



Liaison Committee

House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

Tel: 020 7219 5675 Email: liaisoncommittee@parliament.uk

Website: <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/103/liaison-committee-commons>

From Sir Bernard Jenkin MP, Chair

Rt Hon Jacob Rees-Mogg MP
Leader of the House
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

17 February 2021

Dear Jacob,

In anticipation of the announcement of the end of the current Parliamentary Session, I am writing on behalf of Select Committee Chairs to highlight a number of pieces of legislation which are awaiting time in the Government's legislative programme.

The Government's legislative programme has been understandably impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, but there are a number of outstanding proposals which Committees are keen to see brought forward or where further action or information is required:

- Passing the **Environment Bill** should be a Government priority, given the gap that now exists in environmental governance following the end of the transition period. Provisions in the Bill respond to recommendations the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee and the Environmental Audit Committee have made across a range of inquiries in recent years. Both Committees conducted pre-legislative scrutiny of the first part of the Bill in 2019 and have continued to monitor its progress during the current Session.
- The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee have also conducted pre-legislative scrutiny on the **Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill**, which increases sentences for some animal cruelty offences. This Bill will implement recommendations from the Committee dating back to 2016. The Committee completed pre-legislative scrutiny on the relevant provisions in 2018 but the Bill has yet to complete passage through the House.
- The Justice Committee have held a number of sessions with the Lord Chancellor on the **Sentencing Bill** announced in the last Queen's speech. The subject of sentencing, and post-sentence and post-custodial provision has also come up repeatedly in the Committee's running inquiries into the Probation Service and Court Capacity. The Committee understands the Bill is now likely to touch on all the MOJ's major policy areas – Prisons, Probation and Courts. An indication of both the final scope of this Bill and its likely timing are becoming increasingly important.



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- The Petitions Committee continues to receive very popular petitions on two issues where the Government has committed to acting, but legislation is yet to be introduced, on proposals for **stronger sentences for drivers who kill or seriously injure** and on **banning the practice of Conversion Therapy**.
- The Government's response to the Petitions Committee's report on *The impact of COVID-19 on maternity and parental leave* suggested that many of the Committee's recommendations would be addressed in a forthcoming **Employment Bill**. The Work and Pensions and Women & Equalities Committees have similarly called on Government to prioritise the bill for Parliamentary scrutiny.
- The Science and Technology Committee last week published report on a **new UK Research Funding Agency**. Establishment of the agency has been mentioned in the last two Queen's speeches, but firm proposals have yet to be brought forward. In the last Parliament, the Committee also called for the **Forensic Science Regulator to be placed on a statutory footing**. The Government has expressed support for such a proposal in the past but time has not been found for the legislation to proceed. A private Member's Bill on this issue had been through Committee in the current session but now looks unlikely to pass due to the suspension of Friday sittings.
- The Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee has consistently called for reform of the **Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman**. While draft legislation was published in 2016, the proposals have not been taken forward. An early indication of the Government's intentions in this area would be welcome, as would any opportunity to conduct pre-legislative scrutiny of new draft legislation.
- The Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee has conducted work in a number of areas where new legislation is anticipated, particularly on **planning, leasehold reform and renters' reform**, and would be keen to undertake pre-legislative scrutiny on any proposed bills. The Committee has already conducted similar work on the **draft building safety Bill**, which is awaiting introduction.
- The draft **Health Service Safety Investigations Body Bill** underwent pre-legislative scrutiny by a Joint Committee of the House of Lords and House of Commons from May to July 2018. The Bill was subsequently introduced in the Lords, although it had not progressed passed Second Reading prior to Dissolution. The Government's recently announced White Paper on reform of the Health Service includes proposals to establish a statutory Health Service Safety Investigations Body and I would urge the Government to consider the recommendations of the Joint Committee in implementing these proposals.

While I appreciate that you will not be in a position to divulge the contents of the Queen's Speech, I am keen to ensure that this legislation is given due priority in the forthcoming Session. I look forward to your response.



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Yours ever

Bernard

Sir Bernard Jenkin MP

Chair of the Committee