

BRITISH CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE
Queen’s Speech – May 2021
Summary of key bills



The Queen’s Speech took place on 11 May. The below grid provides an overview of the key Bills announced for the reference of the Accredited Chamber of Commerce Network. Whilst much more detail will come into the public domain over time, the Government’s briefing note is [here](#).

Bill	What the Bill will legislate for	BCC high-level position
<p>High Speed Rail (Crewe – Manchester) Bill: Transform connectivity by rail and bus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Powers to compulsorily acquire the land needed for the railway, to construct and to operate it. • Deemed planning permission to deliver the scheme. The details of planning will be developed on a site-by-site basis in coordination with the local planning authority. • Setting out how railway regulation will apply to HS2. 	<p>The HS2 network must be delivered in full to gain maximum benefit from the scheme. The passage of this Bill is an important step towards this, and the realisation of many transformative regeneration and investment projects planned in the North and Midlands dependent on the route.</p>
<p>Skills and Post-16 Education Bill: Lifetime skills guarantee to provide access to training throughout people’s lives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting employers at the heart of the post-16 skills system through the Skills Accelerator, by enabling employers and providers to collaborate to develop skills plans aimed at ensuring local skills provision meets local needs. • Introducing the Lifelong Learning Entitlement, which will give individuals access to the equivalent of up to four years’ student loans for level 4-6 qualifications that they can use flexibly across their lifetime, at colleges as well as universities. • Strengthening the system of accountability by extending existing powers for the Secretary of State for Education to intervene where colleges have failed to meet local needs, to direct structural change where required to secure improvement, and by amending the regulation of post-16 education and training providers to ensure quality. 	<p>As we set out in our Workplace Training and Development Commission, firms want an education system that better prepares young people for the workplace and a skills system that supports more people to retrain and gain technical and vocational qualifications throughout their working lives.</p> <p>We need a more agile skills system that can adapt quickly to meet the evolving needs of employers. Giving local businesses a stronger voice in skills planning will help ensure people get the training they need.</p> <p>Good to see this move towards parity of funding and access for technical and academic routes. Around 3 in 4 employers are experiencing recruitment difficulties and say they need more people with technical qualifications, especially at level 4 and 5. Could the loan be introduced earlier than 2025?</p> <p>Training providers need more flexibility to deliver high quality skills training that meets</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening the ability of the Office for Students to assess and regulate Higher Education provision in England, ensuring that they can regulate in line with minimum expectations of quality. 	the needs of employers of all sizes, wherever they are located in the UK.
<p>Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Bill: Extend 5G mobile coverage and gigabit broadband</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requiring manufacturers, importers and distributors to ensure that consumer connected products (e.g. wifi routers) that are available to UK consumers meet minimum security standards. It would also create powers to investigate cases of non-compliance and to take steps to ensure compliance. Providing a robust regulatory framework that can adapt and remain effective in the face of rapid technological advancement, the evolving techniques employed by malicious actors and the broader international regulatory landscape. Reforms to the Electronic Communications Code to support faster and more collaborative negotiations for the use of private and public land for telecommunications, and to put the right framework in place for using that equipment. 	<p>Business communities across the country rely on fast and reliable mobile and broadband coverage to run their businesses and to connect with customers, suppliers and employees both here and across the world.</p> <p>With more staff and firms working flexibly, extending 5G mobile coverage and gigabit broadband is key to facilitating these connections.</p> <p>This extension must ensure the elimination of mobile not spots, particularly in rural areas and on major road and rail corridors.</p>
<p>Subsidy Control Bill: Measures to support businesses, reflecting the UK's strategic interests and drives economic growth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating a consistent set of UK-wide principles that public authorities must follow when granting subsidies. Exempting categories of subsidies from some or all of the new regulations. Prohibiting and placing conditions on certain types of subsidies which are at a 	<p>The acid test for the new subsidy system will be whether it can help tackle some of the longstanding issues facing the UK economy such as levelling-up, and is nimble enough to address economic emergencies.</p> <p>The new regime should also carefully strike the balance between using the greater flexibility to actively support key priorities and avoiding increasing uncertainty and</p>

	<p>particularly high risk of distorting markets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obliging public authorities to upload information on subsidies to a new UK-wide, publicly accessible, transparency database. • Establishing an independent subsidy control body to oversee the UK's bespoke, modern subsidy control system. • Providing for judicial oversight of the grant of subsidies. 	<p>consequently more risk to both administrators of subsidies and potential beneficiaries.</p>
<p>Procurement Bill: Simplify procurement in the public sector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enshrining principles of public procurement, such as value for money, fair treatment of suppliers and non-discrimination, in law. • Overhauling the complex and inflexible procurement procedures and replacing them with three simple channels. The intention is to allow the public sector more scope to negotiate with potential suppliers to deliver innovative new solutions. • Requiring buyers to have regard to the Government's strategic priorities for public procurement as set out in a new National Procurement Policy Statement. • Introducing procurement processes that allow contracting authorities to buy at pace in a crisis, with additional safeguards. • Establishing a single data platform for supplier registration that ensures suppliers only have to submit their data 	<p>Complexity of current public procurement can shut businesses out of the process, particularly smaller firms.</p> <p>Enshrining in law the principles of public procurement and overhauling the system is key to engaging small and medium sized firms in the process and unlocking innovation.</p> <p>The new system must be clear and simple, with opportunities communicated openly, and proportionate requirements for smaller businesses looking to engage with the process.</p>

	<p>once to qualify for any public sector procurement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • Tackling unacceptable behaviour such as supplier fraud through new exclusion rules and giving buyers the tools to properly take account of a bidder's past performance. • • Reforming the process for challenging procurement decisions to speed up the review system and make it more accessible and capping the level of damages available to bidders in order to reduce the attractiveness of speculative claims. 	
<p>National Insurance Contributions Bill: Creating eight new Freeports and enhancing the incentives to employer veterans.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing employers with a relief from National Insurance contributions for eligible new employees in Freeports for three years, up to earnings of £25,000 per annum. Freeport employers will be able to claim this relief on all new hires from April 2022. • • Providing employers with National Insurance contributions relief for (military, and possibly wider) veterans for the first 12 months, up to earnings of £50,000 per annum. This relief will be available to employers on earnings from April 2021 (not tied to Freeports). • Ensuring that self-employed people who must, or have had to, self-isolate due to COVID-19 do not pay National Insurance contributions on their self-isolation support payments. There will be some retrospective effect. • Given HMRC more powers to act where information on avoidance schemes is not being provided. 	<p>Freeports may increase competitiveness, for example by easing customs administration and cashflow pressures. They must, however, address a number of key issues including the issue of displacement, where the development of freeport areas could just move jobs and investment into the freeport from around surrounding areas, rather than creating new economic activity. Much will depend on the detail of the Bill.</p>

<p>Planning Bill, Leasehold Reform (Ground Rent) Bill: Enhanced rights for renters, modernisation of the planning system, end the practice of ground rents for new leasehold properties</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing local plans so that they provide more certainty over the type, scale and design of development permitted on different categories of land. • Reduce the time it takes for developments to go through the planning system. • Replacing existing systems for funding affordable housing and infrastructure development with a new levy. • Simplifying and amending the framework for environmental assessments for developments • Reforming the framework for locally-led development corporations to ensure local areas have access to appropriate delivery vehicles to support growth and regeneration. 	<p>The planning system is beset by costs, complexities and delays that stifle opportunities for business growth. Reform of the system must lead to a faster and more streamlined process that provides greater certainty and consistency for its users.</p> <p>It’s crucial that we build more high-quality homes where people want to live - but councils also need to plan for jobs - and ensure that land and premises are available for businesses to grow and operate sustainably.</p> <p>Local councils need the skills, expertise and resources to work with businesses in creating employment, economic growth and new opportunities for people, in towns, cities and rural areas across the country.</p>
<p>Environment Bill: Set binding environmental targets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placing a duty on Ministers to ensure environmental considerations are central to policy development; setting legally-binding targets; producing a long-term environmental improvement plan; and setting up the independent Office for Environmental Protection. • Minimising waste, promoting resource efficiency and moving towards a circular economy by measures such as extended producer responsibility, product labelling powers, introducing a consistent approach to recycling across local authorities in England, introducing a deposit return scheme for drinks containers, and providing for more effective litter enforcement. It will also provide the powers to introduce charges for single use plastic items. 	<p>Businesses and workers will have a key role in the shift to a carbon neutral economy.</p> <p>Government must work with businesses to ensure a long-term, joined-up, effective approach is developed for the delivery of policy aligned to the long-term climate targets.</p> <p>While the impact of the pandemic has not diminished business communities’ desire to become greener, the pace of change will mean many firms will need support in the transition to cleaner technologies.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving air quality by requiring the Secretary of State to set at least two legally binding targets on air quality for PM2.5, the most harmful air pollutant. • Managing water sustainably through modernised legislation to secure a long-term, resilient, water supply and wastewater services. • Mandating ‘biodiversity net gain’ in the planning system, ensuring new houses are not built at the expense of nature and delivering thriving natural spaces for communities. Stengthening the importance of biodiversity in the planning system, with a role for local communities. • • Placing requirements on larger businesses that use agricultural commodities associated with deforestation. These requirements will prohibit larger businesses from using key agricultural commodities produced on illegally deforested land. • Amending the laws and reporting requirements (on Government) on wastewater. 	
<p>Armed Forces Bill: Honour and strengthen the Armed Forces Covenant</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewing the Armed Forces Act 2006, which would otherwise expire at the end of 2021. • When they do certain things, such as in the housing sector, specified public bodies will have to have due regard to the three principles of the Armed Forces Covenant. 	<p>Having signed the Covenant earlier this year, the BCC supports its enshrinement in law.</p> <p>The BCC and the Chamber Military Network will continue to work with the Armed Forces to deepen links between the business and defence communities.</p> <p>Our unique position helping British businesses in every region and nation and across the globe means we can work together to foster</p>

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		relationships, dispel myths, and support service people and their families.
<p>Professional Qualifications Bill: Create a new bespoke framework for the UK to recognise professional qualifications from across the world to ensure employers can access professionals where there are UK shortages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling the UK to implement its international agreements on professional qualifications and to allow regulators to enter into reciprocal agreements with their international counterparts to facilitate the recognition of professional qualifications. • Giving regulators more information where in-scope professionals qualified in another part of the UK. • Requiring regulators to publish details about entry and practice requirements making information about careers more accessible and raising public confidence in regulated professions. • Introducing a new system for recognising all architects who qualified overseas. 	<p>This will facilitate access to skills and help ensure UK professionals can undertake work overseas.</p>