

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET



Report to a meeting of Gwynedd Council Cabinet

Date of meeting:	19 July 2022
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn, Council Leader
Contact officer:	Sioned Williams, Head of Economy and Community
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Title of Item:	SECOND PHASE OF THE ARFOR PROGRAMME

1. THE DECISION SOUGHT

- 1.1. To approve the second phase of the Programme as outlined in the report and authorise the Head of Economy and Community– in consultation with the Leader, the Head of Finance and the Chief Executive – to agree on the content of the final programme.
- 1.2. To agree for Gwynedd Council to lead on the second phase of the ARFOR Programme on behalf of Anglesey, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire Councils in terms of managing Welsh Government's financial agreement, realising the joint schemes within the Programme and coordinating/administrating the Programme in its entirety.
- 1.3. To authorise the Head of Economy and Community - with the Head of Finance and the Head of Legal Service - to review and update the governance arrangements between the four counties and to submit a further report if required.
- 1.4. On the basis of receiving an agreement in principle from Welsh Government on the second phase of the Programme, to allow to proceed with the appointment of an ARFOR Regional Manager.
- 1.5. To authorise the Head of Economy and Community to establish appropriate arrangements for delivering the programme in Gwynedd.

2. THE REASON FOR THE NEED FOR A DECISION

- 2.1. Following the success of the ARFOR Programme, £11 million has been committed by the Welsh Government for the next phase of the Programme until March 2025.
- 2.2. Welsh Government wishes to receive an offer from Gwynedd, Anglesey, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire Councils regarding use of the budget and management of the Programme.

3. INTRODUCTION

First phase of the ARFOR Programme

- 3.1. In 2019, following a budgetary agreement between Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru, £2 million was provided to Gwynedd, Anglesey, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire Councils to trial innovative methods of supporting the economy in the Welsh language heartlands (the ARFOR Programme).
- 3.2. The Programme was operational until the end of 2020/21 and Gwynedd Council led/coordinated the Programme at the request of the other counties.
- 3.3. In Gwynedd, the following schemes were realised via the ARFOR Programme:
 - *Support for Enterprise* - an advice and financial assistance package for businesses that wished to venture and create new jobs
 - *Production Space* - establishing [the Ffiws centre](#) in Porthmadog to provide opportunities for local businesses and the community to use new equipment and technology
 - *Enterprising Communities Challenge* - support was provided to Partneriaeth Ogwen, Bethesda; Henblas Centre, Bala and Menter y Plu, Llanystumdwy to develop social enterprises that circulated money within their communities and created jobs
 - [Llwyddo'n Lleol 2050](#) - supporting local young people to venture within their communities and inspire others to follow their example
 - [Bwrlwm ARFOR](#) - a scheme across the four counties to promote examples of local success and encourage use of the Welsh language
- 3.4. The implementation period of the Programme was substantially affected by the Coronavirus pandemic. Despite COVID-19, and the modest budget, the [Evaluation of the Programme](#) reported that it had made a difference, which included supporting the creation of 65 new jobs in Gwynedd.

- 3.5. Most significantly, the first phase of the Programme highlighted the lack of data regarding the interrelation between economic prosperity and the state of the Welsh language; the need for further investment was highlighted and the practice of collaborating between Members and officers of the four counties was established.

Second phase of the ARFOR Programme

- 3.6. Based on the results of the first phase of the Programme, by means of the Co-operation Agreement between Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru, a further £11 million has been secured to sustain the second phase of the Programme (ARFOR II) until March 2025.
- 3.7. In April 2022, the ARFOR Board (namely the Leaders of the four counties) submitted an 'Outline Proposal' for the second phase of the Programme to Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru setting out the rationale, purpose, strategic objectives and principles of the Counties for ARFOR II. The Outline Proposal is enclosed in Appendix 1.
- 3.8. A desire to continue to collaborate on a four-county basis was confirmed, for the following purpose:

Support communities that are the strongholds of the Welsh language to flourish by means of economic interventions that will also contribute towards increasing opportunities to see and use the Welsh language on a daily basis.

- 3.9. In consultation with Welsh Government officers (the Economy Department and the Welsh Language Unit), officers of the four counties have developed proposals to convert the strategic objectives into projects for delivery.

Proposed ARFOR II projects

3.10. **Llwyddo'n Lleol 2050**

Evolution of the project to support young people to venture within their native communities that was only operational in Gwynedd and Anglesey during the first phase of the ARFOR Programme across the four counties.

The scheme will continue to support young people to venture through a combination of support and financial assistance but it will also extend to support young families to remain or return to the area, and seek to change the perceptions of target groups regarding their ability to fulfil their aspirations locally.

The scheme will be operational across the four counties and realised on a regional level via a commission managed by the leading authority.

3.11. Cymunedau Mentrus (Enterprising Communities)

Build on the successful business support funds that were available from the four counties during the first phase of the ARFOR Programme by providing financial and practical support for commercial, social and community enterprises to establish and develop.

The activity will focus on enterprises that take advantage of the unique qualities of their communities (including the Welsh language) and/or that circulate money within their areas in order to increase the amount of wealth that is kept locally.

The scheme will be operational across the four counties but realised locally by individual counties (although it will have an emphasis on coordinating and reconciling the provision).

3.12. ARFOR Challenge Fund

Establish a strategic fund to allow organisations (including Councils) to secure resources to develop and trial activities within the ARFOR area that will achieve the strategic objectives of the Programme.

The Fund will respond to findings in the appraisal of the first phase of the ARFOR Programme that an opportunity needs to be offered to a wider range of organisations with an interest in the field to contribute and allow new activities to be commissioned during the lifespan of ARFOR II.

The scheme will be operational across the four counties and managed on a regional level by the leading authority with input from all counties.

3.13. Strengthen the identity of ARFOR communities

The scheme will build on previous work to promote good practice and use of the Welsh language. The work will promote the identity of communities with a high density of Welsh speakers and stimulate the loyalty of local residents by disseminating positive messages about their area and West Wales in its entirety.

The scheme will be operational across the four counties and realised on a regional level via a commission managed by the leading authority.

3.14. Learning from the ARFOR Programme

A key quality of the ARFOR Programme is stimulating collaboration and cascading learning about the field.

The scheme will ensure that monitoring and evaluating results and the impact of ARFOR will be central to the Programme, and ensure that

structures to share lessons from the Programme and its activity are established from the offset.

The scheme will be operational across the four counties and realised on a regional level via a commission managed by the leading authority.

Managing / administrating ARFOR II

- 3.15. The second phase of the ARFOR Programme will continue to be lead by the Board, which includes the Leaders of the four counties. The Board will be supported by a Group of Officers including senior officers representing the four counties, along with representatives from Welsh Government and the Welsh Local Government Association.
- 3.16. The counties of Anglesey, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire have already stated a desire for Gwynedd Council to continue to coordinate / lead the programme on behalf of the four counties.
- 3.17. A legal agreement between the counties has already been established for the first phase of the ARFOR Programme. The current agreement will be reviewed to ensure protection for Gwynedd Council's interests in light of the increased ARFOR II budget and the desire to commission some joint activities.
- 3.18. Likewise, reflecting on the increased budget of the Programme and the increasing emphasis on regional collaboration, it is intended to establish a regional team - via Gwynedd Council - to manage the Programme and ensure a suitable resource to coordinate the work in individual counties. It is wished to proceed to appoint a Manager for the Programme as soon as Welsh Government confirms that it is satisfied with what is proposed for ARFOR II.

4. THE RATIONALE AND JUSTIFICATION FOR RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

- 4.1. The proposed activity for the second phase of the ARFOR Programme is an evolution of the programme's previous activity, giving specific attention to the lessons learnt.
- 4.2. Gwynedd Council has previously undertaken the 'lead authority' role for the ARFOR Programme and it is wished to continue with the arrangement taking advantage of the expertise that already exists within the Council.
- 4.3. Swift action will need to be taken to realise the Programme after Welsh Government agrees on the content and, to this end, an appropriate resource to lead on the work will need to be ensured as soon as possible.

- 4.4. Work detailing the delivery arrangements and the creation of suitable structures / procedures locally and regionally will continue over the summer period.

5. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

- 5.1. A further meeting between the ARFOR Board, a Welsh Government Minister and a representative of Plaid Cymru will be held in the next few weeks.
- 5.2. The formal proposal of the four counties will be submitted following the discussion.
- 5.3. Subject to receiving Welsh Government's response, it is anticipated that ARFOR II will start to be implemented during the autumn.

6. ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

- 6.1. Monitoring Officer's Observations:

'As stated in the report, the legal agreement and the governance arrangements between the counties will be reviewed in light of these developments and a further report will be presented if necessary.'

- 6.2. Observations of the Head of Finance Department:

'I have no objection to the decision sought. I can confirm the financial information contained in the report, and the Finance Department will support Economy and Community officers in implementing this scheme.'