



The Labour government's legislative programme - the first 100 days

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This post was written as part of the Bingham Centre's [Rule of Law Monitoring of Legislation Project](#).

Introduction

On 17 July 2024, the new Labour government announced an extensive programme of legislation in the [King's Speech](#). With both the House of Commons and the House of Lords currently on [recess](#) for conference season and with only a couple of weeks left until the end of Labour's first 100 days in government, we take a look at the progress of the new government's legislative agenda.

Overview

To date, [15 governments bills](#) have been introduced into Parliament and we will consider several of them in more detail below: the **Arbitration Bill**, the **House of Lords (Hereditary Peers) Bill** (and the **Lords Spiritual (Women) Act 2015 (Extension) Bill**), the **Product Regulation and Metrology Bill** and the **Renters' Rights Bill**.

In addition, two Treasury bills have already received Royal Assent (the **Budget Responsibility Act** and the **Supply and Appropriation (Main Estimates) Act**) and others are still progressing including the **Bank Resolution (Recapitalisation) Bill** which [aims](#) to "enhance the UK's resolution regime for managing the failure of financial institutions" and the **Crown Estates Bill** which [seeks](#) to "modernise The Crown Estate" by removing limitations on its investment and borrowing powers.

There are also several bills which seek to take forward key [manifesto commitments](#) relating to essential services, such as the **Great British Energy Bill** which [would set up](#) Great British Energy an independent company owned by the government and which aims to support the move to clean energy, improve energy efficiency and take steps to ensure energy security; the **Water (Special Measures) Bill** which [seeks](#) to "strengthen the power of the water industry regulators" and "ensure water companies and their executives are held to account"; and the **Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Bill** which [aims](#) to facilitate the government's commitment to bring train operations "back into public ownership". It has been [commented](#) that these proposals provide public lawyers "with the chance to revisit the public-private distinction, this time with a renewed focus on the nature of 'public functions' and a clearer articulation of the state's role in performing those functions".

There is the **Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill**, also known as Martyn's law, which is [intended](#) to "improve protective security and organisational preparedness across the UK" and which places various requirements on certain premises; the **Property (Digital Assets etc) Bill** which [provides](#) that "something may be capable of attracting property rights even if [it] does not fit into either of the two categories of personal property that have traditionally been recognised under the law of England and Wales" and which gives effect to recommendations of the Law Commission in response to "the development of new types of assets such as crypto-tokens"; and the **Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and International Committee of the Red Cross (Status) Bill**

which [seeks](#) to enable the government to treat these organisations in a way comparable to international organisations.

In focus

Arbitration Bill - The Bill was [introduced](#) in the House of Lords and had its First reading on 18 July, Second reading on 30 July and Committee stage on 11 September. The date for Report stage is still to be announced. A [previous iteration](#) of the Arbitration Bill was introduced in November 2023 but abandoned at the end of the last parliamentary session when the general election was announced, following its passage through a Lords Special Public Bill Committee which [scrutinised and took evidence on the Bill](#). The new Bill as drafted [replicates](#) the previous Bill as amended at Lords Special Public Bill Committee Stage, with one additional change to ensure that Clause 1 does not apply to investor-state arbitration agreements where they are derived from treaties or non-UK legislation. The Bill [seeks](#) to give effect to recommendations from the Law Commission to amend the Arbitration Act 1996, which is now over 25 years old, in order to ensure that the Act is "fit for purpose and that it continues to promote the UK as a leading destination for arbitrations". Both the [Law Society](#) and [Bar Council](#) expressed their support for the proposals in the Arbitration Bill in evidence to the Special Public Bill Committee earlier in the year. The "[Law Commission parliamentary procedure](#)" is aimed at improving the rate of implementation of Law Commission reports and is suitable for bills regarded as "uncontroversial". An earlier version of the Arbitration Bill introduced in the last session was [subject to such procedures](#).

House of Lords (Hereditary Peers) Bill - The Bill was [introduced](#) in the House of Commons and had its First reading on 5 September. It is currently awaiting Second reading on 15 October. The Bill [seeks](#) to remove the right of the remaining hereditary peers to sit and vote in the House of Lords. Although the House of Lords Act 1999 [removed](#) automatic seats for hereditary peers in the Lords, 92 places were kept as part of a "compromise agreement". House of Lords reform was included in the [Labour Manifesto](#) and the [King's Speech background briefing notes](#) state that "[t]he continued presence of hereditary peers in the House of Lords is outdated and indefensible". Writing about the Bill on UCL's Constitution Unit Blog, Lisa James has commented that "[t]he reduction in numbers will be noticeable (so long as it is not reversed by new appointments of life peers), but the effect on party balance will be fairly limited, and the Conservatives will remain the largest group". A related bill, the **Lords Spiritual (Women) Act 2015 (Extension) Bill** was [introduced](#) in the House of Lords and had its First reading on 30 July and Second reading on 10 September. Committee Stage is scheduled for 16 October. The Bill [aims](#) to extend "the limited period in which, if a female diocesan bishop is eligible when a Lords Spiritual seat becomes vacant, she will be appointed to the seat".

Product Regulation and Metrology Bill - The Bill was [introduced](#) in the House of Lords and had its First reading on 4 September. It is scheduled to have its Second reading on 8 October. The Bill makes provision about product safety, regulation and metrology, and [intends](#) to "ensure the UK is better placed to address modern day safety issues to protect consumers, harness opportunities that deliver economic growth, and ensure a level playing field for responsible businesses operating online or on the high street". The Bill also [aims](#) to respond to "new product risks and opportunities to enable the UK to keep pace with technological advances, such as AI". [The King's Speech background briefing notes](#) explain that the majority of the UK's product safety and metrology framework is derived from EU law and the Bill would "enable us to make the sovereign choice to mirror or diverge from updated EU rules, so that we can maintain high product safety while supporting businesses and economic growth". The Bill would confer [powers to make delegated legislation](#) and it has been [commented](#) that "[a]lthough the Bill is likely to pass relatively quickly, it remains to be seen what secondary legislation will emerge under the powers given to the [Secretary of State] and when these are likely to apply". Others have [highlighted](#) some of the issues raised by the Bill in relation to the devolution settlement.

Renters' Rights Bill - The Bill was [introduced](#) in the House of Commons and had its First reading on 11 September with Second reading scheduled for 9 October. The Bill [seeks](#) to deliver the "Government's manifesto commitment to transform the experience of private renting, including by abolishing section 21 evictions and introducing a robust Decent Homes Standard in the sector for

the first time". In the last parliamentary session, under the previous government, the [Renters \(Reform\) Bill](#) was abandoned when the general election was announced. However, the previous government [planned to delay abolition](#) of section 21 no-fault evictions "until after there had been significant improvements in the court process". This new Bill revives the attempt to end Section 21 no-fault evictions, which many stakeholders have welcomed including [Shelter](#) and the [London Councils](#). The Bill also [seeks](#) to apply a "Decent Homes Standard" to the private rented sector and "Awaab's Law" will also be applied to the sector, which will "set clear legal expectations about the timeframes within which PRS landlords must make homes safe where they contain serious hazards". Awaab's Law was [announced](#) by the previous government following a Coroner's [report](#) into the death of Awaab Ishak. Awaab's Law was introduced through the [Social Housing \(Regulation\) Act 2023](#) for social housing. The Renters' Rights Bill would [extend](#) Awaab's Law to privately rented homes.

Looking ahead

There were 40 bills listed in the [King's Speech background briefing notes](#) however, we have not yet seen some of the flagship pieces of legislation highlighted there. So, what might we expect in the coming months?

Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill- In a [written statement](#) to Parliament on 5 September, Dame Angela Eagle, Minister of State for the Home Office stated that work is "advancing" on the planned Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill which "will be introduced at the earliest opportunity". She said that the proposed new legislation would include "provisions to give the border security system, including law enforcement partners, stronger powers to disrupt, investigate and prosecute organised criminals facilitating organised immigration crime".

Employment Rights Bill- The [Labour Manifesto](#) committed to introducing legislation within 100 days to implement Labour's 'Plan to Make Work Pay: Delivering a New Deal for Working People'. Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner MP [confirmed](#) in a speech at the Labour party conference on 22 September that the Employments Rights Bill will be tabled in October. Importantly, the Labour Manifesto contained a commitment to "consult fully with businesses, workers, and civil society on how to put our plans into practice before legislation is passed".

Hillsborough Law - In his Labour party conference speech on 24 September, Prime Minister Keir Starmer [confirmed](#) that a Hillsborough Law which will place a duty of candour on public authorities and public servants "will be introduced to Parliament before the next anniversary in April". This commitment follows recent reports from the [House of Lords Statutory Inquiries Committee](#) in September 2024 on enhancing public trust in public inquiries and from the [Joint Committee on Human Rights](#) in May 2024 which found that "'Institutional defensiveness' appears to remain a problem for public authorities, particularly when they are involved in public inquiries and inquests" and which called on the government to "consider introducing a statutory duty of candour and extend it to all public authorities".

Conclusion

We welcome commitments to the rule of law from the new [Prime Minister](#), [Lord Chancellor](#) and [Secretary of State for Justice](#), [Attorney General](#) and [Solicitor General](#). As the new Labour government seeks to strengthen the UK's rule of law, the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law, through our [Rule of Law Monitoring of Legislation](#) project will be closely examining the government's legislative programme.

URL: <https://binghamcentre.biicl.org/comments/133/the-labour-governments-legislative-programme-the-first-100-days>