

## National Welsh History Week

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 11 Mehefin 2019

Petitions Committee | 11 June 2019

### Research Briefing:

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**Petition number:** P-05-883

**Petition title:** National Welsh History Week

**Text of petition:** We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to establish a National Welsh History Week.

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.

To challenge the stereotypical and inaccurate historical fantasies of Wales and how it came to be within the hierarchy of modern day Britain.

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.

Many people in Wales (myself included) 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.

#### 1. New curriculum

In his letter to the Committee, the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism outlines the opportunities to learn about the history of Wales that are in the current curriculum, through Programme of Study for History. The Welsh Government [published the draft new curriculum on 30 April 2019](#). The statutory introduction of the new curriculum will be in September 2022.

Learning in the new curriculum will be organised in six ‘Areas of Learning and Experience’ (AoLEs) rather than narrow subject boundaries. Within these, statements of ‘what matters’ set out the most important knowledge, skills and experiences to be gained. The six AoLEs are:

- Expressive Arts
- Health and Well-being
- Humanities
- Languages, Literacy and Communication
- Mathematics and Numeracy
- Science and Technology.

History will fall mainly within the **Humanities AoLE**.

The new curriculum will be organised into **Progression Steps** at ages 5, 8, 11, 14 and 16 (rather than key stages) and take the form of **Achievement Outcomes** relating broadly to expectations at those ages. The progression steps are set out in terms of what a learner can do, or has done.

The new Curriculum for Wales is **purpose-driven rather than content-driven**. There are therefore **no ‘programmes of study’** as there are in the current curriculum and there will be comparatively less prescription of what must be taught. The statutory guidance on each AoLE sets out what schools should take into account in designing their curriculum and how it could be structured and the broad expectations for learners at each progression step.

As well as the six AoLEs, the new curriculum has and three cross-curricular responsibilities (literacy, numeracy and digital competence) and also cross cutting-elements, including the ‘Welsh dimension and international perspective’. The draft guidance states that:

The Welsh dimension and international perspective are integral to all disciplines within the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience. An exploration of Welsh businesses, cultures, history, geography, politics, religions, societies, and world views should form a central part of a learners’ entitlement and include an understanding of the links between these and wider national, European and international contexts. Through Humanities, learners develop a sense of identity and of their own cynefin [habitat], as well as an understanding of Wales and its place in the wider world

## 2. Areas of Learning and Experience

The draft **Humanities AoLE** defines humanities as being all about asking questions about the human condition. It states:

As such, studying human experiences in the past and present, at local, national and global levels, will help learners answer those questions, encouraging them to contribute to their communities, imagine possible futures and benefit from a sense of belonging. Humanities encompasses geography, history, religious education, business studies and social studies. It is intended that Humanities will provide opportunities for all learners to learn about their heritage and sense of place through a study of their cynefin and of Wales. It will aim to promote an understanding of how the people of Wales, its communities, culture, landscape, resources and industries interrelate with the rest of the world.

There are five elements within the Humanities what matters statements, the one that would seem most relevant to the Petition is ‘Developing an enquiring mind enables learners to explore and investigate the world, past, present and future, for themselves’. This states that, at progression step 3 (and onwards), learners should about the history and diversity of the communities of which they are part.

The **Languages, Literacy and Communication** AoLE states that learning about identity and culture through languages prepares learners to be citizens of Wales and the world. It says:

Meaningful learning experiences in a multilingual context go hand in hand with learning about one’s own cultural identity as well as the cultural identities of others. This area of learning and experience will therefore foster in the learners a pride in their sense of identity as citizens of Wales and the world.

### 3. Assembly activity

#### Previous Petitions

Between February and November 2018, the Committee considered a petition, [Change the National Curriculum and teach Welsh history, from a Welsh perspective, in our Primary, Secondary and Sixth form Schools](#). The Committee heard oral evidence from the petitioner, Elfed Wyn Jones, Dr Elin Jones and Kirsty Williams, Minister for Education.

The Culture, Welsh Language and Communications (CWLC) Committee ran a public poll during summer 2018, inviting members of the public to select from a list of potential inquiry topics. Nearly 2,500 people participated in the poll. Forty-four per cent voted for ‘Teaching of Welsh history, culture and heritage in schools’. The Petitions Committee therefore agreed to pass the evidence that it had received to CWLC Committee and close the petition.

CWLC Committee’s inquiry, Knowing our History is underway. The Committee [held a symposium in February 2019](#) to gather evidence from stakeholders and will take further evidence later this year.

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