ARFOR

CREU GWAITH - CEFNOGI'R IAITH

ARFOR 2 CASE STUDIES

UP TO MARCH 2025

CYNGOR GWYNEDD

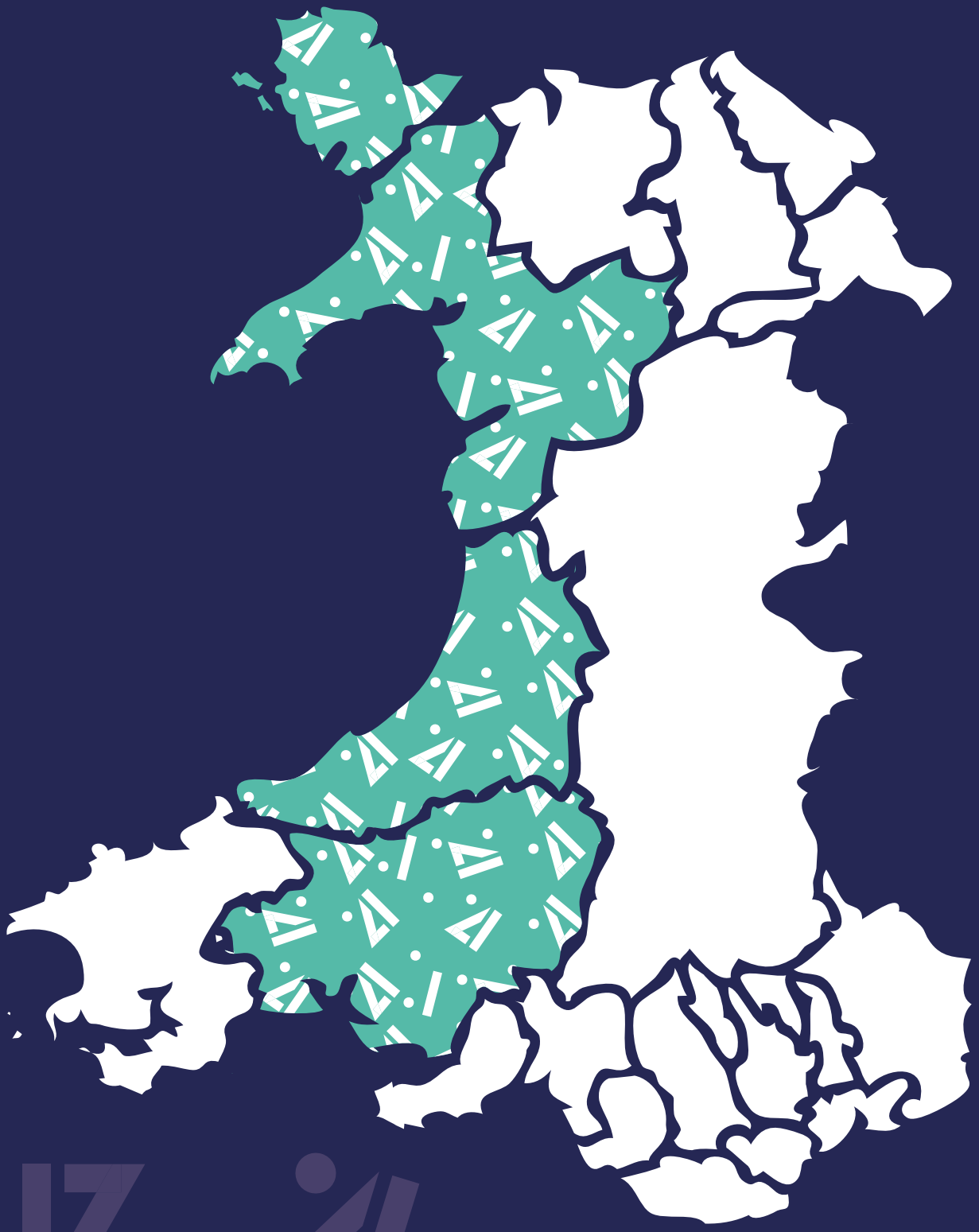
CYNGOR SIR YNYS MÔN ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL

Cyngor Sir Gâr Carmarthenshire County Council

Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

Ariennir gan **Lywodraeth Cymru**
Funded by **Welsh Government**

ARFOR ACTION AREA



INTRODUCTION

Since 2022 ARFOR 2 has been operating across Sir Gâr, Ceredigion, Gwynedd and Ynys Môn to develop the local economy and increase the visibility and use of the Welsh language in those communities where a high percentage of the population are Welsh speakers. Through a wide variety of programmes and work streams, ARFOR has ensured innovative and far-reaching interventions in favour of the language and the local economy in these areas, which have had a positive impact on a large number of local communities, businesses and individuals.

The core aim of the ARFOR Programme was defined as "Supporting communities that are strongholds of the Welsh language to flourish through economic interventions that will also contribute to increasing opportunities to see and use the Welsh language on a daily basis". We can confidently say that all interventions of the Programme have contributed towards ensuring that this goal has been reached, and that there is real appreciation at grassroots level for the opportunities that the Programme has provided.

A key part of this work, and one of the most important outcomes when considering the long-term impact of the project, is ARFOR's success in facilitating and creating new partnerships and networks. Stakeholders across the region now know each other, are aware of the work being done in other areas and are more willing and able to work together on projects of all kinds. All this desire to work in favour of the Welsh language and the economies of Welsh-speaking communities cuts across geographical boundaries and individual areas of work, and we have been very fortunate to be able to bring the Public Sector, the Private Sector and the Third Sector together in this regard. We are absolutely convinced that this work needs to continue in the future, and that we need to build and develop on the solid foundations of creative collaboration laid by ARFOR 2.

We have also seen collaboration between local schemes supported by ARFOR and national programmes including Regional Skills Partnerships, Skills Wales and the Welsh Language Commissioner.

This has ensured not only that value is added to the ARFOR Programme, but that ARFOR's work attracts wider attention and recognition with more opportunities for collaboration created as a result.

At the core of the whole Programme are the strategic objectives, which have guided and directed every step of the process. At the core of the work are four strategic objectives:

1. **Create opportunities for young people and families under 35 years of age to stay or return to their native communities**, supporting them to succeed in their local areas by following new initiatives and developing careers for them to secure a livelihood that matches their ambitions.
2. **Create enterprising communities within the ARFOR region by supporting business and community initiatives that seek to preserve and increase local wealth** by motivating them to take advantage of the resources, identity and unique characteristics of their local areas in order to do this.
3. **Increase the benefit obtained from the project's activity by ensuring constant and continuous collaboration.** At the core of this lie the principles of learning by doing and sharing good practice within communities, expanding and spreading these practices to other areas while also ensuring that any interventions are tailored for local conditions.
4. **Strengthen the identity of communities with a high density of Welsh speakers in terms of percentage by supporting and promoting the use and visibility of the Welsh language in these areas.** An essential element of this is emphasizing local pride, a sense of place and local loyalty in individual communities while also helping to show the characteristics, conditions and factors that are common to the whole region.

OVERVIEW OF WORK STREAMS

ARFOR 2 was divided into 5 work streams which were supplied by individual contracted providers. Each stream focused on a different element of realizing ARFOR's strategic objectives and represented work programmes with an individual focus on specific interventions to achieve this. Over the following pages we will provide a snapshot of the varied work carried out over years through showcasing a range of case studies from across the region.

1. **LLWYDDO'N LLEOL:** Working to raise awareness of the opportunities that exist in the ARFOR area and help develop the skills of young people there.

2. **CYMUNEDAU MENTRUS:** Fund for County Councils to be able to invest directly to ensure economic growth and that capital stays and circulates within the local economy.

3. **CRONFA HER:** A grant programme that allows organisations, businesses and groups of individuals to come together to solve some of the challenges they face locally.

4. **BWRLWM:** ARFOR activity promotion stream. Working to inform the public about what is being achieved as part of the programme and explore some of its core ideas.

5. **MONITORING, EVALUATING AND LEARNING:** Providing reviews of the programme as a whole in the form of reports, working to develop the academic and public policy bases of the scheme.

CASE STUDIES: LLWYDDO'N LLEOL

Llwyddo'n Lleol 2050 was a marketing and promotional campaign that worked to raise awareness of the opportunities that exist in the ARFOR area and offer advice and support to those who want to stay or return to the region. The project was delivered by Menter Môn in partnership with Mentera with a proposed budget of £3,000,000 over the lifetime of the Programme.

KIERAN THOMAS, DELI ALBERT REES

Since being employed by Deli Albert Rees through the support of Llwyddo'n Lleol, Kieran Thomas from Llanddarog has experienced success as a new butcher. Kieran won a gold medal in the Apprentice Butcher of the Year competition in Newport and is going from strength to strength building skills for the future. His apprenticeship was sponsored by Llwyddo'n Lleol, which enabled Kieran to change careers and gain skills that have proved beneficial to him personally and to the wider business.

> Matthew Rees said:
>
> **The help we got from Llwyddo'n Lleol has enabled us to do this. Without this help we might not have be able to do it for a while. We want to push the business, we want to grow, and this will help us do that.**

MENTER GORLLEWIN SIR GÂR'S PROFI SCHEME

Menter Gorllewin Sir Gâr's Profi Scheme aims to improve young people's world of work skills, inspiring them to take risks and confidently apply for local opportunities in order to enable thriving bilingual communities. The scheme offers support and advice to young people to develop individual strengths and skills and take advantage of opportunities such as work experience, volunteering and part-time work in order to improve their employability and develop as people. The **www.profi.cymru** website offers a wide variety of resources and digital content to help young people grow their awareness of what they have to offer within the world of work.

SETTLING SUPPORT

As part of the Settling Element, 7 families were offered the opportunity to receive financial support to return to ARFOR. The scheme provided financial and practical support to people who wanted to return to their communities in Ynys Môn, Gwynedd, Ceredigion and Sir Gâr. Up to £5,000 was available to assist these families with transport costs, securing accommodation and childcare. This programme proved extremely popular with the demand for the grant very high. The 7 families have since returned to their areas and are in the process of starting their new lives in ARFOR.

Among the successful families were Annest and Saman, who met in Thailand after Annest moved there in 2013. They now have a son and were eager to return to Gwynedd so that he could be brought up in Wales and benefit from the wealth of the Welsh language and its culture.

> Annest said:
>
> **This support has made the decision so much easier. We are excited to be coming home and so grateful to Llwyddo'n Lleol for making it possible.**
>
> **It means a lot to be able to give back to the community that shaped me. I want Arwyn to have the same opportunities as I had growing up, to speak Welsh every day and be part of a strong, supportive community.**

Discussing the project and the importance of the Settling element, Aled Pritchard, Llwyddo'n Lleol Project Officer, said:

We know that so many young people want to return, but there are practical barriers holding them back. The Settling element helps to remove those barriers, proving that moving home is not just a dream but a viable supported reality. Seeing these seven families take the step to return home is incredible.

SETTLING TOOLKIT

As a result of the popularity of the settling grant and as part of the wider work of the Settling Element, a Settling Toolkit was prepared to help those who are considering moving or returning to ARFOR areas to learn about the region and what is available there. The decision to move anywhere is a step that can seem challenging at times, and it is natural for questions about work, housing, public services and social life to arise. Finding the information that is relevant to you can be a seemingly overwhelming task. The purpose of the document was therefore to assist individuals and families to take the next steps towards moving back to ARFOR areas by providing information, advice and guidance. The toolkit was divided into 5 sections: housing, jobs and work opportunities, education and childcare, health and care and social events and the Welsh language. To read the document in its entirety contact **gwybodaeth@rhaglenarfor.cymru**.

CAREER ELEMENT: DANIEL THOMAS – M-SPARC

Daniel Thomas from Ceredigion received support through the Career Element of ARFOR's Llwyddo'n Lleol stream. Following a period working in London after attending university, Daniel now works for M-Sparc in Anglesey as a Decarbonisation Advisor. The scheme has allowed Daniel to receive training for his work as well as helping him with the cost of living as he moved to Anglesey. The opportunity to work through the medium of Welsh was important to Daniel, and he is now able to do so in an innovative field supporting small businesses in Wales to decarbonise.

Daniel's example clearly demonstrates how the ARFOR scheme is able to attract talent back to Wales to live and work, and the importance of the existence of such a network that can facilitate it.

gan Brifysgol Bangor
by Bangor University

ENTERPRISE ELEMENT: ALAW EVANS

Alaw applied to be part of ARFOR's Llwyddo'n Lleol 2050 Stream Enterprise Element in 2023 to develop a business idea to offer baby massage sessions for parents and guardians. She had noticed that there was no such provision within an hour's journey from her home in Porthmadog, and was keen to try and develop a business that would fill this gap. After a successful application, Alaw received 10 weeks of training on business development which included mentoring and skills development sessions and an opportunity to share her experiences with the other individuals on the course.

Alaw has now set up her own company 'Babis Del' and started running sessions for parents and their children in the Porthmadog area.

Babis DEL TYLINO BABI

> Discussing her time on the course, Alaw said:
>
> **My experience of the Enterprise programme has given me a boost and confidence to start my own business. As well as equipping me with skills and knowledge, it has also been a process of personal growth for me as I pursued a business idea that I had for years.**

CASE STUDIES: CYMUNEDAU MENTRUS

Cymunedau Mentrus was a programme administered by ARFOR areas county councils. The core purpose of the fund was to respond to the regional challenges found across ARFOR areas, with the hope that successful plans will respond to these and seek innovative solutions in the areas of work, the local economy, and the Welsh language.

CEREDIGION - HALEN A PUPUR

Halen a Pupur is a café in Tregaron run by two young mothers and has been in business for just over a year. The project is a testament to the opportunities that the ARFOR Programme offered to individuals who want to venture into the world of business and do so in their own communities where the Welsh language is a natural part of social and commercial life. The business has gone from strength to strength, with the £15,000 grant received through Cymunedau Mentrus allowing them to invest and grow their business and secure 5 jobs for local people. The café has become a popular destination for young and old residents and is now a natural Welsh-speaking space that has helped regenerate the town.

SIR GAR - GOFAL GOLWG

Sara Tidey received support from ARFOR to start an optometry practice in Llandovery. Insight / Gofal Golwg is a fully bilingual business that has already created employment opportunities for two people in the area and has brought an empty building back into use.

Sara said:

The opportunity to gain support from ARFOR has turned Gofal Golwg into a reality. Having grown up in the area, and now raising children here, I was eager to start a business that served the community. Through support from ARFOR and other business grant opportunities provided by Carmarthenshire County Council, the business is now operational and proving successful.

GWYNEDD - CHWAREL

Chwarel Cyf, an independent television production company based in Cricieth, managed to secure an ARFOR Cymunedau Mentrus grant worth £40,155.11. With a growing portfolio of awards and successful productions, including BAFTA, RTS, *Great House Giveaway* and the Welsh version of *Gogglebox* on S4C, Chwarel has seen rapid growth in recent years.

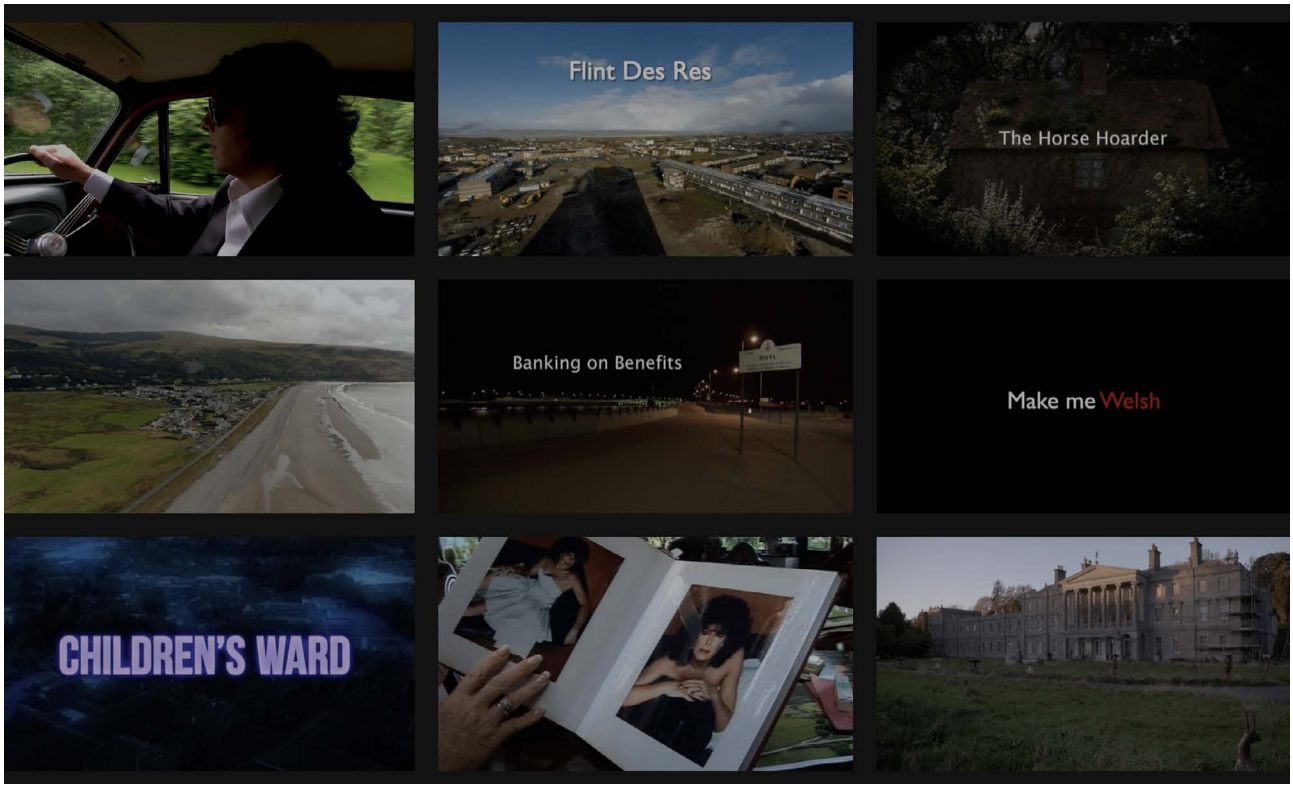
With the support of an ARFOR grant, Chwarel created two new roles as part of the company's ongoing development. These jobs have offered valuable learning and career opportunities to Welsh speakers in the area, strengthening the company's commitment to promoting and using the Welsh language in the creative industry.

The funding has enabled Chwarel to expand their capacity and develop new and exciting formats. It has also allowed them to continue to provide high quality content while nurturing the next generation of Welsh-speaking talent within the television production sector.

chwarel
independent film & radio
ffilm a radio annibynnol

Sioned Wyn Morus, owner of Chwarel, said:

Receiving this grant means that the company has been able to survive after COVID and has enabled us to go from strength to strength and build on winning a British BAFTA for our production of *Great House Giveaway*.



YNYS MÔN - CWMNI CADARN (CADARN CONSULTING ENGINEERS)

Cadarn is an independent engineering consultancy based in Llangefni, which uses a local workforce to develop structural and infrastructure expertise to serve the wider construction industry.

With the help of ARFOR, the company managed to invest in new design and engineering equipment in order to offer new and innovative services. As a result of this investment, the company continues to create new technical jobs in the area and has supported training for existing staff to operate the equipment and offer new services. They also run an apprenticeship programme with colleges and universities to develop a local workforce. They offer a fully bilingual service, providing projects to clients in Welsh and English as 80% of the company's workforce are fluent Welsh speakers.

CADARN
CONSULTING ENGINEERS

Ifan Rowlands, Managing Director of Cadarn, said:

The grant has been invaluable to us as we are now able to offer a unique service to our clients, and continue to employ and train local, bilingual engineers.

DYLUNIO GRINGO

Gringo Design company from Penygroes received financial support through Cyngor Gwynedd's Cymunedau Mentrus stream. The company specializes in product branding and packaging and advertising for the food and drink sector, providing the service to a number of local companies. As a result of the investment, Justin Davies, the company's chief executive has been able to allocate money to upgrade necessary computer equipment to his current work portfolio and it has also enabled him to invest in equipment to expand the services he provides to customers.

GRINGO

Discussing the impact ARFOR has had on his business, Justin said:

I have wanted to expand my service of creating murals for businesses and community projects for a while, and this grant will help with buying the necessary digital equipment for this work. I paint murals inside and outside, murals that celebrate the Welsh way of life. It's a slightly different approach to the company's usual work and something that I enjoy.

DELINEATE

Delineate is a market research agency pioneering digital data access and analysis and trading globally. Delineate received support through ARFOR's Cymunedau Mentrus stream which is administered by Ceredigion Council and recently launched their new headquarters in Llandysul, the first technology company of its kind to establish a presence in Ceredigion. The office will be home to 50 employees who will carry out a wide variety of jobs and different types of expertise. A 'Wales first' recruitment policy is essential to Delineate's strategy, with all vacancies being advertised in Wales.

One of the main aims of this is to bring more Welsh speakers into the company. Currently around 60% of the team are Welsh speakers and opportunities are offered to individuals who do not speak Welsh to learn the language. A high percentage of the team is bilingual or multilingual due to the nature of the business, which requires a number of languages to be used with clients across the world.

delineate

Discussing the support, Delineate CEO James Turner said:

Support from initiatives such as ARFOR has been key to our growth. These initiatives have provided essential funding and resources that have enabled us to transform empty spaces into valuable commercial properties and establish our operations in Ceredigion. This support has enabled us to build a solid infrastructure and attract local talent, laying a strong foundation for our continued expansion.

DECUS RESEARCH LTD

Decus Research Limited was established in 2003 and provides comprehensive laboratory testing services and scientific consulting support. Based in Capel Hendre, Carmarthenshire, it's a good example of how ARFOR's support has not only supported the growth of the business, but also given an opportunity to a local young person studying outside of Wales to undertake work experience in a scientific location. Decus received financial support to develop the business by creating a water testing laboratory. After a local water testing business relocated to England, a gap was identified to develop another branch of the business in order to support the local food, drink and agriculture sector. 10 new jobs will be created to support the new element of the business.

decus RESEARCH

Steve Whitehouse from Decus Research commented:

The support provided by the ARFOR programme has been central to the growth of our business. As a service-based business in Carmarthenshire, ARFOR has allowed Decus Research Ltd to develop a new branch of the business, which provides local services for the agriculture and food and drink sectors which are such important sectors in the county. We have received support from various streams of the ARFOR programme which have focused on increasing the use of the Welsh language in our business.

CASE STUDIES: CRONFA HER

Cronfa Her offered businesses and organizations the opportunity to apply for financial grants in order to solve specific challenges they were facing in their local communities and provide innovative new ways of working in the ARFOR area that aligned with the strategic objectives of the Programme. The project was delivered by Mentera in partnership with Menter Môn with a proposed budget of £2,600,000 over the programme's delivery period.

MENTRAU IAITH CYMRU: SPORT AND LEISURE ENTERPRISE PROJECT

The intention of this project was to encourage entrepreneurship among Welsh speakers in the fields of leisure and sport. By providing an opportunity for young people to qualify as coaches in their chosen leisure areas, the aim was to enable them to gain casual work in their local communities while also encouraging and enabling sports and leisure clubs to hold sessions through the medium of Welsh.

The project enjoyed a presence across all of ARFOR's counties and collaboration was achieved with the sports departments of the councils together with local clubs in order to motivate individuals to participate and to facilitate training in various recreational sports. As part of the project, two individuals were employed to lead the work.

One of these officers was located in Ynys Môn and Gwynedd and the other in Ceredigion and Sir Gâr, with 3 officers who worked for the Mentrau Iaith already in place to assist them with the work. Links were created with young people through the secondary schools, local colleges and through sports clubs in order to attract interest in securing training to qualify as accredited coaches. There was collaboration between the officials and Sport Wales and the individual sports management bodies, together with bodies that provide sports training. Without this intervention it would not have been possible to hold these sessions through the medium of Welsh, as there was not sufficient demand for Welsh-language sessions before the establishment of the programme.

This project shows how Cronfa Her enabled different organizations to work together in order to encourage entrepreneurship among the young people of ARFOR and allow them to follow training in their own language. This ensured not only the ability to look for possible job opportunities in the future but also helped to gain confidence and start to change the culture in some clubs where although Welsh may be the main language of the sessions, technical training through the medium of Welsh was seen as less important.

CANOLFAN BEDWYR, BANGOR UNIVERSITY: ARFER

The aim of this project was to develop an app that incorporated some of ARFer's principles and methodology in order to create a framework to support changing language practices within workplaces. The aim of the ARFer method is to support staff in workplaces where English is currently the default language, to use more Welsh.

The initial evidence of the methodology and the results seen before the development of the app were very promising. When ARFer methods were used and the frameworks outlined were followed, the use of Welsh among work teams doubled. 88.4% of users who trialled ARFer's language use tasks said that their use of Welsh had increased as a result.

As a result of the ARFOR Cronfa Her grant, the team was able to develop an app that implemented this research in an accessible way that was available to a wide audience. The app is now available free of charge on various platforms and is proving an effective way for businesses and organizations to increase their use of the Welsh language and to make the process fun.

ADRA'S TENDRA PROJECT

Following a successful application to the Challenge Fund, Adra has now launched their Tendra project in order to support small construction businesses in completing tender applications for construction projects for social housing agencies. The project provides advice and training to those within the construction industry who face barriers in completing the necessary paperwork for applications to supply contracts. The aim is to build confidence and understanding of the process by individuals within the industry so that they can apply for work, whether for small local projects or larger ones through platforms such as Sell2Wales.

Tendra shows how the ARFOR project can facilitate and support established businesses to make the most of the opportunities available to them, ensuring that capital stays within the local economy, promoting local supply chains and securing work within the region.

Adra

Tendra
Adeiladu'r Dyfodol, Un Tendr ar y Tro
Building the Future, One Tender at a Time

TETRIM TEAS: GROWING LANGUAGE, GROWING MUSHROOMS, GROWING PARTNERSHIPS

This project's objective was to give disadvantaged communities in west and north Wales the opportunity to work together and benefit by growing mushrooms for use in tea products. Tetrim Teas collaborated with Madarch Cymru to create various mushroom growing sites in Sir Gâr, Ceredigion and Gwynedd. As part of the project Cynan Jones from Madarch Cymru provided training for local people to be able to grow and harvest mushrooms themselves and now the project employs 6 people who share 3 jobs across the 3 sites. All the employees either speak or are learning Welsh and Welsh is the main language of the enterprise.

Along with the provision of jobs, many wider community movements have been established as a result of the project, including community composting units to support and facilitate community vegetable growing projects, specialist training for workers to improve skills and the provision of fresh mushrooms for these communities to eat. The project has also succeeded in securing further significant funding to further grow and expand the project.

The project shows the potential of Cronfa Her to create work in innovative areas and new sectors, helping businesses and communities to work together to ensure that well-paid opportunities for work through the medium of Welsh are available to local people.

TETRIM TEAS

CYMRU

CARMARTHENSHIRE AND CEREDIGION CONNECTOR HUB, GLOBALWELSH

Following investment from Cronfa Her ARFOR, this joint venture between GlobalWelsh and creative projects agency Sgema aims to stimulate growth and economic regeneration across the Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion region by connecting local businesses and an international network of thousands of expatriate Welsh members who have skills, knowledge and networks to share. The Yr Egin centre is at the core of the project and acts as a hub for these businesses to foster the connections necessary to stimulate investment and growth in the area, showing the importance of dedicated Welsh-language spaces to develop business and trade.

GLOBAL WELSH

> Speaking about their involvement, Carys Ifan, Director of Yr Egin, said:
>
> **As we are a hub for creativity and digital innovation, Yr Egin is excited to be part of the Connector Hub project. This partnership opens up a world of opportunities for businesses in Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion, offering them a unique platform to connect with a global community that is passionate about Wales and its economic prospects.**

WELSH SPEAKERS RECRUITMENT RESEARCH PROJECT, BANGOR UNIVERSITY

Cronfa Her has also enabled Bangor University to launch a research project that looks at why recruiting Welsh speakers can prove so challenging for employers, despite demand for jobs locally. Over 12 months, academics from the university will look at the challenges facing organisations when recruiting as well as try to find out what guides the migration decisions of young people between the ages of 18 and 35 when moving away from and into ARFOR areas.

Project leaders will conduct interviews with employers in ARFOR areas in order to collect data that will form the basis of their research work. The team will then produce a practical package to support employers based in ARFOR when recruiting.

PRIFYSGOL BANGOR UNIVERSITY

> Dr Cynog Prys, project lead, commented:
>
> **The aim of the project is to create a long-term legacy that will enable young adults who speak Welsh to stay or return to Wales by matching them with work opportunities. We are looking forward to working with all the partners to produce high quality work that will have an impact at grassroots level by contributing to the successful economic development of the area, and thereby supporting Welsh speaking communities within these areas.**

CASE STUDIES: BWRLWM ARFOR

Bwrlwm ARFOR's objective was to encourage the use of the Welsh language locally, to promote ARFOR's wider work, and to strengthen that work by raising awareness of the Programme in the form of a multi-media public marketing campaign. The project was delivered by the Lafan company with a budget of £300,000 over the duration of the programme.

FUTURE LEADERS

Future Leaders was a joint partnership between Bwrlwm ARFOR and the Young Farmers Clubs, with the aim of showcasing the opportunities available to individuals who were considering returning to ARFOR areas by telling the stories of those who had already taken the step to move back. Through video interviews examples were shown of how individuals have returned and found success in their careers by finding work or setting up businesses to serve local needs, using existing networks and established connections to assist them in the process.

These short films were an effective means of broadcasting some of the main messages of Bwrlwm ARFOR, focusing on a positive message that emphasized the benefits of living in ARFOR areas and addressing some of the preconceptions and myths that exist. The video shows that these areas are lively places, where young people can venture into business and find success, they enjoy social lives and strong communities where a happy and meaningful life can be created.

> In one of the films Cadi Mars Jones who has returned to Meirionnydd having completed a degree in Cardiff, tells her story and emphasizes the opportunities available to young people:
>
> **I think everyone from this generation says, 'We have to go away to get work, go to the big cities then come back home,' but I don't think that's true. I think it's what you do, and if you want a good career in a rural area, it's possible and the opportunities available are endless.**

‘ARFOR 2024’ SUMMIT

The ARFOR 2024 Summit was held at Parc y Scarlets in Llanelli in November 2024. The event was an opportunity for ARFOR stakeholders and those who had been working on the Programme to come together to discuss and celebrate the work achievements of the Programme.

The event was hosted by producer and presenter Angharad Mair, and a number of guest speakers also discussed different aspects of the presence of the Welsh language in their businesses. The highlights of the day included contributions from the ARFOR project leaders outlining the progress of the Programme, group activities to discuss different ideas about the Welsh language in the workplace and informal networking sessions for people to get to know each other and discuss further.

There was also an opportunity to listen and ask questions to business leaders who had directly benefited from the work of the different streams. The Trade Fair held as part of the day was also a valuable opportunity for those attending to meet, discuss and buy from traders from across ARFOR areas and hear their individual stories.

A spokesman for Lafan, the organizers of the event, said:

Our aim with the ‘ARFOR 24’ Summit was to attract all business sectors (private, social) as well as the public sector to an event that would bring a wide range of stakeholders from across the ARFOR region together to agree on a statement of commitment to make “more and better use of the Welsh language” in order to make a stand, and create a buzz around the subject. This resulted in a packed programme of guest speakers, group activities and informal networking opportunities.

With plenty of space at the location, there was an opportunity to hold a ‘Trade Fair’. This provided an opportunity for ARFOR businesses to showcase their businesses (our target was 25-30 businesses), create new connections, develop relationships across the ARFOR area and celebrate the wide range of businesses that benefit economically from the Welsh language - all under one roof.

It was also an opportunity to support businesses that have not managed to receive financial support through either Cymunedau Mentrus, Cronfa Her or Llwyddo’n Lleol, in order to expand the network of businesses that know each other and work together in the ARFOR area. The eligible businesses were able to take advantage of a free of charge exhibition stand, refreshments as well as networking opportunities. By holding the Trade Fair on the same day as the Summit, conference delegates could visit the Trade Fair, and for businesses that were exhibiting could sit in on the conference, learn and be further inspired.

A small working group was held from other work streams of the ARFOR programme, together with Menter Iaith Cymru and a member of the Welsh Language Commissioner’s team, in order to ensure collaboration and to add value to the event.

It was agreed that first refusal for the 25-30 business slots at the Trade Fair would be offered to the businesses that had already benefited from ARFOR’s support, through Cymunedau Mentrus, Cronfa Her or Llwyddo’n Lleol. The work streams nominated 10 businesses each from the streams, and then Lafan contacted them to offer them the opportunity to exhibit. The feedback from the businesses was very positive, with many of them enjoying high sales on the day.

The conference was well attended by a variety of people from various sectors.

WORLD'S MOST WELSH-LANGUAGE AWARDS

One of the elements of Bwrlwm ARFOR's work is the World's Most Welsh-Language Awards which aim to celebrate the language in the world of work in ARFOR areas. Since the wider programme looks specifically at links between economy and language, an obvious step was to hold an awards ceremony celebrating the businesses and individuals who work through the medium of Welsh. Businesses, organisations and individuals could nominate themselves or others for one of seven awards namely, Most Welsh Brand (Sglods Llanon), Most Welsh Social Media (Pawen Lawen Dog Park), Most Welsh Staff (Caffi Maes Caernarfon), Most Welsh Space (Garth Newydd), Most Welsh Business (Caffi Maes Caernarfon), Most Welsh Individual (Geraint Edwards, Pedair Cainc) and the Most Welsh Product (Blocks by Ffion Wyn Evans from Enfys o Emosiynau). The nominations were announced, and a public vote was opened to decide the winners. On 17 July an awards ceremony was held in Aberystwyth to celebrate the winners' success.

GWOBRAU
MWYAF
CYMRAEG
Y BYD

BWRLWM FORUM

The Forum is an opportunity for individuals who are interested in ARFOR projects and the future of Welsh-speaking communities to take part in a conversation to discuss their experiences, what's happening at grassroots level in their communities and hear some of the latest developments from others who are part of the project. It can be a good opportunity to network and learn more about the variety of projects that are supported by the ARFOR project and those organisations, businesses and individuals who live and work in our Welsh-speaking communities and for the benefit of their future. The Forum is held virtually over Zoom, and everyone is welcome.

They have been very successful so far, attracting people to learn and understand more about ARFOR and offering individuals a valuable opportunity to share their ideas in a welcoming and positive context.

FFORWM
BWRLWM

CASE STUDIES:
MONITORING, EVALUATING AND LEARNING

The objective of the ARFOR Programme Monitoring, Evaluating and Learning stream was to carry out research looking at the ARFOR Programme in order to record the successes of the scheme together with learning what could be improved and developed during the lifetime of the project and in the future. The project was delivered by research company Wavehill in partnership with Sgema and Aberystwyth University with a budget of £300,000 over the project period. Wavehill was also responsible for the evaluation work on the ARFOR 1 project.

STRENGTHENING UNDERSTANDING AND LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE CONFERENCE

An ARFOR conference: Strengthening Understanding and Looking Towards The Future was held at Canolfan Medrus, Aberystwyth University. The conference offered attendees the opportunity to take part in various sessions, presentations and talks. Along with discussion sessions and presentations on specific topics, a preview of some of the main points of Wavehill's final evaluation of the ARFOR Programme was provided. The conference also offered an opportunity for stakeholders and those who have been part of the ARFOR Programme to come together to discuss the project and their impressions of it towards the end of the project.

Good feedback was given to the event as well as a positive response to the different sessions. The clear enthusiasm and passion that could be heard in the contributions of individuals during the discussion sessions was impressive, showing once again that the future of the Welsh language is a subject that inspires profound thought.

We succeeded in creating and environment for meaningful and engaging discussions which enabled attendees to share their valuable experiences and insights regarding the Programme, and the wider challenges that north and west Wales face. There seems to be a real appetite to tackle ideas that discuss the economy in these areas in the context of the Welsh language and how to use investment plans for the benefit of Welsh-speaking communities.

The discussion was enriched by the wide range of individuals who attended, with experts from a wide variety of fields present and ready to share their experiences and ideas in order to solve some of the main challenges that ARFOR areas face.

Speaking on behalf of Wavehill, Lowri Cunnington-Wynn, the event co-ordinator, said: **The conference was a huge success - a great opportunity to bring people together to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing our communities, our economy and the Welsh language. We are very grateful to everyone who contributed to make the day so successful. It is clear that collaboration is key and that continuing some of these conversations is extremely important.**

Discussing the evaluation report due to be published later in 2025 Ioan Teifi from Wavehill said: **The ARFOR 2 evaluation has a critical role in helping to inform how the main objectives of the Programme should be supported going forward. When considering the challenge of losing young Welsh speakers from these areas, the evaluation offers an opportunity to assess what lessons we can take from the introduction of the Programme and how these challenges should be tackled moving forward.**

ARSYLLFA: RURAL OBSERVATORY WEBSITE

The Arsyllfa: Rural Observatory website, which is run by Sgema, is an example of the work undertaken by the Monitoring, Evaluating and Learning stream to improve stakeholders understanding of some of the ideas at the heart of the ARFOR programme by sharing news about the project and presenting contributions from leading academics in the field of language planning. Over the past year the Arsyllfa: Rural Observatory has grown into an essential platform to motivate public discussion about ARFOR's core objectives, the nature of the relationship between economic development and the language, the impact of migration on communities and what policy makers need to consider when developing interventions.

ARSYLLFA OBSERVATORY

ABERYSTWYTH UNIVERSITY RESEARCH WORKSHOPS

As part of their work with Wavehill, academics from the Centre for Welsh Politics and Society, Aberystwyth University have held a series of workshops exploring some of the themes that arise when looking at the links between economic development and the Welsh language. In November 2023 two workshops were held discussing the impact of migration and emigration, with the first of these looking at the specific conditions of north-west Wales and the second inviting contributions from academics across Europe to explain comparative contexts across the continent. These meetings have been a valuable opportunity for those who formulate policy and implement the ARFOR scheme at grassroots level to come together and hear from experts about the latest evidence regarding the links that exist between the economy and the language.

By hearing about what different regions and countries have in common and comparing the impact of migration and specific policy interventions strengthen our understanding of the best way to implement the different work streams and how ARFOR could be developed in the future.

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> Dr Huw Lewis from Aberystwyth University commented:
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> **Our aim in collaborating with Wavehill on this project is to identify relevant lessons that arise from contemporary research - e.g. in the case of the nature of rural emigration and wider discussions about the nature of the relationship between the economy and the language - and delivering those findings back to the officials responsible for coordinating the ARFOR programme.**

ARFOR'S VISIT TO THE BASQUE COUNTRY, DR. ELIN ROYLES

The enthusiastic crew on the ARFOR trip to the Basque Country, led by Elin Haf Gruffydd Jones, were a combination of members of the ARFOR Board, a group of ARFOR officers, officers of bodies implementing the Programme and staff from universities involved in the Programme. It was an opportunity to understand more about the activity of local public organizations and universities in the Basque Country supporting the Basque language.

Hearing from the Mayor of Hernani, a town in the province of Gipuzkoa, 9 kilometres from Donostia, was an impressive experience. In a town of just over twenty thousand people, there are approximately 240 industrial companies working in various sectors, including international companies and part of the Mondragon cooperative group. The Mayor explained that the town has an annual budget of €40 million as a result of good taxable income from the industries in the area. While there was no specific responsibility for economic development from this level of government, their intention as a council was to have linguistic influence through their internal action, use procurement powers, in projects and in their relationship with large companies.

A key element in trying to have linguistic influence was to operate internally in the Basque language. They considered themselves as one of the largest councils using Basque as an internal language. While the decision to operate internally through Basque in 2011 had been relatively controversial, it had now been accepted and rooted. Therefore, Basque is the language of meetings, and they had internal procedures regarding the use of Basque. If information needed to be provided in Spanish, it would be translated at the end. Simultaneous translation from Basque to Spanish was also used in some external meetings, but not often. Each job had a language profile council and understanding of Basque was higher among the staff than the language profile.

The council also set language conditions and clauses in their procurement contracts to provide services, for example cleaning, waste management, or social care. Their linguistic expectations were the same as if the council itself provided the service. For example, the language profile of staff was expected to match the council's expectations if they were to provide the service. A procurement agreement also includes an assessment of linguistic needs for specific positions. The cost of providing language training was included and recognised, and the town council monitored its implementation. It would be a company's responsibility and internal process to assess the language skills of their staff as part of assessing compliance with expectations. If the body did not realize the expectations of language clauses, it would have to draw up a language plan outlining how to achieve it. As it was 14 years since the measures were introduced, companies understood and were used to the expectations.

An impressive initiative was the council's agreement with a co-operative to provide care at home for the elderly in Hernani. The council contributed to the establishment of the initiative run by women who had migrated to Spain. As their Basque linguistic skills are limited and the council wants them to develop their Basque skills, as part of the agreement the council pays 15% of the employees' working hours to learn Basque in language learning centres. This is an initiative that meets the need to provide social care, the workers develop oral skills in Basque and promote social integration by bringing two communities together. There was no formal assessment of the 3-year-old programme but the impression of the council staff was that the employees take part in other events in the town and that the scheme enables them to support their children in the Basque education system, and that the initiative dispels myths about learning challenges and value of the Basque language.

The council also worked with small and medium-sized companies within their area to increase their use of the Basque language internally, visually and with clients. Their expectation was that anyone representing a company that would meet the council could speak Basque. The council did not have the power to force companies to put up Basque signs, but they could encourage them to do so. If a company failed to provide a version in Basque, the town hall would assist them. A recent development was the passing of local legislation creating an expectation on cafes or restaurants that wanted to use public land (e.g. terrace or pavement) to provide the menu in Basque.

Also, the council used language clauses as part of the planning permission procedure. In order to try to influence supermarkets such as Lidl to make Basque visible, they drew up separate agreements. It was not possible to impose a language requirement on them according to the law, but language clauses were discussed with a company from the start and the council developed a Memorandum of Understanding. While this had no solid legal basis, it was considered a way of encouraging making the Basque language visible and trying to ensure that large companies coming into the area are aware of the importance of the Basque language and the expectations on them.

This provides a wealth of examples of positive linguistic action by public bodies.

In the case of Mondragon University, the potential of internships to develop student connections with workplaces, including to use the Basque language, was underlined. It is a good example of integration between workplaces and universities that can support the provision of career paths to professional skills and local Welsh jobs.

In the town of Hernani, the significance of using a combination of local powers to promote a minority language was evident. Every element has value: from operating internally in Basque, high linguistic expectations in procurement agreement processes, including linguistic considerations when establishing cooperative enterprises to fill gaps in service provision, and using planning and influence powers to promote the language when dealing with companies.

CONCLUSIONS

The legacy of the ARFOR Programme continues to develop further, and the efforts to continue the objectives of the project are subject to wider activity through local authority and stakeholder work. Despite this there is still a need for a dedicated work programme that directly addresses some of the main challenges that motivated the establishment of ARFOR in the first place. Some of the main areas that require further attention are:

- The need to change the narrative 'there's nothing here for me' and to offer different narratives about what ARFOR areas have to offer young people.
- A sustainable and long-term solution for the challenges that the migration of young people from the areas where they grew up and not returning raises, and the significant demographic change that comes as a result.
- A campaign to further share what has been learned and developed as part of the ARFOR Programme, taking advantage of the opportunities that already exist and the established networks that have been formed as a result.

We have learned a lot while making and developing the Programme, and the team at ARFOR is convinced that there is a real need to share those lessons and build on them so that future interventions can develop, and expand the work delivered as part of ARFOR and ensure a prosperous future for the economies of local communities and the Welsh language in these communities.

Successes

The work carried out as part of the Monitoring, Evaluating and Learning stream and in particular Wavehill's final review of the Programme has highlighted some of ARFOR's main achievements. These include:

- Success in delivering a substantial, multifaceted and innovative programme that broke new ground in a very short period of time.
- Positive economic impact on the areas that received support.
- Increase in the use of Welsh in the world of work, with businesses reporting that they are more likely to use Welsh as an internal and external working language when communicating with the public, customers and other businesses.
- Success in influencing migration patterns following successful interventions.
- High satisfaction expressed by those who were involved in the Programme in some way.

Challenges

The monitoring process also discovered challenges faced during the implementation process, and any further interventions will need to consider these if work is to continue in this area. Among the challenges identified were:

- The effect of the short operational period of the Programme on its efficiency.
- Ambiguity in terms of the main objectives of the Programme and the outputs.
- Lack of a clear definition of the 'local challenges' in the ARFOR area.
- Lack of a robust monitoring structure.

Lessons and Future Direction

When considering the lessons learned in the implementation of ARFOR and what is needed to ensure the long-term legacy of the Programme, three things need to be ensured.

- First of all, a long-term commitment to interventions that have an extended period and that have a wide distribution, in order to measure the impact and effectiveness of measures such as those developed in ARFOR 2.
- Secondly, a need to mainstream those elements of the Programme that have been successful, ensuring that what made them into effective programmes is preserved and developed.

- Thirdly the Programme's strengths should focus on informing and enabling innovative solutions and answers to complex problems. It is not possible for any such programme to answer all challenges directly and therefore we have to prioritize and focus on the areas where a real difference can be made.

A great deal of effort and hard work has been done to ensure that the ARFOR Programme realizes its objectives. Collaboration between organizations and suppliers has been at the core of the project, and we can now confidently say that a strong network has been formed across the region to realize this innovative project.

ARFOR 2 has built on the initial work of ARFOR 1 and has continued the important process of raising awareness among the public about the opportunities available to them within their local areas and what ARFOR streams have to offer them when looking towards the future. There is now a solid foundation in place to ensure success if we can maintain the momentum and continue the necessary investment required in these areas.

There is still a lot of work to be done, but the popularity and personal investment of those who have been involved in the streams' work is testament to the fact that the Programme has had a real impact at grassroots level. If we can continue this good work developing what was discovered during the lifetime of the project based on the most successful elements, we are confident that we will see a real change now in how we understand, interpret and act regarding the economy and the language in the strongholds of the Welsh language.

ARFOR

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