

MANAGEMENT BOARD**VISITOR MANAGEMENT REVIEW**

Paper from the Director General of Information Services

Purpose

1. Attached to this paper is a report of the visitor management review that has been conducted by the Parliamentary Visitor Board, which I chair. The report was considered and the recommendations endorsed by the Administration Committee (and the House Committee in the House of Lords) on 10 February. This paper highlights some key issues arising.

Conclusions and decisions

2. The Board is invited to take note of the paper.

Background and conduct of the review

3. The visitor management review met a remit to review arrangements following the opening of the Cromwell Green entrance in April 2008. In my opinion, the process of conducting a review has been very constructive and creative. It provided an opportunity to involve staff from a number of departments across both Houses on issues where it was vital that the different players look at the issues in a unified way.

4. The management of visitors highlights a number of tensions: the tension between efficient conduct of parliamentary business and our desire to be open to citizens who wish to see their Parliament in action; the tension between security and access; the tension between free flow of visitors and the need to maintain the fabric of the building; the tension between commercial considerations (especially for banqueting and the summer opening) and providing free facilities; the constraints of space and more.

5. The outcome has been agreement on a set of proposals that are likely to have far reaching consequences:

- For the first time, a system to match our capacity to receive visitors with the numbers we invite. I have raised this at a Board meeting before but it has only been through the review process that we have been able to get some traction on this issue
- A recognition that pressure is likely to continue to rise and that therefore we need to increase capacity. We will do this by exploring the feasibility of weekend opening and also the enhancement of security facilities in the Black Rod's Garden area
- A wide range of administrative improvements, including better training, review of the use of Westminster Hall, improved welcome for disabled visitors, better management information, review of the visitor services team, and better coordination between departments.

Many of the changes will be self-financing (e.g. weekend opening) but insofar as they are not (e.g. improved security facilities) will be subject to business case and budget approvals in the usual way.

John Pullinger

Director General of Information Services

February 2009

Parliamentary Visitor Board

VISITOR MANAGEMENT REVIEW

3 February 2009

Executive Summary

Introduction

Background

I Managing Visitor Demand

- **Current visitor priorities**
- **Volume of visitors**
- **Pattern of visits**
- **Categories of visitor**
- **Conservation and works issues**

II Managing Capacity

- **Other entrances**
- **Disabled access**
- **Weekend opening**

III Visitor Route

- **Background**
- **Summer opening**
- **Options for the Visitor Route**

Appendix A – Illustrative pattern of visits

Appendix B – Volume of visitors 2006-2008

Appendix C – Tour times

Appendix D – Other visitor management issues

Appendix E – Visitor Management Review details

Appendix F – Members' concerns

Parliamentary Visitor Board

VISITOR MANAGEMENT REVIEW**Executive Summary****The New Entrance: Overall**

- The Cromwell Green Entrance started full operations on 1 April 2008. It has improved the security of access; the quality of welcome; and the capacity of handling (500 per hour).
- The new route makes better use of Westminster Hall, providing better initial impact and a valuable “information hub”; an internal mustering/gathering point on entrance with toilets and café; and, as before, facilities and a place for those on tours to pause before leaving.

The Challenges**I Managing Visitor Demand**

- The level of visitors and security levels have risen since the new entrance was planned. Backlogs occur at peak times, mitigated for priority ‘business’ visitors by “fast track” procedures.
- At the back of the queue are visitors to the Public Galleries, where empty seats remain because visitors cannot get in.
- The problem is partly scale, but mainly peaks, particularly around the times that banqueting guests are arriving. Possible action might be to reduce the scale of banqueting events, for which numbers are increasing, particularly during the 3pm-7pm period (Monday to Wednesday) which coincides with committees and other meetings.
- Main elements are (both Houses) Members’ tours (130,000), Education groups (35,000), Banqueting (175,000), Galleries (180,000), other visitors to Committees, Members, meetings etc (380,000), Summer opening (90,000).

II Managing Capacity

- Cromwell Green is operating at capacity.
- Members’ tours were moved to this entrance for security reasons, rather than continuing at Sovereign’s Entrance under the initial plan.
- An increase in capacity of other entrances could help, e.g. Portcullis House (already some queues at busy times) - increase from 1 to 2 search lanes; Black Rod’s Garden (current capacity 150 per hour; used for invited visitors including banqueting; substantial queues at peak times) – an enlarged facility away from the building could help if this can be sited successfully in Black Rod’s Garden. There is a strong case, on security grounds alone, for investigating an enhancement of security facilities at the Lords end of the Palace.

- Weekend opening could spread or increase capacity, but could have cost and works programme implications. Alternative tours could be offered at certain times.

III Visitor Route

- In May 2007 the House of Lords House Committee supported turning the visitor route round to start in Westminster Hall and exit via Sovereign's Entrance. This was not supported by the Administration Committee in the House of Commons.
- The new route via Cromwell Green has brought the benefits of full use of Westminster Hall for all visitors but a system of "doubling-back" for those on tours; and a "pinch point" in the Princes Chamber which is a main transit route for Peers and Lords staff.
- Taking the increased security levels and volume of visitors into account, the options for the Visitor Route are:
 - Option A – Retain current Visitor Route arrangements, reduce number of visitors
 - Option B – Westminster Hall to Norman Porch, with new facilities
 - Option C – Norman Porch to Westminster Hall, with new search facility
 - Option D – Option B or C, but current arrangements for Summer Opening
- The Review's conclusions are:
 - a) **To retain the current Visitor Route arrangements in the short-term, the lack of facilities in Black Rod's Garden area being a major obstacle to any change.**
 - b) **To recommend a feasibility study of an enhanced, enlarged search facility in Black Rod's Garden area (Option C) as a long-term solution.**
 - c) **Unless and until new security facilities are in place, to cut the number of visitors invited at peak times by reviewing Commons banqueting arrangements to a level that enables gallery access on all but exceptional occasions.**
 - d) **To introduce weekend opening, if feasible, on a cost recovery basis (as with the Summer Opening Programme) ensuring there is no disruption to the works programme.**

Action:

1. **The Committee is invited to agree with the conclusions of the review.**
2. **The Committee is invited to note that officials will report back with the outcome of the further review items listed in Appendix D later in 2009.**

Parliamentary Visitor Board
3 February 2009

Visitor Management Review

A report by the Parliamentary Visitor Board

Introduction

1. Following the opening of the Cromwell Green Entrance to Parliament on 1 April 2008, officials undertook to report back to Members on the direction of the Visitor Route in the light of experience. The House of Lords House Committee in May 2007 had supported a proposal that the route start in Westminster Hall and exit via Sovereign's Entrance. The House of Commons Administration Committee was concerned about the lack of visitor facilities at Sovereign's Entrance and also about Members being able to meet constituents after a tour. Under the current arrangements, the Visitor Route starts and ends in Westminster Hall.
2. The Parliamentary Visitor Board has undertaken a review into this question in the wider context of visitor management. The review findings are presented under three headings:
 - I Managing visitor demand
 - II Managing capacity
 - III Visitor Route

Some related issues that arose during the course of the review are listed in Appendix D.

Members' views are sought on the conclusions and the questions posed at paragraphs 49 and 50 below, as summarised in the *Executive Summary*.

Background

3. Both Houses have a strategic objective that includes welcoming visitors to Parliament. Much progress has been made in recent years to improve services and facilities for visitors. Visitor access is based on these underlying principles:
 - Visitors to Parliament, whatever their reason for visiting, will have a positive and pleasant experience and feel welcomed
 - The Palace of Westminster is a working building: Parliament must be able to operate in a dignified and unimpeded manner
 - Security of the Parliamentary Estate, its occupants and visitors will be assured
 - The architectural and historic significance of the Palace of Westminster will be respected
4. The opening of the Cromwell Green Entrance has improved the quality and security of access. However, the security threat has heightened in recent years, and one must assume that this will remain so for the foreseeable future. The heightened security level has increased the time taken to search each visitor. With all three search lanes in operation, the current maximum capacity is around 500 per hour. In addition, the number of visitors is growing (around 985,000 in 2008), which presents challenges in managing the volume and ensuring the quality of visitors' experiences.
5. The current situation, with an increased level of visitors, is unsatisfactory. This paper examines the main challenges and identifies possible options. With security as a given, and having ensured that visitors are managed in the most efficient way (e.g. spreading the demand, optimising capacity), Parliament can manage the growing volume of visitors in one, or both, of the following ways:
 - Limiting the demand (e.g. restricting visitors, or categories of visitor)
 - Increasing the capacity of the access arrangements

I Managing visitor demand

Current visitor priorities

6. With most visitors now entering via Cromwell Green Entrance, a system of priorities was agreed by Members of both Houses. The current priorities, agreed by Committees, are:

Priority 1 - “Fast-track”:

- Visitors connected with the proceedings of the Houses in the Chambers and Committees, such as -
 - officials supporting Ministers
 - officials and witnesses to Committees
- Invited guests with an individual appointment with a Member

Priority 2 - Other invited guests:

- to meetings
- appointments with Members
- banqueting events
- Member-sponsored tours

Priority 3 - Other visitors:

- Lobbies
- Visitors to the public galleries, Committees and exhibitions

7. Members are understandably keen for their guests to gain access as swiftly as possible and, arguably, all have an equally legitimate reason for wanting to visit Parliament. The fast-track categories can on occasion cause difficulty. As noted above, only those invited guests with an individual appointment with a Member (as opposed to 20 guests attending a meeting, say) are entitled to be fast-tracked. This has to be enforced to avoid congestion of the fast-track lane.

8. Mr Speaker and the Lord Speaker are unhappy that the current prioritisation for access can lead to visitors for the public galleries being kept waiting, or even told to return an hour later, despite the availability of seats in the galleries.

Volume of visitors

9. The total number of visitors has risen year on year to around 985,000 in 2008. During busy periods, an influx of visitors (of different priorities) arrives around the same time, resulting in queues. Not only can this lead to frayed tempers and visitors arriving late for meetings and functions, but it also means that there is a significant wait for those in the “other visitors” category because others have priority through security. There have been complaints from visitors about queues, and from Members about delays in getting their guests through security.

10. Administrative arrangements have been reviewed, and professional “best-practice” advice sought, to ensure that Parliament is managing the volume of visitors efficiently using existing facilities.

Ultimately it would seem that Parliament is inviting/receiving more visitors than can be effectively processed by current arrangements.

Pattern of visitors

11. To a certain extent some queuing is unavoidable at peak times; the inevitable pressure caused by the weekly Parliamentary timetable naturally concentrates more “business” visitors on Monday

afternoons, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Tuesdays and Wednesdays are the two most congested days, when a large volume of Committees, Prime Minister's Questions, functions and tours coincide. There are exceptional days when there will be significant queues (e.g. Budget Day, mass lobby events).

12. The volume of visitors also varies during the course of the day. Although not all peaks can be predicted in advance, there are commonly peaks at 10am-11am, 3pm-5pm and 6pm-7pm. Illustrative statistics showing the pattern of visitors over the week, and during the course of the day, appear at Appendix A (although it should be noted that the hourly figures are limited by the approximate 500 per hour search capacity maximum, so indicate throughput not numbers arriving).

Categories of visitor

13. A table showing the number of visitors over the last three years, broken down by category, appears at Appendix B. Brief notes follow on the different categories of visitor.

Member-sponsored tours

14. Members (predominantly Commons Members) book tours for visitors through the Central Tours Office. Tours are available on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays, organised around the sittings of the Houses, as detailed at Appendix C.
15. Visitors on Member-sponsored tours now use the Cromwell Green Entrance rather than the Sovereign's Entrance (a change from the original planning, reflecting security needs). Given the overall increase in visitor numbers, and in order to ensure that all visitors were able to pass through security quickly and to access the Visitor Route, the morning maximum was reduced in May 2008 from 1,100 to 750 (Mondays and Tuesdays) and to 650 (Wednesdays).
16. There is a high demand from Members for tours, and the route is usually full. In addition, Members sometimes experience difficulties with other Members (a) bringing additional groups onto the route without a permit, and (b) writing letters to their guests indicating that they will be "fast-tracked". This exacerbates queuing and Visitor Route congestion, and, given the overall volume of visitors, can cause difficulties for those Members and their guests who follow the agreed procedures.

Functions, events and meetings

17. Events are organised at Parliament for a wide variety of purposes. An issue for consideration could be the extent to which banqueting, such as the large scale receptions between 4pm and 7pm (see below), is providing a facility largely of benefit to outside organisations rather than to Parliament and its Members. In practice, it would be difficult to make a meaningful distinction between permissible functions with a Parliamentary function and other events.

Banqueting

18. The banqueting operation in the House of Commons services approximately 1,500 events per year, attracting on average 100,000 guests each year. At peak levels, up to 1,200 guests per day can attend banqueting events; of these, up to 650 can be attending events starting between 4pm and 6pm. Guests are asked to allow 45 minutes to pass through security; this information is forwarded to event organisers when making a banqueting booking.
19. In the House of Lords, banqueting guests enter via Black Rod's Garden Entrance. While this avoids adding to queues at the Cromwell Green Entrance, the arrangement is not without problems. The Black Rod's Garden Entrance search facility can process approximately 150 visitors

per hour. The Cholmondeley Room and Terrace alone hosts receptions for around 200 people. Queues are common.

20. No limit is currently put on banqueting functions; the limit is simply the capacity of the available dining facilities. The consequences of this are that visitors attending functions at busy times of the day/week will themselves have to queue for significant periods, and that the queues will have a knock-on effect on the waiting times of lower priority visitors (including those wishing to visit the public galleries and/or Committees). It should be noted that the income generated from banqueting is significant, and that any adjustment to overall numbers would have financial consequences.

Education Service tours

21. Schools visiting Parliament as part of the Education Service programme currently enter via the Portcullis House Entrance. As their workshops currently take place in rooms in either Portcullis House or 1 Parliament Street this does not impact on visitors arriving at Cromwell Green Entrance. However, other schools visit on Member-sponsored tours organised via the Central Tours Office (CTO), and they enter via the Cromwell Green Entrance.
22. With the current accommodation available to the Education Service, its core programme has a maximum capacity of around 37,000 pupils per year. Future planning must take account of the planned expansion of the Education Service: when the dedicated Education Centre comes into operation (around 2012), education numbers are due to rise to 100,000 learners per year, but incorporating the approximately 40,000 school pupils who currently come on Member-sponsored tours.

Lobbies

23. Arrangements for managing mass lobbies are well-established, although those on the busiest days do have long waiting times (as lobbies are priority 3). This adds to the frustration experienced in the queues that form. Many of those involved have travelled a considerable distance or are elderly/infirm, and they find it difficult to accept the higher prioritisation afforded to some other guests. A number of those within mass lobbies also have timed appointments with Members.

Clock Tower tours

24. Clock Tower tours raise no particular issues for this review. They are deliberately not widely advertised, and are generally reserved for those with a particular interest (e.g. in horology). There are three tours a day, with a maximum of 48 visitors daily. Visitors enter through Portcullis House and this arrangement works well.

Conservation and works issues

25. Concerns have been raised during the course of the review in relation to the effect on maintenance, project and conservation work in the Palace of Westminster of the increasing number of visitors coming to Parliament. There is also concern about the impact of so many visitors on the fabric of the building (e.g. on the floor tiles in Central Lobby). Any development of a revised strategy will need to bear these concerns in mind. Discussions are already underway among officials to improve coordination and communication to ensure a smooth relationship between the needs of the works and visitor programmes.

II Managing capacity

Other entrances

26. Cromwell Green Entrance is currently working at capacity; there is no scope for increasing the number of search lanes at that entrance. The other entrances to Parliament have been examined as part of this review, to investigate whether capacity could be increased elsewhere.

Black Rod's Garden Entrance and Sovereign's Entrance

27. One search lane is operational at Black Rod's Garden Entrance, which is used by visitors to:

- House of Lords banqueting functions
- House of Lords meetings (individual and mass)
- House of Lords exhibitions
- Parliamentary Archives

28. The search facility can process 150 visitors per hour. Queues occur at busy times. When advance notice is given of large functions in the House of Lords, an additional search point can be provided at Sovereign's Entrance, but this requires additional Police staff time so cannot be provided on an *ad hoc* basis. Both these search facilities are inside the perimeter of the building, which is undesirable from a security point of view. Improving and expanding the Garden Entrance search facility in its current location inside the building is therefore not an option.

29. The provision of a new search facility in the area of Black Rod's Garden would bring two significant benefits: it would substantially upgrade the search facilities at this end of the Palace, and also take some pressure off of the Cromwell Green Entrance. Any new construction would have to create a facility which could process at least 300 visitors per hour (i.e. two search lanes minimum). Conservation and facilities staff would have an interest in any plans for a further external security facility, as the Palace is a Grade 1 listed building. While further study would be required to examine the feasibility of such a provision, initial work has identified three potential options (one short-term, and two requiring significant construction):

- Exploratory work is already underway to consolidate all deliveries to the Palace at an offsite centre. This project, which would not be completed until 2011, would significantly reduce the number of contractors and delivery vehicles entering through Black Rod's Garden vehicle entrance. This could create space for an external search facility to be located in the Garden.
- Similarly, the use of an offsite consolidation centre would allow remodelling of the Garden to take place with the provision of permanent buildings providing visitor access and, potentially, further visitor facilities (e.g. toilets).
- If space in Black Rod's Garden is not available, a building on (or under) Victoria Tower Gardens, with pedestrian access across (or under) Black Rod's Garden might be feasible. This would require the cooperation of the Royal Parks.

30. The House of Lords House Committee has already ruled out a fourth option - a tunnel under Abingdon Street - on the grounds of cost and practicality, making a more remote search facility unfeasible.

31. There is a strong case, on security grounds alone, for investigating an enhancement of security facilities at the Lords end of the Palace of Westminster.

Peers' Entrance

32. A search facility is operational at Peers' Entrance for Peers' escorted visitors only. It is not suitable for large volumes of visitors. The search facility is inside the building and therefore sub-optimal, so again, from a security point of view, it would not be possible to upgrade the facilities where they are. Security interests suggest that this entrance should be used by Members only.

Alternatively, a case could be made for a feasibility study on developing this entrance to improve disabled access to the Palace (see below).

Portcullis House Entrance

33. Portcullis House currently has one operational search lane and receives the following categories of visitor:
- Visitors to select committee and other meetings in Portcullis House
 - School groups on Parliament's Education Service programme
 - Visitors meeting Members (individual and mass)
 - Large events in the Attlee Suite
34. At busy times, queues occur, particularly when there is a large event in the Attlee Suite. The access arrangements at Portcullis House are frequently working beyond capacity but the impact of delays is not generally as visible. A business case for a project to reconfigure the entrance at Portcullis House is currently underway. The primary aim is to upgrade the security of the reception area, with a secondary driver being an improvement in the throughput rate for visitors (by providing two operational search lanes and better visitor flow).

1 Parliament Street

35. There is one search lane at 1 Parliament Street for escorted visitors. This entrance is sometimes used by escorted visitors (to Select Committees etc) to gain access to Portcullis House if there are long delays. It is not currently suitable for large volumes of visitors. Again, as the entrance is inside the building, significant upgrading of the facility is not recommended.

Disabled Access

36. Disabled (physical) access to the Palace was built into the design of the Cromwell Green Entrance. Wheelchair users can then be escorted further on tours, to the public galleries, and to the Committee Corridor, although arrangements are less than ideal. There are particular problems with the availability of escorts for wheelchair users attending evening functions.
37. In terms of learning disability and visual and hearing impairments, much could be done to improve equality of access and understanding, by addressing, for example, the format of information resources and staff training.
38. Whilst there are security and heritage restraints to consider, it is likely that improvements could be made with regard to disabled access. Officials propose to conduct a review of this area.

Weekend opening

39. The question of weekend opening has been raised before as a possible way of addressing capacity issues. Experience of running the summer opening programme proves that it is much easier to run tours when the Houses are not sitting and there are no "business" visitors around. The increased costs of security and staff (including support, cleaning etc.) could be covered by charging, in the same way as Summer Opening tours as sold. Concerns have been raised, primarily from:
- security - any move to extended weekend working is likely to require renegotiating shift working patterns, (rather than covering it on overtime, as currently);¹ and
 - conservation and works - the effect on the works programme if public access is extended.

¹ The renegotiation of the security contract is about to commence with contract re-let expected in early 2010. The opportunity to factor in any core change of requirement therefore exists.

40. However, the proposal for weekend opening has already been agreed in principle by both Houses, and a costed business case is being prepared. The point has been made that it is unusual for a building of such national interest to be closed at weekends; it is rare among western Parliaments and other domestic legislative bodies. With better communication, coordination and flexibility the needs of works and maintenance should be able to be accommodated. Alternative tours could also be offered at certain times (see also paragraph 46 below). Part of any consideration of weekend opening/alternative tours would be consideration of whether Blue Badge Guides could be used in the same way as for Summer Opening.

III Visitor Route

Background

41. When the Cromwell Green Entrance was originally conceived, it was planned that the Sovereign's Entrance would continue to be the entry point for tours. It was subsequently decided, following security advice that search facilities should be located outside the building, that tours would also enter via the Cromwell Green Entrance.
42. Since its opening, tour groups have entered via the Cromwell Green Entrance and the Visitor Route has started and ended in Westminster Hall. Tour groups are met in Westminster Hall and walked by their guides to the historical start of the route at the Norman Porch. This solution was introduced on a trial basis with a commitment to review in light of experience.
43. The large area and the availability of facilities in Westminster Hall are useful both at the start and at the end of a tour. As an entrance, it provides a wonderful first impression and also fulfils the practical need to sort, direct and organise the different categories of visitor and to provide toilet facilities. At the end of a tour, it provides the space for refreshments, a shop, toilets, exhibitions, and the opportunity to linger and seek further information. (It is the norm for such facilities to be at the end of a visit). It is also a convenient location for Members to meet visitors with appointments.
44. Some concerns, however, have been raised about "doubling-back" and about "pinch-points" on the route, and it has been suggested that the route should start at one end of the Palace and finish at the other. In fact, "doubling back" has operated as standard practice in the House of Commons Members' Lobby and Picture Corridor for many years without difficulty. The situation at the House of Lords end is complicated by the fact that the Prince's Chamber is a principal transit route for Members and staff of that House; it is this area which is causing most concern. If resolution here can be found it will alleviate matters. The experience of Summer Opening, as shown below, gives hope that simple measures may produce good effects. Also, a shortened route could be introduced at the busiest times, omitting the Royal Apartments.²
45. If the decision were taken that the Visitor Route should run in one direction, this would have to be accompanied by the provision of facilities, of some sort, around Black Rod's Garden. If this were the start of the Visitor Route, enhanced search facilities would be required (see paragraph 30 above). If this were the end of the Visitor Route, some limited provision of toilets, and maybe a shop, would be expected, and this would suggest the creation of space within the building or in Black Rod's Garden. It is less desirable that the route should finish at the south end of the Palace, as tour visitors who had a subsequent appointment inside the Palace (mainly Commons visitors) would either have to be met at a convenient place or escorted back to Central Lobby/Westminster

² Advice from visitor management professionals suggests in any case, that more flexible, alternative and shorter tours should be on offer to suit different visitor needs.

Hall. It would also present a particular problem for school groups on the Education Service programme. To have school groups doubling-back either outside the Palace or through the courtyards in order to reach the location of their education workshop is not a feasible option.

Summer Opening

46. A case might be made for deciding on a one-way route for tours during sitting times, but retaining the current arrangements for the Summer Opening programme. During the summer, when there is a far higher throughput of visitors, there are fewer problems on the route (due to less conflict with staff and business visitors moving about the Palace and better group management by the professional Blue Badge Guides). The use of Westminster Hall at both the start of the tour (for organising groups and using toilets etc.) and the end of the tour (for information, using toilets and cafeteria, visiting the shop, browsing the exhibition) was particularly appreciated when this arrangement was introduced for the first time during the 2008 Summer Opening.

Options for Visitor Route

47. Four options for the Visitor Route are examined below. In brief they are:

- Option A – Retain current Visitor Route arrangements, reduce number of visitors
- Option B – Westminster Hall to Norman Porch, with new facilities
- Option C – Norman Porch to Westminster Hall, with new search facility
- Option D – Option B or C, but current arrangements for Summer Opening

48. The current search facility at Black Rod's Garden Entrance could not deal with the volume of tour visitors, and it is also inside the building. The option of tour groups entering through the existing Black Rod's Garden Entrance is therefore discounted on security grounds.

Option A – Retain current Visitor Route arrangements, reduce number of visitors

<i>Description</i>	Westminster Hall → → → → → Norman Porch → House of Lords → House of Commons → St Stephen's → exit Westminster Hall
<i>Facilities required</i>	No extra facilities required
<i>Financial impact</i>	Decrease in banqueting income (and implications for catering subsidy)
<i>Advantages</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retains use of Westminster Hall as useful space, with visitor facilities, both at start and end of tour • Mustering of groups under cover • Westminster Hall as "information hub" at the end of tour (more natural time to dwell and seek further information, also access to exhibitions etc) • Visitor route follows historical route • Retains use of Westminster Hall as convenient place for (House of Commons) Members to meet guests
<i>Disadvantages</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not relieve pressure at Cromwell Green Entrance • Increased traffic on Visitor Route; particularly in Lords areas • Effect on fabric of building • Less convenient for elderly and disabled visitors

Other issues

- Restrictions on House of Commons banqueting at certain times
- Greater need to manage tour groups effectively; improved guide training could mitigate against congestion on route

Option B – Westminster Hall to Norman Porch, with new facilities

<i>Description</i>	Westminster Hall → St Stephen's → House of Commons → House of Lords → Norman Porch
<i>Facilities required</i>	At end of route: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toilets • Cafeteria/refreshments • Shop/kiosk • Waiting/meeting area
<i>Financial impact</i>	Building costs: a project would have to be commissioned to provide facilities. Staff costs (to staff facilities – could be offset by revenue).
<i>Advantages</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Westminster Hall can continue to be used to organise tour groups • No doubling-back in Lords areas
<i>Disadvantages</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No facilities currently at Norman Porch • Does not relieve pressure on Cromwell Green Entrance • Lose use of Westminster Hall as “information hub” at the end of tour (more natural time to dwell and seek further information) • Exhibitions cannot be viewed at leisure • Visitors with appointments following tours would have to be escorted back to Central Lobby/ Westminster Hall. (It is not desirable to have visitors enter through security again) • As the pre-sitting security sweep of the Chambers would have to be reversed, starting with the Commons Chamber, that Chamber would be closed for <i>ad hoc</i> viewings by Members approx. 1 hour earlier than at present • It would also take (approx. 1 hour) longer for tours to clear from the Royal Gallery, Prince's Chamber, Robing Room (which are used as a working area by Peers) • Members of the Commons would have to meet visitors at the end of the route (on the street, or would need to provide waiting area) • Exit via Sovereign's Steps not ideal
<i>Other issues</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special arrangements would have to be made for school groups on Education Service programme

Option C – Norman Porch to Westminster Hall, with new search facility

<i>Description</i>	Norman Porch → House of Lords → House of Commons → St Stephen's → exit Westminster Hall
<i>Facilities required</i>	At start of route: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • external search facilities - 2 lanes minimum (see paragraph 30 above) • ideally, also toilet facilities
<i>Financial impact</i>	Building/security costs: a project would have to be commissioned to construct a search facility outside the building. Increased staff costs (to staff enhanced search facility).
<i>Advantages</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would substantially improve security facilities at Lords end of Palace • Tour groups could be separated from other visitors (as was originally intended) and noticeably reduce (but not eliminate) queuing at Cromwell Green Entrance at certain times • Improved search facility would benefit Lords' guests who currently experience queues at Black Rod's Garden Entrance • No doubling-back through Lords areas • Westminster Hall as "information hub" at the end of tour (more natural time to dwell and seek further information) • Other visitor facilities already in situ (café, toilets, shop, exhibitions) • Visitor route follows historical route • Retain Westminster Hall as convenient place for (House of Commons) Members to meet guests • Presents a long-term solution rather than a quick fix
<i>Disadvantages</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not an immediate solution • Tours would have to muster outside
<i>Other issues</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longer-term issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Planning/heritage issues in using Black Rod's Garden ○ A route from the new search facility to start of route would have to be established

Option D – Option B or C, but option A for Summer Opening

<i>Description</i>	Single direction visitor route during sitting weeks, but keeping current arrangements for Summer Opening
<i>Facilities required</i>	As for Options B or C
<i>Financial impact</i>	As for Options B or C
<i>Advantages</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Westminster Hall particularly well suited to summer opening arrangements (both at start and end of tours) • Meets the expectations of paying visitors; less risk to reputation of Parliament
<i>Disadvantages</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doubling-back in Lords areas • Increased footfall in certain areas (might require conservation impact analysis)
<i>Other issues</i>	The expectations of visitors paying market rates for admission (currently £12 per head) differ from those offered a tour for free and it would be less acceptable for them to see that there are facilities available on entry, when they are pressed for time, (shop, café, exhibitions etc) which they will subsequently not be able to use after their tour at their leisure. The volumes of visitors required during Summer to achieve financial break even are such that re-entry via the search would have to be refused.

Visitor Route: conclusions

49. The Review's conclusions are:

- a) **To retain the current Visitor Route arrangements in the short-term, the lack of facilities in Black Rod's Garden area being a major obstacle to any change.**
- b) **To recommend a feasibility study of an enhanced, enlarged search facility in Black Rod's Garden area (Option C) as a long-term solution.**
- c) **Unless and until new security facilities are in place, to cut the number of visitors invited at peak times by reviewing Commons banqueting arrangements to a level that enables gallery access on all but exceptional occasions.**
- d) **To introduce weekend opening, if feasible, on a cost recovery basis (as with the Summer Opening Programme) ensuring there is no disruption to the works programme.**

50. Action:

- 1) **The Committee is invited to agree with the conclusions of the review.**
- 2) **The Committee is invited to note that officials will report back with the outcome of the further review items listed in Appendix D later in 2009.**

Parliamentary Visitor Board
3 February 2009

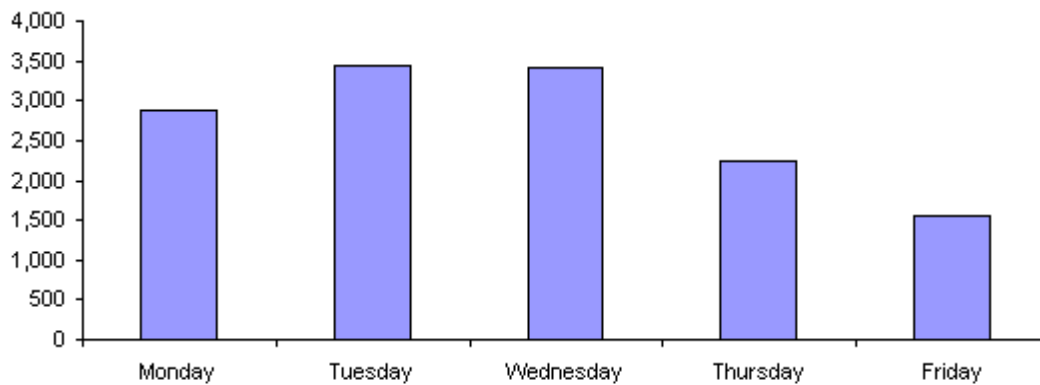
Appendix A – Illustrative pattern of visits

Cromwell Green Entrance statistics over five week period 21.4.08-23.5.08

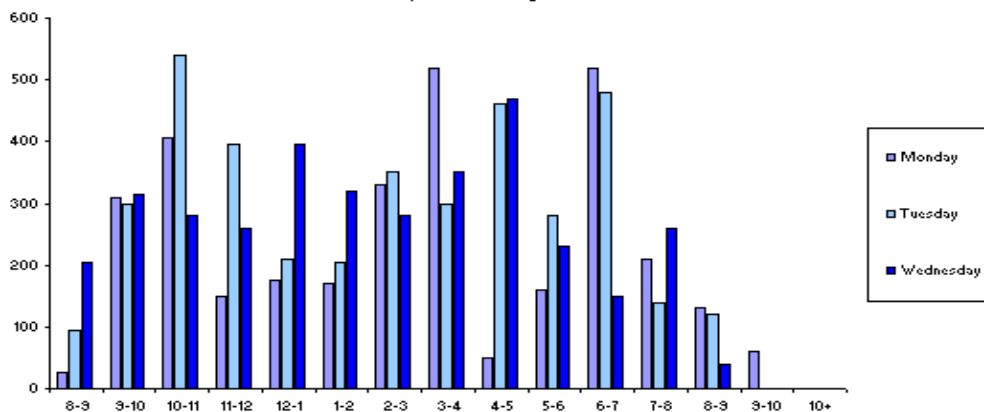
Visitor Admissions (Monday to Friday)
Week commencing

	21-Apr	28-Apr	05-May	12-May	19-May	Average
Monday	2,522	3,004	-	2,758	3,221	2,876
Tuesday	3,795	3,146	2,972	3,269	3,926	3,442
Wednesday	3,497	2,920	3,395	3,642	3,557	3,402
Thursday	2,423	2,227	2,437	2,186	1,939	2,242
Friday	2,104	1,673	1,405	1,296	1,342	1,564
Mon-Fri	14,341	12,970	10,209	13,151	13,985	13,506

Average visitor admissions by day of the week
5 weeks beginning 21 April to 19 May 2008



Visitor Admissions at hourly intervals
19, 20 & 21 May 2008



Note: Figures relate to throughput, which is limited by maximum capacity of approximately 500 per hour, so do not reflect number of visitors arriving and queues that may exist during these hourly periods

Appendix B – Volume of visitors 2006-2008

Table 1: Profile of visitors to the Parliamentary Estate, 2006 to 2008

	2006	2007	2008
Total estimated visitors¹	890,460	962,410	984,560
Of whom ² :			
Took a Member-sponsored tour	127,740	133,530	129,050
Took a Summer opening tour	87,290	89,060	90,840
Undertook an Education Services visit	10,970	24,140	33,390
Visited House of Commons gallery	110,720	110,980	111,310
Visited House of Lords gallery	59,320	60,360	67,350
Used House of Commons Banqueting	107,990	105,560	109,820
Used House of Lords Banqueting	51,600	61,920	65,960
Residual ³	334,830	376,860	376,850

1 Visitors passing through metal search arches at Parliamentary Estate entry points. Excludes Parliament Street, Westminster House and Millbank House as arch counters unavailable at these sites.

2 These categories are not mutually exclusive, visitors may undertake multiple activities during a visit.

3 This number can be viewed as the minimum number of visitors who entered the Parliamentary Estate for purposes for which detailed data are not available, e.g. pre-arranged meetings with Members.

Table 2

Estimated visitors passing through metal search arches at Parliamentary Estate entry points' 2006 to 2008

	Jan-08	Feb-08	Mar-08	Apr-08	May-08	Jun-08	Jul-08	Aug-08	Sep-08	Oct-08	Nov-08	Dec-08	Total
Black Rod's Gardens	8,944	9,515	9,253	9,038	9,301	12,665	12,633	2,432	6,555	14,147	11,040	7,060	112,583
Derby Gate	1,675	1,612	1,578	1,851	1,822	1,940	1,861	1,321	1,719	1,897	1,401	1,655	20,332
Fielden House	1,032	887	908	934	764	1,081	1,069	611	745	1,127	1,131	939	11,228
Norman Porch	8,058	13,441	11,727	1,273	-	1,031	95	-	-	-	-	-	35,625
Peers' Entrance	2,927	1,625	-	2,729	2,825	4,550	3,771	285	770	4,401	4,262	2,812	30,957
Portcullis House	18,172	15,898	17,575	14,400	13,970	17,850	19,300	4,681	11,990	21,959	18,779	12,717	187,291
Cromwell Green Ent.	-	-	-	47,952	45,554	67,874	58,595	58,033	51,412	54,659	47,338	29,483	460,900
St.Stephen's Entrance	33,930	39,789	43,902	7,056	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	124,677
Total	74,738	82,767	84,943	85,233	74,236	106,991	97,324	67,363	73,191	98,190	83,951	54,666	983,593
	Jan-07	Feb-07	Mar-07	Apr-07	May-07	Jun-07	Jul-07	Aug-07	Sep-07	Oct-07	Nov-07	Dec-07	Total
Black Rod's Gardens	7,745	6,710	2,702	7,330	9,902	12,574	10,892	6,092	8,282	11,871	11,638	6,022	101,760
Derby Gate	1,838	1,579	2,016	1,494	1,859	5,132	3,600	2,303	2,334	1,928	1,660	1,314	27,057
Fielden House	1,016	662	656	639	874	1,172	1,056	321	866	732	1,073	824	9,891
Norman Porch	6,907	10,206	5,102	10,128	-	-	-	-	-	13,469	9,876	4,344	60,032
Peers' Entrance	2,609	2,760	2,436	5,879	3,001	3,272	3,250	1,492	461	2,952	3,094	2,188	33,394
Portcullis House	15,817	14,265	16,480	11,012	14,457	16,937	15,600	9,697	10,916	16,478	18,407	11,850	171,916
St Stephen's Entrance	37,771	34,351	47,076	30,051	48,717	49,978	56,612	73,776	60,546	45,765	45,480	28,233	558,356
Total	73,703	70,533	76,468	66,533	78,810	89,065	91,010	93,681	83,405	93,195	91,228	54,775	962,406
	Jan-06	Feb-06	Mar-06	Apr-06	May-06	Jun-06	Jul-06	Aug-06	Sep-06	Oct-06	Nov-06	Dec-06	Total
Black Rod's Gardens	5,378	6,253	14,929	5,232	7,833	10,010	8,838	2,210	6,248	10,483	10,738	4,512	92,664

Derby Gate	1,621	2,052	2,130	1,264	1,828	2,245	2,545	2,169	2,124	2,368	1,993	1,095	23,434
Fielden House	1,289	976	1,533	621	928	903	982	631	717	853	820	623	10,876
Norman Porch	3,465	1,009	1,742	9,842	962	3,528	-	-	9,236	7,946	5,363	-	43,093
Peers' Entrance	2,411	2,742	3,464	1,436	2,914	3,689	3,623	122	386	2,986	2,904	1,517	28,194
Portcullis House	13,765	15,889	17,077	9,760	14,670	19,208	18,164	5,381	11,268	15,528	20,655	9,021	170,386
St Stephen's Entrance	29,496	49,789	46,201	21,773	43,019	50,027	59,184	49,569	56,368	46,771	47,370	22,241	521,808
Total	57,425	78,710	87,076	49,928	72,154	89,610	93,336	60,082	86,347	86,935	89,843	39,009	890,455

1 Excluding Parliament Street, Westminster House and Millbank House as arch counters unavailable at these sites.

2. Missing data for Norman Porch entrance in 2007 are included in the St Stephen's entrance estimates

(-) missing values

Collection of Data

Reliable data regarding the number and type of visitors to Parliament can play a significant role in understanding the various demands on the capacity of the estate and hence the management of visits. This in turn will impact on the visitor's experience of Parliament and their opinion of the institution. The table in Appendix A presents the detail which is available from a range of sources across both Houses. The analysis undertaken for this review has highlighted a number of limitations of the available data, specifically:

- total visitor numbers are difficult to establish because not all entrances have the capability to count people;
- reliable data are available for only a relatively small sub-set of specific purposes of visit (where supporting administrative systems, e.g. for banqueting, make estimates possible);
- it is not currently possible to estimate the number of visitors attending for other specific purposes, which makes it difficult to take well-founded decisions about possible responses e.g. setting caps on particular visitor categories;
- there are gaps in some of the historic data, which makes comparisons over time difficult;
- there is a lack of strong central coordination of visitor data collection, which makes both the ownership of data quality and addressing these limitations more difficult.

Improving visitor data coverage and quality needs to trade off the costs (including possible adverse impact on the visitor experience of further data collection) with the benefits for visitor management. It is proposed that the central coordination of visitor data collection is improved with a view to improving the quality assurance of existing data and to identifying ways in which visitor data coverage and quality can be improved.

Appendix C – Tour times

Note: Times given below are start times. Tours commence every four minutes and last 75 minutes.

Tour times in session

Monday and Tuesday	9am-12pm (full tour)
Wednesday	9am-9.20am (full tour) and 9.25am-12pm (partial tour of Lords only)
Thursday	no tours
Friday	3.30pm-5pm (full tour)

Non-sitting days & recesses

Non-sitting Fridays:	9.30am-5pm
Christmas / New Year	Closed
Easter & Spring Weekdays	9.30am-5pm
Whitsun Recess Weekdays	9.30am-5pm
Prorogation	no tours

Summer recess (Member-sponsored tours)

<i>July and August -</i>	
Wednesdays & Thursdays	9.30am-12noon
<i>September and October –</i>	
Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Thursdays	9.30am-12noon

Summer Opening Programme (paying visitors)

Mondays to Saturdays	9.15am-4.30pm
----------------------	---------------

Appendix D - Other visitor management issues

The Parliamentary Visitor Board will also consider the following issues over the course of the year and report back to Members in due course:

a) **Guide-related issues**

- Proposal to introduce improved training and certification for in-house guides
- All school groups to have a curriculum-linked tour
- Banqueting tours to be administered by Central Tours Office
- Measures to prevent unofficial tours being sold (through the internet and elsewhere)

b) **Westminster Hall**

- Use and layout of the Hall
- Exhibitions (including King's Table exhibition)
- Location of information desk
- Provision of monitors showing footage from Chambers, Committees

c) **Disabled access**

Improve access and facilities for disabled visitors

d) **Collection of data**

Proposal to improve arrangements of data collection (currently no central reliable source)

e) **Review of Visitor Services**

Visitor Services (based in the House of Commons but funded by both Houses) has grown rapidly since the Central Tours Office was first established in 2003 and the first Visitor Assistants recruited in 2005. A review is planned to include:

- Role and function of Visitor Services, and management of the Visitor Route
- Introduction of different types of tour, e.g. standard, short (public areas), themed visits, talks
- Structure and staffing of Visitor Services, and strategic and operational links with other departments/offices
- Arrangements over general election periods

f) **Works programme**

Improve coordination and communication between visitor management, security, curators and planned works programme.

Appendix E – Visitor Management Review

The review was undertaken by the Parliamentary Visitor Board between November 2008 and January 2009.

Parliamentary Visitor Board members

John Pullinger (Chair)	<i>Librarian and Director General, Dept of Information Services, HC</i>
Mel Barlex	<i>Director of Estates, Dept of Facilities, HC</i>
John Borley	<i>Director General, Dept of Facilities, HC</i>
Liz Hallam-Smith	<i>Director of Information Services and Librarian, HL</i>
Jill Pay	<i>Serjeant at Arms</i>
Phil Reed	<i>Director, Cabinet War Rooms (external member)</i>
Aileen Walker	<i>Director of Public Information, HC</i>
Sir Michael Willcocks	<i>Black Rod</i>
Robert Wilson	<i>Principal Clerk of Select Committees, HC</i>

Terms of Reference for the Review

To conduct a review of the management of visitors to Parliament following the opening of the Cromwell Green Entrance, with specific reference to:

1. **Visitor route** – including the operation of the new Cromwell Green Entrance; and options for the use of Westminster Hall bearing in mind its status as a World Heritage Site
2. **Managing visitor demand** – including investigation of the number of visitors in different categories and their competing demands; visitor priorities; access to the public galleries
3. **Managing capacity** – including the feasibility of weekend opening; the use of other access points (e.g. Portcullis House, Black Rod's Garden Entrance, Sovereign's Entrance); capacity limits and potential improvements

To report to relevant committees in both Houses.

Information collection (Dec 2008/Jan 2009)

In addition to members of the Parliamentary Visitor Board, the following offices/services had input to the information collection exercise:

- Deputy Serjeant at Arms (Mike Naworynsky)
- Yeoman Usher (Hedley Duncan)
- Visitor Services (Victor Launert, Steve Catherall, visitor assistants)
- Police/security (Insp Andy Richford, Insp Ron Tucker, Sgt Mark Smith)
- HC Refreshments (Sue Harrison, Robert Gibb)
- HL Refreshments (Tim Lamming, Chris Hever)
- Education Service (Tom O'Leary, Katharine Lee)
- HC Dept of Facilities (Steve Beck, Lester Benjamin)
- Conservation architect (Adam Watrobski)
- Curator's Office (Malcolm Hay, Melanie Unwin)
- Events Team (Steve Stockwell)
- Clock Tower Tours (Amanda Leck)
- Legal Services Office (Megan Forbes, Helen Emes)

External advisors consulted:

- Michael Jolly CBE (Commissioner - English Heritage)
- Ken Robinson CBE (Consultant in tourism, Chair - Visitor Attractions Forum)
- Prof John J. Lennon (Moffat Professor Travel and Tourism Business Development Glasgow Caledonian University)
- Blue Badge Guides (from summer opening)³

³ After the Summer Opening 2008 the Blue Badge Guides were surveyed on their experiences of the hybrid trial and asked for their professional opinion. Asked the question - "All things considered, do you feel that arrangements along the Route worked this summer?" 100% answered "Yes". Asked the question - "All things considered, would you support a complete reversal of the Route (i.e. ending at Sovereign's Entrance)?" , 91.2% said "No", 5.3% said "Don't know, and 3.5% said "Yes".

Appendix F – Members' concerns

Members who have raised concerns relevant to the review include:

Sir Patrick Cormack MP

Sir Patrick was in favour of the Visitor Route running from the Norman Porch to Westminster Hall, even if this meant developing a new search facility in the vicinity of Black Rod's Garden.

Jim Fitzpatrick MP

Mr Fitzpatrick (in advance of the opening of the Cromwell Green Entrance) reported guide concerns about "pinch points" on the line of route and about the capacity of the Cromwell Green Entrance to accommodate tours and other visitors.

Baroness Gibson of Market Rasen and Lord Hoyle of Warrington

Baroness Gibson and Lord Hoyle were interested in exploring whether Members could use Blue Badge Guides for their tours.

Sir Alan Haselhurst MP

Sir Alan was unhappy about the change to the Visitor Route and about tour groups now mixing with other visitors at the Cromwell Green Entrance.