

Speech: Alun Cairns' St David's Day Reception Speech

Thank you all for joining us here at No 10 to celebrate St David's Day and to the Prime Minister for kindly hosting us for the third year in a row.

This is a significant occasion for the UK Government to celebrate and mark the relevance of – what I would say – is the most important nation of the UK – Wales! The rugby on Saturday only confirms that!

Some of you over the last three years will be aware that I have always sought to highlight key facts about Wales, underlining the great contribution we make to the whole of the UK.

I think I have said on each and every occasion that Wales has more castles per square mile than any other nation in the world! So this year I've got some new facts:

We are home to the world's steepest road – Ffordd Pen Llech in Harlech, Snowdonia.

Mount Everest is named after Sir George Everest, a Welshman for surveying the Meridian Arc over 35 years.

The equals sign was invented by Welsh Physician and Mathematician Robert Recorde from Tenby – so anyone who has had some problems with algebra, knows who to blame.

And the World's first ever radio message was transmitted by Marconi in 1897, from Larvernock Point, on the edge of my constituency to Flat Holm in the Bristol Channel – a grand distance of three miles.

And the message was: "Are you ready?"

Well, we may be a small nation but we are definitely ready to underline, mark and celebrate our unique history, language and culture that adds so much to the diversity of the UK and beyond.

And as a government, we are ready to continue to support Welsh innovations, culture, academia and excellence in the public and private sectors to provide for the next generation of rightly proud Welsh men and women.

Welsh is one of Europe's oldest living languages, having stemmed from the 6th century. Far older than English! And it is delight to see that 30% of the Welsh population now speaks at least some Welsh, with a quarter of children taught purely through the medium of Welsh.

Our great culture is about to be amply demonstrated by the choir and we are grateful for their presence here

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ewtoday and to the exhibitors for highlighting the great food offerings we have and their importance to the UK's export drive.

The Prime Minister is a true champion of every part of the UK but I can speak from personal experience, I know Wales holds a very special place in the Prime Minister's outlook. From promoting Welsh businesses like Aston Martin, who I can now say are a Welsh business, to international trade to driving exports. The Prime Minister always has Wales in her sights.

In August the PM and I took more Welsh businesses than any other part of the UK to Africa to promote Welsh excellence in supporting the developing world.

And over the last year, with the Prime Minister's support, I have had the privilege of seeing our scientists at CERN in Geneva, our semi-conductor cluster – the largest in the world- has wowed international audiences and in three weeks time, I will present the first ever catalogue of Welsh projects to an international audience at the MIPIM conference in Cannes.

Our City and Growth Deals demonstrate our joint work with the Welsh Government. And earlier this week – for the first time ever, both governments jointly hosted an Ambassador's event at the Foreign Office as part of Wales Week in London.

In this room we have some of Wales' most talented people from businesses to culture and sport and I'd like to pay tribute to you for what you do to promote Welsh interests at home and overseas.

Let me end by bringing you the words of St. David which I hope can inspire us all:

“Byddwch lawen a gwnewch y pethau bychain.” Or “Be cheerful, keep your faith and do the little things.”

So Prime Minister – as well as the big things across government that you do on an ongoing basis, I know these words will be important to you because your attention to detail on the things that really matter epitomises your approach.

So, I am sure we will all agree that you are following the path and the advice of St David, the greatest Welshman to ever exist.

Thank you very much.

[Press release: PM celebrates best of](#)

Wales at St David's Day reception

Among those celebrating Wales' national day were world-renowned fashion designer Julien Macdonald OBE and Chairman of the Welsh Rugby Union Gareth Davies.

The new Aston Martin DBX – built at the brand's new manufacturing plant in the Vale of Glamorgan – was parked in Downing Street. The South Wales site will become Aston Martin's 'home of electrification', putting Wales at the forefront of electric technology and bringing over 700 new jobs to the region.

Inside Number 10 Welsh creative talent was centre stage; Julien Macdonald showcased a selection of his fashion range while guests enjoyed musical performances from Welsh choir Côr Llundain and harpist Dylan Wyn Rowlands.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

The sheer breadth of talent and industry represented here today is testament to the huge contribution the people of Wales make both at home and on the world stage.

From music to manufacturing, fashion to food, it is a real privilege to celebrate Wales' proud heritage and bright future ahead of St David's Day.

Wales has a truly global outlook and I am determined to see this great nation go from strength to strength.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

I am delighted to celebrate St David's Day by opening the doors of No10 once again to welcome guests from all aspects of Welsh culture in celebration of our unique history, language, sporting and business achievements.

I'd like to thank all those who came together to make the event a success today. It is a clear demonstration of the UK Government and the Prime Minister's commitment to Wales, recognising that Wales is an integral part of our union.

Guests also enjoyed quality Welsh produce on show from Ruthin-based company Patchwork Traditional Foods who use locally sourced ingredients for their handmade products. They were joined by Llanllyr Source whose drinks are enjoyed in hotels and restaurants all around the world as well as the award-winning Dà Mhìle Distillery and Teifi Farmhouse Cheese.

[News story: Aviation minister meets airlines and allergy sufferers to improve flying for those with nut allergies](#)

The Aviation Minister Liz Sugg met with allergy sufferers, medical experts and airlines today to explore options for improving the flying experience for those who suffer from nut allergies.

While passenger numbers continue to grow, barriers remain for people with additional needs, such as those suffering from allergies, meaning they are less likely to choose to fly or find the experience more difficult when they do.

The meeting follows the [publication of the consultation on the future of aviation](#), Aviation 2050, which proposes the introduction of a passenger charter. The charter will set out clear standards for a range of passenger issues which could include more consistent information for consumers with allergies.

Aviation Minister Liz Sugg said:

Passengers with nut allergies can face potentially life-threatening challenges when travelling which can cause significant stress and anxiety, especially for families with children. We want to see improved clarity and consistency in how the sector deals with allergies because it is vital that sufferers have the confidence to travel.

It is clear that airlines want to help too and build on the good practice that already exists. They will now meet with food allergy sufferers to explore further what more can be done. The Department for Transport will work with industry, the CAA and allergy groups to ensure there is a central point where people can access the allergy policies of individual airlines and the procedures for alerting airlines when there are passengers travelling with allergy needs.

Some airlines have stopped serving nuts on flights, which provides some reassurance for those with allergies, but the possibility of exposure cannot be fully ruled out. Airlines already take the welfare of their passengers very seriously and have processes in place to enable passengers to notify them in advance of their flight of any allergies to reduce risk and mitigate

against potential exposure.

The government is currently consulting on measures to improve the flying experience for those with nut allergies as part of the [Aviation Strategy green paper](#), and welcomes contributions from interested parties.

The consultation will conclude later this year. The government will then respond in due course.

[News story: UK statement on re-election of President Buhari in Nigeria](#)



Last night the Independent National Electoral Commission of Nigeria declared President Buhari the winner of the 2019 Presidential elections.

Minister of State for Africa, Harriett Baldwin, said:

I offer my congratulations to President Buhari on securing a second term as the Nigerian President. The UK is a long-standing friend and partner of Nigeria and the Nigerian people, and a stable and prosperous Nigeria benefits Africa and the world.

The Nigerian people have demonstrated resilience and a commitment to democracy. The result declared by the Nigerian election commission is consistent with the result obtained through the civil society Parallel Vote Tabulation process. Along with our international partners, the UK believes the Nigerian people can have confidence in the result.

However, we also recognise that independent Nigerian voices have

expressed concerns about the conduct of the electoral process, in particular logistics and results collation, and reports of intimidation of election officials. We urge any party or individual who wishes to challenge the process to do so peacefully and through the appropriate legal channel and we encourage Nigerian authorities to examine all allegations of wrongdoing carefully, and take the necessary action against individuals found responsible.

My thoughts are also with the families and friends of those who lost their lives in election-related violence. No one should die in the exercise of their democratic rights. We will continue to support Nigeria and its civil society in drawing lessons from these elections and strengthening its democracy.

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[News story: Appointments made to the Board of Kew's Royal Botanic Gardens](#)

Defra Ministers have reappointed Liam Dolan and Sue Hartley to the Board of Trustees of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, for second terms of three years. Both appointments will run from 1 March 2019 until 28 February 2022.

RBG Kew became an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body under the National Heritage Act 1983 and is sponsored by Defra. The Board of Trustees comprises a Chairman and 11 other members.

The appointments have been made in accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments published by the Cabinet Office. All appointments are made on merit and political activity plays no part in the selection process.

Trustees do not receive any direct remuneration for their services, although reasonable travel and subsistence expenses can be reimbursed.

There is a requirement for appointees' significant political activity to be made public. Neither Liam Dolan nor Sue Hartley has declared any significant political activity in the past five years.

Biographical details

Liam Dolan

Professor Liam Dolan is from the Republic of Ireland and graduated with a

degree in Botany at University College Dublin. He carried out PhD research on plant developmental genetics at the University of Pennsylvania, USA. He then spent three years as a post-doctoral researcher at the John Innes Centre, Norwich, before becoming an independent project leader. After 13 years running his own group in Norwich, Liam moved to the University of Oxford as the Sherardian Professor of Botany in 2009 and was Head of the Department of Plant Sciences between 2012 and 2017. Liam has received a number of awards in recognition of his contributions to science. These include the President's Medal of the Society of Experimental Biology in 2001 and membership of the European Molecular Biology Organisation (EMBO) in 2009. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 2014 and awarded European Research Council Advanced Grants in 2010 and 2018. Liam's research aims to understand how plants colonised the land over 400 million years ago using a combination of genetics and palaeontology.

Sue Hartley

Sue Hartley is Professor of Ecology at the University of York and Director of the York Environmental Sustainability Institute, a pioneering interdisciplinary research partnership generating solutions to global environmental challenges. Sue studied biochemistry at the University of Oxford before moving to the University of York for her PhD on plant defences against insect herbivores and then the University of Sussex where her research included projects on the factors maintaining the extraordinary biodiversity of tropical forests and the impact of climate change on plant resistance to herbivores. In 2009 she delivered the Royal Institution Christmas lectures, becoming only the fourth woman to do so since they began in 1825. Sue served as President of the British Ecological Society 2016-2017 and has been a Board Member of Natural England since 2018.