



LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Written Ministerial Statement

12 July 2012

Public Reading Stage and Explanatory Statements on Amendments

Leader of the House of Commons and Lord Privy Seal (Rt. Hon Sir George Young Bt MP): I am today announcing a pilot of the Government's Public Reading Stage system for the Small Charitable Donations Bill.

Lobby groups, industry and other third parties, who tend to have a close understanding of the legislative process, already actively engage as a Bill goes through its various stages in Parliament. But there are thousands of other private citizens who may have expertise in a certain area but either don't know how to or are unwilling to use the current channels to get involved in providing MPs with their views. Public Reading Stage will allow us to end up with more open and better laws by harnessing the experience of the public.

A trial of a Public Reading Stage was undertaken for the Protection of Freedoms Bill in the previous session of this Parliament. Following an evaluation, my Office have worked with the Government Digital Service to develop a new, simple digital platform that allows members of the public to read the Government's proposed Bill and related information, comment on specific clauses and to make suggested amendments. The site can be visited at <http://publicreadingstage.cabinetoffice.gov.uk>

It is the intention that a normal Public Reading Stage would run for a period of around 3 weeks, from First Reading to 7 days before a Public Bill Committee meets for the first time. In reflection of the pilot status of this stage and the natural interval that the summer recess provides, the site will be open for 6 weeks, until 23 August 2012, allowing the greatest possible number of comments to be made. Following this, officials in HM Treasury will collate these into a report to be presented to the Public Bill Committee and made available in the Vote Office and online.

I intend to bring forward proposals later in the session for a second Public Reading Stage pilot, following an evaluation of the Small Charitable Donations Bill Public Reading Stage.

The evaluation will consider:

- The volume of comments received and their relevance to the legislation.
- Any amendments proposed to or made to the legislation in response to specific comments.
- The reception of the Public Committee and the whole House at report stage to the comments.
- Any other feedback received from contributors to the site and Members of Parliament who contributed to scrutiny of the Bill.

I would also like to remind the House that the Small Charitable Donations Bill will be the second of the pilots for the tabling of explanatory statements to amendments, covering both Public Bill Committee stage and report stage, as I set out in my Written Ministerial Statement of 23 May 2012.

The Government intends to continue to participate fully in the pilot, and I would encourage all Members who table amendments at both Public Bill Committee stage and report stage to take part.