

Language, community and change in Rhos



WP1.1 Civil participation in Wales, in place and over time

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Aim and structure

- Rhos as a place and doing research in Rhos
- Focus on a theme in the data around a “narrative of decline” in and around local perceptions of local change
- Critical engagement and attempt to offer some alternative ways of looking at linguistic change and Rhos which do not fall back on “community”
- Implications for doing local ethnographies, co-production and engagement within the “community”





Situating Rhos

- Think about the “Three Wales Model” – *Y Fro Gymraeg, Welsh Wales, British Wales*
- Rhos cuts across these...
- Geographically located within *British Wales* – proximate to Welsh-English border
- Shares some features with *Y Fro* – legacy of Welsh religious nonconformism; Welsh speaking culture;
- Also *Welsh Wales* – former coal mining and wider industrial locale; Labour and trade union politics



The Constituencies in 1985

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 Ynys Mon | 24 Clonallt | 27 Pontypridd |
| 2 Caerkeiffan | 25 Brycon and Radnor | 28 Vale of Glamorgan |
| 3 Conwy | 26 Gower | 29 Cardiff West |
| 4 Meirionnydd North Cwmery | 27 Swansea West | 30 Cardiff North |
| 5 Clwyd South-West | 28 Swansea East | 31 Cardiff Central |
| 6 Clwyd North-West | 29 Neath | 32 Cardiff South and Penarth |
| 7 Deffryn | 30 Aberavon | 33 Blaenau Gwent |
| 8 Alyn and Deeside | 31 Bridgend | 34 Blaenys |
| 9 Brecknock | 32 Ogmore | 35 Torfaen |
| 10 Montgomery | 33 Rhondda | 36 Newport West |
| 11 Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire North | 34 Cynon Valley | 37 Newport East |
| 12 Penabroke | 35 Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda | 38 Monmouth |
| 13 Carmarthen | 36 Cardiff | |



Wrexham Local Development Plan 2013-2028 (2016)

- **Rhosllanerchrugog** Welsh Speaking Census Trends
- 2011 31.5%; 2001 24%; +/-Change -7.5%
- “Nationally 19% of the population of Wales can speak Welsh but within the County Borough, this figure is 12.6%, the main focus for Welsh speaking is broadly within the Ceiriog valley and the Western hill villages (Coedpoeth, Minera, Penycae and **Rhosllanerchrugog**) with the Welsh speaking population ranging from 18.3% to 47%”
- Welsh culture transcends language and encompasses national identity, sense of place and community, place names, sport, the arts and history. Locally there is a strong Welsh identity with a population that largely considers themselves to be Welsh, Wrexham hosted the National Eisteddfod of Wales in 2011, is home to Glyndwr University and the Racecourse Football Ground (host for international football and rugby matches) and **the Stiwt cultural centre is in Rhosllanerchrugog**. Local landscape assets include the Ceiriog valley, Ruabon Mountain and AONB contribute to the sense of culture and identity. Former coal mining villages retain a link to the historic past, evidence of the past industrial heritage such as coal spoil tips provide a strong visual clue to local identity. Heritage features such as Wrexham Parish Church, Llay Miners Institute, Offa’s and Watts Dyke also contribute to local culture and identity. **These cultural assets are mutually supportive of the Welsh language, they can help create a sense of identity and pride and they can support opportunities to speak and promote the language.**



Growing demand for WM education in WCBC

Table 3: Welsh Language School Admissions⁵

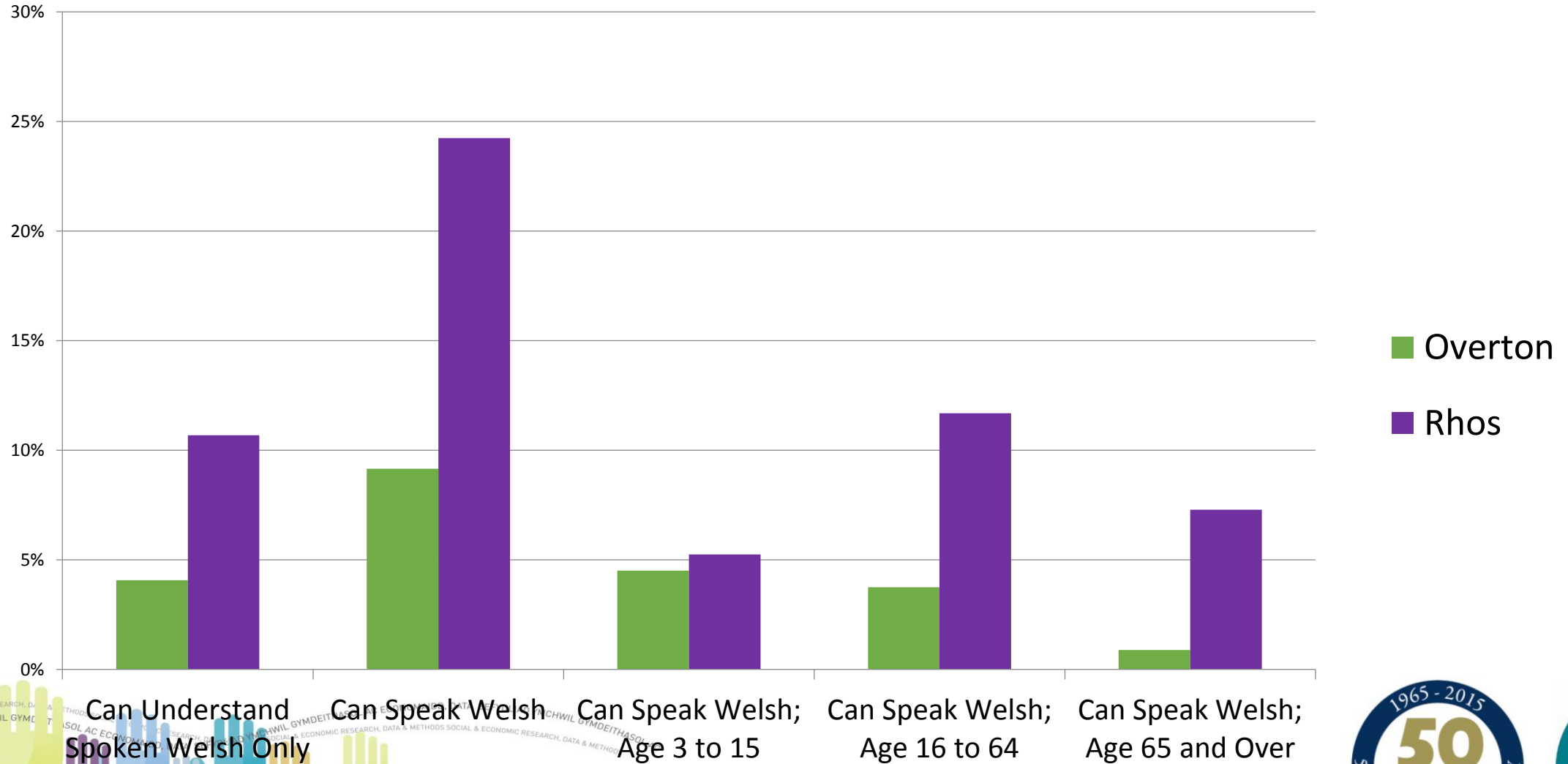
	Admission Number 2012-2013	Admission Number 2015-2016	Capacity	New Capacity	Increase In Spaces	% Increase	Admitted
Min Y Ddol	14	15	98	98	0	0	20
Bodhyfryd	49	49	343	343	0	0	60
Plas Coch	27	45	189	315	126	66.67%	45
ID Hooson	29	45	203	315	112	55.17%	45
Bro Alun	0	30	0	210	210	100%	30
Bryn Tabor	42	42	294	294	0	0	45
	161	225	1127	1575	448		245

Summary points from Table 3;

- Welsh medium admissions and capacity increased between 2013-2016 to meet growing demand for Welsh education provision

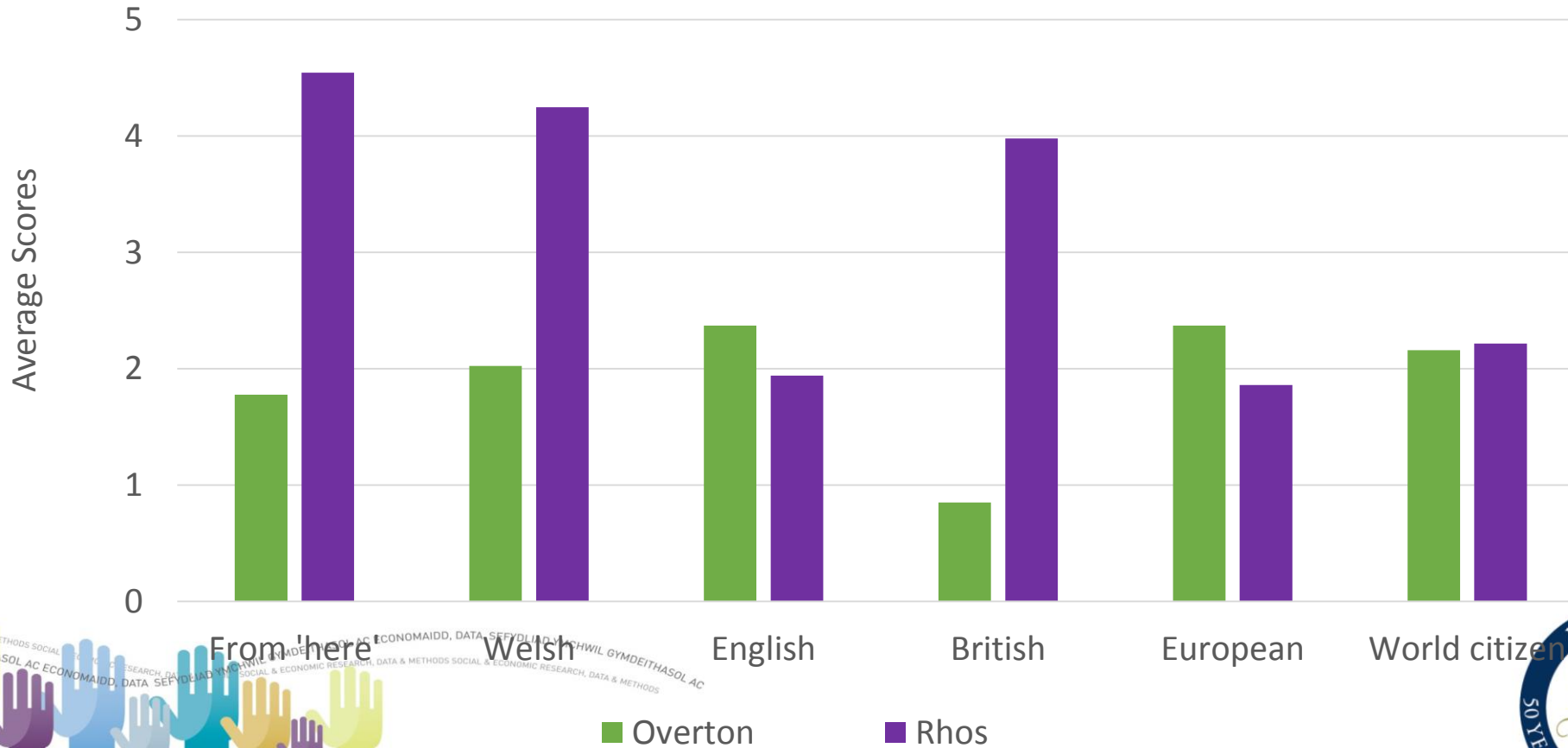


People in Rhos and Overton: Welsh speaking (2001 census)



People in Rhos and Overton: Identity and Belonging

On a scale of 1 to 6, where 6 is 'feel very strongly', and 1 is 'not at all', would you consider yourself to be:



Rhos - participation

- Five choirs (4 x MVC)
- Crown Green Bowling Club
- Rugby Club
- Chapels
- Papur Bro
- Aelwyd
- Dancing classes



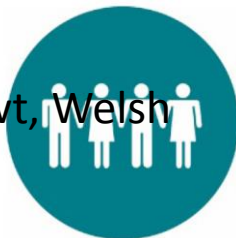
PRIFYSGOL
BANGOR
UNIVERSITY

- Youth Council
- Theatre / Pantomimes
- Theatre yr Ifanc Rhos
- Ponciau Banks Park
- Cage Bird Society
- Friends of the Stiwt
- Aelwyd Football Club



The best things about living in Rhos

- People here are very special - especially the older community which is very, very strong - goes back to the mines.
- Rhos is a close knit community. There`s always someone around to help. Friends and family are all close by.
- Everyone is very nice. There are no 'bad eggs'. There's a nice feeling to the place.
- Community spirit. I'm proud to be part of the community but things are changing.
- Living conditions are very good and the money from benefits is good. Cheap housing.
- Everyone knows each other. Close to family and my husbands work.
- Nice people. Nice countryside. Good walking. Mixed cultural and social groups.
- A lot of things going on in the Stwt - concerts and things. There are the choirs.
- Feeling of belonging. You know everybody here.
- The community. People have very high standards. We have a special culture here - the Welsh dialect, the Stiwt, Welsh culture particularly.



The worst things about living in Rhos

- The kids - very badly behaved. Lots of anti-social behaviour. They always backchat and cause trouble. Vandalism and drugs.
- It`s changed a lot. New people moving here and younger generation don`t have the same connection to the place.
- Nothing to do. Poor facilities.
- It's very small. There's not a great deal around here - facilities or things to do.
- Vandalism. Bad behaviour. You can't go out at night anymore. Not how it used to be.
- Untidiness. The streets are terrible, the shops are a mess - all boarded up.
- The weather!
- In the last few years lots of people from outside have moved here - from Liverpool and Manchester - they don't bring anything to the village
- There's not a lot here any more. The Stiwt is all there's left. It's everything. Pubs are closing, so the darts teams have gone. People are becoming more and more insular.
- People can be narrow-minded. Everyone knows your business.



Narratives on Welsh in Rhos

- “everybody spoke Welsh. That was the difference. We all spoke... well, most of us spoke Welsh together. Although we weren’t learning through the medium of Welsh, Welsh was your first language and English was your second language in a way. But then you’d go down to Johnstown and all the English were living down in Johnstown. And to some extent Garden Road – English people lived on Garden Road, more or less” (Dafydd)
- “One goes through Rhos sometimes at night, on the way to choir practice. Rhos’s choir is still one hope that there is still someone in the “Welsh life”. But between my house and the place where we practice, you don’t hear a word of Welsh. The place is almost foreign in its Englishness, in terms of the younger generation” (Ifor)



Beyond the narratives

- **Representation and the nation - *How the reproduction of nations entails ongoing, yet intermittent, engagements with the local/grassroots/everyday***
 - How Rhos fits within broader imaginations and representations of Wales. Ongoing representations of Rhos as a ‘unique’ Welsh speaking place in different local/national media and public discourse
 - In some senses, Rhos occupies a position of esteem within Welsh Language representations of Wales
- **Connections and networks - *Understand Rhos not only in terms resident ‘talk’ on belonging, decline etc. but in terms of actual individual, organisation and institutional connections to other places***
 - Shaped by proximity to Wrexham and developments at local authority level. Creation of “hubs” for Welsh language cultural services and WM education in Wrexham CBC/North East Wales
 - “Exporter” of Welsh speakers working in education and creative and cultural industries. Many of who have continued attachments through family, employment
 - Understanding of the opportunities and threats presented by these sorts of connections
- **Public engagement and co-production = *Issues around confirming/critically engaging with narratives of decline as part of the process of doing public engagement and co-production***
 - Space for counter-narratives – statistics, outliers





Pawb a'i Farn

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Key questions for discussion

- How do we interpret resident accounts of language decline at local levels?
 - Segmenting of participation and social relations in Rhos over time
 - Migration and intergenerational change
 - Conflicts between connected places and place belonging
- Can we think of ways which go beyond the “narrative of decline” as the dominant discourse amongst local civic actors in Rhos?
 - National representations
 - Connections through spaces in which to participate – opportunities *and* threats
 - *Neither are risk-free*

