



THE LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS

Our Ref: LHOL/PEER050

25<sup>th</sup> July 2019

My Lords,

**Parliamentary Buildings (Restoration and Renewal) Bill**

**I am writing regarding a number of issues raised by Noble Lords during the Committee Stage debate on the Parliamentary Buildings (Restoration and Renewal) Bill on 22 July.**

I would first like to thank all Noble Lords for their contributions during the debate, which is another crucial step in the passage of this Bill. A number of important points were raised during the debate which I committed to write to Peers on.

**The Holocaust Memorial**

A number of Noble Lords raised questions concerning the timeline for the completion of the Holocaust Memorial, planned to be situated in Victoria Tower Gardens, and whether any of the Gardens will remain open during its construction. Firstly, I should be clear that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is responsible for leading this project on behalf of Government, supported by independent advice from the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation. Whilst it is not a matter for this Bill, I thought it would be helpful to Noble Lords if I set out the position of MHCLG on the points raised during the debate that I promised to write on.

The construction phase of the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre is expected to last around 2½ years, and will require careful consideration and detailed planning. This includes ensuring that part of Victoria Tower Gardens remains open for users during construction works. Those responsible for this project hope to have phased closures and reopenings of different sections of the park throughout the construction phase to ensure as much of the Victoria Tower Gardens as possible is kept open.

Subject to planning approval, construction is expected to start in 2020 and for the Memorial to open in late 2022. Once constructed, the Memorial will only take up 7.5% of Victoria Tower Gardens, and the design incorporates improvements to the gardens that will help all visitors including better pathways, improved access to existing memorials, and an enhanced playground with a new café-kiosk. The public exhibition boards showing the area open to the public once the Memorial has been built are available on the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation website at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/761583/UK\\_Holocaust\\_Memorial\\_public\\_exhibition\\_boards\\_December\\_2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/761583/UK_Holocaust_Memorial_public_exhibition_boards_December_2018.pdf)

### **Accessibility of the Palace following the works**

Baroness Wheeler asked a question seeking details on how much more accessible the Palace will be following the Restoration and Renewal project.

As outlined during the debate, under the Bill the Sponsor Body and Delivery Authority will need to formulate proposals relating to the design, cost and timing of the works. This will form the Outline Business Case (OBC) which must be approved by Parliament before the substantive works can proceed. As my noble friend, Earl Howe mentioned during the debate, one of the shadow Sponsor Body's main strategic priorities is to "open up the Houses of Parliament, improve access and encourage a wider participation in the work of Parliament". Therefore, before any work commences on the Palace, detailed preliminary work must first be undertaken in order to evaluate where access can be improved.

Ultimately, it will be for the Sponsor Body to put forward designs to Parliament on how accessibility of the Palace can be improved as part of restoration and renewal. Parliament will then have the final say as no substantial works on the Palace can be undertaken without the approval of Parliament.

### **Disability sub-committee**

During the debate at Committee, Baroness Wheeler asked for an explanation on the role and remit of the disability sub-committee proposed by the Government during the passage of the Bill in the Commons.

Schedule 1 paragraph 20 of the Bill enables the Sponsor Body to establish committees and sub-committees and that members of these can consist of or include neither members or non members of staff of the Sponsor Body. It is under this mechanism that the Sponsor Body could decide to form a sub-committee that will focus on the matter of disability access to the Palace.

## **Committee scrutiny**

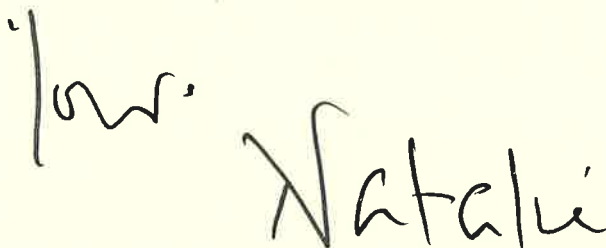
Baroness Wheeler also spoke about the interaction between the Restoration and Renewal Programme and Parliament, noting the current interaction the Programme has with the Services Committee.

As part of the pre-legislative scrutiny, the Joint Committee recommended that it should be for the Commons and the Lords to take it upon themselves to clarify how the scrutiny process will work and to determine which committees should undertake that work. The Joint Committee suggested that “both Houses consider amending their Standing Orders to specify which committee should primarily be tasked with scrutinising the progress of the parliamentary building works and the associated use of public funds. It will be for each House to determine which committees assume these responsibilities”.

As we set out in our response to the Joint Committee, it is a matter for Parliament to decide what Committees scrutinise the work of the Sponsor Body.

## **Temporary relocation of Parliament outside of London**

Finally, in response to a question raised by Baroness Quin during the debate on her amendment, I would refer Noble Lords to the letter from Earl Howe to the House on the 11 July, which has been deposited in the Library. I will ensure a copy of this letter is also deposited in the Library.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'N' followed by 'atalie'.

**Baroness Evans of Bowes Park**  
Leader of the House of Lords and Lord Privy Seal