

Briefing paper: 2008 draft legislative programme

15 May 2008

Introduction

On Wednesday 14 May, the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, outlined the Government's priorities and the bills that will be introduced in the next parliamentary session.

The programme contains 18 bills and other non-legislative actions, which are organised into 4 themes that reflect the direction of the Government. These are:

- Economic Stability
- Making the most of your potential
- Personalisation and Improvement of Public Services
- Handing Power Back to the People.

In his statement to the House, Gordon Brown made clear that his immediate concern is the economy, but highlighted specifically the need for a new Welfare Reform Bill and a new Education and Skills Bill, among the 18 bills in the draft legislative programme.

Of the 18 bills proposed, only one the Education and Skills Bill is of direct importance to the UK automotive industry. There are four that have indirect importance to the industry, namely the Constitutional Reform Bill, Welfare Reform Bill, Banking Reform Bill and Business Rates Supplements Bill.

Key bills announced in the draft legislative programme:

Education and Skills Bill

This Bill is intended to ensure a "customer-driven skills and apprenticeship system" by creating a new regulator for qualifications and tests replacing the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, and creating a development agency for curriculum, assessment and qualifications.

The Bill will also create a new Skills Funding Agency and National Apprenticeships Service, putting the programme on a statutory footing. The main elements of the Bill are:

- Transfer funding and responsibility for delivering 16-18 education and training to local authorities; and create a new non-departmental public body to perform certain functions on pre-19 education and skills (Young People's Learning Agency);
- Strengthen qualifications regulation powers, and to transfer those powers from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) to a new independent regulator for England, the Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator (Ofqual); and to establish a Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency to continue QCA's remaining functions;
- Provide a statutory basis for the apprenticeship programme, creating a new National Apprenticeships Service, establishing the first statutory entitlement to Apprenticeships for all suitably qualified young people, and ensuring that careers teachers and advisors provide comprehensive information about Apprenticeships.
- Secure a demand-led adult skills system, driven by learners and employers; a new adult advancement and careers service will be housed within a new post-19 Skills Funding Agency.

- Strengthen workplace skills training workplace skills training, including by creating a right for employees to request from their employer time to undertake relevant training;
- Secure contributions from employers towards English language provision for employees who are speakers of other languages;

Bills to note:

Banking Reform Bill - The Bill will ensure that if financial stability in the UK is threatened, the authorities have a range of tools available to mitigate the risk, whilst protecting consumers, and minimising the impact on the economy overall.

Constitutional Renewal Bill - The purpose of the Bill is to redistribute power away from the centralised state by improving civil liberties, strengthening parliament and making the executive more accountable. Included are provisions to establish an independent commission for the civil service, to reform the roles of the Attorney General and the Lord Chancellor and to remove restrictions on protests around parliament. The Bill follows up on the Draft Constitutional Renewal Bill which was published by the Ministry of Justice on March 25 2008.

Welfare Reform Bill - The Government has committed to introduce a Welfare Reform Bill to provide greater incentives for people to move from benefits into work and to provide more choice for people with disabilities. The Bill aims to better enable people to undertake training to help find employment; to strengthen the benefit contract between the individual and society; to strengthen requirements of non-resident parents to contribute to their children's upbringing and to modernise and simplify the benefits system.

Business Rates Supplements Bill - The Government has outlined plans to bring forward regulation that will give upper tier local authorities the power to levy a local supplement on the business rate and retain the proceeds for economic development.

Other bills:

- Citizenship, Immigration and Borders Bill
- Communications Data Bill
- Community Empowerment, Housing and Economic Regeneration Bill
- Coroners and Death Certification Bill
- Equality Bill
- Geneva Conventions and United Nations Personnel Bill
- Heritage Protection Bill
- Law Reform, Victims and Witnesses Bill
- Marine and Coastal Access Bill
- National Health Service Reform Bill
- Police and Crime Reduction Bill
- Saving Gateway Bill
- Transport Security Bill

For more detail on the Bills, please go to:

www.commonleader.gov.uk/output/Page2391.asp

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