

# **New amendments will create safer streets, champion culture, and strengthen local accountability under the English Devolution Bill**

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## **Communities and local leaders will benefit from new powers introduced in the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill.**

- Communities to gain new powers to protect local spaces, shape their high streets, and celebrate culture.
- New tools for local leaders to keep residents safe by cracking down on dangerous pavement parking and strengthening standards for taxi and private hire vehicle licencing.
- Local people will see stronger and more public scrutiny of their regional mayors, through new Local Scrutiny Committees.

Streets will be made safer, arts and culture will be championed, and local people will be handed more tools to transform the places they live under measures tabled yesterday (17th March) to shift more power out of Westminster and into the hands of local leaders.

Measures tabled to the landmark English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill represent the latest step in giving local leaders, people who know their areas best, the keys to the driving seat in kick-starting real change for their areas.

If voted through, the measures will hand communities the power to tackle the concentration of gambling premises on high streets, and make streets safer by enforcing against dangerous pavement parking outside of London.

Communities will have far longer to save the pubs, parks, libraries and local spaces that matter most to them, with the Community Right to Buy listing period doubling from five to 10 years. Mayors will also gain new powers to champion arts, heritage and the creative industries, celebrating what makes each place distinctive, as culture becomes an official responsibility for Strategic Authorities for the first time.

This comes on top of measures to empower local people to take charge of their futures through the Pride in Place programme, now extending to 284 neighbourhoods across the UK.

£150m has also been provided to turn the tide on the decline of our high streets, helping bolster community pride and give our villages, towns and cities a boost. Together with the new powers introduced through the Bill, this package gives communities across the country the tools, funding and authority to make the changes that matter most to them.

### **Minister for Devolution, Miatta Fahnbulleh, said:**

“Each region in England has its own unique history, culture and identity. It’s right that we recognise that, champion it, and provide the people in those communities with the powers they need to make the most of the places they call home.

“We’ve listened to what our regions want and need - and that’s why we are providing the powers that local leaders need, and the accountability local people deserve, to make a real difference at the heart of villages, towns and cities up and down the country.”

### **Secretary of State for Transport Heidi Alexander said:**

“It’s vital that authorities can act fast to stop dangerous drivers, taxis and private hire vehicles wherever they operate. These new powers will mean safer journeys for everyone with drivers still subject to the highest criminal background checks.

“Meanwhile, people shouldn’t have to dodge vehicles parked up on pavements as part of their daily routines. That’s why we’re giving local authorities powers to clamp down on pavement parking, helping to make our town centres and high streets open and accessible for all.”

The package also ensures that increased power comes alongside stronger accountability. As regional mayors take on greater responsibility for their regions, new Local Scrutiny Committees will hold them to a higher standard of scrutiny on how public money is spent and decisions are made.

Recognising the unique priorities and pressures of each region and mayoral authority, mayors will also be able to hire up to 10 commissioners allowing them to better respond to the demands and focuses of their region, and their residents.

Rolling out powers already provided in London, local leaders across the country will be able to enforce against pavement parking, delivering on a commitment made in the 2020 pavement parking consultation and building on the Road Safety Strategy published in January 2026. The measure will make streets safer and more accessible for wheelchair users, people with visual impairments, and parents with pushchairs, ensuring communities are accessible to everyone.

Addressing concerns around taxi and private hire vehicle safety, enforcement officers will be able to temporarily suspend licences issued by another English authority where a driver or vehicle is operating outside their licensed area and there is a need to suspend a licence with immediate effect to protect the public.

In London, boroughs will benefit from a more direct route to central government funding, with Ministers able to pay grants straight to a joint committee of all London borough leaders - cutting out delays and getting investment into projects faster, from tackling rough sleeping to rolling out electric vehicle infrastructure.

These measures build on the English Devolution White Paper, published in December 2024, which set out the government’s programme to shift power from Westminster to local leaders and communities across England.

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### **Notes to editors**

- The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill completed Lords Committee Stage on 5 March 2026.
- Lords Report Stage runs from 24 March to 13 April 2026.
- The English Devolution White Paper was published on 16 December 2024.
- Local Scrutiny Committees will apply to all established Mayoral Strategic Authorities from April 2027, and all other Mayoral Strategic Authorities from April 2028.
- The Bill’s Impact Assessment received a green rating from the Regulatory Policy Committee,

indicating a likely positive growth outcome.

- The London Councils grant amendment enables Ministers to pay funding directly to a joint committee comprising leaders from all London Boroughs and the City of London, under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003.
- Further information on the Bill is available at: English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill publications - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-amendments-will-create-safer-streets-champion-culture-and-strengthen-local-accountability-under-the-english-devolution-bill>