# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Publication of Public Commemoration in Wales: Guidance for Public Bodies** |
| **DATE**  | **14 March 2024** |
| **BY** | **Dawn Bowden MS, Deputy Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism** |

Public commemoration is central to the way in which we represent our history, promote our values and celebrate our communities. But it can sometimes be controversial and will always be an issue of considerable public interest. I am pleased to announce the publication of [new guidance](https://www.gov.wales/public-commemoration-wales-guidance) to help public bodies in Wales make well-informed decisions about existing and future commemorations in public spaces, and in doing so, contribute to our goal of an anti-racist Wales.

In 2020 [The Slave Trade and the British Empire: An audit of commemoration in Wales](https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-12/the-slave-trade-and-the-british-empire-an-audit-of-commemoration-in-wales.pdf) drew our attention both to the extent to which figures associated with the transatlantic slave trade are memorialised in public places, and also to the general absence of people from Black, Asian or minority ethnic groups from the landscape of public commemoration. This Guidance further considers these issues and touches on wider questions of under-representation and contested histories and it fulfils a commitment in the programme for government to address fully the recommendations of the audit. It also directly supports a specific action in the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan, ‘to review and appropriately address the way in which people and events with known historical associations to slavery and colonialism are commemorated in our public spaces and collections, acknowledging the harm done by their actions and reframing the presentation of their legacy to fully recognise this’.

Commemorations are an important element of the public realm, and whilst many are uncontroversial, others may be contentious. All of them communicate something of the values of their time and some may deliver uncomfortable truths. The guidance explains the issues around public commemoration and shows how it can be used not only to deepen understanding of the past and its legacies, but also to celebrate the diversity of our communities. In this way the actions set out in the guidance will help public bodies discharge this particular responsibility towards the achievement of an anti-racist Wales.

This is a sensitive subject, and the guidance has been developed through a careful process of engagement and consultation. It has been informed by the opinions of a broad spectrum of stakeholders and is illustrated by examples from across the world of how difficult subjects for commemoration have been handled.

We should not shy away from the issues that public commemoration can raise, and I hope that this guidance will prompt a positive and active response to them that contributes to a more balanced account of our past, and a clear expression of our present values.