



New Labour's constitutional reforms



Reform	Description
Devolution	The transfer of extensive powers to elected assemblies and executives in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. However, this is not a transfer of sovereignty. This remains in the hands of the Westminster Parliament.
London's elected mayor and assembly	The people of London have elected a mayor and an assembly to support him. They have limited powers over transport, planning, the arts and emergency services.
Local government Cabinets	New arrangements for local authorities to be governed by one single central committee or 'Cabinet', rather than the council as a whole, and a series of functional committees.
Bank of England control over interest rates	The basic interest rate, determining most other lending rates, is set by an independent committee of the Bank of England rather than by government ministers.
Human Rights Act	The incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into British law. All public bodies must conform to the convention in their actions. Parliament, and therefore primary legislation, is not compelled to conform.
Referenda	The government favours the use of referenda to approve constitutional change. Referenda have been held on devolution, the Northern Ireland settlement and the London mayor. Further referenda are proposed for changes to the electoral system and the introduction of the single European currency.
Freedom of Information Act	Gives the public the right to see most records that are held on them by public bodies. It also opens up a large variety of government records and reports to public scrutiny.
House of Lords reform	Most hereditary peers have lost their right to sit and vote in the House of Lords.
Electoral systems	New proportional electoral systems were introduced for assemblies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and for elections to the European Parliament.
The judiciary	A new Supreme Court will be formed, separating senior judges from the House of Lords. Senior appointments have been transferred from the prime minister to an independent appointments commission. The Lord Chancellor will no longer be a member of the Cabinet but will be a neutral figure.
Political parties	Political parties must now register with the electoral commission in order to appear on ballot papers. This also has the effect of forcing them to submit to strict financial controls.