

Continued European collaboration vital for Wales, says Finance Minister

The Finance Secretary will meet scientists from Bangor University and representatives from the industry to hear about the progress of two cross-border projects aimed at growing both nations' shellfish industries and assessing the effects of climate change in the Irish Sea.

The projects are part of the EU's Ireland-Wales co-operation programme, which is strengthening economic links and collaboration between both nations. The programme is one of a range of EU territorial cooperation initiatives in which Wales currently participates.

Mark Drakeford said:

"The Irish Sea is a vitally important shared resource between both our nations, so it's essential we work together to address the common challenges and opportunities arising from climate and environmental changes.

"These projects are harnessing the expertise of scientists on both sides of the Irish Sea to help preserve marine life and provide ground-breaking insights to safeguard and develop the fisheries industry in Wales and Ireland. They are excellent examples of working together to provide solutions to cross-border challenges."

As part of the Bluefish and Irish Sea Portal projects, Bangor University has teamed up with fellow Irish and Welsh universities as well as Ireland's Marine Institute and its seafood development agency, Bord Iascaigh Mhara.

The projects are investigating the migratory movement of commercial fish, risks from new non-native species and how climate change is affecting the health of fish stocks.

Fisheries businesses are also benefiting from guidance in adapting to environmental changes in the Irish Sea and support to capitalise on new commercial opportunities to develop the industry.

Bangor University's Vice-Chancellor, Professor John G. Hughes, said:

"Both the Bluefish and the Irish Sea Portal projects are excellent examples of international research which benefit the coastal communities of Wales and Ireland.

"By working together with universities, industry bodies and commercial partners on both sides of the Irish Sea, the world-leading expertise of Bangor University's School of Ocean Sciences

is having real and positive impact on the lives of those working in the marine sector.”

Mark Drakeford added:

“Welsh businesses and universities are benefiting very significantly from a range of initiatives supporting pan-European collaboration through the European Territorial Cooperation programmes. It’s vital we retain access to these opportunities as part of any new relationship with Europe.”