

REMOTE OBJECTION TO PRIVATE BUSINESS
TEMPORARY PRACTICE DIRECTION
SESSION 2021-22

This Direction rescinds the temporary, Commons-only Practice Direction issued on 23 March 2021, whose purpose was to allow remote objection to private business taken at the beginning of a sitting day.

Background

The substantive stages of Private Bills (Second Reading; Report Stage; Third Reading) and other items of private business are taken without debate at the start of a day's business, before question time.

In order for the relevant business to make progress, the relevant motion (for example that the Bill be read a second time, that the Bill be considered, or that the Bill be read a third time) must be agreed to unanimously. If any Member objects, the stage must be rescheduled for another day. If objection persists, opposed private business would need to be scheduled when time is available.

The usual way for a Member to object at the start of the day is by shouting "Object!" in the Chamber.

Once a given stage has been objected to once, it is possible for a Member to table a 'blocking motion', in the form that the bill be considered in six months' time. The presence of such a motion on the paper effectively means that each time the Bill is put down for the stage in question, the Member will be deemed to have objected – he/she no longer needs to object in person.

However, Standing Order 174(3), which provides for blocking motions, only applies to proceedings which have previously been deferred under Standing Order 174(2) – in other words, proceedings to which there has already been an objection in person (whether by the same Member or another Member):

[...]

(2) During the time of private business opposed business shall not be proceeded with but shall be deferred to such time, other than a Friday, as the Chairman of Ways and Means may appoint.

(3) Opposed business shall include any proceedings on a private bill or a confirming bill which have been deferred under paragraph (2) of this order, so long as a notice of an amendment stands upon the order paper in the form of a notice of motion (other than a notice of motion in the name of the Chairman of Ways and Means) on second reading, consideration or third reading for such bill:

Provided that no such notice of motion shall stand on the paper for more than seven days unless renewed

The practical implication of this is that the blocking motions cannot be used for the first objection to a given motion, but only for subsequent objections.

Temporary Practice Direction

To allow Members to be able to object remotely to motions at the time of private business at the start of the sitting to which there had not yet been an objection, a temporary Commons-only Practice Direction was issued on 23 March 2021 allowing such objections to be made by a Member emailing speakersoffice@parliament.uk by the rise of the House on the previous sitting day. The temporary Practice Direction stated that this provision would remain in place until further notice.

The temporary Commons-only Practice Direction issued on 23 March 2021 is now rescinded. Members wishing to object to Private Business motions to which there has not yet been an objection must do so in person in the Chamber.

Chris Stanton
Clerk of Bills
8 September 2021