

# Press release: Delivering for Wales: Alun Cairns marks two years as Secretary of State for Wales

Two years ago today (19 March), Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns took his seat at the Cabinet table in Westminster and outlined his ambitions to create a nation which is more ambitious, confident and more outward looking than ever before.

The Welsh Secretary has overseen a number of key achievements for Wales since March 2016, including:

## **Abolition of the Severn Tolls**

Following the return of the Severn Crossings to public ownership on 8 January 2018, the tolls were reduced for all drivers ahead of their complete abolition by the end of the year. This sends a direct message to businesses, commuters and tourists alike that we are committed to strengthening the links between England and Wales

## **The Great Western Powerhouse and the Severn Growth Summit**

Over 300 guests from both sides of the Severn estuary attended the inaugural Severn Growth Summit at the Celtic Manor Resort to explore how links between the South Wales and South West England economies can be strengthened following the announcement of the abolition of the Severn Tolls later this year.

## **State of the art trains for south Wales**

The new fleet of Intercity Express Trains to be introduced on the Great Western Main lines from London will significantly enhance the travel experience of passengers in South Wales.

## **Wales Act 2017**

The Wales Bill received Royal Assent in January 2017, setting in stone a strong package of powers for Assembly members with stability and accountability at its heart.

## **Fiscal Framework**

A new fiscal framework setting out how the Welsh Government will be funded following the devolution of some taxes represents a significant milestone for Wales. The deal provides secure long-term funding for the Welsh Government and gives Cardiff Bay greater visibility when looking at spending decisions.

## **City and Growth Deals**

The Welsh Secretary is overseeing the delivery of the £1.2bn deal for the Cardiff Capital Region – UKG £500m contribution to the deal with provide an investment fund for the region and support electrification of the Valleys Lines railways. He was also a key driver for the Swansea Bay City Region which will deliver almost £1.3bn of investment to the region. The UK Government has also started formal negotiations on a North Wales Growth Deal and are open to proposals for a Mid Wales Growth Deal.

## **Broadband**

The UK Government's £69million investment in delivering superfast broadband across Wales has seen Wales experience a rapid increase in access from 29.4% of homes and businesses in 2010 to 94.2% by December 2017.

## **Welsh language**

Alun Cairns became the first MP in history to make a speech in the Welsh Language in a House of Commons debate after the UK Government brought forward a motion February last year enabling MPs to speak in Welsh in Westminster debates.

## **Business support**

The Government's modern Industrial Strategy has been designed to build on Wales' strengths in fields such as aerospace, technology and life sciences. The Secretary of State is putting Wales' best foot forward to maximise the benefits for Wales from the initiatives and grand challenges it presents.

## **Export support**

Over 80 companies joined the Welsh Secretary in Cardiff at the inaugural Wales Business Export Summit in 2017. The event connected firms starting out on exporting journeys with the expertise and support of the UK Government.

## **Speaking of his two years in office, Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:**

Over the last two years I have had the privilege of experiencing the very best of this country – connecting with every corner of Wales, its culture, its history and its people.

The goals we have achieved for Wales over this time take us one step closer to achieving this Government's mission to build a country that works for everyone.

But there is still work to be done. As we prepare to live through one of the most important moments in our country's history, I will not waste a second in getting on with the job. I will provide the leadership to make sure that Wales is in the strongest possible

position to prosper when we leave the European Union, to cultivate an economy that's fit for the future, and deliver a stronger and fairer society for everyone.

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## **News story: Tick the Gift Aid box on donations so charities don't miss out on £600m extra funding**

People giving to charity are being encouraged by the government to declare Gift Aid on their donations, and boost the money that reaches their charity of choice at no extra cost.

The call comes after research showed that charities are losing out on potentially hundreds of millions of pounds in extra funding.

Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, Robert Jenrick MP, said:

The UK has thousands of brilliant charities, all working hard to make people's lives better. Through Gift Aid, we are already giving charities an extra £1.3 billion of funding so they can continue their important work.

We know how crucial this funding is. This is why we've just written to 50,000 charities to tell them about the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme, which makes it even easier for charities to claim a 25% top-up on their donations.

The research, published today by HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC), shows that a third of eligible donations made to many of the UK's 200,000 charities did not add Gift Aid when they could have done. This means that charities are losing out on extra funding worth nearly £600 million a year.

Gift Aid allows charities and community amateur sports clubs (CASC) to claim an extra 25p for every £1 donated. To add Gift Aid to a donation, you must have paid income or capital gains tax that year worth at least the value of the Gift Aid being added and give the charity permission to claim it. Gift

Aid costs no extra to add on to your donation.

HMRC is continuing to work closely with charities to ensure they get the most out of Gift Aid, including making sure their donors understand the rules, and they fully benefit from the support it gives.

The department has also written to 50,000 charities to promote the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme, introduced in 2013, to explain how easy it is to claim a 25% top-up on cash donations. The scheme does not require a declaration to be made for donations worth up to £20, making it simpler for charities to get extra support through Gift Aid.

### **Further information**

1. [How to donate through Gift Aid](#)
2. [Claiming Gift Aid as a charity or CASC](#)
3. [Claiming Gift Aid through the Small Donation Scheme](#)

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## **[Press release: Government announces major programme to tackle inequalities in youth unemployment](#)**

Prime Minister Theresa May has announced the launch of an innovative new programme to address ethnic disparities in youth unemployment and to help disadvantaged young people get into work.

The announcement comes after Theresa May's challenge to society to 'explain or change' disparities in how people from different backgrounds are treated, following the publication of the [Race Disparity Audit](#) – the government's ground-breaking audit of public services, from central government to local communities, launched last October.

The £90 million youth programme, designed jointly by the Big Lottery Fund, DCMS, DfE and DWP, will be shaped by evidence from the Race Disparity Audit, which highlighted the differences in outcomes facing young people from different backgrounds in different parts of England.

It will offer young people the chance to work directly with educators and youth and community organisations – who will consider how their skills can benefit their local communities and businesses.

Young people will feed into the programme's design, working with educators, youth and community organisations and businesses to demonstrate how their skills and talents can benefit their local economies.

Today's announcement marks the start of an engagement phase which will see

the government and the Big Lottery Fund running a series of workshops with young people from across the country to gather evidence about the unique challenges they face in making the transition from education to employment.

The Prime Minister also today announces the Race Disparity Audit Advisory Group, chaired by Simon Woolley. The Advisory Group will challenge, steer and support government departments to develop interventions to tackle disparities found in the Audit – and will drive civil society, businesses and local government to take action.

Figures from the [Ethnicity Facts and Figures website](#) show that young people from ethnic minorities between the ages of 16 and 24 are almost twice as likely to be unemployed (23%) as their white peers (12%) – despite having similar qualifications.

Later today, the Prime Minister will visit a Birmingham-based youth employment charity, which has helped thousands of young people to find work since 2010. The charity runs programmes helping unemployed 16 to 24 year-olds develop key skills in team work, leadership, communication and discipline – providing them with the necessary skills to gain qualifications and work experience so they can move into sustainable employment or further training.

On the visit, Theresa May will speak to young people about the barriers they have experienced in finding work, and will also meet young people who have successfully completed training and gone into full-time employment.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

Youth unemployment blights communities and wastes talent and potential – and too many young people from deprived and ethnic minority backgrounds face barriers preventing them from entering the world of work.

Evidence from the Race Disparity Audit clearly shows that while the educational attainment gap between people of different backgrounds has narrowed over time, this has not been reflected in getting jobs.

Talent, ability and hard work should be the only factors affecting a young person's ability to get on in life – not their background or ethnicity.

The launch of this ambitious programme, which has young people at its heart and draws on their direct experiences, will help to address the barriers holding many young lives back, and will support young people furthest from the labour market into employment, so they can achieve their full potential.

Dawn Austwick, Chief Executive of the Big Lottery Fund, said:

Young people who are facing multiple barriers to employment are the best placed to tell us what needs to change for them.

They will be at the heart of the process to shape solutions and create a dormant accounts youth programme that works for them by working with employers, educators, youth and community organisations.

Simon Woolley, Chair of the Race Disparity Advisory Group and Director of Operation Black Vote, said:

This intervention is driven by the Prime Minister's leadership with support from NGOs. Our role is to find out where and how we can make the biggest impact on a range of issues including youth unemployment and the ethnic disparities within it.

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## **Press release: PM call with Prime Minister Morawiecki: 18 March 2018**

Today the Prime Minister called Polish Prime Minister Morawiecki to discuss the use in Salisbury of a military grade nerve agent developed by Russia.

The Prime Minister said this was another example of an unacceptable pattern of aggressive Russian behaviour, and Prime Minister Morawiecki expressed his full solidarity with the UK in its response to this reckless act.

The Prime Minister thanked Prime Minister Morawiecki for his strong support and they agreed on the importance of a determined response from the European Union and the wider international community.

They looked forward to meeting and holding further discussions on this matter at this week's European Council.