

Press release: New powers model for Wales comes into force on 1 April 2018

- The reserved powers model provides a clear boundary between reserved and devolved matters
- Welsh devolution will be strengthened through further powers coming on stream for the Assembly and Welsh Ministers

A new reserved powers model of devolution in Wales comes into force today (1 April), putting 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.

The new model places Welsh devolution on a firmer foundation, making clearer what is devolved, and the responsibility of the National Assembly for Wales, and what is reserved – and the responsibility of Parliament.

The Assembly and Welsh Ministers will also today gain a raft of new powers to make a real difference to the lives of people in Wales, including over bus and taxi services, Welsh ports and elections to the Assembly and local government. The new reserved powers model will take effect on at the same day time as the first new devolved Welsh taxes enabled by the last Wales Act, and just a year before the Assembly and Welsh Ministers take responsibility for a portion of income tax.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

The new reserved powers model for Wales provides more transparent government, with more clearly defined responsibilities for both the UK and devolved level. Taken with the fiscal framework – which gives funding certainty for Wales over the longer-term – Welsh devolution is now on a strong footing to deliver for the people of Wales.

And in changing the model of devolution today, we are also seeing the devolution of wide-ranging new powers to the National Assembly.

From decisions over ports, taxis and bus regulation and teachers' pay, to decisions on the electoral system for the Assembly and Welsh local government, all these decisions will now be taken in the Senedd.

To me that is responsible devolution; that is real devolution and I think that is vital for Wales and for the UK. The Welsh Government now needs to be innovative with the opportunities these new powers

provide and deliver the improvements in devolved services that the people of Wales deserve.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Some parts of the Wales Act 2017 are already in force, including provisions that: – reaffirm the government’s commitment to the permanence of the National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Government; – remove the requirement for a referendum before the devolution of income tax to Wales; and – double (to £1 billion) the amount Welsh Ministers can borrow to fund capital expenditure.

Last year, the UK Government and Welsh Government introduced a [water protocol](#) for England and Wales which will safeguard water resources, water supply and water quality for consumers on both sides of the border.

[Press release: Children’s Funeral Fund for England](#)

Under the scheme, parents will no longer have to meet the costs of burials or cremations. Fees will be waived by all local authorities and met instead by government funding.

Every year an estimated 4,350 children die under the age of 18 and grieving parents can face thousands in council fees for burial or cremation costs. There is also considerable variation in charges, with some councils waiving fees altogether.

The intervention brings England in line with Wales and follows a cross-party campaign by bereaved parents to remove fees for funerals for those under the age of 18.

Theresa May today praised the “dignity and strength” of Swansea East MP Carolyn Harris who been at the forefront of the cross-party Parliamentary campaign following the death of her eight-year-old son Martin.

The Prime Minister said:

No parent should ever have to endure the unbearable loss of a child – a loss that no amount of time will ever truly heal.

But in the raw pain of immediate loss, it cannot be right that grieving parents should have to worry about how to meet the funeral

costs for a child they hoped to see grow into adulthood.

I have been incredibly moved by the dignity and strength of campaigners like Carolyn Harris, who lost her own son Martin when he was just eight years old. Carolyn has passionately argued for a Children's Funeral Fund to spare grieving families the burden of meeting funeral costs.

In the darkest moment of any parent's life there is little light – but there can be support.

That is why I have asked for the Children's Funeral Fund to be set up in England. For Carolyn, in memory of her son Martin, and in support of all those parents overwhelmed by such harrowing loss.

The intervention follows government support for Kevin Hollinrake's Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Bill for parents who lose a child under the age of 18.

Fatality notice: Sergeant Matt Tonroe has been killed in action in the Middle East

Sergeant Matt Tonroe.

It is with great sadness that the Ministry of Defence must confirm that Sergeant Matt Tonroe from the 3rd Battalion the Parachute Regiment was tragically killed in action whilst on duty in the Middle East on the 29th March 2018.

Sergeant Tonroe was born in Manchester on the 14th of August 1984. He enlisted in the Army on the 27th September 2004. On completion of his initial training he joined the 3rd Battalion of The Parachute Regiment in Colchester where he served as part of the Sniper Platoon. He rapidly developed an array of competencies and combat experiences that were to lay the foundations of an outstanding career.

During his service, Matt deployed numerous times on operations to Afghanistan and the Middle East. His distinguished service reflected a man that was happiest when professionally tested on operations. He relished responsibility, the opportunity to contribute and when the time came, to lead. He was a natural in this role.

Matt was also a capable and respected parachutist. As a gifted instructor he

was free with his time and his advice, and would dedicate himself to support and develop this skill in others.

He was well known within his unit, well-liked by all and he will be sorely missed. When talking of Matt, his colleagues recount his humour, mischief and endless endeavours. Laid back, but a consummate professional, Matt was utterly selfless and always strived to achieve excellence.

Matt was very much a family man, making every effort to see his beloved mum around numerous overseas deployments. He is survived by his mother Michelle, his brother Alex and girlfriend Olivia.

Sgt Tonroe's Officer Commanding said

If you had met Matt Tonroe, then you would have liked him. He bristled with the contentment of a life lived to its full. His bravery and talent as a soldier, was matched by his compassion as a human being. He was an individual, with the courage to set his own course, and the perspective to see new possibilities at every turn. He was destined for great things in our unit; his leadership was both natural and apparently effortless. He is already missed. Without Matt, our company has lost some of its humour; some of its warmth; and some of its sheer opportunism. We will always remember him.

Sgt Tonroe's Commanding Officer said

Matt Tonroe was a deeply intelligent man and one of life's characters. He was a caring and considerate soul, a loving and dutiful son, and a friend to many. Yet he had a steel core, served his country with pride and was a first class soldier, proven in combat, faced risk willingly and was ever ready for more. He thus died as he lived: daring and fearless in duty. We mourn his loss dearly, are proud to have known him and will honour him by continuing this fight.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said

My thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends of Sergeant Matt Tonroe at this dreadful time. Sergeant Tonroe served his country with great distinction and it is clear from the tributes made by his colleagues that he was not only exceptionally dedicated and courageous but also a gifted and intelligent instructor who was respected by everyone he served with. Sergeant Tonroe fought to protect British values, our freedoms and to keep us back at home safe. His sacrifice, unflinching commitment and bravery will never be forgotten.

Press release: British Army re-joins Boxer programme

The British Army has taken a step towards exploring a deal for a fleet of new armoured vehicles, potentially supporting at least 1,000 British jobs, by announcing it is re-joining the Boxer programme today.

The UK will re-join the Boxer programme and explore options to equip the Army with the 8x8 troop carriers to modernise its vehicle fleet and meet the Army's Mechanised Infantry Vehicle requirement.

The UK played a major role in the original design, development and testing of the Boxer, and would reassume the rights it had as a project partner if a deal was to go through – allowing the option for the vehicle to be built and exported from the UK. The deal could see the Boxer fully assembled in the UK with at least 60% of the manufacturing with British industry, sustaining and developing UK industrial capabilities, facilities and skills.

Artec, the consortium who manufacture the Boxer vehicle, have already made commitments to British industry by signing partnership agreements with BAE Systems, Pearson Engineering and Thales UK, in anticipation of a deal being struck.

It is expected that British companies would compete for the manufacture and supply of many of the vehicle sub-systems, as well as for a full production and assembly line in the UK. Estimates suggest Artec's planned investment in the UK could secure or create at least 1,000 jobs, based across the country including locations such as Glasgow, Newcastle, Sheffield, Stockport, Telford and Wales.

With the likes of Rolls Royce already powering Boxers with engines and Parker-Hannifin, William Cook Engineering and other British companies also supplying sub-systems for the vehicle, this deal could secure a broader industrial UK partnership.

The MOD is now taking forward negotiations with the Organisation for Joint Armament Cooperation (OCCAR) and Artec. Looking forward to the Assessment Phase, concluding in 2019, this will consider the comparable benefits of manufacturing locations and different supply chains for Boxer, as well as value-for-money. Any deal will be subject to commercial negotiation and assessment in 2019 and the aim is to have the first vehicles in service with the Army in 2023.

OCCAR is a European intergovernmental organisation which facilitates and manages collaborative armament programmes through their lifecycle between the UK and European allies. The organisation manages the Boxer programme and, as an OCCAR member state, the UK has the necessary Intellectual Property Rights

to the Boxer and greater control over ensuring Britain benefits from supply chain work.

The MOD conducted a comprehensive market analysis of Mechanised Infantry Vehicles in-service, entering service and in development. The analysis was guided by the British Army's requirements and how best to deliver them. The Boxer delivered on protected mobility, capacity, flexibility, utility and agility.

As part of the proposed deal, the UK is also expected to see substantial inward investment from Rheinmetall, one of Artec's parent companies, who signalled their intention to launch a production and integration centre for armoured vehicles in the UK as part of the programme. This would represent a significant commitment which would lead to long-lasting armoured vehicle capability in the UK.

The other of Artec's parent companies, Krauss-MaffeiWegmann (KMW), already has a substantial UK manufacturing facility in Stockport, from where it designs, manufactures and supports complex military equipment as far afield as the US and Australia, as well as parts of Europe.

[Press release: Pilot scheme launched to help build sustainable future for listed places of worship](#)

A new scheme to help build a sustainable future for listed places of worship will be piloted in urban and rural areas in England, Heritage Minister Michael Ellis announced today.

Expert advisors will work with listed buildings used by all faiths and denominations in Manchester and Suffolk to increase community engagement and vital heritage management skills.

The projects, expected to begin in early autumn, will receive a total of £1.8 million over the next two years.

Eligible listed places of worship in the pilot areas will be able to access a £500,000 minor repairs fund.

The Taylor Review: Sustainability of English Churches and Cathedrals, which was published in December 2017, called for greater community use of Church of England buildings to help congregations raise income to pay for their upkeep.

This new pilot scheme extends this support to all faiths or denominations in order to help worshippers better care for and protect their listed buildings.

Fabric support officers will work within the two areas to provide high quality advice and develop maintenance and repair plans. These will ensure that routine repairs can be addressed immediately and prevent the development of more costly problems.

Community support advisors will work with the custodians of listed places of worship to identify and strengthen relationships within their local area and develop greater community partnerships.

Heritage Minister Michael Ellis said: "Britain has an incredible array of historic buildings important to all faiths which tell the story of our shared history and our communities. However the costs of caring for and protecting many listed places of worship can be prohibitive and lead many to fall into disrepair.

"The innovative pilots I am announcing today will help unlock the community potential of these buildings and provide practical guidance so they can be preserved for future generations."

Deborah Lamb, Deputy Chief Executive of Historic England, said:

"We are delighted that the Government is funding a new project to support the volunteers who care for historic places of worship. Buildings that are well looked after help to enrich the lives of people across England. They are special spaces to visit and can be enjoyed by anyone, whether for worship or not.

"We know that keeping these buildings in good repair can be a challenge for congregations so we are excited by the potential of this pilot scheme, and look forward to playing our part in its success."

Bishop of Worcester, the Rt Revd Dr John Inge said: "Church buildings have always been a crucial part of the community life of this nation and the majority of them provide one or more form of social outreach or community facilities. In working with the government on reviewing their long-term sustainability, it has been gratifying to hear many stories of churches that understand their Christian mission in terms of service to the community.

"These pilots will model a new type of partnership between the Church and the Government, investing in people and buildings side-by-side to ensure churches are able to continue to fulfil this function, whilst growing new opportunities to serve the people of England."

Notes to editors: Funding will be available across different faiths and denominations. The support officers will be based with the Church of England diocese of Manchester and St Edmundsbury and Ipswich.