# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Ireland-Wales Ministerial Forum** |
| **DATE**  | **31 October 2023** |
| **BY** | **Mark Drakeford MS, First Minister of Wales** |

On 20 October, the Minister for Rural Affairs, North Wales and Trefnydd and I hosted the third annual Ireland-Wales Ministerial Forum in North Wales, joined by the Minister for Economy and Minister for Climate Change. From the Irish Government, we welcomed Micheál Martin TD, Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence, and Simon Harris TD, Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

The Ireland-Wales annual Ministerial Forum is a key commitment of the Ireland-Wales Shared Statement 2021-25, bringing Wales and Ireland closer together, strengthening connections for our mutual benefit.

The [Ireland-Wales Shared Statement and Joint Action Plan 2021-25](https://www.gov.wales/ireland-wales-shared-statement-and-joint-action-plan-2021-to-2025) include 6 areas of cooperation on devolved matters, these are:

1. Political and Official Engagement

2. Climate and Sustainability

3. Trade and Tourism

4. Education and Research

5. Culture, Language and Heritage

6. Communities, Diaspora and Sport

The themes of the Forum this year focussed on shared opportunities in renewable energy, skills development and language. The Forum also included a programme of visits in North Wales, showcasing and informing discussions of the key themes, looking at approaches for addressing common challenges and opportunities in these areas. Related site visits included, the port of Holyhead, Morlais energy project, Ysgol Morswyn, M-SParc and Tŷ Gwyrddfai. We also held a session with Agile Cymru partners to bring to life what can be achieved in joint projects.

Now at the mid-point of the 2021-25 period, we reflected on progress over the past year under the areas of cooperation. We agreed to continue working and learning together, and identified new areas where we can share information, such as our woodland plans and language technologies.

This is a significant relationship for Wales with our nearest European neighbour. Their presence showed the importance we both place on this partnership stretching across all parts of Ireland and Wales. There are other international networks where we work with Ireland, for example the British Irish Council, however our Shared Statement creates a direct bilateral relationship for us to collaborate on devolved areas.

This statement is being issued during recess in order to keep members informed.