

Alun Cairns: Speech to Conservative Party Conference 2019

Alun Cairns, Secretary of State for Wales, speaking today at Conservative Party Conference at The Manchester Convention Centre, said:

(Check against delivery)

“Thank you for that kind introduction.

It is a privilege to share a platform with my good friends and cabinet colleagues, Julian Smith and Alister Jack.

Although we work closely together and agree on almost everything, don't accept a word they say about rugby or football. They know nothing. Take my word for it, it is definitely Alun Wyn Jones that will be lifting the rugby world cup in just a few weeks time!

And as we leave the EU, our Union, the Union of the United Kingdom will become more important and relevant than ever before.

Our Union is the most successful Union of nations in human history. It's not forced. It's practical and pragmatic. It comes together through natural bonds. A family of nations with a common culture and a shared identity.

The way we identify ourselves, how we feel as a people and how we express our loyalties can be complex but nationality doesn't have to be mutually exclusive – I am proudly British *and* I'm proud to be Welsh.

It's a Union where each nation and region contributes to the success of the other. Where each community can excel in manufacturing, technology, services, tourism or agriculture. All contributing to the greatness of our nation.

Wales has great strengths –

In aerospace, half the world's passenger aircraft have Wings that were built in Broughton

The F35 Global Repair Hub is in Flintshire

The world's largest compound semiconductor cluster

is in South Wales, where your smartphone technology was developed

We're part of the Cyber Security golden triangle
and have the best new Nuclear Offer anywhere in Europe

Cardiff University is the world's leading centre in
Precision Medicine

And I could highlight so many more areas – Fintech,
tourism, food production...

And of course, rural Wales rears the best lamb in
the world too.

And it is the strength of our Union that allows us
to invest and to support these sectors.

A new, fair funding settlement for Wales with
additional investment in –

Growth Deals across every part – the UK's largest
City Deal is in Cardiff

The Semiconductor sector and Active Homes and
Precision Medicine projects are supported by UKRI

The MoD playing a pivotal role in attracting the US
Airforce to Sealand

And the National Cyber Security centre facilitating
investment by recognising our great strengths.

Tomorrow's industries built on the strength of our
Union today.

From initiatives like these –

Wales has seen record levels of employment, the
highest growth in the UK and the brightest future.

These are the outcomes of Conservative Government's
investment and confidence in Wales.

I'm prepared to accept that Scotland may have *some* of the best whiskys,
Northern

Ireland *does* have Titanic Studios

producing film and TV hit after hit, England *could* be considered to have some
of the best universities in the

world – but Wales, well, where do I begin, the best sportsmen and women, the
best rugby and football teams, the best entrepreneurs, the best musicians and
I

could go on and on.

This friendly rivalry is what makes our relationship so special.

BREXIT

There is no doubt that we are living in the most dynamic political times.

This is a time when we can re-shape our Union ambitions because in 29 days' time, we will leave the EU and a new dawn will break across *our* Union.

I don't say this just because Wales voted to leave – something that Labour and Plaid choose to forget. -the so-called parties of Wales ignoring the people of Wales is nothing but shameful.

I say this because Brexit enables us to respond to the growing opportunities right across the globe so that our areas of expertise can compete in new markets, win new business and attract global investment.

Looking outward is part of our being. There is an old Welsh proverb, “Eang yw'r byd i bawb” which means ‘The world is wide to everyone’ – this is exactly the attitude we take as Conservatives – outward looking and ambitious.

With 90% of Global Growth will come from outside of the EU over the next 20 years. The United Kingdom will not only be ready to respond, we will be central to that opportunity.

Brexit will give us the prospect to strengthen our Union – where a Global Britain serves all parts of our country and where nations and regions serve a Global Britain.

The Welsh Labour First Minister, Mark Drakeford said that his support for the Union is conditional. He wants further constitutional change and greater separation, when businesses are longing for certainty.

Labour's flirting with the Nationalists is driving a wedge between our nations.

There are traditional proud Labour supporters, passionate about our Union who feel let down and rejected by the state of their Party.

Well, I want to say something directly to Welsh Labour:

Ignoring the will of the people and attempting to

undermine our Unity as a nation won't distract the public from your failings on the Welsh NHS and education system.

After 20 years of Welsh Labour– we've seen money wasted and squandered and an obsession with restructuring and centralising powers away from doctors, nurses and teachers.

Now is not the time to be looking inward. We need to think big, act decisively and grasp the many opportunities before us.

This is my fourth Conference speech as Secretary of State for Wales, a job which, as a son of a Welder at the Port Talbot steel works, growing up in the Swansea Valley, I could never have dreamed I would be doing.

I have the privilege of travelling the length and breadth of my home nation, of talking to some truly inspiring people and visiting some of the most innovative, ambitious and exciting businesses.

I also have the opportunity to talk to International investors and global traders who are looking at the UK in a new and exciting way.

It is this knowledge of the country I love and an appreciation of the opportunities before us that gives me great hope and confidence for our next chapter.

Conference, we come together as people of different backgrounds, different communities and different nations but as Conservatives we all want the same thing.

Get Brexit done and move on to deliver the people's priorities.

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A United
Nation

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A fairer
society

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And a Global
Britain.

Thank you."

ENDS