**Ireland Wales Co-operation Programme: 2015 Annual Implementation Report**

**Citizen’s Summary**

**Overview**

The €100m Ireland Wales Co-operation Programme is funded through the European Union’s European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The Programme will support operations with partners based in both Ireland and Wales, focussing on activities across three key priority areas which will go some way to providing solutions to common challenges. The Irish Sea will be a central focus for the Programme given the maritime nature of the border between Ireland and Wales and the significant benefits which can be derived from this important resource.

This is the first Annual Implementation Report for the Ireland Wales Co-operation Programme, covering the reporting years of 2014 and 2015. The year 2014 focussed mainly on planning and negotiating the new Programme with the European Commission which was formally agreed in February 2015.

**Key achievements over 2014/2015 reporting years**

* A Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) was formally constituted in April 2015 and met three times during 2015.
* The PMC formally agreed in 2015 the:
* assessment and selection criteria for operations;
* Monitoring and Evaluation strategy; and
* Communications plan;

These documents and the minutes of the PMC can be found on the Ireland / Wales website at [www.irelandwales.eu](file:///%5C%5Chba76%5CERDMSCache%5Cberryj2%5CDefaultHome%5CObjects%5Cwww.irelandwales.eu)

* PMC delegated the responsibility for selecting operations to the Programme Steering Committee (PSC)
* Systems have been put in place to manage the Programme and a suite of guidance has been produced and published for organisations wishing to access funds.

**Financial progress**

At the end of December 2015 no operations were approved under the Programme. During 2015 there was, and continues to be, high levels of interest in the Ireland Wales Co-operation programme following its launch in March 2015. Consequently, the Joint Secretariat has met with a large number of organisations to discuss their proposals for funding from the Programme. As set out in the Programme there will be no financial instruments supported under the Programme.

Because there were no operations approved, there was no expenditure paid and no indicator achievements were made to the end of December 2015. There were 31 proposals in the pipeline in 2015 and the Managing Authority expects the first operations to be approved during 2016 and to begin delivery against the Programme's output indicators, as operations submit claims and incur expenditure.

**Operations approved up to the end of 2015**

**Cross-Border Innovation**

By the end of December 2015 no operations had been approved under the Priority.

During 2015 seventeen proposals were in the pipeline for the Priority, of which five were in the 'business planning' and one in the 'detailed business planning' stages.

The operation 'Dwr-Uisce' which is a proposal for integrated low carbon and smart energy solution for the water sector was at the 'detailed business planning' stage.

At the 'business planning' stage were 'CALIN', a proposal in Nano-Health technology; 'Irish Sea Portal (Pilot)', a proposal to test the concept a link between HEI’s, Research Institutions and SMEs operating in the Irish Sea; 'Food – Ascend', a proposal for improving competitiveness in the Food Sector; 'Bucanier', a proposal for improving the innovation processes in new and established SMEs; and 'More than a Club (Pilot)', a proposal designed to test the use of sports clubs as hubs to develop social enterprises.

Not all of the operations in the pipeline will progress to the business planning stages, nor be taken through to funding decision. No significant problems were identified whilst implementing the Priority during 2015.

**Adaptation of the Irish Sea and Coastal Communities to Climate Change**

By the end of December 2015 no operations had been approved under the Priority.

During 2015 seven proposals were in the pipeline for the Priority, of which four were in 'business planning', including: 'Acclimatize', a proposal for evaluating the impact of climate change on bathing waters; 'CHERISH', a proposal to look at the effects of climate change and sea-level rise upon the cultural and maritime heritage of small islands, headlands and reefs of the Irish Sea; 'Eco-Structures' a proposal exploring how coastal communities can meet the challenges of the EU strategy on adaptation to climate change while minimising the impacts on the natural environment; and 'STREAM' a proposal to develop and implement a technological solution to monitor coastal and estuarine regions for the impacts of climate change.

Not all of the operations in the pipeline will progress to the business planning stages, nor be taken through to funding decision. No significant problems were identified whilst implementing the Priority during 2015.

**Cultural and Natural Resources and Heritage**

By the end of December 2015 no operations had been approved under the Priority.

During 2015 one proposal was at the 'business planning' stage. This was 'Seascapes (Pilot)', a proposal to identify assets that can be used to add to visitor numbers. A further 6 proposals are at the 'pre planning' stage.

Not all of the operations in the pipeline will progress to the business planning stages, nor be taken through to funding decision. No significant problems were identified whilst implementing the Priority during 2015.

**Technical Assistance**

By the end of December 2015 no operations have been approved under the Priority axis. One project is in development and this will support the deliver and promotion of the Ireland/Wales programme.