

QUEEN'S SPEECH – MAY 2021

OVERVIEW

- On 11 May the Queen's Speech was delivered to open the 2021-22 session of Parliament.
- The speech focuses on the Government's post-COVID recovery plan to spread opportunity across the UK and deliver a national recovery from the pandemic.
- The speech includes several Bills looking at key issues such as Climate Change and the Government's Net Zero pledge, research and development, skills, and defence.

SUMMARY

Levelling Up

- The Government will publish a Levelling Up White Paper later this year.
- The White Paper will look to create new jobs, boosting training and growing productivity in places that have seen economic decline and the loss of industry. The White Paper will also look to 'grasp the opportunities of Brexit'.

Climate Change

- The Government will release sector strategies this year, including the Transport Decarbonisation Plan, and the comprehensive Net Zero Strategy will set out the Government's vision for transitioning to a net zero economy by 2050.
- The Government will work with international partners to push a significant reduction in global carbon emissions with new or updated 2030 targets, otherwise known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), ahead of COP26, and commitments from countries, regions, businesses that set a course for net zero.
- The Government announced a new Environment Bill that aims to put the environment at the centre of policy making, introduce a framework for legally binding environmental targets and establish a new, independent Office for Environmental Protection.

Research and Innovation

- The Government has announced its plans to invest £14.9 billion in R&D in 2021- 22, building towards the Government's target of 2.4 per cent of gross domestic product being spent on R&D across the UK economy by 2027.
- BEIS will publish an Innovation Strategy this summer aimed at encouraging and facilitating innovation across the UK, as well as supporting and harnessing the capability of UK innovators to boost future prosperity locally and nationwide.
- The Advanced Research and Innovation Agency (ARIA) Bill will create a new statutory corporation to fund high-risk, high-reward R&D. The Bill will give ARIA broad powers to take an innovative approach to research funding, and a mandate for higher tolerance for failure when pursuing high-risk research.
- The Bill will also establish an arm's length relationship to Government, set out in ARIA's procedure, membership, and appointments processes, with limited information and direction rights for the Secretary of State.

Defence and Security

- The Government highlighted its commitment to defence spending - a £24 billion increase over four years. Of this, £6.6 billion will fund R&D in agile, inter-connected, and data-driven capabilities. This includes additional investment in AI, space, the renewal of the nuclear deterrent, eight Type 26 and five Type 31 frigates, at least 48 F-35s, a new combat air system and the new Ranger regiment.
- The UK will fully implement the Integrated Review released earlier this year and reaffirm its NATO commitment.
- The new Armed Forces Bill will enshrine the Armed Forces Covenant in law, provide National Insurance contribution relief for the employers of veterans and improve the service justice system creating an independent body to oversee complaints.
- The Counter-State Threats Bill will counter hostile activity by foreign states and make it more costly to do so. This will include reforming the official secrets act and considering the update of treason laws. The creation of a Foreign Influence Registration Scheme will help combat espionage, foreign interference, and to better protect research.

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- The Telecommunications (Security) Bill will look to boost security standards, which the Government says will create one of the strongest telecoms security regimes in the world allowing the UK to respond to rapidly evolving threats.

Procurement

- The Procurement Bill will consolidate and streamline over 350 EU-derived regulations to make public procurement, quicker and easier to use whilst complying with international commitments. It aims to allow more freedom for suppliers and the public sector to innovate and form closer ties to the private sector. The Government asserts that the Bill will allow authorities to procure at pace during a crisis.
- The Bill aims to make public procurement more accessible for new entrants such as SMEs and voluntary, charitable, and social enterprises.
- The proposed legislation aims to increase transparency at every stage of the procurement process with procurement data published in a standardised format increasing accessibility.
- The principles of public procurement will be enshrined in law, with the intention for UK procurement rules to become more modern, flexible, innovative, and diverse, including allowing the Government to consider wider social value of contracts.

Education and Skills

- The Skills and Post-16 Education Bill will legislate for reforms to post-16 education and training, make skills more readily available and get more people into work as set out in the Government's Skills for Jobs White Paper. The Bill will enable people to access flexible funding for Higher or Further Education, bringing Universities and Further Education colleges closer together, and aims to remove the bias against technical education.
- The Bill's Skills Accelerator will enable employers and providers to collaborate to develop skills plans aimed at ensuring local skills provision meets local needs, and a Lifelong Loan Entitlement will be introduced.

Post-Brexit issues: state aid and subsidies, Freeports, qualifications and Northern Ireland

- The Government will introduce a Subsidy Control Bill that implements a domestic UK subsidy control regime to reflect UK strategic interests.
- The National Insurance Contributions Bill will establish several Freeports in England. Discussions are ongoing with the devolved administrations to ensure these benefits are felt UK-wide. The Bill will provide employers with a relief from National Insurance contributions for eligible new employees in Freeports for three years, up to earnings of £25,000 per annum.
- The Professional Qualifications Bill will create a new framework for the UK to recognise professional qualifications from across the world to ensure employers can access professionals where there are UK shortages.
- The £400 million New Deal for Northern Ireland will support businesses to innovate and invest following the Transition Period, while also ensuring businesses in Northern Ireland are ready to seize the trade and investment opportunities ahead.

All other legislation announced:

- **Immigration** – The New Plan for Immigration Bill will deliver a significant overhaul of the UK's asylum system and looks to correct historical anomalies in British Nationality law.
- **Health and Social Care** – The Government will improve technological innovation in the NHS and provide it additional funding. Proposals on social care reform will be brought forward and the Government will continue to deliver the COVID vaccination programme.
- **Infrastructure** – Plans to extend 5G mobile coverage and gigabit broadband, across the Union whilst improving bus and rail links such as through the HS2 Bill.
- **Housing and planning** – The Government plans to introduce measures to help more people own their own home, enhance renters' rights and establish a new building safety regulator.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available by clicking on the link below:

- [Number 10 Downing Street briefing of all relevant Bills available here.](#)
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