

The 2014 Queen's Speech

Introduction

On 4th June, the Queen's Speech set out the Government's final legislative programme for the 2014-15 session ahead of the 2015 General Election. This paper summarises the content and provides details on the key points for the physical activity sector.

Summary

- The centrepiece of the Queen's Speech is formed by two ground-breaking pensions bills, which set out new freedoms for pensioners to cash in their pension savings rather than buy an annuity, and introduces collective defined contributions.
- A Small Business Bill promotes deregulation and clamps down on tribunal delays.
- Legal protections for individuals carrying out good deeds who then become vulnerable to liability claims have been put forward.
- A new offence tackling the emotional neglect of children has been introduced through a Serious Crime Bill.
- The speech includes controversial plans to encourage fracking by allowing companies to drill under peoples' homes.
- The government proposes new powers for constituents to recall MPs found to have been in breach of the code of conduct - an original coalition agreement promise.
- Following the success of a similar initiative in Wales and Northern Ireland, a 5p charge for plastic bags will be introduced next year, and is expected to cut their use by at least three-quarters.
- Notable through their absence was any content addressing immigration or the NHS; two areas on which the opposition are likely to focus during the Queen's Speech debate.

The following 11 Bills have been announced:

- The **Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Bill** will support small businesses, set deregulation targets and introduce a new statutory code and an adjudicator for public house tenants.
- The **National Insurance Contributions Bill** will simplify the collection of class 2 national insurance contributions.
- The **Infrastructure Bill** will bolster investment in infrastructure and reform planning law. It will also enhance energy security in the UK by opening up access to shale and geothermal sites.

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- The **Pension Tax Bill** will give individuals greater discretion over the use of their retirement funds.
- The **Private Pensions Bill** will give employees greater control over their pension funds.
- The **Childcare Payments Bill** will help working families with childcare costs.
- The **Modern Slavery Bill** will strengthen the powers to prevent slavery and human trafficking and support for victims of such crimes.
- The **Social Action, Responsibility and Heroism Bill** will ensure courts consider the context of a person's actions if they have acted heroically or for the benefit of others.
- The **Service Complaints Bill** will improve the complaints system in armed forces by creating an ombudsman.
- The **Serious Crime Bill** will tackle child neglect, organise crime and strengthen powers to seize the proceeds of crime.
- The **Recall of MPs Bill** will allow voters to trigger a by-election when an MP is found of serious wrong doing.

There are also three new draft Bills:

- The **Draft Governance of National Parks (England) and the Broads Bill** will provide for direct elections to the National Park authorities in England.
- The **Draft Riots (Damages) Act Bill** will improve the way compensation is paid to individuals and companies.
- The **Draft Protection of Charities Bill** will protect charities from abuse by people in England and Wales.

Key content

Carry-over Bills

Consumer Rights Bill

The government has introduced the Consumer Rights Bill into Parliament to clarify and simplify consumer rights. The Bill aims to make consumers better informed and better protected when they are buying. It is currently at report stage in the House of Commons.

Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Bill

Background

This Bill is an amalgamation of several different issues that have been the subject of current political debate. In part it appears to be an extension of the 'Small business: GREAT ambition' commitment announced by the government in December 2013, which focused on the creation and growth of small businesses.

Additionally, the employment elements of the Bill follow recent debate between the government and opposition on the best way to tackle employers' responsibilities. Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills Vince Cable has led a review into zero hours contracts whilst Labour have pledged legislative action to tackle the exploitation within this area. Cable however has previously ruled out a complete ban on the contracts.

Concerning the topic of trust in UK business, in April 2014 the government released a response to their earlier discussion paper in which they set out their main proposals to encourage the growth of transparency and accountability within UK business.

On pubs, the House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skills Committee has, for ten years, been publishing a series of reports on problems surrounding the relationship between tenant landlords who lease their pubs from large pub conglomerates. The most recent activity concerning the topic played out in an opposition day debate led by shadow business minister Toby Perkins, in January 2014, who called for a statutory code to ensure protection for landlords.

Main elements of the Bill

- To make it easier for small businesses to access finance and tender for public procurement contracts.
- To improve payment practices between small businesses and their customers.
- To increase the availability and quantity of sources of finance for businesses looking to invest.
- To encourage and facilitate the expansion of small businesses overseas.
- To ensure the frequent review of red tape and regulations affecting small businesses.
- To strengthen the UK's reputation as a reliable and fair arena in which to do business.
- To combat the abuse of National Minimum Wage and zero hours contracts.
- To guarantee the fair treatment of publicans who are tied to pub owning companies.
- To create greater flexibility in childcare regulations.
- To tackle the exploitation of redundancy payments within the public sector.



Legislative timetable

The legislative timetable is currently unknown – details and publications dates have not yet been confirmed.

2014/2015 Commitments

Apprenticeships

The government has committed to increasing the total number of apprenticeship places to two million by the end of the new session. It was also announced that the third phase of the Trailblazers apprenticeship standards redesign would be announced in September.

Education

The government will be investing over £7bn from 2015 to 2021 to ensure that the supply of free school places meets need.

New GCSE and A level courses will be linear with exams at the end of the course. The new qualifications will be phased in from 2015 to 2017.

From September 2014 every child in reception, year one and year two in state-funded schools will receive free school meals.