



Queen's Speech Analysis

Political Overview

This was no conventional Queen's Speech. In fact, it felt more like a pre-election manifesto launch, with a raft of policies designed to win-over large swathes of middle-England. Politically, the Queen's Speech was carefully crafted to burnish the Conservative Party's 'One Nation' credentials, and to convince those voters alienated by the Government's Brexit stance that its domestic policy agenda is firmly rooted in the centre ground.

A number of these key policy priorities announced as part of the Speech had already been tested at the recent Conservative Party Conference:

- Delivering Brexit (including successor immigration, farming and fisheries frameworks)
- Getting tough on crime (longer sentences for violent and sexual crimes)
- Improving digital and transport infrastructure (to level the playing field for those 'left behind' Brexit-voting constituencies)
- Greater investment in key public services such as schools and the NHS
- Improving air and water quality, tackling plastic pollution and restoring habitats so plant and wildlife "can thrive"

There were 26 Bills in total, though in practice, it is unlikely that any of this legislation will complete its parliamentary passage, at least during this Parliament, given that Boris Johnson simply does not have the numbers in the Commons to implement his legislative programme.

Predictably, The Labour Party have criticised Boris Johnson's Government for using the event as a distraction from the current political situation, and for playing party politics by effectively turning the Speech into a pre-election Conservative Party broadcast. The Speech has also been attacked by political opponents for its lack of content – there were few surprises and much of the content had been heavily trailed in the weekend press.

The event felt more like a 'wish list' of what Boris Johnson's administration hopes to achieve in the event of winning a General Election. With opposition parties reluctant to acquiesce to a snap poll, today's pomp and pageantry felt like nothing more than a holding operation as we edge closer to the 31st October Brexit deadline.

Draft Bills

- **Brexit**

- **European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill** – The Government has outlined its priority to secure a Withdrawal Agreement with the European Union by 31st October. This will be based on free trade and “friendly cooperation”.
- **Agriculture Bill** – This aims to reform UK agriculture policy to place farmers, land managers, the environment and taxpayers at the fore. The current farmer subsidy system will be replaced, along with the Common Agricultural Policy, and a new Environmental Land Management scheme will be introduced.
- **Fisheries Bill** – To enshrine in primary legislation the powers to control access to our waters and more effectively manage our fisheries in the longer term. It will also involve devolving powers to the Devolved Administrations to manage fisheries.
- **Trade Bill** – To create powers to transition existing trade agreements that the UK are signed up to as part of the EU and establish a new independent body to protect UK firms from unfair trade practices.
- **Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill** – This will end free movement of EU citizens under UK law and implement a modern, global immigration system. EU citizens who have been resident in the UK will have the right to remain.
- **Financial Services Bill** – To implement the Basel standards in order to strengthen the regulation of global banks, ensure the maintenance of high regulatory standards and enhance the competitiveness of the UK financial services sector.
- **Private International Law (Implementation of Agreements) Bill** – This will make it easier for UK individuals and families involved in international legal disputes to access justice and maintain the UK’s role as a world leader in delivering justice on civil and family issues across borders.

- **Health**

- **NHS Long-Term Plan** – The Government has committed to an NHS multi-year funding settlement that will see a £33.9 billion per annum increase in the NHS budget by 2023-24. The Plan will allocate this and improve integration, reduce bureaucracy and promote collaboration in health services.
- **Health Services Safety Investigations Bill** – The Health Service Safety Investigations Body will be introduced to investigate patient safety concerns. This will be an executive non-departmental public body, with powers to conduct investigations into incidents that occur during the provision of NHS services and have, or may have, implications for the safety of patients.
- **Medicines and Medical Devices Bill** – To give patients faster access to innovative medicines and allow the UK to take a leading role in global research to find cures for rare diseases and improve treatments for patients around the world.
- **Adult Social Care** – This is to be reformed to ensure dignity in old age. The Government will provide local authorities with more funding for adult social care services.
- **Mental Health Reform** – A White Paper will be published on mental health reform. This will include an emphasis on patient choice and autonomy and reforming the detention process.

- **Violent Crime & Criminal Justice**
 - **Sentencing Bill** – Will change the automatic release point from halfway to two-thirds for adult offenders serving sentences of four years or more for serious violence or sexual offences.
 - **Foreign National Offenders Bill** – This will improve the justice systems' response to foreign national offenders by increasing the maximum penalty for foreign national offenders who return to the UK in breach of a deportation order.
 - **Prisoners (Disclosure of Information About Victims) Bill** – To require the Parole Board to consider an offender's failure to disclose certain information about their crime. This follows pressure to introduce Helen's Law. This Bill will look to find out information on the location of victims' remains, whilst looking to protect the identities of children in indecent photographs.
 - **Serious Violence Bill** – The parole system will be reformed, following pressure to introduce Helen's Law.
 - **Police Protections Bill** – To support the police, establishing a Police Covenant that recognises their bravery, commitment and sacrifice.
 - **Extradition (Provisional Arrest) Bill** – To empower police officers to immediately arrest someone they know is wanted for a serious crime committed in a trusted country, without having to apply to a court for a warrant first.
 - **Sentencing (Pre-Consolidation Amendments) Bill** – This focuses on improving trust, transparency and efficiency across the criminal justice system by bringing greater clarity to sentencing law, reducing errors and delays.

- **Protecting Individuals & Families**
 - **Domestic Abuse Bill** – To transform the response, across sectors and agencies, to victims of domestic abuse. This Bill was carried over from the previous session of Parliament.
 - **Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill** – This focuses on minimising the impact of divorce, particularly on children. The Bill will introduce a minimum timeframe before the court makes a conditional divorce order and introduce a new option for a joint application where the decision to divorce is mutual.
 - **Online Harms** – This aims to improve internet safety. The Bill will develop comprehensive regulatory regime for online safety, protect children and other vulnerable users and ensure that there are no safe spaces for terrorists online.
 - **Employment (Allocation of Tips) Bill** – Creates legal obligations on employers to pass on all tips to workers in full and, where they distribute tips amongst workers, to do so on a fair and transparent basis.
 - **Employment Reform** – This entails raising the National Living Wage and strengthening workers' rights.
 - **Pension Schemes Bill** – This will enable a simpler oversight of pensions' savings and tackling the irresponsible management of private pensions schemes. Pensions' dashboards to allow people to access their pensions savings in one place online will also be introduced.
 - **National Security and Investment Legislation** – Strengthens the Government's existing powers to scrutinise and intervene in business transactions (takeovers and mergers) to protect national security.

- **Windrush Compensation Scheme (Expenditure) Bill** – This will ensure that the Windrush Compensation Scheme is underpinned by the necessary parliamentary authority.
- **Building Safety Standards Legislation** – Legislation will be introduced to improve building safety and construction standards to ensure that residents have a stronger voice in the system.
- **Infrastructure, Education & Science**
 - **Education funding** – The Government have committed an extra £400 million for 16-19 year-old education next year, an increase of 7 per cent overall in 16-19 year-old funding. Additionally, on schools' investment there will be £14 billion more over three years, so the core schools' budget will be £7.1 billion higher in 2022-23 compared to this year. Accordingly, the Government will move towards delivering this funding directly to schools, through a single national formula.
 - **National Infrastructure Strategy** – A National Infrastructure Strategy will be implemented, which will encompass a long-term vision to improve digital, transport and energy structures. The Government's strategy will have 2 key aims; namely to begin to close the productivity gap between London and other parts of the country; and to tackle the challenges posed by climate change in order to fulfill the Government's commitment to achieve 'net zero emissions' by 2050.
 - **Broadband** – A cheaper and faster light-touch tribunal process for telecoms companies to obtain interim code rights (or access rights) for a period of up to 18 months will be established. This will enable companies to install connections where landlords have refused to co-operate with requests for access.
 - **Air Traffic Management and Unmanned Aircraft Bill** – The Government will expand their powers to direct an airport or other relevant body to prepare and submit a proposal to the Civil Aviation Authority to change the design of airspace. Additionally, the Government will modernise current air traffic control licensing regulations and give the police new powers to tackle unlawful use of unmanned aircraft such as drones.
 - **High Speed Rail 2 (West Midlands - Crewe) Bill** – This will give the Government key powers to acquire the necessary land needed for this stretch of the railway, including licensed operation.
 - **National Space Strategy** – A National Space Council and UK Space Strategy will be introduced, investing in AI, innovation, robotics and satellites.
- **Environment**
 - **Environment Bill** – Environmental principles are to be enshrined in law. Measures to improve both air and water quality will be introduced, along with tackling plastic pollution and restoring habitats. Legally-binding environment improvement targets will be introduced, as will an environmental regulator to scrutinise policy and law, investigate complaints and enforcement actions.
 - **Animal Welfare** – Legislation will be introduced to modify the penalties implicated in the Animal Welfare Act 2006, from six months imprisonment to five years imprisonment in cases of cruelty to animals. Imports for trophy hunting will be banned.

- **Other Legislative Measures**
 - **Birmingham Commonwealth Games Bill** – This will include measures to ensure that the Games budget complies with Treasury spending rules, whilst making ticket touting illegal.
 - **Historical Institutional Abuse (Northern Ireland) Bill** – To create a Redress Board comprised of judicial and lay members, which will then ultimately determine applications for compensation.
- **Other Non-Legislative Measures**
 - **Public Finances** – The Government has outlined their new economic plan, which entails both investing in economic growth and maintaining the stability of public finances. The Government will also review the existing fiscal framework ahead of the Budget later this year.
 - **The Union** – Regional devolution will be expanded after powers are returned from the EU. An Office of Veterans' Affairs will also be established.
 - **Northern Ireland Governance** – The Government will work with all parties in Northern Ireland to restore devolved governance there.
 - **The Armed Forces** – Investment will be made in the armed forces, to honour the NATO commitment of spending 2% of GDP on defence.
 - **Foreign Affairs** – The Government announced its intentions for Britain to play a leading role in global affairs, defending its interests and promoting its values. Collaborating with global partners on international security issues and championing global free trade will be part of this. In addition, the Government will work alongside international partners on global challenges, including tackling climate change, and ensuring that all girls have access to 12 years of quality education.



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