



LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Written Ministerial Statement

23 May 2012

Explanatory statements on amendments: pilot

Leader of the House of Commons and Lord Privy Seal (Rt. Hon Sir George Young Bt MP): On 13 October 2011, the House agreed a resolution noting the recommendations in paragraphs 31 and 32 of the Second Report of the Procedure Committee of Session 2010-12 (HC 800) relating to explanatory statements on amendments to bills and inviting the Leader of the House and the Procedure Committee to put in place a pilot scheme to implement these proposals in respect of one or more bills before the end of the next session.

In my Written Ministerial Statement of 10 May 2012 relating to the Government's legislative programme for 2012/13, I stated that I would write shortly to the Chair of the Procedure Committee with proposals for such a pilot in respect of two Bills to be introduced early in this session and that I hoped to make a further announcement soon.

I am pleased to tell the House that the Procedure Committee has agreed to my proposal that the pilot should take place in respect of the Electoral Registration and Administration Bill and the Small Donations Bill.

The Electoral Registration and Administration Bill will have its second reading today and, if the programme motion is agreed to, will be committed to a Committee of the whole House. The pilot in respect of the Bill will cover both Committee of the whole House stage and any proceedings on consideration.

The Small Donations Bill will be published soon. The pilot in respect of the Bill will cover both Public Bill Committee stage and report stage.

Guidelines for the tabling of explanatory statements were set out in paragraph 32 of the Second Report of the Procedure Committee of Session 2010-12 (HC 800). Questions as to the implementation of the rules shall be decided by the Chair of the Public Bill Committee, the Chairman of Ways and Means in respect of Committee of the whole House and the Speaker in respect of report stage.

The Government intends to participate fully in the pilot. We plan to provide explanatory statements for all Government amendments for bills in the pilot at both Committee and report stage other than those amendments where the legal effect is clear on the face of the amendment. The Government will also do what it can to promote awareness of, and encourage participation by others in, the pilot. The Procedure Committee will consider other steps which might be taken to the same end.

The Government believes that there would have to be very significant and clearly definable benefits illustrated from this final pilot for any further progress to be made. Because there

have already been several pilots for explanatory statements and only limited evidence available on the outcome of those pilots, I have proposed to the Procedure Committee, and that Committee has agreed, that there should be a formal evaluation of the pilot, with an initial evaluation conducted by the House Service which the Procedure Committee will then use as the basis for a report on the outcome, together with evidence from elsewhere, including the Government's views.

The criteria for evaluation which I have agreed with the Procedure Committee are as follows:

- The extent to which explanatory statements are tabled by (a) backbenchers and (b) the Official Opposition;
- The extent to which explanatory statements are viewed as worthwhile and of assistance by Members;
- The extent to which explanatory statements require editorial or other intervention by the House authorities to ensure compliance with the guidelines;
- The extent to which explanatory statements provided new or additional information about amendments;
- The extent to which explanatory statements or information uniquely available from those statements is referred to in debate or otherwise used in discussion about the Bill;
- The costs and resource implications, including indirect costs.