

RANDALL'S

» Political monitoring with a human touch



King's Speech 2024 – Background Briefing

12 July 2024

Contents

Introduction.....	2
Procedure	2
What legislation can we expect?	3

Introduction

On Wednesday 17 July, a new Parliamentary session will begin with the State Opening of Parliament and the King's Speech, taking place in the House of Lords at 11.30 am. The speech will set out the new Labour government's priorities and legislative agenda, listing the bills it intends to pass over the coming year and giving details of forthcoming state visits.

As Keir Starmer has promised to "[hit the ground running](#)" in his new role as Prime Minister, he and his team will have been preparing for this day for months. The 10-minute speech will outline Labour's aims for the next year, and quite naturally, is thought to be centred on commitments made in their manifesto in previous weeks. With promises of a "new deal for working people" in the run up to the election, it is expected that the government's first priority will be to push through an employment rights bill within the first 100 days. The other talking points of this speech are thought to be legislation to nationalise the railways, establish Great British Energy, increase the number of new homes and to rebuild the NHS.

After the speech, the House of Commons will be suspended until 2.30 pm. When MPs return, a general debate will take place on the contents of the speech, and then in the following days more specific debates will take place. The [Lords debates have already been announced](#) and are as follows:

- **Thursday 18 July** from 11 am – Energy, Environment and Housing
- **Friday 19 July** from 10 am – Creating Opportunities: Education, Early Years and Health Care
- **Monday 22 July** from 2.30 pm – Economic Growth, Infrastructure and Employment
- **Tuesday 23 July** from 2.30 pm – Constitution and Devolution
- **Wednesday 24 July** from 3 pm – Justice and Home Affairs
- **Thursday 25 July** from 11 am – Foreign Affairs and Defence

At the end of these debates, the speech is then voted on by MPs – this is viewed as the first test that any new government faces. However, with Labour's large majority it is almost certain that the King's Speech will pass.

Procedure

Ceremony

The King's Speech is written by the government and delivered by the King in the House of Lords. Before it is delivered, an official from the Lords named [Black Rod](#) first summons MPs to the Lords chamber. On their approach to the Commons, the door is slammed in their face to symbolise its independence from the monarchy; it is only opened once and knocked three times with an ebony staff. In a similar act of tradition, a government MP (typically a whip who bears the title of Vice Chamberlain of the Household), is 'held hostage' in Buckingham Palace during the King's visit to Parliament, to ensure the monarch's safe return.

The Lord Chancellor presents the King with his speech in a silk bag, which he takes around ten minutes to read before departing. It is to be read in a neutral tone and listened to in silence by MPs and peers. Once delivered, documents relating to the speech are published and we send them to clients.

Debate

After the ceremony, the speech is then debated over five or six days in both the Commons and the Lords as a “[Humble Address](#)” to the King. A symbolic first reading is given to the Outlawries Bill (in the Commons) and the Select Vestries Bill (in the Lords) before the debates on the contents of the King’s Speech can begin. This is to demonstrate the Houses’ right to consider other business.

MPs meet at 2.30 pm in the Commons to begin the first day of general debate, where a motion on the address is moved and seconded by two backbenchers from the governing party, traditionally from very different constituencies and parliamentary intakes. The Leader of the Opposition then makes a speech followed by a response from the Prime Minister before the leader of the third largest party, who is now Ed Davey of the Liberal Democrats, and any other MPs. Topics for subsequent days of debate are decided by the government with notice given by the Speaker before the first day of debate begins.

The Lords have a shorter day of debate, convening at 3.30 pm; speeches are made by a mover and seconder before the Leader of the Opposition in the Lords traditionally moves a motion to adjourn. Advance notice is given slightly ahead of the topics for the Lords’ themed debates. The motion of the King’s Speech is agreed in the Lords without amendment. In the Commons, the debate concludes with a vote on the government motion which can be amended. Here, up to four amendments may be selected by the Speaker, which may be debated in the last two days of the Address.

In the past, voting on the King’s Speech was an important indication as to whether a government commanded confidence in the Commons, but this is not so much of an issue when they hold a majority.

Other Parliamentary business

On the day of the King’s Speech, urgent questions and applications for emergency debates are not permitted. From the next day, most public business resumes. Although the debate on the Address is generally prioritised, government statements and urgent questions can be taken and debates on other matters can be scheduled. The rota for daily oral questions to department ministers, including Prime Minister’s Questions, begins on the first Monday after the speech. Westminster Hall debates are suspended until the debate on the Address has concluded. Daily adjournment debates take place as normal, including on the day of the speech itself.

What legislation can we expect?

Keir Starmer’s first King’s Speech is expected to be one of most packed in post-war history, containing at least 30 bills. Considerable focus is set to be upon house building, with a hiring spree of planning officers and comprehensive housing legislation planned to include a council-led review of the re-classification of green belt land. Chancellor Rachel Reeves’ fiscal rules are to be enshrined in law, as is a requirement for the Office of Budget Responsibility to publish a forecast attached to every budget. Some legislation originating from the previous government will be resurrected, including the substance of the Tobacco and Vapes Bill and the introduction of an independent regulator of men’s football in England.

Rebel amendments to the two-child benefit cap have been mooted, which will be an initial test of the government's resolve.

A list of expected legislation that has been trailed by the party or speculated on by the media, is below.

A New Deal for Working People

Promised to be enacted within 100 days of government, Labour's New Deal for Working People is expected to introduce an increase in the minimum wage, the removal of age bands and penalties for companies that don't comply.

Race Equality Bill

This item of legislation is expected to extend equal pay rights to BAME and disabled workers and ensure equal pay claims are treated the same as those made by women. The Windrush Compensation scheme will also be re-started within the Home Office, monitored by a Windrush commissioner.

Fiscal Responsibility Bill

The new Chancellor's fiscal rules are to be enshrined in law, to make it a legal requirement for the Office of Budget Responsibility to provide forecasts to accompany all budgets.

Railway legislation

The 1993 Railways Act will be amended to allow the government to nationalise rail companies when their current franchises expire.

Energy Independence Bill

This will unveil the new publicly owned energy company, GB Energy, which will finance and build low carbon energy infrastructure including solar, wind and nuclear.

Housing legislation

A review of green belt land for housebuilding and the restoration of council housing targets is set to be included in the King's Speech. Legislation may also be granted that allows local authorities to scrap the hope value of earmarked future developments, bans no fault evictions and rolls out a "first dibs" housing scheme in London, prioritising locals above foreign investors.

Tobacco and Vapes Bill

The short-lived smoking ban legislation is expected to be resurrected which will ban disposable vapes as well as the sale of tobacco to anyone born after 1 January 2009.

NHS reform

Legislation will reform the UK's current mental health policy with the aim of tackling the amount of people being sectioned, and to improve care for people with learning disabilities who are being detained in hospitals.

Border Security Bill

A new Border Security Command will be established that gives authorities the power to punish people traffickers with serious crime prevention orders.

Two-child benefit cap

There are rumours that the two-child benefit cap could be scrapped, despite Keir Starmer's promise to keep it. Kim Johnson and John McDonnell have both pledged to make amendments to the King's Speech if it is not, while Scottish Labour backed by Gordon Brown have demanded the cap is axed.

Crime and Policing Bill

Legislation will be introduced to crack down on antisocial behaviour and create a new offence of criminal exploitation of a child to tackle county lines drug-dealing.

Constitutional changes

Automatic voter registration will be introduced, potentially alongside the lowering of the voting age to 16, as pledged in Labour's manifesto. A long-awaited Hillsborough law will introduce a duty of candour for all public servants.

House of Lords reform

Proposals may include the removal of hereditary peers and the compulsory retirement of all peers at the age of 80.

"Take Back Control" Bill

More powers will be devolved to Metro Mayors and local authorities, such as powers over energy, transportation and planning. They will be given powers to reinstate bus routes and set bus fares.

Martyn's Law

Named after Martyn Hett, a victim of the 2017 Manchester Arena bombings, this would require all venues and local authorities to have training requirements and preventative plans against terror attacks.

Football Governance Bill

This legislation would grant powers to an independent body to oversee clubs in the top five leagues of men's professional football in England and ensure their financial stability.

AI regulation

Several technology bills are expected. Labour's manifesto pledged to ban sexually explicit 'deepfake' images and videos.

For further information, please email team@randallsmonitoring.co.uk