

UPDATE ON PROGRESS OF THE MEDIA BILL AND THE NCWGB/VLV RESOLUTION (DECEMBER 2023).

Process for Media Bill

First reading

First reading is the formal presentation of the bill and doesn't involve any debate.

Second Reading – 21 November 2023

Second reading is MP's chance to talk about the purpose of the bill. It's the first time the bill is debated.

The debate usually takes a whole sitting (about five or six hours), after which MP's decide whether the bill should pass to the next stage. Occasionally, second reading debates for major bills take place over two days.

It's possible for a bill to have a second reading with no debate, as long as MPs agree to the bill's progress.

Committee Stage – due December 5th 2023

At committee stage, MPs go through the bill in detail considering proposed changes. The committee stage usually starts a couple of weeks after second reading. It is hoped to be over by Christmas recess.

Most bills are considered by a Public Bill Committee, which is usually made up of 17 MPs. Public Bill Committees can take evidence from the public.

Bills can also be considered by MPs in the Chamber in what's known as a Committee of the whole House. This usually happens if the Government need to pass a bill quickly or if it's of constitutional importance.

In rare cases a Select Committee can be set up to consider a bill. In these cases, the bill is then considered in a Committee of the whole House.

A public bill committee usually has 17 members, who are appointed by the Selection Committee. If an MP would like to be on a public bill committee they have to speak in the second reading debate and talk to their whips.

The Speaker appoints the committee's Chairs from the Panel of Chairs. They are impartial and don't take part in the debate.

Committees on Government bills often have a set period of time to consider the bill. This is set out in the programme order, which is usually agreed by the House on the day of the second reading debate. They usually meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays, both morning and afternoon.

A public bill committee considers the text of a bill in detail. The committee often starts by taking oral evidence on the bill. If the bill started its journey in the House of Lords, oral evidence isn't taken. The committee then goes through the bill line by line, looking at each clause and schedule.

If an MP is a member of the committee, they can move amendments to the bill. If they aren't a member of the committee, they can submit amendments, but need another MP, who's a committee member, to move them so that they can be debated. The committee decides on any amendments moved to a clause or schedule and then on whether the clause or schedule should remain in the bill.

The committee disbands once it's finished considering the bill.

Report stage

Report stage, also known as Consideration, is an opportunity for the whole House to consider what has been done during the committee stage. There is no set time period between the end of committee stage and report stage.

MPs can propose amendments at report stage.

If the bill has been amended at its committee stage, it will normally be reprinted before report stage.

If the bill has been considered by a Committee of the whole House (rather than a Public Bill Committee) and not amended, there is no report stage and the Bill passes straight to third reading.

Third reading

The House decides whether to agree the bill at third reading. Third reading is the final opportunity for MPs to pass or reject the whole bill. It normally takes place immediately after report stage and any Legislative Grand Committee. There is usually up to an hour for the debate, although some of this time might be used up by any votes at the end of report stage.

In the House of Commons, you can't amend the text of the bill at third reading (unlike in the House of Lords, where amendments can be made at third reading). If an MP disagrees with the content of the bill, they can submit a reasoned amendment setting out why. The Speaker will decide whether to select their reasoned amendment for debate. Reasoned amendments to third reading are rare.

House of Lords

The bill then passes to the other House. The first House is asked to agree with amendments made by the second.

Once both Houses are agreed, the bill receives Royal Assent and becomes law.