

## **Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee - Inquiry into [Wales-Ireland relations](#).**

### **CHERISH Project – EU Funded Interreg Programme**

CHERISH is a six-year Ireland-Wales project (January 2017- June 2023), through a partnership agreement it brought together four organisations: the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (Lead Partner); Aberystwyth University: Department of Geography and Earth Sciences; the Discovery Programme, Ireland; and Geological Survey Ireland.

Funded through Axis 2 of the Interreg Programme to increase capacity and knowledge of climate change adaptation for the Irish Sea and Coastal communities.

CHERISH is a truly cross-disciplinary project aimed at raising awareness and understanding of the past, present, and near-future impacts of climate change, storminess and extreme weather events on the rich cultural heritage of our sea and coast.

It has benefited from €4.9 million of EU funds through the Ireland Wales Co-operation Programme 2014-2020. (Split €2.5 million Wales and €2.4 million Ireland). The project employed(s) 8 full time project staff and has had contributions from a further 15 team members. [www.cherishproject.eu](http://www.cherishproject.eu)

### **The Ireland-Wales Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan (2021-2025) as an approach to international engagement. [Numbers follow Action plan.]**

**2. Continue to highlight and promote the impact and findings of projects dealing with climate adaptation and coastal communities in the Irish Sea, under the Ireland-Wales INTERREG programme;** This is good, but the key question is what funding is going to replace the INTERREG programme for projects around these topics.

**3. Trade and tourism.** More efforts are required to decarbonise ferry travel between Ireland and Wales. Funds such as Agile Cymru encourage travel across the Irish Sea for collaboration, which means either flying or taking the ferry. As flying has an extremely high carbon footprint, the ferry is the greenest option, but the carbon footprint is still too high, especially if you are meeting beyond Dublin. If there is no funding available for collaboration, then we would ask why travel? We need to better align the Well-being of Future Generations Act, Agile Cymru and the declared climate emergency. Our concern is that funds such as Agile Cymru are encouraging travel in a climate emergency when there are more efficient ways of collaborating these days and many of the partnerships are already in place.

### **4. Education and Research**

**Facilitate and support academic collaboration events / workshops in both countries which explore options to maintain the strong links between academia and business.**

Funds are required for organisations that fall outside of academia and business. They seem to be a lower priority and fall between the gaps, despite the importance placed on heritage. Heritage organisations such as the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales ('Royal Commission') undertake research and are far better placed than universities to influence how heritage is protected and promoted.

## **Explore the possibility of establishing new Welsh/Irish research fellowships.**

This suggests that funds are available, but only for universities. Again, research happens beyond the university sector and needs access to this type of funding.

## **5 Culture, Language and Heritage**

**Support current initiatives and projects which promote awareness and knowledge of our shared history and built heritage, and encourage interested organisations to identify new opportunities, including in the context of the “decade of centenaries”, the RMS Leinster, the Famine Memorial in Cardiff, and Frongoch in North Wales.**

Once more, we ask the question: what type of funding is available for ‘interested organisations’ to apply for? Whilst we appreciate that Universities and Business will always dominate this type of discussion, the role of Welsh Government Sponsored bodies needs to be incorporated into the discussion as they can provide services, resources, and skills not available elsewhere.

### **Email prompts**

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

There is an appetite for continuing funding projects that have been successful. The Irish Sea workshops have shown that, yet all we have are small pots through Agile Cymru that support travel and network forming. Most of these networks are already in place so until the funding is sufficient to actually undertake a project it is difficult to proceed further. The Irish Sea workshops are a good starting point, but have been around in different guises since Brexit, and we need to move quicker.

- **Priority areas for cooperation between Ireland and Wales.**

The success of, and the interest in, the CHERISH project has shown the desire to continue the collaborative work between the two nations. The project has set base lines which need to be revisited to provide data on the rate of coastal erosion due to climate change on both sides of the Irish Sea.

The medieval aspects of the histories of both countries are a driver of Tourism. We have a shared heritage, especially around Saints and pilgrimage with their abbeys and churches, the buildings associated with the Norman conquests, such as Castles, and similarities in prehistoric cultures.

The culture and buildings of the twentieth century have been identified as increasingly important in recent years and these should also be included in any forward strategy.

Although Universities have other forms of funding available to them, Welsh Government sponsored bodies are not eligible to apply for this in their own right, so as yet there is no direct replacement for INTERREG for an organisation such as the Royal Commission.

When INTERREG projects have completed later this year, the committee should undertake an overview of all the evaluation reports, which have been undertaken by external third parties. These will enable a better understanding of the benefits of co-operation and what we need to focus upon in the future.

**Clare Lancaster (CHERISH Project Manager) and Christopher Catling (Secretary - Chief Executive)**

**Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales**