

2015 Conservative Government

1 Introduction

Despite the pollsters and political commentators predicting an uncertain general election result and a minority government, David Cameron won the 2015 general election and returned to Number 10 with a majority, albeit a small one of twelve.

A night of high drama saw the resignations of three party leaders from Labour, the Liberal Democrats and UKIP, though UKIP's subsequently refused Nigel Farage's resignation and he is once again leading the party. With most of the opposition parties seemingly in disarray, the Prime Minister has selected his Cabinet and wider ministerial team.

2 Continuity

The re-appointment of so much of his Cabinet will allow departments to carry on as they left off and 'finish the job' unshackled from coalition, an important Conservative message during the campaign. There were over twenty positions made vacant by departing Liberal Democrats, with a number of the 2010 intake that have had to wait for positions being appointed to junior positions.

A number of Conservative policies previously vetoed by the Liberal Democrats are now possible, such as cuts to the welfare budget, communications data legislation, reforming strike laws and boundary reform. David Cameron has pledged to carry out all the policies contained in his manifesto as well as pre-existing Budget commitments. The Government will also need to implement cuts to non-protected areas in order to meet deficit reduction targets and fund new spending announced during the campaign (such as the extra £8bn for the NHS).



3 Cabinet

- George Osborne reappointed as Chancellor and will also be First Secretary of State
- Theresa May reappointed Home Secretary
- Philip Hammond reappointed Foreign Secretary
- Michael Fallon reappointed Defence Secretary
- Jeremy Hunt reappointed as Health Secretary
- Michael Gove is the new Justice Secretary
- Nicky Morgan reappointed Education Secretary
- Patrick McLoughlin reappointed Transport Secretary
- Iain Duncan Smith reappointed Work and Pensions Secretary
- Liz Truss reappointed Environment Secretary
- Sajid Javid is the new Business Secretary
- Amber Rudd is the new Energy and Climate Change Secretary
- John Whittingdale is the new Culture Secretary
- Greg Clark is the new Communities Secretary
- Justine Greening reappointed International Development Secretary
- David Mundell is the new Scotland Secretary
- Stephen Crabb reappointed Wales Secretary
- Theresa Villiers reappointed Northern Ireland Secretary
- Jeremy Wright reappointed as Attorney General
- Chris Grayling is the new Leader of the House of Commons and Lord President of the Council
- Baroness Stowell reappointed Leader of the Lords but is now a full Cabinet member
- Mark Harper is the new Chief Whip
- Robert Halfon is the new Deputy Chairman of the Conservative Party
- Greg Hands is the new Chief Secretary to the Treasury
- Matt Hancock is the new Minister for Cabinet Office and Paymaster General
- Priti Patel is the new Minister of State for Employment at DWP and attends Cabinet
- Anna Soubry is the new Minister of State for Small Business. She will attend Cabinet
- Oliver Letwin is the new full Cabinet member in overall charge of Cabinet Office
- In addition, Boris Johnson as Mayor of London and Lord Feldman as Conservative Party Chairman. Will attend 'Political Cabinet'.



4 Priority areas

- A Queen's Speech is scheduled for 27 May to set out the Government's legislative agenda
- A post-election budget is expected to allow the Chancellor to set out his fiscal plans including legislating to prevent the raising of VAT, National Insurance and Income Tax
- An In-Out Referendum on the EU is set to take place in 2016-17 and with a number of the Cabinet Eurosceptics, and a small working majority, renegotiating the UK's role and managing any party dissent and the concerns of business is set to be a defining issue
- New Scotland Secretary David Mundell (the only Conservative MP in Scotland) is charged with implementing the Smith Commission and English Votes for English Laws, which may not sit well with the fifty six SNP MPs in Parliament who have promised to make the Prime Minister's job difficult
- Further devolution to the English regions is expected with the creation of a new 'Northern Powerhouse' minister, James Wharton
- Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin will face high level opposition (from Boris Johnson, Justine Greening and Theresa May among others) not to expand Heathrow when the final Airports Commission recommendation is made before July
- New Justice Secretary Michael Gove will be expected to bring his reforming zeal to the MoJ to bring forward a British Bill of rights to replace the Human Rights Act
- The BBC Charter renewal will generate controversy. The 2016 Charter is the first since iPlayer and smartphones took hold and new Culture Secretary John Whittingdale has been a vocal critic of the licence fee
- In time, attention will be focused on a Conservative leadership race as several Cabinet Ministers have leadership ambitions. Cameron will want to give his successor enough time as Prime Minister to maximise their chances ahead of the 2020 election, so a contest could come as early as 2017. This could lead to factions and divisions opening up within Cabinet and ministerial teams.