

Welsh Language Project Report 2024



Rhian Lloyd with pupils at Ysgol y Cwm

The Welsh Language Project (WLP) was established in 1997 with the purpose of promoting and developing the Welsh language in the province of Chubut, Argentina. Each year, British Council aims to send 2 teachers from Wales to spend a full academic year working in Patagonia, developing the language in Welsh-speaking communities through formal teaching for young people and adults, in the 3 bilingual schools and adult teaching centres, and via informal social activities. A permanent Teaching Co-ordinator from Wales responsible for the quality of the teaching, is also based in Patagonia. Funding also supports the network of Welsh-speaking tutors who are based in the region, providing support teaching to the bilingual schools and adult teaching.

The Welsh Language Project is funded by Welsh Government and managed by British Council.

2024-25 Achievements

- 1 teacher from Wales (April 2024 – November 2024)
- 1 Teacher Co-ordinator in Patagonia
- 1 digital co-ordinator in Wales (part time)
- 20+ local tutors in Patagonia
- 19 students passed WJEC exams
- 1106 registered learners (schools and adult learners)

Recruitment for 2025 placements

Recruitment for the 2025 placements began in July 2024 to coincide with the National Eisteddfod. 7 applications were received, all from current teachers/adult tutors, or younger people with less teaching experience, and 6 were interviewed. Of these, 3 were appointable and following the selection process, positions were offered to Anna ap Robert and Lleucu Haf.

Lleucu is a reception class teacher at Ysgol Rhydpennau in Aberystwyth, and will be located in Trevelin at Ysgol y Cwm and Anna is a Welsh for Adults tutor and will be teaching students and adults in Gaiman.

<https://nation.cymru/feature/aberystwyth-family-set-off-to-champion-the-welsh-language-in-patagonia/>

A day long pre-departure briefing was held in Cardiff in January 2025 and covered topics such as immigration procedures, teaching in Patagonia, delivered by Clare Vaughan via Teams, and life in Patagonia, delivered by previous teachers from 2020 Marian Brosschot, and 2024 Rhian Lloyd.

Anna and Lleucu travelled to Patagonia in February 2025, spending 10 days in Buenos Aires arranging their necessary work and residence permits, supported by British Council Argentina and Ernst and Young in Buenos Aires, before traveling on to Trevelin and Trelew to start their employment.

Timetables for Lleucu and Anna 2025

Lleucu Haf	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Morning	7.40 – 9.00 Blwyddyn 1 11.35 – 12.55 Blwyddyn 4 Ysgol y Cwm	9.15 – 9.55 Staff Ysgol y Cwm	7.40 – 9.00 Blwyddyn 1 11.35 – 12.55 Blwyddyn 4 Ysgol y Cwm	7.40 – 9.45 Blwyddyn 4 10.45 – 12.55 Blwyddyn 1 Ysgol y Cwm	7.40 -9.00 Blwyddyn 1 9.15 – 11.25 Planning with staff 11.35 – 12.55 Blwyddyn 4 Ysgol y Cwm
Afternoon	16.00 – 17.30 Mynediad 2 Esquel			16.00 – 17.30 Mynediad 1 Esquel	
Evening	18.00 – 19.30 Mynediad 2 Esquel	19.00 – 20.00 Children's club Esquel			18.30 – 20.00 Children's club Esquel

Anna ap Robert	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Morning	8 – 12.00 Ysgol Gymraeg Gaiman	9.30 -11.30 Ysgol yr Hendre Trelew		8.00 – 9.30 Uwch Coleg Camwy 10.00 – 12.00 Ysgol Bryn Gwyn	8.00 – 9.30 Uwch Coleg Camwy
Afternoon	13.30 - 14.30 Blwyddyn 5 Coleg Camwy 14.30 - 15.30 Mynediad Gaiman 17.00 – 18.00 Uwch Gaiman	13.00 – 15. — Ysgol yr Hendre Trelew 15.30 -17.00 Conversation Trelew 17.30 -18.30 Mynediad Trelew	13.00 – 16.30 Mynediad Rawson	14.00 – 15.30 Mynediad Dolavon	13.00 – 15.00 Yard games Ysgol Gymraeg Gaiman 16.00 – 17.00 Conversation Gaiman
Evening		18.30 – 19.30 Children's club Trelew		18.30 – 19.30 Exam prep group Gaiman	Once a month: Porth Madryn



Teachers at British Council Wales pre-departure briefing

Pupil/adult learner numbers

An audit of both adult and pupil learners was conducted at the end of December 2024, and there are currently 1106 registered learners. Although this is a considerable reduction on pre-pandemic learners in 2019 which totalled 1411, it is a

welcome increase from last year's numbers of 970. A more detailed breakdown is given in Clare Vaughan's report below.

Local tutors

The network of local tutors and school support staff is managed by Rebecca White in Patagonia with assistance from Coleg Camwy. Although the number of tutors can vary month by month according to availability, there has been a minimum of 20 per month providing teaching for the WLP, both in and outside the bilingual schools. The Project relies heavily on this network to lead adult classes and continue the vital work in the 3 bilingual schools.

WLP funding partially supports the hourly salaries of these tutors who are also funded directly from the schools (school fees paid by students' families) and the Chubut government. Due to the current economic situation in Argentina however, schools are facing severe budget cuts and financial limitations, so WLP funding is critical in sustaining continuity amongst this network.

A significant development this year however has been the creation of a tertiary course which will train teachers and future teachers to teach Welsh. Having recognized the need for Welsh teachers within the schools, the government of Chubut is funding and introducing the 4-year course from March 2025, to be held in both Gaiman and Trevelin. There are currently 65 people registered, and the course will cover Welsh language teaching practice, pedagogy, didactics, history and culture. The importance of this training course cannot be overstated and is Chubut government recognition of the need to train future Argentinian teachers of Welsh. This was one of the key aims of the Project when it was established in 1997 and is clear evidence of its success in that the education system is helping to preserve and grow Welsh language and culture in the region.

[Quedó inaugurado el Profesorado de Galés en Gaiman y Trevelin - Últimas Noticias: El Chubut](#)

Marian Brosschot

From April – December 2024, Marian continued to create digital content for the project on her YouTube Channel “Gales Con Marian” (Welsh with Marian) including sharing vlog type videos of Wales for learners to see in a Welsh context, which are able to be used both in and out of the classroom, and also by students outside of the catchment area in Chubut. The digital resources have been able to attract the interest of people who are new to learning Welsh as well as supporting current and advanced students.

Having completed all the Spanish translations of the Welsh teaching course books, Marion has now left the Project to focus on her PhD in Linguistics but will still continue producing videos for her [YouTube channel](#), and assisting with recruitment of teachers each Summer at the National Eisteddfod.



Report from Clare Vaughan, Teaching Co-ordinator, Trevelin, Patagonia

Teachers and Recruitment

Following a fallow year with only one teacher being sent through the project (Rhian Lloyd who spent the year in the Andes), in October 2024 recruiting took place for the teachers who were to come out in March 2025. It was positive to receive seven applications, all but one worthy of an interview. There were three very strong candidates, and it was very disappointing to only be able to offer two posts as the current funding is not sufficient for more than two teachers' salary, due to travel, insurance, visa etc costs). It is challenging then to decide where the teachers from Wales are to be placed: the Andes communities of Trevelin and Esquel need a teacher as well as Gaiman and Trelew. Gaiman and Trelew can share a teacher geographically but there is more than enough work for 2 teachers here due to the fact that not only are there 2 Welsh-Spanish primary schools but also a variety of smaller communities (Porth Madryn, Rawson, Dolavon) who also benefit from the input from professional teachers from Wales.

Two of the three primary schools have employed their own teachers in the past, to collaborate solely with them in the school, and it has been notable the effect they have had. Unfortunately, the economic situation continues to be concerning in Argentina, and the schools are struggling with little funding and inadequate resources. Rhian Lloyd, for the project, started several interesting and important actions last year in Ysgol y Cwm and it is vital that this work is continued in 2025 by her successor. We are operating at a much lower level than ever in the history of the project and to be able to return to the 'old' system of three teachers would be a boost.

Both teachers are situated in places with most need within their geographical area and it is obvious that the emphasis in the Andes is on the work in the school. Lleucu only has contact time with 2 year groups, although she holds planning sessions with the local teachers in the school. The work with adults in Trevelin is weak because of so much effort having gone into the young people but it is impossible for the teacher from Wales to offer classes for everyone. In Esquel it is almost the reverse with poor children numbers and a selection of adult classes maintained by local tutors but with a vital input from the teacher from Wales.

Anna's timetable in the Dyffryn tells a different story: she is in all areas, children, adolescents, adults, in five different geographical locations during the week! This constant change and travel will have an effect over the year on the teacher and there is more than enough work for at least another teacher here. The work by local tutors is fundamental in keeping the variety of adult classes alive but the role of the expert professional from Wales is hugely important.



Clare Vaughan with pupils at Ysgol y Cwm

Adult learners

There seems to be a direct relationship between teachers from Wales being present in the catchment areas and adults wishing to learn Welsh: having a 'real' reason to learn the language is vital especially as it is almost impossible for people to travel from Argentina to Wales without considerable planning and financial support. Gaiman had both a teacher employed by the primary school there and a teacher who had stayed on after her British Council contract had expired and there was a huge upturn in numbers here with this new incentive and the availability of classes at convenient times. Without consistent support these activities only last a year and then they disappear: more continuity is needed.

The economic situation has a direct effect on the numbers of adult learners too as more people must hold down various jobs to make ends meet

and so luxuries like the learning of a language take second place to earning a living wage.

The concentration of the efforts of the project on the young people has led to a lessening of emphasis on adult learners. It would be ideal to have a teacher expert in teaching children and a teacher expert in teaching adults in order to address the balance.

The vast majority of adult classes are aimed at A1 level which suggests that few learners are attaining the level of a native speaker. Professional teachers from Wales have the skill set necessary to be able to provide both the motivation and teaching for students but there is sometimes a stagnation when students pass from one teacher to another and begin their path into the language so close to where they began.

WJEC exams

The exams offer an incentive to keep studying and to reach a particular level as they follow the levels of the courses taught in Wales and Y Wladfa.

Level	Candidates	Pass
MYNEDIAD A1	22	19
SYLFAEN A2	6	4
CANOLRADD B1	2	2
Percentage Pass Rate overall: 83%		

It is so important to be able to offer the WJEC exams as an option for the students, both teenagers and adults, as this puts the Welsh language on the same level as English, where the sitting of international exams marks the passage of students from one level to the next. It is also a way to motivate students to move from one level to the next and a way of measuring progress on a scale used in in Wales.

2024 Learner numbers

PUPILS	
Nursery	142
Primary 6 – 12 years old	456
Secondary	303
Extra-curricular	17
Sub-total	918
ADULTS	
Mynediad (Entry level) A1	130
Sylfaen (Foundation) A2	10
Canolradd (Intermediate) B1	12
Uwch B2	16
Siaradwyr (Speakers) C1 and 2	20
SUB-TOTAL	188
TOTAL	1106

Numbers never tell the whole story - there is always the value added and the impact on lives. However, it is evident that the numbers are still lower than before the Pandemic. The reasons behind these figures are complex and it is not easy to draw any firm conclusions from them but a significant factors which appears to be affecting many areas of life in Argentina would be the serious economic challenges faced by ordinary families and globalisation.

Although inflation has slowed down considerably in the last six months, wages and salaries lag behind and it is accepted that people will have more than one job in order to make ends meet. In the case of the bilingual schools, the parents have to pay towards this education as the government does not fully support the work being done, despite the fact that the three schools are part of the system and have to follow regulation set down by the government. As disposable income is reduced, sadly many parents who support the idea of a bilingual education in Spanish and Welsh are unable to contribute the necessary fee and must take their children out of the schools.

For adult learners, although the fee for the Welsh classes is minimal, the excess of working hours means it is almost impossible to organise a timetable which can include everyone who wishes to learn the language and people have to prioritise how to spend their free time.



School Eisteddfod at Ysgol y Cwm

The absence of scholarships for students to travel to Wales has had a negative effect on the morale of learners: a plane ticket to Wales and accommodation during a course is way beyond the dreams of many young students and if we consider the local tutors who have been dedicated to the teaching of Welsh, all of them have at some time travelled to Wales on a scholarship in order to improve their language skills. There is a danger that the first beneficiaries of the scholarships are now thinking of retirement and there is a scarcity of young people waiting to take their place. Many young people and their families see learning English, not Welsh, as an escape route from the social, political and economic problems in Argentina and put the emphasis on what will be universally useful to them. There is also a significant brain drain from within the province of Chubut to the large urban areas in Argentina where the young people go to study and do not return to their home towns.

Conclusion

The Welsh Language Project is a gem in world where big is beautiful and minority languages are floundering globally. A year-long project grew into a two then three-year project which has lasted almost 30! It has built bridges on common ground and opened communication between two countries which were at one point at war with each other. It has promoted Welsh culture far beyond the limits of the 'Old Country' and has facilitated language skills for many hundreds of students. It is vital that the Welsh Government continues too support this unique project and if there were to be a growth in funding to match the inflation and rise in prices the project could achieve even more over the next years.

Report from Rhian Lloyd, Teacher, Ysgol y Cwm 2024

Rhian is a former Head at Ysgol Pencarnisiog in Anglesey who spent 9 months in 2024 teaching at Ysgol y Cwm in Trevelin, and at the Welsh for Adults Centre in Esquel. Her report is below:

Ysgol Y Cwm

The small team of Welsh teachers at Ysgol y Cwm work hard to provide progression and continuity in the development of the learners' skills and the following strengths of the Welsh Department have been recognised:

- There are constant opportunities for pupils to integrate with the community, and take part in various cultural events, including Eisteddfods locally and beyond
- Teachers are active in raising pupils' awareness of the culture and traditions of Wales
- Teachers are active in making connections with Welsh schools within the province and in Wales in order to improve communication skills
- There is frequent contact with visitors from Wales
- The timetable ensures daily Welsh lessons for the whole school at different levels

- Staff work together in planning to ensure progression and continuity throughout the school, paying attention to transition opportunities in order to ensure consistency from nursery through to secondary
- Welsh work is displayed in common places in order to raise the school's stakeholders' awareness of good practice
- An excellent library of Welsh resources is available for common use
- The staff plan sessions for outdoor learning
- There are various teaching opportunities to practice cross-curricular skills



"I have used the Tric a Clic pack daily to help the learners from Years 1-3 improve their understanding of the sounds of Welsh letters and develop their skills in pronouncing, reading and writing words in Welsh. I have also given the Welsh Department training on using this resource with lessons, website, and resource demonstrations and have prepared an extensive online Google Drive file full of digital resources for the Welsh Department to use in their classes. Flash cards, posters and lotto and bingo games available to me are perfect for short sessions of revising and practicing words and sayings and I have made use of online educational resources. Twinkl Cymraeg, Spotify and YouTube have been a great help to me in terms of enriching the learners' presentations and experiences in class, including Marian Brosschot's Gales con Marian channel.

Year 6 is where I feel I have had most success with developing pupils' Welsh language skills. Most of the group has made strong progress and some are now very fluent, speaking Welsh with confidence. These pupils are always looking to learn new Welsh words and phrases and are obviously interested in developing their Welsh language skills further. Behavioural difficulties however have been a barrier to the development of a couple of members of this higher ability group, and the behaviour within the lower ability group has been an issue at times, more so as it is difficult (with very little Spanish) to communicate.

During my year I was able to create links between Ysgol y Cwm and several schools in Ynys Môn (Henblas, Y Graig, Ysgol Pencarnisiog and Rhosybol) which is an extremely exciting and valuable experience for all the children and staff who have contributed.

A significant introduction and enriching activity this year has been my introduction of a school Eisteddfod, following concern raised about the decline in the number of Ysgol y Cwm pupils competing in the Eisteddfod's in recent years. Possible factors in the decline were due to lack of interest in the Welsh competitions from school staff outside the Welsh Department and from home, and little Welsh being spoken or heard by the pupils outside the Welsh classes - due to lack of confidence / knowledge / understanding of the Welsh language.

Recognising the problem is the first step in any good school's improvement process, and as an experienced Head, I was able to help the Welsh department create a plan to prioritise and implement improvements, to which the school enthusiastically agreed. The aim of the plan is to **encourage all stakeholders to work together to raise the status of the Welsh language within the school and to ensure development, progression and continuity in the progress of learners' Welsh cross-curricular skills.**

Within the school there is a large team of staff (leaders, teachers, classroom assistants, admin etc) but only three Welsh Department primary staff. For the Welsh language to thrive here it's essential that all staff are included in the project's goals. The pressure of being responsible for developing 150+ children's Welsh language skills is an impossible expectation to put on the Welsh Department alone. Support of the Head is also critical for any school improvement plan. The Head and School

Committee authorised my plan and took accountability for reaching the outlined goals. The content was shared with the whole school staff, although the lack of enthusiasm from staff members from other departments made it quite difficult for us to ensure pupil engagement.

However, I feel that our Ysgol y Cwm Eisteddfod was a major turning point for the school. Following weeks of hard work from the Welsh Department and School Committee members we hosted Ysgol y Cwm's first ever Welsh language school Eisteddfod - it was a really special morning with so many pupils representing themselves and their Houses and enjoying it. The School Committee's contribution was key to the success of the day bringing in so many community members to help with the judging and prize giving and they should be commended for this. With this new special Welsh event in the school calendar. I'm confident that the Ysgol y Cwm Eisteddfod will go from strength to strength. The School Improvement Plan and Eisteddfod will be passed onto the incoming teacher for 25-26 to ensure continuity.

Beyond the Welsh Department however it has sometimes been difficult to understand the bigger picture of the whole school. Lines of communication can be vague and contradictory which can be frustrating, but I also have to accept cultural differences and how things are done in Argentina.



Esquel Adult Teaching Center

Providing lessons for adults was a new experience for me - but following professional guidance from the team of Welsh tutors here I now enjoy providing sessions independently. The learners are very friendly and sociable, and I admire so much the enthusiasm, dedication and effort they have towards learning the language of their grandparents. The resources provided by the National Welsh Learning Center are essential to my job of helping the students - they set a simple and clear

plan that ensures progression and continuity in the teaching. The other tutors and I communicate constantly in order to check the progress of our learners against the units of the document.

The classes at the Esquel Center are a modern, stimulating and comfortable learning and teaching environment where I have access to valuable resources (books and online resources) for presenting Welsh lessons. There is a very special library in the Center which contains a variety of fictional and factual, modern and classic Welsh literature for all ages. I am full of admiration for the passion and commitment of the curators who carefully care for this impressive collection and for their continued hard work in ensuring that this special library is maintained and developed. The Centre at Esquel holds a weekly Chatting Group in the Centre's library which is open to all our Welsh learners and is a lovely opportunity for me to meet other members of the community and enjoy informal chats.

Y Dyffryn

I remained in permanent contact with my counterparts in the Dyffryn and developed a close relationships with them. We have enjoyed many opportunities to work together and plan in terms of our jobs and experiences. Attending the Youth Eisteddfod in Y Gaiman in September I was able to spend time in Ysgol Y Gaiman and Coleg Camwy and visit schools and classes, gaining valuable insight into the ethos and learning environments in a different location. Ysgol y Gaiman has a high number of Welsh speaking staff and Welsh is very embedded within the school. Preparing for and attending the Chubut Eisteddfod – the largest of all the Eisteddfods - was most definitely a highlight here for me. I truly felt part of the Welsh Language community in the weeks before and during the festival.

Scholarship Welsh Students

I thoroughly enjoyed mentoring the 6 Welsh Students that visited the Andes from Cardiff University this year. Each one contributed enthusiastically to the Welsh lessons at Ysgol y Cwm and at the Esquel Centre and I worked hard to ensure that their time here was a positive one for everyone, providing them with a detailed timetable for their two week visit to ensure a variety of experiences and opportunities.

Conclusion

It is crucial that improvements are made to communication lines within the local Welsh Society so there is transparency and clarity for all of us working towards the same goals. Too many important decisions are made in WhatsApp groups and information is often lost from group to group with individuals often feeling left out or misinformed. An improvement would be a website or facebook page which lists the Society members, Chairperson and officers. There should be a publicly shared direct contact email for their Secretary, dates of meetings and access to minutes of annual meetings available on request, which would ensure access to information and a direct means of contact for those wanting to communicate with the Society from the outside.

However, despite the difficulties and challenges, working here has been a wonderful experience for me. I have learnt a great deal about myself, other cultures and the world around me and it has been a life-changing experience. The support of the Welsh Language Project and school staff has been vital for my well-being and some of the Argentinan staff in the school are fantastic Welsh teachers whose dedication to the Project is astounding. I have met so many friendly, kind and supportive people in the wider community. I am extremely proud to have had this special experience and that I am now an active part of the contemporary practice within the world of Welsh education, being able to support and strengthen the provision of learning Welsh as a second language in Chubut."

