

LOCALISM BILL 2010-11 RECEIVES ROYAL ASSENT

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November 2011



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On 15 November 2011 the Localism Bill 2010-11 was granted Royal Assent. The Localism Act 2011 will introduce fundamental reforms in many aspects of Local Government. These will include:-

1. A new power of general competence for Local Authorities and certain other public bodies.
2. Significant changes to the planning system (for example at a local level the Act will introduce neighbourhood plans, and nationally the Act will also abolish the Infrastructure Planning Commission).
3. New community rights to:-
 - 3.1 bid to take over local assets;
 - 3.2 challenge to provide local services; and
 - 3.3 build the facilities they require.
4. Changes to the social housing regime and homelessness legislation.
5. Changes to Local Authority Governance including changes to:-
 - 5.1 the available governance structures;
 - 5.2 the rules on predetermination; and
 - 5.3 the standards regime, including the abolition of the Standards Board.

The Act is very wide ranging and will clearly change Local Government in the future and also the planning system. There has been much public debate at present over the new National Planning Policy Framework but no doubt as the weeks and months progress matters will become a little clearer. However, what is clear is that it is the Government's intention to bring Local Government, and in particular the planning system, down to a more locally based level with direction being given more to local needs and for communities to put forward their own plans for their own governance and how they see their community being shaped in the future.

There is clearly a role for commercial enterprises, Local Authorities and other public bodies in what is, in effect, this brave new world.

To discuss this matter in more detail please contact Paul Leach either by telephone on 01306 502313 or by email: p.leach@downslaw.co.uk

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