Impact on government: The English kingdom is widely considered to be the most organised state in western Europe in the eleventh century. By 1066, the whole country, with a few exceptions, was divided into shires, which were further subdivided into hundreds/wapentakes. Each shire usually contained a number of hides, on which taxation and military burdens were assessed. This organisational structure allowed for the levying of a land tax (geld), which was both efficient and flexible, controlled at the centre and administrated at shire level by a sheriff. There was use of writs, which were essentially a title deed, which would notify the public in the shire court of royal grants. By the time of the conquest, writs were already being used for more executive functions, like announcing ecclesiastical appointments.

The Norman Conquest was possible due to the strength and sophistication of the Anglo-Saxon state. This is proved by the fact that the Normans, despite having been in the country a short time were able to produce an undertaking like the Domesday Book. The exceptionally precocious apparatus of royal government, which seems to have been one of the distinctive characteristics of the English kingdom since its creation in the early 10th century, was carefully preserved. Indeed, it was only by means of it that much of the transformation was accomplished. In the fundamental case of landholding, for instance, this was true not only of the replacement of individual landholders, but of the very system of tenure. These changes would have been impossible without the Old English institutions of the shire and its constituent hundreds, each of which was composed of (usually) one hundred hides, a hide being the standard unit of fiscal land assessment. Each shire and each constituent hundred had its own public court, the fora in which grants of land were publicized. The changes would also have been impossible without the apparatus of royal bureaucracy: chiefly the royal writing office, through which the king issued his instructions, primarily in terse Old English documents known as wris. It was in this way that he communicated with the sheriff, the royal administrator in each shire who usually presided (alongside the bishop) in the shire court. In order to discourage insurgent assassination of Frenchmen, a massive fine was imposed upon the local community if a corpse was discovered that it could not be proven to be that of an Englishman. The aim was clearly to discourage the recalcitrant English from taking pot-shots at any passing Frenchman. But even in this instance, the murdrum fine, as it was called, was ingeniously devised using relevant materials from Old English law. Existing English laws could be exploited in order to create something necessary and new, which could also be presented as traditional. They provided the Conqueror with a ready-made resource of applied legal principles, with a patina of impeccably Englishness.

Only practical needs altered the administration of government, especially ruling a cross-channel kingdom; notably, absence required delegation. It has been argued that post-Conquest feudal kingship developed but this idea has since been challenged. William certainly did introduce regular crown wearing to emphasise majesty. William continued holding courts with strong ceremonial and ritual elements. The racial composition of the household was the only change as the court eventually became entirely Norman. Golding suggests that government was not so much about governing and more about exploiting sources of royal revenue, which also remained essentially unchanged. The bureaucracy of Norman kings was more basic than that of the Angevins. The Norman kings promulgated no new laws and those like the murdrum fine were only ad hoc responses. Use of ordeal to resolve cases used less, while more use made of trial by combat. Normans did develop forests as distinct judicial and administrative units, with William I creating the New Forest as a hunting preserve. Normans were novel in the way they extended royal hunting rights to non-Royal lands, which was deeply resented. The continued use of the essential form of the writ enabled the smooth running of the new regime. Some changes to the writ were the inclusion of named witnesses, date place and written in Latin. Its uses were also expanded to use as an executive order to sheriffs, royal officials and to enforce judicial decisions. It was principally the sheriff who was expected to put the writ into effect and, post-conquest, with fewer earls, the importance of the sheriff increased, even if his functions were unchanged. After the conquest, several English sheriffs remained. By 1066, there was a well-established system of English coinage in which silver coins of standard weight and design were produced in sixty mints across southern and central England from dies made in London with a new coinage issued every three years, when the weight and design were adjusted. After 1066, a few new mints were opened, including Durham. Coiners remained English and it is coinage that best shows administrative continuity. Native administrators usually remained below the level of the sheriff. Warren argued that when these men died or retired, this created a crisis of administration in which there