

Y Gwir Anrh/Rt Hon Mark Drakeford AS/MS
Prif Weinidog Cymru/First Minister of Wales

Dawn Bowden AS/MS
Dirprwy Weinidog y Celfyddydau, Chwaraeon a Thwristiaeth
Deputy Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Delyth Jewell AS/MS
Chair
Culture, Communications, Welsh Language,
Sport, and International Relations Committee

6 March 2024

Dear Delyth,

I am writing in response to your letter dated 9 February regarding the UK Government's plans to ratify the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

The Welsh Government welcomes the UK Government's proposal to ratify the UNESCO 2003 Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and the launch of a public consultation on the initial stages of implementation.

This is an opportunity to raise awareness and the profile of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in Wales for the benefit of current and future generations and to showcase the diverse traditions and heritage that exist here.

The process of ratifying the Convention is still in its early stages and therefore many areas remain unclear. The UK will be the state signatory, but it is of course important that the UK works with devolved governments as part of taking this work forward. A number of the questions you raise resonate with concerns which the Welsh Government has expressed in its consultation response, and this is attached as Doc 1.

As set out in the consultation documents, the nomination of items of ICH for the inventory should be bottom up and community led, and we agree with the approach that ICH can only be heritage when it is recognised as such by the communities, groups or individuals who create, maintain and transmit it. The Welsh Government will not be expressing preferences on what we would like to see included in the inventory, however we will encourage and support communities, groups or individuals who wish to submit items.

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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.

You will see in the consultation documents that DCMS is proposing that compatible inventories are created for each of the four nations of the UK, as well as for participating Overseas Territories or Crown Dependencies. Each inventory will then be collated into the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage in the UK.

The consultation document does specifically suggest that inventories created for each part of the UK could draw on and complement existing inventories, for example, the list maintained by Museums Galleries Scotland, and the Red List of Endangered Crafts compiled by Heritage Crafts.

Contact with the UK government in respect of UNESCO conventions takes place at a number of levels. In March 2023, as part of a programme to launch Wales in France, the First Minister visited UNESCO in Paris. The Welsh delegation, comprising representatives from Wales Arts International, Amgueddfa Cymru, Urdd Gobaith Cymru, and the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner, alongside the First Minister, engaged in discussions with several senior UNESCO officials on topics including youth, culture, language and heritage.

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Arts and Heritage is the Minister responsible for the ratification of the Convention and also the ongoing implementation of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention to which the UK is already a signatory. Lord Parkinson provides updates on actions relating to UNESCO conventions in writing and through meetings with myself as Deputy Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism and equivalent Culture Ministers in Scotland and Northern Ireland. During the past year this has included discussions in respect of the UK tentative list for WHS nominations and the proposal to ratify the ICH convention.

Welsh Government officials in Cadw support practical delivery of the UK's international obligations in respect of the implementation of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention including participating in advisory groups operating at UK level. Officials from the Welsh Government have participated in discussions with DCMS officials in advance of and during the present consultation process for ratification and implementation of the ICH convention.

The arrangements for collating and maintaining intangible cultural heritage inventories is the subject of the current consultation and will be the responsibility of the UK State Party.

Following consultation, the Welsh Government looks forward to working with the UK Government on the policy paper which will outline the details of how the UK plans to implement the Convention. We expect this paper will include monitoring and compliance arrangements.

Wales has a distinct culture and heritage and the Welsh Government is supportive of the inventory representing both traditional and contemporary culture and ensuring diverse practices are included that reflect a modern society. The inclusion within the criteria that "*The Intangible Cultural Heritage can originate from anywhere*", means that diverse traditions or practices by people who have migrated and settled in Wales over generations can also be recognised and celebrated. It is important to also note the criteria that the IHG item "*can be from any time*" and "*must be currently practised*".

There have been calls over a number of years to make St David's Day a bank holiday in Wales. The subject was debated by the National Assembly for Wales on 1 March 2000 and received unanimous support. However, the Welsh Government does not have the power to designate bank holidays.

Any new bank holiday would need to be added to the list of existing bank holidays in the Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971. This is currently only within the gift of the UK Government. As the creation of bank holidays is not a devolved matter, a request had to be made to the UK Government to designate the day as a bank holiday in Wales. The UK Government formally rejected the request in October 2002 and successive UK Governments have maintained this position.

We will continue to make the case for the devolution of the powers to the Senedd and the Welsh Ministers to make St David's Day a bank holiday.

Yours sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Mark Drakeford in black ink.

MARK DRAKEFORD

Handwritten signature of Dawn Bowden in black ink.

**Dawn Bowden MS
Deputy Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism**