

Working with Parliament

A nighttime photograph of the Palace of Westminster and Big Ben in London. The buildings are illuminated with warm yellow lights, contrasting with the deep blue twilight sky. The River Thames is visible in the foreground, reflecting the lights from the buildings.

Dr Alexandra Meakin, University of Leeds
March 2022

Learning objectives

1. List the main avenues for getting academic research into Parliament.
2. Understand the benefits and drawbacks for engaging with each of these avenues.
3. Be equipped with the tools to take your research into Parliament!

Presentation outline

- Who uses research in parliament?
 - How each actor works
 - How to engage as an academic.
 - Benefits/drawbacks of engaging as an academic
- Q&A session

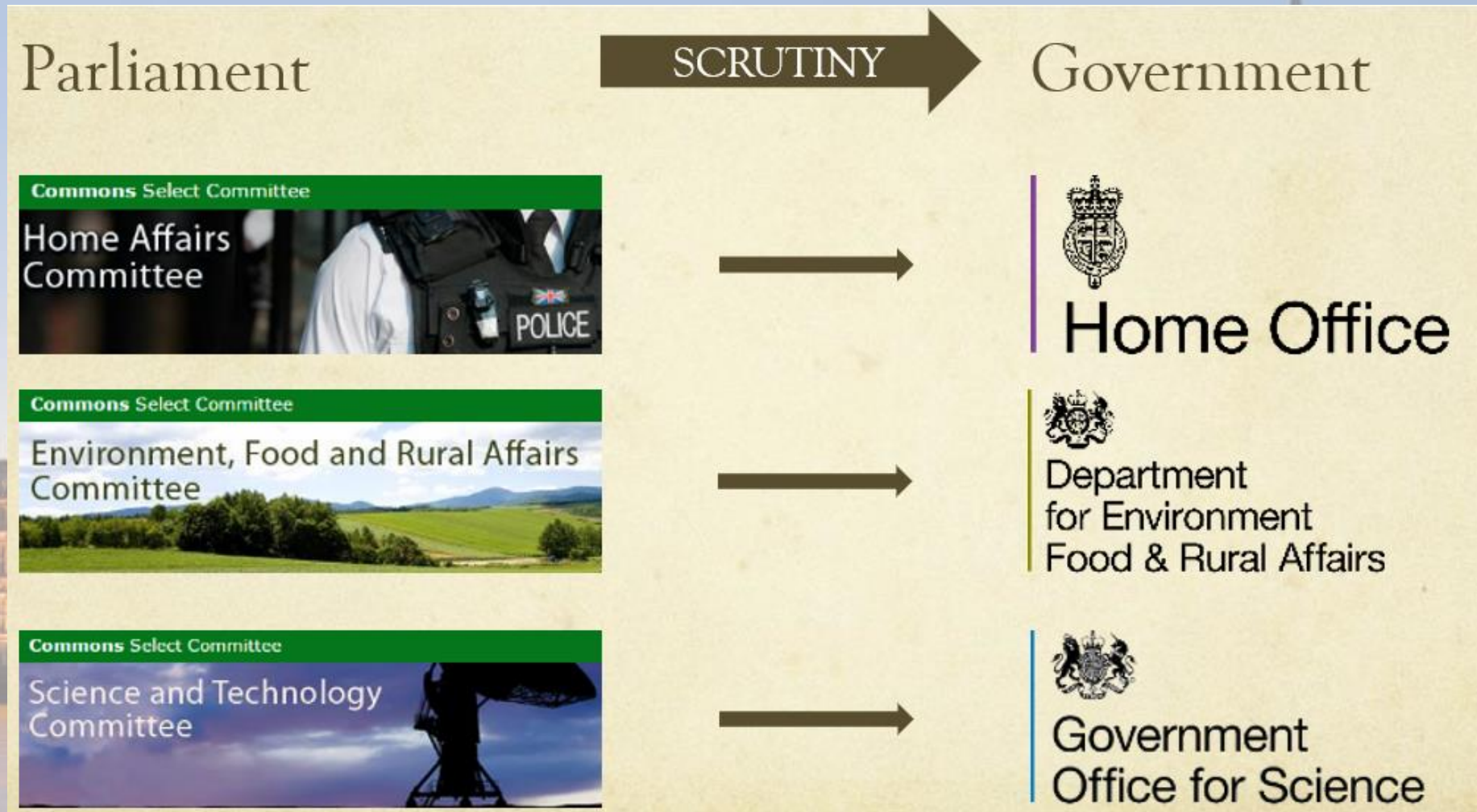
Who uses research in Parliament?

House of Commons Select Committees	House of Lords Select Committees
House of Commons Library	House of Lords Library
Legislation – particularly Public Bill Committees	
POST (Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology)	
MPs/MPs' researchers	Peers/Peers' researchers
All Party Parliamentary Groups	

Select committees

- Cross-party groups of MPs or Peers (or both – joint committees).
- Scrutinise the work of the Government (and, increasingly, private companies).
- Usually focus on the work of a particular department (Commons) or a broad theme (Lords).

What are select committees?



What are select committees?



What are select committees?

- Usually permanent, although some Lords committees established for single parliamentary session.
- They can meet during parliamentary recesses but not during dissolution – each committee must be re-established at the start of each Parliament.

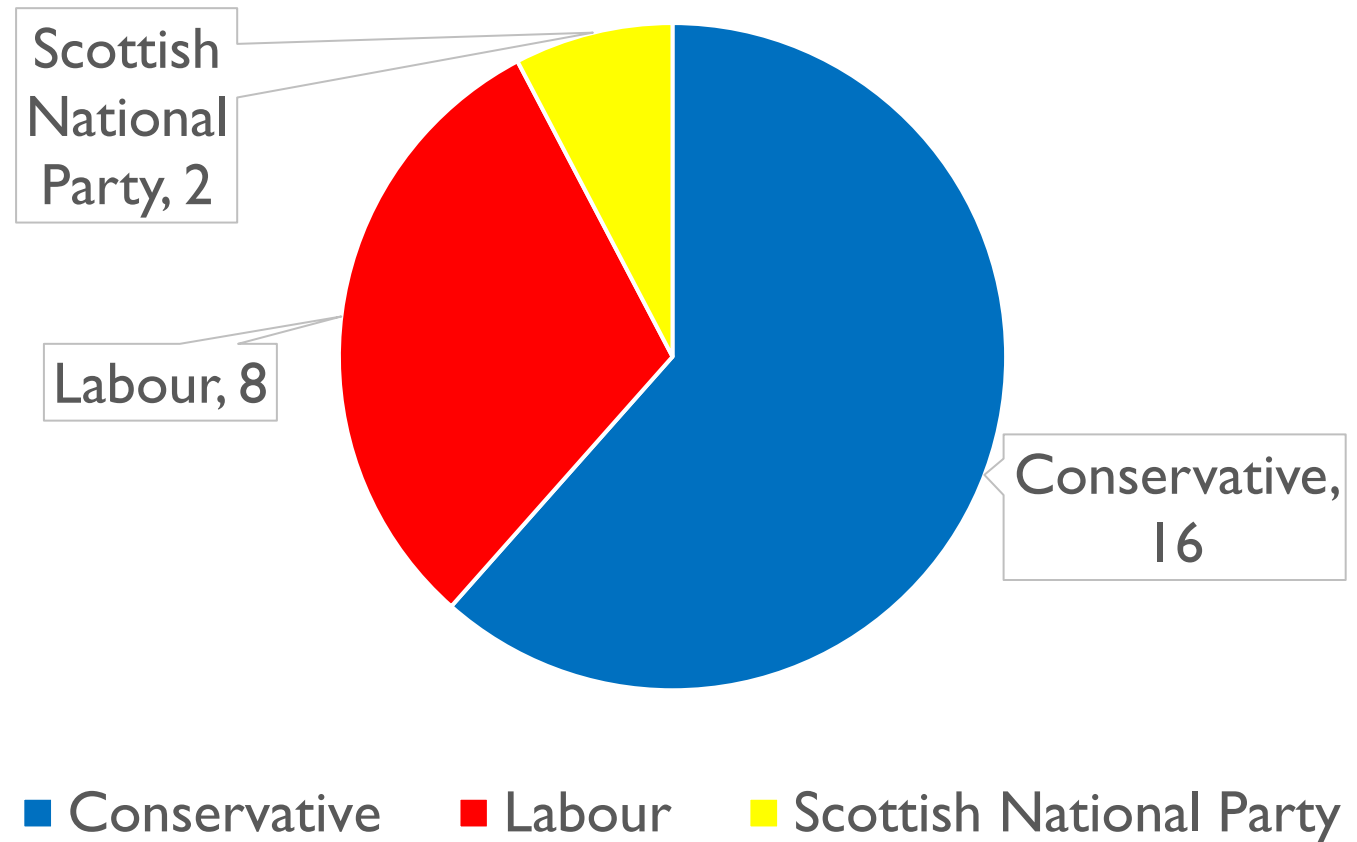
What do
select
committees
do?

Overall aim:

To hold Ministers and Departments to account, and to investigate matters of public concern where there is a need for accountability to the public through Parliament.

How do
select
committees
work?

Number of committee chairs



The number of committee chairs for each party reflects the party balance in the Commons.

How do select committees work?

Committee	Allocation of chair
Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	Labour
Defence	Conservative
Digital, Culture, Media and Sport	Conservative
Education	Conservative
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	Conservative
Foreign Affairs	Conservative
Health and Social Care	Conservative
Home Affairs	Labour
Housing, Communities and Local Government	Labour
International Development	Labour
International Trade	Scottish National Party
Justice	Conservative
Northern Ireland Affairs	Conservative
Science and Technology	Conservative
Scottish Affairs	Scottish National Party
Transport	Conservative
Treasury	Conservative
Welsh Affairs	Conservative
Women and Equalities	Conservative
Work and Pensions	Labour
Environmental Audit	Conservative
Exiting the European Union	Labour
Petitions	Labour
Procedure	Conservative
Public Accounts	Labour
Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs	Conservative

Exact allocation of
which committee
to which party is
decided by the
“usual channels”
and then approved
by the Commons

Chairs elected in a secret ballot of all MPs, using the alternative vote system

How do
select
committees
work?

Result Sheet							
Select Committee: Defence				Number of Invalid Votes: 24			
Candidates	First Stage	Second Stage		Third Stage		Fourth Stage	
		Exclusion of:		Exclusion of:		Exclusion of:	
		Gray		Holloway		Courts	
		Change	New total	Change	New Total	Change	New Total
Robert COURTS	62	6	68	13	81	-81	0
Mr Tobias ELLWOOD	243	13	256	15	271	25	296
James GRAY	39	-39	0				
Adam HOLLOWAY	45	3	48	-48	0		
Sir Bernard JENKIN	173	10	183	10	193	33	226
Non-transferable votes (preferences exhausted)		7	31	10	41	23	64
TOTAL	586		586		586		586

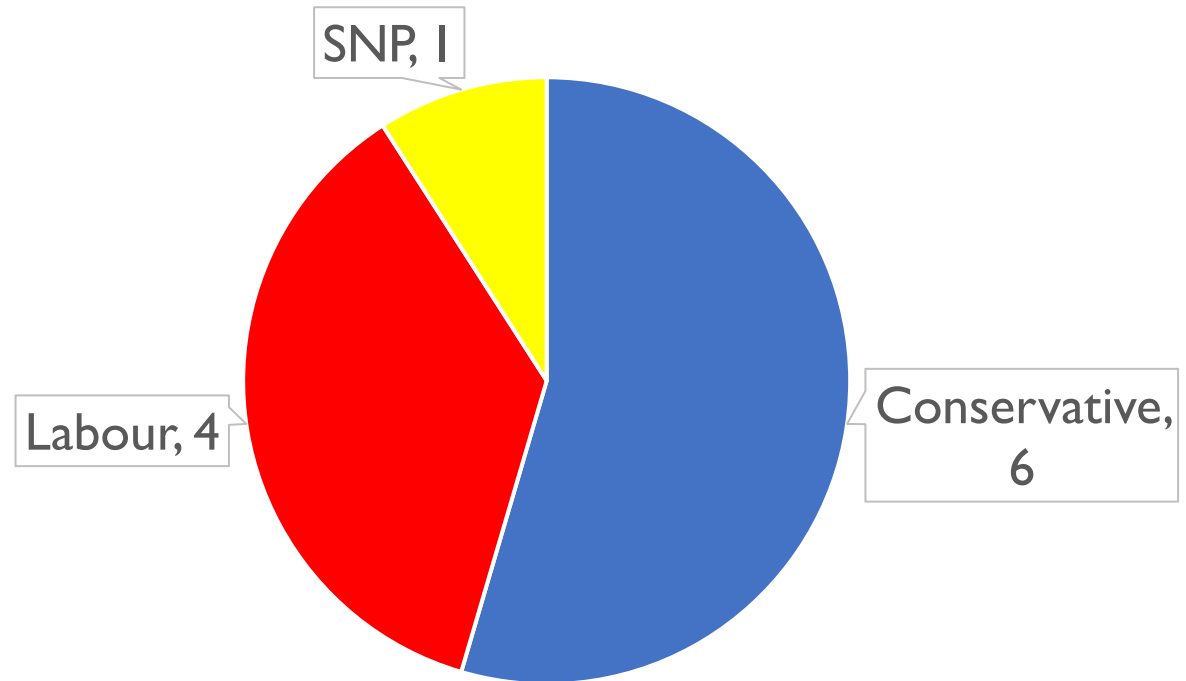
ELECTED

Total number of active votes	562	555	545	522
Number to be elected	282	278	273	262

The membership of each committee (usually 11 MPs) also reflects the party balance of the Commons:

How do
select
committees
work?

Transport select committee membership



■ Conservative ■ Labour ■ SNP

Parties elect their members individually (using internal elections if places are oversubscribed), then formally approved by the Commons

How do
select
committees
work?

9. BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY COMMITTEE

No debate after 10.00pm (Standing Order No. 9(6))

Sir Bill Wiggin, on behalf of the Committee of Selection

That Judith Cummins and Sarah Owen be discharged from the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee and Tonia Antoniazzi and Andy McDonald be added.

10. DEFENCE COMMITTEE

No debate after 10.00pm (Standing Order No. 9(6))

Sir Bill Wiggin, on behalf of the Committee of Selection

That Martin Docherty-Hughes be discharged from the Defence Committee and Dave Doogan be added.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT COMMITTEE

No debate after 10.00pm (Standing Order No. 9(6))

Sir Bill Wiggin, on behalf of the Committee of Selection

That Dan Carden be discharged from the Environmental Audit Committee and Valerie Vaz be added.

How do select committees work?

- They don't usually carry out line-by-line scrutiny of proposed legislation (that's a job for Public Bill Committees).
- They do conduct inquiries into specific topics.
- They do hold one-off evidence sessions and pre-appointment hearings.

How do select committees work?

Education Committee

Commons Select Committee

The Education Committee scrutinises the work of the Department for Education, covering children's social care, schools, colleges, the early years and higher education. The Committee also holds regular hearings with DfE's arms-length bodies, including Ofsted, Ofqual and the Children's Commissioner. You can follow the Committee on Twitter [@CommonsEd](https://twitter.com/CommonsEd)

How do select committees work?

11 current committee members

[Export list as CSV](#)

[View former members >](#)



Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP >

Conservative

Harlow



Chair



Commons



Apsana Begum MP >

Labour

Poplar and Limehouse



Commons



Miriam Cates MP >

Conservative

Penistone and Stocksbridge



Commons



Brendan Clarke-Smith MP >

Conservative

Bassetlaw



Commons



Tom Hunt MP >

Conservative

Ipswich



Commons



Dr Caroline Johnson MP >

Conservative

Sleaford and North Hykeham



Commons



Kim Johnson MP >

Labour

Liverpool, Riverside



Commons



Ian Mearns MP >

Labour

Gateshead



Commons



Kate Osborne MP >

Labour

Jarrow



Commons



Nicola Richards MP >

Conservative

West Bromwich East



Commons



Christian Wakeford MP >

Conservative

Bury South



Commons

How do select committees work?

6 current inquiries

[View all inquiries >](#)

Inquiries allow committees to consider oral and written evidence on a particular topic. They usually result in the publication of a report.

Accountability hearings >

Opened 17 March 2020


Prison Education >

Opened 19 November 2020

Children's Homes >

Opened 15 March 2021

The future of post-16 qualifications >


Written evidence:  Accepting
Deadline 20 January 2022

Opened 23 November 2021

The Government's Catch-up programme >

Opened 29 November 2021

Education challenges facing children and young people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds >

Written evidence:  Accepting
Deadline 25 January 2022

Opened 6 December 2021

How do select committees work?

All non-inquiry sessions

Name or keyword(s)

Date from

Date until

Select session

Sort by

Date opened (newest first)

Status



Any



Current



Closed

Show inquiries that are accepting

Written
evidence

Petitions

Search

Universities and the pandemic >

Opened 11 October 2021

COVID-19 and the vaccination of children >

Opened 15 September 2021

Summer results 2021 and arrangements for 2022 >

Opened 31 August 2021

Education Recovery >

Opened 23 June 2021

Safeguarding in Schools >

Opened 7 June 2021

Regional Schools Commissioners >

Opened 1 April 2021

Funding and financial management of schools >

Opened 18 February 2021

Exams 2021 >

Opened 3 December 2020

Further Education White Paper >

Opened 2 September 2020

Apprenticeship Levy >

Opened 4 March 2020

How do
select
committees
work?


All pre-appointment hearings

Name or keyword(s)

Date from

dd/mm/yyyy 

Date until

dd/mm/yyyy 

Select session

Sort by

Date opened (newest first) 

Status

Any

Current

Closed

Show inquiries that are accepting

Written evidence

Petitions

Search

Appointment of the Chief Regulator of Ofqual >

Report:  Published
On 8 July 2021

Govt. response:  Overdue
Since 8 September 2021

Opened 5 July 2021

Appointment of the Chair of the Office for Students >

Report:  Published
On 5 February 2021

Govt. response:  Overdue
Since 5 April 2021

Opened 7 January 2021

Appointment of the Children's Commissioner for England >

Report:  Published
On 17 December 2020

Opened 24 November 2020

How do select committees work?

Economic Affairs Committee

Lords Select Committee

The Economic Affairs Committee is a House of Lords permanent investigative committee charged with considering economic affairs.

Follow the Economic Affairs Committee on [Twitter](#)

Summary

Membership

Events

Publications

News

These pages only show information for this committee from the start of 2020 onwards. Earlier information can be found on the previous version of the UK Parliament website.

[View previous Economic Affairs Committee website](#)

4 current inquiries

[View all inquiries >](#)

Inquiries allow committees to consider oral and written evidence on a particular topic. They usually result in the publication of a report.

The economics of Universal Credit >

Report:  Published
On 31 July 2020

Govt.
response:  Published
On 11 November 2020

Opened 6 February 2020

Employment and COVID-19 >

Report:  Published
On 14 December 2020

Govt.
response:  Published
On 12 March 2021

Opened 3 August 2020

Quantitative Easing >

Report:  Published
On 16 July 2021

Govt.
response:  Published
On 17 September 2021

Opened 27 January 2021

Central Bank Digital Currencies >

Opened 16 September 2021

How do select committees work?

Youth Unemployment Committee

Lords Select Committee

The committee was appointed to consider youth unemployment, education and skills.

Summary


[Membership](#)[Events](#)[Publications](#)[News](#)

Inquiry

Inquiries allow committees to consider oral and written evidence on a particular topic. They usually result in the publication of a report.

Youth Unemployment >

Report:  Published
On 26 November 2021

Govt.
response:  Due by
On 26 January 2022

Opened 28 January 2021

How do
select
committees
work?

Homelessness inquiry

Inquiry Launch
25/08/2017



Written submission
deadline
25/10/2017

Hearings
in person

Report
publication

Government
response

House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee



How do select committees work?

Call for Evidence

Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG)

The Committee invites written submissions on any or all of the points below:

- Whether the current system of careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) is serving young people, particularly:
 - those from disadvantaged backgrounds;
 - those who are known to the care system
 - those who are not in mainstream education, including home-educated pupils and those in alternative provision;
 - those from different ethnic minority backgrounds; and
 - those who have a special educational need or disability.
- Whether and how the Government should bring responsibility for CEIAG under one body, for example a National Skills Service, to take overall responsibility for CEIAG for all ages, and how this might help young people navigate the CEIAG system.
- Whether such a National Skills Service is best placed in the Department for Education or the Department of Work and Pensions to avoid duplication of work.
- Whether organisations like the Careers Enterprise Company and National Careers Service provide value for money to the taxpayer.
- How careers and skills guidance could be better embedded in the curriculum across primary, secondary, further, higher and adult education, to ensure all learners are properly prepared for the world of work
- How schools could be supported to better fulfil their duties to provide careers advice and inform students of technical, as well as academic, pathways.
 - How the Baker Clause could be more effectively enforced
 - How the Government can ensure more young people have access to a professional and independent careers advisor and increase the take-up of the Lifetime Skills initiative.
- Whether the proposals for CEIAG in the Government's Skills for Jobs White Paper will effectively address current challenges in the CEIAG system
 - Whether greater investment to create a robust system of CEIAG is needed, and how could this be targeted, to create a stronger CEIAG

You can submit evidence until 23:59 on Thursday 17 March 2022.

Start

How do select committees work?

Anyone can submit written evidence!

- You don't have to be invited to do so.
- You don't have to have a pre-existing relationship with the Committee.
- You don't have to be a professor, lecturer or have a PhD.

All you need is relevant interest or expertise in the questions asked.

Tips:

- Introduce yourself (explain why your evidence is credible).
- Be relevant (focus on the questions asked*)
- Be original (can't just send in journal articles or blogposts)
- Be concise and clear (<3,000 words, limit technical language)
- Meet the deadline.

How do select committees work?

Submission of written evidence to the Public Accounts Committee Restoration and Renewal of Parliament Inquiry Dr Alexandra Meakin, Lecturer in Politics, University of Leeds

Summary

This submission expresses significant concern about the current progress of the Restoration and Renewal Programme as a result of the decisions taken by the House of Commons and House of Lords Commissions in February 2022. The abolition of the Parliamentary Works Sponsor Body and the reversal of the commitment to full decant will mean the R&R programme will mean Parliament to spending more taxpayers' money on the Palace than necessary, while exposing staff and visitors to a dangerous level of risk, simply in the hope that the current generation of MPs will not have to move out temporarily.

Introduction

1. My submission draws on research carried out since September 2016, including semi-structured elite interviews of MPs, Peers and parliamentary staff as part of my PhD thesis: "Understanding the Restoration and Renewal of the Palace of Westminster: An analysis of institutional change in the UK Parliament", and my continued scrutiny of the R&R programme.
2. My evidence highlights three key interlinked issues:
 - i) The planned abolition of the Parliamentary Works Sponsor Body should be a matter of significant concern for members of the Committee due to the risks of political interference and micro-management on the progress of the necessary works, and the value for money secured for the taxpayer.
 - ii) The House of Commons Commission's statement that the new Joint Department should work with the Delivery Authority to develop plans that "reduce the need for a complete or nearly-complete decant of the Palace" suggests that the Restoration and Renewal programme will now proceed without the full decant being part of any future Outline Business Case and not presented to MPs and Peers as an available option.⁴ As all evidence has shown that a full decant is the cheapest way to deliver the necessary work, this approach will automatically commit Parliament to spending more taxpayers' money on the Palace than necessary, simply in the hope that the current generation of MPs will not have to move out on a temporary basis.
 - iii) Insisting on remaining in the Palace during the building works will not only cost more but will also expose everyone working within Parliament or visiting the Palace to "extraordinary levels of risk".² While some Members may be willing to expose themselves to this risk, they will be making that decision on behalf of future MPs and Peers, their staff, the staff of the House, the contractors and staff working on the R&R programme, and any of their constituents (including schoolchildren) who wish to exercise their democratic right to visit Parliament at any point in the next seventy years.³
3. This submission moves to consider each of these three points in further detail.

The proposed abolition of the Parliamentary Works Sponsor Body

4. The Parliamentary Works Sponsor Body was created on the specific grounds that Parliament should not directly manage a project of this scale. The report of the Joint Committee on the Palace of Westminster stated that:

⁴ The House of Commons Commission statement of 2 February 2022: <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/8750/documents/88648/default/>

² Houses of Parliament Restoration and Renewal (2021) Restoration and Renewal Programme: Strategic Review Available at: https://assets.ctfassets.net/vuykqhqtihf/6FHPwIY7BdBF0XR0Pdad0a/461ecf229f91ff743153f8a49ef39080/4107-RRP-CO-SG-00003_01_U_v9_-_main_report.pdf

³ Sir Edward Leigh, a Sponsor Body board member, told the Today in Parliament programme on 11 February 2022 that without decant "they will go on working around us for thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, years".

The Programme Team has already carried out significant analysis of the risks which arise in complex, large-scale building projects, including those which arose during the construction of Portcullis House and the Scottish Parliament. While both of those projects were new buildings, the risks are certainly no less, and possibly greater, on a major renovation project. The generic risks include discovery of previously unknown building issues, an incomplete or ambiguous definition of the brief, changing the scope part-way through the project, lack of continuity in governance, changes in the political context, weak project and programme management, and weakness in the management of procurement and contracts. Obviously, it will therefore be essential to develop a governance structure which minimises and manages such risks.⁴

[...]

Expert witnesses emphasised the need to create a clearly identifiable client for the Programme, akin to a non-executive board. Such a client would need to be precise in defining the scope and objectives of the Programme but, having authorised the delivery partner to proceed, would need to let the partner deliver the Programme without undue interference. Such a client would clearly need to have a deep understanding of the work of both Houses, but also be distinct from Parliament and be dedicated to the R&R Programme.⁵

[...]

In a two-tier governance system, the top level of governance would be the body that 'sponsored' the Programme, and became the guardian of it. The Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) said it was "vital" that there should be a strong Sponsor Body for the Programme. The Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE) noted that the successful completion in recent decades of three large and complex projects—the Olympic Park, the Channel Tunnel Rail Link and Heathrow Terminal 5—all involved a client body with "a clear vision, excellent leadership and world class project managers."⁶

5. While some of these issues may be resolved if the expert staff within the Sponsor Body are transferred to work for the new joint department, there is no way to address the risks the Joint Committee warned of "an incomplete or ambiguous definition of the brief, changing the scope part-way through the project, lack of continuity in governance, [and] changes in the political context" with making the project directly accountable to the Commissions of both Houses.
6. The House of Commons Commission statement suggested that the abolition of the Sponsor Body will "enable a more rapid prioritisation of critical work on the Palace". There is, however, no evidence at all that it is the existence of the Sponsor Body that has delayed the start of critical work on the Palace. Instead, there is clear evidence that it has been political interventions that have delayed such work: the NAO found that the work of the Strategic Review of R&R "diverted resources away from producing the business case" and that the "Sponsor Body currently has less information than it expected to have at this stage to develop the business case".⁷ The request by the Commons Commission for further work on the feasibility of a continued presence cost the Sponsor Body £5 million, and presumably considerable time.⁸ It is hard to reconcile these objective facts with the statement made by the Commission.

Decant

7. The meeting of the House of Commons Commission in which they agreed the abolition of the Sponsor Body came just seven days after the Commission discussed the report produced by the Sponsor Body on the issue of continued presence. This report found that a continued presence could increase the timescale of the work by as much as 48 years & increase the cost by 180% to £22 billion. Whereas full decant would cost between £7-13 billion and take up to 28 years, no decant will cost between £11-22 billion and take up

⁴ Joint Committee on the Palace of Westminster (2016) Restoration and Renewal of the Palace of Westminster. HL 41, HC 659. London: House of Commons. Para 255

⁵ *Ibid.* para 256

⁶ *Ibid.* para 258

⁷ NAO (2022) Restoration and Renewal of the Palace of Westminster: Progress update HC1016

⁸ *Ibid.*

How do select committees work?

Things to avoid:

- Presenting them with all the information you have on a topic.
- Being too abstract – link your findings to government policy, make recommendations (and not just asking for further research).
- Being party political.
- Anything libellous (it will be covered by parliamentary privilege but you don't want to give them a reason to reject your evidence)
- Criticising the inquiry itself – be constructive.

Also remember: almost all evidence is published and will stay on the internet forever...

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

EIM numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 5 Gyres Institute ([EIM0017](#))
- 2 Anglian Water ([EIM0046](#))
- 3 British Plastics Federation ([EIM0041](#))
- 4 British Plastics Federation / PlasticsEurope ([EIM0015](#))
- 5 British Retail Consortium ([EIM0037](#))
- 6 Brunel University, London ([EIM0028](#))
- 7 CEFAS ([EIM0023](#))
- 8 CHEM Trust ([EIM0010](#))
- 9 Cornwall Plastic Pollution Coalition ([EIM0054](#))
- 10 Cosmetics Europe ([EIM0032](#))
- 11 DEFRA ([EIM0034](#))
- 12 Dr Dannielle Green ([EIM0040](#))
- 13 Dr Michael Shaver ([EIM0005](#))
- 14 Dr Natalie Welden ([EIM0003](#))
- 15 Environment Agency ([EIM0056](#))
- 16 Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) ([EIM0022](#))
- 17 Fauna & Flora International ([EIM0016](#))
- 18 Fidra ([EIM0012](#))
- 19 Grantham Institute ([EIM0027](#))
- 20 Greenpeace UK, the Environmental Investigation Agency, Fauna & Flora International, and the Marine Conservation Society ([EIM0020](#))
- 21 Johnson & Johnson ([EIM0042](#))
- 22 Keep Britain Tidy ([EIM0029](#))
- 23 King's College London ([EIM0014](#))
- 24 L'Oréal ([EIM0043](#))
- 25 Marine Conservation Society ([EIM0025](#))

How do
select
committees
work?

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How do select committees work?

Getting called to give oral evidence:

- Oral evidence is not of any higher status than written evidence.
 - There can be additional prestige of getting invited to give evidence.
 - Opportunity to go into greater depth, explore ideas with committee members.
- Tips:
 - Research background of Members.
 - Practice with colleagues.
 - Get a briefing from the staff.

How do select committees work?

Committee staff (impartial crown servants) support select committees by...

- Proposing witnesses
- Drafting the call for evidence
- Reading and analysing all the written evidence
- Drafting evidence session briefing papers (suggested questions)
- Drafting “Heads of Report”
- Drafting Chair’s Draft Report
- Rewriting report until all the Committee are happy.

How do
select
committees
work?



House of Commons
Environmental Audit Committee

**Environmental impact
of microplastics**

Fourth Report of Session 2016–17

HC 179



House of Commons
Environmental Audit Committee

**Sustainability in
the Department for
Transport**

Third Report of Session 2016–17

HC 184

How do select committees work?

Environmental impact of microplastics

- Sources of microplastics include exfoliation beads in cosmetic products, fibres from clothes,
- Microplastics can't be fully filtered out by waste water treatment, so are released into the sea, where they get find their way into the food chain
- Committee took evidence over spring/summer 2016
- Strategically held back publication of report until newspapers 'silly season' in August
- Daily Mail not only ran story, but launched a full campaign
- 2 weeks later Government agreed to ban microbeads in cosmetics & personal care products



Daily Mail
THURSDAY, AUGUST 25, 2016 www.dailymail.co.uk DAILY NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR 65p

BAN THE TOXIC BEADS NOW!

Tiny plastic beads in everything from shower gel to toothpaste are poisoning oceans and threatening health. Today we call for them to be outlawed

MICROBEADS should be banned by Britain without waiting for EU approval, campaigners said last night. They urged Theresa May to take unilateral action against the plastics used in shower gels, toothpastes and anti-ageing creams. Microbeads are flushed into rivers and seas by the trillion where they attract toxins, threaten marine life and can reach the human food chain. In an unprecedented joint statement, the campaigners accused beauty firms of 'dragging their feet'. The European Commission is considering a ban but MPs from all parties and environmental groups want one now. And today the Daily Mail also calls for the beads to be banished. Louise Edge of Greenpeace, which signed the campaigners' statement, said: 'It's common sense to most people that pouring plastic into the sea is a terrible idea. Unfortunately most companies have been trying to get away with it for as long as they can. And even now that companies are under the spotlight and seem to acknowledge that microbeads are

By Sean Poulter
Consumer Affairs Editor

Turn to Page 2



VICTORY!
UK GOVERNMENT
JUST BANNED
MICROBEADS!

GREENPEACE

Strengths

- Cross-party consensus on recommendations – very powerful.
- Hold Government to account and improve policymaking.
- Around 40% of recommendations are taken up by the Government in one way or another, not always immediately.

Strengths

- Can be agenda-setting, or shine a spotlight on an area that is being neglected.
- Provide an avenue for expertise and a range of voices into Parliament.
- Even just holding an inquiry can push the Government to address an issue.

Weaknesses

- Sometimes can't escape party politics – especially in the run-up to elections or particularly tense periods (Brexit...)
- Trying to maintain consensus can weaken their work.
- MPs are busy people – can't always devote much time to select committee work.

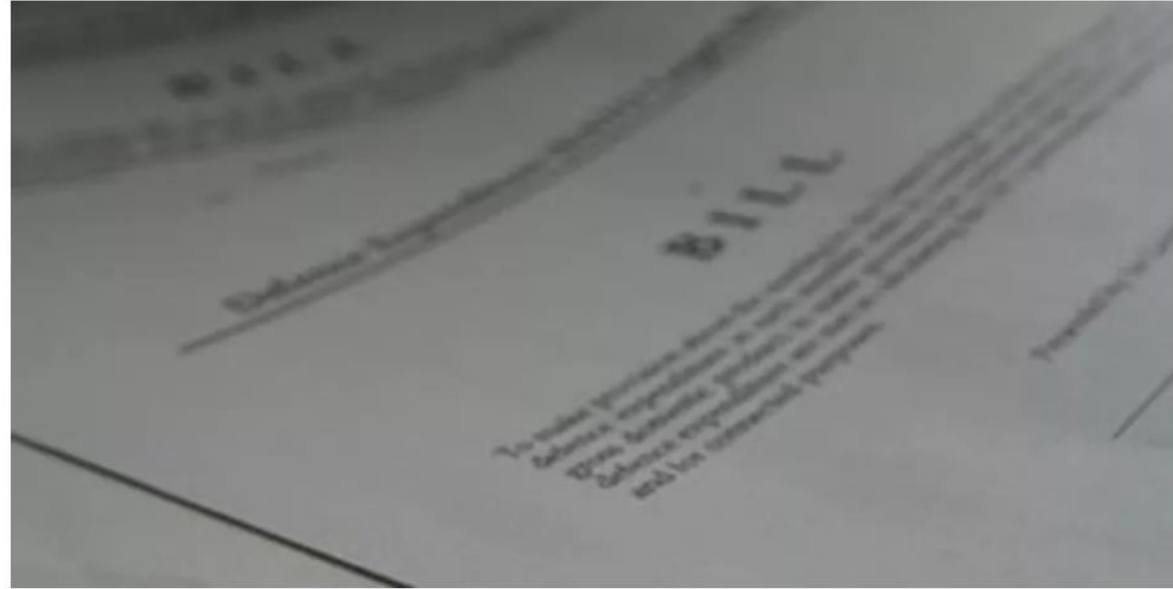
Weaknesses

- Diversity – gender and race balance can be much worse than Parliament as a whole.
- Talented politicians often go straight onto the front bench.
- Lack of formal powers.
- No automatic plenary debates.
- Lack of follow-up.
- Can be too focused on the past.

Public Bill Committees

Have your say on the Elections Bill

13 September 2021



Do you have relevant expertise and experience or a special interest in the Elections Bill 2021-22, which is currently passing through Parliament?

If so, you can submit your views in writing to the House of Commons Public Bill Committee which is going to consider this Bill.

The first sitting of the Public Bill Committee is expected to be on Wednesday 15 September. Written evidence can now be sent in to the Public Bill Committee. The Committee is scheduled to report by Wednesday 3 November. **However, please note that when the Committee concludes its consideration of the Bill it is no longer able to receive written evidence and it can conclude earlier than the expected deadline of 5.00pm on Wednesday 3 November. You are strongly advised to submit your written evidence as soon as possible. The sooner you send in your submission, the more time the Committee will have to take it into consideration.**

Elections Bill

Written evidence submitted by Dr Katharine Dommett, University of Sheffield (EB01)

Research expertise in digital campaigning and transparency

This submission of evidence relates to Part 6 of the Elections, focusing on the proposals to introduce digital imprints.

Summary of key points:

- The Bill stipulates that an imprint does not need to be displayed on material '[i]f it is not reasonably practicable'. This creates potential challenges in implementation as the bounds of what is 'reasonably practicable' are not defined. As such there is potential for campaigners to interpret this provision in a range of ways, resulting in large amounts of material not displaying a imprint on the material itself (with this content hosted elsewhere). This would create challenges for scrutiny and research and would affect public access to this information – frustrating legislative goals. As such there is a need for clearer guidance of what 'reasonably practicable' means in practice (for more see point 4 below).

- The Bill makes a distinction between paid and unpaid material which has three consequences.

1. In specifying paid content, the Bill focuses on certain types of payment – namely, payment for dissemination. This would lead to some types of activity not being subject to imprints (i.e. influencers – who are paid for content creation, not distribution, which is done organically). To advance the goals of the imprints - to improve transparency around the origin and financial source of campaign material – payment should not be measured only in terms of distribution, but also content creation. (for more see point 7 below)

2. The distinction between paid and unpaid potentially creates confusion around requirements for campaign material when it changes content type (i.e. when originally paid material is subsequently disseminated organically, or vice versa). This suggests that the distinction may be difficult to enforce in practice, and at least suggests the need for additional guidance on what happens when materials change format. (for more see point 7 below)

3. The distinction is accompanied by different regulatory requirements, specifically excluding unregistered third party campaigners from including an imprint on unpaid campaign material. Given evidence of large scale organic campaigns, which can often be coordinated, this could result in a swathe of election material lacking transparency information. For this reason I recommend that all forms of content should be subject to the same requirement to carry an imprint (for more see point 8 below)

Detailed points:

1. In relation to point 35, 3(b) it is notable that the provision does not extend to SMS text messages. This is a potentially significant gap given that many text messages are accessed on electronic devices and through applications (such as WhatsApp). Whilst not commonly used in the UK, the use of SMS messages in campaigns has increased dramatically in the US and Brazil, but such content would not be subject to oversight.

2. In relation to point 35(4) it is indicated that "'The promoter", in relation to electronic material, means the person causing the material to be published' – the phrase 'causing' here could be possibly misleading. I.e. if an advertising intermediary is used – such as SmallAxe Communications– they would be 'causing' the advert to appear in a material sense, but they are not the actor responsible for conceiving that paid content. As an alternative I suggest that, in line with 38(4), the language of 'paying for' the material to be published would be more appropriate here.

Public Bill Committees

Elections Bill

Written evidence submitted by Dr Katharine Dommett, University of Sheffield (EB01)

Research expertise in digital campaigning and transparency

This submission of evidence relates to Part 6 of the Elections, focusing on the proposals to introduce digital imprints.

Summary of key points:

- The Bill stipulates that an imprint does not need to be displayed on material '[i]f it is not reasonably practicable'. This creates potential challenges in implementation as the bounds of what is 'reasonably practicable' are not defined. As such there is potential for campaigners to interpret this provision in a range of ways, resulting in large amounts of material not displaying a imprint on the material itself (with this content hosted elsewhere). This would create challenges for scrutiny and research and would affect public access to this information – frustrating legislative goals. As such there is a need for clearer guidance of what 'reasonably practicable' means in practice (for more see point 4 below).

- The Bill makes a distinction between paid and unpaid material which has three consequences.

1. In specifying paid content, the Bill focuses on certain types of payment – namely, payment for dissemination. This would lead to some types of activity not being subject to imprints (i.e. influencers – who are paid for content creation, not distribution, which is done organically). To advance the goals of the imprints - to improve transparency around the origin and financial source of campaign material – payment should not be measured only in terms of distribution, but also content creation. (for more see point 7 below)

2. The distinction between paid and unpaid potentially creates confusion around requirements for campaign material when it changes content type (i.e. when originally paid material is subsequently disseminated organically, or vice versa). This suggests that the distinction may be difficult to enforce in practice, and at least suggests the need for additional guidance on what happens when materials change format. (for more see point 7 below)

3. The distinction is accompanied by different regulatory requirements, specifically excluding unregistered third party campaigners from including an imprint on unpaid campaign material. Given evidence of large scale organic campaigns, which can often be coordinated, this could result in a swathe of election material lacking transparency information. For this reason I recommend that all forms of content should be subject to the same requirement to carry an imprint (for more see point 8 below)

Detailed points:

1. In relation to point 35, 3(b) it is notable that the provision does not extend to SMS text messages. This is a potentially significant gap given that many text messages are accessed on electronic devices and through applications (such as WhatsApp). Whilst not commonly used in the UK, the use of SMS messages in campaigns has increased dramatically in the US and Brazil, but such content would not be subject to oversight.

2. In relation to point 35(4) it is indicated that "'The promoter", in relation to electronic material, means the person causing the material to be published' – the phrase 'causing' here could be possibly misleading. I.e. if an advertising intermediary is used – such as SmallAxe Communications– they would be 'causing' the advert to appear in a material sense, but they are not the actor responsible for conceiving that paid content. As an alternative I suggest that, in line with 38(4), the language of 'paying for' the material to be published would be more appropriate here.

Public Bill Committees

Public Bill Committees

Cat Smith >

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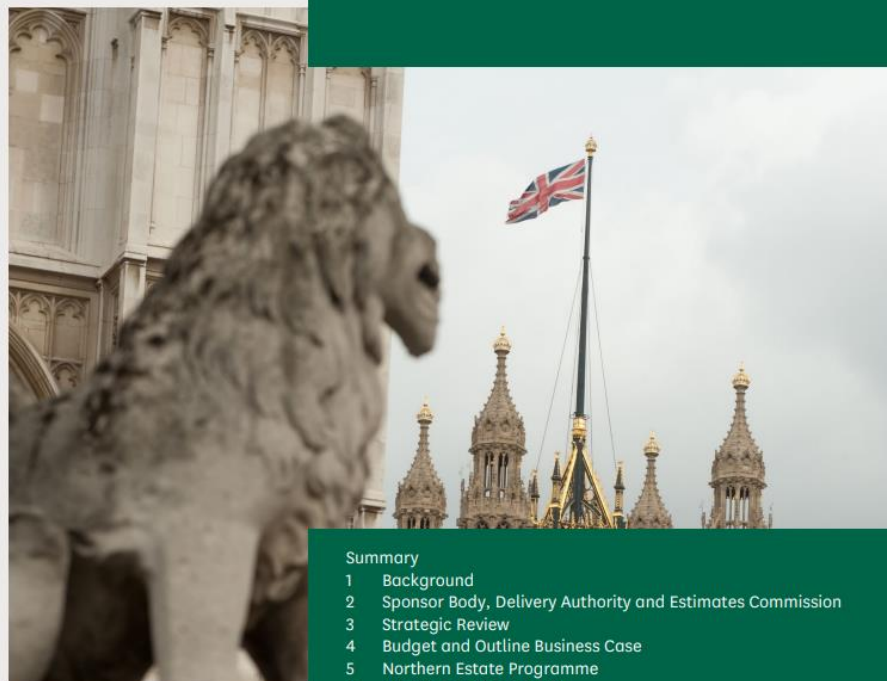
Q Thank you, Chair. My first question is for Dr Dommett, regarding your research on digital campaigning. Obviously, for about a decade now, there has been widespread support and campaigning for additional imprints to be part of transparency around online campaigning. Do you feel that this is sufficient? Do you feel that it is future-proofed, and are there any changes or additions that you would like to see in the legislation, given your specialist knowledge in that area?

Dr Dommett: Thank you very much, Cat. First, it is very good to finally see imprints being tabled into electoral law. This is something that has been called for for 10 years. I have sent evidence to the Committee that outlines some small changes, but broadly I think there is support for this and it is likely to be welcomed. There are questions about the implementation of the proposals as drafted. For example, there is a lot of vagueness around what it means for an imprint to be “reasonably practicable”. From my perspective, that appears to be quite a big challenge in implementation. Is it going to be down to a campaigner, for example, to determine what is reasonably practicable? If that is the case, we are going to see imprints being placed not directly on the material itself, but on external websites. That starts to pose significant challenges not only for oversight, but for researchers such as me, who will be tasked with collecting all these instances to offer any scrutiny. That is a point of concern that I would raise.

The other issue is the distinction between paid and unpaid material, and the implications for what is regulated under each type of content. This is a very challenging issue, and it comes to your question about what is and is not being covered in future-proofing. It is notable that, in focusing on page content, we are talking about a very specific type of page content in relation to imprints. This is about being paid for dissemination, and it is a reflection of the huge growth in online political advertising and payment for dissemination on platforms such as Facebook. It leaves a big gap, so we are already seeing, particularly in other electoral contexts, things like influencers being paid to produce content that they then disseminate organically. That material would not be required, if it was being disseminated by an unregistered non-party campaigner, to contain the kind of imprint we are talking about. There are some questions about what will be left out under the Bill as currently drafted.

By Richard Kelly

10 March 2022



Restoration and Renewal - developments since October 2019

Summary

- 1 Background
- 2 Sponsor Body, Delivery Authority and Estimates Commission
- 3 Strategic Review
- 4 Budget and Outline Business Case
- 5 Northern Estate Programme
- 6 NAO Report (April 2020)
- 7 Public Accounts Committee comment on the NAO report (October 2020)
- 8 NAO Report (January 2022)
- 9 Formal documentation

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Nationality and Borders Bill HL Bill 82 of 2021–22

Author: James Tobin

Date published: 21 December 2021

The Government's Nationality and Borders Bill has three stated objectives:

- To increase the fairness of the system to better protect and support those in need of asylum.
- To deter illegal entry into the United Kingdom, thereby breaking the business model of people smuggling networks and protecting the lives of those they endanger.
- To remove more easily those with no right to be in the UK.

The bill would also make changes to nationality law and to processes for identifying and protecting victims of trafficking or modern slavery. The Government contends that the bill will deliver comprehensive reform to fix what it calls a dysfunctional asylum system.

However, several provisions in the bill have proven highly controversial. They include powers related to the so called 'pushback' of those seeking to cross the Channel in small boats, the creation of two tiers of those seeking asylum, and the Government's interpretation of the 1951 refugee convention. The bill has attracted criticism from refugee advocacy groups, the Joint Committee on Human Rights, the UN Refugee Agency, and others. Other political parties have been similarly critical. Labour, the Scottish National Party, and the Liberal Democrats all voted against the bill being given a second reading in the House of Commons. It passed by a margin of 366 votes to 265.

The Government subsequently moved over 100 amendments at committee and report stages, which have been incorporated into the bill. Some of these amendments were introduced to correct drafting errors or make minor administrative changes. However, a significant number were substantial, replacing 'placeholder' clauses that had previously been present in the bill, or introducing new policy provisions. These included the deprivation of British citizenship without notice, which again has generated significant debate.

A range of opposition amendments were also moved during these stages but were either withdrawn or defeated at division. Opposition parties again voted against the bill at third reading, where it was passed by 298 votes to 231.

On 5 January 2022, the second reading of the bill is scheduled to take place in the House of Lords. This briefing concentrates on changes made to the bill during its passage through the House of Commons ahead of consideration in the Lords. Recent statistics on asylum and immigration, and links to further background reading and relevant documents, are also provided.

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1. What would the bill do?
2. Consideration of the bill in the House of Commons
3. Recent statistics on immigration and asylum
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Advances in vaccine technologies



This POSTnote provides an overview of vaccine development and technologies. It also covers opportunities and challenges in vaccine discovery and manufacture, as well as policy approaches to stimulate vaccine research and development in the UK. It does not cover vaccination campaigns, access or uptake.

Background

Vaccines, as part of a wider array of complementary measures, are highly effective at tackling infectious diseases.^{1,2} The World Health Organization estimates that vaccines prevent 4-5 million deaths every year around the world.³ The Government's 2021 Life Sciences Vision identified supporting novel vaccine discovery, development, manufacture and use as part of its priorities.⁴

Vaccine development

Vaccines train the immune system to recognise parts of pathogens (disease-causing agents such as viruses and bacteria) or their secreted components so that it can protect the body at the next encounter.⁵ Vaccines typically contain: an active component that stimulates the immune system; 'adjuvants' that enhance the immune system's response; and stabilisers, antibacterials and preservatives to extend shelf life and prevent contamination.⁶⁻⁹

Pre-clinical and clinical trials

The first step in vaccine development is creating a 'target product profile' - a strategic planning document setting out all the features of the final vaccine.¹⁰ Pre-clinical development then occurs at a very small scale in academia or expert industrial environments. This is to identify what to use to stimulate the immune system, to create *vaccine candidates*, to test their safety and efficacy in animal studies and to develop manufacturing protocols.^{11,12,13-15} Vaccines are then tested in *clinical trials*, which need prior approval of regulatory bodies such as the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory

Overview

- Each vaccine technology has its own advantages and limitations.
- Challenges to vaccine R&D include gaps in biological and immunological knowledge (including in animals), complexity of clinical trials, manufacturing and distribution.
- Vaccine R&D can be facilitated by advances in fundamental and veterinary research, clinical trial infrastructure, and support for manufacturing capabilities.
- The Government's 2021 Life Sciences Vision focuses on, among other areas, supporting novel vaccine discovery, development, manufacture and use.

Agency (MHRA) and the Health Research Authority (HRA). Clinical trials involve:

- **Phase 1:** a small group of healthy adults (<100) is given the vaccine to make sure there are no clear safety concerns, to see how well it stimulates an immune response and to work out an appropriate dose.
- **Phase 2:** the vaccine is tested in a larger group (several hundred people) to see whether the vaccine works consistently, to assess the immune response and to look for rarer side effects.
- **Phase 3:** the vaccine is studied on a much larger scale in the target population (several thousand people). This aims to identify relatively rare side effects and to provide information about how well the vaccine is likely to work in the real world.
- **Phase 4:** even after a vaccine is authorised for use (see below), surveillance continues throughout roll-out to monitor adverse effects and to determine long-term effectiveness. This phase (also known as 'pharmacovigilance') may last several years.

Authorisation and manufacture

In the UK, the MHRA is responsible for granting authorisation (licence) for use, based on an assessment of: vaccine safety and efficacy using the data generated through animal studies and clinical trials; manufacturing quality and evidence that the production process is under control.¹⁶ Vaccines are then manufactured at scale in licensed manufacturing facilities and distributed (see *Vaccine Manufacturing*). Prior to deployment, the manufacturing and quality control record for every batch is reviewed by the National Institute for Biological Standards and

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Contact the Knowledge Exchange unit: Sarah Foxen, Naomi Saint and Laura Webb. Email: keu@parliament.uk Follow us on Twitter: [@UKParl_Research](https://twitter.com/UKParl_Research)

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Find out more about the role of Parliament.

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Individual MPs/Peers

Can build relationships with specific MPs especially if local or have a specialist policy interest. BUT

Target your approach.

Make clear why it is relevant for them.

Be aware of the party politics involved.

Recognise that they will be incredibly busy.

Peers may be more successful BUT

Few have staff.

Activity levels vary.

Think about what your end goal is.

All Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs)

- Informal cross-party groups for parliamentarians with an interest in a particular issue.
- Must contain members of more than one party.
- No official status within parliament.
- Some involve people outside parliament in their administration and activities.
- Vary a lot in how active and credible they are.

Conclusion

- Always know what your goal is and how engaging with Parliament will help.
- Be aware of the different routes into engaging with Parliament and their different timescales: some will mean long-term commitment, others have a quicker payoff.
- Stay alert for opportunities: parliamentary staff won't find you.
- Enjoy it!



Thank you

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