

Welsh Parliament

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

Wales-Ireland relations: A portrait of brilliant possibility

March 2026



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and International Relations Committee**

Wales-Ireland relations: A portrait of brilliant possibility

March 2026



About the Committee

The Committee was established on 23 June 2021. Its remit can be found at:
www.senedd.wales/SeneddCulture

Current Committee membership:



**Committee Chair:
Delyth Jewell MS**
Plaid Cymru



Mick Antoniw MS
Welsh Labour



Alun Davies MS
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Chair's foreword

As the Sixth Senedd draws to a close, so too does the work of our Committee. In recent months, we have revisited a strand of our work to which we have returned time and again: that of the connections linking Wales with our Celtic neighbour-across-the-sea, Ireland. In looking afresh at our 2023 report on Wales-Ireland relations (*Exploring an old relationship in a new age*), and determining what work has yet to be completed in responding to our recommendations, we now set out five principal findings that we believe should shape the Welsh Government's actions.

Once again, we have been moved by the depth of the connections that bind our lands and peoples: that “rich historical tapestry” which has woven us together over thousands of years. Our nations are, as Philip King, founder of Other Voices observed, “edgy” places and peoples, living as we do on the edge of a continent. But our geography must never become an obstacle: we were urged by witnesses and those we met, rather, to look at the sea between us as not a barrier, but a highway, and perhaps to learn the lesson of the Mabinogi tale of *Branwen*—that those in positions of leadership must become a bridge, too, between nations.

In taking evidence from stakeholders, we heard tales of manuscripts lost and found; of national collections and history; of Heaney; of Yeats; of Thomas. In many places, the evidence we heard was poetry in and of itself. But what shone through most of all was the fantastic opportunities that lie in the future for our cooperation: that “portrait of brilliant possibility” of which Philip King spoke. Tarnished and bruised as our nations have been by the burdens of Brexit, this picture need not resemble the “cracked looking-glass” of Joyce's *Ulysses*. Rather, the portrait of artists and businesses, of academics and linguists working together and overcoming shared barriers is what gives us hope for the future of our nations.

Our explorations in this area may have ceased, but we leave an appeal to a future Senedd committee to continue our work, to ensure that the Wales-Ireland relationship retains its special status, and that our findings find new voice.

A fo ben, bid bont.

Delyth Jewell MS
Committee Chair

Recommendations for future Wales-Ireland relations

Recommendation 1. A future Welsh Government should continue to make Wales-Ireland relations a priority in its international relations, by recommitting to the Shared Statement 2030 and by incorporating our findings.....Page 10

Recommendation 2. A future Welsh Government should prioritise and raise the profile of the new relationship with the EU, as it relates to culture and creative work, including pressing the UK Government to reach joint solutions with the EU on touring artists and participation in EU programmes. Page 12

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Recommendation 5. A future Senedd committee should continue our work on Wales-Ireland relations to ensure the relationship retains its special status and that our findings are implemented. Page 21

1. Background

- 1.** We have followed Wales-Ireland relations closely during the Sixth Senedd as part of our wider international relations work. Cooperation between Wales and Ireland encompasses cultural, linguistic and economic ties rooted in an historic relationship and reflected in formal government cooperation.
- 2.** The Welsh Government's most developed international relationship was enshrined in an international agreement with the Irish Government in 2021, the Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan 2021-2025.¹
- 3.** Our 2022-23 inquiry culminated in our report, *Wales-Ireland relations: Exploring an old relationship in a new age*.² It assessed the effectiveness of the Welsh Government's approach, finding many positive examples of cooperation, as well as significant goodwill, passion and enthusiasm. We recommended improving the coordination, visibility and resource for this work, and hoped the report's findings would be reflected in future bilateral agreements and in Wales-Ireland co-operation beyond 2025. We hoped that the report would:

"Mark the start of the process to shine more light on this important chapter in the history of Wales-Ireland relations, and of Wales's own international story."³

- 4.** Two years on, we have re-visited our original inquiry in light of the renewal in 2025 of the international agreement, the Shared Statement 2030.⁴
- 5.** This follow-up work aimed to understand developments in Wales-Ireland relations since our report was published and how our findings have been reflected. As the end of the Sixth Senedd approaches, we were also eager to look ahead to future collaboration between the two nations.

¹ Welsh Government press release, [Ireland and Wales launch Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan 2021 to 2025](#), March 2021

² Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee, [Wales-Ireland relations Exploring an old relationship in a new age](#), October 2023

³ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee, [Wales-Ireland relations Exploring an old relationship in a new age](#), October 2023, page 10

⁴ Welsh Government press release, [Ireland-Wales Shared Statement 2030](#), July 2025

6. The First Minister declined to attend our oral evidence sessions and instead provided a written response to our questions.⁵ The Irish Government did attend and was represented by the Consul General of Ireland in Cardiff, Denise McQuade.

⁵ Welsh Government, [Letter from the First Minister - 27 January 2026](#)

2. Our findings

Finding 1: The importance of the Wales-Ireland relationship

7. The Wales-Ireland relationship remains the Welsh Government’s most developed strategic international relationship with another country. The First Minister wrote in December 2025 that “Ireland is one of our highest priorities when it comes to international partnerships”⁶. The Consul General of Ireland in Cardiff, Denise McQuade, described an ever-closer relationship between the two countries with “strengthened and deepened” political and official engagement.⁷ She said:

“[...] the real value of having the shared statement was that it expressed the very clear shared wish of both Governments for the closest and deepest possible relationship between Wales and Ireland.”⁸

8. This was reflected in the Shared Statement 2030, described by the Tánaiste and the First Minister as “a forward-looking and action-oriented framework that provides direction for our cooperation to the end of the decade”⁹.

9. Witnesses were unanimous that links between Wales and Ireland represent a meaningful, valued and dynamic relationship and an important part of their work. We heard impressive examples of collaborations across our arts, broadcasters, national libraries, museums, archives and more.

10. Amgueddfa Cymru said “Ireland has historically been, and continues to be, one of our most important strategic international partnerships”.¹⁰ The Shared Statement was described by Philip King as “the guiding framework document of

⁶ Welsh Government, [Letter from the First Minister - 8 December 2025](#)

⁷ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 10 December 2025](#), paragraph 5

⁸ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 10 December 2025](#), paragraph 24

⁹ Welsh Government, [Ireland-Wales Shared Statement 2030](#), July 2025, paragraph 3

¹⁰ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 4 December 2025](#), paragraph 174

how best we interact and engage with one another on the Welsh and the Irish side”¹¹.

11. Language cooperation and collaboration was again identified as an important element of Wales-Ireland relations by both countries’ language commissioners. An Comisínéir Teanga, the Irish Language Commissioner, described how he and the Welsh Language Commissioner “are united in our commitment to safeguarding and promoting language rights”¹². We heard also of inspirational work with young people through the partnership between Cymru’s Urdd Gobaith Cymru and Éireann’s Coláiste Lurgan that has engaged more than a thousand young people.¹³

12. Cooperation now sits alongside new UK-Ireland arrangements, which were proactively raised by witnesses as positive, useful and beneficial. This important new dynamic was prevalent in all of the themes raised in this report. The First Minister wrote that:

“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.”¹⁴

Recommendation 1. A future Welsh Government should continue to make Wales-Ireland relations a priority in its international relations, by recommitting to the Shared Statement 2030 and by incorporating our findings.

Finding 2: Brexit issues are becoming longer standing challenges

13. In 2023, we reported that the UK’s exit from the EU had significantly altered collaboration, including due to the loss of EU funding.¹⁵ That Brexit had forced a renewed focus on relationships to retain their unique bonds was again evident

¹¹ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 4 December 2025, paragraph 34

¹² Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 10 December 2025, paragraph 92

¹³ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 4 December 2025, paragraph 255

¹⁴ Welsh Government, Letter from the First Minister - 27 January 2026, page 3

¹⁵ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee, Wales-Ireland relations Exploring an old relationship in a new age, October 2023, paragraph 21

amongst witnesses. However, we were concerned and disheartened by its continuing adverse effects, particularly in relation to cross-border work, touring and the loss of Creative Europe. Amgueddfa Cymru told us:

*"[...] nothing has moved on [...] challenges that were flagged previously still remain. We haven't uncovered anything new, but it would be great to be able to address some of what are now becoming longer standing challenges."*¹⁶

14. Bectu told us that its members "continue to be choked and stymied by the United Kingdom's exit from the EU, which has created a range of logistical, financial and bureaucratic challenges to working across our nations"¹⁷.

15. The Musicians' Union reported a drop-off in member enquiries about working in the EU. This, it said, could mean that "either that they've kind of figured it out to a degree and kind of worked out how to do it, [...] or they're paying people to figure that out for them, or people just aren't doing it at all"¹⁸.

16. Wales Arts International spoke of its disappointment that UK participation in Creative Europe "seems to have been deprioritised, from a UK perspective"¹⁹. It has joined over 200 organisations to launch a new Forum on EU-UK Cultural and Media Relations to work together on these matters.²⁰ It also described a new North European Mobility Opportunity (NEMO) pilot programme for artistic exchange as:

*"[...] extremely important. It's the arts councils from the Baltic and Scandinavia, Britain and Ireland. It has led to the creation of the northern European mobility opportunity fund, which is delivered by the Nordic Culture Fund."*²¹

¹⁶ Culture Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 4 December 2025, paragraph 196

¹⁷ Culture Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 4 December 2025, paragraph 44

¹⁸ Culture Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 4 December 2025, paragraph 46

¹⁹ Culture Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 4 December 2025, paragraph 51

²⁰ Culture Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 4 December 2025, paragraph 51

²¹ Culture Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 4 December 2025, paragraph 26

17. These matters form part of our ongoing work on culture and the new relationship with the EU. In our 2024 *Culture Shock* report, we called on the Welsh Government to maintain a dialogue with the Irish Government on the issue of Brexit/touring artists, and to scope additional support that could be provided while awaiting a UK-EU-led solution.²² This was accepted and the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning said that the renewed Shared Statement “will form the basis of discussions”²³. However, the issue is not listed in the renewed agreement.

18. In her letter to us, the First Minister advised that:

“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.”²⁴

Recommendation 2. A future Welsh Government should prioritise and raise the profile of the new relationship with the EU, as it relates to culture and creative work, including pressing the UK Government to reach joint solutions with the EU on touring artists and participation in EU programmes.

Finding 3: Involving stakeholders brings dividends

19. Our 2023 report asked important questions of the Welsh Government on the steps it had taken to raise awareness of its Wales-Ireland strategies amongst stakeholders. We also made a number of recommendations designed to improve information, visibility and transparency to assist the Senedd, stakeholders, and the public to better understand the Welsh Government’s Wales-Ireland activity.²⁵ This in turn would increase the likelihood of preserving links and maximising opportunities arising from cross-border cooperation.

²² Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee, [Culture Shock: Culture and the new relationship with the European Union](#), November 2024, recommendation 14

²³ Welsh Government, [Response to Committee report: Culture shock: Culture and the new relationship with the European Union](#), December 2024, recommendation 14

²⁴ Welsh Government, [Letter from the First Minister – 27 January 2026](#), page 3

²⁵ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee, [Wales-Ireland relations Exploring an old relationship in a new age](#), October 2023 recommendations 4,5,6 and 7

20. In setting out the governments' shared ambition, the Shared Statement 2030 names specific areas of cooperation and stakeholders as part of its delivery.²⁶ This uses the same approach as the original Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan 2021-2025 but the stakeholders listed differ.²⁷ For example, literary organisations, Poetry Ireland, the Irish Writers Centre, Literature Wales and Academi are no longer named. As such, there was a perception amongst some witnesses that this could indicate a reprioritisation.

21. We wanted to explore how the governments took decisions in this regard and involved stakeholders in the renewal process, including those named in the Shared Statement 2030. The First Minister explained that:

"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."²⁸

22. There were examples of positive relations with the Welsh Government, and many organisations described relationships with specific individuals and government departments. The Welsh Government's Dublin office is clearly a valued point of connection.²⁹

23. Regrettably, we heard that stakeholder involvement in the renewal process had been poor and sometimes non-existent, even amongst those named in the Shared Statement 2030.³⁰ While one witnesses indicated that they did not expect to have been involved, the majority of stakeholders who were not involved were surprised that they had not been, and expressed a desire to be involved in future delivery.³¹ The First Minister wrote that:

²⁶ Welsh Government, [Ireland-Wales Shared Statement 2030](#), July 2025, Introduction

²⁷ Welsh Government, [Ireland and Wales launch Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan 2021 to 2025](#), March 2021

²⁸ Welsh Government, [Letter from the First Minister - 27 January 2026](#), page 2

²⁹ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 4 December 2025](#), paragraph 431

³⁰ For example [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 4 December 2025](#), paragraphs 95, 99 and 190

³¹ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 10 December 2025](#), paragraph 139

“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.”³²

24. Amgueddfa Cymru, which is named, told us it was not aware of the renewed Shared Statement until it was approached by the Welsh Government to host its launch. Neither were representatives from the National Library of Wales (named), Bectu or the Musicians’ Union (both unnamed).³³ Similarly Wales Arts International and the Arts Council of Wales (both named) appeared to have had very limited input.³⁴

25. Named stakeholders felt they could be involved further. Amgueddfa Cymru told us that:

“We, as cultural bodies, and specifically us as the amgueddfa, can do so much for Wales around soft power. And if we could be engaging with wider teams in Welsh Government, with trade and investment, the economy et cetera, there are things that we could do to open up doors that have much wider benefits for Wales, beyond purely culture.”³⁵

³² Welsh Government, [Letter from the First Minister – 27 January 2026](#), page 2

³³ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 4 December 2025](#), paragraphs 95, 99 and 371

³⁴ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 4 December 2025](#), paragraphs 66-68

³⁵ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 4 December 2025](#), paragraph 187

26. Others were not named at all. This included the language commissioners, despite our 2023 recommendation for their future inclusion.³⁶ We heard that whilst it is welcome that the Shared Statement 2030 references the importance of collaboration on language, this contrasts starkly with other specific bodies that are named. We agree with the Welsh Language Commissioner’s office that “there are specific organisations whose work could have been referred to, and that could have actually encouraged greater collaboration”³⁷.

27. Urdd Gobaith Cymru were named in the original statement but not in the Shared Statement 2030. In evidence, it referenced its strong relationship with the Welsh Government’s international teams and welcomed the Shared Statement 2030, but explained that it “had no direct input into the formation of the statement”³⁸. Reflecting on this, it told us:

“I was surprised that we weren’t named, because it is quite a unique project between young people in the statement. Now, in the previous statement the Urdd was named, and we were pleased to ensure that we were part of that.”³⁹

28. Whilst the opportunity to involve and name some key stakeholders in the Shared Statement 2030 has been missed, the opportunity to involve them in delivery remains. A number of stakeholders expressed the hope that they would be involved in future and it is imperative that this opportunity is not missed.⁴⁰ We urge that meaningful opportunities are made available for stakeholders to be involved in delivery, including in planning meetings.

29. The importance of governments engaging with stakeholders was further illustrated by the positivity with which the recent annual meeting of UK and Irish cultural institutions in Dublin, organised by the UK Government, was reported. We heard that this was driving opportunities for collaboration, joint programming and initiatives and skills transfer. Amgueddfa Cymru will be developing funding bids

³⁶ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee, [Wales-Ireland relations Exploring an old relationship in a new age](#), October 2023, recommendation 5

³⁷ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 10 December 2025](#), paragraph 133

³⁸ Urdd Gobaith Cymru, [Written evidence](#), November 2025, page 1

³⁹ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 4 December 2025](#), paragraph 290

⁴⁰ For example [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 10 December 2025](#), paragraph 139

for specific projects through the National Museum of Ireland.⁴¹ Wales Arts International and the Arts Council of Wales were also positive about the event, whilst urging more focus on the arts sector.⁴² We were surprised to hear that this important event, well-attended by Welsh organisations, was not attended by Welsh Government representatives.⁴³

Recommendation 3. A future Welsh Government should involve stakeholders in Wales-Ireland relations, including by developing meaningful opportunities for their contribution to the delivery of the Shared Statement 2030.

Finding 4: Resources must follow rhetoric

30. Our 2023 Wales-Ireland report recommended that 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.⁴⁴

31. Whilst this recommendation was accepted in principle by the Welsh Government, we heard new evidence that funding remains a key barrier.⁴⁵ Described in 2023 by the Consul General as “always a challenge” where “we have to be as creative as we can”,⁴⁶ funding continues to be piecemeal and sectoral. Updating us, the Consul General said that “there wasn’t an easy way of setting up one [joint] funding mechanism”⁴⁷.

32. However, the Welsh Government’s Agile Cymru remains a key pillar. The First Minister provided an update on Welsh Government funding for Wales-Ireland relations:

⁴¹ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 4 December 2025](#), paragraph 176

⁴² [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 4 December 2025](#), paragraph 76

⁴³ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 4 December 2025](#), paragraph 78

⁴⁴ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee, *Wales-Ireland relations Exploring an old relationship in a new age*, October 2023](#), recommendation 16

⁴⁵ [Welsh Government, *Response to Committee report: Wales-Ireland relations Exploring an old relationship in a new age*, October 2023](#), recommendation 16

⁴⁶ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 30 March 2023](#), paragraph 183

⁴⁷ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 10 December 2025](#), paragraph 40

“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. [...]”

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. [...]

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.”⁴⁸

33. The British Council describes Welsh Government support as a “significant level of investment” in a new report, to which it drew our attention.⁴⁹

34. Through our follow up work, we learned that the Irish Government has agreed a formal cooperation mechanism to match Agile Cymru’s funds through existing funding in relevant governmental departments.⁵⁰ We also heard of Welsh Government support for specific projects, for example for producing Welsh and

⁴⁸ Welsh Government, [Letter from the First Minister – 27 January 2026](#), pages 3 and 4

⁴⁹ British Council, [Cultural Mobility and Connection: Ireland and the four nations of the UK](#), November 2025, page 29

⁵⁰ British Council, [Cultural Mobility and Connection: Ireland and the four nations of the UK](#), November 2025, page 29

Irish language music videos between Coláiste Lurgan and the Urdd, who told us: “it’s been possible through Government support that’s allowed us to do that”⁵¹.

35. On the loss of EU funding, the National Library explained that:

“[...] losing that opportunity in terms of European funding has been a blow. That is clear. Projects had happened in the library thanks to that funding from Europe, and that door isn’t open to us anymore.”⁵²

36. The end of the EU’s INTERREG programme has been mentioned repeatedly in the course of our Wales-Ireland work, with the Consul General summarising in 2023 that: “It’s a €100 million programme, and neither Ireland or Wales has €100 million on our own for that purpose”⁵³.

37. As part of its UK-Ireland cooperation, the Irish Government has contributed €6 million of funding that will enable key Welsh bodies such as Amgueddfa Cymru and the National Library to submit joint bids with their Irish counterparts. We heard that the UK Government is not providing funding in this way.⁵⁴ Amgueddfa Cymru told us:

“[...] it feels a bit awkward when you’re in the room and all of the money is coming from one side.”⁵⁵

38. We also received new evidence of the loss of EU networks, which was a key theme in our original 2023 inquiry and our Culture Shock report. Again, we heard that cooperation is often based on “personal networks and goodwill”⁵⁶. A key theme in our 2023 report was that work was needed to ensure that future ties rely on more than chance alone.⁵⁷

⁵¹ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 4 December 2025](#), paragraph 256

⁵² [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 4 December 2025](#), paragraph 366

⁵³ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 30 March 2023](#), paragraph 165

⁵⁴ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 4 December 2025](#), paragraphs 198-200

⁵⁵ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 4 December 2025](#), paragraph 200

⁵⁶ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 4 December 2025](#), paragraph 209

⁵⁷ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Wales-Ireland relations Exploring an old relationship in a new age - October 2023](#), page 5

39. Witnesses reemphasised the economic contribution of culture and the need to see it through an economic lens. We heard again of the impressive economic impact and return on investment in the arts, with a £2.51 return for every £1 spent.⁵⁸

40. It was during our original 2023 inquiry that Philip King coined the phrase, “where culture leads, commerce follows” and we reiterate that sentiment again here.⁵⁹

Recommendation 4. A future Welsh Government should ensure that sufficient funding is allocated annually for Wales-Ireland relations, including to guarantee the successful delivery of the Shared Statement 2030.

Finding 5: The future

41. Witnesses were unanimously positive about the future of Wales-Ireland relations. Philip King said “this is still early days, but we sense that there is so much more that we can do together”⁶⁰. The Consul General spoke of “huge potential” in the three areas of energy, education and research innovation and languages.⁶¹

42. We agree with Amgueddfa Cymru when it said:

“Wales-Ireland is probably the biggest international opportunity we’ve got. So, as they say, go big or go home. I would take it to a whole new level.”⁶²

43. It gave the following example:

“Just look at what we did with Wales and France. We just exchanged one item each. We took Renoir’s Blue Lady to the Musée d’Orsay, and we got a Van Gogh back [...] That was one painting. Imagine, if we

⁵⁸ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 4 December 2025, paragraph 93

⁵⁹ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee, Engagement with Stakeholders in Ireland - October 2023, page 5

⁶⁰ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 4 December 2025, paragraph 83

⁶¹ Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 4 December 2025, paragraph 74

⁶² Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings - 4 December 2025, paragraph 229

had a whole programme at that level with Ireland, what it could do and what it could open up.”⁶³

44. Similarly, we were excited by the possibilities that are presented by the work of the National Library in seeking to bring together, for the first time in over a thousand years, the 11th century manuscripts from the Llanbadarn scriptorium, created as the Normans first arrived in Wales.⁶⁴

45. The Arts Council urged everyone not to “lose sight of the bigger picture” and pointed to Ireland’s forthcoming presidency of the Council of the European Union, alongside others.⁶⁵ On the effects of closer UK-EU ties on Wales-Ireland relations, the First Minister said:

“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 [UK-EU reset] 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.”⁶⁶

⁶³ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 4 December 2025](#), paragraph 231

⁶⁴ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 4 December 2025](#), paragraph 394

⁶⁵ [Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee: Record of Proceedings – 4 December 2025](#), paragraph 194

⁶⁶ Welsh Government, [Letter from the First Minister – 27 January 2026](#), page 3

Recommendation 5. A future Senedd committee should continue our work on Wales-Ireland relations to ensure the relationship retains its special status and that our findings are implemented.

Annex 1: List of oral evidence sessions

The following witnesses provided oral evidence to the Committee on the dates noted below. Transcripts of all oral evidence sessions can be viewed on the [Committee's website](#).

Date	Name and organisation
<p>4 December 2025</p>	<p>Dafydd Rhys, Chief Executive, Arts Council of Wales</p> <p>Eluned Hâf, Head, Wales Arts International</p> <p>Andy Warnock, Regional Organiser, Musicians' Union Welsh Branch</p> <p>Carwyn Donovan, Wales Negotiations Officer Bectu</p> <p>Philip King, Co-founder, Other Voices</p> <p>Jane Richardson, Chief Executive, Amgueddfa Cymru</p> <p>Siân Lewis, Chief Executive Urdd Gobaith Cymru</p> <p>Micheál Ó Foighil, Chief Executive Officer, Coláiste Lurgan</p> <p>Rhodri Llwyd Morgan, Chief Executive, National Library of Wales</p> <p>Dr Maredudd ap Huw, Head of Archives and Manuscripts Section, National Library of Wales</p>
<p>10 December 2025</p>	<p>Denise McQuade, Consul General of Ireland in Cardiff, Consulate General of Ireland in Cardiff</p> <p>Séamas Ó Concheanainn, Coimisinéir Teanga, Irish Language Commissioner</p> <p>Lowri Williams, Strategic Director, Office of the Welsh Language Commissioner</p>

Annex 2: List of written evidence

The following people and organisations provided written evidence to the Committee. All additional written information can be viewed on the [Committee's website](#).

Title	Date
Urdd Gobaith Cymru, Written evidence	24 November 2025
Arts Council of Wales and Wales Arts International, Written evidence	24 November 2025
Coimisinéir Teanga, Written evidence	28 November 2025
Welsh Language Commissioner, Written evidence	28 November 2025
Consulate General of Ireland in Cardiff, Written evidence	1 December 2025
Welsh Government, Letter from the First Minister	8 December 2025
British Council, Report: Cultural Mobility and Connection: Ireland and the four nations of the UK	9 December 2025
Welsh Government, Letter from the First Minister	27 January 2026

