

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF DELIVERY AND DISCOVERY

SUBJECT: WALES – IRELAND INTERREG BID (CELTIC TRAILS) 2017 – 2019

Purpose of Report

To update Members on the evolving Celtic Trails Interreg bid and to seek approval for the Park Authority's proposed in-kind contribution to the project.

Background

The Ireland Wales 2014-2020 European Territorial Co-operation (ETC) programme is a maritime programme connecting organisations, businesses and communities on the West coast of Wales with the South-East coast of Ireland.

The programme is one of a family of ETC programmes (known as Inter-Regional or 'Interreg' programmes for short) which provide opportunities for regions in the EU to work together to address common economic, environmental and social challenges.

The Ireland Wales Interreg programme focuses on seeking solutions to shared challenges on both sides of the Irish Sea, to improve the economic and sustainable development priorities of Wales and Ireland.

The programme focuses on:

- Cross border innovation
- Adaptation of the Irish Sea and Coastal Communities to Climate Change
- Cultural and Natural Resources and Heritage

The Welsh Government manages the programme with partners, the Southern Regional Assembly (SRA) and the Department for Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER).

The overall value of the programme is €100m, utilising €79m from the European Union's European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

Introduction – Celtic Trails

Historically, the Park Authority has had limited involvement with Interreg projects but, through improved regional working on tourism initiatives, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA), Ceredigion County Council and Carmarthenshire County Council (as the lead agency) have formed a strong partnership that has allowed the West Wales region to bid to the Interreg programme in 2016.

The bid is under Priority 3 of the Interreg Programme which focusses on "realising the potential of natural and cultural assets to increase visitor numbers to coastal communities in Wales and Ireland" (see Appendix 1). The Celtic Trails programme involves the aforementioned Welsh public agencies working closely with Waterford

City & County Council (Co-Lead partner), Wicklow County Council and Wexford County Council in Ireland.

Project Outcomes

The aim of the Celtic Trails project is to convert the sizable “footfall” of potential visitors driving through the identified destinations with another final location in mind, into staying and paying visitors as well as attracting new visitors to cross the Irish/Celtic Sea. Whilst each partner is currently a large and successful tourism destination in their own right, the converting of the transient population into one that becomes a day and overnight visitor will increase and spread visitor dwell and visitor spend across the Region’s counties whilst adding considerable value through joint marketing activities.

This project aims to work collectively to establish an innovative and penetrative cross border complementary tourism campaign leveraging economies of scale. This would materialise as a coherent, integrated, efficient and sustainable promotional campaign, which can be effectively sustained. The development of innovative content will provide Ireland and Wales with new digital content, editorial, eye catching imagery and innovative video footage to use across all digital and social platforms. This would materialise as a coherent, integrated and efficient promotional campaign leading to an extending of the season. The project will also create a unique, discreet and competitive destination attracting and creating new and exciting opportunities for first time visitors.

Changes sought through the operation include:

- Increase in visitor numbers to the region
- Increase the number of longer repeat visits as well as attract new visitors leading to increased profits and safeguarding jobs within the cultural heritage and tourism sectors
- Increased capacity and confidence of the cultural heritage and tourism sectors on both sides of the Irish Sea to better utilise their combined, unique, natural cultural heritage assets as a driver for economic growth
- Increase the visitor appeal of the targeted areas through the development of new trails linking local culture, heritage and the natural environment
- Improved marketing and promotion of the regions through an integrated and coherent approach

Financial considerations

Officer	Hrs	Rate / hr	£
Interpretation (1 Officer 1 day per week for 2.5 years)	962	16.32	15,699.84
Director of Discovery (1 Officer 0.5 day per week for 2.5 years)	465	45.16	20,999.40
Admin (1 Officer 0.5 day per week for 2.5 years)	481	12.74	6,127.94
Total			42,827.18

The total project bid is for €2.2m with PCNPA's in-kind contribution of staff time totalling approximately €60K as detailed above. The number of staff involved in the programme may increase as the Stage 2 bid develops but the total PCNPA in-kind contribution will not increase above the figure stated above (i.e. £42,827.18) over the course of the 3 year programme.

Risk considerations

The Celtic Trails project does not involve employing new staff. The Authority will be diverting a proportion of existing staff time to the project to help shape the delivery as part of the wider project team (see Appendix 2). This will, ultimately, allow PCNPA to help shape the work (most of which will be delivered via open tendering on Sell-2-Wales) and access considerable project funding at minimal risk to the Authority.

It is worth noting that the Brexit decision will not impact on the Celtic Trails project. The UK Treasury will provide a full lifetime guarantee for all structural and investment projects approved before the UK leaves the EU. A guarantee has also been made for investments to UK organisations through the European Territorial Co-operation (Interreg) programmes from which Wales benefits, including the Ireland Wales programme, as well as programmes directly managed by the European Commission.

Compliance

The proposed changes to the Authority's visitor services will enhance the ability "*to encourage and support the development of sustainable employment and businesses, particularly in tourism and recreation*" and "*to protect and promote the local culture of language, arts and heritage of the area*" as set out in the Authority's draft 2017/18 Corporate Plan.

Human Rights/Equality issues

An important component of the project will be to ensure that all partner agencies involved are working together to address barriers that may prevent individuals and/or groups with protected characteristics from accessing the tourism and heritage products and experiences available across the Wales-Ireland programme area.

Biodiversity implications/Sustainability appraisal

The Celtic Trails project does not conflict with the National Park Management Plan and/or departmental policies for nature conservation, climate change and resource use.

Welsh Language considerations

The proposals comply with the requirements of the [Compliance Notice](#) served upon the Authority under Section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

Wider implications

Once the project has received Stage 2 approval from WEFO (potentially at the end of March 2017) then more formal engagement with the wider tourism trade will begin to ensure that we maximise the potential benefits for Pembrokeshire and West Wales.

Conclusion

The Celtic Trails project provides an exciting opportunity to collaborate across West Wales and Ireland to promote the cultural heritage of the area as part of the Visit Wales Year of Legends (2017) and 'Year of the Sea' (2018) marketing campaigns.

Through improved market research and collaborative marketing it is hoped that the project will make a measurable contribution to further strengthening the year-round visitor economy of Pembrokeshire.

RECOMMENDATION:

Members are asked to note the report and to agree the Park Authority's in-kind contribution to the project of £42,827.18.

*(For further information, please contact James Parkin, ext 4807,
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SOUTHERN
Regional Assembly
Promoting our Region



**Ireland's European Structural and
Investment Funds Programmes
2014-2020**

Co-funded by the Irish Government
and the European Union

**EU Funds:
Ireland Wales Co-operation
Programme 2014-2020
Summary Document**

WHAT IS THE IRELAND WALES CO-OPERATION PROGRAMME?

The €100m Ireland Wales Co-operation Programme is funded through the European Union's European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

Linking the west coast of Wales with the south-east of Ireland, the Programme's vision statement is:

'To provide the framework for organisations in the cross-border area to actively cooperate to address challenges and shared priorities of common interest on both sides of the Irish Sea thereby contributing and adding value to the economic and sustainable development priorities of Ireland and Wales.'

The Programme will support operations with partners based in both Ireland and Wales, focussing on activities across three key priority areas which will go some way to providing solutions to common challenges. The Irish Sea will be a central focus for the Programme given the maritime nature of the border between Ireland and Wales and the significant benefits which can be derived from this important resource.

FOCUS OF THE 2014-2020 PROGRAMME

- **CROSS-BORDER** – genuine cross-border operations, providing clear added value
- **ECONOMIC OBJECTIVES** – focus on economic activity and jobs and growth
- **QUALITY** – good quality operations seeking solutions to shared challenges and priorities
- **RESULTS AND IMPACT** – strong focus on tangible outcomes with maximum impact

The ERDF intervention rate across the Programme is up to 80% of eligible expenditure.

PRIORITY AXES

Priority 1: Cross-border Innovation	<p>Specific Objective: To increase the intensity of knowledge transfer collaborations involving research organisations and SMEs in line with the shared priorities of the smart specialisation strategies</p> <p>This Priority focusses strongly on increasing innovation within SMEs, including social enterprises, by encouraging collaboration between Higher and Further Education institutions and other public sector organisations with SMEs.</p> <p>The Priority seeks to increase the intensity of collaboration to jointly improve innovation performance and increase productivity within SMEs. Through increasing the flow of knowledge between sectors, the Priority will support mainly the concept/technology validation phase of the innovation idea including design testing and development phases. The Priority will therefore facilitate the translation of research and innovation processes into new and improved products, services or processes in the cross-border area.</p> <p>The Priority will focus on activities in the following sectors which are aligned to shared priorities of the smart specialisation strategies in both countries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Marine and Environmental Sciences (including renewable energy);➤ Food and Drink;➤ Life Sciences. <p>The results this Priority seeks to achieve are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● To identify and address the barriers faced by SMEs including social enterprises;● To increase the number of cross-border networks between research institutions and SMEs therefore raising the intensity of knowledge transfer through collaboration. The Programme will utilise a wider range of expertise and experience which can be accessed in relation to the shared priorities of the smart specialisation strategies;● To bring new innovative products closer to the market as a result of the cross-border collaboration between research organisations and SMEs in relation to the shared priorities of the smart specialisation strategies;● To strengthen responses to the smart specialisation strategies and provide opportunities to develop the international competitiveness of SMEs in line with the identified shared priorities.
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**Priority 2:
Adaptation
of the Irish
Sea and
Coastal
Communities
to Climate
Change**

Specific Objective: To increase capacity and knowledge of Climate Change Adaptation for the Irish Sea and coastal communities

A key goal for this Programme is to preserve and enhance the marine and coastal environment for the enjoyment of future generations in the face of the increasing impacts of climate change. There is considerable added value in co-operating on a cross-border basis on this issue particularly around building knowledge about the specific impacts of climate change on the Irish Sea.

This Priority will focus on the links between the impact of climate change on jobs and growth and will seek to respond to cross-border challenges on the Irish Sea and coastal communities due to the effects of climate change which have impacted on society, the economy, businesses and our shared ecosystem.

The maritime nature of the border between Ireland and Wales provides an opportunity to increase capacity and knowledge of climate change adaptation across the Irish Sea and its coastal communities by commissioning joint research, sharing existing research and expertise and monitoring the impacts of climate change.

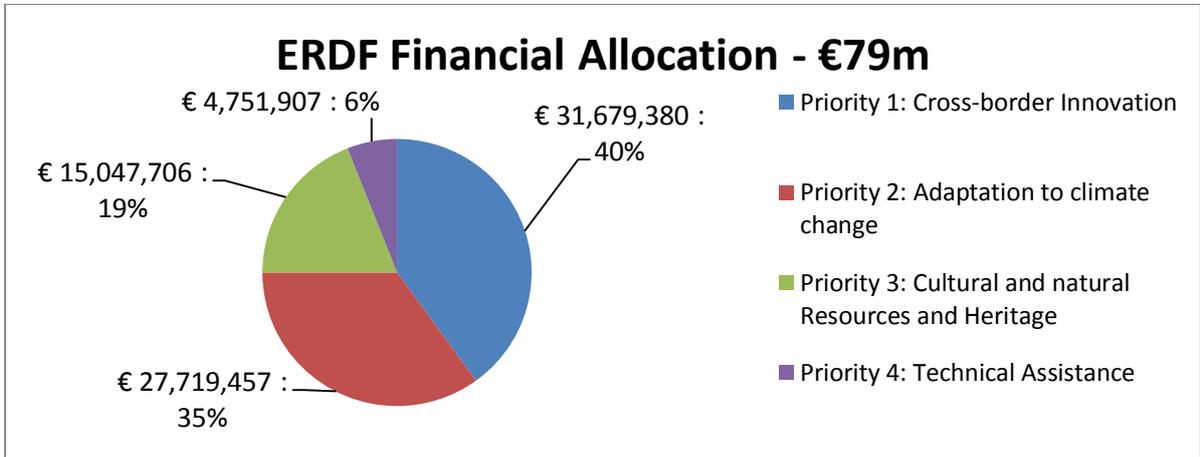
The Priority will support activity aimed at reducing knowledge gaps, the transfer of that knowledge amongst key stakeholders and the wider dissemination within the scientific community and the wider communities of the cross-border region.

The **results** that this Priority seeks to achieve are:

- Better knowledge within Irish Sea coastal communities to adapt to climate change, improving their security, well-being and health;
- Increased knowledge of the impacts of climate change – negative and potentially positive – and greater capacity of adapting them by the use of cross-border strategies and adaptation tools;
- Increased acknowledgement and capacity to benefit from the potential positive impacts of climate change (e.g. increase in tourist numbers due to a lengthened tourist season);
- Increased capacity to share knowledge of climate change across the Irish Sea and the cross-border region.

Priority 3: Cultural and Natural Resources and Heritage	Specific Objective: To sustainably realise the potential of natural and cultural assets in increasing visitor numbers to coastal communities in the Programme area
	<p>This Priority will focus on enhancing sustainable growth through co-operation by utilising the potential of the natural and cultural assets of the cross-border maritime area.</p> <p>Cultural and natural heritage will be used as a tool to stimulate economic growth by utilising the assets, enhancing the natural and cultural environment and increasing the attractiveness of the coastal communities in the Programme area as places to visit. A key focus will be on supporting and diversifying the tourism sector to increase visitor numbers to coastal communities.</p> <p>The Priority will explore how the Irish Sea can be used to this end and how green and blue growth can be utilised to underpin economic growth, with the aim of capitalising on the strengths of the unique, shared heritage and the maritime and coastal character of the Programme area.</p> <p>The results that this Priority seeks to achieve are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in the number of visitors to the coastal communities of the cross-border region by sustainably utilising their natural and cultural assets; • Increase in the capacity of coastal communities to utilise their natural and cultural heritage as a driver to economic growth.

The Programme will support two cross-cutting themes which will run through the whole programme: Sustainable Development and Equal Opportunities and gender mainstreaming.



The 2014-2020 Ireland Wales Co-operation Programme is a cross-border programme linking Ireland and Wales. The Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO), as Managing Authority, will lead the management of the Programme in conjunction with its partners in the Southern Regional Assembly, based in Waterford, Ireland.

For more information and to download the 2014-2020 Ireland Wales Co-operation Programme, please visit our website:

<http://wefo.wales.gov.uk/programmes/irelandwales/?lang=en>

Alternatively you can contact the team by emailing IrelandWalesCrossBorderProgramme@wales.gsi.gov.uk or ireland_wales@southernassembly.ie



You can also follow us on Twitter:

@irelandwales and @wefowales

IRELAND WALES CO-OPERATION PROGRAMME 2014-2020

Celtic Routes

