



HOUSE OF
LORDS
BRIEFING

HER MAJESTY'S
MOST GRACIOUS SPEECH
TO BOTH HOUSES OF
PARLIAMENT

STATE OPENING
OF PARLIAMENT

The start of the parliamentary year



THE QUEEN'S SPEECH TO BOTH
HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

WEDNESDAY, 3RD DECEMBER 2008

MY LORDS AND MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

My Government's overriding priority is to ensure the stability of the British economy during the global economic downturn. My Government is committed to helping families and businesses through difficult times.

The strength of the financial sector is vital to the future vibrancy of the economy. Therefore, legislation will continue to be taken forward to ensure secure protection for bank depositors.

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The start of the parliamentary year – the State Opening of Parliament

The State Opening of Parliament is one of the most well-known and colourful state occasions in the United Kingdom. For over 500 years, State Opening has served as a symbolic reminder of the unity of Parliament's three constituent parts: the Sovereign, the House of Lords and the House of Commons. The State Opening ceremony takes place in the House of Lords but it is not a sitting of the House of Lords. The Chamber is packed with guests, including judges, ambassadors and high commissioners, many of them wearing colourful national or ceremonial dress. Members of the House of Lords wear their parliamentary robes, the only occasion they all do so. When the House sits as the second Chamber of Parliament Members wear everyday business clothes.

Parliament's three components:



Parliamentary sessions

A parliament lasts for a maximum of five years and runs from one general election to the next, it is broken up into sessions which typically last for about a year. State Opening is an integral feature of the parliamentary calendar because it marks the beginning of a parliamentary session and sets out the Government's agenda for that session. It usually takes place in November but at other times following a general election.

The Queen in Parliament

Only the Monarch can call together a parliament for the transaction of business. This is why the UK legislature is often described formally as 'The Queen in Parliament'. The Speech, written by the Government, is read out from the Throne in the House of Lords Chamber. Until the Speech is made, neither House can conduct any business.

From Buckingham Palace to the House of Lords

Escorted by the Household Cavalry, the Queen leaves Buckingham Palace in a carriage procession that makes its way through the streets to the Houses of Parliament.



The carriage procession starts at Buckingham Palace



The Queen's carriage approaching the Palace of Westminster

Arrival at Westminster Note: the numbers in brackets refer to the diagram overleaf.

The Queen is met at Sovereign's Entrance (1) by the Earl Marshal and the Lord Great Chamberlain who have ceremonial and royal parliamentary duties. The Royal Standard is flown from the Victoria Tower and gun salutes are fired by the King's Troop in Hyde Park and the Tower of London.

The Royal Procession

Wearing the Imperial State Crown and the parliamentary robe, the Queen emerges from the Robing Room (2) before leading the Procession through the Royal Gallery, packed with over 600 guests, to the House of Lords Chamber (see diagram overleaf).

The Royal Procession is led by senior parliamentary and government officers, including the Lord Chancellor, the Lord President of the Privy Council, the Lord Speaker of the House of Lords and the Lord Privy Seal. The Great Sword of State and the Cap of Maintenance, symbols of sovereign power and authority, are carried in front of the Queen.

The summons of the Commons

When the Queen sits down (3), the Lord Great Chamberlain signals to Black Rod to summon the House of Commons. The doors to the Commons Chamber are traditionally slammed in his face; a practice dating back to the civil war, symbolising the Commons' autonomy from the Monarchy. Black Rod knocks three times on the door with his rod (4). On gaining entry, he goes to the Table and announces the Queen's summons. The Serjeant-at-Arms, carrying the Mace, leads the procession to the Lords followed by the Commons Speaker and Black Rod. The Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, MPs and senior Commons officials follow them (5). When they reach the Lords Chamber, they stand at the opposite end to the Throne, known as the Bar, to listen to the Speech.

The Queen's Speech—setting out the legislative programme



The official copy of the Speech is delivered by the Lord Chancellor to the Queen. The Speech is read by the Queen from the Throne in the House of Lords Chamber (6).

The Speech sets out the Government's agenda for the session and outlines the business it intends to carry out. The final words of the Speech, 'Other measures will be laid before you', give the Government flexibility to introduce other legislation as necessary.

The Speech is broadcast on www.parliamentlive.tv and on television and radio.



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Delivered on
WEDNESDAY, 3RD DECEMBER 2008

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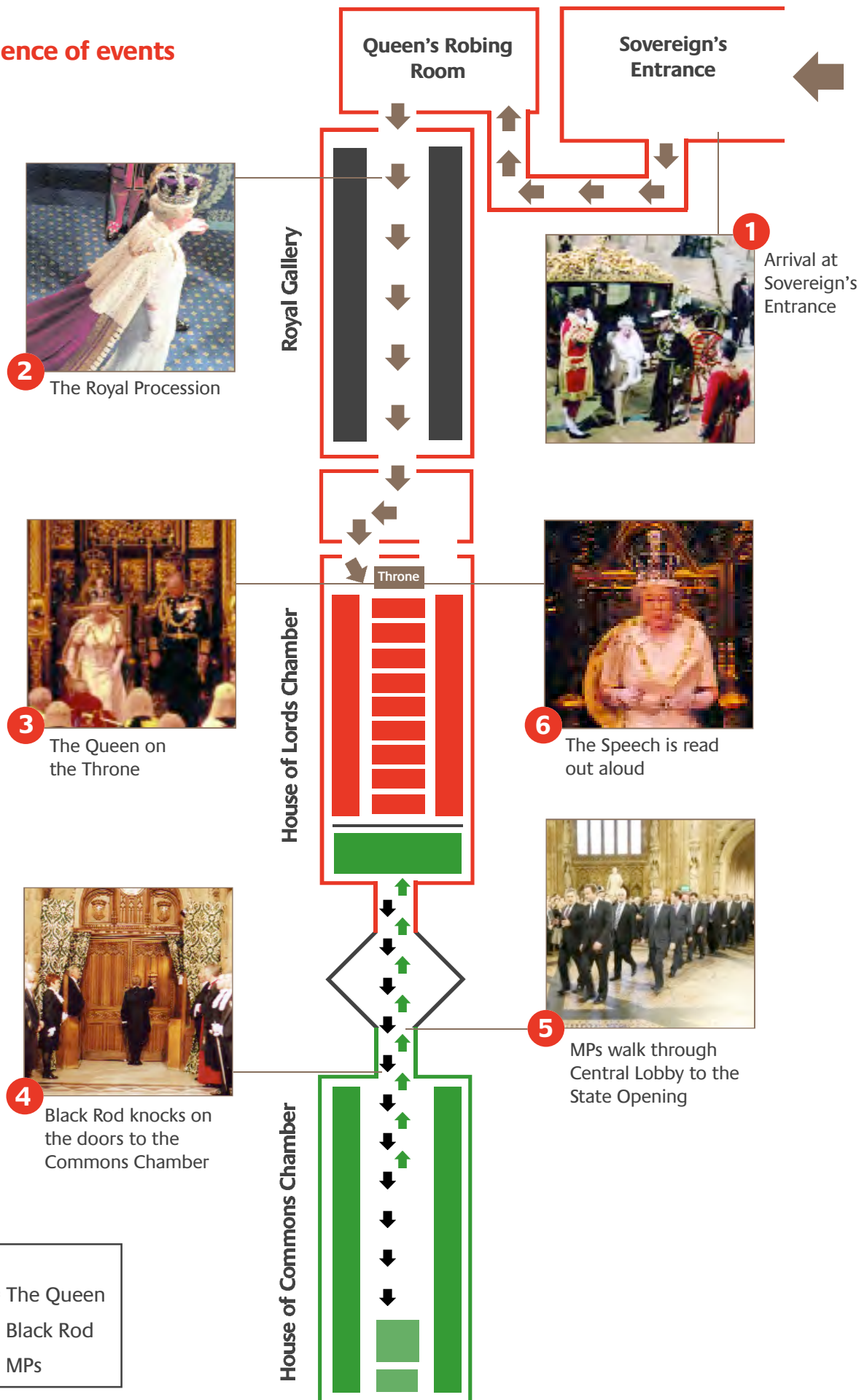
The strength of the financial sector is vital to the future vibrancy of the economy. Therefore, legislation will continue to be taken forward to ensure fairer and more secure protection for bank depositors and to improve the resilience of the financial sector.

My Government will also bring forward proposals to create Saving Gateway Accounts to encourage people on lower incomes to save more by offering financial incentives.

My Government will bring forward legislation to promote local economic development and to create greater opportunities for community and individual involvement in local decision-making.

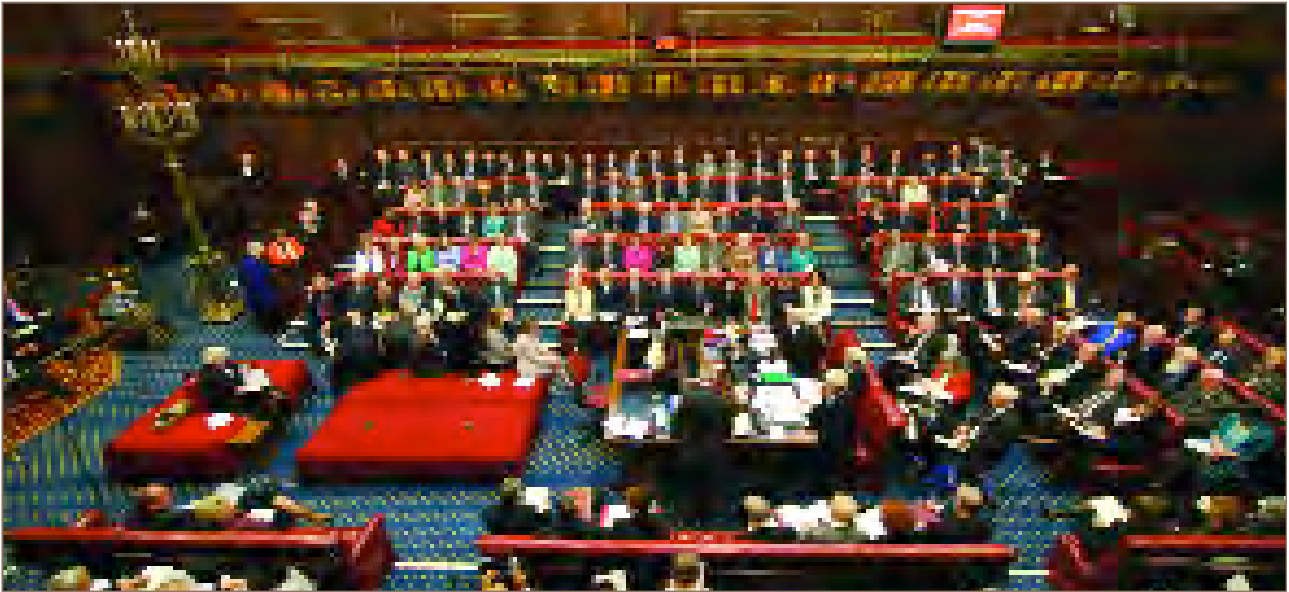
A Bill will be brought forward to reform the welfare system, to improve incentives for people to move from benefits into sustained

Sequence of events



Back to work

When the Queen leaves, the Royal Standard is taken down from the Victoria Tower and the Union Flag hoisted. The robes are put away until the next State Opening: Members of the House of Lords only wear robes for the morning of the State Opening, they wear normal business dress for day to day business in a sitting of the House.



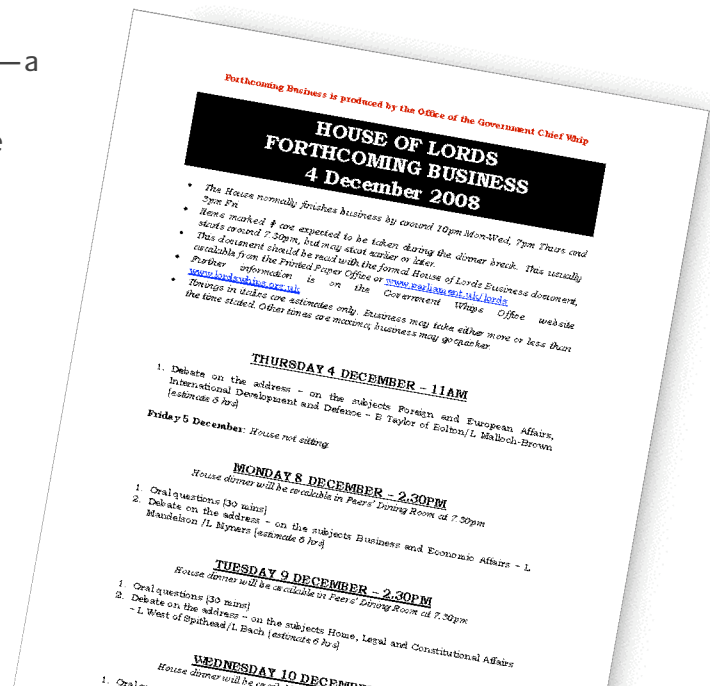
Business as usual once the ceremony is over

Debating the content of the Speech

In the afternoon, Parliament goes back to work—a new session is underway. Each House meets separately to begin debating the content of the Speech and to consider an ‘Address in Reply to Her Majesty’s Gracious Speech’.

The House of Lords debates the content of the Speech extensively over five days. The debates address the separate affairs of state e.g. foreign and European affairs, international development and defence one day and home, legal and constitutional affairs another.

Provisional list of House of Lords debates following the Queen’s Speech



State Opening is broadcast on www.parliamentlive.tv and on television and radio.

For information contact:

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For information about the content of the Queen’s Speech visit: www.number10.gov.uk