

Collections Advisory Group

Minutes of the meeting held on 17 May 2022 at 2pm in Room T, PCH [CAG02]

CAG Members Present: Baroness Young of Hornsey (Chair)
Lord Faulkner of Worcester (LF)
Alayo Akinkugbe (AA)
Malavika Anderson (MA)
Molly Bretton (MB)
Cat Manson (CM)
Hannah Obee (HO)
Gilane Tawadros (GT)

Apologies: Gagan Mohindra MP

In attendance: [REDACTED] Heritage Collections [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Parliamentary Archives, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Parliamentary Archives, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] (secretary)
[REDACTED] Parliamentary Archives) [REDACTED]

Acronyms

CAG	Collections Advisory Group		
CWG	Collections Working Group		

Meeting Opened at 2pm	Actions
Note: The meeting was preceded by a tour of the House of Commons Library and certain objects in other Collections for CAG members.	
<p><u>Item I: Chair's Introduction and minutes of previous meeting</u></p> <p>The Chair reflected on the tours undertaken of the Commons Collections prior to the formal CAG meeting, noting that they illustrated the complexity of Parliament and its governance.</p> <p>[REDACTED] and [REDACTED] explained that they, or other Collections colleagues, may wish to appeal to the expertise of individual CAG members on particular matters. [REDACTED] would act as a focal point for these requests, to minimise the need for external CAG members' contact details to be shared. [REDACTED] suggested that members highlight areas where they have particular strengths and/or would be willing to contribute, so that this can be captured for future use. It was also clarified that external members would be compensated for substantial additional work conducted outside of CAG meetings.</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2022 were considered. [REDACTED] raised the outstanding actions to investigate the possibility of</p>	<p>Members to highlight particular areas where they could contribute to [REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED] to ask [REDACTED] to help arrange tours of Line of</p>

<p>CAG members taking a tour of the Line of Route, and visiting the Education Centre. It was suggested that the Line of Route tour could be done this calendar year, and that the Participation team could facilitate this. It was also suggested that the Education Centre visit could be scheduled to precede a CAG meeting, likely after the summer recess. The draft minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2022 were agreed.</p>	<p>Route and Education Centre</p>
<p><u>Item 2: Parliamentary Archives paper: Royal Gallery display on 1981</u></p> <p>[REDACTED] joined the meeting. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] spoke to the paper on the paused Royal Gallery display on the 1981 Brixton disorders, which had been introduced at the March meeting. It was noted that the 1981 display is currently planned to be held in autumn 2022.</p> <p>It was suggested that, now the 40-year anniversary of the Brixton disorders has passed, the HSG should think in more strategic terms about a series of displays (not necessarily in chronological order) illustrating an historical arc, potentially starting with 17th century material relating to discrimination against Catholics. This would help mitigate the risk that people would react negatively to the 1981 display by immediately viewing in the context of current “culture war” concerns; instead, the 1981 material could be presented as part of thematic continuum. [REDACTED] noted that there is currently an Exhibitions and Displays Group, with representation from all the Collections, and that the suggested series of displays could align with the vision of the Collections speaking with one voice.</p> <p>There was discussion of the relationship with Museumand, how they had come to be involved with the 1981 display, and what they brought in terms of authority and rigour. [REDACTED] noted that neither the Archives nor Museumand had anticipated the level of scrutiny given to the 1981 display. The collaboration with Museumand had been intended to include community groups organised with Leeds Library, but this had not happened.</p> <p>There was also discussion of the caption text produced for the display, with it being noted that some are direct quotes while others are collated thoughts. It was felt that unattributed captions are problematic and leave the display vulnerable to criticism. The display could benefit from statements by other contemporary voices, such as published statements at the time by politicians and the press, the legitimacy of which could not be questioned in quite the same way. It was also suggested that contemporaneous artistic output could be used to bring black voices into the display, which would also contribute to enhancing the online version.</p> <p>It was felt that some sort of facilitator will be needed to pull material together. It was also suggested that it will still be necessary to present a positive story of Museumand’s involvement. CM volunteered to advise on these communications.</p> <p>It was felt that the complexities presented by the 1981 display should not mean that the Houses shy away from such subjects in future. The Chair noted that it will be important to learn from this experience, in dealing with future such projects. [REDACTED] suggested that the Archives could hold a session on lessons learned and circulate a paper on this to</p>	<p>[REDACTED] to discuss strategic approach to displays at the next HSG</p> <p>[REDACTED] to contact CM re advice on comms around 1981 display</p> <p>[REDACTED] to ensure that the CAG sees any paper on lessons learned by the Archives</p>

<p>the CAG for information. [REDACTED] also noted that CAG will be consulted on future projects presenting this sort of complexity.</p> <p>There was also some discussion of how the involvement of internal stakeholders led to the pausing of the display, as well as seeming contradictions in the paper on how the Houses approach “neutrality”.</p> <p>The CAG is unable to endorse the current contents of the 1981 display. [REDACTED] will come back to the CAG with a proposal for a reshaped display.</p>	<p>[REDACTED] to come back to the CAG with a proposal for a reshaped 1981 display</p>
<p><u>Item 3: Draft sensitive objects policy for the Parliamentary Art Collection</u></p> <p>[REDACTED] presented a paper prepared for the Speaker’s Advisory Committee on Works of Art, setting out a draft policy on sensitive objects in the Parliamentary Art Collection. She explained some of the recent context which had led to the production of this paper. [REDACTED] and the Chair would also be discussing this paper at the Lord Speaker’s Advisory Panel on Works of Art on 18 May.</p> <p>It was suggested that what is needed is a transparent, open and rigorous conversation about such objects, how they came to be in the Collections and what should be the response of a democratic institution. This may require research and or academic partnerships. It was also suggested that the complexity of this issue might require an extended discussion by the CAG, potentially a “working day”.</p> <p>There was discussion that some objects could be considered so offensive that they should not be displayed at all. But was also suggested that certain offensive materials can be useful in explaining historical and contemporary social contexts. [REDACTED] explained that the intention was to create a framework that is not prescriptive, but would allow the Collections to approach their holdings in a consistent way while aware of the breadth and nuances of the material.</p> <p>It was pointed out that, ultimately, the Collections are publicly owned. This led to a discussion of the governance structures in the two Houses, and whether a solution might require structural changes. [REDACTED] noted that the chief executives of the two administrations [REDACTED] had agreed that there is a common challenge which both Houses need to address in a cross-cutting and consistent way as far as is possible.</p> <p>There was discussion of the framework set out in the paper for defining sensitive objects. It was also noted that a law-based framework is useful given the role of parliamentarians as lawmakers. It was also suggested that this should be a holistic policy across all categories of subject matter.</p> <p>The Chair and [REDACTED] agreed to tell the Lord Speaker’s Advisory Panel that the CAG had had an initial discussion, and solicit thoughts from them to feed into a further discussion.</p>	<p>Chair/[REDACTED] to come to a future CAG meeting with feedback from the WoA panel</p>

	and other stakeholders on the draft policy
<p><u>Item 4: Introduction to the Collections Working Group and Priority themes and activities</u></p> <p>[REDACTED] had prepared a paper on the Collections Working Group, providing background on its purpose and high-level priority work areas.</p> <p>Due to time constraints, there was not a substantive discussion of the CWG paper, but it was intended to return to this paper in the June meeting.</p>	
<p><u>Item 5: AOB</u></p> <p>No items were raised under AOB.</p>	
<p><u>Meeting Closed at 3.53pm</u></p>	

Summary of Decisions agreed:

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2022 were agreed.

The CAG is unable to endorse the current contents of the 1981 display.

Summary of Actions agreed:

Members to highlight particular areas where they could contribute to [REDACTED]	All
[REDACTED] to ask [REDACTED] to help arrange tours of Line of Route and Education Centre	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] to discuss strategic approach to displays at the next HSG	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] to contact CM re advice on comms around 1981 display	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] to ensure that the CAG sees any paper on lessons learned by the Archives	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] to come back to the CAG with a proposal for a reshaped 1981 display	[REDACTED]
Chair/[REDACTED] to come to a future CAG meeting with feedback from the WoA panel and other stakeholders on the draft policy	Chair/[REDACTED]

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