

P-05-1073 Create and build a new branch of National Museum Wales dedicated to Welsh involvement in colonialism

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 15 Rhagfyr 2020
Petitions Committee | 15 December 2020

Reference: RS20/14845

Petition Number: P-05-1073

Petition title: Create and build a new branch of National Museum Wales dedicated to Welsh involvement in colonialism

Text of petition: The BLM movement has highlighted some ugly truths about Wales' history that a massive amount of us never learned.

This has been because traditionally in Wales, the Empire is largely ignored as we choose to focus on the colonialist elements that we had to face ourselves. This does not wipe Wales' slate clean of any wrongdoing.

A new, dedicated museum run by National Museum Wales would provide us with a proper means to stimulate these difficult conversations and educate our future generations.



1. Welsh Government action

The Welsh Government's response to this petition states:

Colonialism has undoubtedly influenced our development as a nation and is deeply embedded in many aspects of Welsh history. Colonialism and racism must be explored properly as an integral part of history already presented by the network of museums, local and national, across Wales. Our focus is currently on ensuring that they have the support they require to survive. Beyond that, we will work with them to ensure that they have the capacity and capability to reflect our heritage accurately. This requires a collective effort from all our cultural heritage bodies and cannot be achieved through one organisation in a centralised location.

I welcome the statement already made by Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales which commits to diversifying its collections and explore issues associated with decolonisation, inequality and racism.

The Welsh Government has also recently published an **audit of statues, street and building names to address Wales' connections with the slave trade and colonialisation**, led by Gaynor Legal, which can be read [here](#). It is now considering what it does with this information.

2. National Museum action

The National Museum's statement on this subject (referenced by the Welsh Government in its response) can be read [here](#). It outlines the following things the Museum is doing:

- We are working with black communities across Wales to build trust and understanding, asking how to make working in the museum a viable option across the board for potential curators, conservators, designers, technicians, palaeontologists and more.
- We are reviewing colonial and racist collections and interpretation with relevant community groups as an urgent priority.
- We are actively collecting the histories, contemporary histories, material culture and art of black communities in Wales and looking at how we can review these collections to better reflect their true histories.

Title:

- We are upskilling and educating our own staff in terms of intersectionality, BLM and black communities, including on the use of language and terminology. This includes Trustees, Friends, Patrons and Volunteers.
- Equality and diversity is one of our top priorities and will remain so; we are committed to this work.

3. Welsh Parliament action

Although not directly related to the petitioners' concerns, the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee is carrying out a piece of work looking at Who gets remembered in public spaces?

This is not about colonialism per se, but the issue of public commemoration more broadly. However, on 3 December 2020 the Committee took evidence from Gaynor Legall, looking at the audit she had recently led for the Welsh Government. The meeting can be watched here.

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