

Welsh Government make £2m available for West Wales Arfor pilot

The Arfor Innovation fund, a product of the Welsh Government's budget agreement with Plaid Cymru, will target support in Gwynedd, Anglesey, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire, particularly in areas where there is a high percentage of Welsh speakers and an inflow of older people and outflow of younger people. It will focus on those areas where the foundational and agricultural economy are of vital importance and in market and university towns where low incomes remain an issue.

The funding being made available to the four local authorities will look to facilitate new and innovative methods to supporting economic development in the region, by:

- promoting enterprise and supporting business growth in areas with a high proportion of Welsh speakers
- generating more and better paid jobs to retain local people in these areas and encourage those who have left to return
- promoting the wide ranging value of the use of Welsh and bilingualism in business creating a vibrant sense of place
- encouraging the businesses and people who move to rural areas to value and use the Welsh language

In addition to supporting a range of projects within each local authority area, the nature of the scheme will allow for a collaborative approach to projects where the benefits can be felt across council boundaries. An evaluation of the programme will be commissioned to capture the success or otherwise of individual interventions and best practice from the programme of works.

In announcing this new programme today, Economy Minister Ken Skates said:

“This innovative programme, based on extensive discussion with local authority partners, aims to test out new approaches to promote entrepreneurship, business growth and community resilience in the four local authority areas, with a focus on promoting the use of the Welsh language.

The Economic Action Plan has been very clear on the need for Welsh Government to support all parts of our economy to drive up skills, encourage innovation and identify and utilise emerging technology. I am therefore pleased to provide £2 million funding over a two year period to support this initiative which will help guide and inform future activity in areas where we know the rural and foundational economies are of paramount importance, our Welsh speaking and rural heartlands.”

Gwynedd County Council will co-ordinate the programme on behalf of the four local authorities to minimise costs. Speaking on behalf of the Arfor partnership, Gwynedd Council Leader Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn said:

“Today’s announcement is a significant step forward in our joint efforts to build a prosperous and sustainable future for the people and communities of Anglesey, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Gwynedd and a vibrant future for the Welsh language across the region.

This initial investment is the culmination of several months of joint-working between the Leaders of the four Arfor councils and the Welsh Government. With the funding now in place, we can move forward together to explore ways in which we can ensure a vibrant and diverse economy that includes new and better paid work for local people which will, in turn, support the Welsh language.

We very much hope that this will be the first phase of a project that will both boost the Arfor economy and contribute towards the government’s target of a million Welsh speakers by 2050.”