

Cultural and educational opportunities for Welsh Language learners aligned to the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

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The Royal Society of Arts (RSA) is developing its presence in Wales based on a thematic approach around the Wellbeing of Future Generations Wales Act. (2015) In response to a call from the RSA for goal champions aligned to the specific goals set out in the act a small research enquiry around the specific goal of *'A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language – a society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, sports and recreation'* was put forward as one aspect of this activity.

This was an opportunity to engage with some key cultural Welsh medium organisations who work within Wales from a Welsh language tradition to undertake a small scoping exercise to gather initial data that shows the specific aspects of their work as it relates or potentially relates to Welsh language learners and how any initial engagement by and with those individual learners can be sustained through the goals of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. The nature, timing and resources for the project narrowed the field of co-researchers and it is recognised that this is a selective view of those invited and responding on behalf of the organisations who have engaged with the project. It presents some information for potential future work in the arena of Welsh learners.

In addition the Coleg Cenedlaethol Cymraeg was invited to take part given their overarching role in a pan Wales context of working with Colleges and Universities in Wales through the medium of Welsh and in the provision of Higher Education through the medium of Welsh.

The purpose of this small scale investigation was to collate a report of activities undertaken by those specific organisations and groups. This was achieved through gathering information around longer term sustainability in Welsh learner involvement. It must be noted that there are many other groups working at a national, regional and local level who provide learner support formally and informally but the size and scope of this investigation did not enable, at this time, a deeper level enquiry.

A questionnaire was sent to those organisations who had agreed to take part and which focused on their approaches to strategy, responsibility, opportunity, collaboration and plans for sustainability which is an embedded aspect of the act. This was intended to gain an overview of the important role Welsh medium culture and heritage has in supporting Welsh language learners. The report is to be disseminated to all parties who have taken part in the enquiry and through the RSA and is intended to offer the potential opportunity for further discussion around existing good practice, future/further collaboration, cross fertilisation and a continued engagement within the communities of Welsh learners. While the aims of the Act underpin the project no specific reference to the engagement of those organisations with the Act was sought or discussed. Rather the focus was on their role in supporting and encouraging learners. It is hoped that the overarching report would provide a picture of the valuable work these groups do in supporting the aims of the Act as it pertains to Welsh Language learners and the key role of the Coleg in supporting those aspects through its validated provision in Welsh medium study.

Methodology

Based on time and resource constraints the decision was taken to contact the following organisations – Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru, Cymdeithas Eisteddfodau Bach and Merched y Wawr who work specifically through the medium of Welsh in a cultural context and the Coleg Cenedlaethol who provide higher education opportunities through the medium of Welsh.

A number of other organisations were considered and although they are not included in the findings of this report we can be usefully reminded of two in particular whose work sits at a national level through the medium of Welsh.

Amongst them are Urdd Gobaith Cymru - who work specifically with children and young people up to the age of 25 and whose work with learners through the framework of the Area, Regional and National Eisteddfod is well known and accessible at a local and national level, and whose aim is *'to provide the opportunity, through the medium of Welsh, for the children and young people in Wales to become fully rounded individuals, developing personal and social skills that will enable them to make a positive contribution to the community'*. (translation).

<http://www.urdd.cymru/cy/amdanom-ni/>

The National Centre for Learning Welsh is responsible for all aspects of the Learn Welsh sector - from curriculum and course development to resources for tutors, research, marketing and e-learning. Established in response to the report [Raising our sights: review of Welsh for Adults](#) its aim is to *'attract new learners to the Welsh language and increase the numbers using and enjoying Welsh each day'*.

(translation) <https://dysgucymraeg.cymru/amdanom-ni/y-ganolfan-dysgu-cymraeg-genedlaethol/>

Informal contact was made with the following organisations – Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru, Cymdeithas Eisteddfodau Cymru, Merched y Wawr and the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol whose agreement was sought and given to take part. This was followed by the formal invitation and a short questionnaire which focused on issues of strategy, responsibility, opportunity, collaboration and any plans for sustainability (appx 1); the latter being an embedded aspect of the act; in order to gain an overview of the important role Welsh language culture and heritage has in supporting Welsh language learners along with the formalised opportunities through the higher education offering of the Coleg.

The decision to use qualitative data to inform this report research project was based on the following factor – the size of the project that made a qualitative rather than quantitative research methodology more useful in providing relevant data. While recognising that the *"credibility of generalisations"* (Denscombe, 2007, p. 45) may lead to some criticism, qualitative data offers a rich seam of findings representing the individual responses from participants on behalf of those organisations in a project of this size. As the research is based within what Denscombe describes as *"fairly distinct boundaries"* (2007, p. 44), the analysis of the research will be holistic within the experiences of the participants.

The research focused on one key aspect of data gathering namely: 5 survey questions which offered a yes/no option and the opportunity for further comments. The decision was taken to reference feedback comments against the individual organisations given the small number of respondents taking part who agreed to this.

Analysis of data – while the analysis is across all participants it focused into that of the organisations who engage culturally and the work of the Coleg as a provider of

validated credit bearing opportunities for Welsh medium study. Where there is evidence of joint activity through for example – committees - this is noted.

Question 1 - Does your organisation/group have a STRATEGY for enabling Welsh language learners?

All respondents highlighted that they have a strategy for enabling Welsh language learners but no specific mention was made by those cultural organisations of a formal strategy. However it is evident from the responses of those organisations that there is a continuation built into their approaches to support and develop Welsh language learners. The Coleg has an explicit Academic Plan with strategic priorities leading up to 2020 and beyond and provided specific examples of how this is implemented.

There is a strong focus within the responses of working towards encouraging and offering developmental opportunities to engage in informal Welsh medium activities throughout the year:

‘we cooperate with institutions who work hard in the Eisteddfod’s locale to develop a programme of interesting courses and activities for informal learning throughout the year in order to attract more people to speak Welsh and to come to the Eisteddfod’. (Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru -translation)

While the National Eisteddfod is an annual event held in a different community and moves between North and South Wales in August of each year the Cymdeithas Eisteddfodau Cymru has a Wales wide remit over the year and provided examples of those events:

‘five are to be held over the year (Pub eisteddfod for Swansea learners, Carmarthenshire, Powys and Ceredigion learner Eisteddfod, North East Wales learner eisteddfod, North West Wales Eisteddfod and Central Glamorgan learner Eisteddfod’ (Cymdeithas Eisteddfodau Cymru - translation)

Merched y Wawr states on its website that within its constitution it’s purpose is:

‘to promote any cause for the benefit of women in Wales, considered in law as charitable at this time or at anytime in the future, and especially to strengthen public education and facilitate Welsh culture, education and the Arts in Wales through the medium of Welsh language’. (Merched y Wawr website – accessed 16 August 2018 - translation)

Thus Merched y Wawr present an overarching and holistic approach to engaging and developing opportunities for Welsh learners in on-going activities. Specific competitions enable recognition at their annual summer event and important opportunities are offered for learners to take up roles within the organisation and their development is recognised within the Wawr magazine which disseminates their achievements to a wider audience.

‘We encourage all our branches and clubs to offer special events or evenings for learners and also offer volunteers to support events such as talking sessions’ (Merched y Wawr -translation)

The publication of the Coleg’s second Academic Plan in 2017 has highlighted specific priorities until 2020 and beyond to ensure the highest quality Welsh medium

higher education and building on its original strong foundations within the 2012 Academic Plan through :

'focusing on ensuring high quality higher education with students at the heart of the learning process'. (Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol- translation)

The Coleg also has a remit of developing more opportunities for study through the medium of Welsh including support for course development, scholarships for students following Welsh medium courses thus supporting and enabling Welsh speakers of the future:

'Through working with Welsh Universities, the Coleg Cymraeg ensures that it is developing further opportunities for Welsh students to study through the medium of Welsh' (Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol - translation)

Within the context of the organisations and the Coleg there is a clear remit and ambition to support, improve and develop language skills through cultural and educational opportunities.

Question 2 - Does your organisation/group define any RESPONSIBILITY to Welsh learners?

Specific approaches to this are outlined and which are focused within the overarching criterion on which each organisation bases its role. Examples include plans by the National Eisteddfod to attend and work with primary schools in Cardiff, to encourage and develop the use of Welsh scientific vocabulary and:

'Welsh learners have opportunities to volunteer and work in the Welsh Learner area cafe at the Eisteddfod. We encourage Welsh learners to become members of Local level committees'. (Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru - translation)

The Cymdeithas Eisteddfodau have previously organised workshops as an aspect of their work in encouraging learner engagement and highlight future plans in their responses to Q3.

'In the past the Society has organised and held a variety of workshops for learners – choral music and literature' (Cymdeithas Eisteddfodau Cymru - translation)

There are many opportunities available within Merched y Wawr's approach to supporting learners including encouragement to join local level committees and events focused specifically on learners and volunteering support at Welsh speaking sessions:

'Special competitions are held annually for learners and a ceremony held at the Summer Festival. We also provide every support for learners to engage with roles within our charity. A specific part of our magazine is set aside for our brilliant learners'. (Merched Y Wawr - translation)

Opportunities and responsibility for Welsh medium higher education as part of the student experience is the 'raison d'être' for the Coleg and is managed through the development of discipline planning to ensure the development of high quality academic material thus providing unique opportunities for students to manage their future in a bilingual workplace. Thus opportunities are based within the responsibilities outlined by the Coleg around this:

'Enabling, supporting and promoting study opportunities for Welsh students is the raison d'être of the Coleg' (Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol - translation)

In order to deliver those aspects outlined in their Academic Plan the Coleg is developing subject plans and resources for identified academic fields of study in support of developing their educational offering:

'This is achieved through discussion at subject panels, which include academic representation from all the institutions'. (Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol - translation)

Keeping the student experience at the heart of these developments is aligned to the Coleg's focus on how Welsh medium higher education:

'can provide unique experiences to learners and to equip them with the knowledge, confidence and skills to work in a bi-lingual nation in the future' (Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol - translation).

Question 3 - Do you engage with and promote OPPORTUNITIES for and with learners?

There are clear and a wide range of opportunities which those respondents highlighted in their engagement with learners. This includes practical activities aligned to cultural and community experiences alongside the formal educational experiences offered through the Coleg. Examples in the community include:

'The craft workshop and creation of the e-book will be of benefit to Welsh learners in order to expand their vocabulary of scientific terminology about space. They will also be invited to the learner area of the Eisteddfod where there will be opportunities for them to practice their Welsh and experience the language live in those surroundings' (Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru - translation)

On a national level the annual Welsh learner of the year competition held at the National Eisteddfod is the main enabling opportunity to showcase the input and commitment of Welsh learners to both the language and engagement with their communities. With the Eisteddfod moving to a different locality annually this ensures that the competition is highlighted to a different audience each year:

'Encouraging people to learn and use the Welsh language is central to the National Eisteddfod's message when visiting any locality, and this competition is an opportunity to celebrate success and inspire others to compete in the future' (Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru - translation)

This approach is also replicated in the desire of the Cymdeithas Eisteddfodau Cymru to see competitions specifically aimed at learners throughout Wales and which has resulted in learners taking part in mainstream competitions reflected in the taking part in local learner eisteddfodau and/or attending the annual National Eisteddfod with notable successes:

'By now some 'learners' take part in general competitions – and one has successfully won a number of Eisteddfod chairs. We attempt to send a list of competitions to learner groups across Wales' (Cymdeithas Eisteddfodau Cymru - translation)

In the context of Merched y Wawr this is focused on the facilitation of Welsh learners through their overarching activities which evidences further their holistic approach:

'We also promote learners who undertake key roles within our movement and encourage others. Our annual stand at the Eisteddfod is sited near to Maes D (the learner's tent) and we organise activities there' (Merched Y Wawr - translation)

The Coleg has a more formalised approach given its role in delivering credit bearing opportunities through the medium of Welsh. These include registering with the Coleg itself where information is made available about opportunities and developments, access to resources and specific schemes. The following list encompasses some aspects of those opportunities available to students to study through the medium of Welsh and full descriptors are available on the Coleg website:

- Scholarships for undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral study
- Work experience
- The language skills certificate - accredited certificate (CBAC)
- Ambassador Scheme

The Academic Board ensures ownership of the work and processes of the Coleg and up to 8 members of the Board are student representatives. To ensure representation on subject panels institutions are invited to nominate students. Training and support is offered to students to ensure that their voice is central to the Coleg's mission.

Technology and resources are key factors in the Coleg experience for students. This includes the Gwerddon - the Welsh medium academic e-journal representing a range of disciplines and is a repository for scholarly work for the use of research students and academics through the medium of Welsh. Social Media is used centrally with subject officers communicating with students and academic staff.

The Research skills programme supports Welsh medium research students and early career academics and is the only programme of its kind available through the medium of Welsh. The Welsh medium research conference is part of the Coleg's training programme for academic and research staff and a means for new Welsh language academics to present their research to their contemporaries thus building further scholarly work through the medium of Welsh.

Question 4 - Do you undertake COLLABORATIVE activities with others in Wales around Welsh learner activity?

Each respondent engages in collaboration with organisations relevant to their aims and approaches. These may be on a national, regional or local level and aligned to specific aspects of their work but in all cases learners are a key aspect of that collaboration. These include relationships with other organisations to enrich learner opportunities and volunteering in the work of those organisations.

'we work with the Canolfan Dysgu Cymraeg, Cardiff University and Paralel.cymru to attract more Welsh learners to the Eisteddfod. We work together with those organisations and movements in order to enrich the timetable of events for learners during the Eisteddfod week.' (Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru - translation)

The National Eisteddfod also expanded its reach outside the usual Welsh language communities to work with:

'Cardiff Metropolitan University to create the Learner of the Year 2018 Trophy. This offers a creative opportunity for non- Welsh students to engage with Welsh culture' (Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru – translation)

Practical opportunities are being considered such as:

'looking to arrange further workshops for speakers (i.e. how to select a piece, how to perform etc..' (Cymdeithas Eisteddfodau Cymru - translation)

Merched y Wawr outline their overarching collaborative approach and engage in a wide and different range of activities across Wales, including:

'We volunteer in nursery groups, we listen to children reading in some schools, steward and help at Urdd eisteddfods, offer opportunities for young people to entertain our members and work closely with language centres. This year Efa Gruffydd Jones will be the invited speaker at our annual meeting'. (Merched y Wawr – translation)*

*Chief Executive of the National Welsh Learning Centre

Educational opportunities through the Coleg are framed within the Coleg's approach to co-operating with all Welsh universities and :

'connects with students, lecturers and support staff through branches, subject panels, working committees, a number of projects (eg collaborative activities) and specific projects' (Coleg Cenedlaethol Cymraeg - translation)

Examples of collaborative activities include module delivery which is financially supported to enable students to meet and access specialist lecturers from other institutions.

Future developments include the inclusion of Further Education Colleges in the work and scope of the Coleg. Through the development of a formal operational plan and visiting schools across Wales to share information about opportunities and support for studying through the medium of Welsh.

Currently there are Coleg funded projects targeting schoolchildren:

['Y Gymraeg ar Daith](#) (to try and increase the number of pupils studying A levels and a degree in Welsh), summer schools in modern languages and Welsh as a second language provide a taste of university life for year 12 students' (Coleg Cenedlaethol Cymraeg - translation)

Work is also on-going with five Welsh universities to to prepare a Welsh medium route for the Post Graduate Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education – a certificated approach embedded within UK wide Higher Education professional development for academic staff.

In response to a request from the Welsh Government the Coleg is also working with those institutions who deliver Initial teacher Training (ITT) to support application for the Language Competency Certificate for Teachers and in conjunction with those ITT providers the Cynllun Colegau Cymru is a framework for teaching Welsh as a second language to those who are:

'studying courses in primary teaching and which leads to Qualified Teaching Status' (QTS) (Coleg Cenedlaethol Cymraeg - translation)

The Work Welsh in Higher Education Scheme runs under the auspices of the National Centre for Learning Welsh and aims to:

[Cynllun Cymraeg Gwaith mewn Addysg Uwch](#) *'gives higher education staff the opportunity to develop their language skills in order to enable them to increase the use of Welsh in their work' (Coleg Cenedlaethol Cymraeg - translation)*

While the collaborative activities undertaken by both the different organisations and the Coleg itself may not be directly aligned there are areas of cross over such as working with the National Centre for Learning Welsh through courses and committee work and the collaborative presence of all the organisations and the Coleg at the National Eisteddfod annually.

Question 5 - Have you plans for future SUSTAINABILITY of Welsh learner development ?

Each organisation presented examples of their approach to sustainability which included practical approaches through the outcomes of projects and awareness raising and including:

'The e –book and the work of the craft workshop will be returned to the English schools so that they can use them as educational resources. By attracting children and their families to the Eisteddfod they are able to learn about Welsh culture and get more information about Welsh language lessons'. (Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru - translation)

Specific to the 2018 Eisteddfod held in Cardiff Bay were:

'Eisteddfod taster sessions to local businesses in the Bay in order to encourage use of the Welsh language and to raise awareness of the language within the local business community' (Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru - translation)

Cymdeithas Eisteddfodau Cymru gather feedback following workshops as a tool to gain information about the efficacy of those events and enabling them to follow those learners who attended workshops and who may then go on to compete:

'through looking for their names in the results we receive from local Eisteddfods' (Cymdeithas Eisteddfodau Cymru - translation)

Merched Y Wawr also build longer term planning into their approach with annual events to engage learners held in local branches. Space is allocated within their magazine for learners who see their work published in Welsh for the first time and specific competitions for learners are held at the annual summer festival with a ceremony held to celebrate their achievements. A key aspect of sustainability is to:

'offer every possible help to women learners who join to take up posts when they have enough confidence to do this and support their professional development in both spoken and written Welsh. We also have a number of members across Wales who volunteer to help learners e.g. speaking sessions'. (Merched y Wawr - translation)

Additional incentives include awarding prizes to those who reach the final round of the Welsh learner of the year competition. With the Director sitting on the National Learn Welsh Committee there is a link to other organisations and to the Coleg. As an organisation that encourages and involves learners closely in its activities Merched y Wawr make:

‘Every possible effort is made to ensure that learners enjoy socialising on our stalls at both the Royal Welsh Show and Eisteddfods’. (Merched y Wawr - translation)

Sustainability is part of the Coleg’s formal responsibilities within its Academic Plan ‘Towards 2020 and beyond’ through setting priorities for this period and the following decade:

These include consideration for developments in the field of information technology, flexible learning, diverse competencies, widening access and sequential pathways.

‘All subject plans will take sustainability into account to ensure a viable number of lecturers and students to sustain Welsh medium provision’. (Coleg Cenedlaethol Cymraeg - translation)

The Coleg is moving from its original model of higher education provision and lecturer sponsorship through its Academic Staffing Plan towards subject grants where:

‘the Coleg will be setting up individual agreements with institutions with stated targets to be completed and commitment to sustain from the institution. This model will place more responsibility on the institution to root Welsh language provision within departments and academic schools and grow sustainability longer term’ (Coleg Cenedlaethol Cymraeg - translation)

Conclusion

The responses provide clear evidence of the focus on Welsh learner engagement and development within the five areas of the research.

1. Strategy

All respondents have strategies suited to their situation for Welsh language learners and there is continuation built into their approaches. While organisations’ strategies may be less formalised than that of the Coleg they nevertheless have a clear remit and focus within their roles in enabling, developing and supporting Welsh learners.

2. Responsibility

Aspects of responsibility are clearly focused within the overarching criterion on which each organisation bases its role and for the Coleg the student experience sits at the heart of its responsibilities.

3. Opportunity

There are a wide range of opportunities focused on the facilitation of Welsh learners which are offered holistically through the organisations and more formally through those opportunities outlined by the Coleg.

4. Collaboration

Respondents describe collaboration with organisations which are relevant to their aims and approaches. These may be on a national, regional or local level and aligned to specific aspects of their work but in all cases learners are central to that collaboration. The Coleg outlines aspects of collaborative working within the University sector in Wales including development and delivery and future collaboration with the post 16 sector .

5. Sustainability

Approaches to sustainability included practical approaches through the outcomes of projects and awareness raising, longer term planning and building in incentives for learners while sustainability is core to the longer term priorities of the Coleg.

While organisations may have a core of employed staff the community of individuals who support the central role of those organisations are important drivers of their plans, strategy and sustainability and ensuring the future of the Welsh Language and their long term commitment to all aspects of cultural life through the medium of Welsh.

It is also evident that while the Coleg is the key provider in ensuring high quality Welsh medium higher education in supporting and developing the skills needed in a bilingual Wales the role of both the organisations and the Coleg can not be underestimated in their importance as the vehicles through which Welsh learners develop into future Welsh language speakers.

This snapshot of activities across an informal and formal platform of Welsh learner activity provides a picture of broad and committed engagement to enabling Welsh speakers of the future. This could be the beginning of a much deeper engagement with organisations across Wales to gather data and provide evidence which informs the goal of the Act upon which this project is based namely '*A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language – a society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, sports and recreation*'. While the project has been specific in looking at culture and educational opportunities there is a longer term potential of gaining additional data which could be used to positive effect to inform the Welsh Government's target of a million Welsh speakers.

I would like to note my gratitude to those individuals who took part in the research on behalf of their organisations, for their willingness to engage and to provide the rich seam of qualitative data informing this report and to thank the RSA for the opportunity to undertake the project.

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The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Royal Society of Arts (RSA) is developing its presence in Wales based on a thematic approach around the Wellbeing of Future Generations Wales Act. As a Fellow of the RSA and in response to a call for 'goal champions' aligned to the specific goals set out in the act I have put forward the following small research enquiry around an aspect of the specific goal of '*A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language – a society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, sports and recreation*'

Through the RSA's involvement with the Act there is an opportunity to engage with the key cultural Welsh medium organisations in Wales who work specifically from a Welsh language tradition to gather initial data that shows the specific aspects of their work as it relates or potentially relates to Welsh language learners and how any initial engagement by and with those individuals can be sustained.

The purpose of this small scale investigation will be to collate an overarching report of activities undertaken by those organisations and groups, This will be achieved through information gathered around strategy, responsibility, activity and collaboration and how this may provide information to inform the potential for longer term sustainability around Welsh learner involvement.

Attached to this invitation is short questionnaire which focuses on those issues of strategy, responsibility, activity, collaboration and any plans for sustainability which is an embedded aspect of the the act in order to gain an overview of the important role culture and heritage has in supporting Welsh language learners. The report would be disseminated to all parties who have taken part in the enquiry and through the RSA and offer the opportunity for further discussion around existing good practice and future/further collaboration and cross fertilisation and a continued engagement within the communities of Welsh learners.

Any information you provide will be anonymised unless you indicate otherwise.

Your help and response to this enquiry would be much appreciated.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Barbara E Thomas'.

Barbara E Thomas PFHEA, FRSA

Higher Education Consultant

February 2018



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Survey questions

Q1 - Does your organisation/group have a strategy for enabling Welsh language learners?	Yes	No
Additional comments		
Q2 - Does your organisation/group define any responsibility to Welsh learners?	Yes	No
Additional comments		
Q3 - Do you engage with and promote opportunities for and with learners?	Yes	No
Additional comments		
Q4 - Do you undertake collaborative activities with others in Wales around Welsh learner activity?	Yes	No
Additional comments		
Q5 - Have you plans for future sustainability of Welsh learner development ?	Yes	No
Additional comments		
Anonymity Do you wish your responses to be anonymised	Yes	No
Signature		
Organisation/group		

Return the completed form by e mail to Barbara Thomas b.e.thomas@btinternet.com by February 23rd 2018. Thank you for your cooperation.