

Malvern Hills Bill [HL]: Next steps

Published guidance can be found on:

- The [committee's webpage](#).
- The [Bill's webpage](#).
- [Right to be Heard Guidance](#).

What stages has the Bill already completed?

The Malvern Hills Bill was deposited with Parliament on 27 November 2024. It was examined against the Private Business Standing Orders of both Houses on 18 December. The Examination is to ensure that the Promoters of the Bill have complied with the provisions of the relevant Standing Orders. The Examiners, who are officials of both Houses, found that the Standing Orders had been complied with.

First reading of the Bill took place on 22 January 2025. First reading is a formal stage in the Chamber where the Bill is introduced. There is no debate on the substance of the Bill.

The petitioning period for the Bill was triggered by its introduction into the House. The petitioning period ran from 23 January until 6 February and [50 petitions](#) were received against the Bill.

What are the next stages?

Second reading

The next stage for the Bill is second reading. Normally the second reading of a private bill is a formal stage, like first reading, where there is no debate. However, a Peer can request a debate at this stage. It is important to note that, unlike public bills, if the House agrees to give a private bill a second reading this does not affirm the principle of the bill. This is not the stage where a Peer could seek to amend the Bill.

A date for the second reading of the Bill has yet to be set, but the Private Bill Office will contact petitioners when it has been.

Committee stage

Following second reading, whether debated or not, the Bill will be referred to a Select Committee (also known as an Opposed Bill Committee). Dates for committee sittings will be arranged once second reading has taken place. This cross-party committee will consist of five Peers. The

membership of the committee will be published on the committee's website when it has been formally constituted.

Petitioners will be contacted by the Private Bill Office asking for availability, and a suitable date and time to appear before the committee will be arranged. Petitioners are asked to be flexible in their availability. It is important to remember that petitioners may be asked to appear twice before the committee as the Promoter may challenge the right to be heard (also known as *locus standi*) of any petitioner if they do not believe that the petitioner is specially and directly affected by the provisions of the Bill. The Promoter will be in contact with any petitioner who's right to be heard they wish to challenge. The link to the Right to be Heard Guidance can be found at the top of this note.

When the committee has finished hearing the right to be heard challenges, if any, it will move on to hearing the substantive petitions of those who have a right to be heard. The committee follows a quasi-judicial process where the petitioner will present their case and is able to call witnesses and introduce evidence. It is important to note that a petitioner is only able to speak to matters contained in their petition. The Promoter will then have a right of reply.

The committee will expect to hear from people with no legal training so petitioners are at no disadvantage if they decide to represent themselves. However, some petitioners may feel more comfortable (or feel better represented by) asking someone to act on their behalf. This could be a friend, relative or colleague, or it could be someone they pay (for example, a solicitor or land agent). There are professional Parliamentary Agents (solicitors accredited by Parliament who specialise in promoting and opposing hybrid and private bills), known as "Roll A" Agents, who could be asked to act on their behalf. A list of Roll A Agents can be found on the Parliamentary website [here](#).

For petitions where there are multiple signatories, one of the petitioners may act on behalf of their co-petitioners, as their representative, provided all of the co-petitioners consent. Other signatories could be called as witnesses, if desired. Alternatively, the group could ask someone else to represent them.

The committee has the power to provide relief to a petitioner by way of amendment to the Bill, or request that the Promoter provide assurances or undertakings. The committee may write a Special Report if it chooses, but is not always required to do so. The Promoter may also try and seek a compromise with the petitioner away from the committee. The Promoter may also seek amendments to the Bill.

If a petitioner does reach an agreement with the Promoter, or for any other reason, the petitioner may withdraw their petition at any point by simply giving notice to the Private Bill Office. If there is more than one name on the petition, a petitioner may withdraw their name from it but the petition cannot be withdrawn without the consent of all named petitioners.

Third reading

After the Select Committee stage, the Bill is referred back to the House for third reading. Like second reading, although this stage is normally formal Peers can seek a debate on the Bill and propose amendments. It is unusual for amendments contrary to the wishes of the Promoter to be agreed but it is possible.

After third reading

After third reading, the Bill is sent to the House of Commons and follows broadly the same process. Petitioners may petition again in the Commons if they wish to, and a person may petition in the Commons even though they did not petition in the Lords. Should further amendments be made to the Bill in that House, it would then be returned to the Lords to seek agreement on those changes. When those changes are agreed the Bill is ready for Royal Assent.

Who is involved in the process?

The promoter of the Malvern Hills Bill is the Malvern Hills Conservators, also known as the Malvern Hills Trust. It is represented by Sharpe Pritchard LLP, Parliamentary Agents.

The Private Bill Office in the House of Lords is responsible for overseeing the petitioning process and supporting the Select Committee.

Further information and resources

For further information on the process or for impartial advice, please contact the Private Bill Office at HLPrivateBills@parliament.uk or 020 7219 6061.