



Eich cyf/Your ref: P-05-819
Ein cyf/Our ref: DET/00323/18

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Dear David,

Thank you for your letter of 24 April seeking my views on the issues raised by the petition of Dr Dafydd Williams on historic Welsh place names.

Wales' historic place names are integral elements of our communities and countryside and provide precious evidence about linguistic, social and cultural changes that have shaped our nation. The widespread recognition of the importance of this rich legacy was reflected in the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016, which gave Wales the first statutory list of historic place names in the United Kingdom.

The Welsh Ministers entrusted the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales with the responsibility for creating and maintaining the List of Historic Place Names of Wales (<https://historicplacenames.rcahmw.gov.uk/>). It was launched in May 2017 and is freely available online, through the Welsh historic environment records and as a dataset for local authorities and other public bodies.

The list already contains 350,000 entries and includes the names of topographical features, communities, roads, structures, fields and any other elements of the Welsh landscape that can be identified and mapped in sources that predate the First World War. The list offers map and text searches and records variant forms of names, illustrating the fascinating interplay between linguistic and social changes in Wales over time. It will continue to grow as new sources are added and research identifies further names.

The Royal Commission employs a full-time curator to enhance the list, deal with enquiries and raise awareness of the importance of our historic place names. By educating private

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

individuals and public decision makers about the value of these crucial elements of the historic environment, the list will help to safeguard historic place names for the future by encouraging their continued use in daily life.

Statutory guidance requires local and National Park authorities and Natural Resources Wales to take account of the list when their functions involve naming or renaming places. This includes the naming or renaming of streets, properties and other places, either directly or by another party. The intention is that the operation of the list and the statutory guidance together will lead to a reduction in the number of formal changes to historic property names. It will also encourage the use of historic names for new developments. The curator of the list has already assisted a local authority in finding suitable historic Welsh names for a new housing development and is in the process of contacting major developers to make them aware that he can help them to use the list and other sources to identify appropriate historic names.


During 2018, further best-practice guidance on historic place names in Wales will be developed. This will highlight the importance of place names in the cultural, social and linguistic history of our nation and provide further guidance for owners, developers and local authorities on what the list of historic place names has to offer and how it can be used effectively.

However, these measures stop short of providing formal protection for historic place names. Detailed consideration was given to providing statutory protection for historic place names during the development of the 2016 Act, when a number of representations similar to the current petition were made. However a number of significant issues, including enforcement, potential additional burdens on local authorities and human rights, militated against it.

In closing, I should note that as part of its recent inquiry into the historic environment, the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee considered the List of Historic Place Names of Wales. It stated that the Welsh Government should keep the matter under 'active review and should be willing to introduce further protection for historic place names if the current list does not prove effective'.

We have already made a commitment to review the effectiveness of the List of Historic Place Names of Wales and the associated non-statutory measures in encouraging the retention of historic place names. My officials at Cadw are liaising with local authority street naming and numbering officers to establish mechanisms for the regular collection of data on the use of the list in the naming and renaming of properties in accordance with the statutory guidance. It is expected that it will take a least four or five years to collect sufficient evidence to evaluate the impact of these measures.

Yours sincerely



Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas AC/AM
Y Gweinidog Diwylliant, Twristiaeth a Chwaraeon
Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport