



In Focus

Easter Trading Bill [HL] HL Bill 5 of 2015–16

Key Provisions

The [Easter Trading Bill \[HL\]](#) is a private member's bill introduced by Baroness Turner of Camden (Labour). The Bill received its first reading on 28 May 2015 and is scheduled to receive its second reading on 19 June 2015.

The Bill seeks to “reform the law of England relating to Easter trading; and for connected purposes”.¹ The Bill, if enacted, would amend schedule 1 to the Sunday Trading Act 1994 to remove the prohibition on Easter Day trading for large shops (defined as measuring over 280 square metres/3,000 square foot). The existing restrictions on Sunday trading would still apply to such shops. The Bill would, therefore, enable large shops to open on Easter Sunday as they do on any other Sunday of the year.² The Bill would also allow for the repeal or amendment, by statutory instrument, of any provision in a local Act which appears to the Secretary of State to be inconsistent, unnecessary or to require amendment as a consequence of the Bill.³

The Bill, if enacted, would extend to England only and would come into force on the day on which it was passed.

Background

The House of Commons Library briefing, [Shop Opening Hours Including Sunday Trading](#), explains:

Under current legislation, a distinction is made between large and small shops in respect of permissible trading hours. Large shops (over 280 square metres/3,000 square foot) may open Monday to Saturday without restrictions. On Sundays [in England and Wales], opening is restricted to 6 continual hours between the period 10am and 6pm. All large shops must close on Easter Sunday and on Christmas Day.

In contrast, there are no opening restrictions for small shops (under 280 square metres/3,000 square foot). In effect, a small shop could open twenty-four hours a day, every day of the year including Easter Sunday and Christmas Day, if the owner so wished.⁴

Certain shops are exempt from the Sunday trading restrictions for large shops. These include: airport, railway and service station outlets; certain registered pharmacies; certain farm shops; motor or bicycle

outlets selling supplies and accessories; and exhibition stands selling goods.⁵ The House of Commons Library briefing, produced for MPs, commented on why garden centres are not similarly exempted:

Many constituents wonder why large garden centres are not able to open on Easter Sunday. In fact, this was considered by Parliament in 1994 during the passage of the Sunday Trading Bill. An amendment proposing that large garden centres should be exempt from closing on Easter Sunday was defeated on a free vote in both Houses.⁶

Local authority trading standards officers enforce the provisions of the Sunday Trading Act 1994. It is an offence punishable on summary conviction by a maximum fine of £50,000 for a large shop to trade on a Sunday in contravention of the provisions of the Act.⁷

There are no trading hours restrictions in Scotland.⁸

On 13 January 2006, the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, Alan Johnson MP, announced a review of Sunday trading laws. As part of this review, an independent economic cost-benefit analysis was commissioned to examine the impact of allowing large shops to open for longer on Sundays, and to open on Easter Sunday.⁹ The review found that there would be an economic benefit if large shops were able to open on Easter Sunday.¹⁰ On 6 July 2006, the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, Alistair Darling MP (who had replaced Alan Johnson on 5 May 2006) announced that there would be no change to the Sunday trading laws as a result of there having been “no substantial demand for change” in the responses received as part of an informal consultation on the issue.¹¹

Further Information

- House of Commons Library, [Shop Opening Hours Including Sunday Trading](#), 26 March 2013, SN05522
- Indepen, [The Economic Costs and Benefits of Easing Sunday Shopping Restrictions on Large Stores in England and Wales: A Report for the Department of Trade and Industry](#), May 2006 (see in particular pp 49–51)

¹ [Easter Trading Bill \[HL\] 2015–16 \(HL Bill 5 of 2015–16\)](#), 28 May 2015, p 1.

² National Secular Society, [‘Bills on Assisted Dying, ‘Chancel Tax’, Easter Trading and Sharia Tribunals Set for Lords Debates’](#), 1 June 2015.

³ [Easter Trading Bill \[HL\] 2015–16 \(HL Bill 5 of 2015–16\)](#), 28 May 2015, p 1.

⁴ House of Commons Library, [Shop Opening Hours Including Sunday Trading](#), 26 March 2013, SN05522, p 1.

⁵ GOV.UK, [‘Trading Hours for Retailers: The Law’](#), 12 November 2014.

⁶ House of Commons Library, [Shop Opening Hours Including Sunday Trading](#), 26 March 2013, SN05522, p 4.

⁷ *ibid*, p 3.

⁸ GOV.UK, [‘Trading Hours for Retailers: The Law’](#), 12 November 2014.

⁹ House of Commons Library, [Shop Opening Hours Including Sunday Trading](#), 26 March 2013, SN05522, p 5.

¹⁰ Indepen, [The Economic Costs and Benefits of Easing Sunday Shopping Restrictions on Large Stores in England and Wales: A Report for the Department of Trade and Industry](#), May 2006, pp 2 and 49–51.

¹¹ House of Commons Library, [Shop Opening Hours Including Sunday Trading](#), 26 March 2013, SN05522, p 5.

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