



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

EU Funds: Ireland Wales Co-operation Programme 2014-2020

2021 Annual Implementation Report – Summary



UNDEB EYROPEAIDD
EUROPEAN UNION



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

**Cronfa Datblygu
Rhanbarthol Ewrop
European Regional
Development Fund**

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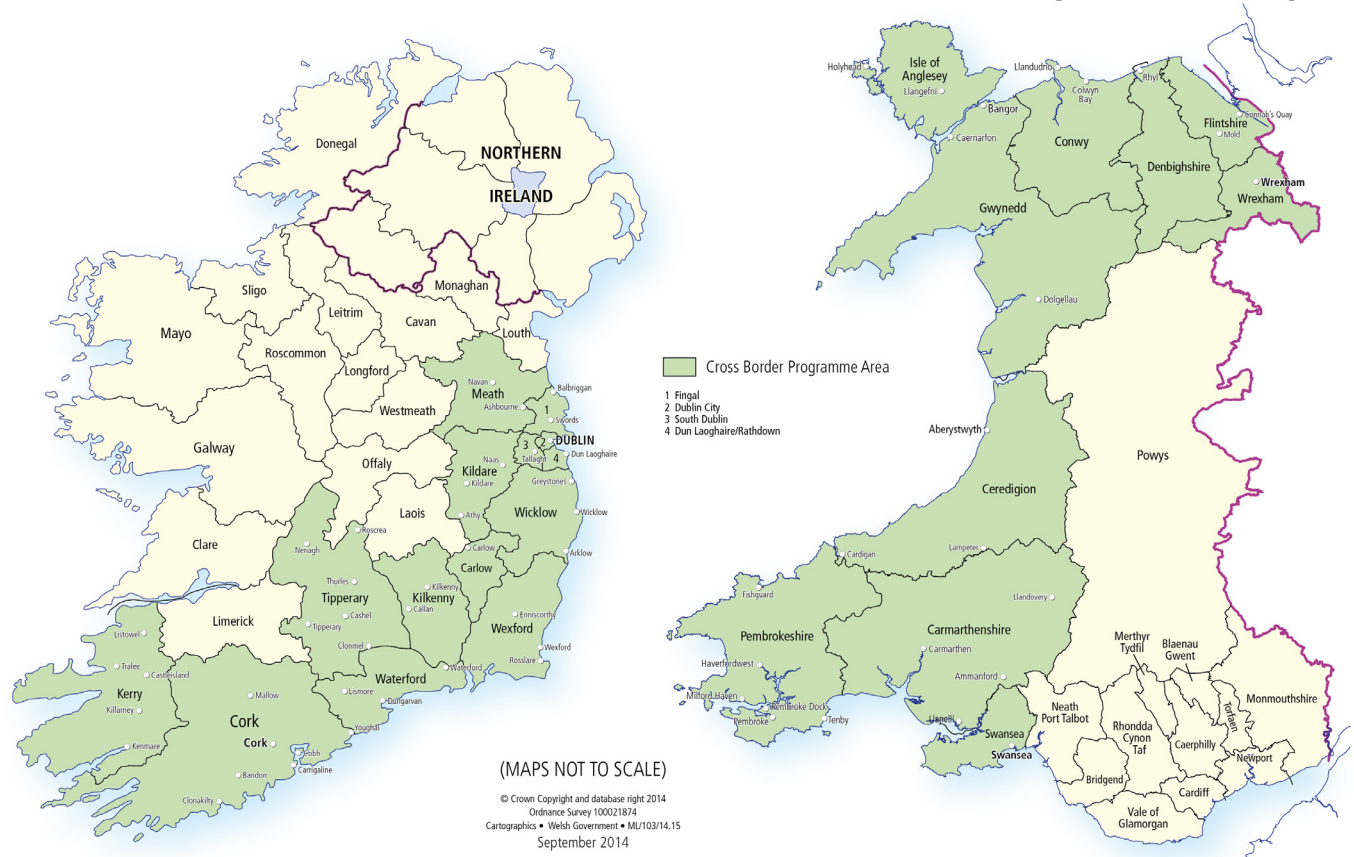
Introduction

The €100m Ireland-Wales Co-operation programme is one of a set of European Territorial Co-operation programmes which provide opportunities for regions in the EU to work together to address common economic, environmental and social challenges.

Funded through the European Regional Development Fund, the programme is connecting organisations, businesses and communities on the West coast of Wales with the South-East coast of Ireland.

The Irish Sea is a central focus for the programme given the maritime nature of the border between the two nations.

IRELAND/WALES CROSS BORDER PROGRAMME (2014-2020)

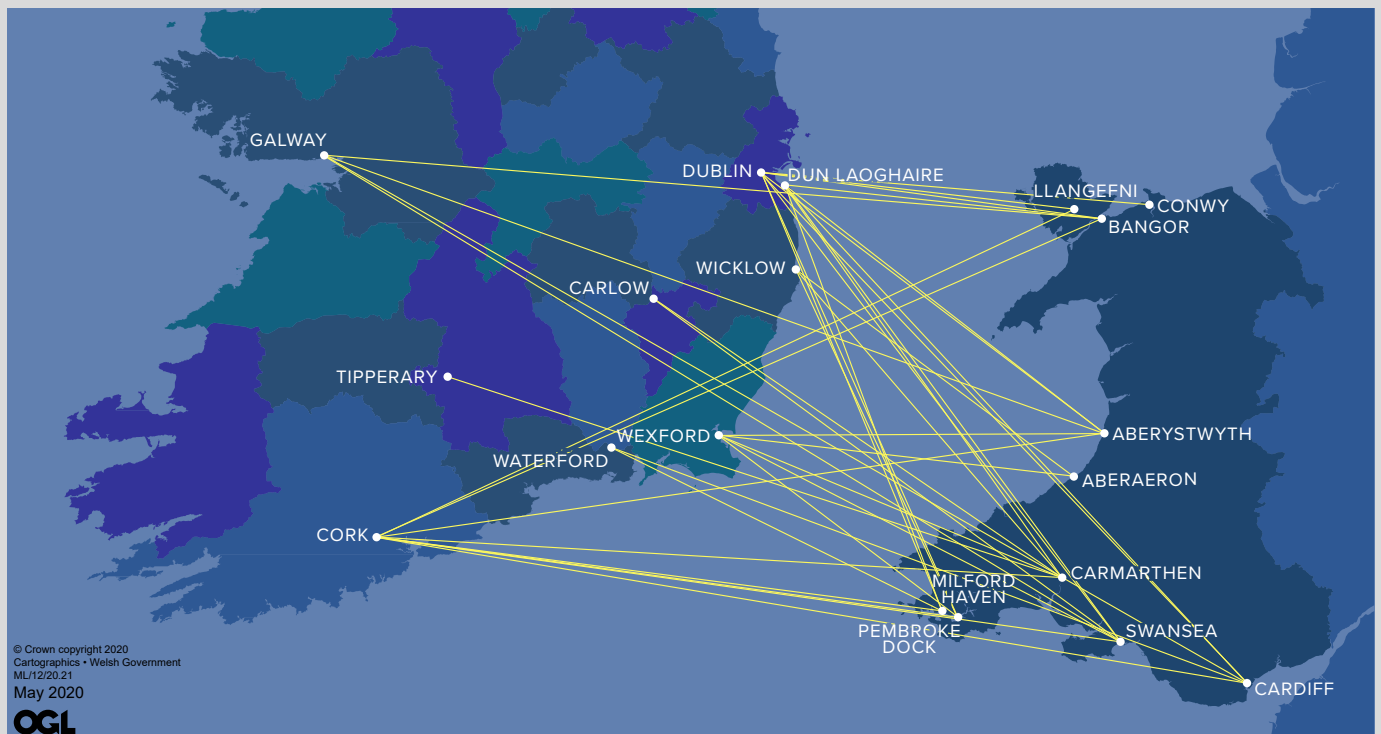


About the programme

The programme's vision is to provide a framework for organisations in the cross-border area to actively co-operate to address challenges and shared priorities on both sides of the Irish Sea, thereby contributing to economic and sustainable development of Ireland and Wales.

The programme's focus on the Irish Sea includes projects that are bringing together scientific expertise from both nations to increase capacity and research into the effects of climate change.

Universities and colleges are also linking with businesses to stimulate collaboration in sectors including food & drink, marine and environmental sciences and life sciences, while the programme is also utilising shared culture, resources and heritage to boost tourism and visitor numbers to the cross-border region.



Collaborative links made between organisations in both nations through the Ireland-Wales Co-operation programme

The Welsh European Funding Office, part of the Welsh Government, is the Managing Authority for the programme and is delivering the programme alongside its operational partners, the Southern Regional Assembly in Waterford, and government partners, the Department for Public Expenditure and Reform in Dublin.



Tionól Réigiúnach an Deiscirt
Southern Regional Assembly

Ireland's European Structural and Investment Funds Programmes 2014-2020
Co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Union

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Programme progress

Overview

Taking account of the issues surrounding the UK's exit from the EU and the pandemic, the programme continued to make significant progress.

By the end of 2021, the programme had fully committed with investment in 24 projects in the cross-border region.

During the year, the profile of the programme was raised through news stories and programme progress being announced by Ministers and covered by news outlets and stakeholders in both nations.

The programme website, www.irelandwales.eu, and [@irelandwales](https://twitter.com/irelandwales) twitter channel continue to publish breaking news and information about the progress of the programme.

Programme priorities

Priority 1 – Cross-border Innovation

Projects under this priority are increasing the intensity of knowledge sharing and collaborations between research organisations and businesses.

Priority 2 – Adaptation of the Irish Sea and Coastal Communities to Climate Change

Projects under this priority are increasing capacity and knowledge of climate change adaptation for the Irish Sea and coastal communities.

Priority 3 – Cultural and Natural Resources and Heritage

Projects under this priority are utilising the potential of natural, cultural and heritage assets to increase visitor numbers to coastal communities.

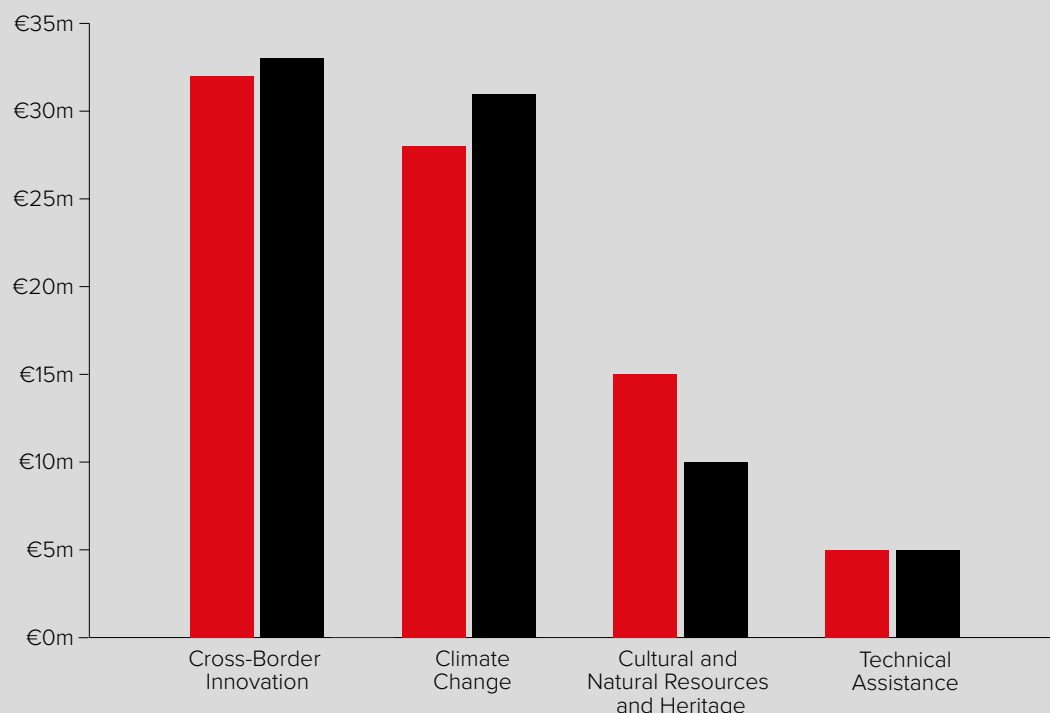
Priority 4 – Technical Assistance

This priority provides funding to support the management of the programme.

Financial progress

The following chart shows the total allocation of EU funds for the Ireland-Wales programme and how much has been invested in each of the three priorities by the end of 2021.

Chart 1: EU Grant: Budget and Approved



Progress by Priority

Cross-border Innovation

By the end of 2021, the total allocation of EU funds available had been invested under this priority for ten projects.

€2m support for environmental and healthy food project

In February, €2m EU funds was awarded to the 'Healthy Oats' research project, led by University College Dublin, in partnership with Aberystwyth University, Swansea University and Teagasc promoting the economic and environmental benefits of oats as a crop and as a healthy food product. The project will also help farmers and industry prepare for the changes pending under the EU Green deal, including reduced use of fertilisers and pesticides.

Consumer demand for oats is increasing with the demand for healthier products, with food manufacturers capitalising on new opportunities in food categories including cereal bars, breads and drinks. The higher protein and oil content of oats mean that they have very high nutritional value and, in addition, are an effective replacement for imported soya.

Researchers will work with agricultural communities and stakeholders to promote the health, economic and environmental benefits of growing oats – a crop which is ideally suited to the climate of both Ireland and Wales, and is well-established in traditional farming systems.

The researchers will also test the resilience and performance of different varieties under reduced and targeted input tillage systems, and will work to identify varieties that have a combination of enhanced performance under low inputs and superior nutritional and health benefits.

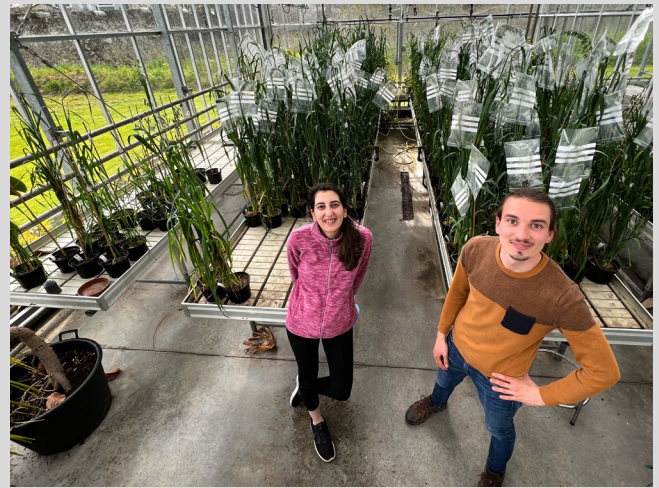
The project will also develop a digital platform to disseminate information and knowledge with industry and other stakeholders.

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Michael McGrath, TD said: "This project marks another successful cooperation between Irish and Welsh institutions supported by the EU maritime cross-border Ireland-Wales programme."

He added: "Joint participation by institutions in Ireland and Wales in EU programmes has been a positive force for deepening the close relationships between us and promoting ongoing and increased engagement across the Irish Sea."



Healthy Oats – Heritage oats being tested for yield



Healthy Oats – Glasshouse trials in University College Dublin

Adaptation of the Irish Sea and Coastal Communities to Climate Change

By the end of 2021, the programme had invested the total allocation of EU funds available for seven projects.

Bluefish project achievements celebrated in online closure event

In June, the BlueFish project, backed by €5.2m EU funds, marked the closure of their operation through an online conference which was attended by the Welsh Government Deputy Minister for Climate Change.

Led by Bangor University, in collaboration with Aberystwyth University, Swansea University, University College Cork, Bord Iascaigh Mhara and the Marine Institute, BlueFish aimed to assess and disseminate knowledge of risks and opportunities for commercial fish and shellfish under predicted climate change impacts to a wide range of interested parties across the Irish Sea in a variety of different mediums. As well as translate the knowledge, expertise and best practice into region-wide adaptation strategies for the benefit of coastal communities.

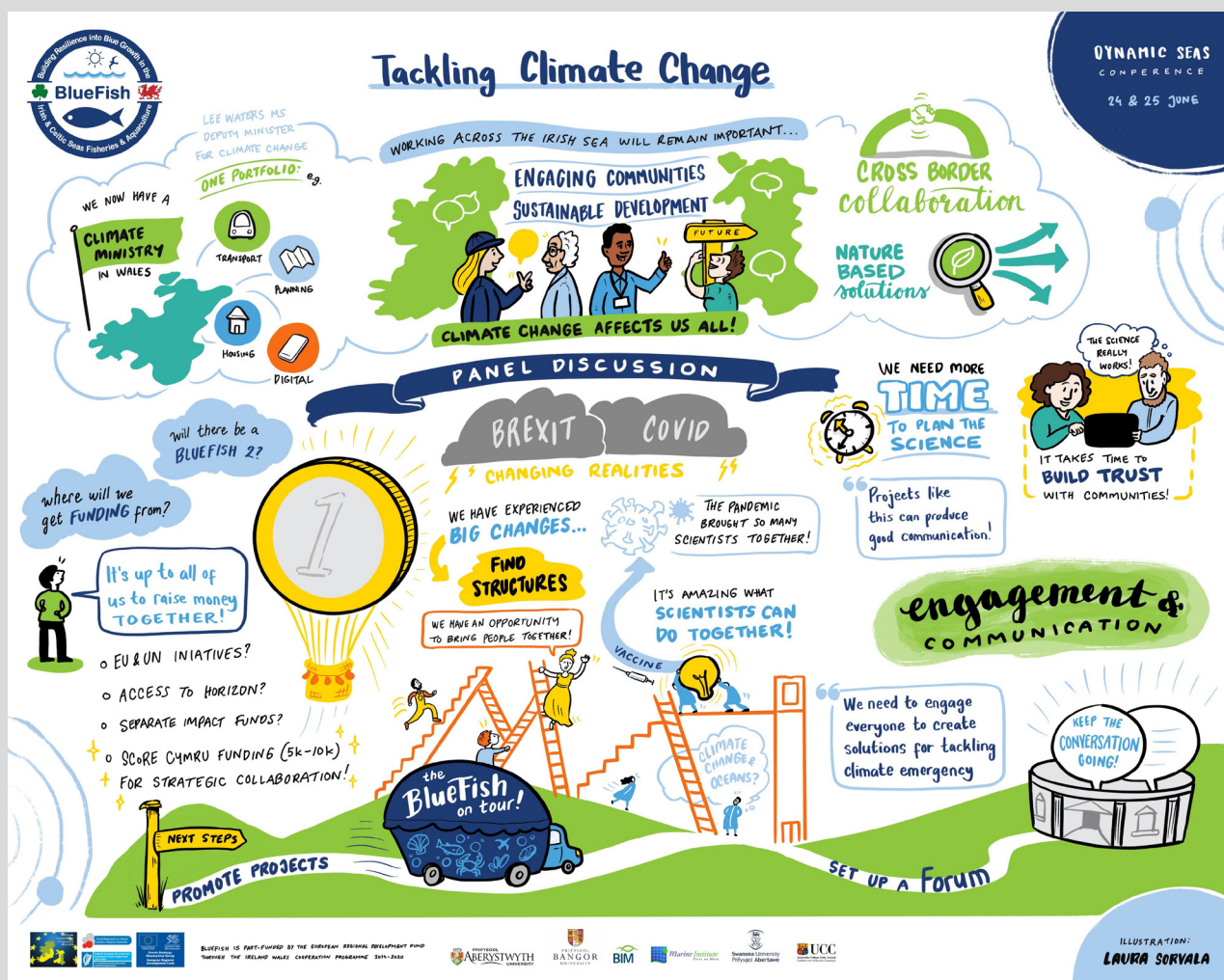
The conference was an opportunity for BlueFish to report back on their key findings and the impacts of predicted climate change scenarios across the Irish Sea, with respect to commercial fish and shellfish which included how Marine ecosystems provide economic value of at least €3.2 billion annually in the study area and how environmental management

has a significant impact on the economic value provided by coastal and marine ecosystems.

The conference was also an opportunity to showcase how the project brought art and science together to demystify climate change and explore the resilience of coastal communities by producing a significant portfolio of multimedia artwork and infographics.

The Welsh Government Deputy Minister for Climate Change, who provided the closing address, said “Engaging with local businesses and all members of a community to take a shared responsibility for how they interact with the environment is absolutely vital.

“Using innovative engagement methods, as the BlueFish project has done, through art, infographics and other mediums, is essential to ensure we communicate these, sometimes difficult or complex messages in a way that is easy to understand and to engage with.”



Bluefish: Tackling Climate Change

Cultural and Natural Resources and Heritage

By the end of 2021, the total allocation of EU funds had been invested under this priority for six projects.

Additional £1.5 million for second phase of cross border tourism project

In March, Celtic Routes received an additional £1.5m EU funds to deliver the second phase of the project, extending it until 2023.

Celtic Routes is a partnership project between Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire County Councils and the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority in Wales and Wicklow, Wexford and Waterford County Councils in Ireland.

It's a branded collection of tourism experiences encouraging travellers to visit Ireland and Wales to discover the Celtic spirit by suggesting immersive and authentic experiences in West Wales and South East Ireland.

Phase 2, led by Carmarthenshire County Council, focusses on developing the legacy of Celtic Routes by further enhancing the visitor experience working closely with the tourism sector.

Enabling existing and new Celtic Routes networks to develop, building on the success so far and to work together to recover from the impact of the pandemic.

Irish Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform Michael McGrath TD said: "I want to congratulate the Celtic Routes project for its success in securing additional funding under the Ireland Wales Cooperation Programme 2014-2020.

"As the tourism industry seeks to recover from the impact of Covid-19, the extension of this project, which promotes ongoing cooperation between West Wales and the sunny South East of Ireland, reminds us of the wealth of natural beauty, heritage and tourist amenities that are so important in contributing to regional development in both economies."



Celtic Routes – Llansteffan Castle



Celtic Routes – Castell Henllys Iron Age Village



Celtic Routes – Lough Tay

Project examples

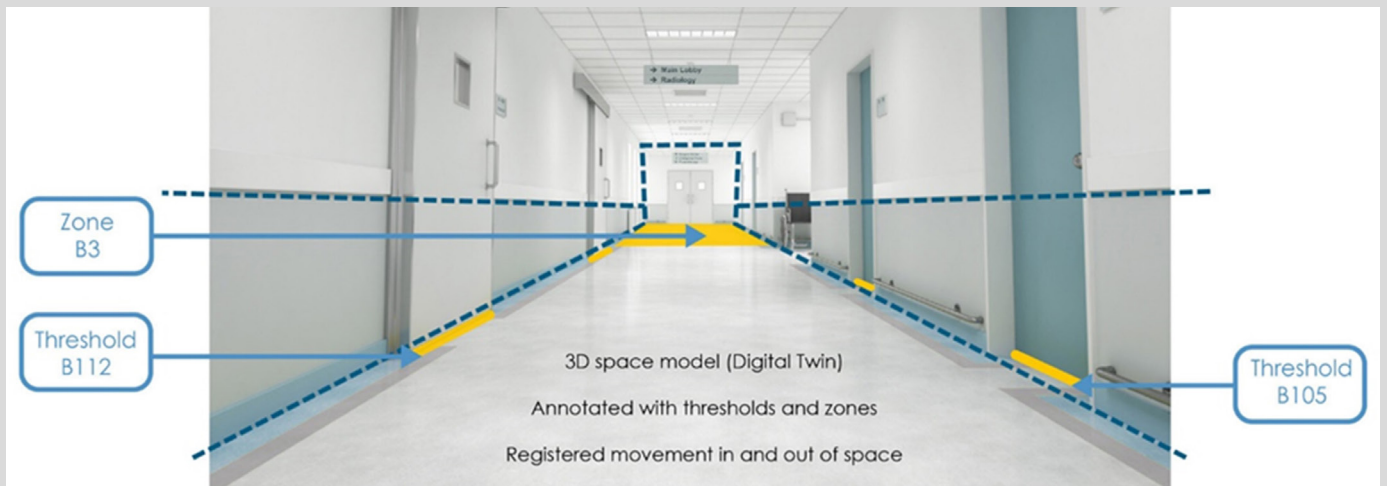
CALIN

The Celtic Advanced Life Science Innovation Network (CALIN) is led by Swansea University in partnership with Bangor University, Cardiff University, University College Dublin, Tyndall National Institute-Cork, and the National University of Ireland Galway.

Enabling SMEs in the Life Science sector to access knowledge, skills, state-of-the-art technologies and networks from world-leading Higher Education Institutes, CALIN has supported over 156 enterprises across Ireland and Wales through 45 cross-border collaborative R&D projects. This has enabled 17 new products and processes to be introduced to

market, attracted €5.5M of private investment and created 13 highly skilled jobs in the sector.

Collaborations with SMEs have developed new technologies, products, processes and services including pioneering a new class of real-time location systems for the global hospital market resulting in a new wearable device for vulnerable patients; improving cell therapy production; developing a digital therapy platform to combat obesity; improved non-invasive cortisol testing; and developing a new inhalable treatment for respiratory viruses such as influenza, the common cold and SARS-CoV-2.



CALIN – Real-time location system

SELKIE

The Selkie project is developing a cross-border network for the Marine Renewal Energy industry, bringing together industry and academic on collaborative R&D projects and pilot demonstrations at sea to harness low carbon energy.

In the summer of 2021, the testing on a new tool developed by Selkie to grow understanding of tidal streams was supported by fellow EU funded Marine Energy Test Area (META) project at their site in Milford Haven.

The project also held a series of 13 'Meet the Expert' events from May to November 2021 which focused on providing business support for companies looking to diversify into the marine energy sector. These events were an opportunity for small and medium-sized enterprises (SME's) to learn more about key themes from experts in the sector to help them enter and work in this innovative and growing industry.

Further events included the Selkie Network Showcase Event, held in July, an opportunity to promote the range of the 85 companies and their projects that are part of the Selkie network, with a Supply Chain Workshop also held in November 2021.



Selkie and META collaboration

CCAT

The Coastal Communities Adapting Together (CCAT) project supported coastal communities to understand and adapt to climate change, engaging with over 5,000 people in Pembrokeshire and Fingal County.

An initiative launched in April 2021 saw over 1,930 native tree species planted by the local community in the Milford Haven Waterway in a month with the project also developing a Tree Carbon Calculator to provide the community with a method to continue their climate adaptation journey.

Over 2,000 young people were involved with the project through online geo-games workshops using Minecraft, as well as online school exchanges between students highlighting the impacts of climate change in their local area.

CCAT's animated Sea Change, Take Action! and augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) experiences provided an engaging visual approach to the threats of sea-level rise due to climate change and the available solutions to deal with coastal erosion, with the Citizens' Observatory providing a mapping tool for collecting crowd-sourced data, producing easily accessible data for the local communities and policy makers.

The CCAT project ended in February 2022.



CCAT – STEM career day in Milford Haven



CCAT – Pembroke Dock CP School pupils

Ports, Past & Present

Ports Past and Present, led by University College Cork, works to increase public awareness of the culture and heritage of the port areas of Dublin, Rosslare, Holyhead, Fishguard and Pembroke Dock.

'Port Fests' a series of online community-focused events, showcasing the project to port communities featuring panel discussions, creative workshops and talks, were held in 2021 with other highlights including a cross-coastal local museums roundtable as part of Rosslare Port Fest, the 'If Objects Could Speak' creative writing workshop as part of Pembroke Dock Port Fest and a continuing series of monthly online 'coffee morning' sessions focussing on themes of heritage and creative interest across the port towns.

A partnership with Lancaster University has produced a downloaded project app to access the online heritage content that have been developed with local communities and work has also been underway on a series of promotional films shot throughout the summer in each of the port towns, which will be launched in the spring of 2022 along with a series of creative events and exhibitions highlighting local artistic talent to be held throughout the year.



Ports, Past & Present Team