



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

GUIDANCE

# International relations annual report 2023 to 2024

Annual report setting out activity in Wales and overseas to deliver the aspirations within the International Strategy.

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# 1. Overview

## Introduction

Wales is an outward-looking and interconnected European nation, and this annual report provides an overview of our work at home and overseas to deliver our priorities, showcase our values and promote our nation in this globally connected world.

By building and developing connections to the wider world, we can showcase the very best of Wales by attracting jobs and investment whilst, at the same time, demonstrating our commitment to global responsibility. This means sharing learning and progressive values from a small nation and also our commitment to international sustainable development through work, including our Wales in Africa programme.

This year has continued to be impacted by global turbulence in terms of challenges including conflict, climate change and the cost-of-living crisis. Wales is not immune from these issues and, as an outward-looking nation, we have an important role to play through our international activity.

## International strategy

Our activity is centred around the 3 aims of the **International Strategy**; raise the profile of Wales, grow our economy, and demonstrate our commitment to global responsibility.

We work to raise the profile of Wales on the international stage. Over the last year, Wales has increasingly been seen as a thought-leader in issues such as our ambition to become the most LGBTQ+ friendly nation in Europe and to eradicate racism. Our innovative policy approaches in many areas - from the circular economy to basic income - are attracting international interest and

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stimulating connections. We are making important contributions to international priorities such as indigenous languages, through the UN Decade of Indigenous Languages, and through our partnerships with other regions across the world.

We have continued to develop and expand our relationships with regions by signing new agreements over the last year, including Silesia, Flanders, Birmingham (Alabama) and Baden-Württemberg, that cover areas where we can share learning and collaborate across many policies from energy and digital to culture and language.

Our strategy sets ambitious plans to grow the economy in a challenging financial climate by attracting inward investment and supporting Welsh exporters to sell their goods and services overseas. Working with key partners, we are actively promoting Wales internationally as a prime destination for investment by highlighting areas of the economy where Wales has international class capabilities (including cyber, compound semiconductors, fintech, life sciences and renewable energy), showcasing these as opportunities for potential investors. Moreover, we maintain strong relationships with existing investors, providing support to ensure their continued presence and growth within Wales.

In November 2023, we celebrated 50 years of Japanese investment in Wales by joining one of our global companies, Sony, at an event in Bridgend to mark this prestigious milestone which has been developed by Welsh Government teams in Wales and Japan for decades. Turning to exports, our Export Action Plan for Wales has supported Welsh companies to explore new markets overseas, identify new customers and grow their exports. Last year saw trade missions to a variety of markets including the USA, Middle East and Australia. We also undertook a trade mission to the Netherlands that was specifically aimed at companies who are new to exporting to show the practical support that Welsh Government can provide in terms of accessing a market and identifying customers. The USA, Germany, Ireland, France and the Netherlands all retained their positions as Wales' 5 largest export destinations.

The commitment to global responsibility remains at the forefront of our international activity. We have been sharing our ground-breaking Well-being of

Future Generations approach with many parts of the world, as well as our progressive activity to support those in need, such as those fleeing conflict, or sharing our work on renewable energy innovation as part of efforts to tackle climate change.

In practice, this has seen us focus on activities which share Wales' values and learning. Last year, we shared the Urdd's Peace and Goodwill Message 2023 which plays an integral role in projecting Wales' values around the globe. This focussed on anti-racism and was available in over 50 languages. As part of this, we were also able to support reciprocal visits between Wales and Birmingham, Alabama bringing young people together to learn about each other's actions against inequality. We also worked with Academi Heddwch to develop international relationships - such as the one focussed on Peace and Health with the Norwegian Taiji Centre - reflecting our aim to promote peace through partnerships. Finally, we have responded to increasing global interest in our future generations approach, including welcoming a delegation of the Members of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly to Wales for a range of discussions about how the Act is implemented and could be replicated elsewhere.

Our overseas network, in collaboration with colleagues in Wales, is vital to our aims at home and abroad. Through building networks and establishing enduring connections, we have raised awareness and secured influence. This is the first year that all of our offices have been able to operate without Covid-19 restrictions, which has allowed for events to take place across all of the corners of the globe where Welsh Government is represented.

We have also worked closely with the UK government, specifically the FCDO, embassies and high commissions, to ensure that Wales is both understood and reflected in its activity. This approach respects that foreign affairs are not devolved but that the Welsh Government has an important role in our international relations with others – something that has taken place for decades.

The next year's activity will look to build on what has been achieved over the course of this year, with a particular focus on Wales in India 2024 and Wales in Japan 2025, also recognising the challenging financial context and continued

global uncertainty.

## Prioritising international engagement

Our profile is increasing. The pandemic placed a spotlight on devolution, as have some of our innovative approaches. Cultural and sporting successes have increased global awareness and understanding of Wales - from millions of people watching a television programme and knowing where Wrexham is to our appearance at a number of major international sporting tournaments.

The result of this spotlight has been an unprecedented demand for international engagement both at home and overseas.

More than 100 diplomatic and international visits took place in Wales – an increase on the number of visits we used to average before the pandemic. Every visitor, and every delegation, has been keen to learn more about our country, our approaches and our investment and business opportunities.

Ministers have welcomed leaders from our priority regional relationships, including the Minister-President of Flanders and the Marshal of Silesia. Ministers have also welcomed diplomatic representatives from across the globe, including the Ambassadors of France, Spain, Germany, Italy, Japan and the USA and High Commissioners from Australia and New Zealand amongst others. Having face to face engagement with international partners at home or abroad helps foster closer working relations and communicates ‘this relationship is important’.

There were many other significant international opportunities secured over the course of the year. We have attracted a number of high-profile events that have shown Wales as a global thought leader and outward-looking nation. The Future Generations Leadership Summit in Swansea, hosted by Swansea University and the Welsh Government, with President Bill Clinton and Secretary Hillary Clinton was an important opportunity to talk about Wales’ global influence and shine a light on this part of Wales. We welcomed leaders from across Europe who are

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members of the Atlantic Arc Commission - part of the EU Council of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) - to Cardiff, demonstrating our commitment to enduring links with Europe.

International ministerial visits took place where there were opportunities to add value and prioritise engagement. The creation of our Strategic Partnership Agreements with Wales Arts International, the office of the Future Generations Commissioner and the Urdd has added another layer to our stakeholder engagement and our impact during overseas events. Over the course of the year, they have been present at key events extending our reach to new audiences and helping to promote our key messages.

Sport, once again, has provided an opportunity to achieve high-level and high-impact engagement. The Deputy Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism travelled to Paris and Bordeaux. She visited the new Aquatic Centre for the Paris Olympics, met with the Deputy Mayor for Sport, Olympics, Paralympics and Major Events to discuss the opportunities and legacy the Rugby World Cup and Paris Olympics 2024 will provide for the area. She spoke at the Tackle HIV launch event alongside former Welsh international and Lions rugby star Gareth Thomas, taking the opportunity to highlight Welsh Government's HIV Action Plan as well as visiting Musée d'Orsay to secure an art exchange between Wales and France.

The Minister for Finance and Local Government visited Lyon to undertake a programme of events to promote Welsh culture and showcase Welsh food and drink ahead of Wales' match against Australia.

The minister visited Lyon's Rugby Village and attended a Wales Arts International showcase of Wales' diverse range of cultural talent, with performances by Qwerin, Carmarthenshire-based Urdd youth choir Côr Hafodwenog and Welsh soprano and BBC Cardiff Singer of the World finalist, Jessica Robinson. The Minister met with the CEO of Boccard, which recently opened its first UK operation in Broughton.

This was an opportunity to reaffirm the welcome that Wales has given to

Boccard and reiterate the support that Welsh Government can provide to companies who are looking for opportunities to invest in Wales. She also hosted a food and drink showcase in partnership with Hybu Cig Cymru, Food Innovation Wales and Welsh food and drink companies.

France was recently named as Wales' number one export destination for food and drink, so this was an opportunity to bring together the best of Welsh cuisine, culinary and cultural talent at the home of French gastronomy - the Cité Internationale de la Gastronomie in Lyon.

The First Minister travelled to Paris and Nantes, which included a reception at the British Embassy and a visit to Louise Michel Elementary School to accompany the Urdd as it showcased its 'Chwarae yn Gymraeg'; a programme that introduces language and culture to children through play and activities.

**All 3 ministerial programmes**, when brought together, provided Wales with an incredible platform to highlight Welsh food, culture and language as well as reinforce important relationships with our economic and political partners.

The First Minister visited the Basque Country and Silesia. The purpose of his visit to Silesia was to sign a Memoranda of Understanding (MOU), setting out how we will work together to develop our relationships through economic, academic and cultural activities.

A Memorandum of Understanding was also signed with the German state of Baden-Württemberg, with the Minister for Economy travelling to Germany to sign the agreement in November. 2024 will see further work undertaken by the Welsh Government's team in Germany to develop this relationship further using the MOU as a basis. The minister also travelled to the USA, visiting Alabama and Georgia in a programme that focussed on civil rights and unity.

## Raising our profile through key moments

**St David's Day** was, once again, a focal point for the Welsh Government's work

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to raise Wales' profile on the global stage. Events took place across the overseas network, in London and in British Embassies, using this as an opportunity to highlight Wales' strengths to the world around the message 'do the little things' and how these little things can add up to make global impact.

The Minister for Social Justice travelled to Ireland to host the annual St David's Day reception, alongside a wider programme of engagements which featured meetings with a world leading clinical research company investing in Swansea, and with women leaders from commerce, government, cultural bodies and academia.

The Minister for Health and Social Services celebrated St David's Day in Mumbai, whilst also launching the year of "Wales in India 2024".

The First Minister once again travelled to Brussels for a programme of activities including speaking at an event on Wales' Future as a European Nation, meeting with the Minister President of Flanders to discuss progress on the MOU, meeting with Wind Europe to discuss the opportunities in Wales for the wind energy sector and hosting the annual St David's Day reception at the UK Ambassador's Residence, bringing together VIP guests from EU nations, regions and institutions.

St David's Day across North America continued to grow in its profile, helped along by the light currently shining on Wrexham. St David's Day receptions were held in Atlanta, Chicago, New York, Hartford, Salt Lake City, Washington DC and Montréal with guests from diaspora, US Cabinet members, business and alumni. Three events were held in Washington DC.

The first was a joint event with the Smithsonian showing the Welsh film, Y Sŵn, as part of "Mother Tongue Film Festival" and the promotion of the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 ambitions; a reception with the Deputy Ambassador with Welsh food and drink and a performance from 4 Welsh singers from the Urdd; and a reception on Capitol Hill with the Friends of Wales Caucus in collaboration with Penderyn.

The Welsh Government's office in Los Angeles hosted a series of events in Salt Lake City, marking the historical relationship between Wales and Utah and including a joint business event with Utah state government and stakeholders. We continued discussions with the state government on plans to bring a statue of Martha Hughes Cannon (the first female State Senator in the USA, and originally from Llandudno) to the National Statuary Hall at the US Capitol later in the year.

In Canada, a reception was hosted to celebrate St David's Day in Montréal with attendance from diaspora, government, business and diplomatic contacts. In addition to celebrating Welsh culture and traditions, it provided an opportunity to discuss opportunities for future collaboration with key stakeholders.

In Dubai and Doha, the team organised St David's Day receptions at the British Embassies during which Welsh food and drink were heavily promoted. Subsequently, Hybu Cig Cymru has developed some promising leads in the UAE and Qatar with potential distributors and supermarkets for exporting Welsh lamb.

The Dubai event also promoted the Welsh language, with an international school choir singing Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau and three songs by composer Robat Arwyn in Welsh. The main speech was also translated into Welsh. Both events featured key members of the Welsh diaspora, alumni and the local business community.

In China, St David's Day receptions were held in Shanghai, Beijing, and Wuhan, with HM Ambassador's attendance at the latter events supporting the impact.

In Japan, the team hosted a series of events across the country including a reception in Oita to celebrate the 2nd anniversary of the MOU between Wales and Oita and showcased a number of joint exchange projects in the arts, culture, education, tourism and business. A reception was held at the Ambassador's Residence in Tokyo for business contacts, diaspora and alumni from across Japan and highlighted a growing interest in Wales' Well-being of Future Generations Act.

We also took the opportunity to support other national and international days across the year including Diwali and St Patrick's Day in Cardiff building on our key priority relationships here in Wales.

## Office locations

The overseas network has undergone a slight change this year. In order to better align our overseas office locations with our objectives, we have changed the location of our West Coast USA office from San Francisco to Los Angeles. This gives greater access to a range of trade and investment opportunities that fully align to our priorities.

### Asia

- Beijing
- Chongqing
- Shanghai
- Bangalore
- Mumbai
- New Delhi
- Tokyo

### Europe

- Brussels
- Berlin
- Düsseldorf
- Dublin
- Paris
- London

## North America

- Atlanta
- Chicago
- New York
- Los Angeles
- Washington DC
- Montréal

## Middle East

- Doha
- Dubai

## 2. Global network

### Introduction

Our overseas offices network is split into three regions: Europe, North America and the Middle East and Asia. Each region has a focus tailored to its strengths, and Wales' interests, as outlined in their international remits. This section sets out highlights of activity undertaken in each region during 2023-2024.

### Europe

Europe remains a key focus for our international work. Our offices in Europe continue to proactively engage with European institutions, networks, nations and regions to demonstrate that Wales remains an active part of Europe and increase our reputation as a trusted partner.

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There has been a significant ministerial presence across Europe over the past 12 months with ministers travelling to France, Germany, Belgium, Poland and Ireland.

This year we have signed **4 new international agreements** with European partners, which set out areas of cooperation and closer ties with those countries and regions where we have shared interests. This includes:

- A new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and action plan with Flanders - in June 2023, the Minister-President of Flanders visited Wales with the primary purpose of signing this MOU. The First Minister also met with the Minister-President during his St David's Day visit to Brussels.
- The re-signing of our longstanding MOU with Brittany marking 20 years of the Wales-Brittany relationship.
- The new 'Rennes Declaration' signed at the **Celtic Forum** by 6 partners to strengthen inter-celtic cooperation.
- A new Shared Statement and action plan with Baden-Württemberg, signed by the Minister for Economy during a visit to Stuttgart.
- A new MOU and action plan with Silesia, Poland – the **First Minister travelled to Poland** in order to sign the Agreement, which followed a visit to Wales by the Marshal of Silesia in March 2023.

In Brussels, we have seen increased engagement with EU institutions, strengthened by the engagement with the Welsh Government's Representative on Europe. Highlights include:

- Minister for Economy address to the European Parliament Regional Development Committee on Wales' approach to European regional engagement. Wider programme of meetings with MEPs, CPMR, and visit to IMEC research facility in Leuven.
- Deputy Minister for Social Partnership visit, which included meetings with the President of European Economic and Social Committee, MEPs and EU representatives to discuss the Social Partnership Act and how we can engage with EU institutions going forward.
- Addressing the European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education

as part of its inquiry on UK-EU mobility. The meeting provided the opportunity to highlight the Taith programme and to emphasise Wales' commitment to European engagement.

- Hosting the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission General Assembly in Cardiff –bringing together ministers and senior officials from a range of EU regions, plus Québec, to discuss strengthened inter-regional cooperation in the Atlantic area. The event was jointly delivered by the Welsh Government Brussels and Cardiff offices and the Senedd.

With France as the dedicated country for our 'Wales in...' campaign, and the host of the Rugby World Cup, France was a strong focus for Wales in 2023-2024. **Three Ministers were in France for the RWC** promoting Wales and widening our relations in Paris, Bordeaux, Lyon, Nantes and Marseille. There was a strong focus on food and drink promotion across the cities, following a Food and Drink trade mission earlier in the year, and a strong focus on company engagement. Our key partners – Wales Arts International and the Urdd - enabled us to also have a strong cultural element across key cities with the Wales in France year, establishing a new Wales in France Cultural Fund (jointly funded with the British Council). Six projects were funded to a value of £100,000. More information on the activity and outcomes of Wales in France is contained in the case study on page 29.

Our Paris office supported the Welsh presence at European Cyber Week in Brittany and the World Nuclear Exhibition in Paris. Other low carbon economy activity included engagement with Pays de la Loire and Hauts de France regions on green energy, and the team helped secure a French business delegation to the Marine Energy Wales Conference.

We have worked with food and drink companies entering the French market and with partners to support Welsh exporters experiencing difficulties with customs checks at the French border. The team's intervention prevented the destruction of a £200,000 value food export.

2024 is the 20-year anniversary of the Wales-Brittany relationship. Celebrations will include a visit by the President of Brittany to Wales, marine energy

engagement and a joint project between BBC National Orchestra of Wales and Orchestre National de Bretagne.

In Germany, our activity has been focused on North Rhine-Westphalia and Baden-Württemberg, with the Minister for Economy visiting both states at the end of 2023 to support trade missions and strengthen trade and investment opportunities. Activity in North Rhine-Westphalia included meetings with industry and clusters around collaboration on German circular economy projects linked to Wales hosting the Circular Economy Hotspot in October 2024, as well as support to a Welsh delegation of 23 Welsh exhibitors at MEDICA in Düsseldorf - the world's largest medical trade fair.

The team also addressed the UK-North Rhine-Westphalia Parliamentary Group, discussing international student exchange, the German language in Wales, links with Germany post-Brexit and net zero. We are in discussion with the Parliamentary Group about a visit to Wales in 2024.

Teams in Germany and Cardiff have spent the last 12 months preparing the ground for Welsh Ministers to sign a **Shared Statement of Cooperation with Baden-Württemberg** (B-W). The Economy Minister signed the Statement on behalf of the WG and held bilateral meetings with B-W Ministers on life sciences and wider economic and shared interests.

We represented Wales at the Four Motors for Europe conference on e-mobility, as well as the Automotive Suppliers Day in Stuttgart, showcasing Wales' assets and expertise to experts from a range of European regions. We also attended the Battery Show in Stuttgart, planning next steps with the B-W mobility cluster around hydrogen, 5G research, market access workshops and the Stuttgart automotive suppliers' day.

Building on our sports diplomacy focus, we supported the Urdd (in partnership with the Football Association of Wales) to deliver a "Chwarae yn Cymraeg" activity with a partner school in Sinsheim in the lead up to a UEFA Nations League women's football match. This activity helped to raise awareness of Cymraeg, and to show support to the Wales women's team. The office also

represented Welsh Government at the UK-German Cultural Commission at the German Foreign Office, co-chaired by the UK Minister for Europe and German Minister for Cultural Relations. This was the first meeting of this commission since 1993.

Working with the Bavarian Representative to the UK, we brought together academics, industry and policy makers for a virtual AgriTech Roundtable between Bavaria and Wales. The meeting discussed some of the biggest challenges and interest areas in agritech to establish key shared interest areas. This engagement led to our presentation on Wales-Bavarian agritech links to the UK-Bavaria Steering Committee, chaired by the Bavarian Minister for Europe and the UK Parliamentary Under Secretary of State.

Engagement across other German states included supporting the trade mission of Welsh publishers at the 75th Frankfurt Book Fair and attendance at Semicon Europa, providing the opportunity to meet companies looking to engage with the Welsh cluster and the President of Semi, ahead of the launch of Semi UK in Cardiff, which brings leading decision makers to Wales from some of the world's leading semiconductor companies.

Ministers and officials have continued to work together throughout the year to deliver the Ireland Wales Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan. The Ireland office has built on existing policy exchanges and established new areas of collaboration within fields such as agriculture, forestry and peatlands, enterprise and trade, education, innovation and finance. Throughout the year, the team has worked directly with Irish exporters and relevant policy teams in the Ireland and UK governments on the role of new border controls which impact trade channels from Ireland into Welsh ports.

The Dublin office has further celebrated the cultural links at the Other Voices Festivals in Dingle and Aberteifi, with the First Minister opening the Festival in Aberteifi, participating in a panel session and hosting a reception. Further opportunities were secured in Ireland for Welsh artists at key cultural events such as the Dublin Fringe festival and St Patrick's festival.



The Ireland team has supported visits across the year, including facilitating the International Relations Senedd Committee's two-day visit programme investigating the Wales Ireland relationship and Universities Wales' visit to establish connections with the British Council, Irish University Association, Trinity and University College Dublin. The office delivered a 2-day visit for the Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip in Dublin, which included 2 receptions for Ireland Wales stakeholders as part of St David's Day celebrations.

The Ireland team has focused strongly on trade and investment opportunities and supported Welsh businesses at the Dublin Aviation Summit, World Offshore Wind Conference, Dublin Tech Summit and ARVR conferences. Furthermore, the team has connected Welsh businesses to sector opportunities in Ireland around key sectors such as Life Sciences and Aerospace and attended Explore Export events in Wales.

The team has supported reinvestment projects by Irish businesses with an existing footprint in Wales throughout the year. The team celebrated Irish investment in Wales through events with the British Irish Chamber of Commerce and an investor dinner hosted by the UK Ambassador in Dublin. A direct result of the ongoing work has seen a world leading clinical research organisation headquartered in Dublin grow and create new roles at its Swansea base this year.

The 2023 **Ireland Wales Ministerial Forum** took place in Bangor in October with the First Minister, Minister for Rural Affairs, North Wales and Trefnydd, Minister for Economy and Minister for Climate Change hosting the Tánaiste and Irish Government's Simon Harris TD, then Minister for Higher Education and Skills, now Taoiseach. The 2-day programme included site visits and roundtable discussions showcasing a variety of Wales' strengths.

The forum continues to forge new connections and deepen the bilateral relationship across many themes and sectors.

This year, it enabled greater cooperation and engagement between respective organisations in the Maritime, Renewable Energy, Language, Agritech and

Environment sectors and has led to further meetings and reciprocal visits between Ireland and Wales on shared challenges and policy exchanges.

## North America

In North America, our growing relationship with Alabama and sports diplomacy continued to provide a backdrop to some of the main strands of work over the past 12 months.

Our strengthening of cultural relations with Alabama saw the University of Alabama Birmingham Gospel Choir visit Wales in partnership with the Urdd, and a **visit from the Minister for Economy** to sign the **Wales-Birmingham International Friendship Pact** in the autumn. As a result of our developing relationship, our offices have held a series of meetings, including with the Mayor's Office on progressing the goals of the Pact, the University of Alabama at Birmingham - which is working with Cardiff University on medical student exchange - and meetings with industry leaders in Birmingham on investment opportunities focused on life sciences and tech. Economic partnerships are being explored and there is a potential visit to Wales by a Birmingham business and cultural delegation in Summer 2024. More information about the Minister for Economy's visit, and our relationship with Alabama can be found on page 36.

14 additional members were added to the Congressional Friends of Wales Caucus, increasing the Caucus by 70%. This achievement has been delivered following successful relationship building during the Minister for Economy's visit to Birmingham, and the wider team co-hosting an event with the House Chiefs of Staff Association, amongst others. This, and the 10-year anniversary of the Caucus, was celebrated at a 'State of the Whisky' event in the US Capitol before the State of the Union and in collaboration with Penderyn.

Sports diplomacy was a strong focus for the team with the 'Summer of Welsh Soccer' taking place across the USA. Wrexham AFC played 4 games in the USA and the US Women's National Team invited Cymru to play in San Jose. The

offices collaborated with Visit Wales to promote Wrexham and Wales as tourist destinations at the Wrexham games, whilst investors were hosted at all matches to showcase Wales as a destination to do business. Likewise, in collaboration with the FAW, we used the Cymru game to promote Wales as a business destination – a company attending one of these matches later invested substantially into Wales. In addition, the US team promoted two teams from Wales at the Homeless World Cup in Sacramento (the first iteration of the Cup took place in Wales). In October, we partnered with the Georgian and Portuguese Embassies in Washington DC on a Rugby World Cup event celebrating ‘Group C’ nations.

This year, we also advanced a number of educational partnerships. We worked with Global Wales to host an event to celebrate its renewed partnership with the Gilman Scholarship Program, the Welsh Government’s Seren and Taith Schemes and supported the signing of an MOU between Universities Wales and Universities Canada. The team also supported the new partnership agreement between the University of Illinois and Cardiff University, which creates a £200,000 per year joint mobility fund for 5 years. This was the culmination of more than 3 years of relationship building and marks the beginning of a significant new chapter of collaboration.

Over the course of the year, the North America team has maintained a presence at key conferences. Teams across the region supported a Welsh presence at the AI summit in Montréal, RSA Cyber and Game Developers conferences in California, MRO Americas in Atlanta and the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society annual conference in Chicago, amongst others.

On the trade side, it was announced that the USA is now the No. 1 export destination for Welsh businesses. Throughout the year, the team has supported Welsh businesses in various ways - from 1:1 advisory meetings to support at conferences. The team provided export advice to Wales-based companies looking to expand into the Midwest and worked with US investors promoting Wales as a destination for business. This was celebrated on St David’s Day when a joint reception was held with the Welsh Government and the company. The importance of trade conferences was reflected at Game Developers

Conference (GDC) in 2024 where it was revealed that, as a direct result of the Welsh Government trade mission in 2023 to GDC, \$1.6m worth of trade deals had already been generated.

In support of the semiconductor industry, we attended the Semicon West Conference in San Francisco, holding meetings with key companies in the cluster, and meeting with the US Commerce Department to discuss areas of collaboration under the CHIPS Act. We co-sponsored an event discussing UK-USA collaboration in semiconductors at the University of Arizona and are exploring joint research programmes with Welsh universities.

On the investment side, the USA remained the largest inward investor into Wales. As a direct result of the semiconductor activities, we worked with a major design studio that is anticipating creating a presence in Wales. This work also enabled the team to manage relationships with major investors into Wales – for example Vishay, which has acquired Newport Wafer Fab for \$177 million.

In gaming, this year Rocket Science chose Wales as its European HQ having begun conversations with the Welsh Government at Game Developers Conference in 2022. The company was welcomed as part of the Welsh delegation to the 2024 Conference. A more detailed account of Wales' journey to become a leader in the compound semiconductor industry can be found on page 39.

In the life sciences sector, we supported a Welsh delegation to BIO life sciences conference in Boston, facilitating and participating in conversations between NHS Wales and US companies, The North America team also travelled to Wales to meet with key stakeholders and priority clusters and held networking events providing 1:1 support for more than 20 companies looking to export to the USA and Canada.

The team also attended and supported the North American Festival of Wales. Through Welsh Government support, the Festival hosted the first ever free 'open air' street event celebrating Welsh music on the streets of Lincoln, Nebraska. We attended the Earthshot Innovation Summit and participated on a panel (with

former US vice-president Al Gore) at New York Climate Week.

Welsh food and drink were promoted at the Summer Fancy Food show in New York City and a 'Taste of Wales' reception at the Consul General's residence in New York which connected producers with buyers.

On US soil, for Pride month, the offices joined local celebrations in Washington DC, New York City and Chicago, working to raise the profile of Wales and our ambition to be the most LGBTQ+ friendly nation in Europe.

Activity in Canada focussed on the creative sector during the second half of the year. The office partnered with FOCUS Wales to deliver an official 'Wales at BreakOut West' reception on the opening night of the music conference in October and a music showcase and Wales reception at M for Montreal in November. The events helped to strengthen our relationships, increase connections, showcase Wales and promote Welsh language music.

The office also jointly hosted a screening and reception of a Welsh film, 'Chuck Chuck Baby', at the International Film Festival of Ottawa with the Deputy High Commissioner. It was an opportunity to celebrate the art of film and to connect with fellow film enthusiasts – showcasing Wales at an International Film Festival. Under the direction of the Declaration of Intent, we continue to work closely with the Québec Government on our Joint Call for Proposals, which is now in its 4th year.

## **Middle East, North Africa and Asia (MENA)**

Preparations for our presence at COP28 UAE started early, including regular meetings with UK and Welsh stakeholders to plan and support elements of Wales content and the promotion of Wales as a globally responsible nation. This involved engagement with representatives from business, innovation, the third sector, Future Generations Office, Climate Cymru, Size of Wales, several Welsh universities and the arts.

In the run up to, and during the Conference, the team helped promote renewables company Dulas, Respiratory Innovation Wales, Swansea-based EFT Consult, Infinite Renewables, Atlantic College, Swansea City Council, Swansea University and University Wales Trinity St David's partnership with KPMG/OSC/Augment City to develop a digital twin of Swansea, Bangor University and the Mbale biodegradable potting bag project. Assistance was also provided to Welsh Government Climate Change officials who took part in plenary sessions at COP28. The team engaged with the former Future Generations Commissioner, Sophie Howe, who participated in the Dubai Future Forum panel sessions, and, with the help of the office, the Dubai Future Foundation has reached out to the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales to invite him to participate in Dubai Future Forum 2024.

There are a number of established exhibitions and conferences across the UAE that were attended by Welsh companies on Welsh Government organised trade missions. These include Arab Health, Gulfood and ADIPEC.

The overseas office helped support 15 companies at ADIPEC energy show with a further 8 joining a concurrent multi-sector export market visit, 13 food and drink producers at Gulfood and 21 companies at the Arab Health and Dubai multi-sector export market visit. The team has assisted more than 100 companies in their export journeys over the past year across a variety of sectors throughout the region.

Networking events were organised for the trade missions, including a reception at HM Ambassador's Residence for the ADIPEC trade mission attended by the Ambassador, and a reception in Dubai for the Arab Health trade mission for Welsh diaspora and business contacts. The team also hosted a multi-sector export market visit to Qatar and a virtual tech export cluster trade mission to UAE, supporting 13 cluster members with local market intelligence and key contacts.

On investment, the team facilitated a presentation on the ARTHUR nuclear medical radio-isotope project by the Chief Scientific Advisor's Office to HM Ambassador Qatar, DBT investment teams in UAE and Qatar and the Office for



Investment. This followed interest from the Qatar Investment Authority during the Economy Minister's World Cup visit in 2022. Support was also provided to 4 potential capital investment projects.

The team assisted visits by the Global Centre for Rail Excellence to UAE for meetings with potential investors and the development of an MOU with the UAE's national rail company.

To help expand our reach across MENA, and explore further opportunities for Wales, the office visited Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in November to scope both markets and develop a network of contacts.

Throughout the year the team has been instrumental providing support to Welsh Ministers and facilitating meetings regarding the possible re-establishment of the Doha-Cardiff route.

During the Destination Middle East promotion in the UAE and Qatar, the team supported Welsh food and drink launches at key supermarket retailers alongside a Chef's Table Dinner in Dubai targeting the hotel, restaurant and catering sectors. The British Embassy Qatar showcased Welsh food and drink at HM King's Coronation Party and Hybu Cig Cymru showcased Welsh lamb at Gulfood in Dubai. Daioni Organic milk re-entered the UAE market following a successful Gulfood trade show in Dubai last year; its organic milk range is now on sale in major Dubai retailers. Edwards of Conwy and Tŷ Nant water have also entered the UAE market with support from the office. The team is also helping companies tackle some market access barriers working with DEFRA colleagues in the region.

Work has continued building diaspora networks in the UAE and Qatar. The team regularly attended Global Welsh Middle East Hub networking events with diaspora in Dubai and new connections were made with Welsh diaspora at the Sharjah Performing Arts Academy. The team organised specific business networking events for Welsh diaspora and Welsh companies with a presence in the region throughout the year, including deploying our Welsh Government Envoy for the UAE to chair a business roundtable. The team also meet with the

Envoy on a regular basis and refer new exporters to him for advice and contacts.

The offices in MENA have continued their work with Welsh universities. The team provided support to IBERS regarding agritech research collaboration and student recruitment and assisted visits from Cardiff University to Qatar and Kuwait, as well as Swansea University's to visit to UAE. The team has also provided on-going support to Bangor University's International Team and has been developing stronger alumni links.

The MENA team worked with Amgueddfa Cymru to host curators and educators from the Museum of Islamic Art Qatar in Wales - a legacy of the First Minister's visit to Qatar during the FIFA World Cup 2022 - and supported the Urdd's Rugby 7s women's team visit to UAE as it participated in the Dubai Rugby 7s.

Other cultural aspects included ongoing planning for a visit to Wales by Qatar's Katara Cultural Village to develop its partnerships with Amgueddfa Cymru and other cultural organisations and the facilitation of calls between the Welsh National Opera and the Abu Dhabi Music & Arts Foundation to explore potential collaborative projects. Ongoing support was also provided to Wales Arts International and Burum jazz band for a visit to Qatar to participate in a jazz festival.

In addition to the proposed inward visit by Katara Cultural Village, the team supported the inward visits of HM Ambassador to Qatar to Wales and the Crown Prince of Bahrain's visit to the UK, with the team briefing the Prince of Wales to raise opportunities in Wales. The team also led discussions with the UAE-UK Business Council and the UAE Embassy to discuss a potential visit to Wales by the UAE Embassy London team with an in-bound business delegation from the UAE.

We now have a fully staffed team in India who have dedicated substantial efforts to forging business and political connections, as well as launching the 'Wales in India' campaign, with 18 events having taken place in the first quarter of 2024. The campaign was launched by the First Minister and the Minister for Health and Social Services at simultaneous St David's Day events at the Indian High



Commission in London and in Mumbai. It is a year-long campaign to promote ties between 'Two Nations of Culture and Innovation' with the objectives of fostering new trade and investment opportunities, promoting cultural, artistic, and educational ties, and supporting healthcare activities.

Throughout the year, a series of Welsh Government Investment Roundtables were organised, which drew more than 200 participants. These were held in key cities such as Mumbai, Bengaluru, Jaipur, and Thiruvananthapuram. The team also attended several exhibitions, including Bengaluru Tech Week, a cyber-security conference in New Delhi and several business events alongside the Department for Business and Trade (DBT). Notably, in Kerala, the Minister for Health and Social Services hosted the inaugural Welsh-Indo Med-Tech Conclave under the 'Wales in India' banner. Additionally, the Minister engaged with numerous pivotal partners who maintain a significant presence in Wales, further solidifying these crucial international links.

The team has supported several Welsh businesses with the potential to export to India across medtech, aerospace, renewables and food and drink, with plans launched for a trade mission to India in May 2024. The team also attended key global trade events that host a large presence of Indian companies including at ADIPEC, Gulfood and Arab Health. Alongside DBT, the team supported a delegation of 20 Indian businesses attending London Tech Week to visit Wales and see what Wales has to offer.

Throughout the year, a significant amount of effort has been made to raise Wales' profile across India and to promote education, culture, sports, and our values as a nation. A strong relationship has been formed with Maharashtra legislators around the Well-being of Future Generations Act, with 2 delegations visiting Wales on a fact-finding mission and a conference in Mumbai hosted by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly alongside the Minister for Health and Social Services and the Future Generations Commissioner. Maharashtra legislators are now exploring their own version of the Act as a Private Members' Bill.

The team has worked closely with Global Wales and various educational

institutions to enhance connections with India. Their efforts have spanned from aiding research projects to collaborating on curriculum developments and fostering relationships with key incubators. Notably, the Minister for Health and Social Services met with T-Hub, one of the world's largest start-up incubators. Global Wales secured an MOU with T-Hub, which also included a visit to Wales for business discussions, during which they joined the First Minister's Diwali celebrations.

With Wales Arts International, Literature Wales and the British Council, Wales took centre stage at one of the world's largest literature festivals in Kolkata where one of our poets laureate led discussions on language and identity. The team also supported the Wales Over 60s Cricket Team during its participation in the Chennai World Cup and held several discussions with Glamorgan Cricket Club on in-market support. Wales also took part in Mumbai Pride, alongside diplomats from more than 10 different countries, and hosted an LGBTQ+ reception for community leaders during the Health Minister's visit. The Minister also supported the announcement between the Urdd and Her Future Coalition, an organisation that seeks to support women and girls who have experienced gender-based and sexual violence.

The team has worked extensively with Health colleagues to support and deliver on their objectives in India including the announcement of an MOU between Wales and Kerala on the recruitment of internationally educated clinical practitioners during 2024-2025 consisting of up to 250 nurses, doctors and other healthcare professionals through the implementation of the MOU framework. During her visit to India, the Minister for Health and Social Services met with the Chief Minister of Kerala to sign the MOU and hosted a reception for families of nurses in Wales and for those soon to come to work in Wales. A recruitment event in Kerala is being planned for June 2024.

In Japan, over the year, activity has focused on strengthening relationships including those following the Oita MOU signed in 2022. The MOU included an Oita delegation visit to Wales in October for meetings with Welsh Government, the National Museum of Wales, WRU and Cardiff University and an Aquarium joint project between Umi-Tamago and Anglesey Sea Zoo.

There were a significant number of other inward visits into Wales from Japan covering inward investment, R&D links with universities, tourism and culture. Business visits included Marubeni Europower, the Executive Vice President Daiwa House, Honda, Toshiba, Rohm, Sumitomo Electric Industries, NEDO, JETRO and Kyushu Institute of Technology with many bringing wider delegations.

Trade and investment work has had a particular focus on renewable energy again this year, mainly around identifying business collaboration in the Celtic Sea Offshore wind projects and supporting investment into Welsh projects. In February and March, the team attended the Celtic Sea Floating Offshore Wind business seminar and promoted Wales at Wind Expo 2024. Marubeni was also chosen by Bridgend to deliver an AEMS (Advanced Energy Management System) utilising Green Hydrogen produced under a Japanese NEDO-funded project. This will bring investment worth £147 million into the region and resulted in an MOU being signed between Welsh Government and NEDO for the first time.

Activity to promote Welsh strengths in compound semiconductors was another area of focus for the team, including participation at Semicon Japan in December 2023 and delivering a business seminar on power electronics in collaboration with DBT and SiC Alliance. The team also leveraged the UK-Japan Hiroshima Accords, signed in July, to forge links between Wales and Japan in cyber security, with the inauguration of Cyber Hiroshima (the Japanese branch of Cyber Wales) marking a milestone in the development of the Wales-Japan relationship in the Tech sector.

In October, we supported a multi-sector trade mission of 6 Welsh companies to Tokyo which included a reception for 60 guests at HM Ambassador's residence, and the annual food and drink trade mission to FOODEX in March.

Our investment into our relationships with existing Japanese investors has continued across the year and we were pleased that Panasonic cemented its ongoing commitment to Wales by announcing up to £20 million investment in its facility in Cardiff to roll out a state-of-the-art net zero power system, as part of its

ambition to use the site as a centre of excellence for green technologies in the UK.

Panasonic's self-sustaining system makes use of hydrogen fuel cell generators, photovoltaic generators, and storage batteries and will strengthen Panasonic as a key supplier in assisting customers achieve net zero.

The team continued to support the strengthening of links between individual regions of Wales and Japan. Aberystwyth University signed an MOU in 2023 with Oita University and renewed MOUs with Yosano town and Matsumoto college in Nagano to continue summer school programmes, whilst Yosano town in Kyoto also signed an MOU with Aberystwyth on peace and friendships. In September, Himeji welcomed a visit by the Mayor of Conwy to celebrate 30 years of UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage accreditation of its castle, which is twinned with Conwy Castle. The Mayor met Japanese travel agents, visited local elementary schools and joined our Japan office's business networking dinner involving the Himeji Chamber of Commerce and major Japanese companies focused on de-carbonisation projects.

An increasing focus of the team has been increasing awareness of Wales as a globally responsible nation. The team exhibited at an Earth Day Tokyo event with the Afan Forest Woodland Trust, founded in Japan by the late C.W. Nicol, and spoke about biodiversity. Meetings have also taken place with parliamentarians and NGOs who are keen to find out more about Wales' experience of implementing its Well-being of Future Generations Act.

In January and February, the team met with the Government of Hokkaido and organisations representing Japan's indigenous community - the Ainu - to highlight our support for minority languages and discuss opportunities for collaboration.

Part of the year has also been preparing for Wales' presence at Osaka EXPO 2025 and the Wales in Japan 2025 campaign.

In China, it was the first year after the lifting of Covid-19 lockdowns, and 2023-24

was mainly driven by the market requirements of the education sector in Wales. There has been significant year-round support to promote Welsh universities and colleges on various joint programmes, sister schools, student recruitment partnerships, research projects, and alumni network development.

Meanwhile, a lot of effort has been put in place in preparing for meeting the demands by the emerging middle class, such as premium consumer products, medtech and public health care and services, as well as tourism promotion, plus the fields of new energy vehicle and consumer electronics.

In reflecting the requirements set by the education organisations, there were a lot of visits to China related mainly to the education sector. The team supported all visits and delivered education promotion events in market. Some highlights include:

- Neath Port Talbot College: two market visits to Northern China and Shanghai - 30 meetings were held, and 8 MOUs were signed. One regional centre of NPTC's Centre of Excellence for British Vocational Education in China (CEBVEC) was set up in Shanxi, and a Sino-British Centre for Industry-Driven Vocational Education was set up at NPTC by a partner (First Landing) from Beijing, building a good foundation and platform for NPTC to continuously conduct revenue-generation activities in the future, including teacher training, student exchange, curriculum mapping, and joint programme development.
- Cardiff and Vale College visited Chengdu in March and June for the MOU signing with the Fan-Mei Education Group. Their joint education programme on aircraft engineering is due to be approved soon.
- Four higher education promotion events were organised in Chongqing and Kunming in May, building up a platform for 8 Welsh universities to engage with agents, education authorities and universities in the region. Opportunities generated include an MOU between Wrexham Glyndwr University and Southwest Forestry University on joint education programmes in Renewable and Sustainable Engineering.
- Cardiff University visited Shanghai and Beijing for Alumni events resulting in alumni database increasing by 120 and WeChat followers increasing to

5,000.

- Cardiff University conference on 'Biodiversity Protection and Poverty Alleviation through Urban Planning and Design' in Guizhou to present Welsh advances in sustainable development and biodiversity protection.

There were several inbound visits into Wales, including Yunnan Provincial Education Department to Wrexham Glyndwr University, a delegation from Southwest Jiaotong University to Cardiff University. The team also supported the first summer school from Chongqing No.1 Secondary School with Gower College, funded through Taith.

On the trade side, notable success includes Health & Her signing its first contract and Green Earth reaching an exclusive distribution agreement. During the year, the team attended the 7th World Intelligence Congress in Tianjin, the China International Senior Service Expo in Beijing, the China Medical Equipment Fair in Shanghai, Smart China Expo in Chongqing, Food and Hotel China in Shanghai, Alcoholic Expo in Guizhou, and DRiNK Awards in Xiamen, to promote and identify trade opportunities. The team also attended the China International Fair for Trade in Services in Beijing. Export support was provided to Welsh companies across a variety of target sectors including medtech, greentech, IT, consumer products, food & drink and TVET. The team also recruited 4 Chinese buyers for attendance at BlasCymru in November.

On investment, the team maintained the relationship with existing investors including HKC and ABClonal to explore reinvestment opportunities. The team also proactively identified new inward investment leads. Six new leads were generated, with 2 from the automotive sector. With automotive replacing real estate as China's no. 1 pillar industry, the team sees big potential for Wales in the automotive and electrical vehicle sectors. Good relationships with China Association of Automobile Manufacturers (CAAM) and China Society of Automotive Engineers have been developed to lay the foundation for future work.

The team also attended the Greater Bay Area Conference in Shenzhen, MedTech FDI Roundtable in Chongqing, and Investment Salon on Tech &



Innovation in Chengdu, to promote Wales as an investment destination, and worked with DBT to bring a Consumer Electronics & Service Robotics delegation to Cardiff in March.

As China removed its Covid-related travel restrictions, the team re-started promoting tourism and highlighted outdoor adventure resources in Wales as a unique selling point. The team worked with Kendal China and Visit Britain on several offline events. This resulted in Kendal China bringing a business delegation on a 7-day exploration and business-matching tour to North Wales in October. A new trekking tour to the UK, including a 3-night stay in Snowdonia is being developed and promoted by Kendal China.

In terms of regional relations, the team was involved in Cardiff City Council's visit to Xiamen to celebrate the Cardiff-Xiamen 40th Anniversary of Sister City Relations and the 5th anniversary of sister city relations between Swansea and Wuhan was also promoted. Exchange visits were made from Xiamen to Cardiff and Wuhan to Swansea to strengthen the regional relations.

Other activities to raise profile of Wales included attendance at the King's Coronation and King's Birthday Party in Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing, Guiyang, Kunming, and Chengdu, where the team hosted Welsh diaspora, alumni and key business contacts.

### **3. Case studies**

## **Wales in France 2023-2024**

Wales in France was a collaborative initiative convened by the Welsh Government to spotlight resource and focus on France.

The year sought to utilise the profile-raising opportunities of the Rugby World Cup and work with partners within and outside of government to raise Wales' profile both in France and on the world stage, furthering economic and

international relations objectives by delivering strategic activations with focal cities and priority sectors where long-term, equitable and sustainable partnerships could be catalysed.

The promotion of contemporary Welsh values on an international stage was at the heart of all activities, with young, ethnically diverse, female and LGBTIQ+ voices platformed throughout the programme as well as consistently raising awareness of the Welsh language, history and culture. From a business perspective, we maintained our commitment to deliver economic growth and net zero through green energy, decarbonisation and sustainable policies for future generations.

France is an economic powerhouse for Wales; there are 80 French companies operating in Wales, employing more than 10,000 people. France is also the number one export destination for Welsh food and drink.

Overall, the year supported 5 trade missions to France, 4 inward delegations and seven strategic activations in the green energy and marine renewables space. This included a Welsh-French organised and First Minister-led symposium which built on a year of focused engagement with the eleven French companies and Welsh delegation present.

Many of the culture, sports and education-based projects of the year were also enablers that provided an engagement or profile-raising opportunity targeted to high-priority economic stakeholders. Early figures indicate that at least £30 million of investment into Wales has been secured, supporting more than 1,000 jobs.

Welsh culture is a huge strength in terms of promoting Wales on the world stage. Artists were vital in supporting the year's international relations aims – we had Tredegar beat-boxer Dean Yhell delighting Ambassadors and titans of industry at the British Embassy, National Dance Company Wales doing a half time performance at a packed Stade de France and Hijinx sharing expertise in disability theatre in Lille. Welsh culture has been a vital mechanism in profile raising and establishing new networks.



The Wales in France open-call cultural fund was an innovative partnership between the British Council in France and Wales, Wales Arts International and Welsh Government which:

- Invested in the development of Welsh artistic and cultural networks in France, this including a first-time partnership between the National Eisteddfod with Lorient Festival Interceltique.
- Showcased our culture, heritage, and language to new audiences, supporting NoFit States performances in Lyon and Gruff Rhys's debut of his new album in Paris.
- Facilitated skills-sharing and outreach work, enabling Newport theatre company Dirty Protest to work with young asylum seekers in rural France.

The year drew to a close with a reciprocal loan of paintings by Renoir and Van Gogh between Wales and France, enabled by a new partnership between Amgueddfa Cymru and Musée d'Orsay.

Several projects facilitated by the Wales in France year are being further supported by the British Council UK France Spotlight, including supporting the BBC National Orchestra of Wales to further collaborate with the Orchestre National de Bretagne in Rennes.

Communicating Wales' commitment to youth mobility and providing reciprocal intercultural experiences to young people in both Wales and France was a vital workstream for the year.

Throughout the Wales in France year, the Urdd Gobiath Cymru was able to engage more than 800 young French people in Welsh language activity across Lorient, Nantes and Lyon. The British Council has successfully developed 29 new schools' partnerships between Wales and France, as well as confirming a new school twinning between Nantes and Cardiff. Welsh Government's Cymraeg2050 team facilitated open-access Welsh lessons for 70 children and young people in Nantes.

The legacy for this work continues. Using Taith funding, the Urdd will support

100 Welsh children to attend Lorient Festival Interceltique this year, with a reciprocal visit of Breton children to Llangrannog.

UNESCO and OECD are headquartered in Paris, offering an opportunity to utilise the Wales in France concept as a springboard for profile raising engagement in areas of mutual interest. The year was kicked off with a First Minister-led 15-strong Welsh delegation heading up a learning and exchange networking with UNESCO secretariat and Member States to identify new relationships in the youth, arts, heritage, social values and language revitalisation spheres.

The Future Generations Office led on engagement with the OECD on well-being economies and is continuing to develop this work through a formal partnership with French think-tank 'Villes et territoires durables' to facilitate policy learning exchanges with Welsh and French public bodies.

An extensive programme with Brittany celebrated Wales' historic and cultural links and included an enhanced Wales presence at Lorient Festival Interceltique, Welsh language activities and an official signing of a revised action plan for continued cooperation at the year close event in Amgueddfa Cymru. The year aimed to develop new cooperations in the green energy and innovation sphere, an area which has significant economic and social potential for Wales.

The Rugby World Cup provided opportunities to capture the profile-raising opportunities of sport to create new links with strategic focus cities in France. The resulting sports diplomacy programme prioritised relationship development, as-well as showcasing and profile-raising activity underpinning the formal engagement from three Ministerial visits.

Scoping visits and multiple engagement points through the year linked Welsh partners with French counterparts for activations at all levels of society from policy dialogues between local authorities, to music showcases and commercial partnerships.

Wales Arts International continued to innovate in the sports diplomacy space,

leading an extensive cultural programme that coordinated with the Urdd activity and delivered public showcasing in fanzones of major Welsh artists, relationship building delegations of visual arts and dance and business showcasing at B2B congresses in Lyon and Paris.

Nantes is a city of art and culture with a progressive sustainability agenda and the rugby outreach here delivered 2 larger-scale showcase events, alongside an extensive programme of strategic activations and partner delivered activity in both Brittany and Nantes that included schools' outreach with over 800 children, Welsh language events, rugby hospitality, delegations, fanzone performances and business roundtables.

A highlight was Cardiff Council, Welsh Government and Nantes Métropole together supporting Clwb Ifor Bach and French venue Stereolux to collaborate on hosting a live music showcase where Welsh hip-hop and punk played alongside bands from Brittany, Bordeaux and Nantes. The opportunity also catalysed a first-time partnership between national broadcasters in Wales and France, S4C and France3 (French national free-to-air TV broadcaster), who partnered on filming and broadcasting the gig in Welsh, Breton and French.

Illustrating the commitment to working collaboratively, Wales adopted a local venue Maison de l'Europe as a Wales House for the tournament, operating as a temporary diplomatic hub. Through the partnership, the venue hosted a month of activity including open-access Welsh lessons, an exhibition and a networking event and cultural showcase. Six months later, our contacts there are still fielding enquiries from Nantes partners for engagement with Wales.

As the second city of focus for the Rugby World Cup's sport diplomacy activities, Lyon shared Welsh values on inclusion, diversity and sustainability which, along with a focus on food showcasing, were the touchpoints Wales used to build engagement. Welsh Government worked collaboratively with Hybu Cig Cymru, Food Innovation Wales and Cité Internationale de la Gastronomie on a Minister-hosted food and culture showcase to celebrate France being the number 1 export destination for Welsh produce.

The Urdd supported a 35-strong Welsh youth choir from Carmarthen to perform across the city with celebrated soprano Jessica Robinson and led outreach workshops in local secondary schools. The Wales Arts International cultural programme also platformed Querin, contemporary dancers who weave Welsh folk-dancing with Queer nightlife, to showcase at the famed Lyon Biennale and perform in fanzones.

As a global example of multiculturalism and diversity in the arts, Welsh engagement with Marseille included a performance by Butetown-based Welsh breakers Jukebox in the Vieux Port and a visit by the Arts Council Wales Agent for Change, opening the doors to more work together understanding opportunities to support diversity in the arts.

The Wales in France year opened and closed with Wales hosting a delegation of French business and diplomatic contacts at the Six Nations, illustrating the importance of capturing the profile-raising opportunities of sport to the wider programme. The team has commissioned an evaluation of the year to take place to inform, and evidence, future policy and further our understanding and expertise of sports diplomacy and cultural relations practice and policy at a variety of scales and ambitions.

## Wales and Africa

One of the key ambitions in our International Strategy was to establish Wales as a globally responsible nation. The Welsh Government's Wales and Africa programme aims to fulfil this ambition by developing sustainable partnerships in sub-Saharan Africa, supporting the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. For almost 20 years, Wales has been developing and deepening community or institution-based links and partnerships with sub-Saharan Africa. Partnerships characterise the Welsh approach to international development, sharing experiences and knowledge in a spirit of mutual respect and reciprocity.

The Wales and Africa Action Plan (2020-2025) set out a number of key actions

that supports Wales in delivering the ambition of being a globally responsible nation.

Several key achievements were made against these actions during 2023-2024, including working closely with Fair Trade Wales, Scottish Fair Trade Forum and the Scottish Government to develop new criteria for nations to use when working towards and maintaining their Fair Trade Nation status. An event to highlight the new criteria and celebrate 15 years of Wales' being a Fair Trade Nation was held in the Senedd in July 2023.

The Wales and Africa team also arranged 9 successful International Learning Opportunities (ILO) placements during 2023-2024 – 1 in Uganda, 3 in Namibia and 5 in Lesotho. Welsh professionals from different sectors and at different stages in their careers were able to share their expertise and help organisations in Africa to effect positive changes. Participants felt the benefits too, returning home with new skills and fresh perspectives that make them more effective in their everyday roles.

The UN's Sustainable Development Goals include a strong commitment to gender equality - a recognition that women are entitled to the same rights and opportunities as men, and to lives free from violence and discrimination. The Wales and Africa Action Plan commits to taking action on gender and equality in Uganda and Lesotho.

In the Mbale and Masaka districts of Uganda, women often find themselves marginalised in political, economic and social life. In a year-long pilot project, Size of Wales aimed to strengthen the role of women and girls in tackling climate change and managing natural resources sustainably – helping them to become agents of change. With funding from a Wales and Africa Gender Empowerment Grant, Size of Wales co-designed the project with three partner organisations: Mount Elgon Tree Growing Enterprise, Masaka District Landcare Chapter Leadership, and the International Tree Foundation. Their work included a range of initiatives to make a positive impact on the lives of women, their households and their communities.

One of the most effective activities was the training of 44 gender champions – 25 women and 19 men. They were able to improve their communication, teamwork, coordination and networking skills. In addition, 40 women were trained in leadership and decision making, and were able to pass their training on to a further 664 women. The project has produced sustainable and climate-resilient livelihood opportunities, helping women to generate income by setting up kitchen gardens, growing cashew nuts and keeping bees. The participants were provided with seed funding, training and essential equipment. In providing easier access to clean water, the project also helped to improve quality of life for women in rural Uganda – some of whom had previously needed to walk for up to four hours to collect water. These absences from the home had been identified as a frequent pretext for domestic violence. Nineteen local savings and loans associations received training support, tackling topics including financial literacy, management, record keeping and loans recovery.

The project challenged and changed attitudes to gender in Ugandan rural communities. Women are now able to buy land in their own names – a practice not previously permitted. Participants have reported increased confidence in making decisions, both at family and community level. A number of women are now planning to stand in local elections. Within Wales, these stories have been widely shared to raise awareness of the impact that climate change has on women, and their role in tackling the crisis. Presentations were held during Wales Youth COP27 events, the Hub Cymru Africa summer summit, events to mark International Women’s Day, and visits to schools and community groups. Size of Wales has engaged with more than 700 young people and other members of the public, including many from the African diaspora living in Wales.

A number of Welsh organisations received funding through the Wales and Africa programme to work in close collaboration with their African partners, to deliver life-changing projects: providing better livelihoods for women, promoting gender integration to fight the effects of climate change, and helping girls complete their education. For example, working with partner organisations in Uganda, Size of Wales designed a project that empowered rural women to tackle climate change and sustainability issues in their communities. This project also helped worked towards the tree planting commitment set out in our Action Plan, to support the

distribution of over 3 million trees every year in Uganda, working towards Size of Wales' target of 50 million trees by 2030.

In March, the Wales and Africa programme supported Hub Cymru Africa to hold an extremely successful and vibrant celebratory event in the Senedd. This event recognised the hard work, dedication and achievements of the international development and solidarity community in Wales, who work tirelessly towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

## **Wales' Relationship with Birmingham, Alabama**

Wales has a relationship with the city of Birmingham, Alabama, which spans decades. The relationship was born out of the response by the people of Wales to the tragic events that took place on 15 September 1963, when the 16th Street Baptist Church was bombed in an act of white supremacist terrorism committed by the Ku Klux Klan. The explosion at the church killed four girls attending Sunday School and injured a further 22 people. The church itself suffered significant damage, a gaping hole was blown into its side, all of the windows were shattered and the face of Jesus in the church's main stained-glass window was destroyed.

The bombing was a significant moment in US history, altering forever the course of the civil rights movement and became, according to many, a catalyst for the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The bombing was reported internationally. As a gesture of solidarity with the African American community in Birmingham, the people of Wales raised funds for the creation of a stained-glass window for the church, designed by Welsh artist John Petts. The Wales Window depicts the crucifixion of a black Christ, the right hand pushing away hatred and injustice, the left offering forgiveness. The window was dedicated in 1965 and is still a central part of the 16th Street Baptist Church community.

Building from the historic link between Wales and the 16th Street Baptist



Church, there has been ongoing activity between organisations in Wales and Birmingham, with a focus on education and culture. The Welsh Government's Atlanta office has worked to develop relationships and facilitate connections since 2018. Stakeholders have expressed interest in growing the relationship with Wales, given this natural connection, and contacts on both sides of the Atlantic have been welcoming and enthusiastic.

Former Education Minister Kirsty Williams visited in 2019. The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) developed an annual study abroad programme at Aberystwyth University, signing an MOU in 2020 and in 2022, a choir from Urdd Gobaith Cymru, Wales' largest national youth organisation, visited the city before a reciprocal visit to Wales by the UAB Gospel Choir in summer 2023.

2023 saw the 60th anniversary of the bombing and a series of events took place in Wales and Alabama to mark this occasion. One of the cultural partnerships that has grown over the years is between the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) and the Urdd. In June 2023, UAB's Gospel Choir performed across Wales including at the Urdd Eisteddfod in Llandovery and live on S4C. In Cardiff, the UAB Gospel Choir held a performance event at the Senedd hosted by the First Minister and in the presence of John Petts – the Wales Window designer's - 2 sons.

In September, the Minister for Economy travelled to Alabama to sign an International Friendship Pact between Wales and Birmingham and commemorate the 60th anniversary of the bombing. In addition, he undertook a wider programme, meeting with businesses and economic institutions from the region, prominent US, State and City officials and leaders from Alabama's civil rights movement. The minister spoke alongside US Supreme Court Justice, Ketanji Brown Jackson, at the invitation of the 16th Street Baptist Church as it commemorated the 60th anniversary of the bombing.

The minister's contribution to the ceremony also gave Wales the opportunity to pay tribute to the enduring legacy of the campaign for racial justice that Birmingham has championed, which has inspired people of colour across the world, including here in Wales. He was able to meet with friends and families of



the victims and deliver a message of solidarity and friendship on behalf of the people of Wales. In a moving moment of the visit, the minister was welcomed at the home of Lisa McNair and Kimberly Brock McNair, whose 11-year-old sister Denise was among those killed in the bombing, and presented them with a gift from Wales. He also heard about their father's efforts to document the Civil Rights Movement and life as an African American during the 1960s through photography.

Over the last 6 decades, Wales and Birmingham have forged a long-standing and meaningful relationship based on friendship. The minister's visit was an opportunity to formalise this friendship through the signing of an International Friendship Pact, between Wales and the city of Birmingham, with Mayor Randall Woodfin signing the agreement on behalf of Birmingham. It is hoped that, in coming years, the Pact will build on these connections by fostering greater collaboration, enhancing cultural exchanges, supporting opportunities for stronger economic growth, and creating mutual benefits for both regions across the key areas of Arts and Culture, Life Sciences and Healthcare, and Education.

To symbolise this friendship, the Minister took part in a tree dedication ceremony in Kelly Ingram Park, alongside Mayor Woodfin. They dedicated 4 trees symbolising the memory of the 4 girls who were murdered - Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Morris Wesley, Carole Robertson and Denise McNair. A commemorative plaque was unveiled to mark the 60 years of friendship between Wales and Birmingham. The plaque contains text in Welsh and English – “Mewn undod mae nerth – Strength in unity” – this important Welsh phrase was central to the minister's remarks at the ceremony, the Friendship Pact itself and was reflected throughout the entire visit.

The minister took part in a panel session with leading activists from the Birmingham civil rights movement at the historic Sloss Furnaces. This was an opportunity to discuss lived experiences and the actions that we are taking in Wales and Alabama to combat racism. Conversations around the publication of the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan demonstrated Wales' commitment to equality. The session was also attended by young people from the Urdd, who were in Birmingham to learn about civil rights and promote the 2023 Peace and Goodwill

message about anti-racism.

Finally, there was an opportunity to bring together partners who had supported the visit and developed the Friendship Pact. Birmingham Sister Cities hosted a traditional Southern cookout reception for key stakeholders across business, education, and culture in the Birmingham and Wales partnership. The event was an opportunity to spend time with young volunteers from the Urdd alongside civil rights activists and the partners responsible for delivering our collaborative activities.

This was a visit of solemnity and commemoration, but also one that looked ahead to a better tomorrow. In addition to prompting future exchanges, a roundtable with the business ecosystem in Birmingham identified promising opportunities to take forward links with Wales in fields ranging from oncology and automation in manufacturing. The International Friendship Pact reaffirmed joint commitment at both the political and community level to drive the relationship forward.

Just a few days after this visit, the US Ambassador to the UK, H.E. Jane D. Hartley, came to Wales. Ambassador Hartley discussed the Birmingham Commemoration and expressed interest in supporting efforts to strengthen the bonds between both communities to help sustain a positive legacy for people in Wales and the USA, cementing this friendship at all levels.

## **Compound Semiconductors - the Wales Offer**

Wales is home to the first compound semiconductor cluster in the world. The cluster is home to highly innovative companies, skilled workers, and university-led advanced research & development (R&D).

The cluster has been identified by the Welsh and UK governments as an area for high potential growth. In south Wales, the cluster is dominated by US investors that provide the region with high quality, well-paid jobs. Given this, and

the high potential for growth that has been identified, there has been a focus on promoting what Wales has to offer in this sector, primarily within the USA, but also globally at events in markets such as South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and Germany.

This focus on the compound semiconductor sector has already promised to deliver more than \$300m in new investment into Wales from the USA alone – supporting more than 600 jobs this year and over the next couple of years. Further investments to grow the sector are also in the pipeline. Many of the American investments are as a result of relationship building between the CEOs of major companies in the USA and Welsh Government officials in Wales and overseas.

There have also been a number of outward facing activities during the year to promote the sector on a global scale.

## USA

In March 2023, the Minister for Economy visited KLA in California to discuss plans to invest \$100 million and create 200 jobs at its Newport facility. Commercial confidentiality, and the timing of the meeting, meant that this was not included in the 2022-2023 annual report. KLA's investment includes a new research, development and manufacturing facility.

The new state-of-the-art innovation centre will provide over 25,000 square feet of cleanrooms for R&D and more than 35,000 square feet of bespoke manufacturing assembly halls, whilst also including offices, cleanrooms, storage and support facilities to accommodate up to 750 employees.

Commitment from Ministers, supplementing the day-to-day relationship developed between our US and Wales-based teams and the company resulted in a substantial investment into Wales from a global leader in the sector. KLA's CEO has spoken highly of the sector in Wales saying that the investment can take advantage of the "region's attractive talent pool and benefit from an

appealing quality of life with access to many international sporting events, historic parks and outdoor activities”.

Working with our partners, CS Connected, the US team attended the CS ManTech conference in California in May 2023. This conference allows us an opportunity to reflect the innovation within Wales’ compound semiconductor supply chain.

In July 2023, a delegation from the Welsh Government attended the Semicon West conference in California. During this conference, discussions were had with existing investors, new investors and the US Department of Commerce. Based on the UK Government’s endorsement of Wales’ compound semiconductor capability, we worked with the Department for Business and Trade in San Francisco – taking part in some of the visits and meetings arranged by DBT, alongside our own programme. As a direct result of attendance at this event, one US investor could announce an investment in Wales in 2025 creating 50 jobs. This is a unique private-public sector partnership involving the company, the CS Catapult and local universities, bringing high value jobs to our graduates.

In October, the US team visited Arizona with the British Consulate General in Los Angeles to learn about the semiconductor sector in Arizona and to raise the profile of the sector in Wales. The Welsh Government sponsored a reception on collaboration opportunities between both sides of the Atlantic.

Working with Space Forge US (a Welsh company which has expanded into the USA) and the UK Government, in January 2024 we supported an event which explored space manufacturing – including semiconductor manufacturing. The event was attended by industry, NASA and federal government leaders.

SEMI is a California-based organisation that promotes the semiconductor sector. SEMI UK was launched in January 2024 in Cardiff Castle with KLA and the Minister for Economy. It has been created to promote the UK's semiconductor sector and is made up of senior decision makers from across UK and international companies.

In February 2024, the US team attended Photonics West conference in California with CS Connected. This provided another opportunity to promote the cluster on the West Coast and specifically to users of semiconductors.

The year ended where it was announced that California-based Vishay had purchased Newport Wafer Fab. This will see a \$200 million investment being made to the Fab and 400 jobs safeguarded. Vishay announced it is ready to work with local universities on R&D opportunities. Given the success of the cluster, we will continue to promote the cluster at appropriate events in the USA and further our discussions with pre-identified investors.

Globally, it has been identified that there is a skills shortage within this sector. Universities in the cluster have a number of training opportunities as well as advanced R&D capabilities.

Throughout the year, officials from the Welsh Government in Wales and overseas have worked closely with CSConnected and relevant universities on the needs of businesses. Working together, we have been able to work directly with businesses on bespoke training packages which, in turn, creates jobs in Wales.

The CHIPS Act in the USA provides an opportunity for Welsh universities to be funded to undertake R&D with American partners. We have been undertaking scoping work with universities in the USA (primarily in Arizona) on potential areas of collaboration between Welsh and US universities. Working with CS Connected we are arranging a future mission for Welsh universities to visit Arizona to further develop potential research collaborations.

We are also working with Study in Wales and Global Wales on potential exchange and R&D opportunities in the field of advanced manufacturing and materials and semiconductor production. This would involve funding from the US Federal Government with discussions on this progressing.

The focus of the work on compound semiconductors has, primarily, been in the USA. However, a significant amount of work has been undertaken in other

markets to showcase Wales' capability in this sector. A selection of activities is below:

## AsiaPacific

- Australia - Visit from the Australian High Commissioner to Wales Tech Week to explore collaboration opportunities with the Australian compound semiconductor cluster.
- Japan - Swansea University is currently in dialogue with Japanese companies on collaboration programmes. Japanese investors have visited Wales to explore links for power electronics and high-power photonics as a result of work undertaken by the Welsh Government's Tokyo office. JETRO (the Japan External Trade Organisation) visited London and met with Welsh Government officials. In December, we attended Semicon Japan where we had a stand presence at the show and hosted a reception at the UK Embassy with a focus on Power Electronics, which was attended by more than 100 guests.
- Taiwan - In September, we attended Semicon Taiwan, supporting a UK trade mission of 18 companies and CSConnected, to promote Wales' offer.
- Malaysia - the Sarawak government (region of Malaysia) visited Wales three times, along with semiconductor cluster members, to discuss collaboration opportunities resulting in the signing of an MOU with CSA Catapult.
- South Korea - In February, we attended Semicon Korea to showcase Wales' offer.

## Europe

- Spain - Wales has signed an MOU with Catalonia which includes a focus on compound semiconductors. Catalonia is seeking to develop its own cluster. Wales Tech Week was attended by representatives from the Basque Country who had with a programme of meetings with Wales' compound semiconductor cluster.
- Belgium - Wales signed the European Silicon Regions Alliance (ESRA) in

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Brussels in September, which was attended by Derek Vaugan who signed on behalf of the Welsh Ministers. Wales was the only UK region to be invited to sign the partnership with 26 other regions across Europe. This has resulted in the first meeting of the Sherpa Working Group which took place in Munich to explore collaboration opportunities through Horizon and IPCE.

- Norway – working with CSCConnected, officials took part in Oslo Tech Week in September, presenting the Wales offer and collaboration opportunities to companies as well as attending workshops on AI and Energy.
- Germany - MOUs have been signed with Baden-Württemberg and Saxony with semiconductors included as potential areas for collaboration. In addition, a Declaration of Intent has been signed with the Bavarian government in November. The signings were attended by the Minister for Economy, who then visited Semicon Europa where he met with companies including KLA. Semicon Europa also resulted in a meeting with an investor who is keen to explore opportunities in Wales as it plans to open another centre in the UK to complement an existing UK facility.

## Bringing the World to Wales

Our increasing international profile is being reflected in the number of diplomatic and international visits to Wales – more than 100 last year. We use these opportunities to showcase our strengths and share our aim to be a globally responsible nation.

As well as an increasing number of visits, we have been able to attract and support impactful events which offer important opportunities for engagement, whilst also demonstrating our commitment to be an outward-looking nation. These offer moments for Wales to share our learning and to learn from others.

## Maintaining connections with Europe

Welcoming international and diplomatic visitors from Europe has been a key part

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of our activity over the last year. Many of which have made important statements about who we are, our shared beliefs and values and a commitment to continue to collaborate.

In May 2023, we facilitated the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission General Assembly which was held in Cardiff – bringing together ministers and senior officials from a range of EU regions, plus Québec, to discuss strengthened inter-regional cooperation in the Atlantic area. This was the first time the General Assembly had been held in the UK after Brexit and offered an important opportunity to demonstrate that we can continue to cooperate on shared interests following the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. Wales was able to take a central role in the Assembly which was attended by ministers and the Welsh Government's Representative on Europe.

## **Wales – an innovating and listening nation**

We have supported a number of visits to Wales that have discussed a range of innovative approaches here, including our groundbreaking Well-being of Future Generations Act and other activity such as our Anti-Racist and LGBTQ+ Action Plans.

In November 2023, we supported the 'Leadership for Future Generations' summit at Swansea University with Secretary Hillary Rodham Clinton, who was accompanied by former US President Bill Clinton. The First Minister also participated in the summit speaking as part of the panel. The event offered an opportunity to talk to an audience, which included young people and international attendees online, about a number of issues that show our commitment to global responsibility such as peace, community resilience, climate change and changing technologies.

## Using our international partnerships to showcase our strengths

We signed a number of new international agreements this year including Flanders, Baden-Württemberg, Silesia and Birmingham, AL in addition to taking forward our existing agreements. We have taken the opportunity to welcome delegations from our partner regions to Wales sharing our innovations and thinking.

In October 2023, we welcomed a delegation from our priority regions to Wales Tech Week in Newport.

The event creates opportunities to connect people and businesses in Tech.

By focussing on digital, cyber and artificial intelligence, we invited representatives from Silesia, Catalonia, the Basque Country, Flanders, Baden-Württemberg and Québec to attend the event and an international reception hosted by the Health Minister.

We also developed a bespoke programme beyond the event that included site visits to key industries in South Wales.

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