

P-06-1219 Install a commemorative statue of African-American singer Paul Robeson in the Valleys

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 29 Tachwedd 2020
Petitions Committee | 29 November 2020

Reference: SR21/1251-3

Petition Number: P-06-1219

Petition title: Install a commemorative statue of African-American singer Paul Robeson in the Valleys

Text of petition: Paul Robeson was an African-American singer & actor who came to have a love for Wales and its mining communities. He supported Welsh miners with proceeds from his concerts to their striking relief fund & toured Wales, singing in Cardiff, Neath & elsewhere to raise funds for miners. Whilst he was subject to segregation in the U.S., he described the reception he received in Wales as warm beyond "all bounds", and said that Welsh mining communities had "shaped" his life.



1. Background

A number of sources of funding could be pursued for a statue such as this. Senedd Research has produced a number of guides for constituents, signposting sources of funding and advice. The following may be relevant to this petition:

- [Assistance for the arts](#)
- [Community buildings, places of worship and faith groups](#)

The petitioners may find it useful to consider the work of [Monumental Welsh Women](#), a group that are campaigning to erect five statues of Welsh women in five years. The group was motivated by the fact that, when their campaign started, there were not any statues to named Welsh women in Wales. The group's first statue - to headteacher Betty Campbell - was [unveiled](#) in Cardiff Central Square in September 2021. Funding came from the Welsh Government, Sir Robert McAlpine Ltd, Rightacres Property Ltd, Legal & General, ISG Ltd, Hugh James, Eversheds Sutherland LLP, Blake Morgan LLP , The MoonDance Foundation as well as a number of individuals.

2. Welsh Government action

The Welsh Government contributed to the funding of the recently-erected statue to Betty Campbell. It also previous [contributed](#) £5,000 towards a statue of Cardiff City captain Fred Keenor.

The Welsh Government commissioned an audit of statues, street and building names to address Wales' connections with the slave trade, led by Gaynor Legall. In November 2020 the [Legall audit](#) identified 209 monuments, buildings or street names, located in all parts of Wales, which commemorate people who were directly involved with slavery and the slave trade or opposed its abolition.

The report noted a number of groups are under-represented in public commemoration in Wales:

The general absence noted of the commemoration of people of colour is remarkable, as is the lack of commemoration of women, disabled people and significant world figures.

Title:

In an accompanying statement, the First Minister said that “the audit has shown the slave trade and colonial exploitation were embedded in our nation’s economy and society” and that:

This is the first stage of a much bigger piece of work, which must now, collectively, consider how we move forward with this information as we seek to honour and celebrate our diverse communities.

3. Welsh Parliament action

In 2020, the previous Senedd’s Culture, Welsh Language and Culture Committee carried out an inquiry into public acts of commemoration, in the wake of the toppling of Colston’s statue in Bristol and widespread discussion about the appropriateness of historic monuments.

The report’s recommendations included:

The Welsh Government should work in partnership with local authorities, charities, and the heritage sector to identify ways in which the current under-representation of particular groups can be addressed with a view to commissioning new statues or commemorative art works in Wales.

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.