

## Summary of UK Legislative Changes: Free Speech, Digital Rights, and Employment Law

This document provides a clear summary of recent and proposed UK laws that affect free speech, online content, workplace rights, parental involvement in schools, and nature conservation. It explains each law, how it may impact ordinary people, and includes useful links for further reading.

### 1. The Online Safety Act

A law that forces online platforms to take down harmful and illegal content. It is meant to protect people, especially children, but some worry it will lead to too much censorship and may remove posts that are not actually illegal.

Useful links:

<https://vm.tiktok.com/ZNd2NVSXk/>

<https://therecord.media/uk-online-safety-act-us-social-media-jd-vance?s=09>

<https://togetherdeclaration.org/the-online-safety-act-is-here-and-its-a-free-speech-disaster/>

### 2. Clause 20 of the Employment Rights Bill

This part of a new bill could let staff sue employers over offensive comments they overhear from customers. Even jokes not aimed at them could count. It might make workplaces overly strict and harm free conversation.

### 3. The EU Alignment Bill

This bill would let UK ministers copy EU product rules to help businesses. Critics say it reduces the UK's control over its own laws, especially after Brexit.

Useful links:

<https://capx.co/this-eu-alignment-bill-should-scare-us?>

### 4. Henry VIII Powers in Data and Tech Laws

Some new laws let ministers change rules without full debate in Parliament. These 'Henry VIII powers' could weaken privacy and make important decisions less transparent.

Useful links:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/apr/01/data-privacy-campaigners-warn-of-henry-viii-powers>

## 5. School Rules on Parental Criticism

There are cases of schools punishing parents for raising concerns, including bans and arrests. This has made people worry that free speech and parents' rights are under threat.

Useful links:

<https://www.spiked-online.com/2025/04/12/you-got-a-licence-for-that/>

## 6. Nature as a Commodity

The UK is letting private companies invest in nature projects, like forests or wetlands, in return for profit. This helps fund conservation but some fear it turns nature into a business deal and may lead to misuse.

Useful links:

<https://thefeistyadelie.com/2022/12/05/the-global-public-private-partnership-to-profit-from-nature-conservation-as-commodification/>

This note summarises the key aspects of the revised guidance issued under section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003 (February 2025)<sup>1</sup>. This statutory guidance, produced by the Home Office, assists licensing authorities and other relevant parties in understanding and applying the Licensing Act 2003<sup>2</sup>.

The guidance covers several types of licences and permissions under the Act:

**Premises Licence:** This permits the use of premises for licensable activities<sup>3</sup>. Applications must be made to the relevant licensing authority<sup>4</sup>. If an application is lawful and there are no representations from responsible authorities or other persons, the licensing authority must grant it, subject to conditions consistent with the operating schedule and mandatory conditions<sup>3</sup>. The process involves application forms, operating schedules, plans, and advertising<sup>5</sup> .... Variations to premises licences can be made, with simplified processes for minor changes or changes of DPS<sup>7</sup> ....

**Club Premises Certificate:** This allows qualifying clubs to engage in qualifying club activities<sup>3</sup>. The application process is similar to that of a premises licence, but licensing authorities do not need to satisfy themselves that applicants are entitled to work in the UK<sup>10</sup>.

**Temporary Event Notice (TEN):** This allows for the carrying out of licensable activities at a temporary event<sup>3</sup> .... A TEN must be given to the licensing authority, police, and environmental health authority at least ten working days before the event<sup>12</sup> . Personal licence holders can give more TENs per year than non-personal licence holders<sup>13</sup> .

**Personal Licence:** This is required to sell or authorise the sale of alcohol from premises with a premises licence<sup>3</sup> . Applicants must demonstrate their right to work in the UK<sup>14</sup> . Applications are made to the licensing authority where the applicant is ordinarily resident, or any licensing authority in England and Wales if not ordinarily resident<sup>15</sup> .

The guidance details the **general principles** that underpin licensing, including the four licensing objectives: the prevention of crime and disorder, public safety, the prevention of public nuisance, and the protection of children from harm<sup>16</sup> .... It emphasises the importance of operating schedules in setting out the steps an applicant will take to promote these objectives<sup>3</sup> ....

**Conditions** can be attached to premises licences and club premises certificates. These can be proposed by the applicant, imposed by the licensing authority following representations, or are mandatory<sup>18</sup> .... Conditions must be appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives and should be tailored to the specific premises<sup>20</sup> ....

The guidance also covers **representations** from responsible authorities (such as the police, fire authority, and public health bodies) and other persons regarding licence applications and reviews<sup>22</sup> .... Licensing authorities must consider relevant representations and may hold hearings<sup>25</sup> .

**Reviews** of premises licences and club premises certificates can be initiated by responsible authorities or other persons if concerns arise about the promotion of the licensing objectives<sup>26</sup> .... **Summary reviews** can be undertaken by the police in cases associated with serious crime or disorder<sup>28</sup> .

The document discusses **cumulative impact assessments (CIAs)**, which licensing authorities may publish to manage the concentration of licensed premises in specific areas where it is negatively affecting the licensing objectives<sup>29</sup> . It also outlines the process for implementing **early morning restriction orders (EMROs)**, which can prevent the sale of alcohol during specified times in designated areas<sup>30</sup> ....

The guidance also addresses specific scenarios such as **vessels** used for licensable activities<sup>32</sup> , **garages and motorway service areas** where alcohol sales are restricted<sup>33</sup> , and **community premises** which may have alternative licensing conditions<sup>34</sup> .... It also provides information on **advertising applications**<sup>6</sup> and the **transfer of premises licences**<sup>36</sup> .

The importance of licensing authorities having a **statement of licensing policy** is highlighted, and the process for consultation on these policies is detailed<sup>37</sup>. The guidance stresses the need for **evidence-based decision-making** by licensing authorities, focusing on the promotion of the licensing objectives<sup>38</sup>.

Finally, the guidance includes an annex with resources related to **counter-terrorism** and public safety at venues and events<sup>39</sup>.

#### **Appendix: Links from the Sources**<sup>1</sup>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/explanatory-memorandum-revised-guidance-issued-under-s-182-of-licensing-act-2003/revised-guidance-issued-under-section-182-of-the-licensing-act-2003-december-2023-accessible-version2>

[https://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/35 ...](https://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/35...)

Details of fees and forms may be viewed on the GOV.UK website (no specific link provided in the text).<sup>41</sup>

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2005/42/contents/made42>

[https://www.gov.uk/view-right-to-work6 ...](https://www.gov.uk/view-right-to-work6...)

[www.legislation.gov.uk43](http://www.legislation.gov.uk43)

GOV.UK publishes a sample form for the senior officer's certificate for summary reviews (no specific link provided in the text).<sup>44</sup>

Guidance on the new closure power in the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 can be found on the gov.uk website, under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act: anti-social behaviour guidance (no specific link provided in the text).<sup>45</sup>

[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/352562/ASB\\_Guidance\\_v8\\_July2014\\_final.4](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/352562/ASB_Guidance_v8_July2014_final.4)