



HOUSE OF LORDS

Select Committee on  
Royal Albert Hall Bill [HL]

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# Special Report

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### *Select Committee on Royal Albert Hall Bill [HL]*

The select committee was appointed on 11 March 2024 to consider the Royal Albert Hall Bill [HL].

#### *Members*

[Baroness Fairhead](#)

[Lord German](#)

[Baroness Hale of Richmond](#) (Chair)

[Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town](#)

[Lord Naseby](#)

#### *Committee staff*

The staff of the Committee are Chris Salmon Percival (Clerk), Ché Diamond (Assistant Counsel to the Chairman of Committees), Mike Wright (Private and Hybrid Legislation Manager) and Kiran Kaur (Committee Operations Officer).

#### *Registered interests*

Committee Members' registered interests may be examined in the online Register of Lords' Interests at <https://www.parliament.uk/hlregister>. The Register may also be inspected in the Parliamentary Archives.

#### *Publications*

The Committee's reports are published by Order of the House in hard copy and on the internet at <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/712/royal-albert-hall-bill-hl-committee/publications/>

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# Special Report

## ROYAL ALBERT HALL BILL [HL]

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1. The Royal Albert Hall Bill was introduced into the House of Lords on 23 January 2023 and given a second reading on 19 October 2023. It is promoted by The Corporation of the Hall of Arts and Sciences (the Royal Albert Hall) (“the Corporation”). One petition against the Bill was deposited in the names of The Hon. Richard Lyttelton, the FanFair Alliance and the Court of the Worshipful Company of Musicians. Mr Lyttelton subsequently withdrew his name from the petition but continued as the representative of the remaining petitioners.
2. The Select Committee on the Bill was appointed on 11 March 2024. The members of the Committee were: Baroness Fairhead, Lord German, Baroness Hale of Richmond (Chair), Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town and Lord Naseby.
3. In accordance with Private Business Standing Order (SO) 142, a report on the Bill was presented to the House by the Attorney General.<sup>1</sup>
4. On 12 April 2024, the Promoters gave notice that they intended to object to the Petitioners’ right to be heard (*locus standi*). At its meeting on 22 April 2024, following submissions by the parties, the Committee decided that neither of the Petitioners fell within the terms of SO 117 (Power to allow associations, etc, to have petition considered).<sup>2</sup> It was conceded by Mr Lyttelton, who spoke for both the FanFair Alliance and the Court of the Worshipful Company of Musicians, that their interests were not injuriously or adversely affected by the provisions contained in the Bill. The Committee regretted having to reach that conclusion, because it considered that the governance of the Corporation is a matter of considerable public interest and concern.
5. Clause 5 of the Bill which was before the Committee would have affected the governance of the Corporation by increasing the number of privately owned seats the owners of which would be entitled to vote at General Meetings and to elect members of the Council. The Promoters propose an amendment to omit clause 5 in its entirety.
6. In the light of that proposed amendment, the Attorney General, in her report, does not object to the Bill.
7. Nevertheless, the Attorney General went on to say this:

“I must, however, express my disappointment that the Bill is not more ambitious. It is widely acknowledged that the constitution of the Corporation of the Hall of Arts and Sciences gives rise to a potential conflict between the private interests of seat-holding trustees and the Corporation’s charitable objects. This potential conflict is of significant

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1 Report of the Attorney General, the Rt Hon. Victoria Prentis KC MP to the Rt Hon. Lord Gardiner of Kimble, Senior Deputy Speaker (18 April 2024): <https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/55059/documents/4701> [accessed 25 April 2024]

2 Oral evidence taken before the Opposed Bill Committee on the Royal Albert Hall Bill [HL], 22 April 2024 (Session 2023–24): <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/14661/html/>

concern to the Charity Commission and many well-informed observers. Indeed, I wrote last year to the President of the Corporation to express my disappointment that more had not been done to resolve the conflicts issue in the many years of its existence. I therefore regard the Bill as a missed opportunity to effect meaningful change to the arrangements by which the Royal Albert Hall is governed.”

8. The Committee is aware that promoters of private Bills are required to certify that the objects of the Bill “cannot be attained without the authority of Parliament” and paragraph (17) of the Preamble so declares.<sup>3</sup> This is because the Bill affects the private law rights of the seat-holders.
9. The Committee is also aware that it may not be possible to make such a declaration in relation to every aspect of the governance of the Corporation. The Charter of the Corporation contains the power to amend its constitution and this power is preserved in Schedule 2 to the Royal Albert Hall Act 1966<sup>4</sup> which sets out the Constitution.
10. The Committee was informed by leading Counsel for the Corporation (and was aware from the voluminous evidence filed by the Corporation) that the Corporation conducted a governance review which produced a number of recommendations; that the Charity Commission wanted to impose a more radical scheme upon the Corporation and to that end proposed to make a reference to the First-tier Tribunal (Charity); but that the then Attorney General had refused consent for such a reference. Counsel also explained that the Corporation opposes any amendments to their governance which would risk jeopardising the relationship which seat-holders have with the Hall.
11. It appears to the Committee that an impasse has been reached. The Corporation is unwilling to make changes to its governance. The Charity Commission would like to do so but has so far been prevented from taking the matter forward. And this House is prevented from doing so by way of amendments to a private Bill unless such amendments fall within the scope of such Bill as the Corporation chooses to promote (and Parliamentary Practice prevents the Corporation from promoting a Bill the objects of which include changes to governance that could be attained by other means) (see paragraph 8 above).
12. **The Committee is of the view that these matters should be drawn to the attention of the House and of the Government, in particular but not only at further stages of the Bill, so that a way forward can eventually be found to address the concerns raised in the Attorney General’s report. The Royal Albert Hall plays an iconic part in the life of the nation and there is a strong public interest in ensuring that its governance arrangements are consistent with its charitable status.**

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3 See *Erskine May’s treatise on the law, privileges, proceedings and usage of Parliament* (25th edition, 2019), para 42.1: <https://erskinemay.parliament.uk/section/6187/introduction-history-and-principles> “Before agreeing to exemption from, or amendment of, the general law in particular local circumstances, Parliament has always required proof, first of the need for the exemption or amendment, and second of the fact that the need is, at any rate in part, that of the promoters of the bill.”

4 Royal Albert Hall Act 1966, [Schedule 2](#).