



Department for Culture, Media & Sport

Sir Chris Bryant MP
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14 May 2025

Alberto Costa MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

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Dear Alberto,

Thank you once again for raising the issue of the Parthenon Sculptures and the British Museum Act 1963. I am writing to set out a response to the questions you raised during the Westminster Hall debate on 30 April 2025.

Firstly, you asked what communications there had been with the Greek authorities since the government was elected last year.

As I mentioned in the debate, I met Greece's Tourism Minister Olga Kefalogianni on 4 November 2024 for a meeting regarding tourism, and she briefly raised the Parthenon Sculptures.

You then asked whether the British Museum trustees have the authority to temporarily lend the artefacts to the Acropolis Museum and under what terms a loan could be made.

Section 4 of the British Museum Act expressly allows objects to be lent for public exhibitions. Therefore, in response to your third question, no change to the British Museum Act is required for a loan to take place. As I said in the debate, the legislation makes it clear that any loan agreement would be temporary and cannot be open-ended, indefinite or permanent.

Any such loan would require a cultural objects export licence, as set out in the Export of Objects of Cultural Interest (Control) Order 2003, and relevant guidance. Arts Council England administers the system on behalf of the Secretary of State.

The British Museum has published a loans policy, with which any loan must comply. At section 2.4 it states that "The Trustees of the British Museum will lend only in circumstances when the perceived risk to the object is considered reasonable and when the borrower guarantees that the object will be returned to the Museum at the end of the loan period." The loans policy can be found here:

https://www.britishmuseum.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/British-Museum-Loans-Policy-approved-07-11-19_0.pdf



Your final question asked about undertaking an assessment of whether there is an opportunity for a mutually beneficial agreement with Greece about the future status of the artefacts.

As I mentioned in the debate, there are talks taking place between the Greek government and the British Museum. The UK government is not involved in these talks. We, therefore, have not conducted any assessment of this kind, and do not propose to do so.

I would reiterate that decisions relating to the care and management of the Parthenon Sculptures are a matter for the British Museum trustees.

The government would not stand in the way of any agreement that respects the legal responsibilities of the British Museum, including receiving sufficient assurances as to the return of the sculptures at the end of any loan period.

The government has not been asked by the British Museum trustees to consider any request or arrangement for the Parthenon Sculptures.

There are no plans to change the law that would allow for a permanent move.

As recognised by all during the debate, the UK and Greece have a strong bilateral relationship, built on shared values and history. We greatly value the friendship that exists between our people today.

I will place a copy of this letter in the Libraries of both Houses.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Bryant', with a large, stylized initial 'C'.

Sir Chris Bryant MP
Minister for Creative Industries, Arts and Tourism