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## News Release

**Embargoed until 00:01 hours on Wednesday 4 April 2012**

### **Tidying up the Statute Book**

In a report published today the Law Commission for England and Wales and the Scottish Law Commission are sweeping away more than 800 old laws that are cluttering up the statute book. Our statute book is littered with dead law from down the centuries. Obsolete provisions from the 1600s and earlier continue to survive long after they have ceased to serve any useful purpose.

The two Commissions are committed to cleaning up and modernising legislation. The 800+ Acts they are proposing to repeal are set out in the draft Statute Law (Repeals) Bill that accompanies today's report.

Sir James Munby, Chairman of the Law Commission for England and Wales, said today:

“Getting rid of statutory dead wood helps to simplify and modernise our law, making it more intelligible. It saves time and costs for lawyers and others who need to know what the law actually is, and makes it easier for citizens to access justice.

“This report and draft Bill are a great achievement for the Law Commissions. We are committed to ridding the statute book of meaningless provisions from days gone by and making sure our laws are relevant to the modern world.”

The Statute Law (Repeals) Bill, which is expected to be introduced into Parliament this summer, is the largest the Commissions have ever produced. It will repeal 817 whole Acts and part repeal 50 other Acts. The Bill covers a diverse range of subjects, from poor relief and lotteries to turnpikes and Indian railways. The earliest repeal is from around 1322 (Statutes of the Exchequer) and the latest is part of the Taxation (International and Other Provisions) Act 2010.

These repeal proposals were developed following a rigorous research and consultation process. Everyone interested in the proposals was given the opportunity to contribute their views.

For more details on the Commissions' work go to the Statute Law Repeals pages on [www.lawcom.gov.uk](http://www.lawcom.gov.uk)

or

<http://www.scotlawcom.gov.uk/law-reform-projects/joint-projects/statute-law-repeals/>

## Examples of repeals included in the Statute Law (Repeals) Bill

- An Act of 1856 passed to help imprisoned debtors secure their early release from prison
- A 1710 Act to raise coal duty to pay for 50 new churches in London
- 38 obsolete Acts relating to the various railway companies operating in British India and the wider East Indies
- 40 Acts relating to the City of Dublin and passed by the UK Parliament before Ireland was partitioned in 1921
- A 1696 Act to fund the rebuilding of St Paul's Cathedral after the Great Fire of 1666
- An 1800 Act to hold a lottery to win the £30,000 Pigot Diamond
- 57 obsolete Acts to raise money for the parish poor, including a 1697 Act to run a workhouse in Exeter
- 295 obsolete railway Acts. Many of the railways projects outlined in these Acts collapsed in the banking crisis of 1866
- 16 Acts passed between 1798 and 1828 to impose duty on every pint of ale, beer or porter brewed or sold in parts of Scotland
- A 1696 turnpike Act to repair the roads between Reigate (Surrey) and Crawley (West Sussex)
- The removal of unnecessary taxation provisions.

### Notes for Editors

1. The Law Commission and the Scottish Law Commission are non-political independent bodies, set up by Parliament in 1965 to keep all the law of England and Wales and of Scotland under review, and to recommend reform where it is needed.
2. For more details on this project, visit [www.lawcom.gov.uk](http://www.lawcom.gov.uk) and <http://www.scotlawcom.gov.uk/law-reform-projects/joint-projects/statute-law-repeals/>
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