

P-05-883 National Welsh History Week, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 26.11.19

Thank you for the opportunity to address the points raised by Lord Elis-Thomas.

It is encouraging to hear that opportunities to study Welsh History and the Age of Princes exist at Key Stage 2. With several grandchildren currently in Key Stage 2 in Welsh medium education I look forward to seeing them gain knowledge of their heritage.

The aim of the petition was intended to be about the packaging of Welsh History rather than the content, which I am not qualified to speak on. I can only speak of my own experience and of those I have discussed this issue with around me, admittedly of people well beyond the age of both Primary and Secondary Education. Unfortunately I grew up in an era where many Welsh parents came to the incorrect conclusion that the Welsh language would be a hindrance to their children's progress in the English world, and my English medium education did not make much allowance for history from a Welsh perspective.

It is telling that, even with a reasonably active interest in Wales and Welsh culture, the previous initiatives that are mentioned by the Deputy Minister are entirely unknown to me. I would point out that the 'National Newspaper of Wales' is an entirely self-attributed accolade by the publishers of the Western Mail. With the circulation currently being somewhere around 11,000 copies issue, it could hardly be stated that the aforementioned articles, however commendable, represent blanket coverage of the issue.

Likewise, while I have had the pleasure of enjoying some of CADW's usually excellent offerings, the many strands of the interpretation plan mentioned remain to be many strands and, therefore, outside the circles of already interested parties, are not particularly highly visible to the public.

As we are currently seeing from the chaos surrounding Brexit, the general public as a whole struggle to digest a complex message, preferring the simplicity of a binary option. I believe that a National Welsh History Week offers the opportunity to provide a central, easily identifiable product that would be far simpler and more powerful to market than a plethora of related and unrelated events and offerings by various organisations. The marketable product, of course, would serve as a gateway beyond which all of those other worthy activities would reside.

I see no conflict between building "a contemporary, engaging nation brand that promotes Wales on a UK and international stage..." and building the brand of Wales for her own inhabitants through both formal and incidental education.

Having spent most of my adult life working in advertising I am painfully aware of how, even with the very best of intentions, most of us eventually assume that the outside world holds similar knowledge of our endeavours as we do ourselves. This is virtually always an incorrect assumption (as demonstrated by some of the previous initiatives mentioned above), and I think it is reasonable to expect our national assembly to perform a little higher in this respect than the average small business, as it does in many other areas.

The Deputy Minister's suggestion to draw on the successes of initiatives such as 'Black History Month' is an excellent and appropriate one; the now transcontinental nature of this movement being a wonderful ambition for a project such as National Welsh History Week, which could reach out through our many Welsh Societies and groups throughout the world.

I certainly agree that the project should be undertaken fully in collaboration with existing and future stakeholders, and I would hope that all concerned would find the prospect of a unified approach to this an exciting and productive opportunity.

Cofion gorau / Best regards,