

An inquiry into Wales – Ireland relations by the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

Comments submitted by Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales

Responses are focused on Amgueddfa Cymru's relationship with National Museum Ireland.

- **Wales-Ireland relations post-Brexit**
Amgueddfa Cymru first established a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Museum of Ireland (NMI) in February 2019. This was renewed in 2021 to mark the continued commitment of the strategic relationship between both national museums and in response to the Ireland-Wales Shared Statement & Joint Action Plan (2021-2025).
- **Current approach to bilateral engagement between the Welsh and Irish governments and whether it is fit for purpose post-Brexit.**
In terms of the cultural sector, our approach to bilateral engagement between the Welsh and Irish Governments is working well. NMI is our closest international partner. We are discussing a number of joint initiatives and share a commitment to cultural participation and widening engagement with our National Museums.
- **The Ireland-Wales Shared Statement & Joint Action Plan (2021-2025) as an approach to international engagement.**
Amgueddfa Cymru is committed to the Ireland-Wales Shared Statement & Joint Action Plan (2021-2025) as an approach to developing our relationships with Ireland. Our involvement in political and diplomatic engagements e.g. supporting Wales Ireland Forum,  has provided a platform for us to exchange policy perspectives, share learning and build collaborations to strengthen our relationship with NMI and the Irish Museums Association. The MoU between National Museums is enabling us to frame this work as part of delivering against the Ireland-Wales Shared Statement & Joint Action Plan (2021-2025).

In response to the Joint Action Plan, we have developed five pillars of focus for our ongoing strategic partnership. These place an emphasis on areas of shared interest, as well as those especially relevant to wider Museum practice in the wake of Brexit, COVID-19 and other global challenges. The five pillars respond in particular to the Culture, Language and Heritage area of cooperation in the Joint Action Plan, but also reflect other areas of co-operation in the Plan. They are currently largely focused on knowledge exchange and on sharing ways of working. The five pillars of mutual beneficial outcomes are as follows:

- **Strategic Development, Peer Mentorship and Learning** - NMI and Amgueddfa Cymru have establishing opportunities for peer review and learning to evaluate, assess and improve our ways of working. For example

- a *Cultural Rights, Cultural Democracy* learning and development conference in Caernarfon with museum workers, leading researchers and government representatives from Cymru, Éire, Alba, Kernow, Breizh, North and Latin America.
- **Decolonisation** - Both Amgueddfa Cymru and NMI are developing strategic initiatives, policies and procedures that address the overall process of decolonisation within our institutions.
 - **Climate and Biodiversity** - We are collaborating on best practice models for museums with extensive Natural History collections, and the opportunities these present.
 - **Mobility of Collections** - As national museums with multiple site locations in both rural and urban contexts, we are sharing methods of working to enable greater mobility of national collections across the communities we serve.
 - **Future Collaboration**- We are also identifying opportunities for future collaboration. For example, supporting the development of the Welsh and Irish languages.
- **The funding of future cooperation and collaborative projects between Ireland and Wales.**

There are opportunities in the future to develop co-funded cultural initiatives between Ireland and Wales although the post-Brexit European funding situation is making this more challenging. Funding is limited and providing seed funding to pilot collaborative initiatives would seem a reasonable way forward.
 - **Priority areas for cooperation between Ireland and Wales.**

In terms of Culture, Language and Heritage it would be good to build on the co-operation that has already been established within individual sectors (such as Arts, Museums and Libraries), to develop a wider co-operation across the cultural sector. This could bring together local and national cultural institutions in the creative and cultural sector to explore closer collaboration on a broader scale.

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