

Urdd Gobaith Cymru's response to the Senedd Cymru's Inquiry into Wales-Ireland relations²¹

February 2023

Urdd Gobaith Cymru established in 1922 is Wales's largest youth organisation. Its aim is to provide opportunities and experiences, through the medium of the Welsh language, for all young people in Wales to develop into confident citizens. We have nurtured generations of young people to be proud of their country, open to the world and embodiments of our language and culture, as well as having the global values that are respected in Wales. The Urdd is essential to the future of the Welsh language and to Wales. We are world leaders for youth provision in national minority languages.

This response is based on a co-production project between the Urdd and TG Lurgan in Ireland. We also receive a financial contribution from Welsh Government towards the cost of this project.

Specific reference to our project is included in the Ireland-Wales Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan 2021 to 2025 as a method for international engagement.

Support the development of partnerships between our youth organisations that, respectively, promote the use of Welsh and Irish languages, and specifically facilitate and promote the three-year partnership programme between Coláiste Lurgan and Urdd Gobaith Cymru to share learning and best practice in digital technology

Outline of the partnership between the Urdd and TG Lurgan in Ireland

Coláiste Lurgan is an Irish summer school for young people. TG Lurgan is part of Coláiste Lurgan and specialises in releasing interpretations of popular songs with new lyrics in the Irish language.

The partnership between the Urdd and TG Lurgan was launched in March 2020 with the intention of promoting the Welsh and Irish language among young people by creating joint productions and sharing the cultures of Wales and Ireland. Through the partnership, young people in Wales and Ireland co-produce music videos of well-known popular songs in Irish and Welsh, which are released globally to share the cultures of Wales and Ireland. TG Lurgan's YouTube channel is the most popular minority language YouTube channel in the world.

The partnership started during the covid period when virtual co-productions were created.

2020 - "[Golau'n Dallu – Dallta ag na Soilse](#)" first ever Welsh/Irish co-production, of the popular song "Blinding Lights". watched by 86,000 across all platforms during the first 7 days of its release.

2021 - "[Gwenwyn – Nimhneach](#)", a version of the Alfa band's Welsh song which is the first Welsh song to be played a million times on Spotify.

2022 – [Uisce Faoin Droichead / Dŵr Dan Bont](#) by Adele. 16 young people travelled to the TG Lurgan summer camp in Connemara, during the 4-day visit, together with TG Lurgan young people the following was achieved:-

- Rehearsed the song 'Dŵr dan bont' by Adele
- Recorded and filmed the video for the Lurgan's YouTube channel
- Participated in instrumental and vocal workshops
- Enjoyed in each other's company celebrating Welsh and Irish cultures and the importance of using the languages as young people
- Demonstrated Welsh Folk dancing and Clog dancing workshops and learnt Irish dancing.

- spent time socialising and sharing the two cultures and inspiring each other to make use of Welsh and Irish through the arts.

Quotes

“After living most of my teenage years during the pandemic, this was an amazing experience that means so much more than one can explain.”

“This trip has taught me more about the Irish language and has increased my appreciation for the Welsh language.”

Quote from a young member of TG Lurgan :

“I came to Lurgan not knowing how I would get on. I was anxious about meeting new people but excited at the same time, but meeting all of you from Wales was probably the highlight of my trip. Getting to meet and share an experience with other teenagers that have the same passion for their native language as I do was surreal and honestly really comforting. We are all trying to keep in contact and plan on meeting up at some point. We shared plenty of laughs, bonded over our collective love for musicals (especially Mamma Mia), and had some really amazing jam sessions in the music room. Getting to learn Welsh for the collaboration on Water Under The Bridge was really cool and I for one am really excited to see how it comes out. All in all, my general experience in Lurgan this year was amazing, but meeting all of you was the best part!”

Response by Urdd to the main themes of the inquiry

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

From the Urdd's experience of working together on a young people's project, it has

- develop national and international pride and raised the status of minority languages among young people
- brought together people who speak a minority language
- developed good practice in creating and sharing digital content
- enabled us as an organisation to compare and benchmark our provision
- shown to young people the norm of bilingualism within a social context outside of the education system.

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

We are delighted to be included within the Culture, Language and Heritage element of the action plan. For us as an organisation and for the young people it has been:-

- a positive experience for young people in Wales and Ireland
- a contemporary, dynamic, and exciting way of involving young people in Wales and Ireland and sharing our cultures to the wider world
- of social and personal value for the youth of Wales
- an opportunity for Urdd staff to share good practice and learn with an emphasis on minority languages
- catalyst and opened doors to develop new partnerships in Ireland
- an opportunity to show the Welsh language to a new audience outside of Wales. E.g., coverage in 13 different countries and coverage in the popular press e.g. The Independent, The Sun and Joe.ie

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

The collaboration between the Urdd and TG Lurgan would not have been possible without Welsh Government funding and the links at civil service level between Wales and Ireland.

We have succeeded:-

- to create an inclusive opportunity to develop a project that any young person from any background can participate.
- jointly, to have the opportunity to raise the cultural and linguistic status of Wales and Ireland
- to create a model of joint working between the Urdd and Welsh Government's International department which celebrates the culture and vitality of young people

Priority areas for cooperation between Ireland and Wales

From our experience so far, we would like to see an emphasis on the following priorities:-

- Further develop, with the encouragement of the International Department in Ireland, partnerships between Irish youth organisations and the Urdd.
- Sharing the good practice of the Urdd's provision, e.g., for the first time in Europe introducing the 'Chwarae yn Gymraeg' (Play in Welsh) packages which aims to raise the confidence of new speakers in a minority language
- Wider opportunities to work together to develop and share good practice of youth provision work in a minority language.