

SCANCE Contribution

The Criminal Justice Committee's Stage 1 scrutiny of the **Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles (Scotland) Bill** is nearing completion, with the Stage 1 debate taking place today (Tuesday 3 May). The Committee has agreed to an accelerated parliamentary timetable to enable the Bill to pass through Parliament in advance of summer recess.

The Committee's Stage 1 evidence sessions took place in March, and the majority of stakeholders that gave evidence were supportive of the Bill and saw the benefits in introducing these measures. The fireworks industry, however, were very strong in their opposition to the Bill. There were also strong calls from the Scottish Police Federation for the pyrotechnic possession offence (Part 5 of the Bill) to be broadened, and an indication from Police Scotland that this would also be their favoured approach.

The Criminal Justice Committee's Stage 1 report was published on Thursday 28 April. While the Committee recommends that Parliament agrees to the general principles of the Bill at Stage 1, this is very heavily caveated with concerns around the ability of the provisions within the Bill to meet the overall Bill objectives. In particular, the report raises concerns in relation to the accelerated timetable for scrutiny. The report outlines that the Committee believe Parliament should be provided with the opportunity to improve the Bill; but stresses that for some members this is being done in good faith for amendments to be considered in due course.

The Minister for Community Safety provided a response to the Committee's Stage 1 report yesterday (Monday 2 May) to enable this to be circulated in advance of the debate.

As the timetable between the Stage 1 report being published and the debate taking place did not allow for 5 sitting days, a motion was lodged on Wednesday 27 April to suspend Rule 9.6.3A of the Parliament's Standing Orders. While the motion to suspend Standing Orders passed, the Labour Party and Conservative Party spoke against the motion, citing concerns regarding the accelerated timetable impacting upon Parliamentary scrutiny.

Speaking Note

- Standing Orders have had to be suspended, as the Stage 1 debate will take place one sitting day after the Stage 1 report has been published. This compressed timetable has arisen following confirmation from the Criminal Justice Committee that they would not be in a position to publish their Stage 1 report until Thursday 28 April at the earliest; while the original date for the Stage 1 debate of 5 May has been moved to Tuesday 3 May due to the local elections.
- There are practical advantages to having the parliamentary scrutiny process for this Bill concluded in advance of summer recess. Given the issues faced each year by communities and stakeholders, such as the emergency services, involving fireworks it is important to progress positive change and introduce the restrictions as soon as possible to reduce incidents and harm.

- This timetable will enable the new proxy purchase offence to be implemented in time for the bonfire period this year. It will also enable, following Royal Assent, work to start immediately on operationalising the remaining Bill provisions, so that further positive change is in place for people and communities as soon as possible.
- [redacted s29(1)(a)]

Links to further information

Previous SCANCE note regarding the introduction of the Bill:

Name of Official: [redacted s38(1)(b)]

Extension Number: [redacted s38(1)(b)]