Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

International Relations Annual Report

2024-25

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Ministerial Foreword

Wales is an outward-looking nation. In these globally challenging and uncertain times, we remain committed to forging international connections and partnerships that attract jobs, investment and opportunities.

We are a small nation but increasingly mighty in our impact and seen as a global innovator, particularly in sustainable development. As we mark ten years of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, our work is shaping actions by the United Nations and the European Union.

It has been five years since we published the Welsh Government's International Strategy. It was a bold statement of intent, a commitment to work across a number of areas to raise the profile of our country, to grow the economy and to tell the world that we are a globally responsible nation willing to play our role in future defining challenges and opportunities. Our diplomacy model is unique. Our Team Cymru approach ensures collaboration across government and with partners to maximise impact and benefits. I particularly want to pay tribute to our overseas network. These small teams based across the world – almost always co-located within British embassies and high commissions – facilitate engagement on a range of objectives from trade and investment to policy, engage with diaspora and showcase the best of Wales during moments such as St David's Day.

We work together overseas to make a difference at home. Our 2024 Wales in India Year saw an agreement reached with the Chief Minister of Kerala that has seen health professionals recruited and working in Welsh hospitals.

This report sets out the activity and outcomes that have been achieved over the last year. However, I am very clear that my focus is on what lies ahead. This year, I published the International Delivery Plan, setting out the 15 areas of activity where I will concentrate our efforts over the next year.

2025-26 will be a huge year for Wales on the international stage. Our women's football team will compete in Switzerland at the European Championships - its first major international tournament - and we will host an Investment Summit which will showcase Wales as a prime destination for investment and job creation. These are major opportunities – and there will be others – that will tell the world about our country, inspire new generations and create opportunities for people at home.

Eluned Morgan MS
First Minister of Wales

1. Overview

2024-25 has focused on strengthening international relations, expanding trade and investment opportunities, and promoting Welsh culture globally. This report - the fourth annual report covering the work of the Welsh Government's International Relations and Trade department - encapsulates the key achievements and challenges faced by our international offices throughout the year and serves as a testament to the collaborative efforts and strategic initiatives undertaken to advance our goals, promote Wales on the world stage, develop our international relations, sell Wales as a destination for inward investment and support Welsh companies to export their goods and services overseas. Following on from last year's report, it includes information about the Wales and Africa programme and how the programme has changed its scope to a broader Global Responsibility agenda.

Geopolitical Context

Significant geopolitical shifts in 2024-25 have influenced Wales' approach to international relations and trade. The evolving landscape of global politics, characterised by changing alliances, trade agreements, and economic policies, has presented both opportunities and challenges for Wales. The Hamas terrorist attacks on Israel in early October 2023, the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, and the escalation of conflict across the wider Middle East have increasingly dominated the foreign policy challenges faced by the UK and this impact has been felt in Wales. As the conflict has gone on, there has been an increased focus on the non-devolved nature of foreign policy.

Geopolitical tensions in Eastern Europe, particularly the conflict in Ukraine, highlighted the importance of solidarity and support among democratic nations, whilst Wales has participated in providing humanitarian aid to Gaza, reflecting its commitment to global responsibility.

This report covers 2024-25, so the effect of tariffs imposed by the USA on its trading partners in April 2025 are not covered; however, it is clear that 2025-26 will see a restructuring of trade relationships and supply chains worldwide. Welsh exporters may have to navigate the complexities of increased tariffs, re-evaluate their trade strategies and explore alternative markets to mitigate the impact of these tariffs. The Welsh Government will support businesses, providing resources and guidance to help them remain competitive in the global market.

The impact of climate change remains a critical issue, influencing geopolitical decisions and international collaborations. Wales has continued to advocate for sustainable practices and environmental stewardship, aligning its policies with global initiatives to combat climate change.

St David's Day

St David's Day was celebrated across the world, showcasing Welsh heritage and strengthening bilateral relationships.

In North America, the Washington DC office hosted a reception at Madison Hall of the Library of Congress, marking 10 years of the Friends of Wales Caucus. In New York and Chicago, receptions were held for Welsh diaspora, key stakeholders, government representatives, educators, and business leaders, and also promoted the recent launch of Wrexham Lager in the US, whilst the Los Angeles office hosted a dinner at the Consul General's Residence, attended by 30 tech and creative professionals from companies such as HBO, Fox, Disney and Paramount. The Canada office celebrated with the new British High Commissioner to Canada, Rob Tinline, at the Consul General's Residence in Toronto. The event featured Welsh products like Penderyn, Snowdonia Cheese, Welsh Lady Preserves, and Drop Bear Beer.

In Europe, Ireland focused on reinforcing the Wales-Ireland relationship through a series of events, including a visit to Dublin by the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales who attended the Royal Irish Academy's International Women's Day event and the IACES Annual Lecture.

The First Minister visited Brussels and Paris, where her programme included the annual St David's Day reception – with a theme centred around peace - whilst the team in Germany hosted investment-focussed receptions in Düsseldorf and Berlin.

In the Middle East, the Dubai office hosted a St David's Day networking event at the British Embassy, showcasing Welsh lamb, for companies visiting Gulfood and local diaspora. Additionally, a St David's Day event including an International Women's Day panel was held in Doha, with 108 attendees and featuring work by Welsh artists.

India celebrated the culmination of the Wales in India 2024 year with events across Mumbai and New Delhi and a visit by the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services. The Japan office hosted a reception at the Ambassador's residence for businesses, where the Urdd performed. Additionally, a special Eki stamp rally at the Himeji Castle was held, with over 700 Japanese consumers participating. In China, St David's Day events varied in focus - Beijing focused on Welsh alumni and diaspora, whilst Shanghai celebrated with businesses. In Chongqing, a joint celebration was held with the Chongqing Consulate, which secured the attendance of HM Ambassador.

2. Global Network

Our overseas offices network is split into three regions: Europe, North America and the Middle East and Asia. Each region has a focus tailored to its strengths, and Wales' interests, as outlined in their international remits. This section sets out highlights of activity undertaken in each region during 2024-25.

Europe

Trade and Investment

All offices across Europe have promoted the benefits of investing and trading with Wales. As part of the work to deliver the Ireland-Wales Shared Statement and Action Plan, the Ireland office has been very active in trade and investment. As part of the First Minister's visit to Ireland in October 2024, the Ireland team convened a business round table with the British Irish Chamber of Commerce at the BDO Advisory offices in central Dublin. She addressed 24 senior business leaders on the investment opportunities in Wales. These included several key Irish investors such as Dunbia, Green Link Interconnector, Simply Blue and ESB. Also in attendance were large US companies, including Microsoft and Oracle, and several key Irish Universities. There was an open and honest conversation around the table on challenges and opportunities in the Ireland-Wales business relationship.

In Brussels, the team demonstrated that its work is not confined to Belgium, supporting Welsh companies in the Clean Energy Export Cluster to attend the World Hydrogen Summit in Rotterdam in May, and organising an investment and sustainability-focused roundtable with Dutch businesses in Eindhoven, hosted by DAF Trucks. The team also supported a trade mission to Barcelona, represented Wales at a cyber event in Rome, a fintech event in Belgium and various Chamber events in the Netherlands, and supported an inward investment mission with Nordic Life Sciences companies to Wales.

In March 2025, as part of a wider St David's Day programme, the First Minister met with the CEO of Wind Europe, Giles Dickson, and spoke to several major wind energy developers, manufacturers and ports representatives over a roundtable hosted by Wind Europe in Brussels. This was an opportunity to raise the profile of the wind energy sector in Wales and reinforce Wales' commitment to renewable energy to major players in the energy industry. Wind Europe considered the roundtable to be one of the best it has held with politicians, and industry valued the depth of conversation and commitment from the First Minister. Following the roundtable, Giles Dickson invited her to speak at the Wind Europe Conference in Copenhagen.

Wind Europe Conference is one of the highest profile events for the wind energy sector in Europe, with over 16,000 participants, 250 speakers and 400 exhibitors. Team Brussels led on the First Minister's visit to Copenhagen with support from relevant Welsh Government teams. The two-day programme included a main stage address to an audience of 600+, a VIP lunch with CEOs and business leaders, bilateral meetings with multiple C-suite companies, meeting HM Ambassador to Denmark and a visit to Rockwool HQ.

The First Minister was able to showcase Wales on a global stage, ensuring that the industry is aware of the unique opportunity and capability offered in Wales, whilst also highlighting commitment to green jobs and growth ahead of the Investment Summit at the end of 2025.

The Welsh Government also exhibited at Wind Europe as part of the Renewable UK Pavilion and took a trade delegation to the event. The First Minister met the Welsh companies at the conference.

Medica was the focus for Germany where, once again, a strong delegation of Welsh life science companies attended the world's largest medical trade fair. More than 30 companies from the life sciences sector travelled to Düsseldorf as part of a trade mission, making it the largest Welsh presence at the trade fair since the pandemic, and the largest overseas trade delegation for this year. The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning led the delegation on her first overseas visit in this portfolio. The Cabinet

Secretary also visited WEPA, a leading supplier of household paper with a facility in Bridgend employing approximately 350 people, to understand more about plans for future investment in Wales.

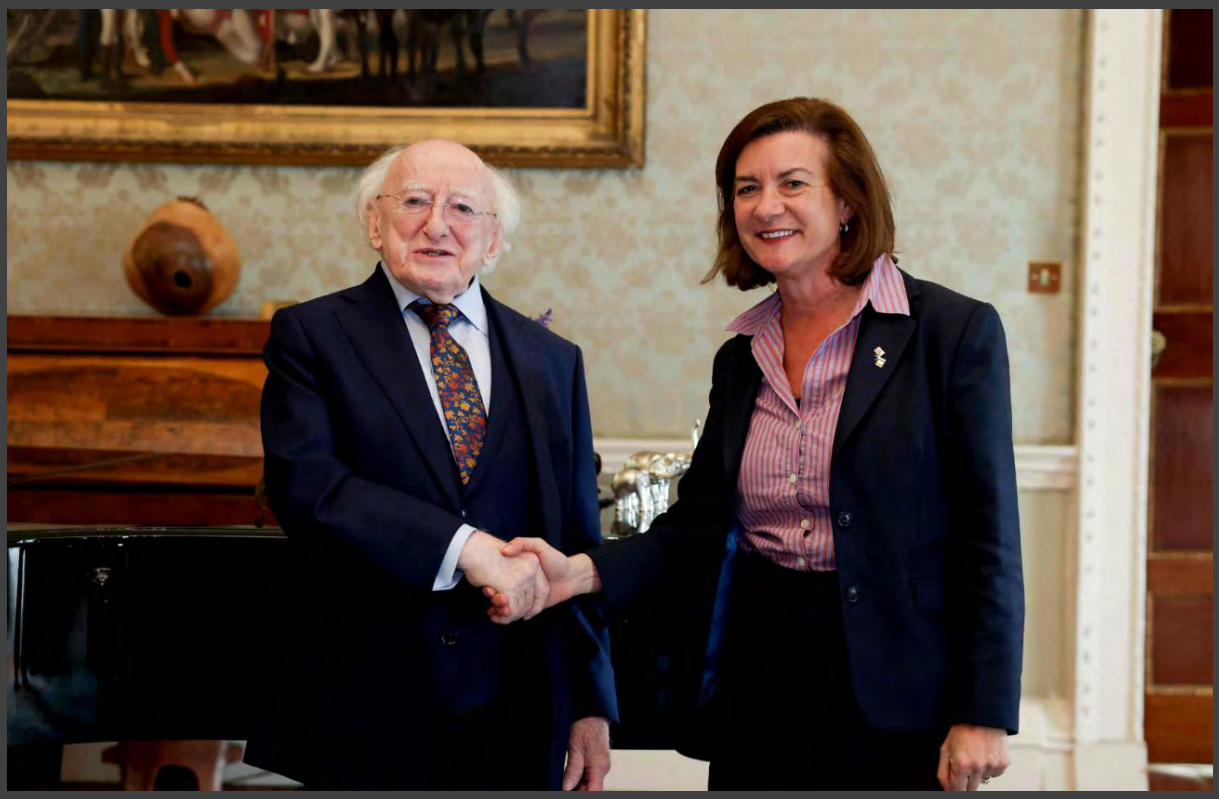
Cyber security and renewables were the focus for France, with attendance at Vivatech, Seanergy, Farnborough, the Interceltic Business Forum, SIAL, and European Cyber Week and engagement around developing marine renewable opportunities with Pays de la Loire, Normandy, and Brittany.

In addition to the usual business support functions, the Dublin office found itself playing a significant role in supporting, co-ordinating and responding to the challenges created by the unexpected closure of the Port of Holyhead in December 2024. The team worked with existing contacts, and developed new relationships in Ireland with freight, logistics, exporter associations and Irish ports / government. The team became a focal point for a range of relevant organisations to monitor, update and disseminate the latest positions on the port closure, working with partners such as the Departments of Transport in the Irish and UK governments, Border Force, HMRC and Wales regional colleagues. Meetings were convened daily from the port closure throughout the holiday period into January. The team collated daily evidence in terms of freight and passenger numbers which fed into alternative route plans. The Ireland team was described as "… *a focal point for co-ordination between the Welsh Government, the UK Government and the Irish Government"*[1] and a core part of the Holyhead Taskforce formed by the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning, maintaining and building new relationships with key stakeholders in Ireland including direct engagement with the Irish Minister responsible for ports.

[1] Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Senedd Scrutiny Committee Evidence Session – 6 March 2025

International Relations

In October, the Ireland-Wales Ministerial Forum took place in Dublin and Cork after being postponed due to the UK General Election. The First Minister travelled to Dublin, where she met with President Higgins and the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications and Transport. She attended an investor roundtable with the British Irish Chamber of Commerce before travelling down to Cork. In Cork, the focus was on agreeing the approach for a new Shared Statement for future Ireland-Wales relations with the Tánaiste. The Ireland office also supported visits to Ireland around the British Irish Association regional meeting. The team supported the Future Generations Commissioner's visit when he delivered a lecture at Dublin College University and held meetings with the Taoiseach's department.



In line with our ambitions to establish Wales as a globally responsible nation, sustainability was also a key theme. The Brussels office attended the annual World Circular Economy Forum in Brussels and the Germany office attended the Circular Valley Convention in Düsseldorf to promote our work on the circular economy.

This year, the Brussels office capitalised on the EU creating a new Commissioner responsible for Intergenerational Fairness, coinciding with the 10-year anniversary of our Well-being of Future Generations Act. The team and Wales' Future Generations Commissioner met with Commissioner Micallef, who is keen to learn from us and use Wales as an example of good practice. We were also invited by an MEP to speak in the European Parliament - sharing Wales' expertise on implementing Future Generations thinking.

The 80th anniversary of D-Day provided opportunities to mark this important occasion in France and Belgium. In June 2024, the First Minister attended commemoration events in Normandy, whilst the Deputy First Minister visited 's-Hertogenbosch in the Netherlands for the 80th anniversary of the liberation of the city. The Brussels office promoted and attended Côr Meibion Rhosllanerchrugog male voice choir's Remembrance Concert in St George's Church, Ypres.

North America

Trade and Investment

Across North America, economic development was, once again, a key feature for the year. Colorado-based data centre company, Vantage, finalised its purchase of the former Ford site at Bridgend, which promises a multi-million dollar investment and job creation. There was also significant investment in Wales by West-coast based Cadence who announced plans to open a new chip design studio in Cardiff, bringing over 100 highly skilled jobs to the region and creating a strong pipeline of graduate talent to help address skills shortages. In addition, Canadian company Soleil Food Service expanded its presence in North Wales, adding 110 jobs to its existing footprint.

There were also notable trade wins for Welsh companies in 2024-25. Cardiff-based Transdiagen secured a multi-million pound export deal to Canada, and Newport-based Tomoe Valve announced a £1.6 million trade deal with a US Government-funded project in Washington state.

Across the year, the team participated in numerous trade and invest conferences to promote Wales, including Money2020, InsureTech Fintech Summit, Photonics West and Aéromart Montréal. We also supported Welsh delegations at MRO Americas, BIO and Games Developers Conference. In March 2025, the team participated in the Wales-based Explore Export event, providing support to Welsh companies interested in exporting to North America.

Building on previous years, the team leveraged sports diplomacy to promote discussions around investment. In July, we used the opportunity of Wrexham AFC's tour of the West Coast to elevate Wales' profile, hosting VIP guests at the Santa Barbara fixture and a reception for Welsh investors at the Vancouver match. Wales' strength in sports diplomacy was recognised by New York University in March 2025, when we were invited to lead a seminar at the Preston Robert Tisch Institute for Global Sport.

International Relations

The relationship between Wales and Birmingham, Alabama continued to grow in strength and significance following the signing of the International Friendship Pact in 2023. This year, the Welsh Government was honoured to welcome a high-level delegation from Birmingham, AL to Wales, marking a major step forward in the partnership. The delegation, led by Birmingham Sister Cities, included civic leaders, business representatives, and deeply symbolic participants - among them, relatives of the four young girls tragically killed in the 1963 bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church, as well as survivors and figures from the American civil rights movement. The visit reflected the commitment of both parties to advance collaboration across shared priorities including arts and culture, life sciences, healthcare, and education.

Welsh Government ministers undertook significant engagement in the United States this year, promoting Wales' global leadership on climate action and supporting the growth of its creative industries. At New York Climate Week, the Deputy First Minister reaffirmed Wales' international role in addressing the climate and nature emergency. Wales' role as a founding member of the Under2 Coalition and commitment to future generations were key themes throughout the visit, reflecting the enduring global relevance of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. In March 2025, the Minister for Culture, Skills and Social

Partnership led a trade mission to the Game Developers Conference (GDC) in San Francisco, joined by over 30 representatives from the Welsh games industry. The visit strengthened connections with international studios and investors, promoted export opportunities, and underlined Wales' position as a vibrant hub for gaming, digital innovation and screen production. These visits not only raised Wales' international profile, but also delivered tangible support for trade, investment, and international engagement.

Throughout the year, the team worked to promote Welsh culture and values across the United States and Canada. In recognition of Pride Month, the offices participated in celebrations in Washington DC, New York City, and Chicago, highlighting Wales' ambition to become the most LGBTQ+ friendly nation in Europe. We sponsored the North America Festival of Wales in Pittsburgh, which served as a prominent platform for showcasing Welsh culture, while additional activity such as International Dylan Thomas Day in New York and collaboration with US agencies on the preservation of Indigenous languages, further emphasised Wales' commitment to cultural diplomacy. In addition, we were delighted to be able to promote a Welsh film at the prestigious Sundance Film Festival, underscoring the growing international prominence of Wales' creative industries.

Caucus

Following the significant growth of the Friends of Wales Caucus in 2023-24, this year marked a significant milestone with the appointment of Congressman Lloyd Doggett as the first Democratic Co-Chair of the Caucus. The announcement was made during a Welsh Government-hosted St David's Day reception at the Library of Congress. Rep. Doggett joins Republican Co-Chair, Congressman Morgan Griffith, in leading the bipartisan group. The Caucus now includes 26 members from both the US House and Senate. With the Caucus' support, the Welsh Government has further advanced its engagement with the US Congress, including events to promote Wales' world-class compound semiconductor cluster and our efforts to combat climate change.

Educational and Research Partnerships

We continued to support the development of educational and research partnerships between Wales and North America. The team assisted a visit by Universities Wales to Calgary, connecting them with stakeholders and potential collaborators, and facilitated discussions between Cardiff University and Concordia University in Montréal. We also supported the federal Parliamentary Interns Programme, as well as the Ontario Legislature Internship Programme on visits to Cardiff, further strengthening educational ties. Research collaborations were created between Welsh universities and Michigan Tech, Brigham Young University and the University of North Carolina, as well as a symposium with Arizona State University and Swansea to foster R&D collaboration. In partnership with Global Wales, we also organised a roundtable discussion between Study in Tennessee and Welsh universities to explore R&D opportunities in the semiconductor sector.

Asia and Middle East & North Africa (MENA)

Trade and Investment

In the Middle East, supporting Welsh companies to export their goods and services to the region is a priority. In 2024-25, our Middle East offices in Dubai and Doha supported 15 Welsh companies, including Calon Wen Dairy, Castle Dairies, and Penderyn Distillery, to attend the Gulfood trade show in Dubai and galvanised support from the Welsh diaspora in collaboration with Global Welsh. The team also provided in-market support for companies at Arab Health and the ADIPEC energy trade show in Abu Dhabi.

The MENA team has supported over 100 Welsh businesses on their export journeys to the region, for example, supporting the Royal Mint with relevant connections and helping with promotional events.

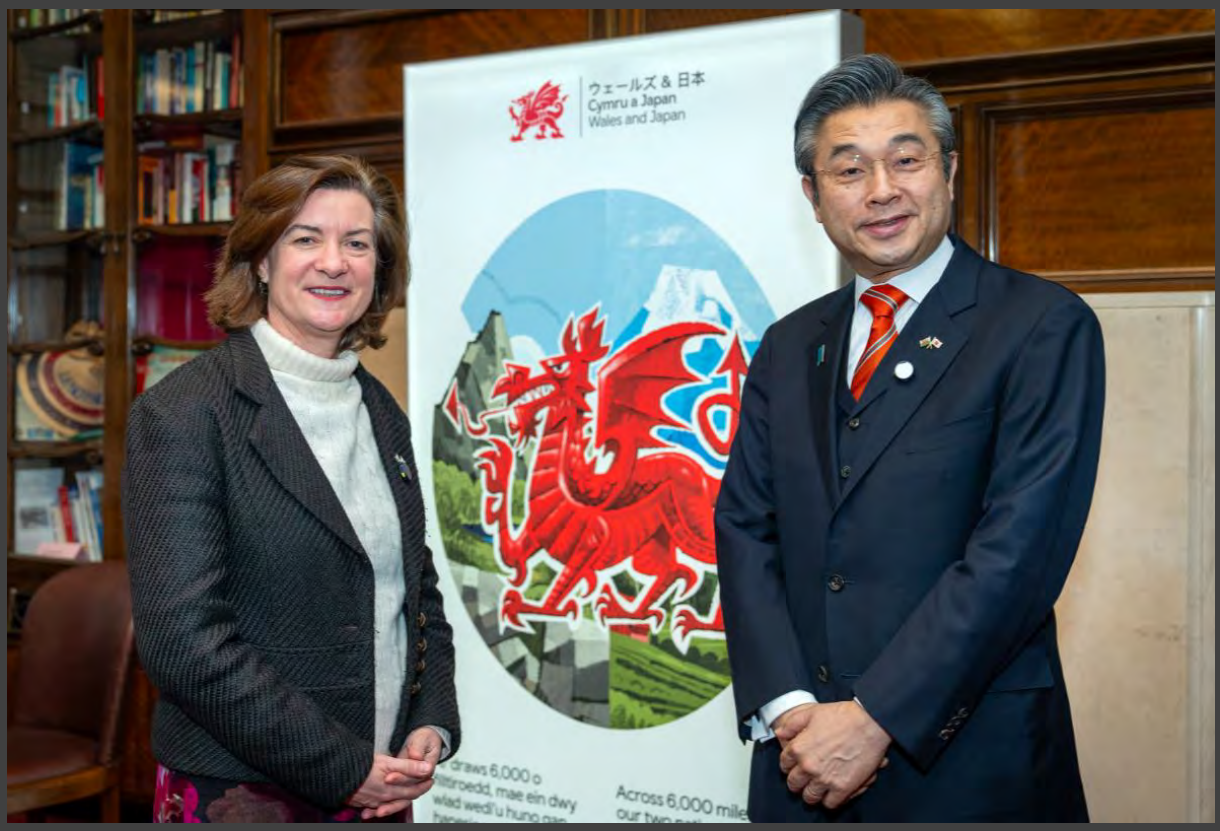
Due to growing interest in the country, our Middle East team has been undertaking research on support for Welsh businesses who want to explore opportunities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. As part of this work, the team was able to support Welsh companies in their bids to secure contracts to work on the NEOM GigaProject in the Kingdom. The MENA team also supported Hybu Cig Cymru (HCC) as it launched PGI Welsh Lamb for sale in Riyadh for the first time, shortly after helping HCC to secure orders with a major retailer in the UAE.

The MENA team has been central to an initiative to encourage Women in Exports and compiled a hints and tips factsheet for exporters to use when visiting markets in the region.

Through connections in Jordan, the team supported an inward visit of the Jordanian Businessmen's Association to Wales, brokering relationships with Chambers Wales.

2024 was the year of Wales in India. A case study with the outcomes and activity undertaken throughout the year is included in this report. Increasing trade and investment links between Wales and India was one of the objectives, with investment roundtables, conferences and exhibitions, such as the Global Bengal Business Summit and SEMICON India, promoting Wales as an investment location featuring throughout the year.

Wales and Japan 2025 launched in January. Prior to the launch, Japanese businesses in Wales marked 50 years of investment in Wales, with events hosted by Sony, Toyota and Panasonic and a roundtable for Japanese companies hosted by the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning. Wales and Japan 2025 will use the World Expo in Osaka as a platform for showcasing Wales on the world stage. In addition to events in Wales, which demonstrate the strong economic ties between our two countries, the Japan team hosted a Wales Medtech Symposium at HM Ambassador's Residence in Tokyo, had a Welsh booth at Foodex Japan - securing trade wins worth up to £8 million - and supported several visits to Wales by Japanese businesses and organisations, including JETRO Kitakyushu and Himeji City.



In China, there has been increased interest in the renewables market. The China team has been working with Welsh and Chinese companies to support partnerships and identify investment opportunities, including working with a Welsh marine renewables company to explore expansion in China. The team participated in the 10th UK-China Offshore Wind Industry Forum, a Clean Energy Reception in Beijing, and the UK Mayoral Delegation receptions in Chongqing and Chengdu - generating inward investment leads. As a designated UK High Potential Opportunities sector, the Welsh life sciences sector provides products and services to fulfil the increasing demand from the public health and medical services industry in China. As a result, 13 Welsh companies now feature in the catalogue. Wales' advanced manufacturing ecosystem also attracts investment from Chinese companies, especially Electric Vehicle firms. The China team has been working with Welsh firms and organisations to proactively seek for export opportunities, as well as scoping for more than 10 qualified investment leads.

International Relations

The Middle East offices worked closely with partners, such as the British Council, to undertake events that promoted Wales, attending the British Council Study UK award events in Doha and Riyadh, and supporting Welsh sound artist John Rea's installation at the Raneen Festival in Oman.

In Qatar, the team supported activities to promote Welsh values through an International Women's Day event at Qatar's Sherborne School for Girls, and conversations between Unify and cultural institutions. The MENA team continues to work with Welsh universities (Swansea, Aberystwyth, Cardiff, Cardiff Met and Bangor) in their ambition to forge educational links with the Gulf and accompanied Swansea University to Riyadh for discussions with Princess Noura University. The MENA office supported and promoted Welsh teams attending events in the region - Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Edern, which was competing in the F1 in Schools World Finals in Saudi Arabia, and the Culinary Association of Wales young chefs' team at the Expo Culinaire UAE competition in Sharjah. Supporting Cardiff Airport in its negotiations with Qatar Airways remains a priority in Qatar.

Cultural links featured during Wales in India 2024 as the year's official closure took place during the Hornbill Festival in Nagaland – one of the largest cultural events in India - which chose Wales as a partner country and enabled Welsh artists to perform at this prestigious event. The team also used the year to promote Welsh values through events such as LGBTQ+ roundtables alongside the French and Dutch consulates. During the launch of Wales in India 2024, the Welsh Government signed a healthcare Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Kerala to recruit healthcare workers from the region to work in Wales. The MOU's target of 250 healthcare workers was exceeded and the Welsh NHS has welcomed 350 professionals from Kerala in the last 12 months.

In Japan, the National Museum of Wales re-signed its MOU with Oita Prefectural Art Museum, whilst the Welsh Government participated in the SDG Week EXPO at Nikkei Messe's 2024 ECOPRO event, highlighting Wales' approach to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The Welsh Government team in Tokyo has also been developing links with Japan's indigenous community, the Ainu, to share learning on promoting and encouraging the use of indigenous languages.

China focussed on alumni and education to forge soft power links between our two countries, establishing the Welsh Alumni Society of China and growing the network across the country. In support of the net-zero agenda, the China team has collaborated with Cardiff University to leverage its expertise in green urban planning and design for the development of Boao, Hainan Island. This partnership was realised through "Sino-UK Higher Education Urban planning and Design Competition for Rural Revitalisation in Boao". The initiative not only advocates Wales' sustainable development objectives but also fosters engagement with leading Chinese academic institutions, such as Wuhan University and Dalian University of Technology.

3. Globally Responsible Wales

In 2024-25, the Wales and Africa programme continued to demonstrate the Welsh Government's commitment to global responsibility by fostering international cooperation between communities in both Wales and Africa. Since its launch in 2006, the programme has promoted environmental sustainability, gender equality, health, education and livelihoods as well as providing humanitarian aid.

2024-25 has been a tough year for those engaged with International Development and solidarity globally. The closure of USAID and major cuts announced to the UK aid budget coupled with the devastation of Gaza and increased climate-related disasters have undoubtedly depressed the sector. Despite these issues, the sector in Wales continues to make progress.

The Wales and Africa budget was reduced by 17.5% at the end of 2023-24 to £1,050,000 and resulting in the suspension of the International Learning Opportunities programme until late-2024 and a reduction in the pot of money available for small grants.

The team responsible for Wales and Africa has expanded its remit to cover Global Responsibility, better reflecting the work with networks such as Regions 4 Sustainable Development and the European Sustainable Development Network.

Highlights of the Year

In May, King Letsie III of Lesotho made a State Visit to Wales, where we shared learning on Wales' approach to renewable energy, including rolling out green technology.

Mbale Tree Planting Programme

One of the standout achievements of the Wales and Africa programme has been the tree planting work with Size of Wales and the Mount Elgon Tree Growing Enterprise (METGE) which celebrated the distribution of 25 million trees in March. Deborah Nabulobi and Hellen Alupo of METGE visited Wales, attending events - including one celebrating International Women's Day - meeting MSs and speaking to school children.

The urgency of the Climate Emergency was highlighted in November with news of a landslide in the Bulambuli district, which killed more than one hundred people and displacing many hundreds more. The Welsh Government quickly responded and donated £11,000 (50m Ugandan Shillings) towards relief efforts. Our partners at METGE were able to buy and distribute much needed food, soap, bedding and tents directly to the affected families within days.

Small Grants Scheme

The Wales and Africa Small Grants Scheme has supported a variety of projects throughout the year:

- Swansea University Panzi Partnership
  Funded by a £1.7m research grant and a £20,000 Wales and Africa small grant, this project focuses on using genetic material to grow skin and cartilage to repair facial scarring. Prof. Ian Whitaker led this initiative in partnership with Dr. Denis Mukwege at Panzi Hospital, DR Congo.
- ResponsABLE Assistance z
  Supported disabled people and their families in Kenya with a solar-powered borehole, water management training, and soil preservation.
- Kick 4 Life Partnership
  Aims to share learning on community development between Wrexham AFC and Kick 4 Life from Lesotho.
- Mbale Tree Growing Programme
  Gender training for 70 community members, promoting climate justice.
- Cardiff University Optometry Project
  In partnership with the University of Cape Coast, this project provided specialised training and community outreach to advance optometry and eye care practices.
- Dolen Ffermio and FARLU Partnership
  Provided water and electricity infrastructure in Uganda, benefiting more than 420 households and 1,000 people.
- Treeflights Project
  Funded travel for volunteers from Treeflights shops in Wales to Kenya, supporting tree propagation and nature-positive shopping.

- Potter's House CBO Project
  Supported children in Kenya with disabilities through postural support devices made from recycled materials, promoting employment and skills training.
- Chomuzangari Women's Co-operative
  In partnership with the Hope Foundation Trust Zimbabwe, this project addressed period poverty and empowered women and girls through reusable sanitary wear distribution.

These projects exemplify the diverse and significant impact of the Wales and Africa Small Grants Scheme, contributing to community empowerment, environmental sustainability, health improvements, gender equality and educational initiatives across Africa.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Over the last year, the Wales and Africa programme has supported several impactful, women's empowerment projects between Welsh organisations and their partners in Uganda. Working in close collaboration with their African partners, Welsh organisations have designed projects which are bringing new insight and understanding back to the global solidarity community in Wales, delivering life-changing impacts, providing better livelihoods and financial autonomy for women, promoting gender integration to fight the effects of climate change, reducing the practice of FGM, tackling period dignity and stigma, and helping girls to complete their education.

International Learning Opportunities

The International Learning Opportunities (ILO) programme was relaunched late in 2024 after nearly a year-long pause. The programme is now more focussed on meeting demands of African partners, recruiting participants with the skills and experience

highlighted by partners. One placement was started within the financial year with many more planned for 2025-26.

Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC)

The Wales and Africa Programme continues to fund the Disasters Emergency Committee Wales to support its coordination and fundraising in Wales. Two donations were made to the Middle East Appeal – with the second one made during the short-lived ceasefire. Officials met with NGOs throughout the year to discuss potential support towards the future rebuilding of Gaza.

Visit by Jenipher Sambazi

In September, Jenipher Sambazi, of Jenipher's Coffi, visited Wales from Uganda, attending 24 events ranging from visits to the Senedd and UK Parliament to school and community visits.

Bio pots

Bangor University was awarded a £50,000 grant to fine-tune its bio pots initiative, developing a solution to the use of single-use plastics in tree planting projects in East Africa – potentially replacing billions of single-use plastic bags that currently enter the environment every year with a potting sleeve, which harmlessly breaks down in the soil.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is a priority for the Wales and Africa programme. Throughout the year, mandatory training on safeguarding was given to all grant recipients, participants and staff involved in the International Learning Opportunities programme.

Hub Cymru Africa (HCA)

Our partner, Hub Cymru Africa, organised a Shared Learning Event in June themed around "Shifting the Power to African Partners," showcasing the work done by Dolen Cymru to decolonise the sector and empower local partners.

4. International Engagement in Wales

International engagement at home, to improve outcomes for Wales, was a continued focus this year. Our in-Wales activity included impactful visits and events to support the delivery of the International Strategy's ambitions: to raise our profile, grow the economy and establish Wales as a globally responsible nation.

Targeted Visits and Events

We hosted bespoke visits to Wales for international delegations, leading to significant outcomes. For example, a visit by the Chief Minister of Nagaland resulted in Wales becoming a partner country at the Hornbill Festival, showcasing the best of Welsh culture to an international audience.

Wales Tech Week welcomed international delegations, raising the profile of the world-class tech sector in Wales and fostering discussions regarding international collaboration.

We welcomed a breadth of international diplomatic and commercial visitors, highlighting our growing presence and strategic importance. Notable guests included Ambassadors, High Commissioners, senior government delegations, and international organisations. A particular highlight was the visit of King Letsie III of Lesotho, who wanted to explore our renewable energy initiatives and reaffirm links spanning 40 years.

These engagements have not only deepened diplomatic ties but also opened new avenues for trade, investment, and cultural exchange.

Following an inspiring and successful fact-finding visit by representatives from the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly, a private members bill - the Maharashtra Future Generations Welfare Bill - was introduced to ensure government departments follow sustainable goals.

Celebratory Events

In 2024, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of Panasonic's investment in Wales, with a programme of events attended by the First Minister, the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning and Japan's Ambassador to the United Kingdom. This strengthened diplomatic relationships ahead of Wales and Japan 2025.

Strengthening long-term relationships

We worked to strengthen longer-term relationships, such as the International Friendship Pact with Birmingham, Alabama, which stretches back 60 years. The First Minister welcomed a civic delegation that visited Wales to strengthen economic ties across the arts, culture, life sciences, healthcare, and education sectors. The First Minister led celebrations marking the 20-year anniversary of collaboration with Brittany, including a visit from Loïg Chesnais-Girard, President of the Regional Council of Brittany.

Cultural Diplomacy

Welsh culture continues to build relationships. In October 2024, Other Voices Cardigan - supported by both the Welsh and Irish Governments - returned for its fifth year, delivering a weekend of world-class music and cultural programming. In addition to performances, the *Clebran Sessions* offered a platform for discussion on contemporary issues facing Wales and Ireland and featured prominent voices from Welsh public life, including Professor Laura McAllister, Football Association of Wales CEO Noel Mooney, and the First Minister.

Supporting the Festival demonstrates our commitment to the Wales-Ireland relationship. The festival garnered extensive media coverage, with more than 40 articles published across national and international outlets and attracted 15,000+ attendees, with increased numbers coming from outside Wales. The festival also led to a rise in net additional local spending, amounting to over half a million pounds.

Wales – a Global Innovator

We continue to see more international delegations visiting Wales to learn from our policy approaches - from language planning to industrial decarbonisation. Last year, we hosted the 2024 European Circular Economy Hotspot, a prestigious event recognising nations who lead the way in circular economy innovation. Over three days, we welcomed more than 400 international delegates, who heard about our transformational journey in areas such as recycling.

Team Wales – Our Unique Approach to Diplomacy and International Engagement

We emphasise collaboration to achieve the aims of the International Strategy, working with our funded strategic partners and a wider range of stakeholders in Wales.

Examples include:

- On the Move – Cultural Mobility Forum: Explored how international professional development in the arts can go beyond commercial objectives to promote understanding, collaboration and stronger community ties. Bringing together delegates from across Europe and beyond, it examined the role of culture and language in addressing global challenges such as the preservation of indigenous languages, climate change and equitable access to international opportunities.

- Wales-Québec Joint Call for Proposals: Through our Declaration of Intent, the joint call for proposals has funded projects that encourage long-term partnerships between Welsh and Québecois organisations. One such collaboration between CULTVR Lab and the Society for Arts and Technology in Montréal has led to professional development opportunities and co-productions. Seed funding, provided by both governments, led to the partnership being formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding. A standout result of this collaboration is the production *Arka Kinari: Artivism at Sea*, which won Best Live Performance at the Best of Earth Awards 2025.

- Urdd Gobaith Cymru: The Urdd has used Welsh Government funding to deliver a significant programme of international activity. For example, Urdd Youth Ambassadors promoted their Message of Peace and Goodwill in Washington DC and New York, marking the centenary of the Welsh Women's peace petitions. Their work led to six new partnerships with US organisations, including JP Morgan, the Global Network of Women Peace builders, and UN representatives. In India, the Urdd partnered with Her Future Coalition to deliver workshops promoting Welsh values in Kolkata. This project engaged 12 young women from Wales and reached over 1,000 people.

Promoting Wales: International Engagement with the UK

Our London office acts as window on Wales to the world, deepening Wales' diplomatic relations and strengthening government-to-government relations. It offers an opportunity for regular engagement with the diplomatic network and provides a platform on which to develop trade and investment links, providing economic benefits for Wales. It also acts as a point for regular engagement with internationally focused UK Government departments including the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)'s Devolution Unit, Strategy and Protocol divisions.

The focus for the office has been on developing diplomatic relations to pursue outcomes at home. Activity included:

- Diplomatic Corps reception at Somerset House, London: More than 120 Ambassadors, High Commissioners and diplomatic guests, representing over 80 different countries, attended an event with the First Minister. Bilateral meetings were also held with the Canadian High Commissioner, Australian High Commissioner and Japanese Ambassador, laying the foundations for Wales and Japan 2025.

- UK-German Cultural Commission hosted by the FCDO in London: Welsh participation focused on strengthening educational, research and cultural activities between the UK and Germany.

- Wales Week in London/ St David's day activities: An extensive programme of events showcasing Wales to London and international audiences. Events included a sport-themed St David's Day event hosted by the Swiss Embassy, ahead of the UEFA Women's Championships 2025, at which the Cabinet Secretary for Economy spoke alongside the Swiss Ambassador.

5. Case Studies

Martha Hughes Cannon and the Growing Relationship between Wales and Utah

Martha Hughes Cannon was a Welsh-American politician, physician, and women's rights advocate. Born in Llandudno, she emigrated to the United States with her family and became the first female state senator in the US, representing Utah. Her achievements include the introduction of Utah sanitation laws and founding Utah's first State Board of Health.

In 2018, the Utah Legislature voted to send her statue to represent the State at the US Capitol in Washington DC. Following delays caused by COVID-19, the statue eventually arrived in DC at the end of 2024.

The Welsh Government, through our US team, has used this occasion to celebrate her legacy throughout the year and build links with Utah. This included the team visiting Utah for St David's Day 2024 to form links with the Lt Governor, and the hosting of a large reception in Washington DC to commemorate the unveiling of the statue that highlighted Martha Hughes Cannon's Welsh heritage, as well as announcing new scholarships and partnerships between Wales and Utah. The DC office worked with Congressional offices on videos made by its members about Martha Hughes Cannon as well as uncovering Welsh connections to Utah. Additionally, the Welsh Government supported events in Llandudno to honour her contributions.

Achievements

The Martha Hughes Cannon project is a good example of using soft power to achieve several aims within the International Strategy for Wales.

The Welsh Government's involvement in the project, along with the cumulative impact of the visit to Utah, St David's Day celebrations and the Washington Reception, has already led to a number of achievements, including:

- **Stena Center and FintechWales** entering into a partnership to create soft landing facilities on both sides of the Atlantic, with the Welsh Government already receiving an enquiry from a Utah company about this.
- **Creation of a new scholarship** to enable students from Wales to travel to Utah to study in the fields of life sciences, fintech or aerospace. It is anticipated to launch for the next academic year, administered by a diaspora organisation and dedicated to Martha Hughes Cannon.
- **Welsh Government Los Angeles office securing inward investment** with ATL Technologies expanding its operation in Wales.
- **Expansion of the Friends of Wales Caucus** and the **possibility of Wales having a Senatorial Co-Chair** – this would be the first senatorial chair of a UK Caucus.
- **A Trade Mission** from Utah to Wales.

What is not measurable is the goodwill that has been created in Utah to the Welsh Government and Wales. The team looks forward to extending and deepening its relationship with one of the fastest growing states in the USA.

Strengthening Welsh Engagement with UNESCO: A Year of Strategic Exploration

The Welsh Government is exploring ways to strengthen Wales' engagement with multilateral organisations - specifically UNESCO - by identifying effective, long-term mechanisms for cooperation and partnership.

Engaging with these organisations allows Wales to learn from international best practice to improve domestic outcomes while contributing to shared global challenges, supporting the goals of a globally responsible, prosperous, and resilient Wales.

UNESCO - the UN's specialised agency for education, science, and culture - convenes global communities, sets international standards and produces tools and knowledge that shape domestic policymaking and delivery.

Although UNESCO is not a funding body for developed nations, its brand power is significant. UNESCO designations, such as World Heritage Sites, biospheres, geoparks and Creative Cities, contributed at least £151m in financial benefits to the UK in a single year[2]. Currently, 14% of Wales' landmass is part of a UNESCO designation, offering global-to-local links for communities, international visibility, economic benefits, policy and research development.

Swansea University was awarded a prestigious UNESCO Chair in Sustainable Energy Technologies in 2022, securing significant research funding and enhancing the university's international reputation; it is now competing with Oxbridge and Ivy League institutions for post-doctoral talent. This bolsters Wales as a hub for research excellence and international education, with international students contributing £1.43bn[3] to the Welsh economy.

Given UNESCO's vast scope and limited capacity, engagement is only effective through its mechanisms. Our work has taken a highly strategic approach centred on two mutually reinforcing policy areas: minority languages and sustainable development, presenting a strong Welsh narrative that complements the existing UK offer, aligns with UNESCO interests and provides clear entry points for formal, long-term and self-sustaining engagement. The approach seeks to amplify existing activity, maximising the economic,

[2] National Value of UNESCO to the United Kingdom, published by UNESCO UK National Commission (2019)

[3] The costs and benefits of international higher education students to the UK, published by Universities UK International (UUKi), the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) and Kaplan International in collaboration with London Economics (2023)

social and diplomatic benefits by widening networks and programme participation across Welsh civil society and UNESCO.

The approach is iterative, with the Welsh Government adapting its strategy in real-time to build a framework for future engagement that can be applied across other policy areas.

In 2025, reciprocal visits established cross-government support and engagement. The UK Ambassador and Permanent Delegate to UNESCO, Anna Nsubuga, the National Commission and the UK Government's Department for Culture, Media and Sport visited Wales for policy briefings. The programme included a tour of the Blaenavon World Heritage Site, led by the site's Youth Ambassadors and concluded with a public 'lunch and learn' session at the Welsh Government, where the Ambassador and Swansea University's UNESCO Chair presented to nearly 100 civil society stakeholders.

Building on this, the First Minister led a delegation to UNESCO HQ in Paris for outcome-driven meetings with senior policy directors. This targeted engagement was complemented by a wider Wales event at UNESCO, attracting more than 100 attendees from 50+ countries. These reciprocal visits catalysed tangible outputs, including co-productions, network membership and participation at UNESCO fora.

A key area of engagement is the support of Cymraeg2050 and its pioneering work on digital inclusion and AI through the Welsh Language Technology Action Plan. Cymraeg2050 partners with commercial giants like Microsoft and OpenAI to secure access of minority languages to digital tools. This intersects strongly with UNESCO's current priorities; AI and digital inclusion are core themes at MONDIACULT 2025. Our work with the unit has facilitated further technical collaboration and widened engagement across networks like the Decade of Indigenous Languages, UNITWIN and within UNESCO's affiliated networks. The Welsh Government is also deepening engagement across Wales through links with culture, youth and sustainable development.

The integration of technical policy work with culture has proved powerful in engaging UNESCO's senior policymakers, reflecting the organisation's natural intersectionality across science and culture. It will be showcased at a Celtic multilateral event on languages and culture as part of the 20th anniversary of the *UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*. This event, delivered in partnership with Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Irish Cultural Centre, will also test a

multilateral model of engagement more aligned with UNESCO's ethos than traditional bilateral partnerships.

This model, which uses UNESCO patronage and badging as accessible entry points, is also being trialled by other Welsh organisations to signpost activity, build credibility, and lay the foundation for deeper engagement.

Future Generations legislation underpins the listed policy areas, offering case studies and learnings from ten years of domestic implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Links have been made with the strategic planning team at UNESCO, exploring policy workshops and staff exchanges.

Further work is underway to support and elevate existing UNESCO affiliations within Wales, the UK and UNESCO systems.

Swansea University's work to develop locally adaptable, circular green energy solutions for Africa not only advances global sustainability goals but also positions Wales as a leader in green energy, circular economy and next-generation technology.

The Welsh Government is working to support the Chair's integration into wider UNESCO frameworks - such as the Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development - and foster strategic partnerships across Welsh institutions and programmes. This Team Wales approach extends the reach and impact of the prestigious designation.

As Wales looks toward a significant autumn featuring MONDIACULT 2025 and the outcome of Aberystwyth and Ceredigion's City of Literature bid, strategic coordination is already delivering impact and laying the foundation for future engagement across other UNESCO policy areas.

A final reflective paper will capture key learnings, share best practice, and present a clear set of recommendations for how Wales can deepen and sustain its engagement with UNESCO and other international bodies in the years ahead.

Wales in India 2024

In November 2023, during the annual Welsh Government Diwali event, it was announced that 2024 would be the year of Wales in India, focussing on four priority regions: Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, and Haryana and celebrating the deep-rooted economic, health, educational, and artistic ties that exist. The year featured a variety of events across both countries, including trade and investment events, research partnerships, cultural celebrations, and health collaborations.

The year had three main objectives:

1. Secure trade, investment, and employment opportunities for Wales.
2. Support and strengthen healthcare links.
3. Strengthen cultural, educational, and artistic ties, and to promote Wales as a globally responsible nation.

Key partners were asked to develop activities to deliver throughout the year, whilst the Welsh Government worked with PR Agency, Cowshed Communication, to create a calendar of events.

In February 2024, the formal launch of took place during St David's Day events in Mumbai, New Delhi, and Bengaluru. The Minister for Health and Social Services hosted a reception in Mumbai, coinciding with a reception at the Indian High Commissioner's Residence in London, hosted by the First Minister. These events saw participation from partners including the Future Generations Commissioner, the Urdd Gobaith Cymru, Wales Arts International, British Council Wales, and key businesses.

Trade and Investment

India is a significant market for trade. In 2023-24, India ranked 18th in Wales' top export markets, with exports worth over £187 million. Wales in India provided an opportunity to organise, attend, and sponsor several trade and investment events. Wales has a robust network of Indian businesses, offering potential opportunities for reinvestment and untapped trade prospects. The initiative aimed to showcase Wales' economy as a hub of creativity, technology, and sustainability.

Throughout the year, 40+ events were delivered, including more than a dozen business roundtables. Wales was promoted as a prime destination for trade and investment at several Wales Medtech Conclaves in Jaipur and Kerala. The first trade mission from Wales to India in many years took place in May 2024, focusing on Mumbai and Bengaluru with Welsh businesses in manufacturing, life sciences, technology, and education visiting India to explore potential export opportunities.

Wales also participated in international exhibitions such as SEMICON India, Arab Health, Farnborough Airshow, ADIPEC, and Gulfood. Conferences focusing on sustainability, future generations, and cyber security were sponsored. New and lasting relationships were built with business chambers, incubators, and universities.

Wales' Chief Scientific Advisor visited India and met with India's Principal Scientific Advisor. Discussions focussed on Wales' circular economy and semiconductors and provided an opportunity to showcase Wales at the upper levels of government in India. Measuring the impact of economic development activities is challenging due to the time taken for relationships to develop into outcomes. Much of the activity focused on planting the seeds for new relationships and initiatives.

Health

The bond between NHS Wales, the Government of Kerala, and recruitment partners was crucial for meeting Welsh NHS staffing targets. A key moment for Wales in India 2024 was the Ministerial visit in March 2024, which included a visit to Kerala. The Welsh Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Chief Minister of Kerala for nursing and medical practitioner recruitment, announcing plans to recruit up to 250 healthcare professionals during 2024-25. A reception for new nurses, doctors, and their families who had accepted jobs in the Welsh NHS took place in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.

The MOU agreement further strengthened relations between Wales, India, and the Government of Kerala to support ongoing ethical recruitment. More than 300 health professionals have been recruited - predominantly nurses - with one-third already working in Welsh hospitals. Cowshed Communication pursued case studies from this

cohort to promote further recruitment activity. The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care extended the MOU in March 2025.

Soft Power

The cultural connections between Wales and India are rich and deserve continued celebration. Wales in India presented an opportunity to solidify relationships and showcase Wales' strengths and commitment to being a globally responsible nation. The programme utilised cultural showcases to elevate Wales' profile on the international stage, particularly at launch events and the Hornbill Festival in Nagaland.

In February 2024, the Minister for Health and Social Services joined St David's Day celebrations in Mumbai, welcoming 300+ leaders from diplomacy, culture, and education. She met with India's LGBTQI+ leaders, announced an Urdd partnership with Her Future Coalition to support victims of sexual abuse and violence in Kolkata, and discussed Maharashtra's plans for its version of Wales' Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. These projects have since come to fruition, culminating in Wales' participation at Hornbill 2024 in Kohima, Nagaland.

The Welsh Language Children's Poet Laureate was a guest of honour at the Kolkata literature festival, leading discussions on Wales' language and identity. The Future Generations Commissioner met with political leaders in Mumbai to discuss the Maharashtra Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, which has since been introduced as a Private Members Bill.

The Wales in India Cultural Fund was launched in collaboration with the British Council and Wales Arts International, supporting five artists to strengthen relationships in arts in health, music, literature, and early years theatre.

Welsh Ministers celebrated Holi and India Independence Day at Cardiff Castle alongside Wales' Honorary Consul for India and the Indian community. The First Minister hosted a Diwali reception with the Indian High Commissioner at Swansea University to mark the close of the year.

Global Wales, Welsh universities, and colleges established research partnerships, student exchanges, and fostered alumni. Cardiff University launched its Indian Alumni Chapters in New Delhi and Mumbai. During the latter part of the year, Wales was invited as Chief Guest to Shillong, where Welsh harpists performed alongside their students, and Welsh art was displayed. The region has a national holiday for Thomas Jones, the father of the Khasi alphabet.

The Chief Minister of Nagaland visited Cardiff, announcing Wales as the partner country for the prestigious Hornbill Festival. At Hornbill, Wales showcased the best of Welsh music, culture, and industry, marking a remarkable close to the year of Wales in India.

Reflections

The Wales in India 2024 platform allowed the Welsh Government to establish numerous connections with businesses, cultural organisations, governments, and diplomatic missions. The relationships forged with the British Council, Wales Arts International, the Urdd Gobaith Cymru, and the Future Generations Office were vital to the year's success. We continue to focus on key cities and sectors for trade and investment, explore emerging markets in India, and leveraging support from the Department for Business and Trade.

The MOU with the Government of Kerala has been a clear success, and we aim to nurture and maintain this relationship. We will continue to cherish the connections established in diplomacy, culture, the arts, sport, and education. The significant cultural connections with the Khasi people of Shillong offer opportunities for growth in trade, investment, and education.

Following the visit of the Chief Minister of Nagaland to Wales, and our attendance at Hornbill 2024, we have established strong ties with Nagaland, positioning us for further collaboration. Activities promoting Wales' Wellbeing of Future Generations Act have been a formative success, offering insights into future opportunities.

How 3D-Printed Innovation is Transforming Surgical Care for Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence

In a groundbreaking effort to restore dignity and rebuild lives, the VVF (Vesicovaginal Fistula) Project is pushing the boundaries of what's possible in reconstructive surgery for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. This visionary initiative is led by Professor Iain Whitaker - Professor of Reconstructive Surgery and Regenerative Medicine and Consultant Plastic Surgeon - and represents a powerful collaboration between ReconRegen, Swansea University, and the renowned Panzi Hospital in the Democratic Republic of Congo, with support from the Duchess of Edinburgh.

The Panzi Hospital, founded in 1999 by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Dr Denis Mukwege, has treated more than 85,000 women and girls who have survived the unspeakable horrors of wartime sexual violence. Whilst the dedicated team achieves extraordinary outcomes, approximately 5% of cases present injuries so severe that standard surgical approaches simply are not enough. These types of injury typically require advanced reconstructive surgery techniques and, as plastic surgery does not exist as a specialty in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Congolese surgeons are not trained in these techniques.

That’s where the VVF Project steps in.

The Welsh Government’s Wales and Africa Grant Scheme funded a pivotal exploratory mission to Panzi Hospital in July 2024. The application for funding was submitted after Professor Whitaker and his team had conducted a series of online meetings with Panzi Hospital’s clinicians. These discussions identified a critical need: advanced reconstructive surgery training paired with hands-on teaching materials that allows trainee surgeons to refine their skills before entering the operating theatre.

To answer that call, Professor Whitaker joined forces with Dr Hari Arora from Swansea University’s BEST Lab (Biomedical Engineering Simulation & Testing Lab). Together, they led a team of talented postgraduate biomedical engineers to design and build anatomically accurate, low-cost surgical training models for fistula repair.

The innovation is as ingenious as it is impactful. Each model consists of a 3D-printed ‘bone’ pelvis layered with hand-moulded silicone that mimics the feel of human tissue—including muscle, fat, fascia, and skin. These models were developed to ensure that cutting and suturing them would closely simulate real-life surgery - crucial for effective

training. An interim round of feedback from Professor Whitaker's surgical team helped to refine the final design.

Thanks to Wales and Africa grant funding, and match-funding from a £15,000 Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council grant, in July 2024, the team travelled to Panzi Hospital with five pelvis models and 20 reusable silicone tissue overlays, along with detailed assembly instructions. To support a full evaluation of the models, the Swansea team also shipped 30 single-use surgical instrument kits, donated free of charge by Corza Medical.

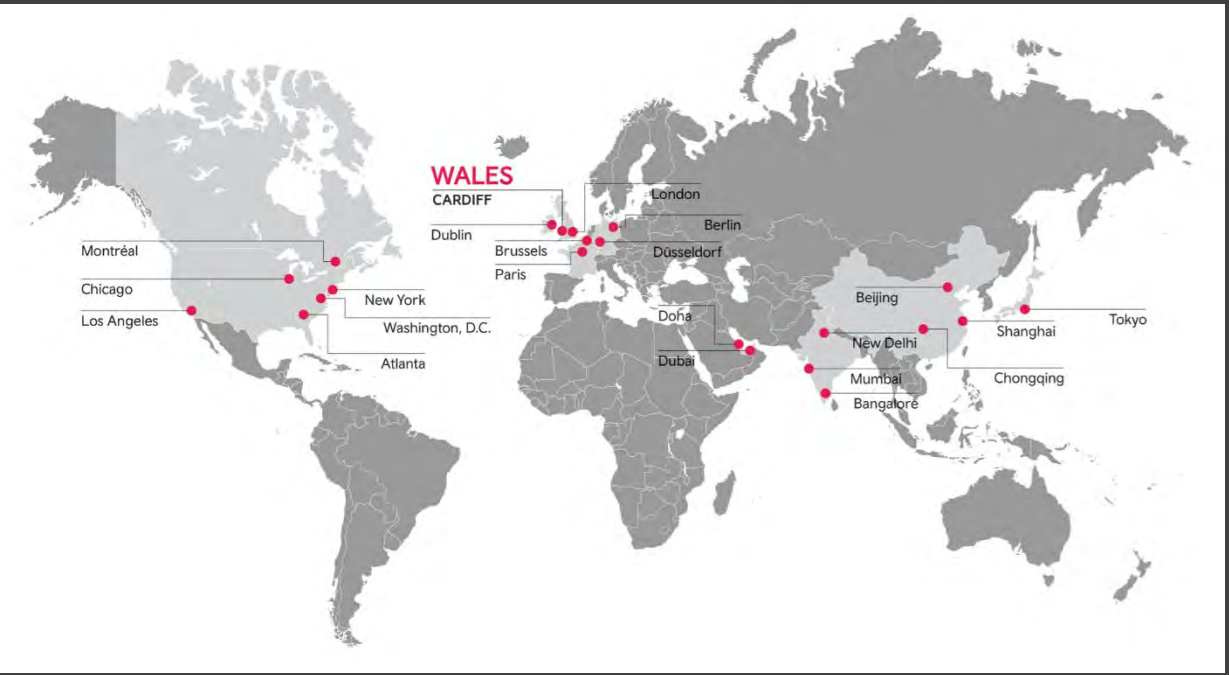
Panzi Hospital's surgical team took part in hands-on trials of the prototypes and then completed detailed online feedback forms - an essential step in perfecting the next generation of these game-changing models.

To our knowledge, these are the only anatomically correct fistula repair training models in existence. Because they can be produced at a relatively low cost, they hold immense potential - not just for Panzi Hospital, but for hospitals across low-resource countries worldwide.

With this bold step forward, Wales is helping to lead the global charge to improve surgical outcomes for survivors of conflict-related violence - bringing healing, hope, and humanity to some of the world's most vulnerable.

Office locations

There have been no changes to the overseas network. The map and table below show our offices by region.



Asia	Europe	North America	Middle East
Beijing	Brussels	Atlanta	Doha
Chongqing	Berlin	Chicago	Dubai
Shanghai	Düsseldorf	New York	
Bangalore	Dublin	Los Angeles	
Mumbai	Paris	Washington DC	
New Delhi	London	Montréal	
Tokyo			

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