



HOUSE COMMITTEE

2015 ANNIVERSARIES: AN UPDATE

Memorandum by the Director of Information Services and Librarian

<i>Issue previously considered by</i>	House Committee on 21 May
<i>For decision or information</i>	For information
<i>Decision(s) before the Committee</i>	N/A

1. This paper outlines progress to date on marking two significant anniversaries in 2015: 750 years since Simon de Montfort’s parliament and 800 since the sealing of Magna Carta.
2. This paper updates the House Committee on plans emerging across the two Houses, and explains the management and funding model. The Committee is invited to note it, and if it wishes, to provide comment and advice.

Parliament Week

3. The management and funding model for the 2015 Anniversaries builds on arrangements for the annual Parliament Week. Since 2011 the two Houses have been supporting this week-long programme of events and activities, held in November. This aims to inspire, inform and connect people across the UK with Parliament and democracy, and provides a helpful focus for public engagement work for both Houses.
4. Parliament Week is planned and run by the House of Commons Public Engagement team. The House of Lords does not fund this team: it is wholly funded by the House of Commons; and much of the activity is undertaken by over 100 partner organisations.
5. Two House of Lords Offices, the Parliamentary Archives and the Information Office, work with our Members and support Lords participation, as part of our public engagement remit, as do the Parliamentary Outreach and Education Services. This is done within existing budgets.
6. Members of both Houses have provided advice and support to the teams running these events. Lords Members have given lectures, have filmed interviews for the website, and have participated in a range of events and panel discussions.

7. This year's Parliament Week will take place from 15-21 November, and part of the programme will focus on the theme of Women in Democracy.

Commemorative Events in 2014

8. To mark the centenary of the outbreak of World War I in 2014, some commemorative events are being planned by the House of Commons Public Engagement Team, the Parliamentary Archives and the House of Lords Information Office. This work will link in with Parliament Week 2014.
9. Members of both Houses with a particular interest in this subject are advising these teams.

'Year of Parliament' 2015

10. In 2011 the House Committee stated that it would like the Administration to bring forward appropriate plans to mark 2015 – the 750th anniversary of the Simon de Montfort Parliament and the 800th Anniversary of the sealing of Magna Carta. It noted that a loyal address was presented to the Queen in 1965 to mark the 700th anniversary of the de Montfort Parliament.
11. In June 2012, the Lords Management Board considered the 2015 Anniversaries and while supporting the principle of marking them, agreed that 'a selective and moderate approach should be taken to [them], keeping in mind other activities that would take priority for the Administration in 2015.'
12. The House of Commons has by contrast adopted the idea of a 'Year of Parliament', to mark both anniversaries, as a key strategic goal of their House and Administration. This will build on the Parliament Week approach and funding model. They are therefore currently giving this initiative higher priority than is the House of Lords.
13. Initial work has now taken place by both Administrations to scope out a possible and suitable programme of events.

Initial Plans for 2015

14. The proposed theme for public engagement for the whole year is a journey to democracy and the rule of law over 800 years. Initial ideas for groupings of events are as follows:
 - January-March – events to mark Simon de Montfort's Parliament; these could include a loyal address to the sovereign, as in 1965, an event for the 'shires' in Westminster Abbey, a lecture series
 - [May – General Election]

- June-September – events to mark Magna Carta; these could include educational , library and archival programmes with partners, a multi-faith service, an event with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
- November – Parliament Week – themed around democracy and the rule of law over the next 800 years

15. More lively and ambitious ideas put forward by the Commons Public Engagement team, which would need partnership and external funding, include:

- Decorating Westminster Hall with banners
- Projections relating to the past 800 years on the outside of the Palace of Westminster
- A giant birthday cake to put key messages across in an accessible way
- Encouraging a record-breaking sized schools assembly

Member Involvement

16. An informal group of Members of both Houses is advising the two Speakers on shaping the programme: Current membership is:

- L Bew (co-chair)
- Hugh Bayley MP
- Sir Malcolm Bruce MP
- Prof David Carpenter (external advisor)
- L Cormack
- Frank Doran MP
- Canon Jane Hedges (external advisor)
- Tristram Hunt MP (co-chair)
- L Kirkwood of Kirkhope
- Eleanor Laing MP
- Peter Luff MP
- B Massey of Darwen
- L McNally
- L Mitchell
- L Newby
- Chris Skidmore MP
- Plus officials from both Houses

17. Their initial steer is that the programme should:

- Reflect the whole UK, not just England
- Build strongly on Commonwealth and international dimensions, especially of Magna Carta
- Prioritise on the main themes and downplay other anniversaries (e.g. Agincourt, Waterloo)
- Develop more arts and cultural content
- Tie in with the 2015 Peers in Schools programme
- Produce a resource/briefing pack for Members
- Take account of current financial constraints

Resource Implications

18. Despite the difference in the emphasis between the two Administrations in the priority given to the 2015 celebrations, we have agreed the principle is that **this should be within existing budget envelopes**: any additional spend must be covered by partnership, sponsorship or grants.
19. This approach meshes strongly with the advice of the group of Members. It would in practice mean that any major ceremonial events, such as a loyal address to the sovereign, would not be funded by the 2015 programme budget.
20. Its practical implications are different in each House. The House of Commons has larger budgets to spend, and despite having made savings in its public-facing and support services, has more flexibility in this regard than does the House of Lords.
21. However, the two lead Offices on the Lords side have existing public engagement remits and programmes which can be focused on the 2015 agenda (as they will be in 2014 for World War One commemorative events).
22. The Parliamentary Archives (a bicameral service) runs a successful Connecting with Communities Programme, working in partnership with museums, libraries and archives across the UK to widen access to and knowledge of our holdings, and to inform and educate the public about Parliament. This fits very well with the 2015 themes.
23. The Archives also provides expert historical input to both Houses on public engagement plans around anniversaries and other events, often working closely with the Curator's Office in the House of Commons (also bicameral). It also organises exhibitions and loans of documents. 2015 is likely to be a busy year as a number of requests for loans are expected.
24. The Information Office runs the House of Lords public engagement programme, working with the Lord Speaker and the bicameral Parliamentary Education and Outreach services. This programme, which includes the annual Chamber Event and the Peers in Schools programme, can tie in well with 2015 themes.

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11 June 2013