

House of Commons

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House of Commons Commission Press Release

Renovation of the Palace of Westminster

At its regular monthly meeting tonight (Monday), the Commission agreed that officials from both Houses should conduct an initial study that will allow them, in due course, to present options for the long term upkeep of the Palace of Westminster. Whilst noting that there is no immediate risk to the structure of the Palace, the Commission is pleased that such long term planning is being undertaken in a thorough and strategic manner. It is envisaged that this early work will take approximately a year, with any decisions on renovation not being made until the next Parliament (2015 – 2020), with any work not commencing before 2020.

The Commission also wished to state that, contrary to some recent speculation, the Palace of Westminster remains structurally sound and that while the Clock Tower (commonly referred to as Big Ben) has a very slight tilt, this is not causing structural problems and has not changed since the statement made in October. As Professor John Burland, an expert in construction from Imperial College, London has said: **"I calculated that it would take 10,000 years to reach the inclination of the Leaning Tower of Pisa. It's moving incredibly slowly and always has done so and there really is no immediate danger at all."**

The full story is available here - <http://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2011/october1/big-ben-tilt/>

Background:

The current Palace of Westminster dates mainly from the 1840s and 1850s, though some parts were rebuilt following bomb damage in the Second World War and there have been partial adaptations and renovations in more recent years. Responsibility for maintaining and conserving the Palace passed from the Crown to Parliament in 1992. No decisions have been made, or are likely to be made for several years, as to whether either House will need to move out of the Palace for a period to allow for essential work to take place. Although Parliament is distinct from Government, any large future project carried out on behalf of Parliament would follow normal public sector guidance on costing and evaluating all feasible options before funding is committed. These guidelines are set out in the *Treasury Green Book*. http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/green_book_complete.pdf