



Foreign Affairs Committee

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Sir Simon McDonald, KCMG, KCVO
Permanent Under Secretary
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
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19 July 2018

Dear Sir Simon,

Thank you for your letter of 12 July 2018 giving the FCO's latest corporate update.

Your update makes a number of points about estates. I was surprised, however, that it did not refer to what I understand to be the imminent closure of the UK's Washington Embassy for refurbishment. Can you let the Committee know:

- Which buildings will close; when; for how long; for what purpose; and at what cost.
- What contingency arrangements will be made while the buildings are closed.
- Whether those contingency arrangements will provide facilities for business and hospitality purposes of an equivalent capacity and quality as the Embassy.

This is a critical time for the UK's relations with the US. We need to do everything we can to influence the current US administration to continue to engage with NATO, the UN and other multilateral bodies. And as the UK leaves the EU, our ability to foster good trade links with the US has never been more vital. The impressive Embassy is an extremely important diplomatic tool in helping us to shape opinion and explain the UK's perspective. In that context, can you explain why the decision has been taken now to move out of it? Further, can you set out what steps the FCO will be taking to ensure that without access to the Embassy, our post in Washington suffers no diminution in its ability to help deliver the UK's strategic priorities?

Tom Tugendhat MP
Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee