

King's Speech 2024 – Analysis

On Wednesday 17 July 2024, HM King Charles III delivered the King's Speech in the House of Lords for the State Opening of Parliament. 40 Bills were announced for this new session of the UK Parliament, the highest number of Bills to appear in a Speech since 2005.

This provides topline analysis of key elements for the cultural and creative industries.

According to [statistics](#) from the UK Government's Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), 33% of vacancies in the creative industries and 30% of vacancies in the cultural sector are attributed to skills shortages. **The Skills England Bill** is intended to establish a new partnership with the new UK Government and sectors to address these issues. Creative UK is encouraged by the opportunity to invest in the creative workforce of tomorrow and strengthen creative representation in schools, further education and higher education.

The Children's Wellbeing Bill seeks to ensure that every child receives a broad and rounded education. Creative UK is encouraged by the UK Government's recent announcement of a [Curriculum and Assessment Review](#) and urges the UK Government to reprioritise creative subjects and increase funding to schools for creative programmes. According to [Ofqual statistics](#), the number of pupils taking creative subjects saw a 3.37% drop between 2022 and 2023. The consequences of this are twofold: a missed opportunity for individuals to discover and nurture their creative potential; and a potential hindrance to the talent pipeline and the development of cultural capital, therefore impeding the growth and dynamism of the UK's creative industries. In the long-term, reform of our curriculum will be vital to equipping young people with the right blend of digital and creative skills either for further study or for the changing and varied job market.

The Employment Rights Bill is intended to offer improved support and protections for workers in areas like sick pay, shared parental leave and pensions, however, there was no mention of activity related to freelancers and the self-employed which had been signalled in [previous publications](#) by the Labour Party prior to the UK General Election. UK Government [DCMS figures](#) show that in the year to June 2023, there were over 3.1 million filled jobs in the cultural and creative industries – a third of these jobs were self-employed, more than double the UK average (14%). Addressing ways to strengthen support for freelancers and the self-employed would contribute to ensuring that creative freelancing is viable and supported option. News of the Bill did not reference the development of a Freelance Commissioner, whose role could be to develop strategy which works across the UK Government to champion freelancing. In doing this, the UK Government can be better positioned to advance the development and implementation of policy that facilitates growth and retention of a significant proportion of the cultural and creative industries workforce, in support of economic growth.

The National Wealth Fund Bill seeks to drive growth and innovation across the UK, including the opportunity to strengthen support for companies and organisations in the cultural and creative industries in due course should the UK Government create this possibility. Creative UK is encouraging the UK Government to take a "patient capital" approach to ensure that public investment best catalyses private investment, includes addressing access to finance issues, as well as expanding tools and resources for creative organisations.

The English Devolution Bill seeks to re-distribute decision-making powers away from Westminster, with cultural policy expected to be included. Creative UK is discouraged by the decline in public funding, which is having a serious impact on the cultural sector, with many museums, festivals, galleries, theatres, venues and arts centres fighting for survival. While the Speech stopped short of detailing how the Bill will affect the UK Government's DCMS and Arts Council England, as an example, this could be a moment to refresh England's cultural infrastructure and reverse the deterioration of local authority support for cultural provision.

A standalone Artificial intelligence (AI) Bill was not included in the King's Speech after media reports indicated it would be. However, AI did [feature](#) in **The Product Safety & Metrology Bill**, which is designed to "respond to new product risks and opportunities to enable the UK Government to keep pace with technological advances, such as AI". AI is being utilised heavily within the creative sector, with 83% of creatives [stating](#) that they already use AI. Creative UK believes that there is a future where human creativity and AI can thrive together. Over the course of the next Parliament, Creative UK will work with members and the UK Government to ensure that any AI Bill harnesses the power of AI but puts IP rights at the centre of technology development and application.

Finally, HM King Charles III [stated](#) in the Speech that the UK Government "will seek to reset the relationship with European partners and work to improve the United Kingdom's trade and investment relationship with the European Union". To enable UK artists to grow their audience and represent British culture on the international stage, Creative UK calls for a Cultural Touring Agreement with the European Union (EU). The UK and Member States should have a reciprocal freedom of movement agreement on for all creatives whose work require short-term travel within the EU. According to [figures](#) from UK Music (a Creative UK member), 12.9% of all musicians claim that it is no longer viable for them to tour the EU. By facilitating ease of access to international audiences, the UK Government can ensure that British performing artists are able to prosper. International co-operation is also vital in the protection creative's intellectual property (IP). Therefore, the UK Government must also ensure that all bilateral and trade agreements with other countries protect IP rights and cultural diversity. Finally, Creative UK calls for the UK to rejoin Creative Europe as it unlocks further funding for organisations, which in turn boosts output, job creation and can lead to additional investment.

While the cultural and creative industries did not make an appearance in content related to the King's Speech, Creative UK is encouraged by the direction of travel and is looking forward to working with the UK Government to ensure that its legislative agenda benefits the creative sector.