



Debate on the Queen's Speech: Day 3

Economic Affairs, Business and Public Services

9 January 2020

Summary

This Lords Library Briefing is one of three prepared ahead of the three days of debate in the House of Lords on the Queen's Speech, scheduled to take place between 7 and 9 January 2020. The briefings detail the legislative and policy announcements made by the Government, in the Queen's Speech and in the associated documents, and provide links to further reading.

This briefing looks at economic affairs, business, culture, education, health and social care, housing, pensions, transport and welfare. It provides background on the following legislative announcements:

- NHS Funding Bill
- Health Service Safety Investigations Bill
- Medicines and Medical Devices Bill
- Employment Bill
- Pension Schemes Bill
- Immigration and Social Security Coordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill
- National Security and Investment Bill
- Thomas Cook Compensation Bill
- Renters' Reform Bill
- Building Safety Bill
- Fire Safety Bill
- Online Harms Bill
- Broadband Bill
- Birmingham Commonwealth Games Bill
- Air Traffic Management and Unmanned Aircraft Bill
- Financial Services Bill
- Bills relating to airline insolvency and minimum railway service levels during strikes

Thomas Brown, James Goddard, Emily Haves, Edward Scott, Chris Smith and Sarah Tudor |
3 January 2020

A full list of Lords Library briefings is available on the research briefings page on the internet. The Library publishes briefings for all major items of business debated in the House of Lords. The Library also publishes briefings on the House of Lords itself and other subjects that may be of interest to Members. Library briefings are compiled for the benefit of Members of the House of Lords and their personal staff, to provide impartial, authoritative, politically balanced briefing on subjects likely to be of interest to Members of the Lords. Authors are available to discuss the contents of the briefings with the Members and their staff but cannot advise members of the general public.

Any comments on Library briefings should be sent to the Head of Research Services, House of Lords Library, London SW1A 0PW or emailed to purvism@parliament.uk.

I. Economic Affairs

I.1 Taxation and Public Spending

The Queen’s Speech and the Conservative Party manifesto contained a number of announcements on specific areas of public spending, which are covered in the other sections of this briefing.

On taxation, the Queen’s Speech contained a commitment to increase the threshold for paying national insurance contributions in 2020.¹ The background notes to the speech said that the threshold would rise to £9,500 per year (from the current £8,632).² This pledge was also contained in the Conservative Party’s manifesto.

In addition, the manifesto included:

- A further “ultimate ambition” to increase the national insurance threshold to £12,500 per year.³
- A commitment not to increase the rates of income tax, VAT or national insurance—this was reiterated in the background notes to the Queen’s Speech.⁴
- An aim to “use our freedom from the EU to improve the UK’s tax regime”. As an example, the manifesto said that the Government would make tampons exempt from VAT.⁵
- A pledge to introduce certain specific tax incentives; for example, for “small retail businesses and for local music venues, pubs and cinemas”.⁶
- A commitment to introduce further measures to reduce tax avoidance and evasion. These included proposals, reiterated in the background notes to the Queen’s Speech, to double the maximum prison term for tax fraud. The manifesto also said that a more powerful anti-evasion unit would be created in HM Revenue and Customs.⁷
- A promise to introduce a digital services tax, first announced in the October 2018 budget.⁸

I.2 Fiscal Rules

The Queen’s Speech said that the Government would invest in public services and infrastructure “whilst keeping borrowing and debt under control; maintaining the sustainability of the public finances through a responsible fiscal strategy”.⁹ The speech and the Conservative Party manifesto set out the

¹ Prime Minister’s Office, [The Queen’s Speech 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, p 5.

² *ibid*, p 60.

³ Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, p 35.

⁴ *ibid*, p 15; and Prime Minister’s Office, [The Queen’s Speech 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, p 60.

⁵ Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, p 16.

⁶ *ibid*, p 26.

⁷ *ibid*, p 35, and Prime Minister’s Office, [The Queen’s Speech 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, p 131.

⁸ Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, p 35. For more information on the digital services tax, see: House of Lords Library, [Budget 2018](#), 7 November 2018, p 5.

⁹ Prime Minister’s Office, [The Queen’s Speech 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, p 8.

following “fiscal rules” it would apply:¹⁰

- the current budget (income compared to day-to-day spending) will be in balance by “no later than the third year of the forecast period”;¹¹
- public sector net investment will not average more than 3% of GDP; and
- if debt interest exceeds 6% of revenue, the Government will reassess its fiscal plans.

These represent a change from the previous fiscal objectives, which were:¹²

- to “return the public finances to balance at the earliest possible date in the next Parliament” (at the time the target was written, the next parliament was anticipated to run from 2020 to 2025);
- cyclically adjusted public sector net borrowing to lie below 2% of GDP by 2020/21;
- public sector net debt to be falling relative to GDP in 2020/21; and
- welfare spending to remain within a cap. The latest cap, initially set in November 2017, was £135 billion to apply in 2022/23.¹³

1.3 Spending Plans and Budget

On 4 September 2019, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sajid Javid, delivered the Government’s spending plans for 2020/21.¹⁴ He stated that day-to-day departmental spending would rise by 4.1 percent between 2018/19 and 2019/20, and that this was “the fastest planned real growth in day-to-day departmental spending in 15 years”.¹⁵ He said that all departments would have their budgets increased at least by inflation.¹⁶ The Chancellor also committed to a full multi-year spending review in 2020.¹⁷

During the election campaign, the Conservative Party said that if it won a majority it would hold a budget in February 2020.¹⁸ It has been suggested that, in advance of the budget, the Government is considering changing the criteria by which public sector investment decisions are made, contained in HM Treasury’s ‘green book’.¹⁹ Reports suggested that these changes would mean taking into account the impact of possible projects on, for example, the wellbeing of people living in poorer areas and on

¹⁰ Prime Minister’s Office, [The Queen’s Speech 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, p 131; and Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, p 7.

¹¹ This is a rolling target, meaning that fiscal policy must be set so the Office for Budget Responsibility’s forecast at any time must show a current budget balance or surplus in the third year of that forecast: Thomas Pope, ‘[Conservative and Labour Fiscal Rules Would Shake Off the Spending Straitjacket](#)’, Institute for Government, 25 November 2019.

¹² HM Treasury, [Charter for Budget Responsibility: Autumn 2016 Update](#), 30 January 2017, p 7.

¹³ Office for Budget Responsibility, [Economic and Fiscal Outlook](#), March 2019, CP 50, p 145.

¹⁴ HM Treasury, [Spending Round 2019](#), 4 September 2019, CP 170.

¹⁵ *ibid*, p 1.

¹⁶ [HC Hansard, 4 September 2019, col 188](#).

¹⁷ HM Treasury, [Spending Round 2019](#), 4 September 2019, CP 170, p 1.

¹⁸ Conservative Party, ‘[The First 100 Days of a Conservative Majority Government and the Choice Before the British People](#)’, 4 December 2019.

¹⁹ Jim Pickard and Delphine Strauss, ‘[Johnson to Overhaul Public Spending Rules to Boost UK Regions](#)’, *Financial Times* (£), 27 December 2019.

the productivity gap between regions.²⁰

1.4 New Governor of the Bank of England

On 20 December 2019, the Government announced that Andrew Bailey, currently chief executive of the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), would succeed Mark Carney as governor of the Bank of England.²¹ Mr Bailey is due to take office on 16 March 2020, with Mr Carney's term extended to 15 March.

1.5 Economic Indicators

Recent trends and the latest data for a number of key economic indicators follow:

- **Economic growth:** On an annual basis, economic growth, measured by changes in real gross domestic product (GDP), has been trending downwards since 2014.²² The most recent data shows real GDP rising by 1.1% between the third quarters of 2018 and 2019. On a quarterly basis, latest data suggests real GDP rose by 0.4% between the second and third quarters of 2019.
- **Inflation:** The most recent data shows a consumer price index (CPI) inflation rate of 1.5% in the year to November 2019.²³ Inflation had previously risen above the Bank of England's target rate of 2% in 2017. However, it has been on a downward trend since early 2018.
- **Interest rates:** The Bank of England's base rate has been at or near historic lows since the financial crisis. It currently stands at 0.75%.²⁴ This follows small increases in 2017 and 2018, which raised the rate from a low of 0.25% in August 2016. In its most recent monetary report, the Bank said that if the economy develops as it expects, a "modest increase" in interest rates is likely to be needed as inflationary pressures "build gradually over the next few years".²⁵
- **Employment and Unemployment:** The employment rate has been trending up and the unemployment rate has been trending down since late 2011. The latest figures, for August to October 2019, show an employment rate of 76.2% and an unemployment rate of 3.8%.²⁶ The remainder of the population is classed as economically inactive.²⁷ The Office for National Statistics (ONS) said that although the employment rate is a record high, it has been "broadly flat" over the last few quarters.²⁸

²⁰ Jim Pickard and Delphine Strauss, '[Johnson to Overhaul Public Spending Rules to Boost UK Regions](#)', *Financial Times* (£), 27 December 2019.

²¹ HM Treasury, '[Andrew Bailey to Be New Governor of the Bank of England](#)', 20 December 2019.

²² Office for National Statistics, '[GDP—Data Tables](#)', 20 December 2019, table A1 series IHYR and IHYQ.

²³ Office for National Statistics, '[Consumer Price Inflation Tables](#)', 18 December 2019, table 20b series D7G7.

²⁴ Bank of England, '[Official Bank Rate History](#)', accessed 20 September 2019.

²⁵ Bank of England, '[Monetary Policy Report—November 2019](#)', 7 November 2019.

²⁶ Office for National Statistics, '[Summary of Labour Market Statistics](#)', 17 December 2019, table 1 series LF24 and MGSX.

²⁷ The economically inactive are those who are: (i) not in work; and (ii) either not looking for work, and/or not available to work. The main inactive groups are students, people looking after family and home, long-term or temporarily sick and disabled, retired people and those who have given up looking for work: Office for National Statistics, '[A Guide to Labour Market Statistics](#)', 4 March 2019, section 6.

²⁸ Office for National Statistics, '[Labour Market Overview, UK: December 2019](#)', 17 December 2019, section 2.

- **Earnings:** Real average earnings rose relatively consistently in the years up to the financial crisis. They then fell to a low in 2013, before beginning a recovery.²⁹ On the latest data, real average weekly earnings in October 2019 were £502, 4% below their pre-crisis peak.³⁰
- **Productivity:** Average productivity growth since the financial crisis has been below its earlier levels. The most recent data suggests a fall in productivity, measured by output per hour worked, of 0.5% between the second quarters of 2018 and 2019.³¹
- **Balance of Trade:** For each of the last 20 years, the UK has had a deficit in trade in goods (ie it has imported more goods than it has exported).³² It has also had a surplus in trade in services (ie it has exported more than it has imported), but this has not been sufficient to offset the deficit in goods trade. The latest figures show that the overall deficit narrowed to 0.1% of GDP in the third quarter of 2019, although the ONS stated that trade flows in 2019 have been “volatile”.³³
- **Public Sector Deficit:** The public sector has been a net borrower in each year since 2001/02.³⁴ The annual deficit increased around the financial crisis, peaking at 10.2% of GDP in 2009/10, but has been reducing since. In 2018/19, net borrowing fell to 1.8% of GDP. However, borrowing in 2019/20 to date (April to November) was £50.9 billion, which is £5.1 billion higher than the same period in 2018/19.³⁵
- **Public Sector Debt:** Public sector debt is the accumulated value of each year’s deficits and surpluses, to the extent that they have not yet been repaid. The higher deficits during the financial crisis meant that overall debt rose sharply.³⁶ It then levelled off and fell gradually from mid-2017 to early 2019. The latest figures suggest that public sector net debt was 80.3% of GDP in the third quarter of 2019.

1.6 Further Reading

- Chris Giles, [‘UK at Risk of Breaking Spending Rules Before Fiscal Splurge, Office for Budget Responsibility Warns’](#), *Financial Times* (£), 16 December 2019
- Institute for Fiscal Studies, [‘Conservative Manifesto: An Initial Reaction from Institute for Fiscal Studies Researchers’](#), 24 November 2019
- BBC News, [‘General Election 2019: Tory and Labour Spending Plans “Not Credible”—Institute for Fiscal Studies’](#), 28 November 2019
- Oliver Wright, [‘Treasury to Rip Up Public Spending Rules in Cash Boost for North and Midlands’](#), *Times* (£), 27 December 2019

²⁹ Office for National Statistics, [‘Summary of Labour Market Statistics’](#), 17 December 2019, table I6 series A3WX.

³⁰ *ibid.* Earnings data is total pay and is expressed in constant 2015 prices.

³¹ Office for National Statistics, [‘Labour Productivity Time Series’](#), 7 October 2019, series LZVD.

³² Office for National Statistics, [‘Balance of Payments Time Series’](#), 20 December 2019, series D28J, D28K and D28L.

³³ *ibid.*, series D28L; and Office for National Statistics, [‘Quarterly Economic Commentary: July to September 2019’](#), 20 December 2019.

³⁴ Office for National Statistics, [‘Public Sector Finances Time Series’](#), 20 December 2019, series J5IJ.

³⁵ *ibid.*, series J5II; and Office for National Statistics, [‘Quarterly Economic Commentary: July to September 2019’](#), 20 December 2019, section 3.

³⁶ Office for National Statistics, [‘Public Sector Finances Time Series’](#), 20 December 2019, series HF6X.

2. Business

The Queen's Speech contained the following bills and proposals related to business:³⁷

- Financial Services Bill;
- Employment Bill;
- National Security and Investment Bill;
- Thomas Cook Compensation Bill;
- a review of business rates; and
- establishment of a national skills fund.

2.1 Financial Services Bill

The Conservative Party stated in its 2019 manifesto that it believed the UK leads the world in certain sectors, including financial services, and intended the country to “continue to do so after Brexit”.³⁸ In support of this, the Queen's Speech promised the introduction of legislation to ensure that the UK financial services industry “maintains its world-leading regulatory standards and remains open to international markets after we leave the EU”.³⁹ According to the background notes accompanying the speech, the main elements of the legislation will be:⁴⁰

- delivering long-term market access between the UK and Gibraltar for financial services firms;
- simplifying the process that allows overseas investment funds to be sold in the UK; and
- enabling the UK to implement the Basel standards, which strengthen the regulation of global banks.

The Queen's Speech also said that the Government would continue to progress legislation to combat money laundering and to achieve greater transparency in the UK property market.⁴¹

2.2 Employment Bill

Post-Brexit protection of workers' rights had been included in the previous EU (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill introduced in the 2019 session of the last parliament. Clause 34 and schedule 4 of that bill would have amended the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 to require a minister introducing a government bill to make a statement of “non-regression in relation to workers' retained EU rights”.⁴²

Following the 2019 general election, it was reported that the Government intended to remove those

³⁷ Prime Minister's Office, [Queen's Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019.

³⁸ Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, p 32.

³⁹ Prime Minister's Office, [Queen's Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, p 26.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p 27.

⁴² [European Union \(Withdrawal Agreement\) Bill 2019–20 \(October–November\)](#), clause 34.

clauses from the version of the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill introduced in the new parliament. On 17 December 2019, a Government spokesperson stated that protection of workers' rights "would be done in parallel to the withdrawal agreement and the issue will be dealt with in its own legislation".⁴³

The background notes accompanying the Queen's Speech stated that the purpose of the Employment Bill was to "protect and enhance workers' rights as the UK leaves the EU".⁴⁴ However, the document's list of "main elements" in the bill did not refer to protection of retained EU workers' rights. The stated elements of the bill included:

- Creating a new, single enforcement body, offering greater protections for workers.
- Ensuring that tips left for workers go to them in full.
- Introducing a new right for all workers to request a more predictable contract.
- extending redundancy protections to prevent pregnancy and maternity discrimination.
- Allowing parents to take extended leave for neonatal care, and introducing an entitlement to one week of leave for unpaid carers.
- Subject to consultation, the bill will make flexible working the default, unless employers have good reason not to.⁴⁵

The elements listed above were Conservative manifesto commitments. The manifesto stated that the Government would "prioritise the principle of fairness in the workplace", particularly through measures to "protect those in low-paid work and the gig economy".⁴⁶ This would be achieved by implementing the recommendations of the 2017 [Taylor Review of Modern Working Practices](#). The October 2019 Queen's Speech stated that the recommendations of the Taylor review would be achieved by implementing the *Good Work Plan*, published in December 2018 by Theresa May's Government.⁴⁷ Details of the *Good Work Plan* can be found in the further reading section below.

2.3 National Security and Investment Bill

The background notes to the Queen's Speech stated that legislation would be introduced to provide powers to scrutinise and intervene in takeovers and mergers to protect national security.⁴⁸ The Government said that this would allow it to consider the risks arising from "hostile parties" acquiring ownership of, or control over, businesses and assets that have national security implications. The main elements of the bill include:⁴⁹

- A notification system, whereby businesses would flag transactions with potential security concerns for "quick, efficient screening".

⁴³ Kevin Schofield, '[Government to Enshrine Workers' Rights Pledge in New Bill, Number 10 Confirms](#)', Politics Home, 17 December 2019

⁴⁴ Prime Minister's Office, [Queen's Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, p 43.

⁴⁵ *ibid*, p 44.

⁴⁶ Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, pp 37–9.

⁴⁷ Prime Minister's Office, [Queen's Speech 14 October 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 14 October 2019, p 66.

⁴⁸ Prime Minister's Office, [Queen's Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, p 104.

⁴⁹ *ibid*.

- Powers to mitigate risks; for example, by adding conditions to a deal or, as a last resort, blocking it.

2.4 Thomas Cook Compensation Bill

The Government has said it would legislate to compensate customers of the bankrupt travel firm Thomas Cook who have suffered “life-changing injuries, illness or loss of life for which UK-based Thomas Cook companies would have been liable”.⁵⁰ No estimate of the cost of the scheme was provided.

2.5 Other Policy Announcements

The background notes stated that the Government would undertake a “fundamental review” of the business rates system.⁵¹ This had also been a Conservative Party manifesto commitment.⁵² The notes stated that the Government would legislate to bring forward the next business rates revaluation from 2022 to 2021 and to “move business rates revaluations from a five-yearly cycle to a three-yearly cycle”.⁵³ It also stated that business rates would be reduced for cinemas, music venues and pubs.

The Conservative Party manifesto set out an aspiration for Britain to be the “best country in the world to start and grow a business”.⁵⁴ The manifesto promised an increase in the National Living Wage (NLW) to two-thirds of average earnings by 2024, currently projected to be £10.50 per hour.⁵⁵ The manifesto also committed to extending the NLW to all those aged over 21, as opposed to those aged over 24 at present. The Queen’s Speech background notes stated that the increase in the NLW would be implemented “provided economic conditions allow”.⁵⁶

Other manifesto commitments to encourage business growth included:⁵⁷

- Establishing a new £3 billion national skills fund.
- Supporting start-ups and small businesses in government procurement.
- Reducing late payments and strengthening the powers of the Small Business Commissioner.
- Expanding start-up loans.
- Increasing the research and development tax credit rate to 13 percent.
- Reviewing entrepreneurs’ relief and support for the self-employed.
- Consideration of how to improve the working of the apprenticeship levy.

⁵⁰ Prime Minister’s Office, [Queen’s Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, p 137.

⁵¹ *ibid*, p 111.

⁵² Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, p 32.

⁵³ Prime Minister’s Office, [Queen’s Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, p 111.

⁵⁴ Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, p 32.

⁵⁵ *ibid*, p 14.

⁵⁶ Prime Minister’s Office, [Queen’s Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, p 60.

⁵⁷ Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, pp 32–4.

2.6 Further Reading

- House of Commons Library, [Brexit and Financial Services](#), 13 December 2019, p 3.
- House of Commons Library, '[Withdrawal Agreement Bill: Protection for Workers' Rights](#)', 22 October 2019
- HM Government, [Good Work Plan](#), December 2018, pp 6–10
- Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, '[National Security and Investment: Proposed Legislative Reforms](#)', 24 July 2018, pp 9–16
- BBC News, '[What Does Business Want from Boris Johnson?](#)', 16 December 2019

3. Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

The Queen's Speech included a government commitment to develop legislation to combat online harms. It also included bills to support the roll-out of gigabit-capable broadband and the running of the 2020 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham.

3.1 Online Harms Bill

The Queen's Speech included a commitment to "develop legislation to improve internet safety for all".⁵⁸ This follows a Conservative Party manifesto pledge to "legislate to make the UK the safest place in the world to be online".⁵⁹

In April 2019, the previous Conservative government published the *Online Harms White Paper*.⁶⁰ The consultation sought views on the creation of a new regulatory framework intended to eradicate illegal and hateful content online. The consultation addressed a range of problems online, such as child sexual abuse, incitement to violence and terrorism, the sale of illegal products, and online hate crimes and bullying. The white paper proposed to bring technology companies, including social media platforms, under a new system of regulation to make them responsible for the content hosted on their websites. The system would be enforced through the establishment of a new independent regulator.

The background briefing to the Queen's Speech stated the Government was still considering its response to the consultation:

[...] the Government is analysing the responses and considering the issues raised. The Government is working closely with a variety of stakeholders, including technology companies and civil society groups, to understand their views. The Government will prepare legislation to implement the final policy in response to the consultation.⁶¹

The background briefing stated the Government wanted to ensure freedom of expression was protected online as part of any new legislation.⁶² It also outlined the following actions the Government intended to take before a bill was introduced. The Government would publish:

- Interim codes of practice for companies on tackling internet use by terrorists and those engaged in child sexual abuse and exploitation.
- A media literacy strategy intended to help internet users stay safe online.
- A 'safety by design' framework to help businesses protect customer safety online when developing and maintaining online platforms.

The Government also said it would carry out a review of the Gambling Act, which it argued did not

⁵⁸ [HL Hansard, 19 December 2019, cols 7–9.](#)

⁵⁹ Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, p 20.

⁶⁰ HM Government, [Online Harms White Paper](#), April 2019, CP 57.

⁶¹ Prime Minister's Office, [Queen's Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, p 58.

⁶² *ibid.*

adequately address online gambling. This follows a commitment to review the Act made in the Conservative Party manifesto.⁶³

3.2 Broadband Bill

The Queen’s Speech stated the Government would introduce new laws to “accelerate the delivery of gigabit-capable broadband”.⁶⁴ This follows the commitment in the 2019 Conservative Party manifesto to enable the rollout of a full-fibre broadband network across the whole of the UK by 2025, including rural areas.⁶⁵

The background briefing to the Queen’s Speech stated the Government would introduce legislation to:⁶⁶

- Make it easier for telecoms companies to install broadband infrastructure in flats where landlords failed to respond to repeated requests for access. This legislation would establish a new tribunal process by which telecoms companies would be able to gain interim code rights (or access rights) for properties for a period of up to 18 months.
- Require new-built houses to have the infrastructure to support gigabit-capable broadband connections.
- Require developers to cooperate with broadband companies to install these connections.

The background briefing to the Queen’s Speech stated the Government would support the roll-out of gigabit-capable broadband to enable “nationwide coverage as soon as possible”.⁶⁷ It also repeated the manifesto commitment to provide £5 billion of funding to connect premises that are the hardest to reach.⁶⁸

The Conservative Party manifesto stated that further information on this funding, and on other infrastructure funding, would be provided in a national infrastructure strategy to be published at the time of the next budget.⁶⁹

3.3 Birmingham Commonwealth Games Bill

The background briefing to the Queen’s Speech stated that the Government would introduce a bill to make provision for the hosting of the next Commonwealth Games.⁷⁰ These will be held in Birmingham in 2022. A similar bill, the Birmingham Commonwealth Games Bill [HL], was introduced in the House of Lords during the previous parliament. It completed its report stage in the House of

⁶³ Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, p 20.

⁶⁴ [HL Hansard, 19 December 2019, cols 7–9](#).

⁶⁵ Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, pp 42–3.

⁶⁶ Prime Minister’s Office, [Queen’s Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, p 92.

⁶⁷ Prime Minister’s Office, [Queen’s Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, p 93.

⁶⁸ Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, p 28; and Prime Minister’s Office, [Queen’s Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, p 93.

⁶⁹ Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019: Costings Document](#), November 2019, p 3.

⁷⁰ Prime Minister’s Office, [Queen’s Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, p 139.

Lords during the 2017–19 session and was carried over into the 2019 session.⁷¹ However, it did not progress further and fell at the end of the 2019 session.

3.4 Other Announcements

The Conservative Party stated in its manifesto that a Conservative government would also:

- Require the free TV licences for over-75s to be funded by the BBC.⁷²
- Protect the role of the free press.⁷³
- Support local and regional newspapers.⁷⁴ This support would include extending business rate relief to local and regional press.
- Not implement the second part of the Leveson Inquiry’s recommendations (Leveson 2).⁷⁵
- Repeal section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013.⁷⁶ Section 40 of the 2013 Act has yet to be brought into force. It was included in the Act following the recommendations of the Leveson Inquiry into the UK press industry’s ethics and standards. If brought into force, this provision would affect news publishers who choose not to subscribe to an approved press regulator. It would require the publisher to pay the legal costs of both sides if the publisher is found to have acted illegally.⁷⁷ The Conservative Party argued in its manifesto that this would “coerce the press”.⁷⁸

Following the 2019 general election, the Secretary of State for Justice, Robert Buckland, announced the Government intended to review whether to de-criminalise non-payment of the television licence fee.⁷⁹

3.5 Further Reading

- HM Government, [Online Harms White Paper](#), April 2019, CP 57
- Home Office, [‘Online Harms White Paper Factsheet’](#), 8 April 2019
- Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, [‘Building Digital UK’](#), 17 October 2019
- BBC News, [‘Full-Fibre Broadband: What Is It and How Does It Work?’](#), 30 September 2019
- House of Commons Library, [Full-Fibre Networks in the UK](#), 4 June 2019
- House of Commons Library, [Free TV Licences for the Over-75s](#), 20 December 2019
- House of Commons Library, [Press Regulation after Leveson](#), 27 July 2018

⁷¹ UK Parliament, [‘Birmingham Commonwealth Games Bill \[HL\] 2017–19’](#), accessed 20 December 2019.

⁷² Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, p 16.

⁷³ *ibid*, p 20.

⁷⁴ *ibid*, p 26.

⁷⁵ *ibid*, p 48.

⁷⁶ *ibid*.

⁷⁷ Further information is provided in the following briefings: House of Lords Library, [Salisbury Convention: A Decade of Developments](#), 13 December 2019, pp 11–14; and House of Commons Library, [Press Regulation After Leveson](#), 27 July 2018.

⁷⁸ Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, p 48.

⁷⁹ Reuters, [‘UK Could Decriminalise Non-payment of BBC Licence Fee—Minister’](#), 10 December 2019.

4. Education

In its general election manifesto, the Conservative Party pledged that a Conservative government would: invest in schools; “level up Britain’s skills” by investing in more technical qualifications and apprenticeships; and maintain and strengthen the country’s “global position in higher education”.⁸⁰ The Queen’s Speech set out the following policy commitments.

4.1 Education Funding

The Government pledged in the Queen’s Speech to “ensure every child has access to a high-quality education” by increasing levels of funding per pupil in every school. This commitment was also made in the Conservative Party manifesto.⁸¹ The Government announced:⁸²

- An increase of £7.1 billion in the core schools budget by 2022/23, compared to 2019/20 funding levels. By 2022/23 the core schools budget will rise to £52.2 billion.
- The minimum per pupil amount for 2020/21 will increase to £3,750 for primary schools and £5,000 for secondary schools. The primary school minimum will rise to £4,000 in 2021/22.
- All local authorities will be legally required to deliver the minimum per-pupil funding in their local area.
- Schools funding will include £780 million of additional funding in 2020/21 for complex special educational needs.
- There will be an extra £400 million in 2020/21 for 16–19 year old education.

4.2 National Skills Fund

In the Queen’s Speech the Government pledged to establish a national skills fund of £3 billion over the course of the Parliament.⁸³

The Conservative Party’s manifesto provided further details on the Government’s plans:⁸⁴

- The fund will provide “matching funding” for individuals and SMEs for high-quality education and training.
- A proportion will be reserved for further “strategic” investment in skills.
- The Government intends to consult “widely” on its design.

⁸⁰ Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, pp 13 and 36–7.

⁸¹ [HL Hansard 19 December 2019, col 7](#); and Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, p 13.

⁸² Prime Minister’s Office, [Queen’s Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, pp 40–2.

⁸³ [HL Hansard 19 December 2019, col 8](#); and Prime Minister’s Office, [Queen’s Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, p 41.

⁸⁴ Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, p 36.

4.3 Other Announcements

The Conservative Party manifesto and the Queen’s Speech contained other education policy commitments. These included:⁸⁵

- Increasing teachers’ starting salaries to £30,000 nationally by September 2020.
- Expanding the free schools programme.
- Investing in primary school physical education teaching.
- Consulting on removing the Ofsted inspection exemption for some schools rated “outstanding” so that they are inspected routinely.
- Establishing 20 institutes of technology to “connect” teaching in science, technology, engineering and maths to business and industry.
- Considering the recommendations made in the Augar Review on post-18 education and funding.
- Making sure higher education funding “reflects a sustainable model” and delivers “value for money for both students and the taxpayer”. The Government pledged to review interest rates on student loan repayments in its manifesto.
- Ensuring that universities are places where “free speech can thrive” and strengthening “academic freedoms”.

4.4 Further Reading

- Department for Education, [‘Prime Minister Boosts Schools with £14 Billion Package’](#), 30 August 2019
- Department for Education and HM Treasury, [‘Chancellor Announces £400 Million Investment for 16–19 Year Olds’ Education’](#), 31 August 2019
- Institute for Fiscal Studies, [‘Conservative Manifesto: An Initial Reaction From IFS Researchers’](#), 24 November 2019
- Luke Sibieta, [‘Seven Charts on the £73,000 Cost of Educating a Child’](#), 2 December 2019
- John Roberts, [‘Funding at Heart of Tory Manifesto Offer for Schools’](#), *TES*, 24 November 2019
- Stephen Exley, [‘Conservative Manifesto: £3 billion for ‘National Skills Fund’](#), *TES*, 24 November 2019
- Sean Coughlan, [‘Conservatives Pledge to Boost Ofsted Rather than Scrap It’](#), BBC News, 29 November 2019; and Richard Adams, [‘Conservatives Pledge to Boost Ofsted’s Power to Inspect Schools’](#), *Guardian*, 28 November 2019
- John Morgan, [‘UK Universities Face Up to Brexit After Tory Election Win’](#), *Times Higher Education*, 13 December 2019

⁸⁵ Prime Minister’s Office, [Queen’s Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, pp 40–2; and Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, pp 13, and 36–7.

5. Health and Social Care

The Conservative Party pledged to “strengthen the NHS and social care” in its manifesto.⁸⁶ In the Queen’s Speech, the Government outlined the following NHS and social care-related legislation and policy measures to implement this ambition.

5.1 NHS Funding Bill and NHS Long-term Plan

The purpose of the NHS Funding Bill will be to “enshrine in law” the multi-year funding settlement for the NHS in England agreed in 2019.⁸⁷ The Government has stated that this will mean £34 billion per year in additional funding for the NHS in cash terms by 2023/24. It will also be the first time such an NHS funding commitment has been set out in legislation. It is expected that this bill will be brought forward early in the new session.

The Government has committed to “bring forward detailed proposals” in response to the NHS’s recommendations for legislative changes that would assist implementation of its long-term plan.⁸⁸ These were published in September 2019.⁸⁹ The Government expects to introduce draft legislation in due course as part of this process.

5.2 Health Service Safety Investigations Bill

The purpose of the Health Service Safety Investigations Bill will be to establish the Health Service Safety Investigations Body (HSSIB) on a statutory footing. This will be a new independent arms-length body with powers to conduct investigations into patient safety incidents that occur during the provision of NHS services.⁹⁰ The bill is expected to include provisions to:

- prohibit the disclosure of information held by HSSIB, except in limited circumstances, to allow participants to be candid in the information they provide and enable thorough investigations;
- improve the quality and effectiveness of local investigations by developing standards and providing advice, guidance and training to organisations;
- amend the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 to give NHS bodies in England the power to appoint medical examiners; and
- place a duty on the Secretary of State to ensure the system is properly maintained.

A bill with the same title had its second reading in the House of Lords on 29 October 2019, before

⁸⁶ Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, p 9.

⁸⁷ Prime Minister’s Office, [Queen’s Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, p 30. See also HM Treasury, [Spending Round 2019](#), 4 September 2019, CP 170, p 2. The King’s Fund has stated: “when adjusted for inflation, this equates to the £20.5 billion increase that was more commonly referred to when the NHS five-year settlement was announced” (Siva Anandaciva, [Five Numbers to Sum Up the Spending Round for Health and Social Care](#), The King’s Fund, 6 September 2019).

⁸⁸ *ibid*, pp 30–2.

⁸⁹ NHS England and NHS Improvement, [NHS Publishes Response and Recommendations on Long-term Plan Legislative Proposals](#), 26 September 2019.

⁹⁰ Prime Minister’s Office, [Queen’s Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, pp 35–6.

the dissolution of the 2017–19 parliament.⁹¹ This followed a joint committee’s scrutiny of a draft bill published in September 2017.⁹²

5.3 Medicines and Medical Devices Bill

The purpose of the Medicines and Medical Devices Bill will be to facilitate faster access to innovative medicines for the NHS and patients, at the same time as supporting the growth of the UK life sciences sector.⁹³ The Government has stated the bill’s aims will include:⁹⁴

- removing bureaucracy for the lowest-risk clinical trials, to encourage the “rapid” introduction of new medicines;
- protecting public health by implementing a scheme to tackle falsified medicines entering supply chains, and a registration scheme to set standards for online sellers;
- increasing the range of professions able to prescribe and supply certain medicines, as well as developing more innovative ways of dispensing medicines in local pharmacies;
- enabling the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and the Veterinary Medicines Directorate to develop regulatory approaches to be able to respond quickly to developments such as artificial intelligence in treatments; and
- simplifying and strengthening the system used to enforce medical device regulations.

5.4 Social Care

The Queen’s Speech included a commitment that the Government would “seek cross-party consensus on proposals for long-term reform of social care”.⁹⁵ Cross-party talks would form part of a three-point plan to address social care in England. The two accompanying measures set out were:⁹⁶

- an additional £1 billion for adult and children’s social care in every year of this parliament and consultation on a 2 percent precept that would enable local authorities to access a further £500 million for adult social care for 2020/21; and
- a commitment that “nobody needing care will be forced to sell their home” to pay for social care.

5.5 Mental Health

The Queen’s Speech also contained a commitment that the Government would “continue work to

⁹¹ [HL Hansard, 29 October 2019, cols 887–942](#). See also House of Lords Library, [Health Service Safety Investigations Bill \[HL\]](#), 24 October 2019.

⁹² Joint Committee on the Draft Health Service Safety Investigations Bill, [Draft Health Service Safety Investigations Bill: A New Capability for Investigating Patient Safety Incidents](#), 2 August 2018, HL Paper 180 of session 2017–19.

⁹³ Prime Minister’s Office, [Queen’s Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, pp 33–4.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*

⁹⁵ [HL Hansard, 19 December 2019, col 7](#).

⁹⁶ Prime Minister’s Office, [Queen’s Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, pp 37–8.

reform the Mental Health Act”.⁹⁷ This is expected to focus on providing better care and greater choice and autonomy for patients, and reforming the process for detention. The Government has stated that it will respond to the recommendations made by the Independent Review of the Mental Health Act 1983 in a white paper to be published in the new year.⁹⁸ This will be followed by legislation “when parliamentary time allows”.

5.6 Other Announcements

Other pledges announced by the Government in support of the NHS and its long-term plan in either the Conservative Party manifesto or as part of the Queen’s Speech include:⁹⁹

- Delivering 50,000 more nurses, 6,000 more doctors and 6,000 more primary care professionals in general practice.
- Introducing a new visa for qualified doctors, nurses and health professionals allowing entry to the United Kingdom on a fast-track and reduced-fee basis.
- Funding and building 40 new hospitals, in addition to the 20 hospital upgrades announced in summer 2019.
- Securing 50 million more appointments in GP surgeries every year.
- Supporting early cancer diagnosis across 78 hospital trusts.
- Addressing the ‘taper problem’ in doctors’ pensions.
- Providing free hospital parking for those in “greatest need”.
- Ensuring that the price the NHS pays for drugs will not be “on the table” in any trade deal negotiations.

5.7 Further Reading

- Department of Health and Social Care, [‘Matt Hancock: What Record NHS Investment Means for Each of My Priorities’](#), 18 December 2019
- Helen McKenna, [‘After the Election: How Will the New Government Approach Health and Social Care?’](#), The King’s Fund, 17 December 2019; and Richard Murray, [‘Looking Ahead to 2020’](#), The King’s Fund, 1 January 2020
- NHS Providers, [‘We Must be Realistic About What NHS Funding Will Buy’](#), 19 December 2019; and [‘Back to Reality for the NHS’](#), 19 December 2019
- Health Foundation, [‘Government Must Now “Grasp the Nettle” and Reform Social Care’](#), 19 December 2019
- House of Lords Library, [Health Service Safety Investigations Bill \[HL\]](#), 24 October 2019

⁹⁷ [HL Hansard, 19 December 2019, col 7](#); and Prime Minister’s Office, [Queen’s Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, p 39.

⁹⁸ The independent review published its final report in December 2018: Independent Review of the Mental Health Act 1983, [‘Modernising the Mental Health Act: Increasing Choice, Reducing Compulsion’](#), 6 December 2018.

⁹⁹ Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, pp 9–11; and Prime Minister’s Office, [Queen’s Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, p 31.

6. Housing

The Queen's Speech included a commitment that new measures would be introduced to “protect tenants and to improve building safety”.¹⁰⁰ The Government has proposed the following legislation to fulfil this undertaking.

6.1 Renters' Reform Bill

The purpose of the Renters' Reform Bill will be to introduce measures to “deliver a fairer and more effective rental market”.¹⁰¹ The main elements of the bill will include:¹⁰²

- abolishing the use of ‘no fault’ evictions by removing section 21 of the Housing Act 1988 and reforming the grounds for possession;
- reforming current legislation to give landlords more rights to gain possession of their property through the courts where there is a legitimate need for them to do so;
- introducing a new lifetime deposit to remove the need for tenants to pay a new deposit if or when they move; and
- measures to widen access to and expand the scope of the database of rogue landlords and property agents.

6.2 Building Safety Bill

The purpose of the Building Safety Bill will be to introduce “new and enhanced regulatory regimes for building safety and construction products, and ensure residents have a stronger voice in the system”.¹⁰³ The bill will take forward all 53 recommendations made by the Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety in its final report published in May 2018.¹⁰⁴ Led by Dame Judith Hackitt, the review found that the current regulatory system was not fit for purpose in relation to high-rise and complex buildings. In particular, the bill will aim to:¹⁰⁵

- Provide clearer accountability and stronger duties for those responsible for the safety of high-rise buildings.
- Give residents a “stronger voice in the system”, ensuring concerns are not ignored and encouraging residents' involvement in maintaining building safety.
- Strengthen enforcement and sanctions to deter non-compliance with the new regime.
- Develop a framework to provide national oversight of construction products and a system to oversee the whole built environment.

¹⁰⁰ [HL Hansard, 19 December 2019, col 8.](#)

¹⁰¹ Prime Minister's Office, [Queen's Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, pp 46–7.

¹⁰² *ibid.*

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, pp 51–3.

¹⁰⁴ Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety, [Building a Safer Future](#), May 2018, Cm 9607.

¹⁰⁵ Prime Minister's Office, [Queen's Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, p 51.

6.3 Fire Safety Bill

The purpose of the Fire Safety Bill will be to implement the relevant legislative recommendations of the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry Phase I report and “put beyond doubt” that the fire safety order will require building owners and managers of multi-occupied residential premises of any height to “fully consider and mitigate the risks of any external wall systems and fire doors”.¹⁰⁶ The Government has stated that the bill will:

- clarify that the scope of the fire safety order includes the external walls of buildings, including cladding, and fire doors for domestic premises of multiple occupancy;
- strengthen the relevant enforcement powers to hold building owners and managers to account; and
- provide a transitional period for building owners and managers (the “responsible person”) and Fire and Rescue Services to put in place the infrastructure for these changes.

6.4 Other Housing-related Measures

In the Queen’s Speech, the Government also made a commitment to “support home ownership, including by making homes available at a discount for local first-time buyers”.¹⁰⁷ Policy measures announced to support this ambition include:¹⁰⁸

- Building “at least” a million more homes over the current parliament, facilitated by an “ambitious” planning white paper and funding for relevant infrastructure.
- A social housing white paper to set out measures to “empower tenants and support the continued supply of social homes”.
- A consultation on first homes, that will aim to provide homes for local people and key workers at a discount of at least 30 percent.
- A renewal of the affordable homes programme.
- The introduction of a new shared ownership model aimed at “making buying a share of a home fairer and more transparent”.
- Ending “unfair practices” in the leasehold market and ensuring that new homes are sold as freehold if possible.
- Ending rough sleeping by the end of the current parliament.

The Conservative Party manifesto included other housing-related pledges, including: encouraging a new market in long-term fixed rate mortgages; extending the help-to-buy scheme from 2021 to 2023; bringing in a stamp duty surcharge on non-UK resident buyers; and maintaining a right-to-buy scheme for all council tenants.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Prime Minister’s Office, [Queen’s Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, pp 54–5. See also: Grenfell Tower Inquiry, ‘[Phase I Report](#)’, accessed 20 December 2019; and Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, SI 2005/1541.

¹⁰⁷ [HL Hansard, 19 December 2019, col 8.](#)

¹⁰⁸ Prime Minister’s Office, [Queen’s Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, pp 48–9.

¹⁰⁹ Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, p 29.

6.5 Further Reading

- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, '[Queen's Speech: Delivering Fairer, More Affordable Homes for Buyers and Renters](#)', 19 December 2019; and '[Prime Minister Pledges New Action to Eliminate Homelessness and Rough Sleeping](#)', 23 December 2019
- British Property Federation, '[BPF Reaction to Queen's Speech December 2019](#)', 19 December 2019
- National Housing Federation, '[Federation Response to the Queen's Speech](#)', 19 December 2019
- National Landlords Association, '[Government's Housing Plans Are a Crisis Waiting to Happen](#)', 19 December 2019
- Generation Rent, '[The New Parliament Must End the Renting Crisis](#)', 13 December 2019

7. Pensions

The Queen's Speech set out proposals to introduce a Pension Schemes Bill.¹¹⁰ The bill had been introduced in the 2019 session of the previous parliament, but did not receive a second reading before dissolution. Reintroducing the legislation was a Conservative Party manifesto commitment.¹¹¹

7.1 Pensions Schemes Bill

The main elements of the Pensions Schemes Bill would be:¹¹²

- Providing a framework for the introduction of collective defined contribution pensions.
- Strengthening the powers of the pensions regulators and introducing new criminal offences for mismanagement of occupational pensions schemes.
- Providing a framework for the introduction of online pensions dashboards, allowing pension holders to access their information all in one place.

Further information on the bill as introduced in the previous parliament can be found in the House of Lords Library briefing, [Pension Schemes Bill \[HL\]](#), 24 October 2019.

7.2 Other Policy Announcements

The Conservative Party manifesto promised a Conservative government would retain the current 'triple lock' on state pensions.¹¹³ Under this mechanism, the amount paid under the state pension increases each year by the highest of 2.5 percent, the consumer prices index (CPI) measure of inflation or average earnings. The manifesto committed to retaining winter fuel payments, free bus passes and "other pensioner benefits".¹¹⁴

The manifesto also committed to address two other issues related to pensions. First, the manifesto stated that a number of workers, disproportionately women, had been missing out on pensions benefits due to a "loophole" affecting those earning £10,000 to £12,500.¹¹⁵ The manifesto said a Conservative government would undertake a "comprehensive review" to fix the issue. Second, the manifesto referred to a "taper problem" in doctors' pensions, which "causes many to turn down extra shifts for fear of high tax bills".¹¹⁶ It committed a Conservative government to solving the problem, firstly by holding an "urgent review" within the first 30 days of taking office.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁰ Prime Minister's Office, [Queen's Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, p 56.

¹¹¹ Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, p 35.

¹¹² Prime Minister's Office, [Queen's Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, pp 56–7.

¹¹³ Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, p 16.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, p 16.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, p 10.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*

7.3 Further Reading

- Imogen Tew, '[Industry Welcomes Govt's Commitment on Pensions](#)', *Financial Times Adviser*, 20 December 2019
- Department for Work and Pensions, [Delivering Collective Defined Contribution Pension Schemes: Public Consultation](#), November 2018, pp 7–20; and [Government Response](#), March 2019, pp 5–15
- Department for Work and Pensions, [Pensions Dashboards: Working Together for the Consumer](#), December 2018, Cm 9719, pp 5–12; and [Government Response](#), April 2019, CP 75, pp 6–9
- BBC News, '[NHS Waiting Lists Surge Due to Pensions Row](#)', 8 July 2019

8. Transport

In the Queen's Speech, the Government said it would prioritise investment in infrastructure.¹¹⁸ It also said it would introduce a requirement for minimum levels of service to be provided during transport strikes.

8.1 Air Traffic Management and Unmanned Aircraft Bill

The background briefing to the Queen's Speech stated that the Government plans to introduce a bill to reform air traffic management and create new powers to tackle the unlawful use of unmanned aircraft.¹¹⁹ This bill would:

- give the Government new powers to direct an airport or other relevant body to submit a proposal to the Civil Aviation authority to modernise their airspace;
- modernise the licensing framework for air traffic control; and
- give the police powers to require a person to land an unmanned aircraft and enhanced stop and search powers where certain unmanned aircraft-related offences have taken place.

8.2 Airline Insolvency Legislation

The Government intends to introduce legislation to protect passengers in the event of an airline becoming insolvent. The focus of the legislation would be ensuring passengers are able to return home quickly after an airline becomes insolvent.¹²⁰

8.3 Railways Minimum Service Levels Legislation

The Queen's Speech included a commitment to introduce measures to ensure a minimum service is provided during transport strikes.¹²¹ This measure was included in the Conservative Party's 2019 general election manifesto.¹²² The background briefing to the Queen's Speech states that this legislation would make a strike against a rail employer unlawful unless a minimum service agreement, setting out the minimum service to be delivered during the strike, is in place.¹²³

8.4 Rail Infrastructure Announcements

High Speed 2 Bill

High Speed 2 is a high speed rail infrastructure project that would connect London, Leeds,

¹¹⁸ Prime Minister's Office, '[Queen's Speech December 2019](#)', 19 December 2019.

¹¹⁹ Prime Minister's Office, '[Queen's Speech 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#)', 19 December 2019, p 95.

¹²⁰ *ibid*, p 97.

¹²¹ Prime Minister's Office, '[Queen's Speech December 2019](#)', 19 December 2019.

¹²² Conservative Party, '[Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#)', November 2019, p 27.

¹²³ Prime Minister's Office, '[The Queen's Speech 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#)', 19 December 2019, p 99.

Manchester and the West Midlands. The project is planned to be undertaken in phases:

- Phase 1: London to West Midlands;
- Phase 2a: West Midlands to Crewe; and
- Phase 2b, comprising:
 - Crewe to Manchester; and
 - West Midlands to Leeds.¹²⁴

The project was initially launched by the Labour Government in 2009 and has been backed by the subsequent Coalition and Conservative governments.¹²⁵ A bill approving phase 2a of the project completed all its stages in the House of Commons in July 2019 and had its second reading in the House of Lords on 9 September 2019.¹²⁶

In August 2019, the Government launched a review, led by Douglas Oakervee, into whether and how the High Speed 2 project should proceed.¹²⁷ In its general election manifesto, the Conservative Party said it would consider the findings of the review and work with leaders of the Midlands and the North to decide the optimal outcome of the project.¹²⁸ In the background briefing to the Queen's Speech, the Government said that while it would await the outcome of the Oakervee review, it expected the bill to be revived and taken forward in the new parliament.¹²⁹

Other Rail Investments

The Queen's Speech background briefing included commitments to invest in railways in several regions of England. The Government said it would invest in:

- a Midlands Rail Hub, to improve services around Birmingham and through the West and East Midlands;
- Northern Powerhouse Rail;
- reopening a number of the lines and stations closed under the Beeching cuts in the 1960s; and
- significant upgrades to urban commuter and regional services outside London.¹³⁰

The Conservative Party's manifesto provided further detail on these plans. It stated that the first priority of Northern Powerhouse Rail would be the connection between Leeds and Manchester, followed by a focus on Liverpool, Tees Valley, Hull, Sheffield and Newcastle.¹³¹ The Midlands Rail Hub

¹²⁴ House of Lords Library, [High Speed Rail \(West Midlands–Crewe\) Bill](#), 15 August 2019, p 1.

¹²⁵ *ibid*, pp 2–3.

¹²⁶ UK Parliament website, '[Bill Stages–High Speed Rail \(West Midlands–Crewe\) Bill 2017–19 to 2019](#)', accessed 20 December 2019.

¹²⁷ Department for Transport, '[Government Announces Independent Review into HS2 Programme](#)', 21 August 2019.

¹²⁸ Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, p 27.

¹²⁹ Prime Minister's Office, [The Queen's Speech 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, p 102.

¹³⁰ *ibid*, p 101.

¹³¹ Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, p 27.

will aim to strengthen rail links between Birmingham, Leicester, Nottingham, Coventry, Derby, Hereford and Worcester.

8.5 Further Measures

The Conservative Party's manifesto also mentioned further transport policies, including:¹³²

- not allocating any new public money to the third runway at Heathrow, and requiring the project to meet air quality and noise obligations; and
- investing in “superbus networks with lower fares”, as announced in September 2019 as part of a new policy on bus transport.

8.6 Further Reading

- House of Commons Library, [Civilian Drones](#), 11 February 2019
- House of Commons Library, [Airline Insolvency Review](#), 1 November 2019
- Edward Thicknesse, '[RMT Pledges to Fight Tory Plans for “Minimum Service” During Strikes](#)', *City A.M.*, 17 December 2019
- Department for Transport, '[Government Announces Independent Review into HS2 Programme](#)', 21 August 2019; and Louisa Clarence-Smith, '[Full Speed Ahead for HS2 or Passengers Will Face Rising Fares](#)', *The Times* (£), 12 November 2019
- Department for Transport, '[A Better Deal for Bus Users](#)', 30 September 2019

¹³² Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, p 28.

9. Welfare

The only legislative announcement in the Queen’s Speech directly applicable to the welfare system was the Immigration and Social Security Coordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill.

9.1 Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill

The background notes state that the bill would provide powers after Brexit for the UK to “align the entitlement of EU citizens arriving after January 2021 to access taxpayer funded benefits with that of non-EU citizens”.¹³³ This was a Conservative Party manifesto commitment.¹³⁴ The manifesto stated that after Brexit EU citizens would only be able to access “unemployment, housing, and child benefit after five years, in the way non-EEA migrants currently do”.¹³⁵ The manifesto also stated that a Conservative Government would “no longer allow people to claim child benefit for children living overseas”.¹³⁶

A previous version of the Immigration and Social Security Coordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill was introduced in the 2017–19 session of the last parliament; however, it did not complete its House of Commons stages before Parliament was dissolved for the election.¹³⁷

9.2 National Strategy for Disabled People

The Queen’s Speech background notes include the Government’s intention to publish a national disability strategy, which had also been a Conservative Party manifesto commitment.¹³⁸ The Government stated that it wanted to “transform the lives” of disabled people by ensuring they have “access to opportunities and are able to achieve their potential”.¹³⁹

The disability strategy would be published in 2020, and would include “practical proposals” to improve disabled people’s access to “housing, education and transport”.¹⁴⁰ The notes state that the welfare and benefits aspects of the strategy would be published in a future green paper, to consider how the system can best support disabled people.

The Conservative Party manifesto included a commitment to “reduce the number of reassessments a disabled person must go through” in the welfare system.¹⁴¹

¹³³ Prime Minister’s Office, [Queen’s Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, p 23.

¹³⁴ Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, p 23.

¹³⁵ *ibid.*

¹³⁶ *ibid.*

¹³⁷ UK Parliament website, [‘Immigration and Social Security Coordination \(EU Withdrawal\) Bill 2017–19’](#), accessed 20 December 2019.

¹³⁸ Prime Minister’s Office, [Queen’s Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, p 62.

¹³⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, p 17.

9.3 Other Policy Announcements

The Conservative Party manifesto said that a Conservative government would continue the roll-out of universal credit and “do more to make sure that universal credit works for the most vulnerable”.¹⁴² It also committed to “end the benefit freeze, while making sure it pays to work more hours”.¹⁴³ The manifesto committed to reduce poverty, including child poverty, and to maintain free school meals.

9.4 Further Reading

- House of Commons Library, [The Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination \(EU Withdrawal\) Bill 2017–19](#), 25 January 2019
- Resolution Foundation, [The Shifting Shape of Social Security: Charting the Changing Size and Shape of the British Welfare System](#), November 2019, pp 4–11
- Andrew Woodcock, [‘Tory Tax and Welfare Plans Will Benefit Richer Households More Than Poorest, Says Leading Think-Tank’](#), *Independent*, 28 November 2019
- Matt Honeycombe-Foster, [‘Boris Johnson Eyes £5bn Welfare Spending Spree As Jeremy Corbyn Narrows Poll Gap’](#), *Politics Home*, 3 November 2019

¹⁴² Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, p 17.

¹⁴³ *ibid.*