



Huw Irranca-Davies MP
Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee

By email to:
SeneddLJC@senedd.wales

17/10/2022

Dear Chair

Scrutiny of Wales' first Consolidation Bill - The Historic Environment (Wales) Bill

I am aware that the Committee scrutinised the Welsh Parliament's first Consolidation Bill over the summer. Although we missed that opportunity to share our views with you, I understand that the Committee is still giving initial consideration to the Bill. I therefore trust that the contents of this letter will be useful as these discussions continue.

We have a keen interest in this Bill on account of our unique responsibility to standardise Welsh place names and our policy interest in promoting and protecting Welsh names. However, our interest in this Bill actually falls outside the scope of the Committee's current remit. We do not consider that we have specific comments to offer in relation to the Committee's terms of reference arising from Standing Order 26C.

We understand that there is no opportunity to amend or strengthen the existing legislation as part of the consolidation exercise. Our interest in this Bill relates mainly to the statutory List of Historic Place Names and we will seek other opportunities to discuss how the status and content of this resource could be strengthened further. We were happy to contribute recently to the work of a Task and Finish Group that made recommendations to the Royal Commission, for example. And it is a timely discussion as the Government works towards the goal outlined in the Co-operation Agreement to 'ensure that Welsh place names in the built and natural environment are protected and promoted'.

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We are also, of course, interested in the potential of Welsh law to further strengthen the status of the Welsh language. This consolidation exercise is taking place in a legislative context where the Welsh language has official status in Wales. There is no reference currently to the Welsh language in the Bill as introduced. Indeed, references to the Welsh language are rare in the Acts of the Senedd in general, as highlighted in [the Commissioner's- 5 year report](#) (see p.29), and this national consolidation project could be an opportunity to rectify this.

In conclusion, we would like to note that, in general, we welcome the current exercise and the general aim of ensuring that Welsh law is more accessible, clear and user friendly in both the official languages of Wales. This work has ensured, of course, that historic legislation drawn up in Westminster is available in Welsh for the first time. It would be good to have a better understanding of how the bilingual drafters, legislative translators and terminologists have worked together in order to improve the accessibility of the law and to standardise and align terminology in both languages. This, too, is probably beyond the scope of the current scrutiny process but it would be beneficial to consider whether there are lessons to be learned and successful practices to be transferred as the consolidation programme progresses.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you well as a committee as you begin the work of scrutinising the first consolidation bill of the Welsh Parliament.

Yours sincerely,

Gwenith Price

Deputy Welsh Language Commissioner