

Press release: Welsh Secretary Alun Cairns' New Year message for 2018.

Each New Year provides us with the opportunity to reflect on our achievements over the 12 months, and look forward to the year that stretches before us.

2017 was the year that Wales once again shone in the global spotlight and underlined its credentials as a first class host of major sporting events when Cardiff hosted the UEFA Champions League final. The biggest sporting event in the world that year was beamed to 200 countries and up to 170,000 fans from all over the world flocked to the city and left with a clear and positive message about everything Wales has to offer.

There is little doubt that 2017 was also the year that launched the UK into a seminal moment in our political and constitutional history.

We began the year by writing a new chapter in Welsh devolution as the Wales Bill received Royal Assent. In March we triggered Article 50, putting the decision taken by the British people to leave the European Union into action. And we ended the year by reaching an agreement on the first phase of negotiations which will take us through to discussions on trade and security in 2018.

It was the year that the UK Government also underpinned its ambition to re-balance the Welsh economy and grow the private sector with major investment in infrastructure.

The decision to reduce the Severn Tolls before abolishing them altogether, the introduction of state of the art trains on the Great Western Mainline and funding for superfast broadband, are all essential steps towards delivering long-term, balanced economic growth.

We have also continued to demonstrate that this Government is firmly on the side of business. The Government's modern Industrial Strategy has been designed to build on Wales' strengths in fields such as aerospace, technology and life sciences and I want to ensure that we are putting our best foot forward to maximise the benefits for Wales from the initiatives and grand challenges it presents.

And of course, the UK Government has set out the way forward for a comprehensive and ambitious series of City Deals for Cardiff and Swansea, is progressing with a growth deal for North Wales and is opening discussions on a growth deal for the Mid Wales region.

These deals are about creating a network of regional economic powerhouses capable of forging mutually beneficial connections and linkages.

This is why our announcement to abolish the Severn tolls is so important – my number one aim when I became Secretary of State – sending a direct message to businesses, commuters and tourists alike that we are committed to

strengthening the links between England and Wales.

And in order to build on this, one of my first tasks in the New Year will be to host a Summit on 22nd January at the Celtic Manor to bring together local partners from across the South West of England and the South Wales to explore how we can further strengthen the links between the two economies.

So if 2017 was the year of progress for Wales and the United Kingdom, 2018 will be the year where we must have the vision and the courage to seize the opportunities these moment present.

This is also the challenge that we lay down to the Welsh Government when firmer foundations for devolution in Wales come into force on 1 April next year. The new reserved powers model of devolution in Wales will make clear what is devolved, and the responsibility of the National Assembly for Wales, and what is reserved – and the responsibility of Parliament. This will put more decisions into the hands of Welsh Ministers, giving them important new levers to grow the Welsh economy and to deliver better public services across Wales.

As the voice of the UK Government in Wales, and the voice of Wales in Westminster my department will continue to closely with departments across Whitehall to ensure companies and investors see Wales as an outward-looking, ambitious trading partner. That was the message I gave to business leaders on my recent trips to Japan and Qatar, where I spoke to a number of investors – both existing and potential – about what Wales has to offer post EU exit. And it will be the message we will carry forward into 2018.

The UK Government will not be found wanting in energy, enterprise or enthusiasm when it comes to delivering for Wales. In 2018, we will continue to manage our economy carefully, to build a country that works for everyone and an economy that is fit for the future.

This is how we will preserve, protect and progress our prosperity.

On behalf of my ministerial colleagues, I wish you all a very healthy, happy and prosperous 2018.

Press release: David Mundell New Year Message

Speaking just ahead of the turn of the year, Secretary of State for Scotland David Mundell said:

“We have experienced huge changes in Scotland this year.

"I know for many people 2017 will have sometimes felt like a challenging year.

"But as we look forward to the Bells, I'd like to reflect on the progress we have made – and address some of the tasks facing us in 2018.

"The General Election in June, the arrival of important new tax powers at Holyrood earlier this month, and our on-going preparations to leave the EU have all had an immense impact.

"I was honoured to be reappointed Secretary of State for Scotland after the election and I'm determined to ensure the UK Government continues to deliver for Scotland.

"At the beginning of the year, Scotland faced demands from the Scottish Government for a second independence referendum.

"But Scots used the General Election to reject their proposal and I hope the Scottish Government continues to heed the people's verdict.

"It has allowed Scotland's two governments to work much more collaboratively as we put in place the necessary arrangements for Brexit – and it is essential we continue to do that throughout 2018.

"We must build on the constructive relationships we have forged if we are to return powers from Brussels in a way that strengthens devolution and protects our vitally important UK single market.

"This year we reached agreement with the EU on a number of key areas, including our commitment to protect the rights of EU citizens after Brexit.

"I'm delighted that will reassure 200,000 friends, neighbours and colleagues who have made their homes in Scotland and whose contribution we value so much.

"Next year, we will begin negotiations on our future relationship with the EU and, working with the Scottish Government, we will put in place necessary arrangements for fishing, farming, trade and immigration.

"There is a lot of work to do. I'm in no doubt we'll need to work together.

"Since 2016 the UK Government and Scottish Government have been working together to transfer wide ranging new powers to Holyrood, which were agreed following the independence referendum.

"That work will continue next year as more welfare powers are devolved but already the changes are being felt.

"Earlier this month, the Scottish Government unveiled a budget which was based, for the first time, on its own income tax proposals.

"I disagree strongly with their decision to make Scotland the most highly taxed part of the UK. That cannot be the right choice for families or our

economy.

“But I’m confident, 20 years after we voted for a Scottish Parliament, that it has made Holyrood far more accountable. The on-going tax debate is proof of that.

“In 2018 we must focus on the economy and I urge the Scottish Government to use their powers effectively and to work with the UK Government.

“We need to pull together as we roll out the UK’s ambitious Industrial Strategy.

“We’ll need to collaborate, too, on the Borderland’s Growth Deal and UK City Deals in Stirling and Tayside, and on supporting Scotland’s key industries, including whisky, life sciences and energy.

“The UK Government has been doing its part – for example our £1 billion backing of UK City Deals and important measures such as freezing spirits duty to allow Scottish distillers to invest and to encourage new firms.

“So here’s to 2018. There are many challenges ahead of us but I am confident it can be a great year for Scotland.

“As ever my door remains open to all those people and business who have a stake in Scotland’s success. Let’s work together as we look to the future.”

Press release: 2018 to be a great year for music and sport fans as Government bans the ticket tout “bots”

New legislation will ban ticket touts from using automated software to dodge security measures and snap up more tickets than allowed by event organisers, only to sell them on at hugely inflated prices.

A new criminal offence, to be brought forward thanks to a provision in the [Digital Economy Act](#), will mean those who break the law will face an unlimited fine. This places the UK at the forefront of the fight against touts exploiting real fans.

The [legislation](#) recently moved one step closer as Government notified the European Commission of its plans to take forward the proposals.

It comes as London musical Hamilton recently saw tickets being advertised on the secondary ticketing market for up to £6,000. Artists including Adele and Ed Sheeran have also been targeted by professional touts.

[Matt Hancock](#), minister for the creative industries, said:

We're determined to make sure 2018 is the year we help real fans get the chance to see their favourite music and sports stars at a fair price. We'll be acting to stamp out the growing problem of touts misusing technology to scoop up vast numbers of tickets only to sell them on at rip-off prices.

Our work, together with improvements by industry, will help make the market more transparent and mean a great year for Britain's thriving live events scene.

The new legislation is part of a wider government drive to make sure genuine fans are not losing out through the secondary ticketing market. This includes:

The [Digital Economy Act 2017](#) putting additional requirements on ticket sellers to provide a unique ticket number where one was originally given and revised Consumer Rights Act guidance clarifying the information that should be provided on sale restrictions when reselling tickets.

Two high-profile investigations into bad practice delivering results:

- Officers from the eCrime unit of National Trading Standards (NTS) recently raided properties across the UK as part of its ongoing investigation looking into unfair practices in the secondary ticketing market and made four arrests in November. A range of equipment including computers, mobile phones and storage devices were seized as evidence.
- After a [thorough investigation](#), the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) identified widespread concerns about the information people are given about tickets on websites as a requirement under the Consumer Rights Act and gathered evidence which it considers breaches the law. It will require relevant websites to take appropriate action.

Ministers accepting the recommendations of a review into secondary ticketing by Professor Michael Waterson. These included calls for better consumer education around the ticketing market, greater standardisation and transparency by industry, for ticket sellers to do more to guard against bot attacks, stronger enforcement of existing consumer rights laws, and the threat of further action if the industry does not act against rogue ticket traders. Read the [Government's response](#).

Government work being bolstered by new approaches in the private sector:

- Dutch startup Guaranteed Unique Ticketing System has launched in the UK and uses Blockchain technology to make it impossible to resell tickets

at a higher price.

- British firm [DICE](#) is using innovative mobile technology to lock tickets to user accounts and beat the touts.
- Big UK music stars such as Adele and Ed Sheeran have partnered with sites such as [Twickets.co.uk](#), which prohibits the resale of tickets at a profit.

For more information please contact the DCMS press office on 0207 211 2210

[News story: Prime Minister Theresa May's New Year message for 2018](#)

2017 has been a year of progress for the United Kingdom.

In January, I set out our objectives for the Brexit negotiations, and in the months since we have pursued them with steady purpose.

In March we triggered Article 50, putting the decision of the British people into action.

In December we reached agreement on the first phase of negotiations with our EU partners.

Next year we will move on to the vital issues of trade and security, and I am determined that we will keep up our progress in 2018.

Because whichever way you voted in the referendum, most people just want the government to get on and deliver a good Brexit, and that's exactly what we are doing.

Making a success of Brexit is crucial, but it will not be the limit of our ambitions.

We also have to carry on making a difference here and now on the issues that matter to people's daily lives.

That means building an economy fit for the future and taking a balanced approach to government spending, so we get our debt falling but can also invest in the things that matter – our schools, our police and our precious NHS.

Our goal is simple: more good jobs in every part of the country, and more

opportunities for young people to get on in life.

The first step to a better future is getting a place at a good school.

It's what every parent expects, and it's what every child deserves.

So we will build more good schools, keep a tight focus on standards and discipline, and give more help and support to our fantastic teachers.

We will build more homes, so housing becomes more affordable and more families can get on – and climb up – the housing ladder.

And we will protect and enhance our natural environment for the next generation.

2018 is a special year in the life of one of our most cherished institutions, as we will celebrate the 70th birthday of our National Health Service.

It is a year to rededicate ourselves to its founding ideal: that good healthcare should be available to everyone, regardless of income.

And it's a chance to celebrate the care and compassion of our wonderful NHS staff.

We will continue to invest in our NHS and ensure it can deliver a world-class service now and for generations to come.

As we mark the centenary of the end of the First World War, and remember the tremendous sacrifices of that conflict, the UK will remain a champion of peace and order around the world.

Together with our allies, we will continue the fight against all forms of extremism, and support our security services as they work every day to keep us safe.

When we host the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in April we'll work with our partners to tackle global problems like climate change and plastic waste in our oceans.

And as we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the first votes for women, let's vow to eliminate all prejudice and discrimination from our society.

Because in the United Kingdom in 2018, everyone deserves the chance to succeed and everyone has a right to be treated with respect.

That means safe workplaces, free from harassment.

And it also means a public sphere where debate is constructive and courteous, and where we treat each other with decency.

Of course any year brings its challenges – that is true for each of us personally, as much as for our country and the world.

But the real test is not whether challenges come; it's how you face them.

Whether you allow a task to overcome you, or tackle it head on with purpose and resolve.

I believe 2018 can be a year of renewed confidence and pride in our country.

A year in which we continue to make good progress towards a successful Brexit deal, an economy that's fit for the future, and a stronger and fairer society for everyone.

And whatever challenges we may face, I know we will overcome them by standing united as one proud union of nations and people.

I hope that 2018 is a great year for you and your family – and I wish everyone a very happy new year.

Press release: Fresh UK aid for humanitarian crises in 2018, as International Development Secretary warns it could be even “bleaker” than 2017

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt today announced a new package of support for humanitarian crises in the coming year, after UK aid delivered life-saving support to millions of people around the world and averted two famines in 2017.

In early 2017 the United Nations warned that the world was facing its worst humanitarian crisis since 1945. Ms Mordaunt says today that 2018 could be even worse with ongoing famines and conflicts in Yemen, South Sudan and Burma.

The new UK aid package will give a £21 million boost to the United Nations' Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) so agencies can respond even more quickly to under-funded emergencies around the world in 2018.

It will help to provide critical health services to 20 million people, plus clean water and sanitation to 13 million people and food to 9 million people.

The UK package is part of a wider international relief effort. Globally, the United Nations estimates that in 2018 some 136 million people in 25 countries will be in need of humanitarian assistance.

The UK is ready to deliver life-saving aid to those that need it most.

During 2017, UK aid has helped prevented famines in Nigeria and Somalia, as well as alleviating untold suffering in South Sudan and Yemen. We achieved this by providing:

- 1.8 million people in Yemen with food, 300,000 with safe water and 250,000 with medical treatment
- 1.6 million people in Somalia with food, 1.1 million with safe water and 700,000 with medical treatment
- 1 million people in northeast Nigeria with food assistance and 500,000 with safe water
- 500,000 people in South Sudan with food, 300,000 with safe water and 100,000 with medical treatment

In addition, this year UK aid delivered 827 tonnes of supplies in response to hurricanes Irma and Maria in the Caribbean. It also provided emergency shelter to 130,000 people affected by the Rohingya crisis and medical support for more than 1 million people in Syria.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

While 2017 was a year of harrowing humanitarian crises, the truth is 2018 could be even bleaker.

When we see suffering, we instinctively want to help. Britons are big-hearted, open-minded and far-sighted – qualities that define a great nation.

This year, through UK aid and further public donations, we helped avert famines in Nigeria and Somalia, gave emergency help to the survivors of the Caribbean hurricanes and provided a vital life-line to people suffering from conflict in Syria and Yemen.

Britain is giving life saving aid, but also hope, to millions of people around the world. In the challenges 2018 brings Britain will continue to be at the forefront of the global humanitarian response.

Ms Mordaunt also announced -ngoing support for people driven from their homes as a result of the conflict in Syria, which is in its seventh year. The UK aid package will give money directly to Syrian refugees living in Lebanon, so they can decide how best to look after their families.

The programme, delivered by the UN's World Food Programme (WFP), will help stamp out child labour by providing more than 10,000 families with an allowance so that they can buy essential food, shelter, household supplies and medical assistance.

Notes to Editors

1. Today's announcement will provide an additional £21m support for the

Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) so that it can respond to under-funded emergencies even more quickly. This funding is in addition to the UK's core funding allocation of £55m to CERF in 2017.

2. CERF provides an efficient and effective way to provide additional resources rapidly in response to humanitarian crises. It has recently saved lives in Syria, responded to famine in East Africa and supported people suffering violence from Boko Haram.
3. Lebanon is host to more refugees relative to its own population than any other country. It currently hosts around 1.5 million Syrians, as well as 300,000 Palestinians.