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Y Gweinidog Cyllid a'r Trefnydd  
Minister for Finance and Trefnydd



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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21 November 2019

Dear Kevin,

Thank you for your letter regarding the Census (England and Wales) Order 2019.

I welcome the consultation on the draft Order in Council pursuant to Article 4 of the National Assembly for Wales (Transfer of Function) (No.2) Order 2006/3334. I note that the Order directs that the census be taken on 21 March 2021, and also note the necessary provisions in respect to the information to be collected.

The census is an invaluable source of information about all people and households here in Wales and is used to make decisions that affect everyone in the country. High quality data about the population informs policy-making, supports resource allocation and the planning of public services and helps us understand the lives of different groups in society, supporting our goal of becoming a more equal Wales.

I welcome the recommendations in the draft Order in Council, in particular the new questions about sexual orientation and gender identity that will be voluntary for people aged 16 or over. I am pleased to see that the Census (Return Particulars and Removal of Penalties) Act 2019 received Royal Assent on 8 October following the legislative consent motion that was passed by the National Assembly for Wales on the matter in July.

I note the policy aim of “mak[ing] the 2021 Census the most inclusive census to date and to ensure the results reflect everyone in society”, and my one substantive issue with the Order relates to this. I understand that my officials have been in discussion with officials from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) specifically about the ethnic group question here in Wales, and that this is an issue that has been raised on a number of occasions.

The current recommended question includes the option for people in the ‘White’ category to identify as ethnically ‘Welsh’ (in addition to ‘British’ and the constituent countries of the UK). However, the ‘Asian or Asian British’ and ‘Black, Black British, Caribbean or African’

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

categories do not include the option for people to identify as ethnically 'Welsh'. This could be perceived to suggest that people can only identify as being ethnically 'Welsh' if they are 'White', which does not reflect the inclusive society we have in Wales.

I welcome that ONS officials have provided positive commitments in recent meetings about ensuring that the online version of the census questionnaire will allow people to better reflect their own perceived ethnicity and that guidance will be clear on this matter. I also recognise that the national identity question provides everyone with the opportunity to identify themselves as Welsh, British or any other combination. Nevertheless I remain concerned that the current *presentation* of the ethnic group question will feel exclusionary to some in Wales and, possibly, offensive.

While I understand that you have consulted and engaged with stakeholders in Wales, and tested the current recommended question, including in the 2016 Test in north Powys and the 2019 Rehearsal in Ceredigion, my preference would be to have an ethnic group question that would be more inclusive for the non-White Welsh population here in Wales.


Given the importance of the census, I would like to ensure that as many people as possible take part and feel that they are counted, so that the information that we collect can make a real difference to people from all backgrounds.

In paragraph 3.6 of the explanatory memorandum of the current draft Order in Council, it states that, "Welsh Ministers have been consulted and consented to this instrument". Given my concerns about the current ethnic group question, I would invite you to amend the provision to reflect the concerns that I have raised in relation to the prohibitive nature of the ethnic group question in Wales.

I am pleased that officials from the Welsh Government have been working closely with officials from the Office for National Statistics throughout the development of the 2021 Census. We are committed to working with the ONS to ensure that the 2021 Census is a success. It is important that this close collaboration continues throughout, and beyond, the legislative process to ensure that the requirements here in Wales, including relating to the Welsh language, are fully considered. This is particularly important given that I will be laying the Census Regulations in the National Assembly for Wales next year.

I would be grateful if you could respond to the concerns that I have raised regarding the current ethnic group question included in the draft Order in Council.

Yours sincerely,



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