



ARFOR

CREU GWAITH - CEFNOGI'R IAITH

ARFOR 2 PROGRAMME UPDATE UP TO MARCH 2025



CYNGOR SIR
YNYS MÔN
ISLE OF ANGLESEY
COUNTY COUNCIL



Cyngor Sir
CEREDIGION
County Council



Ariennir gan
Llywodraeth 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.

The purpose of this report is to announce the results of the Programme up to the end of March 2025, providing an overview of the work streams and giving examples of some of the many organizations and individuals from across the region who have benefited from the Programme and who have seen a real change in their communities, businesses and lives as a result.

WHAT HAS ARFOR MEANT TO GWYNEDD, MÔN, CEREDIGION AND SIR GÂR?

GWYNEDD



Councillor Nia Jeffreys, Cyngor Gwynedd Leader:

The ARFOR Programme has highlighted the value of the Welsh language in economic development matters and has strengthened the language as a business and community language in Gwynedd. It is a valuable agenda in areas with a high density of Welsh speakers such as Gwynedd, especially when striving to create a million Welsh speakers nationally by 2050. We need good employment in Gwynedd, as well as business development opportunities, and an economic development agenda that puts the Welsh language first - and the ARFOR Programme has successfully responded to these needs. I would like to acknowledge how innovative the Programme was in intertwining issues of linguistic planning and economic development, as well as its key role in supporting our young people to stay in Gwynedd or return here to live and work.



YNYS MÔN



Councillor Gary Pritchard, Leader of the Council and Economic Development Portfolio Holder:

The success of the ARFOR Programme is evident here on Ynys Môn, contributing to the Council's objectives to develop the economy and support the Welsh language. The Programme has enabled a number of businesses - old and new, small and medium-sized to develop, as well as create new job opportunities for local people. It was wonderful to see a number of local businesses drawing attention to the Welsh language within their organisations, new services being introduced, and activities to support a local future for our young people.



CEREDIGION



Councillor Bryan Davies, Ceredigion Council Leader:

In Ceredigion ARFOR has enabled us to break new ground, by offering opportunities for our young people to venture into the world of business and realise that you don't have to leave the area to succeed. It has also enabled existing businesses to develop and contribute towards the economic growth of Ceredigion.



Cyngor Sir
CEREDIGION
County Council

SIR GÂR



Councillor Darren Price, Sir Gâr Council Leader:

The ARFOR Programme's investment in our young people and the Welsh language has meant that Sir Gâr itself benefits. In the current economic climate, taking advantage of every possible opportunity to improve our local economy, for the benefit of future generations, is extremely valuable.

It was wonderful to see Sir Gâr businesses devoting themselves to increasing the use of the Welsh language in the business world and their desire to invest in order to grow economically.

We have welcomed the ARFOR Programme investment from the Welsh Government. It has been a pleasure to work closely with other local authorities in west Wales throughout the Programme. We look forward to further investment to support Sir Gâr's young people and businesses.



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. In the next sections we will look at each of the streams in turn, outlining the objectives, their methods of operation and the outcome of the work for each element of the project.

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.

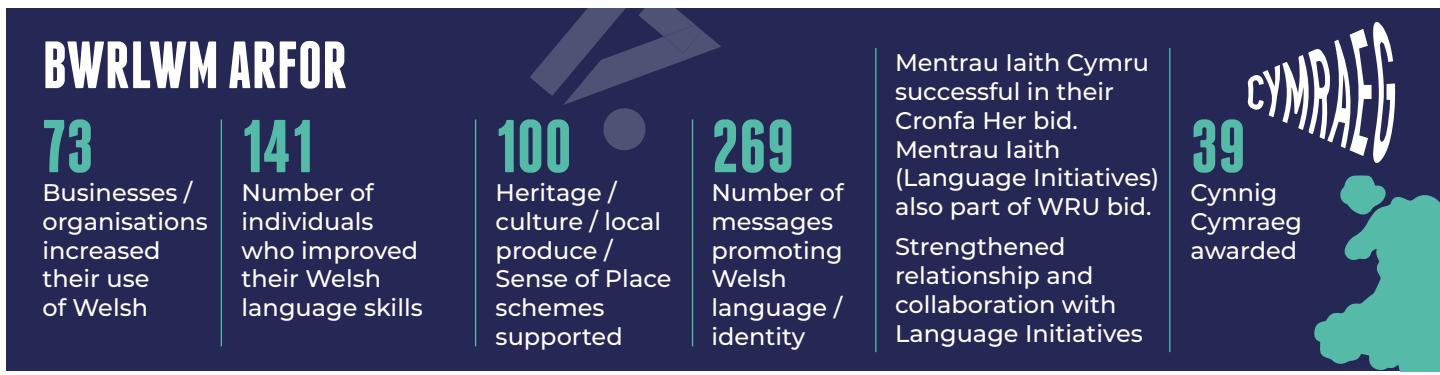
4

BWRWLWM: 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.

ARFOR OUTCOMES – UP TO MARCH 2025



STREAM 1: 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.

The main objective of Llwyddo'n Lleol was to convince and persuade young people and families who lived in the region, together with those who had left, of the exciting career opportunities available to them by staying locally or when returning from other areas. The core of this aim was to start a positive conversation with young people in order to encourage them to take risks and develop successful careers and consider establishing their own businesses in the ARFOR areas. Llwyddo'n Lleol has been an essential part of the ARFOR 2 Programme and has been vitally important in establishing the ARFOR brand and broadcasting messages about the objectives of the Programme among key audiences as well as promoting the opportunities available across the region.

The project was divided into four divisions, the **Career Element**, the **Enterprise Element**, the **Settling Element** and the **Testing Element**.

- The **Career Element** aimed to promote the career and social opportunities that exist in the ARFOR area. This work was delivered through specialist workshops, breakout sessions, mentoring work and providing advice and job fairs highlighting local opportunities. The project also supported local businesses to offer employment to local young people.
- The **Enterprise Element** was designed to encourage young people to venture within their native communities by providing funding and advice to individuals who want, are considering or have already started a business locally. Successful applicants took part in programmes involving advice and training from business experts focusing on key skills such as marketing, financing, financial literacy as well as attracting and serving customers. The scheme also offered grants of £1,000 to participants to develop their business idea.





- The **Settling Element** explored ways of encouraging young families living beyond the ARFOR region to return to their local areas, providing them with information, advice and support to do so. This was delivered in the form of residential weekends where families had the opportunity to visit and spend time in specific areas to experience a taste of life in the ARFOR area.
- The **Testing Element** worked to improve young people's skills to prepare them for the world of work. This work was delivered through face-to-face sessions in schools to help learners identify their skills, provide support on how to search and apply for jobs, as well as advice on how to draft a CV emphasising the opportunities for young people to access local jobs.

We believe that this work is essential in addressing the challenge of the emigration of young people from ARFOR areas and the ongoing impact this has on communities, the Welsh language, the workforce and the economy in these areas. Steps need to be taken to fight the narrative that there are no opportunities for young people in these areas, and the work of Llwyddo'n Lleol is testimony to the fact that interventions can be designed in a positive way in order to do that.

The campaign specifically addressed the following elements:

- The types of jobs available in the ARFOR region.
- How employers have a presence in ARFOR and the opportunities they offer.
- The necessary skills needed in order to get a job and develop a career.
- How entrepreneurship and setting up a business can be an option for anyone.

It is essential that the work in this area continues, as we now have a strong brand and a broad understanding of what the scheme is offering to young people in the area. We need to mainstream the working methods and ensure that young people across ARFOR not only feel pride in their locality but see it as a place where they could live in the future without having to mitigate their ambition.

CASE STUDIES

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 been 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:

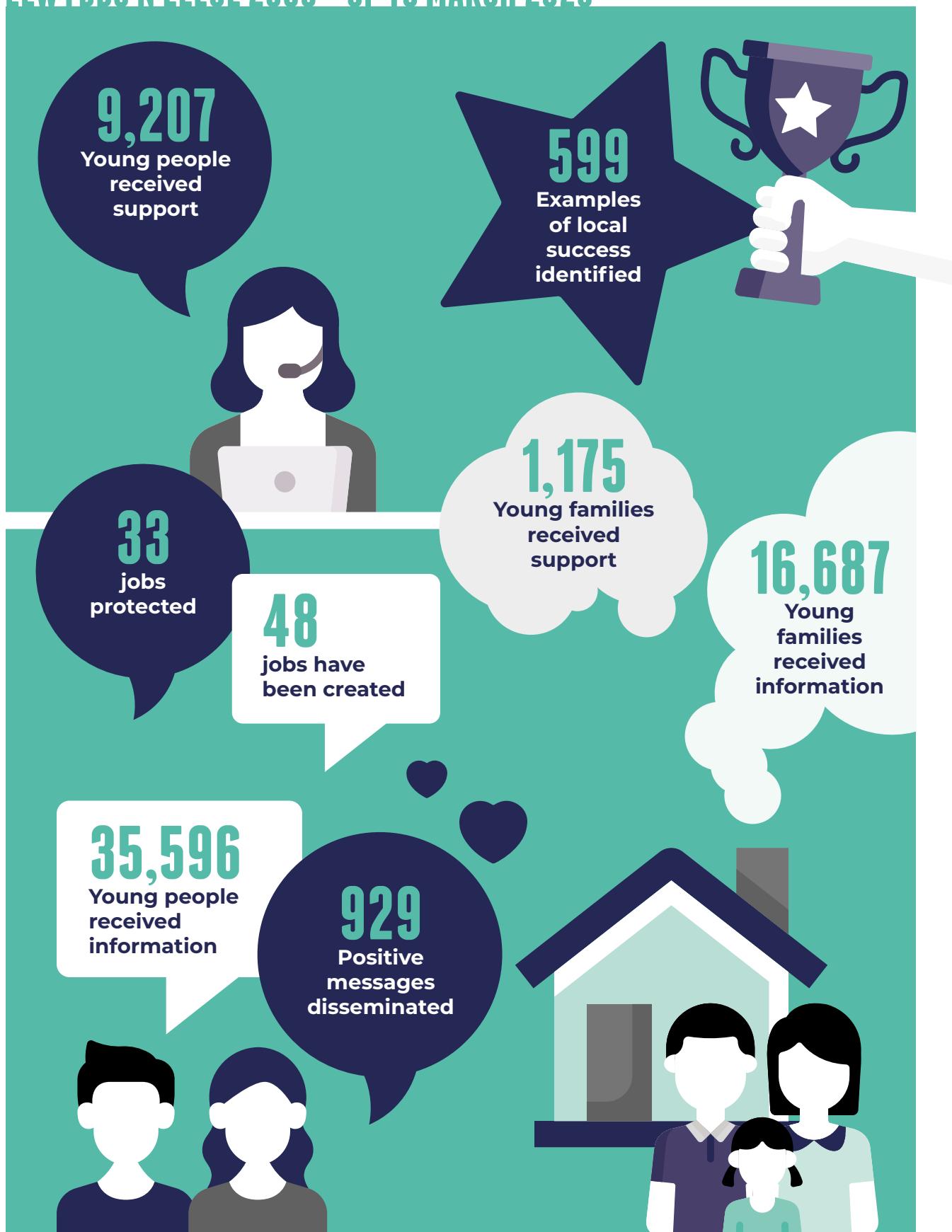
We know that so many young people want to return, but there are practical barriers holding them back. The Settling element helps to remove those barriers, proving that moving home is not just a dream but a viable supported reality. Seeing these seven families take the step to return home is incredible.

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.

LIWYDDON I LLEOI 2050 – UP TO MARCH 2025



STREAM 2: 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. These challenges were defined as follows:

Work

- The belief that work available within the ARFOR region does not offer sufficient income to enable people to live the life they want and to realize their aspirations in terms of pay and work/life balance.
- The belief that a lack of diversity and job opportunities is an obstacle for individuals and young families to be able to stay in the communities where they grew up, and that this also prevents some from returning.
- The skills gap that exists between the workforce and the needs of local employers.

The Local Economy

- The need for communities and individuals to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the economic, social, environmental, cultural and linguistic qualities of the region.
- The need to add value to local products and services in order to strengthen the economic foundations of communities.
- The need to take more advantage of the principles of a basic and circular economy ensuring that more money circulates in the region's economy.
- The need to prevent the risk of losing key resources and services in communities by stimulating a positive, resilient and active attitude that is alert to these problems.





The Welsh Language

- The need for commercial and social enterprises to make a greater contribution to increasing the use of the Welsh language locally, as a means not only of promoting the unique language and culture of the ARFOR area and creating a unique sense of place, but also as a means of adding value to goods and services offered.
- The need to create new Welsh language spaces and develop those that already exist.
- The need to increase the number of jobs that have bilingual skills at their core.
- The need to increase the use of Welsh within businesses and organizations, normalizing its use as the working language of the world of work.

The Cymunedau Mentrus fund had a budget of £4,500,000 divided into £1,125,000 for each county council individually. The county councils could provide financial support to organizations that successfully applied for specific projects.

Organizations were able to receive support through funding that contributed to revenue and capital costs and financial support that paid up to 70% of the costs of each individual project. The size of these projects varied from case to case and organizations could receive support of between £5,000 and £75,000. This funding allowed these organizations to employ Welsh-speaking staff, invest in creating a new product or service, provide training for the new jobs, to cover costs that could help create Welsh-speaking spaces such as the rent and purchase of equipment on a small scale. Cymunedau Mentrus had a wide impact on a large number of businesses, allowing the councils to be able to assist businesses in a strategic way that helped stimulate growth in the area and secure jobs.

CASE STUDIES

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 GÂR - 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.

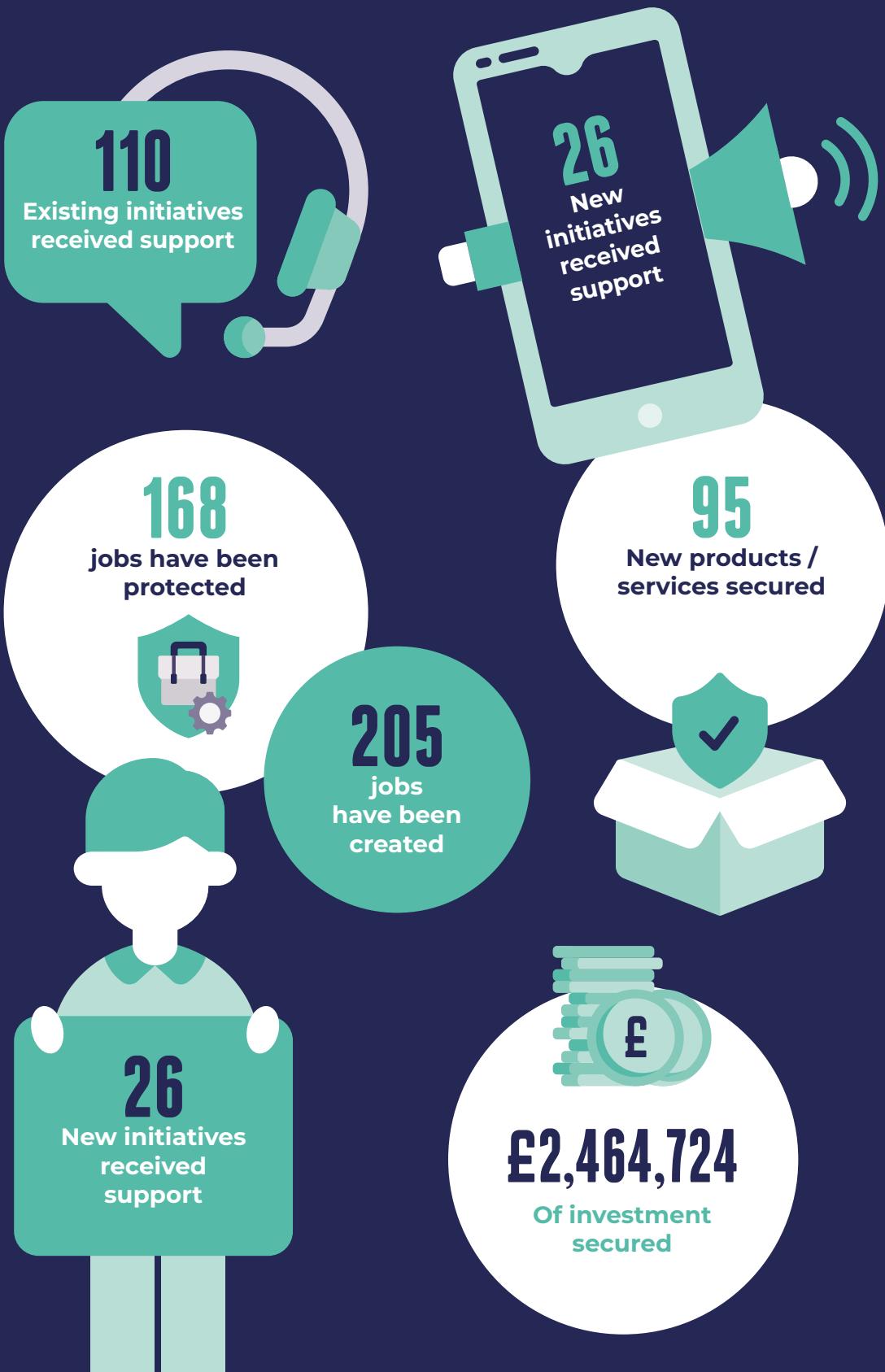
CADARN
CONSULTING ENGINEERS

“ 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.



CYMRUDAU MENTRUS – UP TO MARCH 2025



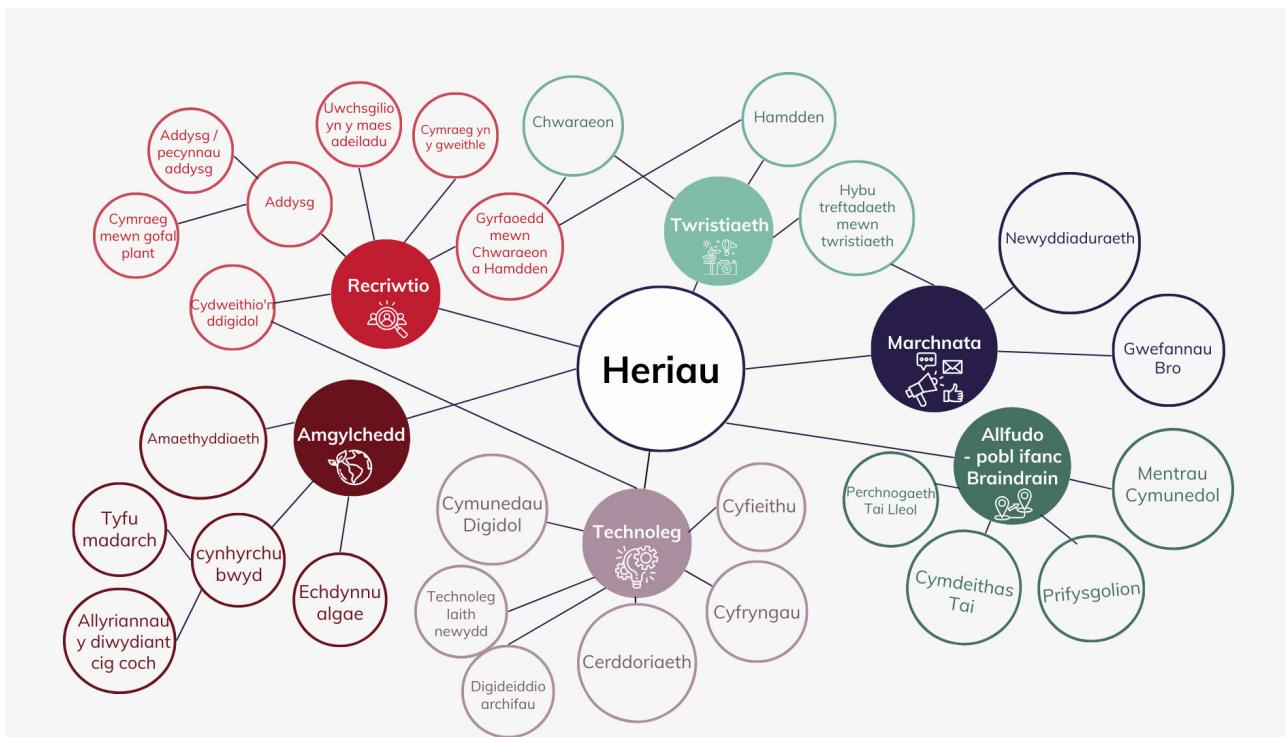
STREAM 3: CRONFA HER

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.

The purpose of Cronfa Her was to respond to local and regional challenges by helping to develop and finance innovative projects that had inter-institutional collaboration at their core. These challenges included:

- The lack of knowledge and understanding of the relationship between the economy and the Welsh language.
- The need to continue to learn and innovate within the field to develop the work further.
- The importance of offering the opportunity to a wide range of stakeholders to contribute to the work.
- Acknowledgment that the Welsh Government and Local Authorities do not have all the answers.

The image below gives an idea of the wider types of challenges that have been responded to through Cronfa Her projects:



Cronfa Her's ambition was to explore solutions to these challenges that could demonstrate and strengthen the relationship between language and economy. Each scheme was required to try and prove the following points:

- Using the language boosts the economy.
- Using the language gives employers and staff new employment opportunities.
- Using the language can help create a brand and draw for businesses.
- Using the language can spark a sense of pride, including a sense of belonging to a community and having the opportunity to talk to other people who speak the same language.

The Cronfa Her work stream was divided into two parts, the Cronfa Her Fach and Cronfa Her Fawr, in order to meet different requirements.

- **Cronfa Her Fach** offered funding of up to £30,000 to trial new ideas for an organization or business. This fund's intention was to finance ideas that could be implemented quickly in order to test whether they were effective or not, with the ability for them to be developed further through an application to the Cronfa Her Fawr.
- **Cronfa Her Fawr** was a flexible fund where organizations or businesses could make a joint individual application to develop and implement plans that responded to the strategic objectives of the ARFOR Programme within one local authority, across several counties or across the entire ARFOR region.

By requiring project applicants to collaborate beyond their individual institutions the aim was to encourage partnership and collaboration as a means not only of strengthening the position of the Welsh language but also the economic context in which its speakers live by fostering new working relationships. At the core of the work was the belief that it is important to help the residents of these areas to tackle the problems they face and empower them to solve problems using their local knowledge by giving them the opportunity to put their ideas into practice.

As a result of this work, the 30 funded projects have produced a toolkit outlining what was delivered and how to go about creating similar projects. Each toolkit provides a useful and interesting insight into what was learned about the links between economy and language, and the challenges and innovative solutions that each of the projects identified and proposed.

CASE STUDIES

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 Mentrâu 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.

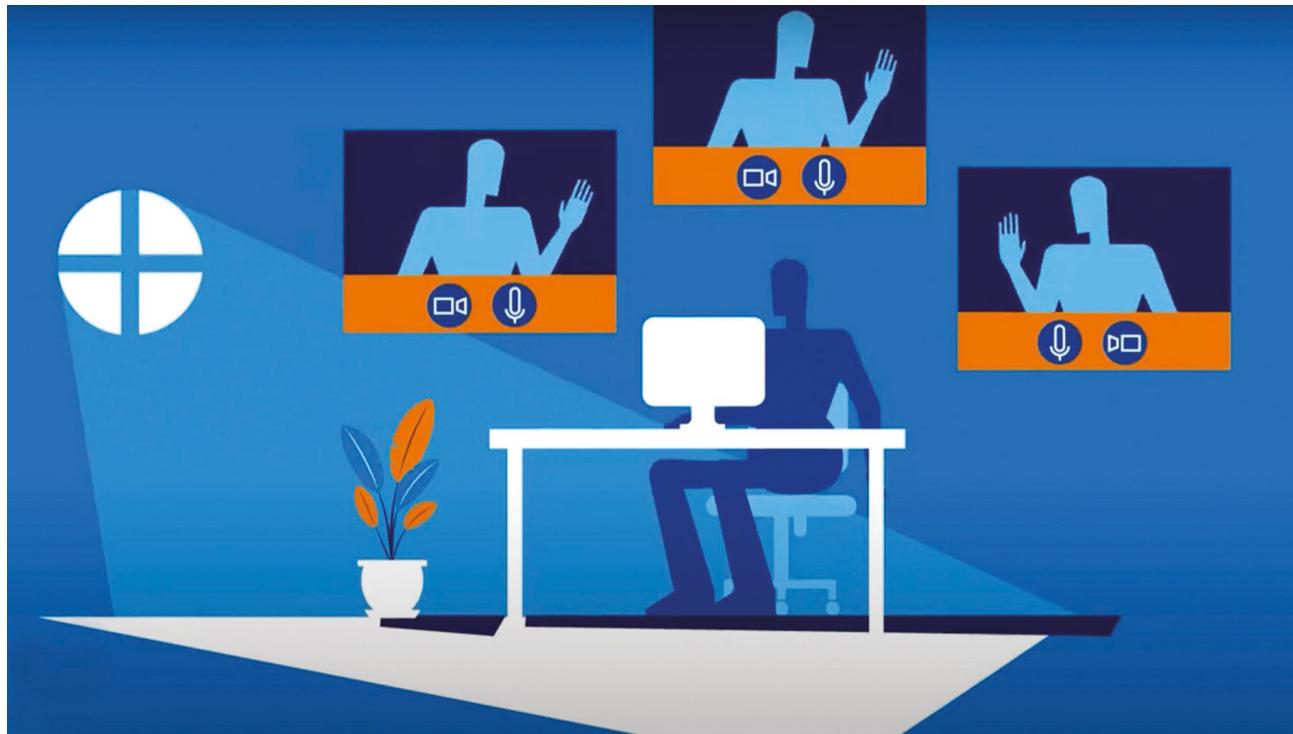


CANOLFAN BEDWYR, BANGOR UNIVERSITY: ARFER

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.



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. Tetrilm 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.

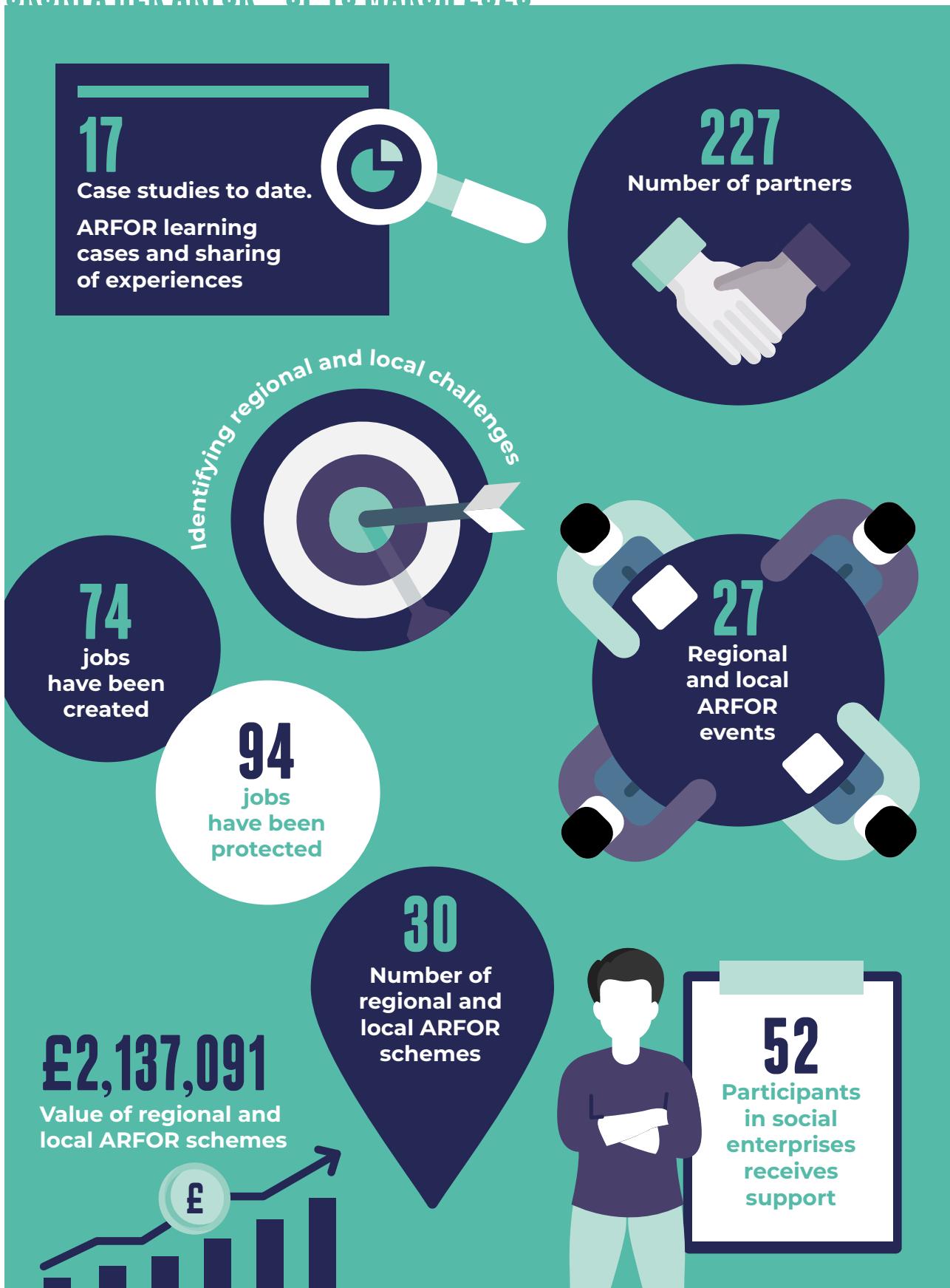


TETRIM TEAS

C Y M R U



CRONFA HER ARFOR – UP TO MARCH 2025



STREAM 4: 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.

Bwrlwm ARFOR was an essential part of the project and led a communication programme that not only increased awareness among the public and partners but also helped connect stakeholders from different streams of the ARFOR Programme. This has resulted in a new network of people who have a keen interest in the Welsh language and economic prosperity who have come to know each other and work together across the active period of the Programme and into the future.

Bwrlwm ARFOR was also key in encouraging a sense of pride in their locality among stakeholders as well as improving awareness of the unique socio-linguistic conditions of the ARFOR area and the economic factors that influence its linguistic situation.

Bwrlwm ARFOR's work was multi-faceted and cross platform, with the need to engage strategically with a variety of audiences in different ways with messages specially tailored for specific purposes.

The core of the work was to produce content to be published through the **Bwrlwm ARFOR** website which outlines good practice and case studies from ARFOR projects as well as informing stakeholders about the work taking place as part of the project. As part of this work Bwrlwm ARFOR also set up and implemented the following projects:

- **C'mon Cymraeg:** a series of podcasts that invited various voices to consider the impact

of the Welsh language on the prosperity of businesses in ARFOR communities.

- **ARFOR Reporters Scheme:** an opportunity for young people to develop their writing and communication skills by reporting and writing about some of the project's important issues and attracting more diverse voices to explore the economy and the Welsh language in the public domain.
- **Bwrlwm Forum:** a regular virtual meeting that allowed stakeholders and those interested in the ARFOR project to come together for an hour to discuss the economy and the Welsh language.
- **ARFOR Box:** a project that reached out to communities in the ARFOR area to hold and film conversations about the Welsh language and the economy in order to hear ideas and create a buzz about the programme.
- **The Future Leaders project:** a special partnership with the ARFOR area Young Farmers Clubs which saw YFC members sharing their experiences of why they have stayed in their local areas or returned after a period away as well as what living and working in the countryside has to offer young people.
- **The Most Welsh in the World Awards:** an event celebrating the contributions of individuals and businesses to the Welsh language in Welsh social and commercial life.
- **Cymraeg Spaces:** special attention was paid to Welsh Language Spaces as a means of raising awareness of their value to local businesses and creating a sense of pride for the presence of the Welsh language locally.

To learn more about **Bwrlwm ARFOR's** various projects visit www.bwrlwmfor.cymru

CASE STUDIES

‘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.

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.



BWRLWM ARFOR – UP TO MARCH 2025

141
Number of individuals who improved their Welsh language skills

269
Number of messages promoting Welsh language /identity

Mentrau Iaith Cymru successful in their Cronfa Her bid. Mentrau Iaith (Language Initiatives) also part of WRU bid.

Strengthened relationship and collaboration with Language Initiatives

100
Heritage/ culture/ local produce/ Sense of Place schemes supported

73
Businesses/organisations increased their use of Welsh

39
Cynnig Cymraeg awarded



STREAM 5: 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.

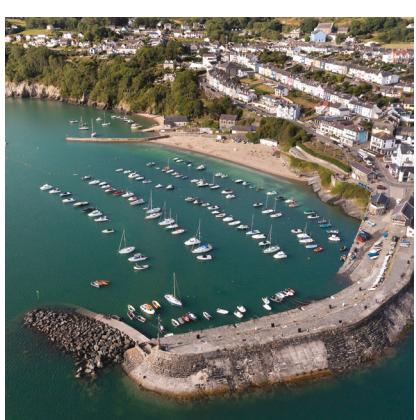
Wavehill has been extremely active in monitoring and evaluating the ARFOR Programme as a whole since 2022. They have prepared a rigorous final evaluation of the project which assesses all work streams in turn, taking care to gather the necessary information and carry out interviews with stakeholders, Programme participants, those who received support through the programme and programme organizers and administrators at all levels.

Aberystwyth University's work was a new aspect of the Programme which helped those who shaped and participated in the project to

learn more about the links between economy and language in the form of research papers, reports, workshops, lectures and seminars. They were also instrumental in looking at examples from beyond Wales, drawing on the experiences of language planners from across Europe and beyond in order to strengthen the Programme and share lessons.

Sgema were also joint partners on this stream and helped deliver various discussion sessions, articles, guest blogs and further research to complement the objectives of this part of the project. Their Observatory website provided a steady stream of stories about the ARFOR project, as well as offering a view of the wider context in the form of blogs and stories discussing ARFOR areas and communities and highlighting some of the key factors at the heart of the project.

As part of this work, a group visited the Basque Country to learn about the work happening within its education system, the business world and the local authorities in order to strengthen Basque as a language and make it an integral and natural part of the world of work through innovative interventions.



CASE STUDIES

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 an 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 Cunningham-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 Iwan 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.

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.

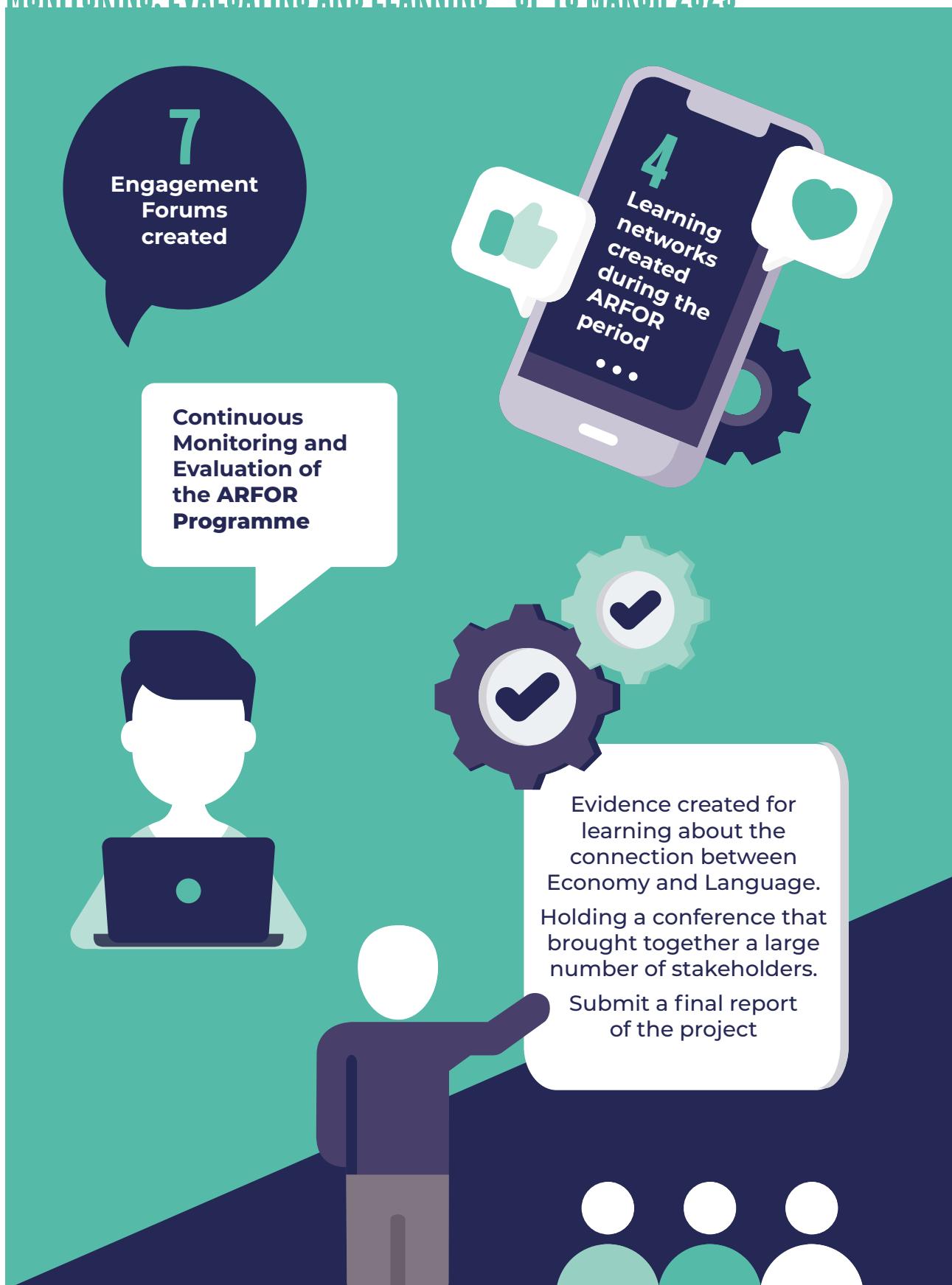
This provides a wealth of examples of positive linguistic action by public bodies.

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.



MONITORING, EVALUATING AND LEARNING – UP TO MARCH 2025



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.

