

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

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 4 – Tŷ Hywel

Meeting date: 30 March 2023

Meeting time: 09.30 – 13.30

For further information contact:

Rhys Morgan

Committee Clerk

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Pre-meeting registration

(09.15 – 09.30)

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(09.30)

2 Wales–Ireland relations: evidence session with language organisations

(09.30 – 10.30)

(Pages 1 – 18)

- Mícheál Ó Foighil, Bainisteoir Lurgan, Coláiste Lurgan
- Lowri W. Williams, Strategic Director, Welsh Language Commissioner

Attached Documents:

- Research Brief: Inquiry into Wales–Ireland relations
- Evidence from the Welsh Language Commissioner: Inquiry into Wales–Ireland relations

Break

(10.30 – 10.40)



3 Wales–Ireland relations: evidence session with the Consul General of Ireland in Cardiff

(10.40 – 11.40)

(Pages 19 – 22)

- Denise McQuade, Consul General of Ireland in Cardiff

Attached Documents:

- Evidence from the Consulate General of Ireland: Inquiry into Wales–Ireland relations

Break

(11.40 – 11.50)

4 Wales–Ireland relations: evidence session with recipients of EU funding

(11.50 – 12.50)

(Pages 23 – 29)

- Gwyn Evans, External Funding Manager, Pembrokeshire County Council
- Steven Conlan, Professor of Molecular and Cellular Biology, Swansea University Medical School

Attached Documents:

- Evidence from Pembrokeshire County Council: Inquiry into Wales–Ireland relations
- Evidence from CALIN: Inquiry into Wales–Ireland relations

5 Papers to note

(12.50)

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

(12.50)

7 Wales–Ireland relations: consideration of evidence

(12.50 – 13.00)

8 Wales–Ireland relations: discussion of the inquiry work programme

(13.00 – 13.10)

(Pages 30 – 31)

Attached Documents:

- Committee timeline: Wales–Ireland Relations

9 Allegations surrounding the Welsh Rugby Union: consideration of the outcome of the Welsh Rugby Union Extraordinary General Meeting

(13.10 – 13.30)

Document is Restricted



WIR 06

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament
Pwyllgor Diwylliant, Cyfathrebu, y
Gymraeg, Chwaraeon, a Chysylltiadau
Rhyngwladol | Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International
Relations Committee
Cysylltiadau rhwng Cymru ac Iwerddon | Wales-Ireland relations
Ymateb gan: Comisiynydd y Gymraeg | Response from: Welsh Language Commissioner

16/02/2023

Dear Committee,

Inquiry into Wales-Ireland relations

I am very keen to raise the committee members' awareness of existing links between my office and Ireland and the potential to further develop this work for the mutual benefit of Welsh and Irish speakers. Our current collaboration in two priority areas is outlined below, namely promoting and facilitating the use of official languages, and protecting and promoting the place names of those languages. At the end of this letter, you will find a list of practical suggestions for developing cooperation in these areas, and ideas for funding collaborative projects.

1. Working together to defend and promote language rights

The post of Irish Language Commissioner, [An Coimisinéir Teanga](#), was established by the Official Languages Act 2003. A close working relationship was soon established between us when the Welsh Language Commissioner's office opened in 2012, and that relationship has been supported and further nurtured through the International Association of Language Commissioners ([IALC](#)). An Coimisinéir Teanga has given evidence to this committee in the past, of course, and the Welsh Language Commissioner has in turn provided evidence to the Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann committees as they scrutinized recent amendments to their official languages act. There has been great interest in Ireland in the Welsh Language Measure and its influence, and the Commissioner has received several invitations to address various groups there in recent years – from language officers

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Comisiynydd y
Gymraeg
Welsh Language
Commissioner

and pressure groups to the Bar Association. The personal tributes received by our office from Ireland, together with the public attention in the press there to the passing of the late Commissioner Aled Roberts, were indicative of the appreciation for these efforts.

At the end of 2021, a revised Official Languages Act came into force in Ireland which contains a number of significant provisions – the most obvious and the most significant in the context of this inquiry – is Ireland's move to a language standards system under the influence our legislation here in Wales. This is testament to the importance of sharing successful practice between the policy makers and legislatures of the two countries. There are a number of other provisions in the act which should be closely monitored, such as the commitment that 20% of those recruited into the public sector and civil service will be Irish speakers by 2030.

We naturally support that 'Culture, Language and Heritage' is recognised as an area of collaboration in [the Joint Action Plan 2021-25](#). However, the main emphasis of this section is very much on the arts and cultural initiatives. There is recognition that there is a need to 'continue to work through the British-Irish Council indigenous, minority and lesser-used languages work sector to support the development of, and policy cooperation for, indigenous languages'. Of course, the British-Irish Council's Indigenous, Minority and Lesser-Used Languages work sector is a useful forum to bring relevant Ministers together. But we believe there is scope to cast the net wider and involve other key stakeholders – including the independent Language Commissioners of both countries.

Language should also be a core part of the Education and Research priority area to strengthen the academic foundations of linguistic revitalisation efforts in both countries. It must be ensured that the best ideas and practices in relation to language planning and the protection of linguistic rights are not lost in the Irish Sea.

The Commissioner would be delighted to contribute to this important discussion, of course. The fruitful relationship that exists between the Commissioners' offices alongside the structure of the International Association of Language Commissioners provides a possible foundation for further collaboration, should the necessary investment to facilitate the work be secured. For example, we hope to organise an international conference for the International Association of Language Commissioners in Wales in 2024 (dependent on securing sponsorship) – we would be very open to discussing the potential of collaboration and ensuring that conference themes and events support the strategic relationship between Ireland and Wales.



2. Standardisation, protection and promotion of place-names

Ireland has a tradition to envy of legislating to protect place-names. Following the receipt of expert advice, the Minister for the Gaeltacht will prescribe the standard forms of Irish place-names in regulations. This procedure means that there is no vagueness about the standard and official forms of place-names and which forms must be displayed on signs and adopted in official contexts.

This is quite different to the current situation in Wales where the Commissioner's recommendations have no statutory force. There is no law to protect the names of the cities, towns and villages of Wales or to incentivise public institutions to follow the advice of the Place-names Standardisation Panel. Establishing a regime where public institutions in Wales are expected to adopt standard forms recommended by the Commissioner would be transformative. It would lead to a situation where standard Welsh forms would be adopted and promoted which would in turn reduce confusion, duplication and inconsistency in mapping and address data. It would also save the valuable time and resources of local authorities who currently have to deal with uncertainty and disagreement over what forms they should adopt.

Ireland also has a tradition to envy of supporting research into place-names. The Placenames Branch was established in 1956 to undertake detailed research into place-names and provide authoritative recommendations on which forms should be adopted. These recommendations, along with the wealth of research to support them, are available to the public through [Logainm.ie | Placenames Database of Ireland](https://logainm.ie) since 2007, a resource developed by DCU under the auspices of the Department for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media. It is an extremely attractive and interactive resource that allows users to search for places on a map, includes records and audio recordings derived from fieldwork, and supports users to pronounce the names correctly. Having a resource like this would transform efforts to standardise and promote the use of standard forms in Wales and I am confident that our Irish colleagues would be very keen to share their expertise and experience with us.

With the Government and Plaid Cymru's Co-operation Agreement recognising the need to protect and promote Welsh place-names, it would be very timely for the Welsh Government to scrutinise what is being achieved in Ireland and the legislation and investment that supports the work there. Collaboration in the field of place-names and the exchange of knowledge, technological solutions, and research as part of the next co-operation plan would also open up exciting possibilities of collaboration across three of the six existing priority areas (Trade and Tourism, Education and Research, Culture, Language and Heritage).



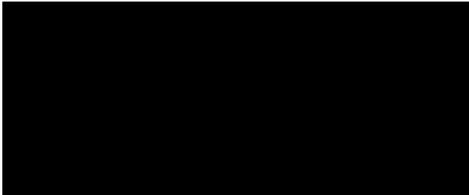
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Gymraeg
Welsh Language
Commissioner

3. Recommendations to strengthen future collaboration

I would be keen to be involved in discussions about how the Wales-Ireland collaboration could be further developed in the above priority areas. In particular, I would like to discuss:

- Possible structures to support a language planning forum between the two countries.
- Ensuring that language, and in particular language planning, is considered as an overarching theme and a core part of the Education and Research priority area.
- The need to scrutinise Irish legislation in relation to place-names.
- The potential for Wales to benefit from the Irish expertise in the field of place-names and the exciting possibilities to share resources and solutions between the two countries.
- The possibilities of further collaboration through the International Association of Language Commissioners, specifically in planning a conference in Wales in 2024.

Yours sincerely,



Efa Gruffudd Jones
Welsh Language Commissioner

WIR 07

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Diwylliant, Cyfathrebu, y Gymraeg, Chwaraeon, a Chysylltiadau Rhyngwladol |
Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee
Cysylltiadau rhwng Cymru ac Iwerddon | Wales-Ireland relations

Ymateb gan: Conswl Cyffredinol Iwerddon | Response from: Consulate General of Ireland

1. The Consulate General of Ireland is very pleased that the Senedd's Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee has decided to undertake an inquiry into Wales-Ireland relations. The engagement of elected representatives adds further depth and breadth to the close relationship that exists between our two Governments. The observations that follow are submitted in response to the Committee's consultation and invitation to make written submissions.

Broader context of Wales-Ireland Relations

2. Ireland and Wales are the closest of neighbours, and we have a strong and positive relationship built 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.
3. The re-establishment of the Consulate-General of Ireland in 2019 was a reaffirmation of Ireland's commitment to deepen and strengthen this naturally warm and close relationship between Ireland and Wales. It was part of Ireland's ambitious Global Ireland programme, which aims to double Ireland's impact around the world by 2025, as well as demonstrating Ireland's commitment to strengthening the British Irish relationship following the UK's departure from the EU. It also forms part of a wider programme of investment in Ireland's footprint in Great Britain in recent years, including an enhanced whole-of-Government presence in London, the opening of the Consulate General for the North of England in 2021, and the establishment of an Enterprise Ireland Office in Manchester in 2019.
4. The UK's departure from the EU has already brought change and it will undoubtedly alter and reshape the Ireland-Wales relationship in the coming years. Joint participation in EU programmes has been a positive force for the relationship between Ireland and Wales. Over the last twenty-five years, the Ireland Wales programme has fostered the creation of uniquely strong and focused connections across the Irish Sea at local and sectoral levels. Ireland and Wales are committed to working together to sustain the networks which have emerged through this programme.
5. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement. In addition to celebrating what was a transformative moment for everyone on the island of Ireland, it is timely to recall the importance of Strand Three of that agreement for the East-West institutional relationship. Wales and Ireland continue to work side-by-side in the framework of the British-Irish Council and our parliamentarians meet regularly through the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly. All three strands of the Agreement are vitally important and they are designed to be mutually reinforcing. We want to see each of them working to their full capacity to deliver for all of the people across these islands.

The Ireland-Wales Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan (2021-2025)

6. The Ireland-Wales Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan 2021-2025 is a key pillar in our bilateral relationship and sets out our commitment to deepening cooperation. It was launched by then Minister for Foreign Affairs, Simon Coveney TD and First Minister Mark Drakeford MS in March 2021. It was the first time that Ireland and Wales published a joint document of this nature.
7. The Joint Action Plan includes forty-five actions across six areas of cooperation for which the Welsh Government has devolved responsibility, namely: political and official engagement; climate action and sustainability; trade and tourism; education and research; culture, language and heritage; and communities, diaspora and sport. Delivery has been led by the Consulate General of Ireland in Cardiff and the Welsh Government Office in Dublin.
8. Delivery of the Joint Action Plan is reviewed annually at ministerial level. To date, implementation has been strong and dynamic. As of late 2022, almost 80% of the commitments made have been either fully completed (10%) or well advanced (70%). Early progress has been made on the remaining 20% of actions.
9. One of its key actions is a commitment to hold an annual Ireland Wales Forum to bring together political, economic and broader stakeholders to build relationships, to reflect on ongoing collaboration and to identify opportunities for further cooperation. The inaugural Forum took place in Cardiff in October 2021 and was an excellent platform to exchange policy perspectives, share learning and build collaboration to strengthen the Ireland-Wales relationship, in particular in the areas of sustainability and green recovery, trade promotion, economic development, climate action and energy policy.
10. The second Ireland-Wales Forum in Dublin and Cork was in October 2022. Chaired jointly by then Minister for Foreign Affairs, Simon Coveney TD and First Minister, Mark Drakeford MS, it involved bilateral meetings as well as a wider roundtable, and included a visit to the National Museum, Collins Barracks, to learn more about the partnership between the National Museums of Ireland and Wales. Discussions focused on bilateral relations, trade cooperation and economic development, and renewable energy. Political discussions were informed by practical engagement with key stakeholders. Participating ministers visited MaREI, the Science Foundation Ireland Centre for Energy Climate and the Marine, where they participated in a roundtable discussion convened by Cork Chamber with companies working on renewable energy.
11. Ireland looks forward to the third annual Ireland-Wales Forum which will take place later this year in Wales. Irish and Welsh officials will work in close cooperation to agree the Forum's programme and agenda.
12. Demonstrating the strong progress and collaborative approach to date, other positive outcomes of the Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan include:
 - High-level meetings between then Taoiseach Micheál Martin and the First Minister at British Irish Council Summits, as well as their joint participation in an Enterprise Ireland trade event in Cardiff in 2021.

- Meetings between the then Tánaiste, Leo Varadkar and Economy Minister, Vaughan Gething; between Higher Education Minister, Simon Harris and Education Minister Jeremy Miles; and between Minister for Disabilities, Equality, Integration and Youth, Roderic O’Gorman and Minister for Social Justice, Jane Hutt.
- A visit to Cardiff by Jennifer Carroll MacNeill, Minister of State at the Department of Finance with special responsibility for Financial Services, Credit Unions and Insurance is planned for St. Patrick’s Day 2023.
- Commencement of an 11-month secondment of Welsh Government official to the Irish Abroad Unit of the Department of Foreign Affairs from May 2022 to build shared learning on diaspora affairs;
- New language legislation in Ireland Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021 informed by Welsh approach to language policy;
- Irish Sea Symposium organised by Welsh Government with participation from Irish officials and ongoing engagement with INTERREG partners;
- Inaugural ‘St David’ lecture, the Dewi Padraig Dialogue, on approaches to language policy in Dublin City University in May 2022;
- Excellent ongoing collaboration between Coláiste Lurgan and Urdd Gobaith Cymru;
- Visit of the Irish naval vessel LÉ Róisín to Cardiff in July 2022 celebrating strong bilateral ties and maritime connections;
- Continued engagement with the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, including a visit by Future Generations Commissioner Sophie Howe to Dublin in October 2022.
- Successful partnerships between the Welsh Government and cultural organisations in Ireland to foster cultural connections, including support of the collaboration between the National Museums of Ireland and Wales.

Opportunities in developing parliamentary relations between the Senedd and Oireachtas

13. The British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA) provides a forum for regular engagement between the Senedd and the Oireachtas. The Consul General of Ireland was very pleased to have the opportunity to meet the Senedd’s BIBA Members before its plenary in Farnham, Cavan in October 2022. As then Taoiseach, Micheál Martin noted at the opening of the plenary, the engagement of parliamentarians helps “build understanding, develop common objectives and, crucially, build relationships that will endure into the future – supporting renewed and positive British-Irish relations.”
14. Closer cooperation between the Senedd and the Oireachtas can only make a positive contribution to Ireland-Wales relations. As set out in the Joint Action Plan, we are committed to supporting the Senedd and the Oireachtas to explore opportunities for exchanges on shared challenges. The Consulate General of Ireland will continue to engage with Members of the Senedd with this in mind and stands ready to support efforts for closer parliamentary relations.

Concluding Observations

15. Ireland and Wales have always enjoyed a strong and warm bilateral relationship. Our intertwined history can be traced all the way back to myths and legends. It is expressed in our Celtic heritage and languages and by our people who have moved freely between our two countries and continue to do so for reasons of family, education, work and sport. We

continue to have strong economic and trade links. In our bilateral relations with Wales, Ireland's goal is to ensure that we remain close neighbours and friends.

Consulate General of Ireland, Cardiff, February 2023

Agenda Item 4

WIR 05

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Diwylliant, Cyfathrebu, y Gymraeg, Chwaraeon, a Chysylltiadau

Rhyngwladol | Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and

International Relations Committee

Cysylltiadau rhwng Cymru ac Iwerddon | Wales–Ireland relations

Ymateb gan: Cyngor Sir Benfro | Response from: Pembrokeshire County Council

Introduction

1. Pembrokeshire County Council is pleased to have the opportunity to respond to this Inquiry, as it has a strong track record of working with local government and other organisations in Ireland to the benefit of both nations. The Council provides public services to around 125,000 people resident in Pembrokeshire, and many more who visit our county.
2. Our services include activity to promote Pembrokeshire's economy, the skills and life chances of our young people, our cultural heritage, and our environment. In all these fields, we have co-operated with and benefited from working with colleagues in Ireland. Our efforts in this regard are not just to improve the situation of Pembrokeshire today, but to lay the groundwork for a better future.
3. Regardless of Brexit, Ireland remains important to Pembrokeshire due to our location, business opportunities and transport links through Pembroke Dock and Fishguard.

Wales-Ireland relations post-Brexit.

4. Whilst Pembrokeshire County Council has a twinning arrangement with Wexford County Council, and the city of St David's is twinned with Naas, County Kildare, most of the co-operation that has taken place between Pembrokeshire County Council and Ireland since 1996 has been as a result of the various EU funded Ireland Wales "Interreg" programmes. Pembrokeshire College, the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, the Milford Haven Port Authority and Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum have also been involved in these programmes.
5. One result of Brexit has therefore been to remove the most significant part of the architecture that supported the rich co-operation that took place between Wales and south eastern Ireland between 1996 and 2020. To date, nothing of any great significance has been put in place to replace it at an operational level. In consequence, as the Ireland-Wales programme 2014-2020 draws to a close (the final projects will complete this year) there is a risk, or even a likelihood, that many of the relationships that have been established between Welsh and Irish organisations through the programme will wither.

6. The Welsh Government has tried, to its credit, to put in place alternative structures to maintain Welsh-Irish links, specifically the Ireland-Wales Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan 2021-2025 discussed further below, and activities arising from this. There have also been a series of symposia under the Agile Cymru banner at the last of which, on 24 November 2022, an “Informal Framework for Co-operation across the Irish Sea Space” was proposed. We are unclear however as to the status of this, for example whether it is a Welsh Government endorsed proposal on which we are being consulted prior to its adoption, or whether it is merely an academic concept setting out one idea of how Welsh-Irish co-operation could take place post-Brexit.
7. Consequently, aside from the Shared Statement, there is now a vacuum in Welsh-Irish relations such that it is not at all clear how cross-border initiatives are to take place, other than at the sole initiative of individual organisations in Wales and in Ireland.
8. There are also Brexit-related matters that have an Irish dimension, on which work is still on-going to put in place the solutions necessary to minimise friction in cross-border trade. Chief amongst these is the question of the Target Operating Model for the GB border, which has implications for Pembrokeshire County Council’s port health function. This may be an area where strengthened Welsh-Irish relations could help bring progress.

Current approach to bilateral engagement between the Welsh and Irish governments and whether it is fit for purpose post-Brexit.

9. This is not a matter on which local government can comment.

The Ireland-Wales Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan (2021-2025) as an approach to international engagement.

10. We consider the Shared Statement provides a strong foundation at a national level for future Irish-Welsh engagement and co-operation, and it could act as a model for international engagement more generally. However, whilst it provides structures at governmental level it fails to offer any real support to Welsh organisations wishing to further Welsh-Irish relations.
11. There is for example only one reference in the Shared Statement to local authorities. This appears on page 17, and states “We will ... Jointly identify and promote existing connections between communities, such as twinned towns; schools; and sports clubs, by signposting interested communities to appropriate local authority and other supports.”
12. Pembrokeshire County Council is unable to offer the support this commitment appears to imply. The Authority does not provide support to twinning associations for example, because we do not have the capacity or budget provision to do so. The commitment given to local organisations interested in Welsh-Irish co-operation in the Shared Statement therefore lacks any substance.

The funding of future cooperation and collaborative projects between Ireland and Wales.

13. The main funding opportunity we are aware of is through the Agile Cymru programme, and this is limited to £5,000 for the purpose of facilitating activity that builds cross-border and international partnerships and increases cooperation. Our understanding of the programme is that it is primarily to help establish new links, rather than maintain pre-existing links. With the loss of the EU Ireland-Wales Cross-Border Programme, and the placing at risk of the partnerships it sustained, we question whether this is the right focus for Agile Cymru.
14. We are unaware of any readily accessible funding to carry Welsh-Irish co-operation forward beyond the partnership formation stage. The Symposium on 24 November referenced above included a presentation on the EU PEACE PLUS programme 2021-2028, which is intended to promote and strengthen the process of peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland. We understand that there is the possibility that this programme could fund Welsh-Irish co-operation activities, provided that the benefit of these activities accrued to the PEACE PLUS programme area, and were consistent with the scope of the programme.
15. Whilst this may present an opportunity for Wales to contribute to the Irish and Northern Irish peace process, it is very limiting in terms of financing cross-border activity that may be of benefit to Wales.

Priority areas for cooperation between Ireland and Wales.

16. We note that the Shared Statement includes a commitment to “Support and promote the policy priorities of our shared involvement in the British-Irish Council’s work sectors, namely collaborative spatial planning; creative industries; indigenous, minority and lesser-used languages; digital inclusion; early years; energy; environment; housing; misuse of substances; social inclusion and transport.” The only one of these that seems out of place is housing, which we do not perceive as having a cross-border dimension, at least not where a maritime border between two states is concerned.
17. The Ireland-Wales Co-operation Programme 2014-2020 had as its three priorities Cross-border Innovation; Adaptation of the Irish Sea and Coastal Communities to Climate Change; and Cultural and Natural Resources and Heritage.
18. The Informal Framework for Co-operation across the Irish Sea Space proposed at the Symposium on 24 November 2022 was based around three priorities, namely Innovation including Life Sciences; Sustainable Blue Growth; and Communities & Culture. The Symposium was informed that these were identified after consultation with stakeholders including the Welsh Government.
19. There is significant commonality between these three assessments of the priority areas for co-operation. We take the view that co-operation can usefully be structured around the priorities from the Informal Framework, i.e. Innovation (we would not specifically identify life sciences as that may be interpreted as giving that discipline more weight than others), Sustainable Blue Growth, and Communities & Culture.

Opportunities in developing parliamentary relations between the Senedd and Oireachtas.

20. This is not a matter that directly involves Welsh local government.

21. We note that the issue of sustainable development is central to the Shared Statement. The goal and challenge of achieving net zero by 2050 in both Wales and Ireland should provide plenty of opportunity for discussion between the parliamentarians of the two countries.

WIR08

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Cysylltiadau rhwng Cymru ac Iwerddon | Wales-Ireland relations
Ymateb gan: CALIN | Response from: CALIN

Inquiry into Wales-Ireland relations

Wales-Ireland relations post-Brexit

CALIN is an INTERREG-funded programme that launched in 2017 through a collaboration between six universities across Ireland and Wales. Together, CALIN partners have developed a strong relationship and worked together to build a network that is driving innovation in over 190 SMEs. The solid foundations and strength of the network has enabled CALIN to continue to grow and work collaboratively with little disruption post-Brexit notwithstanding the impact of Covid-19 on some research activity.

Current activity within CALIN is supported by the INTERREG programme which is due to end in August this year. There is clear motivation from CALIN partners and stakeholders to continue to collaborate beyond this date with an ambition to work under a similar mechanism moving forward. However, with no direct replacement for INTERREG funding, a significant risk of a post-funding hiatus exists if a CALIN bridge isn't maintained between Ireland and Wales. As such, the CALIN team have been proactively engaging with both Welsh and Irish governments to develop a sustainable route forward. A route that would allow CALIN partners and stakeholders to continue to drive life science innovation in Irish and Welsh SMEs both within and beyond the limits of the INTERREG regions.

Current approach to bilateral engagement between the Welsh and Irish governments and whether it is fit for purpose post-Brexit

Since the official opening of the Ireland's Consulate General in Wales in 2021, the CALIN team have engaged directly with both the previous and current Irish Consul and have recently met with the Irish ambassador to the UK to discuss the CALIN programme. The CALIN team are also actively engaged with the Welsh Government office in Ireland. Through this engagement CALIN directors were invited to participate in Government-lead workshops (Irish Sea Symposium series) providing the opportunity for Government officials to hear directly from those involved in the field. We see this as an effective approach to bilateral engagement and would like to see this further developed through future opportunities to present successful bilateral activities to ministers and engage with parliament.

The [Ireland-Wales Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan \(2021-2025\)](#) as an approach to international engagement

The [Ireland-Wales shared statement and joint action plan 2021 to 2025](#) highlights CALIN in delivery industrial collaboration in the Irish and Welsh life-sciences industries. CALIN is leading the Health & Life Science Innovation theme in determining proactive strategies for taking

forward a new phase of future cooperation across the Irish and Celtic seas at the request of the Welsh government. As such, on 28th February 2023, CALIN hosted an Ireland-Wales event that gave stakeholders the opportunity to voice their thoughts on the future approach to international engagement. Discussion within the meeting echoed the statements made within the action plan and further highlighted how important, yet how rare it is for HEIs to have a group of researchers already in place and able to support industry on demand, without the need for prolonged funding applications. It was agreed that this has underpinned an innovation pipeline that has helped to sustain and grow the local life science SME community in Ireland and Wales.

The funding of future cooperation and collaborative projects between Ireland and Wales

For over 6 years CALIN has been enabling world-leading HEI's expertise to deliver economic benefit for SMEs in the Life Science sector. CALIN has united HEIs, SMEs and health and social care services to provide a strong, dynamic cross-border and inter-disciplinary knowledge base that supports economic and scientific Life Science developments in Ireland and Wales. By closely linking R&D, innovation, commercial development, and the provision of high-value jobs, CALIN's smart specialisation approach has established a platform for industry-driven research, development and innovation to promote value creation and strengthen the Life Science sector, an essential generator of wealth and prosperity in the regions.

However, with no direct replacement for INTERREG funding, the CALIN team are actively seeking new opportunities to ensure the continuation of this well-established network. CALIN has considered several opportunities such as engaging with PEACEPLUS and driving investment from large industry stakeholders. Investment by large companies into Wales is a challenge but Ireland have attracted this kind of investment from large industries such as ICON in Dublin. CALIN allows stakeholders in Wales to access these larger companies in Ireland and this will be a key part of CALIN's future.

Furthermore, CALIN is aware of potential opportunities with future joint UKRI-SFI Co-Centre Programmes. The Co-Centre Programme has been established as a new strategic collaborative partnership between Ireland, Great Britain and Northern Ireland, co-funded by industry, to consolidate research activities across higher education institutes in co-hosted centres. The Co-Centre model is essentially an extension of the CALIN model that CALIN partners, where new partners in Northern Ireland (and possibly North West England and Scotland) would join the existing network to further strengthen the research base and offering to industry in driving innovation. The first Co-Centre call has been launched (<https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/co-centre-programme-2022-collaboration-for-transformative-research-and-innovation/>) and CALIN partners understand that there may be a future Co-Centre call in the health area to which they are ideally placed to respond, and would welcome the opportunity to discuss CALIN and relevant Co-Centre opportunities with UKRI.

However, with the CALIN programme due to end in August this year, there is a clear need for bridging funding ideally from both Welsh and Irish governments ahead of the development of future centres and through which CALIN would host a virtual office to maintain continuity as we move forward to next phase.

Priority areas for cooperation between Ireland and Wales

The Ireland Wales workshop recently held by CALIN allowed stakeholders to suggest key areas of important economic and scientific growth within the Life Science sector that should be prioritised for future cooperation between Ireland and Wales sector. The key areas identified were: Advanced therapeutics; diagnostics (including precision medicine and genomics); Regenerative medicine; Population-level research; Systems approaches (digital health, big data & AI); Preventative medicine (including healthy ageing) and One Health.

Agenda Item 8

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

Document is Restricted