

New Government Briefing

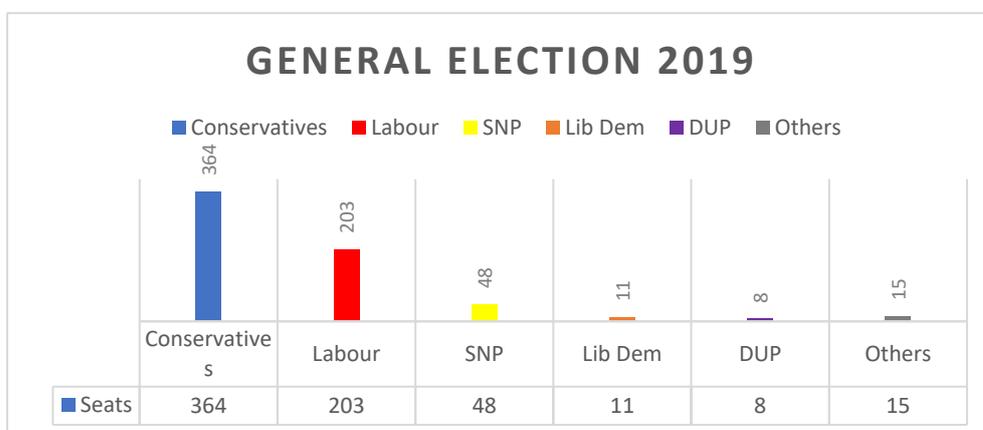
Queen’s Speech sets out Government’s plans for 2020

December 2019

Following the General Election, the Queen has today set out the Government’s legislative plans for the upcoming parliamentary session. This briefing note examines the main announcements and explores what this might mean for the UK travel and tourism industry.

General Election Results

On Thursday 12 December, the Conservative Party won a parliamentary majority of 80 seats – their largest winning margin since 1987. The result was as follows:



In his victory speech, alongside familiar promises around delivering Brexit, investment in the NHS and policing, Boris Johnson delivered a clear commitment to continue the UK’s push for carbon neutrality, citing the UK’s responsibility to lead global efforts to tackle climate change.

The Conservatives have also promised to deliver a Budget within the first 100 days and there is speculation that the Prime Minister could conduct a wide-ranging Cabinet reshuffle in January involving a restructuring of Whitehall departments. There were reports today that the Government intends to close the Department for Exiting the European Union by 31 January. To date, former DCMS and EFRA Committee member Simon Hart has been named Welsh Secretary replacing Alun Cairns who quit his ministerial post at the start of the election, and Nicky Morgan will remain as Culture Secretary despite standing down as an MP. Morgan will take a peerage through the dissolution honours and will attend Cabinet as a minister in the Lords.

More generally, the election results will likely place an increased strain on the future of the Union in the coming months. The SNP made significant gains in the election (now holding 47 out of the 59 Scottish seats) and have resumed their calls for an independence referendum ahead of the Scottish Parliamentary elections next year. In addition, in Northern Ireland, the DUP lost 2 seats, including their Westminster leader Nigel Dodds, meaning the party’s influence over Brexit will be weakened. This will likely make it easier for the Government to get approval for their proposed solution of an East-West border for certain goods and customs processes once the UK leaves the EU. The political realities of the election results, and the increased pressure this could put on the Union, were perhaps reflected in the PM’s attempts to focus

on a 'one-nation' theme in his victory speech, promising to work "night and day" to justify the decision of voters to deliver his party a large majority.

Queen's Speech

Today marked the state opening of Parliament, with the Queen unveiling the Government's agenda for the next parliamentary session. The most notable consequence of the new Government is that the UK's departure from the EU at the end of January 2020 is now all but inevitable. On Friday 20 December, the EU (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill (hereafter referred to as the WAB) is expected to be introduced to the Commons for its first stages. Parliament is then anticipated to go on recess with the remaining stages of the Bill to be completed early next year, ahead of a 31 January Brexit date.

It has been reported that the Government intends to cement its manifesto promise not to extend the current transition period beyond December 2020, by amending the WAB to make this commitment explicit. Currently, the UK and EU can jointly agree, on a one-off basis, to extend that period by 'up to two-years'; a decision which would have to be taken by July 2020. Without an extension to the transition period, the UK Government will only have 11 months to negotiate a Free Trade Agreement with the EU, a timeline which is viewed by many trade experts as ambitious.

Other announcements in the Queen's Speech that pertain to travel and tourism are as follows:

Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill

- Bring an end to free movement in UK law, to ensure that the Government can deliver a new Australian-style points-based immigration system from 2021.
- Make EU citizens arriving from 2021 subject to the same UK immigration controls as non-EU citizens, to enable the Government to deliver a single global immigration system based on people's skills.

National infrastructure strategy

- The National Infrastructure Strategy will be published alongside the first Budget, and will set out further details of the Government's plan to invest £100 billion to transform the UK's infrastructure

Air Traffic Management and Unmanned Aircraft Bill

- Ensuring that regulations keep pace with new technology and the police are able to tackle the unlawful use of unmanned aircraft, including drones and model aircraft.
- Making journeys quicker, quieter and cleaner through the modernisation of our airspace.

Airline insolvency legislation

- Enhancing the Civil Aviation Authority's regulatory powers to improve their oversight of airlines in distress and mitigate the impacts of a future airline failure.
- Extending the Civil Aviation Authority's remit to apply to the repatriation of both ATOL and non-ATOL protected passengers.

Railways minimum service levels legislation

- Reduce the disruption caused to the public during rail strikes, while preserving rail workers' right to strike.
- Mitigating against the overall economic cost of disrupted travel to passengers.

Rail reform and High Speed Rail 2 (West Midlands - Crewe) Bill

- The Government awaits the review of the High Speed Two (HS2) network led by Doug Oakervee which is looking at whether and how to proceed with HS2.
- Without prejudice to the Oakervee Review's findings and any Government decisions that follow, it is expected that the High Speed Rail (West Midlands – Crewe) Bill will be revived in this Parliament.

English devolution

- The Government will publish a White Paper setting out our strategy to unleash the potential of our regions, which will include plans for spending and local growth funding.

Business rates

- The Government will also progress legislation to bring forward the next business rates revaluation by one year from 2022 to 2021 and move business rates revaluations from a five-yearly cycle to a three-yearly cycle

Environment Bill

- Aims to transform our environmental governance once we leave the EU by putting environmental principles into law; introducing legally binding targets; and establishing a new Office for Environmental Protection.
- Increase local powers to tackle sources of air pollution.

Animal welfare legislation

- Recognising explicitly in domestic law that animals are sentient beings.

Thomas Cook Compensation Bill

- Enable the Government to administer a capped compensation scheme to support customers of Thomas Cook facing the most serious hardship as a result of life-changing injuries, illness or loss of life for which UK-based Thomas Cook companies would have been liable.

More information

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