

07 October 2022

In this Q&A, our Director of Government Affairs Robert Gardener shares insights into his role within the wider Public Law and Policy team to enrich legal strategies with a UK public policy perspective. He reveals the three most pressing UK public policy concerns facing the firm's clients and explains how clients can stay prepared.

Describe your role at the firm?

My role is to bring a UK public policy perspective to the legal strategies we develop for our clients to enrich that advice. Critical to this is being a full-integrated member of our Public Law and Policy team, so that the rules governing what the Government can do, at law, are also fully factored in. We work with officials and advisers in the centre of government to understand the opportunities and risks for our clients, and to identify how they interrelate with government policy priorities. This approach is becoming increasingly important for clients in achieving their business goals.

What are the three most pressing public policy concerns facing the firm's clients?

1. Navigating the uncertainty in light of the Government's recent major economic policy announcement.

Not only are the measures contained in the mini-Budget still to be assessed externally, which creates difficulties for risk thresholds within the financial markets, there is still a great deal more detail due from Government on how the Growth Plan is going to work. I would also expect consultation times to be very short, because of the urgency for delivery.

2. Transaction scrutiny under the National Security and Investment regime.

The regime came into force at the beginning of this year and the Government's engagement over this has been very strong, but the legislation is broad, with significant criminal sanctions for non-compliance. Decisions around National Security are made in private, which makes it difficult to draw on precedent to provide guidance for prospective transactions. We have very strong links with the Investment and Security Unit, but uncertainty still prevails.

3. Dynamics within the UK government and Conservative party.

Clients are also very much alive to the power dynamics within the UK Government and Conservative party at the moment. We anticipate that the policy areas favoured by some former senior ministers could receive much more attention by No 10 in the near future, in an attempt to secure their backing for the leadership. This means we could well be seeing changes to the business landscape in ways we have not anticipated, and at significant speed as parliamentary votes for the Government's agenda loom.

How can clients ensure they are on the front foot?

Key for clients in responding to all of these concerns is being properly informed of the law, regulation and policy position, and taking a proactive step in engaging with Government. Public policy engagement has become significantly more transactional recently, as the Government leans on businesses to do some of its work. It is therefore critical that businesses are well equipped, to be the active investor in this relationship, and not just the passive recipient.

This is why our UK2030 programme is so important. UK2030 brings together our global experience and expertise to address the biggest themes for business in the current decade: economic recovery and global competitiveness; ESG; and digitalisation. Our approach is to understand the forces that shape organisations' landscapes; engage effectively with the Government and society to ensure a sustainable policy response; and then to act through developing informed corporate strategies, structures and investments.

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