



16 April 2021

Rt Hon Dame Eleanor Laing MP, Chair
Parliamentary Works Estimates Commission
House of Commons
SW1A 0AA

SB/C/21/20

Estimates Commission: follow-up information on apprentices

Dear Dame Eleanor

Thank you for the opportunity to give evidence to the Estimates Commission on 24 March in respect of the 2021-22 Main Estimate for the Parliamentary Works Sponsor Body.

During the session we agreed to write back to you with further information about our plans for taking on apprentices for the Restoration and Renewal Programme, following a question by Lilian Greenwood MP (Q14). In particular, we were asked whether we have a target for the number of apprentices employed on the Programme for 2021-22 and Phase 1 more generally.

Protecting the home of our democracy for future generations will be a truly national effort. The R&R Programme will create thousands of jobs, apprenticeships and training opportunities spread across the UK and in a wide range of professions. The Programme will support apprenticeships nationwide in areas including construction, engineering, design, heritage and conservation. It will also ensure consistent training is provided for apprentices to encourage completion of their apprenticeships and future employment.

Our view is that by recruiting apprentices, we invest in conscientious and ambitious people of all ages throughout the UK, we ensure that the skills requirements for the restoration and renewal of the Palace are fulfilled, and we equip a generation with specialist skills to supply the construction, engineering, heritage and other industries with a workforce for years to come.

Apprenticeships will be created both within the Delivery Authority itself and the wider supply chain, through our contractors. Further information on each of these is set out below.

Apprenticeships in the Delivery Authority

In 2020-21, we provided opportunity within the Programme team for 10 apprentices to develop their capability in occupations such as data analysis, town planning, civil and environmental engineering, business management and building services, amongst others. In 2021-22 the Delivery Authority intends to recruit five apprentices directly across a range of disciplines and apprenticeships levels, starting in September 2021. These plans are currently being finalised. We will set out our approach for future years in due course.

In addition, we are exploring with our current programme delivery partners, BDP and Jacobs, the adoption of formal apprenticeship recruitment targets through our contracts with them. We hope to have an agreement on this in the near future.



Apprenticeships in the supply chain

In March 2021, the Programme announced that we will create a [Shared Apprenticeship Scheme](#), targeting small and medium businesses across the UK.¹ Research suggests that SMEs face multiple barriers in recruiting apprentices and this will be one of the most ambitious schemes of its kind in the construction and heritage sector. Up to 160 apprentices across a range of trade and professional services will be employed directly by the restoration programme. They will be “loaned out” on rotating placements to around 300 heritage and construction sector SMEs operating in our supply chain over the lifetime of the Programme. These “loan” arrangements will help smaller contractors working on the programme who want to support on-the-job learning, but face challenges in employing apprentices themselves. The scheme is expected to start employing apprentices from 2022.

Separately, in addition to the [Shared Apprenticeship Scheme](#), larger contractors working on the restoration and renewal programme will be required to recruit a minimum number of apprentices, creating hundreds of training opportunities. The Programme has set a minimum target of one apprentice per £5 million worth of contract value. This minimum benchmark is consistent with targets applied by a number of Government departments and other projects and programmes. The Programme has applied the target for the first time recently, in the [intrusive survey works contract specification](#) issued in March 2021.² We will gather feedback from suppliers to continue refining our approach to future procurement rounds.

In addition to all of the above initiatives, dozens of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in social mobility ‘cold spots’ will be offered paid internships and placements as part of a partnership with the Social Mobility Foundation.

In another major commitment to improve skills and training opportunities, the Programme is also surveying 6,000 employers and 500 training providers across the UK, including universities and colleges, to map out any relevant skills shortages and work with them to train people to fill these gaps. This information will allow us to target particular shortage trades and occupations for apprenticeships. It will help us to estimate likely apprenticeships numbers in the future as decisions about the exact scope and span of the works becomes clearer.

Your Sincerely

Sarah Johnson
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¹ <https://restorationandrenewal.uk/news/latest-news/Shared-apprenticeships-scheme-announced>

² <https://restorationandrenewal.uk/news/latest-news/Search-for-surveyors-launched>