

European Union Bill

House of Lords – Second Reading

Tuesday 22 March 2011

This briefing sets out the Commission's view on key issues arising from the European Union Bill ahead of the Bill's Second Reading in the House of Lords.

While we do not take a view on the main subject of the Bill, which we believe is a matter for Parliament, we would expect these referendums to be held under the framework provided by the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. In addition, there will need to be further legislation setting out the specific rules about how such referendums would be run.

PART 1 – restrictions on Treaties and decisions relating to EU

Role of the Electoral Commission

Clause 13 places a duty on the Commission to promote public awareness of any referendum and how to vote in it. **Clause 13** also gives the Commission the power to promote public awareness of the subject matter of any referendum. We support these provisions, which we believe will help ensure voters have access to impartial information about how to participate in any referendum.

PART 2 – implementation of transitional protocol on MEPs

Clause 16 gives effect to the Commission's recommendation, which was laid before Parliament and published on 26 October 2010, that the West Midlands electoral region be allocated the additional MEP seat that was awarded to the UK under the Treaty of Lisbon. We are pleased that **Clause 16** makes this provision and look forward to the recommendation being implemented.

However, the Commission takes no view on how the additional MEP will be elected (**Clause 17** and **Schedule 2**) believing this to be a matter for Parliament.