# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **The Slave Trade and the British Empire: An Audit of Commemoration in Wales** |
| **DATE** | **26 November 2020** |
| **BY** | **Mark Drakeford MS, First Minister** |

In July, following the killing of George Floyd in the United States and increased awareness of racial inequalities, I asked Gaynor Legall to lead an independent [task and finish group](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fgov.wales%2Fslave-trade-and-british-empire-audit-commemoration-wales-task-and-finish-group&data=04%7C01%7CGovernment.Plenary.Business%40gov.wales%7C3c7331dfefed42314ff408d891796817%7Ca2cc36c592804ae78887d06dab89216b%7C0%7C0%7C637419297904292126%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=AkH7gdJJmw32ZCAz%2FtSJ4zxNcQLuvWvK88RtG0D5rD8%3D&reserved=0) to carry out an audit of Wales’ historic monuments, buildings and street names, which have associations with the slave trade and the British Empire. It was supported by a small expert team in Cadw.

Under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, we have a duty to work towards a Wales which is more equal. To help us do this, we need a clear-eyed understanding of the legacies of the slave trade and the British Empire. This audit provides an important evidence base, which will help us to establish an honest and more informed relationship with our history.

[The audit is published today](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fgov.wales%2Fslave-trade-and-british-empire-audit-commemoration-wales&data=04%7C01%7CGovernment.Plenary.Business%40gov.wales%7C3c7331dfefed42314ff408d891796817%7Ca2cc36c592804ae78887d06dab89216b%7C0%7C0%7C637419297904282167%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=Sx6GwthWsAY2zW%2BOQtuUfoesKmFTx9tyZr6jYRSUSkY%3D&reserved=0) and for the first time brings together a comprehensive list of the people who have been commemorated with statues, monuments, buildings and street names in Wales, who have been associated with the slave trade or with other crimes against Black people.

This is not an exercise in rewriting our past but reflecting on it to understand what these commemorations mean for people today. It is an opportunity for us to arrive at a mature relationship with our history, to consider the way we remember our history and find a heritage, which can be shared by us all.

The audit has shown the slave trade and colonial exploitation were embedded in our nation’s economy and society. Welsh mariners and investors participated in the slave trade; Welsh cloth, copper and iron was made for markets dependent on slavery and produce farmed by enslaved people was traded in Wales. This involvement was fundamental to Wales’ development as an industrialised nation.

This audit is not about naming and shaming – it is about recognising and learning from the events of the past.

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. I will not pre-empt any recommendations that may come from this wider work but this audit must be the start of an open conversation with our communities.

The Senedd’s Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee is undertaking its own inquiry about *Who Gets Remembered in Public Places*. I hope it will have an opportunity to consider this audit and I am keen to see the outcome of its work before we make any decisions about the next steps.

The task and finish group’s work also highlights there are alarmingly few Welsh people of Black or Asian heritage commemorated in our statues, building and street names. This provides an opportunity to consider how we might celebrate the diverse nature of modern Wales and the contributions that all parts of our community have made to the development of Wales.

I want to thank Gaynor Legall and the members of the independent task and finish group for all their work. They have provided a comprehensive and authoritative piece of work that truly transforms our understanding of our complex and often-troubled past.