

Briefing in advance of House of Lords debate on 13th July 2022 on a new mandate for restoration and renewal of the Palace of Westminster

The restoration of the Palace of Westminster is of paramount importance to both Parliamentarians and the nation.

Ten years after the Victorian Society welcomed the Government's commitment to the Restoration and Renewal programme we are concerned by the continued indecision on how to address the Palace of Westminster's problems and the predicted timescales for the project, with some claiming the works could take up to 80 years to complete.

The recently published Committee Report by the Commissions of both Houses to be debated next week has not allayed our concerns.

The proposed new approach to the works would see further discussion and options appraisals for the scope of works, decanting of the Houses, and timescales. The Victorian Society understands that a project of this scale must be carefully considered. However, decisions cannot be delayed indefinitely. Furthermore, unfeasible options such as new parliament buildings must be discounted from the outset. This World Heritage Site must be restored whether or not Parliament moves elsewhere. Reusing an existing building is also inherently more sustainable than building a new one.

A decade has passed since Parliament recognised the need for serious restoration. While some essential works have taken place, restoration and renewal cannot remain undecided, unimplemented or continually rethought for any longer. An independent options report in 2015 estimated the works at £4bn, current estimates are between £7bn and £13bn. Further delay will only increase these costs.

The Palace of Westminster is a Grade I listed building and UNESCO World Heritage Site of enormous significance. Historically important as 'the mother of parliaments' and home of British democracy, Charles Barry and Augustus Pugin's Palace of Westminster is known across the world and is one of the United Kingdom's greatest examples of Victorian architecture and design.

We urge you to use [the debate](#) taking place on 13 July to push for a firm timeline for decision-making. Parliament has a duty to ensure a clear plan is in place to bring the internationally renowned building in which it sits back into good and proper order. Failure to do so will send out a terrible message to the owners of other heritage buildings and to the world at large.

Joe O'Donnell
Director

The Victorian Society
1 Priory Gardens
London W4 1TT
director@victoriansociety.org.uk

8 July 2022