

Political Reform Draft Structural Reform Plan

27 July 2010

Structural Reform Plans

Structural Reform Plans are the key tool of the Coalition Government for making departments accountable for the implementation of the reforms set out in the Coalition Agreement. They replace the old, top-down systems of targets and central micromanagement.

The reforms set out in each department's SRP are designed to turn government on its head, taking power away from Whitehall and putting it into the hands of people and communities. Once these reforms are in place, people themselves will have the power to improve our country and our public services, through the mechanisms of local democratic accountability, competition, choice, and social action.

The reform plans set out in this document are consistent with and form part of the Department's contribution to the Spending Review. All departmental spending is subject to the Spending Review.

We have adopted a cautious view of the timescales for delivering all legislative measures due to the unpredictability of pressures on Parliamentary time.

Political Reform Priorities (1 / 2)

Overall approach to reform

- The Coalition's political and constitutional reform programme is a comprehensive response to the over-concentration of power in an over-centralised state. The British state has become too authoritarian. We have to reclaim our proud traditions of freedom and democracy. To restore the balance we need to redistribute power and accountability back where it belongs, restore civil liberties and promote the autonomy and self-determination of the individual and the neighbourhood – a rebalancing in favour of communities and the citizen, not the state.

Parliamentary democracy and political reform

- Our proposals start with Parliament itself. We are cutting the number of MPs and creating fewer, more equal-sized constituencies, so everyone's vote counts more fairly. We will offer voters a choice, in a referendum, about whether to change the voting system for the House of Commons to the Alternative Vote system. Parliaments with five-year terms fixed by law mean an end to the personal power of Prime Ministers to call elections at a time to suit party-political interests. An upper house, wholly or mainly elected, on the basis of proportional representation, means more democratic accountability for our law-making process. We will tackle electoral fraud, and help maximise the levels of electoral registration by speeding up Individual Electoral Registration.

Political Reform Priorities (2/2)

Devolution, decentralisation, accountability and localism

- The United Kingdom needs a less powerful central government, and more power and accountability at community level. We will build strong relationships with the administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and improve national devolution within a cohesive United Kingdom. In particular, we will go further on the decentralisation of financial accountability by legislating to implement the proposals of the Calman Commission and to hold a referendum on further devolution in Wales; we will also set up a commission to consider the ‘West Lothian’ question of how English issues are handled in Parliament. We will reinvigorate local accountability, democracy and participation by freeing central government from central and regional control, decentralising power and providing greater freedoms and flexibilities to local government. We have a powerful new focus on localism – we want people to have control over the decisions that affect them – by devolving power closer to neighbourhoods and boosting local decision-making, increasing town hall transparency, giving people a reason to vote for councils and mayors, improving local accountability for policing, reviewing local government resource and localising health services.

Civil liberties

- And the Coalition wants less Big State intrusion and interference with our private lives. We will move to restore the rights of individuals in the face of encroaching state power, in keeping with our traditions of freedom and fairness. We will tackle the problem of too many laws – bringing in a Freedom Bill, repealing unnecessary laws, and setting up a new mechanism to stop unnecessary criminal offences; we will also review libel laws to protect freedom of speech. We are reviewing safeguards against the misuse of anti-terror legislation. We will reverse state intrusion into the lives of law-abiding citizens by scrapping ID cards and unnecessarily intrusive databases, and restoring rights to non-violent protest.

1. Parliamentary democracy and political reform (1 / 3)

Bring forward proposals to reform Parliament, including fixed-term Parliaments and a wholly or mainly elected upper chamber on the basis of proportional representation; bring forward a Referendum Bill on electoral reform, alongside wider changes to make our political system more transparent and accountable

ACTIONS	Start	End	Lead
1.1 Establish fixed-term Parliaments			
i. Set the date of the next general election as 7 May 2015, and legislate to make provision for fixed-term Parliaments of 5 years	Jul 2010	Jul 2011	COCG* *Cabinet Office Constitution Group
1.2 Reform the House of Lords			
i. Establish a committee to bring forward draft legislative proposals for a wholly or mainly elected upper chamber on the basis of proportional representation	Jun 2010		COCG
ii. Introduce legislation to implement necessary changes	By Nov 2011		COCG
1.3 Introduce a power of recall			
i. Bring forward legislation enabling voters to force a by-election	By Nov 2011		COCG
1.4 Introduce extra support for people with disabilities who want to become MPs, councillors or elected officials			
i. Review section 141 of the Mental Health Act 1983	Jun 2010	Nov 2012	COCG
1.5 Reform the House of Commons			
i. Present proposals to the House of Commons for the implementation of major recommendations of the Wright Committee, including Backbench Business Committee	Jun 2010		LHC* *Leader of the House of Commons
ii. Present proposals to the House of Commons for the implementation of remaining recommendations of the Wright Committee	Dec 2010		LHC
MILESTONES			
A. New Backbench Business Committee established	Jun 2010		
B. Committee brings forward draft legislative proposals for new upper chamber	Dec 2010		
C. Bill on fixed-term Parliaments enacted	Jul 2011		

1. Parliamentary democracy and political reform (2 / 3)

Bring forward proposals to reform Parliament, including fixed-term Parliaments and a wholly or mainly elected upper chamber on the basis of proportional representation; bring forward a Referendum Bill on electoral reform, alongside wider changes to make our political system more transparent and accountable

ACTIONS	Start	End	Lead
iii. Bring forward proposals for the reform of Parliamentary privilege	By end 2011		LHC
iv. Establish House Business Committee by third year of Parliament	By end 2013		LHC
1.6 Reform legislative processes			
i. Present proposals to the House of Commons to ensure that any petition that secures 100,000 signatures within a given year will be eligible for formal debate in Parliament, and that the petition with the most signatures be tabled as a Bill	Dec 2010		LHC
ii. Present proposals to the House of Commons to introduce a new 'public reading stage' for Bills to give the public an opportunity to comment on proposed legislation online for use in a dedicated 'public reading day' within a Bill's committee stage	Dec 2010		LHC
1.7 Make wider Parliamentary reforms			
i. Identify and implement first tranche of measures to cut the 'perks and bureaucracy' of Parliament	Jun 2010	Mar 2011	LHC
ii. Publish the Senior Salaries Review Board's (SSRB) report on MPs' pensions	Jul 2010		LHC
iii. In light of the SSRB report and Lord Hutton's subsequent recommendations, publish proposals for cost-saving changes to MPs' pensions	Sep 2010	Apr 2011	LHC

MILESTONES			
D. Petitioning mechanism introduced, subject to House approval		Nov 2011	
E. Pilots for new 'public reading stage' for Bills introduced		Nov 2011	
F. New House Business Committee established		By end 2013	

1. Parliamentary democracy and political reform (3/3)

Bring forward proposals to reform Parliament, including fixed-term Parliaments and a wholly or mainly elected upper chamber on the basis of proportional representation; bring forward a Referendum Bill on electoral reform, alongside wider changes to make our political system more transparent and accountable

ACTIONS	Start	End	Lead
iv. Transfer responsibility for MPs' pensions to Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority	Apr 2012		LHC
1.8 Give people a choice on voting reform and reduce the number of MPs			
i. Introduce legislation to enable a referendum on the Alternative Vote on 5 May 2011, with provision for introduction of AV in the event of a 'yes' vote and creation of fewer, more equal-sized constituencies	Jul 2010		COCG
1.9 Speed up implementation of Individual Electoral Registration to tackle electoral fraud and improve the system of voter registration			
i. Bring forward legislative proposals to speed up Individual Electoral Registration	By Nov 2011		COCG
ii. Implement legislative proposals, subject to Spending Review	2015		
1.10 Improve transparency			
i. Pursue detailed agreement on limiting donations and reforming party funding	2011	2014	COCG
ii. Introduce legislation to create a statutory register of lobbyists	Nov 2011		COCG
MILESTONES			
G. Referendum on the Alternative Vote	May 2011		
H. Boundary Commissions report	Sept 2013		

2. Devolution, decentralisation, accountability and localism (1 / 2)

Establish a commission to consider the 'West Lothian' question. Build strong relationships with the devolved administrations, and address key devolution issues. Trust people to take control of the decisions that affect them by devolving power closer to neighbourhoods, increasing citizen participation, promoting community ownership, lifting inspection burdens on councils and removing regional government

ACTIONS	Start	End	Lead
2.1 Establish a commission to consider the 'West Lothian' question	Nov 2010	Nov 2011	COCG
2.2 Build strong relationships with the administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland			
i. Prepare for and oversee a referendum on further Welsh devolution	Jun 2010	By end Mar 2011	WO*
ii. Subject to referendum result, establish process for the Welsh Assembly based on that of the Calman Commission	TBC		WO
			*Wales Office
iii. Review the control and use of accumulated and future revenues from the Fossil Fuel Levy in Scotland	Jun 2010	Nov 2011	HMT/SO*
			*Scotland Office
iv. Draft and publish government paper examining potential mechanisms for changing the corporation tax rate in Northern Ireland, as part of bringing Northern Ireland back into the mainstream of UK politics	Aug 2010	Oct 2010	HMT/NIO*
			*Northern Ireland Office
v. Introduce Scotland Bill to start process of implementing proposals of the Calman Commission on Scottish devolution	Nov 2010		SO

MILESTONES	
A. Government paper published on corporation tax rate changes in Northern Ireland	Oct 2010
B. Commission set up to consider the 'West Lothian' question	Nov 2011
C. Referendum held on further Welsh devolution	By end Mar 2011
D. Scotland Bill to implement Calman Commission proposals passed	Nov 2011

2. Devolution, decentralisation, accountability and localism (2/2)

Establish a commission to consider the 'West Lothian' question. Build strong relationships with the devolved administrations, and address key devolution issues. Trust people to take control of the decisions that affect them by devolving power closer to neighbourhoods, increasing citizen participation, promoting community ownership, lifting inspection burdens on councils and removing regional government

ACTIONS	Start	End	Lead
2.3 Implement reforms to transfer power from Westminster to local people			
i. Develop options to give neighbourhoods and local authorities the powers and freedoms to lead economic growth and regeneration (including through the Regional Growth Fund) as part of the Spending Review	Jun 2010	Oct 2010	CLG*
*Department for Communities and Local Government			
ii. Publish all local authority performance data held by central government	Jun 2010	Dec 2010	CLG
iii. Design and implement a new approach with fewer reporting burdens on local government and greater transparency for local people	Oct 2010	Apr 2011	CLG
iv. Give residents the power to instigate local referendums on any local issue and to veto excessive council tax increases, through the Localism Bill	Nov 2010	Nov 2011	CLG
v. Local government resource review	Summer 2011	2012	CLG

MILESTONES	
E. Localism Bill passed	Nov 2011

3. Civil liberties (1 / 2)

Restore the rights of individuals in keeping with Britain's traditions of freedom, fairness and responsibility; reverse the erosion of civil liberties and roll back state intrusion

ACTIONS	Start	End	Lead
3.1 Restore the rights of individuals in the face of encroaching state power, in keeping with Britain's tradition of freedom and fairness			
i. Take Identity Documents Bill through parliament to scrap ID cards and the National Identity Register and halt work on having fingerprints on passports	May 2010	Dec 2010	HO*
ii. Implement the system whereby proposed new criminal offences have to be considered and approved by the SoS for Justice, with recourse to the relevant Cabinet Committee, to help prevent unnecessary criminal offences	Jun 2010	Jul 2010	MoJ*
iii. Develop options for reform of libel laws to protect freedom of speech	Jun 2010	Mar 2011	MoJ
iv. Review counter-terrorism legislation, including Control Orders, and the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA), and publish proposals for the storage of internet and e-mail records, including introducing legislation if necessary	Jun 2010	Nov 2010	HO
v. Implement Freedom Bill to adopt the protections of the Scottish model for the DNA database, outlaw fingerprinting of children at school without parental permission, further regulate CCTV, restore rights to non-violent protest, and consider additional areas in response to ideas from Your Freedom website	Jun 2010	Nov 2011	HO
MILESTONES			
A. All work on ID cards and other identified projects stopped	Jun 2010		
B. Freedom Bill passed	Nov 2011		

