

Palace of Westminster
London SW1A 0AA

Dame Meg Hillier
Chair of the Public Accounts Committee
House of Commons

31 October 2022

Dear Dame Meg,

R&R Programme update

We are writing to update you on the R&R programme and the progress that has been made in implementing the recommendations of the Joint Report of the House of Commons and House of Lords Commissions, *Restoration and Renewal of the Palace of Westminster—a new mandate*¹, which was agreed to by both Houses in July 2022².

Implementation of the Joint report recommendations

Establishment of the new two-tier governance structure for the R&R Programme is under way. The R&R Client Board held its first meeting on 17 October 2022 and the establishment of the R&R Programme Board is in progress.

We understand that the Statutory Instrument to transfer the Sponsor Body's responsibilities to the Clerk of the House and the Clerk of the Parliaments, as provided for under section 10 the Parliamentary Buildings (Restoration and Renewal) Act 2019, will be laid before Parliament as soon as possible. Our best estimate is that this will be before the House rises for Christmas. However, the Committee will be aware that the laying of the necessary instrument is not within the control of either the Clerk of the House or the Clerk of the Parliaments. Although officials in Parliament have been closely involved in the drafting of the instrument, the timetable for bringing it forward for approval by each House is for the Government to determine.

All members of the R&R Client Board are committed to ensuring that momentum on the R&R Programme is maintained. The former Leader of the House of Commons committed to returning to the House before the end of 2023 to agree a way forward

¹ [Restoration and Renewal of the Palace of Westminster—a new mandate](#), HL Paper 19, HC 399, 13 June 2022

² Restoration and Renewal of the Palace of Westminster, [HC Deb vol. 718, cols. 271–301](#), 12 July 2022 & Restoration and Renewal, [HL Deb, vol. 823, cols. 1498–1548](#), 13 July 2022

for the programme and the R&R Client Board remains committed to this goal.³ In the next two months, the R&R Client Board will scrutinise and endorse a plan from the R&R Sponsor Body and Delivery Authority to achieve this, ensuring that sufficient and effective engagement with member bodies is an essential component of the plan. We believe that a key benefit of bringing the sponsor function in-house will be improved engagement with Members of both Houses and the wider parliamentary community.

Transparency and scrutiny of new governance arrangements

The R&R Client Board is also keen to ensure openness and transparency and committed to the following actions at its first meeting:

- agendas and minutes of the R&R Client Board will be published as swiftly as possible after meetings;
- papers that are required to help the two Houses make decisions relating to the programme will be published and copies placed in the libraries of both Houses;
- an annual report about the carrying out of the Parliamentary building works and the progress that has been made towards completion of those works will be prepared and laid before Parliament by the Corporate Officers (the Clerks in each House), in line with their statutory obligations;
- quarterly reports on the progress of the Programme, will be published to supplement the annual report;⁴
- statements will be made in both Houses regarding significant decisions taken by the R&R Client Board or milestones reached by the R&R Programme, when these fall outside of the quarterly reporting.

Publications will be made to the R&R Client Board webpage.⁵ Given your Committee's interest and previous work regarding the R&R Programme, we will ensure your Committee is alerted to the quarterly and annual reports as well as any papers which are published and placed in the libraries.

Update on progress on the R&R Programme

We would also like to take this opportunity to update the Committee on works that have progressed since we last appeared before you. The Delivery Authority has been continuing its extensive range of surveys across the Palace during 2022. This includes surveys in more than 2,500 spaces looking at asbestos, heat, dust and light in the building, as well as using radar to non-intrusively obtain underground conditions/information.

³ Restoration and Renewal of the Palace of Westminster, [HC Deb vol. 718, col. 277](#), 12 July 2022

⁴ The Clerk of the House and the Clerk of the Parliaments committed to the production of quarterly reports on the progress of the R&R Programme in response to the Public Accounts Committee's [Restoration and Renewal of Parliament](#) (Tenth report, Session 2022–2023, HC 49) [Correspondence from the House of Commons, House of Lords, Restoration & Renewal Sponsor Body and Delivery Authority to the Committee](#), 6 July 2022. The R&R Client Board endorsed this commitment.

⁵ <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/616/restoration-and-renewal-client-board/>

Intrusive surveys started as planned during the recent summer recess; 85 rooms were inspected, which involved drilling into floors and removing wall and ceiling panels to understand the condition of the building's structure. Ground investigation surveys have also taken place to obtain geotechnical and geo-environmental data. Four investigations were undertaken during the summer recess, two in Royal Court and another two in Old Palace Yard. A fifth survey was started in Chancellor's Court during the summer but the drilling team discovered a suspected section of a medieval river wall, causing them to pause drilling and investigate the discovery. This is a good example of the unknown archaeology beneath the Palace. After archaeological investigations concluded the team were able to proceed and the fifth ground investigation was successfully completed during the Conference Recess.

Information collected from surveys will inform the design of restoration proposals and provide the programme's governance boards and ultimately the two Houses with information to help make decisions on the way forward.

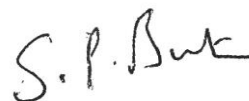
More information relating to surveys is available on the online "R&R hub".⁶ This hub is available to all parliamentary network users and will be updated regularly. We encourage all Members and their staff to make use of this hub to remain up to date on the R&R Programme.

As ever, we remain grateful for your Committee's interest in and scrutiny of the R&R Programme.

Yours sincerely,



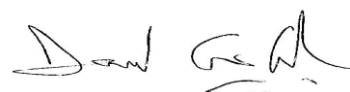
John Benger
Clerk of the House



Simon Burton
Clerk of the Parliaments



Patsy Richards
CEO, Sponsor Body



David Goldstone
CEO, Delivery Authority

⁶ <https://hopuk.sharepoint.com/sites/RRHub>