

# Natural History GCSE

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 17 Tachwedd 2020  
Petitions Committee | 17 November 2020

Reference: RS20/14409

**Petition Number:** P-05-1044

**Petition title:** Set up a Natural History GCSE to help prepare future generations to tackle the threats facing nature

**Text of petition:** Our natural world has never faced so many man made challenges and threats. The creation of a Welsh Natural History GCSE is now needed more than ever before. We must give future generations the skills and knowledge, which would enable them to tackle many of these global issues.

Re-engagement with the natural world must become a priority of the Welsh Government. Wales could lead the way in preparing our children with the tools needed to tackle the climate emergency and species extinction crises.

The call for a Natural History GCSE was first led by Mary Colwell who believed that currently young people in the UK do not engage with nature enough and this impacts on both conservation and wellbeing.

The iconic State of Nature report was a wake up call to everyone that we cannot continue with business as usual. It gave us a stark warning that since 1970 the UK had lost 60% of its wildlife and that Britain was one of the most nature depleted countries in the world.

We must teach young people about the global threats of an expanding population; pesticide and herbicide use; land, water and air pollution; the climate emergency; soil loss; intensive farming vs Organic farming; habitat



loss; invasive species; species extinction and biodiversity loss; over fishing; single use plastics; deforestation and so, so much more.

We must teach that our lives today and tomorrow are entwined with having a vibrant, abundant and healthy natural world.

## 1. New curriculum and qualifications

Subject to the passing of the [Curriculum and Assessment \(Wales\) Bill](#), the new age 3-16 Curriculum for Wales will be introduced in all maintained schools and publicly funded nursery settings from September 2022 on a phased basis.

The Bill was introduced to the Senedd on 6 July 2020 and sets out the four purposes for the new curriculum:

- To enable pupils and children to develop as ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives;
- To enable pupils and children to develop as enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work;
- To enable pupils and children to develop as ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world;
- To enable pupils and children to develop as healthy, confident individuals, ready to live fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

The regulator, [Qualifications Wales](#) is currently considering how qualifications for 16 year olds will align with the requirements of the new curriculum. It has recommended [retaining GCSEs](#) and to update the content and assessment of individual GCSEs to meet future needs. The next phase of its consultation will consider the main qualifications that should be available for 16-year-olds to study from 2025 and the design principles for GCSEs in Wales. It will be [consulting on proposals early in 2021](#) and plan to confirm which qualifications are required later in 2021.

## 2. Position in England

In 2017, a petition in the House of Commons calling for a Natural History GCSE gathered over 10,000 signatures. The UK Government's response was that there are existing opportunities in the curriculum to study natural history and that schools need time to adjust to the recent qualifications reforms. They said that there were no plans to introduce new GCSE subjects. That petition's organiser later approached the examination board, OCR who has since begun developing a GCSE in Natural History.

Between June and July 2020, **OCR undertook a consultation** on what a Natural History GCSE should look like. Any new GCSE needs approval from the Department for Education and Ofqual, the regulatory body in England

A recognised awarding body can apply to have qualifications approved or designated in Wales. The awarding body must create and submit a qualification on the Qualifications in Wales (QiW) [database](#). If an awarding body submits an application for the approval of a qualification that is on the Priority Qualifications List, then Qualifications Wales must consider that application. Qualifications on the list will only be approved if they meet the published approval criteria. Qualifications Wales will consider qualifications that are not on the Priority Qualifications List if there are published approval criteria. However the approval of qualifications that are on the Priority Qualifications List will be of higher priority. If an appropriately recognised awarding body submits an application for the approval of a qualification not on the Priority Qualifications List, it will only be approved if it meets the published approval criteria.

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