

Written response by the Welsh Government to the report of the former Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee of the Senedd entitled: 'Set in Stone? A report on who gets remembered in public spaces'

November 2021

I would like to thank the Chair and members of the former Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee for its considered report and recommendations. I agree with the Committee conclusions that more needs to be done to raise awareness of our history, including some of the more difficult and painful legacies of the past. The intention of the audit led by Gaynor Legall, 'The Slave Trade and the British Empire: An Audit of Commemoration in Wales' was to identify public monuments, street and building names in Wales associated with the slave trade and the British Empire. The draft goals and action plan for the Race Equality Action Plan make specific reference to address the findings of the Legall Audit and this is now a commitment within the Programme for Government.

I also agree with the conclusion of the Committee that local communities should have the final say on acts of commemoration in their area and that steps should be taken to facilitate this including through the development of new guidance.

Detailed responses to the report's recommendations are set out below.

Recommendation 1

The Welsh Government should publicise the work of the Legall Audit of Commemoration through a programme of community engagement and public awareness-raising.

Accept / Accept in principle / Reject

The report received – and continues to receive – extensive media coverage in both UK and Welsh national press.

The full Audit report has been published on the Welsh Government website. Cadw is also preparing a dedicated page on its website that will host both the Audit and other information relating to the history associated with Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups in Wales.

Cadw has published an article in Heritage in Wales – that was distributed to its 40,000 members – drawing attention to the audit and summarising its findings. Cadw will continue to explore further ways of publicising the work of the audit through community engagement and public awareness-raising. Awareness of the audit was frequently raised during the preparation and engagement with the culture and heritage section of the Race Equality Action Plan.

There will be extensive community engagement, with workshops planned, during the preparation of proposed new guidance on public commemoration.

Financial implications

None - part of existing Cadw budget.

Recommendation 2

The Welsh Government should leave ultimate authority for decisions relating to contentious statues, monuments or commemorations with local authorities and communities. However, there are some important processes and principles which should apply and which the Welsh Government should provide leadership and guidance to local authorities and other public bodies on, which are set out below.

Accept / Accept in principle / Reject

The Welsh Government accepts that, in the majority of cases, ultimate authority for decisions relating to contentious statues, monuments or commemorations rests with local authorities and communities. It is also recognised that Welsh Government should provide guidance to support this decision making process.

Financial implications

None – part of normal local government decision making process

Recommendation 3

The Welsh Government should create a comprehensive “one stop shop” guidance document for local authorities and public bodies relating to acts of commemoration in Wales. The guidance should include:

- advice on best practice for consulting local communities;
- advice on participative methods for engaging ‘harder to reach’ and minority groups;
- advice on involving specialist opinion, including local historians.

Accept / Accept in principle / Reject

Welsh Government agrees that there is a need to prepare guidance to support how local authorities and public bodies deal with public acts of commemoration. It is suggested that this is divided into two distinct parts:

Part 1 – to guide and support decisions relating to historical acts of commemoration.
Part 2 – to guide and support decisions relating to future acts of commemoration – in part to redress the imbalance that is currently evident in existing public commemorations.

The preparation of the guidance will be led by a small team, drawn from a number of government divisions.

Financial implications

The preparation of the guidance will be relatively modest and will be met from existing budgets.

Recommendation 4

The Welsh Government should agree criteria for inclusion in the guidance document which can be used as a “diagnostic checklist” by local authorities and relevant public

bodies in determining whether to consult on relocation or greater contextualisation of a statue or commemoration. This checklist of criteria should adapt existing examples of good practice and should include:

- Whether the person is of historical significance
- Whether the person has had a national impact or a significant positive impact on his or her field
- How was this person viewed at the time and how are they viewed today? Do they provide a good example to people?
- How is this person viewed across communities – including minority communities and groups?
- Has this person made a contribution to the well-being and happiness of the public?

Accept / Accept in principle / Reject

The proposed Welsh Government guidance will consider any criteria that might be needed when assessing or evaluating potential contentious historical commemorations. The intention is to engage with relevant stakeholder groups during the development of any such criteria.

Financial implications

Funding for the proposed Welsh Government guidance will be drawn from existing budgets.

Recommendation 5

In instances where contentious statues have been identified: local authorities and public bodies should engage local communities, experts, and historians to agree greater provision of information and contextualisation. The Welsh Government should set out a clear policy position with regard to this.

Accept / Accept in principle / Reject

The proposed Welsh Government guidance will stress the need for extensive consultation when considering contentious statues, including with communities and with experts. The guidance will set out the Welsh Government policy context with regards to this.

Financial implications

Funding for the proposed Welsh Government guidance will be drawn from existing budgets.

Recommendation 6

The Welsh Government should set out in its response to this report what assessment it has made of the financial implications of removing statues (in instances where local communities have earmarked a statue for removal) and how it will work with local authorities and heritage bodies to ensure they have the resources they need to undertake further work in this area.

Accept / **Accept in principle** / Reject

The financial implications and potential sources of financial support – for example re-interpretation, re-location – will be considered as part of the proposed Welsh Government guidance. It is likely that this might be complex and will be dependent on individual circumstances. For example costs might include engaging with local communities, dismantling, storing and finding a new home for a statue.

Financial implications

There will be financial implication for any proposal to remove a statue. However, any assessment of the financial implications would have to be framed in very broad terms given the unknown nature of any potential future proposals. For example it would depend on the nature and size of the statue that is being proposed for removal and the plans for its future storage or contextualised display.

Recommendation 7

The Welsh Government should work in partnership with local authorities, charities, and the heritage sector to identify ways in which the current under-representation of particular groups can be addressed with a view to commissioning new statues or commemorative art works in Wales.

Accept / Accept in principle / Reject

A partnership of this kind, to identify ways in which the current under-representation of particular groups can be addressed, would appear to be entirely appropriate. The Legall Audit highlighted the under-representation of such groups. The proposed Welsh Government guidance will consider how this might be achieved by local government and public body decision makers. The new monument to Betty Campbell in central Cardiff provides a good, successful example of such a partnership.

Financial implications

The financial implications of addressing these issues will need to be considered as part of the proposed Welsh Government guidance.

Recommendation 8

The Welsh Government should work in partnership with local authorities, charities, and the heritage sector to identify suitable locations for future statues or commemorative art works of national significance in Wales to tackle the under-representation identified in this report.

Accept / Accept in principle / Reject

A partnership of this kind, to identify suitable locations for any such future commemorative structures or works, would appear to be entirely appropriate. The principles to consider will form part of the proposed Welsh Government guidance.

Financial implications

There will be financial implications for any proposal to commission new statues or commemorative art works in Wales. However, any assessment of the financial

implications would have to be framed in very broad terms in the proposed Welsh Government guidance given the unknown nature of any potential future proposals.

Recommendation 9

The Welsh Government should work in partnership with local authorities, charities, and the heritage sector to create a new, national plaque scheme of public commemoration in line with the principles and criteria outlined in this report.

Accept / Accept in principle / Reject

We are sympathetic to the idea of a national plaque scheme. However, careful thought would need to be given as to how this could be implemented in practice. For example, the majority of existing plaque schemes are run and managed at a local level, and we would not want to over-ride the importance of local decision making around commemoration. There is also a national purple plaque scheme already in place for commemorating the contribution of women to Welsh society. The introduction of a further national scheme, in addition to these existing schemes, will not be simple and it will also be important to consider approaches taken elsewhere in the United Kingdom. A more detailed appraisal of options will need to be undertaken.

Financial implications

There will be financial implications for establishing plaque schemes of this kind and this will need to be considered as part of the options appraisal proposed above.