**Queen’s Speech – Highlights for Heritage Science**

The National Heritage Science Forum has reviewed the Queen’s Speech, 19th December 2019, and has highlighted below the main points that could impact heritage science in the UK.

It includes excerpts taken from the published transcript of the Queen’s Speech, [available on the gov.uk website, here.](https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/queens-speech-december-2019) [Accessed 20/01/2020]. Where the speech refers to current or expected legislation, references to these have also been included.

[Full government briefing notes for the Queen’s speech are available here.](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/853886/Queen_s_Speech_December_2019_-_background_briefing_notes.pdf)

**Brexit**

“…my Ministers will seek a future relationship with the European Union based on a free trade agreement that benefits the whole of the United Kingdom. They will also begin trade negotiations with other leading global economies.”

[See also **European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill**.]

The main impact of Brexit on the heritage science community is expected to be on immigration (see below) and funding. The Conservative Manifesto 2019 insisted it would “continued to collaborate…with the EU and scientific research, including Horizon.” So far, the government has [guaranteed funding to successful UK bids to Horizon 2020 in the event of a no-deal Brexit.](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/horizon-2020-funding-after-brexit)

Other areas that could potentially be affected by any trade deal negotiated includes the transportation of materials and equipment necessary for conservation and restoration work.

**Immigration**

“A modern, fair, points-based immigration system will welcome skilled workers from across the world to contribute to the United Kingdom’s economy, communities and public services.”

[See also **Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill**.]

The current proposed revisions to immigration would significantly affect the heritage science community. The Migration Advisory Committee’s recommendation that a minimum salary of £30,000 be introduced would impact heritage science, whose highly skilled but low paid field would struggle to meet this requirement. A survey carried out by the Heritage Alliance found that [48% of respondents believed that more than half the roles in their organisation would not meet the minimum salary threshold.](https://www.theheritagealliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Heritage-and-Immigration-Brexit-Briefing.pdf)

It is worth noting that other fields relate to heritage science, such as construction, would also be affected by a minimum salary for intermediate skilled workers wishing to work in the EU. (e.g. [CITB’s report, Migration and Construction](https://www.citb.co.uk/documents/research/citb-migration-research-2019-the-view-from-employers.pdf).)

[The Brexit White Paper](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/786626/The_Future_Relationship_between_the_United_Kingdom_and_the_European_Union_120319.pdf) (Sections 1.4.1, para 80-1) has outlined a desire to negotiate reciprocal, visa-free roles for UK nationals to visit the EU for short-term business reasons. A similar arrangement could allow for heritage scientists to visit the EU for conferences or short-term research trips. However, the Brexit White Paper also suggests that such arrangements for scientists and researchers, among other groups, remains to be discussed.

**Flexible Working**

“Measures will be brought forward to encourage flexible working…”

[See also **Employment Bill**.]

In the [Queen’s speech briefing](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/853886/Queen_s_Speech_December_2019_-_background_briefing_notes.pdf), one purpose of the Employment Bill is stated to promote fairness in the workplace, striking the right balance between flexibility and security. The main elements of the bill are notably vague, stating it aims to ‘Introduc[e] a new right for all workers to request a more predictable contract.’

While difficult to predict how this will affect heritage science, the National Heritage Science Forum’s recently published report, [Careers in Heritage Science: Opportunities and Constraints](http://www.heritagescienceforum.org.uk/documents/Careers_in_Heritage_Science.pdf), suggests that irregular employment and insecure contracts are dissuading individuals from entering the field and advocates for the development of more secure jobs roles. If the bill encourages this, it may help the sector rebalance opportunities in favour of employees.

**Investment in Communities and Infrastructure**

“My Ministers will bring forward measures to ensure that every part of the United Kingdom can prosper. My Government will invest in the country’s public services and infrastructure…My Government will prioritise investment in infrastructure and world-leading science research and skills, in order to unleash productivity and improve daily life for communities across the country. It will give communities more control over how investment is spent so that they can decide what is best for them.”

Investment in communities and research infrastructures was highlighted in the [Conservative Manifesto 2019.](https://assets-global.website-files.com/5da42e2cae7ebd3f8bde353c/5dda924905da587992a064ba_Conservative%202019%20Manifesto.pdf) It would appear that investment across regions will be a core theme of this government, with an English Devolution White Paper also promised in the election manifesto. This could be a welcome change for individual heritage scientists, as the NHSF’s report, Careers in Heritage Science, recommended the development of jobs across the UK and outside of London in particular. Investment in infrastructure across the country could help to facilitate this.

**Support for Business**

“To support business, my government will increase tax credits for research and development, establish a National Skills Fund, and bring forward changes to business rates.”

The Conservative Manifesto promised to create a new National Skills Fund worth £3bn. This could help to open up new careers routes into heritage science, diversifying entry routes into the sector. Changes to business rate were included in [the Museum Association’s 2019 Museum Manifesto](https://www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=1265286), which argued that business rates are a major financial burden on the UK museums sector and that applying a fair and simple evaluation would aid the long-term support of many museums.