

BCC reacts to Queen's Speech

BCC gives its reaction to the 2017 Queen's Speech.

21 June 2017

Commenting on the Queen's Speech, Dr Adam Marshall, Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) said:

"While Brexit isn't the top immediate priority for many businesses, firms of every size and shape want to avoid turbulence and confusion during the Brexit transition. The government's proposed bills on trade, customs and immigration must minimise adjustment costs and maximise opportunities. Achieving this will require continuous and constructive engagement with business communities across the UK.

"Importantly, many of the real, practical priorities for businesses across the UK can be delivered without new primary legislation. Ministers must inject real momentum and pace into the major infrastructure schemes that have already been agreed and announced. They must cut back on the stifling up-front costs that deter investment and risk-taking, and press ahead with an Industrial Strategy that helps places across the UK achieve their potential. This is an important moment for ministers to show that they are doing their day job, and delivering a stronger environment for growth here at home.

"Businesses want to see a workable government going about its day job, and clear signals that the economy is once again front and centre in political life. Consensus and a strong partnership between government and business will be critical at a time of significant change."

On the Customs Bill:

"Chambers of Commerce facilitate tens of billions of pounds worth of UK trade across borders every year. We stand ready to work with the government to develop a UK customs system that supports free-flowing trade between UK firms and their customers and suppliers around the world. It is crucial that business and government work together, as well, to ensure that a new UK customs code underpins seamless trade between the UK and the continent in the years to come."

On Immigration Bill:

"The needs of the economy must be at the heart of this once-in-a-generation overhaul of the UK's immigration system. While businesses accept the need for controls over migration flows, they want clear assurances that they will be able to recruit from overseas to fill vacancies when they are unable to find or train suitable candidates here at home.

"After Brexit, they will also want to see a flexible system for the movement of labour and skills between the UK and the EU that enjoys clear public

support. This is also a major opportunity to simplify the Home Office's bureaucratic processes, which impose heavy costs and great uncertainty on businesses and individuals alike."

On the Trade Bill:

"Safeguarding and retaining the favourable terms of trade that UK businesses have enjoyed under EU free trade agreements negotiated by the EU over the past four decades must be a top priority for ministers as the UK develops its own trade policy. The firms we represent say that confirming existing levels of market access is a bigger immediate priority than launching new free trade negotiations with new countries and markets around the world. They also need ground-level trade promotion and support to take advantage of the opportunities that new trade agreements may create in future."

On the Great Repeal Bill:

"At a time of change, businesses want as much short-term certainty and stability as possible on their regulatory obligations. This bill must deliver continuity and the day-one equivalence that is necessary for businesses to continue to trade seamlessly with customers and suppliers, both in Europe and across the world."

On the HS2 Phase 2A Bill:

"We welcome the government's commitment to legislate for the second phase of HS2, which will extend the benefits of the line to many more business communities. However, we will continue to press for the completion of a full national network – and to ensure that other key road and rail priorities, both small and large, are fully funded and executed throughout the UK. We need to have the fundamentals right here at home, including infrastructure, to trade successfully in the future regardless of the eventual Brexit deal."

Ends

Notes to editors:

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) sits at the heart of a powerful network of 52 Accredited Chambers of Commerce across the UK, representing thousands of businesses of all sizes and within all sectors. Our Global Business Network connects exporters with nearly 40 markets around the world. For more information, visit: www.britishchambers.org.uk

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