

STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE The Legislative Programme

DATE 15 July 2014

BY The Rt. Hon Carwyn Jones AM, First Minister of Wales

I am pleased to announce the final ten bills of this Welsh Government's Legislative Programme.

When I introduced the Legislative Programme at the start of this Assembly I said we would bring forward Bills that would create opportunities for everyone, and deliver our vision of an efficient, effective and accessible Welsh public sector.

I believe that our legislative programme has already significantly contributed towards delivering on that commitment and will continue to do so through the ten bills I am announcing today.

We want our local communities to have the opportunities to influence the way places grow and change and we want to remove the unduly regulatory obstacles that frustrate business growth. To do this we will need a positive enabling planning system that facilitates, rather than frustrates development; a planning system that will help us to deliver the homes, jobs and infrastructure that Wales requires.

To this end, after the summer recess, we will be bringing forward a **Planning Bill** to reform and simplify our current planning system. The Bill will provide the legislation necessary to ensure that planning becomes an enabling tool which is supported by appropriate subordinate legislation, policy and guidance. It will provide for a modernised service delivery framework that will complement our proposed public service reforms.

Education reform has featured prominently in this Government's Legislative programme and we will be introducing the fifth education bill - **The Qualifications (Wales) Bill** at the end of this year. It will establish an independent body (Qualifications Wales) that will be responsible for the regulation and quality assurance of non-degree level qualifications available in Wales.

In addition we will bring forward before next summer the recess the **Additional Learning Needs Bill** which will be the sixth and final education bill of this Government's Legislative Programme.

And in order to pave the way for our planned reform of local authorities in Wales we will be bringing forward a **Local Government Bill** at the beginning of next year. The

Bill will prepare the ground for reforming local authorities in Wales through a series of mergers.

Whilst the merger proposals themselves and other reforms will be provided for in a second Bill to be introduced after the 2016 Assembly elections, the Local Government Bill will enable mergers to take place in a coherent and planned way. It will enable the Welsh Ministers to merge local authorities who wish to do so voluntarily ahead of the main merger and reform programme.

The Bill will enable the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales and the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales to start work in respect of proposed new authorities. It will provide a power to ensure authorities co-operate for the purpose of jointly planning and preparing for merger and it will include provision to prevent activities by current or shadow authorities which might bring financial or reputational harm to any new authority.

And to further advance this Government's three strategic priorities for housing: more homes, better homes, and better services we will bring forward in the early part of next year the **Renting Homes Bill**. The Bill will provide a fairer, simpler and more efficient legal foundation for the relationship between landlords and tenants. It will for the first time, provide a legal framework tailored to the needs of supported housing.

The Bill will draw on extensive recommendations produced by the Law Commission who have helped develop our proposals. It will, amongst other things, assist landlords to tackle housing-related anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse; give equal rights to local authority and housing association tenants and ensure every private tenant has a clear written contract.

The Renting Homes Bill will be followed by the introduction of the **Social Services Regulation and Inspection Bill** - the sister bill of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act. Responses to the White Paper consultation – The Future of Regulation and Inspection of Care and Support in Wales, provided a rich basis for developing the policy of the regulation and inspection of care and support in Wales. The two clear underpinning aims of the Bill will be to secure well-being for citizens and improve the quality of care and support they receive.

We recognise that in order to secure Wales' future prosperity, we must value our natural resources and the services they provide. To manage them sustainably to support the opportunities to deliver jobs, and sustainable growth within our transition to a low carbon economy, as well as in tackling key challenges, such as the decline in our biodiversity.

We therefore plan to bring forward next spring an **Environment Bill** to establish a modern and innovative legislative framework for the sustainable management of natural resources. The Bill will establish a framework to prioritise natural resource opportunities and help to reduce complexity and enable improvements in resource efficiency while streamlining and clarifying processes for a number of existing regulatory regimes.

This Government also recognises the value of the historic environment of Wales. A rich resource that can inspire our citizens and visitors, stimulate regeneration and economic growth. But if it is going to continue to provide these many benefits to present and future generations, it must be protected and sustainably managed. We therefore intend to introduce the **Heritage Bill** which will also come forward next spring.

The Heritage Bill will introduce greater transparency and accountability into decisions taken on the historic environment. It will include provisions that seek to give more effective protection to Wales' listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments by giving the Welsh Government and local planning authorities enhanced powers. The Bill will provide the legislation necessary to ensure the sustainable management of the Welsh historic environment supported by non-legislative policy, advice and guidance.

Members will be aware that over the past year the Welsh Government has continued to pursue legislation as a means for improving and protecting health. In April the Minister for Health and Social Services outlined a series of proposals for addressing specific health concerns in a Public Health White Paper. We were pleased that this exercise attracted a great deal of interest and stimulated lively debate on a number of important issues. The consultation period closed on 24 June and we will be considering the responses over the coming months, with a view to bringing forward a **Public Health Bill** before summer recess next year.

The Wales Bill, which as we all know will confer significant new responsibilities on the Assembly in respect of taxation and borrowing, has now cleared the House of Commons and is under consideration in the House of Lords.

Whilst Parliamentary consideration has not completed, I think it reasonable for the Welsh Government to make preparatory plans. I can inform the Assembly that if the Bill becomes law broadly in its current form, it would be our intention to bring forward legislation in this Assembly term, a **Tax Collection and Management Bill** that will confer the powers of tax collection and management in Wales.

This Bill would establish a corporate body, operationally separate from Welsh Ministers, and vest it with the legal powers of tax collection and management. The legislation would also establish a legal process to ensure and protect taxpayer rights in the full and proper payment of taxes.

This is an historic time for Wales: this will be the first piece of tax legislation that the Assembly has had to consider, and will pave the way for the replacement of UK Stamp Duty Land Tax and Landfill Tax with new, devolved Welsh taxes from 2018.

Llywydd, this government's legislative ambitions do not end here.

I should also like to inform Members that we will be working with the Law Commission on projects which we hope will be included in its 12th Programme of Law Reform, details of which will be announced shortly. I am hopeful that there will be a major piece of work on Planning Law reform, to simplify and codify the law relating to development control, which should lead to legislation in the next Assembly, as well

as work to address the issues around accessibility to Welsh law and the Welsh statute book; again this should be relevant to legislation in the next Assembly.

I commend this legislative statement.