

QUEEN'S SPEECH

ON-THE-DAY UPDATE

What does today's Queen's Speech mean for NHC members?

Today's formal State Opening of Parliament saw the Prince of Wales, on behalf of the Queen, deliver a speech to outline the Government's legislative priorities for the next parliamentary session.

Often seen as an opportunity to refresh the Government's agenda, the speech (and accompanying [briefing notes](#)) included **new legislation to be brought forward on social housing regulation, renters' reform, levelling up, and procurement**. It was delivered today against the backdrop of an ongoing cost-of-living crisis, and closely followed local elections that took place last week.

The speech outlined a series of proposed bills, under the theme '*growing the economy to address the cost-of-living crisis*', that will impact NHC members, including:

Social Housing Regulation Bill: Legislation intended to improve the regulation of social housing to "strengthen the rights of tenants and ensure better quality, safer homes" was announced. Today confirms the Regulator of Social Housing will be given stronger powers to issue fines; the ability to intervene quickly in cases of mismanagement; and powers to complete emergency repairs. The Bill seeks to provide greater transparency on the management of social homes, taking forward the creation of Tenant Satisfaction Measures to allow tenants to see how their landlord is performing relative to others. Housing association tenants will be able to request information from their landlord, akin to how the Freedom of Information Act works for local authority tenants.

The NHC [supported calls](#), led by Shelter, to have this Bill brought forward to this parliamentary session so we are pleased to see it included.

Renters' Reform Bill: This is intended to fulfil the Conservative Party's manifesto commitment to abolish Section 21 'no fault' evictions; and to strengthen other grounds for possession, such as for rent arrears and anti-social behaviour. The Bill will also legislate for the extension of the Decent Homes Standard to the private rented sector (a Levelling Up White Paper commitment), introduce a new 'property portal' to give tenants performance information to hold their landlord to account and create an Ombudsman for private landlords.

Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill: This legislation will take forward the Government's planning reform agenda. It also aims to ensure that all areas of England will have the opportunity to be covered by a devolution deal by 2030; and establish new powers for local authorities to bring empty premises back into use.

As trailed in the Levelling Up White Paper, the Bill will place a duty on government departments to set levelling up missions and produce an annual report to update on their delivery. We welcome the commitment to give the levelling up missions a legal status – if these are to be delivered, it will be essential the Bill is backed with investment to address aspects of deep-seated inequity across the North.

The Bill will include measures to enable a locally set, non-negotiable infrastructure levy, intended to capture and deliver benefits from new developments. There will also be a new approach to environmental assessment in the planning system and plans to digitalise the planning system as set out in the earlier Planning White Paper.

Energy Security Bill: The Government aims to provide the legal framework to "deliver the transition to cheaper, cleaner and more secure energy." This follows the Energy Security Strategy published last month, which we found [missed the mark on driving energy efficiency improvements](#). Included in the speech was a commitment to extending the price cap for energy bills beyond 2023 as part of efforts to alleviate the cost-of-living crisis, this was introduced in 2019 to provide some consumer protection against rising prices.

The Bill will also include a new market standard and trading scheme to support the growth of the consumer market for heat pumps; the introduction of regulation of heat networks by Ofgem; a large-scale hydrogen heating trial; and establishing a new Future System Operator. We welcome this further commitment to transition to renewable energy and to reduce the UK's dependence on gas, but a missing part of this legislation is reducing energy demand by improving the energy efficiency of homes which we know would cut energy bills and carbon emissions.

UK Infrastructure Bank Bill: This will establish the Leeds-based Bank in law, including powers for the Bank to lend to local authorities, enabling it to fund public sector infrastructure projects.

Procurement Bill: A commitment to pursue new procurement legislation was previously announced in last year's Queen's Speech but has been rolled over into

this parliamentary session to drive “social, environmental and economic benefits across every part of the UK”. The Bill will create a new procurement regime following the UK’s exit from the EU and aims to make public procurement more accessible to new entrants (especially small businesses).

Changes are expected to include establishing a single digital platform for supplier registration; simplifying current legislation into a single regulatory framework; enshrining procurement principles such as value for money, maximising public benefit, and acting with integrity in law; the introduction of a new exclusions framework; and wider powers to monitor compliance to the new regime.

Commenting on the proposed programme for this parliamentary session, the NHC’s Chief Executive Tracy Harrison said:

“In the run-up to the Queen’s Speech the NHC had joined with other organisations to call on the Government to bring forward the Renters’ Reform and Social Housing Regulation Bills, so we’re pleased to see confirmation of both Bills in today’s speech. The Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill will also be significant for the North and the NHC will be working with members and parliamentarians on this in the months ahead to ensure it makes rebalancing a reality for people and places across the North.”

The NHC will continue to work with members to ensure housing is at the heart of a rebalanced country, building a strong evidence base, and leveraging the collective voice of our 140 members across the North:

- We’ll be exploring what levelling up means for housing in the North at our Levelling Up Conference, in partnership with Karbon Homes and Bolton at Home, in Leeds on 14th July, make sure to register your attendance [here](#) - NHC members can access tickets without charge as part of your membership.
- To discuss private sector reform with colleagues from across the North, join us at the next Private Rented Sector Network online meeting on 17th May, chaired by Dr Julie Rugg. DLUHC officials will be attending the meeting to outline thinking on the extension of the Decent Homes Standard to the PRS. Find out more on MyNHC [here](#).
- Kate Dodsworth, Director of Consumer Regulation at the Regulator of Social Housing, will be speaking at our annual Resident Involvement Conference on 21st June so members and tenants will be able to get an update on regulatory changes [there](#).

To discuss today’s Queen’s Speech in more detail, please contact the NHC’s Anna Seddon (Policy and Public Affairs Manager) at anna.seddon@northern-consortium.org.uk