

Welsh Education for All: Reaching the Objective

Introduction

The Welsh language belongs to everyone in Wales but the education system currently deprives 80% of young people of the ability to speak and use Welsh confidently by the end of their time in statutory education.

Welsh-medium education is the only way to ensure that pupils can leave school confident in their ability to use the Welsh language. Cymdeithas yr Iaith published a [Welsh-medium Education of All Act](#) last year, setting a statutory target that every child receives Welsh-medium education by 2050.

For this to happen there will be a need to act nationally and locally. The Government will need to adopt this target and set targets for Local Authorities, and Local Authorities will need to create a plan to reach these targets and put every school on a path to teaching through the medium of Welsh.

The first part of this statistical work shows the growth that will be required in each county in order to reach the target that every pupil receives Welsh-medium education by 2050.

The Welsh Government has consulted on proposals for a Welsh Language Education Bill that sets a target that 50% of the pupils in Wales receive Welsh-medium education by 2050. The statistics in the second part of this work shows the growth that will be required in each county to reach the target that half of pupils in Wales receive Welsh-medium education by 2050. Although this is a step forward it would be insufficient as it would continue to deprive half of the pupils of Wales of the ability to use the Welsh language confidently.

Cymdeithas yr Iaith carried out similar statistical work in 2017. It shows the growth that would be needed to reach the Government's target of reaching a million speakers by 2050 and shows that 39.7% of seven year old pupils would need to be receiving Welsh-medium education by 2025. In 2022/23, with two years to go, only 23.5% of primary school children were receiving Welsh-medium education¹.

This work expands on that statistical work, and draws attention to the significant lack of continuity as pupils move from the primary to secondary sector, this is seen at it's most obvious in some of the counties in the west of Wales.

What is clear therefore is that the Welsh Government needs to create an action plan, fund the growth and set targets for Local Authorities, whatever the target may be.

The education workforce

The main challenge to ensure that every pupil receives Welsh-medium education is increasing the number of teachers, teaching assistants and every member of staff able to use the Welsh language in the class and beyond. There needs to be a plan for this.

We have previously called for an investment of £20 million each year to train teachers, teaching assistants, auxiliary staff and school support staff; and a 5-10 year strategic plan for staff training.

In Wales we have a total of 26,445 teachers and 15,660 teaching assistants (12,850 of them in primary schools) and about a third of them can speak Welsh although they don't all teach in Welsh at present. Giving these teachers training and support would give them confidence to teach in Welsh.

¹ Data 22/23 from StatsWales - <https://statscymru.llyw.cymru/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Schools-and-Teachers/Schools-Census/Pupil-Level-Annual-School-Census/Welsh-Language/classesinprimarymiddlesecondaryschools-by-laregion-welshcategori>

To accompany this the sabbatical training plan for teachers needs to offer a variety of opportunities, follow up support and evaluations.

There is a need to include an additional year to initial teacher training in order to learn and improve Welsh skills so that new teachers are able to teach through the medium of Welsh.

In addition, statutory targets relating to the number of the education workforce that speak Welsh are needed for every local authority.

Methodology

To reach the target that every pupil in secondary schools (up to 16 years old) receives Welsh-medium education by 2050, primary schools would have to reach a similar target five years earlier, that is after 20 years, or in 2045.

The figures by county show the relevant figures for the cumulative growth that would be needed to realise the two scenarios.

On this basis, it was decided to calculate the growth necessary in secondary education on the basis of a timeline five years after the provision in primary education.

To do this the percentages will stay the same. However, there is a need for a separate estimate of the numbers as we are talking about an age range of 5 years in secondary pupils, 11-15 years old, and an age range of 8 years in primary schools, 3-10 years old.

The exact numbers in each individual age group in each sector are not easily available, but it is possible to make approximate calculations on the basis of the percentage of school pupils in the different counties in these age groups. As the projections being discussed are indicative, there are no 'correct' or 'incorrect' figures, but the approximate estimates show the scale of the growth that will be required.

The bilingual AB category is defined as secondary schools where every pupil studies 80% of subjects through Welsh alone. Nationally only a small percentage of pupils are in such schools but as everyone in these schools receives Welsh-medium education, they have been added to the Welsh-medium category, on combining they form a percentage of 13%.

There are many fewer pupils in middle schools (3-16 or 3-18) – about 26,000 compared with 175,000 in secondary schools – Welsh provision is much higher in these. There is more than one county where the only Welsh secondary provision in the county is in middle schools.

It is important to note that no projections in a study such as this, no matter how detailed they have been calculated, can form a meaningful plan for Welsh-medium in themselves.

Education authorities will need to take practical action by planning for each year group and each individual school, rather than on the basis of pupil numbers only.

The purpose of these projections is to act as a guideline to measure and show the type of growth required.

All the numbers mentioned in this study are based on the current school population in Wales. It is inevitable that the number of school pupils will increase in some counties and fall in others, but trying to project correctly for everywhere would be an endless task, and the further we look into the future, the more uncertain any projection would be.

Any numbers should therefore be considered as illustrative only but the percentages are on a more firm basis, and are likely to stay unchanged whatever the exact numbers of pupils.

Counties in the west

When setting targets for each county the four western counties – Môn, Gwynedd, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire – will need to be looked at as special cases as it will be possible to ensure Welsh-medium education for 100% of pupils much earlier in these counties than the rest of Wales. It is also worth noting that over 40% of all the pupils receiving Welsh-medium education in Wales are in schools in these counties. Despite this, it appears that there is a significant difference – to different degrees – in the provision of primary education and secondary education in the four counties.

The largest number of pupils receiving Welsh-medium education is in Gwynedd, and the percentage is already within a hair's breadth of 100% among primary school children. The percentages are a little lower in Môn and Ceredigion (and the numbers are much lower because the counties are smaller in terms of population). Realising the scale of growth in Welsh-medium education that is required in the rest of Wales would be more than enough to enable these three counties to reach the target that 100% of pupils receive Welsh-medium education over the next 10 years.

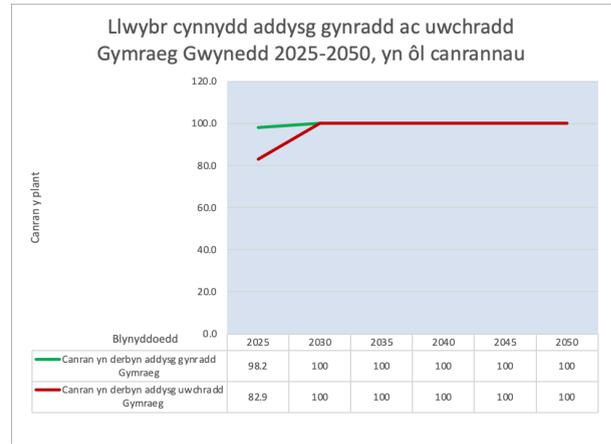
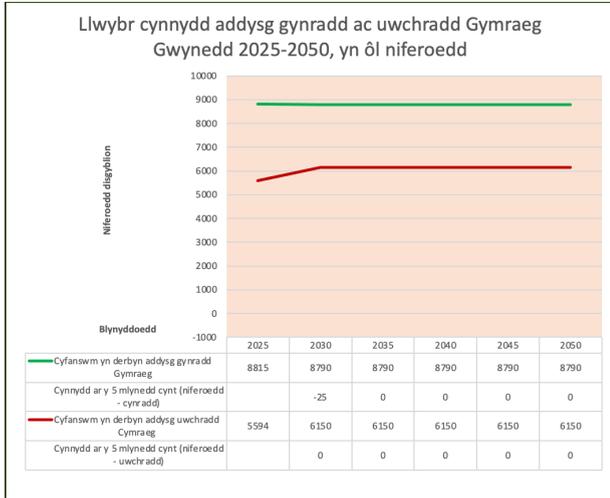
Although the percentage of pupils receiving Welsh-medium education is much lower in Carmarthenshire than the other three counties, this is the county that is second in Wales in terms of the number of children in Welsh primary education. Although it has further to go to reach 100% than the other three counties, it could reach such a target well ahead of the rest of Wales – even with a more moderate growth rate.

For these reasons, unique and separate growth plans will be required for these four counties, based on further research.

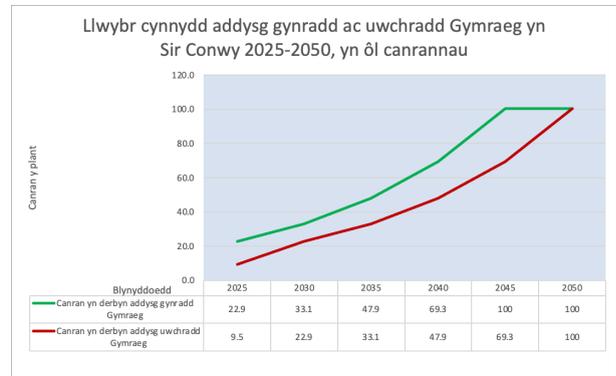
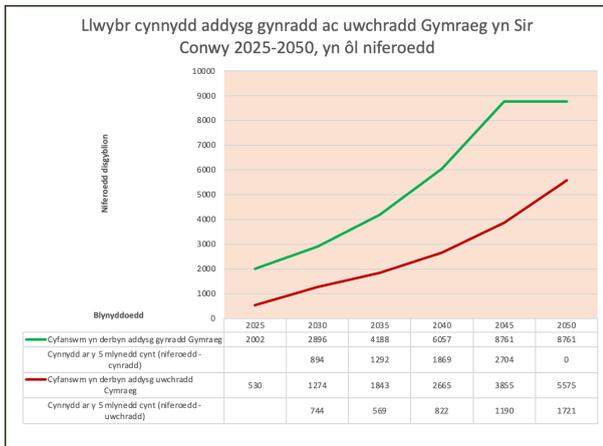
Reaching the objective that 100% of children receive Welsh-medium education

The graphs below show, by county, the growth required every five years to reach a situation where every pupil receives Welsh-medium education by 2050.

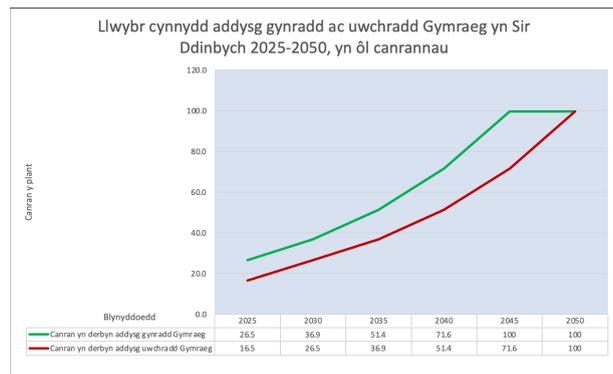
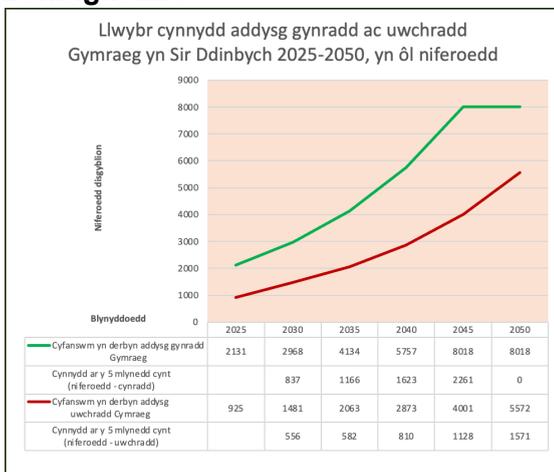
Gwynedd



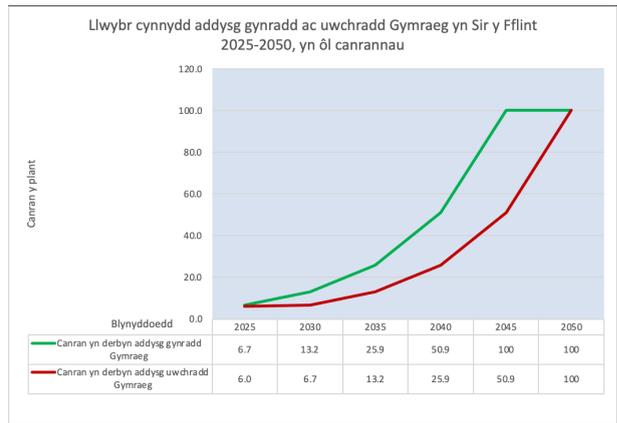
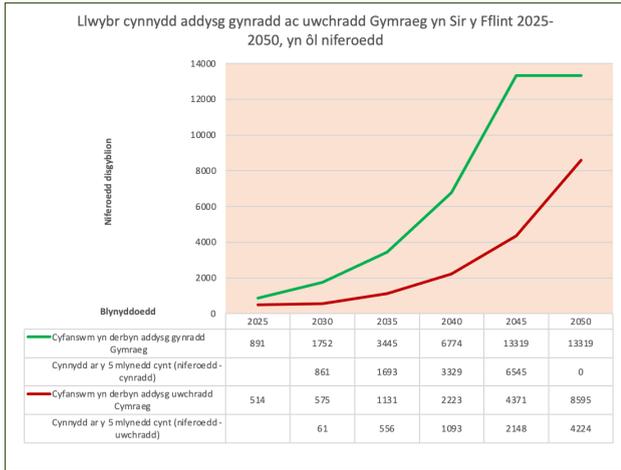
Conwy



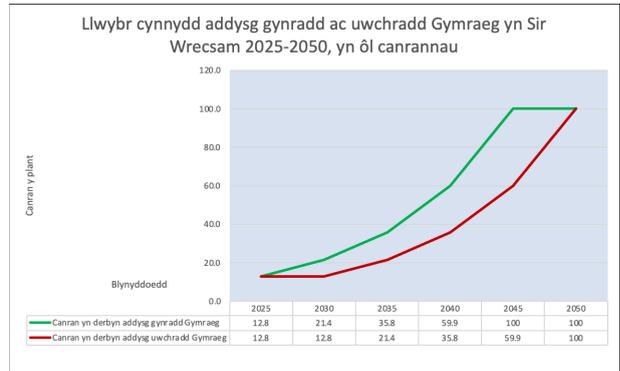
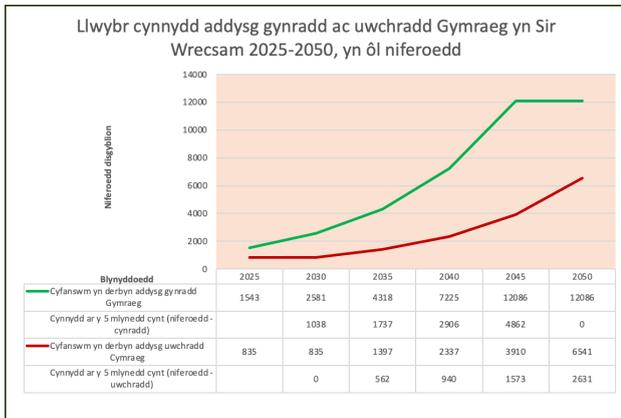
Denbighshire



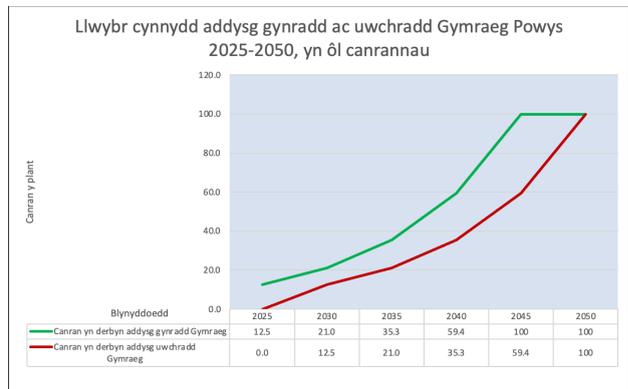
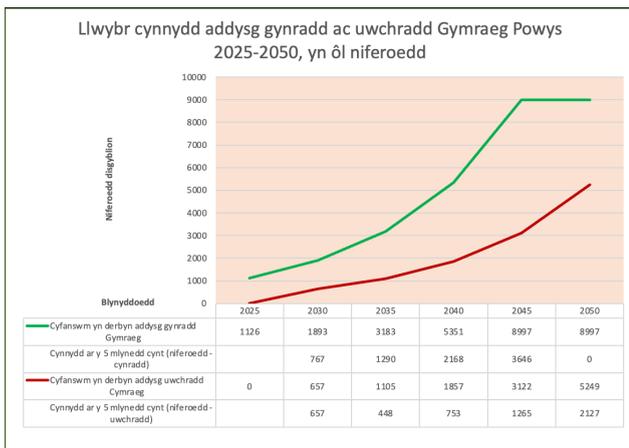
Flintshire



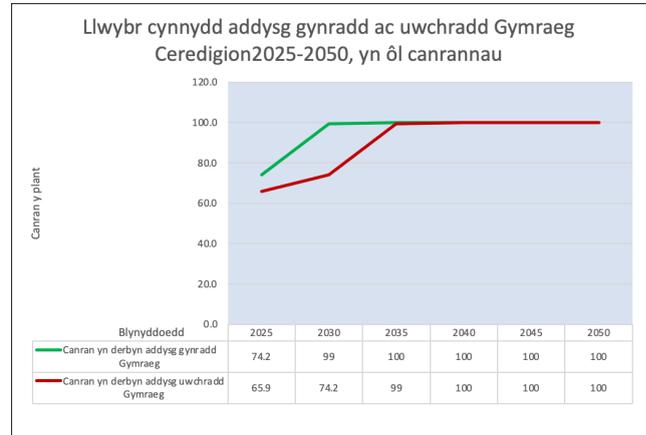
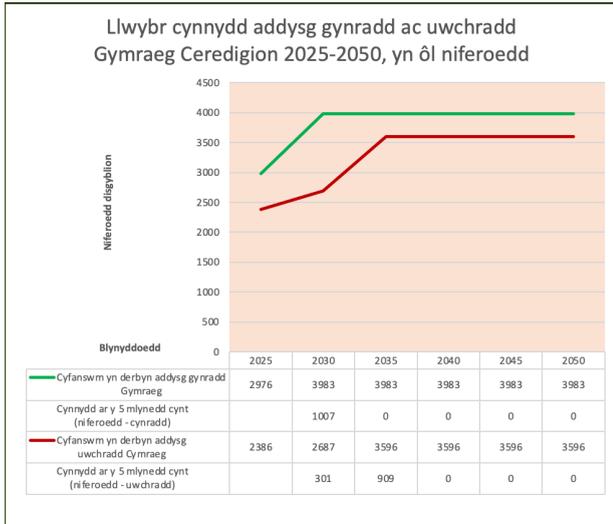
Wrecsam



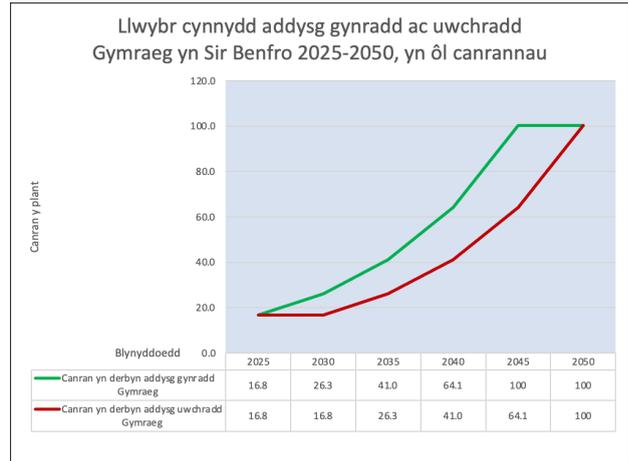
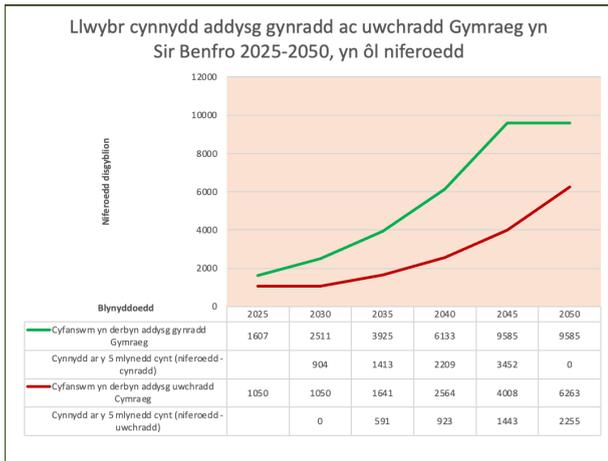
Powys



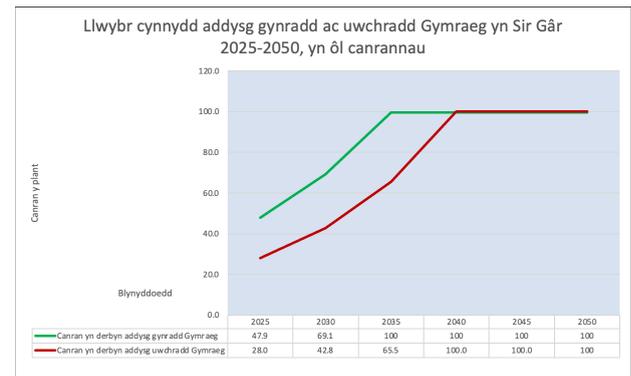
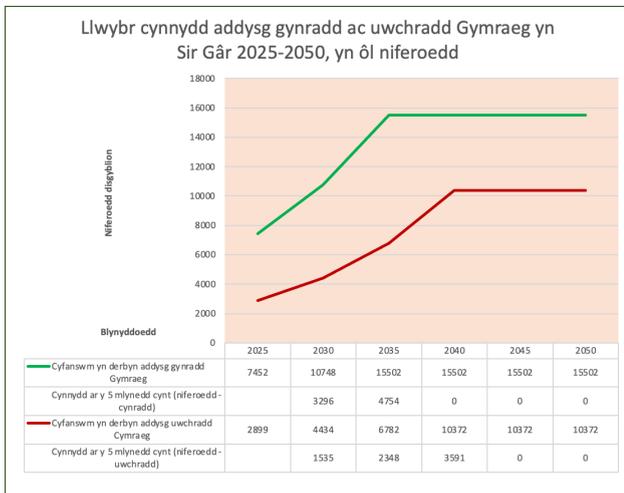
Ceredigion



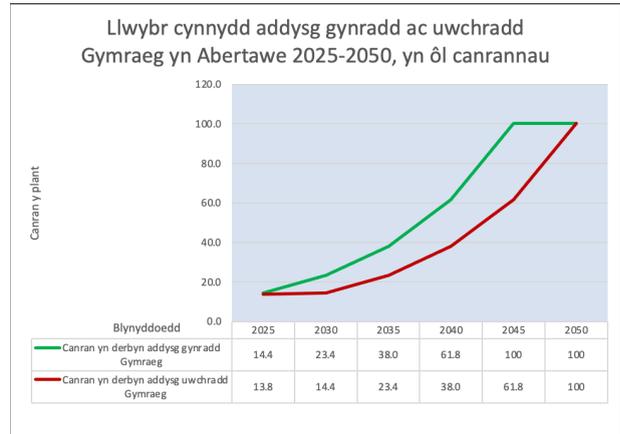
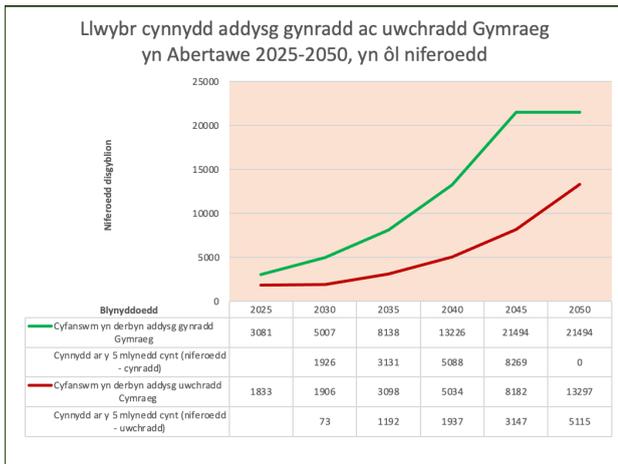
Pembrokeshire



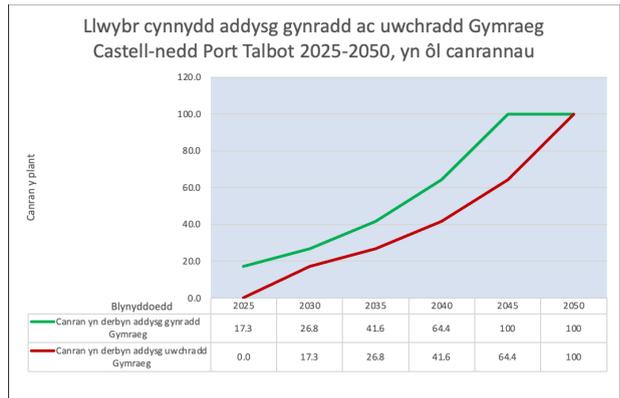
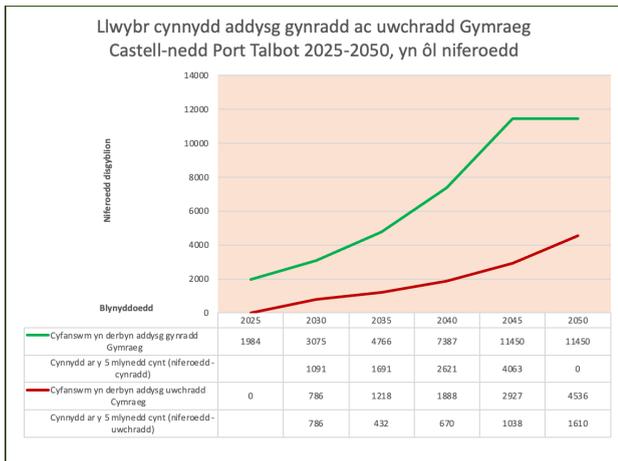
Carmarthenshire



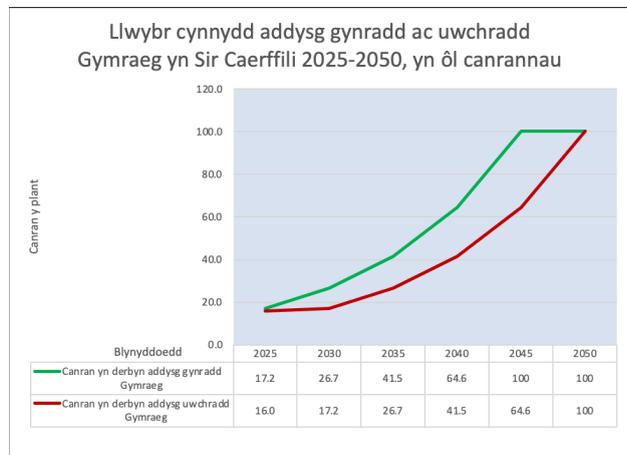
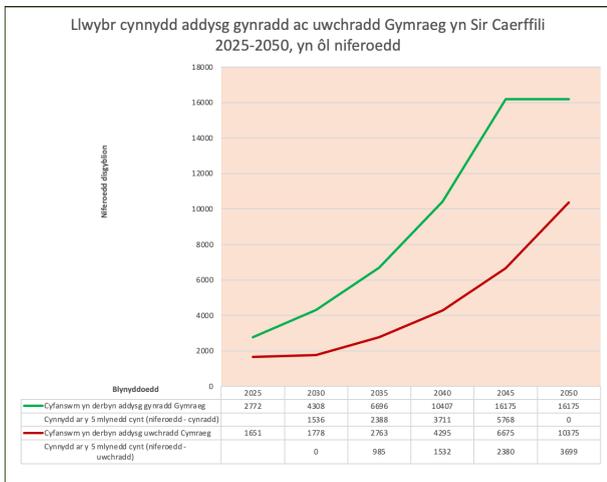
Swansea



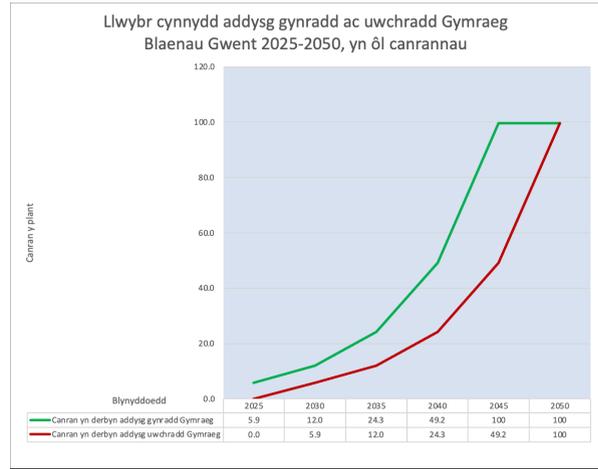
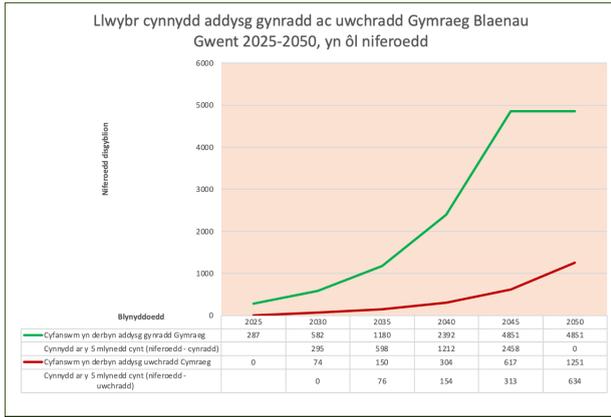
Neath Port Talbot



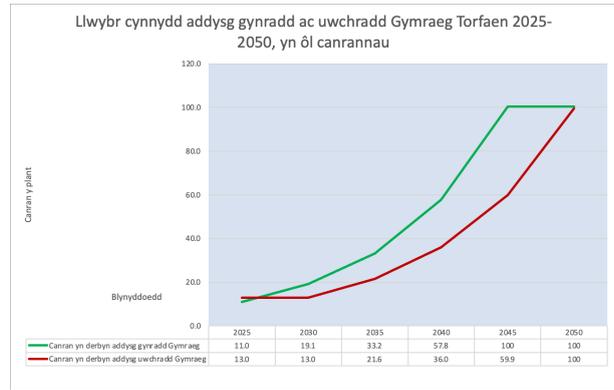
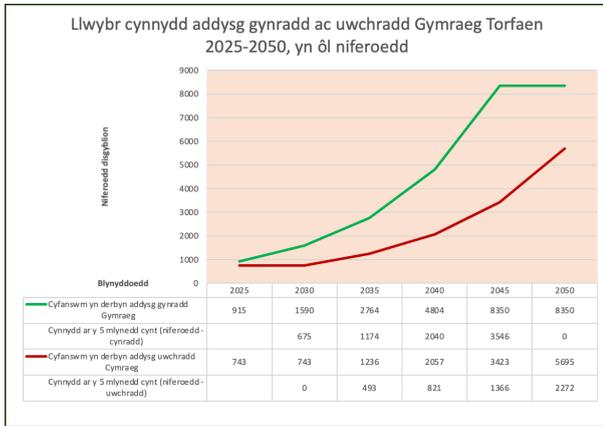
Caerffili



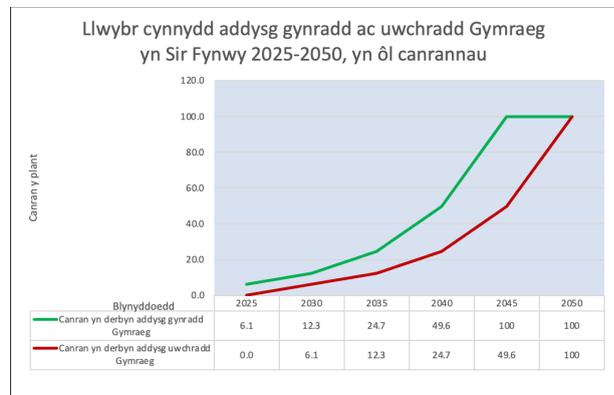
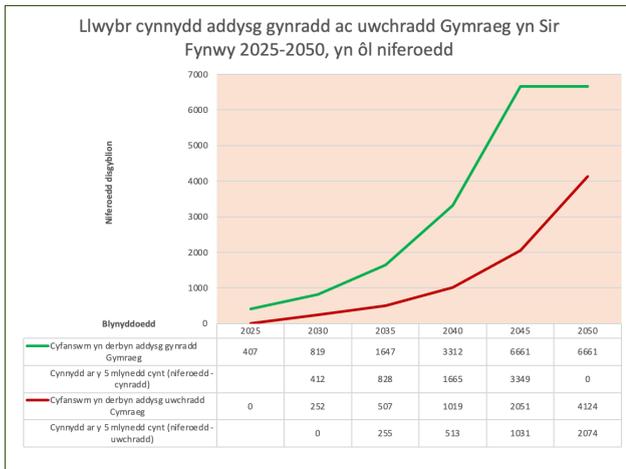
Blaenau Gwent



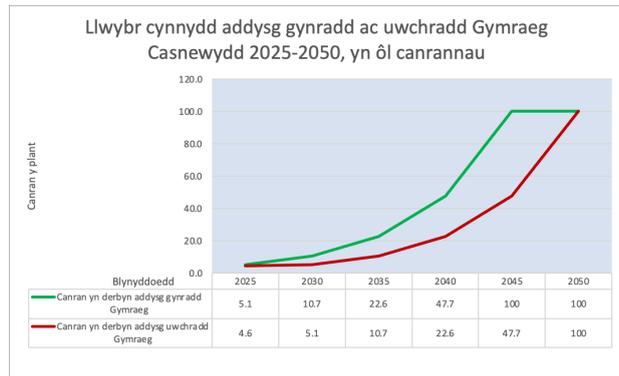
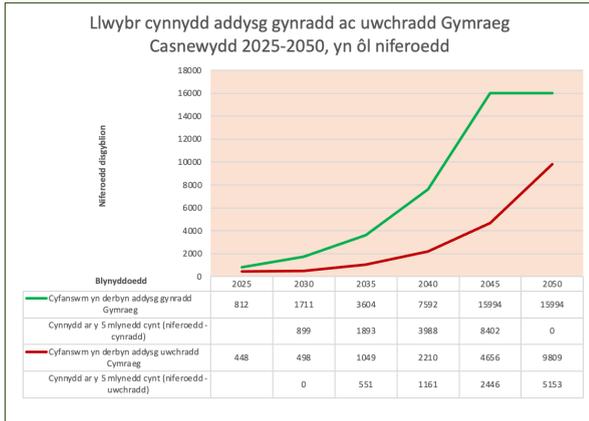
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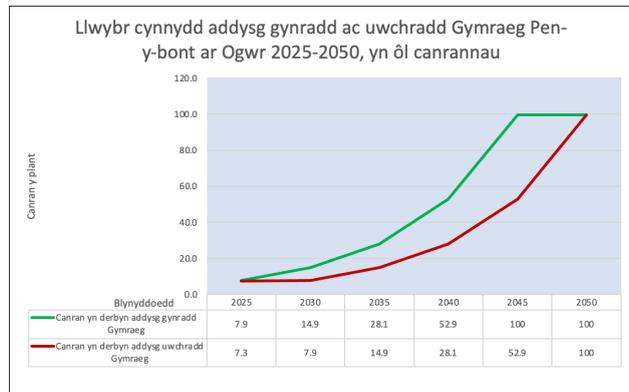
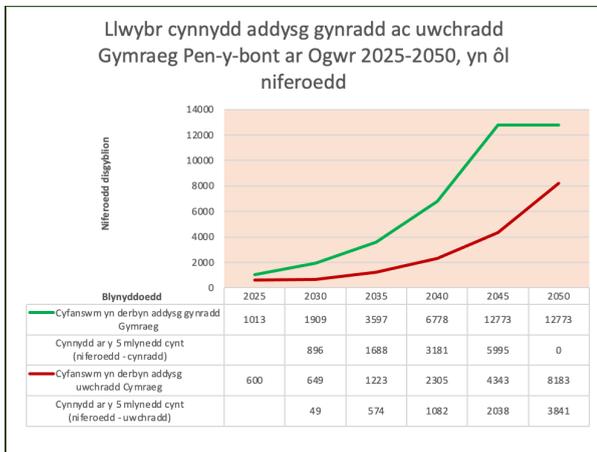
Monmouthshire



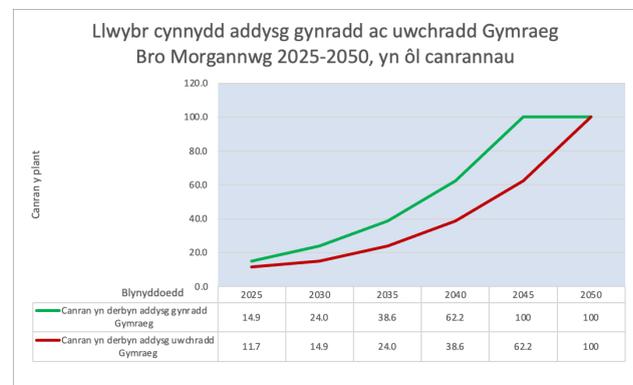
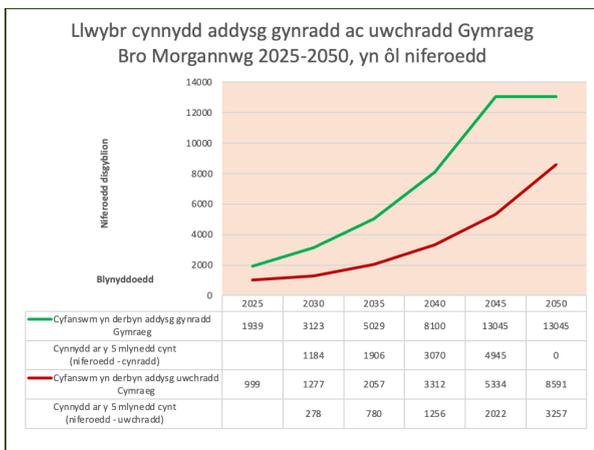
Newport



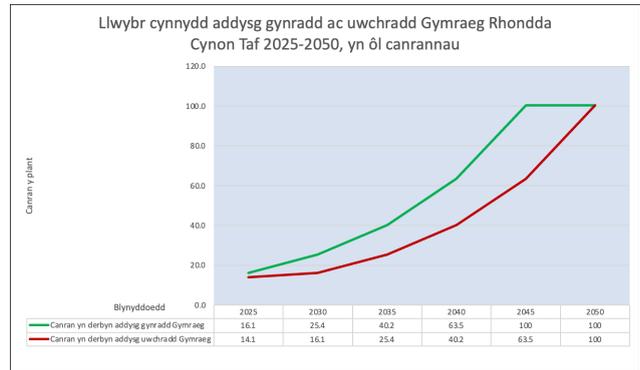
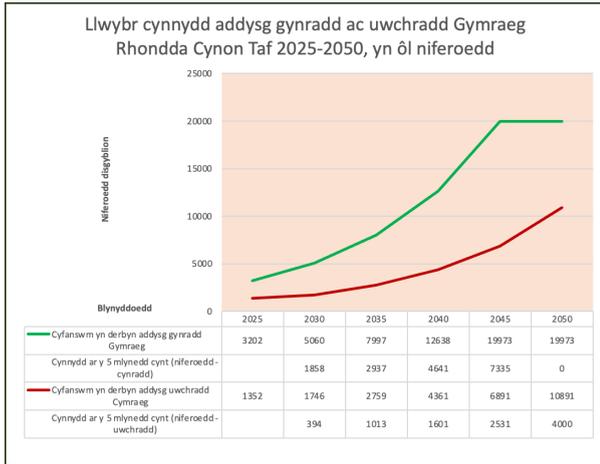
Bridgend



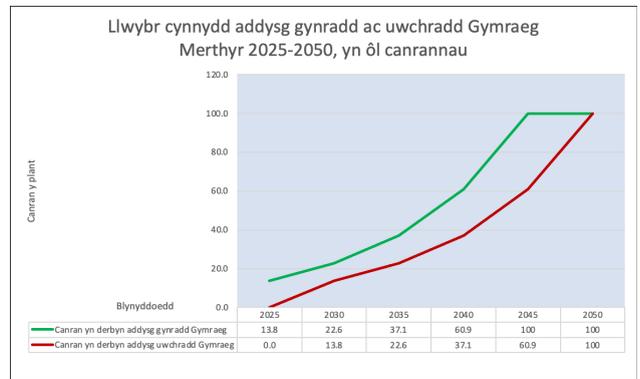
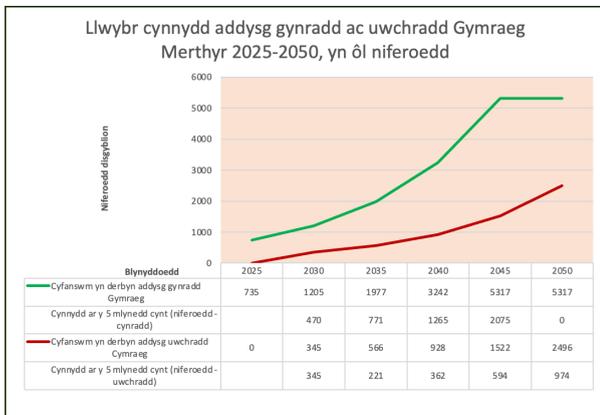
Vale of Galmorgan



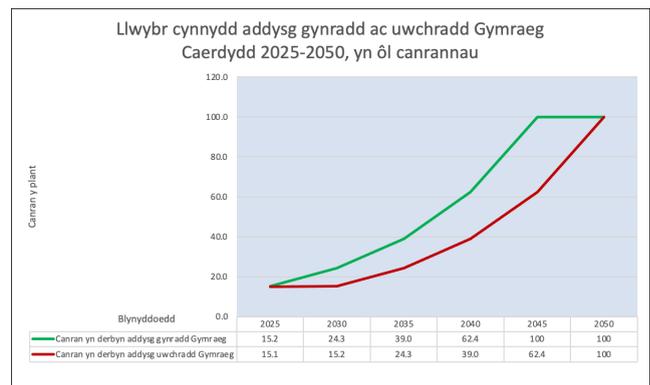
Rhondda Cynon Taf



Merthyr Tudful



Cardiff



Anglesey

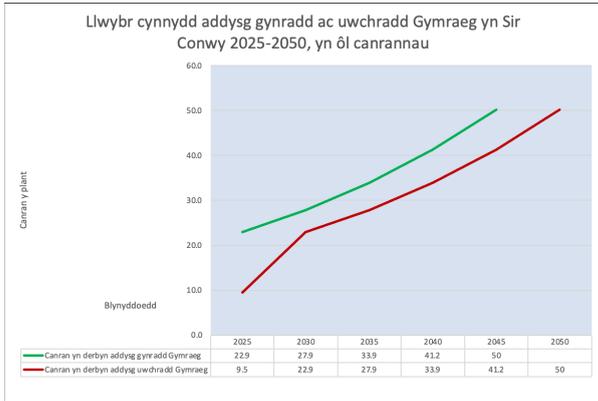
Anglesey is already very close to the goal. As there is not enough detailed information in the School Census figures for secondary schools, it is difficult to calculate any specific percentage of progress. From what we know about the general linguistic nature of the island, however, it is hard to believe that a plan could not be put in place to move the island's schools to becoming Welsh-medium schools within about 10 years.

Reaching the objective that 50% of children receive Welsh-medium education

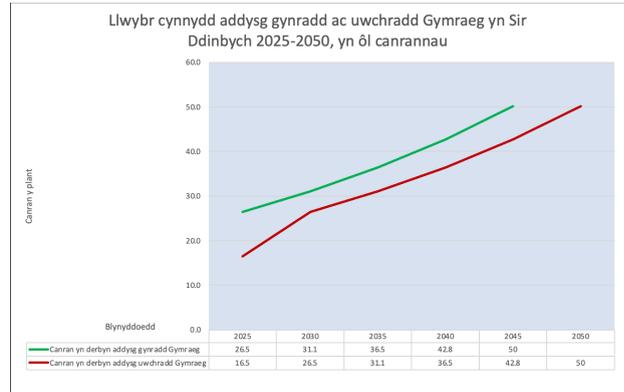
The Government has set a target that 50% of pupils in Wales receive Welsh-medium education by 2050.

The graphs below show, by county, the growth required every five years to reach a situation where half of the pupils in Wales receive Welsh-medium education by 2050.

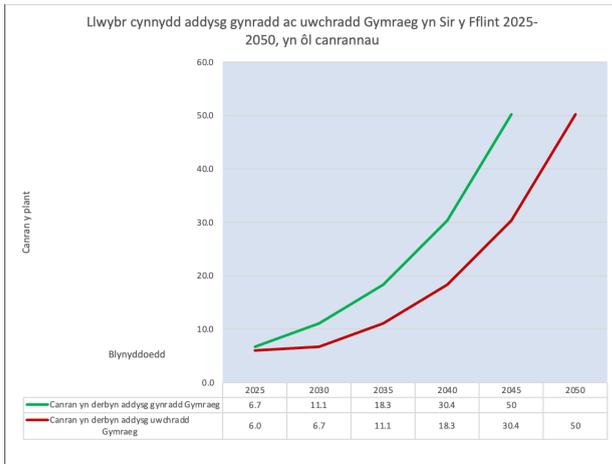
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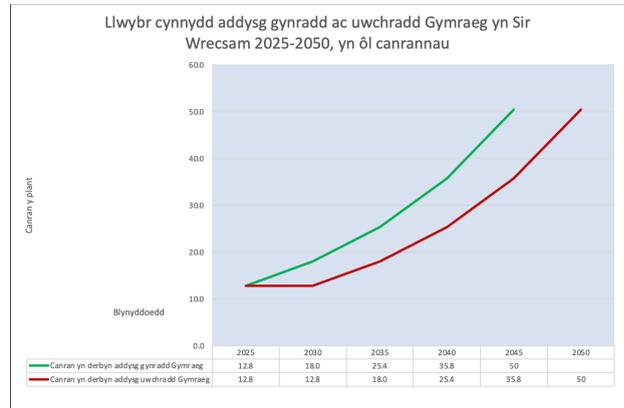
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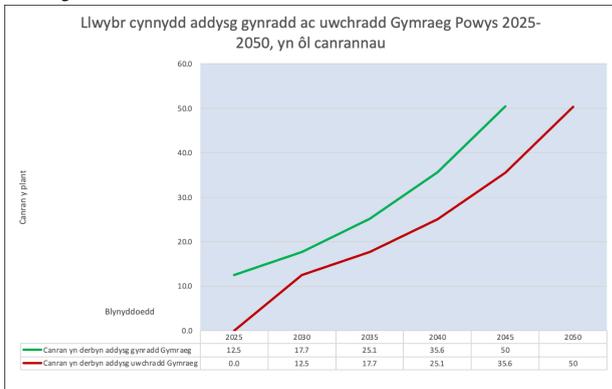
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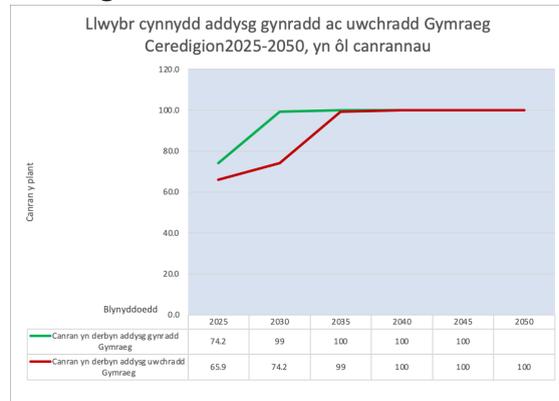
Wrecsam



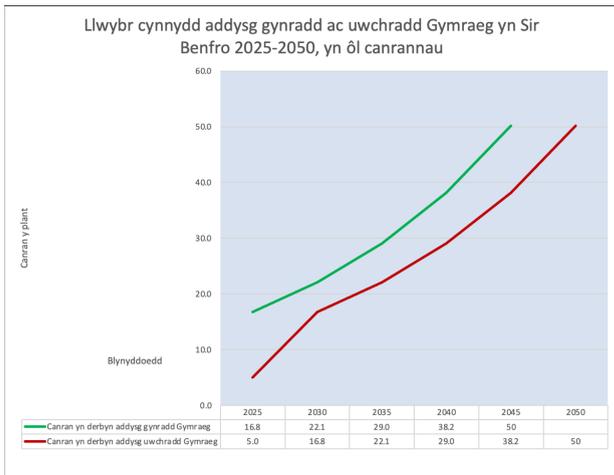
Powys



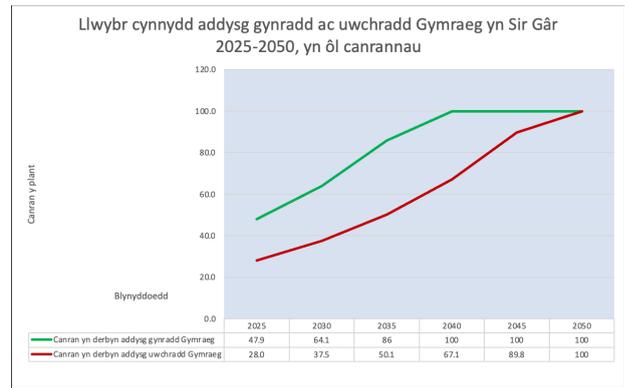
Ceredigion



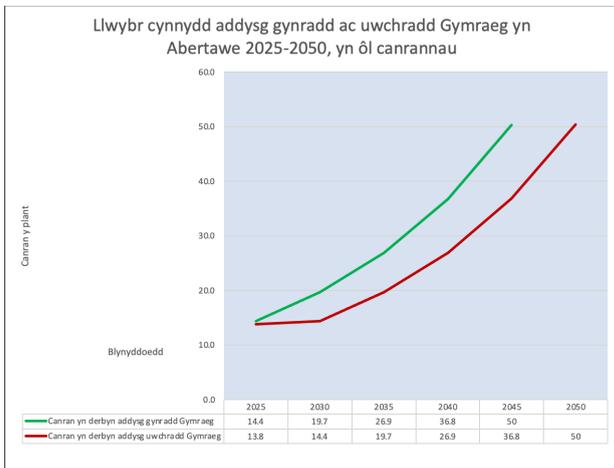
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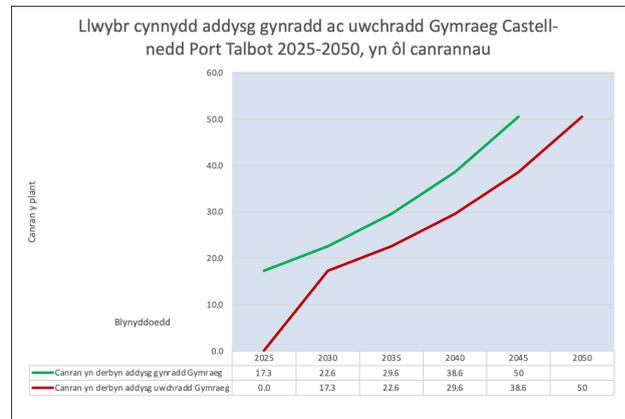
Carmarthenshire



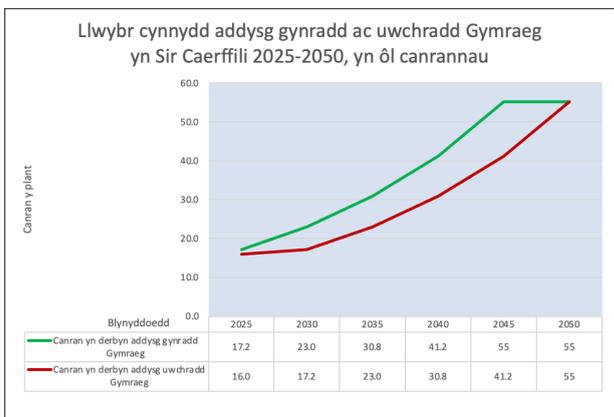
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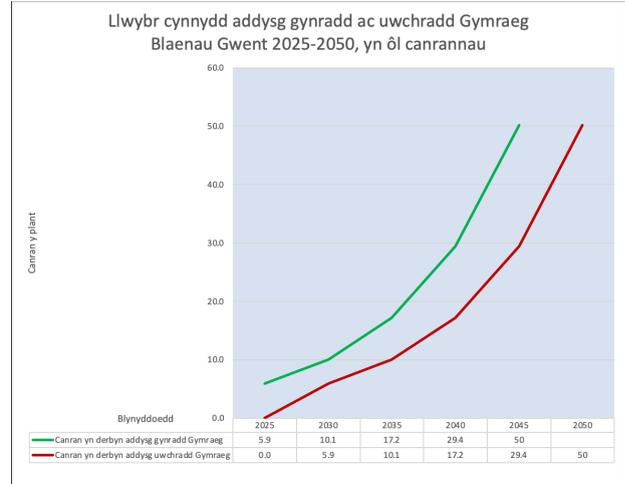
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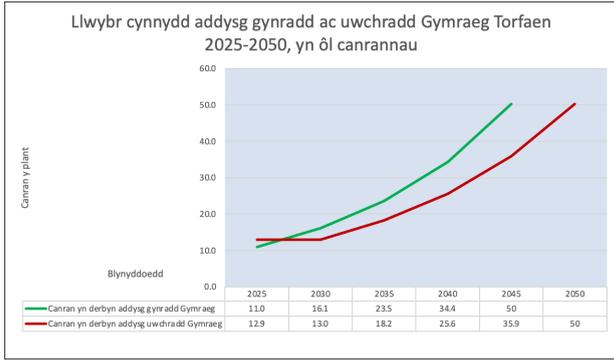
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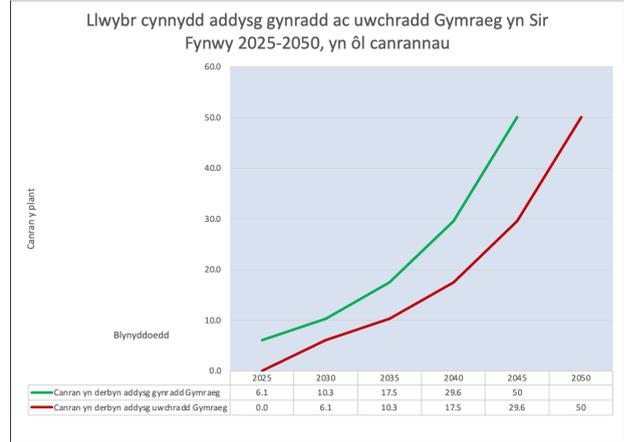
Blaenau Gwent



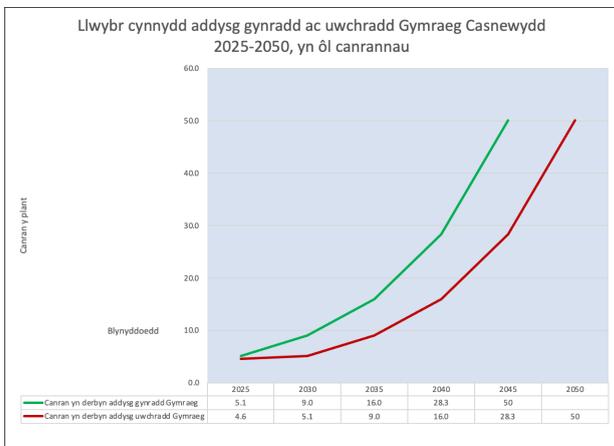
Torfaen



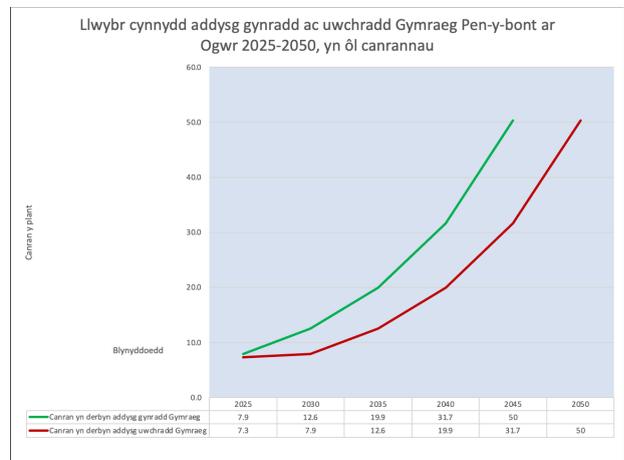
Monmouthshire



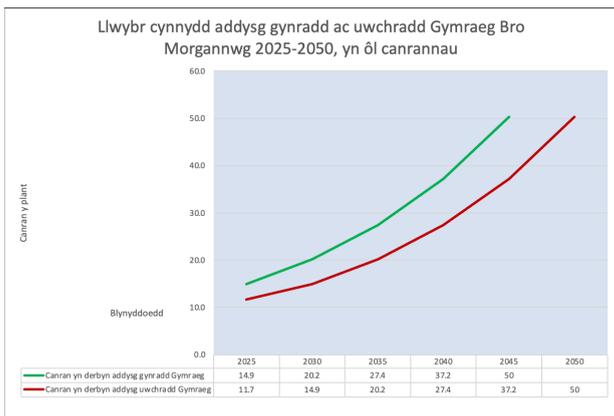
Newport



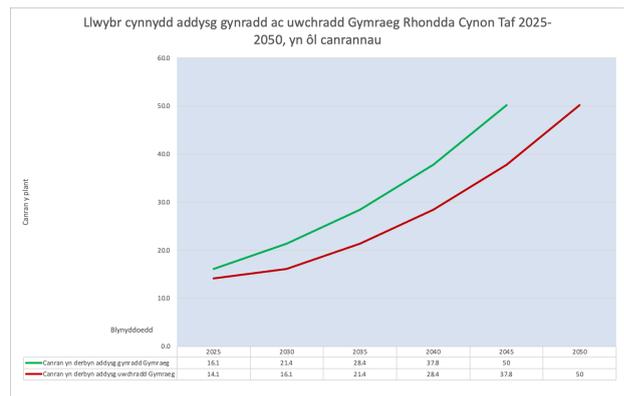
Bridgend



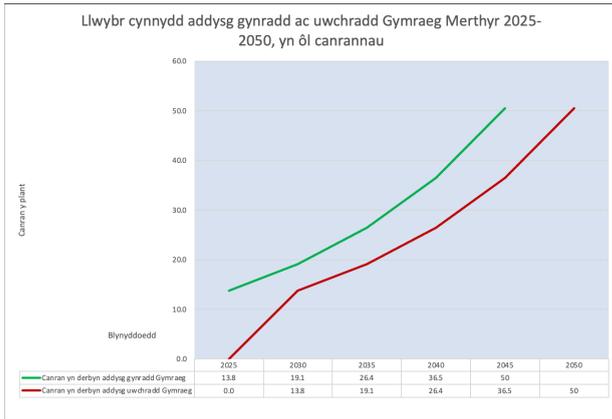
Vale of Glamorgan



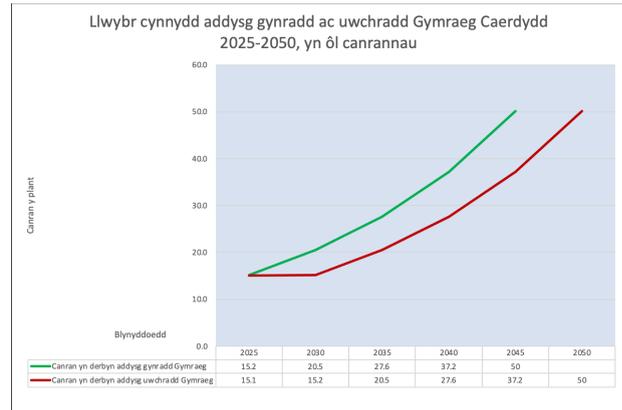
Rhondda Cynon Taf



Merthyr Tudful



Cardiff



Anglesey and Gwynedd

With the percentages of pupils in both counties receiving Welsh-medium education already exceeding 50 per cent, implementing an annual national multiplier of 6 per cent would be enough to raise the percentage in both counties to 100 per cent within a short time years.

Over 90 per cent of primary school children in both counties already receive Welsh-medium education. With the same being true for over 80 per cent of Year 7-11 children in secondary and middle schools in Gwynedd, the percentage could be raised to 100 per cent very quickly.

The situation is not quite as clear regarding Anglesey secondary schools, although it is clear that the proportion receiving Welsh-medium education is lower than in primary schools. It can be speculated fairly confidently however that the implementation of the national multiplier of 6 per cent would be able to raise the percentage to 100 per cent within around 10 years.

Conclusions

The figures show that reaching the Government's target that 50% of pupils receiving Welsh-medium education by 2050 would be a challenge unless there is a clear plan for growth. Ensuring Welsh-medium education for every pupil by 2050 would be more of a challenge, but the figures show that this is entirely possible.

With political will and sufficient funding the Welsh Government could ensure that everyone receives Welsh-medium education through the Welsh Language Education Bill.

Cymdeithas yr Iaith Education Group
April 2024