



Ein cyf/Our ref: PO/FM/0044/26

Delyth Jewell MS
Chair
Culture, Communications, Welsh Language,
Sport, and International Relations Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1SN

27 January 2026

Dear Delyth,

Thank you for your letter dated 17 December 2025 about the Wales-Ireland relationship. Please see the answers to your questions below.

An update on the recommendations has been provided at **Annex A**.

I am aware that the Committee will be visiting Ireland in the coming period and I am pleased that my officials have been engaging with you to support your visit. I hope that this will provide an important opportunity to find out more about our extensive work programme and focus on delivery.

General

Q1. Could you outline the next steps for delivery, including relevant dates such as the 2026 Ireland-Wales Forum?

A1. Delivery remains the key focus for the Shared Statement. Discussions are underway with the Irish Government about a potential date for the next Ireland-Wales Ministerial forum and a date will be confirmed after the Senedd elections.

Irish Government Ministers attended the recent British Irish Council, which I hosted in Wales, and this was an opportunity to discuss the renewed Shared Statement.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Officials are planning events with stakeholders and partners to mark St David's Day in Dublin and Galway. This includes business and diaspora receptions and cultural events. Agile Cymru will launch a new round of seed funding before the end of March and the Welsh Government will also continue to take a lead role in the PEACEPLUS-funded *Developing Irish Sea Cooperation* project, including four nation stakeholder events in Scotland and Ireland in the first half of 2026.

We are in the final stages of agreeing dates for inward visits around the semiconductor, food and drink, education and energy sectors. This is supported by wider work including facilitating a visit for Welsh food and drink producers to visit Ireland and meet buyers in March. We are also working with the Tyndall research institute and Photonics cluster in Galway on a visit by the CS Connected partners, academics in the semi compound conductor sector. Finally, we are progressing a visit by renewable energy companies to Ireland to understand more about the supply chain opportunities and pipeline of projects being delivered in Ireland and Wales.

Stakeholder Engagement

Q2. How did the governments involve stakeholders in the renewal process, including those named in the Shared Statement 2030?

A2. This is a joint agreement, so our approach to stakeholder consultation must be agreed with the Irish Government. This is a government-to-government agreement, with the Irish Government's preference being not to publicise the draft with external partners as it wanted to maximise the time dedicated to delivery. This decision was in line with the Irish Government's previous approach, and, therefore, external consultation on the exact wording was limited.

The Welsh Government undertook internal engagement and involvement with relevant policy leads across all themes, including areas such as culture, energy, innovation and sport, as well as holding discussions with external stakeholders, including the Urdd and Wales Arts International. Officials reached out to a wider group of stakeholders and potential partners to deliver the 2030 statement.

Q3. What opportunities will be made available for stakeholders who are not named to be involved in delivery, including in the planning meetings expected in early 2026?

A3. The Shared Statement has been designed to be a living flexible document that provides a platform that responds to opportunities as they arise. For the 2030 Statement, we have updated our approach towards collaboration to improve flexibility and our ability to adapt for change; therefore, we have moved away from naming stakeholders. The aim of this change is to enable different collaborations with a wider variety of organisations, as we have done previously as part of our Team Cymru approach, rather than restricting collaboration to a defined list of names. Agile Cymru will continue to support Welsh organisations from all sectors in their collaboration with Ireland.

Interaction with UK and EU arrangements

Q4. To what extent will Wales-Ireland cooperation be enhanced by closer UK-Ireland and UK-EU relations announced earlier this year?

A4. The announcement of the Common Understanding Agreement in May 2025 has laid the foundations for 're-setting' the relationship between the UK and the EU. The Welsh Government has consistently called for a closer association with the EU and welcomed the announcement of the Common Understanding. Discussions between the UK and EU are now underway on what that new relationship will ultimately look like, and we are engaging productively with the UK Government to ensure Welsh interests are represented. With the recent announcement that the UK is rejoining ERASMUS+, expectations of enhanced cooperation are hopeful. With regards to Ireland specifically, the discussions in May 2025 have certainly helped to increase the appetite for cooperation on the Irish side and helped build links with EU stakeholders. Whilst it is still early days, there are signs of promising progress in enhancing the connections between the Irish Horizon Europe contact point network and UK/Welsh Horizon Europe contact point networks, as committed to in the Statement. A stronger relationship will benefit key sectors such as offshore energy in the Celtic and Irish Sea as projects move through from consenting to generation

The closer Ireland UK relationship will benefit Wales in areas such as renewable energy. The new MoU between UK and Ireland on energy has allowed Wales to be part of these discussions and contribute in areas for collaboration around offshore energy. Furthermore, Wales will have the opportunity to contribute to the 2026 Ireland UK Summit to be held in the first quarter of this year.

Q5. The Welsh Government said in response to our Culture Shock report that the new Shared Statement would form the basis for discussions on supporting those navigating Brexit effects in their Wales-Ireland cooperation. Could you provide an update on how this is taking place?

A5. We are holding routine meetings with impacted stakeholders. Officials in Dublin met with Wales Arts International in January 2025 to discuss the new Shared Statement and will be meeting them again at the end of the month.

The Holyhead Taskforce is one example of closer cooperation between Wales and Ireland in a post-Brexit environment. The Taskforce has brought together ports, government officials on both sides of the Irish Sea, and wider stakeholders to support the movement of goods. This cooperation was highlighted during the prolonged closure of Holyhead port in the winter of 2024-25 and, most recently, in January 2026 when the port was again briefly closed due to damage.

Funding and Budget

Q6. What funding will be made available by the Welsh Government to organisations delivering Wales-Ireland activity?

A6. The Welsh Government's Ireland office has an overall activity budget of £50,000 allocated for 2025-26. This funds all delivery undertaken by the office, including activity related to delivering the Shared Statement and support for trade and investment.

In addition, the Welsh Government has already committed over half a million pounds to support cooperation in the Irish Sea region through Agile Cymru, with £200,000 of that available in this financial year. Agile Cymru will launch a new round of seed funding before the end of March.

The Welsh Government's Innovation team has also contributed to the Universities Wales / Research Ireland Alliance funding which totals £0.5m. Funding has been allocated to support eight projects which have Ireland and Wales partners.

Q7. Could you confirm the Welsh Government budget allocations for Shared Statement delivery to date?

A7. The budget allocated to delivering the Shared Statement is £68,500 in total. Additional funded activities from the Dublin Office activity budget, the trade and investment budget, and major events budget also contribute to delivery of the Shared Statement.

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

Eluned Morgan

Annex A – Update on Recommendations

Recommendation 1.

The Welsh Government should outline the potential opportunities provided by renewed Horizon participation in response to the Committee's report.

Update:

We continue to urge Welsh stakeholders to make the most of access to the Horizon Europe programme. Relevant activity includes events, newsletters and publication of a “calls calendar” on the Welsh Government website. Agile Cymru provides seed funding to Welsh organisations who want to build Irish and European networks or apply to Horizon Europe. There are strong links between our work on the Shared Statement, the Irish Sea Framework, DISC and Horizon Europe, with capacity being built in key themes to bid for competitive funding.

Recommendation 2.

The Welsh Government should resume publishing annual reports on the achievements of Horizon participation in Wales.

Update:

The ‘Wales in Horizon Europe: 2021 to 2023’ was published on 19 September 2024 and contains an analysis of the first three years of Horizon Europe as well as case studies and advice. Our Horizon Europe Unit, part of Agile Cymru, issues a regular newsletter highlighting latest developments and success stories.

Recommendation 3.

The Welsh Government should increase the visibility of Wales-Ireland relations on its website by bringing together its strategies as they relate to Ireland in one place, to include the Irish Sea Framework, the International Strategy, the Shared Statement, and information about the role of the Dublin office, by the end of February 2024. This should be accompanied by clear explanations of how each strand relates to the others, and how this is coordinated.

Update:

Information concerning the Wales-Ireland relationship is available on the International Relations and Development page on the Welsh Government website with links to the Shared Statement, Forum Meetings, the Irish Sea Framework and the Agile Cymru funding call.

We will continue to explore strengthening this.

Recommendation 5.

The Welsh Government should involve relevant civil society expertise (including the Future Generations and Welsh Language Commissioners) in its future Wales-Ireland relations work and explain how this will be done in its response to the Committee's report.

Update:

Engagement and involvement are at the heart of our Team Cymru approach to diplomatic engagement. The Ireland office has, and continues, to work closely with the Future Generations commissioner and his team and has supported two visits to Ireland in the past 12 months. Most recently, the Future Generations Commissioner's visit in September 2025 included participation in a panel session at the Business in the Community Ireland Sustainability and Social Inclusion Summit in Dublin.

Given that Culture, Language and Heritage is one the key areas of focus, the team have recently worked with the Urdd, Literature Wales and Menter Caerdydd in supporting activity to deliver the Shared Statement.

The office will continue to regularly engage with the Commissioner and other Team Cymru partners in order to support their work from a Wales-Ireland perspective.

Recommendation 6.

The Welsh Government should provide more information about its activities to raise awareness of its Wales-Ireland strategies amongst Welsh stakeholders in its response to the Committee's report.

Update:

The Irish Sea email network and relevant social media accounts continue to provide information on events, funding opportunities, case studies and thematic topics to stakeholders from all sectors. Agile Cymru has supported several stakeholder-led thematic workshops in locations in Wales and across the Irish Sea region. The Welsh Government played a lead role in the Developing Irish Sea Cooperation Symposiums in Belfast in May and Cardiff in November.

Recommendation 11.

Where the Welsh Government adopts a similar approach for other priority international relationships, it should build in the findings of this report from the outset.

Update:

The Shared Statement is unique. It is our only agreement with a whole country and it is a government-to-government agreement that commits to ministerial engagement in Wales and Ireland.

We use the learning from this to inform future agreements and, in January 2026, the Welsh Government signed new agreements with the governments of the Basque Country and Catalonia. As with the Ireland Shared Statement, these are focussed on targeted areas where collaboration can support delivery to improve outcomes at home and overseas.

However, it is important to remember that, although we have a number of agreements in place, a templated approach is not feasible or realistic. Different governments have different approaches and a more flexible style that remains focussed on delivery but respectful of protocols and approaches is important.

Recommendation 12.

The Welsh Government should review the evidence we have gathered and use it to inform future decisions on priorities for Wales-Ireland cooperation post-2025. These lessons should be taken forward by the Welsh Government and reapplied to its other priority international relationships in future.

Update:

The Committee Report contained important findings which I accepted. Those findings including feedback from stakeholders urged focus, engagement and ensuring that funding was available.

The Wales Ireland Shared Statement 2025-30 is an action-oriented, forward-looking framework for bilateral cooperation between the governments of Ireland and Wales. It will advance work under six agreed areas. Financial support for cooperation is available.

That focus on delivery, collaboration and allocating appropriate resources extends to our other partnerships too. The recent agreements with the Basque Country and Catalonia are focused on delivering outcomes with work on areas such as technology, renewable energy, trade, investment, language and culture. We will work with our Team Cymru partners to achieve meaningful outcomes.

Recommendation 14.

As international relations policy appears indivisible from trade in respect of Wales-Ireland relations, the Welsh Government should clarify how they are coordinated across the work of government.

Update:

As previously set out, the Welsh Government's international relations, inward investment, export support and trade policy work is led by a single directorate and set by the International Strategy. Other teams across Welsh Government, for example Education, will undertake international activity and this will be aligned with the three goals in the Strategy. Our Ireland office will coordinate all of the activity that is being undertaken in its market.

The Ireland office directly worked with the Investment team to secure attendance to the 2025 Wales Investment Summit. These executives heard directly on investment opportunities in Wales across sectors including energy, Semiconductors and Tech. The Ireland office works closely with the trade colleagues sharing export opportunities in Ireland and encouraging Welsh companies to realise the opportunities to secure deals in Ireland. The Dublin team have and continue to attend the Wales Explore Export events to meet directly with Welsh businesses.

The Team have delivered trade and investment missions in the Tech and Cyber Security sectors, working with relevant chamber, Cardiff Capital region and Welsh universities. For example, the team supported a visit to Dublin in May 2025 by Tramshed Tech and Cardiff Council Inward Invest lead to build their connection with Ireland.

Recommendation 16.

The Welsh and Irish governments should commit funding to Wales-Ireland relations proportionate to their ambition beyond 2025 without delay, to provide certainty to stakeholders and to ensure that opportunity costs are minimised.

Update:

The Welsh Government has committed over £0.5m to support cooperation in the Irish Sea region through Agile Cymru, £0.2m of that in this financial year. Agile Cymru will launch a new round of seed funding before the end of March.

Irish Government funding is a matter for the Irish Government. However, it is a matter of public record that the Irish Government provided funding for the Research Alliance fund and the recent scheme to support Irish early career researchers to build collaborative links with Wales.

Recommendation 17.

The Welsh Government should provide more information on Agile Cymru, including its focus on developing new links rather than preserving existing ones and the involvement of stakeholders.

Update:

Information on Agile Cymru continues to be available on our website, through the Irish Sea email network and relevant social media accounts. This includes case studies demonstrating how stakeholders are maintaining existing links and developing new links through our support.