

# The Queen's Speech

December 2019

# Overview

Following a December election that returned an unequivocal Conservative majority, a second Queen's Speech was delivered this year. The Government's legislative programme sets out a priority to 'get Brexit done' and maximising the opportunities granted by Brexit.

As part of the Prime Minister's desire to reflect on the priorities of the general public who 'lent him' their vote last Thursday, the Queen's Speech focuses on boosting investment in public services, particularly the NHS. There is a strong emphasis on supporting workers, families and the environment – policies that the opposition parties have led the agenda on – as well as restoring the Conservatives as the party of law and order.

Political Intelligence summarises the key bills announced during the Queen's Speech, as well providing an overview of the bills announced in the tech, health, infrastructure and transport sectors.



# Brexit-related bills

- **EU (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill** to ensure the departure of the European Union on 31<sup>st</sup> January.
- **Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill** to bring an end to free movement in UK law and introduce a points-based immigration system, which will be based on people's skills and "contributions to the UK economy".
- **Trade Bill** to deliver a trading framework for the UK after Brexit and ensuring that the trade policy reflects the need of the whole of the UK.
- **Financial Services Legislation Bill** to ensure that the UK "maintains its world-leading regulatory standards and remains open to the international market after leaving the EU".
- **Private International Law (Implementation of Agreements) Bill** to implement international agreements to ensure that the UK continues to have effective legal rules agreed between the UK and other countries.
- **Fisheries Bill** to provide the legal framework for the UK to operate as "an independent coastal state" after Brexit, after revoking the Common Fisheries Policy.
- **Agriculture Bill** to remove farmers from the Common Agricultural Bill and move to a system based on 'public money for public goods'.
- Further legislation will be introduced in the new Parliamentary session to implement the **future relationship between the UK and EU** seek a future relationship based on a free trade agreement that benefits the whole of the UK.



# Key bills announced

Of the more than 30 bills announced in the Queen's Speech, some of the most eye-catching announcements included:

- **The NHS Funding Bill:** This will enshrine into law that an extra £33.9bn per year of funding will be provided to the NHS by 2023/24.
- **The Counter Terrorism (Sentencing and Release) Bill** to ensure “greater public confidence and that the most dangerous terrorists spend longer in prison before they are released”.
- **The Employment Bill** to protect and enhance workers' rights. This will: create a single enforcement body offering greater protections for workers; and ensure tips left for workers go to them in full.
- **The Sentencing Bill** to “ensure the most serious and violent offenders serve more of their sentences in custody”.
- **The Building Safety Bill** to ensure new and enhanced regulatory regimes for building safety and construction products. This will include an enhanced safety framework for high-rise residential buildings to ensure that lessons are learned from the Grenfell Tower fire.



# Tech

- The Government has committed to supporting the rollout of gigabit capable broadband and reiterates the £5bn pledge to support rollout in the hardest to reach 20% of the country.
- **Broadband legislation** will include a Bill to speed up wayleaves for blocks of flats, and ensuring new builds are developed to support gigabit-capable connections.
- Government has committed to preparing legislation to implement proposals in the **Online Harms White Paper**, pushing for codes of practise in the interim.
- Government will publish a **"Safety by Design" framework** to help businesses embed safety at the earliest stage of development.
- A National Infrastructure Strategy is expected alongside February budget in 2020 which includes digital infrastructure.
- Government will **"significantly boost R&D funding"** and boost the tech and digital skills base with a new fast-track visa for scientists and researchers.
- **Espionage legislation** will be introduced to strengthen the UK's response to hostile state activity and evolving threats to the UK. They will also examine how the Government can improve collaboration with scientists and technology companies to improve security.

# Health

- The **NHS Funding Bill** will enshrine the £33.9 billion increase in cash terms by 2023-24 that was announced earlier this year for the NHS.
- As outlined in the Conservative manifesto there will be 50,000 more nurses, 6,000 more doctors and 6,000 more primary care professionals. This includes the retention of 18,500 existing nurses.
- The **Medicines and Medical Devices Bill** was brought back to streamline the licensing and regulation of innovative medicines and devices.
- Ministers will continue to reform the **Mental Health Act**.
- The **NHS People Plan** will enable qualified doctors, nurses and allied health professionals with a job offer from the NHS and the recognised training to get fast-tracked entry into the UK.
- The **Health Service Safety Bill** will introduce the world's first Health Service Safety Investigations Body (HSSIB) will be set up to investigate patient safety concerns.
- Government will urgently seek cross-party consensus on proposals for long term reform of social care.
- Councils will receive an additional £1 billion for adults and children's social care in every year of this Parliament.



# Transport, Energy & Infrastructure

- **A National Infrastructure Strategy** will be published alongside the first Budget and will set out details for the Government's plans to invest £100 billion to transform the UK's infrastructure.
- **Air Traffic Management and Unmanned Aircraft Bill** to maintain the UK's position as a "world-leader in aviation", ensuring that regulations keep pace with new technology to support sustainable growth and ensure that police are able to tackle the unlawful use of unmanned aircrafts.
- **Airline Insolvency Legislation** to protect passengers in the event of an airline going bust by reforming the airline insolvency process.
- **Thomas Cook Compensation Bill** to enable the Government to administer a capped compensation scheme to support customers of Thomas Cook facing life-changing injuries, illness or loss of life for which UK-based Thomas Cook companies would have been liable.
- **Railways (minimum service levels) Legislation** to "reduce the disruption caused to the public during rail strikes, whilst preserving rail workers' right to strike".
- **Rail reform and High Speed Rail 2 (West Midlands – Crewe) White Paper** which will be informed by the 'root and branch' review of the railways last year led by Keith Williams.



# Labour's response

Labour's shadow chancellor, John McDonnell MP, responding to the Government's Queen Speech, said:

*"This is more pomp and ceremony – the second Queen's Speech in three months – from a Government hopelessly out of touch with the needs and hopes of people in this country."*

*"There is nothing new in this Queen's Speech for our NHS and public services or people struggling this Christmas, except for strong suggestions that this Government wants to slash regulations on its way to making the UK a Trump-supporting tax haven."*

*"There is a woeful lack of ambition on regional investment and infrastructure – and Labour will continue to show up the Government for what it is: a Government for the few and not the many."*



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# Political Intelligence

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