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BSA Briefing - Conservative Party Majority

Foreword

Following the election of the Conservative Party with a parliamentary majority, this briefing provides an overview of the party's key policies and next steps as set out in the manifesto and over the course of the General Election campaign. The policies and actions set out below are those areas deemed most relevant to the business services sector.

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Key Policies

A summary of the key commitments made by the Conservatives during the campaign and in their manifesto.

Brexit

The [Withdrawal Agreement Bill](#) is expected to be reintroduced after the Queen's Speech on Thursday 19 December. A Second Reading is likely to follow shortly thereafter where MPs will vote on it. Once the Withdrawal Agreement passes into law the UK will enter the implementation period and negotiations on the Future Relationship with the EU will begin.

The BSA's briefing on the Withdrawal Agreement and the next steps in the Brexit process can be read [here](#).

Migration

The party has made repeated commitments to introducing an Australian-style points based immigration system. They have also pledged to introduce the legislation to create such a system within the first one hundred days of government (see [below](#)).

The new system will prioritise those with a 'good grasp' of English, those without criminal records in their country of origin, and those with recognised qualifications. The stated intention is that there will be 'fewer lower-skilled migrants and overall numbers will come down'.¹

There will be three categories of visas under the new system:

1. Those with 'exceptional talent' - no requirement for a job offer
2. Skilled workers - job offered required
3. Unskilled Workers - eligible for short-term visas in sectors where there are shortages

The independent Migration Advisory Committee will be given further powers to set the visa quotas for certain sectors whilst an implementation group will be established to deliver the new system immediately after the planned end of the implementation period. This will be followed by a new 'digital immigration status' planned for 2022 although we await further details as to what this will entail.²

¹ Conservative Party Manifesto (2019), *Get Brexit Done*: https://assets-global.website-files.com/5da42e2cae7ebd3f8bde353c/5dda924905da587992a064ba_Conservative%202019%20Manifesto.pdf?dm_i=20YA,YX3C,75C4X5,300YN,1

² BBC (2019), 'It's Inexcusable we don't know who we can hire': <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-50712497>



Net Zero by 2050

The party has retained its target of bringing all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050 (as passed into legislation by the May administration). The manifesto stated that the first budget would prioritise the environment and that £9.2 billion would be invested in the energy efficiency of homes, schools and hospitals.³

NHS Spending & PFIs

The party pledge to increase spending on the NHS by £34bn a year by the end of the next Parliament. This includes building and funding 40 new hospitals over the next 10 years amongst other spending. The manifesto also commits that party to making hospital parking free for those deemed to be 'in greatest need' (including disabled people, frequent outpatient attenders, parents of sick children staying overnight and staff working night shifts).

During the campaign, it was announced that the Conservatives intend to establish a dedicated unit within the Department of Health to pore over the details of dozens of PFI deals with the intention of 'rolling back' all of them.⁴

³ Conservative Party Manifesto (2019), *Get Brexit Done*: https://assets-global.website-files.com/5da42e2cae7ebd3f8bde353c/5dda924905da587992a064ba_Conservative%202019%20Manifesto.pdf?dm_i=2OYA,YX3C,75C4X5,300YN,1

⁴ Daily Mail (2019), *Matt Hancock vows to axe Labour's PFI hospital schemes to free up resources for frontline medical staff*: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7757367/Matt-Hancock-vows-axe-Labours-PFI-hospital-schemes-free-resources.html>



First 100 days in office

During the campaign the Conservatives issued a [press release](#) in which they set out the actions they wish to take and the legislation they want to implement within the first hundred days of being in office. The date this would fall on is Sunday 22 March 2020.

The immediate actions will be the appointment of ministers, holding a Queen's Speech (announced during the campaign as Thursday 19 December), and then reintroducing and subsequently passing the Withdrawal Agreement Bill.

Before 100 days are up, the party pledges to have also taken the following actions:

- Delivered a 'post Brexit Budget' in February 'which will cut taxes for hardworking families'
- Changed the law to end the automatic release of serious violent and sexual offenders at the half-way point
- Legislated for a funding increase to schools - raising minimum funding per pupil
- Begin cross party talks to find an enduring solution to the challenge of social care
- Changed the law to increase the amount that migrants pay to use our NHS
- Launched a review of the UK's defence, security and foreign policy
- Finalised an agreement with mobile phone operators to improve mobile service in the countryside

Before the 100 days are up, the party pledges to have introduced legislation to create:

- A new Australian-style points-based immigration system
- A fund guarantee for the NHS - to ensure the extra £33.9 billion per year pledged to the NHS by 2023 is enshrined in law
- Gigabit capable broadband across the UK
- The future schemes for trade, agriculture, and the environment once the UK leaves the EU



General Election 2019 - Conservative Manifesto summary

This is a summary of the Conservative Party's main manifesto pledges, with a focus on pledges of direct interest to the work of BSA members. All policies have been taken from the manifesto below unless specified otherwise.

Manifesto

- [Get Brexit Done: Unleash Britain's Potential](#)

Policy areas

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Brexit

- Withdrawal Agreement Bill to go before Parliament before December 25th and UK to leave the EU by the end of January.
- Negotiate a trade deal with the EU next year.
- Rules out extending transition period beyond December 31st 2020 deadline.

Business & Public Procurement

- Commitment to 'support start-ups and small businesses via government procurement and commit to paying them on time'.
- Use government procurement to 'support new ideas and new companies and continue to support charities'.
- Strengthen the powers of the Small Business Commissioner to support small businesses.
- Reduce National Insurance contributions for employers if they employ ex-Service personnel.



Crime & Justice (Security & Home Affairs)

- 20,000 more police officers.
- Tougher sentencing for the 'worst offenders' and end automatic halfway release from prison for serious crimes.
- 10,000 more prison places.
- A job coach in each prison as part of a prisoner education system.
- 'Root-and-branch' review of the parole system and establish a Royal Commission on the criminal justice process.
- Expand electronic tagging including the use of sobriety tags for those whose offending is fuelled by alcohol.
- New national cyber-crime force.

Defence

- Continue to exceed the NATO target of spending 2 per cent of GDP on defence and increase the budget by at least 0.5 per cent above inflation every year of the new Parliament.
- Maintain the Trident nuclear deterrent.
- Invest in training and equipping our Armed Forces.

Democracy

- Review of the "relationship between the government, Parliament and courts".
- Get rid of the Fixed Term Parliaments Act.
- Redraw current constituency boundaries.
- Introduce voter ID.
- Not proceed with Leveson 2.
- Make it easier for expats to vote.

Devolved & Local Government

- English Devolution White Paper to be published in 2020.
- 'Towns Fund' including a £150m community ownership fund and £250m cultural capital fund.

Economy

- Net investment not to average more than 3% of GDP.
- Reassessment of fiscal rules if debt hits 6% of revenue.

Education and Skills

- Increase spending on schools to level up per pupil funding of £5000
- £600m a year for five years for a National Skills Fund

Energy and Environment

- Net zero by 2050.
- £640 million new Nature for Climate fund.
- First Budget will prioritise the environment.
- Invest £9.2 billion in the energy efficiency of homes, schools and hospitals.



Health & Social Care

- £1bn per year in extra funding over 5 years for social care.
- “Build a consensus” with other political parties on how social care should be funded over the long term.
- Increase spending on the NHS by £34bn a year by the end of the next Parliament.
- Build and fund 40 new hospitals over the next 10 years.
- Enshrine the long-term funding plan for the NHS in law.
- 50,000 more nurses in NHS England workforce by 2024-25.
- Create 50 million more GP appointments by recruiting 6000 more GPs and 6000 more primary care doctors.
- Make hospital parking free for those ‘in greatest need’, including disabled people, frequent outpatient attenders, parents of sick children staying overnight and staff working night shifts.
- Establish a dedicated unit within the Department of Health to pore over the details of dozens of PFI deals with the intention of ‘rolling back’ all of them.⁵

Migration

- Introduce an Australian-style points based immigration system.
- Commitment to ‘fewer lower-skilled migrants and overall numbers will come down’.
- The new system will prioritise those with a ‘good grasp’ of English, those without criminal records in their country of origin, and those with recognised qualifications.
- There will be no distinction between EU and non-EU citizens.

Pension & Taxes

- National Insurance threshold to rise to £9,250 in 2020, with an ambition to raise it further to £12,500.
- A “Triple tax lock”, ruling out increases in income tax, national insurance and VAT for 5 years.
- Reduce National Insurance contributions for employers if they employ ex-Service personnel.
- Review of business rates with the intent of reducing them (beginning with pubs, live music venues, and retail).
- Pledged a review of IR35 as part of the Conservative party’s manifesto bid to support self-employed workers.⁶

Transport & Infrastructure

- £100bn in additional spending.
- £28.8bn for road including £1bn for fast charging network and £500m a year for four years for filling potholes.
- £6.3bn for upgrades to homes, such as grants for improving boilers and insulation.
- Build “Northern Powerhouse Rail” between Leeds and Manchester and invest £28.8bn in strategic and local roads.
- HS2 decision will follow the outcome of the Oakervee Review.
- Pledge to restore ‘many of the Beching lines’.

⁵ Daily Mail (2019), *Matt Hancock vows to axe Labour’s PFI hospital schemes to free up resources for frontline medical staff*: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7757367/Matt-Hancock-vows-axe-Labours-PFI-hospital-schemes-free-resources.html>

⁶ FT Advisor (2019) *Chancellor pledges IR35 review*: <https://www.ftadviser.com/your-industry/2019/12/02/chancellor-pledges-ir35-review/>



- Heathrow's third runway will receive no new public funding.
- Full fibre and gigabit capable broadband to every home and business across the UK by 2025.

Workers' Rights & Employment

- Nation Living Wage to be set at Two Thirds of average earnings (currently £10.50 p/h).
- Create a single enforcement body for labour standards.
- Ensure workers have the right to request a more predictable contract.

Scotland

Scottish Conservatives

- Separate manifesto '[No To IndyRef2](#)'
- Oppose a second referendum.
- Consider the recommendations of Lord Dunlop's Independent Review into UK Government Union capability when it is published.
- Consider all new powers that return to the UK to be 'devolved by default'.

Wales

Welsh Conservative Party

- Separate manifesto '[Get Brexit Done: Unleash Wales' Potential](#)'
- Marches Growth Deal, focusing on cross-border infrastructure which supports the local and cross-border economy.