

Agenda – Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 4 – Tŷ Hywel

Meeting date: 10 May 2023

Meeting time: 09.30 – 12.30

For further information contact:

Lleu Williams

Committee Clerk

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Pre-meeting registration

(09.15 – 09.30)

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(09.30)

2 Papers to note

(9.30)

2.1 Safeguarding the national collections

(Pages 1 – 2)

Attached Documents:

- Response from the Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, and Chief Whip: Safeguarding the national collections – 27 April 2023

2.2 Impact of increasing costs

(Pages 3 – 4)

Attached Documents:

- Response from the Minister for Finance and Local Government – Additional funding for swimming pools – 28 April 2023



2.3 Welsh Government international relations

(Page 5)

Attached Documents:

- Welsh Government international visits – April 2023

2.4 Inter-institutional relations agreement

(Pages 6 – 7)

Attached Documents:

- Letter to the Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee from the Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales, and Trefnydd: Interministerial Group on UK–EU Relations – 3 May 2023

3 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 (vi) and (ix) to resolve to exclude the public from items 4 and 5 of the meeting

(09.30)

4 Allegations surrounding the Welsh Rugby Union: consideration of the draft report on the Committee's initial findings

(09.30 – 09.50)

(Pages 8 – 36)

Attached Documents:

- Draft report on the Committee's initial findings on the allegations surrounding the Welsh Rugby Union

5 Wales–Ireland relations: consideration of the key issues

(09.50 – 10.30)

(Pages 37 – 46)

Attached Documents:

- Research brief and key issues paper: Inquiry into Wales–Ireland relations

6 Welsh Government international relations: scrutiny of the First Minister

(10.30 – 11.15)

(Pages 47 – 88)

- Mark Drakeford MS, First Minister for Wales
- Andrew Gwatkin – Director, International Relations and Trade
- Paula Walsh – Deputy Director, International Relations

Attached Documents:

- Research Brief: Welsh Government international relations
- Welsh Government: Annual Report on the Overseas Network – 2022–23

Break

(11.15 – 11.20)

7 Wales–Ireland relations: evidence session with the First Minister

(11.20 – 12.15)

(Pages 89 – 96)

- Mark Drakeford MS, First Minister for Wales
- Andrew Gwatkin – Director, International Relations and Trade
- Paula Walsh – Deputy Director, International Relations

Attached Documents:

- Evidence from the First Minister: Inquiry into Wales–Ireland relations

8 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 (vi) and (ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of this meeting

(12.15)

9 Wales–Ireland relations: consideration of evidence

(12.15 – 12.25)

10 Welsh Government international relations: consideration of evidence

(12.25 – 12.30)

Dawn Bowden AS/MS

Dirprwy Weinidog y Celfyddydau a Chwaraeon, a'r Prif Chwip
Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, and Chief Whip



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Delyth Jewell MS
Committee Chair
Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport,
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27th April 2023

Dear Delyth

Thank you for your letter of 28 March 2023, regarding safeguarding the national collections at Amgueddfa Cymru. This matter was raised as part of the scrutiny of the Draft Budget for 2023-24. Therefore, much of the information provided in this response has been shared with you previously.

As you are aware, the Welsh Government has prioritised funding for front line services, particularly health services, in the most recent Budget. It is not possible to fund everything that we would wish to, and difficult decisions have had to be made. Despite this, within a very challenging Budget settlement from the UK Government, we have protected the budgets of Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs) within the Economy MEG as much as possible.

The maintenance and development of Amgueddfa Cymru's estate, especially its historical buildings, is a priority for capital investment. Officials are in regular contact with colleagues at the Museum to discuss these issues. The Welsh Government provides annual Grant in Aid Funding to Amgueddfa Cymru, as well as specific ringfenced and project funding. The Museum also receives further funding through income generation, including from trusts, foundations, donations, sponsorship etc. As part of its Grant in Aid Funding for 2023/24, in addition to c.£27m in Revenue (gross), we are providing Amgueddfa Cymru with c.£4.7m specifically towards Capital Maintenance, plus a further allocation to be agreed for specific projects. We do not stipulate how this funding should be used, it is for Amgueddfa Cymru to prioritise the maintenance work across its estate.

Wherever possible we are providing additional funding to help our cultural ALBs. This is not easy during a cost of living crisis, and especially in light of the challenging financial settlement we have received from the UK Government. Nevertheless, in 2022/23, we managed to make an additional c.£474,000 capital available to Amgueddfa Cymru, as well as £2.652m revenue,

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of which £1.3m was given to help with the increased cost of utilities due to inflation. I have committed £1.25m over three years (2022/23-2024/25) to support decarbonisation initiatives at Amgueddfa Cymru. Also over these three years, £529,000 has been made available towards activities Amgueddfa Cymru is delivering in support of the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan (ArWAP).

I am also aware of Amgueddfa Cymru's plans for redeveloping the National Slate Museum in Llanberis. Subject to an acceptable business case being submitted, in addition to the allocations outlined above, I hope to be able to invest some funding in the first phase of this project.

I note that the letter sent to the Committee by the Interim Chief Operating Officer at Amgueddfa Cymru confirms that the Museum considers its settlement is reasonable over the next two years, whilst also noting uncertainty and challenge related to the longer-term outlook. I am, of course, unable to make any financial commitments beyond this current spending review period, but I would like to assure the committee that I am doing all I can to support Amgueddfa Cymru and the other ALBs within my portfolio, under very challenging economic circumstances. The vast majority of my allocated budget goes directly to these organisations.

You also reference the National Library of Wales in your letter. My officials are working closely with colleagues at the Library and we are providing additional support where possible. For 2023/24, as part of its Grant in Aid Funding, we are providing the Library with c.£1.6 million specifically towards Capital Maintenance. An additional £500,000 was also given in 2022/23, to pay for a new fire system to ensure the safety of collections.

As with Amgueddfa Cymru, for the next two financial years we have made available additional time-limited and ring-fenced funding available to the Library, to support additional cost of living pressures relating to pay and utilities. I have committed a further £1.5m capital to the development of new collections storage, to help care for the national collection held by the Library and £1.61m over three years towards digitisation and decarbonisation. Officials will continue to work closely with the National Library throughout this period.

I am pleased that we have been able to secure additional funding for our ALBs during a difficult cost of living crisis when budgets are being stretched and reprioritised. However, I am acutely aware of the current economic challenges we are facing. Whilst I would like to assure the Committee that if further funding becomes available we will continue to support our ALBs, as integral cultural organisations in Wales, it would be helpful if the Committee could suggest areas where we might reduce spending in order to facilitate this.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dawn Bowden', written in a cursive style.

Dawn Bowden AS/MS

Dirprwy Weinidog y Celfyddydau a Chwaraeon, a'r Prif Chwip
Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport, and Chief Whip

Our Ref: RE/132/2023

Delyth Jewell MS
Chair of Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations
Committee
Senedd Cymru/ Welsh Parliament
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28 April 2023

Dear Delyth,

Thank you for your letter of 4th April regarding the consequential funding the Welsh Government will receive as a result of £63m additional funding for swimming pools in England, announced in the UK Government's Spring Budget, on 15 March. I am also replying on behalf of the Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport.

I can confirm that the Welsh Government will receive a total consequential of £3.54m in 2023-24 as a result of this measure, comprising £1.153m revenue and £2.307m capital. There are no consequentials anticipated for 2024-25 for this measure. We have yet to receive the funding from HM Treasury, but it is expected to flow through as part of the 2023-24 Main Estimates process, which is currently ongoing.

The Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport is acutely aware of, and equally concerned about, the pressures the current energy and cost of living crises are having on the sport and leisure sector. The Welsh Government has called on the UK Government, which retains the main policy levers for responding to these pressures, to use its levers and provide enhanced support for swimming pools. While the UK Government's decision to extend the replacement Energy Bills Discount Scheme is welcome, it is extremely disappointing that leisure centres and swimming pools will continue to be excluded by the UK Government from receiving the level of support they need.

Welsh Ministers will continue to provide all possible support to the sport and leisure sector. Our annual budget, approved by the Senedd on 7th March, provided £16m of capital funding to Sport Wales over the next two years, which will support the sector to upgrade sport facilities, including swimming pools, with energy saving measures.

I would also highlight that funding for swimming pools and leisure centres is provided to local authorities through the Local Government settlement. Despite the challenging financial

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situation, we have agreed significant additional investment for Local Government for 2023-24 which will enable local authorities to continue to deliver the services their communities need.

This was reflected in the provision of substantial funding to local authorities as part of the 23-24 Budget. In 2023-24, local authorities will receive £5.5 billion from the Welsh Government in core revenue funding and non-domestic rates to spend on delivering key services. This equates to an increase of 7.9% or £403 million on a like-for-like basis compared to the current year. No Authority receives less than an 6.5% increase.

We have not yet allocated the small amount of funding received through the Spring Statement, as the announcement fell later than our Budget publication date. It is an important principle of devolution that consequential funding is not ringfenced for similar purposes in devolved governments. Welsh Ministers are continuing to assess and consider where the greatest impact will be when making funding decisions in line with Welsh circumstances and priorities, noting the range of identified pressures, including active discussions on pay and mitigating the ongoing cost-of-living crisis.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Evans". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rebecca Evans AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Cyllid a Llywodraeth Leol
Minister for Finance and Local Government

Agenda Item 2.3

INWARD VISITS – APRIL 2023

25 April Visit by the French Ambassador to the UK

Bi-lateral with First Minister on the Ambassador's first visit to Wales since her appointment. The meeting discussed the Wales in France year and how both countries can work together to maximise existing links and celebrate new connections.

OUTWARD VISITS – APRIL 2023

25 April Minister for Economy Visit to Brussels

The Minister for Economy visited Brussels to address the Regional Development Committee in the European Parliament. The Minister also met with the Chair of REGI Committee, the UK Ambassador to the EU and Jan Olbrycht MEP.

Agenda Item 2.4

Y Gweinidog Materion Gwledig a Gogledd Cymru, a'r Trefnydd
Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales, and Trefnydd



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Huw Irranca-Davies MS
Chair
Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee
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3 May 2023

Dear Huw,

In accordance with the Inter-Institutional Relations Agreement, I can report that I attended a meeting of the Interministerial Group on UK-EU Relations on 20 March, on behalf of the Minister for Economy. I was unable to provide prior notice of the meeting as it was called at very short notice by the UK Government.

The meeting was held in preparation for the subsequent UK-EU meetings of the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee and the Partnership Council under the Trade & Cooperation Agreement held on 24 March. The discussions of the IMG are outlined in a Written Statement [Written Statement: Meeting of the Interministerial Group on UK-EU Relations \(3 May 2023\) | GOV.WALES](#)

We will provide a written update on the arrangements for the next meeting, which will include the date and likely agenda items, in due course.

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I am copying this letter to the Chairs of the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee, of the Economy Trade and Rural Affairs Committee, and to the Minister for Economy, and to the Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lesley Griffiths". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end of the name.

Lesley Griffiths AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Materion Gwledig a Gogledd Cymru, a'r Trefnydd
Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales, and Trefnydd

Agenda Item 4

By virtue of paragraph(s) vi of Standing Order 17.42

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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Annual Report on the Overseas Network

2022-23

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Annex A – Case Studies

a) FIFA World Cup, Qatar 2022

b) Wales in Canada 2022

c) Relationship with Europe

Overview

This is the second annual report on the work of the Welsh Government's overseas network. The [report](#) for 2021-22 is available on the Welsh Government website and sets out how the Welsh Government's international activity was resuming following the Covid-19 pandemic. It also outlined how the Welsh Government was delivering the ambitions of the International Strategy.

This is an exciting moment for Wales on the international stage. Innovative policy approaches and achievements in sports, arts and culture have raised our profile and awareness of who we are and what we stand for. This has seen demand for increased engagement by international partners, in Wales and overseas.

The period covered by this year's report has been marked by a series of devastating global events, particularly the war in Ukraine, floods in Pakistan and the earthquake in Türkiye and Syria. Whilst the UK Government has led on the UK's response to these events, the Welsh Government has been able to provide support to those who have been affected through the Homes for Ukraine scheme and working with the Disasters Emergency Committee Cymru.

We have delivered a significant international programme over the last 12 months, including Ministerial visits to raise Wales' profile overseas and trade missions which are an important part of Wales' economic recovery following the pandemic. This year has also had a strong focus on sport diplomacy with Wales represented at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, the Women's Rugby World Cup in New Zealand, the Men's Hockey World Cup in India and, of course, the FIFA Men's Football World Cup in Qatar.

This year has seen an emphasis on projecting Wales' values on the international stage, in line with one of the key ambitions of our International Strategy – to establish Wales as a globally responsible nation. The diversity of our global relationships means that not all of the countries with which we have a relationship share the same values or approach to human rights as Wales. Through our international work, we seek to engage constructively with partners and set out Wales' approach to human rights, LGBTQ+ rights, political and religious freedom, inclusive education and fair work. Our approach to international engagement helps to portray the message that Wales is a Nation of Sanctuary and of values.



Overseas Ministerial Visits and Inward Visits to Wales

Ministers have undertaken a broad range of overseas visits this year. The First Minister visited Oslo to join Urdd Gobaith Cymru as it marked the centenary of its message of peace and goodwill and undertake a wide programme of diplomatic and economy focussed events. In May, the Minister for Economy led a trade mission to Qatar and also visited Airbus' headquarters in Toulouse in October. The second Wales-Ireland Ministerial Forum took place in Dublin and Cork, in October, and was attended by the First Minister, the Minister for Economy and the Minister for Rural Affairs. This Forum took stock of progress against the Ireland Wales Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan and had a particular focus on bilateral relations; trade cooperation and economic development; and renewable energy developments and opportunities.

Also in October, the Deputy Minister for Sport travelled to New Zealand for the Women's Rugby World Cup to support the Wales Women's Rugby Team and raise the profile of Wales, and the Minister for Education and Welsh Language travelled to Brussels to speak in the European Parliament on the Taith programme.



In November, the First Minister and Minister for Economy supported Wales at the Football World Cup in Qatar - the first time Wales had been on that world stage in 64 years – to promote Wales and project our values. In December, the Minister for Climate Change travelled to Montréal for COP15, including the 7th Summit for Subnational Governments, to help push the UN level states into action to reverse the loss of biodiversity.

The Minister spoke during plenary sessions, participated in conversations and workshops around the 30x30 High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, and held bilaterals with other nations, including the Wampís Nation, Catalan Government, Québec Government and Scottish Government. Around St David's Day, the First Minister visited Brussels and launched Wales in France 2023 in Paris, the Minister for Education visited Ireland and the Minister for Health visited Copenhagen.

Later in March, the First Minister visited the Basque Country to explore further deepening our cooperation and the Minister for the Economy visited the West Coast of the USA to develop economic links and promote Wales' tech and creative industries.



Ministers have welcomed more than 30 international representatives in the last year and the First Minister has undertaken a programme of events to meet Ambassadors and High Commissioners in London. The London Office plays a vital role in maintaining connections to the wider world. The office supports our relationships with the diplomatic corps, including countries and regions where we have a priority relationship. It leads on our engagement with overseas companies who are based in London and are seeking to expand into Wales, as well as taking forward St David's Day celebrations through Wales Week in London. The office has also hosted a number of events that have been economically focussed or aimed at sharing innovative policy.

Sports Diplomacy

Wales is now routinely qualifying for major international sporting tournaments which provide an opportunity to raise our profile and promote our values. In August, the XXII Commonwealth Games in Birmingham marked the launch of a programme of 18 months of sports diplomacy that continues this year with the Rugby World Cup in France.

Our programme started with a successful international event at the Commonwealth Games, with an inspirational panel of past and present Welsh athletes talking about empowering women in sport. An impressive international audience of government and

sporting figures was present, including the Deputy Prime Ministers of New Zealand and Québec. Also in August, the Canada team used the Wales Women's Rugby team match in Canada to launch the *SoftPowerCymru* podcast – a series that explores the power of sport to foster relationships between countries. The Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport then led a programme of events in New Zealand in October for the Women's Rugby World Cup, around culture, sport, indigenous language promotion and academic links.

The qualification of the Wales Men's Football Team, for the first time in 64 years, at the FIFA Men's Football World Cup in Qatar was an opportunity to truly put Wales on the global stage. We promoted economic and cultural links and demonstrated that Wales is a nation of values. Events were held across the globe with a particular focus on the USA and Qatar and Wales' matches against the USA and England. This was supported by a significant marketing campaign and media coverage. A case study on the World Cup is included in this report.

In January, the Wales Men's Hockey Team qualified for the World Cup for the first time. This took place in India, an important partner for Wales, and provided an opportunity to both support the Wales Men's Hockey Team and raise the profile of Wales in India with a number of events in Odisha state, focussing on education exchange and sport.

Strategic Partnerships

We continued to directly fund four strategic partnerships this year with Urdd Gobaith Cymru, the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner, Wales Arts International and Academi Heddwch.

Two workshops were held with Strategic Partners over the course of the year, as well as regular monthly discussions to ensure that work aligned to International Strategy priorities. The collective highlight of the year was all partners engaging in the Team Cymru approach to the FIFA Football World Cup in Qatar, supporting activity to raise Wales' profile and promote our values. Wales Arts International and the Urdd were responsible for supporting cultural activity. They, and the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner and Academi Heddwch, also participated in workshops in the run up to the event on values and how we promote these.

Broader work has taken place across the year with initiatives such as Wales Arts International and the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner collaborating on engagement in Canada as part of our Wales in Canada year. This included discussions with indigenous communities as part of the UNESCO Decade of Indigenous Languages.

Our engagement is not limited to these partners. We regularly engage others such as Amgueddfa Cymru, the British Council, the National Dance Company Wales, Atlantic College, Hockey Wales, the Football Association of Wales and others.

St David's Day

St David's Day 2023 offered an important opportunity at the end of the year to re-visit and build on previous work. We supported activity in London and across the world to build on the legacy of our World Cup engagement. In addition to overseas travel by Welsh Ministers, events to mark St David's Day took place across the USA, Canada, China, Japan, India, the Middle East and Europe, led by our overseas network.

In London, we supported Wales Week in London through a variety of events showcasing industries -such as Fintech and Biotech - and international relationships such the USA and France. We delivered an international marketing campaign which celebrated Wales with a focus on our values and which re-targeted audiences introduced to Wales through previous campaigns such as the Football and Hockey World Cups.

Office locations



Asia	Europe	North America	Middle East
Beijing	Brussels	Atlanta	Doha
Chongqing	Berlin	Chicago	Dubai
Shanghai	Düsseldorf	New York	
Bangalore	Dublin	San Francisco	
Mumbai	Paris	Washington DC	
New Delhi	London	Montreal	
Tokyo			

Global Network

Our overseas offices network has three regions: Europe, North America and the Middle East and Asia. Each region has a focus tailored to its strengths, and Wales' interests, as outlined in their international remits. This section sets out highlights of activity undertaken in each region during 2022-23.

Europe

Our offices in Europe continued to work with partners across Europe following the UK's exit from the EU. They have been proactively engaging with European partners to demonstrate that Wales remains an active part of Europe.

We continue to engage with EU institutions and take a leading role in European regional networks, with this engagement strengthened by the appointment of Welsh Government's Representative on Europe. Highlights include:

- The First Minister met with senior representatives from the European Parliament and delivered a well-received speech at the European Policy Centre on the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.
- The Minister for Education and Welsh Language spoke about Taith in the European Parliament and met with EU member state and regional representatives on Welsh language, and equity in education.
- With Atlantic regions of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR), Wales signed a Pledge for a clean Atlantic Ocean.
- Wales House Brussels hosted the Network for Promoting Linguistic Diversity's (NPLD) General Assembly, which included a speaking slot by Welsh Government on Welsh language policy.
- Wales has been appointed once again to chair the Board of the Vanguard Initiative – an influential and well-respected innovation network - in 2023.

We continued to promote Welsh culture to an EU audience, including the participation of Welsh poet, Grug Muse, in the Transpoésie international poetry festival, and a performance by Welsh singer Eve Goodman at a World Cup event. Platinum Jubilee celebrations showcased Welsh food and drink at two events in Brussels. A Jubilee event was also held in Paris for over 2,500 guests which included businesses, political stakeholders, UNESCO, OECD, and Welsh partners from the Brittany region.

Ministers and officials have continued to work together throughout the year to deliver the Ireland Wales Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan. Cultural links were celebrated at the Other Voices festivals in Dingle and Cardigan, and the inaugural Dewi Pádraig Dialogue was held in partnership with Wales Arts International, Arts Council of Wales and Dublin City University. The Future Generations Commissioner also visited Ireland to exchange learning on sustainable development goals.

A delegation from Wales' Creative Industries exhibited at ARVR INNOVATE - Ireland's leading immersive tech event - and a multi-sector trade mission visited in March, coinciding with the visit by the Minister for Education and Welsh Language and St David's Day. The Minister for Economy delivered the keynote address at the Irish Sea Symposium on the benefits joint action can bring to economic activity across the Irish Sea. The Food team in Wales is working with the Food Hub in Cork on a food cluster.

The second Ireland Wales Ministerial Forum took place in October, with the First Minister, the Minister for Rural Affairs, North Wales and Trefnydd, and the Minister for Economy visiting Dublin and Cork for a series of bilateral meetings with Irish Government Ministers focused on closer cooperation, renewable energy opportunities and future potential bilateral funding options.



Activity in Germany had a strong focus on the state of Baden-Württemberg throughout the year ahead of the upcoming signing of a Shared Statement. The Minister-President of Baden-Württemberg visited Wales, as did Germany's Ambassador to the UK - twice. His first visit coincided with the German Embassy's Careers Roadshow – an event highlighting career opportunities open to learners of all ages through the German language – which was being held in Wales for the first time. A trade mission from Baden-Württemberg also came to Wales.

The programme of overseas events in Germany focussed on supporting Welsh companies at Medica, Innotrans, Wind Energy Hamburg and the Start-Up Summit in Stuttgart. Following a global bidding process, Wales was successful in its application to host the Circular Economy Hotspot in 2024.

France is the next destination for our 'Wales In...' themed years so work has been underway on a programme of activities. Wales in France 2023 will provide an opportunity to celebrate the Wales France relationships we've had over centuries and reassert its relevance, revitalising existing partnerships and planting the seeds for new collaborations across the economy, culture, sport, innovation and more. The year affirms Wales as an outward looking, European nation with a diverse and advanced economy, known for its commitment to a fairer and more sustainable world. The First Minister launched Wales in France on 17 March in Paris, meeting with a number of French investors who have a presence in Wales and leading a Welsh delegation to UNESCO, amongst other activities. The programme includes using the Rugby World Cup in France as a platform to raise Wales' profile and will build on continuing work with Brittany delivering stronger bilateral cooperation against the MoU and Action Plan, including supporting the Arts Council of Wales at Lorient Interceltique Festival.

The focus for France's trade and invest work continues to be on collaboration in the tech industry, in particular cyber security and compound semiconductors, supporting the Swansea/Grenoble Strategic Partnership and representing the Welsh Cyber sector at the *Forum International de la Cybersécurité* (FIC), France's leading cybersecurity trade show. Welsh companies travelled to Paris for the JEC World Composites trade fair, the International Aeronautical Congress and the SIAL food and drink show. The Minister for Economy visited Toulouse in October for an aerospace themed visit, which included a visit to Airbus and meeting the Welsh delegation attending ADS - the UK's trade association for the Aerospace sectors annual seminar and networking event.

We also had renewable energy events in Norway and Sweden and supported a delegation of eleven Welsh companies and sponsored a stand at Ocean Energy Europe. In March, we had a visit to Wales by the Marshal of Silesia, Poland, to explore areas for potential cooperation and the First Minister visited the Basque Country to consolidate that relationship and explore new areas of collaboration.

North America

In the USA, the World Cup provided a focal point for events aimed at raising Wales' profile. Each office in the US network held its own events to coincide with the Wales vs. USA game. In the weeks leading up to the World Cup, our New York office hosted a series of events to raise the profile of Wales with a "Welcome to Wrexham" event in conjunction with Disney/FX and supported S4C to host a 'Wales in the World' gala.



Sports diplomacy was not limited to football. We worked with Wales Rugby captain, Elinor Snowsill, for a free skills session for young girls in Virginia and with the Welsh Government's Major Events team to get the most value out of the WWE Clash at the Castle, including a business networking event taking place at a WWE event in Nashville.

We supported two visits from the Urdd. In April, the Urdd choir visited Birmingham, Montgomery, Selma and Atlanta. The visit saw performances in both Birmingham and Atlanta, including a joint performance with the University of Alabama's Gospel Choir. The visit served to strengthen the close relationship between Birmingham and Wales and was captured by Avanti Media and aired on S4C. In September, the Urdd visited Philadelphia for the North American Festival of Wales (NAFOW) and we took part in a welcome ceremony there with the Mayor of Philadelphia with positive coverage on social and local media. The Urdd had a full programme of events, including meetings with local youth organisations. We also used NAFOW as a platform to run a city-wide street campaign across Philadelphia to promote Wales.

This year, we also advanced a number of educational partnerships as well as continuing to successfully grow our alumni network. We have supported visits from Cardiff and Aberystwyth Universities and have continued to work with Global Wales to support its efforts to promote Wales as a prime study destination. In March 2023, we helped to launch a new summer school programme between the University of Florida and Wales.

Platinum Jubilee celebrations across the US were used as platforms to convey key Welsh messages and showcase Welsh food and drink to guests. Following the successful repeal of the ban on UK lamb, Chicago was the venue for the first lamb from the UK and Ireland – Welsh lamb - to be served in the USA for over 20 years.

A number of events promoted exports and Wales as an investment location. For inward investment, these included Semicon West, RSA, Photonics West, Lendit FinTech conference and Money2020. We also supported a Welsh presence at major export conferences, including MRO Americas, the New York international exhibition for food and drink and Game Developers Conference. The Atlanta office supported a Trade Mission to North Carolina and South Carolina in the run up to the World Cup, with a business breakfast with Rob Page, Wales manager, and the delegation included the FAW Trust.

There have been a number of media pieces on the Welsh economy. Foreign Policy Magazine published an article about the transformation of the Welsh economy with a strong focus on USA-Wales trade. A campaign was run in the Wall Street Journal on the day of USA vs. Wales at the World Cup which focussed on USA-Wales trade and Wales' compound semiconductor cluster. Following the success of this campaign, a further Wall Street Journal campaign was launched in March.

In March, the Minister for Economy visited San Francisco and Los Angeles, to develop economic links and promote Wales' tech and creative industries. He led a multi-sector trade mission and supported the Welsh delegation exhibiting at the annual Games Developers Conference, as well as undertaking a wider programme of engagement with businesses and political figures.



Canada was the focus of the second of our “Wales In...” themed years with reciprocal activity in Wales led by the Canadian High Commission through its *Canada Goes Cymru* campaign. A case study looks at the year in more detail.

The Wales-Québec Call for Proposals continued with a third round launched in July. In agreement with the Québec Government, we focussed on arts and culture, science and innovation, and green recovery. In total, twelve projects were approved, and the success enabled us to get buy-in from the Québec Government to run a fourth call in 2023.

We supported Wales Arts International at BreakOut West music festival and hosted a session on indigenous languages in the music industry as well as promoting the Gwrando programme for UNESCO’s Decade of Indigenous Languages, which coincided with Canada’s ‘Truth and Reconciliation Day’. FOCUS Wales in Wrexham provided a showcase for Canadian artists to launch the Canadian High Commission’s ‘Canada Goes Cymru’ campaign, pulling in FOCUS Wales’ Canadian partners which enabled Welsh artists to be showcased across various locations in Canada. We also promoted PRIDE celebrations, including support for Welsh participants of Gay Rugby World Cup 2022 in Ottawa, and a film screening of the Welsh-directed ‘Donna’ in collaboration with US Embassy in Ottawa and Ottawa Capital Pride.



Canada had a strong focus on diaspora, with alumni events in Vancouver and Toronto to promote Taith and grow the Welsh alumni network. A visit to Calgary by the Welsh Cŵr Cymru Gogledd America built links with Calgary’s Welsh Society and a visit by the Future Generations Commissioner included an alumni/diaspora event.

On the trade and invest side, we supported a trade mission to Canada with twelve Welsh companies mainly from the clean energy, tech, and nuclear sectors. We promoted MedTech and Cyber Security at the World AI Summit in Montréal and worked with the UK Government to showcase Welsh products, including food and drink, at events in Ottawa, Montréal and Québec City. With Creative Wales, Creative British Columbia and the Canadian High Commission we hosted a reception for TV and film producers from Wales and British Columbia to look for co-production opportunities and highlight Wales' creative industry.

Ontario's new Agent General visited Wales to explore opportunities in creative, nuclear, manufacturing, insuretech and higher education - leading to a deepening of the relationship between Wales and Ontario.

Finally, when a Yukon-based social media influencer, Pavlina Sudrich, mistakenly said that Wales was part of England and posted an apology online, the First Minister took the opportunity to invite her to Wales using the Welsh Government's recently launched TikTok channel. This led to a collaboration to promote Wales to Pavlina's Canadian followers and beyond. The visit gained media interest in Wales, Canada and outlets across the globe. She developed content which promoted Wales' values, language, food and drink, Dydd Miwsig Cymru, sporting connections via Wrexham AFC, culture and heritage. The videos commissioned gained over 5.5million views, with high rates of engagement.

Middle East and Asia

Following the qualification of the Wales Men's Football Team for the FIFA Men's World Cup in Qatar 2022, much of the activity in the Middle East focussed on preparations for that tournament. A case study providing more detail on this is included.

In May, the Minister for Economy led a trade mission to Qatar, with companies from sectors including food and drink, manufacturing, training and education services. He held meetings with Qatar Airways and Cardiff Airport about the Doha-Cardiff route, the Qatar Free Zone Authority, Qatar University's School of Medicine and the planning committee responsible for delivering the World Cup.

Leading up to the World Cup, we had events for diaspora and to promote Welsh lamb and other food and drink exports. With Global Welsh and the Welsh Government Envoy to the UAE, we helped deliver a programme of business activity for diaspora in Dubai around Wales' group games. The First Minister and the Minister for Economy had programmes in Qatar for the USA and England matches respectively, focussed on promoting Wales' values, trade and investment links and cultural exchange. In the months after the World Cup, the Middle East team has been following up on engagement, including visiting a 'Landscapes of Faith' archaeological excavation site (a University of Wales Trinity St David/Qatar Museums collaboration) in northern Qatar.

Work has continued building diaspora networks in the UAE and Qatar, and with stakeholders who met the Minister for Economy during his visits to Qatar and Dubai Expo. The UAE's sovereign wealth fund, Mubadala, visited Cardiff to explore investment opportunities in the energy and fintech sectors and we continue to support Cardiff Airport's engagement with Qatar Airways on resumption of the Doha/Cardiff route.

Trade webinars were held on the Advanced Manufacturing cluster, Arab Health and exporting to the Middle East. We were at the World Future Energy Summit, Abu Dhabi, and BIG 5 and DEAL in Dubai and supported Hybu Cig Cymru at the BBC Good Food Awards in Dubai. In January, we supported a multi-sector trade mission visiting Dubai, alongside a delegation attending Arab Health, and hosted an event for the delegates to network with diaspora in the UAE. In February, we supported a trade development visit to the Gulfood trade show closely followed by St David's Day events in Dubai and Doha promoting Welsh food and drink, the Welsh language, business and culture. We also hosted a networking event in Qatar to celebrate International Women's Day and promote Wales' values around women's equality and gender parity.

In October, Japan's border fully re-opened. There was appetite for increased engagement with foreign businesses and the resumption of international travel was marked by tourism and trade delegations from Wales. A British Embassy reception for key Japanese investors was an opportunity to re-affirm Wales' relationship with companies such as Sony and Panasonic ahead of travel restrictions being lifted. There are proposed visits to Wales by Japanese companies in sectors including green energy and semiconductors and a delegation from Oita prefecture.

Trade and investment work has had a particular focus on renewable energy with a delegation of more than 50 representatives from the Japanese green energy industry, including offshore wind companies, visiting Wales. In Tokyo, we hosted an event with the Japan Hydrogen Association with over 150 attendees. We supported a trade mission from Wales in October across the food and drink, creative/ tech, education, advanced manufacturing/ decarbonisation and housing sectors. Welsh Food and Drink was showcased at Mitsukoshi Department store and at a Leek Festival in Fukaya City. Welsh food and drink companies also exhibited at Foodex 2023 in Tokyo, with a sampling session held at the Ambassador's Residence featuring chefs from Wales and a traditional Welsh menu. In December, we celebrated 50 years of Japanese investment in Wales at a reception hosted by the Japanese Ambassador in London.



The Oita Memorandum of Understanding, signed on 1 March 2022, has been a platform for a strong international engagement programme. The first anniversary of the signing was marked on St David's Day with a visit by Amgueddfa Cymru/National Museum of Wales to the Oita Prefecture Art Museum. The third anniversary of the 2019 Rugby World Cup was marked with a series of events including meetings with the Governor of Oita and a reception with local businesses. The Oita Prefecture Government visited Wales and Oita University students went to summer school in Aberystwyth. Only Boys Aloud also undertook a research tour of Japan in February and March with ten public performances across Japan.

In India, we have had a particular focus on education links, including support for a delegation from Telangana who visited Wales as part of Global Wales' existing partnership with the Telangana State Council for Higher Education (TSCHE) and university partners, with the aim of developing university to university partnerships. In terms of trade and investment, the focus has been on promoting Wales as an investment location for tech and life sciences, including an event for start-ups incubated at the Indian Institute of Science.



India hosted the Hockey World Cup in January and, with the Wales Men's team qualifying, this presented an opportunity to raise Wales' profile. The programme brought together Hockey Wales, Global Wales/Study in Wales, Welsh universities and businesses. We hosted joint hospitality events and achieved extensive local coverage. Events included school outreach at the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) with the Wales Hockey team playing hockey with the local children and a separate friendly rugby game with staff. We had a visit to the Kalinga Institute of Social Science (KISS) with discussions about student/staff/academic exchange, a round table on Women in Technology/STEM and met Odisha state's Chief Minister. We visited the Tata Naval Hockey Academy with Hockey Wales in advance of the Wales vs India match at the Kalinga Stadium and hosted a Wales reception as well as learning about the KIIT, KISS and Tata Naval Academy's support for children from low-economic backgrounds to support their training to become future national hockey stars.

Covid-19 continued to impact activity in China with all offices experiencing extended periods of lockdown, postponing activity or delivering virtually. Education links were a particular focus, working with universities on student recruitment and partnership opportunities, including promoting Taith. We delivered alumni events, supported Jubilee celebrations and developed a programme with the Football Association of Wales to promote Welsh football to the China market in the run up to World Cup.

We supported Welsh exporters interested in China, with a particular focus on the life sciences and food and drink sectors. There was an uplift in interest around Welsh food and drink at the China Food & Drinks Fair in Chengdu.

FIFA World Cup, Qatar 2022

20 November 2022 – 18 December 2022

In June 2022, the Wales Cymru men's national football team qualified for the FIFA World Cup finals for the first time in 64 years. The tournament was a unique opportunity to promote Wales on a global stage.

There were four key objectives for this World Cup – promote Wales; project our values; ensure the safety of Welsh citizens and secure a positive legacy from our participation. The activity in Wales, and around the world, was an opportunity to raise concerns about workers' and LGBTQ+ rights in Qatar as well as set out Wales' values on a global stage.

The Welsh Government offices in Doha and Dubai were the focus for the activity taking place around the matches but the tournament also provided opportunities for the rest of the overseas network to carry out activity to promote Wales and our values.

A month prior to the World Cup, the Middle East Welsh Government Offices, working in collaboration with Food and Drink Division, organised a dinner to showcase Welsh food and drink exports - including Welsh lamb - at the Ambassador's residence for 40 key buyers in Qatar across retail and hospitality.

In the Middle East, the First Minister and the Minister for Economy travelled to Doha to support Wales in the group stages. Written Statements were published on [28 November](#) and [5 December](#) outlining the breadth of the programmes undertaken by both Ministers which included cultural, economic and diplomatic engagements.

As well as delivering two Ministerial programmes, activity in the Middle East for the World Cup was wide-ranging.



The Middle East team worked with partners to launch the Bucket Hat installation on the Corniche in Doha to promote Wales at the tournament, provide Welsh content in the UK GREAT Garden Pavilion and Festival and a Welsh-themed reception, hosted by the British Ambassador to Qatar. The Bucket Hat became a focal point for global media featuring in images broadcast across the world.

To promote Welsh culture, the team supported the Urdd to deliver school workshops and choral performances, as well as working with Wales Arts International to deliver a range of cultural performances by Welsh performers and artists. Events were held for Welsh diaspora in the Middle East, working with partners, such as Global Welsh who held a reception in the Consul-General's residence garden in Dubai for 100 guests. The Welsh Government team in Doha held a networking breakfast for 35 members of the diaspora in Qatar.

In the USA, there was an ambitious programme of activity centred around the Wales vs. US game. The Minister for Economy visited Washington DC to lead the Welsh Government's World Cup activity and advance relationships with key political and business contacts in DC. The visit included a roundtable with key inward investors, a meeting with the Deputy Mayor of DC, as well as the flagship Soccer in the Circle screening of the Wales vs. USA game at the Dupont Festival. The visit generated positive media coverage in the USA and Wales.

The US team in New York supported S4C to deliver a concert in the city as well as hosting other events, including a screening of 'Welcome to Wrexham', panel discussions and a watch party. An e-gaming competition, linked to a FIFA gaming tournament, was held in Atlanta, whilst business and diaspora receptions were held in Chicago and Los Angeles. Additional activity was undertaken around this game, including a LinkedIn campaign on the West Coast promoting Wales as a business destination, a visit to Mumbles 'Sister City' to build on that relationship and visits from an Urdd artist to capture the Wales vs. US match. We had media activity around the game including features in the Washington Post, FOX5, HANSH and various local radio stations in the USA. Activity was also delivered in partnership with the UK Government around the England vs. Wales game.

Events for the games were held across Canada in Halifax, Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver using old and new diaspora contacts developed through our Wales in Canada year.

The next FIFA World Cup will be held across North America in 2026 and this activity provides a useful platform to learn from and develop future activity for the next tournament in four years' time.

Events were held across Europe in Brussels, Dublin, Paris and Berlin. In Dublin, the team joined the US Embassy to Ireland to co-host a screening of the Wales vs. USA game and hosted an in-conversation event with Noel Mooney, CEO of the FAW, Neville Southall and

Ian Rush. Brussels used the tournament as a platform to host a panel event, in partnership with the UK Mission to the EU, on diversity and inclusion in football with speakers from the Football Association of Wales (FAW), the Premier League and the European Parliament. In France, a “C’mon Cymru” banner was placed at the entrance of British Embassy in Paris. Both of the events in Berlin featured Welsh food and drink, attracting over 100 stakeholders to each.

London’s Southbank hosted Tŷ Cymru/Wales Dome for four days in November. A variety of events took place in the Dome including a fintech inward investment panel discussion, Welsh language events, arts screenings and a performance by Ysgol Gymraeg Llundain and Griffin Primary school.

In Japan, the team worked with a Japanese football influencer and media organisations to promote Wales and the Red Wall and developed stories around the Welsh players. A public viewing of the Wales vs. Iran match in Himeji City attracted a large audience and Kitakyushu Kokura Castle supported the Welsh national football team with a social media campaign.

Unfortunately, Covid restrictions in China impacted on the team’s ability to deliver planned events such as a football festival in Beijing and an FAW demonstration event in Chongqing. However, the Shanghai office was able to work with the FAW to deliver five-a-side football matches with Welsh alumni, key businesses contacts and local football clubs, meaning that, despite restrictions and setbacks, the China team made the best of the opportunities that the World Cup presented.

Wales in Canada 2022

The ‘Wales in...’ themed years are designed to strengthen the relationship between Wales and the partner country and provide a strategic focus to our activity. They are about building connections – new and old. In 2021, the Welsh Government ran its first “Wales in...” campaign called ‘Wales in Germany 2021’. Following the success in Germany, it was decided to continue the ‘Wales in...’ project for two more years, with Wales in Canada 2022 followed by Wales in France 2023.

Objectives for Wales in Canada 2022

Montréal is the home of the Welsh Government in Canada, and the relationship between the Welsh Government and stakeholders in Québec, particularly the Québec Government, has gone from strength to strength since opening the office there in 2018. Wales in Canada 2022 presented an opportunity to strengthen and deepen existing relationships in Quebec and build on this work to forge new partnerships and increase Wales’ visibility across other parts of Canada.

The Canada team identified four main objectives for the year:

- 1. Engage a wider audience, including growing the Canadian diaspora network.
- 2. Build on and deepen our strong relationship with Québec.
- 3. Develop and grow new partnerships in Provinces and Territories across Canada.
- 4. Create a legacy that continues to add value to delivery of the International Strategy in the Canadian market once the Wales in Canada year is over.



We delivered more than 35 activities across seven provinces in Canada, as well as virtual activities which engaged millions of people.

Engaging with Diaspora

To maximise reach and develop a long-lasting network of new contacts, we focused on three things: positive media coverage; increased comms and outreach through social media; and growing and diversifying our diaspora across Canada.

We were featured on three Canadian television networks - CBC, CTV and TSN – and three Welsh television networks - BBC Wales, ITV Wales, and S4C. We featured in one full length op-ed in the Globe and Mail - Canada's most widely read newspaper with a national readership of over seven million people. Separately, one full length op-ed was written entirely in Welsh to mark Wales' qualification to the Football World Cup. We also secured an audio interview for the First Minister with CBC.

Our collaboration with a Canadian social media influencer from the Yukon generated over 5.3 million views for the commissioned Wales content across TikTok and Instagram alone, with nearly 750,000 likes and a high level of user engagement.

To grow our diaspora network across Canada, we held alumni and diaspora networking events in Toronto, Halifax and Vancouver, working with Global Wales, other stakeholders and local diaspora organisations to reach Welsh alumni and new contacts with an affiliation to Wales. Later in the year, we held World Cup events as part of Welsh Government's campaign around the Qatar World Cup – in Halifax, Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver.

Deepen Relationship with Québec

We hosted Wales' Future Generations Commissioner and Wales Arts International (WAI) over the year. The Future Generations Commissioner's visit included engagement with McGill University, a virtual seminar with panellists from across Canada. WAI visited the *Société des Arts Technologiques* (SAT) and met with the *Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec* (CALQ). Together with CALQ, WAI announced three reciprocal artistic residencies between Wales and Québec, with the first taking place at the *Centre des Musiciens du Monde* in Montréal in autumn 2023.

The new Agent General of Québec in the UK, Line Rivard, travelled to Wales for her first visit meeting with the First Minister, touring the Senedd, and meeting with several key partners of Québec in Wales.

Develop New Relationships Across Canada

There are opportunities and synergies for Wales across Canada, particularly in Ontario, British Columbia and the Maritime Provinces due to population size, key industries such as renewable energy and tech, and a good general understanding of what and where Wales is. The following is a snapshot of activity from across each of the provinces.

Ontario

- *Alumni Reception Toronto*: In collaboration with Global Wales, we held an evening reception to reach Welsh alumni and new contacts with an affiliation to Wales. This was also an opportunity to celebrate Global Wales' postgraduate scholarship which had been made available to students from Canada as part of the Wales in Canada year.
- *Doors Open Ottawa*: A 'street party' style event at the UK residence open to the public. At the event, we ran a Welsh stand with an immersive Welsh tourism experience using VR headsets. Over 2,000 visitors attended the event.

British Columbia, Alberta and The Yukon

- *Policy roundtable between the Future Generations Commissioner and Vancouver Economic Commission (VEC)*: focussed on First Nations approaches to well-being and knowledge sharing between Wales and Canada.
- *Breakout West Festival*: In collaboration with FOCUS Wales, we supported three showcase concerts to highlight the Welsh artists and held a music session with Welsh and Indigenous languages artists. On Truth and Reconciliation Day, WAI and a member of the Welsh band, Adwaith, spoke on a panel on the role music plays in protecting and promoting indigenous languages.
- *Promoting Wales via a Yukon-based social media influencer*: The First Minister responded to Yukon social media content-creator Pavlina Sudrich's message of apology to Wales after mistakenly saying Wales was part of England. The First Minister's message was posted from the Welsh Government's recently launched TikTok channel and gained ten times the views of typical posts on that channel.

Nova Scotia

- *Welsh Women Rugby Team in Canada*: Wales and Canada played each other in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in the run-up to the Rugby World Cup in New Zealand in October 2022. We hosted local business, political, and diaspora contacts and undertook some sponsorship to market tourism to Wales.

Legacy

We have increased and diversified the diaspora and Friends of Wales network which has enabled us to reach a wider local audience in major locations where the Welsh Government does not have a physical presence. We have increased visibility for Wales and Wales' messages in Canada and we have a trackable pipeline of collaborations and joint activities to strengthen relationships between Wales and stakeholders in Canada.

Examples to date include:

- Extension of the Global Wales Postgraduate Scholarship to students from Canada. This Scholarship aims to encourage more links between higher education institutions in Wales and those in Canada.
- Wales Arts International have signed an agreement with the *Conseil des Arts et des Lettres du Québec* (CALQ) for three reciprocal artistic residencies between Wales and Québec, supporting six artists.
- Ongoing discussions with the Ontario Government about signing a Memorandum of Understanding across a range of sectors for mutual benefit, with an accompanying action plan.
- 12 joint projects between Welsh and Québec-based stakeholders to be undertaken in 2023, with a fourth Call for Proposals to be launched in 2023.
- Engaging online content that delivers our key messages and raises awareness about Wales across a diverse set of platforms.

Relationship with Europe

The Welsh Government is committed to continued engagement with Europe, including through European institutions, networks and priority national and regional relationships. This is reflected in our Programme for Government commitment to retain the Welsh Government Brussels Office, and the appointment of Derek Vaughan, the Welsh Government Representative on Europe in January 2022.

Our team in Brussels drives Welsh Government’s proactive and positive engagement with its European partners, with three main aims:

1. Reinforce Welsh Government’s commitment to working with European partners on shared policy interests – education, research and innovation, climate, environment, energy, agriculture, coastal and maritime issues, social justice and equality.
2. Raise the profile of Wales and the Welsh Government’s unique policies that contribute to shared policy interests – for example, the Taith learning exchange programme, basic income pilot, single-use plastics ban and our pioneering Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.
3. Monitor and analyse EU policy developments which may have implications for Wales and Welsh Government policy.

The role of our European Representative strengthens our ability to engage with European Institutions in particular, resulting in increased awareness and understanding of Wales and Welsh Government policies. Derek Vaughan brings a strong background and knowledge of the European institutions, which has been of benefit to our engagement there.



An example of this is that the Welsh Government was asked to host an event highlighting the Taith programme in the European Parliament, including an audience of MEPs and EU learning mobility stakeholders.

The Welsh Government's Brussels team works closely with other Welsh organisations, such as Welsh Higher Education Brussels and the Senedd, who both have a presence in Wales House. This joined-up "Team Wales" approach helps to maximise the impact and visibility of Wales' EU engagement efforts. Wales continues to be invited to work with the European Parliament and other institutions, for example the Committee of Regions, on other events where distinct Welsh policy approaches can be highlighted.

The Brussels Office also leads our engagement with a number of European networks, in particular the Vanguard Initiative - which Wales is chairing in 2023 - and the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR), which will be hosting its General Assembly of Atlantic regions in Cardiff in May 2023. Our engagement in EU networks provides a platform for the Welsh Government to engage with European partners on shared policy interests, as well as raise Wales' profile.

The Welsh Government is committed to bilateral engagement with European nations and regions, including through our Ireland Wales Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan as well as Memoranda of Understanding with several regions, including Brittany and the Basque Country. Our Brussels team and European Representative strengthen relationships through engagement with those regions' offices in Brussels, and their representatives in the European Parliament and Committee of the Regions.

Agenda Item 7

Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee

Inquiry into the Wales-Ireland Relationship - Evidence Paper

The Ireland Wales Relationship

Wales and Ireland are the closest of neighbours and have built a strong and positive relationship on age-old connections and a deep cultural understanding. Our modern and vibrant relationship has grown from historic links, common heritage and culture, and close people-to-people, business, cultural and sporting connections.

A new enabling environment for Wales and Ireland came about with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 which led to the establishment of the British-Irish Council. Recent years have seen further developments that have brought new energy to our engagement and, in 2012, the Welsh Government opened an office within the British Embassy in Dublin to capitalise on these activities.

In a business context, Wales is home to around 85 Irish-headquartered companies and counts Ireland as its second largest export market behind the United States of America. The Port of Holyhead, the second largest roll-on roll-off port in the UK after Dover, remains a vital component of the Irish Sea Trade corridor, even in the wake of post-Brexit challenges.

EU Programmes

Our geography means that Ireland and Wales share a common maritime story. Since 1994, cross-border cooperation, and the building of policy networks across the Irish Sea, has been facilitated by the EU's INTERREG Programme.

The Ireland Wales 2014-2020 European Territorial Co-operation (ETC) programme is a maritime programme connecting organisations, businesses and communities on the West coast of Wales with the South-East coast of Ireland. The overall value of the programme is €100m, utilising €79m from the European Union's European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The programme focuses on:

- Cross border innovation
- Adaptation of the Irish Sea and Coastal Communities to Climate Change
- Cultural and Natural Resources and Heritage

Officials continue to work together to ensure the successes gained through the Ireland Wales Programme are not lost and that research remains at the forefront of our collaboration with Ireland.

Relationship post-Brexit

Following the UK's withdrawal from the European Union, the Ireland Wales relationship has continued to grow, building on the strong foundations laid since 1998. Key events in the ongoing story of our relationship are set out below.

In 2019, the Irish Government re-opened the Consulate General of Ireland in Cardiff. The re-establishment of the Consulate is testament to Ireland's commitment to

increasing cooperation and collaboration with Wales across the business, arts, sporting and community sectors.

The Celtic Sea Developers Alliance (a partnership between Wales, Ireland, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly) was launched in 2019 to lay foundations for fuller cooperation within the Celtic Sea. One member of the Alliance is Simply Blue Energy, an Irish owned renewable energy developer with offices in both Cork and Pembroke Dock. The company is working in partnership with Total Energies to develop Wales' first floating offshore wind project in the Celtic Sea. Climate change is the defining challenge of our time which is why we have committed to prioritise actions that support climate adaptation and mitigation, green growth and the transition to net zero carbon, and a circular economy.

In October 2020, the Irish Government committed to deepen relations with Wales in its Programme for Government and, as a result of this and the Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan signed in 2021, Wales and Ireland now have direct cooperation at political and official level across a range of policy and cultural areas.

Ireland Wales Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan

In March 2021, the Welsh and Irish Governments launched a new Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan (the Statement) which set out joint ambitions for cooperation between Wales and Ireland until 2025. Through the Statement, we have committed to facilitate and support collaborations which will deliver lasting, positive and mutually beneficial outcomes.

The Statement identifies six priority areas for cooperation:

1. Political and Official Engagement

The Statement commits Ministers and officials to convene an annual Ireland Wales Ministerial Forum, to engage political, economic and broader stakeholders and develop relationships that will deliver on the potential of current and future opportunities.

2. Climate and Sustainability

Both governments have agreed on urgency of action to respond to the defining global challenge of our time – climate change. The Statement prioritises joint working that supports sustainable development, through climate adaptation and mitigation, green growth and the transition to net zero carbon and a circular economy.

3. Trade and Tourism

Our two governments have identified trade flows as central to the strong economic links between Ireland and Wales. The land bridge connecting Ireland with other EU markets plays an important role in both of our economies. Ireland and Wales have agreed to work together to support businesses to adapt to the new context provided by the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

4. Education and Research

Many of the existing strong connections between academic institutions are grounded in EU programmes such as the Framework Research Programmes (Horizon 2020), Erasmus+, the Ireland Wales Programme, and UK-Ireland research cooperation programmes. Through the Statement, we have committed to supporting institutions to explore all avenues to maintain strong collaborations as we adjust to the new environment following the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

5. Culture, Language and Heritage

Ireland and Wales benefit from a rich, and often shared, cultural heritage. Both countries promote our identities through our cultural performers and use the creative industries as an economic and social tool at home. The Statement sets out how we will continue to support our national and local cultural institutions, and our artists, writers and performers to work collaboratively across Ireland and Wales.

6. Communities, Diaspora and Sport

Throughout history families and individuals have moved between Ireland and Wales. We have committed to sharing our experiences in engaging with our diasporas and learning from one another to deepen and enrich our connections to our diaspora communities overseas.

Delivering the Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan

There has been progress against all six areas of cooperation set out in the Statement, with delivery being taken forward by the Welsh and Irish Governments and our partner organisations. Examples of delivery and progress against each of the six areas include, and are not limited to:

1. Political and Official Engagement

Throughout 2021 and 2022, there were six separate bilateral Ministerial meetings, in addition to the bilateral meetings held at the Ireland Wales Ministerial Forums. In January 2021, the Welsh Government Office in Ireland and the Consulate General of Ireland in Cardiff organised a joint event between the Irish and UK Missions to the UN called "Small Nations, Big Ambitions: Future Generations and Gender Equality".

In October 2022, the Irish Foreign Minister, Simon Coveney TD, formally opened the Consulate General of Ireland in Cardiff. Two Ireland Wales Ministerial Forums have taken place, one in Cardiff and one in Cork, which have included exchanges between nine different Ministers - the 2023 Ministerial Forum will take place in North Wales.

2. Climate and Sustainability

We have supported the Future Generations Commissioner to take part in a policy exchange workstream on sustainability, including organising a visit to Dublin in October 2022. As a result of this work, a member of Ireland's Green Party brought a private members bill to the Dáil on Future Generations and Ireland's 2022 UN Youth Ambassador has been selected as a Future Generations Global Ambassador.

The Greenlink Interconnector reached financial close in March 2022 and in March 2023, the Welsh Government granted consent to Irish-owned Simply Blue Energy to develop Wales' first floating windfarm. Enterprise Ireland attended the 2023 Marine Energy Wales Annual Conference to explore supply chain opportunities in the Celtic Sea.

3. Trade and Tourism

In November 2021, the Taoiseach met Irish investors at Cardiff City Hall, all of whom support our Net Zero ambitions. There have been four separate trade missions to Ireland since the Statement was signed with 26 companies travelling to Ireland from sectors such as renewable energy, financial services and life sciences. Following the first Ministerial Forum in 2021, Enterprise Ireland has also supported companies to visit the Wales Life Sciences Hub to develop trade cooperation.

4. Education and Research

The Welsh Government has launched two Agile Cymru research funds to support collaboration with Irish Institutions across the Irish Sea space. Following the launch of the Statement, both governments have been working together to explore future funding opportunities to ensure that the progress and partnerships made through the Ireland Wales European Territorial Cooperation programme can continue.

In 2021, the "Celtic Academies Alliance" was launched to pool expertise in common challenges. This is a partnership between the Royal Irish Academy, the Learned Society of Wales and the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

The Welsh Government launched Taith in 2022, which has been promoted across Ireland. This promotion includes during the Minister for Education and Welsh Language's visit to Dublin in March 2023, Also, during this visit, the Minister for Education and Welsh Language met key academic institutions, Irish Government Ministers, and cultural and linguistic partners to reaffirm our commitment to the Ireland Wales relationship.

5. Culture, Language and Heritage

In May 2022, the Welsh Government's office in Ireland marked the UN Decade of Indigenous Languages by hosting the first St Patrick and St David lecture titled: *Dewi Padraig Dialogue*, in partnership with Wales Arts International, Arts Council Wales and Dublin City University. It was also the launch for Wales Arts International's Gwrandu campaign. Our respective Arts Councils meet regularly and share learning on common challenges. The Welsh Government team in Ireland has supported artistic showcases in the Dublin Film Festival, Dublin Fringe Festival and the St Patrick's Festival.

The relationship between our National Museums continues to grow, including participation in a 'Cultural Rights, Cultural Democracy' conference. The Welsh and Irish Governments have supported the Other Voices partnership in Dingle and Cardigan, with the First Minister attending the Cardigan event in 2022.

We have continued to support the Coláiste Lurgan and Urdd Gobaith Cymru partnership as well as the Urdd's 2023 European launch of 'Chwarae yn Gymraeg' at Gaelscoil Thaobh na Coille in Dublin, where the Minister for Education and Welsh Language visited pupils who were participating in the Urdd's workshop. The Irish Consul General in Cardiff organised monthly pop-up Gaeltacht events between April 2021 to August 2022 as well as working in collaboration with Culture Ireland to support the Hay Festival and Youth Literature Laureates. The Irish Government has supported the teaching of Irish at Aberystwyth University and Cardiff University in 2020/21 and 2021/22 and for students from these courses to spend a period of time studying in the Gaeltacht in Ireland.

6. Communities, Diaspora and Sport

A Welsh Government official is seconded to the Ireland Abroad Unit in the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs to learn about how the Irish Government takes forward its diaspora engagement. This work aligns with our Diaspora Action Plan. The Irish Consulate General has promoted the Government of Ireland's Emigrant Support Programme which has seen an increase in applications.

The Welsh Government in Ireland and the Consulate General in Cardiff have hosted St David's Day, St Patrick's Day and St Brigid's day events each year to bring our respective communities together.

The Welsh Government's office in Ireland continues to support the Men's and Women's 6 Nations rugby games in Dublin and Cardiff. During the 2022 FIFA Men's Football World Cup, our office in Ireland hosted a networking reception for the Wales vs USA game as well as an in-conversation event with the FAW and former Welsh players.

Future Plans and Challenges

Overview

The Ireland Wales Shared Statement is regarded positively by our partners as it provides a platform on which they can develop stronger relationships and forge new collaborations and partnerships with support from both governments. The Statement has provided a focus for stakeholders to ensure the opportunities which span common areas for political, economic and cultural engagement are realised. Both governments regard the relationship between our two countries as being the strongest it has been for many years.

Many of the ambitions for the Statement have been addressed and are either complete or in progress. In recent steering group meetings, consideration has been given to revising or stretching the current goals to maximise their impact. As we reach the halfway point of the Statement, early consideration is now being given to a future or revised statement which both governments can agree and commit to delivering post-2025.

Educational Links

Educational links are strong between Welsh and Irish institutions through direct exchanges, historic connections and live research programmes. There is a concern that, without a funding resolution and the completion of the current Interreg funding stream, some collaborative Ireland Wales connections will be lost.

The ongoing development of the Celtic Academies Alliance and the growing commitment from the Learned Society is positive and has the potential to forge and grow new connections and areas of joint research between Welsh and Irish universities.

The Taith programme has been well received in Ireland and, while the current round is committed, there are further opportunities to see greater uptake in Ireland and we are encouraging a proactive outreach programme to promote Taith to Irish schools, tertiary, and further education institutions.

Funding

The significant and key challenge to the delivery of the Statement remains around funding. There have been strong, tangible collaborative projects and programmes delivered through Interreg funding which will be withdrawn in 2023 - most notably the Calin Life Science network and Selkie project which is delivering mapping solutions for the offshore renewable sector – with no funding alternative in place.

There are ongoing discussions between the relevant funding departments on alternatives to enable future collaborations and existing projects to continue to deliver, however, the size of the funding would be on a much-reduced scale. Through the Windsor Framework, which sets out the UK Government and European Commission's joint revisions the Northern Ireland Protocol, there is optimism that a potential path for the UK's association to Horizon Europe can open access to new funding opportunities, although this will not be realised in the near-term.

Economic

The economic ties between Wales and Ireland remain strong, with Irish Investors continuing to reinvest in Welsh operations and Welsh exporters recently undertaking a market visit to Ireland.

A future focus for economic ties will be within the renewable energy sector and the opportunities that exist in the Irish Sea. Opportunities exist for energy developers, the construction supply chain, port development and ongoing maintenance. There is strong potential for Wales and Ireland to jointly benefit from these opportunities and a future shared statement should have a focus within these common areas and this has been a central theme of the ministerial forums.

There are also ongoing discussions with Borders teams on the forthcoming changes, including the introduction of border control posts. It is economically important that trade routes between Wales and Ireland remain as frictionless as possible within the future proposed changes.

Political

A strong element of the Statement has been the commitment from leaders on both sides to meet annually at a Ministerial Forum rotating between both countries. These Forums are an opportunity to mark the progress against the objectives of the Statement, showcase its central themes - including cultural links or educational ties as examples - and provide a platform to discuss future areas of joint working. The next Forum will take place in North Wales in October 2023.

Ministers on both sides will also meet at the British Irish Council throughout the year, however, the dedicated Ministerial Forum remains a significant element of the programme and visibly demonstrates the commitment of both governments to the Statement. Such meetings must continue and feature in any revised or future agreement.

Policy Sharing

Collaboration, sharing best practice and policy learning are common themes and ambitions of the Statement. One direct example of this has been the secondment of a Welsh Government official into the Irish Government's Department of Foreign Affairs. This has been an opportunity for us to learn, understand and experience first-hand Ireland's approach to diaspora engagement and inform our own approach to working with the Welsh diaspora. Other government departments have also forged new relationships and shared current policy development and best practice. Moving forward, more opportunities to connect officials across policy areas are being identified to sharing learning.

There is an ongoing appetite for future collaboration between our two governments and the 2020-2025 Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan provides a strong foundation upon which we can take forward our relationship further.