RESTORATION AND RENEWAL

Restoration and Renewal: Equality, Merit and the National Inheritance

Equality before the law, withdrawal from the ECHR, free speech and the national inheritance.

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Britain did not shape the modern world by accident. It invented neither faith nor freedom, but it alone bound them together with law, property rights and enterprise into institutions that turned ingenuity into progress on a scale the world had never seen. The experiment in post-national liberalism that has been inflicted on the country in recent decades has treated that inheritance as something to apologise for and dismantle. A programme of restoration and renewal begins with rebuilding those foundations: one law for all, advancement on merit, common institutions and a national culture that is celebrated and handed on with confidence.

The Human Rights Act 1998 moved contested national questions from Parliament to the courts, whilst the Equality Act 2010 replaced equal treatment of individuals with duties to manage outcomes between groups. Around them grew equality duties, procurement conditions, regulatory mandates, diversity targets and official definitions of offence. Together they changed how the state recruits, funds, polices, teaches and judges. Representation displaced merit. Communal intermediaries displaced common institutions. Citizens were sorted into groups with competing claims and the result has been division rather than cohesion. A nation that cannot define itself cannot shape the future. Britain has become accustomed to changing its governments but not its direction, because the power to decide has passed from those it elects to courts, regulators and international bodies.

The Anglo inheritance was distinctive in its balance. Fierce individualism sat alongside social obligation and tradition sat alongside a willingness to experiment. Christianity shaped ideas of individual moral worth, conscience, duty and charity and permeated the nation's language, literature, education, architecture and law.

This paper proposes a programme of legal restoration and institutional reform. Repeal the Equality Act 2010 and replace it with a narrower code protecting individuals against discrimination on grounds of sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age and pregnancy. Repeal the Gender Recognition Act 2004. Apply the merit principle to universities, research funding, the NHS, judicial appointments and the BBC. Remove demographic preferences from procurement, regulation and public administration.

Restore common policing and criminal-law principles. Withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and repeal the Human Rights Act, with specific arrangements preserving Northern Ireland's domestic protections.

Establish a coherent educational entitlement in British history and Anglo-Western civilisation for every school in England, including independent schools. Set a national framework for religious education centred on Christianity. Teach that sex is biological and keep gender identity theory out of the curriculum. Retain public funding for Christian schools and end it for non-Christian denominational schools. Restore common school practices and national commemorations, protect Christian heritage and give cultural funding a clear public purpose. Make English the language of public administration. Separate legislation will address public face concealment, religious slaughter, marriage and religious civil adjudication. Set one statutory threshold for criminal speech. Repeal the offences that exceed it and the regulatory regime of the Online Safety Act. Protect criticism of any religion, belief or state. Restore voting in person, with postal votes only for service voters and the housebound, and confine the parliamentary franchise to British and Irish citizens aged 21 and over.

The purpose is to reorient institutions to transmit the language, habits, achievements and accumulated understanding of the nation, while enabling new work in science, technology, commerce and the arts.

The programme requires a government prepared to change the operating rules of institutions as well as the legislation above them. Its measures are organised below with their delivery responsibilities and legislative dependencies.

1 National purpose and institutional responsibility

National culture is carried through ordinary institutions: schools, books, scholarships, public buildings and the treatment of individuals. Repeated practice establishes the country's expectations of common life.

Public services should serve individuals through common rules. Schools should transmit the national inheritance. Appointments should turn on competence. Cultural expenditure should sustain accomplishment and common participation. Police should enforce the law directly and consistently.

Legislative repeal must be accompanied by changes to mandates, contracts, training and management incentives. Institutions can retain an abandoned policy through recruitment criteria, grant scoring or professional guidance. The implementation programme will identify and replace those instruments, assigning responsibility for each change.

A common public culture

The public calendar, English language, inherited civic ceremonies and Christian traditions should be ordinary features of national institutions. Freedom of conscience and private religious observance will remain protected. Institutions will operate through common procedures and professional obligations, with specific provisions for disability, essential care and custody.

Much of English public conduct rests on conventions rather than legal commands: courtesy, reciprocity, restraint and respect between men and women. Schools, public employers and professional bodies should teach and uphold those expectations through their own conduct. Employment standards should require equal professional service and cooperation.

The Christian character of the state

Equality before the law governs how the state treats its citizens. It does not require the state to have no character of its own. Britain is a Christian nation. The monarch is crowned under a Christian oath and is Supreme Governor of the Church of England. Bishops sit in Parliament. The public calendar and national holidays follow the Christian year. Since 1944 the law has required collective worship in schools and since 1988 has required it to be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character.

The state's own institutions will therefore teach and practise the national faith while every citizen remains equal before the law. Outside the specific exceptions for religious organisations, charities and schools set out in this paper, no person will be advantaged or disadvantaged in employment, services or justice because of their religion. Every child of any faith or none will have a place at a publicly funded school and may withdraw from worship. Christian schools may give admissions priority to children of their faith. What the state will not do is fund institutions whose purpose is to transmit a different religious tradition. Citizens remain free to establish and fund such schools privately, subject to the common curriculum required of every school in England.

Territorial application

The initial programme will preserve Northern Ireland's separate settlement and allocate reforms according to their subject and jurisdiction. UK objectives in devolved fields will be pursued through the relevant legislatures and agreements.

FIELD	INITIAL APPLICATION
Equality and merit	Great Britain, with express treatment of reserved and devolved powers
Education, heritage and culture	England. The Scottish and Welsh governments will be invited to adopt equivalent measures. Broadcasting and UK research funding apply across the United Kingdom.
Criminal law, policing and civil adjudication	England and Wales, with separate Scottish provision where agreed including marriage law
Public face visibility and institutional procedures	Jurisdiction specific legislation and service rules
Speech offences and online regulation	United Kingdom for online regulation and communications offences. England and Wales for public order offences, with Scotland invited to adopt equivalent measures.
ECHR withdrawal and international negotiations	United Kingdom, with Northern Ireland domestic protections preserved and the Scottish and Welsh devolution statutes amended
Food production and religious meat supply	Initial Great Britain programme, with devolved implementation and specific trade provisions
Elections and the franchise	UK parliamentary elections across the United Kingdom, local elections in England and Northern Ireland. Scotland and Wales invited to adopt equivalent rules for their own elections.

2 Equality and advancement through merit

The law should protect people against discriminatory treatment and give them an effective individual remedy. Appointments and competitive opportunities should be awarded through relevant ability and achievement. Public bodies should pursue their substantive functions without a parallel mandate to

redistribute opportunities between demographic groups.

A1 Repeal the Equality Act and enact a narrower non-discrimination code

Repeal the Equality Act 2010. Replace it with a narrower code built on the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the regulations on religion or belief, sexual orientation and age. The code will protect individuals against direct discrimination and harassment because of sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age, pregnancy or maternity in employment, education, housing, ordinary services and public functions. Restore equal-pay law as specified in B5.

Sex means biological sex. Gender reassignment will not be a separate protected characteristic. Repeal the Gender Recognition Act 2004 so that legal sex is biological sex for all purposes. The repeal will apply in Great Britain, with Northern Ireland treated through the schedule in D5. No new gender recognition certificates will be issued. The repeal legislation will set out the treatment of existing certificates, including marriages, pensions and records. Everyone is protected against sex discrimination and harassment according to their biological sex. The ordinary law on assault, threats and harassment applies to everyone. Direct age discrimination will remain capable of justification where it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, as it has been since 2006.

The code will contain express exceptions. Services and facilities may be provided separately for each sex or for one sex only, including refuges, changing rooms, toilets, hospital wards and services for victims of sexual violence. Sport and sporting competitions may be separated by sex. Religious organisations may restrict membership, participation, worship and religious office by religion, and by sex or sexual orientation where their doctrine requires it. No religious organisation or minister will be compelled to conduct a marriage contrary to its doctrine. Voluntary associations and members' clubs may restrict membership to people who share a protected characteristic other than colour.

Unlike the 1975 and 1976 Acts, the new code will not include indirect discrimination. Indirect-discrimination claims judge a common rule by its effect on group outcomes. Over time they turned neutral requirements into demographic audits that organisations had to justify in advance. Individuals will be protected against being treated worse because of who they are. Organisations will not have to defend ordinary standards because results differ between groups. The disability-adjustment duties in A4 and the equal-pay rights in B5 are retained as specific provisions.

The repeal legislation will expressly re-enact the selected provisions, preserve pending claims except as provided in B5 and specify commencement. End the public-sector equality duty, positive action permissions and associated demographic promotion duties. Do not revive earlier commissions or ethnic-preference exceptions. Justice and business ministers will publish the complete schedule of re-enacted provisions with the Bill.

A2 Prohibit identity preferences in selection

Prohibit eligibility restrictions, quotas, preferential shortlists and identity tie-breaks based on race, sex or religion in recruitment, training, promotion, admissions and competitive awards. Apply the prohibition to public bodies, private employers and education providers. Extend it to deliberate proxies used to reproduce the prohibited preference.

Schools with a religious character, whether publicly funded or independent, may give admissions priority on grounds of religion under the rules in section 11. Single-sex schools and colleges may restrict admission by sex, and awards made by or held at those institutions may do the same. Sport may be separated by sex under A1. Other competitive awards may not restrict eligibility by sex.

Employers and education providers will set standards and assess candidates. Courts and tribunals will enforce the prohibition on identity preferences and criteria used to disguise them. Differences in group outcomes will not themselves establish a breach. There will be no general jurisdiction under these provisions to substitute judicial judgement about the best candidate or require justification of ordinary selection standards. Define genuine occupational requirements narrowly around necessary duties, including explicitly religious offices. Schools with a religious character may require their head teacher, senior leaders and teachers of religious education to share the school's faith. Public appointments will use published criteria and recorded reasons.

A3 Apply the rule to charitable and private awards

Bring scholarships, bursaries and charitable awards within the same rule, including schemes financed by private donors. A university must not attach an ethnic restriction to a funding opportunity because a donor requests it. Amend charitable-benefit exceptions and provide a court-supervised route to vary incompatible trust terms.

Permit assistance based on verified financial need. Competitive academic, artistic and vocational awards will state how relevant merit and need determine priority. Support may address a particular subject, place or functional disadvantage where its criteria serve the award's purpose and do not conceal an ethnic or religious preference. Religious charities and organisations may restrict awards by religion where the award serves the religion’s own purposes, including training clergy, supporting religious education and assisting members of the faith. Honour awards already granted and apply the new eligibility rules to future competitions.

3 Individual protection and ordinary enforcement

The new code will use courts, employment tribunals and ordinary legal remedies. Its protections must be usable by an individual whose opportunity or treatment has been affected. Administrative targets and promotional commissions will cease to be the means through which compliance is assessed.

A4 Restore practical disability protections

Restore substantive disability protections and reasonable-adjustment duties across employment, education, premises and services. Include necessary later improvements in coverage when preparing the re-enactment schedule. Support should remove functional barriers to participation while preserving essential competence and safety requirements.

Disability assistance and financial-need support will have their own defined purposes and eligibility tests. They will not authorise demographic recruitment preferences. The restoration legislation will specify evidence, reasonable adjustments and dispute routes.

A5 Define actionable conduct and preserve remedies

Retain specified statutory remedies for direct discrimination, workplace harassment and retaliation. Confine employment duties to defined conduct connected with employment. Define harassment through identifiable conduct, context and objective seriousness. Lawful disagreement and subjective offence alone will not establish liability. Impose no general duty under discrimination law to monitor employees' private beliefs or opinions.

Employers will remain liable for harassment by their employees in the course of employment, with the established defence where they took all reasonable steps to prevent it, but the state will not impose general preventive or monitoring duties on employers under discrimination law.

A6 Abolish the Equality and Human Rights Commission

Abolish the Equality and Human Rights Commission through express amendment of the Equality Act 2006. Enforce the new code and merit provisions through ordinary courts and tribunals. End the Commission's promotional, monitoring and group-representation functions without creating a successor body.

Wind up its property, staffing, records and liabilities through a published transition plan. Deal expressly with live litigation and assistance already committed to individual cases. Do not revive predecessor commissions, including the Commission for Racial Equality, which was dissolved in 2007. Northern Ireland's separate institutions will remain outside this measure.

A7 Reform employment conciliation

Redesign early conciliation through the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) around prompt identification of the dispute, timely exchange of relevant evidence and impartial settlement. Preserve continuity with workplace procedures and recognised trade union representation.

Business ministers will publish the revised pathway and procedural changes within six months of taking office. Service standards will specify time to first contact, evidence exchange and completion. Conciliation will preserve access to adjudication, with limitation rules preventing claims expiring during the process. Publish service performance rather than demographic settlement objectives.

4 Procurement and regulatory mandates

Public purchasing and regulation transmit government policy beyond the public sector. A tender condition can change a supplier's hiring practices. A licence can make demographic reporting a permanent management obligation. Repealing the Equality Act must be followed through into these instruments.

B1 Remove identity preferences from procurement

Prohibit supplier preferences based on the race, sex or religion of owners, directors or employees. Remove demographic workforce and board-composition conditions from public tenders. Replace the relevant Social Value Model provisions and standard contract terms with requirements concerned with the goods or services purchased, performance and lawful employment.

Amend the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 and connected procurement provisions as necessary. Retain the Procurement Act 2023 safeguards concerning value, transparency, integrity and equal treatment of suppliers. Contract-specific training or accessibility requirements must serve delivery of the contract and satisfy the merit and disability rules.

The Cabinet Office will issue revised terms for new tenders and a schedule for existing contracts. Contracting authorities will identify clauses to vary, expire or replace and publish the legal route. The transition must cover subcontracting and grant-funded purchasing as well as central procurement.

B2 Confine regulators to their statutory functions

Amend the Regulators' Code and, where necessary, enabling legislation to end demographic promotion beyond the non-discrimination duties of the new code. Each regulator will publish its affected rules, guidance and reporting requirements, identify required statutory changes and complete the amendments within twelve months of the necessary powers becoming available.

BODY	REQUIRED CHANGE
Financial Conduct Authority	Remove demographic board targets and associated composition reporting through Handbook amendments
Solicitors Regulation Authority	End compulsory workforce diversity returns and the general diversity-promotion mandate through the applicable approval process
Ofcom	Amend workforce demographic-promotion duties and corresponding licence conditions while retaining defined disability access requirements
Advertising Standards Authority and advertising code bodies	Replace broad racial and ethnic stereotyping guidance with rules addressing defined unlawful or otherwise specified prohibited content
General Medical Council and Nursing and Midwifery Council	Remove diversity-promotion duties, targets and requirements beyond the new code from professional standards, education and training
Bar Standards Board	End compulsory diversity data collection, equality officer requirements and diversity-promotion rules for chambers and practitioners
Charity Commission	Revise guidance so charity regulation concerns charitable purpose, governance and public benefit, applying A3 to charitable awards
Ofsted	Align inspection frameworks with the E1 entitlement and the new code, removing assessment of diversity promotion

Sponsoring ministers will bring forward the statutory amendments. Independent regulators and code bodies will use their respective rule-making processes. Where a voluntary code body declines the required change, ministers will identify the proportionate legislative instrument rather than rely on an unenforceable instruction.

5 Public sponsorship, reporting, equal pay and the NHS

Government should remove the incentives that turn demographic targets into routine organisational policy. Funding conditions, official endorsements and management objectives must follow the same principles as the legislation. Replacing a statutory duty while continuing to reward its objectives through

sponsorship would preserve the old system in practice.

B3 End official backing for demographic targets

Withdraw public funding, sponsorship and official endorsement from employer schemes that use demographic representation as a selection objective. End equivalent demographic preferences and targets operating through departmental performance frameworks, public appointment processes, training contracts and grants. The same rule applies to recruitment, promotion and command appointments in the armed forces.

Accounting officers will identify the affected schemes, spending and contractual commitments. End new discretionary commitments where existing law permits, then terminate or amend continuing arrangements through their lawful powers. Public-sector staff networks will have no privileged role in determining appointment standards, promotion or public service entitlement. Ordinary staff consultation will operate through accountable management and recognised employment processes.

Private employers will determine their ordinary staffing and operating arrangements within the restored employment law. The prohibition on identity preferences will apply whether or not a scheme receives public backing. Withdraw official guidance, government-sponsored accreditation conditions and publicly funded training that encourage demographic balancing, quotas or preferential selection. Replacement guidance will state the specific statutory prohibitions and remedies.

B4 End compulsory demographic pay-gap reporting

Repeal the statutory gender pay-gap reporting requirement and connected regulations. Do not introduce compulsory ethnicity or disability pay-gap reporting. Repeal any such requirements enacted before this programme takes office, including any introduced by the Equality (Race and Disability) Bill or any Act resulting from it.

An aggregate difference between groups does not establish the treatment of an individual doing particular work. Individual pay discrimination will remain actionable under restored equal pay law. Employers will retain the records necessary to determine those claims. Remove demographic reporting that has no separate continuing regulatory purpose, while retaining ordinary financial, employment and safety records.

B5 Restore the Equal Pay Act for like work and work rated as equivalent

Re-enact the Equal Pay Act 1970 for like work and for work rated as equivalent under the employer's own job evaluation scheme. Claims comparing different jobs on the basis of equal value will not be re-enacted. Pay between different jobs will be set by employers and the labour market, not by tribunals. The defence that a pay difference is genuinely due to a factor other than sex will continue and will not require objective justification.

Equal value claims ask tribunals to decide what different jobs are worth. That is a judgement for employers and the labour market. Equal value claims in which no tribunal has found liability by the date the Bill is published will end. Claims in which liability has already been found will continue under the previous law. Agreed settlements and awards already made will stand. Claims for like work and work rated as equivalent will continue under the restored Act. The legislation will restore the equality clause and individual remedies and specify comparators. Performance, responsibility, experience and other

relevant factors will be examined through the statutory defence. Enforcement will remain with ordinary courts and tribunals. Justice and business ministers will issue the transition rules alongside the repeal legislation so employers and claimants can identify the applicable law throughout the change.

The ILO Equal Remuneration Convention, which the United Kingdom ratified in 1971, requires states to promote equal pay for work of equal value by means appropriate to their methods of setting pay and to ensure it so far as is consistent with those methods. Pay in Britain is set by employers, the labour market and collective bargaining. The restored equality clause, claims for work rated as equivalent and employers' freedom to use job evaluation meet that obligation. The government will defend this position at the ILO and in any proceedings under the labour provisions of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement. If the ILO's supervisory bodies conclude that the Convention requires equal value claims, the United Kingdom will denounce it at the first opportunity under its own terms.

B6 End workforce equality standards in the NHS

Withdraw the NHS Workforce Race Equality Standard and Workforce Disability Equality Standard in England and remove them from the NHS Standard Contract, oversight frameworks and the Care Quality Commission's assessment of leadership. End demographic representation targets in NHS appointment, promotion and leadership programmes. Recruitment and promotion will turn on clinical and professional competence under A2.

NHS bodies will not maintain equality, diversity and inclusion posts, units or mandatory training. The reasonable-adjustment duties in A4 and patient-facing duties concerned with clinical need, access and safeguarding will continue. Health ministers will issue the revised contract terms and oversight requirements.

6 Common criminal law and direct policing

Criminal justice should assess the act, intent, culpability and harm. Police authority should run directly between the law, accountable officers and the individual. Communities must not be assigned representatives who bargain over the application of ordinary law on their behalf.

C1 Remove identity-specific criminal aggravation

The criminal law should punish what an offender did, intended and caused. Aggravation based on the identity category of the victim asks courts to grade victims by group and to punish the opinions behind an act as well as the act itself. An assault on one man should carry the same sentence as an equally grave assault on another. The seriousness of an offence will be judged by its harm, its planning, its effect on the victim and any intent to intimidate.

Repeal identity-specific aggravated offences and sentencing uplifts. Use common assessments of intent, harm, repeated targeting, intimidation and vulnerability when determining seriousness. Apply the reform across offences and sentencing provisions, including racial and religious aggravation and section 66 of the Sentencing Act 2020. Hostility-based starting points for murder will be removed. Starting points will be set by the remaining factors in Schedule 21.

The justice department will publish a complete consequential schedule and revised sentencing instructions. Ordinary offences concerning violence, threats, harassment and organised intimidation will remain enforceable. The same evidence of planning, terrorising a victim or targeting vulnerability will bear the same weight regardless of the identity classification of those involved.

C2 Reset policing standards and accountability

Reset the College of Policing mandate around investigation, operational competence, professional standards and common enforcement. Revise the relevant appointment, accountability and curriculum controls. Preserve necessary accreditation, evidence handling and operational knowledge through the transition.

The Home Office will identify the powers needed to secure the reset and assess institutional compliance. Structural abolition will be brought forward only if the governance assessment establishes that the required changes cannot be delivered within the College. Operational responsibility must remain identifiable throughout.

C3 End demographic outcome programmes

End race action plans and dedicated structures whose purpose is demographic equality of outcome. Replace associated training, promotion and force performance requirements with standards concerning competence, investigation and consistent enforcement. Chief officers will publish the instruments rescinded and the operational rules replacing them.

Collect evidence needed to investigate offences and assess service performance. Do not use demographic disparities alone as proof of misconduct or as a reason to adjust enforcement. Access assistance and specialist investigative knowledge must be attached to a defined policing function.

C4 End communal representative authority

Terminate standing arrangements that give ethnic or religious organisations authority to negotiate ordinary enforcement or mediate access to police on behalf of a population. Transfer reporting, victim liaison and witness support directly to accountable staff. Accept complaints without an intermediary's approval.

Chief officers will review liaison posts, funding, referral arrangements and informal agreements. Consultation may obtain evidence from people with relevant knowledge. It will confer no authority over another person's complaint or legal entitlement. Record enforcement decisions and reasons through the ordinary chain of command and complaints system.

7 Constitutional authority and domestic law

Parliament should determine the laws governing the country and the powers of its public authorities. Government must remain answerable through elections, parliamentary scrutiny, courts applying domestic law and effective individual remedies. The constitutional programme will restore that allocation of responsibility through express legislation.

D1 Authorise ECHR withdrawal and repeal the Human Rights Act

Enact legislation expressly authorising withdrawal from the European Convention on Human Rights. Require notice under Article 58 within fourteen days of Royal Assent. Withdrawal will take effect after the Convention's six-month notice period. Repeal the Human Rights Act 1998 for Great Britain with the necessary transition and preservation schedules in force, and retain the Northern Ireland arrangements described in D5.

Specify the treatment of earlier conduct, pending proceedings and accrued remedies. Convention responsibility for acts before withdrawal takes effect will be handled in accordance with Article 58. Give ministers the powers necessary to implement the Act and identify the domestic provisions to amend or disapply expressly.

Devolved legislatures

The Scotland Act 1998 and the Government of Wales Act 2006 limit devolved competence by reference to the Convention rights defined in the Human Rights Act. The constitutional Bill will amend both Acts so that devolved competence is limited instead by the domestic protections preserved under D2 and D3. The Northern Ireland Act 1998 will be left unchanged in line with D5.

The government will seek the consent of the Scottish Parliament and the Senedd. The Sewel convention provides that Parliament will not normally legislate on devolved matters without consent. Treaty withdrawal is a reserved matter and setting the constitutional protections that apply across Great Britain is not a normal case. If consent is refused, Parliament will proceed and ministers will set out their reasons in the House. The Supreme Court confirmed in Miller in 2017 that the convention is political rather than legally enforceable.

Council of Europe membership

Withdrawal from the Convention does not require the United Kingdom to leave the Council of Europe. Article 58 provides that a state leaving the Council ceases to be a party to the Convention but does not provide the reverse. The government will notify its intention to remain a member and continue its contribution to the Council's work on security, crime, elections and other fields. If the Council's organs decide that membership cannot continue, the government will accept that decision and pursue the relevant conventions as a non-member state where they are open to it.

D2 Settle inherited interpretations and administrative rules

Prepare schedules dealing with statutory interpretations, precedents and administrative rules derived from the Human Rights Act. State which effects cease prospectively, which are restated in domestic law and which continue for existing proceedings. Review underlying statutory provisions so an interpretation is resolved in legislation where necessary.

Justice ministers will establish a time-limited inventory and present substantive preservation decisions to Parliament. Public bodies must replace affected guidance within twelve months of commencement. Changes to fundamental protections will be specified in primary legislation. Implementation powers will be confined to identified purposes and consequential detail.

D3 Retain common law and specific statutory remedies

Maintain common law protections and the specific legislation governing public powers, detention, search, fair procedure and access to courts. Resolve particular gaps through targeted provisions within the repeal package. No general replacement rights Act or successor human rights commission will be created.

The implementation schedule will identify the continuing cause of action and remedy for each protection selected for preservation. Judicial review will continue to determine whether public bodies act within their powers and follow the law. The jurisdiction of the courts will be stated clearly in the legislation.

D4 Appoint judges on merit alone

Repeal the duties on the Judicial Appointments Commission and any successor body, the Lord Chancellor and the Lord Chief Justice to encourage diversity in the range of candidates for judicial office. Repeal the provisions allowing preference for diversity between candidates of equal merit. Selection will be solely on merit and good character.

Apply the same rule to tribunal appointments and to the selection of magistrates. Appointing bodies will publish their selection criteria and assessment methods. Justice ministers will bring forward the necessary amendments with the constitutional Bill.

8 Northern Ireland and external arrangements

D5 Preserve the Northern Ireland settlement while proceeding with reform

Preserve Northern Ireland's existing substantive domestic rights, access to courts and effective remedies, together with the relevant limits on Assembly legislation and public authorities. Retain the necessary Human Rights Act and Northern Ireland Act provisions through express territorial savings. Leave Northern Ireland's separate equality legislation and commissions outside the initial reform package. These arrangements will have no automatic expiry date.

The government will proceed on the position that UK withdrawal from the ECHR is compatible with preserving the Belfast Agreement's required domestic protections. Withdrawal is a UK international act. The Northern Ireland savings will preserve domestic law and remedies without purporting to make Northern Ireland a separate Convention party.

Publish a provision-by-provision schedule covering the Belfast Agreement, Northern Ireland Act 1998, Windsor Framework and relevant implementing legislation. Identify which obligations remain satisfied by existing law, which require specific savings and which external arrangements need amendment. Preserve Northern Ireland protections affected by UK-wide changes to regulators or public bodies through corresponding provisions.

Negotiate consequential treaty changes

Begin engagement with Ireland, the European Union and other counterparties alongside preparation of the constitutional Bill. Identify the precise commitment engaged by each proposed change and negotiate amendments or alternative arrangements where required. Parliamentary legislation will

resolve domestic statutory conflicts expressly, including any necessary treatment of section 7A of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018.

Where agreement cannot be reached, ministers will present the available route, operational consequences and proposed response to Parliament. A decision to depart from a continuing international obligation must be stated and authorised on its own terms. The implementation plan will distinguish treaty amendment by agreement, withdrawal under an available clause and any deliberate departure from a continuing commitment.

Protect EU criminal justice cooperation

Article 692 of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement allows either party to terminate Part Three, which covers law enforcement and judicial cooperation. Termination is not automatic. If the EU gives notice on the ground of ECHR denunciation, Part Three can cease on the date the denunciation takes effect rather than after the usual nine months. The programme will plan for that possibility while seeking to keep the arrangements in place. Part Three covers surrender of suspects, exchange of DNA, fingerprint and vehicle data, passenger name records, criminal records, asset freezing and confiscation, mutual legal assistance and cooperation with Europol and Eurojust.

Before giving notice under Article 58, the Home Office and justice ministers will prepare a replacement for each mechanism. These will draw on the Council of Europe conventions on extradition and mutual legal assistance, which are open to states outside the ECHR, on bilateral agreements with member states and on a negotiated successor agreement with the EU. Ministers will publish an assessment of operational capacity, including the expected effect on extradition and data access during any gap. The government will seek a successor agreement during the notice period but will not make withdrawal conditional on securing one.

The EU's data adequacy decision for the United Kingdom, which governs commercial personal-data transfers, refers to the UK's adherence to the ECHR. The government will prepare for its review and set out the contractual safeguards businesses can rely on if adequacy is withdrawn.

Prevent unrelated dependencies delaying the programme

Prior agreement from Ireland or the EU will not be a general precondition for domestic reform or the withdrawal notice. Each measure will have a stated territorial scope and its own commencement requirements. Negotiations concerning one cooperation mechanism will affect the measures that depend on it. Equality restoration, education and other independent reforms will proceed on their own legislative and delivery timetables.

9 Education in the national inheritance

Education should give every generation an understanding of the civilisation it inherits and the ability to contribute to its future. A sequence of disconnected historical topics cannot perform that task. Pupils need to understand how institutions, beliefs, discoveries and habits developed, how they relate to one another and why they continue to matter.

E1 Establish a coherent national educational entitlement

Make British history, English language and literature, geography and constitutional understanding a coherent entitlement throughout schooling in England. Teach the development of Anglo civilisation within its Western setting and its transmission into the wider Anglosphere. Explain the relationship between Christianity, common law, Parliament, conscience, scientific inquiry, enterprise and voluntary association through substantive subject teaching.

Set progression requirements through the national curriculum, academy obligations, independent-school registration standards, examination specifications and inspection. The common core will apply to every school in England. The entitlement must reach pupils who do not take a history qualification and continue through appropriate academic and technical routes after sixteen.

E2 Commission teaching resources and subject development

Commission substantial books, source collections and teacher development connecting the national narrative across disciplines. Materials should include primary documents, literature, music, scientific discoveries and accounts of institutions in operation. Commission through subject expertise and test materials in schools before national rollout.

The education department will publish a staged implementation plan covering teaching time, resources, initial teacher education, continuing subject preparation and examination cycles. Require school curriculum plans to show where the entitlement is taught and revisited. Evaluate pupils' knowledge and understanding through normal subject assessment.

10 School life, religious education, sex and universities

Knowledge is reinforced through participation. Singing, reading aloud, drama, ceremonies and visits to historic places give the national inheritance a place in daily life. These activities require teaching time, trained staff and a repertoire that schools can use with confidence.

E3 Restore common school practices and artistic accomplishment

Restore regular assemblies with hymns and prayer within the broadly Christian tradition in publicly funded schools, together with communal singing, substantial reading, recitation, drama and practical artistic work. Sustain nativity plays, carols and the Christian calendar as ordinary school practices. Give national commemorations a place in the school year, including Remembrance and Trafalgar Day with their historical meaning taught.

Use the existing statutory worship framework as a starting point, replacing inconsistent guidance and bringing academy requirements into alignment. Preserve freedom of conscience and the right to withdraw from worship. Withdrawal will not remove the school's common calendar or the entitlement to learn about its cultural and religious inheritance. Supervision arrangements must be practical and clear.

Provide access to music tuition, performance and cultural visits through a dedicated programme. Schools will publish their actual provision and participation alongside information on curriculum delivery. Inspectorates will assess whether the entitlement is being delivered through teaching and activity.

E4 Set a national framework for religious education

Replace locally agreed syllabuses with a national religious education framework forming part of the E1 entitlement in England. Christianity will form the majority of religious education at every stage, taught through its scripture, history, doctrine and place in national life. Pupils will also learn about the other principal religions.

Standing advisory councils on religious education and agreed-syllabus conferences will cease to set syllabuses. End their power to lift the requirement for broadly Christian collective worship in individual schools. Schools with a religious character may teach additional denominational content. The parental right to withdraw from religious education will continue.

E5 Teach biological sex and protect pupils from social transition

Schools will teach that sex is biological. Gender identity theory will not form part of the curriculum in any subject. Teachers may answer pupils' questions factually and consistently with this rule. Parents will have the right to see all relationships, sex and health education materials used with their children.

Social transition will not take place in primary schools. A secondary school may adopt a new name or pronouns for a pupil only with the written consent of the pupil's parents. Staff will inform parents promptly when a pupil raises questions about gender identity unless doing so would put the child at risk of significant harm. Toilets, changing rooms, residential accommodation and sport will be allocated by biological sex without exception. No pupil or member of staff will be required to use pronouns that do not match a person's sex.

These rules will be set in statute and apply to maintained schools, academies and independent schools through the registration standards.

E6 Remove identity targets from universities and research funding

Amend the powers and registration conditions of the Office for Students so that access and participation plans address financial need, educational disadvantage and place, without targets or risk measures based on ethnicity or other identity categories. Admission, appointment and promotion will fall within the prohibition on identity preferences in A2.

Research councils and other public funders will not make funding, eligibility or assessment conditional on equality, diversity and inclusion statements, plans or accreditation, including Athena SWAN and the Race Equality Charter. Funding will be awarded on the quality of the research and the capability of the applicants. Universities will not maintain equality, diversity and inclusion posts, units or mandatory training. Disability support, complaints handling and compliance with the new code will be provided through ordinary student services, human resources and legal functions. Compliance will be a condition of registration with the Office for Students and of public research funding.

11 School funding and the common curriculum

E7 Retain Christian school funding and end other denominational funding

Public education will sustain the national inheritance through common teaching and institutional practices. Christian schools will remain part of the publicly funded system, subject to the national educational entitlement, the admissions rules in this section and ordinary funding controls.

End public revenue, capital and commissioned-place funding for schools designated or operated to provide non-Christian denominational education. Determine status through the school's designation, governance, educational purpose and actual operation. The rule will concern the institution rather than the private religion of its founders, staff or pupils.

A Christian school is one whose religious character is designated as that of a recognised Christian church, whose foundation, trustees or sponsoring body are appointed by or accountable to that church and whose collective worship and religious education follow that church's tenets. Recognised churches will be listed in regulations by reference to membership of established national Christian bodies. A school that meets these tests in form but in practice transmits another religious tradition will be treated as non-Christian. Changes of designation made after the programme is published will be disregarded for funding purposes. The Secretary of State will determine status, with a right of appeal.

Existing affected schools may convert into ordinary publicly funded schools under common governance and curriculum requirements, or continue independently with private funding. Establish a statutory transition securing suitable education for existing pupils and settling staff, premises, assets and contractual commitments. Every child will retain access to publicly funded education.

Admissions and independent schools

Christian schools may give admissions priority to children of their faith. Priority will not prevent any child from securing a suitable publicly funded school place. Other publicly funded schools will admit pupils without religious eligibility or priority. Ordinary appointment and award rules will follow A2 and A3, with the occupational requirements permitted for religious offices and for leadership and religious teaching posts in schools with a religious character.

Independent religious schools may continue to admit pupils by religion while delivering the common core in full.

Require every independent school, including every private religious school, to teach the Anglo civilisation core specified in E1. Make the staged learning requirements a condition of registration. Independent schools may provide additional denominational teaching and choose their teaching methods while delivering the common core in full.

Inspect actual curriculum provision and pupil learning. Use improvement requirements, restrictions and ultimately withdrawal of registration to enforce compliance. Apply the common core through amended independent-school standards and inspection instructions alongside the changes for maintained schools and academies.

Legislation and transition

Authorise the institutional funding distinction expressly in education legislation and connected equality provisions. Amend admissions law, school governing instruments and funding agreements to implement the policy. Include the measure in D5's schedule of domestic and international commitments and the government action required.

Publish school-by-school transition plans, funding dates and arrangements for suitable pupil places before withdrawals take effect. End new funding commitments for non-Christian denominational provision from the statutory commencement date. Coordinate existing-school transitions with available places and the curriculum rollout.

12 Cultural funding, broadcasting, heritage and civic institutions

Public cultural expenditure should sustain the national inheritance, artistic accomplishment and activities through which people take part in a common civic life. A claim to represent a demographic constituency will not establish a public entitlement to funding.

E8 Apply a common cultural purpose to expenditure

Replace grant criteria and institutional mandates with a common cultural purpose test. An award must identify the heritage preserved, artistic work produced, education provided or common participation enabled. Spending whose primary purpose is celebrating or representing a separate ethnic or religious constituency will be ineligible. End ethnic eligibility and demographic representation targets.

Apply the test to national and local grants, direct events, commissioning, concessions and material support in kind. Assess the programme, intended beneficiaries and delivery. Open admission alone will not establish a sufficient public purpose. A festival or exhibition must demonstrate its contribution to the cultural objectives. Specialist art may qualify through its artistic or educational substance. Public funders will publish award reasons, conditions and delivery evidence.

Rewrite the mandates of publicly funded cultural institutions around stewardship, serious scholarship and public access to their collections and work. Use clear contractual consequences for failure to deliver. Ordinary policing and necessary event-safety functions will be accounted for separately from cultural sponsorship. Existing commitments will be varied or allowed to expire through a published transition schedule. Retain the statutory bars on disposal by national museums and exclude collection objects from the moral-obligation transfer powers in the Charities Act 2022. Restitution of objects from national collections will require express legislation.

E9 Set the BBC Charter around impartiality and national purpose

Use the Charter review to remove diversity and representation objectives from the BBC's mission, public purposes, operating framework and Agreement. Replace them with duties concerning impartiality, accuracy, the national story and service to every nation and region of the United Kingdom. Remove workforce and on-screen demographic targets and associated reporting.

Apply the same changes to Channel 4 and to Ofcom's broadcasting diversity duties. If the new Charter is settled before the programme takes office, use the mid-term review and amendment of the Agreement to make these changes. Culture ministers will lead.

E10 Protect churches, monuments and Christian heritage

Establish a programme for church repair, skilled conservation and public understanding of Christian heritage. Strengthen protection of significant monuments. Introduce statutory restrictions on the conversion of churches to places of worship of non-Christian religions. Transfer between Christian denominations will remain permitted.

The legislation will define the buildings covered, including treatment of historic, consecrated and unlisted churches, and specify consent, enforcement and appeal. For this purpose a Christian denomination or congregation is one that belongs to a recognised Christian church listed in the regulations made under E7. Address compatible secular reuse, demolition and alterations through the relevant heritage and planning provisions. Conservation funding will identify urgent repairs, access arrangements and the skilled trades needed to deliver them.

E11 Give civic institutions durable access to premises

Offer suitable clubs and voluntary associations secure, affordable access to underused public buildings and grounds. Councils will publish an asset programme and standard leases covering activity, maintenance, public access and review. Support institutions through which people undertake common activities in sport, music, practical skills and civic service.

Agreements will confer responsibility for premises and activities, with elected oversight of public assets. They will confer no authority to represent an ethnic or religious population in public decisions. The first delivery programme will identify usable premises, repair costs and prospective activities before announcing its scale.

13 Common public procedures, face visibility and language

Public institutions should operate through a common calendar, ordinary professional duties and consistent procedures. These conventions give people predictable expectations of one another. Ministers and managers must be able to uphold them without treating every departure as an obligation to redesign the institution.

F1 Restore common institutional procedures

Review service rules, employment guidance and operating procedures that require public institutions to reorganise around particular religious practices. Replace them with common requirements concerning service hours, attendance, professional cooperation, identification and access. The Christian public calendar and inherited ceremonies will remain the institutional default.

There will be no general entitlement to faith-specific interruption of public duties, separate service arrangements or exemption from equal professional treatment of men and women. Voluntary leave or shift exchanges may operate through ordinary staffing rules where they do not create a privileged

entitlement or reduce service. Private employers will retain voluntary scheduling choices within the restored employment law.

Preserve private observance and freedom of conscience. Define the specific provision required in custody and essential care, where people cannot make ordinary private arrangements. Disability access, clinical need and safeguarding will retain their own functional tests. Each department will publish the procedures changed, the legal power used and the commencement arrangements.

F2 Require visible faces in public

Prohibit face concealment in public places through a general rule applying to everyone. Define public places to include streets, public transport and premises open to the public. There will be no religious exemption.

Specify narrow functional exceptions for medical necessity, public-health protection, occupational protective equipment, helmets during relevant activities, emergency weather protection and defined performances or sporting activities. Exceptions will concern the actual activity and circumstances. They will not authorise indefinite concealment throughout ordinary public life.

Provide for directions to uncover, civil penalties for ordinary first breaches and escalation for persistent deliberate non-compliance. Create offences addressing coercion to conceal a face and deliberate obstruction of lawful enforcement. Publish consistent instructions for officers and service providers before commencement. Identity verification, including electoral identification, will use common procedures rather than faith-specific arrangements.

Implementation through the relevant jurisdiction

Introduce a public face-visibility measure for the initial jurisdiction and pursue corresponding legislation elsewhere. Coordinate it with public service rules, electoral administration and the constitutional commencement schedule. Officers and institutions must know both the rule and the limited functional exceptions when enforcement begins.

F3 Make English the language of public administration

Public bodies will publish their literature, forms, notices, websites and correspondence in English only. The rule will apply to central government, local authorities, the NHS, schools, police and other bodies exercising public functions in England. It will also apply to UK-wide public bodies. Welsh will continue to be used in Wales alongside existing statutory provision for Scottish Gaelic and Irish. British Sign Language and accessible formats will remain available for disabled people.

Public bodies will not provide translation or interpretation at public expense except where the law or safety requires it. The exceptions will cover criminal investigations and proceedings for suspects, defendants, victims and witnesses. They will also cover immigration and asylum tribunals, urgent clinical care, safeguarding and public health emergencies. Other interpretation may be arranged by the individual or provided by a public body at full cost to the person using it. Each department will publish the services withdrawn and the exceptions retained.

14 Domestic slaughter and restricted religious meat imports

F4 Prohibit domestic religious slaughter and license restricted imports

Prohibit domestic slaughter operations performed to meet halal or kosher ritual requirements within the initial Great Britain programme. The prohibition will cover the defined ritual operations whether or not prior stunning is used. It will govern the slaughter process. Ordinary non-meat foods and religious descriptions unconnected with slaughter will fall outside it.

Provide a restricted import concession for religious meat through licensed businesses. This will be a defined statutory exception to the common rules. Religious meat will be clearly labelled, segregated and traceable throughout importation, storage and distribution. It may be sold only through licensed outlets and will not enter general retail or catering supply chains. Public bodies may procure it through the licensed channel only to meet the religious requirements of individuals in custody, hospitals and other settings where they cannot make their own arrangements. It will never be served as the default in public catering.

Define the licensed supply channel

Require importers, distributors, retailers, caterers and religious institutions supplying religious meat to hold a licence, use approved overseas establishments and retain batch-level records. Licensed outlets may sell to any customer. No register of purchasers or households will be kept.

Set rules for recognised religious certifiers, licence applications, review and appeal. The system must distinguish religious certification of the meat, food-safety approval and business licensing. A supplier will have to satisfy each applicable requirement.

Labels must state the slaughter method and religious supply status at wholesale, retail and catering stages. Specify physical segregation, traceability, recall and record-retention requirements. Create inspection powers, licence suspension and revocation, seizure and sanctions for deliberate diversion or false certification.

Commence production and supply changes together

The food and trade authorities will publish the statutory conduct definition, licensing rules, border procedures and inspection responsibilities before commencement. Establish the restricted supply channel when the domestic prohibition takes effect. Allow a defined transition for existing stock and contracts.

Assess production capacity, compliance costs and the affected domestic supply chains. Prepare the required changes to food, customs and market-access law. Identify the World Trade Organization and bilateral trade provisions engaged by the restriction and establish the legal route for implementation or negotiation. Treat Northern Ireland production and movements through Northern Ireland expressly, consistently with the preserved settlement.

This measure will have its own legislation and commencement conditions. Its detailed supply and trade arrangements will not delay equality restoration, policing or the educational programme.

15 Marriage and civil adjudication

Marriage, family status and civil entitlements must be determined under the law applying in the relevant UK jurisdiction. People must have direct access to public courts and remedies. Private religious authority must not displace those entitlements or control whether a person may exercise them.

F5 Prohibit future first-cousin marriages and strengthen enforcement

Add first cousins to the prohibited degrees of relationship for future marriages in England and Wales, with corresponding proposals for other jurisdictions. Specify the kinship definition, registration checks and rules for marriages contracted overseas. Include an anti-evasion rule for residents who travel to avoid the prohibition, with prospective recognition provisions set out in the Bill.

Protect the civil position of existing spouses and children. Preserve access to maintenance, property, inheritance and remedies where a marriage is invalid or its recognition is refused. The change will apply prospectively. Transition provisions must identify the relevant dates and connections to the jurisdiction.

Create offences for knowingly contracting or arranging a prohibited marriage and for organised evasion. Use substantial custodial penalties for coercive or organised offending, aligned with the related marriage and safeguarding offences. Strengthen investigation and prosecution of bigamy, false registration and forced marriage. Publish clear routes through registrars, police and courts so enforcement does not depend on communal intermediaries.

F6 End religious civil adjudication

Remove civil enforceability from decisions of religious tribunals applying religious rules to determine civil entitlements. Amend arbitration, recognition and enforcement law so such decisions cannot acquire binding effect through an arbitration agreement or overseas award. Courts will determine the civil validity of any subsequent agreement through the ordinary law, including genuine consent and applicable protections.

Prohibit operating a religious tribunal that purports to exercise binding civil jurisdiction. Create offences for coercing attendance or compliance, obstructing access to public courts, misrepresenting legal authority and organising deliberate evasion. Provide substantial custodial penalties for serious coercive and organised conduct. Prosecution should address those exercising or enforcing the prohibited authority. Seeking help will not expose a coerced participant to punishment.

Private pastoral advice, voluntary mediation without binding authority and decisions about religious rites will remain private religious matters. They will not alter civil status or extinguish a legal entitlement. Ordinary commercial arbitration under the applicable civil law will continue. Arbitrators may be of any faith, provided their awards apply the law of a UK jurisdiction. UK courts will retain control over enforcement, including overseas decisions, and over any attempt to obtain a waiver of these protections.

Justice ministers will publish the jurisdiction, overseas-recognition rules, sanctions and transition provisions with the Bill. Family courts, registrars, legal advisers and enforcement agencies will receive implementation instructions together.

16 Freedom of speech

Free speech is the condition of every other liberty this paper defends. Parliament should set the limits of lawful expression, not regulators, police guidance or administrative definitions. Those limits should concern what people do to others, not what they believe or say about ideas, religions or states.

This section does not create a general rights instrument for courts to balance case by case. It sets a clear rule in statute and repeals the provisions that exceed it, consistent with the approach to domestic rights in D3.

G1 Protect people, not beliefs

Hostility towards persons because of who they are is a matter for the law. Criticism, rejection or mockery of a religion, belief, ideology or state is not. No public body may treat criticism of a religion, belief or state as hostility towards the people who hold or belong to it. Definitions of hostility may be used to identify hostility towards persons but may not be used to discipline, prosecute or penalise lawful expression.

Withdraw the non-statutory definition of anti-Muslim hostility and any associated advisory role. Muslims as individuals remain protected by the new code, harassment law and the ordinary criminal law like everyone else. Jews are recognised in law as an ethnic group. The IHRA working definition of antisemitism may continue to be used to identify hostility towards Jews as people, subject to this rule. Criticism of Israel comparable to that levelled at any other state will not be treated as antisemitic, as the definition itself provides.

G2 Set one threshold for criminal expression

Expression will be a criminal offence only in four cases: threats, incitement to violence or other crime, harassment as a course of conduct and categories Parliament has expressly defined. Those categories will include fraud, terrorism, official secrets, contempt of court, perjury and child sexual abuse material. Offensiveness, abuse or insult will not by themselves make expression criminal.

The threshold governs criminal law only. The civil law of defamation, privacy, confidence and harassment continues. Incitement to violence against any group remains an offence under the general law of encouraging and assisting crime.

G3 Repeal offences that exceed the threshold

Repeal the stirring-up hatred offences in Parts 3 and 3A of the Public Order Act 1986. Amend sections 4A and 5 of that Act so they cover only threatening conduct. Repeal section 127(1) of the Communications Act 2003 and the Malicious Communications Act 1988, relying on the threatening communications offence preserved under G4.

Repeal the power to issue a statutory code on non-crime hate incidents in section 60 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022. Prohibit police from recording personal data about lawful expression unless it is connected with the investigation of an offence. Delete existing records that do not meet that test.

The public order changes apply in England and Wales. The Scottish Government will be invited to make equivalent changes to the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021. Justice ministers will publish a complete consequential schedule with the Bill.

G4 Repeal the Online Safety Act regulatory regime

Repeal the regulatory framework of the Online Safety Act 2023. This includes the duties on user-to-user and search services, Ofcom's codes and enforcement powers, the categorisation of services and the power to require scanning of private or encrypted communications. Online services will remain subject to the general criminal and civil law.

Preserve the criminal offences the Act created or inserted that concern conduct rather than opinion. These are cyberflashing, sharing or threatening to share intimate images without consent, encouraging or assisting serious self-harm, sending flashing images to people with epilepsy and threatening communications. Retain a standalone duty on commercial pornography providers to verify that users are adults, enforced by the British Board of Film Classification. Preserve the duty to report child sexual abuse material to the National Crime Agency.

G5 Protect lawful speech in universities and at work

Bring every provision of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 into force, restoring any that have been repealed or disapplied. Workplace harassment liability will follow A5, so lawful disagreement and subjective offence will not establish liability.

Employers in the public sector and professional regulators may not discipline staff or registrants for lawful expression outside work unless it directly impairs the performance of their duties. Regulators listed in B2 will amend their conduct standards accordingly.

17 Elections and the franchise

Equality before the law includes equality at the ballot box. Every vote should be cast in the same way, in secret and in person, by a citizen who has reached the age of full civic responsibility. Postal voting on demand, introduced in Great Britain in 2001, has moved a growing share of the vote out of the polling station and into homes where no official can see who else is in the room when the ballot is marked. Northern Ireland never adopted it because of concern about abuse, and its system shows that restricted absent voting works within the United Kingdom.

The franchise should also follow citizenship. Qualifying Commonwealth citizens can vote in parliamentary elections on residence and immigration status alone, a survival from an imperial nationality that no longer exists. Irish citizens are treated differently, because Ireland gives British citizens the vote in its own general elections under the Common Travel Area.

H1 Vote in person, with postal votes for defined groups only

End postal voting on demand. A postal vote will be available only to members of the armed forces, Crown servants serving overseas such as members of the diplomatic service, and their spouses or partners serving with them, and to electors certified by a registered medical practitioner as unable to leave their home because of physical incapacity. Certification will be renewed at set intervals. Every other elector will vote in person at a polling station, showing the identification the law already requires.

H2 Proxy votes on stated grounds

Return to the absent voting rules of the Representation of the People Act 1985 for everyone outside H1. An elector who cannot attend the polling station at a particular election, whether because of work, study, travel, a holiday or religious observance, may appoint a proxy for that election by stating the reason, with attestation where the ground allows it. A standing proxy will be available only to electors with a long-term physical incapacity who do not qualify under H1 and to overseas electors under H3. The existing limits on how many electors one person may act for as a proxy will remain.

H3 Overseas electors for five years

British citizens living abroad will keep the vote for five years after they leave the United Kingdom, as the 1985 Act first provided, and will vote by proxy. The Elections Act 2022 provision giving overseas electors the vote for life will be repealed. Service voters and Crown servants overseas are not overseas electors and keep the vote for as long as they serve.

H4 A franchise of British and Irish citizens aged 21 and over

Confine the parliamentary franchise to British citizens and Irish citizens resident in the United Kingdom. Qualifying Commonwealth citizens will no longer be entitled to register. Restore 21 as the voting age, the age that applied until the Representation of the People Act 1969, with no exceptions, and raise the minimum age for standing for election to 21 to match. If a lower voting age has been enacted by the time the Bill is introduced, it will be reversed by the same provision.

The new franchise will apply from the first election after commencement. Electoral registration officers will remove electors who no longer qualify when the registers are revised, and those electors will be told directly that their entitlement has ended and why.

Elections covered

These rules will apply to elections to the House of Commons and to local, mayoral and police and crime commissioner elections in England. They will apply in Northern Ireland, where electoral law already rests with Westminster and absent voting is already restricted. Elections to the Scottish Parliament, the Senedd and local government in Scotland and Wales are set by those legislatures, which will be invited to adopt the same rules.

18 Legislative programme and responsibility

An incoming government implementing this programme will assign a lead minister to each package and coordinate delivery through the Cabinet Office. Use existing departments, parliamentary scrutiny and normal enforcement institutions. Each Bill will carry a schedule of repeals, restored provisions, consequential changes, territorial application, commencement and treatment of existing cases.

PACKAGE	MEASURES	LEAD AND REQUIRED OUTPUT
Equality repeal and restoration	A1 to A6, B4 and B5	Justice and business ministers publish the new code, merit provisions, individual remedies and commission winding up
Employment conciliation	A7	Business ministers and ACAS publish procedure, service standards and limitation changes

PACKAGE	MEASURES	LEAD AND REQUIRED OUTPUT
Procurement and regulation	B1 to B3	Cabinet Office and sponsoring ministers replace tender rules, mandates, licences, guidance and reporting
NHS workforce	B6	Health ministers and NHS England withdraw workforce standards, contract terms and oversight requirements
Criminal law and policing	C1 to C4	Home Office and justice ministers amend offences and sentencing, and reset policing governance and procedures
Constitutional legislation	D1 to D5	Justice, foreign affairs and Northern Ireland ministers provide withdrawal authority, domestic transition, judicial appointment reform and preserved Northern Ireland protections
Education and culture	E1 to E11	Education and culture ministers deliver curriculum, religious education, school funding and admissions, universities and research funding, cultural provision, broadcasting and heritage
Public procedures, face visibility and language	F1 to F3	Service departments, Home Office and justice ministers enact defined rules, exceptions and enforcement powers
Religious meat supply	F4	Food and trade ministers establish the domestic prohibition, licensed supply channel and trade arrangements
Marriage and religious adjudication	F5 and F6	Justice ministers amend marriage, arbitration, recognition and enforcement law
Freedom of speech	G1 to G5	Justice, Home Office and culture ministers set the criminal threshold, repeal speech offences and the online safety regime and withdraw the anti-Muslim hostility definition
Elections and the franchise	H1 to H4	Elections ministers and the Electoral Commission revise the franchise, absent voting rules, registers and guidance to returning officers

Identify what depends on what

Proceed with independent measures through their own instruments. Link commencement where a provision depends on another legal change, an enforcement capacity or an operational supply arrangement. Ending discretionary schemes can begin under existing lawful powers. Duties that remain statutory must be amended before contrary administrative instructions take effect.

The constitutional package will resolve its domestic conflicts expressly and identify external negotiations separately. Measures engaging retained Northern Ireland protections will have specific savings or territorial limits. Later sector Bills will not become prerequisites for the core equality, policing or educational programme.

19 Delivery

Complete the legislative specifications

Specify the provisions of the new non-discrimination code, its exceptions and the exclusion of indirect discrimination. Publish church-conversion coverage, the school funding transition, school admissions and independent-school curriculum provisions with the education legislation. Specify face-visibility

exceptions, religious slaughter conduct, business licensing, prohibited marriage rules and religious adjudication offences in their respective Bills. Specify the English-language exceptions, the treatment of existing gender recognition certificates and the university and research funding conditions in the same way.

Resolve these questions through legislative instructions and clauses rather than leaving substantive choices to later guidance. Do not book savings from ending programmes until their contracts and liabilities have been examined.

Make delivery visible

Publish progress against the named measures and outputs through normal departmental reporting. Record statutory provisions commenced, rules withdrawn, contracts changed and operational arrangements delivered. For education and culture, report actual teaching provision, resource delivery, performances, conservation work and use of premises.

Use ordinary audit, complaints and judicial remedies to identify failures of implementation. Ministers will answer for performance to Parliament. The programme's success will be assessed through the institutions and practices it changes: individual protection, merit in selection, common enforcement and the effective transmission of our national inheritance.