**NATIONAL DIGITAL LEARNING COUNCIL (NDLC) MINUTES**

**10:15 TO 15:00; MONDAY 9 JUNE 2014**

**CELTIC MANOR, NEWPORT (PART OF DIGITAL WALES 2014)**

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| **In attendance:**  Janet Hayward (JH) [Chair]  Tom Crick (TC)  Pete Richardson (PR)  Hannah Mathias (HM)  Gareth Morgan (GM)  Iain Tweedale (IT)  Mark Jones (MJ)  Lindsay Harvey (LH) [Welsh Government]  Chris Owen (CO) [Welsh Government]  Chris Roderick (CR) [Welsh Government] | **Apologies:**  Geraint James  Maldwyn Pryse  Catherine Grout  David Morgan  Chris Britten  Simon Pridham  Sue Burnett  Huw Evans  Robert Newsome |

1. **Welcome**
   1. JH thanked everyone for attending and welcomed them to the Celtic Manor.
2. **Minutes of previous meetings**
   1. 20 May 2014

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| **REF** | **ACTION** | **UPDATE** |
| 3.12 | CO to investigate “outward look for websites” with DfES Comms & Marketing. | On-going discussions with C&M colleagues. The website has been designed by LP in line with their existing offering to schools in other local authorities |
| 3.24 | Hwb Team to pursue avenues in relation to early promotion of 2015 NDLE awards. | Information on 2015 awards will be published as soon as possible following this year’s event via Hwb. |
| 3.29 | Andy Wood (Welsh Government adviser for e-safety) to review the current tool wording in supporting documentation to ensure it covers education rather than just schools. | AW currently in discussions with SWGfL over amending wording |
| 6.17 | CO to investigate alternative methods for promoting Hwb+ via practitioner videos and discuss with Comms & Marketing | This will be an on-going activity for the Digital Leaders from September onwards. |

* 1. 9 June 2014

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| **REF** | **ACTION** |
| 3.5 | Secretariat to circulate link to ‘ICT situation in schools’ survey. |
| 3.42 | LH and JH to meet to discuss the make-up of the second term of the Council on 16 June. |

1. **Hwb / Digital Learning in Digital Wales Programme Update – Chris Owen / Lindsay Harvey**

**Learning in Digital Wales Grant**

* 1. LH provided an update on the progress being made in rolling out improved broadband to schools. 171 of 206 secondary and 856 of 1412 primary and special schools have benefitted from the grant.
  2. LH confirmed that Anglesey have now signed up to the terms of the grant. However, they are now 9 months behind the other local authorities involved so will not meet the end of July deadline.
  3. LH also noted that there are 258 primary schools that will be upgraded to 100Mbps rather than 10Mbps (due to a larger number of pupils) which are also likely to miss this deadline.
  4. JH highlighted a survey recently disseminated by Vale of Glamorgan, asking what the ICT situation is in schools. LH stated that this has been requested by the Minister for Education and Skills and local authorities must respond to the Welsh Government by 30 June.
  5. JH noted that Vale of Glamorgan have disseminated this within an online portal which makes it very difficult to access. CO stated that the original requirement from Welsh Government was to complete a simple spreadsheet.

**Action: Secretariat to circulate link to survey.**

* 1. GM noted that this should not be about how much ICT kit there is in schools, but what is being done with it.
  2. LH outlined that Welsh Government are trying to gauge the landscape in Wales.
  3. JH noted that parents do not know which devices are best suited for use in an educational context (i.e. best to use Hwb+) when they are buying gifts for their children at Christmas and that it would be useful for guidance to be provided. LH noted that this could spin out of the survey, but that the focus should be on schools making an informed decision between the major brands. GM also added that this should focus on value for money and a detailed evaluation of how the kit will be used.
  4. JH suggested a focus group or matrix of teachers, learners and parents, which could potentially lead to a case study.
  5. It was agreed that the Council would commission external guidance on this issue for both schools and parents. This will need to be refreshed regularly given developments in the field. However, this will not be undertaken by the Welsh Government, given the procurement issues this would raise.
  6. LH noted that as part of the review of the curriculum, it is intended to pull together lists of all practitioners for each subject and year group.

**Hwb**

* 1. CO noted that there has been a slight increase in the number of visits to the Hwb site and that while the bounce rate remains high at around 43%, it is hoped that that this will reduce to 25% following the re-launch (when users logging in to their Hwb+ site from the homepage will be counted as relevant.)
  2. MJ asked how these figures compared to NGfL Cymru. CO stated that these figures are an improvement on NGfL, given the limited number of authenticated users the previous system had.

**Hwb+**

* 1. 1057 schools have now received Hwb+ training, totalling 1431 individual users.
  2. CO stated that secondary training is ongoing and that the SLK course management software included within the revamped shell has been particularly well received.
  3. CO stated that SLT members have also now been invited to attend at least a half day session to gain an understanding of what the Hwb+ platform has to offer. However, MJ noted that he has not yet received this communication, despite training being arranged for early July.
  4. MJ questioned if there were any local authorities in particular that we causing any issues. CO stated that no specific authority has proved difficult, and the team is working proactively to improve the situation.

**Office 365**

* 1. CO confirmed that the O365 rollout to schools in both tranches 4 and 5 were completed ahead of schedule. It is anticipated that all outstanding schools will be provisioned by the end of July 2014, with public Hwb+ sites to be made available throughout September and October 2014.
  2. CO noted that the Hwb Team was currently investigating how blogs could be published to an external-facing site.
  3. CO noted that there are licensing issues in relation to parents and governors, resulting in a potential substantial increase in cost. Advice on this will be put to Ministers for consideration shortly.
  4. There was discussion of parental access to the platform. CO stated that a child’s main parent/guardian will be provided with access to their child’s records (attendance etc.) but that additional requests (for parents that may have separated and would both want to access separately) may be accommodated. A single logon should also cover all their children, even if they are in different schools.

**National Digital Content Repository**

* 1. CO confirmed that the Blaenavon Data Centre has passed the recent security vetting process. However, the supplier of the NDCR has concerns over Blaenavon’s bandwidth capabilities. They are currently looking into alternative solutions like Amazon Cloud (AWS).
  2. The migration of data to the new platform created by CDSM is well underway and the authentication process is also on track for the new Hwb site to be re-launched on 9 July.

**HwbMeets**

* 1. A recent HwbMeet in Bridgend focussing on Special Education Needs had a relatively low turnout. However, this was not unexpected given the limited audience. Excellent feedback was received following the event.
  2. The HwbMeets schedule for this academic year has now come to a close. A new HwbMeet schedule will be released in September outlining events to be planned through the next academic year.
  3. CO stated that it is intended for these to be more general, with no specific focus for an entire session, but with individual tables devoted to a specific topic (i.e. coding).
  4. LH noted that the Minister has recently approved funding for all secondary schools to run taster sessions on programming. This must involve teachers and pupils in all 219 secondary schools in Wales, with the first to commence in September.
  5. IT stated that the BBC will be running a [Connected Studios Event on 17 June](http://www.bbc.co.uk/partnersandsuppliers/connectedstudio/events/coding.html), specifically on Coding for Teenagers. A follow-up event will then be held at the Chapter Arts Centre on 16 and 17 July.

**NDLE Awards**

* 1. CO confirmed that the judging process is now complete and that the panel have opted for a highly commended approach, rather than settling on 2nd and 3rd place entries.
  2. The filming tender has now also been awarded, with videos of the successful applicants being uploaded to Hwb as soon as possible after the event.

**National Digital Learning Event**

* 1. Speeches have now been received from presenters and are currently being translated where necessary. Nigel Owen’s script is also currently being drafted and the NDLE hashtag being promoted on twitter.
  2. The booking system for the event is now live, with bookings being “cleansed” as they are received, with priority being given to teachers and other sectors being put on a waiting list.
  3. A very successful trial run of the workshops being run on the day has been held on 4 June.
  4. e-Safety sessions have been planned for June and July. QA workshops on the 360 degree safe Cymru tool have also been arranged for 13 to 20 June, with an acceptable use policy (AUP) to be finalised in time for the new school term in September.
  5. GM questioned whether this AUP will be competing or complimenting the ICT Self Review Framework. While this would appear to be duplicating much of the information, it was agreed that it would be beneficial for both to run concurrently.
  6. LH stated that will be discussed as part of a workshop to be held on 16 June, to be attended by educationalists, technicians, and representatives from communications and marketing and the Safeguarding Team. It is also hoped that an agreement will be reached over the issue of web-filtering. While it is clear that the benefits of wider access will outweigh the risks involved (front page headlines etc), it must be for local authorities to manage this risk, which they appear reluctant to do. A framework detailing steps towards this will be developed by March 2015.
  7. A workshop will also be held on the benefits of the LiDW Programme on 8 July. To date, it has proven difficult to encourage senior staff to attend, but they will also be required to nominate 2 head teachers from within their consortia.

**Future of the National Digital Learning Council**

* 1. LH confirmed that the first two-year term of the National Digital Learning Council will conclude in July. The Minister has however agreed to commit to a further two-year term to commence in the academic year 2014/15, to meet on a quarterly basis, rather than monthly.
  2. The Minister has asked JH to stay on as Chair in order to provide continuity between the two terms. However, the Minister has requested that the Council be ‘refreshed’, with new members being invited to apply for a position. LH stressed that existing members are welcome to apply for a position on the new Council. However, if there is a lot of interest, an interview process may be required.
  3. IT asked if there was anything which the current iteration of the Council has not been providing. LH stated that this was mainly representation from Consortia at a senior level, as well as a lack of representation from Estyn.
  4. LH also stated that this current term has involved a lot of reporting on developments in the LiDW Programme, but this will not be as prominent once the majority of projects enter a ‘business as usual’ state.

**Action: LH and JH to meet to discuss the make-up of the second term of the Council on 16 June.**

1. **Julia Skinner – 100 Word Challenge**
   1. JS provided a brief overview of her career and the background to her project – 100 word challenge. As a head teacher for over 13 years and time as an SEN co-ordinator, she has found blogging to be a particularly useful tool to aid in the teaching of literacy.
   2. Through [her website](http://100wc.net/), she publishes prompts which must form the basis of a paragraph or story using no more than 100 words. These prompts can consist of a sentence, a set of random words or just a picture.
   3. There are currently 35,000 links to pieces of work on the site, which has gained more than 220,000 visitors from 86 countries around the world.
   4. While the site only links to pieces of work that have been published on individual school sites, both students and teachers can complete the online form for a link to a piece of work to be generated.
   5. Any ‘quirky’ entries are highlighted as part of a weekly showcase.
   6. Anyone is able to comment on any piece of work, but there is a dedicated team of volunteers (Team 100) who provide feedback and encouragement. However, JS stated that the most useful feedback is often provided by other pupils, with a lot of learners taking these comments on board more often.
   7. Teachers have noted that this has had an impact in the classroom. Given the limited word count (“it’s only 100 words”) pupils are more motivated and encouraged to be more succinct with their writing and improve their punctuation.
   8. JS also noted that the 100 words is purely a guideline and these are not actually counted.
   9. JS is looking for volunteers to join Team 100, who are not necessarily teachers.
   10. A more basic version of the challenge has been established for KS1 and SEN pupils, where each fortnight they are provided with a picture to write 5 sentences about.
   11. In establishing links with Hwb+, JS raised a couple of points:
       1. It would be helpful if there was a public facing blog for anyone to be able to provide comments.
       2. There are concerns over security and safety.
       3. It would also be helpful for access to be provided. However, this may require tweaks being made to the platform.
   12. JS did state that attempts have been made to establish a 100 Word Challenge Cymru but that this struggled to get off the ground due to a lack of Welsh speakers.
   13. Priority to improve literacy and numeracy, using digital technology as effectively as possible.
   14. CO confirmed that the LNF framework is published on Learning Wales, but that the Hwb+ mapping materials will be published on Hwb+.
2. **Gianni O’ Connor**
   1. JH thanked GO’C for agreeing to speak to the Council about his experiences and provided him with a brief overview of the Council’s role in advising on the Learning in Digital Wales Programme.
   2. GO’C expressed his opinion that there should be more of a focus on ‘why you learn’ rather than ‘what you learn’ within the classroom. Pupils could be much more enthusiastic about computing when they are made aware of what computers make possible. Pupils are effectively currently being taught the elements that make up a pen, rather than the fact that a pen could be used to write a masterpiece.
   3. Unlike almost all other subjects, the ICT and computing field is always evolving. Whereas a maths teacher will almost certainly know more than every single pupil in the class, with ICT evolving so quickly, and a lack of training for teachers, there is a strong possibility that interested pupils could have more knowledge of some areas than whoever is teaching. This could lead to a significant loss of interest.
   4. The current curriculum is not allowing pupils to develop creative or innovative skills. They are just being taught to pass exams. MJ stated that the ICT field used to be much more flexible, but exams are not keeping up with the developments.
   5. There are some year 7 pupils that have very advanced skills, but they would not be able to pass exams because they have not been taught to think methodically with regards to evaluation etc.
   6. It was also suggested that a Business Studies course/qualification may be of more benefit in the long term, given the skills and knowledge that this can provide.
   7. JH stated that one of the recommendations from the ICT Curriculum Steering Group report involved the total disaggregation of IT and Computing as subjects within the curriculum.
   8. Digital technology and computers can aid in the teaching of most subjects and while it’s unlikely that children would be able to fix a household appliance, they may be able to fix a computer, as this is likely to involve working backwards and undoing something wrong.
   9. How can more creativity be incorporated into the current curriculum? It would be beneficial for there to be some sort of end product at the end of the period.
   10. GO’C highlighted how easy it is for students to download a final A\* project from the internet.
   11. MJ highlighted that even after only 5 years of being out of ICT teaching profession, trying to re-enter this can be a big problem.
   12. It was later stressed that currently all pupils will need to sit the same standard final exam, leaving little room for creativity during the school year.