

This document provides a translation of correspondence received from the National Library of Wales

Wales-Ireland Relations

Evidence from the National Library of Wales

The Library is grateful for the opportunity to contribute evidence to the inquiry being undertaken by the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee. As a cultural institution responsible for collecting Welsh and Celtic materials, the Library can cite a number of examples where it has collaborated – and continues to collaborate – with institutions and organisations in Ireland.

Legal Deposit

In its capacity as the only Legal Deposit Library in Wales, the Library works closely with Trinity College Dublin on the collection and processing of Legal Deposit materials from the United Kingdom (UK) and Ireland. These materials include print publications (books, newspapers) and digital publications (websites, e-books). The Legal Deposit Libraries Act 2003 and the Legal Deposit Libraries (Non-Print Works) Regulations 2013 allow the National Library, together with other legal deposit libraries in the UK and Ireland (the British Library; Cambridge University Library; the Bodleian Libraries, Oxford; the National Library of Scotland; and the Library of Trinity College Dublin). This collaboration is a means of sharing expertise and nurturing a close relationship with libraries such as Trinity College Dublin. In the wake of recent changes to legislation in Ireland, obtaining items from Ireland is more challenging. These changes are not a result of Brexit. In terms of the direct impact of Brexit on Legal Deposit issues, in light of the fact that items from Ireland cross the border, Brexit has increased the cost of collecting items as there are additional costs and paperwork associated with ensuring that print publications can reach the UK.

Collections and the Potential for Collaboration

As the Ireland-Wales Joint Action Plan (2021-2025) acknowledges, 'Culture, Language and Heritage' is an area of collaboration that offers a number of opportunities. Unique collections often provide opportunities to share and create projects that improve relations between the two countries. For example, a collection of Irish manuscripts has been used as part of bids for postgraduate projects and research. The recent project undertaken by the Library to establish a Musical Archive means that there is an interesting relationship with traditional Irish music and the Taisce Cheol Duchais Eireann (Irish Traditional Music Archive). As you would imagine, there are a whole host of links with Ireland across the National Collections, from estate archives to political archives, as well as other literary and cultural connections. The archives of the International Celtic Congress are also kept at the Library in Aberystwyth. In terms of developing parliamentary relations between the Senedd and the Oireachtas, as the institution that receives and looks after the Senedd

Cymru archives, there is an opportunity here to explore research projects in relation to the archives of both institutions.

Other Activities

Staff at the Library support a number of projects. The First World War commemorations were an opportunity to foster relations with Ireland, with a number of activities focusing on the links between Ireland and Fron-Goch near Bala, where 1,800 Irish were interned in a prison camp in 1916. Another current example is the Coastal Uplands project: Heritage and Tourism (Coastal Uplands: Heritage and Tourism (cuphat.aber.ac.uk/)). This project is being jointly undertaken by Aberystwyth University and University College Dublin. It seeks to gather information about areas that will showcase the natural and cultural heritage of coastal upland areas in Ireland and Wales, with the aim of increasing sustainable forms of tourism in those areas, leading to the creation of more sustainable livelihoods, communities and environments. The Library has been supporting this work by holding sessions that enable communities to gather information about the areas in question and upload it to Wikipedia. In terms of broader work related to Wikipedia, the Library also contributes to the Celtic Wiki group, which promotes and supports the development of Celtic materials on the Wiki platform. In respect of culture, there are also opportunities to share expertise in areas such as data management, which is an essential element of supporting a knowledge-based economy. Our links with institutions such as the Digital Repository of Ireland (DRI) offer important opportunities for learning and collaboration in this area.

Further Developments

In the Government's International Strategy, published in January 2020, Ireland is identified as one of the priorities. In addition, the Ireland-Wales shared statement and joint action plan (2021-2025) places a greater emphasis on the kind of relations that the Government wants to develop. The Library will develop a new International Strategy during the next year. There will therefore be an opportunity to consider where relations with Ireland belong in that strategy.

15-03-2023

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