

# The Queen's speech - the mark of a new Parliament

The Queen's speech is a long standing tradition to mark the start of the parliamentary year which forms part of the State Opening of Parliament ceremony which can be dated back to 1523. The most recent Queen's speech was given on 19th December and it outlines the laws that Parliament aims to deliver.

23 December 2019

The Queen's speech is a long standing tradition to mark the start of the parliamentary year which forms part of the State Opening of Parliament ceremony which can be dated back to 1523. Usually the Queen's speech happens once a year however the most recent two have been within two months of each other due to Boris Johnson holding one on 14 October 2019 when he became Prime Minister despite the controversy. The most recent Queen's speech was given on 19th December and it outlines the laws that Parliament aims to deliver. The purpose of this is to create clarity of the direction of Parliament, including their intentions for local and central government.

## Brexit

Her Majesty's speech opened with the Conservatives plan for Brexit which includes departing from the European Union on 31 January 2020. The aim is to have a free trade agreement with the European Union as well as to begin trade negotiations with other countries. This ambition with the short deadline will mean that preparation for Brexit will be amplified over the coming month. The speech also confirmed that the Australian-style points-based immigration system will be used. From the Policy Briefing note, the Conservatives aim to bring seven bills to deliver Brexit, arguably the most important of these being the EU (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill which will ensure that the UK leaves on the 31 January and that it is delivered before the implementation period ends on 31 December 2020. Other benefits that are listed in the note include protecting the right of EU, EEA and Swiss Citizens in UK Law and beginning to implement the new protocol, following the removal of the backstop, on Ireland/ Northern Ireland.

## Public Services

The speech emphasised that public services and infrastructure will be invested in whilst keeping borrowing and debt to a minimum. A National Infrastructure Strategy will be published to outline further details of the Conservatives plan to invest into the UK's infrastructure and a White Paper will be published next year to put forward a new Railway reform. There are also plans to reduce the impact of railway strikes by implementing new legislation to require a minimum level of service called the Railways (minimum service levels) legislation which will make strikes unlawful if these levels are not met.

## Devolution

Communities will have "more control over how investment is spent so that they can decide what is best for them." A White Paper will set out the Conservatives' strategy to unleash the potential of the English regions and this shall include plans for spending and local growth funding. This in turn should increase responsibility and accountability to the local democratic areas due to the growth in funding and the expansion of powers. The Briefing Document also reinforces the Prime Minister's plans for the Towns Fund (a £3.6billion investment), Town Deal (of 100 places to develop proposals) and additional money going to youth clubs, local libraries and regional museums.

## Environment

The Policy Briefing note also aims to tackle sources of air pollution bringing new legally binding targets into fruition. These targets will mean a greater responsibility for local government to reduce air pollution and protect natural habitats. The Environment Bill will also address recycling, introduce deposit return schemes and charges for single-use plastic, stricter penalties for litter offences and ban the export of polluting plastic waste to non-OECD countries.

## Policing

Perhaps the most significant bill to local authorities regarding crime and policing is the new duty to work collaboratively, share data and information to reduce serious violence within communities which is all contained within the Serious Violence Bill. Also, the new Domestic Abuse Bill will place a duty on local authorities to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children.

## Other promises

Other promises and intentions of the Conservatives include:

- Business rates will be reviewed due to the important role that they have as a source of income for local authorities. Legislation will reevaluate business rates to every three years rather than a five-yearly cycle and this will begin in 2021. This should allow for the system to be more responsive to economic changes.
- Voter ID will be implemented and further work on the electoral system has been promised, such as removing the 15 year limit on voting rights for British citizens overseas.
- There will be a cross-party consensus regarding a long-term social care reform in England
- An additional £1billion is promised for adults and children's social care every year
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- Increasing the National Living Wage
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- Raising the National Insurance, Personal Allowance and Higher Rate thresholds

If you do have any queries on the matters raised in this note do [get in touch](#).

## Contact



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