

Collections Advisory Group

Minutes of the meeting held on 16 May 2023 at 10.00am via Microsoft Teams [CAG07]

CAG Members Present: Molly Bretton (MB)
 Lord Faulkner of Worcester (LF)
 Cat Manson (CM)
 Hannah Obee (HO)
 Baroness Young of Hornsey (Chair)

Apologies: Alayo Akinkugbe
 Malavika Anderson
 Gagan Mohindra MP
 Gilane Tawadros

In attendance: [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED], Parliamentary Archives, [REDACTED] (item 5)
 [REDACTED] (secretary)
 [REDACTED] House of Commons Communications Office)

Acronyms

CAG	Collections Advisory Group	D&I	Diversity and Inclusion
CWG	Collections Working Group	WEN	Workplace Equality Network
HSG	Heritage Strategy Group		
DEWG	Displays and Engagement Working Group		

Meeting Opened at approx 10.00am	Actions
Note: [REDACTED] was unavoidably absent for most of items 4 and 5 due to a fire alarm.	
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Item 1: Minutes of previous meeting and outstanding actions</u></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2023 were agreed.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Item 2: Collections Working Group annual reflection</u></p> <p>[REDACTED] introduced herself as the new co-chair of CWG, taking over from [REDACTED]. She presented a paper setting out the CWG’s annual report from 2022-23, with additional feedback and reflections from the CWG discussion as noted by her and [REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED] noted a huge amount of progress has been made, with both CWG and CAG feeling momentum across a number of areas, but noted areas where there is still work to be done. Several CWG members had indicated that they would value the opportunity to work closely with CAG on particular issues, with positive feeling about the upcoming CAG/CWG workshop (29 June). Some CWG members had also expressed an interest in observing CAG meetings, particularly those whose roles are less focussed on the collections (e.g. colleagues in the Participation and D&I teams). CWG is also keen to</p>	

communicate its work, but is happy to take CAG's steer on this. BY agreed that communicating internally is a high priority.

The upcoming 75th anniversary of the Commonwealth (in 2024) presents an opportunity to work on interpretation, one of CWG's priority areas.

[REDACTED] noted that, due to the high profile of this anniversary, a third party may be engaged for advice on language and terminology. BY agreed that the Commonwealth anniversary is something that we will need to get on top of.

[REDACTED] also noted work on CWG's other two priorities: audience development (with a collections focus, identifying gaps to target resource) and partnerships (with internal collaboration having taken place to unpick some differing use of terminology). In terms of collaboration, CWG now receives regular updates on the newly refocussed Displays and Engagement Working Group, and the Catalogue and Language review group would also be meeting soon to consider such issues.

HO asked for elaboration on the issue of support/resource for the Workplace Equality Networks (WENs). [REDACTED] noted that one of the WENs (ParliREACH, the network for race, ethnicity and cultural heritage) had collaborated on the delivery of the South Asian Heritage Month project in 2022; the resource point is due to the fact that WEN members are doing this work on top of their day jobs.

[REDACTED] suggested that individual CAG members could provide support to CWG members on specific areas, where it might be more challenging to provide advice in a large group setting like a CAG meeting. BY raised the question of whether, in such interactions, CAG members would be acting in an individual capacity or as a representative of CAG (and, if the latter, what their mandate would be). This is particularly important given the press interest in these matters. CM agreed that it is difficult to generate momentum behind actual change with quarterly meetings. She thought it is important that CAG is able to demonstrate impact, and so it will be necessary to strike the right balance between individual advice and CAG advice in order to maintain momentum between meetings.

[REDACTED] suggested that CAG members could undertake deep dives into specific areas, then come back to the full group to enable high-level oversight. She referenced the work of Rebecca Lyons at the RA (on cataloguing and items with multiple narratives) that might be a useful model.

BY suggested that, for the Commonwealth piece, the group has a wider discussion (potentially engaging other colleagues around Parliament), and then members could engage individually between meetings, depending on the specific expertise needs that are highlighted. She also noted that there is no reason additional, shorter meetings could not be scheduled. [REDACTED] thought that a sub-group of CWG may be necessary to take forward the Commonwealth work.

[REDACTED] and [REDACTED] will consider CWG's timescales for the Commonwealth anniversary piece, and identify timing for a CAG meeting to input to this.

[REDACTED]

Item 3: CAG strategic objectives for 2023/24, including workshop plan

Due to unavoidable circumstances, [REDACTED] was not able to provide a full update on the workshop plan.

[Secretary's note: The workshop will be held on Thursday 29 June, from 11:00-14:00, on the Parliamentary Estate. It will bring together members of CAG and CWG, or the latter's nominated substitutes, to take forward the audience development strand of CWG's priority work areas.]

Item 4: Introduction to sensitive objects case studies

[REDACTED] provided an update on the sensitive objects framework, to serve as context for a future discussion of some specific case studies. The framework has now been endorsed by the Commissions of both Houses, and six objects had been identified to test the framework for the Speaker's Advisory Committee and the Lord Speaker's Advisory Panel.

MB noted the principle, outlined in the paper, that caption text should direct the audience to the digital counterpart record on the website. She asked if there was also a policy to ensure that alternative text (i.e. text which describes a web image, for accessibility purposes) would be in line with the new approach to interpretation. [REDACTED] replied that alternative text was produced for the case studies (although this had been challenging for some artworks which depict "busy" scenes); MB offered to share some examples of good practice.

CM asked about the intended use of the sensitive objects framework: would it be proactive (at the point of designing an exhibition), or retrospective (for objects in the collection)? [REDACTED] explained that the intention is for new content to implement the framework immediately, while the review of interpretation will help us consider what needs to be addressed retrospectively.

Item 5: AOB

[REDACTED] joined to provide an update on communications, following the recent press approach enquiring about CAG membership, as well as earlier coverage of the review of objects related to the transatlantic slave trade. [REDACTED] explained that the main approach to media handling should be to take the "heat" out of the discussion, and set the CAG's work in the context of routine collections management. [REDACTED] acknowledged that there is some complexity involved; Parliament is different from most galleries/museums due to the number of collections and stakeholders involved, as well as the presence of journalists (with relationships with Members) on the Estate itself.

[REDACTED] shared an updated media line on CAG and its relationship with the Works of Art Committee and Panel (see **Annex**). He also intended to draft some lines for BY to use in response to any media approaches.

[REDACTED] explained the plan for internal and external communications.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An internal piece for House staff had already been shared via the intranet and an email newsletter, talking in broad terms about new acquisitions and broadening diversity. • It is planned to produce a similar piece in Member-directed bulletins. The focus will not be on CAG itself, and any references will be tangential. • Other plans include heritage tours, case studies of collections work, and lunch and learn sessions for staff. • A Q&A will be developed for teams who deal with the public (e.g. Visitor Experience) explaining how Parliament is trying to broaden diversity with its collections. • An op-ed from the chairs of the Committee and Panel is being drafted for the House Magazine, which should be published in the next couple of weeks. <p>In the longer term (autumn), another editorial may be developed, discussing recent acquisitions and broadening diversity. A broader feature around collections management (not discussing specific actions) may also be beneficial, potentially involving BY and members of the Committee and Panel. [REDACTED] also noted that the website will be updated to include a reference to CAG, as well as the sensitive objects framework.</p> <p>BY raised some concern with the use of the term “diversity”; she would favour a focus on access and opening up the collections to tell Parliament’s story. MB agreed with a focus on access and inclusion. BY also noted that previous discussions had raised the idea of using staff to help introduce the Collections (e.g. “my favourite item”).</p> <p>CM noted the importance of demonstrating the CAG’s impact; it should be communicated that CAG promotes the core purpose of Parliament. She hoped that, by autumn 2023, there would be tangible outputs linked to the CAG’s work. CM also said she was happy to discuss communications further with [REDACTED] offline, and that her relationship with the arts sector press may be useful.</p> <p>BY to meet with [REDACTED] to discuss communications plans.</p>	<p>BY/[REDACTED]</p>
<p>Meeting Closed at approx 11.00am</p>	

Summary of Decisions agreed:

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2023 were agreed.

Summary of Actions agreed:

<p>[REDACTED] and [REDACTED] will consider CWG’s timescales for the Commonwealth anniversary piece, and identify timing for a CAG meeting to input to this.</p>	<p>[REDACTED]</p>
<p>BY to meet with [REDACTED] to discuss communications plans.</p>	<p>BY/[REDACTED]</p>

Annex: Media line for CAG members

“The Collections Advisory Group (CAG), chaired by Baroness Young of Hornsey, works to support access and inclusion across Parliament’s six Collections. Given the breadth of these Collections, the advice provided by the Group helps to ensure that these significant collections are accessible to as many people as possible - and are explained, promoted, and developed in ways that are relevant to the diverse groups that Parliament serves.

“The Group brings together Members of both Houses alongside a variety of collections, engagement and academic specialists - representing a broad range of experiences and viewpoints. It is an advisory group, which shares relevant expertise and knowledge drawn from a number of disciplines. All decision-making powers relating to the Collections remain with the relevant Parliamentary Committees in both Houses, including oversight of their day-to-day management.”

On background:

- Parliament’s Collections include: the Parliamentary Art Collection, the Historic Furniture and Decorative Arts Collection, the Architectural Fabric Collection, the Parliamentary Archives, the House of Lords Library, and the House of Commons Library
- The Collections Advisory Group meets approximately every quarter. Current membership includes:
 - Gagan Mohindra MP
 - Baroness Young
 - Lord Faulkner
 - Alayo Akinkugbe
 - Malavika Anderson
 - Molly Bretton
 - Cat Manson
 - Hannah Obee
 - Gilane Tawadros
- A Working Group assists the Advisory Group and is comprised of staff drawn from the Parliamentary Collections as well as from other relevant teams across Parliament. The Working Group flags prevailing topics and opportunities, including in areas where they need support from the Collections Advisory Group – the latter relate largely to areas of Collections development and engagement.
- Items which the CAG have considered at recent meetings include:
 - Reviewing the current internal and external engagement outputs across all the Collections and advising on a more strategic approach, including the establishment of a Displays and Exhibitions Working Group
 - Feedback on three strategic Collections engagement priorities (Interpretation, Audience Development and Partnerships) to ensure a more inclusive approach.

Restricted: For Committee use only

- In relation to the Parliamentary Art Collection (one of the six Parliamentary Collections that the CAG serves) the Lord Speaker's Advisory Panel and the Speaker's Advisory Committee on Works of Art receive regular updates at its meetings on the day-to-day management of the Parliamentary Art Collection, and matters discussed in the Collections Advisory Group form part of these updates. Committee minutes and decisions are published on the Committee's websites.