



CoastWEB: Exploring intangible values associated with saltmarshes

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Introducing the CoastWEB Project

- Coastal areas are facing increasing pressure due to human activity and the effects of climate change.
 - This can harm habitat capacity to provide various benefits and services in the future.
 - There is a need for better understanding of what coastal habitats do for us in order to protect them
 - The CoastWEB project aims to appreciate the contribution that coastal habitats make to human health and wellbeing, whilst also focusing on mitigating natural hazards
 - The research is ambitious in its interdisciplinary scope, including art, social and environmental psychology, environmental economics, governance, policy, a suite of natural sciences, and non-academic stakeholders.



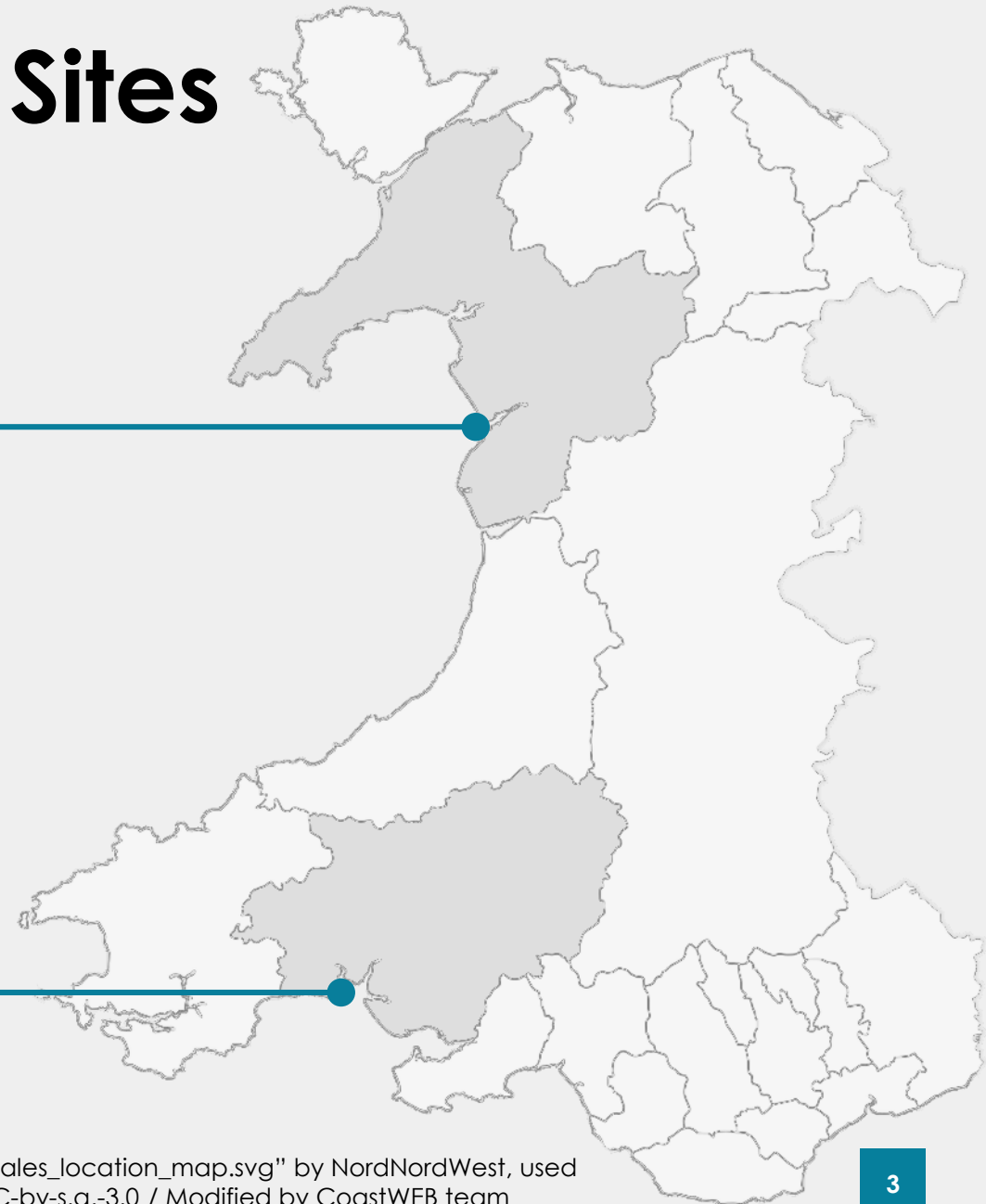
Case Study Sites



Mawddach
(Gwynedd)



Taf
(Carms)

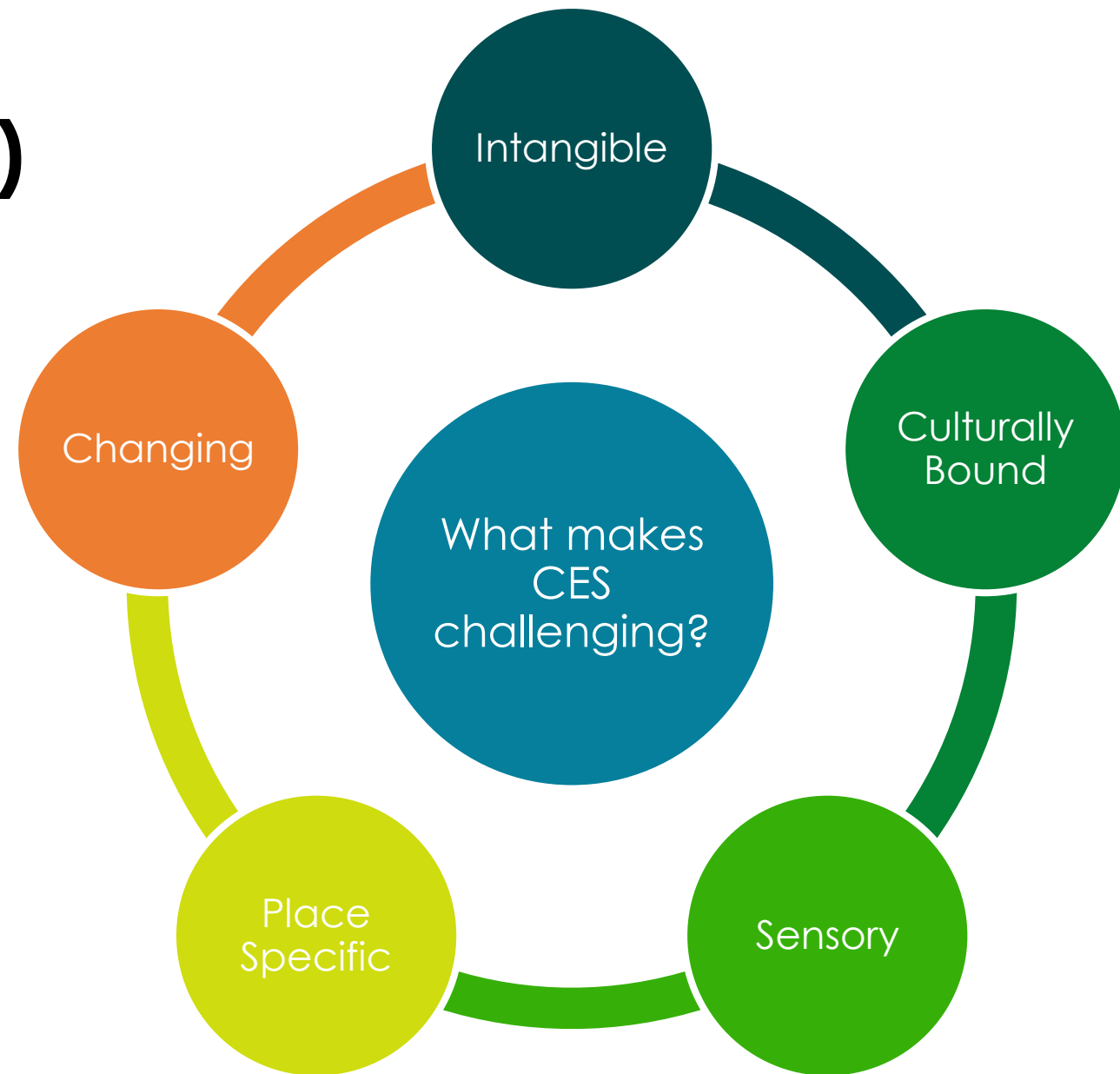




Study Design: Combined Methods

Challenges of cultural ecosystem services (CES)

- Ecosystem services, including CES (e.g. spiritual, aesthetic, recreational and educational) contribute to human wellbeing (including health, good social relations)
- CES are challenging...
- However, if appropriate methods are used, these factors can all be taken into account
- We designed a mixed-methods approach to explore CES, which embraces these challenges



Approach

Semi-structured interview

Mobile
interview

Pre-
interview

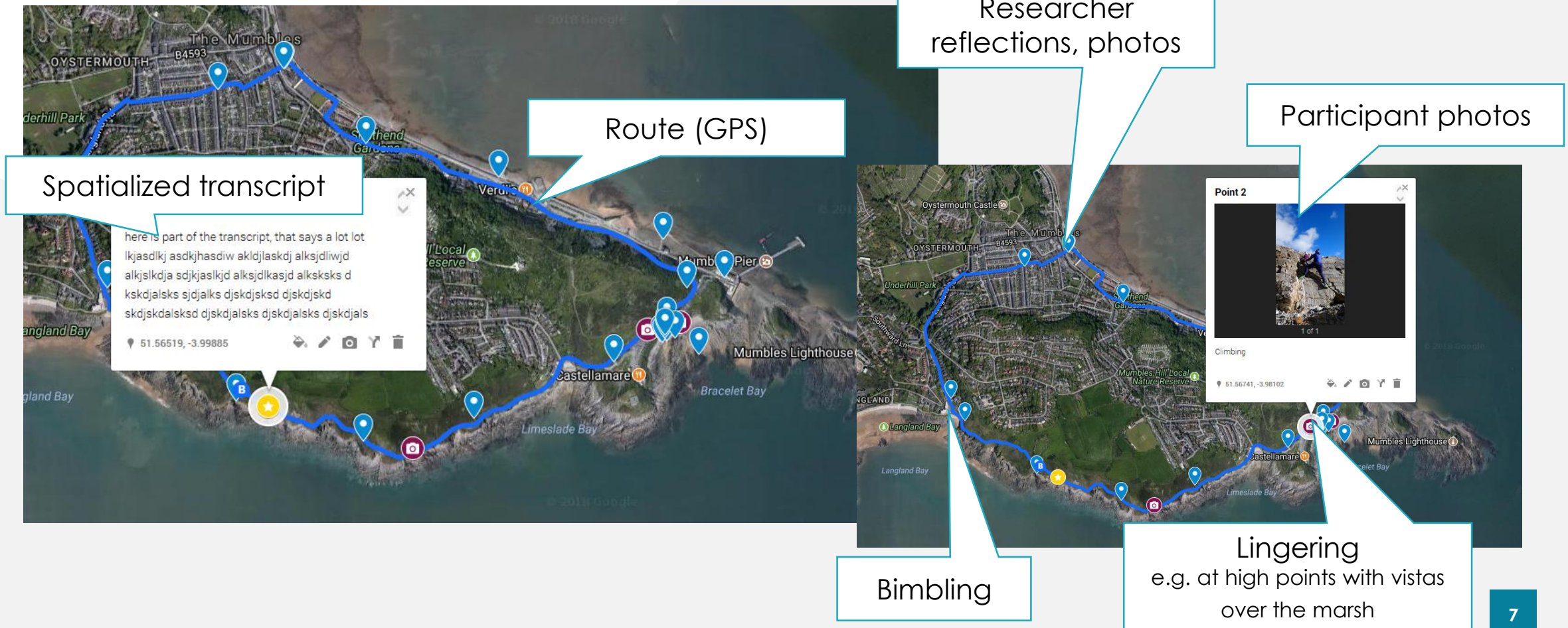
Participant Photo taking / collecting

Photo task | Map task | Word task

Sit-down
interview

Analysis

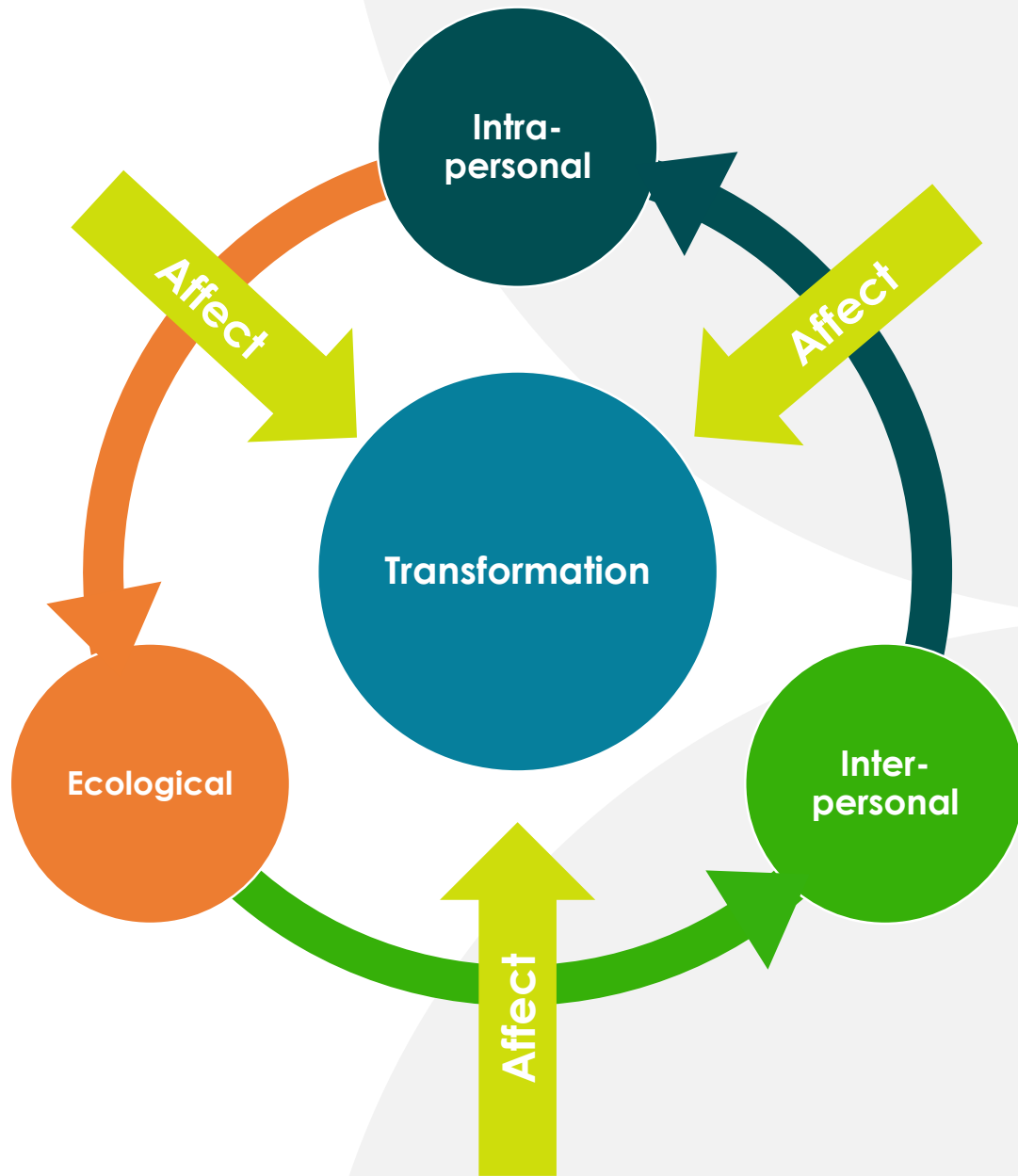
- Grounded thematic analyses of narrative data
- Spatial transcripts / multi-layer geo-narratives





Emerging Insights

Encountering Saltmarshes



- Like the wider coastline, saltmarshes are **liminal landscapes/ecosystems**.
Betwixt & between - Turner (1979); Coasts & wetlands - Andrews & Roberts (2012)

Familiar | Unfamiliar
Land | Sea

- Understanding wellbeing in natural landscapes
 - **The Liminal Loop; liminality, the liminoid & transformation** [Crowther (2018; 185-188)]

Contradictory

intangibles

“ There’s nothing really to do here. I wouldn’t [come to the saltmarsh alone], why would you? In my opinion [laughs]. **It’s not something I necessarily appreciate, just something that’s there.** It’s always there and **as long as it’s not sort of artificially removed, then that’s fine.** ”

(dis)Liking is not always
valuing

“ ... I'd say with climate change, there's kind of a risk of things changing and habitats like [saltmarshes] disappearing [...] I'd say that was a risk. So it's not only a loss then, in terms of a sea defense, but then also a loss of a habitat, which is really important and kind of wildlife risk - for environment - and somewhere that's beautiful for people to visit and appreciate. ”

[Lilly, 20s, Mawddach]

“ I guess because [the saltmarsh]'s near the sea, and how **coastal habitats are like really transient**, they're always changing. And, you know, things are **adapting to**, I don't know, sea level rise or like with the way that sediment is carried around the coast and stuff. **So I'd consider it more of like somewhere a bit delicate**, and saying before about how sometimes [saltmarsh] can be like used for agriculture. So I don't know if it's like worry about over-grazing or anything like that. **And with climate change, that's another reason why I'd imagine that it's quite delicate** because we were saying before about how things might change around [the] Fairbourne area, and what the future is for the saltmarshes around there. **It seems quite uncertain.** ”

Saltmarshes, global ecological risk & human wellbeing

... continued...



“ You see here, there's polystyrene bits down here, there's plastic pollution all in here, and this is right next to a stream that washes out. You've got livestock over there and this is tidal so all of this, eventually, will go out and in, and this is the kind of stuff that really concerns me because not only is it concerning for wildlife and the look of the place but it's now in our food chain and, you know, I'm a mum of three. That really bothers me. REALLY bothers me. ”

Conclusions

- Fleeting moments of knowing, as generated by our methodology, enables engagement with issues of ecological risk (including to people) more successfully than through otherwise direct questioning.
- Knowing through intense engagement with saltmarshes enables connections with global environmental risk in more relatable ways than distant icons of climate change (e.g. polar bears) in a narrative that is locally embedded.
- The narratives of loss present in our analysis demonstrates the intrinsic value of marshes through contradictory intangibles, which challenge unreflexive focus on 'preferences' as well as discussions relating to the 'need' for coastal defence.



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Diolch | Thank you

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