

National Security Bill reaches last stage in the House of Commons

This is an important stage in the progress of this vital bill, which will keep the people of this nation safe by introducing a full suite of new measures to tackle the full range of modern-day state threats, from sabotage and spying to foreign interference and economic espionage.

For the first time, the bill will make it illegal to be an undeclared spy in the UK.

It will be an offence to improperly interfere with the UK's democracy and civil society through disinformation or by attacking our electoral processes. Attempting to sabotage our critical national infrastructure – either by damaging a government or military building or by directing a ransomware attack – will also be illegal under the new offences.

Since the bill was introduced to the House of Commons, the government has added a new Foreign Influence Registration scheme (FIRS), which will compel those acting for a foreign power or entity to declare any political influencing activity that they are carrying out – and criminalise those who do not. This will strengthen the resilience of the UK political system against covert foreign influence.

The scheme will also enable the government to specify foreign powers, or entities they control, if they attempt to undermine the UK, its democracy and values. This will mean individuals or companies acting at their behest will be required to register any arrangements or activities with them – and face prosecution if they do not.

Tom Tugendhat, Security Minister, said:

The threat of hostile activity against the UK's interests from foreign powers is growing. Malign actors are emboldened and their modes are becoming more sophisticated.

Our laws must be updated to give our agencies the tools they need to keep us safe.

Our National Security Bill will enhance our ability to protect our national security, updating our tools, powers and protections to counter those who seek to do us harm.

The bill will ensure our world class security and intelligence agencies and police have the modern tools, powers and protections they need to counter those who threaten our country.

It will also introduce additional powers and measures to tackle the threat

from terrorism. For instance, allowing the courts to withhold payment of civil damages if there is a real risk that money will be used for the purposes of terrorism.

The National Security Bill is vital to deter actions which often take place in the shadows. We must be able to deter, detect and disrupt those state actors who seek to harm the UK by covertly targeting our national interests, sensitive information, trade secrets and democratic way of life.

The bill will progress through further stages as Parliamentary time allows.