FORM, DOCUMENT

Initiative to encourage co-operation across and around the Irish Sea space (Agile Cymru)

Open to applications now but with a focus on expenditure claimed before the end of March 2025.

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Background

The Welsh Government's **Programme for Government** stresses the importance of giving Wales the strongest possible presence on the World stage and commits to '*closer economic and research ties with the EU'*. Cooperating with other nations and regions will help to:

- Increase the profile of Wales on the world stage;
- Grow the Welsh economy;
- Position Wales as a globally responsible nation.

Joint working provides opportunities to exchange ideas, identify areas of best practice, extend innovation and competitiveness, and address key issues which transcend borders. We want "an Agile Cymru" that looks outward to existing and future UK, European and international partners, to maximise shared opportunities and address shared challenges.

The Irish Sea Framework guides and influences actions aimed at increasing co-operation across and around the Irish Sea space. It provides strategic direction in the short term and a pathway to medium term goals. The Framework is informal, flexible and will evolve, helping to deliver relevant policies, strategies and programmes, including the Welsh Government's **International Strategy**, the **Ireland Wales Shared Statement and Action Plan** and the **2021-2027 Interreg programmes**, including **Peace Plus**.

The Irish Sea space is considered to be the geographical area defined by the Irish Sea, Celtic Sea and North Channel. It is also influenced by the nations and regions around that space, i.e. Wales, Ireland, Scotland, Northern Ireland, North West England, South West England and the Isle of Man. There will also be economic geographies and bilateral relationships that will influence activity. The basis for this funding initiative is benefit for Wales, but there is no restriction on the potential partners who wish to deliver that benefit.

The Irish Sea Framework identifies three broad priority areas for co-operation: Sustainable Blue Economy, Innovation Strengths and Communities & Culture – see the **guide to the Framework** for more detail.

Wales' **Regional Investment Framework** highlights how we should build on the activity and networks established through Wales' participation in a range of European Territorial Co-operation (ETC) programmes.

Horizon Europe provides a major opportunity for Welsh researchers and innovators to collaborate with the best in the world, attract global talent and carry out cutting-edge science and innovation for the benefit of society.

Agile Cymru supports the 'seeding' or facilitating of activity that builds cross-border and international partnerships and increases cooperation in areas that have the potential to lead to greater, more sustained economic activity of significance to Wales. It also recognises the importance of cultural collaboration and the social benefits of working across borders.

Initiative

This initiative encourages applications from organisations operating in Wales that have the potential to increase and sustain co-operation across and around the Irish Sea space. There is a focus on activity and expenditure claimed before the end of March 2025.

A strong application will reflect the strategic context set out above and:

- Support and build strategic relations in the Irish Sea space, reflecting the aims of the Irish Sea Framework.
- Create a range of opportunities in an area of significance for the Welsh economy.

- Directly address one or more of the Irish Sea Framework priority areas.
- Involve important and relevant organisations or networks in the Irish Sea space.
- Transfer international knowledge to Wales that will have a positive impact on Welsh policy priorities.
- Build on and grow existing activity.
- Have a clear pathway to bringing in other funding, or another route to ongoing, sustainable economic activity.

All applications will need to demonstrate viability and value for money. We would also expect an appropriate contribution to relevant **Agile Cymru outputs and outcomes.**

There are no fixed grant thresholds but based on experience the following is a guide:

- For small projects, such as travel, engagement and consultancy, applicants should bear in mind that up to £3,000 per application may be considered reasonable.
- For more strategic projects, such as forming networks, feasibility studies and pilot projects involving significant staff-time and materials, applicants should bear in mind that up to £20,000 per application may be considered reasonable. Strategic in the context of this initiative is expected to involve building significant capacity in the 'coalition of the willing' in one of the priority areas set out in the Irish Sea Framework.

This initiative can support up to 100% of eligible costs where justified but Welsh Government may prioritise applications that leverage other funding.

The budget allocated for this initiative is **up to £100,000** but we will take into account other commitments and underspends at the time of decision.

Eligible costs

Unless explicitly stated in this call, **Agile Cymru rules and procedures** apply.

We will not support general trade activity or product marketing. If the primary focus of activity is export, Welsh Government has specific support available which may be more appropriate - **Explore Export Wales**.

Agile Cymru can support cultural, heritage and sporting projects if the activity proposed has the potential to lead to greater, sustained cooperation of significance to Wales. We are unlikely to support individual artists or performances.

The expenditure can include the activity of non-Welsh partners, provided the costs claimed are incurred by the Welsh partner and value for money can be demonstrated. However, we advise contacting the Welsh Government's **Agile Cymru Team** at an early stage in the development of your proposal to ensure compliance.

We will not support activity or expenditure after 31 March 2025.

To avoid unintended consequences and inflexibility, we do not specify a closed list of eligible costs, but costs must be necessary for the promotion, implementation and dissemination of the projects agreed through the application process and written offer of grant. They must be reasonable, verifiable and incurred by the applicant. See the Agile Cymru rules and procedures for more details. We also advise that you focus on larger items of expenditure with a robust evidence trail to simplify the claim process.

Costs incurred before the date of approval are ineligible unless the Welsh Government's Agile Cymru Team confirms otherwise in writing.

Submission of applications

We are open to applications now. If your proposal is not 'strong' as defined above, please contact the Welsh Government's Agile Cymru Team before submitting an application. Otherwise, complete the application form and send it to the Welsh Government's Agile Cymru Team at **AgileCymru@gov.wales**.

Applications will be judged on their fit with the aims of this initiative and Welsh Government will have the final decision. This decision may include offering a lower level of grant than requested. We may seek the advice of relevant specialist and policy colleagues in Wales or in relevant nations/regions. Eligible applications will be dealt with on a **'first come, first served'** basis but there will be limited opportunity for further clarification and applications that are not considered strong as defined in this document may be placed on a **'reserve list'** to allow opportunities for other applications. Welsh Government will also take a portfolio approach in order to manage the balance of risk and range of outcomes. This will include considering the spread of activities across themes, geography and sectors where it will strengthen the overall outcomes of this initiative. We may therefore place applications on the 'reserve list' in order to manage portfolio considerations, or for budgetary reasons.