

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.

ENDS

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.
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[Press release: PM call with President Trump: 6 February 2018](#)

A Downing Street spokesperson said,

“The Prime Minister spoke to President Trump this evening.

“They discussed the Clarifying Lawful Overseas Use of Data (CLOUD) Act, due to be considered by the US Senate later this month. The Act covers how the US can access data stored in another country, when it is needed to prosecute serious crime or to disrupt terrorism. It will also authorise the US Attorney General to enter into agreements with like-minded allies like the UK to allow reciprocal compliance with US and foreign court orders. With it, law enforcement officials in the US and the UK will be empowered to investigate their citizens suspected of terrorism and serious crimes like murder, human trafficking, and the sexual abuse of children regardless of where the suspect’s email or messages happen to be stored.

“The Prime Minister stressed the great importance of the legislation to the UK authorities in investigating criminal and terrorist activity in the UK. The Prime Minister and President Trump agreed the passage of the Act through the US legislative system was vital for our collective security.”

[Speech: PM’s Vote 100 speech: 6 February 2018](#)

The 6th of February 1918 may not be as well-known or instantly recognisable as the dates of the wars, battles and coronations that have shaped our

nation's history.

But there is no doubt it was a day that forever changed our nation's future. A day when, for the first time, we went from being a country where most people could not vote to one where most people could.

It was another decade before equal suffrage was achieved.

But on that February day – seven centuries after Magna Carta, almost 90 years after the Great Reform Act – the Mother of Parliaments finally earned the right to call itself a true democracy.

A 1909 postcard published by the Women Writers Suffrage League shows a woman being dragged from the feet of Justice by the masked thug of Prejudice. And so it was in real life.

Because the right to vote was not handed over willingly. Rather it had to be forced, over many years of struggle, from the hands of those who held it for themselves. All around us here today are reminders of what that struggle looked like.

Through that small door away to my right is the cupboard where Emily Wilding Davison hid on census night. Up the stairs is St Stephen's Hall, where the statue of Viscount Falkland still bears the mark of Margery Humes, who chained herself to its spur.

Outside, beyond the grand arched window, lie New Palace Yard and Parliament Square, scene of such brutality when suffragettes clashed with police on Black Friday. Now these stories now dwell in the history books, dusted off to share with visiting constituents and schoolchildren. Yet in this hall tonight we see the living legacy of the suffrage campaigners. Hundreds of female Parliamentarians, past and present.

Women who serve or have served as ministers and shadow ministers. A female former Speaker of the House of Commons. A female Prime Minister.

A century after women won the right to send MPs to Westminster, nearly all the parties represented here have a female leader or deputy leader.

The women in this hall come from every corner of the country, indeed from right across the world.

We represent many parties and almost every point on the political spectrum.

None of us are exactly alike, none of our stories are the same.

Yet every one of us is here today because of the heroic, tireless struggle of those who came before us.

Women who led a campaign not just for themselves or their families, but for generations as yet unborn.

Of course, women were not the only people brought into public life by the

1918 act.

It also enfranchised, for the first time, more than five million working class men. Men who – for four, bloody years – had been expected to fight and die for their country, yet had not been trusted with the right to choose who governed it.

So the granting of Royal Assent was a truly momentous moment in our history. Yet when it came, the celebrations were muted.

In 1918, Europe was still at war. In the words of Emmeline Pankhurst – the founder of the Women's Social and Political Union, who I'm proud to say was later adopted as a candidate for the Conservative Party – "the sorrows of the world conflict precluded jubilations". A century on, we're putting that right.

And not just this evening. As we've heard, the celebrations and commemorations will run all year long, both in here in Parliament and across the country.

In an age where millions around the world are denied the right to vote and millions here at home are apathetic about exercising it, it's only right that we all learn more about those who fought so hard to extend the franchise.

We don't hear enough about these Edwardian radicals.

In fact I think for many people, the first time many of us encounter the suffragettes is when we see Mrs Banks in Mary Poppins. It's certainly an entertaining introduction to the "soldiers in petticoats". But in terms of detail I think it leaves a little bit to be desired.

We owe such a debt to the suffrage campaigners that they deserve greater recognition. And that's why, later this year, a statue of Millicent Fawcett will be unveiled in Parliament Square, It's why the government is also helping to fund a statue of Emmeline Pankhurst in her home town of Manchester.

And it's why the Government has put £5 million towards events marking this year's centenary. Events that will recognise and celebrate not just the Pankhursts and the Fawcetts, significant though they were. But also the many other women whose roles are often overlooked. Marion Wallace Dunlop, the illustrator of children's books who staged the first suffragette hunger strike. Sophia Duleep Singh, the Maharaja's daughter who faced both sexual and racial prejudice as she played a leading role in the Women's Tax Resistance League.

Helen Ogston, the "woman with the whip", who in 1908 was driven from the stage by an angry mob during a suffrage rally in Maidenhead – a town that, many years later, I have the privilege of representing in Parliament. And, of course, the thousands – tens of thousands – of ordinary women and men whose names are lost to history. Some risked arrest and imprisonment. Others were forced out of their jobs. All faced being shunned by family, friends and society.

Yet each played their part in securing a right we should never take for granted – and a right that is still not secure today. Because a century after women were first enfranchised, some are still prevented from taking their place on the electoral roll. Many survivors of domestic abuse are unable to register for fear of revealing their address to an ex-partner. That effectively means the threat of violence is removing women's right to vote, something that is simply unacceptable. That's why just before Christmas, the Government laid a series of statutory instruments that will make it easier for those who are at risk of abuse to register and vote anonymously.

Those changes will be debated in the House of Commons tomorrow. I'm sure that, in the week of this significant anniversary for women voters, MPs of all parties will set aside their differences to support this important change.

The need to expand anonymous registration is a reminder that the Act we're commemorating tonight was only one step on a long journey.

I'm the 54th person to be Prime Minister of this country, but only the second to be a woman. Women make up half the population of this country, yet only a third of its MPs. I've long campaigned to get more women into public life at all levels. It's not about appearances, or even just about giving women an equal chance to get on. I want to see more women in politics and government because greater female representation makes a real difference to everyone's lives.

The same is true of the many other groups who do not see themselves properly reflected in public life.

People from minority ethnic groups, members of the LGBT community, people with disabilities, or those from less privileged backgrounds. At last year's election, the proportion of MPs who were educated at comprehensive schools reached a record high – but it's still just 51 per cent.

So let us celebrate this centenary, and give thanks to those who gave their all so that we might be here today.

But let us also commit ourselves to continuing their work.

To carrying forward the torch they passed to us.

To securing the rights they fought for and ensuring that everyone, regardless of background, is able to play a full and active role in our democracy.

The brave women and men who came before us left us the most precious inheritance.

Now let us all, through words and deeds, be their fitting heirs.

Speech: Adapting the Security Council to Be More Inclusive, Transparent and Effective

Thank you Mr President.

And I would like to thank Ian Martin for his briefing, and the Kuwaiti Presidency for scheduling this open debate. I would also like to congratulate Kuwait on taking up the Chairmanship of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, and I look forward to a productive two years under your leadership.

Mr President, I am afraid that you have a tough act to follow. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Japan as the outgoing Chair, particularly their stewardship of the negotiations that led to agreement of a new Note 507.

The new Note 507 is a valuable resource for all current and future members of this Council. It brings together almost all of the Council's myriad procedural documents and contains a number of important changes. In particular, I would highlight the new language on the conduct of informal consultations, the negotiation process, and cooperation with non-Council bodies, including the Peacebuilding Commission and the African Union. And I echo what the distinguished representative of Ethiopia had to say on the value of African Union briefers to this Council, something we called on collectively when we were in Addis Ababa for our annual meeting.

Many parts of the Note reflect best practice which has built up gradually over the years. But it also signals our collective ambition for a more inclusive, transparent and effective Council that is better able to tackle the challenges of the modern world.

One of the ways that we can deliver this ambition is through a stronger relationship with external partners. Last week, the Cruz report reminded us of the risks faced by peacekeepers deployed by this Council. The United Kingdom is pleased to have worked with Pakistan to strengthen triangular cooperation between the Council, Troop Contributing Countries, Police Contributing Countries and the Secretariat and looks forward to further discussions on this crucial issue in the forthcoming session of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping. The Security Council needs to work closely with those countries whose troops and police are on the front line when we consider our peacekeeping deployments, and we in the UK will continue to ensure that we do so when considering mandates.

We also need to hear more from civil society and particularly from women. And I would just note that today marks a hundred years since women first gained the right to vote in the UK. All too often, we hear only one perspective, and we do not hear from those that are most affected by our decisions in this

Chamber. Last year just 30 representatives of civil society briefed this Council, and under a quarter of our briefers were women. We need to do better.

We also need to continue our efforts to make our meetings more effective and action-oriented. This means making sure that the briefings we receive from the Secretariat are comprehensive, but promoting more interactivity in consultations, and seeking outcomes from our meetings. This will not be accomplished by more changes to the guidance, but requires the commitment of all of us around this table, especially during Council members' Presidencies.

Finally, this Council needs to work harder to meet the Secretary-General's ambition—and our own—to do more on preventive diplomacy. This means focusing our time on the conflicts of today and tomorrow, not only those of previous decades. It means being flexible in how we handle our agenda, and making the best use of the Secretariat's insights, including through situational awareness briefings.

Mr President,

As the world's threats evolve, so too must this Council. We must implement Note 507. We must also challenge ourselves to continue to adapt as a Council so that we better meet our mandate of maintaining international peace and security.

And may I just finish by thanking those who work so hard to support us as a Council, including in particular SCAD and our excellent interpreters.

Thank you.

[News story: UK leading transparency revolution for empowerment and growth](#)

The UK is behind a transparency revolution to make aid work better to end poverty, eradicate disease and help refugees survive brutal conflicts, with the Department for International Development (DFID) publishing a new Transparency Agenda, 'Open Aid, Open Societies' today (Tuesday 6 February 2018).

We are leading the way to drive transparency standards across the world to make governments, company ownership and the oil and mining sectors more accountable, more responsive and more open.

By opening up all areas of spending in the countries we work in, including national budgets and income from trading natural resources, we empower citizens, close down global opportunities for corruption, let people

everywhere see how decisions are made and hold their leaders accountable – leading to better economic growth and helping countries stand on their own two feet.

The results of this work range from building trust in governments and increasing the number of people willing to pay tax, or making changes to mining laws which increase revenues going directly to public services.

This also sets out how DFID's work is being made as transparent as possible, so that British taxpayers know exactly how and where their contributions are being made to save millions of lives around the world. We are ensuring the public, both in the UK and elsewhere, have data and information that they can easily understand and challenge, enabling them to scrutinise how money is spent and build trust in aid.

Minister of State for International Development Harriett Baldwin said:

"Transparency transforms people's lives for the better by enabling countries to collect taxes, improve public services, and ensure a level-playing field in which businesses can flourish.

"We are encouraging developing countries to open up their governments to scrutiny by their own citizens – and in doing so we are making sure UK taxpayers know exactly how their aid is spent.

"Fairness and justice are core British values. This is why we will continue leading the global transparency revolution – starting with closing loopholes that hide illicit money. We all prosper in a fairer and more transparent world."

The Transparency Agenda sets out the various ways that DFID is a leader in transparency:

- DFID's Development Tracker was the first of its kind and has been widely replicated by aid agencies around the world – showing exactly how the aid budget is being spent.
- The UK was the first G7 country to adopt the Open Contracting Data Standard ensuring transparency across the full procurement process and publishing who is winning public contracts. This helps eliminate the risk of corruption or collusion. We will support 16 countries to implement more open contracting in public procurement by 2020
- In 2011, we helped establish the Open Government Partnership which strengthens good governance by securing concrete commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower citizens and fight corruption. This work included a project supporting citizens in the Democratic Republic of Congo to vote on budget allocations using mobile phones, which led to a 16 fold increase in tax collection and increased trust in government.
- The UK was among the first countries to require companies to submit details of their real beneficial owners – information which is then made public by the UK government.

- We will lead an international effort to make global commodities trading more transparent – the physical sales by governments producing oil, gas and minerals to commodity trading companies where the national government receives an undisclosed share of production. This will address a black hole which can provides opportunities for corruption on a colossal scale that can hinder economic growth and foster national security challenges.
- The UK was a founding member of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), a global standard to promote the open and accountable management of oil, gas and mineral resources. Ghana, for example, revised its mining tax law after joining the EITI, which led to revenues more than doubling between 2010 and 2011, from \$210 million to \$500 million.
- DFID publishes its data every single month as opposed to every quarter, going beyond the highest international standards, and we hold our partners to the same high standards.