

1. European Union (Amendment) Bill 2014 – Third Reading approved

The Acting Attorney General to move:

That the European Union (Amendment) Bill 2014 be read a third time and do pass.

The President: We turn to Item 1, the European Union (Amendment) Bill 2014 for Third Reading.

I call on Her Majesty's Acting Attorney General.

The Acting Attorney General: Thank you, Madam President.

I would like to thank the Hon. Members of Council for their interest in this Bill and for their support during its previous Readings.

Madam President, it has never been so important as perhaps now, for us to keep abreast of international issues that may have an impact on the Island's well-being. Developments in the European Union are, of course, monitored closely by the Isle of Man Government and, as necessary, considered by Tynwald, as the EU has influence that goes far beyond the direct effects that arise through the Island's Protocol 3 relationship.

There is, for example, the possibility of an independent Scotland seeking membership of the EU, and the remainder of the UK seeking to renegotiate its membership and perhaps even leave the EU.

In a very small way this Bill should enable the Island to act with more agility in response to some of these and other potential changes.

Madam President, I beg to move that the European Union (Amendment) Bill be read for a third time and do pass.

Mr Braidwood: I beg to second, Madam President, and reserve my remarks.

The President: The Hon. Member, Mr Downie.

Mr Downie: Yes, thank you, Madam President.

Just briefly, I am supportive of this particular Bill, it will streamline the process. It seems to me to be, really, a waste of parliamentary time when every time a new country joins the European Union we have to start on the process of having a Bill specific to that new joining country.

I think by being able to bring the countries now to Tynwald by Order, that is a good move. I think that as we are seeing the European Union in a state of flux with the possibility of some leaving and new members joining, by streamlining the process this will actually stand us in good stead.

The President: The Hon. Member, Mr Turner.

Mr Turner: Thank you, Madam President.

As Mr Downie says, this Bill will enable us to be more efficient in the way we deal with matters that we have to bring through in the legislative process, so anything that makes the process easier is a good thing. So I will support the Third Reading.

We did in the earlier debates discuss various aspects of European Union membership and, of course, our own dealings with the EU in our relationship. I think it is going to be an interesting time ahead to see as the learned Attorney says, to see where the Scotland debate goes – that will be incredibly interesting – and also to see, indeed, how the UK itself deals with its own relationship with the EU, whether it renegotiates or whether it chooses to leave.

I would hope that the Isle of Man Government continues to assess what links it has with the European Union and, of those links, which ones really do suit us and which ones we maybe do not have to take part in. There is no doubt about it that the man in the street here seems to feel that we have all the regulation of the European Union, but none of the benefits. So I think it is something that I would hope the administration here continues to assess, as to whether some of those provisions are in the best interests of the Island.

I think it should go a bit deeper than that and whilst not wanting to widen this out, but certainly in the Departments I have worked in we have looked at the European Union for best practice – and I think it is not always the case where we should be. I think that given our own constitutional position, we should have the ability to actually look anywhere in the world for best practice, that suits us.

It may be that there are various schemes and methodology in places like the United States, where best practice is better practice than what goes on in the European Union. Certainly, I have been taking an interest in, just as an example, some civil engineering schemes that they have been doing to do with flooding, which the United States are tackling in a certain way but I have noticed that in the UK – we deal with UK and EU practices – they seem to be incredibly over-engineered and expensive. So it is just an example that we can look beyond the shores of the European Union when we come to looking at what suits us here in the Isle of Man, and we should be in a position to be able to do what is best for us and not simply follow something because the EU are doing it.

I will support this, because this legislation is a good piece of housekeeping, and I will support the Third Reading.

The President: Her Majesty's Acting Attorney General to reply.

The Acting Attorney General: Yes, thank you, Madam President.

I would just like to briefly thank the Hon. Members for their support of the Bill, and move the Third Reading, that it do pass.

Thank you.

The President: The motion is that the Bill be read a third time and do pass. Those in favour, please say aye; against, no. The ayes have it. The ayes have it.