

The Queen's Speech

May 2021

Overview

The previous Queen's Speech, delivered days after the 2019 general election, began with a commitment to deliver Brexit but the Government today finds itself in a completely different position as it prioritises efforts to 'build back better' from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The focus now is on 'levelling up' the country and today's Queen's Speech sought to do that by outlining a wide-ranging legislative agenda to deliver growth to all parts of the UK, support jobs, businesses and address the impact of the pandemic on public services.

The package outlined contained no huge surprises with many Bills already in progress and carried over from the last parliamentary session or briefed in advance. Both health and tech issues featured prominently, with the Health and Care Bill, Online Safety Bill and Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Bill taking centre stage during Her Majesty's statement.

Legislation to reform social care was a glaring exclusion from today's speech – however proposals will be 'brought forward' this year. The Queen's Speech also set out two Bills – to reduce the scope of judicial review and mandatory photo IDs – which will no doubt provoke much political consternation in Westminster.



Key bills announced

- **Health and Care Bill** to implement proposals set out in the NHS Reform White Paper published earlier this year.
- A draft **Online Safety Bill** based on the 2019 Online Harms White Paper.
- Following delay, the **Environment Bill** will be brought to Parliament to introduce new binding environmental targets.
- **Dissolution and Calling of Parliament Bill** which will repeal the Fixed-term Parliaments Act and return the power to call early elections to the Prime Minister.
- Measures will be brought forward to strengthen devolved Government in Northern Ireland and address the legacy of the past in the **Northern Ireland (minister, elections and petitions of concerns) Bill**.
- **Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Bill** to extend 5G mobile coverage and gigabit capable broadband.
- **Procurement Bill** to make public sector procurement easier and replace the current rules which are based on EU regulations.
- The **Advanced Research and Invention Agency Bill** intended to promote high-risk, high reward research with the Government investing £800m over the course of this Parliament.



Tech

- A new **Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Bill** will seek to extend 5G mobile coverage and gigabit capable broadband whilst ensuring smart devices are secure against cyber threats.
- Government emphasised their commitment to broadband roll-out and highlighted their ambitions to reach 85% gigabit-capable coverage by 2025.
- The highly anticipated **Online Safety Bill** will be introduced in draft form and will include new requirements on tech companies to tackle harmful and illegal content online.
- The **Telecommunications (Security) Bill**, which focuses on securing the UK's telecoms networks and infrastructure, will continue its journey through Parliament.
- **The Counter-State Threats Bill** will reform the Official Secrets Act to bring it up to date with the threats posed in the age of cyber warfare.
- **The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy** will be implemented, including investment in science and technology to enable the UK to act as a 'responsible cyber power'.

Health

- As set out in the long-term funding settlement, NHS funding will be increased by **£33.9 billion** by 2023-24, with £325m for new investment in diagnostics equipment and £3.7bn to build 40 hospitals.
- The total package of additional healthcare funding for COVID-19 now stands at £92bn, £63bn this year and £29bn for next.
- The **Health and Care Bill** will 'lay the foundations for a more integrated and efficient' health system and will support the NHS to innovate and embrace technology, with patients receiving more tailored and preventative care, remotely at home.
- Plans to **transform Urgent and Emergency care** to prevent inappropriate attendance.
- **Measures to prevent obesity** will be introduced, including: Junk food advert restrictions from April 2022, large businesses with 250 or more employees to calorie label food and £35m into the Breakfast Club Programme
- **Social care reform** proposals will be brought forward in 2021.
- Additional **£2.3 billion** a year in **mental health services** by 2023-24, and a one-off £500m for the Mental Health Recovery Action Plan
- The new **Office for Health Promotion** will work across the Government to improve health
- On the **vaccination programme**, planning for a potential booster campaign will commence later this year, targeting variants of concern



Transport, Energy & Infrastructure

- **Investing and improving National infrastructure** with an investment of over £27 billion in motorways and A roads and £5 billion in buses and cycle routes across England.
- **Rail Reform** through a White Paper outlining proposals to transform connectivity by rail and reforming rails services across the country to be greener, more reliable and deliver for customers.
- **A new National Bus Strategy** as part of the levelling up agenda by ensuring every area in the country has a more frequent, cheaper and reliable bus services.
- The **High Speed Rail (Crewe to Manchester) Bill** will provide the powers to build and operate the next stage of HS2.
- A new **Planning Bill** introducing new laws to modernise the planning system ensuring homes and infrastructure can be delivered more quickly across England. The Bill will help deliver vital infrastructure while protecting and enhancing the environment. The Bill aims to introduce quicker and simpler frameworks for funding infrastructure and assessing the environmental impacts and opportunities.
- **The Environment Bill** will be carried over from the last Parliamentary session and will place the environment at the centre of policy making.
- **Investing in new green industries** to create highly skilled jobs as part of a Green Industrial Revolution.

