of works to the Northern Estate buildings which require refurbishment due to ageing infrastructure, limited operational resilience and space that no longer meets modern standards. CBIP has the secondary objective of delivering the temporary accommodation for the House of Commons,

including the provision of Chamber facilities, to enable any decant from the Palace resulting from R&R (regardless of delivery option). This work is being delivered by Strategic Estates.

24. While CBIP is progressing to be agnostic to the R&R option ultimately selected by Members, it is on the critical path for the R&R Programme and there have been significant changes to the timescale and costs since the publication of the Client Board's costed proposals report in February 2026 due to the confirmation by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) that their car park would not be available for logistical purposes. The costed proposals report identified this risk by stating that the decant of the House of Commons to the Northern Estate (under a full decant scenario) would likely be phased between 2032 and 2039, depending on Northern Estate buildings being ready for occupation.
25. The lack of availability of the MoD land has resulted in an expected four year extension to the CBIP programme and increased the estimated cost of the Richmond House works by circa £258m, excluding any knock-on impacts to R&R or the rest of CBIP. Initial assessment of the potential costs to the R&R Programme due to this delay give an indicative range of £280m-600m, excluding inflation.⁶
26. The R&R Programme Board, R&R Client Board and the House of Commons Commission have all received updates and information on this development relevant to their remits. Work is underway between programme teams to better understand the impact on the R&R timeline and explore possible mitigations through a phased decant of the Commons from the Palace or other measures, such as considering additional accommodation close to the Northern Estate. The costed proposals report made clear that a "creative and purposeful approach" would be needed to identify other opportunities for decant, given that the space available on the Northern Estate is not adequate to recreate many of the Commons' existing facilities.

Key findings by the National Audit Office

27. We welcome the NAO's 2026 update on the R&R Programme (HC 32) and are grateful for its continued scrutiny of the Programme. We are digesting the NAO's recommendations but we confirm that we accept the recommendations in full. We will prepare a management response which will be shared with the R&R Programme Board in the Autumn.
28. In particular, we welcome that the NAO has identified that there are risks to value-for-money in delaying a decision on the Programme and that it has concluded that the costed options provide enough information for a decision on the way forward and that carrying out phase one preparatory works while progressing the Programme is a sensible approach.
29. We agree that the fact the Programme has developed through a series of decisions taken over many years and across several Parliaments makes it harder to maintain a shared understanding of the Programme's purpose, its agreed direction and the constraints that now apply, and we will consider how this narrative can be better communicated to Members and others.

⁶ Work is underway to refine the cost to R&R as schedule impact is confirmed and mitigations are developed.

30. We will respond fully to all recommendations in the management response but wished to provide an initial response now to two specific findings.

R&R interdependencies with wider parliamentary projects

31. The NAO noted that the R&R Programme features many interdependencies with wider activities and capital projects being carried out on the Parliamentary Estate (for example, Strategic Estates is delivering decant accommodation for the House of Commons and the decant, storage and conservation of heritage collections). The NAO calls for improvements in the management of these interfaces.
32. At the team level, there are already various ways in which the interfaces between the R&R Client Team, R&R Delivery Authority and Strategic Estates are managed. The Managing Directors of the R&R Client Team and Strategic Estates and the Chief Executive of the R&R Delivery Authority all attend the R&R Programme Board as well as the official-level R&R Projects Group, which owns and oversees an integrated schedule covering all dependencies. These interfaces have become stronger over the past 18 months and will need to continue to strengthen.
33. There are good examples of ongoing collaboration between the different teams with R&R represented on the project boards of all their critical dependencies. To give some specific examples:
- the R&R Client Team, R&R Delivery Authority and Strategic Estates worked closely together to develop an Estates Development Framework (masterplan);
 - Strategic Estates was tasked with developing the EMI option to a challenging deadline which involved work to align with the R&R Delivery Authority's maturing designs for the other delivery options and benchmarked and assured cost estimates; and
 - Strategic Estates and the R&R Client Team and other teams in the House of Commons collaborated closely on developing and engaging on plans for Commons temporary accommodation on the Northern Estate, and with the R&R Delivery Authority are working to mitigate the delay to works on the Northern Estate.
34. We recognise, however, there will be a need to formalise and centralise management of dependencies and interfaces should the Houses agree to the R&R Client Board's recommendation for the Programme to deliver "phase one works". This is being examined by the R&R Client Team as part of a current review of R&R governance.

Temporary accommodation target operating models

35. The NAO recommended that we (the Clerks) need to work with Members at speed to create a clear vision of the target operating models for each House and for Parliament overall, in their temporary accommodation. We can confirm that the requirements for both Houses in temporary accommodation are being developed and discussed with relevant governance bodies and political stakeholders.
36. In the Commons, high-level information about the facilities and functions that could be provided on the Northern Estate, as part of CBIP, were shared with the Commons Commission and several Commons committees in 2024, following engagement with various parliamentary teams. These

proposals, which are currently at RIBA stage 2 (concept design), were also set out in the R&R Client Board's costed proposals report.

37. The Commission and Commons domestic committees are currently being consulted on the facilities and functions that will be provided on the Northern Estate as temporary accommodation for the House during the R&R works, with a particular focus on the key buildings from the R&R perspective: Richmond House, 85 Whitehall and 54 Parliament Street. Once that consultation has taken place and a steer has been provided on the facilities and functions to be prioritised on the Northern Estate, the intention is that designs will progress to RIBA 3 (spatial coordination) and Members will be engaged on these developing designs. Senior House officials have also begun work to identify other opportunities for decant, given that the space available on the Northern Estate is not adequate to meet many of the Commons' existing facilities under a "full decant" scenario.
38. The Lords Commission considered in 2025 shortlisted design scheme options for the QEII as the temporary accommodation venue for the Lords. The selected scheme option by the Lords Commission informed the R&R Client Board's costed proposals report. An acquisition justification case will be required to acquire the QEII for R&R purposes. This will be considered as part of both official and political level governance, following and subject to the outcome of the debates in both Houses. Discussions between Parliament and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (who own the freehold of the QEII), facilitated by the Cabinet Office, continue and are seeking to establish the terms on which a future acquisition of the QEII by Parliament might be undertaken.
39. Efforts are also underway to find solutions to bicameral events and services that may be affected during any decant from the Palace, such as ceremonial activities. The R&R Programme is engaging with officials, including the offices of Black Rod and the Serjeant at Arms, to consider the impact of a decant from the Palace and the possible adaptations that would be required to facilitate various ceremonies that currently take place within the Palace, such as State Opening. Detailed consideration of possible adaptations with stakeholders involved in the planning and delivery of ceremonial events will be undertaken in future.

Areas of concern

40. We wanted to focus on some key concerns raised since the publication of the costed proposals report, some of which we are sure the Committee will focus on in the next session on 9 July—specifically, cost, duration and scope.

Programme costs including oversight

41. The R&R Client Board's costed proposals report was helpful in putting into the public domain up-to-date estimated costs for delivering the Programme; the first time R&R estimates had been published since 2022 (albeit that was before the Programme reset). We recognise that costs are high. Restoring the Palace is necessary to ensure it continues to remain the home of UK Parliament and retains its status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, continuing in its original function and playing a pivotal role in society and our democracy. The R&R Client Board's recommended way forward seeks to balance the need to protect the Palace with the need to

control costs and seek value for money for future stages of R&R. As set out earlier, there is also a significant cost of not making a decision.

42. The size, complexity and unique nature of the building partly explain the costs. It covers 34 acres and with around 1,100 rooms, which are in regular use and support the running of Parliament. There are 65 different floor levels, more than 100 staircases, and around 4,000 windows, many of which need repairing. The whole building shares the same water, power, heating and sewage systems, many of which are over 50 years old and have reached the end of their lifespan. Hundreds of miles of pipes and cables need replacing, and interconnecting voids and ventilation shafts add to the complexity of removing services and managing asbestos.
43. As the NAO points out, the Programme has many unique aspects which add to its cost and make it difficult to benchmark to other projects. The Palace is a Grade 1 listed building within a UNESCO World Heritage site in central London, combining large open spaces with many small, enclosed rooms, electrical, heating and plumbing systems threaded through the building and high levels of asbestos. These constraints limit access and productivity, increasing complexity, time and cost, particularly where Parliamentarians and staff remain on site. The distinctive requirements of the Programme have an impact on cost, such as underground service tunnels to improve ease of future maintenance, deeper basements, riverside works, and the extent to which Parliamentarians and staff remain on site. Uncertainties such as the full extent of asbestos and presence of heritage collections also present risks for future cost and schedule pressures.
44. The Programme also depends on specialist heritage skills. Between 1,500 and 4,000 roles, many specialist and in high-demand, will be needed each year over the lifetime of construction, with shift work including nights and weekends involved for many construction activities.
45. Our public engagement, from regular polling to focus groups, has consistently told us that the public value the building and its symbolic importance to the country and, although they do not take the costs lightly, ultimately want it to be restored and protected.
46. All options set out in the Client Board's report and their underlying cost and schedule estimates underwent a standard development process and internal and external checks to assure them. On top of the costs of carrying out the work, risk and contingency estimates have been applied to all costs in line with best practice (a P50 to P80 range).⁷ This process adds significant sums to the total Programme estimates but reflects uncertainties at this early stage. While the phase one works are progressed, more detailed cost estimates will be developed as designs are further developed which is described by the NAO as a "sensible approach".
47. We welcome the NAO's finding that the costed options provide enough information for a decision on the way forward, while noting that the EMI options are less developed and more uncertain.
48. Key financial controls are already in place for the Programme. These include:

⁷ P50 is a confidence that the estimate will not be exceeded 50% of the time. P80 represents a confidence that the estimate will not be exceeded 80% of the time (i.e. a 20% chance of cost and duration overruns).

- regular reporting and scrutiny at monthly, quarterly and annual levels by officials and the R&R Programme Board, enabling ongoing oversight of Programme performance;
- monthly meetings held with Government officials from HM Treasury (HMT), the National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority (NISTA) and Cabinet Office;
- annual estimates for the R&R Delivery Authority's expenditure are subject to formal scrutiny and governance processes, reflecting requirements set out in the 2019 Act,⁸ with public hearings about the proposed expenditure held with the Accounting Officers for the Programme (the Clerks), the R&R Delivery Authority Chief Executive Officer and the R&R Senior Responsible Owner;
- the Programme is required under the 2019 Act to report contract spend on an annual basis and the R&R Delivery Authority publishes all expenditure over £25,000;
- financial commitments are managed through defined authority arrangements, ensuring that expenditure is approved in line with delegated limits and governance structures – for example, approval of the R&R Programme Board is required for any Delivery Authority commitment greater than £20 million;
- business case approvals by the Accounting Officers (the Clerks) provide a further control point, informed by decisions taken by the R&R Boards and the Houses; and
- R&R relevant expenditure which is funded through the Houses' Estimates, such as the Commons temporary accommodation components of CBIP and the costs of the R&R Client Team and House of Lords R&R team, is scrutinised and approved via the Houses' business-as-usual governance processes—however, all R&R related costs are considered by the R&R Boards when scrutinising and agreeing the R&R Delivery Authority Estimate and are factored into the cost estimates for the programme as a whole (as presented in the R&R Client Board's costed proposals report) so that the whole picture of R&R spend is transparent and understood.

49. These controls operate within a wider system of Parliamentary oversight. The R&R Client Board spokespeople, the respective Commission spokespeople, respond to questions in their respective Houses, with Parliamentary Questions and Questions for Written Answer regularly answered in both Houses.

50. The 2019 Act also requires National Audit Office (NAO) audit of the Delivery Authority accounts every year, and similarly the NAO audits the accounts of both Houses. The NAO also audits the Parliamentary Works (R&R) Grant which comprises the Delivery Authority's expenditure. In addition, the Clerks have allowed the NAO access to undertake reviews of the R&R Programme with the resulting NAO reports received by your Committee.

51. The R&R Programme Board is currently considering measures to strengthen the programme controls framework as we move towards delivery of the recommended package of phase one works, subject to the approval of the Houses.

⁸ The Commissions are required to set an expenditure limit for phase one. The Parliamentary Works Estimates Commission (PWEC), with input from HMT, review the annual estimate and if total phase one forecast costs exceed the phase one expenditure limit PWEC may lay the estimate before the House of Commons or reject it (in which case, a fresh estimate must be prepared).

Programme duration

52. As already stated, the restoration of the Palace of Westminster is a uniquely challenging heritage conservation project; the age and condition of the site, its sheer size, the complexity of the work required, the constrained access and use of the site, the security risks and the need to ensure continual functioning of parliamentary business all contribute to the time it will take to complete. The Programme also depends on specialist labour with heritage skills, which are planned to work in double shifts for some critical schedule activities.
53. The main differences in the duration of each delivery option arise from the constraints of working around areas of the Houses of Parliament which remain occupied during the works. These constraints determine the areas in which work can be undertaken and the working restrictions that are in place to ensure effective operations in those occupied areas (for example, minimising disruptive and noisy work near parliamentary business). For these reasons, the delivery options with the shortest amount of decant from the Palace for both Houses (the EMI options) have the longest overall programme duration.
54. As with the costs, schedules are provided in ranges at different confidence levels (P50 and P80) in line with major programme best practice and guidance from the National Audit Office, provided with plain English definitions in the costed proposals report.
55. The recommended approach of the R&R Client Board is to take final decisions on the delivery option no later than 2030 once further designs and schedules are developed over the period of the phase one works. This will enable the most accurate timelines to be developed to inform the decision-making process. The Programme is seeking to learn lessons from past and present similar projects to ensure that is providing realistic estimates, with appropriate risks and contingency factored in.

Scope

56. In exercising their functions, the 2019 Act states that the Corporate Officers must have regard to a list of specific matters, for instance the need to ensure the Parliamentary building works represent good value for money, the need for improved visitor access to the Palace of Westminster after completion of the works, and the need to ensure that educational and other facilities are provided for people visiting the Palace. The Act did not specify whether any areas should be prioritised over others.
57. A direction was provided in 2022 when the Houses agreed four priority areas for the R&R Programme—fire safety and protection, building services, asbestos, and building fabric conservation.
58. In 2023 the R&R Programme Board evaluated different ways for delivering the Act's goals (known as outcome levels), from a minimal scheme (level zero) which the Board determined was unlikely to meet statutory requirements, to a highly ambitious option (level five) offering major improvements like more substantive building repairs and accessibility. It chose outcome level four, deemed "reasonably ambitious", as the best value, meeting compliance standards while allowing for future enhancement. The decisions on outcome levels drew on the Client Team's

work to understand the preferences of Members and staff on aspects such as risk, scope of work, disruption and cost. This exercise contributed to setting what the Programme would deliver. The R&R Client Board published these in the strategic case in March 2024.⁹

59. As the NAO report states, around 85% of the Programme's estimated construction costs comprise the four priority works agreed by the Houses. Analysis showed that because meeting core requirements drive most costs, moving to a less ambitious (level 3) or more ambitious (level 5) scope would change costs by only around 5% each way.
60. Other works/areas (not the four priority areas agreed by the Houses) comprise a relatively small amount of the estimated total construction costs for the Programme. For example:
- Accessibility improvement measures, over and above those delivered through priority work areas, account for 8% of construction costs for the full decant option and 5% for the EMI+ option;
 - Improvements for visitor access and facilities, over and above those delivered through priority and other work areas, account for 0.5% of construction costs for the full decant option and 1.1% for the EMI+ option;
 - Improvements for educational facilities, over and above those delivered through priority work and other areas, account for 0.3% of construction costs for the full decant option and 1.6% for the EMI+ option.
61. We note the NAO's finding that the rationale, or cost implications between different outcome levels, is not currently set out in a way that Parliamentarians and the public can easily follow. The R&R Client Board has recently published further information on the consideration of, and decisions made, on the level of scope for the end-state Palace which will be delivered through the Programme.¹⁰

Governance

62. Under the 2019 Act, various statutory duties related to the R&R Programme fall to the Corporate Officers of both Houses (the Clerks) acting jointly, for example the duty to determine the strategic objectives of the R&R works and the duty to make strategic decisions relating to the carrying out of the R&R works. The Clerks are also Accounting Officers for the Parliamentary Works Grant which funds the Programme. These duties originally resided with the Parliamentary Works Sponsor Body but were transferred to the Corporate Officers following the abolition of the Sponsor Body in 2023, in part because there was no other obvious legal place for them to sit. In our view, this is not a straightforward arrangement because some of the duties in the Act, such as determining the strategic objectives of the works, are not capable of being solely delivered by officials and the 2019 Act reserves certain decisions for the Houses themselves. In practice, therefore, the R&R Client Board guides the two Corporate Officers in exercising their statutory responsibility under the 2019 Act to make critical strategic decisions. The R&R

⁹ <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/43891/documents/217735/default/>

¹⁰ <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/53917/documents/300666/default/>

Programme Board is also expected to fulfil its remit in a way that supports the Corporate Officers in the exercise of their statutory duties. We as Clerks are members of both Boards.

63. The day-to-day running of the Programme is delegated to the R&R Client Team and R&R Delivery Authority. The R&R Client Team is a parliamentary joint department that acts as a client on behalf of both Houses, providing oversight, assurance, engagement and governance for the R&R Programme. The R&R Client Team Managing Director plays a key role in advising and supporting the Corporate Officers in the exercise of their statutory duties in relation to R&R. The R&R Delivery Authority is a private company limited by guarantee, established under the 2019 Act and incorporated in April 2020. The Corporate Officers have various responsibilities set out in the 2019 Act relating to the R&R Delivery Authority, including for example acting as the only member and the only guarantor of the R&R Delivery Authority and appointing its Chair and Accounting Officer. Under the 2019 Act, the R&R Delivery Authority is responsible for developing and delivering the works to the scope, budget and timescale set by the Corporate Officers.
64. The NAO report includes several recommendations about governance arrangements. These are under consideration and will be addressed fully in the management response. The R&R Client Team is undertaking a governance review for the next stage of the Programme although its conclusions will be dependent on what is agreed by the Houses. Key to any changes to the governance in the next stages of the Programme, however, will be ensuring that responsibilities, accountabilities and authorities are clear, that roles are distinct, that there is continued transparency with the wider parliamentary community, and that decision-making is delegated to the appropriate level.

The Clerks' role in respect of the R&R parliamentary debates

65. In the House of Commons, the Speaker has the power, under Standing Order No 32, to select amendments for debate (May 20.33). This power is exercised at the Speaker's sole discretion, and he does not give reasons for his decisions. In reaching his decisions on selection the Speaker receives advice from the Clerk. In effect, the Clerk has two relevant set of responsibilities in relation to R&R: his corporate responsibilities, where he has to make judgements informed by consideration of matters such as safety and value for money; and his procedural responsibilities, where he has to advise about the compatibility of amendments with the House's rules and related proceedings in the Chamber. The Clerk's procedural advice has to be given in confidence to the Speaker and to other Members. Members wishing to table an amendment would be able to seek advice on the drafting and admissibility from Table Office clerks.
66. The House of Lords does not have an equivalent procedure to the selection of amendments in the House of Commons. Any amendment tabled to a motion may be debated and decided by the House. Advice on the drafting and admissibility of amendments to motions is usually provided by the Lords Table Office. Advice tendered by the clerks should be accepted, however a Member may proceed with tabling an amendment to a motion should they choose, with the House acting

as the final arbiter (Companion paragraph 6.12).¹¹ The Clerk of the Parliaments' role as the chief procedural adviser is therefore more limited with respect to amendments.

¹¹ Where multiple amendments have been tabled to a motion in the House of Lords, usual practice is that a single debate takes place on the first amendment; members in whose names any subsequent amendments may indicate during that single debate why they prefer their form of words. When the first amendment has been disposed of, any remaining amendments and the original motion (as amended) are usually put and decided without further debate (Companion paragraph 6.76).

Annex: Summary information on the recommended delivery options

As set out on page 14 of the R&R Client Board's costed proposals report, February 2026

	Full decant	EMI+
Total Programme duration	19-24 years	38-61 years
Total Programme cost (including optimism bias and risk but excluding inflation and opportunities)	£8.4-11.5bn	£11.8-18.7bn
Average annual cost (excluding opportunities)	£440-490m	£310-310m
Highest annual cost (including opportunities)	£600-760m	£430-530m
Total Programme cost (including optimism bias and risk and inflation but excluding opportunities)	£11.1-15.6bn	£19.5-39.2bn
Net present cost	£4.2-5.7bn	£5.1-6.6bn
House of Commons Chamber decant period	8-10 years	For up to two years to the House of Lords Chamber
House of Lords Chamber decant period	12-15 years	8-13 years