



House of Commons  
Environment, Food and Rural  
Affairs Committee

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# **New Covent Garden Market: a follow-up**

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**Fifteenth Report of Session 2002–  
2003**





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Environment, Food and Rural  
Affairs Committee

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**New Covent Garden  
Market: a follow-up**

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**Fifteenth Report of Session 2002–  
2003**

*Report, together with formal minutes, oral and  
written evidence*

*Ordered by The House of Commons  
to be printed 17 September 2003*

The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and its associated bodies.

### Current membership

Mr David Curry (*Conservative, Skipton and Ripon*) (Chairman)\*  
Ms Candy Atherton (*Labour, Falmouth and Camborne*)  
Mr David Borrow (*Labour, South Ribble*)\*  
Mr Colin Breed (*Liberal Democrat, South East Cornwall*)  
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Mr Bill Wiggin (*Conservative, Leominster*)

\*These Members were nominated as members of the Sub-committee. Mr Michael Jack was the Chairman of the Sub-committee.

### Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No. 152. These are available on the Internet via [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk).

### Publications

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the Internet at

[www.parliament.uk/parliamentary\\_committees/environment\\_\\_food\\_and\\_rural\\_affairs.cfm](http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/environment__food_and_rural_affairs.cfm).

A list of Reports of the Committee in the present Parliament is at the back of this Report.

### Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Gavin Devine (Clerk), Tim Jarvis (Second Clerk), Dr Kate Trumper (Committee Specialist), Mark Oxborough and Louise Combs (Committee Assistants), and Anne Woolhouse (Secretary).

### Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, House of Commons, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 3262; the Committee's e-mail address is: [efracom@parliament.uk](mailto:efracom@parliament.uk).

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## Summary

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In 2001 our predecessor Committee, the Agriculture Committee, carried out an inquiry into New Covent Garden Market. It noted that the market was in need of significant capital investment and that the Government had announced its intention to sell the market as a going concern to enable this investment to be made. The Committee recommended that the key parties involved in London's wholesale food markets should commission an independent strategic review of market provision in London.

We welcome the decision of Defra and the Corporation of London to commission Nicholas Saphir to carry out such a strategic review. However, we are disappointed that the major parties have failed to agree on his main recommendation that there should be three composite wholesale food markets at Western International at Hounslow, and Spitalfields and New Covent Garden. We fear that the current deadlock may lead to all the wholesale markets in London falling into decline.

We therefore urge the Government to assume some leadership on this issue and bring the major parties together with the intention of brokering an agreement. We believe the Government's current policy of allowing New Covent Garden to diversify, while anticipating a legal challenge to any diversification, does not demonstrate the strategic oversight that is required. We are concerned that two years on the Government seems no closer to fulfilling its policy objective of selling New Covent Garden Market as a going concern. There is also apparently no strategic direction for London's wholesale markets. The Government has the influence and resources to oversee the required changes to market provision in London. We believe it must now exercise its power to this end.



# 1 Introduction

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## Background

1. The wholesale horticultural market at Covent Garden in central London was privately run until it was brought within the remit of what was then the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in 1961.<sup>1</sup> The Covent Garden Market Act 1961 set up the Covent Garden Market Authority (CGMA) to operate the market on behalf of the Government. The Act replaced the pre-existing legislative framework covering the market which was deemed inadequate to cope with the various problems of planning and traffic congestion at the site. These were making it difficult to operate a modern market in Covent Garden.

2. In the Second Reading debate on the Bill which became the Covent Garden Market Act 1961, Christopher Soames, then Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, set out the Government's reasons for taking over Covent Garden. In doing so, he stressed that there were problems particular to that market and its site, and the Government was making a special case:

To concentrate the present sprawl of the market and, in due course concentrate it, there must be control by licensing over the premises used for marketing ... The powers required even for this limited scheme at Covent Garden go far beyond any used by local authorities in running markets, let alone private enterprise, and the problem in Covent Garden involves several different authorities.

For these reasons we believe it necessary to have a statutory Authority set up specifically for the purpose. This is a special Authority constituted for one market for special reasons, and it in no way indicates any thought on the part of the Government that markets in general should be run by statutory authorities of this character.<sup>2</sup>

3. Subsequently, the decision was reached that the requirements of the market could no longer be met at the Covent Garden site and the market should be moved from its central London location. The CGMA supervised the market's move to its present site at Nine Elms, Vauxhall, in 1974, since when it has been known as New Covent Garden Market. **It is clear that the original reasons for Government involvement in Covent Garden Market have long ceased to be relevant. We believe that it is no longer appropriate for the Government to be involved in the ownership and management of a wholesale food market.**

4. The Nine Elms site covers 22.7 hectares (56 acres) and hosts 250 companies employing approximately 2,500 people. There are two main centres of activity at the site: the fruit and vegetable market and the flower market. The total turnover of market activity in the calendar year 2001 was £396 million.<sup>3</sup> This was made up of fruit and vegetable wholesaling (38%), fruit

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<sup>1</sup> Responsibility passed to the new Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) on its creation in June 2001

<sup>2</sup> HC Deb 7 December 1960 cc1285-6

<sup>3</sup> CGMA, Annual Report and Accounts 2001-02

and vegetable catering distribution (34%), and the flower market (16%). The remaining 12% is accounted for by non-horticultural food distribution.

5. Ownership of the Nine Elms site is vested in the CGMA. The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs appoints the CGMA's Chairman and Board members. The function and responsibility of CGMA is to operate an efficient wholesale market at Nine Elms while ensuring that its revenues are sufficient at least to break even.<sup>4</sup> It provides essential services such as the management, supervision and security of the site, heating, electricity, cleaning and refuse disposal, and maintenance of buildings and roads. The Authority also handles the letting of trading premises and offices to tenants.

6. New Covent Garden Market is one of the five main wholesale food markets which currently service the Greater London area and beyond. Brief details of each market are set out in the table below.

	<b>Product</b>	<b>Number of tenants</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Landlord</b>
Smithfield	Meat and poultry	41	Smithfield	Corporation of London
Billingsgate	Fish	62	Canary Wharf	Corporation of London
Spitalfields	Fruit and vegetables, and flowers	149	Leyton, East London	Corporation of London
New Covent Garden	Fruit and vegetables, and flowers	240	Vauxhall	Covent Garden Market Authority
Western International	Fruit and vegetables, and flowers	82	Hounslow, West London	Hounslow Borough Council

*Source: Review of London Markets*

7. New Covent Garden Market requires modernisation. The CGMA's latest Report and Accounts notes that the facilities are three decades old and annual expenditure on maintenance is increasing.<sup>5</sup> Much of the infrastructure and plant require replacement. In 2001, the CGMA submitted to Defra a £35 million programme of capital refurbishment. Defra agreed to the first phase of the programme, valued at £1.68 million, and this will be completed

<sup>4</sup> CGMA, Annual Report and Accounts 2001-02, p 2

<sup>5</sup> para. 31

during 2002-03. This initial phase of work, and work in the following year, will be funded from the CGMA's own resources using depreciation and retained profits. CGMA's post-tax surplus in 2001 was £1.5 million.

8. The Authority usually pays part of any surplus from its trading activities to Defra with the exact amount decided by a formula agreed between Defra and the Treasury. These payments are transferred to the Consolidated Fund. In his evidence to the Committee, the chairman of the Authority confirmed that Defra and the Treasury have agreed to allow the Authority to retain all post-tax profits until major capital works have been completed at the site.<sup>6</sup> But the Government has indicated that further monies, of the scale required for completion of the refurbishment plan submitted by the CGMA, would not be "forthcoming from the Treasury".<sup>7</sup> The funding of any further capital investment therefore appears to be dependent on a change in the ownership of the market.

9. It has been the policy of successive governments since 1990 to sell New Covent Garden Market. In 1999, the Government clarified its position by stating that it would "explore the conditions under which it might be sold as a going concern".<sup>8</sup> This statement was intended to offer a greater degree of certainty about the future in the context of the renewal and renegotiation of leases. Previous statements had simply confirmed Government plans to sell the site with no commitment for it to be sold as a going concern.

## Our inquiry

10. In early 2001, our predecessor Committee, the Agriculture Committee, decided to carry out a short inquiry into the future of New Covent Garden Market. The Committee published its Report in March 2001.<sup>9</sup> The Report noted that the future of New Covent Garden needed to be considered in the context of a strategic plan for the future of the other wholesale markets in Greater London. Therefore, one of its main recommendations was that the Government, together with the other relevant bodies, should instigate an independent review to "take a rapid, rational and strategic view of the provision of wholesale markets in London".<sup>10</sup> The Government accepted this recommendation.<sup>11</sup>

11. In June 2002, Lord Whitty, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at Defra, announced that the Department and the Corporation of London had jointly commissioned Nicholas Saphir to carry out a review into the Future of London Markets. Mr Saphir farms in Kent and is a director and advisor to several international farming and food companies. He was chairman and chief executive of Hunter Saphir plc, a family fruit and vegetable distributor,

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<sup>6</sup> Q 76

<sup>7</sup> CGMA submission, para. 3

<sup>8</sup> CGMA, Report and Accounts 1999/2000

<sup>9</sup> Agriculture Committee, *New Covent Garden Market*, Eighth Report HC 173—1 2000-01 28 March 2001

<sup>10</sup> para. 24

<sup>11</sup> Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, *Reply by the Government to the Eighth Report from the Agriculture Committee, Session 2000-01, "New Covent Garden Market" (HC 173)*, First Special Report, HC 272 2001-02, para. 12

until 1992. Mr Saphir is currently chairman of the Agricultural Forum and he was the founder chairman of Food from Britain.

12. Mr Saphir published his Review of London Markets (the Saphir Report) on 22 November 2002.<sup>12</sup> The Government sought views on the main recommendations of the Saphir Report and invited responses by 22 February 2003. Following this consultation period, in a Written Ministerial Statement on 20 June 2003, Ben Bradshaw, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at Defra, set out the Government's response to the main recommendations of the report.<sup>13</sup>

13. We decided to carry out a brief inquiry into New Covent Garden Market to follow-up on the work of the Agriculture Committee in 2001 and examine developments in the context of the Saphir Report and the Government's response to it. In May we appointed a Sub-committee, under the chairmanship of Rt Hon Michael Jack MP, to carry out the inquiry. It took oral evidence from the Corporation of London, Covent Garden Market Authority, Nicholas Saphir and Lord Whitty, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at Defra. It also received written memoranda from the Covent Garden Market Authority and the Billingsgate Fish Merchants Association. The Sub-committee received various papers from the Greater London Authority and examined responses to the Government's consultation exercise on the Saphir Report. We are grateful to all those who assisted during the course of the inquiry.

## 2 The Saphir Report and responses to it

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14. Nicholas Saphir published his Review of London Wholesale Markets in November 2002. He suggested that the markets were increasingly dependent on supplying small catering establishments, the relatively small number of remaining independent retailers and street markets. As such, they perform an "important, but reduced function in the distribution of perishable foods".<sup>14</sup> Although peripheral to the main supply chain, the markets, if well managed, could play a major role in reducing traffic congestion by improving the distribution of food to central London's catering establishments. In order to service the catering trade effectively, markets needed to consolidate and supply a range of food produce from the same site.

15. The Review also considered the effect of the current legislative framework on London's wholesale markets. Mr Saphir noted that over centuries, Royal Charters, legislation and regulations have placed restrictions on how markets operate and what products can be sold within them. He argued that the current prohibitions "protect some wholesalers' profits at the expense of the future prosperity of markets, customers and society in general".<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Available from <http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/markets/review.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> HC Deb 20 June 2003 cc 25-27WS

<sup>14</sup> Review of London Wholesale Markets, para 11

<sup>15</sup> p 56

16. The Saphir Report was broadly welcomed by the key stakeholders. The Corporation of London described it as “a very useful report”.<sup>16</sup> The Chairman of the CGMA issued a statement welcoming it.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, Wandsworth Borough Council said it was “thorough in its analysis”,<sup>18</sup> and the Fresh Produce Consortium described it as an “excellent report”.<sup>19</sup> **We welcome the decision of the Government and the Corporation of London to commission a review of London Markets in line with the recommendation made by the Agriculture Committee in 2001. We also welcome Mr Saphir’s Report and the clear conclusions that it draws on the way that a secure future for London’s wholesale markets can be achieved.**

17. Although there is a broad consensus on parts of Mr Saphir’s analysis, there is significant disagreement between the two main controllers of London’s markets, the CGMA and the Corporation of London, on the recommendations in the Report. The table below sets out the three main recommendations of the Saphir Report and the positions of the CGMA and the Corporation of London on each.

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<sup>16</sup> Q1

<sup>17</sup> Ev 9, para. 3

<sup>18</sup> Wandsworth Borough Council response to the Review of London Markets

<sup>19</sup> Fresh Produce Consortium response to the Review of London Markets

Saphir recommendation	Covent Garden Market Authority	Corporation of London
<p><b>Recommendation 1:</b> markets need to operate from a limited number of composite sites.</p>	<p>Agrees. In a statement on the publication of the Saphir Report, the Chairman of the CGMA said that there was “an overwhelming logic” to meat, fish, and fruit and vegetables being distributed from the same site.</p>	<p>Agrees. The Corporation of London told us that “it could see the benefit of composite sites”. [Q1]</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2:</b> the legislation that applies to wholesale markets restrains trade and “should be removed to allow competitive dynamics to produce a more effective supply chain”.</p>	<p>Agrees. The CGMA said “we agree particularly that the medieval common law of 6½ miles market franchise areas and Edward III’s charter of 1327 are not really apposite to wholesale markets in the 21st century”.</p>	<p>The Corporation of London described this recommendation to us as “more difficult and somewhat controversial” [Q1]. It has indicated its intention to mount a legal challenge to diversification at New Covent Garden Market. In his observations on the Review, the Town Clerk suggests that the laws “prohibiting the creation of a new market within 6½ miles of an existing market have stood the test of time”. [Report of Town Clerk, 17 February 2003, para.10]</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 3:</b> London should be serviced by three composite markets for meat, fish, fruit and vegetables based at the sites of Nine Elms, Spitalfields and Western International.</p>	<p>Agrees.</p>	<p>Disagrees. The Corporation does not believe that “the creation of composite sites at Nine Elms and Spitalfields is desirable or financially viable” [Report of Town Clerk, 17 February 2003, para.11]. It proposes as an alternative that it take over ownership of New Covent Garden and develop ‘non-wholesale’ activities. It envisages New Covent Garden Market as a “complementary facility providing specialist ‘value-added’ services for the catering and restaurant trade of Central London”. [Q1] This would “complement ... a composite wholesale market at Spitalfields”. [Report of Town Clerk, 17 February 2003, para. 15d]</p>

18. The CGMA has rejected a proposal from the Corporation of London to take over New Covent Garden Market and develop it as a non-wholesale market providing specialist services to the catering trade. In his evidence to the Committee, the Chairman of CGMA accused the Corporation of “deliberately trying to stifle the development and expansion of New Covent Garden Market to protect their own markets”.<sup>20</sup> Since rejecting the Corporation of London’s proposal, the CGMA has started discussions with property development companies as potential sources of external finance. These discussions have included the possibility of such companies “developing parts of the site that are not needed for market purposes and possibly developing those for their own purposes”.<sup>21</sup>

19. The Government published its response to the Saphir Report in the form of a Written Ministerial Statement on 20 June 2003.<sup>22</sup> In this, it noted from the response to the consultation on the Saphir recommendations and discussions with the various parties, that “there is no consensus on a single way forward”. On the specific recommendations in the report, the Government reached the following conclusions.

- While sympathetic to the view that some of the current legislation which governs markets should be amended or repealed, it has “no proposals at present to amend the legislation governing markets generally or to promote amendments to the legislation governing specific London markets”.
- It is for the market owners to plan for the future of each market in consultation with the relevant local authorities, the Greater London Authority (GLA) and the London Development Agency. The Government would play a part “as consultees in this process”.
- The statement reiterates the Government’s policy to “disengage” from New Covent Garden Market in a way which maintains it as a going concern.
- Where the legislation covering New Covent Garden Market requires the Secretary of State to grant permission for new forms of trading, this will generally be granted. It has indicated that it is “minded” to approve any application from the CGMA to trade in meat and fish. The statement notes that the Corporation of London may seek to challenge the legality of any moves made by the CGMA to trade in meat and fish at Nine Elms. This may therefore be a matter “on which the Courts shall be called to decide”.
- The Government is ready to consider proposals from any source for the future development of the Nine Elms site which provide for its future use as a market. It confirms that “proposals for the injection of private finance into the site have been and will be welcome”.

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<sup>20</sup> Q 67

<sup>21</sup> Q 77

<sup>22</sup> HC Deb 20 June 2003 cc 25-27WS

### 3 The consequences of further delay

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20. We were told during the course of our inquiry that little has changed since the Agriculture Committee carried out its inquiry in early 2001.<sup>23</sup> In fact, as the same witness pointed out, the situation is worse because two years have passed and there appears to have been no progress made. In his evidence to the Sub-committee, Mr Saphir warned of the dangers of a continued lack of progress towards developing and consolidating London's wholesale markets to meet the changing demands of their main users. He suggested that if the markets fail to consolidate and provide a range of produce on single sites, "the big catering firms will increasingly go direct, as did the supermarkets, the game will be over and we will be into decline".<sup>24</sup> He suggested that there needs to be a resolution of the problems with London markets within five years.<sup>25</sup>

21. Continued uncertainty over the future of New Covent Garden is also likely to complicate investment and planning decisions at the other London markets. The Assistant Town Clerk at the London Corporation told us that "large sums of money" would need to be spent on Billingsgate in a few years.<sup>26</sup> He also acknowledged the possibility that the Corporation of London may move Billingsgate market from its present site.<sup>27</sup>

22. Clearly, one option would simply be for the Government to allow the markets, including New Covent Garden, to fall into decline. Mr Saphir made the case for supporting London's wholesale markets in his report. He confirmed this view in his evidence to the Sub-committee:

"What the report does do is it spends time examining the public good. I think it is very important that we do recognise there is still a public good in markets. Not the original public good, not the public good of maintaining food standards and health and safety because that can be done, and is done, in many food establishments around the country. The two public goods that I believe flow now from markets are for SMEs, small businesses, to be able to buy in a competitive arena, and that is very important, and secondly it gives the opportunity to try and do something about congestion in terms of reducing the number of white vans that are passing backwards and forwards between markets and consolidating on pavements and in car parks."<sup>28</sup>

**We agree that London's wholesale markets should not be allowed to drift into decline. We suggest that there is a significant risk of this happening as a result of the failure on the part of the Corporation of London and the Covent Garden Market Authority to reach an agreement over the future of New Covent Garden Market. We are also disappointed that, despite the fact that the Saphir review has been published and**

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<sup>23</sup> Q 15

<sup>24</sup> Q 140

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

<sup>26</sup> Q 53

<sup>27</sup> Q 60

<sup>28</sup> Q 136

recommends a coherent way forward, stallholders and employees at London’s wholesale markets continue to face an apparently indefinite period of uncertainty.

## 4 The way forward

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23. Lord Whitty told us that he “would hope that we could reach a conclusion on the future of the Covent Garden site in less than five years”.<sup>29</sup> He said that the “key issue” was finding a partner to provide sufficient capital to run the market at New Covent Garden and fulfil the Government’s commitment to sell it as a going concern.<sup>30</sup> However, Lord Whitty went on to acknowledge that there were other bodies with an interest in these negotiations. For example, the London Borough of Wandsworth has responsibility for the planning implications of any redevelopment of the site. Also, as part of its response to the Saphir Report, the Greater London Authority (GLA) said that the Report provided a useful initial overview but “did not examine in depth the economics which underpin the markets or take full account of the planning objectives that will influence the future of the market sites”.<sup>31</sup> It suggests that the options need to be considered in the context of the markets’ wider strategic implications for the finalisation of the London plan.

**24. We recognise, as Mr Saphir suggested in his evidence, that “this is a multi-dimensional problem”. We are therefore concerned that there is a lack of strategic ‘grip’ of the complex issues surrounding the future of London wholesale markets. We share the Greater London Authority’s concern that in taking a view on the future of the market sites, account needs to be taken of other policy issues such as planning, transport and employment. There appears to be little prospect of this happening. The Saphir Report offered a way forward but, without Government intervention, there now appears to be little prospect of implementation of his main recommendations. The Corporation of London is exploring options for Billingsgate and Smithfield, and the Government is investigating solutions for the Nine Elms site with private developers. There appears to be no strategic oversight of the implications of these separate developments.**

25. In addition to pursuing options with private developers, the Government has announced that it plans to allow the CGMA to diversify at New Covent Garden Market. The Government does not plan to introduce legislation to amend or repeal the prohibitions on London markets and will allow the courts to decide on the interpretation of the current legal and other restrictions on markets. Since the Agriculture Committee reported on the future of Covent Garden market in 2001, the Government does not appear to have reached a decision on the future of the market, it has not withdrawn from control of the market and appears to have pulled back from its commitment to introduce early legislation to enable the privatisation of the market.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Q 176

<sup>30</sup> Q 177

<sup>31</sup> GLA, *Wholesale markets review – outline research programme*, para. 1

<sup>32</sup> Agriculture Committee, *New Covent Garden Market*, Eighth Report HC 173—II 200-01 28 March 2001, Q 226, Q 115, Q 118

26. We are very disappointed in the Government's response to the Saphir Report. As the relevant body with the most power and resources, we believe that the Government should now start to assume some leadership on this issue. It is in a strong position to bring all the relevant parties together and broker an agreement on the way forward. We are disappointed that it has failed to do this and is showing little intention of doing so. In 2001, the Agriculture Committee concluded that the future of New Covent Garden Market had been "left hanging". Unfortunately, two years on the future remains equally unclear. We urge the Government to set out its objectives for the future of New Covent Garden Market, how it plans to realise these objectives and the timescale within which each will be achieved. The recent history of New Covent Garden Market has been one of delay and prevarication; the consequences of continued delay threaten its existence.

## Conclusions and recommendations

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1. It is clear that the original reasons for Government involvement in Covent Garden Market have long ceased to be relevant. We believe that it is no longer appropriate for the Government to be involved in the ownership and management of a wholesale food market. (Paragraph 3)
2. We welcome the decision of the Government and the Corporation of London to commission a review of London Markets in line with the recommendation made by the Agriculture Committee in 2001. We also welcome Mr Saphir's Report and the clear conclusions that it draws on the way that a secure future for London's wholesale markets can be achieved. (Paragraph 16)
3. We agree that London's wholesale markets should not be allowed to drift into decline. We suggest that there is a significant risk of this happening as a result of the failure on the part of the Corporation of London and the Covent Garden Market Authority to reach an agreement over the future of New Covent Garden Market. We are also disappointed that, despite the fact that the Saphir review has been published and recommends a coherent way forward, stallholders and employees at London's wholesale markets continue to face an apparently indefinite period of uncertainty. (Paragraph 22)
4. We recognise, as Mr Saphir suggested in his evidence, that "this is a multi-dimensional problem". We are therefore concerned that there is a lack of strategic 'grip' of the complex issues surrounding the future of London wholesale markets. We share the Greater London Authority's concern that in taking a view on the future of the market sites, account needs to be taken of other policy issues such as planning, transport and employment. There appears to be little prospect of this happening. The Saphir Report offered a way forward but, without Government intervention, there now appears to be little prospect of implementation of his main recommendations. The Corporation of London is exploring options for Billingsgate and Smithfield, and the Government is investigating solutions for the Nine Elms site with private developers. There appears to be no strategic oversight of the implications of these separate developments. (Paragraph 24)
5. We are very disappointed in the Government's response to the Saphir Report. As the relevant body with the most power and resources, we believe that the Government should now start to assume some leadership on this issue. It is in a strong position to bring all the relevant parties together and broker an agreement on the way forward. We are disappointed that it has failed to do this and is showing little intention of doing so. In 2001, the Agriculture Committee concluded that the future of New Covent Garden Market had been "left hanging". Unfortunately, two years on the future remains equally unclear. We urge the Government to set out its objectives for the future of New Covent Garden Market, how it plans to realise these objectives and the timescale within which each will be achieved. The recent history of New

Covent Garden Market has been one of delay and prevarication; the consequences of continued delay threaten its existence. (Paragraph 26)

# Formal minutes

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**Wednesday 17 September 2003**

Members present:

Mr Curry, in the Chair

Mr Colin Breed

Mr David Drew

Mr Michael Jack

Mr Mark Lazarowicz

Mr David Lepper

Alan Simpson

Mr Bill Wiggin

The Committee deliberated.

Draft Report [*New Covent Garden Market: a follow-up*], proposed by Mr Jack, brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 26 read and agreed to.

Summary read and agreed to.

*Resolved*, That the Report be the Fifteenth Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chairman do make the Report to the House.

A Paper was ordered to be appended to the Minutes of Evidence.

*Ordered*, That the Appendix to the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Committee be reported to the House.—(*The Chairman*).

The Committee further deliberated.

[Adjourned till 15 October at a quarter past two o'clock.]

## Witnesses

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### Monday 30 June 2003

*Page*Richard Adams, and David Smith, **Corporation of London**

Ev 1

Leif Mills CBE, and Dr Mike Liggins, **Covent Garden Market Authority**

Ev 11

### Monday 14 July 2003

Mr Nicholas Saphir

Ev 18

Lord Whitty and David Jones, **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

Ev 25

## List of written evidence

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Corporation of London

Ev 8

Covent Garden Market Authority

Ev 9

London Fish Merchants Association (Billingsgate) Ltd

Ev 34

## Reports from the Committee since 2001

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### Session 2002–03

Fourteenth Report	Gangmasters	HC 691
Thirteenth Report	Poultry Farming in the United Kingdom	HC 779-I
Twelfth Report	The Departmental Annual Report 2003	HC 832
Eleventh Report	Rural Broadband	HC 587
Tenth Report	Horticulture Research International ( <i>Reply, HC 1086</i> )	HC 873
Ninth Report	The Delivery of Education in Rural Areas ( <i>Reply, HC 1085</i> )	HC 467
Eighth Report	The Future of Waste Management ( <i>Reply, HC 1084</i> )	HC 385
Seventh Report	Badgers and Bovine TB ( <i>Reply, HC 831</i> )	HC 432
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