

[News story: Westminster welcomes Welsh language at the Welsh grand committee](#)

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MPs will be given the chance to speak Welsh in parliamentary debates in the Palace of Westminster for the first time ever this year.

The UK Government, responding to the Commons' Procedure Committee's report on the matter, today confirms it will bring forward a motion in Government time enabling MPs to speak in Welsh when the Welsh Grand Committee meets in Westminster.

MPs are currently only permitted to speak Welsh in Westminster's parliamentary proceedings when the Welsh Affairs select committee is taking evidence.

Making proceedings of the Welsh Grand Committee bilingual means that the Welsh language will be used for short debates, legislative scrutiny and the questioning of ministers in Westminster for the first time ever.

David Lidington, Leader of the House of Commons, said:

Welsh MPs play a vital role in making their constituents' voices heard in the House of Commons.

Across Whitehall, UK Government ministers are listening and responding – as we are today by promoting the Welsh language in Parliament and its contribution to the cultural diversity of the United Kingdom.

Alun Cairns, Secretary of State for Wales, said:

I am delighted that MPs will be able to participate in the Welsh Grand Committee through the medium of Welsh for the first time in Westminster.

It is vitally important that the people of Wales are able to hear debates in both languages. I hope that MPs who can speak Welsh will choose to use this service in order to help promote the Welsh language across Parliament.

The cost of the translation services – both interpreters and headsets – will be absorbed within Parliament's existing budgets, meaning this change takes place at no extra cost to the taxpayer.

[Design and use of UK airspace consultation](#)

The Government is currently consulting on proposals to:

- Support the reform of airspace, thereby maximising the economic and social benefits of aviation
- Minimise the negative local impacts of aviation

Ministers are seeking comment on proposals to update policy on the management of UK airspace including:

- The role of an Independent Commission on Civil Aviation Noise to ensure noise impacts are openly considered
- Providing industry with the ability to assess noise impacts and guidance to help them manage change more effectively
- Bringing compensation policy for airspace changes in line with policy on changes to aviation infrastructure
- Greater flexibility for London's major airports, so they can adapt noise management to the needs of their local communities

The consultation can be found here: <http://bit.ly/2m3y2Hj>. **It closes on 25 May 2017.**

[China commissions new naval training ship](#)

The Chinese navy on Tuesday commissioned a new training ship at a military port in Lyushun, northeast China's Liaoning Province, the PLA Daily reported Wednesday.

With hull number 83, the Qijiguang naval training ship is 163 meters long and

22 meters wide, with a full load displacement of 9,000 tonnes and maximum speed of 22 knots, making it the largest and most advanced training ship in the Chinese navy.

Designed and built by China, the training ship can accommodate over 400 navy cadets or officers for training in offshore waters and high seas. It can also be used in foreign exchanges, natural disaster rescue and other non-military operations.

Qi Jiguang was an ancient Chinese national hero in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) best known for leading Ming forces to defend China's eastern coastal regions from raids by Japanese pirates in the 16th century.

The training ship is affiliated with Dalian Naval Academy.

UK public finances are OK

The latest figures for public spending, tax revenue and borrowing published yesterday showed more progress in reducing the running deficit. Total state borrowing adjusted for the bonds the Bank of England has bought in remains at a moderate level, around 65% of GDP.

The main reason new borrowing is reducing is the continued good growth in tax receipts. In the period April 2016 to January 2017 tax revenues were 5% higher than in the same period of the previous financial year. This reflects the continued growth of the UK economy. Self assessment income tax receipts and corporation tax receipts showed especially strong growth based on improved business activity and investment prospects.

This increase in tax allowed an increase of 2% in public spending and a reduction in the rate of new borrowing. In the financial year to date central government current spending is up by 1.4% and local government current spending up by 10.2%. Central government net investment rose by 6%. (ONS official figures). There are some areas where it may be necessary to spend more.

It is still a good idea to spend money wisely. Ending our EU contributions is an obvious improvement to make. There are issues with poor value for money in parts of the overseas aid budget. There are more opportunities to help people into work, to cut the benefit bill by substituting earnings from work. There are many efficiency improvements to be made in areas like railway spending, which is running at high levels.

The government also needs to be careful over tax rates. Taxing income may be a necessity, but it is not wise to tax working and investing too heavily as it can do considerable economic damage and prove self defeating. The budget is an ideal time to review current rates and ask which taxes should be lower

in order to raise more revenue as and when economic growth delivers more cash.

[Humanitarian agencies seek \\$1 billion to provide life-saving aid to millions in northeast Nigeria – UN](#)

22 February 2017 – As relief organizations increase response to the humanitarian emergency in the north-east of Nigeria, timely donor support amounting to a little over \$1 billion is required to sustain life-saving assistance to millions people devastated by Boko Haram-linked violence, the United Nations relief aid wing has said.

“If the resources do not arrive in time, one in five children suffering severe acute malnutrition could die,” said Peter Lundberg, the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator for Nigeria in a press release issued yesterday by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

“The likelihood of a child with severe acute malnutrition surviving is nine times less than a properly nourished child,” he added.

According to OCHA, the eight-year-long conflict has left some 8.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in the worst-affected states of Nigeria’s north-east. In the coming months, around 5.1 million people will face severe food insecurity in the region, where some 1.8 million people have been displaced and millions are exposed to violence and abuse.

“Food assistance alone will cost \$1 million a day to avoid famine in a region where 450,000 children under five will suffer from severe acute malnutrition this year,” said Mr. Lundberg. “Sustained and timely financial support is needed to maintain the scale-up in operations desperately needed in the north-east of Nigeria.”

RELATED: UN food relief agency chief welcomes progress on anti-hunger programmes in north-east Nigeria

During a recent visit by representatives of 12 donor countries and agencies to Borno state, in the run up to the 24 February Humanitarian Conference on Nigeria and Lake Chad region, they lauded the scale-up of humanitarian operations in the north-east and emphasized the need for more funding, a stance the humanitarian community in Nigeria concurs with.

“We are grateful to our donors who have enabled us scale up the response and appreciate their continued commitment. We look forward to receiving the needed resources to implement the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan for

Nigeria,” Mr. Lundberg said.