



PRESS RELEASE 16/10/2026

New Strategy Sets Course for Stronger Irish Sea Cooperation

The achievements and strategic legacy of the Developing Irish Sea Cooperation (DISC) project were marked at the legacy showcase and official launch of the DISC Strategy and Action Plan at Monaghan Peace Campus on 15 October. The showcase brought together key stakeholders involved in the project's funding, strategic development and implementation from across Ireland and Northern Ireland to reflect on the project's achievements and consider how its evidence and recommendations can support future cooperation.

Running from September 2024 to August 2026, DISC was supported by PEACEPLUS, a programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB). DISC focused on creating the evidence base, strategic vision and action plan for future territorial cooperation between Ireland, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland.

Minister of Finance John O'Dowd MLA said: "The DISC project demonstrates the value of North-South and East-West engagement, bringing partners together to share expertise, build connections and address common challenges.

"The Strategy and Action Plan launched today is a significant outcome of that work, providing a clear framework to support future engagement across these islands. The relationships established throughout this initiative will create opportunities for continued partnership and mutual learning in the future.

"I would like to thank all partners for their dedication and congratulate them on the successful delivery of this important initiative."

The Minister for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation, Jack Chambers, welcomed the successful conclusion of the DISC project, saying: "The DISC project has demonstrated the power of practical cooperation across Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. It has strengthened relationships, highlighted new opportunities for collaboration and provided a strong foundation for future action.

"Our regions are connected by deep historical, cultural and economic ties, and DISC has helped to build on those longstanding links in a practical and constructive way. I would like to thank all of the partners and stakeholders whose commitment and expertise have contributed to the project's success.



“The final report provides a clear roadmap for future cooperation, and we are particularly encouraged by the momentum that has been created. We now look forward to the next iteration of DISC, building on the strong foundations that have been established and delivering real benefits for citizens and communities across the Irish Sea region.”

SEUPB Chief Executive Gina McIntyre said: "PEACEPLUS is about creating lasting foundations for cooperation, understanding and shared prosperity, and the successful completion of DISC is a powerful example of that ambition being realised. This project has brought together partners from Ireland, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland to explore new opportunities for collaboration and develop a clear strategic vision for future North-South and East-West cooperation. Leaving the Strategy, a valuable legacy that will help ensure the relationships and momentum generated through DISC continue to support cooperation, economic development and stronger connections across the Irish Sea region long after the project has ended."

Speaking at the event Mr David Kelly, Director, Southern Regional Assembly said: “Today’s launch marks an important step in advancing cooperation across the Irish Sea region. The DISC Strategy and Action Plan translates research, partnership and shared learning into a practical roadmap for future collaboration, providing a lasting platform for Ireland, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland to work together in pursuit of shared prosperity and sustainable development.”

The Strategy and Action Plan draws on DISC research, four symposiums held across the partner jurisdictions, contributions from experts in policy and territorial cooperation representing government, regional assemblies, public bodies, academic institutes, business, community and voluntary sector and other stakeholders.

It presents a shared vision in which the mutual benefits of territorial cooperation are better understood, a cooperation mindset is more widespread, public servants have greater capacity to cooperate and stronger networks build on established foundations. It also recognises that a strong culture of cooperation can support economic growth, build trust, contribute to social cohesion and promote peace and prosperity.

The research underpinning the Strategy identifies territorial cooperation as a means of building critical mass around shared issues, enhancing organisational capability and capacity, promoting innovation and generating new ideas. It also recognises that



a strong culture of cooperation can support economic growth, build trust, contribute to social cohesion and promote peace and prosperity.

Building on the relationships, knowledge and momentum created through DISC, the project partners have expressed their commitment to continuing to work together to strengthen Irish Sea cooperation and advance shared opportunities for collaboration in the years ahead.

PEACEPLUS is co-funded by the European Union, the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Government of Ireland, and the Northern Ireland Executive.

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Notes to Editors

- The Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) is a North South Body with the statutory remit for managing EU funding programmes within Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland.
- PEACEPLUS is a cross-border funding Programme designed to support peace and prosperity across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland. The total value of PEACEPLUS is €1.14 billion.
- PEACEPLUS is co-funded by the European Union, the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Government of Ireland, and the Northern Ireland Executive.

Further detail on the DISC project:



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot



- DISC is a project supported by PEACEPLUS, a programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).
- The project ran from September 2024 to August 2026.
- Project partners include Southern Regional Assembly, The Executive Office, Welsh Government and Scottish Government.
- The project objective is to enable intergovernmental cooperation between the relevant departments in Northern Ireland and the Governments in Ireland, Wales and Scotland by developing a strategy and action plan for future North-South and East-West cross border economic and social cooperation.
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Further detail on Southern Regional Assembly, Ireland (Lead Partner):

- The Southern Regional Assembly (SRA) was established in 2015 under the Local Government Reform Act 2014 and part of the Local Government Sector and has a remit for the Southern Region as the regional tier of government. The SRA has been the Managing Authority for three successive Southern & Eastern Regional Operational Programmes and was appointed Managing Authority of a fourth Southern Eastern & Midlands, Regional Operational Programme.
- The SRA was Programme Partner and Irish Contact Point for the Ireland Wales Programme since 1994 and is the designated Irish Contact Point for Interreg North West Europe and the Contact Point for Southern & Eastern region for Interreg Europe. It is also the designated First Level Control audit function for EU funding claims for Irish partners participating in ETC programmes, and a Member State representative on ETC programme monitoring committees.

Further detail on The Executive Office, Northern Ireland (Partner):

- The Executive Office oversees the coordination of Executive policies and programmes to deliver a peaceful, fair, equal and prosperous society in Northern Ireland. The First Minister and deputy First Minister supported by the Junior Ministers set the strategic policy and resources framework for the department.





- The Executive Office acts as a coordinating partner for the NI Executive departments that have specific interests across the three theme areas of the DISC project. This includes departments for Economy, Infrastructure, Communities, Health, and Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs.

Further detail on Welsh Government (Partner):

- The Welsh Government are the devolved government for Wales, consisting of the First Minister, Welsh Ministers and the Counsel General. They are supported by civil servants who work across devolved areas that include key areas of public life such as health, education and the environment.
- The Welsh Government Board provides collective leadership to the organisation as a whole and are responsible for the delivery of the Programme for Government.

Further detail on Scottish Government (Associate Partner):

- The Scottish Government are the devolved government for Scotland and have a range of responsibilities that include: the economy, education, health, justice, rural affairs, housing, environment, equal opportunities, consumer advocacy and advice, transport and taxation.