

P-05-996 To call on the Welsh Government not to remove, damage or destroy any historical symbols in Wales

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 15 Medi 2020
Petitions Committee | 15 September 2020

Reference: RS20/13469

Petition Number: P-05-996

Petition title: To call on the Welsh Government not to remove, damage or destroy any historical symbols in Wales

Text of petition: The recent Black Lives Matter protests have resulted in the Welsh Government reassessing the appropriateness of statues, public buildings and street names which have links to slavery.

We believe that no public authority should remove, damage or destroy any of them.

1. Background

In June 2020, during the Black Lives Matter protests, a crowd toppled a statue of slave trader Edward Colston, leading to a public debate about the appropriateness of historical acts of remembrance.



For instance, Cardiff Council has since voted to remove a statue of Thomas Picton from City Hall. The statue will be covered up whilst the Council seeks permission from Cadw to remove it. Picton was the highest ranking general to die at Waterloo, and was convicted of authorising the torture of a teenage girl whilst he was Governor of Trinidad. In Carmarthenshire, Councillors plan to address racism by reviewing monuments and street names, including an obelisk to Thomas Picton, in Carmarthen.

2. Welsh Government action

On 18 June the Senedd's Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee wrote to the Welsh Government calling for "an inventory of statues in public spaces" to enable "an open discussion about the way historical figures are remembered in Wales' significant public spaces". It said that:

The Committee is interested in establishing some guiding principles for public bodies on how to make balanced judgements when deciding whether it is appropriate to continue displaying certain figures.

On 6 July the Welsh Government announced it had commissioned an audit of statues, street and building names to address Wales' connections with the slave trade, led by Gaynor Legall. An external group of young people and communities will be consulted about the findings before the Welsh Government considers its next steps in this area.

3. Welsh Parliament action

In August 2020 the Senedd's Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee launched an inquiry looking into Who gets remembered in public spaces?

The Committee is not looking at the rights and wrongs of individual instances, such as statues or street names. Instead, it is looking for views on what principles should be used to decide who is commemorated, and what process should be followed if people want individual instances to be removed or changed.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that

Title:

these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.