

You're running scared, Cameron told as controversial gay marriage legislation is dropped from the speech

- Downing Street insists that law will continue its passage through Lords
- The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill was rejected by more than half of Prime Minister's MPs in February

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David Cameron was accused of 'running scared' on gay marriage after the controversial legislation was left out of the Queen's Speech.

Downing Street insisted that the law – which has already cleared the Commons – would continue its passage through the Lords in the new session of Parliament.

But, in apparent recognition of its unpopularity with many traditional Tory voters – there was no mention of it in yesterday's speech setting out the Government's legislative programme for the year.



In apparent recognition of its unpopularity with many traditional Tory voters, there was no mention of it in yesterday's speech setting out the Government's legislative programme

The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill was rejected by more than half of his MPs in a Commons vote in February and was blamed by some for an exodus of traditional Tory supporters to the UK Independence Party in last week's council elections.

Labour MP Stephen Pound said the legislation was becoming 'the Bill that dare not speak its name'.

He added: 'The speech has UKIP's footprints all over it.'

Downing Street said there was no need for legislation to be in the speech because it was a 'carry-over' measure introduced midway through the last session.

But other carried-over legislation, such as the Energy Bill, was included in the speech, as were populist measures that do not need legislation at all.



The measure was one of a number of controversial issues left out of the Queen's Speech. Ministers have also abandoned a pre-election pledge to allow voters to 'recall' MPs found guilty of serious wrongdoing

Andrea Minichiello Williams, chief executive of the group Christian Concern, which opposes gay marriage, said the Prime Minister was 'running scared' on the issue.

She added: 'The local elections last week were disastrous for the Conservatives in large part due to the divisive nature of this policy. The voices calling for him to drop it are increasing in number and in volume, both inside and outside of his party.'

'Perhaps the Prime Minister thinks that if he keeps quiet on the issue it will slip through unnoticed.'

'But it cannot go unnoticed that there is now absolutely no mandate for this Bill.'

The measure was one of a number of controversial issues left out of the Queen's Speech.

Ministers have also abandoned a pre-election pledge to allow voters to 'recall' MPs found guilty of serious wrongdoing.

Legislation to guarantee lavish aid spending, a crackdown on the lobbying industry and plans to allow the public to sack errant MPs were among a raft of pledges quietly dropped as the Government tried to focus on

core messages such as the economy and immigration.