

## **Proposed amendment of Private Business Standing Orders (27 October 2025)**

### **Explanatory memorandum**

The Chairman of Ways and Means has tabled the following amendment to Standing Order 224 (Examination of public bills by Examiners):

After paragraph 6, insert –

“(6A) In the case of a public bill in relation to which the Examiner decides standing orders are applicable, or of any additional provision in such a bill, the Examiner will not report that the bill, or additional provision, is non-compliant with a standing order on the ground that the date, or dates, specified in the standing order has, or have, not been complied with, provided that the Examiner is satisfied that anything which was required to be done on, or by, a date specified in that standing order has been done on, or by, a date that is appropriate, having regard to the purpose of the standing order in question.”

The text of Standing Order 224 as it would stand with such an amendment made is given in the annex to this note. An equivalent amendment to the Private Business Standing Orders of the House of Lords is scheduled to be considered by that House on 23 October 2025.<sup>1</sup>

The amendment follows a recommendation made by the then-Chairman of Ways and Means and the House of Lords’ Senior Deputy Speaker in a report published in September 2022 as part of the bicameral review of hybrid bill procedure.<sup>2</sup>

Many of the [Private Business Standing Orders](#) specify dates by which certain actions have to be taken by the promoters of a bill – for example, specifying the dates on or times by which certain notices have to be served or published or when copies of a bill need to be made available. The specified dates follow from the requirement for private bills to be deposited on or by 27 November (private bills operating on an annual cycle, unlike public bills which can be introduced at any time).

These standing orders are also applied to hybrid bills (which, like private bills, impact private rights). However, because hybrid bills are usually introduced by the Government as public bills – not, therefore, in accordance with the rules or dates governing the introduction of private bills – such bills are inevitably found to be non-compliant with the Private Business Standing Orders that specify particular dates.

Where the Examiners report non-compliance with the Private Business Standing Orders, the report is referred to the Standing Orders Committees of both Houses, which consider whether to dispense with the Standing Orders which have not been complied with and allow the bill to proceed. Where non-compliance is due solely to the date requirements, these meetings can take only a few minutes, as the Committees will invariably allow hybrid bills non-compliant on these grounds to proceed, as they could not reasonably have been expected to have complied. Over recent years, there have been several such meetings in relation to the High Speed Rail Bills.

This amendment is therefore proposed to prevent hybrid bills from being found non-compliant with the Private Business Standing Orders on the grounds of the date requirements and avoid the need for

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<sup>1</sup> See [House of Lords Business](#), 23 October 2025

<sup>2</sup> [Hybrid Bill Review Report](#), September 2022, paras 27-29

such meetings of the Standing Orders Committees, which take up the time of Members and incur costs of the bill's promoter.

The amendment would mean that when a public bill is examined for compliance with the Private Business Standing Orders, the Examiners would not report a non-compliance where the non-compliance relates only to the failure to act on or by the dates specified in the Standing Orders. Bills could still be found non-compliant with other requirements of the Standing Orders, unrelated to dates.

The amendment would not absolve promoters of the requirement to take the actions specified by the Standing Orders (the service of notices, the deposit of bills and plans, etc), but only mean that they would not have to do so on or by the dates specified in the Standing Orders. The Examiners would, when considering a bill's compliance, consider whether the action required by the Standing Order has been taken "on, or by, a date that is appropriate, having regard to the purpose of the standing order in question".

Simon Armitage  
Clerk of Private and Hybrid Bills, House of Commons  
October 2025

### **Annex – text of Standing Order 224 as proposed to be amended**

#### **224 Examination of public bills by Examiners (HL 83)**

- (1) Where a public bill (not being a bill to confirm a provisional order) is whilst pending in this House ordered to be examined by the Examiners with respect to the applicability thereto of the standing orders, the Examiner shall decide whether or not the bill is of such a nature that Standing Orders 4 to 68 should apply to it and if he decides that those Standing Orders should so apply he shall report to the House whether or not they have been complied with, and when they have not been complied with, he shall also report to the House the facts upon which his decision is founded and any special circumstances connected with the case.
- (2) The Examiners may inquire into compliance with Standing Orders 62 to 68 at any time after the order for the examination of the bill.
- (3) The Examiner shall give not less than two clear days' notice in the Private Bill Office of the day on which the bill will be examined.
- (4) Parties shall be entitled to appear and to be heard by themselves or their agents upon a memorial addressed to the Examiners and signed by those parties or their agents alleging that the standing orders are applicable to the bill and have not been complied with, provided that such memorial has been deposited in the Private Bill Office before 12 noon on the day before that appointed for the examination of the bill, together with two copies of the memorial for the use of the Examiners; and the member in charge of the bill shall be entitled to be heard by himself or his agents.
- (5) In the case of a bill originating in this House the Examiner shall have leave to report to the House of Lords (if that House thinks fit so to order) whether any standing orders of that House compliance with which, in the case of a private bill, is to be proved before one of the Examiners are applicable to the bill, and, if applicable, whether or not they have been complied with.

- (6) Where a public bill originating in the House of Lords is whilst pending in that House referred to the Examiners for examination as to the applicability thereto of the standing orders of that House, the Examiner shall (if that House thinks fit to give him leave) report to this House whether any such standing orders of this House as aforesaid are applicable to the bill and, if applicable, whether or not they have been complied with, and when they have not been complied with, he shall also report to the House the facts upon which his decision is founded and any special circumstances connected with the case.
- (7) ***In the case of a public bill in relation to which the Examiner decides standing orders are applicable, or of any additional provision in such a bill, the Examiner will not report that the bill, or additional provision, is non-compliant with a standing order on the ground that the date, or dates, specified in the standing order has, or have, not been complied with, provided that the Examiner is satisfied that anything which was required to be done on, or by, a date specified in that standing order has been done on, or by, a date that is appropriate, having regard to the purpose of the standing order in question.***
- (8) Standing Order 104 (Reference to Standing Orders Committee of reports from Examiner of non-compliance with standing orders, etc.) shall, so far as applicable, apply to reports from the Examiner under this order in like manner as it applies to reports from the Examiner in relation to private bills.