

Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas AC/AM
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Diwylliant, Chwaraeon a Thwristiaeth
Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-05-883
Ein cyf/Our ref DET/05405/19

Janet Finch-Saunders AM
Chair – Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

SeneddPetitions@Assembly.Wales

21 May 2019

Dear Janet,

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to comment on this petition calling on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to establish a National Welsh History Week.

I have read the petition text very carefully and whilst a National Welsh History Week could be beneficial to promote Welsh History, and in turn the Welsh Language, I believe there are already measures in place to support these aims set out in the petition. Taking the points of the petition in turn:

The aim is to create and promote a celebratory and historically accurate week of learning and educational opportunities about the history of Wales that is more honest than the sanitised British history that many of us took from school and does not seek to bias the information to offer a favourable view of any party.

It is important that all learners in Wales have the opportunity to learn about our nation's history. Welsh history is a prominent part of the Programme of Study for History at Key Stages 2 and 3 in our schools. Learners are able to consider the local, national and global perspective of historical events, and develop their historical skills, knowledge and understanding through learning about a range of historical contexts.

Specifically, at Key Stage 2 there are opportunities for schools to study Owain Glyndwr and The Age of Princes, and at Key Stage 3, there are opportunities for learners to study

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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.

how the Normans affected Wales and Britain between 1000 and 1500, the change and conflict in Wales and, Britain between 1500 and 1760 and other events that have shaped Wales.

At Key Stage 4, a new History GCSE was introduced in September 2017. This was a significant change and has increased the focus on Welsh History at Secondary level. The new GCSE has been adapted to include a more in depth focus on Welsh History and the Welsh perspective in a wider historical context. It requires candidates to make reference to the impact of historical change on Wales or on a Welsh perspective.

There is a wealth of materials to support the teaching of Welsh history across the key stages, available on Hwb, the national digital learning platform for schools in Wales.

My further thoughts are around how others in the teaching profession in Wales would feel if we were to say that current Welsh history teachers and lecturers represent a biased and sanitised view of Welsh History? I am not convinced that this is the case and to support such a claim would put me at odds with Welsh Government Education policy.

There have been previous initiatives to develop the idea of a Wales history festival. Between 2009 and 2014, History Research Wales –a collaboration between a number of university departments – established a Wales History Month. One the key outputs was the annual publication by the Western Mail of a series of articles on Welsh historical themes beginning with 'Myths and Realities in Welsh History'. Cadw also contributed shorter articles to these series. Supporting events were held at the Hay Festival with daily talks and lectures, while Cadw also contributed displays and activities.

Cadw has also led on the development of a pan-Wales interpretation plan with the intention of joining up and celebrating the many and varied facets of our history in an authentic and collaborative way. The many strands of this Interpretation Plan are available on the Cadw website and they have been used to inform the interpretation at sites run by Cadw and many other organisations across Wales. Cadw currently organises – and participates in – a wide range of learning activities which promote Welsh history and we have supported a children's history festival since its inception.

With specific reference to:

Through understanding our actual history, promote the importance of Welsh language and culture, its place within modern Britain, and bring about discussion on how we should seek for it to be perceived not only within Wales, but within the other countries of the British isles and the wider world.

Additional Information:

Many people in Wales grow up with inaccurate assumptions and ideas of how Wales came to be, and of 'races' within the British Isles.

A more complete understanding of who we are and how we arrived where we are today can better place us as a population to consider where we want to be in the future.

The Welsh Language is part of a rich tapestry of languages that have developed, co-existed and evolved throughout history. It lives side by side with a global language, and continues to contribute to the contemporary culture of the UK, Europe and the world. Understanding the importance of the language and Wales's history means that people respect it, feel an emotional commitment to it, and therefore want to see it continue and thrive, regardless of whether or not they speak it.

As we grow the numbers of Welsh speakers, and as we welcome people from across the world to Wales, further opportunities present themselves to promote the use of Welsh in new and increasingly diverse cultural contexts.

Our aim is to build a contemporary, engaging nation brand that promotes Wales on a UK and international stage, while also inspiring the people of Wales to venture forward with confidence. This includes providing our citizens and visitors alike with an inherently Welsh welcome which provides a sense of place, and showcases us a bilingual nation. Continuing to support and promote the language means broadening our horizons and looking out towards the world, and recognising that everyday life for very many people across the world involves more than one language.

Whilst on the face of it a National Welsh History Week would have its benefits, my main concern would be who would decide what was the “correct” version of history? I am also aware that the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee is currently scrutinizing the teaching of Welsh History, culture and heritage in schools and the outcome of that inquiry should also be taken into account.

It is of course open to those promoting this to move ahead with this idea themselves. They could look at existing initiatives, such as Black History Month, which have come from the grass roots and have grown over the years. Similarly, the impetus for our existing festivals in the museums and heritage sector have come from the sector itself.

Furthermore I am aware of other initiatives that overlap with the concept of a history week/festival. For example, Wales (facilitated by Cadw) continues to participate in the European-wide Open Doors festival held every September. This aims to encourage free visits to the many historic attractions across Wales – many of which are normally closed to the public. This provides a unique opportunity to understand the full extent and range of historic stories across Wales. Cadw and other Welsh heritage organisations also regularly contribute to the annual Festival of Archaeology organised by the Council for British Archaeology.

If a National Welsh History Week were to happen, then it would be best for it to be done as a positive celebration of Welsh History and Culture, and of Wales’s contribution to the wider world, for example, our prominent role in the Industrial Revolution. I would certainly avoid couching it in the more negative terms of the wording of this petition. However, to be successful such an idea would need to be widely adopted by the sector and would need to be based on consultation and collaboration with stakeholders.

Yours sincerely,



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