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**European Computer
Driving Licence (ECDL)**

First Stage Report

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CONTENTS

	Page
Background	3
ECDL	4
<i>How it works</i>	
<i>What are the benefits</i>	
<i>How are people tested</i>	
<i>Why is ECDL so effective</i>	
Issues	6
<i>Initial progress</i>	
<i>Day Conference</i>	
<i>Partnership with the TECs</i>	
<i>Training Day</i>	
<i>Further Revision Training Day and Tests</i>	
Cyber College Feasibility Conference Report	8
<i>Summary and Recommendations</i>	
<i>Possible Future Developments of ECDL</i>	
Conclusion and Recommendations	9
Annex A	10
<i>Summary and Recommendations</i>	



European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL)

BACKGROUND

During February 1999 the Curriculum Policy Development Officer of the Wales Youth Agency (WYA) met with Pete Bayley of the British Computer Society following an introduction to the benefits of the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) during a visit to a Youth Centre in the Vale of Glamorgan. It seemed that this European wide accredited qualification would give the Youth Service another useful dimension in meeting governmental targets for ICT training for any future work force. This initiative also coincided with a declaration by the National Assembly for Wales offering computers for educational purposes through the Capital Modernisation plan.

The New Opportunities Fund was also looking at applications and opportunities to fund local authorities and voluntary organisations to help meet government targets regarding local ICT plans and strategies. The National Grid for Learning and progression routes into further education for 'young people' and older people through the University for Industry (ufi) were also initiatives around at the same time. A joint project between the WYA, South-East Wales Open College Network (SEWOCN), YMCA Wales and the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) through their Millennium Volunteers programme, was also embarking on a feasibility study into the possibilities of a Cyber College for young people in Wales. The above was happening simultaneously and so it seemed an appropriate and opportune time to explore the merits of the **ECDL** programme.

ECDL

ECDL is a new **Europe-wide qualification**, which enables people to demonstrate their competence in computer skills. Its aims are: to raise the general level of competency in IT; to improve productivity at work; to enable employers to invest more efficiently in IT; and to ensure that the best practice and quality issues are understood and implemented.

How does it work?

The **ECDL** syllabus is designed to cover the key concepts of computing, its practical applications and their use in the workplace and society in general. It is broken down into seven modules, each of which must be passed before the **ECDL** certificate will be awarded. **ECDL** is open to anyone – regardless of age, education, experience or background.

The modules are:

- Basic concepts of information Technology
- Using the Computers and Managing Files
- Word Processing
- Spreadsheets
- Database
- Presentation
- Information and Communication

Candidates may take modules in any order and over a period of time – even at once – offering maximum flexibility. When all modules have been successfully completed, the logbook is exchanged for a certificate. Users may, if they wish, just walk in off the street and take the tests (45minutes). More likely, they will opt for courses provided using the **ECDL** syllabus – online and off-line or using an interactive CD.

What are the benefits?

.....for the individual?

***ECDL** is designed to help people at or out of work. It will confirm to potential employers that the person has a professionally recognised, relevant and up-to-date qualification and it will assist in raising familiarity with the technology and its uses.*

.....for the employer?

***ECDL** helps provide proof of competency in the computer skills of potential employees. Similarly, a company looking to train up its workforce will want to ensure that the money they spend on courses is going to be well spent.*

.....for the training provider?

Training providers are well aware of the importance of Information Systems to the world of work – and increasingly, to the individual in their day-to-day life. Indeed, many courses already incorporate significant elements of the teaching of basic and advanced computer skills – but there is no widely accepted qualification.

***ECDL** is now a European wide qualification that meets these needs – and more!*

Courses may take any form. Examples of day and evening classes, at colleges, training providers, youth work providers, schools and universities. To ensure even greater access to young people they will also have to be made available via distance learning and on day release or mainstream and/or informal education providers.

How are people tested?

Testing will be carried out at audited testing centres and hopefully at Youth work provider centres in the near future.

Why is ECDL so effective?

ECDL is not like any other qualification – although it utilises the positive aspects of the best.

It is set to become the most widely recognised qualification in the field of work-related computer use, partly because it is targeted at the full spectrum of the population, and partly because of the support and monitoring of the organisations behind it.

ISSUES

Initial progress

Following several meetings with Pete Bayley of the British Computer Society and the management team of the Wales Youth Agency regarding the way in which we should introduce the concept of **ECDL** within the Youth Service in Wales it was decided to take the following course of action: -

Carry out a pilot project involving local authorities youth services from North, South, and urban, rural, Welsh speaking areas of Wales and to include a voluntary organisation.

Day Conference

A day conference was held in Broneiron (Guides Cymru residential centre and HQ) on 11 May 1999.

In liaison with the chairperson of the Principal Youth Officers group, the following local authority youth services were, invited: -

- Conwy
- Monmouth
- Vale of Glamorgan
- Bridgend
- Wrexham
- Powys

Officers from Denbigh and Cardiff were also invited as they had declared an interest.

Boys' and Girls' Clubs of Wales attended from the voluntary youth sector organisation represented at this conference.

Each organisation was asked to bring along five members of staff ideally covering the following areas of IT delivery in their organisation.

- One policy making officer
- Two full time workers (one manager, one face to face worker, possibly Information Advice)
- Two part time workers/instructors who deliver IT training to young people

The programme for the day started with a summary of the background and history of **ECDL**. This was followed by a group exercise. There then followed a session on the practicalities of **ECDL** given by Pete Bayley who talked about the Log books, Setting up of Centres, British Computer Society Requirements and as to "how" the scheme operates. After lunch a practical exercise took place and followed with questions and answers and the various testing methods were explained.

The day ended up with a discussion and with a commitment from those present agreeing to support and pilot project to take place in Wales. There were reservations about implementation of the scheme however it was generally felt that it was an opportunity and initiative that should be pursued.

There was a request that there should be a further day where actual training could be given. The Agency officer agreed to this request and took the responsibility of organising such a day.

Partnership with the Tec's

During this process meetings with Lydsey Evans of South-East Wales TEC had been arranged. He negotiated with other TECs in Wales and agreed to fund the purchase of 60 Log Books at a cost of £25 per book for those organisations taking part in the pilot project.

Training Day

The training day took place at Builth Wells on the 7 July thanks to the hospitality of Powys County Council. Tom Charnley an independent consultant from Denbigh North Wales was commissioned and paid for by **ECDL** to deliver the training. Unfortunately only two people who had attended the initial meeting were present for the training. We were however joined by another Voluntary organisation namely Living Proof from Newport on the day as they had shown interest although were unable to attend the first meeting. Denbigh had indicated that they would prefer to deal with the trainer direct as he lived in their area.

Conwy requested more time as they had just appointed an IT specialist in their youth service department and wanted his involvement in such an initiative. They indicated interest and particularly wanted the opportunity to take up the offer of the allocated free logbooks.

Other organisations found that other priorities prevailed at that time although they were still interested in any further developments. The final conclusion at the training day was the opportunity for some revision of the tests and the opportunity to actually go for validation with those present and young people to now take some of the tests should be carried out as soon as possible.

The WYA officer agreed to arrange these sessions, which was planned to take place in September.

Further Revision Training Day and Tests

An afternoon of further training took place on the 24 September with tests taking place the following day 25 September.

Despite an attendance lower than was anticipated those that did (**13 in all**) completed **77** modules under test conditions. Since that time the results show that **Two people** (one young person and one adult) completed and passed all the modules gaining the certificate of the **ECDL**. Of the remaining 11 seven have only one module to complete the others have a number of modules to finish. At the time of writing this report some have already gone ahead with the further modules under test conditions and I understand have passed.

CYBER COLLEGE FEASIBILITY CONFERENCE AND REPORT

Summary and Recommendations

A summary and recommendations sheet is attached in **Annex A** to this report. Copies of the full report are available from the Wales Youth Agency at a cost of £5 plus post and packing.

During the developments of this pilot project a further initiative was taking place. This initiative involved a partnership arrangement with YMCA - Wales, The Wales Youth Agency, WCVA – Millennium Volunteers and South-East Wales Open College Network through the European Unions' Social Fund (ESF). Much of what took place at that conference considered the many and various methods for the delivery of new technology.

ECDL had a presence at the conference and participants were interested in the application of **ECDL** within their own programmes of work with young people. They were requesting updates on any future developments. It was also recognised that **ECDL** could have a significant impact with the Cyber College should the funding and development be successful.

Possible Future Developments of ECDL

The Curriculum Policy Development Officer had a further meeting with Pete Bayley on the 1st December to evaluate progress on the pilot and to explore a range of issues as follows:-

- Welsh versions of the Logbooks
- Registration – record of young people from Wales
- Accreditation and Assessment Centres based at Youth Service establishments
- Links with other providers in other, or even the same departments as that of the Youth Service

Our deliberations are included in the recommendations and conclusions paragraphs.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the pilot project has had limited but nevertheless positive results. Some authorities have found it difficult to commit themselves to the scheme because of the many demands and other priorities prevailing at this time. However, although there are other activities given a greater priority, generally speaking most of those authorities that agreed to take the scheme forward would still like to see this initiative developed further. It may well be that some authorities/organisations are in a better position to embrace the programme sooner rather than later.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Negotiate and seek funding to accredit two youth service providers as testing centres.**
2. **Explore and seek costing for bilingual logbooks.**
3. **Meet with those authorities involved with the pilot project to evaluate progress and need for further support if necessary.**
4. **Consider how best to record outcomes and indicators of young people using youth services or youth service staff in terms of taking part in the ECDL scheme.**
5. **Meet with Principal Officers and CWYVS Executive to consider their views regarding future developments.**

*Barry Doughty
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Wales Youth Agency
December 2000*

YOUTH COLLEGE PARTNERSHIP FEASIBILITY STUDY February-June 2000

Summary and Recommendations

- The Youth College Partnership Feasibility Study is a partnership between the YMCA-Wales, the Wales Youth Agency, South East Wales Open College Network, Millennium Volunteers and the European Social Fund.
- The purpose of the Feasibility Study was to identify the potential for the development of a Cyber College in Wales for 'disengaged' young people (14-25) and to make recommendations for its future development.
- Processes within the Feasibility Study included:
 - An audit provision for disengaged young people
 - Identification of learner requirements including training, skills and aspirations
 - Individual support needed
 - Identification of existing provision to meet learner requirements
 - Identification of gaps in provision
 - Identification of provider requirements for the Cyber College
 - The development of a Web Site model
 - The development of a framework of principles and purposes within the Cyber College
 - Identification of future collaboration, development and funding opportunities
- A variety of research methodology was used within the Feasibility Study.
- The national provision for 'disengaged' young people is patchy and inconsistent in its nature.
- Opportunities exist for the enhanced planning and delivery of education and training opportunities for young people in the target group.
- The development of a Cyber College has been identified as being able to make a realistic, appropriate and valuable contribution to the levels and pattern of provisions across Wales for 'disengaged' young people.
- Significant numbers of the target group possess negative experiences of education. These experiences have reduced the likelihood of young people.
- Continuing with training and education.
- Many young people within the target group prefer to learn in local venues which are accessible, user friendly and stimulating.
- Scientific, technical and practical occupations are the dominant career choices within the target group.

- A variety of both practical and individual support is needed by the target group.
- The Cyber College will be developed through structures, which encourage partnerships and relationships between learners, providers, hosts, mentors and assessors. A policy and Strategy group will be developed to inform this process.
- A user friendly Web Site will be developed and managed according to the needs of the Cyber College and its beneficiaries. A model of this Web Site has been developed within the processes of the Feasibility Study.
- A wide interest from within service sectors has been expressed in the future use and development of the Cyber College.
- The priority future development needs of the Cyber College are:
 - The formation of a member network
 - Identification of training needs
 - The development of quality assurance systems
 - The development of learning materials
 - The development of assessment procedures
 - The formation of a Policy & Strategy Group
 - The development of a Community Grid for learning
 - Negotiation and discussion with current providers of Online Learning to identify future alliances and collaboration
 - The undertaking of political processes to achieve wide ranging support for the Cyber College.