

A new Queen's Speech to build back better from the pandemic

New laws to ensure the UK builds back better and stronger from the pandemic will be unveiled in next week's Queen's Speech.

Following the unprecedented, global impact of coronavirus the Government's new legislative programme will be focussed on supporting the nation's recovery, backing the NHS, levelling up and spreading opportunity.

It will support jobs, businesses and our economy, while delivering the Government's commitments to create safer streets and neighbourhoods and achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, for a cleaner, greener UK.

The new measures will build on the progress so far, in spite of the pandemic, following a period which also saw the UK become an independent nation outside the EU.

The Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

The impact of the pandemic on people's lives has been unique in our history.

My Government is still focussed on beating this disease, saving lives and livelihoods and rolling out vaccines, but I am also determined that we look forward and get on with fulfilling the promises we have made to the British people.

Not only will we address the legacies of the pandemic, we will go further to unite and level up the country, fight crime and create opportunities up and down the country for businesses and families to build brighter futures.

The State Opening of Parliament on Tuesday follows the delivery of 44 bills in the last Parliamentary session, including the legal framework to help us strike new trade deals around the world and powers to regain control over our borders.

A number of bills will be carried over to complete their passage in the next session. This includes the Environment Bill, which will set legally binding environmental targets, and cement the UK's leadership on climate change, as we host the international COP26 Summit in Glasgow later this year.

Laws to protect the public, support our police and deliver Manifesto commitments to cut crime will also return, with the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill set to overhaul sentencing to keep serious sexual and violent offenders behind bars for longer.

The bill will also double the maximum sentence for assaulting people in the emergency services, who have worked night and day to keep us safe during the pandemic, and build confidence in the criminal justice system by speeding up justice, modernising courts and reforming bail to better protect vulnerable victims and witnesses.

To tackle knife crime and youth violence, the bill will give the police new powers to stop and search those convicted of knife and offensive weapons offences. Police, local authorities and other agencies will also have a new, legal duty to work together to address the root causes of serious violence and intervene earlier to prevent these crimes from happening in the first place.

These changes follow the delivery of the new Counter-Terrorism and Sentencing Act, which ends the prospect of early release for anyone convicted of a serious terror offence, and the Domestic Abuse Act, which will transform our response and provide greater protections from all forms of abuse.

Together these serve as examples of the Government's commitment to deliver on the promises made to the British people before the pandemic.

The Government's agenda, to be set out in next week's Queen's Speech, will continue to reflect that ambition to not only fight COVID-19 and recover from its impacts, but to build back better.