

Private Members' Bills introduced at Westminster by Edinburgh Labour MPs

Today at Westminster 20 bills were introduced by 20 MPs from all over the UK.

This included Edinburgh MPs, Scott Arthur and Tracy Gilbert.



Dr Scott Arthur MP (Edinburgh South West, Labour) PHOTO courtesy of the UK Parliament

Dr Arthur, who represents Edinburgh South West introduced a bill entitled the Rare Cancers Bill. It will be debated on 14 March 2025.

He explained what he would like his bill to achieve: “Today is the day I submit my Private Members’ Bill. It’s focus will be providing pharmaceutical companies with incentives to develop treatments for rare cancers.

“Recent years have seen sufficient advances in the treatment of cancer. Where rare cancers are concerned, however, progress has not always kept pace. For example, the treatment of glioblastoma brain tumours has not changed for decades (Temozolomide – discovered in 1987, but approved in 1999) and the average life expectancy is only 9 months. There are no clinical trials to improve outcomes for the 3,200 people who are diagnosed every year. That is because there is no financial incentive for the pharmaceutical industry to run clinical trials for such a small patient group.

“I hope to base my bill on a tried and tested approach to address this. The 1983 the Orphan Drug Act was introduced in the USA to provide financial incentives to attract industry’s interest through an extended period of market exclusivity for a drug approved to treat an orphan disease, even if it were not under patent, and tax credits. When Orphan Drug act launched in 1983 only ten drugs for orphan diseases were on the market for patient use, by 2015 550 were approved.

“I am grateful for the support of other MPs on this, in particular Dame Siobhain McDonagh MP who has done all the real work following the death of her sister (Margaret McDonagh) to glioblastoma.”

Ms Gilbert is MP for Edinburgh North and Leith. She introduced the Absent Voting (Elections in Scotland and Wales) Bill. It will receive its second reading on 17 January 2025.

She said: “My Bill will end the anomaly in Scotland and Wales where you can apply online for a postal or proxy vote for General Elections, but not devolved or local elections. This will make it easier and simpler to get a postal or proxy vote

in the 2026 elections.”



Tracy Gilbert MP (Edinburgh North and Leith, Labour) PHOTO courtesy of UK Parliament

It is open to any MP who is not a government minister to propose a Private Members' Bill, and then they can proceed with it if their bill is chosen in the ballot. There were 458 MPs in the ballot this year – and there are two in Edinburgh. The topic is chosen by the MP themselves but usually tries to change the law on a specific area.

The bills are usually debated on Fridays during the parliamentary session – and Scott Arthur's bill has a real chance of being debated as he is near the top of the ballot.

The 20 MPs and their Bills include:

1. Kim Leadbeater, Labour (Spenn Valley) – Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill
2. Max Wilkinson, Liberal Democrats (Cheltenham) – New Homes (Solar Generation) Bill

3. Dr Roz Savage, Liberal Democrats (South Cotswolds) – Climate and Nature Bill
4. Clive Lewis, Labour (Norwich South) – Water Bill
5. Josh MacAlister, Labour (Whitehaven and Workington) – Protection of Children (Digital Safety and Data Protection) Bill
6. Dr Scott Arthur, Labour (Edinburgh South West) – Rare Cancers Bill
7. Jim Allister, Traditional Unionist Voice (North Antrim) – European Union (Withdrawal Arrangements) Bill
8. Peter Lamb, Labour (Crawley) – Free School Meals (Automatic Registration of Eligible Children) Bill
9. Alex McIntyre, Labour (Gloucester) – Controlled Drugs (Procedure for Specification) Bill
10. Andrew Ranger, Labour (Wrexham) – Licensing Hours Extensions Bill
11. Jake Richards, Labour (Rother Valley) – Looked After Children (Distance Placements) Bill
12. Tracy Gilbert, Labour (Edinburgh North and Leith) – Absent Voting (Elections in Scotland and Wales) Bill
13. Linsey Farnsworth, Labour (Amber Valley) – Unauthorised Entry to Football Matches Bill
14. John Grady, Labour (Glasgow East) – Space Industry (Indemnities) Bill
15. Rachael Maskell, Labour (Co-op), (York Central) – Short-term Let Accommodation Bill
16. Ruth Jones, Labour (Newport West and Islwyn) – Fur (Import and Sale) Bill
17. Dr Danny Chambers, Liberal Democrats (Winchester) – Animal Welfare (Import of Dogs, Cats and Ferrets) Bill
18. Sarah Owen, Labour (Luton North) – Fireworks Bill
19. Wendy Chamberlain, Liberal Democrats (North East Fife) – Gambling Act 2005 (Monetary Limits for Lotteries) Bill
20. Dr Rupa Huq, Labour (Ealing Central and Acton) – Sale of Tickets (Sporting and Cultural Events) Bill

Private Members' Bills must go through all legislative stages in both Houses of Parliament before they can become an Act and written into law. You can find out more on bill stages on our website [here](#).



Scott Arthur waits patiently to introduce his bill 16 October 2024 PHOTO courtesy of UK Parliament