

Heritage and the Queen's Speech December 2019

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On 19 December 2019, the Queen set out the priorities of the recently elected Government. The full text of the speech as it was delivered can be found [here](#), and the Background Briefing Notes (BBN) [here](#).

Areas in the Queen's speech which may impact on heritage include:

- **Brexit.** This Government is determined to deliver the UK's departure from the EU on 31 January 2020, seeking to negotiate a free trade agreement with the European Union and to implement a new Protocol on Northern Ireland. The Heritage Alliance has recently updated our Briefings "[Brexit and Heritage](#)" and "[Heritage and Immigration](#)" to highlight the impact that this event could have on the heritage sector. We also [responded](#) to the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) Call for Evidence in November 2019.
 - Immigration will be regulated by a new Australian-style points-based system (from 2021) and "will welcome skilled workers from across the world" (**Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill**). A new MAC report is expected in January 2020 on the Australian-style points-based system. Criteria will be based on skills ("exceptional talents" and "sponsored entrepreneurs": BBN, p. 24) and having received a job offer. Low-skilled "sector-specific workers" will not be entitled to apply for permanent settlement. The **European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill** will include measures to ensure that EU citizens who are in the UK can remain. A fast-track immigration scheme will be introduced for scientists and researchers.
 - In this framework, the **Agriculture Bill** will replace the EU subsidy system (Common Agricultural Policy). It will aim to set "a new Environmental Land Management scheme, underpinned by the principle of 'public money for public good'." (BBN, p. 17). Rewards will be introduced for farmers who contribute to environmental protection.
 - The **Fisheries Bill** will replace the EU Fisheries Policy and will seek to ensure sustainable fishing, improving also the safeguarding of marine environment and resources. [See our documents: [Heritage in the Marine Environment](#), and our responses [to the EFRA Committee](#) and [to the House of Commons Public Bill Committee](#)].
- **Culture**
 - The **Cultural Capital programme** (£250m) will support local libraries and regional museums.

- Retail discounts will be increased and extended to cinemas and music venues. An additional discount will be put in place for pubs.
- The Windrush Compensation Scheme (Expenditure) Bill will ensure that the scheme is underpinned by parliamentary legislation.
- **Prioritisation of the National Health Service.** It is worth remembering that the [Conservatives Manifesto](#) earlier this year mentioned social prescription as a tool to improve wellbeing.
- **Businesses and working conditions.** The Government commits to an increasing of the **National Living Wage** (reaching two thirds of median earnings). **Flexible working** will be encouraged (Employment Bill), also thanks to an improved gigabit-capable nationwide broadband connection (BBN, p. 92). Tax credits for research and development will be increased. The Government commits to review the **business rates**.
- Increased funding for high-quality **education**, as well as in science research. A “**National Skills Fund**” will be created. Greater focus will be given to tech education (e.g. with the creation of new dedicated Institutes). Funding in Research and Development (R&D) will be boosted (target of 2.4% of GDP spent on R&D by 2027), and bureaucracy in funding will be reduced. The Government commits to continue to collaborate with the EU in the research sector, including the Horizon programme.
- **Environment.** The Government commits to meet the target of net zero gas emissions by 2050. The **Environment Bill** will set environmental principles and legally binding targets, and will establish the Office for Environmental Protection. [On this topic you can see our [Briefing on the Exclusion of the Historic Environment](#), submitted ahead of the 2nd reading of the Environment Bill and a our [briefing on the potential of a positive implementation of the Environment Bill](#) (January 2019)]. An additional 75,000 acres of trees will be planted each year. Investments will be made in green infrastructures, electric vehicles, as well as house energy efficiency. A new £640m Nature for Climate Fund will be created.
- **Housing and planning.** Measures will be introduced to support home ownership and to improve building safety (Building Safety Bill, Fire Safety Bill). At least 1 million new homes will be built (BBN, p. 48). They will be required to support gigabit-capable connections. [On planning, see our [response](#) to the 2019 MHCLG consultation].
 - The **Planning White Paper** will “make the planning process clearer” and accessible (BBN, p. 48). Resourcing in Planning Departments will also be addressed.
 - ‘Infrastructure first’: specific funding for basic infrastructures (roads, schools, GPs) will support new homes.
- Investments in **infrastructures**, as already announced in the [Conservative Manifesto](#) (pp. 26-28). Minimum Service Agreements will ensure minimum service during strikes. A White Paper on railways is expected in 2020 (it will aim to end the franchising model now in place). Investments in railways will include the restoring of some Beeching lines and stations, closed in the 1960s. The High Speed Rail (West Midlands - Crewe) Bill will enable the next phase of HS2.
- **Devolution.** The Government commits to “give communities more control over how investment is spent so that they can decide what is best for them”. A White Paper will set out the Government’s strategy on devolution, including spending and funding. After the establishment of City Region Mayors, the Government aims to devolve more powers (especially in transport and education). Local communities will have “the final say on council tax, giving them the power to veto excessive rises” (BBN, p. 61). Local authorities will be required to deliver a minimum per-pupil funding in their area (BBN, p. 40). The **UK Shared Prosperity Fund** will operate throughout the UK.

- On the **international** side, the Government “will work to promote and expand the United Kingdom’s influence in the world ... covering all aspects of international policy from defence to diplomacy and development”.
- Other measures:
 - After the bankruptcy of the company Thomas Cook, the Thomas Cook Compensation Bill will enable the Government to compensate the customers who suffered serious injuries, for which UK-based Thomas Cook would have been liable.
 - The Birmingham Commonwealth Games Bill will ensure a fair management of the 2022 Commonwealth Games, the setting of a Games Transport Plan and a fair tickets pricing.

The Heritage Alliance will continue to use our [Heritage Manifesto](#) and our Fiscal Manifesto “[Backing the Bedrock](#)” to raise the sector’s concerns with the DCMS Secretary of State, Nicky Morgan, and others across the Government.

Our members are non-government, voluntary and private organisations that promote, conserve, study and involve the public in [our heritage](#).

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