

# Press release: Welsh Secretary: “Wales must be ready to respond to dynamic devolution in England”

- Alun Cairns to call for swift devolution of powers to local authorities in Wales during keynote speech in Cardiff
- UK Government announces first cross-border Summit to bolster economic opportunities between South East Wales and South West England

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns will call on the Welsh Government to rise to the challenge and compete with the new dynamic of devolution being rolled out across England when he addresses local government leaders in Cardiff today (23 November).

Speaking at the Welsh Local Government Association seminar at City Hall, Mr Cairns will say that the Welsh Government “must respond to devolution on the other side of the border” where Metro Mayors are encouraging growth and creating opportunities tailored to the needs of local people. Ministers in Cardiff Bay must make sure local government in Wales has “the scope, the power and the resources to act.”

Mr Cairns will also say that “every part of Wales faces different challenges and different opportunities, and it’s time we put a one-size-fits-all approach behind us.

The speech comes following the commitment made in the Budget yesterday, to formally enter into negotiations over a growth deal for North Wales as well as kick starting discussions for a growth deal for Mid Wales. The UK Government has already delivered City Deals for Cardiff and Swansea giving people the tools to transform their local communities, their economies and their lives.

He will say “The simple fact is that these deals recognise that local people know their areas best. We want a long-term, bottom up approach from local authorities, local businesses and local communities who know and understand the character and make up of their patch.”

The Secretary of State will also announce that he will host the first cross-border business summit early in the New Year where he will bring together local partners from across the South West of England and the South East of Wales to explore how links between the two economies can be strengthened following the announcement of the abolition of the Severn Tolls.

He will say: “It is time we make politics fit business, rather than business fit the politics. It’s the importance of the cross border economy which is driving our commitment to bolster relationships and develop new partnerships across the nations. Our individual strengths are many. But brought together, we can develop corridors of growth that can put the UK on a strong platform

to compete on a global scale.”

The Secretary of State for Wales will later travel to North Wales where he will address an audience of business leaders at the Wrexham Business Professional dinner.

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## [Press release: Chancellor to unlock hidden value of government data](#)

The Chancellor has announced today a new Geospatial Commission to maximise the value of all UK government data linked to location, and to create jobs and growth in a modern economy.

Its first task will be to work with government and the Ordnance Survey by May 2018 to establish how to open up freely the OS MasterMap data to UK-based small businesses in particular.

The announcement is a further boost to the UK’s status as a world leader in digital innovation and an example of how advances in technology can be used to foster economic growth, deliver outstanding public services and generate savings for citizens.

Location-aware technologies are revolutionising the economy. From navigating public transport to tracking supply chains and planning efficient delivery routes, the digital services built on GPS and the current mapping data have quietly become everyday parts of daily life and commerce.

Huge amounts of value have been created by the new services made possible using databases of geospatial information – maps, and the information linked to them like house prices or business addresses. This data, which government produces in the course of delivering public services and maintaining laws and regulations, can be used to stimulate innovation in the economy and drive the development of the UK’s growing digital economy.

The new Geospatial Commission, supported by £40 million of new funding in each of the next two years, will drive the move to use this data more productively – unlocking up to £11 billion of extra value for the economy every year.

The new Commission will draw together HM Land Registry, the Ordnance Survey, the British Geological Survey, the Valuation Office Agency, the UK Hydrographic Office and the Coal Authority with a view to:

- improving the access to, links between, and quality of their data

- looking at making more geospatial data available for free and without restriction
- setting regulation and policy in relation to geospatial data created by the public sector
- holding individual bodies to account for delivery against the geospatial strategy
- providing strategic oversight and direction across Whitehall and public bodies who operate in this area

First Secretary of State, Damian Green, said:

“The UK leads the way in digital innovation, using it to drive productivity and growth, and deliver the best public services to citizens. The UK has some of the best geospatial data in the world, much of it is held by public bodies, and the new Geospatial Commission will help Britain to turn this valuable government data into tangible benefits such as new jobs and savings.”

Saul Klein, Partner, LocalGlobe, said:

“The UK has been a world leader in the open data movement, which has already helped to spawn global success stories like Citymapper. Opening up geospatial data shows how committed the UK government is to being the best place in the world for startups and innovative companies to use data to build amazing new products and services.”

Professor Sir Nigel Shadbolt, Chairman of the Open Data Institute said:

“I’m delighted that the UK government is carrying through on the commitment in its manifesto to open up UK geospatial data. In particular, opening up the OS MasterMap will stimulate growth and investment in the UK economy, generate jobs and improve services. It will make it easier to find land for house-building, and enable the development of services that improve vital infrastructure.”

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## **[Press release: Students showcase new skills at Highways England charitable event](#)**

A team of four Highways England staff is supporting the Brimsham Green School students as part of a programme focused on turning the students’ fundraising ideas into a reality while completing personal challenges to develop their confidence, teamwork and resilience.

The students planned the a cake sale and a static bike race at a fundraising

event, as well as making a presentation on their charitable efforts to a group of Highways England staff.

Student Harry Shearwood, aged 14, said:

This has been a really good way to raise money for a smaller charity and it would be great to do something like this again.

The mentors from Highways England have helped us with everything from planning and organising the event to our presentation skills and it's given us more confidence.

A few months ago I couldn't have imagined doing a presentation but because we were talked through what we needed to do and given tips on what to say it was much easier. Our people skills have improved a lot too.

Highways England mentor Desiree Li said:

We are very focused on helping young people to improve their skills and confidence so that they can see their potential, and this mentoring scheme is a great way of doing that while promoting Highways England as a great place to work.

Watching the young people develop from their initial shyness and lack of confidence to presenting to a group of colleagues is amazing and will have a lasting benefit for them. They develop a clear sense of their potential and the skills that they can offer their community.

This is the second year Highways England has supported the project. Staff were so positive about coaching a team of young people last year that this year we have two teams of mentors taking part.

Run by local youth charity Envision and backed by the Careers and Enterprise Company, the 10-week Community Apprentice programme sets young people the challenge of making a difference in the community.

Brimsham Green School careers co-ordinator, Maria Filer, said:

We are delighted with how much the pupils have progressed during the programme. There have been some big changes in individual pupils and how the group has worked together as a whole.

The skills that Envision and Highways England mentors have helped to develop has raised their confidence, their skills level and given them an opportunity to raise money for a charity they feel strongly about.

The Brimsham Green team is in competition with other local schools and mentors are also in competition with those from other local businesses, as well as a second Highways England team based at Brunel House, Aztec West which is supporting Bradley Stoke Community School.

During December the project will culminate in a Boardroom challenge where students will present their achievements to a group of local business leaders and an overall winner will be announced.

Bristol charity Nilaari, which provides culturally appropriate services for young people and adults with mental health or addiction issues and preventing reoffending, will benefit from the fundraising efforts of Brimsham Green School.

The Envision fundraising day follows an event in the summer when the Highways England Regional Operations Centre at Avonmouth hosted its first school open day in a bid to inspire the next generation of transport professionals.

Around 24 year 6 pupils, aged 10 and 11, from Bristol inner city primary school, St Werburgh's, joined traffic officers, engineers and managers for a comprehensive tour of the ROC as well as taking part in business skills workshops and hearing about career options with Highways England.

### **General enquiries**

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

### **Media enquiries**

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

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## **[News story: Ministry of Defence awards celebrate commitment to the environment](#)**

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), part of the MOD, manages the defence estate and supports armed forces throughout the UK and abroad to live, work and train. The 27th annual Sanctuary Awards, held today (22 November 2017) in London, showcased the achievements of teams and individuals working to preserve and protect the defence estate, both at home and abroad.

Winners and runners up were selected from 5 categories and 2 overall winners were chosen to receive the Silver Otter trophy or the Sustainable Business

Award.

This year's winner of the coveted Silver Otter trophy is archaeologist Roy Canham MBE. Roy won the Individual Achievement Award for his 40 years of work to survey and safeguard the over 2,200 historical sites across Salisbury Plain. From the 1970s, he worked with the then newly formed Imber Conservation Group to create a record of the many important archaeological sites on the plain. Roy also led work with the MOD, English Heritage and Wiltshire Council on designing measures to protect this historic landscape while also ensuring that the area could continue to be used by the armed forces for training.

The Sustainable Business Award was won by Army Basing Programme Salisbury Plain for their work to rebase service personnel and their families from Germany and re-role units within the UK by 2020. The scale of ABP's Salisbury Plain programme is unprecedented with an investment of over £1.3 billion, delivering 1,339 service family accommodation (SFA), 2,600 single living accommodation (SLA) units and extensive technical facilities.

This year's awards have an international feel with winners and runners up representing areas of the military training estate from all over Great Britain and the world. Winners and runners up are:

### **Individual Achievement Award**

- Winner and Silver Otter Winner: Roy Canham MBE, Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire
- Runner up: LCpl Sheona Macmillan, Project (ANEMOI), Falklands

### **Heritage Project Award**

- Winner: Ballykinler WWI Practice Trenches, Ballykinler, Northern Ireland
- Runner up: Ancient Akrotiri Project, Dreamer's Bay, Cyprus

### **Sustainability Project Award**

- Winner: Army Basing Programme, Salisbury Plain
- Runner up: Typhoon Propulsion Support Facility, RAF Lossiemouth, Scotland

### **Environmental Project Award**

- Winner: 25 years of Foxglove Covert Nature Reserve, Catterick Garrison
- Runner up: Longmoor Conservation Group Natterjack Toad Project, Home Counties

### **Utilities Project**

- Winner: Maximising MOD Energy Efficient Behaviours – A Partnership Project

The awards were presented by DIO Chief Executive Graham Dalton and Julie Taylor MOD Director General Head Office and Commissioning Services.

Julie Taylor said:

I am pleased to present the Sanctuary Awards this year. It is important that we recognise our staff, partners and volunteers throughout the defence community who play such a vital role in helping us to promote sustainability and preserve the MOD estate. There was a fantastic variety of projects which showcased a great deal of innovation, creativity and community spirit. Congratulations to each of the winners and the runners up.

Graham Dalton commented:

DIO takes its role in maintaining the defence estate on behalf of the MOD very seriously and it is encouraging to see so many others working with us and playing such an active part. There were many worthy winners and nominees and you should all be very proud of your achievements. Thank you to all of you for your support and your hard work.

This year's Sanctuary magazine was also launched at the awards ceremony. Published annually, the magazine demonstrates how the MOD is showcasing sustainability and protecting and maintaining the defence estate throughout the UK and overseas. You can access [Sanctuary Magazine](#) online.

You can also read blogs from each of the winners on the [Inside DIO blog](#)

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## **[Press release: LPC welcomes acceptance of its recommended minimum wage rates](#)**

The Low Pay Commission, the body that advises the Government on the level of the minimum wage, today welcomed the acceptance of its recommendations for the rates to apply from April 2018. These include a 4.4 per cent increase in the National Living Wage, the rate for workers aged 25 and over, from £7.50 to £7.83.

The LPC welcomes the Government's acceptance of our recommendations, which we are required to make on the National Living Wage and the other rates of the National Minimum Wage. On the former we are asked to make recommendations such that the rate reaches 60 per cent of typical earnings by 2020. For the latter, which affect those below the age of 25 and apprentices, we recommend rates as high as possible without damaging employment.

The core decision was whether the most recent economic evidence met the condition of sustained economic growth to enable the NLW to be uprated in line with the path to 60 per cent of median earnings. Commissioners weighed the available evidence carefully, judged that it did, and agreed to keep a steady course to 2020. The recommended rate of £7.83 is in line with the indicative rate of £7.85 that we set out last October.

For young people aged between 18 and 24 years old, Commissioners judged that economic conditions warranted larger percentage increases. There have been ongoing improvements in their employment and unemployment position, and their earnings have been growing faster than those of workers aged 25 and over for three years.

This is good news for the millions of low paid workers who are paid at the minimum rates.

1. The Low Pay Commission is an independent body made up of employers, trade unions and experts whose role is to advise the Government on the minimum wage. The National Living Wage is the legally binding pay floor for workers aged 25 and over. The other minimum wage rates comprise: the 21-24 Year Old Rate, the 18-20 Year Old Rate, the 16-17 Year Old Rate and the Apprentice Rate.
2. The LPC's remit prescribes different requirements in relation to the NLW than for the four other bands of the minimum wage. For the NLW we are asked to make recommendations on the pace of increase towards a target: an 'ambition...that it should continue to increase to reach 60 per cent of median earnings by 2020, subject to sustained economic growth'. For the other rates we are asked to 'help as many low-paid workers as possible without damaging their employment prospects'.
3. Our full recommendations for April 2018 and underpinning analysis will be published today in our [19th report](#), once it is laid in Parliament, as will [a letter from the LPC Chair to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy](#).
4. We said in our report in [March 2016](#) that, in the absence of economic shocks or other strong evidence, we thought that the default for the NLW would be a straight line rolling path to the 60 per cent target – evenly spreading our (annually updated) estimate of the increase in relative value needed to hit the target over the remaining years to 2020. Our recommendation today reflects this approach, and the cash level is in line with the indicative figure we set out last October – £7.85.
5. The new rate will increase pay for typical minimum wage workers (working 30 hours per week) by just over £500 per year. An increase of 4.4 per cent is, after the introduction of the National Living Wage in April 2016, the largest increase in the main rate of the minimum wage since 2006.

6. We estimate that the £7.83 rate will raise coverage – the number of workers paid at or below the NLW – by up to 530,000, from 1.6 million jobs (6.4 per cent of the cohort) in April 2017 to 2.1 million (8.6 per cent) in April 2018. Looking at progress towards the 60 per cent target, we estimate that the £7.83 rate will represent an increase in the relative value of the NLW for workers aged 25 and over of 1.1 percentage points, up from 56.9 per cent of the value of typical earnings (October 2017) to 58 per cent (October 2018).
7. Rates for workers aged under 25, and apprentices, are lower than the NLW in reflection of lower average earnings and higher unemployment rates. International evidence also suggests that younger workers are more exposed to employment risks arising from the pay floor than older workers. Unlike the NLW (where some consequences for employment have been accepted by the Government), the LPC's remit requires us to set the other rates as high as possible without causing damage to jobs and hours.
8. We have also provided an indicative rate for the National Living Wage from April 2019. This is inevitably uncertain because pay forecasts are likely to change, but using those available in October we project that the on-course rate will be £8.20. Using OBR forecasts published today, the projected figure is £8.18. For 2020, the LPC's projected rate for 60 per cent of median earnings is £8.61, within a range of £8.55 to £8.66. Using its forecasts published today, the OBR wage growth projections give a slightly higher estimated figure for 2020, of £8.57.
9. The National Living Wage is different from the UK Living Wage and the London Living Wage. Differences include that: the UK Living Wage and the London Living Wage are voluntary pay benchmarks that employers can sign up to if they wish, not legally binding requirements; the hourly rate of the UK Living Wage and London Living Wage is based on an attempt to measure need, whereas the National Living Wage is based on a target relationship between its level and average pay; the UK Living Wage and London Living Wage apply to workers aged 18 and over, the National Living Wage to workers aged 25 and over. The Low Pay Commission has no role in the UK Living Wage or the London Living Wage.
10. The members of the Low Pay Commission comprise: