

Management Board

Education Centre Progress Update and Approach

A paper by the Director General of Facilities

Purpose

1. This paper asks the Management Board to:
 - A. Note that the brief for the Education Centre project cannot be met within our present estate.
 - B. Approve the expansion of the current operation for educational visits, and defer the construction of an Education Centre.
 - C. Agree to seek agreement from the Administration Committee, to a derogation allowing the use of the Grand Committee Room, on Fridays in school term time only, as a space for educational visits.
2. Following Management Board approval, a paper will be submitted to the House of Commons Administration Committee and the House of Lords Information Committee seeking their endorsement of the decisions.

Background

3. Following an Inquiry into a Parliamentary Visitor and Information Centre in 2006-07 the House of Commons Administration Committee published its report on Improving Facilities for Educational Visitors to Parliament. This recommended:

“that a dedicated space for school visitors of approximately 1,000m² (consisting of flexible accommodation of five classrooms with ancillary space for storage, lavatory facilities, a lunch area and locker space) should be sought either on or off the existing Estate – the exact space depending on what becomes available and at what cost.”¹
4. It is assumed that 1,000m² of space will enable 100,000 school children per year to visit Parliament and take part in educational workshops.

¹ First Report of Session 2006-07, paragraph 89

5. The brief for a new Education Centre was approved by both the House of Lords Information Committee and House of Commons Administration Committee in 2007², and agreed by motions in both Houses. The Commons agreed as follows:³

Resolved,

That this House approves the First Report of the Administration Committee, on Improving Facilities for Educational Visitors to Parliament (House of Commons Paper No. 434); and endorses the Committee's proposals, including a dedicated space for educational visitors to be provided on or off the Estate complemented by engagement with those who do not visit Westminster.

Current Operation

6. The current operation of the Education Service caters for approximately 38,000 children, using non-dedicated spaces in Portcullis House and 1 Parliament Street.

Feasibility

7. The requirement for 1,000 square metres of dedicated space and suitable access and security arrangements for 100,000 student visits per annum, within the context of the historical Estate, poses significant challenges.
8. An initial feasibility study in 2007 identified Lower Ground Floor Secretaries as the preferred location for the Education Centre. Upon mobilisation of the project in 2010, Lower Ground Floor Secretaries was ruled out as a feasible option, on structural grounds. This was communicated to the House of Commons Management Board by the Director General of Facilities at the October 2010 meeting. Further information on Lower Ground Floor Secretaries is at Annex 1.
9. After revisiting and reappraising the suitability of a number of locations previously examined in 2007, and new locations that have arisen since then, it has been determined that it is not possible to meet the full brief for the Education Centre within Parliament's current estate. I propose instead that we meet the requirement as far as we sensibly can, by using existing spaces.

² [HC Paper 434 2006-07](#), April 2007; [HL Paper 117 2006-07](#), June 2007

³ [HC Deb c720 12 June 2007](#); (also [HL Deb c675 ,16 Oct 2007](#))

10. **Management Board Question 1:**

Does the Management Board agree that the educational visits operation should be expanded by the addition of spaces to its current allocation?

11. All options for a new location were appraised against the following criteria, which reflect the Education Service's guiding principles for an Education Centre and associated facilities requirements:

- Size / shape
- Access / Disability Discrimination Act
- Security
- Lavatory provision
- Ease of relocation of current occupants
- Member impact
- Impact on other stakeholders
- Disturbance (noise)
- Heritage constraints
- Cost
- Deliverability
- Coordination with PED 25 year programme.

A summary of the options appraisal is at Annex 2.

Possible locations

12. If the Board agrees with the proposal that to expand the current operation of educational visits until a suitable Education Centre location becomes available, the following three locations have been identified as the most likely of all those appraised against the criteria to be potentially of use:

- A. Portcullis House Ground Floor – Members' Centre and Facilities Executive Office

On the basis of relocating the essential services of the Members' Centre elsewhere in Portcullis House Atrium. Remodelling of the Attendants' post

at the top of the escalator and the Post Office will be investigated.
[s.36(2)(b) and s.36(2)(c)]

B. Use of the Grand Committee Room on Fridays during school term time

On the basis of no reconfiguration of furniture set-up and Member priority when required on a Friday.

C. On-request use of the CPA UK and IPU meeting rooms when they are available

On the basis of CPA UK / IPU priority and only when this fits with their bookings. IPU have informed us that they could only confirm use of the room three days in advance, which would reduce its utility for educational visits.

Recommendation

13. Use of the Members' Centre and Facilities Executive Office in Portcullis House Atrium, in conjunction with the Grand Committee Room on Fridays, would allow the number of children visiting Parliament to be increased by approximately 30,000.⁴ Combined with the current forecast visits figure of 38,000 this provides an overall figure of approximately 68,000.⁵ Given the potential obstacles to using options A and C, Option B seems the best bet in the short term. It would increase capacity for educational visits by about 2,500 children per year.

14. ***Management Board Question 2:***

Does the Management Board agree that recommendation B should be progressed to expand the operation of educational visits?

John Borley
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⁴ The Members' Centre would provide an additional 16,500 and the Facilities Executive Office an additional 11,000. Friday use of the Grand Committee Room would provide additional 2,500⁴.

⁵ This was predicated on circa 60,000-65,000 via the Education Service, and 35,000-40,000 'converted' via existing Central Tours Office school groups. This split is based on current estimates of the capacity of the line of route. Therefore the estimate of 68,000 will start the process of visitors being drawn from Central Tour Office groups.