

**KINGS SPEECH 2023**

**Member Briefing – November 2023**

**Overview:**

On Nov 7, 2023, the government set out its legislative plans for the forthcoming parliament in the King’s Speech, the centrepiece of the State Opening of Parliament. With a general election due by January 2025, this was an opportunity for the Prime Minister to set out a series of priorities and ambitions.

In a [statement](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/kings-speech-to-deliver-a-brighter-future-for-the-country) ahead of the speech, the prime minister said, *“we will bring forward bills that strengthen our society, help people feel safer in their own communities and give a sense of pride in the place they call home.”.* The speech is split into three themes: growing the economy, strengthening society, and keeping people safe. In his commentary to the Speech, the Prime Minister said, *“With this historic King’s Speech...we are changing our country for the long term, delivering a brighter future”.*

This member briefing serves as a digest of the key highlights and announcements made during today's much-anticipated speech, ensuring members are well-informed and equipped with the latest insights and developments.

The briefing provides a clear understanding of the outlined vision and its implications for the sector. The briefing highlights pertinent areas that may directly impact the industry, and explores potential opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

**Bills announced:**

Among the series of bills announced, three key pieces of legislation hold particular relevance for members, including:

* Trade (Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership) Bill,
* Automated Vehicles Bill
* Rail Reform Bill

These bills collectively represent the government's approach to securing the UK's position in the global marketplace, fostering innovation, and ensuring the nation's infrastructure remains at the forefront of technological advancements.

**Relevant Documents:**

* The King's Speech 2023: [background briefing](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/654a21952f045e001214dcd7/The_King_s_Speech_background_briefing_notes.pdf)

**Announcements not covered by Bills:**

1. “My Ministers will seek to attract record levels of investment in **renewable energy sources** and reform grid connections, building on the United Kingdom’s track-record of decarbonising faster than other G7 economies”.
2. “My government will invest in **Network North** to deliver faster and more reliable journeys between, and within, the cities and towns of the North and Midlands, prioritising improving the journeys that people make most often”.
3. “My Ministers will strengthen education for the long term. Steps will be taken to ensure young people have the knowledge and skills to succeed, through the introduction of the Advanced British Standard that will bring technical and academic routes into a single qualification. Proposals will be implemented to reduce the number of young people studying poor quality university degrees and increase the number undertaking high quality apprenticeships”.
4. “My government will continue to lead action on tackling climate change and biodiversity loss, support developing countries with their energy transition, and hold other countries to their environmental commitments”.
5. “My government will host the Global Investment Summit, the European Political Community, and the Energy Conference, leading global conversations on the United Kingdom’s most pressing challenges”.

**Relevant Bills:**

**Trade (Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership) Bill.**

Overview:

The bill is designed to equip the UK with the tools necessary to meet its obligations under the CPTPP, leading to an enhancement of regulatory cooperation, expansion of copyright protections, and alignment with geographical indication standards, all while safeguarding the UK's high environmental and labour standards.

Lead Department(s): Business and Trade

Impact on ACE members:

* Global Market Access and Export Opportunities: ACE members may benefit from improved market access and export opportunities, as the CPTPP membership will enable greater trade with dynamic economies across Asia-Pacific and the Americas. This development could pave the way for expanded business networks, fostering collaborations and partnerships that will drive innovation and growth.
* *Services and Digital Sector Advancements: The integration into the CPTPP has the potential to create opportunities for the UK's services and digital sectors to flourish, requiring ACE members to leverage their expertise in digital trade and service delivery. This will involve the removal of trade barriers and the facilitation of seamless data flow between the UK and CPTPP member countries, fostering a conducive environment for digital innovation and economic growth.*
* *Infrastructure Development and Investment Inflow: The increased investments expected from CPTPP countries could drive the demand for infrastructure development and improvement projects, providing significant opportunities for ACE members to participate in the planning, design, and implementation of various social and economic infrastructure initiatives. This will contribute to the overall growth and development of the UK's infrastructure landscape, creating sustainable and resilient structures that cater to the evolving needs of the global market.*

**Automated Vehicles Bill.**

Overview:

The proposed Bill seeks to facilitate the safe deployment of self-driving vehicles, positioning the UK as a global leader. Anticipated to create a robust legal framework which explicitly defines what a self-driving vehicle is, and who is liable in the event of a collision, the bill underscores safety as a primary concern while aiming to unlock the sector's vast growth potential, estimated to contribute up to £42 billion to the UK economy and generate 38,000 skilled jobs by 2035. By addressing human error as a significant factor in road accidents, the bill emphasises the potential for self-driving vehicles to enhance road safety, improve convenience, and accessibility, thereby enhancing the lives of millions of people. The bill outlines a comprehensive safety framework for self-driving vehicles, providing new powers to authorise their operation, ensuring company accountability, investigating, and learning from incidents, and digitalising Traffic Regulation Orders to support the safe operation of self-driving vehicles. The bill aims to protect consumers by prohibiting misleading marketing and clarifying legal responsibilities for users of self-driving vehicles.

Lead Department(s) – Transport

Impact on ACE members:

* Opportunities for Technological Innovation and Development: The bill's focus on fostering a robust legal framework for self-driving vehicles could encourage ACE members to actively participate in the development and implementation of advanced technological solutions. This will involve the design and integration of cutting-edge technologies and infrastructure to ensure the safe and successful deployment of self-driving vehicles, thereby contributing to the growth and advancement of the UK's autonomous vehicle sector.

**Rail Reform Bill**

Overview:

The proposed Bill aims to address the evolving needs of the railways, positioning them to be more responsive, efficient, and technologically advanced. The bill emphasises the importance of delivering punctual and reliable services, simplifying ticketing systems, and creating a modern and innovative railway network that caters to the demands of a modern economy and society. The draft bill focuses on establishing a new public rail body, Great British Railways, to consolidate network management and passenger services. This consolidation aims to enhance accountability, improve service quality, foster smarter growth through private sector partnerships, and ensure greater efficiency within the rail industry. Specific duties related to accessibility and freight will be outlined in the Great British Railways' license, with a focus on improving the railway experience for disabled passengers and driving the growth of the rail freight sector. With its broad territorial extent and application across the UK, the proposed bill aims to overhaul the rail sector, addressing key issues identified in the Williams review and the Plan for Rail White Paper, with the ultimate goal of future-proofing the industry for sustained growth and innovation.

Lead Department(s): Transport

Impact on ACE members:

* Innovation and Efficiency Enhancement Solutions: The draft Rail Reform Bill emphasises the need for increased innovation and efficiency within the railway industry. ACE members may play a vital role in driving innovation, developing technology-driven solutions, and implementing best practices to enhance operational efficiency.
* Infrastructure and Accessibility Improvement Expertise: With the bill emphasising the importance of enhancing rail accessibility and promoting freight growth, ACE members may be able to contribute their expertise in developing infrastructure improvement strategies. This may include providing guidance on accessibility enhancements at railway stations, facilitating the expansion of freight services, and supporting the implementation of measures to improve the overall rail travel experience for all passengers.



**Association for Consultancy and Engineering (ACE)**

Alliance House, 12 Caxton Street, London, SW1H 0QL

T: 020 7222 6557 - membership@acenet.co.uk - [www.acenet.co.uk](http://www.acenet.co.uk)

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