

New EU project to help grow the fisheries industry in Wales and Ireland

The funding will enable Bangor University and Ireland's seafood development agency, Bord Iascaigh Mhara, to pilot a research and development programme aimed at improving the productivity and growth of shellfish businesses in both nations.

The Irish Sea Portal Pilot will investigate patterns of movement of shellfish in the Irish Sea to help reduce the costs of locating shellfish seed and help increase the volume of mussels and shellfish available to the industry.

The project is being funded through the EU's Ireland-Wales co-operation programme, which aims to strengthen economic links and stimulate cross-border collaboration in areas including innovation, climate change, cultural and natural resources, heritage and tourism.

Shellfish seed is a resource shared across the Irish Sea, crossing national boundaries. and provides significant economic benefits. The industry is worth around €250m between Wales and Ireland.

The two-year pilot will be developed in partnership with small and medium sized businesses and will also help the industry to tap into resources and expertise at Bangor University and Bord Iascaigh Mhara to support wider opportunities to expand the industry and create new jobs.

Welsh Government Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said:

"We've been clear about the benefits of EU cross-border programmes to Wales and this is a very good example of how countries can work together to maximise shared economic opportunities.

"This is a valuable industry to both nations that has the potential to grow further. I'm delighted that over €1m of EU funds is being invested to support that ambition."

Irish Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Paschal Donohoe, T.D. said:

"The Irish Sea is not only our shared border but also our shared resource. This project is an excellent example of how EU funding can assist the two regions in working together to develop that resource."

Prof David Thomas, Head of the School of Ocean Sciences and Director of Sêr Cymru National Research Network for Low Carbon, Energy and Environment, commented:

“This project builds on years of expertise in both sustainable fisheries and in shellfish biology at our School of Ocean Sciences. We’re keen to work with partners to support sustainable fisheries which benefit coastal economies, and are delighted to work with our Irish counterparts to increase the important shellfish industry in both countries.”