

Finance Secretary meets his Irish counterpart to discuss Ireland/Wales trade links post-Brexit

The 2014-2020 Ireland/Wales programme is providing €100m (with €79m coming from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to support collaborative projects in the areas of innovation, adaptation to climate change and tourism, heritage and culture across the Irish Sea.

For more than 20 years EU funding has successfully fostered partnerships across the Irish Sea, to address economic and environmental challenges and to support sustainable development.

The Welsh Government is now looking to develop a successor programme of activity with the Irish government beyond 2020 as outlined in its policy paper "Regional Investment in Wales after Brexit".

Mark Drakeford said:

"We highly value our relationship with Ireland and we are committed to deepening our engagement outside the EU given the close bond, common values, trade and cultural links between the 2 nations.

"As an outward facing nation, we want to maintain and build on our international networks, including through continued participation in co-operation programmes. We place great value on the ETC programmes, including our cross-border programme with our nearest neighbours.

"They provide the means to find real solutions to shared challenges which transcend borders. We must ensure that we do not lose, but rather sustain, the excellent and creative partnerships which have been built up across the maritime border with Ireland."

Following talks with his Irish counterpart, the Cabinet Secretary will visit University College Dublin where he will meet representatives of a number of organisations that have benefitted from the Ireland/Wales programme including:

- Acclimatize – a project led by University College Dublin in partnership with Aberystwyth University which aims to combat the effects of pollution on bathing waters, helping to boost tourism and support marine activities
- Ecostructures – a project led by Aberystwyth University, in collaboration with University College Dublin, Bangor University, University College Cork and Swansea University which is developing new methods of enhancing the quality of coastal structures, including sea-

walls and tidal lagoons, through more ecologically-sensitive design

- CALIN (Celtic Advanced Life Sciences Innovation Network) – a project delivering a pan-Ireland-Wales platform for industry driven innovation in the area of Nanohealth via a collaboration between Swansea, Cardiff and Bangor Universities in Wales and UCD, Dublin City University, Trinity, Cork (Tyndall) and Galway Universities in Ireland.