

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.