# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Audit of public monuments, street and building names associated with the history of black communities in Wales** |
| **DATE** | **6 July 2020** |
| **BY** | **Mark Drakeford MS, First Minister** |

The Black Lives Matter movement has brought to the fore a number of important issues we need to address as a country. One is the need for Wales to reflect on the visible reminders of the country’s past. This is especially true when we look at the horrors of the slave trade.

Some of our historic buildings are reminders of this painful period of our history. Some may appear to make heroes of historical figures whose actions we now condemn. Individuals connected to the slave trade may be remembered in street names or the names of public buildings. They are commemorations of a past that we have not fully challenged and that we are being asked to challenge now.

It is time that we properly reflected on the representation of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic lives in the heritage of Wales. We need to re-examine the way some of our public monuments and buildings are valued and consider what they say about us, our society today and our shared history.

To begin this debate, a two-phased project will be carried out.

The first phase will be to undertake an audit of Wales’ historic monuments and statues, and the names of streets and public buildings, and identify those sites and names that are associated with the history of black communities in Wales, and in particular the slave trade. I expect this phase to be complete by the end of October.

I am delighted to say that Gaynor Legall will lead the task and finish group to undertake the audit. Gaynor is a powerful advocate for equality and diversity. She has a deep and longstanding commitment to the history and heritage of migrants, immigrants and minorities in Wales. She will be supported by a small team selected for their specialist knowledge of the history of black communities in Wales and the role of the British Empire and the slave trade, as it applies to Wales.

The task and finish group will share the findings of the audit with an external reference group, which will include wide community and stakeholder representations, including young people.

Informed by the outcome of this work, we will move to a second phase to determine how we can move forward together and address the concerns it highlights.

Our historic environment, our monuments, street names and buildings, are statements about who we are and what we honour as a society. They carry from one age into another the values and principles of our time. These values and principles evolve – it is therefore right that who and what we chose to commemorate evolves also.

This is not about rewriting the past – it is about reflecting it with the justice it deserves. If done in the right way, we can create a richer and more informed relationship with our history. We can find new stories and figures to celebrate. We can reflect a Wales that rightfully celebrates our diverse communities. This is what our past deserves and our present so rightfully demands.

Additionally, the Minister for Education will shortly announce further details of a working group to oversee the development of learning resources, and identify gaps in current resources or training related to BAME communities, their contributions and experiences. This work is aligned to the Estyn review of Welsh history which will take full account of Welsh, and wider, BAME history, identity and culture.