



## Queen's Speech Briefing

*This briefing contains a summary of key points for local government and Solace members raised by Her Majesty in the annual Queen's speech to both Houses of Parliament.*

It is worth noting that as had been widely expected, this speech has been sparse in terms of new legislation – particularly in relation to local government. See below for further details categorized by sector. Other legislation of national significance can be seen at the end of the briefing.

### Infrastructure

The Queen outlined that the Infrastructure Bill will aim to “bolster investment in infrastructure and reform planning law to improve economic competitiveness”, in order to direct funding to where it is most needed and create jobs across areas of transport, energy provision, housing development and nationally significant infrastructure projects. It will also look to speed up the pace of infrastructure development through allowing some planning conditions to be discharged upon application if a local planning authority has not notified the developer of their decision within a prescribed time period.

This Bill will move the Highways Agency towards full Government ownership, with Passenger Focus and the Office of Rail Regulation to represent the interests of road users and to monitor performance.

The Queen announced that under the Bill that high value land public assets will continue to be sold, and land can be directly transferred from arms-length bodies to the Homes and Communities Agency, and that future purchasers of land owned by the Homes and Communities Agency (and the Greater London Authority) will be able to develop and use land without being affected by the rights and restrictions suspended by the Agency.

Statutory responsibility for the local land charges register and delivery of local land charges searches will be nationalised through transfer to the Land Registry.

For nationally significant infrastructure projects, The Bill would simplify the process for making changes to Development Consent Orders (DCO) by speeding up non-material changes to a DCO, and allowing simplified processes for material changes.

It was announced that the Bill will be “opening up access to shale and geothermal sites”, although it should be noted that the development of this is reliant on the outcome of upcoming consultation. This is expected the adaption of existing trespass laws to allow for shale gas and oil drilling under private land in order to speed up the process.

Construction firms will be able to "offset" the carbon emissions of new homes after they have been built, to meet zero carbon standards due from 2016. Her Majesty has relayed the government's



commitment to Help to Buy and Right to Buy schemes, and to introduce secondary legislation to allow for a locally supported garden city to be built in Ebbsfleet.

### **Business and enterprise**

The Queen announced new legislation to “help make the United Kingdom the most attractive place to start, finance and grow a business”, which will enable new access to funding and the reduction of legislation through a deregulation target for each parliament. Higher penalties will be applied to employers who don’t pay staff the minimum wage. A new statutory code for pub tenancies will be created, with an adjudicator to rule on disputes between publicans and pub owners.

Measures will be taken to “limit excessive redundancy payments” in the public service through preventing officials from returning to work in the same sector in a short period after taking redundancy. Specifics on thresholds for this are yet to be announced.

### **Childcare**

Under the Serious Crime Bill, the Queen announced that child neglect will be tackled through making it explicit that cruelty which is likely to cause psychological harm to a child is an offence.

To help improve health and education attainment through ensuring all infants receive free school meals, and that childcare is extended to more of the most disadvantaged two-year-olds.

A new scheme will be introduced that supports working families by giving support equivalent to basic rate tax relief on money spent on childcare, up to a maximum of £2,000 per year for each child.

### **Devolved nations**

The Queen has announced that the Government will provide the National Assembly for Wales and Welsh Ministers with more power over taxation and investment, including stamp duty land tax and landfill tax, as well as a referendum in Wales on whether an element of income tax should be devolved.

UK Stamp Duty Land Tax and Landfill tax will no longer apply in Scotland, and the Scottish Parliament will introduce new Scottish taxes to replace them. Scottish ministers will also have enhanced borrowing powers and access to a cash reserve to manage revenues from the two taxes. From April 2016, the Scottish Parliament will also set a Scottish rate of income tax, through which it will have the flexibility to raise additional funds.

Other national measures that may be of interest are:

- the shake-up of the private pensions industry by removing the annuity requirement
- special judicial preference for when an individual acts heroically



- the strengthening of existing slavery and human trafficking preventative powers
- the recall of MPs Bill to allow voters to discipline their MP
- legislation to tackle national insurance avoidance and a simplified system for the self-employed
- a 5p charge to be imposed from October 2015 for single-use carrier bag use from large businesses, with retailers expected to donate the proceeds of the charge to good causes.

For more information, see the Government's Queens Speech 2014 briefing in full [here](#).