

Press release: Alun Cairns brings Welsh to Westminster in Welsh Grand first

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns will open the Welsh Grand Committee debate in the House of Commons in Welsh for the first time later today (7th February).

It follows a UK Government decision last year to support the use of Welsh in parliamentary debates.

Addressing the Welsh Grand Committee in his first language in Westminster today, Mr Cairns will take the opportunity to highlight the UK Government's commitment to delivering for Wales, and the decisive action it is taking to put the nation's economy on the path to long-term prosperity.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

I am proud to be using the language I grew up speaking, which is not only important to me, my family and the communities Welsh MPs represent, but is also an integral part of Welsh history and culture.

This is a historic day for Parliament and for Wales, and I pay tribute to those in the committee who have campaigned for this change over many years.

In his speech the Welsh Secretary will outline the UK Government's priorities to strengthen Wales' economy through cross-border growth, including the milestone announcement to abolish the Severn Crossing tolls by the end of this year – a decision set to save the average commuter £1,440 per year.

He will highlight how last year's Autumn Budget sets out a powerful package of measures which will help shape Wales' economy into one that is fit for the future.

The commitment to formally enter into negotiations over a growth deal for North Wales to secure its position as part of the Northern Powerhouse – as well as kick starting early discussions for a growth deal for Mid Wales are significant pan-Wales announcements, he will say.

He will also say that the opportunities of cross border growth between England and Wales will be further bolstered by planned rail infrastructure investments.

Improvements on the Wrexham to Bidston line, as well as £16m of investment in the Halton Curve which will introduce direct services from North Wales to

Liverpool.

People in west Wales will also benefit from new IEP trains and infrastructure upgrades to provide direct services from Pembroke Dock to London via Carmarthen.

As well as budgets and cross-border growth, the parliamentary debate is expected to focus on the UK Government's commitment to working closely with the Welsh Government and urge it to use the levers at its disposal to deliver economic growth for Wales.

Alun Cairns added:

I know that Wales is in a strong position to capitalise on the economic opportunities presented to us as we leave the European Union.

But we can't act alone to deliver the changes Wales needs. I look forward to further discussions with the First Minister as we negotiate a successful exit for Wales from the EU, and call on the Welsh Government to be ambitious for the Welsh economy so that prosperity is felt by all.

The Secretary of State will be joined in the debate by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Wales Stuart Andrew MP, who takes part in his first Welsh Grand debate as a Wales Office Minister.

UK Government Minister for Wales Stuart Andrew said:

I welcome the opportunity to discuss the future opportunities available to Wales, and the UK Government's budget is an example of how we are delivering growth and prosperity through a range of commitments.

In my role I will use every opportunity to make sure the whole of Wales contributes and benefits from these commitments. The North Wales Growth Deal is one example which will transform the way North Wales' towns and villages govern themselves, shifting powers to local leaders who are better placed to take decisions that affect their communities.

From these initiatives it is clear that Wales remains an attractive destination to work, invest and do business, and the UK Government will work collectively to ensure this continues.

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Notes to editors:

- The Welsh Grand Committee, formed of 40 Welsh MPs and five invited members meets to discuss issues relevant to Wales, and provides MPs the opportunity to question ministers, debate current matters and for ministers to make statements.
- The Committee last met in 2016, but MPs have spoken in Welsh when the Committee has previously met in Wales.
- The UK Government [brought forward a motion February last year enabling MPs to speak in Welsh](#) when the Welsh Grand Committee meets in Westminster.