

# Collections Advisory Group

**Minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2022 at 12.45pm in the Room M, Portcullis House, and via Microsoft Teams [CAG05]**

**CAG Members Present:** Alayo Akinkugbe (AA) (in person)  
Molly Bretton (MB) (in person)  
Lord Faulkner of Worcester (LF) (in person)  
Cat Manson (CM) (in person)  
Gagan Mohindra MP (in person)  
Hannah Obee (HO) (in person)  
Baroness Young of Hornsey (Chair) (in person)

**Apologies:** Malavika Anderson  
Gilane Tawadros

**In attendance:** [REDACTED] Heritage Collections [REDACTED] (in person)  
[REDACTED], Parliamentary Archives, [REDACTED] (virtual)  
[REDACTED], Parliamentary Archives, and [REDACTED] (in person)  
[REDACTED] (secretary) (in person)

## Acronyms

CAG	Collections Advisory Group		
CWG	Collections Working Group		
HSG	Heritage Strategy Group		
HVSR	Heritage Vision and Strategy Report		
DEWG	Displays and Engagement Working Group		

<b>Meeting Opened at approx 12.45pm</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<p>The meeting was preceded by a tour for CAG members of the Line of Route (the public visitor route through the Palace of Westminster).</p>	
<p><b><u>Item 1: Minutes of previous meeting and outstanding actions</u></b></p> <p>Following the tour, there was some discussion of Inside UK Parliament tours (formerly known as Democratic Access Tours, i.e. tours facilitated through constituency Members), which are free for UK residents (as opposed to commercial visitor tours). [REDACTED] <b>to find out the rationale for requiring Inside UK Parliament tours to be booked through Members, and what is the precise mechanism to be followed.</b></p> <p>Following up on an action from the July meeting, [REDACTED] noted that there is a printed brochure which Members can provide to guests with information about Parliament. LF said that this had to be paid for. [REDACTED] <b>to clarify the situation with printed materials for guests of Members.</b></p> <p><b>The minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2022 were agreed.</b></p>	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>
<p><b><u>Item 2: Heritage Vision and Strategy</u></b></p>	

[REDACTED] re-introduced the Heritage Vision and Strategy Report (HVSr), which the CAG had offered feedback on at its inaugural meeting, and which had since been endorsed by the Commons Executive Board and Lords Management Board. She explained that the intention had been to put in place a cross-cutting vision which recognises the different roles of the various Collections across both Houses. The next step will be for HSG to map priorities in each House's strategy against the elements of the HVSr. [REDACTED] emphasised that the CAG's voice is being heard by senior management teams in both Houses and their advice sought.

There was discussion of audience engagement, with [REDACTED] inviting suggestions for measurable and strategic objectives fitting with the HVSr. She noted that a piece on understanding our audiences had been done by the Chamber and Participation Team but that this did not extend to the Collections. There had been previous discussions in CAG of how to bring the Collections into existing tours, as well as identifying where else there may be space and demand to showcase them.

GM noted that the website could be used to capture data on why a user has looked at a specific piece of content, as well as using free-text to capture suggestions on what people would like to see more of. CM raised the question of how content showcasing the Collections might be targeted at specific audiences, for example Collections tours for various age groups.

It was noted that more could be done to ensure that Members, and their staff, have background knowledge on Collections items which are encountered during tours. [REDACTED] noted that the House Services Fair for new Members had included Collections tours, and there are also fora to engage more with Members' staff, but one of the biggest challenges is the demands on Members' time.

There were some suggestions for other content that could showcase the Collections, such as a recorded tour, a podcast, or interviews with individuals who can provide narratives about Collections items. AA said that social media content often benefits from a personal "hook", which then leads into the broader historical context behind an object. [REDACTED] noted that a wide range of staff, such as Doorkeepers and security officers, have lovely stories about Collections items that are not being tapped into. CM noted that she had experience of internal communications which included a "favourite painting of the month" etc., and suggested that this could be a collaborative piece with internal communications colleagues; there may also be scope to repurpose this for external audiences.

There was some discussion of how to select and frame the objects to showcase. It was questioned whether our focus should be objects that illustrate "parliamentary democracy", or a broader story about "political engagement". CM suggested that the Collections could play a role in humanising and celebrating the work and motivations of Members past and present, challenging a sometimes negative narrative.

BY also noted the value of bringing in contributions from outside London. [REDACTED] said that the Palace of Westminster Restoration and Renewal project (R&R) would present an opportunity to take items out of Westminster and tour them around the country. This would allow UK Parliament to tell stories about the local origins of objects in the Collections. CM suggested that the website could feature a map of objects' origins. HO suggested bringing in the Education and

Engagement team, providing Collections-related resources for teachers to use in schools.

[REDACTED] said that the Works of Art Committee and Panel had both recognised the value of the Parliamentary Art Collection building an external identity through touring, which could extend to the Archives who have more of an outreach focus. The challenge would be developing links with organisations to put together a touring show, and build awareness outside London that Parliament has engaging collections. [REDACTED] noted that there is currently a pilot, to tour one large object to multiple places. BY suggested the relationship could be two-way, asking local museums how they would tell their area's story through objects. LF suggested we could present them with a list of our holdings, and let them decide what they would like to host. [REDACTED] noted that, about ten years ago, the Archives had undertaken a project which deliberately sought connections between communities and our holdings; this approach works, with local partners facilitating access to our objects. It was noted this is resource-intensive so may be a longer-term aim.

Following on from the discussion of local partners, [REDACTED] noted the importance to HVSR of developing a partnership strategy. HSG has found that the Collections engage with external partners in silos, rather than in a cross-cutting, bicameral way which ties into the Advocacy and Engagement principles of the HVSR. Related to this, [REDACTED] provided an update on lessons learned from the work to develop a display on the 1981 Brixton disorders. The most important lesson had been the need to learn more about a subject before attempting an ambitious project. There had been recent success in partnering with ParliREACH (the Workplace Equality Network for race, ethnicity and cultural heritage) on activities during South Asian Heritage Month in 2022 and an upcoming display on the Sinha peerage case. [REDACTED] noted that lessons learned from the 1981 display are an example of how valuable the CAG is.

In working with partners, GM emphasised the importance of being upfront about the terms of engagement, to avoid needing to negotiate further down the line. [REDACTED] agreed that an important lesson from the 1981 experience had been the lack of expectation management with external partners.

[REDACTED] also provided an update on the Displays and Engagement Working Group (DEWG), recently relaunched with new terms of reference. The group is now smaller and more focussed, with the potential to be very influential in strategic planning for forward programming of displays. It was expected to hold its first meeting early in 2023, and [REDACTED] hoped that representatives of various areas would bring ideas to the group, although it should not be expected that visible changes will follow immediately. BY suggested, in the longer term, considering the possibility of a PhD studentship being involved with this programming work.

[REDACTED] linked the discussion of external partners to the work developing a framework for dealing with sensitive objects in the Collections. CM said it would be important to establish clear criteria on what the Collections want to get out of these external partnerships, as well as setting parameters on who we will and will not work with from a reputational perspective. [REDACTED] said that the aim, with regard to sensitive objects, was to identify academic research partnerships; she referred to the approach being taken by the Royal Academy to better understand their objects' history. A research partnership would hopefully not be a

<p>“cradle to grave” activity on sensitive objects, but a rolling programme of review to update the interpretation and cataloguing of our holdings (an approved CWG priority).</p> <p>BY suggested working with the Arts and Humanities Research Council to develop a number of studentships covering various relevant aspects (BY declared an interest related to AHRC, as she is currently undertaking an advisory role for the Creative Communities programme). CM also asked whether commercial partnerships would be explored, to which [REDACTED] replied that there could be value in partnerships across these sectors.</p> <p>GM asked if the Collections display objects in the HM Government offices around the UK. [REDACTED] said this is the remit of the Government Art Collection. GM also suggested a role for UK embassies and High Commissions around the world.</p> <p><b>The CAG agreed to endorse the principles in the Heritage Vision and Strategy Report.</b></p> <p><b>[REDACTED] to come back to the next CAG meeting with a distilled version of what was discussed and agreed on the HVSR.</b></p>	<p>[REDACTED]</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Item 3: Update on communications</u></b></p> <p>[REDACTED] provided an update on plans to communicate the CAG’s work. As previously explained in the July meeting, the intended approach was to begin with work to communicate the CAG’s work internally before moving on to external engagement.</p> <p>The events in September surrounding the death of Queen Elizabeth II had disrupted the timings for this plan, but the key sequencing of internal then external remains. Work was still ongoing to deliver the internal piece, including developing Intranet content to provide further information on the CAG, and planning a “lunch and learn” sessions to provide an overview of the various workstreams. In the longer term, the aim is to produce a regular newsletter with key updates and decisions, as well as potentially delivering pop-up stands to engage directly with Members.</p> <p>A key dependency for the communications plan is the progress of the sensitive objects framework, which had just been through the staff-level boards of both Houses (the Commons Executive Board and the Lords Management Board) and would now go before Members (on the Commons Administration Committee and the Lords Services Committee). It would then go to the Commissions of both Houses, and only after this point would we step up external engagement. [REDACTED] noted that external enquiries about the sensitive objects framework were already being received, and instances such as media coverage of the involvement of Commons Library staff in a conference linked to the idea of “decolonising” had demonstrated the sensitivities in communications. [REDACTED] <b>will come to the next meeting with examples of external enquiries on the sensitive objects framework.</b></p> <p>CM cautioned against proactive external communications. It is necessary to be prepared with a reasonable response about how the Houses approach sensitive objects, and who has a role in advising on this, but there is a nuance in how much of this is reactive and proactive. CM also noted the need to be prepared for any</p>	<p>[REDACTED]</p>

<p>internal communications being leaked externally. She suggested that any “go live” communication should be along the lines of “a specialist advisory group working collaboratively to ensure the collections are XYZ”, and pivoting toward the core purpose of facilitating access and engagement. BY agreed.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Item 4: AOB</b></p> <p>[REDACTED] noted that a CWG sub-group had met to discuss catalogues and terminology, and how to work across teams to address issues around cataloguing language in a more standardised way.</p> <p>[REDACTED] also updated the group that she is moving to the Archives Relocation Programme for one year, and will therefore be standing down as CWG co-chair and from attending CAG.</p> <p>BY asked if it would be possible for the CAG to tour the Government Art Collection. She also raised the possibility of inviting representatives from arts/heritage institutions to come and speak at a future CAG meeting.  <b>[REDACTED] and [REDACTED] to consider options for the CAG engaging with other organisations in future meetings.</b></p> <p>CM thought it would be helpful for the CAG to hear from internal communications colleagues, whenever any outputs start to emerge from the audiences piece. <b>[REDACTED] and [REDACTED] to consider when it might be helpful for CAG to hear from internal communications colleagues.</b></p>	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>
<p><b>Meeting Closed at approx 2.30pm</b></p>	

**Summary of Decisions agreed:**

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2022 were agreed.

The CAG agreed to endorse the principles in the Heritage Vision and Strategy Report.

**Summary of Actions agreed:**

<p>[REDACTED] to find out the rationale for requiring Inside UK Parliament tours to be booked through Members, and what is the precise mechanism to be followed.</p>	<p>[REDACTED]</p>
<p>[REDACTED] to clarify the situation with printed materials for guests of Members.</p>	<p>[REDACTED]</p>
<p>[REDACTED] to come back to the next CAG meeting with a distilled version of what was discussed and agreed on the HVSR.</p>	<p>[REDACTED]</p>
<p>[REDACTED] will come to the next meeting with examples of external enquiries on the sensitive objects framework.</p>	<p>[REDACTED]</p>

[REDACTED] and [REDACTED] to consider options for the CAG engaging with other organisations in future meetings.	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] and [REDACTED] to consider when it might be helpful for CAG to hear from internal communications colleagues.	[REDACTED]