



The King's Speech – 17 July 2024

The 40 Bills listed in the King's Speech are presented under six different headings which reflect the missions of the Labour manifesto:

1. Economic stability and growth
2. Great British energy and clean energy superpower
3. Secure borders, cracking down on antisocial behaviour and take back our streets
4. Break down the barriers to opportunity
5. Health
6. National security and serving the country

The Prime Minister's introduction states that this will be a government of service for national renewal; that the challenges faced require determined, patient work and serious solutions; based on the principles of security, fairness and opportunity for all.

Full text of the speech: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-kings-speech-2024>

Background Briefing Notes:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/669791c549b9c0597fdafe63/King_s_Speech_2024_background_briefing_notes.pdf

This short briefing note covers only those Bills with direct relevance to local infrastructure or with some indirect relevance. **Bills of most note to local infrastructure are:**

- [English Devolution Bill](#)
- [Employment Rights Bill](#)
- [Terrorism \(Protection of Premises\) Bill](#)

What is missing?

The obvious missing elements of the King's Speech were any Bills to address poverty, particularly child poverty and specifically the removal of the two child benefit cap, a major driver of poverty for children and families. However, after the King's Speech, No.10 announced that a ministerial task force had been set up to develop a child poverty strategy, led by Liz Kendall Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and Bridget Philipson Secretary of State for Education.

The new **Child Poverty Unit in the Cabinet Office** will bring together officials and external experts to explore how all available policy levers can be used across government to create

an ambitious strategy. In the immediate term, the taskforce is expected to consider how Government can use levers related to household income as well as employment, housing, children's health, childcare and education to improve children's experiences and chances at life. Work has started with the Work and Pensions Secretary meeting with leading organisations including Save the Children, Action for Children, Barnardo's, TUC, End Child Poverty Coalition, Resolution Foundation and UNICEF to invite their views on how they can shape the strategy.

For more information: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ministerial-taskforce-launched-to-kickstart-work-on-child-poverty-strategy>

The other notable omission was any mention at all of the voluntary and community sector, charities, and volunteers. It is sobering to see that in lists of partners to be involved in delivery of policy initiatives and local partnerships listed in the King's Speech, charities and the VCS are not listed. At least major children's charities are clearly going to be part of the work of the Child Poverty Unit, which gives some encouragement. NAVCA will be working with officials to explore how the VCS can contribute its expertise to some of the partnerships expected to lead or drive policy delivery. We will also look to ensure that particularly within extended devolution local infrastructure particularly and the VCS more broadly can have an equal and recognised role in relevant partnerships.

1. Economic stability and growth

National Wealth Fund Bill

The National Wealth Fund is intended to enable investment to take place and mobilise additional private sector investment. The existing UK Infrastructure Bank and the British Business Bank will be aligned under the new fund. The intention is to generate £3 of private sector investment for every £1 invested by the fund. 'The NWF will work with local partners, including mayors, to bring together a finance and investment offer that supports the needs of local areas and catalyses growth.' The National Wealth Fund will have an initial £7.3Bn of capital. Investment will be targeted at priorities around climate change and physical infrastructure. Responsible Department: His Majesty's Treasury.

Planning and Infrastructure Bill

The Bill is intended to lead to the building of more housing and simplify planning around major infrastructure developments, contributing to economic growth. The Bill includes provision to modernise planning committees, improve the capacity of local planning authorities and streamline the delivery processes for critical infrastructure.

Responsible Department: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Employment Rights Bill

Part of the *Plan to Make Work Pay* which will create a partnership between business, trade unions and working people, seen as a fundamental part of the growth mission. The Bill will deliver a **New Deal for Working People** which includes:

- **banning exploitative zero hour contracts**
- ending fire and rehire /fire and replace

- **making parental leave, sick pay and protection from unfair dismissal available from the first day of a job for all workers [probationary periods will still apply]**
- **strengthening statutory sick pay by removing the lower earnings limit and the three-day waiting period**
- **flexible working available from day one for all workers, with employers required to accommodate this as far as is reasonable**
- it will be unlawful to dismiss a woman who has had a baby for six months after her return to work [except in specific (unspecified) circumstances]
- establishment of the Fair Work Agency to strengthen the enforcement of workplace rights
- **establishing a fair pay agreement in the adult social care sector**, and following a review assess how and to what extent such agreements could benefit other sectors
- reinstating the School Support Staff Negotiating Body
- updating trade union legislation to remove unnecessary restrictions on activity, including the previous governments application of minimum service levels, and ensuring industrial relations are based around good faith negotiation and bargaining
- simplifying the process of statutory recognition and introduce a regulated route to ensure workers and union members have a reasonable right to access a union within workplaces.

The intention is to retain the flexibility of the labour market whilst protecting against less secure forms of work and extending protections for workers. These changes are very welcome and should reduce the precarity of employment contracts experienced by many workers. There will be implications for VCSE organisations employing staff, particularly if on zero hours contracts, and greater responsibilities for all employers around employment rights and flexible working. Responsible Department: Department of Business and Trade.

English Devolution Bill

The Bill will establish a new standardised framework for English devolution that will give local leaders enhanced powers over:

- strategic planning
- local transport networks
- skills and employment support
- Local Growth Plans.

Devolution will be the default approach, areas will be given devolved powers where they meet governance conditions without the need to negotiate individual agreements. Local leaders will be able to negotiate additional powers within the framework. **Places will be able to formally request devolution** and the Government will be required to (a) consider each request and (b) either devolve or publicly explain why it is not appropriate to do so.

There will be a simpler process for creating new Combined and Combined County Authorities [i.e. without Mayors]. Combined Authorities will need to establish Mayors in order to join the Council of Nations and Regions, so there are still benefits to establishing mayoralities. The Council of Nations and Regions will bring together the Prime Minister, the First Ministers of Scotland and Wales, the First and deputy First Minister of Northern

Ireland, and the Mayors of Combined Authorities. The Deputy Prime Minister has also pledged to introduce Local Growth Plans across the country. As part of this, mayors will be asked to identify local specialisms, and contribute to work on a national industrial strategy. NAVCA will draw on experience from members already working within devolved authorities to help inform your engagement with the new structures. Angela Rayner as Deputy Prime Minister has written to all council leaders of County and Unitary councils not currently subject to a devolution deal [here](#). The intention is to ‘widen and deepen devolution, with a weighting towards creating advanced mayoral settlements where there is the capacity and ambition to do so.’ The Bill also aims to improve local decision-making and governance so that mayors and Combined Authorities can deliver for their areas.

An unexpected provision in the Bill is a **new strong ‘right to buy’ provision for valued community assets** including empty shops, pubs and community spaces. The Right to Buy established in the Localism Act has proved too weak so strengthening it will be helpful. However, this new right to buy needs to be balanced against the wide sale of public assets by some local authorities.

This Bill is likely to be a very high priority for government and introduced quickly, but the timeline is unknown currently. These measures will lead to significant changes in many local areas, with new opportunities created for strategic engagement and partnership working and consequently increased demand for convening and leadership from local infrastructure with the VCS. More locally based decision making may lead to existing funds being spent differently or even more effectively. NAVCA will provide regular briefings on the content and progress of this Bill and its implementation. Responsible Department: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Better Buses Bill

This Bill will enable local leaders to:

- take back franchising powers over buses currently only available to metro mayors
- allow public ownership of buses
- increase accountability of existing bus operators
- have more control over planning and funding for local bus services.

Responsible Department: Department of Transport.

3. Secure borders, cracking down on antisocial behaviour and take back our streets

Crime and Policing Bill

The Bill will include:

- rebuilding neighbourhood policing
- improved police standards including powers to intervene in failing forces, national vetting standards and for procurement
- measures against antisocial behaviour including new Respect Orders for persistent adult offenders, powers to address antisocial use of off-road bikes

- **create a duty for local partners to cooperate to tackle antisocial behaviour with an antisocial behaviour lead in every local authority area**
- measures to address retail crime including the offence of assaulting a shop worker and low level shoplifting
- further restrictions on knives
- strengthening laws to prevent the exploitation of children for criminal purposes and **create Young Futures prevention partnerships to bring together services to support at risk teenagers**
- a stronger, specialist response to violence against women and girls including for domestic abuse, rape, other sexual offences and spiking.

NAVCA will shortly be engaging with members to share experience of those already working with local police, Police and Crime Commissioners, community safety partnerships and related groups. Responsible Department: Home Office.

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill

This is Martyr's Law reintroduced from the last parliament, to strengthen the security of public events and venues. The Bill requires those responsible for certain premises and events to take steps to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack and reduce harm in the event of a terrorist attack occurring. The measures required vary according to the capacity of the premises or event. In the previous version of the Bill they applied to buildings with a capacity greater than 100 people for the standard tier, and greater than 800 people for the enhanced tier.

- **smaller premises in the 'standard tier' will be required to notify the regulator of their premises and put in place reasonably practicable procedural measures to keep the public safe.** Some measures could be as simple as educating staff on locking doors and evacuation procedures.
- the **requirements for organisations at these smaller premises will be focused on simple, low-cost activities** surrounding policies and procedures. Free short online training courses are already available to fulfil some of these requirements.
- those responsible **for larger 'enhanced tier' premises and certain public events will be required to put in place counter terrorism measures** that could be expected to reduce, so far as reasonably practicable, both the risk from an attack occurring at the premises or event as well as the risk of physical harm being caused if an attack was to occur.

ACRE has led the VCS response to this Bill as it supports a large network of village halls. NAVCA will be working with ACRE and others again to try to ensure that the requirements are practical and achievable for smaller venues and community buildings whilst also protecting the public. Responsible Department: Home Office.

4. Break down the barriers to opportunity

Children's Wellbeing Bill

The Bill will remove barriers to opportunity for children and by:

- strengthening multi-agency child protection and safeguarding arrangements

- requiring free breakfast clubs in every primary school
- limiting the number of branded items of uniform and PE kit required
- requiring local authorities to have a register of children not in school and provide support to home educating parents
- requiring all schools to cooperate with the local authority on school admissions, SEND inclusion, and place planning, by giving local authorities greater powers to help them deliver their functions on school admissions and ensure admissions decisions account for the needs for communities

The only mention of child poverty in the Bill is a reference to providing breakfast clubs so that children will be ready to learn. There are other measures around inspections of private schools, multi-academy trusts and ensuring all new teachers have Qualified Teacher Status. Responsible Department: Department of Education.

Skills England Bill

The Bill creates Skills England which will bring together businesses, providers, unions Mayoral Combined Authorities and national government to deliver a highly trained workforce. The functions of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education will transfer to Skills England. Through convening employers, unions, education and training providers, and experts Skills England will:

- identify national and local skills needs
- identify the training for which the Growth and Skills Levy will be available
- in short national and regional skills provision our meeting the needs of local areas

The creation of Skills England will obviously have implications for VCS organisations providing a wide range of pre-employment skills development and training. More information is required to understand whether there will be implications for volunteer involving organisations or wider policy on volunteering. Responsible Department: Department of Education.

Draft Equality (Race and Disability) Bill

This Bill will be published in draft form only, for consultation during this parliamentary session. The Bill will aim to address inequalities for ethnic minority and disabled people by:

- enshrining in law the full right to equal pay for ethnic minority and disabled people
- introducing mandatory ethnicity and disability pay reporting for larger employers with more than 250 employees

Responsible Department: Government Equalities Office.

Draft Conversion Practices Bill

A draft Bill for consultation that will ban conversion practices that aim to change someone's sexual orientation or gender identity. The intention is for the Bill to be trans-inclusive and prevent abusive practices and preserve the freedom LGBT+ people.

Responsible Department: Government Equalities Office.

5. Health

Tobacco and Vapes Bill

A reintroduction of the Bill from the previous parliamentary session to introduce a progressive smoking ban and prevent the legal sale of cigarettes to future generations.

- introduce a progressive smoking ban to gradually end the sale of tobacco products (including herbal smoking products and cigarette papers). Children born on or after 1 January 2009 will never be able to legally be sold cigarettes.
- stop vapes and other consumer nicotine products (such as nicotine pouches) from being deliberately branded and advertised to appeal to children meaning they are only available as a tool to help smokers quit.

Responsible Department: Department of Health and Social Care.

Mental Health Bill

The Bill is intended to move the balance of power from the system to the patient, putting service users at the centre of decisions about their own care. The Bill will amend the Mental Health Act 1983 to give people who are detained greater choice and autonomy, enhanced rights and support.

Responsible Department: Department of Health and Social Care.

6. National Security and Serving the Country

Hillsborough Law

The Bill will place a legal duty of candour on public servants and authorities to improve accountability and transparency where failure in the provision and delivery of public services is the subject of public investigation and scrutiny. It directly addresses the lack of candour in the recent cases of Hillsborough and the Infected Blood Inquiries.

Responsible Department: Cabinet office.