



A Place for People

**Proposals for Enhancing Visitor Engagement
with Parliament's Environs**



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Acronyms

CPA	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
CVC	Capitol Visitor Centre
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
GLA	Greater London Authority
HRP	Historic Royal Palaces
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
LOCOG	London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games
NAI	Netherlands Architecture Institute
OUV	Outstanding Universal Value
QEII	Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre
SOCPA	Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005
TED	Technology, Entertainment, Design
TfL	Transport for London
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WAFC	Westminster Abbey Fabric Commission
WCC	Westminster City Council
WHS	World Heritage Site
WSqA	World Squares for All
WWHS	Westminster World Heritage Site

Executive Summary

The Palace of Westminster and its environs – particularly the World Heritage Site and Parliament Square – should be a place of national pride; a public space that reflects, shapes and sustains our national identity and democratic culture. But this landmark area is a national disgrace. The area is a living, working museum of democracy but one in which, at present, the public appears only to be tolerated. The site needs to be opened up both physically and intellectually.

Traffic management and pedestrianisation of Parliament Square

The south side of Parliament Square, in front of the Abbey, should be closed to traffic completely, and restrictions placed on through traffic on the east side along St Margaret's Street and Abingdon Street in front of Parliament. The Peers' car park in Old Palace Yard should also be removed.

Facilitating greater pedestrian access to the Square would help reduce the risk of a permanent protest camp being re-established: it will be much more difficult for a camp to be maintained on a site that thousands of visitors can access each week.

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Signage

Map and information provision in the underground station must be dramatically improved in time for the events of 2012. The available information is of poor quality and is out of date.

Once Transport for London's Legible London street signage has been rolled out to Westminster in late 2011 it should be reviewed in 2012 to see whether it is sufficient and whether and how information about the World Heritage Site should be provided around the parliamentary estate and Abbey.

Information and interpretation

Information panels and 3D dioramas should be provided in the World Heritage Site, Parliament Square and Victoria Tower Gardens depicting the historic development of the area. These should all be linked together to form a guided walk through the history of the site – the location of each one marked on site maps with further information linked and made available through guidebooks and multi-media guides. A broad range of guided walk maps should be produced embracing a range of democratic, historical and cultural themes.

A Magna Carta Walkway encompassing the sites associated with British democracy should be established in time for the 2015 anniversary.

A cultural and heritage corridor walk from Trafalgar Square to Tate Britain should be developed, supported by a mix of information maps, leaflets and digital applications, to relate the democratic story in an engaging and imaginative form as discerned through the mix of art, statuary and sculpture en route.

A major new public sculpture on a democratic theme, to be installed in Victoria Tower Gardens, should be commissioned to mark the Magna Carta anniversary in 2015.

Bridge Street Information Centre

The Parliamentary Bookshop on the corner of Bridge Street and Parliament Street should be redeveloped as an Information Centre. Here visitors should obtain maps, leaflets, pamphlets, and multi-media guides. Ticketing facilities for parliamentary tours might also be provided.

The range of gifts and souvenir items should be expanded with more innovative approaches to developing a branded line of merchandise. The traditional red/green Portcullis range of souvenirs could be restricted for exclusive sale on the parliamentary estate but a custom made high-quality range of souvenirs, sourced, designed and made in Britain should be sold in the Information Centre and online.

Westminster World Heritage Site Guides/Wardens

Guides or Wardens should be recruited for the World Heritage Site, to help answer visitors' questions, guide them to points of interest, and direct them to neighbouring locations.

Parliament Square: a place for citizenship

The Square should be a forum for spontaneous and organised citizenship similar in style to a Speakers' Corner. It should be a place where the great thinkers, writers, and artists of the day can give talks and lectures and engage in discussion with the public about their ideas. The Square could also on occasion be a theatre for bringing alive our democratic history: a place where key moments in the development of British democracy are dramatised.

A rich and diverse programme of events could be developed through collaborative partnerships to celebrate national days and anniversaries with resonance in our democratic history, or to mark commemorative days such as the International Day of Democracy, World Heritage Day, or the Magna Carta anniversary.

In order to manage participation in the Square a Steering Group should be formed involving neighbouring institutions, the local authorities and user representatives. This

Group should develop a protocol for light touch management of activities in the Square incorporating concerns around noise and access as well as a code of conduct.

Victoria Tower Gardens

A 'People's Terrace' tea-house / visitor facility should be established in the Gardens adjacent to Black Rod's Garden. Visitors should start or finish the line of route tour here, with a café, shop, toilets etc modelled on the facilities available in other Royal Parks.

This facility should offer visitors refreshments and souvenir sales during the day and provide meeting space for democratic debate in the evenings and at weekends (e.g. book-club readings or coffeehouse challenge style evenings).

The facility should be designed for multi-purpose use for state events, particularly State Funerals: for example, to locate memorial condolence books for signature or accommodate security checks for queues of mourners if required.

The Gardens, with improved visitor amenities, should become the focal point of a programme of events organised around democratic themes: for example, cinema screenings, concerts, theatrical performances, or book readings, particularly during the summer months. They should also be used for mobile exhibition displays, for example of photographic works on a democratic theme similar to Parliament's 'The Election Project' collection.

Education Centre

This should largely be provided off Westminster Hall: the W meeting rooms, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association room, and the Inter-Parliamentary Union room, as well as the Jubilee Café and toilet amenities could be converted for education purposes.

The Jewel Tower

The 'Parliament Past and Present' exhibition should be completely overhauled and brought up to modern day exhibition standards.

6/7 Old Palace Yard

The building should be converted for use as exhibition and interpretation space, enabling Parliament to better display some of the treasures in its art and archival collection, as well as provide information about its role, function and history. This should complement what is available on the line of route tour and the exhibition space in the Jewel Tower.

A World Heritage Visitors' Centre

A feasibility study should be undertaken to investigate the viability of converting the

Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre into a multi-stakeholder Visitors' Centre focusing on the history and constitutional relationship between the institutions in the area. It could encompass exhibition and interpretation space, theatres, refreshment and retail facilities.

A new heritage focused website

Parliament should separate out the content of the Living Heritage section of the website and create a new stand-alone site which highlights and showcases its cultural and heritage assets and better facilitates public engagement with its collections through enhanced multi-media and social media strategies than the current parliamentary website permits. Consideration should be given to whether this website is developed independently or whether it would be better – in investment and intellectual terms – to develop a multi-stakeholder Westminster World Heritage Site website linking together the cultural and heritage assets of Parliament, the Abbey, and the Supreme Court.

Smartphone Applications

A diverse range of smartphone applications should be developed to enable the public to engage with Parliament and the World Heritage Site from outside the building. These would enable Parliament to offer the public a broader range of information about the building, its function and history and leverage greater value from the art and archival collections.

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Augmented reality

Elements of the real-world physical environment could be augmented by computer-generated imagery to enable people to see the past, present and future of the built environment. This technology could, for example, bring alive the development of Thorney Island, and recreate 'lost' features such as the River Tyburn and the sections of the Palaces of Westminster and Whitehall that have now vanished. This could be provided on static devices in a new Visitor Centre or integrated into mobile multi-media guides.

Democratising access to Parliament's treasures

Parliament should provide access to its cultural and heritage assets through development of an online catalogue collection that can be personalised, integrated with social media for dissemination, and is licensed for public use. This would democratise access to the works of art, sculptures and statuary, carvings and etchings, and the archival records.

A place of memory: personal experiences of Parliament

Parliament currently has no means to collect, collate and disseminate the views and personal experiences of the public towards it, nor those of the members and staff who have worked in the building over the years. Oral history in relation to Parliament is a rich but largely ignored resource. Through its own stand-alone heritage website, a joint World

Heritage Site website, or through links to a site like Historypin, Parliament could generate and preserve rich content about the institution and the WHS and provide a more diverse, personal, and interactive platform for engagement.

A Trust / Social enterprise model

As currently structured Parliament is completely dependent on public money with little or no capacity to apply for investment grants or attract private sector or philanthropic funds. It needs a robust licensing operation and commercial sales strategy to take advantage of its iconic brand value whilst maintaining high standards in respect of the sourcing and production of souvenir collections and merchandise. However, it is not staffed and organised to develop and take advantage of any new revenue generation opportunities that the proposals outlined in this report might offer.

A social enterprise or trust model should be adopted to enable Parliament to apply a more commercial approach with all profits ploughed back into its public engagement and visitor service strategies.

World Heritage Site Boundaries and Management Plan

The boundary of the World Heritage Site should be extended to include Victoria Tower Gardens, Abingdon Street Gardens/College Green, Old Palace Yard and Parliament Square and if possible Canning Green.

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The WHS Management Plan will be subject to review in 2012-13. Membership of the Steering Group should be revised to include the Supreme Court. The current management model for the WHS is not working. Alternative models should be considered, particularly the options of appointing a coordinator or developing a Westminster World Heritage Trust to oversee implementation of an agreed Management Plan.

Introduction

The Palace of Westminster and its environs – particularly the World Heritage Site and Parliament Square – should be a place of national pride; a public space that reflects, shapes and sustains our national identity and democratic culture. But rather than a place that 'informs, evokes and empowers'¹ this landmark area is a national disgrace.

Through the history and workings of the Palace of Westminster, Westminster Abbey, the Supreme Court, and the buildings of Whitehall can be found our island's democratic story. This nexus of Parliament, government, the church, and the courts is the constitutional heart of the nation. Few areas of the world are so replete with historical, political, religious, cultural and architectural significance. Here, in close proximity, stand a collection of our most iconic national symbols. The Houses of Parliament is regarded the world over as a symbol of democracy and freedom – a 'shrine of the worlds liberties'² – often in the face of tyranny. Big Ben and the clock tower, one of London's best known brands, is an aural symbol of that freedom, whose distinctive hourly chimes have marked the passage of time across the globe for nearly a century. Westminster Abbey, one of the world's greatest churches and a site of continuous worship for 1,400 years, has witnessed the coronation of every king and queen since 1066, and is the place of memorial for over 3,000 of our 'greatest statesmen and politicians, lawyers, warriors, clerics, writers, artists and musicians'.³ The Supreme Court is the final court of appeal for the UK and a number of Commonwealth countries and Crown Dependencies.

The area attracts over 30 million visitors a year. Yet what should be one of the world's greatest civic spaces is a noisy, polluted, inaccessible place, seething with traffic and pedestrians and pockmarked by fortress-like security. Baroness Hamwee eloquently summed up the views of many when she described in 2008 being 'ashamed, embarrassed and uncomfortable about what London presents to our visitors' when they visit Westminster.⁴ The current state of the area does not say much for our sense of national pride and civic values: those tasked with responsibility for the area have been negligent in their stewardship.

As Jonathan Rounce, who led a consultancy team that advised Parliament on visitor services in the late 1990s, notes, 'For far too long the opportunities for enhancing the visitor experience in and around the Palace of Westminster have been seen only through

1 Tristram Hunt, 'A Waste of Space?', *The Guardian*, 29 April 2008.

2 Diary of Alexander McCallum Scott, March 1917, in R. Rogers (2009), *Order! Order! Order! A Parliamentary Miscellany* (London: JR Books), p.36.

3 Westminster Abbey, Dean's Welcome, <http://www.westminster-abbey.org/worship/deans-welcome>

4 Baroness Hamwee, *Hansard*, 14 July 2008, vol. 703, col. 105.

the eyes of reluctant hosts, never through the eyes of intimidated visitors.⁵

For those arriving via Westminster underground station their first act on emerging into the daylight is to pick their way through a dirty, rubbish-strewn passageway. Having done so, there is little by way of signage or information to enable them to navigate their way around the area, identify or learn anything about the landmarks. Information about the buildings, the statues and the history of the area is minimal to non-existent. Parliament Square, rather than one of the world's greatest squares, is an inaccessible, fenced-off traffic island, used only by several protest encampments. Pavements are heavily crowded, often forcing people onto the roads, crossing points are poor and do not correspond well with pedestrian movements, and traffic is heavy and noisy. There are few places for the public to view Parliament or the Abbey properly and, apart from a handful of benches in Victoria Tower Gardens, there is nowhere for visitors to sit and rest, admire, or reflect. Basic amenities – rubbish bins, toilets and refreshment facilities – are in short supply. Security is necessary but increasingly intrusive: the proliferation of railings, bollards, and concrete blocks encircling the parliamentary estate convey a sense of Parliament being shut off from the public.

The overall effect is unwelcoming and contrary to the ideals that this public space could and should represent: a place of democratic assembly and engagement, citizenship and identity, celebration and national memory, congregation and reflection.

For all stakeholders the state of the area is a problem. But for Parliament the challenges are particularly significant given the efforts it has made to enhance visitor access to the Palace and to become generally more open, accessible and welcoming to the public over the course of the last decade. Each year approximately one million people visit the Palace and demand greatly exceeds supply for Members' tours, for the summer opening programme and for school visits. So whilst great importance is placed on openness, accessibility and transparency, Parliament is now at or close to capacity as far as visitors are concerned. The link with Parliament Square is also potentially more problematic for Parliament than other stakeholders. Although it has neither ownership nor management responsibility for the Square the fact that it carries its name means it is more likely to suffer reputational damage arising from the condition of it than are other stakeholders who actually have direct responsibility for it.

This report details possible solutions to these difficulties. Looking at how Parliament independently and in collaboration with other stakeholders might unlock the potential of the parliamentary estate and its neighbouring environs, particularly but not exclusively the World Heritage Site and Parliament Square, it explores how a more coherent vision for this public space might be realised to provide an enriched, inspiring experience for all members of the public drawn to it. In doing so it places the public at the heart of that

vision.

In the last 15 years there have been several proposals that have explored a vision for the environs of Parliament. In 1996 the government revived decade old plans to pedestrianise Trafalgar and Parliament Squares. Foster and Partners won the World Squares for All contest to produce a masterplan for the Squares and Whitehall, the first part of which was completed in 2003 with the pedestrianisation of Trafalgar Square. A design contest for Parliament Square was then launched in 2006 and was won by the firm Hawkins\Brown. Under their auspices a new £18 million plan for Parliament Square was developed with a planned completion date of late 2010. However, having already cost £2 million, the project was abandoned in July 2008 by the newly elected Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, on grounds of cost, the aesthetics of the proposed design and traffic management concerns.⁶ Had it gone ahead the area would have been much improved in time for the 2012 Olympic Games and Diamond Jubilee celebrations. Instead, the opportunity to showcase the area during the biggest events attracting people to the capital in a generation has been wasted.

The Westminster World Heritage Site (WWHS) Management Plan published in 2007 explicitly sought to explore how the potential of the site might be unlocked – its buildings, monuments, public realm and context – 'for the education and further enjoyment of visitors, tourists, residents and workers, without altering the principal purposes of Parliament and Westminster Abbey'.⁷ But to date little progress has been made with implementation of the Plan and the site has come close to being placed on the World Heritage in Danger list by UNESCO. Were this to happen it would be hugely embarrassing to Parliament and the other stakeholders and a reputational blow nationally and internationally.

Parliament too has explored the issue of visitor management in some detail over the last decade. The Administration Committee and Modernisation Committee both explored on-site facilities for visitors in the 2003-04 session and the former examined the issue again in 2006-07. Improvements for visitors were consequently made through the introduction of the Cromwell Green entrance, the Jubilee Café, and changes to the line of route tours. But a proposal for a full-scale Visitors and Information Centre located either in Victoria Tower Gardens or on College Green was rejected by MPs. Instead Parliament committed itself to establishing a dedicated Education Centre capable of accommodating 100,000 pupils each year. The current plan is for the Centre to be operational in 2013 but to date a suitable location for it has not yet been found. Finally Parliament has recently commissioned Donald Insall Associates to carry out an options appraisal for the reintegration of the World Heritage Site which is to 'examine the options for better establishing the value of the Westminster World Heritage Site, both to the nation and internationally and to seek the

conversion of opportunity into advantage.⁸ Their report is anticipated later this year.

Throughout the post-war years the issues of traffic management and security have tended to dominate discussions about the future of the area. The proposals that have been put forward in the last 15 years have been 'grand' plans largely focused on physical improvements: how to reduce traffic flows, whether to pedestrianise the area, what form any refreshment facilities might take. What has been lacking has been any overarching vision about what visitors might expect to do in the area if traffic were reduced, if the area was pedestrianised, the Square made accessible, and if they could find a place to sit down. And there has been little thought given to how this important public space might be used not just to broaden public knowledge and understanding of the buildings and their history, design and function but also to better convey the democratic ideals of participatory democracy and citizenship that they represent.

When the proposals have been rejected – be it on grounds of cost, conservation, planning law or aesthetics – there has been no adoption of alternative second or third tier proposals: it has generally been an all-or-nothing approach. The World Squares for All feasibility study, for example, identified individual 'focus areas' as 'potential opportunities for projects which could be funded and developed discretely' but rather than seek to progress some of these the entire scheme was abandoned.⁹ The result has been to entrench the inadequacies of the status quo, the results of which can be seen today in Parliament Square and throughout the WHS.

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We do not underestimate the difficulty of fashioning a coherent vision for the area. Any changes must take account of the different, often conflicting requirements, of legislators, lawyers, worshippers, staff from the various buildings in the area, journalists, residents, police and security, local businesses as well as visitors. The area is a central focal point not just for marches and protest but also for national ceremonial events such as the annual State Opening of Parliament and Remembrance Sunday commemorations, as well as one off events such as a Royal Wedding or a Lying in State. And at times of heightened focus on political events the area is a magnet for public and media attention often on a global scale. Taken together the sheer number of stakeholders, and the multiple uses, audiences and demands placed on the area understandably complicate the process of collaboration.

This report is not a masterplan setting out a series of sequential development proposals. Indeed, it does not seek to set out precise proposals for change; that will require detailed feasibility studies by technical experts. Rather, it seeks to outline a conceptual vision for the area, the potential for which could be achieved through exploration of new opportunities, innovative ideas and greater stakeholder collaboration. Parliament has only limited responsibility for or control over much of its neighbouring environs. Its capacity

⁸ Houses of Parliament Estates Directorate, 'Brief for an options appraisal for the reintegration of the Westminster World Heritage Site', 2011, p.2.

⁹ World Squares for All Steering Group (2006), *World Squares for All Parliament Square Regeneration: A Framework for Action*, p.12.

to independently determine a future visitor management and engagement strategy is therefore significantly constrained: the success of any new approach will lie in large part in its capacity to nurture and build co-operative and innovative relationships with other bodies.

The options we set out in this report could be implemented on a phased basis in the short (2012), medium (2013-15), and long-term (2016 and beyond). Milestones are important if progress is to be made: past experience demonstrates that real progress will only be made incrementally. The eyes of the world will be on London next year as the country marks the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and hosts the Olympic and Paralympic Games. 2012 also marks the 40th anniversary of the World Heritage Convention; this might provide a useful platform for exploring and celebrating the area through a World Heritage lens. Looking beyond this, 2015 will mark the 750th anniversary of the founding of the House of Commons by Simon de Montfort and the 800th anniversary of the signing of the Magna Carta. As the Speaker of the House of Commons has noted, 'These were momentous moments in our history and they should be the cause of celebration.....Not many institutions enjoy a 750th birthday and I would love Britain to make a party out of it.'¹⁰ As the focal point of these celebrations innovative and imaginative use of the public space at the Westminster World Heritage Site and Parliament Square offer outstanding opportunities for public engagement. Beyond these dates there are longer-term ambitions that can be pursued of which the proposal for a multi-stakeholder visitor centre is the most significant. But if such a centre cannot be agreed upon, the step-change improvements made to the area by 2015 would still radically improve the visitor experience compared to that of today.

There have been a number of developments that lead us to believe that it is now an opportune moment to reopen this debate. The public policy considerations, planning policy and guidance, and the financial and budgetary environment are significantly different from five years ago. The context for this debate is therefore different and opens up new opportunities to rethink and refashion a visitor strategy predicated not on siloed institutional objectives but a shared vision through the lens of an enlarged World Heritage Site.

Debate about what should happen in Parliament Square with regard to the future of the right to public protest and the current encampments is in the process of being resolved by the GLA and Westminster City Council through the courts. The government has also recently brought forward legislative proposals for the future management of the Square in its Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill and several Private Members Bills concerning the future of Parliament Square are currently being considered in the House of Lords. But ultimately we believe that the future of the Square will best be determined in the context of a wider vision in which the public, as citizens, have an opportunity to stake their right to this public space. The institutions of Parliament, church, courts and

¹⁰ Mr Speaker's address to the Women's Institute Annual General Meeting, 2 June 2010.

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government surround the Square – the Square itself should therefore embody the public realm in our democracy, a place in which the public have an opportunity to tell their democratic ‘story’, past, present and future.

The security context has also changed. Over the years the greatest security fear has been the prospect of a car or truck bomb being driven into Parliament, hence the development of the bollards and barriers around the front of the parliamentary estate. Increasingly, however, the new security fear is not the car bomb but a Mumbai-style on-foot, suicide bomber or gunman. The World Heritage Site and Parliament Square all fall within the Government Secure Zone and therefore enjoy enhanced security measures but inevitably the more investment in security outside Parliament the greater the potential threat to buildings in the area that do not enjoy such high levels of security, particularly the Abbey and the Supreme Court. Unless a more collaborative, multi-stakeholder approach to security is developed, the ad hoc, piecemeal approach to security provision and the erecting of the requisite security street furniture will continue, and risk turning the area into an even greater eyesore than it is today.

There is now greater emphasis in public policy on environmental and sustainability issues, particularly in relation to pollution and traffic management through improved pedestrianisation and cycling facilities. All point to the need to resolve a future vision for the World Heritage Site and Parliament Square. Since 2007 the UNESCO World Heritage Committee has made clear its dissatisfaction with the situation at the World

Heritage Site particularly in relation to the lack of a buffer zone to protect the wider setting and views, and the lack of clarity in the management plan about the management system to be deployed to address conflicts between conservation and development. Papers prepared for the last meeting of the Committee in June 2011 suggested that a joint World Heritage Centre / ICOMOS ‘reactive monitoring mission’ should be invited to visit and the situation reviewed at the next annual meeting in 2012 ‘with a view to considering, in the absence of substantial progress, the possible inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger’.¹¹ In fact the final decision adopted by the World Heritage Committee made no mention of possible inscription on the danger list, this was deleted from the recommendation draft, but a reactive monitoring mission is likely to take place later this year or early next.¹² In addition, the Management Plan itself will have to be reviewed in 2012-13. Taken together, these ought to provide a much-needed platform to galvanise the World Heritage Site stakeholders into action to respond not just to the concerns of UNESCO and ICOMOS but to the broader agenda of developing a coherent vision for the area commensurate with its national and international status.

Finally, the financial context has also changed dramatically. Significant budget cuts mean

that Parliament and other stakeholders must rightly consider new cost savings and revenue raising opportunities. Clearly any enhanced engagement strategy will require investment. But the proposals set out here make clear that whilst there are economic opportunities that Parliament could pursue independently if it wished to do so, greater benefits may be derived from looking at the proposals for engagement through a multi-stakeholder ‘World Heritage Site’ lens rather than just a ‘parliamentary’ one. Institutional risk would be beneficially offset through collaboration with other partners.

METHODOLOGY AND STRUCTURE

Substantial desk and archival research has been undertaken supplemented by discussion groups and one-to-one interviews with parliamentary staff and stakeholders. Leading professionals in a diverse range of fields including those drawn from sectors such as heritage, architecture, art, archives, museums and galleries, journalism, digital media and academia were also consulted. Where individuals are quoted this is with their permission – on occasion, however, for reasons of confidentiality it has been necessary to anonymise contributions. In addition to substantial field research in and around the WWHHS study area, visits were also undertaken to the World Heritage sites at Greenwich, the Tower of London and Bath, as well as other sites such as St Paul’s Cathedral, the British Library and several of our national museums and galleries. Additionally, during a visit to Canberra a member of the project team visited the Australian Museum of Democracy.

Chapter one sets out the context and background of the study area, exploring the recent history of the environs of Parliament particularly the Westminster World Heritage Site and Parliament Square. It outlines the responsibilities and statutory obligations of the key stakeholders with regard to these sites, and details the various proposals that have been made in relation to the regeneration of the area.

Chapter two details the challenges and opportunities in relation to improved access, information and interpretation in the study area and the benefits to be derived from a multi-stakeholder approach. Chapter three explores how a new approach to the concept of public space could provide a platform for beneficial improvements in Parliament Square and Victoria Tower Gardens. An opportunity to enhance the Jewel Tower as a visitor facility, and to provide permanent visitor centre facilities for Parliament and the World Heritage Site as a whole are detailed in chapter four. How new opportunities to support these initiatives might be harnessed in the digital realm is then explored in chapter five. Throughout these chapters a number of national and international case studies are provided to illustrate the potential that could be realised at Westminster. Finally, chapter six sets out the business case for the proposals and recommendations. It outlines how Parliament and other stakeholders might consider the case for investment to deliver the improvements in the short, medium and long-term. It explores how a new approach to

¹¹ UNESCO World Heritage Committee, 35th Session, Paris, 19-29 June 2011, State of conservation of World Heritage properties inscribed on the World Heritage list, WHC-11/35.COM/7B (6 May 2011), p. 237.

¹² UNESCO World Heritage Committee, 35th Session, Paris, 19-29 June 2011, Decisions adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 35th session (UNESCO, 2011), WHC-11/35.COM/20, (7 July 2011), pp.147-148.

revenue creation might be pursued in order to develop a self-sustaining income stream and how the cultural, educational and heritage assets, and the potential uplift generated by the improvements, could be valued and better leveraged to the advantage of Parliament and other stakeholders.

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1. Context and History

The core study area consists of two distinct areas – the Westminster World Heritage Site and Parliament Square – plus areas abutting them, including Victoria Tower Gardens, Bridge Street and Whitehall. As Parliament does not have control over most of these areas, lying as they do beyond the parliamentary estate, any progress that is to be made in improving the visitor experience will generally need to be accomplished in partnership with other stakeholders.

This chapter explores who the stakeholders are, the extent of their responsibilities, their interests and priorities, and how these are reflected in their policy positions with regard to improvements to the study area. Finally it details what grounds we believe exist for developing a common vision for enhanced visitor engagement in the future.

THE WESTMINSTER WORLD HERITAGE SITE

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The WWHS encompasses the Palace of Westminster, the Jewel Tower, St Margaret's Church, Westminster Abbey and the Westminster School buildings surrounding Dean's Yard. The site was inscribed on the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites in 1987 on account of its architectural, historic and symbolic significance. The fact that all the buildings within the site continue to perform their historic institutional functions – legislature, place of ceremony, education and daily worship – means that the site rates highly in terms of authenticity.

The original application for WHS status included only the Palace of Westminster and the Jewel Tower within the proposed boundary. This approach was rejected by UNESCO after ICOMOS deemed it, 'extremely regrettable that the nearby and complementary estates of St Margaret's and Westminster Abbey have been excluded'.¹³ The decision was deferred until the WHS nomination was revised but even then the final inscription boundary provided for the Site in two parts: on one side of Abingdon Road the Palace of Westminster; on the other side the Abbey, St Margaret's Church and the Jewel Tower. It took another 20 years before, in 2008, the boundary was modified to join the two component parts in to a single ensemble by including the section of Abingdon Road that divided them within the Site. Following approval of this boundary change, uniquely among the UK's 27 World Heritage Sites, Westminster is now a single site through which runs a main traffic route, a situation which is inevitably deleterious to the integrity and cohesive nature of the setting.



Figure 1: Westminster World Heritage Site map © Parliamentary Estates Directorate

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Any WHS inscription must meet one or more of UNESCO's criteria. The Westminster site is adjudged to meet:

- Criteria i: represents a masterpiece of human creative genius;
- Criteria ii: exhibits an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental art, town planning or landscape design;
- Criteria iv: be an outstanding example of a type of building or architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;
- Criteria vi: to be directly associated with events or living tradition with ideas or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance;

The Westminster site is deemed of international importance 'as a place where sovereignty has been conferred and exercised continuously for nearly a thousand years'; 'in the development of parliamentary government and its transmission around the world'; as 'the place from which a significant part of the world was ruled in the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries'; and 'for the outstanding architectural and artistic value of its buildings and their contents'.

It is important to note that not all of the parliamentary estate is bound within the WHS: for example, Portcullis House, Norman Shaw North and South, and 1 Parliament Street are not included, nor are the parliamentary office buildings on Millbank. As the map at Figure 1 demonstrates, the boundary also excludes Abingdon Green (also known as College Green and as Abingdon Street Gardens), Victoria Tower Gardens and Parliament Square itself (as shown on the map within the dotted red line).

Management of the WHS

Every World Heritage Site must provide evidence of an appropriate management system and for Westminster this is the Westminster World Heritage Site Management Plan Steering Group. The Group is currently chaired by Westminster City Council, and its membership comprises: the Parliamentary Estates Directorate; The Dean and Chapter of Westminster; Westminster School; the Church Commissioners; The Department for Culture, Media and Sport; The Greater London Authority; the London Borough of Lambeth; English Heritage; Transport for London; The Royal Parks Agency; ICOMOS UK; Visit London; and the Government Office of London.¹⁴

So, in addition to the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey, which both have an independent function, administration, and strategic mission, there are a host of other stakeholders with a range of interests in the WHS. Westminster City Council, for example, has a role as the London borough with responsibility for the streetscape and operational maintenance and upkeep of the area. The Mayor of London and the GLA provide strategic

¹⁴ The Government Office for London has now closed and Visit London, having gone into administration in April 2011, has been taken over by a new body, London and Partners.

city-wide policy and have responsibility for much of Parliament Square itself. Transport for London implements the Mayor's transport strategy and has responsibility for both the planning and delivery of transport facilities, as well as the management of transport services across the capital.

The WHS Management Plan states that 'Ownership and responsibility for the site are shared among a number of bodies in a complex set of long-standing relationships, which have an historical significance in their own right'.¹⁵ Some of the stakeholders are political bodies with democratically accountable representatives, whilst others are not; some have statutory responsibilities, some do not; some have single areas of responsibility, others have a much broader remit; some are concerned with conservation, others with traffic management, some place highest priority on visitor services, others on the needs of residents or local workers. The sheer number involved, and the high profile status and political role of many of them, accounts for the particularly challenging nature of management of the Site.

There are so many demarcations of responsibility that decision-making is paralysed: clashing and competing interests, particularly in relation to traffic management and security, appear to outweigh areas of complementarity and UNESCO has been critical of the lack of clarity in the management system. Our interviews with some of the Steering Group stakeholder bodies strongly suggest that the Group lacks any sense of coherent vision and is largely dysfunctional. Indeed, a number of stakeholders conveyed a very strong sense of frustration and fatigue with the issue. Some expressed a reluctance to re-engage in any meaningful way in the future unless they are reassured that their time and effort will be rewarded with some tangible progress in terms of improvements to the area. Relations between some of the stakeholders are characterised by distrust and suspicion and a number of stakeholders perceive 'rivalry' between the Greater London Authority and Westminster City Council to be the root cause of many of the difficulties. Some seek to explain this as 'politics' but this is clearly not partisan politics in the traditional sense for the relationship is not thought to have improved with the advent of Conservative control of City Hall in 2008. Rather the difficulties appear to lie in competing views about who ought to have responsibility for the area: frictions rooted in the devolved settlement of London government a decade ago. Some members indicated that it took four years after the WHS Management Plan was agreed before the first meeting of the Steering Group was actually called and it has made little progress with implementation of the Management Plan.

Published in 2007 after several years in development, the purpose of the Management Plan is to safeguard the Outstanding Universal Value and 'guide, influence and advise those who are managing the organisations involved in the site'.¹⁶ In total it identified 28 separate

actions to be implemented over a five-year period.¹⁷ These cover organisational matters associated with the setting up of the Steering Group and co-ordination of implementation of the plan, numerous assessments and procedures to monitor, consult and influence policy and actions of other bodies that might impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the Site, and provide for studies to explore the feasibility of establishing a Buffer Zone (Defined Local Setting) or similar designated area around the Site. A review of the boundaries of the Site is also provided for, as well as the development of a 'public realm strategy', the commissioning of studies into traffic issues, pedestrian movements and visitor access. It also proposed that consideration be given to the co-ordination of visitor management and provision across the WHS, and to the development of interpretation and education strategies in order to enhance intellectual access to the entire site. But to date little or no progress has been made with most of the actions identified in the Plan including the development of visitor, interpretation and education strategies. The fundamental problem is that no one organisation has overriding authority to co-ordinate and implement an agreed vision.

INSTITUTIONAL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Palace of Westminster

Responsibility for the Palace of Westminster is divided between the House of Commons and the House of Lords, for their respective parts of the building, and the Lord Great Chamberlain, acting on behalf of the Sovereign, who has jurisdiction for the Royal Robing Room and Royal Gallery and joint control with the Speakers of the two Houses of Westminster Hall and the Crypt Chapel.¹⁸ The Palace estate is managed by the Parliamentary Estates Directorate which is in turn responsible to Black Rod and the Serjeant-at-Arms and the relevant domestic committees of both Houses. Any work requiring planning approval requires consultation with both Westminster City Council and English Heritage.

One of the House of Commons Management Board's six strategic goals for 2010-11 is that the public should feel 'respect and trust for the House of Commons as an institution', asserting a new commitment that officials have an obligation to serve the public as much as they are there to serve MPs.¹⁹ To this end the House has identified a number of core tasks in its 2006-11 strategic plan that will enable it to deliver on this goal. With regard to public engagement these tasks are 'to promote public knowledge and understanding of the work and role of Parliament through provision of information and access'²⁰ and 'strengthening the reputation of the House of Commons with the public' has been identified as a priority.²¹

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.133-141.

¹⁸ The British Monarchy, The Lord Great Chamberlain, <http://www.royal.gov.uk/TheRoyalHousehold/OfficialRoyalposts/LordGreatChamberlain.aspx>

¹⁹ House of Commons Management Board (2010), *Corporate Business Plan 2010-11*, p.4.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.4-5.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.8.

A further core task is to 'maintain the heritage and integrity of the Palace of Westminster and other buildings, objects and documents for the benefit of future generations'.²² The Management Board's strategy is for the organisation to work at every level to earn respect for the House of Commons including by 'making the House more welcoming to the public'.²³ To ensure that members, staff and the public are well informed it will seek to give the public 'the information needed to understand and appreciate the work of the House and its Members, by continuing to develop our information, education and outreach services and opening the new Education Centre at Westminster'.²⁴ The strategic objectives of the House of Lords dovetail with those of the Commons. Two of the House's four strategic objectives identified in its 2010-15 Strategic Plan are to 'make the House and its work accessible to the public' and to 'maintain the House's buildings and collections, having regard to the heritage they represent'.²⁵ A core task to deliver these objectives in the Lords is therefore to 'facilitate public access to, and understanding and knowledge of, the work of the House of Lords, its heritage and collections'.²⁶

Public engagement work is led by the bicameral body of officials known as the Group on Information for the Public. Its 2011-16 strategy makes clear that by the end of the five year period the public should recognise that Parliament is the heart of our democracy,

holds the government to account, and its work matters to everyone.²⁷ It is committed to developing 'a rich and varied programme of tours, visits, talks, exhibitions, displays and other activities', including year round Saturday opening for visitors.²⁸ Plans are underway to enhance the tours, improve the skills of the tour guides, explore the development of new audio/video guides to accompany tours, and make more effective use of online engagement initiatives and social media channels. The strategy also highlights the need to 'promote the archives and history of Parliament as a core resource for research, lifelong learning and leisure, and in support of public engagement with Parliament'.²⁹ Finally, the strategy notes the opportunity to 'build on working relationships with nearby partners and other interested parties to explore shared areas of interest, e.g. pedestrianisation'.³⁰

Both Houses of Parliament have made significant investment in their public engagement strategies in recent years. However, as with other areas of parliamentary activity, these are affected by the austerity drive in public expenditure.

The Jewel Tower

The three-storey Jewel Tower next to Abingdon Street Gardens is, along with Westminster Hall, the sole surviving part of the original medieval Palace. However, responsibility for it

²² *Ibid.*, p.4.

²³ House of Commons Management Board (June 2010), *New Parliament: Strategy for the House of Commons Service 2010-15*, p.2.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.2.

²⁵ House of Lords (March 2010), *House of Lords Business Plan 2010-11*, HL 71, p.10.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.11.

²⁷ Group on Information for the Public (2011), *Public Engagement - Parliament's Strategy for 2011-16*.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.5.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.14.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.5.

lies with English Heritage not Parliament, although the latter does have responsibility for some of the exhibition space. Tours of Parliament are also organised from a small ticketing office next to the Jewel Tower at the back of 6/7 Old Palace Yard, with English Heritage consenting to this in the absence of any agreed site for more permanent visitor ticketing provision. However, from English Heritage's perspective it is clear that this is a temporary and pragmatic response; it does not consider the current arrangements to be a satisfactory long-term solution. The onus is therefore on Parliament to locate a suitable, alternative location for ticketing facilities in the future.

Westminster Abbey

Westminster Abbey (or the Collegiate Church of Saint Peter in Westminster) and its precincts have the status of a Royal Peculiar: the 1560 Royal Charter of Queen Elizabeth I placed the Abbey under the personal jurisdiction of the Monarch. As such the Dean and Chapter are responsible only to the Monarch for its governance and management.

Since 1972 the Abbey Dean and Chapter have also been responsible for St Margaret's Church – the 'parish church of the House of Commons' and the only remaining medieval parish church in Westminster – as a result of the Westminster Abbey and Saint Margaret Westminster Act.

The Abbey possesses an ecclesiastical exemption from secular controls, including planning legislation and guidance. It receives no financial assistance from the Government, the Crown or the Church Commissioners. It is financially self-supporting and as such great emphasis is placed on visitors as an essential source of revenue. It estimates that approximately one million people visit the Abbey each year with a further half a million or more attending specifically for services or special events. The Abbey's 2020 Vision strategic plan published in 2009 recognised that, 'In the 21st century our hospitality should be worthy of a World Heritage Site, of which the Abbey is part, and of one of Britain's most inspiring places of worship'.³¹ However, it acknowledges that, 'today's facilities are highly inadequate and can make an unsatisfactory impression on visitors'.³² Declaring themselves 'proud ambassadors for our country', the Abbey has therefore placed renewed emphasis on its approach to all visitors in terms of the provision of amenities, education and information. Its 2020 Vision stresses that it 'wants visitors to experience the beauty of the Abbey through its worship, music, history and art. But we can make no assumptions about the knowledge they bring with them. We must make the Abbey both physically and intellectually accessible if no one is to feel excluded'.³³

Its strategic approach is built around the concepts of 'welcome', 'wonder' and 'worship' as a means to bring in new generations from a range of backgrounds to the Abbey; to enable millions of visitors to experience the beauty, history and traditions in an atmosphere of

³¹ Westminster Abbey (2009), *A Strategy for 2020 and Beyond*, p.11.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, p.7.

peace; and to invite people to join in the central acts of faith that remain the heart of the church's life and function.³⁴ It is committed to developing an education programme for both school children and adults, and to this end a new Education Centre was opened in May 2010 at No 1 Dean's Yard. Significant exhibition space is to be opened up through provision of public access to the Triforium, freeing up further space at ground level for a future visitor centre. It is anticipated that this centre, plus improved audio-guides, will help render intrusive signage and interpretation panels redundant inside the Abbey. Improvements will also include new toilets, a new café/refectory, and a shop, some of which should be available from early 2012. Improved online provision is also to be prioritised as a means of opening up the experience of the Abbey to greater numbers and making its intellectual resources more widely available. To mark the 2011 Royal Wedding an Abbey iPhone app was launched, and in future webcasts of services, concerts, lecture series and debates have all been highlighted for possible development, as well as digitisation of archival documents and virtual tours of the Abbey and its treasures.

Westminster School

For Westminster School the priorities are very different. Although it has a distinguished history in its own right and counts among its alumni many famous figures from the world of politics, diplomacy, the military, the arts, and business, it is not a visitor site and it is not in its interests to see any increase in visitor movements in and around the school premises. The safety and security of the pupils and staff are understandably paramount.

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Supreme Court

The Supreme Court in the Middlesex Guildhall stands on an historic site of sanctuary with links to justice and the law that stretch over a millennium.³⁵ The location was specifically chosen because it would symbolise the separation of powers in our democratic system with the legislature, the executive and the church each represented on the other three sides of Parliament Square. Committed to transparency and openness in its workings, the Supreme Court has worked 'to ensure the Court is welcoming and friendly'.³⁶ One of its strategic objectives is to 'promote knowledge of, and interest in, this historic building, the works of art it houses...'³⁷ and a 'key objective' is to raise awareness of its work, through, for example, educational and outreach activities particularly to promote 'public knowledge of the importance of the independence of the judiciary in a modern democracy'.³⁸ The Court already has a small exhibition space, provides guided tours, and has entered into an agreement with Sky News to film its proceedings. It also offers educational tours to school children but in its second year of operation it was already near capacity with 67,000 student visitors, clearly demonstrating a high level of interest in the building and its work.³⁹

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ For a history of the Supreme Court see C. Miele (Ed.) (2010), *The Supreme Court: history, art, architecture* (London: Merrell).

³⁶ UK Supreme Court (2010), *The Supreme Court Annual Report and Accounts 2009-2010*, p. 33.

³⁷ UK Supreme Court (2010), *Business Plan 2010-11*, p.7.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.14.

³⁹ Information provided during an interview with William Arnold and Sian Lewis, Supreme Court, 30 March 2011.

Like Parliament it faces similar supply and demand visitor pressures and does not have the space or budget capacity to significantly expand its work in this area.

BEYOND THE WORLD HERITAGE SITE

Victoria Tower Gardens

Victoria Tower Gardens is managed by the Royal Parks Agency on behalf of the Government which, as long ago as 2003, outlined a 'restoration and enhancement' project to improve the site, but the vision has never been fully realised.⁴⁰ The Agency is committed to improving the Gardens with a particular focus on developing a greater 'community feel' to them through an increase in the number and variety of events they host. It is also consulting on proposals to regenerate the children's playground, utilising an historical theme to reflect the surroundings.⁴¹ But any plans are inevitably constrained by the availability of funding.

Parliament Square

Concerns about heavy traffic, public access and security are not recent phenomena in relation to Parliament Square.⁴² It is the site of the first ever traffic lights, installed in December 1868, and the country's first official roundabout in 1926. At every stage of its design and re-design over the last century and a half there has been great debate about the openness of the space and pedestrian access to it.

Laid out in the 1860s as part of the redesign of the Palace of Westminster following the fire of 1834, 'Parliament Square Garden' provided an improved setting for the new building. This Parliament Square was smaller than the current model: north to south it was around the size of New Palace Yard; east to west it was slightly narrower than the length of St Margaret's Church. It comprised two small gardens, surrounded by railings, with a paved footpath through the centre (running east to west). A statue of Canning was located on neighbouring Canning Green and the anti-slavery Buxton Memorial Fountain (which is now found in Victoria Tower Gardens) stood at the north-eastern corner of the Square. Over the next 20 years four statues of 19th century statesmen were added: Beaconsfield (Disraeli), Derby, Palmerston and Peel. The origin of the problems to come in relation to traffic flow in the area can be found in this design. Rather than connecting to the precincts of the Abbey, the Square was separated from it by a new, short road running in front of St Margaret's Church: all in order to reduce the travelling time for carriages en route from the Palace to Victoria Station.

⁴⁰ Victoria Tower Gardens Restoration and Enhancement Project: Presentation to the Royal Parks Management Board, by M. Fitt, M. Wasilewski, S. Lee & J. Emery-Wallis, December 2003.

⁴¹ Royal Parks, http://www.royalparks.org.uk/about/play_consultation.cfm

⁴² A comprehensive history of the design and development of Parliament Square can be found in C. Miele (Ed.) (2010), *The Supreme Court: history, art, architecture* (London: Merrell).

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Half a century later the burgeoning use of the motorcar led to significantly increased traffic pressure in and around the Square, hence the introduction of the roundabout in 1926. Subsequent redevelopment proposals throughout the 1930s were largely predicated on improving traffic flow and London County Council designs in these years explicitly refer to the site as a roundabout.⁴³ In the 1930s fears about the Square becoming a focal point for public assembly were also being expressed. Proposals to remove the railings that surrounded the gardens on the Square were opposed by the police with one officer writing that an open square would only be useful for vagrants and, 'in my view, the removal of these railings would attract a most undesirable, unclean person to this spot'. In addition, he feared children might treat the square as a playground.⁴⁴ As the Square was largely used as a crossing point some police officers were concerned that when guiding traffic, it would become difficult to manage pedestrians crossing at new points if access was more open. Others expressed fears about the prospect of large numbers of people being able to congregate outside Parliament, thereby causing a nuisance (including to wedding guests at St Margaret's Church). A letter from the office of the Commissioner of Metropolitan Police concluded that in view of the large number of accidents in the area, a series of subways should be built or the footpaths on the square be closed.⁴⁵ The issue was raised again in 1939 with supporters of the removal of the railings arguing in favour of the aesthetic advantages: again, however, the prospect of increased traffic, pedestrians and the risk of demonstrations were cited in evidence against. In a letter to the Ministry of Works, the Metropolitan Commissioner's office repeated their view that the crossings were 'designed in such a way so as to encourage people as far as possible to move round the square on the outside and not cut across. If they were attracted to the centre the number cutting across would tend to increase.'⁴⁶

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The Country of London Plan in 1943 called for a re-design of the area in order to provide a more tranquil setting and specifically recommended turning Great George Street into a dual carriageway to facilitate this. Some architects suggested that it should be redesigned in such a way as to create new, more accessible civic space. Gordon Cullen, for example, proposed that an underpass be built for public access and the Square be pedestrianised; his drawings even feature awnings and a café in the area around the Square. In 1949, what eventually emerged was a compromise solution implemented with limited post-war resources. At the heart of the debate was whether the roundabout should be enclosed, as with the original Barry design, which would rule out public access, and if not, whether and how people should be able to access the Square without causing undue interruptions to the traffic flow. Among the authorities involved opinion was split: London County Council were primarily concerned about traffic movements; the Ministry of Works wanted improved public access; the Metropolitan Police, as before, were opposed to such access. The Ministry of Transport, who urgently wanted a traffic solution in advance

⁴³ See for example, The National Archives, WORK 16/1939.

⁴⁴ The National Archives, MEPO 2/3240 – letter from R Graham, 25/8/1930.

⁴⁵ The National Archives, MEPO 2/3240 – letter to HM Ministry of Works, Sept 1930.

⁴⁶ The National Archives, MEPO 2/3240 – letter from Secretary to Met Commissioner to Secretary HM Ministry of Works, 23/5/1939.

of the 1951 Festival of Britain argued that those who wanted aesthetic improvements to the basic traffic proposals should pay for them. A compromise of sorts was found when, at the request of the Ministry of Works and on the recommendation of the Royal Institute of British Architects, architect Grey Wornum was asked to work with the traffic engineers to essentially beautify the traffic improvement proposals. Initially, wide pavements on each side of the Square were proposed to allow for pedestrian movement and the Royal Fine Arts Commission suggested a low terrace be incorporated into the design to display the statuary. But again the Ministry of Transport, Westminster City Council and the Metropolitan Police were opposed. With the Festival of Britain fast approaching a pragmatic compromise was eventually struck: the proposed wide pavements on the south and east side of the Square were removed from the plan and replaced with a narrower strip of paving. (These were not intended for general public access but to allow people to view the procession route on state occasions without having to stand on the grass.)

Members of Parliament hotly debated the proposals, objecting to the speed at which decisions were taken and the precedence given to traffic over pedestrians due to the increased motor traffic expected during the Festival. Time and again Members raised concerns about the risks posed to MPs and the public due to the lack of pedestrian crossings and the impact the narrowing of the width of the carriageway might have on existing congestion problems.⁴⁷ Grey Wornum himself always regretted that the Square remained largely inaccessible to the public. Designed as a garden traffic island comprising a central lawn, paved walkways and paths and with some limited seating on the north and western perimeter, the Square we know today is largely based on this post-war model.

Parliament Square has never really been an open, accessible, public space. Its size and shape has altered over the years but the prioritisation of traffic over people has been a constant theme, as have concerns about public gathering and protest. There have been ideas for extensions of the green space but they have come to nothing, as have proposals to enhance public access.

World Squares for All (WSqA) Project

In the mid 1970s the Greater London Council initiated the 'Three Squares' project for the redevelopment of Leicester Square, Trafalgar Square and Parliament Square but progress was only made in respect of the first location. It would be a further three decades before changes were implemented to transform Trafalgar Square through the World Squares for All project.

The WSqA study was initiated in 1996 with the formation of a Steering Group to explore how Trafalgar Square, Parliament Square and the Whitehall conservation area might be

⁴⁷ See for example, House of Commons, *Hansard*, 26 June 1950, vol. 476, col. 1887.

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redefined.⁴⁸ The WSqA masterplan was produced two years later by a consultancy team led by Foster and Partners. Under the 1999 Greater London Act the Mayor of London and the Greater London Authority were vested with lead responsibility for the future of both Trafalgar and Parliament Squares although both Squares remain Crown land. The government made clear during the parliamentary debates in 1999 that it was transferring day-to-day responsibility from the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport to the GLA specifically to facilitate implementation of the 'World Squares for All' masterplan project. Ministers took the view that by giving the Mayor management responsibility for the Squares, as well as for strategic routes such as Whitehall, he would be able to champion the World Squares scheme and ensure that a consistent management regime could be established for the project area.⁴⁹

The first phase of redevelopment was taken forward between 2000 and 2003 in Trafalgar Square. The north side of the Square was pedestrianised creating a terrace link to the National Gallery, a café, public toilets and a disabled access lift were introduced, and Heritage Wardens were provided around the clock. Accompanied by the redevelopment of St Martin in the Fields church, the setting of the Square area was transformed.

As the work in Trafalgar Square neared completion, an Audit Commission assessment of the work in both Squares found that Parliament Square continued to suffer from poor identification and maintenance, and problems arising from various bodies holding responsibility for different areas of the Square.⁵⁰ The GLA Best Value Review Board similarly noted that the identity and significance of Parliament Square could be improved by providing more heritage information on and around the Square as part of the street furniture.⁵¹

In 2006 the World Squares for All Steering Group published a feasibility study – World Squares for All Parliament Square Regeneration: A Framework for Action – for the next stage of the masterplan. Lord Foster of Foster and Partners declared his belief that 'implementation of these proposals will put Parliament Square firmly "on the map", and reintegrate it both physically in to the city and metaphorically in to the consciousness of Londoners and visitors alike'.⁵² The principal aims were to 'redress the balance between traffic and pedestrians, to restore a sense of sanctuary to much of the open space between the buildings, and to enable people to stop, understand and enjoy the fine heritage of the structures at the very heart of the capital'.⁵³

The analysis of traffic and pedestrian movements in and around Parliament Square

⁴⁸ Membership of the World Squares for All Steering Group is smaller than that of the Westminster World Heritage Site Management Plan: the Greater London Authority (Chair), Cabinet Office, English Heritage, Metropolitan Police, National Security Advice Centre, Parliamentary Works Directorate, Royal Parks Agency, Transport for London, Westminster Abbey, Westminster City Council.

⁴⁹ Lord Macintosh of Haringey, *Hansard*, 25 October 1999, vol. 606, col. 128.

⁵⁰ Audit Commission (October 2002), *Greater London Authority - Trafalgar and Parliament Squares*.

⁵¹ Greater London Authority, 'Trafalgar and Parliament Squares Best Value Review Project Board', 27 March 2002, p.6.

⁵² World Squares for All Steering Group (2006), *World Squares for All Parliament Square Regeneration: A Framework for Action*, p.6.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

highlighted in the report remain pertinent today. It found that similar numbers of people move through the area on foot, public transport and in private vehicles. However, vehicles pass through the area whilst for pedestrians the Square is a destination, and one that has some of the highest daytime pedestrian movements in London. Despite this, the planning bias in the Square continues to favour vehicles rather than pedestrian ease of movement.⁵⁴ The high traffic density and flow rendered the conditions 'intimidating' and 'not conducive' for cyclists, and the gyratory nature of the traffic flow increased bus travel times and risked delays. The study concluded that 'the significance of the layers of history in the Square can only be revealed and enjoyed by reducing the dominance of traffic'.⁵⁵

The feasibility study recommended that:⁵⁶

- The south side of Parliament Square be closed to traffic;
- Carriageway and footway improvements be made on the eastern side of the Square;
- Soft landscaping replace existing lawn to create a 'Cathedral Close' setting for the Abbey and St Margaret's Church;
- An avenue of statuary be created to establish a 'dialogue' between key political figures.

In addition to the core Parliament Square area, the feasibility study explored options for the revitalisation of neighbouring areas.⁵⁷ It recommended the:

- Removal of car parking in Old Palace Yard and its relocation to the car park under College Green;
- Integration of security bollards into new street furniture designs, such as flagpoles;
- Creation of a sculpture park on College Green, curated by and linked to Tate Britain, and the potential location of a Visitor Centre here as well;
- Re-landscaping of Victoria Tower Gardens to provide clear views across the River Thames;
- Creation of a 'People's Terrace' in the Gardens, equivalent in size to that of the Members' and Lords' Terraces in the Palace of Westminster;
- Location of amenities – a tea house, orangery and toilets – in the Gardens.

A design contest was launched in late 2006 to develop the next stage of the masterplan and was won by Hawkins\Brown. They were tasked with delivering, by late 2010, 'a public realm regeneration scheme that improves accessibility and the visitor experience while enhancing the area's identity, its historic character and its national and international significance'.⁵⁸ Hawkins\Brown's ambition was 'to create, for the first time in this location, a place for people' which had to 'work on a number of levels, catering for a range of uses

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.10.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.9.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.14-15.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.16-19.

⁵⁸ Submission by Roger Hawkins, Director, Hawkins\Brown, July 2011.



Figure 2. Redeveloping Parliament Square – Before and After © Hawkins\Brown

and users including tourists, ceremonial, events, local business workers, residents, lawful demonstrations etc'.⁵⁹ As the company's principal Roger Hawkins said, on winning the competition, 'This project needs to work on a rainy day in April with only two people in the square, as well as a coronation with up to 100,000 people'.⁶⁰

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The key features of their project proposals were to:

- Simplify the traffic system: change from the current gyratory system to two-way streets on the north and west side, pedestrianise the side against Westminster Abbey, and keep the side in front of the Houses of Parliament open only for movements by people coming onto the parliamentary estate, local residents, buses, taxis and cyclists;
- Introduce a series of controlled pedestrian crossings at the north-east and south-east corners and curved pedestrian access routes across the Square;
- Reintroduce a 'gently cambered topography' to draw visitors around and across the Square – the highest 'vantage point' of the camber would be positioned at the best viewing point to the north-west of the Square;
- Make the Square entirely hard-surface and create a semi-sunken walkway, just off the pedestrian routes, in the form of a 16-metre diameter 'Round Table', where visitors could linger and congregate, and enjoy the surrounding views;
- Offset the hard-surfacing by 'greening' other areas including introducing new plane trees on the grassed area at Canning Green and in the south-east corner of the Square – these would provide shaded areas to 'sit, rest and appreciate the historic surroundings'.

The 'Parliament Square Improvement Project' lasted just under 18 months before the new

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T. Abrahams (2010), *Ideas Exchange: The Collaborative Studio of Hawkins\Brown* (Birkhauser).

R. Vaughn, 'Foster loses out to Hawkins\Brown on Parliament Square revamp', *The Architects Journal*, 15 March 2007.



Figure 3. Redeveloping Parliament Square – Before and After © Hawkins\Brown

Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, withdrew his support for it in August 2008. The reasons given for terminating the project were concern about costs, the potential impact on traffic and the loss of green space.

Who Uses The Square?

The last time significant data was collected about users was in March 2007 when Intelligent Spaces Ltd was commissioned by Transport for London to undertake an assessment of pedestrian movements in the Square.⁶¹ It found that users tend to be evenly divided across the age groups, reflecting its broad appeal, although at weekends young people under the age of 25 were more predominant, whereas during the week, reflecting the local workforce, those in the 34-49 age bracket were more numerous. During the week the majority of people in the area were either commuters (38%) or tourists (40%).

Most people (45% on a weekday and 64% on a Saturday) arrive in the area via the underground tube station. Nearly a quarter were visiting Parliament Square for the first time and a similar number were visiting the capital for the first time as well. Visitors were

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Intelligent Space Partnership Ltd (2007), *Parliament Square Pedestrian Study: Stage 1 & 2 Report for Transport for London*, 8 June 2007, p. 14.

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reportedly drawn from 48 different countries across six continents but almost half – 48% – lived in the UK. Of these just over half lived in London with the remainder travelling from other parts of the country. When asked what they thought about the Square and what improvements they would like to see, the top five recommendations were: reduce the levels of vehicular traffic; improve the amount of pavement space; pedestrianise the area; provide better signage and information; and improve crossing facilities in the area.

The Right To Protest

The Parliament Square area has been the focus of public debate about the right to protest and exercise free speech extending as far back as the suffragette protests and the Chartist petitions. In more recent times it was the scene of the 2000 May Day riots, and has played host to protests ranging from unemployment and fox hunting to student fees. Since 2001 however, attention has focused on two protests in particular: Brian Haw's camp and that of the Democracy Village. The late Brian Haw first camped on the eastern side of the Square in 2001, initially protesting sanctions and then the war against Iraq. Joined by a few supporters, in later years his camp became known as the 'Love, Peace, Justice for All' protest. The Democracy Village in contrast set up their camp just before the May 2010 general election, demonstrating about a variety of issues including Afghanistan, the Iraq war, and the environment and have remained *in situ* ever since, despite initially claiming that they would leave after the general election.

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The camps have been a cause of concern to the authorities because of their permanent nature, the noise and disturbance they are perceived by many to have made, and the impact their presence has had on access by other members of the public and protesters to the Square. But as was noted in the Court of Appeal judgement in July 2010 in relation specifically to Brian Haw: 'While some might regard his presence with his placards as an eyesore in the face of Parliament, others see him as something of a national treasure, embodying the right of free speech in the very eye of the democratic storm.'⁶²

The right to protest in front of Parliament, at the heart of our democratic system, has enormous symbolic value. Nonetheless, the right to stage a peaceful protest must be balanced by the authorities against the need for Parliament to be able to function effectively, and the sensitive security, heritage and conservation issues that pertain in the Square.

Parliament Square is governed and managed by a complex set of legal provisions. The Garden area is managed by the GLA which is authorised under the 1999 Greater London Authority Act to enforce byelaws for the proper management of the Square. However, Westminster City Council manages the pavement to the east and south of the Square: it derives its byelaw powers for the suppression of nuisance from the 1972 Local Government

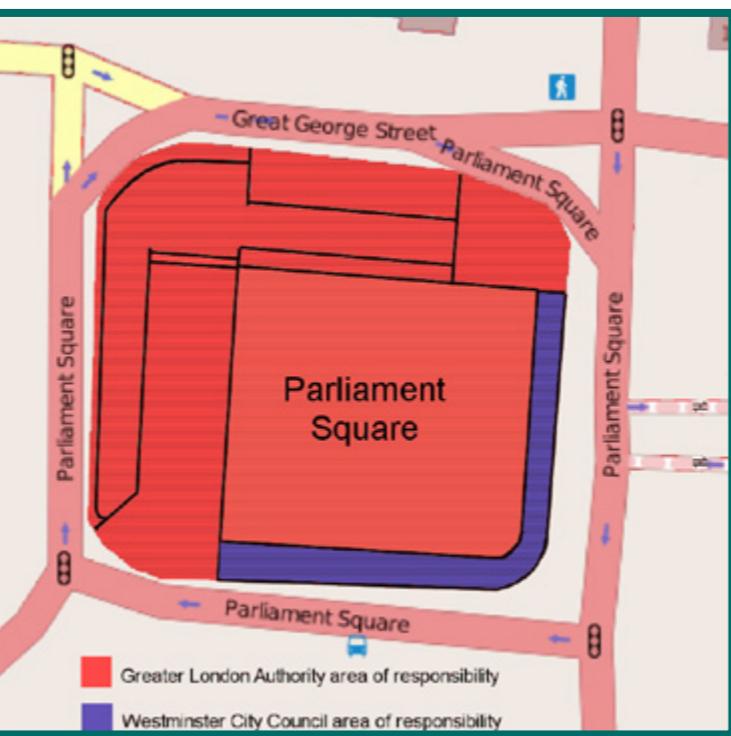


Figure 4. Responsibility for Parliament Square, based on OpenStreetMap.org; Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0

Act. In addition, the House of Commons can issue Sessional Orders and the House of Lords Stoppage Orders to instruct the Metropolitan Police to ensure that the areas outside Parliament are not obstructed, although the Commons has not done so since 2005.

Following various parliamentary inquiries, the government announced in 2004 that it would introduce a bill to prohibit long-term demonstrations and to ensure access to Parliament and in 2005 brought forward new powers (sections 132 to 138) in the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act (SOCPA). The legislation created a new offence of demonstrating in a 'designated area' without authorisation, an area defined by order but within a kilometre of Parliament Square. As a result of the Act, demonstrators must give the police at least 24 hours' written notice, and if reasonably possible, six day's notice of their plans. The police can impose conditions on any protest if they believe it necessary to stop any hindrance of the operation of Parliament, serious public disorder, damage to property or a security risk.

The legislation has been subject to much criticism, with opponents condemning it for having a chilling effect on the right to spontaneous protest and giving the police too broad a remit to inhibit protests and demonstrations. The treatment of two protestors in particular fuelled the criticism: in 2006 Maya Evans and Milan Rai were prosecuted for an unauthorised protest in which they read aloud the names of British soldiers and Iraqi citizens who had died during the Iraq war. Other activists were prosecuted for holding picnics in the Square and comedian Mark Thomas was part of an organised effort to subvert the protest authorisation process by deluging the GLA with permission requests for single person protests.

By 2009 the government had concluded that the SOCRA provisions were ineffectual: free speech campaigners were deeply opposed to them and they had been of little help in removing the Haw camp, against which they were primarily directed. In the Constitutional Reform and Governance Bill it proposed to repeal the relevant sections of SOCRA but the provisions were lost in the legislative wash-up after the general election was called. After the election, the new coalition government announced that it would restore the right to non-violent protest and brought forward proposals to amend the SOCRA provisions, which extended across a one kilometre radius, to controls over the much narrower area of the

⁶² Court of Appeal Civil Division, Transcript of the Judgement by Lady Justice Arden and Lord Justice Stanley Burton in Hall, Haw, Tucker et al v The Mayor of London on behalf of the GLA, [2010] ECWA Civ 817, 16 July 2010, pp.5-6.

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Square only. The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill, which makes these changes, also sets out controls to prevent the use of amplified noise equipment (loud hailers etc) and the use of tents and sleeping equipment, addressing some of the specific concerns of members of both Houses about the Haw and Democracy Village encampments.⁶³

In March 2011, the GLA won a possession order to evict the protestors from the Square and successfully defended the case on appeal. Just a few months later Brian Haw died after a long illness. The Garden area is currently surrounded by fences with the remaining protestors now encamped on the perimeter pavement. As this area is the responsibility of Westminster City Council it is pursuing a removal order on grounds of public highway obstruction. A further hearing is expected later this year that may result in a resolution of the situation, all legal avenues having been fully explored. As the Leader of Westminster Council, Cllr Brian Barrow declared: 'For too long this camp has dominated the square which should be available for all. I think they have made their point and now is the time to reclaim the square for all Londoners and their visitors once and for all.'⁶⁴ But it will not be enough to just reclaim the Square for visitors; thought needs to be given to the nature of the visitor experience once the area is again publicly accessible. How can it be turned into a civic space worthy of the location? Consideration also needs to be given to how the right to free speech and protest in the Square will be balanced with the other demands placed on the area if the prospect of new permanent protest camps is to be averted.

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WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Despite the lack of progress in recent years, there is among key local government stakeholders a broadly common view about the unacceptable state of the study area and some of the remedies that are needed. In 2008 for example, Westminster City Council's Conservation Area Audit described Parliament Square as 'perhaps one of the most significant negative features in the conservation area due to the quality of the experience in the public realm' which is 'not in keeping with the importance of the location'.⁶⁵ Traffic noise, lack of pedestrian access, the poor condition of landscaping and paving, the clutter of poor signage, traffic signals and security equipment were all highlighted. The report proposed working with other stakeholders, such as TfL and the GLA, 'to promote improvements to the quality of the experience' for visitors, and the development of a framework for action for improved signage for the WHS, care for and preservation of historic fabric and iconic views, improved traffic and parking provision, de-cluttering initiatives and the promotion of a consistent approach to street furniture design.⁶⁶

The GLA recognises that 'public spaces are part of what defines a city', that a 'successful public space is a well-used public space'⁶⁷ and that it has a responsibility 'to manage high quality public spaces as a fundamental part of delivering an urban renaissance in London'.⁶⁸ Its 2009 'London's Great Outdoors' strategy committed it to the revitalisation of public spaces, the encouragement of walking and cycling, and the development of an inspirational, healthier, prosperous, safer, accessible and environmentally-friendly city. Its 'Better Streets' policy argues that streets need 'balance' to reflect all users and to avoid clutter and obstacles.⁶⁹ Similarly, the Mayor's Transport Strategy identifies quality of life and safety as two of its key objectives, and highlights the importance of ameliorating road traffic dangers and enhancing streetscapes.⁷⁰ The strategy proposes that the Mayor, through TfL, will work with the London boroughs and other stakeholders, to use the principles of 'better streets' to seek to improve parts of the city by: removing clutter and improving the layout and design of streets; enhancing and protecting the built and historic environment; increasing the permeability of streets; and creating clear and easily understandable routes and spaces to make it easier for cyclists, pedestrians and disabled people to get about'.⁷¹ All these policies are highly relevant to the current condition of the WHS and Parliament Square but have yet to be applied.

Improved Traffic Management and Part-Pedestrianisation

Following their success against the Parliament Square protestors in the courts in early 2011, Westminster City Council announced that it intends to install a new crossing running from the traffic island on St Margaret's Street, between Westminster Abbey and Parliament, to the south-east corner of the Square, thereby providing a safer route for the public to reach the Square in the future. Whilst this will help facilitate greater access to the Square it will not achieve a demonstrable step-change improvement in the pedestrian experience. Unless the balance between people and traffic in the area is resolved then the environs of Parliament will remain choked and Parliament Square will continue to function solely as a traffic roundabout, diminishing the setting of the buildings and their status, and providing an inadequate public space for those who have cause to work, live or visit the area. Successive studies dating back nearly two decades have all reached the same conclusion: the area needs to be partially closed to traffic.

The World Squares for All feasibility study identified that the Parliament Street/Bridge Street junction had far greater traffic demand than did the St Margaret Street/Victoria Street junctions and that this, coupled with other traffic factors pointed to an opportunity to remove vehicular traffic from the south side of Parliament Square in front of Westminster Abbey.

⁶³ In addition there are also two House of Lords Private Members' Bills under consideration – Lord Tyler's Demonstrations in the Vicinity of Parliament (Removal of Authorisation Requirements) Bill and Lord Marlesbury's Parliament Square (Management) Bill – though neither has much chance of reaching the statute book.

⁶⁴ BBC News, 'Parliament Square Crossing Plan', 2 June 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-13626032>

⁶⁵ Westminster County Council (2008), *Conservation Area Audit and Management Proposals: Westminster Abbey and Parliament Square*, pp. 81-85.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.87-89.

⁶⁷ Mayor of London (2009), *London's Great Outdoors* (London: Greater London Authority), pp.4 & 12-13.

⁶⁸ Joint Committee on the Draft Constitutional Renewal Bill (2007-08), *Draft Constitutional Renewal Bill, Vol. II: Evidence*, p. 149.

⁶⁹ Mayor of London (2009), *Better Streets* (London: Greater London Authority), pp.6-9.

⁷⁰ Mayor of London (2010), *Mayor's Transport Strategy* (London: Greater London Authority).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.220.

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Ideally the south side of Parliament Square, in front of the Abbey, should be closed to traffic completely, and restrictions placed on through traffic on the east side along St Margaret's Street and Abingdon Street in front of Parliament. This would significantly reduce traffic pressure on that section of Abingdon Street that currently bisects the WHS with limited vehicular access retained for visitors to the parliamentary estate, local residents and perhaps bus services only. The Peers' car park in Old Palace Yard should also be removed: there are underground car parking facilities on the parliamentary estate and in the NCP car park on Abingdon Street whose use should be maximised.

Closing the area in front of the Abbey and part-closing Abingdon Street to traffic would create a very substantial area of public space to facilitate easier movement around the site and its constituent buildings. Timed pedestrian crossings at the other corners of the Square would permit ease of movement on all sides. Facilitating greater pedestrian access to the Square would, ironically, help reduce the risk of a permanent protest camp being re-established: it will be much more difficult for a camp to be maintained on a site that thousands of visitors can access each week. Removing traffic might also deliver additional 'quality of life' improvements in respect of the reduction of pollution levels in the vicinity of the ancient buildings and possible reconfiguration of security street furniture more in keeping with the dignity and historic nature of the area.

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We do not underestimate the difficulties associated with changing the traffic flow patterns around Parliament Square and along Abingdon Street. Such a move will increase traffic pressures on some neighbouring routes, and there would need to be careful management particularly in the vicinity of Westminster School to ensure that attendant risks are mitigated. However, the 2007-08 Hawkins\Brown study strongly suggested that there would be quality of life improvements for local residents as a result of these changes to traffic management in the area and half of the £18 million project was actually to be spent not in Parliament Square itself but in neighbouring boroughs precisely in order to ameliorate traffic pressures arising from the changes at the Square.

Past experience suggests that objections may nonetheless be raised by local residents about the impact such changes may have on traffic levels in the vicinity and by members of the House of Lords about the availability of car parking facilities in Old Palace Yard. However, self-interested objections by a small number of prominent figures in politics and public life should not stand in the way of plans to develop the WHS and Parliament Square in ways commensurate with their international status and reputation to the greater benefit of the thousands who work in the area and the millions who visit annually.

In taking forward a plan for part-pedestrianisation lessons should be learnt from the Trafalgar Square experience where closure of the north side of the Square to traffic meant that vehicular throughput was approximately 40% less than that accommodated by the old gyratory system. As in Parliament Square, the original proposals here also faced stiff

resistance with many arguing that it would cause chaos on neighbouring roads as traffic was diverted to other routes. Here, rather than a 'big bang' approach, changes to the capacity of the traffic network were made incrementally in order to allow users to adjust to the changes and minimise any adverse reaction from road users.⁷² Each change was monitored in detail and further adjustments made if necessary to offset any evident problems.

Opinion as to whether the project has been a success differ greatly depending on the individual or institutional perspective. For some, the changes have merely had a 'donut effect' in which traffic is displaced from the Square to the detriment of other neighbouring areas. For others, however, the benefits of pedestrianisation and the improved access and ease of movement secured as a result, outweigh the difficulties. In recent years significant improvements in access have also been achieved at Hyde Park Corner and Oxford Circus through changes to pedestrian access, road and pavement layout. These too may provide a useful evidence base to help make the necessary changes in Parliament Square.

Annual events such as the State Opening of Parliament or one-off sporting fixtures such as the Tour de France in 2006 require that Parliament Square and Abingdon Street be closed to vehicular traffic and, particularly for state events, that Old Palace Yard be cleared of parked cars and some of the security street furniture removed. The area has also been closed in the last year for the Royal Wedding and the state visit of President Obama. The photos at Figures 5 and 6 were taken during the Tour de France and convey something of the scale of public space that can be opened up if pedestrianisation were implemented. In addition to facilitating greater ease of movement around the site it would also allow for much more innovative and imaginative provision of interpretation facilities in relation to the history of the Thorney Island site and the historic links between the Abbey and the Palace of Westminster. Looking to the future, consideration is being given by Westminster City Council to closing the streets down around Parliament for London Open House weekend in September 2012 and closures will also be required during next year's Diamond Jubilee celebrations. The Olympics may also offer some useful opportunities to assess traffic re-routing patterns. The Olympic and Paralympic Route Network includes

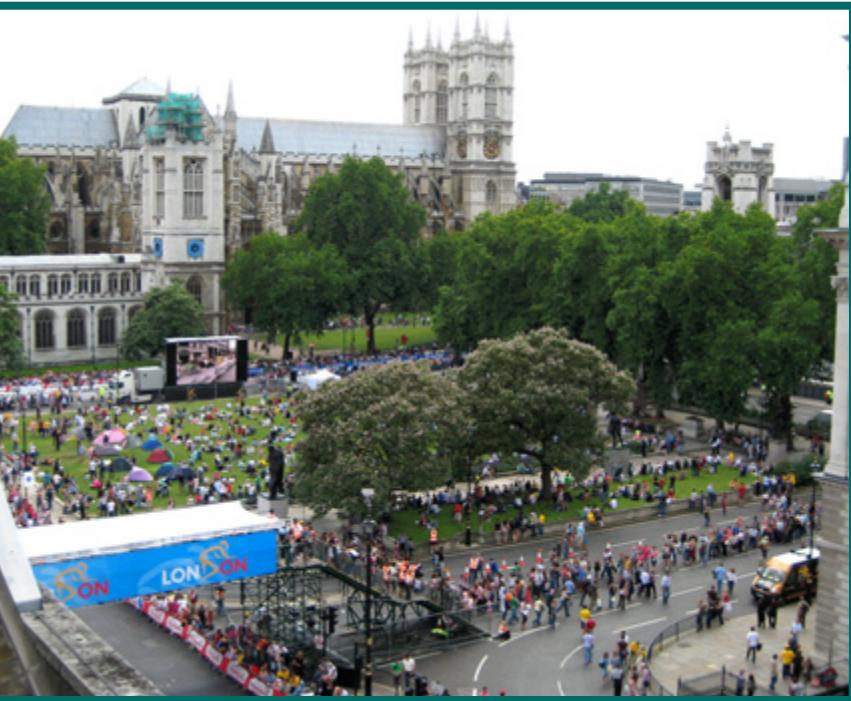


Figure 5. Tour de France 2006, Parliament Square (south west view)

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Figure 6. Tour de France 2006, Parliament Square (south view)

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Whitehall, Bridge Street and Victoria Embankment where lanes will be reserved for Olympic officials with effect from 16 July to 12 August and 29 August to 9 September. A number of Olympic events are also taking place in the vicinity of Westminster in particular some cycle road races and the marathons that will be routed down Abingdon Street and will therefore require road closures.⁷³ The Olympics does not provide a perfect test-bed as the location of the main stadium in east London means that traffic flows throughout the city will be heavier from the centre to the east than would be the case at other times of the year. Nevertheless, the cumulative lessons from each closure should provide a valuable evidence base to explore and evaluate the opportunities that it creates for enhanced visitor engagement in the area.

Revisions to the World Heritage Site Boundaries

The integrity of the World Heritage Site would benefit from a further revision of the boundaries. UNESCO guidance states that the boundaries of World Heritage Sites 'should be drawn to ensure the full expression of the outstanding universal value and the integrity and/or authenticity of the property' and should 'include all those areas and attributes which are a direct tangible expression of the outstanding universal value of the property'.⁷⁴ As such there is a strong case for rationalising the boundary of the site by extending it to

⁷³ '2012 – Diamond Jubilee and Olympic Games', Paper from the Houses of Parliament Business Risk and Resilience Group to the House of Commons Management Board, MB2011.P.37, p.3, Annex A.

⁷⁴ UNESCO, Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, WHC. 08/01, January 2008, para.100.

include Victoria Tower Gardens, Abingdon Street Gardens, Old Palace Yard and Parliament Square. It would also make sense to extend it further west of Parliament Square to take in Canning Green and the Supreme Court given the history of the Guildhall building, the historic links with the Abbey via the Sanctuary, and the link between Canning Green and Parliament Square. The WHS Management Plan also indicated some support for including Portcullis House within the boundary: as a 'working part of the modern parliamentary complex', 'designed by internationally renowned architects' and 'built to last for several centuries', it is deemed to share in the Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS.⁷⁵ The inclusion of these additional areas within the boundaries of the Westminster site would better ensure the protection of these areas and would help facilitate the development of a coherent vision which provides for better presentation of the site as a location of outstanding national and international significance.

Improved Management of the World Heritage Site

The Mayor's recently published Spatial Development Strategy states that he will 'encourage the development and implementation of World Heritage Management Plans'.⁷⁶ But if this goal is to be realised in respect of the Westminster site then a new approach is needed. The WHS Management Plan review process in 2012-13 provides an opportunity to rethink the management system for the site. Membership of the Steering Group will need to be revised as the Government Office for London has closed and Visit London, having gone into administration in April 2011, has been taken over by a new body, London and Partners. A candidate for inclusion in a revised Management Group is the Supreme Court. Given its location on Parliament Square, the democratic links with the other institutions in the area, and the mutual interest in public engagement, it would be logical for the Court to be fully involved in future deliberations about the WHS and Parliament Square and any public engagement and visitor interpretation activities that are proposed.

Greater effort could also be made to engage smaller stakeholders and community interest groups. The membership of the WHS Management Group is confined to large institutional bodies. There is no place in the debate for smaller groups – for example the Thorney Island Society or Westminster Society – who care about the area. Someone needs to lead in providing a forum for discussion with them and Parliament could perhaps perform that role. It might, for example, facilitate bi-annual meetings with them to discuss the state of the area, Parliament's public engagement plans as well as the WHS Management Group's priorities, and it could solicit ideas from the groups about an interpretation strategy for the area and its implementation. In the end it may not be possible to reconcile all the groups around a common vision, but that vision will certainly be stronger if the groups have been consulted and their ideas harnessed early on.

⁷⁵ Westminster World Heritage Site Management Plan Steering Group (May 2007), *The Palace of Westminster and Westminster Abbey including St Margaret's Church*, p.119.

⁷⁶ Greater London Authority (July 2011), *The London Plan: Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London*, p.222.

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When the revised Management Plan is agreed, consideration needs to be given to its implementation. At present there is no single individual or authority tasked with ensuring that the various sections of the Plan are progressed. UNESCO recommends that an effective management system requires 'a cycle of planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and feedback; the involvement of partners and stakeholders; the allocation of necessary resources; capacity building; and an accountable transparent description of how the management system functions are discharged'.⁷⁷ Given the previous lack of progress and the 'opportunity costs' incurred as a result, the Westminster site might benefit from having a co-ordinator tasked with overseeing implementation of the Plan in accordance with the agreed timetable. A more radical departure would be to establish a separate entity – the Westminster World Heritage Trust – to oversee implementation of the Plan. A Trust model is utilised at a number of UK World Heritage sites, including that in Edinburgh and at Hadrian's Wall.⁷⁸ At large sites involving potentially hundreds of partners and therefore complex ownership and management issues, a Trust model has proven effective. Comparatively Westminster is a small site but given its nature and the key partners, its management and ownership is complex and sensitive. A Trust model might be a way of providing new strategic leadership to develop and deliver the visitor management, interpretation, and education strategies which require a joined-up collaborative approach rather than a single institution focus. To date there is no evidence that the current arrangements can and will facilitate joined-up thinking on these issues, and nothing we have heard during the course of this research leads us to be any more optimistic for the development and implementation of these much needed strategies in the future.

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2. Access, Information and Interpretation

The study area is a living, working museum of democracy but one in which, at present, the public appears only to be tolerated. The site needs to be opened up both physically and intellectually. As well as becoming more accessible to visitors the area could be dramatically improved through enhancements to the information and interpretation that is provided. It provides a perfect setting for locational learning in which visitors are transported back in time, their senses engaged and immersed in the past through the articulation of key aspects of our democratic story. It should inform and educate, excite and inspire, and above all provoke the curiosity of all who visit. But if it is to become a place that truly welcomes the public, recognising the essential role of 'the people' within our democratic system, then significant changes are needed.

SIGNAGE

Visitors arriving to the area do so through a number of routes but primarily via the underground station on Bridge Street, or on buses or coaches via drop-off points near Black Rod's Entrance on Millbank, Whitehall, Victoria Street or Embankment, or on foot from adjacent locations. But whatever the route of entry to the World Heritage Site and Parliament Square each person is confronted with the same problem: the dearth of signs and information to help them navigate around the area, identify landmarks, and place buildings, statuary, and the public space in context.

Westminster underground station has limited provision of maps and information about the surrounding area. For example, the exit route map detailed in Figure 7 – is now out of date and does not accurately depict the Supreme Court.

Discussions should be entered into with Transport

⁷⁷ UNESCO, Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, WHC. 08/01, January 2008, para.111.
⁷⁸ For an account of World Heritage Site management models see PriceWaterhouseCoopers LLP (December 2007), *The Costs and Benefits of World Heritage Site Status in the UK: Full Report and Case Studies* (DCMS); and Rebanks Consulting Ltd, *World Heritage Site Status: Is There An Opportunity For Economic Gain?* (Lake District World Heritage Project).



Figure 7. Westminster tube station map (mutilated)

for London as a matter of priority to ensure that map and information provision in the underground station is dramatically improved in time for the events of 2012. The maps will then need to be revised and updated to reflect the implementation timetable for any future improvements in the area.

After leaving the underground station the signage does not improve: what does exist is often unhelpful and inconsistent. There is, for example, no information indicating in what direction anyone wanting the Cromwell Green visitors' entrance should head, where to go for parliamentary tours, and the Supreme Court is nowhere highlighted. There is also little information to help visitors navigate away from the area to other nearby locations of interest such as Buckingham Palace, Trafalgar Square, St James Park, Banqueting House, the Cabinet War Rooms or Tate Britain. Where signs are provided, these are often negative and unwelcoming. Since 2005, for example, there has been a proliferation of signs erected on railings around the Palace of Westminster warning that 'Trespass on this Site is a criminal offence. This is a protected site under Section 128 of the Serious Organised Crime

CASE STUDY: Greenwich World Heritage Site

Like Westminster the Greenwich WHS encompasses several prominent institutional stakeholders and a number of buildings yet it has much better directional signage throughout the site all of which reflect a common brand. Information maps are also clearly displayed, including in the Docklands Light Railway station (Cutty Sark for Maritime Greenwich), and broadly replicate the Visit Maritime Greenwich map that can be located online (www.visitgreenwich.org.uk).



Figure 8: Signage in the Greenwich World Heritage Site

Similar orientation maps could be placed at information points throughout the Westminster area including, for example, Parliament Square, Abingdon Street Gardens/College Green and Victoria Tower Gardens.

and Police Act 2005'.

A complete overhaul of signage is required to help direct people to the institutions and public spaces of interest in the area. Given the current inconsistent approach a 'World Heritage Site' model might be adopted allowing for consistent design and branding in keeping with the historic setting and highlighting for the first time in the area the boundary and importance of the Site.



Figure 9. Signage on Palace of Westminster railings

Transport for London recognise the signage problems having found that 32 different types of information map and signage provision have been used in the central London

Congestion Charge Zone alone.⁷⁹ Accordingly, they have developed a 'Legible London' strategy to make signage clearer and more accessible through consistently branded maps and guides, to integrate the street level information with transport modes including underground stations, and to provide online, downloadable maps and information provision.

The Legible London approach has been subject to considerable consultation and testing and will be rolled out in late 2011 in Westminster and Whitehall. Once complete, this should be reviewed in early 2012 to see if it meets the needs of the World Heritage Site. If possible, it would be useful to incorporate some information about the WHS into the maps and signage.



Figure 10. Legible London map

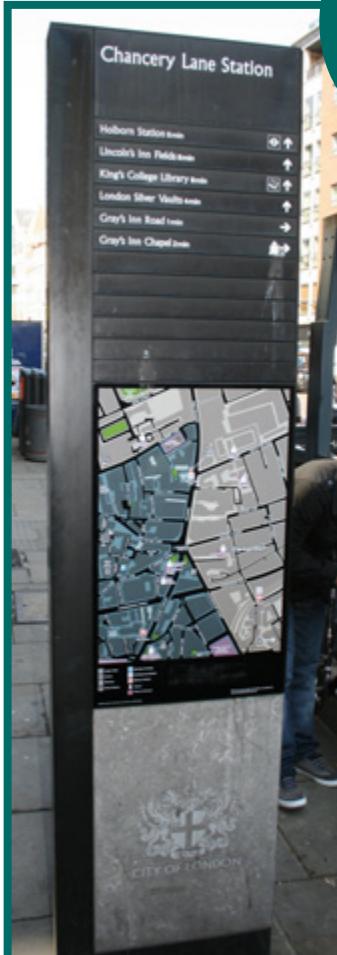


Figure 11. City of London map

INFORMATION PANELS AND GUIDED WALKS

Around Parliament Square itself, the prime viewing point for all the buildings and landmarks, there is little in the way of information provision. On opposite sides of the Square there are two metal information panels linked to the Jubilee Walkway that provide basic information about the landmarks in the area. However, these

are located very close to the road and given the heavy levels of pedestrian movement in the area it is difficult for visitors to find time and space to look at them properly and the lines of sight to the landmarks are often obscured by traffic. The panels are also very out of date.

The Supreme Court plan to fund the erection of several steel dioramas to be located outside the Court on the west side of the Square.⁸⁰ If pressures on pavement access were reduced through improved traffic management around the Square then it would be possible to sensitively locate a few more information panels across the study area. For example, 3D dioramas depicting the historic development of the area in miniature could portray its development from the mid 11th century Thorney Island site developed by Edward the Confessor to the site we have today. As well as conveying architectural changes these could tell the story of the shift at the Palace from the housing of the Royal Court to the home of the working legislature, the provision of sanctuary for fugitives at the Abbey's Sanctuary Tower and Old Belfry site and its transition to a courthouse and the Middlesex Guildhall site, the impact of slum clearances and the fire of 1834, the removal of the law courts from the Palace, the bombing of World War Two, and the current layout of Parliament Square since the Festival of Britain. Similar dioramas and information panels could also be placed in and around Abingdon Street Gardens/College Green, Old Palace Yard and in Victoria Tower Gardens depicting, for example, the route of the River Tyburn, the historic processional links between the Abbey and the Palace, the development of



Figure 12. Silver Jubilee Walkway panel

the Jewel Tower and the prominence and importance of the River Thames in relation to the site. In Victoria Tower Gardens in particular, a few information panels could be provided to facilitate better understanding of the river view and its connections with Westminster, setting out the historic buildings and landmarks on the south side of the river such as Lambeth Palace, the MI6 building, St Thomas' Hospital, County Hall and the London Eye.

The dioramas and information panels could form a guided walk through the history of the site – the location of each one marked on site maps with further information linked and made available either through guidebooks or through digital provision (see chapter five on digital provision for more information). In the same way that the Jubilee Walkway can be followed throughout London via directional discs set in the footway accompanied by panoramic panels that interpret the views along the way, a World Heritage Site walkway could be developed linking the key locations of interest together. TfL work with the social enterprise body, WalkEngland, to deliver the WalkLondon project that provides detailed information and maps for seven strategic walks across the capital including the Jubilee Walkway and the Thames Path. A new 'Magna Carta Walkway' encompassing sites associated with the heart of British democracy would be a fitting way to link together the democratic story in time for the 2015 anniversary.

By developing a series of 'guided' routes in the information materials provided to visitors it may also be possible to better direct and manage the flow of people around the area. A range of leaflets and information materials might offer themed self-guided walking tours: journeys could embrace themes such as 'political leaders', 'empire', 'royalty', 'rebels', 'suffragettes', or 'church and state', all drawing on the wealth of historic homes, institutions, statuary and the like in and around Westminster. In Canada, self-guided walk maps are available on Parliament Hill tracking the footsteps of Prime Ministers of the country. Maritime Greenwich offers guided walk maps (50p in an honesty pay box in the visitor centre) on a number of themes including 'Royal', 'Viewpoints' and 'Architecture'.

An alternative approach would be to seek to engage people through broader cultural ties such as literature and film: the Westminster area has been widely written about and has featured in many television programmes and feature films. Guided walk maps highlighting links to these sites might engage those members of the public who might not be interested in historical or political themes.



Figure 13. Silver Jubilee Walkway disc



Figure 14. Victoria Tower Gardens

Promoting these routes would also help to encourage visitors to pass through the entire length of the World Heritage Site; at present many simply do not walk as far as Victoria Tower Gardens. Facilitating movement from the underground station to the Gardens is necessary if the proposed improvements to the latter are to be effectively

delivered (see page 64 onwards for further details). The lack of through movement means that visitors are also missing out on the opportunity to travel further south to Tate Britain.

A CULTURAL AND HERITAGE CORRIDOR: TRAFALGAR SQUARE TO TATE BRITAIN

On foot it takes less than 45 minutes to walk from Trafalgar Square to Tate Britain on Millbank, travelling down Whitehall and through the Westminster World Heritage site. The route should be one of the capital's leading pedestrian axes, taking in as it does some of the country's greatest institutions in the fields of culture, heritage and democracy. Indeed, aspects of the nation's democratic story can be discerned through the mix of art, statuary and sculpture stretching from the National Portrait Gallery to Tate Britain. A guided walk along this axis, supported by a mix of information maps, leaflets and digital applications could relate this story in engaging and imaginative form.

However, few visitors traverse the full length of this cultural and heritage corridor; the traffic snarl at Parliament Square and Abingdon Street and the lack of directional signage through the area hinder pedestrian movement. The Thames Walkway area from Victoria Tower Gardens to Westminster



Figure 15. Rodin's 'Burghers of Calais'

Walk Gardens is also not a particularly pleasant one, particularly around Lambeth Bridge and along Millbank. Tate Britain, however, has begun work on a 'Millbank urban strategy', investigating initiatives to enhance the identity of the Millbank neighbourhood and reinforce physical, social, cultural and economic connections with surrounding districts, including the Westminster World Heritage Site, Parliament Square, and the River Thames.⁸¹ It is interested in exploring how sculpture might be used to help develop a boulevard style pathway along the stretch of the Thames walkway from Rodin's 'Burghers of Calais' in Victoria Tower Gardens to Henry Moore's 'Locking Piece' in Riverwalk Gardens, Millbank. Both works have strong contextual links to issues around the development of modern liberal democracy.⁸² Together they might therefore bookend an interpretation strategy built around public sculpture of the post Reform Act era and what it can tell us about democratic values in an era of great economic and social upheaval. Indeed, the interpretation strategy could be extended to take in Tate Britain itself for, as a former penitentiary from where prisoners were transported to Australia until 1868, it provides an interesting opportunity to explore a number of historical and political themes and the links to Parliament and the democratic story.

Finally, consideration might be given to commissioning a major new public sculpture on a democratic theme to mark the Magna Carta anniversary in 2015 with a view to installing it in Victoria Tower Gardens and utilising it to promote the sculpture route and cultural corridor, as well as the improvements to the Gardens themselves.

IMAGINATIVE INTERPRETATION⁸³

Information panels, dioramas, sculpture and statuary can all help visitors learn more about Parliament and the neighbouring institutions. But other imaginative forms of interpretation could also be adopted, drawing particularly on the environment of Parliament Square and Victoria Tower Gardens as well as the expert craftsmanship associated with the individual buildings. A comprehensive interpretation plan for the study area could, for example, see stonework, wood, and iron utilised to convey information in illustrative form. These materials are already present in the study area and such a natural association would therefore convey a strong sense of place: the interpretation vehicle would not be intrusive. For example, information could be inscribed on stone or carved into wood, images portrayed on woodcuts or linocuts, or layered images cut into bronze metal sheets. The quality of the street furniture could also be dramatically improved by linking it to interpretation. Benches for example, can be created by peeling back the ground in tile form beneath which information can be discreetly placed in hidden display cases. With imagination, the security street furniture – the bollards and corus blocks – could also be re-designed to allow for information and interpretation that would not affect their security

⁸¹ Information provided during a meeting with Dr Penelope Curtis & Alex Beard at Tate Britain, 14 July 2011.

⁸² Submission by Alex Beard and Donald Hyslop, Directors Office, on behalf of the Trustees, Tate Galleries, July 2011.

⁸³ We are grateful to Michael Day and Lucy Worsley at Historic Royal Palaces for advice and suggestions regarding different forms of interpretation that could be incorporated into the study area's sensitive setting.



Figure 16. (clockwise from top left) Public bench (© Laing Gallery, Newcastle); 'Cursing Stone' (© Carlisle's Tullie House Museum); 'Scriptorium Monk at Work', woodcut (Wikimedia); Wooden carving of a monk, The Vines, Rochester (by Chris Whippet via Geograph, Creative Commons 2.0); Cast steel sheet, British Library (by C.G.P. Grey via Wikipedia, Creative Commons 2.0).

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purpose but which would help them blend in better with the wider historic setting. Figure 16 illustrates some examples of how materials could be used across the WHS to improve interpretation and inspire the public imagination:

- In the square outside the Laing Gallery in Newcastle, public benches were created by 'peeling back' floor tiles. In place of the tile, glass covered subterranean display cases were then installed; the use of mirrors and lights enable visitors to view the installation day and night. The scheme – the 'Blue Carpet' project – was designed by Thomas Heatherwick.
- A 7.5 tonne granite 'Cursing Stone' at Carlisle's Tullie House Museum is inscribed with an extract of a medieval curse. Smaller stone inscriptions cost in the region of £6,000.
- Woodcuts or linocuts can be used to communicate information in illustrative form, drawing on traditional materials, and the work of expert craftsmanship and artists.
- Wood can also be used in carved, painted or burnt form to depict images or convey information in one dimensional or 3D format. The 'Rochester Monk' shown here was carved by Robert Koenig from a Plane tree that was damaged in the October 1987 storm. Plane trees can be found throughout the Westminster World Heritage Site and in Parliament Square.

- This cast steel sheet at the British Library demonstrates the potential for creating layered images which, in changing light and shadow, convey a sense of depth, drama and mystery. A modestly sized bronze sheet might cost approximately £10,000.

BRIDGE STREET INFORMATION CENTRE

The Parliamentary Bookshop on the corner of Bridge Street and Parliament Street is an under-used resource. Its location is ideal for visitor engagement given its proximity to the underground station; however, its current structure is problematic as it is tucked away behind concrete columns and the passageway area – often dirty and rubbish strewn – unpleasantly assaults the senses.

In our discussions with internal parliamentary stakeholders it is clear that the problems with the physical nature of the site are widely recognised and some consideration is being given to the possibility of regenerating the facility by building out the shop to align the front window with the columns, thereby creating a more readily accessible, larger facility. If structurally viable, we would recommend that the store be redeveloped as a visitor Information Centre rather than retained as a bookshop. At present the bookshop occupies the ground floor but a mail order service and office space is also provided for in the basement and on the first floor. This is valuable physical space in a prime location that could be better utilised for visitor engagement than for what are essentially administrative services that could be located in an alternative office facility on or off the parliamentary estate.

The experience of the Jewel Tower demonstrates that there is significant unmet demand for a visitor information centre in the area. An English Heritage weekend survey of visitors to the Tower last year found that three times as many visitors came into the Tower for information as actually wanted to visit the Tower itself.⁸⁴ It is therefore increasingly functioning as an 'unofficial' information point for visitors wanting to know more about the area or locate amenities such as toilets. In part this is of course because it is the only building that can be readily accessed without having to pass through a security check, and because it is here that ticketing for parliamentary tours is provided. However, the Tower is not appropriate or suitable for this Information Centre role; it is not at the primary entrance points to the site (from Westminster tube station and Whitehall), has very limited space and its heritage status prevents any possibility of modification to suit this repurposing. The parliamentary bookshop, in contrast, is a better location.

If equipped as an Information Centre this could become the first port of call for many visitors where they access information about the area – maps, leaflets, pamphlets, audio

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and video guides (see chapter five for further information about the multimedia guide opportunities). Ticketing facilities for parliamentary tours might also be provided here. Ideally, information would also be provided about the other buildings/public spaces in the study area, in addition to Parliament. From here, equipped with maps, information leaflets and the like, visitors could better engage with all aspects of the WHS and Parliament Square.

The range of materials sold in the Parliamentary Bookshop has recently been expanded with more innovative approaches to developing a branded line of gifts. This could be expanded to create an income stream to offset some of the operational costs associated with running the Information Centre and other visitor services. For example, there would be much greater scope to sell books not just about the Palace of Westminster and its history and workings, but also about the art collection and particularly the archival collection.

Parliament's own on-site shops declined to stock the recent book – Victoria Tower Treasures – which was compiled by the parliamentary archives team to mark the 150th anniversary of the completion of the Victoria Tower, because the profit margin was deemed insufficient for such small outlets with limited selling power.⁸⁵ Beautifully illustrated, the book reflects on a selection of 150 documents, artefacts and photos from the millions of records held in the archival collection. It is on sale in the Parliamentary Bookshop but this and other such books could enjoy far greater reach and sales if the facility was overhauled and a more imaginative approach to marketing was taken (see case study on page 56).

Many images associated with Westminster, not least the Big Ben clock tower, have high brand value and the licensing power associated with them would be significant. Other iconic centres of political and spiritual power – Buckingham Palace, the Vatican and the US Capitol for



Figure 17.1 Parliament Street / Bridge Street collonade



Figure 18. Parliamentary Bookshop

architectural treasures of the WHS, are uniquely available at the Information Centre and all the custom-made products are sourced, designed and made in Britain.

WESTMINSTER WORLD HERITAGE SITE GUIDES OR WARDENS

To assist visitors during their time in the Westminster area a number of 'guides' or 'wardens' might be recruited, trained and deployed. Beyond training support, expenses and uniforms, these need not present a significant cost burden; indeed, if a multi-institution approach is taken the costs could be shared between relevant stakeholders. Bodies like the National Trust, for example, deploy volunteers at their sites across the country. Indeed, volunteering in heritage activities currently attracts record numbers of people; the National Trust has seen the number of its volunteers double to approximately 61,000 in a decade.⁸⁶ Given the history of the site it would surely be possible to recruit

example – have all developed and scaled up commercial operations alongside visitor engagement activities and have done so in a way that is sensitive to the needs and reputation of their respective institutions. Parliament could do the same with a view to utilising the funds to invest in its broader public and visitor engagement strategy. The traditional red/green Portcullis range of souvenirs could be restricted for exclusive sale on the parliamentary estate to Members, officials and visitors including those who go on a line of route tour. An alternative, but still unique, high-quality range of souvenirs could be sold off-site in the Information Centre and online. If managed well, such a range could create a new revenue stream whilst associating Parliament with iconic, quality British design and craftsmanship. A virtue could be made of the fact that the merchandise, inspired by Parliament and the

CASE STUDY: The Royal Collection Shop

The Royal Collection has six shops in and around the Buckingham Palace estate, Clarence House, Windsor and Holyrood as well as, since April 2011, an online presence at www.royalcollectionshop.co.uk. The income from the merchandise is used by the Royal Collection Trust, a registered charity, to care for the Royal Collection, held in trust by the Monarch on behalf of the nation.

In the 2010-11 financial year the retail store operation generated £9,115,000 with a profit margin of 62%. This represented a 17.8% increase in sales on the previous year even though visitor numbers only increased by 4.1%. This increase in sales was generated largely by demand for the Royal Wedding collection of products and the refurbishment of one of the stores.

The bone china range, made in Stoke-on-Trent, alone amounted for sales of £1,047,000.*

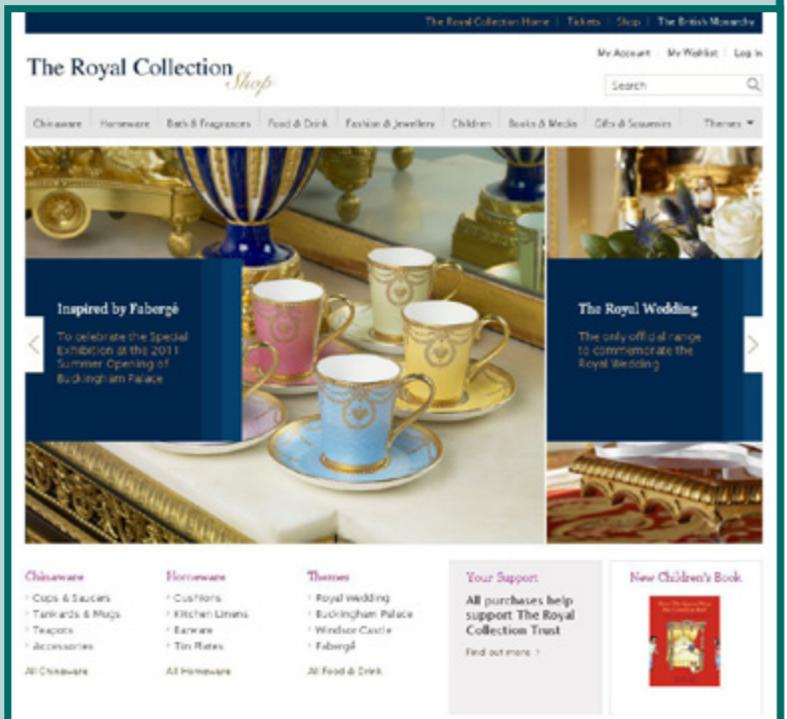


Figure 19. Royal Collection website

All the gifts are designed exclusively for the Royal Collection store and are inspired by works of art in the Collection, many of which are displayed at official residences of the Monarch and the Prince of Wales. Over 70 different product lines are available in the following categories: chinaware, homeware, baths and fragrances, food and drink, fashion and jewellery, children, books and media, and gifts and souvenirs. The merchandise is themed and currently includes items with the following associations: 'Royal Wedding', 'Imperial Russian', 'Windsor', 'Holyrood', 'Clarence House', 'Royal Mews', 'Buckingham Palace Summer Opening', 'Changing of the Guard', 'Queen Victoria', 'Coat of Arms' and 'Great Exhibition'.

The Royal Collection Trust works with carefully selected partner organisations such as the Designers Guild (producers of fabrics and wallcovers using the finest weavers, fabrics and specialist mills) and Fonds Mercator (specialist publishers of art catalogues for museum and gallery exhibitions) to develop their merchandise collections.

* The Royal Collection Trust (2011), Annual Report for the Year Ended 31 March 2011.

some volunteers to act as guides for the World Heritage Site, providing a more friendly welcome, answering visitors' questions, guiding them to points of interest, and directing them to neighbouring locations. A volunteer warden scheme may also reduce the amount of signage required that could risk cluttering the area and restricting views.

Trafalgar Square deploys 'Heritage Wardens' 24 hours a day. Working in conjunction with police based at Charing Cross they have had an impact, particularly helping to reduce low-level crime such as graffiti. An alternative warden model is that which has been established following the re-branding of the Bloomsbury, Holborn and St Giles area of the city as the 'inmidtown' Business Improvement District. An information kiosk has been set up outside Holborn underground station on Kingsway from where visitors can pick up maps, use the touch screen directory, or get information about or join guided walks in the area including the Museum Mile walk.⁸⁷ The kiosk has been designated an Official Tourist Information Point by Visit London and from here 'Rangers', contracted from a private security company, are deployed to assist visitors. These are the 'visible face of inmidtown, offering assistance to workers, residents and visitors and, by their on-street presence, contributing to public safety and crime prevention'.⁸⁸ They patrol the area during business hours – Monday to Friday 9am to 6pm – and are dressed in bright orange uniforms for easy identification. The Rangers are 'equipped with local maps and are happy to answer enquiries from visitors who are looking for local attractions or somewhere to eat' and they have all been accredited as London Ambassadors by Visit London.⁸⁹

In Westminster, guides or wardens could play a similar role although, given the higher security considerations and the potentially voluntary nature of their work, the focus would be better placed on assisting and guiding visitors rather than providing any security or anti-social behaviour support. If deployed, the key to their success will be that they are well trained, knowledgeable about the area and its history, architecture and democratic significance, and have excellent customer-service skills. Guides or wardens with foreign



Figure 20. inmidtown booth, Holborn

language skills would be particularly prized.

The London Ambassadors volunteer scheme for the 2012 Olympics may provide a useful test-bed for the future development of a WHS guides or wardens scheme.⁹⁰ The Organising Committee, LOCOG, aims to recruit 8,000 people to voluntarily staff 38 information stands across the city, answering questions from the public and providing information and advice on issues such as transport, dining, public amenities and visitor attractions as well as the Games. Each Ambassador will work shifts of approximately five hours, and receive lunch expenses, a free travelcard and a uniform; but they will not receive tickets to any of the sporting events. Nonetheless, demand to be an Ambassador has been huge: 33,000 are believed to have applied, of which 11,000 have been interviewed and it is anticipated that more than the originally proposed 8,000 people may now be deployed across the capital.⁹¹ Any evaluation of the scheme in the aftermath of the Games may provide some useful lessons to inform the development of a WHS scheme in the future.

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3. Rethinking the Use of Public Space

There are few locations associated with democracy, particularly outside Parliament buildings, that effectively marry the relationship between public space (the physical environment and location) and the public sphere or realm (the place for social discourse).⁹² Yet throughout the study area – and in Parliament Square and Victoria Tower Gardens in particular – there is an opportunity to integrate the spatial concepts to provide an innovative and vibrant forum for active citizenship outside an institution that is an international symbol of democracy.

Whereas architects and urban planners tend to focus on the physical exterior of the land and cityscape, democratic theorists such as Jurgen Habermas and Hannah Arendt have looked to the use of urban space for social purposes, specifically as places for public communication and public action.⁹³ For the Athenian, participation in the market place or Agora, defined them as citizens: it was a place of debate and discussion, of commercial transactions, of theatre and oratory, and of community information. In classical Rome the Forum performed much the same function and during the Renaissance the market place and public square continued to be a place of democratic engagement. By the 17th and 18th century the coffeehouse, particularly in Europe, had taken on that role: a place of social interaction, debate, ideas and learning. But by the late 19th and 20th centuries the concept of public space had been eroded by suburbanisation and the growth in motorised transport.

Parliament Square and the neighbouring areas now provide a rare opportunity to rethink our approach to the concept of public space through the rehabilitation of the democratic power of ideas, debate and free speech. It should be a place of public congregation in which the public sphere is integrated with the public space to create a genuine place for citizenship. It should be a place where, in the words of Peter Bradley, Director of the Speakers' Corner Trust, 'democracy is not only historic but also living, and indeed, still striving for improvement'.⁹⁴

PARLIAMENT SQUARE: A PLACE FOR CITIZENSHIP

Each side of Parliament Square is flanked by one of the key institutions of power and authority within our democratic system: Parliament, government, church, and court. But

⁹⁰ London Ambassadors, www.londonambassadors.org.uk

⁹¹ L. Barnett, 'My Olympic Dream: Becoming a London Ambassador', *The Guardian*, 27 June 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/sport/2011/jun/27/olympic-london-ambassador-volunteer>

⁹² C. T. Goodsell, 'The concept of public space and its democratic manifestations', *The American Review of Public Administration*, 33(4), 2003, pp.361-383.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Submission by Peter Bradley, Director, Speakers' Corner Trust, 4 July 2011.

there is currently no discernible space for the public other than as a visitor: people can admire the buildings but if they want to engage in the democratic process they have to enter one of the buildings. The purpose of Parliament Square needs to be reconceptualised as a place for the public, a place where the public 'stake their claim as citizens in rather than visitors to Westminster'.⁹⁵

If the narrative about Parliament Square in the future is to be about more than a constant wrangle between the public and authorities about protests then a more rounded view of democratic participation needs to be offered. The right to protest is a fundamental principle of our democratic system but it is not the only one. Similarly, a symbolic location for protest is an important aspect of the contemporary purpose and function of the Square; but it should not – through a lack of imagination, and a safety-first, lowest common denominator approach – become de facto the sole purpose and function of it.

The Square should not be a passive space but a forum for spontaneous and organised citizenship. What is needed is something akin to a 'Speakers' Corner': a place where the public can get on their metaphorical soapbox and expound on the issues of the day. It should be a place where the great thinkers, writers, and artists of the day can give talks and lectures and engage in discussion with the public about their ideas. Believing that there is no greater force for changing the world than the power of an idea, TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) has pioneered the concept of inviting leading figures across a range of professions to give 'the speech of their life' outlining an idea that is important to them in under 18 minutes.⁹⁶ Parliament Square could be a forum for restoring the role of live oratory of this kind, but with the added power and symbolism offered by the opportunity to propound and debate ideas in a place that is at the heart of the democratic system.

The Square could also on occasion be a theatre for bringing alive our democratic history: a place where key moments in the development of British democracy are dramatised. Some of the great political speeches and parliamentary debates could be read aloud and re-enacted, and poetry and plays brought to life by actors and actresses, be it by amateurs or some of the leading actors and actresses of the day. The objective should be to convey the rich narrative of our democratic story: how people have struggled and sacrificed to promote and defend the tenets of liberty and democracy. A rich and diverse programme of events could be developed through collaborative partnerships to celebrate national days and anniversaries with resonance in our democratic history, or to mark commemorative days such as the International Day of Democracy, World Heritage Day, or the Magna Carta anniversary.

The new Parliament Week festival could also be developed to embrace an outdoor

programme of activities in the Square. Festivals are a popular means of engaging public interest and participation: they are a medium for public celebration, information, education as well as entertainment. In 2010 nearly 4,750 people attended the Scottish Parliament's Festival of Politics. Offering outdoor as well as indoor events at Westminster would broaden the programme, the range of partners that might be involved, and perhaps engage new and different audiences.

The Square could also be a place where the public can engage with politicians on an equal footing on neutral territory; a place where politicians listen and respond to members of the public on issues of mutual interest and concern. Rather than embodying an antagonistic relationship between the public and their elected representatives it could become a place for mutual dialogue.

How would it be done? Parliament, the Abbey or the Supreme Court could independently or collaboratively develop a programme of events for the Square. Other organisations – museums, galleries, theatres, charities, or campaign groups – could do the same. One or more small raised platforms for speech could be incorporated into the Square, although simply marking the area through the incorporation of plaques would suffice. The Square is not flat anyway so the positioning of the area for speakers could be incorporated into the natural camber of the landscape. We would not necessarily call the area a Speakers' Corner – that appellation really belongs to Hyde Park Corner – so an alternative name might be needed. In order to avoid clashes some form of booking system for the space might be necessary and this could readily be facilitated online. But to be effective who would own and manage such a system? If the public are to have confidence and trust in it then it should not be within the purview of one authority. A Steering Group or Committee of some kind may therefore be needed which includes representatives of the relevant authorities but also engages external bodies and individuals including users of the Square. The GLA may have to rethink how it applies its byelaws which currently require written permission to play musical instruments, make or give a public speech or address in the Square but this could be done by the Mayor authorising the Steering Group to grant such permissions on his behalf.⁹⁷

In re-thinking the purpose of the Square, consideration also needs to be given to practical matters associated with its condition. On the one hand, a grassed area that is subject to heavy pedestrian movements may incur considerable damage whereas hard surfacing, being more durable, will allow for a greater range of activity in the Square all year round. However, the area was originally designed as a garden and retention of some or all of the grassed area, and a restoration of the garden concept, may therefore be deemed more in keeping with the historic nature of the setting. The Thorney Island Society assert strongly that 'Grass is at the core of England' and the 'European attitude' (of supporters of hard

⁹⁵ Submission by Peter Bradley, Director of the Speakers' Corner Trust, July 2011 (our italics).
⁹⁶ TED, About TED, <http://www.ted.com/pages/about>

⁹⁷ Greater London Authority, Trafalgar Square and Parliament Square Garden (Amendment No. 1) Byelaws 2002, Greater London Authority Act 1999, Section 385(1).

surfacing) 'is totally at odds with the essence of "Englishness".⁹⁸ The Square was built in the immediate post-war period when materials and resources were scarce: consequently, it was built from Portland stone which is not normally deemed suitable for landscape areas. The current state of disrepair of much of the stonework on the Square is testament to this. The Hawkins\Brown study found in 2007-08 that the condition of the Square is such that it could not withstand on-going heavy public use.⁹⁹ Whatever surfacing is adopted it will therefore require considerable work if it is to be transformed into a dignified public space which puts people at its heart.

Consideration will also need to be given to the type and timing of events that are held on the Square and how they will impact on the other activities taking place in and around the neighbouring institutions. We do not propose a blank slate to allow free rein in the public space but nor should its use be too prescriptive: a sensible approach in which the rights and interests of one group or institution is balanced against those of others is needed. The Steering Group could develop a protocol (perhaps a set of Standing Orders) for light touch management of activities in the Square incorporating concerns around noise and access. It could detail a code of conduct setting out guidance on the use of offensive language and the mutual courtesies expected of speakers, hecklers and the audience including the length of speeches when there is competition for the space. The Square holds approximately 5,000 people during a protest. It would be quite rare for it to attract this many people on a regular basis for the kind of activities we have outlined. But there may be occasions, as in places such as Trafalgar

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Square, when the popularity of the proposed event exceeds capacity. In these instances some stewarding of the event may be necessary.

Is this all too idealistic? The success of the TED videos, with thousands, sometimes millions viewing the recorded speeches, indicates that there is an appetite for ideas and the power of speech. But although we may increasingly live in a digital age the public continue to value 'live' activity as much as ever. Across the country politicians continue to engage with their constituents at public meetings, hustings or at the local equivalent of their market place soapbox, subjecting their ideas to debate and scrutiny. The Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park is of course a nationally recognised place for free speech with historic links to political protests



Figure 21. Temporary Speakers' Corner platform, Westminster Village Youth Fete, Victoria Tower Gardens

but there are active Speakers' Corners across the country in places such as Nottingham, Leeds, Lincoln and Bristol some of which are equally if not more vibrant than that in London. The popularity of live drama in the Gothic surroundings at Westminster was also demonstrated last year when 'Shakespeare's Kings and Westminster Abbey', a series of history plays hosted in Westminster Abbey in collaboration with the Royal Shakespeare Company sold out rapidly.

There are few places internationally where such an approach to public space has been embraced in this way and at a site of such democratic symbolism. There are plenty of places where protest and free speech is facilitated: the Mall in Washington DC; the Champs

CASE STUDY: Lekgotlas on Constitution Hill, Johannesburg*

Constitution Hill in Johannesburg is the site of South Africa's new constitutional court and is located next to the Old Fort Prison where political prisoners, including Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela, were interned. Interpretation, education and heritage programmes are all offered in the various buildings on the site as is a 'dialogue programme' to encourage visitors to engage in discussion about the constitution, citizenship, democracy, tolerance, and justice. 'Lekgotlas' is the Sotho/Tswana word for non-hierarchical dialogues that are conducted in the form of public gatherings to decide on matters of group or social importance. These take the form of public debates, lectures, seminars and workshops on Constitution Hill often led by an invited guest including former political prisoners and current decision-makers. Some of the Lekgotlas are hosted inside the buildings, others on the plaza outside. Topics have included 'Freedom. Equality. Dignity. Do we have these rights today?'; 'What do you think of the criminal justice system in South Africa today?'; and 'What are South African prisons like today?' After the Lekgotla the group are often invited to carry out an action



Figure 22. Constitutional Court, Johannesburg, by Dani Bora via Travelpod

arising from what they have discussed – for example, students might be encouraged to set up a Legkotla in their own school to discuss the issues with a broader group of pupils.

* L. Sevcenko & M. Russell-Ciardì, 'Sites of Conscience: Opening Historic Sites for Civic Dialogue', *The Public Historian* (30)1, 2008, pp.9-15; <http://www.sitesofconscience.org/sites/constitution-hill/museum-programs>; and <http://www.sitesofconscience.org/sites/constitution-hill/dialogues-for-democracy>

Elysee in Paris; the Brandenberg Gate in Berlin for example, but none of these has quite the intimacy or potent symbolism of Parliament Square and none of these directly seeks to foster and provide a platform for civic engagement.

Many of the worldwide network of Sites of Conscience – ‘historic sites specifically dedicated to remembering past struggles for justice and addressing their contemporary legacies’ – promote a ‘Dialogue with Democracy’ programme. Sites such as the Gulag Museum in Russia, the Terezin Memorial in the Czech Republic, the Liberation War Museum in Bangladesh or the Workhouse in the UK are perceived by the coalition as ‘new centres for democracy in action’: places of memory where the lens of history can be used to stimulate conversation and dialogue about contemporary issues.¹⁰⁰ But though these sites may provide a platform for citizenship and are symbolically powerful they are not primary locations for free speech and protest and generally do not lie at the democratic heart of their respective nations.

This year the city Square as a place for citizenship has taken on ever greater resonance: as events in Egypt unfolded, Cairo’s Tahrir Square became the symbolic focus of the ‘Arab Spring’ whilst anger at the impact of the economic crisis on young people found expression in Madrid’s Puerto del Sol Square. It remains to be seen to what extent these locations take on the mantle of citizenship as well as being places of protest in the future. But at the heart of Westminster we have the opportunity to remodel the concept of the Square as a truly public space for civic engagement and citizenship. In so doing we would send out a powerful statement to the world about what democracy means to us in the 21st century.

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VICTORIA TOWER GARDENS

In previous reviews of the study area, Victoria Tower Gardens has featured prominently as a resource that could be better used to provide facilities for visitors. Parliament itself considered the possibility of locating a full-scale Visitors’ and Information Centre here and the World Squares for All project proposed that the area be landscaped, a ‘People’s Terrace’ equivalent in size to the



Figure 23. Westminster Village Youth Fete, Victoria Tower Gardens

Members’ and Lords’ Terraces be built, and that a teahouse, orangery and toilets be provided (see page 67).¹⁰¹

The site is really a public park more than a garden and has huge potential but is greatly under-used. Few visitors would be aware, for example, that the Gardens are a Royal Park; the setting and its usage is not commensurate with its status. Home to one of the greatest ever pieces of public art, Rodin’s Burghers of Calais, many visitors simply do not travel beyond Parliament Square and the Abbey to reach it, in large part because of the inadequate signage in the area. The sculpture and statuary has been improved and restored, and some interpretation, albeit of a limited nature, has been provided for the Burghers of Calais and the anti-slavery Buxton Memorial. However, the wider potential of the gardens and their connections in relation to the River Thames frontage are not exploited: there is only limited seating and no other public amenities, clear access to the river vista is obscured by the river wall, and there is no information and interpretation to explain the sites along the river and the connections with Westminster.

The Gardens are currently used for a range of different activities. Local residents and workers visit them throughout the week as a place for rest and relaxation and broadcasters often use them for interviews as the Palace of Westminster provides an excellent backdrop

Can this

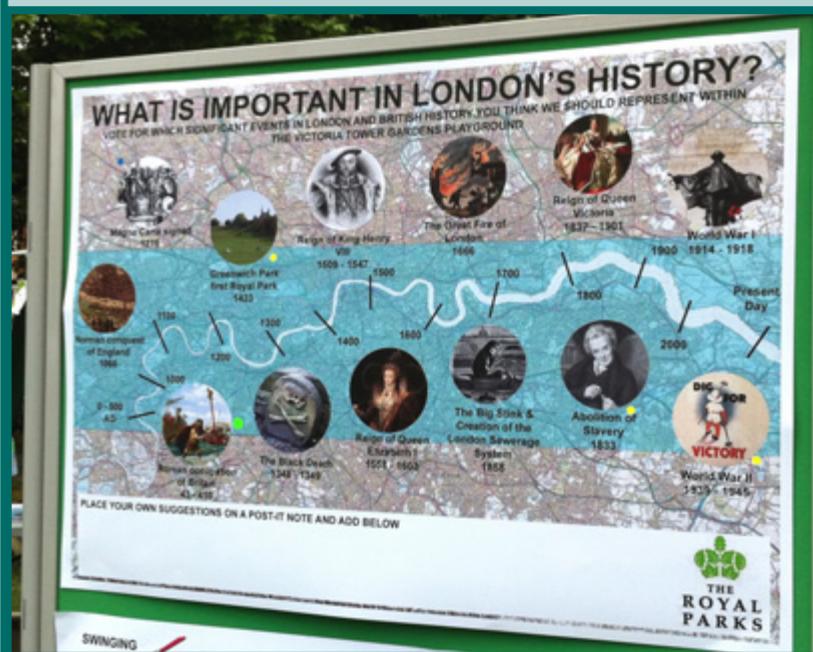


Figure 24. The consultation panel for the redesign of the Children’s Playground on display during the Westminster Village Youth Fete, May 2011.

...Help transform this?

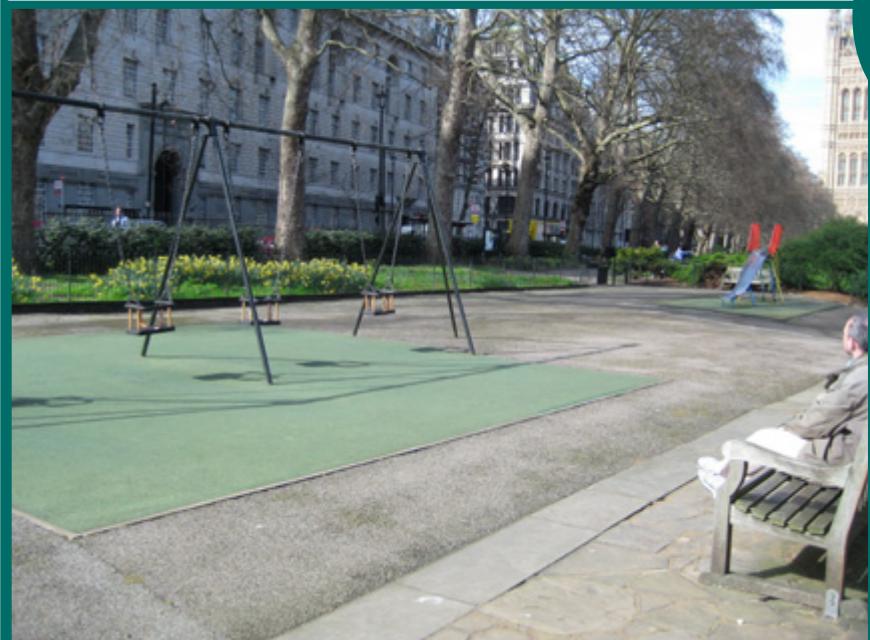


Figure 25. Children’s Playground in Victoria Tower Gardens

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for their live or recorded film segments. The Gardens can be hired for an event providing that the individual or organisation concerned applies for a licence; but restrictions apply if the event will inhibit public access to the Gardens and any corporate events must be sensitive to the public purpose of the park.

Previous events in the Gardens in recent years include, for example, historical re-enactment of events such as the abolition of slavery, a display of Latin American art, and most recently the Westminster Village Youth Fete. The Royal Parks agency are keen that the Gardens be utilised more than at present, and that the local community are engaged to a greater degree in its use. A priority project for them is the redevelopment of the children's playground at the Millbank end of the Gardens (see Figure 25). Originally designed for use by MPs' children, the facility is now in poor condition and does not provide an inspiring playspace. Royal Parks are currently consulting on proposals for its redesign although as yet they have not secured all the funds necessary to undertake the work.¹⁰² This varied use, although valuable, is nonetheless ad hoc and doesn't really come close to exploiting the potential of the Gardens throughout the year.

Changes to the Line of Route Tour

More imaginative use of the Gardens could, for example, improve Parliament's line of route visitor tour. Many parliamentarians and officials are dissatisfied with the current arrangements for Parliament's line of route tours. At present, visitors enter through the Cromwell Green security entrance, pass into Westminster Hall and then have to walk the entire length of the Palace building to begin the tour at the Norman Porch. They then retrace their footsteps on the tour. This is an inefficient use of valuable time and space, frustrating to many visitors, and problematic for anyone who has walking difficulties. The increased footfall in some areas may also have damaging conservation implications.

The tour is constructed in this way because there is no exit for visitors at the House of Lords end of the Palace. If an exit from the House of Lords end of the Palace into the Gardens could be facilitated, then the line of route tour could begin in Westminster Hall. In terms of telling the story of Parliament's development as a legislature as well as its primary business functions in relation to legislation, this route would also be more logical. Westminster Hall is the oldest part of the Palace, the site of the original foundations, so it would be appropriate to begin tours here, and then trace the passage of legislation from Commons to Lords to Royal Assent through each part of the building. If visitors exit at the Lords end of the building, via Black Rod's Garden into Victoria Tower Gardens, then visitor facilities could be provided such as a shop, refreshments, toilets, and some exhibition/interpretation space. If this approach were taken, not only would it provide enhanced facilities for visitors and new revenue opportunities for Parliament but it might also increase the number of tour places that can be made available. Under this plan, the

current length of tours would be reduced as visitors and guides would not be required to traverse the length of the building before they can begin the tour only to then double back on themselves. With visitor movements in one direction only, from north to south, the use of space on the line of route would be enhanced and time-savings could be made.

Parliament has committed itself to establish an Education Centre by 2013 to accommodate 100,000 pupils per year. The underground site originally identified for this purpose is, following investigation, no longer deemed appropriate and an alternative site is urgently needed. However, there are few sites on the parliamentary estate of sufficient size that can readily be adapted. But if the line of route tour were amended then this would open up new opportunities to use some of the facilities off Westminster Hall – the W meeting rooms; the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) room; and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) room, as well as the Jubilee Café and toilet amenities – for education purposes. The meeting rooms are utilised but are far from ideal and better alternative meeting spaces are available elsewhere on the parliamentary estate. The CPA and IPU rooms are highly valued by their organisations but the considerable amount of space they are afforded is not being utilised to best effect from Parliament's perspective. When space is at a premium and when the Education Centre is such a priority, this should take precedence over meeting rooms which could be facilitated elsewhere on the estate. Were the CPA and IPU to be relocated elsewhere, this would open up space on two floors for education centre provision. If line of route tours begin in Westminster Hall then the Jubilee Café may not be required to cater for tour visitors – they would find refreshment facilities at the end of the tour in Victoria Tower Gardens – and if more space were required the Jubilee Café could therefore be converted as well. This might not be a perfect location for an education centre (and may not be sufficient for all 100,000 pupils) but being in the original part of the Palace it would be an inspiring one, and would certainly be better than the current arrangements for school parties which entail mixed use of rooms in Portcullis House, Westminster Hall and other parts of the House of Commons, none of which are specifically set up for education purposes. This solution also means that most pupils will continue to be catered for on the parliamentary estate: off-site provision of an Education Centre would present safety challenges in relation to the movement of pupils which this approach avoids. Depending on the final capacity of the site additional provision could be made on an ad hoc basis as required at other locations on and off the parliamentary estate (eg. in Victoria Tower Gardens or 6/7 Old Palace Yard - see below for further information).

We recognise that changing the direction of the line of route tour and bringing in more pupils to the Westminster Hall area may pose challenges in relation to access capacity at the Cromwell Green entrance. A technical capacity assessment of all the proposals contained in this report will be needed to confirm their viability and the best means of synchronising their introduction. That assessment should also explore what alternative options for access routes might be available in the context of this new set of proposals. At the best of times access to the parliamentary estate – whether through Cromwell

Green or through the Portcullis House entrance – is often difficult and visitors sometimes face long delays. Any proposals must not exacerbate this situation. If access capacity means that changing the line of route tour genuinely cannot be accommodated then the line of route direction should remain and the proposals for the education centre provision and access route via Victoria Tower Gardens (see proposals below) adjusted as necessary.



Figure 26. Inn the Park, St James Park © Royal Parks Agency

68 A People's Terrace

The concept of a 'People's Terrace' set out in the World Squares for All report is a good one, offering as it does the opportunity to combine a much needed place for refreshments with a thematic setting in keeping with the surrounding area which asserts the 'people's' role as the essential underpinning of our democratic settlement. Royal Parks have previously considered a refreshment facility in the park but were concerned that the number of people who visit the Gardens, coupled with the dependence on good weather, would make such a commission unattractive to providers.¹⁰³ However, improvements in signage and information provision across the Westminster site would help address the flow of visitors to the location and a facility – perhaps a teahouse or orangery – with a terrace facility to enable visitors to see both Parliament and the river would make the success of the facility less weather dependent. If all visitors on Parliament's line of route tour exit through here it ought to secure its financial viability.

Similar facilities are already in use in other Royal Parks. It could, for example, be modelled on the 'Inn the Park' in St James Park: a 575m² facility which cost approximately £5 million, this lozenge shaped café/restaurant was built using sustainable timber with a green turf roof that makes it sympathetic to the surroundings.¹⁰⁴

In designing a People's Terrace facility some consideration should be given to re-creating the ambience of the Portcullis House atrium area. Of course the sense of open, bright, airy

space will be difficult to fully reflect in a smaller building. Given that only pass-holders and their guests can use the facilities, Portcullis House is not a democratic space in the way that the café area in the National Assembly for Wales is, where anyone can go in after passing through a security check. However, it has become an attractive, informal setting for small group meetings and discussions, a place to relax over coffee or a light meal, to read and do some work. As a place of social interaction and engagement around the great issues of the day, a place where business is carried out and news exchanged, there is a strong element of coffee house culture to be found here. Given the proliferation of coffee bars in central London, the fact that tea is our national drink, and the symbolic link with the Commons Tea Room as well as the Terrace, it may be better from a marketing perspective, to develop the facility as a teahouse rather than a coffee house. To convey a sense of the work of both Houses of Parliament, the annunciator and vote bell could be incorporated into the facility, as could live feeds of the leading television news channels and the Parliament Channel. Further information could be accessed, if desired, through several BBC Democracy Live information kiosks. These need not be intrusive: as



Figure 27. BBC Democracy Live kiosk, National Assembly for Wales

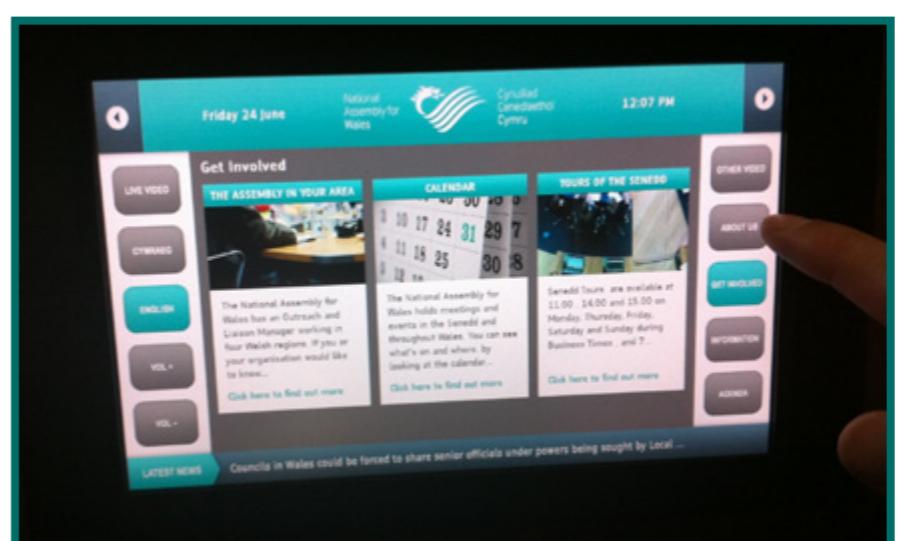


Figure 28. LCD touchscreen, Chamber public gallery, National Assembly for Wales

Figure 28 shows, multiple live video feeds could be provided on small but accessible screens and the information kiosks are mobile and do not take up large amounts of space. If designed well the facility could have multiple uses during the course of the week. During the day, the environs of Parliament are very busy and here it could primarily serve visitors. However, during the

¹⁰³ Information provided during an interview with Tony Assirati and Mark Wasilewski, Royal Parks Agency, 13 May 2011.

¹⁰⁴ Hopkins Architects, Inn the Park, http://www.hopkins.co.uk/projects/_3,89/

evenings and at weekends, the area is quieter and demand would be reduced. During these times the facility could therefore be used as a meeting space for democratic debate, book-club readings and so on. Since 2004 the Royal Society for the Arts has, in partnership with Starbucks, organised hundreds of 'Coffeehouse Challenge' events across the UK where people meet together to discuss problems and challenges related to the Society's areas of interest, exploring ways to resolve them through practical and innovative initiatives. Working with schools, colleges and universities, as well as community groups, businesses and government bodies, the Society's Fellows co-ordinate the events across the country. A similar approach has been taken in the United States where, to mark the 300th anniversary of his birth, the Ben Franklin Coffeehouse Challenge was launched in Pennsylvania to create a space where 'a diverse range of civic-minded individuals – 21st century Ben Franklins – could share their thoughts on particular local issues and, most importantly, generate potential solutions.'¹⁰⁵ A similar approach could be taken with a series of events on democratic themes, exploring national issues of interest, and providing opportunities for people to listen to some of the great thinkers of the day as well as foster debate and discussion among themselves. Innovative partnership opportunities to deliver a programme could be explored with think tanks, universities and media companies.

The facility should be built in such a way that it can be converted for multi-purpose use if required. Specifically, it could be designed such that it can be used during a Lying-in-State and State Funeral when the Gardens have historically been utilised to accommodate the queues of mourners. It could, for example, provide a location for the setting out of memorial condolence books for signature or accommodate additional security checks if required. Parliament of course, cannot deliver such a facility on its own: it would need to work in collaboration with the Royal Parks Agency.¹⁰⁶ However, the Agency is facing a 25% real terms cut in its budget and has made clear that with this in mind it is looking to increase earned income from commercial and other sources.¹⁰⁷ Given that it already recognises that the Gardens are an under-used resource there may thus be new opportunities to explore the development of such a facility for the future.

Additional mobile visitor facilities could also be provided in different areas of the Gardens in order to manage numbers: for example, an information kiosk, a mobile coffee bar, or education and interpretation facilities. As long ago as 1998 proposals were set out for a temporary ticket office and visitor information centre in the Gardens to serve visitors to the WHS and Parliament Square but they were never implemented. Figure 29 shows how this was imagined in the context of the Gardens. The proposed structure incorporated ticket office windows, a café window, secure office space, fold out exhibition walls and a retractable canopy to enable the structure to be secured at night and minimise the use

¹⁰⁵ The Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary, Ben Franklin Coffee House Challenge, <http://www.benfranklin300.org/chc.htm>

¹⁰⁶ In future the Mayor of London and GLA will also have a say as it is proposed in the Localism Bill that a new Royal Parks Board will be established to manage the Parks, with the Chair and Members appointed by the Mayor. The Parks will, however, remain Crown Land and the Royal Parks Agency will remain an executive agency of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

¹⁰⁷ 'The Royal Parks – responding to reductions in government funding', Royal Parks Agency press release, 1 April 2011, www.royalparks.org.uk/about/management_governance_csr.cfm



Figure 29. Artist's impression of a mobile facility in Victoria Tower Gardens. © Petersham Group Ltd.



of space. More than a decade later it would be possible to provide similar mobile structures, of a temporary or permanent nature, for whatever purposes are required in the context of a visitor strategy for the area.

In addition to providing refreshment facilities in the Gardens, much needed public toilets could also be provided; a complex of long-closed public toilets already exists under Lambeth Bridge roundabout that could be brought back into use.¹⁰⁸



Figure 30. The Election Project exhibition, Portcullis House
© The Election Project

This combination of basic public amenities would serve to make the Gardens a more viable site for events such as cinema screenings, concerts, theatrical performances, or book readings, particularly during the summer months. The Royal Parks Agency has already begun to work with the social enterprise, Lexi Cinema chain, to offer occasional film screenings in the Gardens. With its 'Nomad' film facility, Lexi Cinema offers a 'season of outdoor cinema, screening classics and cult favourites in beautiful surroundings under the stars, with special guests, live music and theatre.'¹⁰⁹ Three feature films were screened in the Gardens on the evenings of 5-7 August 2011.¹¹⁰ Rather than showing popular feature films that can be shown at any other location however, there might be more value in offering a programme more in keeping with the history, purpose and institutional back-drop of the area such as rarely seen independent films and documentaries on democratic themes. More ambitiously a 'festival of democracy' could incorporate a mix of outdoor events – music, film, literature, theatre – reflecting on broad themes associated with politics, democracy, the law and religion.

The Gardens might also be used for occasional mobile displays, for example of photographic works on a democratic theme. In 2010 the Speakers' Advisory Committee on Works of Art commissioned photographer Simon Roberts to undertake a study of the general election campaign across the country, focusing on the relationship between politicians and voters and the public were invited to augment the commission by sending in their own images of the election campaign in their local area. As Simon Roberts himself declared, 'The Election Project' collection forms an 'historic archive of photography, which captures the complexity of the UK's social and political landscape in 2010'.¹¹¹ In total, 1,696 such images from the public were included in a 15 metre long installation which was

¹⁰⁸ Information provided by Jonathan Rounce, Chief Executive, Petersham Group Ltd.

¹⁰⁹ For more information see www.whereisthenomad.com.

¹¹⁰ The three feature films show in August 2011 were: Inception, The Talented Mr Ripley, and Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind.

¹¹¹ S. Roberts, The Election Project, <http://theelectionproject.co.uk/>

exhibited first in Portcullis House alongside the photographer's own images.

However, because of the location on the parliamentary estate access to view the exhibition was limited. Visitors could view the collection at anytime during the Open House weekend of 18/19 September 2010 and then between 20 September and 13 December free guided tours were available on a first come, first served basis, twice on a Monday morning and four times on a Friday. This year the exhibition has also travelled to various galleries across the country broadening access to the images. However, a photographic exhibition of this kind would be ideally suited to external display in the Gardens, (providing that the large display boards are designed to blend in appropriately to the location), enabling significantly more people to see the displays than is possible on the parliamentary estate. Similar thought might also be given to how the art and archival treasures of Parliament, the Abbey and other institutions might be conveyed to a greater number of visitors in this way.

CASE STUDIES: Bath World Heritage Site and More London

The Natural History Museum's outdoor exhibition features some of the most outstanding entries in its annual Wildlife Photographer of the Year competitions. Between 6 April and 23 September 2011 the exhibition is on display outside the Abbey and Roman Baths at the heart of the Bath World Heritage Site. A free display, the installations are lit after dusk. It will tour cities across the UK and will next be seen in Manchester.



Figure 31. Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibition, Bath World Heritage Site

Similarly, from July to September 2011 an open air, free exhibition of 66 large format photos by Swedish photographer, Anders Ryman, is on display at More London next to City Hall. 'Rites of Life' documents how people 'mark the decisive moments when



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Figure 32. 'Rites of Life', Raoul Wallenberg Square, Stockholm
© Anders Ryman

they pass from one stage of life to another' and highlights 'both the great cultural variety of the world and the affinity between all people, irrespective of culture or religion'.^{*}

Under the patronage of UNESCO, and with corporate sponsorship to offset the costs, the photos are displayed on illuminated stands for 24 hour access, an accompanying book and exhibition catalogue can be bought from the nearby information centre, and materials for school pupils are available for download.

The exhibition has also been displayed at Raoul Wallenberg Square in Stockholm, Rosen Park in Uppsala, the Nordstan Shopping Centre in Gothenberg, and Sweden's Varberg Fortress.

* A. Ryman, Rites of Life, http://www.ritesoflife.com/?page_id=9

4. Exhibition Facilities and a Visitors' Centre

During the course of our research we encountered very different views about the merit and need for a large-scale Visitors' Centre either for Parliament individually or on a multi-stakeholder basis for the Westminster World Heritage Site. Some take the view that a museum type facility would have to be in a modern, neutral space out of place with the Westminster setting, and that it would be artificial to create a visitor experience that could never be as exciting as the 'real thing', the buildings and landscape themselves. Others take a different view, arguing that it would be a valuable addition to the visitor experience and provide space for exciting opportunities to develop engaging and informative education and interpretation initiatives.

Across the globe a number of parliaments now have Visitors' Centres in some form though these vary extensively in size, resources and content. The relatively new US Capitol Visitor Center is by far the biggest (in terms of surface and capacity) in the world. Its success in terms of sheer throughput of visitor numbers in its first years demonstrates that, if done well, there is a public appetite for such a facility (see page 76 for further information). But even relatively small countries/parliaments – for example in Scandinavia – have visitors' centres: Austria's is approximately 600m²; Norway's is 500m²; Denmark's 350m²; and Finland's is 250m². The services and facilities provided vary considerably as a consequence: in Sweden there is an enquiry service, TV coverage of the Chamber, official documents, books, souvenirs, exhibitions, lectures and seminars; in Portugal multi-media presentations are prominent; whilst in the Scottish Parliament childcare is also provided. In Austria the visitors' centre is particularly well known for its multi-media 'time-wheel' where the public can 'explore Parliament's recent history, or embark on a virtual voyage of discovery through the Houses of Parliament'.¹¹² Further information is provided through video clips, news tickers and interactive media terminals and comic figures help children to learn more about what they have seen on the guided tour of the building.

The former Leader of the House, Robin Cook MP, argued as early as 2001 that the creation of a dedicated Visitors' Centre would be an 'immense opportunity' for 'interpretation of the work and role of Parliament today' and that it could 'put the building and its history in the context of Parliament's place in the constitution and its importance as the expression of our democracy'.¹¹³ In 2004 a joint report by the Accommodation and Works Committee and the Administration Committee recommended such a centre to include

¹¹² Austrian Parliament, The Visitor Centre, <http://www.parlament.gv.at/ENGL/GEBF/BSZ/MEDIENSTATIONEN/index.shtml>
¹¹³ Modernisation of the House of Commons Select Committee (2001-02), Memorandum submitted by the Leader of the House of Commons, HC 440.

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Case study: United States Capitol Visitor Center (CVC)

The mission of the CVC is to 'provide a welcoming and educational environment for visitors to learn about the unique characteristics of the House and the Senate and the legislative process as well as the history and development of the architecture and art of the US Capitol'.^{*} The decision to establish a visitor centre was driven by demand, security considerations and the limited physical capacity of the Capitol to accommodate the growing number of visitors wanting to visit. Built between 2002 and 2008, the 55,000 square metres (or 580,000 square feet) facility cost \$621 million in total.^{**}



Figure 33. Kids exploring the Capitol Visitor Center
Source: CVC website

2.3 million people visited the CVC in its first year of operation – double the number of visitors who came to the Capitol in the previous year. It opened in December 2008 and between March and April 2009 alone it averaged 15,500 visitors per day[†] and in March 2011 registered its five millionth visitor.[‡] Open Monday to Saturday 8:30am-4:30pm (except Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year and Inauguration Days) visits are free but an advance pass obtained over

the internet is required. Such has been the demand for tickets and general enquiries that a centralised call centre operation had to be set up. Income is generated through its refreshment facilities and its gift shops – the latter alone generated \$2 million in revenue in the first year of operation.

The Center includes a 16,500 square foot exhibition hall on the theme 'E Pluribus Unum – Out of Many, One', (the only exhibition in the country solely dedicated to the legislative branch of the US Government), two orientation theatres where films about the Capitol and the legislatures are shown; a restaurant, gift shop and post office; and the Emancipation Hall central gathering space, with a statuary display and an 11-foot tall tactile model of the Capitol Dome.[§] Visitors can also access a mobile (cell)



Figure 34. Capitol Visitor Center website

phone audio tour of the exhibition hall by calling a dedicated number and using the phone's keypad to control the audio in accordance with their own pace. The CVC does not charge for the service but phone companies may apply usage charges. In addition to the permanent displays temporary exhibitions are also shown, generally on a six-month rotation, and often in partnership with bodies such as the National Archives. Recent themes have included 'Capitol and the Congress', 'The Civil War', and 'Pirates, Protests and Public Health'.

* U.S. Capitol, Visitor Center, www.visitthecapitol.gov/AboutTheCapitol/About%20the%20Capitol%20Visitor%20Center/Page%20-%20About%20the%20Capitol%20Visitor%20Center.html

** U.S. Capitol, Visitor Center, http://www.visitthecapitol.gov/for_the_press/press_materials/fact_sheets/pdf/frequently_asked_questions.pdf

† The Architect of the Capitol, Preserving the Past, Enabling the Present, Preparing for the Future: 2009 Performance and Accountability Report, p.32, http://www.aoc.gov/aoc/cfo/upload/AOC-FY-2009-Performance-and-Accountability-Report_rev-0610.pdf

‡ The Architect of the Capitol, http://www.aoc.gov/aoc/press-room/CVC_5millionth_visitor.cfm

§ The Architect of the Capitol, Preserving the Past, Enabling the Present, Preparing for the Future: 2009 Performance and Accountability Report, pp.32-34, http://www.aoc.gov/aoc/cfo/upload/AOC-FY-2009-Performance-and-Accountability-Report_rev-0610.pdf

exhibition space explaining the work and function of Parliament, display areas for items from the art and archival collection, accommodation for school parties, a retail facility, and ticketing provision.¹¹⁴ A further report later that year by the Modernisation Committee also supported the concept of an off-site full-scale interpretative visitor centre.¹¹⁵ It argued that such a facility would enable visitors to see and learn something about Parliament without having to visit the building itself. The House of Lords endorsed the Visitors' Centre concept in July 2004, followed by the House of Commons in January 2005.

In February 2006 the Administration Committee began an inquiry into the viability of such a Parliamentary Visitor and Information Centre on either College Green or in Victoria Tower Gardens. The Committee concluded that a newly built centre on either site would not be good value for money: the capital and revenue costs, estimated at over £80 million for the preferred model, meant the idea was not viable.¹¹⁶ Instead, it recommended that Parliament concentrate on providing a dedicated education space for up to 100,000 pupils per year. Since then the idea of a full-scale Visitor and Information Centre has largely lain dormant.

However, new opportunities, in the context of the staged approach to the improved provision of visitor facilities set out in this report, may now present themselves. Based on our discussions with stakeholders two sites in particular have emerged as potential locations for a visitors' centre which merit further detailed investigation: 6/7 Old Palace Yard and the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre. In addition, the Jewel Tower provides a more immediate, short-term opportunity to upgrade exhibition facilities for visitors to the area.

114 House of Commons Accommodation and Works and Administration Committees, 1st Joint Report (2003-04), *Visitor Facilities: Access to Parliament*, HC 324.

115 Modernisation of the House of Commons Select Committee (2003-04), *Connecting Parliament with the Public*, HC 368.

116 House of Commons Administration Committee (2006-07), *Improving Facilities for Educational Visitors to Parliament*, HC 434.



Figure 35. The Jewel Tower



Figure 36. Jewel Tower signage

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THE JEWEL TOWER

The historic importance of the Jewel Tower in relation to both the Palace of Westminster and Westminster Abbey is not immediately apparent to any visitor to the area. Indeed, tucked back off Abingdon Street, the Tower is not easily identifiable as a building accessible to visitors and there are no signs in the neighbouring areas to direct visitors to it. The only information provided is immediately outside where the English Heritage information board describes it as an 'original 14th century tower' which hardly begins to touch on its importance through the centuries as the personal treasure house of the monarch, the home of the records of Parliament, and in its final incarnation as the official office of Weights and Measures. The three-storey Tower originally formed the south-west corner of the Palace and it is here that one can view the partially excavated remains of the moat which would once have enclosed the entire south side of the Palace all the way to the River Thames.

Approximately 32,000 people per year currently visit the Tower.¹¹⁷ Although the capacity of the building is much less than the neighbouring buildings this is still a very small proportion of the total number of visitors to the area each year. That it is not heavily visited is a saving grace given the current inadequacies of the interior exhibits. It is in the Jewel Tower that the only information identifying the area as a World Heritage Site can be found and there are further exhibitions on the 'Parliament Past and Present' theme

and about weights and measures. However, these are very poorly presented by modern exhibition standards. Although English Heritage is responsible for the management of the Jewel Tower, Parliament is responsible for the 'Parliament Past and Present' exhibition on the first floor. It is now out of date – Gordon Brown is described, for example, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer – and needs a complete overhaul. This ought to be done in advance of the expected increase in visitors to the area in 2012.



Figure 37. Jewel Tower exhibition

The current condition of the Jewel Tower is an embarrassment and a lost opportunity for visitor engagement. But to fully realise the potential of the site will require some investment and, understandably, this is not likely to be forthcoming via English Heritage given their recent 30% budget cuts. An alternative may, however, be available. Among the sites for which Historic Royal Palaces (HRP) are responsible is The Banqueting House, the last surviving part of the Palace of Whitehall. Over the course of the next few years they plan to develop a project to conserve and re-present this building and to look at ways of telling the wider Whitehall Palace story through interpretation of the modern Whitehall and what it can tell us about the 'lost Palace'. The other great 'lost' royal Palace is that at Westminster and HRP would be interested in working with other organisations to explore the potential for the story of the Royal Palace of Westminster to be linked with the Whitehall Palace story. As one of only two surviving parts of the original Royal Palace of Westminster (the other being Westminster Hall), HRP have consequently expressed a preliminary interest in the future of the Jewel Tower to English Heritage and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. Subject to the agreement of others it is therefore possible that HRP might be in a position in due course to become more closely involved in the Jewel Tower's conservation, presentation and management, including making an appropriate investment for improvements.¹¹⁸

HRP have acknowledged experience and expertise in the management and presentation of major historic sites and part of their charitable mission is 'to help everyone explore the story of how monarchs and people have shaped society'.¹¹⁹ If they were to have a presence in the footprint of the World Heritage Site they might be able to offer that leadership and experience in working with other stakeholders to develop a comprehensive interpretation

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Information provided during a meeting with English Heritage staff, 29 March 2011.

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Information provided in an interview with and subsequent submission by Michael Day, Historic Royal Palaces, July 2011.

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Submission by Michael Day, Historic Royal Palaces, July 2011.

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CASE STUDY: Museum of Australian Democracy

A 'living museum of social and political history' the Museum is based at Old Parliament House in Canberra, the site of the Federal Parliament from 1927-1988 and is an Executive Agency of the Australian Government. Opened in 2009, the Museum's focus is not just on Australia's political and parliamentary history but the broader story of democracy and democratic values at home and abroad.* As the site of the old Parliament building it has the advantage of retaining many of the existing rooms in their historic state, enabling visitors to view, for example, the Prime Minister's Office, and press gallery rooms, as well as the parliamentary chambers. An interactive exhibit also explores the office of the opposition party leader. Current permanent exhibitions include: 'Living democracy: the power of the people'; 'Designing democracy'; 'Hands on democracy – make:play'; and 'Prime Ministers in Australia'. The Museum acknowledges that 'democracy has been experienced by different groups in different ways, and this is reflected in the balanced range of narratives and experiences presented'.** In addition to permanent exhibitions the Museum also has a range of temporary exhibitions that are designed specifically to travel – nationally and internationally via the country's diplomatic posts – for up to five years at the end of their season at the Museum.

But the Museum is much more than just exhibition space. Based in a heritage building, it has a role in the acquisition and conservation of artefacts important to the country's democratic history and it collates an oral history programme recording the views of ordinary Australians about their democracy as well as those of well-known public figures. It also houses the Australian Prime Ministers Centre providing an international scholarly and research-oriented focus to its work, offers a range of educational programmes, classroom resources and outreach activities, hosts events and awards ceremonies with a political or democratic theme, and provides a wide range of resources through its website.



Figure 38. Museum of Australian Democracy

In the year to June 2010 the Museum had a 7% rise in visitors to 188,357: a substantial number but considerably below what any such facility in Westminster would face. Of these, 81,079 visitors came via the Museum's school programmes, just under 80,000

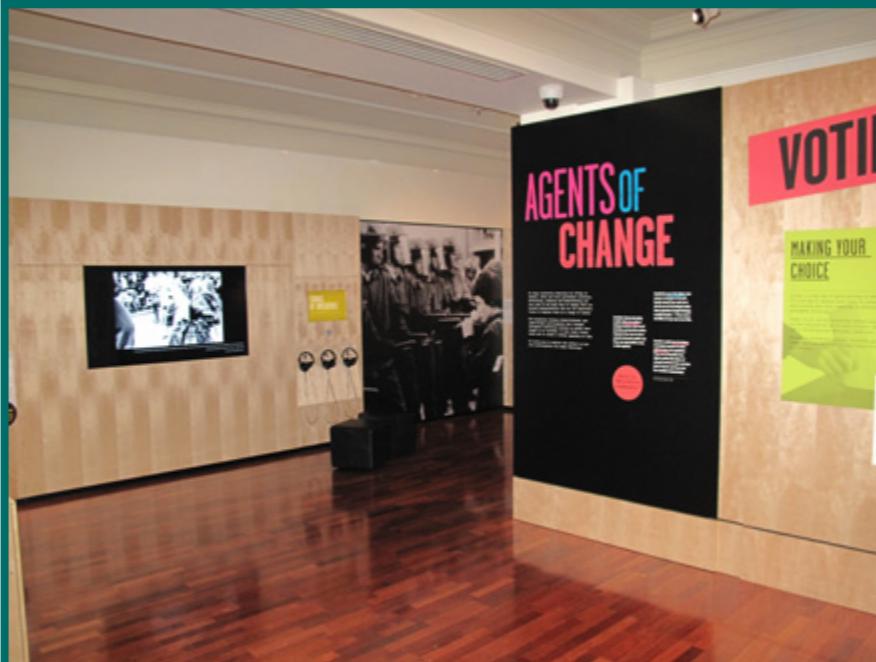


Figure 39. Museum of Australian Democracy

* Museum of Australian Democracy, Strategic Plan 2009-12, p.1.

** Museum of Australian Democracy, <http://moadoph.gov.au-democracy/>

† Museum of Australian Democracy, Strategic Plan 2009-12.

visitors used the function facilities, and over 100,000 toured the exhibition areas. In post-visit surveys 75% of visitors agreed that their knowledge of Australian democracy had increased as a result of their visit: 89% of those under 40 years of age agreed that their knowledge had increased, compared to 70% of over 40s who said the same. In addition the Museum had 246,301 visits to its website and generated \$4.4 million worth of advertising space arising out of its press, broadcast and internet coverage. Employing 94 full time equivalent staff the Museum received an appropriation of \$13.8 million but finished with an end of year surplus of \$0.127 million.[†]

plan for the entire site, providing experience of a kind that may not be readily available on such a scale in-house at the existing institutions.

6/7 OLD PALACE YARD: A PARLIAMENTARY VISITORS' CENTRE

The rear basement of 6/7 Old Palace Yard, a Grade II listed building, is already being used by Parliament for ticket sales for summer tours and on a temporary basis the upper floors have been used to provide office space for peers whilst 1 and 2 Millbank has been



Figure 40. 6/7 Old Palace Yard

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refurbished. In the medium to long-term however, a further review of office space should be undertaken with a view to relocating the peers elsewhere so that the Old Palace Yard buildings can be converted into a visitors' centre by 2015 in time for the Magna Carta anniversary. The available space for exhibition style facilities would be augmented if some ticketing provision for tours was moved to a new Information Centre on Bridge Street. The building would offer considerable exhibition and interpretation space, enabling Parliament to display some of the treasures in its art and archival collection, as well as provide information about its role, function and history. This would greatly augment what is currently available to visitors particularly those who do not wish to, do not have time to, or simply cannot get a place on a parliamentary tour. It would complement exhibition space in the Jewel Tower as well as the visitor exhibition and interpretative provision available in Westminster Abbey and the Supreme Court.

Recommending a Visitors' Centre in its 2005 report *Enhancing Engagement*, the Hansard Society drew a parallel with the experience of the Sellafield Visitors' Centre.¹²⁰ This was established in order to help increase public awareness and understanding of an issue (and therefore influence perceptions) without being either propagandist or didactic. By encouraging people to visit the Sellafield site the public had an opportunity to make up their own minds about nuclear power based on the facts. The company sought to generate trust and acceptance through simple first-hand experience of it.¹²¹ In light of Parliament's

currently diminished reputation, a Vistors' Centre could provide a new medium through which to engage public interest and help address the knowledge gap that currently exists with regard to it.

By separating out ticketing, information, exhibition, interpretation and refreshment facilities across a number of sites in the area and developing them on a staged basis one after the other – the Bridge Street bookshop, the Jewel Tower, Old Palace Yard, Parliament Square and Victoria Tower Gardens – it may also usefully help disperse pressure on the facilities and the finances.

Looking to the long-term however, a more ambitious project for a WHS Visitor Centre could be realised on the site of the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre on Broad Sanctuary.

A WORLD HERITAGE SITE VISITORS' CENTRE: THE QUEEN ELIZABETH II CONFERENCE CENTRE

An executive agency of the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), the Conference Centre has been on the register of assets for sale since 2009 as part of the then government's Operational Efficiency Programme. A study was undertaken

to assess 'opportunities for the potential development of the facility in a way that builds on the strengths of the existing conference business and is sympathetic to the property's unique location'.¹²² However, the economic crisis means that it is difficult for the government to realise the full value of the asset, particularly as it is government policy to retain the freehold. In 2009 the property was valued at £25 million but it is clear that the government would like to realise more from the site. Thus it recommended

that 'opportunities for a redevelopment of the property that are sympathetic to the location of the building and wider planning considerations' be explored with the relevant authorities.¹²³

Opened in 1986 the seven-storey building is not listed but is considered a 'building of merit' by Westminster



Figure 41. QEII Conference Centre

¹²⁰ Hansard Society (2005), *Interpretative Visitor Centre at Parliament: Second Interim Report, Enhancing Engagement*.
¹²¹ *Ibid.*, pp.9-10.

¹²² HM Government (2009), *Operational Efficiency Programme: Asset Portfolio*, (London: HM Treasury), p.58.
¹²³ *Ibid.*

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City Council.¹²⁴ Lying just beyond the boundary of the WHS it would provide an exciting space for development as a multi-stakeholder WHS Visitors' Centre. As Baroness Valentine, Chief Executive of London First, noted during a debate in the House of Lords on tourism in January 2011: 'With its unique Westminster location and some imaginative thinking from government, the QEII conference centre could also play its part in London's broad visitor offer.'¹²⁵

Parliament already occupies 929m² in the basement of the QEII Centre for off-site storage of library and archival materials and £1 million was spent in the recent past to fit it out appropriately for this purpose.¹²⁶ With an existing presence at the site these facilities could be retained if desired. Alternatively storage facilities could be secured at a location outside the centre of London and the space utilised for other purposes within a WHS Visitors' Centre complex.

The events that have been hosted at the Conference Centre over the years – for example, the G7 Summit in 1991; the Palestinian Peace Talks in 2005, the Iraq Inquiry since 2009 – provide an historic setting in its own right, information about which could be incorporated into the visitor facility. The building could be developed to provide exhibition and interpretation space, including theatres, refreshment and retail facilities, focusing on the history and constitutional relationship between the institutions in the area.

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Heritage Consultant, Michael Glen, outlined five key objectives for any successful visitor centre in 2005: it should provoke interest, relate to personal experience, reveal information, widen horizons and entertain.¹²⁷ The Centre is big enough that ambitious projects to meet these objectives could be pursued. Parliament and other stakeholders could take visitors 'behind the scenes' of their institutions: the office of an MP or Minister, even the Prime Minister, could, for example, be re-created in the same way that each US Presidential Library uses photographic records and artefacts to recreate the Oval Office for visitors to view as it was used by the President during a critical moment of their presidency. Radio and television studios could also be incorporated into the site allowing visitors to witness programmes being recorded live. In Washington DC, for example, the Newseum on Pennsylvania Avenue has two studios which can be hired by broadcasters and which provide a view of Congress as a backdrop. Under a partnership agreement with ABC News the weekly Sunday political interview programme, 'This Week with Christiane Amanpour' is filmed live from one of the studios, and visitors can watch it through a glass wall. The QEII Centre has regularly been used as a 'press centre' through the years – for example after the Lockerbie Bombing in 1988 and after the Yugoslavia Peace Conference in 1992 – so retaining media facilities in the building would be in keeping with the historic nature of the location and its legacy. More broadly the space would allow for innovative digital displays

¹²⁴ Westminster County Council (2008), *Conservation Area Audit: Westminster Abbey and Parliament Square*, p.54.

¹²⁵ Baroness Valentine, *Hansard*, 27 January 2011, vol.724, col. 1142.

¹²⁶ Information provided by Parliament's Department of Information Services.

¹²⁷ Hansard Society (2005), *Interpretative Visitor Centre at Parliament: Second Interim Report, Enhancing Engagement*, p.11.

and interactive exhibition space. Theatre space could be created for films about the WHS, the institutions and the relationships between them. It could also be utilised for events and some conference and other meeting facilities could be retained. The top floor of the Centre would also provide a viewing location over the area.

In 2007 the Administration Committee was concerned that a Parliamentary Visitor and Information Centre in either Victoria Tower Gardens or Old Palace Yard would 'prove a costly venture which would run the risk of becoming an expensive tourist attraction for overseas visitors interested in the heritage aspects of the Westminster area rather than providing a resource for visitors wishing to learn more about the role and work of Parliament itself'.¹²⁸ The existence of the Old Palace Yard Visitors' Centre would offset this problem as it could cover the role and work of Parliament specifically with the Conference Centre site embracing the heritage aspects. A Visitor Centre in the QEII Centre would undoubtedly be costly, but as a multi-stakeholder centre for the World Heritage Site rather than just Parliament the costs – and the revenues – would be shared.

The key stakeholders in such a site would be Parliament, Westminster Abbey, the Supreme Court and the Government but other organisations with relevant links might be incorporated on a partnership basis. For example, Lambeth Palace just across the River Thames cannot meet visitor demand due to the size and nature of the building. No more than 200 visitors per week can be accommodated on tours and there is currently an 18-month waiting list. When the Palace held its first ever exhibition, 'The Treasures of Lambeth Palace' in 2010, 24,500 people visited over the 10-week period but demand exceeded supply.¹²⁹ Conceivably then, some exhibition space could be provided in partnership with the Palace to make its religious, art and archival treasures more widely available to the public. Partnerships with other international, national and regional museums and galleries would offer great opportunities to commission exhibitions, interpretative and educational programmes to supplement the permanent provision. A WHS Visitors Centre would be better placed to convey the rich complexity of the UK's democratic story than a Centre focusing on just one of the institutions and it could also facilitate scholarship and support curriculum learning.

At present Parliament faces multiple and conflicting identities: is it a working building or a visitor attraction? In reality it is both, but the former must be accommodated within the building; the latter can be addressed off-site. Westminster is an international tourist attraction: it deserves a facility of international standing to serve the millions who visit each year. The QEII Centre site might provide such a facility and a feasibility study should therefore be undertaken.

¹²⁸ House of Commons Administration Committee (2006-07), *Improving facilities for educational visitors to Parliament*, HC 434, p.38.

¹²⁹ Information provided at a meeting with Amy Wilson, Lambeth Palace, 24 March 2011.

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CASE STUDY: National Constitution Center, Philadelphia

Located on Independence Mall in Philadelphia, just two blocks from the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall, the National Constitution Center is dedicated to promoting the vision of popular sovereignty – ‘We the People’ – embodied in the US Constitution. The Center operates not just as a museum but also as ‘an engine of civic and constitutional education’ and as the country’s town hall, providing a ‘forum for national dialogue’ on the great constitutional issues of the day.* Founded to increase public understanding of the history and ideas of the Constitution, the Center is a non-partisan, non-profit institution. More than six million people have visited since it opened its doors in July 2003, bringing the Constitution to life through multi-media exhibits, live performances, a website and social media programme, public programmes and educational resources.

The Center occupies 160,000 square feet and cost \$185 million to design and build, supplemented by a further \$40 million endowment investment. There is 75,785 square feet of exhibition space, more than 100 interactive exhibits and an estimated 17 hours of interpretative content in the core exhibition. A 225 seat Delegates Café, Museum Store and a children’s store for school groups offer plentiful retail opportunities. State of the art meeting facilities, including the Grand Hall that can seat 650 people for dinner, are also available for hire for corporate meetings, conferences and social events. Tickets cost \$12 with reductions for those aged 65+ and children below 12



Figure 42. National Constitution Centre, Philadelphia; source: G. Widman for GPTMC (www.visitphilly.com)

years of age, and active military personnel can enter for free.**

The permanent ‘The Story Of We The People’ exhibition begins with a multi-media show, ‘Freedom Rising’, combining a film show, video projections on a 360-degree screen, and an award winning theatrical performance. In Signers’ Hall, among 42 life-size bronze statues of the men who participated in the Constitutional Convention, visitors can choose to join the 39 signers or the three dissenters.

In addition to film and multi-media exhibits the story of the Constitution, its history, and its contemporary relevance is told through photographs, text, sculpture, and artefacts. In the American Experience hall family-oriented interactive exhibits allow visitors to vote for their favorite President, take the Presidential Oath-of-Office, don the robes of a Supreme Court Justice and render an opinion on key cases, or e-mail elected officials on constitutional issues of the day.

Other special displays in the Freedom Exhibition Gallery have included ‘Lincoln: The Constitution and the Civil War’, ‘Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World’, ‘9/11: A Nation Remembers’; and ‘Eyewitness: American Originals from the National Archives’, some of them in partnership with organisations such as the Smithsonian Institution. The current temporary exhibition is ‘Spies, Traitors and Saboteurs: Fear and Freedom in America’, which dramatises the challenge of balancing national security and civil liberties.

The Center also provides educational programmes, develops and distributes teaching tools, and hosts a Visiting Scholars programme. On Constitution Day, 17 September 2010, the Center hosted a free interactive day-long webcast and video learning programme – Constitution Hall Pass – which was viewed by

Figure 43. National Constitution Centre website

over a million students nationwide.[†] Participants were able to talk live with the Center's education staff about the Founding Fathers and the background to the signing of the historic document as well as engage with leading public figures like retired Supreme Court Justice, Sandra Day O'Connor.

The Center also hosts 'The Exchange: A Marketplace of Student Ideas': a public forum in which young people 'discover the power of their own voices as active citizens'. In 2010, students were engaged nationwide to deliberate on topical questions such as 'Should a year of national service be required for all Americans?' and 'Can government prohibit citizens from owning handguns?' Student representatives were brought to the Center from across the country to participate in video-conferences with their peers which were broadcast live on its website, with each thematic session featuring a guest scholar to answer students' questions. Professional development support for civic education teachers is also provided through several Summer Teacher Institutes hosted by the Center. In addition to attending lectures given by leading historians and constitutional scholars, the teachers visit the historical sites in the Philadelphia area and are provided with lesson plans and support materials.

The Center's educational work is being extended more widely through its International Engagement Project launched in December 2008 with a particular focus on civic education and civil society building initiatives in Afghanistan. For example, students in Afghanistan were partnered with pupils at a school in Philadelphia, equipped with digital cameras and camcorders and invited to explore what 'We the People' means in their communities. The results have since been exhibited at the Center and the National Museum of Afghanistan.[‡]

The Center also hosts a range of discussions, debates, forums and seminars to encourage dialogue about political and constitutional issues some of which are webcast and most of which are available globally as a downloadable podcast. The Center was also used regularly during the last general election for events, hosting one of the Democratic Primary debates as well as candidate Barack Obama's seminal campaign speech on the issue of race.

* National Constitution Center, About us, http://www.constitutioncenter.org/ncc_about_Landing.aspx

** National Constitution Center, Mission & History, http://www.constitutioncenter.org/ncc_about_Mission_History_.aspx

† National Constitution Center, Constitution Hall Pass, http://www.constitutioncenter.org/ncc_edu_Constitution_Hall_Pass_634255809976016250.aspx

‡ National Constitution Center, International Engagement, <http://www.constitutioncenter.org/International/Default.aspx>

5. Harnessing the Digital Realm

The ability to present the environs of Parliament in digital form has great potential for the future. Through websites, digital applications, geo-tagging, and augmented reality it is possible to reconstruct and present artefacts, documents, historic environments, and societies in three-dimensional form, all reflecting the user's specific interests. Bringing public space and historical items and places into the digital realm also allows for greater dissemination as content can be easily distributed to those with internet access through a computer, mobile phone, or television.

Critics of the digitisation of cultural and heritage assets argue that it lacks authenticity and context¹³⁰ and that digitised objects can be connected to each other in ways that are not always relevant or appropriate, with the result that collections can become disaggregated.¹³¹ To be effective, detailed and careful thought therefore needs to be given to just what is connected in digital form, and why.¹³² But using mobile phone applications, for example, allows people to experience the assets in an unmediated way. Indeed, presentation and interpretation in digital form can be highly democratic in that it facilitates a community-building approach to content accumulation, examination and distribution. It allows chunks of data to be linked to each other in meaningful ways, and allows for relatively easy retrieval of information.¹³³

There are a range of ways in which a more adventurous and innovative approach to digital provision by Parliament could open up the cultural, democratic and heritage assets of the institution to a much greater audience. Some of these are stand-alone digital services, others are intended to supplement and add value to a number of the information, interpretation and education options outlined in the previous chapters.

A NEW HERITAGE FOCUSED WEBSITE

The content and prioritisation of material on the parliamentary website – www.parliament.uk – reflects the inherent conflict within the institution between its role as a working legislature on the one hand and as a heritage and tourist attraction on the other.

130 Y. E. Kalay (2008), 'Introduction' in Y. E. Kalay, T. Kvan & J. Affleck (Eds.) *New Heritage: New media and cultural heritage* (London: Routledge).

131 R. Parry (2007), *Recoding the Museum: Digital heritage and the technologies of change* (London: Routledge).

132 Y. E. Kalay (2008), 'Introduction' in Y. E. Kalay, T. Kvan & J. Affleck (Eds.) *New Heritage: New media and cultural heritage* (London: Routledge).

133 Y. Greenfield-Gilat (2008) 'Through Form and Content: New media components and cultural heritage sites management, in the Jewish traditional society' in Y. E. Kalay, T. Kvan & J. Affleck (Eds.) *New Heritage: New media and cultural heritage* (London: Routledge).

Understandably, the primary focus of the site is on the business of Parliament and how the institution works, not on visitor and heritage services, the archives or the art collection; pages associated with the latter tend to be highlighted far less regularly on the homepage as a consequence.

The webpages associated with the business of the legislature attract between 2.5 million and 4 million page views per month. In contrast, the 'About Parliament' section attracts 200,000 to 400,000 and the 'Visiting' section between 100,000 to 180,000 page views per month. The 'Living Heritage' section of the site has between 40,000 and 100,000 monthly page views whilst the 'Art in Parliament' section receives only around 5,000 views. Only 1.6% of visitors to Parliament's website visit these last two sections of the site combined. Similarly, Parliament's social media focus – particularly its Twitter strategy – appears to focus primarily on chamber and committee work rather than the heritage related elements of Parliament's role and function that would perhaps be of more interest to some members of the public.¹³⁴

Parliament may therefore be missing out on an opportunity to engage with a substantial (and perhaps new) audience who would be interested in Parliament as an historic building, its architecture, art and archives, more than they would be interested in it as a legislative institution. Given the high levels of interest in heritage and the personal links that can be built through the historical realm – as burgeoning membership of bodies like the National Trust and growing interest in hobbies such as genealogy demonstrate – this is an important channel of communication and engagement that could and should be better exploited.

Parliament's Education Service website already has a different look and feel; it now needs a separate website to highlight the heritage and history of Parliament. The institution has within its art and archival collections hundreds of precious documents and artefacts in relation to the history of democracy in this country, yet the public rarely have an opportunity to see them. Some limited exhibition space is available in the Royal Gallery and displays are also mounted in Westminster Hall but this is quite limited in scope. Items are made available for display at other locations – for example, the Act of Union was lent to the Scottish Parliament and the Speaker's Coach was exhibited in Devon. However, the loaning out of artefacts is a relatively new development and the capacity to do so is limited primarily due to insurance and transport related costs. Although there is no substitute for seeing an artefact at first-hand, the digital world does democratise the opportunity for more people – at home and abroad – to view it and provides opportunities to link it to other items and ideas thus providing more contextual information and supporting material. Parliament could significantly expand its work in this area by separating out the content of the Living Heritage section of the website and creating a new stand-alone site which better

facilitates public engagement with its collections through enhanced multi-media and social media strategies than the current parliamentary website permits.

Consideration should also be given to whether this website is developed independently or whether it would be better – in investment and intellectual terms – to develop a Westminster World Heritage Site website. This would better link together the cultural and heritage assets of Parliament, the Abbey, the Supreme Court and the government and convey information, interpretation and education about the sites and the links and relationships between them in more accessible and engaging form than any one of the institutions is currently able to do.

DEMOCRATISING ACCESS TO PARLIAMENT'S TREASURES

Many heritage organisations, museums and art galleries now have websites that display the full range of their collections. One of the more imaginative and innovative models can be found at the science and technology focused Powerhouse Museum in Sydney, Australia. It has digitally catalogued over 80,000 items in its collection many of which had previously lain unseen in storage, and licensed all the collection metadata under a Creative Commons licence. Its Online Public Access Catalogue system enables users to tag objects with words that have resonance and meaning to them in relation to the items they are viewing, personalising the experience. These also sit alongside curators' tags and together create better links between the data and search engines.

The site was launched in June 2006 and within three months every single object had been viewed and in the first two years over 25 million collection records were explored. Interestingly, the three most popular objects in the online catalogue had never been on public display. In the opinion of Jane Finnis, the Director of Culture 24, a non-profit online cultural publisher, by opening up access and enhancing the visibility of the collection to search engines they have 'in effect turned their museum inside out' and through its interaction with the public have 'brought knowledge back into the organisation about their collection'.¹³⁵

Parliament has an enormous number of cultural and heritage 'treasures' that simply cannot be viewed by

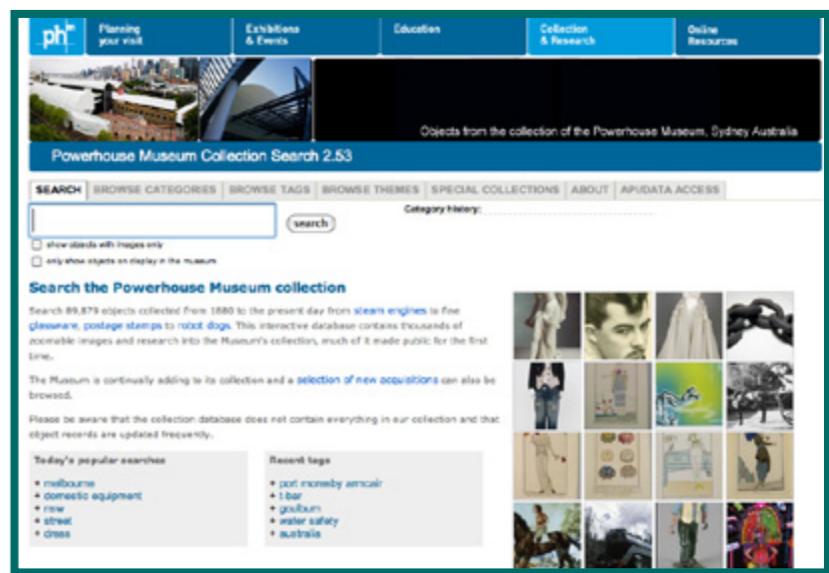


Figure 44. Powerhouse Museum website

¹³⁴ The website page view and visit statistics are derived from data provided by Parliament's Web and Intranet Service covering the period July 2010 to April 2011 and generated using Google Analytics. However, the page view numbers are incomplete as data was not coded and collected in August and September 2010.

¹³⁵ Jane Finnis, Presentation to the NMDC (National Museums Directors Conference) March 08, <http://janefinnis.wordpress.com/2008/04/03/presentation-to-the-nmdc-national-museums-directors-conference-march-08/>

the public. For example, although a significant proportion of Parliament's art collection is on display, much of it lines the walls of corridors, committee rooms and offices across the parliamentary estate that are not accessible to the general public. Providing access through development of an online catalogue collection that can be personalised, integrated with social media for dissemination, and is licensed for public use would democratise access to the works of art, sculptures and statuary, carvings and etchings, and the archival records. The benefits could then be leveraged more broadly through, for example, integration of material into improved educational resources.

A PLACE OF MEMORY: PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF PARLIAMENT

Parliament currently has no means to collect, collate and disseminate the views and personal experiences of the public towards it, nor those of the members and staff who have worked in the building over the years. Oral history is a rich but largely ignored resource as far as Parliament is concerned. The History of Parliament Trust is currently developing such a project in relation to the recollections of MPs in the post-war period. However, an oral history project could be developed, with partners, on a much broader basis involving, for example, those who have visited and taken part in activities in Parliament, and at sites across the World Heritage Site and Parliament Square. If the material is placed online it ensures greater public access and could be integrated into educational resources and programmes. The Coney Island Voices Oral History Archive Project demonstrates the potential of such a site. Dedicated to preserving the legacy of the 125-year old New York amusement project, in addition to online access to photos, documents, and books, users can now listen to and search oral histories, and view maps of geo-located photographs. The users' ability to comment, tag and create assets emphasises the site's community building strengths.

The Historypin website performs a similar function through the collation of photographic material which can be directly linked to a Google map site.

Here individual recollections can be preserved and contextualised through images rather than the spoken word. The site seeks to bring people together, across generations, cultures and places to 'share small glimpses of the past and to build up the huge story of human history'. Through its

own stand-alone heritage website, a joint World Heritage Site website, or through links to a site like Historypin, Parliament could generate and preserve rich content about the institution and the WHS and provide a more diverse, personal, and interactive platform for engagement.

ENHANCED PROVISION OF INFORMATION AND INTERPRETATION



Figure 46. Historypin website

Multi-media guides

A staple of any major visitor attraction has long been the provision of an audio guide. Increasingly, however, multi-media guides are being utilised as part of a broad visitor interpretation and education strategy. For visitors at St Paul's Cathedral, for example, new touch screen multi-media guides are available for both adults and children, allowing them to view videos of the dome galleries and zoom in and out on the ceiling mosaics, paintings and photographs. The guides also provide interviews and commentaries from experts about the Cathedral, as well as archive footage of major services and events from its history. Some of the multi-media guides also feature quizzes, activities and interactive games for young people to learn about the Cathedral during their visit.



Figure 47. St Paul's Cathedral multimedia guide, source www.stpauls.co.uk/

Multi-media guides such as this could be utilised throughout the Westminster World Heritage Site to engage visitors with our democratic story as well as the development of the cultural and heritage assets themselves. If a Visitor Information Centre is established on the corner of Bridge Street then the guides could be provided from here. Given the open-space nature of a visit to the World Heritage Site there is a higher risk of damage to or theft of the equipment than within a building where the access and exit of visitors can be funnelled and controlled. However, attaching security tags to the guides and requiring visitors to pay a substantial deposit when hiring them, repayable on return, would help redress this risk.



Figure 45. Coney Island Oral History Archive website

Smartphone Applications

A diverse range of smartphone applications, linked to the initiatives outlined in previous chapters, could be developed in the future in addition to any applications developed to

support the legislative/business side of the work of both Houses. These would enable Parliament to offer the public a broader range of information about the building, its function and history and leverage greater value from the art and archival collections. An application could, for example, mirror the line of route tour and the 3D online tour that can be accessed via the website; they could also offer greater insight into the private areas of the building not readily accessed by non-passholders. It might also be linked to a major event such as the State Opening of Parliament in the way that Westminster Abbey recently launched its mobile application in time for the Royal Wedding.

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Another good example of what can be achieved with a smartphone application is to be found at the Library of Congress. It has released a popular, highly regarded iPhone app that allows users to take a media-rich tour of the building, viewing historical facts, photos and videos from within the building itself. However, given the constraints on visitor numbers at Westminster more effort should perhaps be put into developing smartphone applications that enable visitors to engage with Parliament and the World Heritage Site from outside the building. Examples of how this might be done are set out in the sections that follow.

Guided Interpretative Walks

Whether it's a new Magna Carta Walkway, the Trafalgar Square to Tate Britain Cultural Trail, or themed walks around the Westminster area, each visitor route can be enhanced through multi-platform digital provision of information and interpretation resources for download or streaming to hand-held devices.

The new 'Medical London Walk' created by CityStories Walks website in collaboration



Figure 48. Library of Congress iPhone application (top); Westminster Abbey smartphone application (bottom)

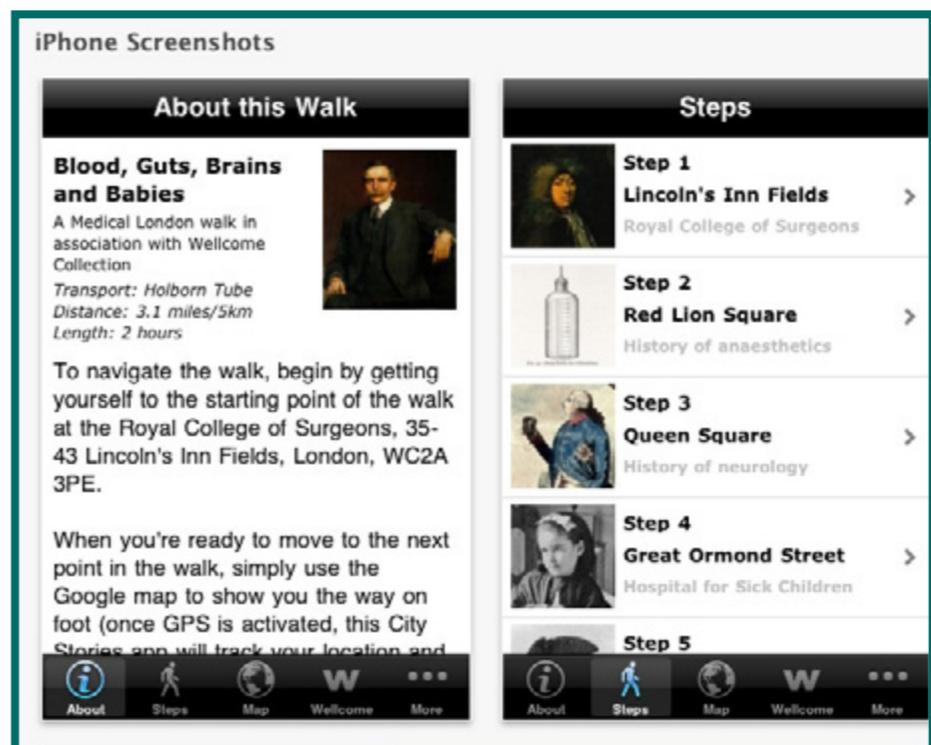


Figure 49. Medical London iPhone application

art in the country. However, as at Westminster, although the collection of sculptures, statues and murals is a tourist attraction, the information provided about the pieces has been quite limited. To address this, the city's Fairmount Park Art Association has launched the new 'Museum Without Walls' outdoor sculpture interpretation project which enables visitors to access audio information about the art pieces free of charge by mobile phone, audio download or on the web. Instructions to access the programme by mobile phone are attached to signage and to the 51 sculptures along the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. A map listing the works and detailing the walk is also available at local visitor centres, museums and galleries and can be printed from the website.

The project has taken an innovative approach to the audio recordings: rather than the single authoritative narrator that usually features on audio guides, the tour captures a series of the city's 'authentic voices' – individuals who are connected to the sculpture by knowledge

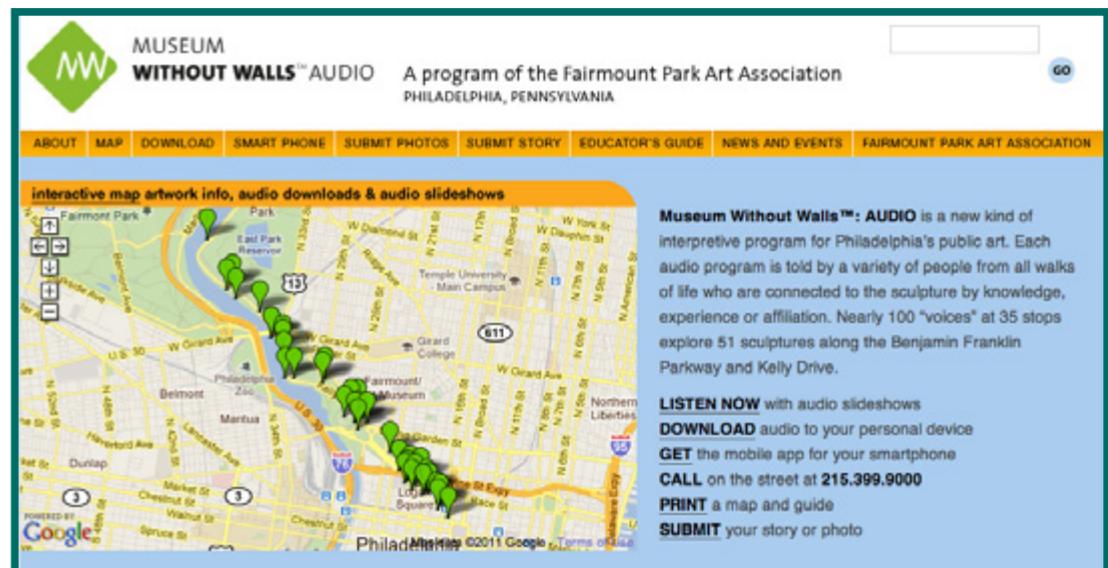


Figure 50. Museum Without Walls Audio website

with the Wellcome Trust demonstrates what can be achieved.¹³⁶ This walk explores the history of medicine in the Bloomsbury area and maps and information can be downloaded via the website in print format, as audio mp3 files, or as an iPhone application.

In the United States the city of Philadelphia is the cradle of the nation's democratic system and has one of the largest collections of public

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or experience. Nearly 100 different voices – including artists, scientists, writers, curators, historians and civic leaders – are therefore featured. The recordings ‘explore personal and cultural connections to the art, while offering insights into the artists and their processes, what the sculptures represent, the history surrounding the works, and why the pieces were commissioned and installed at the specific sites in Philadelphia’.¹³⁷ The recordings offer the untold history of each piece of art in a way that cannot be captured on permanent outdoor interpretation installations. A similar project to explore the sculpture on the Trafalgar Square-Tate Britain culture trail could perhaps be developed by Parliament and other WHS stakeholders working in collaboration with Tate Britain. A mapping sculpture project recently published by Yale University might provide the basis for developing such an online tool and the related mobile applications.¹³⁸

Geo-Tagging

Innovative interpretation can also be provided in mobile digital form through use of geo-tagging to link buildings and sites of interest with static material collections such as photographs, art, and archives. An example of this can be found in the use of the Layar iOS application by the Powerhouse Museum in Australia to display historical photos of Sydney from its collection on a user’s iPhone or iPod Touch. Here, users view the historical scene of the location they are pointing their camera at alongside information and photos highlighted on the screen.

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In the UK the Museum of London’s Streetmuseum application (available for iOS and Android) gives users a unique perspective on the city by using location services on mobile devices to enable users to view photographs from the Museum’s collection that are related to the local area that they are in. The application also allows users to create their own trails around London to view a number of different historical points of interest. Such an

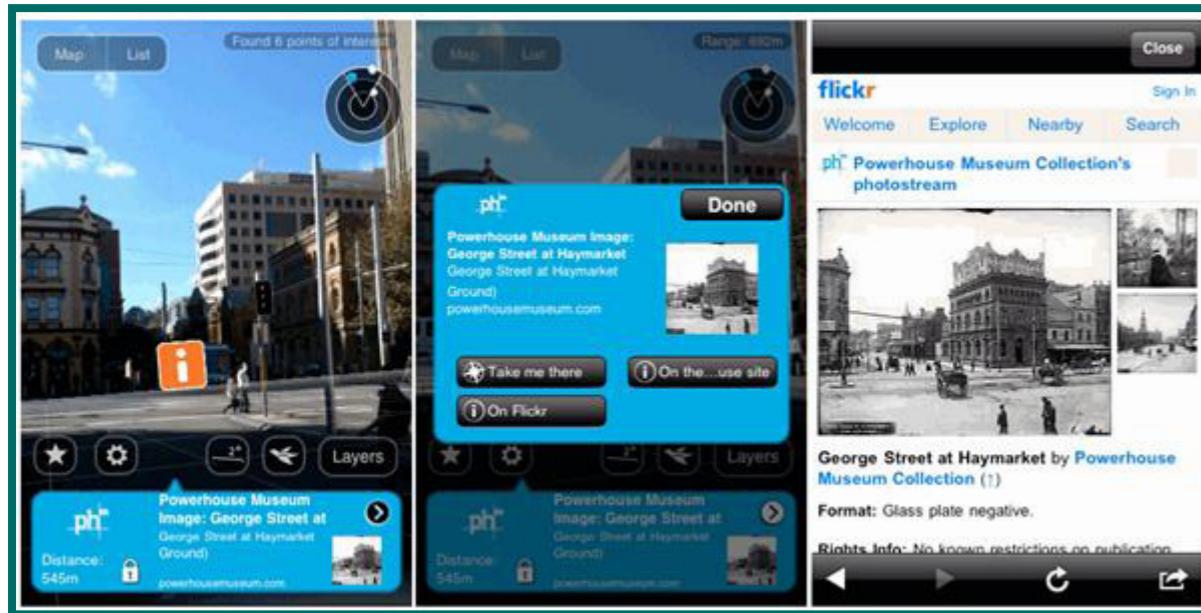


Figure 51. Powerhouse Museum application

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Museum Without Walls Audio, <http://museumwithoutwallsaudio.org/about-mww/>
Submission by the Trustees of the Tate Galleries, July 2011.

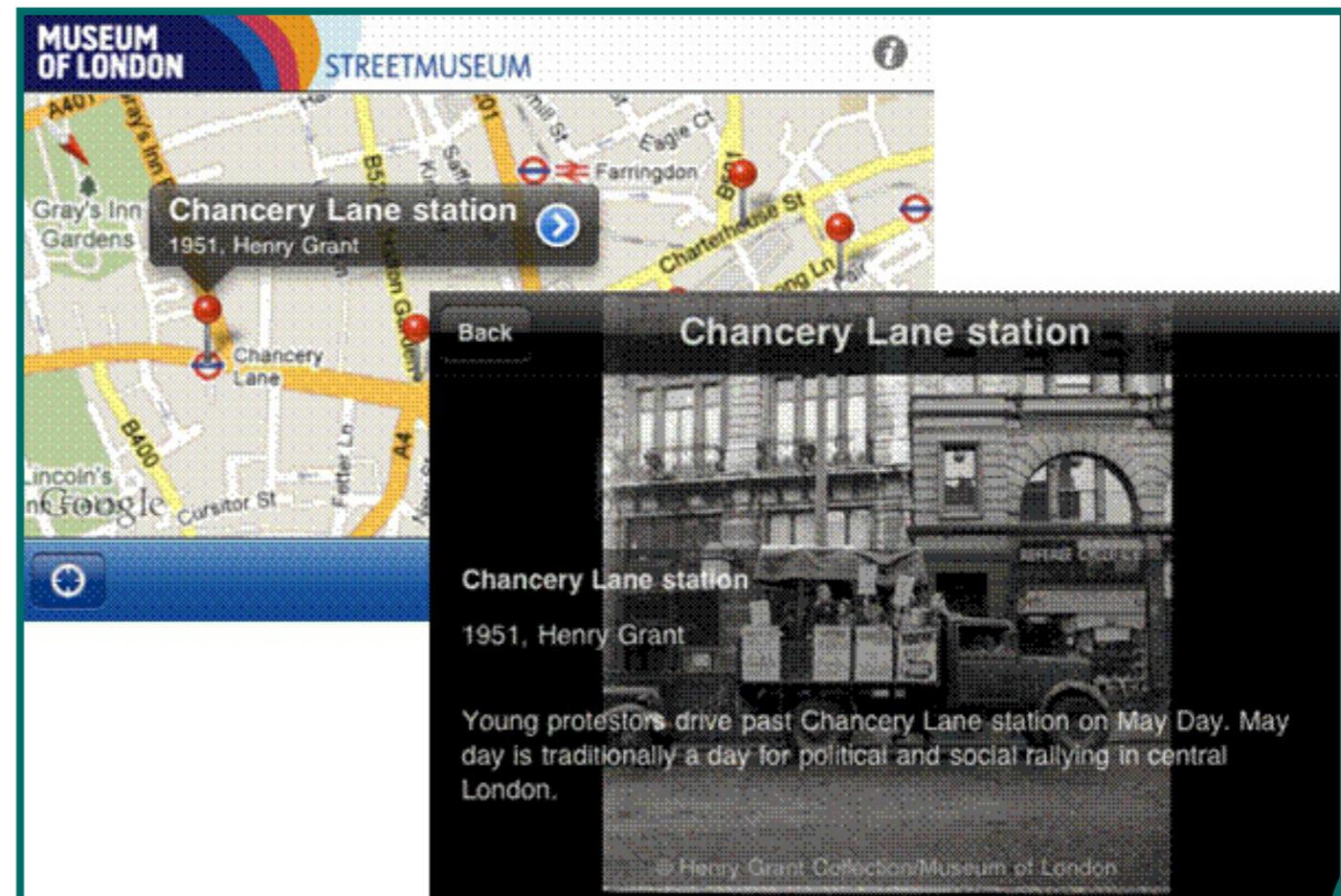


Figure 52. Museum of London iOS application

application could be linked, for example, to a ‘Magna Carta Trail’ for the World Heritage Site area.

Augmented Reality

Elements of the real-world physical environment can be augmented by computer-generated imagery to enable people to see the past, present and future of the built environment. The technology is still in its infancy and has not yet been fully exploited but it could be utilised across the World Heritage Site to enhance the ‘wonder’ of any visit. Firstly, to better appreciate and understand the landscape and buildings in the study area and how they have changed over the centuries; and secondly, to enable visitors to personally explore precious artefacts or excavations that they cannot touch directly.

This technology could, for example, bring alive the development of Thorney Island, and recreate ‘lost’ features such as the River Tyburn and the sections of the Palaces of Westminster and Whitehall that have now vanished. By way of example, at the Allard Pierson Museum in Amsterdam, visitors are able to view large-scale photographs of the ancient Roman sites Satricum and the Forum Romanum through screens showing virtual reconstructions and context-specific information. This allows visitors to see both the site as it exists today, and how the site looked and operated in the past.

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Figure 53. 'A Future for the Past' augmented reality exhibit
Allard Pierson Museum, Amsterdam, source www.engadget.com

Netherlands. The Netherlands Architecture Institute (NAi) – wishing to make its collections accessible to people outside its walls – has set itself the challenge of making the country the first in the world to have its entire architecture viewable in augmented reality and 3D format. Its Urban Augmented Reality mobile application provides information about the built environment using text, image, archival material and film and can be used on iPhone or Android smartphones. The city of Rotterdam is now the first city in the world that can be viewed in augmented reality with Amsterdam, Utrecht and The Hague to follow.

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Visitors can now point their phone at a building in Rotterdam and see it on screen with a layer of digital information on top. In the words of the NAI, the system 'shows you on your phone what isn't there.'

The city as it once was – for instance by showing buildings that once stood there. The city as it might have been – by showing scale models and design drawings of alternative designs that were never implemented. And the city of the future – by showing artists' impressions of buildings under construction or in the planning stage.¹³⁹ Given the rich architectural history of the buildings

In the absence of a specific Visitor Centre for Parliament and the World Heritage Site, such provision would have to be made available via hand-held devices. Mobile augmented reality applications are being pioneered in the

in the Westminster World Heritage Site, an augmented reality project such as this might enable visitors to better understand the development of the area through the centuries.

Parliament also has many artefacts of interest to the public which are simply not accessible or the detail of which cannot be explored because their fragility means they require careful, limited handling. Here, augmented reality might also offer a solution. At the Getty Museum, for example, augmented reality has been applied to the Museum's Augsburg Cabinet, a 17th century German display cabinet known as a 'cabinet of curiosities'.¹⁴⁰ The cabinet has been simulated in 3D and the digital model moves as the viewer interacts with it via a live webcam feed. The Cabinet can be moved by the viewer through hand-eye manipulation, tilting, and spinning the model to view its intricate details. The public can therefore examine the item in 3D in a way that would not be possible in a standard museum display. Parliamentary items such as the despatch box, the mace or historic documents could all be explored by the public in new ways through augmented reality.

ADDED VALUE THROUGH INNOVATIVE COLLABORATION?

Collaborative projects in the digital field could also be used to a much greater extent than at present to extract more value from Parliament's cultural and heritage assets. For example, Google and Microsoft have worked on separate projects with the British Library to digitise its resources. Through the Google project, 250,000 out-of-copyright books are being made available online, augmenting the 13 million books Google has already made available through collaborations with 40 other libraries worldwide.

The BBC and the Public Catalogue Foundation are currently working together to put the nation's collection of oil paintings online; 63,000 paintings can already be viewed at the BBC's Your Paintings website. The new two million-piece ArtFinder database project is even more innovative and demonstrates the kind of untapped potential that Parliament could seek to link to and engage with.¹⁴¹ When members of the public point their phone at an artwork in the future, ArtFinder will identify it and provide contextual information about the artist and the work. The viewer will then have the option to tag the piece as a 'favourite', and link to other similar pictures. In the word of its founder, Chris Thorpe, 'ArtFinder is a kind of mission control for art, that will let you build up a collection of everything you've ever liked.'¹⁴²

A further example of how collections can be linked to the spaces that house them is the Google Art Project which uses Google Maps Street View technology to enable users to walk 'virtually' around international art galleries, viewing high-resolution images of their collections. The site allows users to create their own collection of featured pieces, add

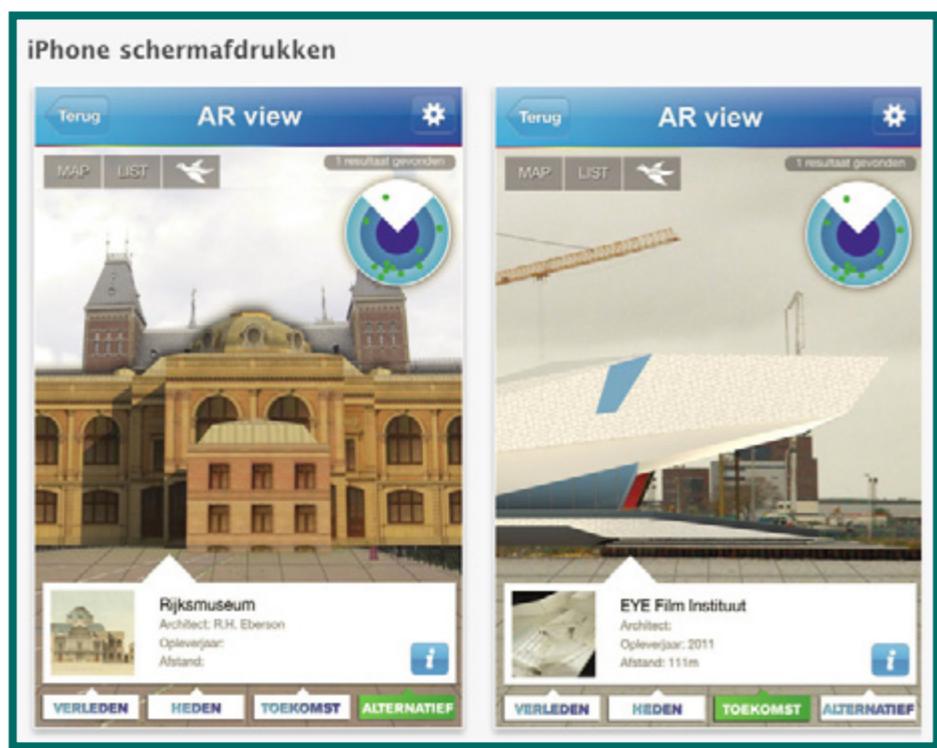


Figure 54. Netherlands Architecture Institute augmented reality application

¹³⁹ Netherlands Architecture Institute, Augmented Reality, http://en.nai.nl/exhibitions/3d_architecture_app/_pid/header/_rp_header_elementId/1_601695

¹⁴⁰ The Getty, Augmented Reality of the Augsburg Display Cabinet, http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/north_pavilion/ar/index.html

¹⁴¹ Art Finder, www.artfinder.com

¹⁴² J.Kiss, 'The tech startup stars', *The Guardian*, 6 February 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2011/feb/06/tech-startup-internet-entrepreneurs>

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comments to each piece and share the collections online with friends. Currently, 17 art museums are featured on the site including Tate Britain and the National Gallery in London, the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art in New York City, and the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam.

Utilising the same Google Maps Street View Technology it may be possible to create a similar project for parliaments around the world.

The public want to see behind the scenes in any parliament building – its public and private areas – but in reality only a very small proportion of the public can ever see inside the building and most of these will only be able to visit the public areas. Parliament has sought to address this by providing an interactive map that explores 13 areas of the estate and provides linked contextual information about them. However, the scope of this is quite limited and the technology is static so a user cannot focus on the art or decoration of their choice, nor can they link or share items of interest. A Google Parliament style project would provide an innovative way for the public to engage with the institution and learn more about both its history and function.

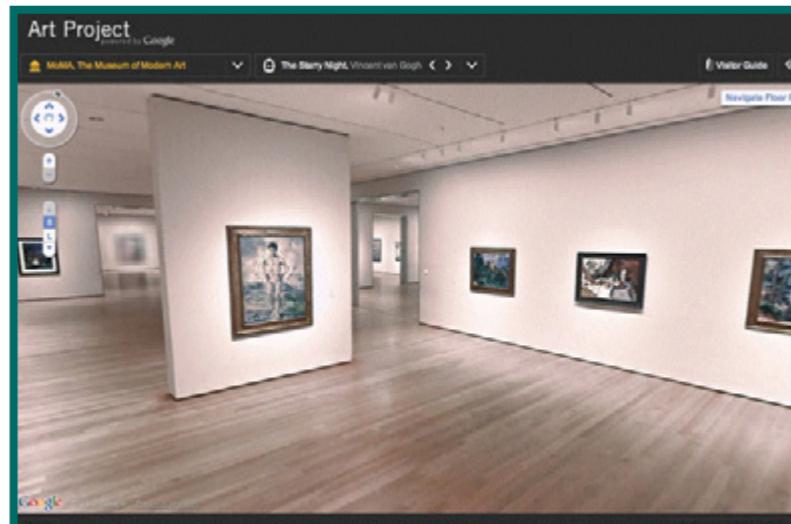


Figure 55. New York Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art, in Google's Art Project

6. The Business Case

The current condition and use of the World Heritage Site and Parliament Square is both a significant risk to Parliament in reputational terms but also an enormous lost opportunity in respect of public engagement and revenue generation. Millions of people pass through the area each year yet for most visitors there are almost no touch points in the external environs which convey a warm welcome, which seek to inform, engage and inspire them with the magnificence of the area, its history, and what it represents. The proposals set out in the previous chapters seek to address this.

However, if these ideas are to be implemented Parliament will need to change its approach to public engagement and visitor services. At present a significant tension exists between its role as a working legislature and a visitor attraction. Members have previously been reluctant to embrace any significant investment initiatives that might serve a broad group of visitors that includes tourists; its primary focus has been on seeking to engage the British public with Parliament's role and function and not its heritage. But this is a false choice: like it or not, Parliament is a major visitor attraction as the demand for parliamentary tours and the number of visitors to the Parliament Square area amply demonstrates. Many of the visitors are also UK residents and heritage and culture can be important avenues to reach out to and engage with those who might otherwise not be interested in Parliament: after all, heritage bodies like the National Trust attract significantly more supporters than political parties. The Palace of Westminster is a heritage attraction of international significance and as part of a World Heritage Site it has global obligations and responsibilities, particularly of course towards Commonwealth citizens. Rather than seeking to separate promotion of its role and function from its heritage, Parliament should embrace them both and seek to align the objectives such that they are mutually supporting, but where necessary or appropriate utilise different funding and delivery mechanisms for them.

COST AND BENEFIT: WHERE'S THE VALUE?

Conventional economic valuation tools, as prescribed by the Government's Green Book, dictate the use of a cost benefit analysis to justify public investment in the kind of proposals set out in this report. Some of the options – for example the conversion of the parliamentary bookshop into an information centre or the creation of exhibition facilities at 6/7 Old Palace Yard – can fit more easily than others into this analytical framework. Market values or a visitor's 'willingness to pay' can be determined for tangible improvements to

the parliamentary estate. However, there are many 'intangible' aspects of the proposals that will be difficult to measure and monetise. The interpretation plan for the study area may be straightforward to cost but it will be much more difficult to quantify the benefits. It is difficult, for example, to put a price on the value to be derived, at an individual and collective level, from engagement in acts of democracy and citizenship in Parliament Square or from the interest and knowledge generated through the enjoyment of a guided walk, complete with multi-media guide; or from the unique experience of witnessing some of our greatest actors re-enact historic political events and speeches amidst the atmospheric Gothic surroundings. How can one value and cost what will be very personal and individually subjective experiences?

For the last decade, government policy has struggled with this problem and has tended to focus on the value that the cultural and heritage sectors can contribute to social and economic well-being. A new theory of 'public value' emerged which has focused on benefits that the public values, not just what they want as consumers. It has been described as 'the equivalent of shareholder value in the private sector; but it is expressed through the democratic realm rather than the market place'.¹⁴³ Accenture in particular has been active in developing a public value framework. Working with the National Trust, it sought to measure public value by weighting a series of quantitative and qualitative indicators relevant to the heritage sector. For example, inputs such as visitor numbers and outputs such as economic impact were measured; but these were then supplemented with qualitative measures such as visitor rating results. However, this approach still does not readily capture the intangible benefits associated with many of the recommendations in this report.

The thinktank Demos developed a new 'cultural value' theory which emphasised the legitimacy of the subjective experiences of participants and citizens which may have some utility in trying to calculate the value of some of the proposals. The Museums and Libraries Association also developed a series of indicators – Generic Learning Outcomes and Generic Social Outcomes – some of which drew on the IDeA's (Improvement and Development Agency,) approach to calculating the returns on cultural investments by local government, and these too might be informative in developing a business case for some of the proposals.

The Department for Communities and Local Government utilises the Multi-Criteria Analysis tool, weighting and scoring individual aspects of a decision, and producing a rating for each option. This method is particularly interesting in the context of the proposals here because it weighs, scores and rates a 'do nothing' option. The opportunity costs in respect of the current state – the 'do nothing' option – of the World Heritage Site and Parliament Square are considerable. At least £2 million was spent on the Square improvement project

in 2007-08 before it was abandoned, on top of which are the costs of those aspects of the Foster Masterplan which have never been implemented. Added to this, the tangible legal and policing costs associated with the encampments have been considerable over the years. If nothing is done to improve access and permanent protest camps continue, then 'do nothing' may prove to be very expensive indeed.

More recently, the Culture Sport and Evidence Programme supported by the DCMS has looked at this issue specifically through the lens of engagement, namely: what drives people to engage, what are the impacts of that engagement and how might that engagement consequently be valued economically? Several case studies have been conducted but don't readily apply themselves to Parliament's situation. A recent report recommended that the DCMS issue detailed guidance on measuring cultural value to aid the sector in the future, focusing on the use of 'stated preference' techniques recognised by the Green Book framework.¹⁴⁴ This tool seeks to capture the economic value of a good or service by asking the public to state their preferences within a hypothetical market for them. Using a version of this methodology the British Library's services were valued, for example, at £363 million against the £83 million it receives in grant-in-aid.¹⁴⁵ However, this method isn't particularly useful when it's applied to a situation – such as that facing Parliament – in which there isn't a true market. A hypothetical market assessment will surely result in a hypothetical cost/benefit analysis.

In short, there is no single economic valuation model that can readily be applied to these proposals. It is possible, however, to articulate what the mix of tangible and intangible benefits, and intrinsic and instrumental values are, as the basis for developing a business case for the proposals in the future. Again, there is no perfect method for doing so but given the particular nature of this study and the issues, institutions and challenges it explores we have adopted a three-tier approach in relation to the benefits to be derived at:

- the individual level;
- the institutional (community) level; and
- the national (international) level.

Individual benefits

For any person visiting the area – for work or leisure purposes – pedestrianisation and improved provision of information, signage and amenities will deliver enormous benefits. Access and mobility will be enhanced and pedestrian journey times cut for a majority of users, and experience of the area will be much improved by reductions in traffic pressure, noise and new visitor amenities. It is difficult to evaluate the 'life enhancing' experience of an enjoyable visit to the area but its resonance will surely be more powerful if it is more tranquil, affording greater opportunities to view, rest and reflect on the buildings and what

¹⁴³ K. Clark (Ed.) (2006), *Capturing the public value of heritage: the proceedings of the London Conference 25-26 January 2006* (London: English Heritage), p.2.

¹⁴⁴ D. O'Brien (2010), *Measuring the value of culture: a report to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport* (London: DCMS), p.5.
¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p.26.

they represent.

A comprehensive interpretation plan will provide learning opportunities and, through the accumulation of knowledge, visitors may establish a greater understanding of the institutions and the relationships between them. The interpretation delivery methods, particularly in the digital sphere, will also allow for individual creativity.

Listening to or participating in hustings or debates in Parliament Square or taking part in a coffeehouse challenge in Victoria Tower Gardens will have citizenship value in the broadest sense as will the opportunity for an individual to volunteer as a heritage guide or warden.

Pupils and teachers in particular will benefit from the changes to Victoria Tower Gardens which will facilitate the development of a new, purpose built Education Centre. Here interest can be piqued, knowledge generated and creativity sparked in an inspiring environment just off Westminster Hall.

The public – and particularly young people – are no longer willing to be passive recipients of information; they want to be active participants in the information generation and creative process. Providing a means for them to do so on Parliament's doorstep through a range of interpretation and digital initiatives will ensure that the institution communicates and engages with its citizens in imaginative and engaging ways, and in doing so will help to build reciprocal bonds of confidence and trust between them.

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Institutional (community) benefits

The risk of future protest encampments on Parliament Square as a result of improved pedestrian access will be much reduced under these proposals. It will be more difficult for protestors to camp on the Square if other members of the public can and want to use it. This will improve the aesthetics and environment of the Square and will open up new opportunities for information and interpretation provision. Public access and mobility will also be enhanced: moving around the immediate external environs of the parliamentary estate should be easier.

Were Parliament to play a leading role in facilitating a vision for the Square as an innovative and vibrant forum for citizenship it would be a highly symbolic demonstration of confidence and optimism in the strength of our democracy, enhancing the relationship between the public and Parliament in the future.

Similarly, improvements to the physical environs of Parliament that help convey a sense of welcome, openness, and engagement will also pay dividends in terms of reputational benefits. At present, how Parliament presents itself to the world – as conveyed at the perimeter of the parliamentary estate and the general state and condition of the immediate environs – enhances many people's sense that Parliament is not for them, that it is closed

off to and separate from the public.

Learning, knowledge transfer and the building of social capital in the public realm are key components of the collective value of the recommendations in this report. Partnerships, support for volunteering initiatives and enhanced links with local community groups in the immediate vicinity of Westminster will ensure that it is a 'better neighbour' in the future.

Its guardianship and conservation responsibilities will also be enhanced by reduced traffic flows immediately outside the building, and the rationalisation of footfall inside the building arising from changes to the line of route tour.

The re-design of Victoria Tower Gardens will mean that improvements to the line of route tour can be made and on-site space on the parliamentary estate freed up for the Education Centre. Parliament is committed to providing a space that can accommodate 100,000 pupils per year by 2013. It needs to make urgent progress if this objective is to be realised and hitherto no alternative space has been found. It will be damaging for Parliament's reputation if this goal is not realised.

The enhanced retail opportunities that can be developed at a number of the locations – the Information Centre, 6/7 Old Palace Yard, Victoria Tower Gardens – would all provide new revenue streams for Parliament, the profits from which could then be ploughed back into public engagement and conservation initiatives, thus creating a self-sustaining income stream.

This income could be used for, among other things, democratising access to Parliament's art and archival collections which are currently rarely seen by the public. Culture and heritage are important platforms for discussion and debate, for appreciating areas of common inheritance and understanding points of difference, for recording, mapping and shaping collective institutional and community memory. Investment is rightly made in conserving the collections, but through innovative partnerships Parliament could leverage much greater value from these assets. More could be made of them – particularly in the digital realm – to empower future generations with enhanced access and the knowledge and understanding that can be derived as a result.

As well as reflecting on what these proposals will do – the benefit they will deliver – it is also worth noting what the recommendations will not do, in light of the concerns expressed by Members in previous Parliaments with regard to developments in the study area. The proposals will not inhibit or interfere with the demands placed on the area during State occasions. Where required (for example, in Victoria Tower Gardens) multi-purpose use must be designed-in to any new facilities. The recommendations are also mindful of the security needs of the area; the security street furniture will not be removed but its appearance can be improved as part of an area-wide interpretation plan. Nor will the proposals impact detrimentally on visitor numbers for parliamentary tours; rather, the proposals will add

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value for those who do not or cannot go on tours in the future, as well as offer additional opportunities for those who do go on a tour to enjoy other aspects of the area. Finally, the proposals will not 'Disneyfy' the Westminster experience for any visitor: information and interpretation will be improved but must respect the dignity of the setting, and should be designed in accordance with the highest standards of craftsmanship.

National (international) benefits

There is no ready measurement for the collective importance of national pride and prestige but the proposals outlined in this report will help to ensure that the Westminster World Heritage Site and Parliament Square are improved in ways truly commensurate with their international status and reputation. Considerable reputational damage is being risked by Parliament and the country by the current failure to do so.

There is also diplomatic value to be leveraged through improvements in access to the cultural and heritage assets of the World Heritage Site and Parliament Square. Such assets help to foster education, understanding and links between peoples and nations. Of course it is vital that resources are focused on improving engagement with UK citizens; but when a visitor from the Commonwealth or United States takes a self-guided tour around the study area armed with their multi-media guide, watches, perhaps even joins in, during a hustings in Parliament Square, observes parliamentarians debating on TV whilst resting over a cup of tea on the People's Terrace in Victoria Tower Gardens, or visits the World Heritage Visitors' Centre, they would be learning not just about our democratic system but also about the influence it has had on the development of their own.

Finally, there are few legislatures around the world that have so many opportunities to engage the public in innovative new ways, and on such a scale, that Westminster has, as outlined in this report. If the opportunities are grasped then Parliament could make a considerable contribution to international parliamentary strengthening programmes through its leadership in the field of public engagement particularly with regard to interpretation and digital provision.

A social enterprise model

Research in the heritage sector suggests that for every £1 that is invested, a return of £1.70 is generated over a 10-year period.¹⁴⁶ As currently structured however, Parliament is not in a position to benefit from such investment or its multiplier effects. It is completely dependent on public money with little or no capacity to apply for investment grants or attract private sector or philanthropic funds. Nor is it staffed and organised to develop and take advantage of any new revenue generation opportunities that the proposals outlined in this report might offer. Its efforts in respect of retail, heritage and cultural initiatives are, for example, generally small-scale and involve little or no marketing. A robust licensing

¹⁴⁶ F. Reynolds, 'Saved for the nation: cultural tourism today' in British Academy Policy Centre (2011), *History for the taking: perspectives on material heritage*, p.25.

operation and commercial sales strategy is needed to take advantage of its iconic brand value whilst maintaining high standards in respect of the sourcing and production of souvenir collections and merchandise.

In order to exploit new opportunities that might cross-subsidise investment in the visitor engagement strategy, a new financial management and delivery model is therefore required. A social enterprise or trust model would enable it to apply a more commercial approach to the public benefit goals of its visitor service strategy. The income generated could then be used to pursue the Trust's defined goals: these might include stewardship and conservation of Parliament's cultural and heritage assets; public access to its collections; presentation and interpretation of its assets to enhance public understanding and appreciation of its role, history and function. Broader aspects of the public engagement strategy – such as education and outreach initiatives – could also be included if desired.

Parliament's cultural and heritage collections – the art and archives for example – could be opened up to a much broader public audience both at the World Heritage Site and across the country if there were greater flexibility in its funding strategy. The National Gallery, for example, has a Touring Exhibition Partnership Scheme through which up to 30 pieces of its collection go on tour each year to the Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery and the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle. This was part-funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation and local fundraising initiatives. If Parliament adopted a different organisational and financial model it could take a more innovative approach of this kind and engage with many more people than at present, well beyond the immediate environs of the parliamentary estate.

In order to support developments such as a new visitor centre at 6/7 Old Palace Yard, a Trust model would also help Parliament to beneficially diversify its funding base and leverage investment from other sources to support its plans. The Natural History Museum, for example, used a £10.7 million government grant as a base to attract a further £67 million in private sector funding for the second phase of the development of its Darwin Gallery. Whereas Parliament might be understandably reluctant to embrace private sponsorship of an initiative within the Palace itself, this should be less of a problem at a location such as Old Palace Yard or the Bridge Street bookshop and could be managed in a sensitive and appropriate way by a Trust dedicated to implementation of Parliament's visitor engagement strategy.

The proposals outlined in this report require highly variable levels of investment. Some are small-ticket items that could be developed quite quickly and be put in place for 2012; others are contingent on progress being made with other factors – e.g. improvements to traffic management – and proposals and will therefore take longer to implement; whilst some will require very substantial capital and revenue as well as partnership between a

number of stakeholders in order to deliver a complex and ambitious project such as the World Heritage Site Visitors' Centre. A Trust model for Parliament, coupled with changes to the management of the wider World Heritage Site, would provide the necessary foundations to take on such an ambitious project in the long-term. But in the short-term there is much that can be achieved on a smaller scale, requiring much lower levels of investment. A model outline of a possible timetable for development and implementation is set out below.

Above all, it is vital that some changes start to be made: the worst outcome of all would be to adopt an all or nothing approach. Parliament may not be able to accomplish all that is set out here, but implementation of any of the proposals would be an improvement on the status quo.

Core recommendations: suggested model timetable

* indicates a recommendation where Parliament has an interest but cannot deliver implementation – however, it could play a role in pressing partners to ensure progress is made

Recommendation	Contingent On...(where applicable)	Key Partner(s)	Suggested Timeframe
Rolling out of Legible London branded signage and subsequent review		Transport for London / Westminster City Council	2011/12
Jewel Tower 'Parliament Past and Present' exhibition to be renewed		English Heritage	2011/12
Improvements to signage information inside the underground station		Transport for London	2012
Install information panels / 3D dioramas in the World Heritage Site, Parliament Square & Victoria Tower Gardens (upgrade the Jubilee Walkway panel etc)		Jubilee Walkway Trust in relation to their two information panels	2012
Development of a series of self-guided walks around the World Heritage Site & provision of related maps, information materials, & smartphone applications	Installation of the information panels would helpfully support the walks but need not be dependent on them. Maps etc. could be produced first to enable some walks to take place but if more time/investment is required for the digital media support they could follow at a later date. Until the Bridge Street Information Centre is established most of the maps might be made available online (although some could be provided through the bookshop).	Westminster Abbey, Supreme Court, Walk London	2012 +
Close the south side of Parliament Square, limit traffic access on Abingdon Street *		GLA / Transport for London / Westminster City Council	From 2012 +
Remove car parking at Old Palace Yard	Reduction of traffic/part-pedestrianisation of Abingdon Street		From 2012 +
Parliament Square: a place for citizenship. Development of a diverse programme of events; establishment of a Square Steering Group.	Whether the legal issues regarding the Square have been resolved, the permanent camps and fencing removed and the condition of the Square improved	GLA / Westminster City Council	2012 (some progress may be possible in 2012 but may be more likely from 2013)
Cultural and heritage corridor from Trafalgar Square to Tate Britain	The scope of the southern end of the corridor may be dependent on progress made with Tate Britain's Millbank regeneration strategy	Tate Britain	2012 +
Set up a Trust / social enterprise model to facilitate a more flexible revenue generation and investment strategy			2012

Recommendation	Contingent On...(where applicable)	Key Partner(s)	Suggested Timeframe
Revision of the World Heritage Site boundaries and the Management Plan and governance model	Licensing and sales capacity being established under the Trust model	Westminster World Heritage Site Management Plan Steering Group members	2012/13
Establish a unique line of branded gifts / souvenirs	Size and scale may be dependent on the ability to 'build out' the building to create a uniform frontage & time it takes to relocate the mail order operation.	Westminster World Heritage Site Management Plan Steering Group members, particularly Westminster Abbey. Also, the Supreme Court.	2013
Convert the Bridge Street parliamentary bookshop into an Information Centre	Any lessons learnt from the 2010 London Ambassadors scheme	Westminster World Heritage Site Management Plan Steering Group members, particularly Westminster Abbey. Also, the Supreme Court.	2013
Establish a Westminster World Heritage Site guide / warden scheme	A new heritage focused parliamentary website or a joint World Heritage Site website focused on the physical environment and the cultural and heritage assets of the institutions	Westminster World Heritage Site Management Plan Steering Group members, particularly Westminster Abbey. Also, the Supreme Court.	2013 +
Provide Education Centre off Westminster Hall	Relocation of current activities	Royal Parks Agency, English Heritage	2013
Victoria Tower Gardens People's Terrace tea house installed	Some events are already happening but are not co-ordinated. A more co-ordinated programme, on a larger scale would be possible before the People's Terrace tea house is installed but would be better done in conjunction with the amenities this facility provides coming on stream	Royal Parks Agency	2013/14
Victoria Tower Gardens programme of events on a democracy theme	Whether peers offices and other functions can be relocated elsewhere on the parliamentary estate	Westminster World Heritage Site Management Plan Steering Group members	2013/14
Parliamentary Visitors' Centre at 6/7 Old Palace Yard		Tate Britain	2014/15
Establish a Magna Carta Walkway	Whether the government will agree to this form of use, which will be highly dependent on whether or not the required investment can be raised.	Tate Britain	2015
Commission a new public sculpture, on a democratic theme, for installation in Victoria Tower Gardens to mark the Magna Carta anniversary			2015 +
A World Heritage Visitors' Centre at the QEII Centre site			

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