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Britain's House of Commons backed a bill to let English authorities impose tourist taxes on hotel stays

The 296 to 96 vote sends the proposal to committee scrutiny before local leaders decide whether to adopt levies that 10 mayors said would top out at 5%

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Britain’s House of Commons voted on Monday, November 16, to back in principle a bill that would let English local authorities impose a tourist tax on hotel stays and other short-term commercial accommodation, moving the proposal to the next stage of scrutiny in Parliament.

Lawmakers approved the Visitor Levy (England) Bill at second reading by 296 votes to 96, a majority of 200. The result means the bill has cleared the stage at which members debate its general purpose and will now go to a parliamentary committee for detailed examination.

If the measure becomes law, mayoral authorities and other strategic authorities in England, including London’s, would be able to decide whether to introduce the levy in their own areas. The bill would not create a single national charge across England. Instead, it would give eligible local authorities the power to choose whether to apply the tax and set the terms within the framework laid out in the legislation.

The proposal is aimed at hotels and other commercial providers of short-stay accommodation. Under the bill, the levy would be calculated as a percentage of the price of the stay rather than as a flat fee per night. That structure would allow the amount paid by visitors to rise or fall with the room price.

The House of Commons vote does not make the levy law. Second reading approval means only that a majority of lawmakers agreed the bill should continue through Parliament. The committee stage is where members will examine the text line by line, consider amendments and test how the system would work in practice for local authorities and accommodation providers.

The committee’s work must be completed by December 10. After that, the bill would need to return to the House of Commons for further stages before it could move to the House of Lords. Only if both houses pass the same text and it receives royal assent would the new powers take effect.

The measure could lead to different local tax rates across England, depending on decisions by individual authorities. According to the official parliamentary record, 10 mayors have said that if they choose to adopt the levy, they would limit it to 5% in their territories. Even so, the bill would still open the way for a more varied map of visitor charges, with some destinations applying a levy and others choosing not to do so.

That possibility has drawn attention from the lodging sector because it would add new collection and remittance duties for properties in places where the charge is introduced. Hotels and other accommodation businesses would have to account for the levy as part of the booking price and transfer the money under the local system created by the authority in question.

Supporters of the bill argue that it would give local leaders a new revenue source tied to tourism and let them direct that money to projects in their own areas. The proposal says revenue raised from any levy would be used for local projects. Because the power would be optional, each eligible authority would have to decide whether the expected benefits outweigh the risk of making stays more expensive for visitors.

The parliamentary vote on Monday, November 16, came after debate on whether England should follow a more localized model for charging visitors. By advancing the bill to committee, lawmakers brought the proposal closer to becoming a practical option for city and regional authorities, while leaving the final decision on whether to impose the tax with those authorities themselves if the legislation is enacted.

For accommodation businesses, the next phase will matter because the committee stage is likely to shape how broad the local powers are, how the levy would be administered and what reporting burdens operators would face. For mayors and local governments, the bill offers a potential tool to raise money from tourism without requiring every part of England to adopt the same policy.

The November 16 vote therefore marks a significant procedural step for a measure that could change how visitor stays are taxed in parts of England, but the proposal remains under parliamentary consideration and has not yet created any new charge for travelers or lodging providers.