



BRIEFING PAPER

Number SN06170, 18 December 2015

Bank and public holidays

By Doug Pyper

Inside:

1. Bank holidays: what and when are they?
2. The bank and public holidays
3. Working on bank holidays
4. Proposals for additional holidays



Contents

1.	Bank holidays: what and when are they?	3
2.	The bank and public holidays	5
3.	Working on bank holidays	6
4.	Proposals for additional holidays	7
4.1	Parliamentary debate	8

1. Bank holidays: what and when are they?

Strictly, “bank holidays” are those fixed by statute - the *Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971* - as days when financial dealings may be suspended. The term “bank” holiday is used interchangeably with “public” holiday. For all practical purposes there is no difference. There is, however, an academic difference between bank holidays derived from statute and public holidays at common law (such as Christmas Day in England and Wales).

Schedule 1 of the Act stipulates those days which are to be bank holidays in England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland:

In England and Wales:

- Easter Monday
- The last Monday in May
- The last Monday in August
- 26th December, if it be not a Sunday
- 27th December in a year in which 25th or 26th December is a Sunday

In Scotland:

- New Year's Day, if it be not a Sunday or, if it be a Sunday, 3rd January
- 2nd January, if it be not a Sunday or, if it be a Sunday, 3rd January
- Good Friday
- The first Monday in May
- The first Monday in August
- 30th November, if it is not a Saturday or Sunday or, if it is a Saturday or Sunday, the first Monday following that day¹
- Christmas Day, if it be not a Sunday or, if it be a Sunday, 26th December

In Northern Ireland:

- 17th March, if it be not a Sunday or, if it be a Sunday, 18th March
- Easter Monday
- The last Monday in May
- The last Monday in August
- 26th December, if it be not a Sunday
- 27th December in a year in which 25th or 26th December is a Sunday

The Act also gives Her Majesty the power to appoint additional days as bank holidays by Royal Proclamation.² Royal Proclamations are part of the exercise of prerogative powers. In real terms this means a proclamation by the Queen, who by unwritten convention follows the

¹ Added by the *St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday (Scotland) Act 2007* – see below

² Section 1 (3)

advice of the relevant Minister. The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has responsibility for bank holidays.

New Year's Day has been proclaimed a bank holiday in England, Wales and Northern Ireland since 1974; as has the first Monday in May since 1978, with the exception of 1995. In that year, and for that year only, the bank holiday was moved to 8 May to commemorate VE day. New Year's Day and the first Monday in May are already bank holidays in Scotland under the 1971 Act. Christmas Day and Good Friday are "common law" public holidays in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, but are bank holidays in Scotland. Boxing Day and the last Monday in May are generally proclaimed as bank holidays in Scotland.

When bank holidays fall on a weekend and the legislation does not already make provision for a substitute day, this will usually be done by Royal Proclamation.³ For example, in 1993, Christmas day fell on a Saturday. The 1971 Act already provided for 27 December to be a bank holiday when 26 December fell on a Sunday, but a Royal Proclamation declared 28 December a bank holiday too.⁴ In 1998, Boxing Day fell on a Saturday. The original Proclamation merely proclaimed Monday, 28 December 1998, a bank holiday.⁵ However, this was re-proclaimed later in the year as a substitute for 26 December 1998.⁶ The effect was that, in 1998, 26 December was not a bank holiday. It was replaced by Monday 28 December.

The Royal Proclamation can also be used to declare one-off bank holidays to celebrate special occasions, such as the Royal Wedding in 1981, the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977, the Millennium on 31 December 1999 and the Queen's Golden and Diamond Jubilees in 2002 and 2012 respectively.

In 2004 the Scottish Parliament consulted about making St Andrew's Day a public holiday.⁷ On 15 January 2007 the *St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday (Scotland) Act 2007* was passed. The Act gives bank and other organisations the power to close on St Andrew's Day (30 November), but they are not compelled to.

³ Section 1(2) allows Her Majesty to substitute another day for one of the days in the Schedule

⁴ 23 June 1993

⁵ 24 June 1998

⁶ 16 December 1998

⁷ Scottish Parliament, [St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday Consultation Paper](#), July 2004

2. The bank and public holidays

There are eight holidays a year in England and Wales, nine in Scotland and ten in Northern Ireland:

England and Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
New Year's Day (2)	New Year's Day (1) 2 January (1)	New Year's Day (2)
Good Friday (3)	Good Friday (1)	St Patrick's Day (17 March)
Easter Monday (1)		Good Friday (3)
First Monday in May (2)	First Monday in May (2)	Easter Monday (1)
Last Monday in May (1)	Last Monday in May (1)	First Monday in May (2)
		Last Monday in May (1)
		Battle of the Boyne (Orangemen's Day, 12
	First Monday in August (1)	
Last Monday in August (1)		Last Monday in August (1)
	St Andrew's Day (30 November) (1)	
Christmas Day (3)	Christmas Day (1)	Christmas Day (3)
Boxing Day (1)	Boxing Day (1)	Boxing Day (1)

(1) Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971

(2) Royal Proclamation under 1971 Act

(3) Common law public holiday

(4) Proclaimed by Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland has the same holidays as England and Wales, plus two more: St Patrick's Day (17 March, under the 1971 Act) and the Anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne (12 July, Orangemen's Day). The latter, which has been a public holiday since 1926, was proclaimed by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Since 2007, Scotland has had an additional day for St Andrew's Day (see above). Although the 1991 Act and Royal Proclamations made under it do promulgate bank holidays in Scotland, these are not necessarily classified as public holidays. In Scotland public holidays can be set locally by local authorities in consultation with local business interests, based on local tradition. For an overview of bank holidays in Scotland, see the Scottish Government's website, [here](#).⁸

⁸ Bank Holidays in Scotland - Frequently Asked Questions, Scottish Government website

3. Working on bank holidays

The 1971 Act does not entitle workers to leave on bank holidays, rather it suspends financial and other dealings on bank holidays. The Act replaced the *Bank Holidays Act 1871*. That Act sought to address the fact that, while most employers were able to give their workers days off on “public” holidays, it was difficult for banks to do so because the holders of bills of exchange⁹ had the power to require payment on those days:

The question of holidays was generally left to be settled between employers and employed, and it was very easy for most employers who desired it, to give their men a holiday at a small pecuniary sacrifice to themselves; but that was impossible in the case of banks so long as the holders of bills of exchange and promissory notes had power to require payment on those days. In order to avoid bankruptcy it was necessary that banks should be kept open on those days, and thus the clerks could not have holidays on - such occasions. He believed a feeling was generally growing that work in England was quite hard enough, and that additional holidays would not be unwelcome to those to whom they were given, nor unpopular with the general community.¹⁰

Many employers do in fact give employees the day off on bank holidays, despite the lack of a statutory requirement to do so. A worker’s right, or lack thereof, to leave on these days derives from their contract. An employer may require a worker to attend work on a bank holiday if entitled to do so by the contract or industry custom. Absent such a provision or custom, there is case law authority for the proposition that the employee is entitled to paid leave.¹¹

Under [section 1](#) of the *Employment Rights Act 1996*, all employees should receive a written statement of their terms and conditions of employment, including those relating to “holidays, including public holidays, and holiday pay” within two months of starting a new job. The particulars should be “sufficient to enable the employee’s entitlement, including any entitlement to accrued holiday pay on the termination of employment to be precisely calculated”.

⁹ An order in writing requiring the addressee to pay a sum to a specified person or the bearer – e.g., a cheque (see *Bills of Exchange Act 1882*, section 3)

¹⁰ Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Series, Vol. 206, 4 May 1871, cc 128-129

¹¹ *Tucker v British Leyland Motor Corporation Ltd* [1978] IRLR 493; *Campbell & Smith Construction Group Ltd v John Alexander Greenwood* [2001] I.R.L.R. 588

4. Proposals for additional holidays

In August 2007, the Institute for Public Policy Research published proposals calling for a new bank holiday “British National Day” on the Monday after Remembrance Sunday.¹²

There have been various other reports suggesting that the number of bank holidays should be increased to bring the position in Great Britain more in line with Europe. These include reports by the TUC, the Fabian Society¹³ and the travel company Expedia.¹⁴ A poll conducted by the TUC revealed an overall preference for a new bank holiday in October:

More than four in ten (41 per cent) of the 19,469 people who voted online in the WorkSMART poll said that a Monday in late October would be their most preferred date for a new bank holiday. Almost a third (32 per cent) opted for St George’s, St Andrew’s and St David’s Days, and just over one in ten (11 per cent) for New Year’s Eve.

Other suggestions included International Women’s Day (8 March), Trafalgar Day (21 October) and Armistice Day (11 November). Only one per cent of the respondents thought that the UK did not need any additional bank holidays.¹⁵

There was also a campaign for a “Community Day” bank holiday launched in May 2007 as a joint venture between, Trades Union Congress (TUC), National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NVCO), Community Service Volunteers (CSV), Volunteering England and the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA) for a new bank holiday in late October. The idea behind the day is that people use the time to get involved with something in their local community.¹⁶ A press release by the NAVCA set out the reasoning behind the timing of late October for this day:

The day has been chosen because:

- Britain only has eight public holidays a year compared to the European average of eleven.
- This day falls in the middle of the longest current gap between bank holidays, many of which are bunched together in spring.
- Unlike calls for a bank holiday tied to a particular date, Community Day would always be on a Monday thus giving people a long weekend and minimising disruption for

¹² IPPR Press Release, [Britain needs bank holiday in November to build national identity](#), 27 August 2007

¹³ Michael Jacobs, *More bank holidays!*, April 2001

¹⁴ Expedia press release, [Britain comes last in European Bank Holiday League](#), 25 August 2000

¹⁵ TUC press release, [The time is right for a new bank holiday](#), 27 August 2004

¹⁶ Joint statement by: The Trades Union Congress; The National Council for Voluntary Organisations; Community Service Volunteers; Volunteering England; The National Association for Voluntary and Community Action *Community Day: A new public holiday celebrating and promoting voluntary community activity*, May 2007

businesses, many of which would not want to close midweek.

- While it is not necessary to sign up to the government's agenda, the call does chime with recent calls for a day to celebrate Britishness and national identity, but in a way that is inclusive and grass-roots led.¹⁷

4.1 Parliamentary debate

There have been several proposals in Parliament to introduce a new public holiday. Early Day Motions have been tabled proposing new holidays for various reasons: a "veteran's day",¹⁸ Remembrance Day,¹⁹ a day to celebrate democracy,²⁰ and – repeatedly – St George's Day.²¹ There have also been a number of Private Members' Bills proposing a new holiday, none of which became law. Most recently:

- [Magna Carta Anniversary \(Bank Holiday\) Bill 2010-12](#)
- [St George's Day and St David's Day Bill 2010-12](#)
- [Remembrance Day \(Bank Holiday\) Bill 2010-12](#)
- [Remembrance Day Bank Holiday Bill 2007-08](#)
- [Bank Holiday \(Contribution of Polish Citizens\) Bill 2007-08](#)
- [St Georges Day Bill 2005-06](#)
- [Public Service \(Bank Holiday\) Bill 2004-05](#)

As noted above, there have been numerous proposals and campaigns to make St George's Day a public holiday. The St George's Day Bill noted above was a Ten Minute Rule Bill, tabled by Andrew Rosindell MP in October 2004 "to make St. George's Day a public holiday in England in place of the May Day public holiday".²² Thus, Mr Rosindell's Bill proposed to replace an existing holiday, rather than add an extra day. Mr Rosindell is also Chair of the St George's Day All-Party Parliamentary Group.²³ In April 2012 the Coalition Government stated that it had no plans to introduce a public holiday for St George's Day nor to change the existing pattern of holidays.²⁴

Responsibility for bank holidays in Wales remains with Westminster. The Welsh have campaigned for a holiday in Wales on St David's Day, but successive governments have resisted this. The current Secretary of State for Wales, the Rt Hon Stephen Crabb MP, set out the Government's position in March 2015:

Hywel Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what recent discussions he has had with (a) cabinet colleagues and (b) the Welsh Government on making St David's Day a bank holiday in Wales.

¹⁷ NAVCA website, [Community Day Campaign](#) [on 19 May 2008]

¹⁸ EDM 1357 session 2007-08, 24 April 2008

¹⁹ [EDM 2474 session 2007-08, 11 November 2008](#)

²⁰ [EDM 8 session 2007-08, 6 November 2007](#)

²¹ [EDM 1083, session 2009-10, 15 March 2010](#); [EDM 1885, session 2005-06, 23 March 2006](#); [EDM 5597, session 2001-01, 24 April 2001](#)

²² HC Deb 27 October 2004 cc1435-8

²³ [Register Of All-Party Groups \[as at 30 July 2015\]](#)

²⁴ [HC Deb 26 April 2012 cc974-975W](#)

9 Bank and public holidays

Stephen Crabb: None. The Government has no plans to change the arrangements for bank holidays in England and Wales.²⁵

An attempt to devolve responsibility for bank holidays to the Welsh Assembly was made, but failed, during the passage of the *Government of Wales Bill 1997-1998*.²⁶

Responsibility for bank holidays in Scotland is devolved. As noted above, on 15 January 2007 the *St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday (Scotland) Act 2007* was passed, granting banks and other organisations the power to close on St Andrew's Day.

Members of Parliament are occasionally petitioned to support the introduction of new bank holidays. During a 2014 backbench debate on an e-petition to make Eid and Diwali holidays, Jenny Willott, then Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, outlined the Coalition Government's support for retaining existing entitlements:

The Government regularly receive requests for additional bank and public holidays to celebrate a variety of occasions, both religious and non-religious. The hon. Member for Chesterfield (Toby Perkins) spoke about requests to recognise St George's day. I am the MP for a Welsh constituency, and there are always calls to recognise St David's day as a bank holiday in Wales. I think there have even been requests for a Margaret Thatcher day as a recognised bank holiday, so a range of different suggestions has been put forward over the years. However, the current pattern of bank holidays is well established and accepted. The Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971 provides the statutory basis for UK bank holidays and bank holidays designated since 1971 are appointed each year by royal proclamation.

Provisions in the legislation enable the dates of bank holidays to be changed or other holidays to be declared, as we saw with the diamond jubilee, but that has to be done by royal proclamation. Such holidays are for celebrating special occasions or for one off events such as the millennium. Proposals for the declaration of special bank holidays are considered by a ministerial committee. Any final decision requires the approval of Her Majesty the Queen. It is the usual process to consult widely when considering new bank holidays or amending the date of an existing one, and an impact assessment is carried out as part of that.

As hon. Members will know, there are currently eight permanent bank and public holidays in England and Wales, nine in Scotland and 10 in Northern Ireland, including St Patrick's day and Battle of the Boyne day. Those figures include Christmas day and Good Friday, which in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are common-law holidays—they are not specified by law as bank holidays but have become customary holidays because of common observance. The last change to the pattern of bank holidays was for the Queen's diamond jubilee in 2012, which followed precedents for celebrating jubilees with an additional bank holiday.

Although bank holidays have become widely observed across the board, legislation does not give employees any right to time off or extra pay on bank holidays. Workers may use some of their

²⁵ [Public Holidays: St David's Day:Written question – 225798, 2 March 2015](#)

²⁶ HC Deb 26 March 1998, cc 752-753

annual leave entitlement for them. In the UK, that entitlement is 28 days, which is intended to reflect the combination of the eight bank holidays with EU minimum annual leave of 20 days. Those eight days of leave do not need not be taken on the bank holidays themselves, giving flexibility to workers.

...

The UK's statutory leave entitlement is very generous when compared with countries outside the EU. The US has 10 public holidays, but there is no statutory entitlement to either annual leave or public holidays. Japan has 15 public holidays but employees are only eligible for 10 working days of annual leave, with one additional day's leave for each year of tenure up to a total of 20 working days. There is also no guarantee of pay for public holidays there.

Our statutory entitlement is in line with that of other European countries. As I have said, providing an annual leave entitlement that does not distinguish between public holidays and annual leave gives employees greater freedom over how they use their leave entitlement, as they can choose when they wish to take it. Public holidays in Germany are paid, but the additional entitlement is 20 days of annual leave only for those who are over 18 years old and are working five days per week. Many other countries such as Denmark and Sweden offer only the European minimum of 20 days per year, with no additional public holiday entitlement. The UK entitlement is generous. the most recent assessment of the economic cost of the additional holiday for the diamond jubilee shows that bank holidays across the UK as a whole cost employers around £1.2 billion, despite there being no statutory right to time off or extra pay on the additional holiday. That estimated cost of £1.2 billion is calculated by considering different scenarios for the extent to which businesses will be shut on the bank holiday and the associated loss in output.

The costs are partially offset by increased revenues for businesses in the leisure and tourism sectors and a boost in retail spending...²⁷

There were a series of Oral Answers on the topic of a new bank holiday in the Lords in February 2008. The cost to business of a new bank holiday was cited as about £2.5 billion. Lord Jones of Birmingham, then Minister of State, Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, stated that the Government had no plans to alter the current bank holiday arrangements:

Lord Foulkes of Cumnock asked Her Majesty's Government: Whether they will consider introducing a new bank holiday in the United Kingdom.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office & Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (Lord Jones of Birmingham): My Lords, the department receives representations on this issue from time to time. However, the present pattern of bank holidays in the UK is well established and accepted, and the Government have no current plans to change the arrangements.

Lord Foulkes of Cumnock: My Lords, I am very disappointed in my honourable friend's reply.

Noble Lords: Noble friend.

Lord Foulkes of Cumnock: He is honourable as well but noble in this context. Is he aware that, while England has only eight bank holidays and Scotland has eight and a half—if you count the half-hearted St Andrew's Day holiday introduced by the SNP—the European Union average is 11? Is he also aware that that is why more than a million people have signed two petitions—one arranged by Thomas Cook and the other on the Downing Street website, of which he should take particular notice? Therefore, will he or one of his colleagues agree to meet a deputation from the campaign involving the Fabian Society, the IPPR, the TUC and voluntary organisations which are campaigning for an extra bank holiday because there is a clear and growing demand for it?

Lord Jones of Birmingham: My Lords, I assure my noble friend Lord Foulkes that I will arrange for all those people to come and meet either me or one of my colleagues. Secondly, be careful what you wish for; you just might get it. Germany, for instance, has more bank holidays than Britain, but if they fall on a weekend you lose them; whereas in Britain you get them on the following Monday. Be careful what you wish for; you just might get it. There is a £2.5 billion loss to the public and private sectors in this country for every bank holiday.

...

Lord Elystan-Morgan: My Lords, would the Minister be surprised in any way to hear that, in the event of further consideration being given to the question of national holidays, there would be strong feeling in Wales that there is a just and proper claim in regard to St David's Day? It would be nothing more than courtesy, chivalry and justice to acknowledge that.

Lord Jones of Birmingham: My Lords, Scotland is allowed to have St Andrew's Day, but it loses a bank holiday from the British calendar; it does not get it in addition. At the end of the day, if we saw another bank holiday, I would love it to be a British bank holiday.

...

Lord Hamilton of Epsom: My Lords, does the Minister think that the dismal economic performance of continental Europe might be attributed to the fact that it has more bank holidays than we do?

Lord Jones of Birmingham: My Lords, given that we are the most successful economy in the whole of Europe, the noble Lord is probably right.

Lord Tyler: My Lords, given the Minister's comment on St David's Day, will he in all equity look at the case for Cornwall to have its St Piran's Day bank holiday?

Lord Jones of Birmingham: My Lords, if Cornwall has one, so should Birmingham. I might have been in a different place five minutes' ago, but I said that I was not in favour of different parts of the United Kingdom having separate bank holidays. I do not want the economy to have the cost of £2.5 billion every time for more, but if there were to be more, let them be British.

Earl Ferrers: My Lords, is the noble Lord aware that his original Answer will give a great deal of pleasure to many people, not least for the fact that it shows that the Government can at least make one right decision?

Lord Jones of Birmingham: Yes, my Lords.

...

Lord Butler of Brockwell: My Lords, is not St Patrick's Day a bank holiday in Northern Ireland? Can the Minister explain why St Patrick is favoured over St David, St Andrew and, indeed, St George?

Lord Jones of Birmingham: My Lords, yes, the noble Lord is right—Northern Ireland has two more bank holidays than Scotland, Wales or England; and, no, I cannot explain it.

Lord Pilkington of Oxenford: My Lords, is the Minister prepared to deplore the Protestant Reformation in that in the Catholic Middle Ages we had many more holidays?

Lord Jones of Birmingham: My Lords, as we in this nation were responsible for the first industrial revolution and we are putting up an incredibly good show about dealing with the second commercial revolution, what we did in the Middle Ages and what we do now just defy comparison.

Lord Brooke of Sutton Mandeville: My Lords, bearing in mind events in Newcastle, is it entirely timely for the banks to have another day off?

Lord Jones of Birmingham: My Lords, I think it is time that we referred to these holidays as "public holidays".

The Earl of Glasgow: My Lords, would the Minister please consider helping the tourism industry to extend the season by considering having a public holiday at the end of October—maybe associated with Halloween or All Saints' Day?

Lord Jones of Birmingham: My Lords, the tourism industry is a serious player in the British economy. It puts some £6.5 billion to £7 billion a year into the economy and employs about 2.5 million people, a lot of whom have come into the world of work for the first time. It is a fabulous entry place for young people and its importance as an industry is not properly recognised. If we created a public holiday on the shoulder of the year in October or November—it is a time that many people make representations to have one—perhaps we should make due reference, as the Prime Minister has, to those who laid down their lives in so many wars so that we could be free. Perhaps we ought to be celebrating Trafalgar Day; at least that was a British victory.²⁸

In March 2008 Lord Goldsmith QC reported on the *Citizenship Review*, as commissioned by the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair.²⁹ In it he recommended that the Government should "consider" creating a national day as a public holiday by 2012:

In terms of enhancing our shared narrative, there is a particularly strong case for creating a national day focused on ideas about shared citizenship. The example of the Australian national day is worth looking at....

In terms of a British national day, what may be beneficial is a new public holiday to celebrate the bond of shared citizenship. This would not be a day to celebrate the Union nor would it be a government event. The role of government would be, as it is in Australia in respect of their national day, to provide a pool of

²⁸ HL Deb 19 February 2008 cc127

²⁹ Lord Goldsmith QC, *Citizenship Review: [Citizenship: our common bond](#)*, March 2008

13 Bank and public holidays

funds for national day committees to assist with the organisation of events all around the country.

Devolving the responsibility for organising events in this way would also create space for local and regional expressions of shared citizenship. This is important, as identity in the UK is far from uniform and belonging to the UK is by no means the only important form of belonging that exists.

I do not propose that this day should be launched straightaway. It would require a lot of planning. Hence the launch of a national day could be linked to some other event, for example, the Olympics and the Diamond Jubilee in 2012.

The date would need to be considered carefully and it may be advantageous to have a day without historical significance, specifically because the purpose of the day is to help to forge a new modern citizenship identity and to encourage the celebration of the widest range of citizens' achievements.

A national day would also provide the ideal setting for a special Honours List, which focuses exclusively on the achievements of ordinary citizens rather than on those of senior figures in public life.

When raised in discussion groups, the idea of a day like this received a high level of support. I was particularly struck by the recognition on the part of many participants that having such a day may not be seen as part of the UK's traditional heritage but that it could become the catalyst for a positive and celebratory new image of citizenship.

There were undoubtedly issues raised about how a national day would be received in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. But the important point to stress in this regard is that there ought to be nothing in the framework of the national day to prevent particular areas from creating events that celebrate other shared identities alongside our bond of shared citizenship. People have multiple identities and it would be false for events organised for a national day not to be responsive to that.

Hence I propose that Government, working with others in civil society, should give further consideration to creating a national day by 2012.³⁰

³⁰ Lord Goldsmith QC, Citizenship Review: [Citizenship: our common bond](#), March 2008, p96

About the Library

The House of Commons Library research service provides MPs and their staff with the impartial briefing and evidence base they need to do their work in scrutinising Government, proposing legislation, and supporting constituents.

As well as providing MPs with a confidential service we publish open briefing papers, which are available on the Parliament website.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publically available research briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email papers@parliament.uk. Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing only with Members and their staff.

If you have any general questions about the work of the House of Commons you can email hcinfo@parliament.uk.

Disclaimer

This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties. It is a general briefing only and should not be relied on as a substitute for specific advice. The House of Commons or the author(s) shall not be liable for any errors or omissions, or for any loss or damage of any kind arising from its use, and may remove, vary or amend any information at any time without prior notice.

The House of Commons accepts no responsibility for any references or links to, or the content of, information maintained by third parties. This information is provided subject to the [conditions of the Open Parliament Licence](#).