

News story: UK and Germany work towards stronger defence relationship



Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson with German Defence Minister Ursula Von der Leyen

The pair and their teams met to discuss strengthening defence ties. The German Defence Minister and Gavin Williamson also took the opportunity to meet a group of German junior officers, who have been learning about UK defence at the Ministry of Defence.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

The UK and Germany face the same intensifying threats to our way of life and we work closely together to protect our citizens from harm.

Germany is one of our closest allies and I look forward to even closer cooperation.

The visit follows on from increased cooperation between the two countries. February saw the successful Ministerial Equipment Capability Cooperation talks in Berlin and the latest annual UK-Germany Army Staff Talks, which took place in London.

Germany was formally recognised as a 'tier one' defence ally in November 2015's Strategic Defence and Security Review. The country has also recognised the UK as a key defence partners in its equivalent review.

Both nations have a strong history of working together in NATO and as part of the Counter-Daesh coalition, working together to tackle terrorist threats, build allies' capacity and boost Europe's security.

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[News story: Welsh rail services set to be devolved following historic agreement](#)

The transfer of rail services to the Welsh government has taken a significant step forward with the laying of a draft order in Parliament.

The draft order was laid before Parliament today (28 February 2018) and will, subject to approval from MPs, Lords and the Privy Council, devolve the procurement and management of Wales and Borders franchise train services within Wales. This follows detailed discussions between the Department for Transport and the Welsh Government on how powers will be devolved to Welsh ministers.

The agreement also takes into account the fact that many of the franchise services operate on both sides of the border between England and Wales and includes safeguards to protect all passengers using these routes.

Rail Minister Jo Johnson said:

This is a positive and significant step in the franchise devolution process and is an example of the effective cooperation between the UK and Welsh governments.

The devolution of these powers delivers on recommendations made by the Commission on Devolution in Wales and demonstrates the commitment we made as a government in the 2015 St David's Day Agreement.

Welsh Government Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport Ken Skates said:

I welcome this recognition of the extensive nature of the cross-border services – and services wholly within England – provided by the Wales and Borders franchise and the need for appropriate accountability for rail operations on each side of the border.

It will be important for devolution of funding for Network Rail to be delivered in the future and I will continue dialogue with the Department for Transport to that end.

As well as continuing with present franchise funding arrangements, the UK government will also provide an extra £125 million towards upgrading the Valley Lines, part of the Welsh Government's metro project in South Wales.

The draft Welsh Ministers (Transfer of Functions) (Railways) Order 2018 was laid before Parliament following formal approval by Welsh ministers. It will go before the Commons and Lords for scrutiny.

[News story: Low Pay Commission visits programme 2018](#)

Date	Location
25-26 April	Kendal and South Lakeland
23-24 May	Barnstaple and North Devon
13-14 June	Newry, Northern Ireland
13-14 June	Perth, Scotland
4-5 July	Anglesey, Wales
8-9 August	Birmingham

The LPC organises an annual programme of visits to gather evidence in support of our recommendations to government. The visits are attended by members of our Commission and Secretariat. We want to hear first hand evidence from employers, workers and anyone else with a view on the National Living and Minimum Wage rates and their effects.

We can host meetings in the locations we visit, but it is also extremely useful for us to visit businesses and workers at their place of work to see the effects of the minimum wage 'on the ground'. So, we would be delighted if you would like to host us and show us around your business, or arrange for us to meet workers.

For more information on why we have chosen these visit locations, read our [blog](#).

The Low Pay Commission's purpose is to provide advice to the Government on the rates of the National Living Wage and the other National Minimum Wages, as well as other related issues.

Click the link at the top of the page to email and arrange a meeting with LPC Commissioners, or call on 020 7215 8772.

All the minimum wage rates will increase on 1 April – see table below for rates.

National Minimum Wage rates

Minimum Wage rate	Current rate (hourly)	Rate from 1 April 2018
National Living Wage	£7.50	£7.83
21-24 Year Old Rate	£7.05	£7.38

Minimum Wage rate	Current rate (hourly)	Rate from 1 April 2018
18-20 Year Old Rate	£5.60	£5.90
16-17 Year Old Rate	£4.05	£4.20
Apprentice Rate	£3.50	£3.70
Accommodation offset	£6.40	£7.00

[Press release: Alun Cairns: “Wales’ cultural reputation has an enormous impact on our global standing”](#)



Leading figures from Welsh cultural organisations will gather at the Wales Office in Westminster today (28 February) in celebration of the strength and diversity of Welsh culture.

Guests from the worlds of broadcasting, arts and sports will join Welsh Secretary Alun Cairns and UK Government Ministers Stuart Andrew and Lord Bourne at an event in Gwydyr House.

The Welsh Secretary is expected to call on those present to come up with inventive ways to showcase Wales’ talent across the world, in order to maintain the nation’s strong reputation in the fields of business, tourism and culture.

Secretary of State for Wales, Alun Cairns said:

I am delighted to welcome those from all walks of Wales’ creative life to celebrate our famous culture in Gwydyr House.

I’m proud to see every element of Welsh culture represented, from sport to tourism and the arts industry, both on stage and on screen. Each one of them plays a crucial role in putting Welsh talent on a pedestal for the world to see.

Wales Week in London provides the opportunity to showcase Wales on

an international stage, and it's my role to ensure Welsh interests are represented across the UK and internationally. But I'm no expert in culture, and I encourage those present to think about how we can take the best of Wales to the rest of the world. My door is always open to hearing their ideas.

ENDS

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[Press release: Homes England at MIPIM Cannes 2018](#)

The HMG delegation is being led by the Department for International Trade and co-ordinated by the Capital Investment directorate. The event is a great opportunity for HMG to present a unified voice to the investor and regional property community and will also feature contributions from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Department for Transport and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

HMG will have a prominent pavilion space at the event and is partnering with the British Property Federation to run an activity programme that promotes UK investment opportunities, based around the Government's Industrial Strategy foundations of productivity: Innovation, People, Infrastructure, Business Environment and Place.

We will be running our own programme of events over 3 days in Cannes, giving attendees the chance to hear from our leadership team on subjects like strategic housing growth, modern methods of construction, design and quality.

Tuesday 13 March

1100 – 1150: Construction, Productivity and Automation Stephen Kinsella, Director, Homes England.

Wednesday 14 March

1000 – 1050: Homes England. Nick Walkley, CEO, Homes England and Sophie White, Head of Infrastructure.

1500 – 1550: Strategic housing growth. Sir Edward Lister, Chairman Homes England and Tom Walker, Deputy CEO, Homes England.

1600 – 1650: Design and Quality. Louise Wyman, Head of Strategy, Homes

England.

1700 – 1750: Housing – the modern way. Gordon More, Chief Investment Officer, Homes England.

Thursday 15 March

1100 – 1150: Northern Powerhouse. Nick Walkley, CEO, Homes England.

1200 – 1250: Funding for Growth. Chair: Sir Edward Lister.

Our team will be working with combined authorities and city regions attending MIPIM on joint activity, including in the Northern Powerhouse and Midlands Engine.

Established in 1990, MIPIM gathers the most influential international property players from the office, residential, retail, healthcare, sport, logistics and industrial sectors for 4 days of networking, learning and transaction.

Follow our activity at MIPIM on Twitter – @HomesEngland / #WeAreHomesEngland.