# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Continuing to Celebrate the Windrush Generation** |
| **DATE** | **20 June 2019** |
| **BY** | **Jane Hutt, Deputy Minister and Chief Whip** |

22nd June marks the anniversary of the arrival in the UK of the Empire Windrush and her 492 passengers. Last year we celebrated the 70th anniversary of this momentous event, which has become so deeply symbolic of the wider links between the United Kingdom, Commonwealth countries and the Caribbean islands, with great resonance for all of us in Wales.

We want to embrace this celebration wholeheartedly again this year and recognise its wide historic and present-day significance.

The Empire Windrush landing followed the passing of the British Nationality Act 1948, at a time when Britain was struggling to recover from the devastation of the Second World War. It was recognised then that Britain needed the assets and strengths of Commonwealth citizens to help rebuild our society. The British Nationality Act presented a clear invitation for individuals to come to Britain to make a new home. The Welsh Government continues to honour that invitation today.

Those on the Empire Windrush were not the first wave of migrants who helped to weave the multi-cultural fabric of modern Wales, nor the last. Migrants were a major part of Wales developing as an economic powerhouse prior to the First World War. Commonwealth citizens were a crucial part of the Allied war effort during both wars. Migrants have continued to be an integral part of how our nation has developed since the Windrush landed.

In 2018, Wales relied heavily on our migrant communities in sectors such as the food and drink industry, manufacturing, tourism, higher education, veterinary health and the NHS. 2018 was also the 70th anniversary of the NHS and it is particularly difficult to imagine the continued success of our health system without the vital support of migrant communities and their descendants.

The celebration held here in the Senedd last year was so joyous, moving and powerful that everyone involved was determined to ensure it was not left at that. So I am delighted that the Welsh Government has again been able to support Race Council Cymru and the Windrush Cymru Elders in organising a similar celebration at the Pierhead Building today.

This year we have been able to go further. At a conference in March, on the UN Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination, I announced that Welsh Government would be providing £40,000 of new funding so that BAME community groups can mark Windrush Day this year, celebrating the contributions of the Windrush generation and all migrants to Welsh society, economy and history.

Through this funding, 18 projects have received funding to coordinate activities across Wales to commemorate Windrush Day 2019. These are testament to the pride felt by communities who are determined to ensure that stories are shared and the sacrifices of previous generations recognised. Due to the strength of the bids we have increased the funding for these events to nearly £55,000.

On a more sombre note, many Members will be aware of the announcement of the UK Government’s Windrush Compensation Scheme earlier this year, as a means of repaying losses experienced by members of these communities. I am aware that for some individuals, now in their late 70’s and early 80’s, this scheme is seen as ‘too little too late’. The traumas inflicted by the UK Government’s hostile environment policy have cast a grim shadow over whole lives. Monetary compensation cannot eradicate experiences such as loss of job, loss of home as well as being forced to delay or forego necessary medical treatment.

Following Home Office engagement events which took place in South Wales during May, I wrote to the Minister of State for Immigration, Caroline Nokes MP, to convey my frustration that the scheme still retains some serious gaps. I also sought clarity in relation to what work has been done by the UK Government to engage with Commonwealth citizen groups in Wales or in Commonwealth nations.

It is crucial that this scheme is properly promoted to all who could be eligible and I am keen to ensure all who are eligible to apply for compensation are aware of the scheme.

I want to encourage all those who may be eligible to seek support from regulated advice providers to enable them to seek redress. We also encourage individuals to get in touch with us with their concerns in relation to the manageability and delivery of the scheme.

These are vital issues, however, they should not be allowed to detract from the spirit of celebration and thanks which is the true nature of this anniversary. Today we pay tribute to the contributions made to Wales by the Windrush generation and their descendants, as well as the other migrant communities who came before and after.

We would like to give our appreciation and gratitude to all ethnic minority service men and women who served in the world wars. We thank them, and their families, for their efforts and sacrifices over the generations, they will never be forgotten.

We will continue to welcome and embrace those from other places who seek to improve our communities and we will challenge discrimination faced by these communities wherever we find it.