



The Queen's Speech

18 May 2016

The 2016 Queen's Speech

| | | |
|----------|--|----------|
| 1 | Overview..... | 2 |
| 2 | Headline announcements | 3 |
| 2.1 | Digital Economy Bill..... | 3 |
| 2.2 | Education for All Bill | 3 |
| 2.3 | British Bill of Rights..... | 3 |
| 2.4 | Prison and Courts Reform Bill..... | 3 |
| 2.5 | Counter-Extremism and Safeguarding Bill..... | 3 |
| 2.6 | Soft Drinks Industry Levy Bill..... | 4 |
| 2.7 | Lifetime Savings Bill | 4 |
| 3 | Sectors to watch | 4 |
| 3.1 | Technology | 4 |
| 3.2 | Health..... | 4 |
| 3.3 | Energy..... | 5 |
| 3.4 | Transport..... | 6 |
| 4 | Political Intelligence..... | 6 |

1 Overview

With just over a month to the EU membership referendum and following a fractious few months for the Conservative Party, the Queen delivered her sixty third Queen's Speech today setting out the legislative agenda for the coming year.

As positioning for the party leadership and the EU referendum dominates headlines, it was clear that Cameron had his legacy in mind with this Queen's Speech, seeking to be remembered as the social reformer he set out to be when he first became leader and not the austerity Prime Minister he became or indeed the Prime Minister that oversaw Britain leaving the EU. The 'one nation' speech had social reform right at the centre, saying that economic strength would *'deliver security for working people, increase life chances for the most disadvantaged and strengthen national security'*.

Whilst the Speech may have set out to reform social ills and ease the rifts between a divided party, party disunity has dominated much of the post Speech analysis, as former Minister Iain Duncan Smith



accused Cameron of 'watering down' the party's legislative programme in his pursuit of an 'in' vote at the referendum. The proposal to create a British Bill of Rights has been seen as a shrewd attempt to silence Brexiters ahead of the referendum.

Overall, the Speech was fairly uncontroversial and has been criticised as 'weak' by the opposition, with twenty-one new Bills proposed, many of which built upon previous Government promises. However, the Speech has reemphasised the Government's commitment to public service reform, tackling extremism, and social inclusion.

2 Headline announcements

2.1 Digital Economy Bill

Taking pride of place as the first Bill announced, the Digital Economy Bill reemphasised Government's commitment to delivering a broadband Universal Service Obligation, giving every household the right to fast broadband and making it easier to rollout broadband.

2.2 Education for All Bill

Most of the education reforms included within the speech had been heavily trailed, with Government restating plans to give schools more independence and move towards academisation, with the caveat it will only be forced upon those schools which are failing.

2.3 British Bill of Rights

This Bill plans to enshrine a separate British Bill of Rights based on those set out in the European Convention on Human Rights, while also taking into account British common law tradition. The move has been seen as an attempt to reassert the authority of British courts ahead of the referendum and been criticised by the SNP, who have accused Cameron of 'playing politics' with basic human rights.

2.4 Prison and Courts Reform Bill

Central to the narrative of rehabilitation and social reform, individual prisons will be given unprecedented freedoms to set their own rules, budgets and rehabilitation programmes under a system modelled on academy schools, aiming for prisons to become places of rehabilitation.

2.5 Counter-Extremism and Safeguarding Bill

This Bill will give authorities new civil powers to ban so-called 'extremist preachers', including new civil orders which will bar individuals from attending or speaking at public events, protests or meetings. Ministers will also be able to ban extremists from working with children and close loopholes so that Ofcom can stop extremist material from being broadcast.



2.6 Soft Drinks Industry Levy Bill

Previously alluded to in the Budget, from April 2018, a new tax on soft drinks will be introduced. The tax will be levied from soft drinks companies and used to tackle childhood obesity.

2.7 Lifetime Savings Bill

Plans to introduce a 'Help to Save' scheme were announced in Budget to help those on low incomes build up "rainy day fund". The Bill will see those receiving in work benefits and saving £50 a month having their savings matched by the Government. The Bill will also create a New Lifetime ISA for under-40s, offering a £1,000 tax-free payment each year for those saving £4,000.

3 Sectors to watch

3.1 Technology

Bills on technology played a major part in this Queen's Speech, with Government reemphasising their commitment to making the UK 'a world leader in digital provision'. The Queen introduced provisions which will give citizens the right to fast broadband, the right to switch providers more easily and get compensation for broadband outages. There were also provisions which dealt with protecting citizens through age verification and the tackling of extremism. The key Bills to follow are:

- **Digital Economy Bill** – This reemphasised Government's commitment to delivering a broadband Universal Service Obligation, giving every household the right to fast broadband. It also aims to strengthen protections for citizens in the digital world, by making switching providers easier for consumers. It also includes plans to introduce age-verification for pornographic websites.
- **Counter-Extremism and Safeguarding Bill** – The Bill has provisions to give Ofcom the power to regulate internet streamed material deemed extremist and potentially prevent those deemed as extremists from being able to post content online.
- **Investigatory Powers Bill** – Government has restated its commitment to this Bill from the 2015/2016 session. The Bill aims to modernise investigatory powers for a digital age, and introduce enhanced authorisation and oversight arrangements.

3.2 Health

Health issues did not feature particularly prominently in this year's Queen's Speech with just one health related Bill included. The Queen did, however, also reference that her Government will "continue work to deliver NHS services over seven days of the week in England" and announced that the Soft Drinks Industry Levy will form part of the Government's legislative programme for the next twelve months. In summary, the key announcements are:



- **The NHS (Overseas Visitors Charging) Bill** – The Bill will ensure that the Government meets its manifesto commitment to ‘recover costs from migrants who use the NHS by extending the rules on charging migrants and overseas visitors for NHS treatment, to ensure that only UK residents... will get free NHS care’.
- **Soft Drinks Industry Levy** – This will be introduced as part of the Finance Bill 2017 and will be targeted at producers and importers of soft drinks that contain added sugar from 2018. The Government added that this is the first step in their national childhood obesity strategy, which will be published later this year. The Government will consult on the technical details of the tax and the revenue from the levy will be spent on funding sporting activities in schools.
- **Seven day NHS** – The Government used the Queen’s speech to highlight its continued commitment to introducing a ‘seven day NHS’. This is intended to include: weekend and evening GP services; ‘the same level of consultant assessment, diagnostic tests, review and treatment seven days a week’; and NHS111 (the non-emergency number) becoming ‘an integrated and more personalised urgent care service’.
- **Better mental health provision for individuals in the criminal justice system** – As part of the Prison and Courts Reform Bill, the Government aims to improve prison healthcare, with a particular focus on mental health.

3.3 Energy

Bills on devolution, planning and consumer switching will have ramifications for the energy sector, with the Better Markets Bill aiming to make switching household providers easier, whilst the Wales Bill will further devolve powers to Welsh Ministers over consenting for all onshore wind in Wales, and up to 350 megawatts for all other onshore and offshore energy projects. The Queen also reaffirmed the Government’s commitment to use its global presence to tackle climate change.

- **Better Markets Bill** – This intends to increase competition and consumer choice in the energy market by enabling faster switching and more protections for consumers, and by speeding up the decision making process for competition investigations.
- **Wales Bill** – Further devolution of powers for renewable projects. Important news for developers active in Wales.
- **Neighbourhood Planning and Development Bill** – Whilst focused on housebuilding, the Bill will also provide a new statutory basis for the independent National Infrastructure Commission, and give more power to local communities over where new developments are located. This will not only have ramifications for housing developers, but for energy and transport projects.



3.4 Transport

The Queen outlined more powers over transport for directly elected Mayors and also built on announcements made at the Budget and in the House on supporting new modes of transport. Specifically, this will create a legislative framework for the rollout of driverless cars and new rules for drones, plus the development of the UK's first commercial spaceports. This support is seeking to extend the UK's position as a world leading transport manufacturing hub. Key bills are:

- **Modern Transport Bill** – support for spaceports, drones and driverless cars. The Government is focused on helping the UK's drone industry, capitalising on the boom in manufacture and operation, rather than creating more obstacles to their use. In regard to driverless cars, the Bill will seek to embed the UK's position as a global testbed and ensure that appropriate insurance is available. The Bill also includes measures to improve protection for customers by updating ATOL, the UK's financial protection scheme for holidays. The Bill promises to clarify the 1992 legislation that predates the widespread booking of holidays online.
- **Bus Services Bill** - This will give directly elected Mayors new powers over bus services and ensure passengers can receive real-time timetabling information.

4 Political Intelligence

For further information on the 2016 Queen's Speech, or if you'd like to discuss your current plans for this Parliament and ways in which Political Intelligence could support your organisation in your public affairs activity, then please contact us on 020 3397 3300 or contact our Group Managing Director [Nicholas Lansman](#) for further information.