

English Devolution Bill receives Royal Assent

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Act follows on from the English Devolution White Paper, which set out government agenda for devolution.

The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill has received Royal Assent.

The Act will introduce new measures to expand devolution and empower mayors and local people. A new Community Right to Buy will give local people the first right of refusal for valued community assets such as shops and community centres when they are put up for sale.

Gambling Impact Assessments will be introduced to address the proliferation of gambling shops on the high street, so councils can prevent new gambling shops opening.

Upwards Only Rent Review clauses in new and renewal commercial leases will also be banned, which previously prevented businesses' rents from decreasing - even if the market rate decreased - for new commercial rental agreements.

On the roads, the Act introduces new national standards for taxi drivers, allowing enforcement officers to suspend licences issued by other local authorities where a driver is operating outside their licensed area.

More local transport authorities will be given new powers to enforce against dangerous pavement parking including through fixed penalty notices, and there will be new licencing powers for rental e-bikes which will allow local authorities to set specific requirements on parking, safety, and accessibility standards.

Beyond making changes for communities and high streets, the Act introduces 'Strategic Authorities' into law, to make it quicker to devolve powers out from Whitehall. Strategic Authorities with elected Mayors will receive more devolved powers over transport, planning, housing, and economic regeneration.

The Act also establishes Local Scrutiny Committees for mayoral authorities, which will provide scrutiny of local public spending and decision making.

Further measures in the Act include:

- Mandating Mayoral Strategic Authorities to develop local growth plans, aligning regional economic strategies with national policy.
- A new bespoke duty for Mayors and Strategic Authorities to ensure they formally consider local health improvement and health inequalities when making policy decisions.
- New powers for Mayors to intervene in planning applications of potential strategic importance, make mayoral development orders and charge a mayoral community infrastructure levy on developers.
- The establishment of the Local Audit Office to help manage council finances, ensuring auditing is carried out more efficiently and transparently.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/english-devolution-bill-receives-royal-assent>