

# Statement between Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Taoiseach Micheál Martin in Cork: 13 March 2026

13.3.2026 - | Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

## **Shared Prosperity, Shared Seas, Shared Ties.**

Ireland and the United Kingdom share a unique partnership, rooted in our geography, our history, and the deep and dynamic connections between our people underpinned by the Good Friday Agreement and our Common Travel Area.

At our Summit in Liverpool last year, we agreed the UK-Ireland 2030 Joint Statement as the starting point for a renewed and strengthened relationship between our two countries.

As we work toward our respective 2030 objectives, we recognise that our domestic priorities - from urgent delivery of critical infrastructure and clean power to investing in innovation and skills - are most effectively realised through cooperation. Our cooperation on energy security and seeking to reduce prices, our renewed Defence MoU, and our commitment to each other is more vital than ever, given current volatility.

Through Shared Prosperity, Shared Seas and Shared Ties, we will nurture our vibrant economies, protect our seas, and strengthen our friendships and partnerships for the generations to come.

## **Shared Prosperity**

1. We have deeply intertwined economies and a dynamic trade and investment partnership worth c. €2 billion a week. Today we are focused on the industries of the future - in energy, infrastructure, research and tech - ensuring our businesses and citizens are equipped for the transition to a high-skill, low-carbon economy.
2. With over 1 GW of electricity interconnection between the UK and Ireland, interconnection helps us drive down consumer costs and secure our collective energy security.
3. Today, we welcome the constructive engagement between MaresConnect and EirGrid, including ongoing work to identify an optimal grid connection solution in North Dublin. We commit to ensuring progress on both the MaresConnect and North-South Interconnector by the end of 2026. This collaboration will support the timely development of new transmission infrastructure to strengthen grid capacity, resilience and enhance our energy security.
4. We will build on our Framework for Cooperation on Infrastructure to share best practice on growing construction sector capacity, skills development, and consent for major projects and critical infrastructure. We will develop complementary infrastructure project trackers to encourage and support investment and expansion of construction sector capacity across our two countries.

5. And we will address the shared challenge of housing affordability by sharing knowledge and expertise on spatial planning, innovations in digital planning, modern methods of construction and approaches to housing regulation.
6. To drive economic growth, our cooperation will foster innovation and research, connecting our world-class institutions and driving the next generation of technological breakthroughs to grow our economies.
7. Through a landmark agreement between UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and Taighde Éireann/Research Ireland, we are strengthening research and innovation cooperation. This capitalises on our world-class research base and provides a framework for future collaboration, starting with funding initiatives in the creative industries and building on our previous research in areas such as quantum technologies - ensuring we lead in the technologies that will define the 2030 economy.
8. We are also strengthening our lead in telecommunications by extending the UK's JOINER testing platform to Trinity College Dublin. This state-of-the-art facility is leading research into 6G technologies and applications, ensuring our digital networks remain resilient and innovative in an increasingly connected world.
9. And we are deepening our bioeconomy cooperation to use our biological resources to produce food materials, and energy to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels; and the circular economy to ensure our existing materials are reused to eliminate unnecessary waste. By sharing our R&D strengths and expertise in bio-innovation, we are creating new business opportunities that turn environmental challenges into economic growth and jobs.
10. As highly integrated economies, we share a common labour market, based on the Common Travel Area, and recognise the importance of working together to ensure our citizens and businesses have the skills for the sectors of the future.
11. We will work to enhance links in relation to the Research and Innovation agenda and to learn from each other, particularly in the areas of STEM and clean energy, to strengthen education and training systems that support innovation, competitiveness and communities to thrive, including through engagement with our respective skills advisory bodies.
12. We will support our small and medium sized businesses to scale and to maximise commercial opportunities. A joint dialogue with UK and Irish SMEs will take place during 2026 focussed on areas of shared interest, such as access to finance, digitalisation, and adoption of AI.
13. We must continue to protect our common economic interests. Building on our successful Economic Security Exchange, we will bolster our cooperation on investment screening. By the end of 2026, a new MoU will enhance our operational collaboration, and we will make it easier for business by providing clear guidance, recognising the importance of investment screening in safeguarding national security.

## Shared Seas

1. Our maritime space, stretching across the Irish, Celtic, and North Seas, is a vital asset for our mutual security and path towards a decarbonised future. It carries critical subsea infrastructure, which powers our economies and secures our energy supplies, as well as shipping routes and naval operating spaces essential to our collective security.
2. In a more contested environment, with increased hostile state activity, we are enhancing information-sharing, maritime domain awareness and coordinated defence planning to better detect, deter and respond to threats across the Irish Sea and North-East Atlantic, including updating our MoU on Defence. This will include targeted maritime security activity and closer liaison between our defence and naval organisations. This will pave the way for potential procurement initiatives, strengthen our cooperation on cyber defence, and keep our seas safe, secure, and resilient. This also underscores our commitment to strengthening wider European and Euro-Atlantic security.
3. We have agreed a new Subsea Infrastructure Bilateral Collaboration Framework that will enable information sharing and coordinated response mechanisms for addressing major subsea communication cable incidents that may affect our countries. A series of live exercises will be carried out to test readiness, with the first in September 2026.
4. We welcome that Ireland has applied to join the North Sea Joint Declaration. Through that information-sharing mechanism, we can work together on the protection of infrastructure in the North Seas jointly with Norway, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany and Denmark. It is envisaged this will extend the reach of the Joint Declaration to additional areas of the Irish and Celtic Seas and further demonstrates our shared commitment to protecting our subsea cables.
5. We are sharing best practice in emergency preparedness to keep citizens across these islands safe, given the shared challenges we face ranging from climate change to cyber-attacks and health emergencies.
6. As both countries accelerate deployment of offshore energy infrastructure, we recognise the need to speed up development and remove barriers to maximise the immense growth opportunities of clean power in our shared seas and the prosperity it will bring, while protecting the marine environment.
7. To support this, we are committed to undertaking new joint initiatives on mapping the seabed. We will explore cooperation between The Crown Estate and MARA, the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority, setting out a pathway to share information and cooperate on marine data, and opportunities for engagement in areas such as common data standards in the shared marine space.
8. We welcome today the agreement by the Ireland and UK Grid System Operators to increase knowledge-sharing and cooperation across areas, including future modelling and scenario planning; stakeholder and community engagement; sustainability; managing grid systems

integrating high levels of renewables; and understanding the growth of large energy users, including ports which are in the process of significant electrification. We also welcome the recent cooperation agreement reached between Eirgrid and National Grid Ventures to enable work towards a hybrid interconnector to continue over the next two years, which would lower energy bills and further reduce barriers to growth.

9. We will progress maritime decarbonisation in our seas, including to progress our shared ambition for the adoption of the IMO's Net Zero Framework.
10. We welcome today the MoU signed by Port of Cork Company and the Belfast Harbour Commissioners committing to enhanced cooperation, including accelerating the delivery of offshore wind projects.
11. We recognise that our shared seas are more than industrial or transit corridors; they are a vital part of a shared natural heritage for the people of these islands.
12. To ensure our waters remain resilient towards 2030 and beyond, we will work towards enhancing the coherence and effectiveness of our Marine Protected Area (MPA) networks, sharing best practice from our experiences of MPA designation and management, and identifying joint research and survey needs. New collaboration on marine science research, including examination of ecological coherence of MPA networks, will help build a legacy for the future.

## **Shared Ties**

1. Our partnership is built on deep and enduring ties between people, culture, and business across our seas. These ties also extend to shared values – our support for democracy and rule of law; and the values of trust, integrity, respect and friendship.
2. In the context of global instability, we reaffirm our staunch support for Ukraine's defence against Russia's illegal invasion, and will work together to support peace and stability in the Middle East.
3. We look forward to Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union later this year and to the UK's Presidency of the G20 in 2027.
4. We will continue our cooperative efforts to share lessons from the Northern Ireland peace process.
5. We welcome the agreement reached since our last summit on a Joint Framework on Legacy marking essential and significant progress on this most difficult of issues. We will continue implementation, including through legislation in both the UK and Ireland.

6. We will also continue to invest in the connections between the next generation, and wider public engagement with the contemporary culture and heritage of our countries.
7. We welcome the announcement of 12 collaborative partnerships that our leading cultural institutions will deliver together through the 2030 UK-Ireland Cultural Cooperation Programme. These projects will deliver an ambitious programme spanning exhibitions, co-productions, professional and youth exchanges, leadership initiatives, digital research and knowledge-sharing, sparking new creative connections for the future.
8. As part of this Summit, we received the report of the first Ireland-UK Youth Forum. We will continue to support the Forum's work and consider how cooperation between our governments can deliver change on issues that matter to our young people. The next Ireland-UK Youth Forum Plenary will be hosted by the UK in 2027.
9. Today, we are taking steps to ensure that the Common Travel Area (CTA) remains secure by working together to expand immigration data sharing arrangements particularly in preventing abuse of CTA free movement by those not entitled to its benefits.
10. We will continue close cooperation to ensure any future digital identity solutions are developed and implemented in partnership, ensuring that the rights afforded by the CTA as well as the rights afforded to citizens under the Good Friday Agreement are protected.
11. With UK participation in the Erasmus Programme from 2027, our National Agencies will work to ensure that Tertiary Education Institutions and schools maximise bi-lateral mobility opportunities for their students.
12. We welcome agreement to engage on reaching a decision in principle this year on a bilateral Ireland-UK approach to address concerns arising from hybrid cross-border working and to consider other aspects of the UK-Ireland Double Taxation Convention which may require updating.
13. We acknowledge the suffering of those who spent time in mother and baby homes during the 20th century. In recognition of the lifelong impact of this, today the UK agrees to disregard payments under Ireland's Mother and Baby Redress Scheme, ensuring that survivors in both countries are treated the same and can receive the compensation to which they are rightly entitled. We also welcome Ireland's agreement in principle to disregard means for compensation payments from UK schemes.
14. Over the past twelve months, we have laid a solid foundation for cooperation. Today, across Shared Prosperity, Shared Seas, Shared Ties, we are setting out pathways to realise the full potential of our partnership for all the people of the UK and Ireland.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-between-prime-minister-keir-starmer-and-taoiseach-micheal-martin-in-cork-13-march-2026>