

WW1 Commemorations
Wales remembers/Cymru'n Cofio 1914-1918 steering group

Meeting Note
Monday, 11 June 2013

Welsh Government Buildings
Aberystwyth

Attendees

[St Cyres School Official 1], St Cyres School
[Cornist Park CP School Official 1], Cornist Park CP School
[Ysgol Tryfan Official 1], Ysgol Tryfan
[Ysgol Emrys ap Iwan Official 1], Ysgol Emrys ap Iwan
[Ysgol Bro Myrddin Official 1], Ysgol Bro Myrddin
[Swansea University Official 1], History and Classics, Swansea University

Welsh Government

[WG Official 1], School Curriculum Branch
[WG Official 2], School Curriculum Branch

Welcome and introductions

[WG Official 1] welcomed members and outlined the role of the group in supporting the commemoration WW1 in Wales.

The group would look at the focus of commemorations, potential ideas and programmes for schools; the aim was to develop variety and interest over five years and to avoid commemoration 'fatigue'. The group all agreed that any materials needed to be relevant to pupils at a local level and should attempt to be 'cutting edge' in their delivery.

Battlefield trips from Wales

The UK government had announced on the day of the meeting, that an agency had been appointed to arrange trips to the WWI battlefields in England. The arrangement is that two pupils and one teacher from all secondary schools in England visit the battlefields. Group members noted that many of these trips merely established the idea that it was a European War and not a World War. The group also felt that many of the itineraries and travel ideas already produced for these trips are not particularly relevant to schools in Wales.

The group were not in favour of providing funding schools to visit the battlefields. The group explained that many schools across Wales already arrange such trips, that the legacy of such trips can be very short lived – it may be talked about in a school assembly for example but then it would not be re-visited. The group felt that there were better ways of spending Welsh Government money.

It was also noted that the tour of the battlefields did not provide enough local context for the pupils visiting. An educational pack for teachers to use on the visits was considered of more value to provide context and relevance.

Existing programmes

Lottery funding was available to fund projects specifically to commemorate WWI. This was considered an 'open goal' for schools to attempt to get additional funding. Greater awareness of this fund should be made to schools.

Development of materials

Two proposals were tabled at the meeting for the group to consider as potential models.

The National Museum/Amgueddfa Cymru

One of the proposals in this programme of activity aims to target 240 young people in 12 workshops across Wales. It looks at developing an educational programme to engage with WWI related materials in the Museum's collections.

The group felt that this proposal was not specifically aimed at schools and was more generic in nature. Group members were of the opinion that although the Youth Project (costed at £192,000 across 5 financial years) had some merits, it didn't have the scope to engage with enough schools and young people across Wales. The proposal aimed to target 240 young people in 12 workshops across Wales.

The National Library of Wales (NLW)

This proposal seeks to identify material related to WW1 that has not yet been digitised, to link appropriate bilingual resources to National Curriculum programmes of study and produce materials specifically targeted at schools in Wales.

This proposal was very well received by members. The group was of the view that although there are a vast array of materials and resources available for schools, much of it is not tailored for schools in Wales and there is a particular dearth of material available through the medium of Welsh.

The proposal from NLW would also prepare materials targeting the Wales, Europe and the World element in the Welsh Baccalaureate. This proposal as it stands is costed at £571,000 across 4 financial years. The group felt that this proposal would be able to address the possible programme themes identified and noted in MB/LA/1568/13.

Group members felt that some elements, such as a dramatic production (a bilingual drama to be commissioned about the effects of the Great War on Wales and shown in all 22 Local Authorities) should not be included.

Steer

The group felt that the NLW proposal could include a virtual app to enable and members of the public to 'access' the battlefields from their classrooms back in Wales or in situ on the Western Front. They felt that the app should be tailor-made for Wales. It would be bi-lingual and interactive, providing a guide to the battlefields and should be based on the Gettysburg field trip planner. http://www.gettysburgfoundation.org/media/assets/GB_FieldTripPlanner_005.pdf.

Clips of film, maps and narrative could be seeded throughout the app. This app would not only be suitable for schools and colleges in Wales but for the general public as well.

The group mentioned, for example, that it was very difficult to find the grave of Hedd Wyn in the Artillery Wood cemetery or know where Welsh soldiers are buried and the app noted above would address this lack of information.

The group felt strongly that any educational materials produced should target cross curricular approaches at KS2 and at KS3 and should also include sections aimed at KS4 and A level pupils.

All materials should include primary evidence, should be inspiring and thought provoking, and help develop pupils' thinking and reflective skills. The group also felt that the Welsh angle needed to be emphasised so that pupils could begin to understand what this conflict meant for Welsh people at the 'front' and back home in Wales. Pupils could then begin to understand what this war meant not only for us in Wales, in the UK, in Europe but world wide. Many in the group felt that WW1 is not fully understood to be a 'world' war. There is also the problem of the prevalence of certain ideas about WW1 in popular culture, such as the "lions led by donkeys" cliché and the notion that Britain was swept by a jingoistic enthusiasm for war in August 1914, and part of the remit of any educational materials must be to try to correct some of these misleading ideas.

The group were also eager for officials to explore further initial discussions that CyMAL have had with the Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council regarding linking young people in Wales to young people in the Commonwealth.

Next steps

[WG Official 1] thanked members and noted that a further meeting would be arranged in the autumn term. The group would be kept informed of the development of the materials.