GOVERNMENT HOSPITALITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR THE PURCHASE OF WINE

241st Meeting held at Lancaster House on Thursday 21st May 2009

PRESENT	Chairman :	Sir David Wright GCMG, LVO
	Members:	Mr John Avery MW
		Mrs Deirdre Blackstock MW
		Mr Mark Pardoe MW
		Mr Sebastian Payne MW
	Secretary:	Mr Robert Alexander, GH

Minutes

1867. The minutes of the 240th Meeting were accepted as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Business Arising

1868. The Secretary up-dated the Committee on wines used at the London Summit in early April, following on from some press articles that had appeared in preceding weeks (copies tabled). While much of the coverage had been accurate – information was taken direct from a letter from the Secretary to a journalist at The Independent newspaper – a number of papers had deliberately mis-reported to costs of the wine. The Minister responsible for Government Hospitality, Ms Gillian Merron, had, as a result, written to the editors of 4 papers to try to correct the inaccuracies.

The Committee felt strongly that the excellent value for money that the cellar had been able to deliver on the government's behalf through the wines supplied for the London Summit should be highlighted for the Minister. The Secretary had calculated that, although the wines used at the summit had been obtained for around £1443, their true market value was nearer to £6 000, over four times the original cost. The Chairman offered to write to the Minister to demonstrate the true value for money that the cellar and the Committee were able to deliver. [Action: Chairman]

Further to the discussion of the Freedom of Information issue mentioned at the 239th meeting (1861), the Secretary up-dated the Committee on progress on the response to [redacted information] and subsequent FoI

enquiries in the wake of the G20 summit. An extensive media briefing document had been prepared by the Secretary to accompany the release of the edited version of the cellar list, as previously discussed.

The Secretary reported, with regret, once again that it had not been possible to produce stock reports or consumption statements for the Committee (1847, 1853 and 1861). However, the Secretary had had a long session with the IT consultants developing the database during the previous week and he hoped that work would soon be completed. The Committee urged the Secretary to pursue this as a matter of urgency. [Action: Secretary]

There was nothing to report on the lease negotiations on Lancaster House.

Stock-sheet and Consumption Statement

1869. There was no quarterly consumption statement available. The Committee examined the monthly consumption statements.

Future Tasting Programme

1870. The Committee agreed that the next meeting should take place on Tuesday 4th August. A provisional date for the 243rd meeting was agreed for 13th October 2009, with 12th October as a reserve. The Committee agreed that the August meeting should be an opportunity to taste “fair trade” wines, with a view to purchase (1863), as well as 2007 German white wines and 2007 Rhône red wines.

Tasting

1871. The Committee conducted a review tasting of white Burgundy wines of the 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2005 vintages, and gave advice on grading and use.

Lunch

1872. There was no guest for lunch.

Any Other Business

1873. There was no other business and the meeting concluded.

4th August 2009

Sir David Wright GCMG, LVO
Chairman