

New EU funded project set to attract more visitors to Welsh and Irish coastal regions

The Celtic Routes project, backed by €1.6m of EU funds, aims to encourage visitors to explore new areas of Wales and Ireland en route to their final tourist destination.

As many Welsh rugby fans head to Dublin this weekend for the Wales Ireland Six Nations match, it is travellers such as these, as well as the many visitors who frequently travel to Wales for similar events, that the project will be targeting.

Led by Carmarthenshire County Council, the project will focus on the areas of Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion in Wales and Waterford, Wicklow and Wexford in Ireland.

The Celtic Routes project aims to transform less well known areas from transit zones to new touring sites, increasing the time visitors spend in these regions and capitalising on the opportunities to boost local economies.

Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport, Dafydd Elis-Thomas AM, said:

“Celtic Routes is a great example of EU funds being used to benefit cross border areas in Ireland and Wales by encouraging visitors to explore the local scenery, hospitality and culture of wider regions , and not just tourist hot spots. By helping to increase visitor numbers, the project will stimulate economic growth and both create and safeguard jobs in the cultural, heritage and tourism sectors.

“In light of Brexit it is more important than ever that we support and celebrate the strong Celtic links between our two countries.”

The project will be developed through customer research, trade events and workshops as well as cross border visits by businesses in Ireland and Wales to bring together expertise and ideas.

The aim is to increase the visitor appeal of the targeted areas, including through the development of new trails linking local culture, heritage and the natural environment.

This exciting new initiative will complement The Wales Way, a ten-year strategic initiative launched to the international market last year, to celebrate a range of existing and planned routes and give visitors from around the world the confidence to explore more of Wales.

Irish Government Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure & Reform, Paschal Donohoe TD, said:

“Tourism is one of Ireland’s most important economic sectors and has significant potential to play a further role in Ireland’s economic renewal. On the weekend we welcome Welsh rugby fans to Lansdowne Road, the Celtic Routes project shows how EU funding can support tourism development in a cross-border context to the benefit of both countries.”

Cllr Peter Hughes Griffiths, executive board member for culture, sport and tourism for Carmarthenshire County Council, said:

“We have a fantastic opportunity to attract people who are passing through south Wales and Ireland as they travel to their final destination. We want people to stop and appreciate the amazing beauty of the countryside and coast, visit our vast array of attractions and stay, eat and enjoy as our guests before they travel on. Hopefully they will come back time and time again, and tell the world about what we have to offer.”

The Celtic Routes project is part-funded by the EU’s Ireland Wales Co-operation Programme, which supports collaboration between Ireland and Wales to address common economic and social challenges and opportunities.