

New pledges for the Armed Forces announced in Queen's Speech

The Government has reaffirmed its solid commitment to protecting and supporting the Armed Forces in the Queen's Speech today.

The Queen's Speech, which outlines legislative priorities for the next Parliamentary session, prioritises both veterans and serving personnel with a promise to further incorporate the Armed Forces Covenant in law, and bring forward proposals to tackle vexatious claims. The Government will also maintain its commitment to spend at least 2 per cent of GDP on defence every year of this Parliament.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

The interests of the men and women of our armed forces are at the heart of this government. That is why we are continuing to invest above inflation every year to meet our NATO commitments.

Beyond this unwavering commitment, I'm pleased we will be bringing forward vital legislation that will put an end to the dogged pursuit of personnel and veterans from repeated investigations resulting from vexatious claims.

We'll also further incorporate the Armed Forces Covenant into law. This will be essential to ensure we minimise any disadvantage faced by the military community because of the sacrifices they make for this country.

The Government is strongly opposed to our service personnel and veterans being subject to the threat of vexatious litigation in the form of repeated investigations and potential prosecution arising from historical military operations many years after the events in question. Following a consultation earlier in the year on proposed legal protections, work is happening at pace to respond.

The Armed Forces Covenant has provided everyday benefits to our armed forces and their families since its introduction. It is this government's aim to build upon this great work, as such it will progress proposals to further incorporate the Covenant into law to minimise any disadvantage faced by the armed forces community due to the unique nature of military service.

Next year will see publication of the government's strategy action plan following last year's consultation on the Strategy for our Veterans at its foundation. This will provide a comprehensive approach to maximising the potential of our veterans while also supporting those who need it.

Other key commitments include:

- The introduction of a Veteran's railcard
- A guaranteed job interview for veterans for any public sector role they apply for where they possess the minimum job requirements
- Reducing the Employer's NICs contribution for those employing veterans
- Providing additional childcare support to those currently serving
- Protecting Armed Forces personnel from tax rises in Scotland, where income tax is devolved to Holyrood