

# Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

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Meeting Venue:  
**Committee Room 2 – Senedd**

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Meeting date:  
**19 July 2012**

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Meeting time:  
**09:10**

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Cynulliad  
Cenedlaethol  
Cymru

National  
Assembly for  
Wales



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## Agenda

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**09.10 – 09.20 – Private Pre-meeting**

**1. Introductions, apologies and substitutions (09.20)**

**2. Inquiry into the Welsh Government's historic environment policy – evidence session (09.20 – 10.00)** (Pages 1 – 6)

National Trust  
CELG(4)-19-12 – Paper 1

Dr Emma Plunkett-Dillon, Wales Head of Conservation

**Break (10.00 – 10.10)**

**3. Inquiry into the Welsh Government's historic environment policy – evidence session (Via video-conference) (10.10 – 10.50)** (Pages 7 – 14)

Conwy County Borough Council  
CELG(4)-19-12 – Paper 2

Peter Jones-Hughes, Principal conservation officer

**Break (10.50 – 11.00)**

**4. Inquiry into the Welsh Government's historic environment policy – evidence session (11.00 – 11.40)** (Pages 15 – 18)

Welsh Government

CELG(4)-19-12 – Paper 3

Edwina Hart AM, Minister for Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science

Steve Webb, Director Development

Lucy O'Donnell, Assistant Director for Public Engagement & Governance, Cadw

**5. Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public from the meeting for the following business: (11.40)**

Item 6 and 7

**6. Consideration of key issues – Inquiry into the Welsh Premier Football league (11.40 – 12.20)** (Pages 19 – 40)

**7. Committee Forward Work Programme – Agreement of inquiry terms of reference (12.20 – 12.30)** (Pages 41 – 46)

**8. Papers to note**

**CELG(4)-19-12 – Paper 5 – Additional information from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales** (Pages 47 – 48)



**Ymddiriedolaeth  
Genedlaethol  
National Trust**

**National Assembly for Wales:  
Communities Equality and Local  
Government Committee**

**Inquiry into the Welsh Government's  
historic environment policy**

**Evidence from National Trust  
29 June 2012**

## **1. Introduction**

The National Trust welcomes the opportunity to contribute evidence to the Inquiry into the Welsh Government's historic environment policy.

Our historic sites in our cities, towns and villages, the historic features in the countryside, and the wider historic landscapes are intrinsic to the cultural life of people in Wales and are a major attractor of visitors to Wales:

>77% of visitors to Cadw sites are from outside of Wales

>15% from overseas

The National Trust is a charity which makes a significant contribution to the economic, social and environmental life of Wales:

- it is Europe's largest conservation charity caring for special places in Wales, Northern Ireland and England - for everyone to enjoy
- it looks after the natural and historic resources upon which so much of the Welsh tourism industry depends. It cares for, and welcomes everyone to enjoy, 18 of Wales' finest houses, castles, gardens and industrial sites, one fifth of the coastline of Wales and 50,000 hectares of land much of it in Snowdonia and the Brecon Beacons, with 240 tenanted farms
- it is the largest social enterprise in Wales;
- it is supported by over 112,000 members in Wales and by 4 million overall;
- it is the largest tourism business in Wales: welcoming a million visitors to its attractions, shops, holiday cottages, restaurants and tea rooms;
- over 4 million people enjoy free access to the Welsh coast and countryside managed by the National Trust;
- it is the biggest non-government provider of educational visits in Wales: 50,000 school pupils and students visit each year;
- it is a major employer in often remote rural areas with nearly 300 permanent staff and many more seasonal staff;

- it attracts over 5,400 volunteers who donate 250,000 volunteer hours per year;
- it is not dependent on Government funding

## 2. Responding to the Inquiry's questions:

### 2.1 How appropriate and successful are the current systems employed by the Welsh Government for protecting and managing the historic environment in Wales?

- The current systems are successful for protecting and managing the designated parts of the historic environment i.e. the aspects deemed to be worthy of statutory protection because of historic, archaeological or architectural merit.
- It can be argued that all the landscapes of Wales, rural and urban are significant to a greater or lesser degree. Have we got the appropriate measures to make sure that these areas are protected?
- We have no means of taking care of special places that are valued for intangible reasons.

### 2.2 How well do the Welsh Government's policies promote the historic environments in Wales (for instance, in terms of interpretation, accessibility, attracting new audiences and tourism)?

- This has improved enormously over the last few years with a range of passionate Ministerial Statements issued providing clarity on the Welsh Government's policies and aims. These have helped to increase the profile of the historic environment in policy circles..But do the positive messages reach the public, or do they still have negative impressions, for example, about perceived delays in getting planning permission on Listed Buildings?
- Cadw's 'Conservation Principles' have been widely welcomed by the sector.
- Cadw has a list of 'Priorities 2011-2016' and we engage with that through the Minister's Historic Environment Group (HEG). However, we recommend it's time to review the effectiveness of HEG as a means of promoting the historic environment.
- Interpretation tends to focus on sites in Cadw's guardianship and those open to the public. For instance the registered Historic Landscapes have been little publicised.
- Within these limits, we note that work to attract new audiences to the sites in Cadw's guardianship has been good – for instance work with the Arts Council and the many and varied public events at the Castles in Caernarfon, Conwy and Caerphilly.
- The pan-Wales interpretation strategy and plan has been completed but a rather overly complex process may be hampering its delivery.

### 2.3 How well do the policies for the HE tie in with wider WG policy objectives?

- **The emerging Natural Resources Body**  
The National Trust is concerned that there is little recognition of the continuum from natural environment to historic environment to cultural environment. We recommend that the definition of 'the environment' for, and by, the new body is a broad one which

recognises this continuum. Very little of Wales' environment is 'natural' as most of it has been influenced by people. We feel that this holistic view of our environment needs to be ingrained in the way the single body views our environment and carries out its duties and a key way to ensure this will be to provide training for staff which enables them to recognise and appreciate the interdependencies of our natural, historic and cultural environment.

- **'Sustaining a Living Wales' Green Paper**

The Green Paper is weak in recognising this continuum. It does identify 'culture' as a key service group noting how local places, landscapes and seascapes are essential ecosystem services, but does not inspire confidence that there will be good integrations between the historic and natural environments in terms of opportunities and needs.

- **Regeneration**

The Welsh Government's Centre for Regeneration Excellence in Wales (CREW) has a remit to promote excellence in regeneration and to establish a more integrated regeneration practice across Wales. One of their four key areas of activity is rigorous research. They are developing a 'Historical Characterisation Toolkit' with Cadw and the Design Commission for Wales.

- **The Sustainable Development Bill** (current consultation)

In the consultation document there is no mention of organisations representing the historic environment such as Cadw or the Royal Commission as *'an organisation making clear contribution to people's economic, social and environmental wellbeing'* although the National Library, the Arts Council and the National Museums of Wales are listed.

- **Woodlands for Wales** (Jan 2011)

This Welsh Government policy document acknowledged that: *'Woodlands and trees make a positive contribution to the special landscape character of Wales and to sites of heritage and cultural importance'*. Within this document there is a very good understanding of the value of landscape and the way the history of Wales is reflected within it. For examples it states: *'In managing existing woodlands and trees, the value of archaeology within the woodland is respected, as well as the archaeology of the woodland; in creating new woodland, existing heritage sites are protected from damage and the integrity of historic landscapes is preserved.'*

- **Glastir:**

Disappointingly, even though Glastir is one of the drivers designed to feed into the above woodland strategy, and farmers are the custodians of our historic landscapes, there is an absence of meaningful provision for the historic environment in Glastir. The issues for the historic landscape are not touched upon within this scheme. The outcomes desired from this scheme are: combating climate change, improving water management, maintaining and enhancing biodiversity.

- In the linked document 'Why Plant Trees on my Farm?' there is no mention of heritage or historic landscapes.

- **Planning Policy Wales** (Feb 2011)

A positive example of integration of the historic environment into other Welsh Government policies is Planning Policy Wales. This is designed to help local authorities develop Local Development Plans, and has a chapter on conserving the historic environment. In this the Welsh Government's objectives are to:

*>preserve or enhance the historic environment, recognising its contribution to economic vitality and culture, civic pride and the quality of life, and its importance as a resource for future generations*

*and specifically to:*

*>protect archaeological remains, which are a finite and non-renewable resource, part of the historical and cultural identity of Wales, and valuable both for their own sake and for their role in education, leisure and the economy, particularly tourism;*

*>ensure that the character of historic buildings is safeguarded from alterations, extensions or demolition that would compromise a building's special architectural and historic interest*

*>ensure that conservation areas are protected or enhanced, while at the same time remaining alive and prosperous, avoiding unnecessarily detailed controls over businesses and householders.'*

It identifies the important role of Cadw, the Royal Commission and the Archaeological Trusts in recording and protecting sites. It also specifically mentions the importance of the setting on several occasions: *'Effect on historic landscape, park or garden and settings as a material consideration'*

- **A White Paper for Better Lives and Communities** (current)

An example of the lack of integrations is the current Housing White Paper is squarely aimed at solving the housing problem, but nowhere, other than in the Minister's title, in the entire 82 pages are 'heritage', 'historic' or 'conservation areas' mentioned.

While fully recognising the importance of solving the shortage of suitable housing the White Paper appears to only see the number and condition of houses as the problem and does not look at the setting, the need to integrate new homes into communities and the need to look at the historic uses of areas.

### **2.3 What would be the advantages and disadvantages of merging the functions of RCAHM with functions of other organisations, including Cadw?**

- Understanding the historic environment is fundamental to effective management of Wales' heritage assets and so we need to make sure that this service continues to be provided, irrespective of the organisational the structure. The Royal Commission has done some exemplary work over the years adding greatly to our understanding of the historic environment. It has also led the way in publicly communicating the exceptional quality of the Welsh Historic Environment through Coflein which provides access to a range of records via the web and also the successful series of television programmes: 'Hidden Histories'.
- From a National Trust perspective our concern would be the risk of loss of expertise currently available within RCAHM. We would ask that this expertise is maintained for Wales irrespective of where it is housed.

- We value the independence of the Royal Commission from the political institution of Welsh Government. The risks of losing this independence need to be considered.
- The main advantage would be budget savings but we would ask that this is properly assessed, both the short and long term consequences.

## **2.5 What role do local authorities and third sector organisations play in implementing the WG's HE policy and what support do they receive in this respect**

- The National Trust is a charity which is independent of government for its core funding. However, we apply for grants to Cadw, the Heritage Lottery Fund and others for support for special projects and initiatives at our historic properties.
- We work in partnership with a wide range of Third Sector and Government partners to deliver joint projects e.g. with Cadw, Visit Wales, CCW, CPRW, the Archaeological Trusts. Please see the two case studies below.
- The third sector organisations in Wales which relate to the historic environment are not organised into a formal network like Heritage Link in England. There are a few Wales wide bodies like ourselves, a few strong regional bodies such as the Archaeological Trusts, but in the main the sector comprises very local groups and historical societies.

## **3. Conclusion**

Therefore National Trust welcomes the Welsh Government's positive efforts with historic environment policy. But we feel the potential for the historic environment to deliver across the Government's priorities such as regeneration, learning, social inclusion and Glastir has yet to be fully realised. We also feel there is much more scope to harness the public's interest in their history and historic environments and National Trust is well placed to work with Welsh Government to deliver wider public engagement.

### **Case Study 1 – Partnership working**

On behalf of the Historic Environment Group: a co-operating group of stakeholders including Cadw, Forestry Commission, Heritage Lottery Fund, Royal Commission, National Trust, Countryside Council for Wales have commissioned research into **"Assessing and addressing the potential impacts of climate change on the historic environment in Wales"**. From this work the group has developed and is reporting on a strategic approach for both assessing and addressing the potential impact of climate change on the historic environment in Wales. The focus of the research is the adaptive response to the consequences of climate change.

### **Case Study 2 – joint work to promote the value the historic environment of Wales**

(Please see the summary leaflet provided to the Committee.)

Research published in September 2010 shows the historic environment makes a significant contribution to the Welsh economy. It is estimated to support 30,000 full time equivalent (FTE) jobs, to contribute approximately £840 million to Wales' gross value added (GVA) and to contribute some £1.8 billion in respect of output.

The wider importance of the historic environment has been evaluated through case studies which show that the public value of the Welsh historic environment is considerable. It supports regeneration through acting as a catalyst for further investment which encourages local pride. The environment benefits by the conservation of landscapes and habitat and through volunteering and training opportunities local communities get involved in the conservation and promotion of the historic environment and are equipped with skills for work. Access and learning is also a priority which enables people of all ages to learn about their history and culture and supports the national curriculum

The research “Valuing the Welsh Historic Environment” by, ECOTEC Research and Consulting Ltd, shows that, in addition to the direct economic benefits provided by important historic assets, there are significant indirect impacts in supporting wider economic, social and environment priorities, for example as a catalyst to investment and improving skills that enable more people to get work. Much of the share of the economic impacts relates to tourism expenditure attributable to the historic environment as many visitors are attracted to Wales because of its wealth of heritage attractions.

The report concludes that the Welsh historic environment is a valuable asset which must be actively cared for and promoted. It also stresses that once these assets have been lost or forgotten they can rarely be recovered.

The National Trust chaired the Valuing the Environment steering group for the study in partnership with Cadw, Visit Wales, CCW , HLF and the three National Park Authorities.

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**EVIDENCE TO COMMUNITIES, EQUALITY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT,  
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES**

**Evidence for the Inquiry into Welsh Government's Historic Environment Policy**

**Introduction**

I am a manager of a local authority conservation section that also includes landscape, tree and regeneration functions (total 5 FTEs). I have worked for Conwy County Borough Council since 2009 to the present day. I was previously the Head of Conservation and Environment at Flintshire County Council (1996 to 2009).

I have been working for a number of council planning/ conservation teams in England, including Chester City Council and in Wales since starting my career in planning in 1978. I have been involved in the North Wales Conservation Officers Group since its inception and have worked with groups examining options for specialist service collaboration since 2008.

I have managed three townscape heritage initiatives for Holywell, Flint and Colwyn Bay and other property enhancement schemes. A number of projects have been recognised with awards.

**Question 1:**

1. How appropriate and successful are the current systems employed by the Welsh Government for protecting and managing the historic environment in Wales?

**Answer:**

The pressure for inappropriate change and for the loss of historic assets and their fabric and authentic character has steadily increased since the 1960/70's. For instance the surge in the manufacture and installation of PVCu products was not envisaged when conservation area legislation was introduced in the early 1970's.

The question addresses the fundamental issues about conservation at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Are the current systems appropriate? Many people believe that now is the time to change the approach to conservation in Wales. There are calls amongst many owners to adopt a more flexible and less preservationist style. These arguments are often supported by calls to conserve energy and to adopt measures that will tackle climate change. I have always thought that consideration of options of least impact, facilitating change where possible and the adoption of a constructive approach to proposals is the best way to conduct 'conservation'. However there is a central tenet to conservation in my opinion and that is that there are occasions

when preservation is the imperative and so saying 'no' to change in these cases is justified. When the authenticity and specialness of our historic assets is threatened, this is often when protection measures are most justified. I often hear terms "well it's already been spoilt by ....." or "you allowed it (or didn't do anything about that.....)" and so further removal or loss of this and that is now ok". A line must often be established in conservation and the failure to 'draw the line' can often lead to complications, accumulative damage and more work!

Conservation areas such as Llandudno and Conwy and other designated areas that cover our market town etc, are also our great income generators. The economic argument to preserve the specialness of places has never been stronger.

However although many owners and stakeholders who 'sign up' to conservation by visiting these places for holidays etc they also have a different view when it comes to the control of their own properties. Without protection of comparatively rare historic assets there would be a rapid erosion of the quality and value of these items and areas. The approach of the Republic of Ireland to the protection of its historic environment is a lesson for us in Wales. It is true that special things are often unappreciated (and undervalued in monetary terms) until there are far fewer of them. Then it may be too late to reverse the trend.

I would say that current protection measures are needed now more than ever. There is a line for preservation beyond which conservation becomes an ever more difficult thing to sustain and it also gets ever more difficult to manage. Protection and management are essentially the same thing. Preservation needs management, as does change. Protection measures for listed buildings remain on the whole robust and there is a need for a system where change can be prevented if aspects of significance are threatened.

Statutory protective measures for conservation areas are not so robust however and the need to positively apply for additional controls is considered to be a weakness. There have been relatively few Article 4 Directions issued for conservation areas in Conwy County and the lack of these in respect of historic residential areas has resulted in significant loss of character. Once an area is eroded in this way, by minor inappropriate alterations, it is a very difficult task to regain authenticity and special character.

The compensation regime for Article 4 Directions has recently been changed to coincide with the English regulations. This is welcomed, but the vast majority of local authorities are very nervous about issuing Article 4 Directions and this increases their exposure to compensation. Where conservation character has been eroded there is greater risk of compensation being paid as residents increasingly apply for modern replacements when they see neighbouring properties already with modern replacements that were installed prior to the making of the Direction.

There needs to be a review of conservation area controls and the current statutory policy requirement to only preserve the character of designated areas. The Civic Trust for Wales and others have long highlighted the decline in the quality and distinctiveness of our conservation areas. The present test for development of merely needing to preserve existing character will make it harder for local authorities to regain the specialness of eroded designated areas. There should be provision for enhancing areas if this is identified as an objective in for instance a specific conservation area management plan.

Enforcement and statutory powers to achieve general repairs to listed buildings are commonly given low priority by local authorities. Planning enforcement sections are managed separately and the legislation itself particularly needs to be review and strengthened.

Controls over advertising within conservation areas are not fit for purpose. Circular 61/ 96 states that where authorities have pursued programmes to improve signage in partnership with local businesses and these have failed they may apply to make a Regulation 7 Direction. To my knowledge no Local Planning Authorities have applied for such a Direction and many commercial conservation areas are plagued by signs that fail to take the special character and appearance of an historic area into account.

The historic environment should ideally be treated in a holistic manner. There is encouragement to survey and identify Buildings of Local Importance (BLI's). Controls over alterations and partial or entire demolition of unlisted BLI's that are located outside conservation areas are weak and a new Heritage Protection Bill should look to address this deficiency.

Other parallel controls on ecclesiastical buildings are considered by many to be less rigorous than listed building consent controls exerted on non-church buildings. I would agree with the views of the Victorian Society who refer to the lack of a review of the system of Ecclesiastical Exemption (EE) in Wales. A recent case for radically altering a grade II\* listed church was considered by the Local Planning Authority and several other consultees as being inappropriate and damaging. The case was referred to the chancellor of the church whose judgement in allowing the proposals bore few references to establish conservation principles.

Protective controls are in many cases more straightforward to implement than exerting management measures. This latter area is often described by Local Planning Authority conservation staff as being more problematic. Because the limited numbers of local authority specialist conservation staff are in the main engaged in a high daily volume of reactive work, less time can be set aside for management. Yet the latter is the true test of the effectiveness of our controls. The greater appreciation and acceptance of historic area controls for instance is likely to make controls within designated areas more effective. However, little progress can be made in the area of engagement and awareness raising because of current levels of specialist resources. How many Welsh conservation areas have got up to date management plans? The answer is very very few. The majority of designated areas that have

management plans are those that were required as a condition of approval of a regeneration scheme such as the THI.

The proposed Heritage Protection Bill of the previous government made it clear that such proposals as the creation of conservation plans and management plans for listed buildings/ monuments could not be introduced due to shortages of resources in Wales compared to England.

It is my opinion therefore that it is the deficiencies in management of heritage assets that need to be addressed rather than contemplating radical modifications to legislation/ procedures.

The following management prescriptions could improve the effectiveness of controls as well as creating a more accepting and sympathetic environment for conservation: -

1. Conservation area management plans and local engagement.
2. World Heritage Site management plans and the formulation of policies for considering distant viewpoints and buffer zones etc.
3. Building at risk initiatives that include proactive measures to inform owners of the implications of listing and the importance of regular maintenance.
4. Local community engagement in the identification of BLI's and their ongoing monitoring and safeguarding and assistance in the appreciation of their local environment in holistic terms.

## **Question 2**

2. How well do the Welsh Government's policies promote the historic environment in Wales (for instance, in terms of interpretation of communities)?

## **Answer:**

The fundamental requirement for the historic environment must, in the first place, be to preserve and where possible enhance the special interest of our heritage assets. Without assets being authentic and in good condition policies for promotion would hardly be necessary and would struggle to succeed. A degraded historic environment is neither a cultural nor an economic asset.

The Welsh Government policies towards supporting sustainable development and tackling climate change have been impressive. However there needs to be an equally strong vision from government on achieving clear heritage goals. Cadw is widely perceived by local authority specialists as being under resourced and has in recent years prioritised their actions to ensure their own estate assets are safeguarded. At a time of financial constraints this is understandable. However we are in a period of increased pressure imposed on the historic environment with fewer funds to tackle damage and

degradation to vulnerable assets. (e.g. Conwy has several large and important listed country houses that are currently vacant and at high risk)

There is a need for Welsh Government to give a clear policy message that is accompanied by a vision of how important the historic environment matters in Wales. A national audit of the health of the nation's heritage assets would be a good start and would inform a much needed national action plan. (say of 5-10 year duration) The plan should focus on the five areas identified by the IHBC in their evidence and should facilitate improved collaborative working together with a increasing the capacity and involvement of the third sector in the aspects mentioned in the question.

The Built Heritage Forum has been one method that has brought dividends for mutual discussion on priority issues and the Forum is now providing more of a focus of integrating local authority and Cadw actions. However in my opinion there is still a lack of national vision and co-ordination of action could be much improved. There are compelling reasons to bring in these improvements however leadership and resource issues represent real drawbacks. There is currently nowhere near the critical mass of resources available to bring these improvements into play.

### **Question 3**

3. How well do the policies for the historic environment tie in with wider Welsh Government policy objectives (such as the regeneration of communities)?

#### **Answer:**

Again there is a strong message and steer from the Welsh Government in areas such as sustainable development etc. This is to be admired however there is not such a strong message being spelled out for the historic environment. Circular 61/96 is outdated in its guidance on many areas, not least in the guidance relating to historic assets and climate change issues. There is a perception that this means improvements for e.g. thermal upgrading and energy generation etc take priority. The balance between the objectives of other Welsh government policies and initiatives has not clearly been set out. This results in cases of significant anomaly and contention that must often be resolved at local level.

The impacts of policies and initiatives, including major funded projects, do not often appear to have been considered beforehand in relation to fragile historic assets. Furthermore the potentially damaging impacts of some initiatives/programmes such as 'ARBED' do not appear to have been scoped in relation to a more holistic architectural / heritage sensitivity.

Regeneration policy at a national level could be greatly improved to target economic and condition issues connected with the Welsh historic environment. The historic environment of Wales is predominantly of a

vernacular type and well dispersed. There are many conservation areas that are market towns and smaller rural settlements/villages with residential areas. These are excluded from strategic regeneration funding areas. Cadw does not co-ordinate its funding schemes with local authorities and vice versa. A pilot joint BAR initiative with Cadw in Conwy takes collaboration a little further but this could be greatly developed.

It is considered important that, where an area of strategic regeneration funding is identified, such as in Colwyn Bay, funds are not diverted prematurely elsewhere. This disrupts momentum and can negate the effects of previous investments.

#### **Question 4**

4. What would be the advantages and disadvantages of merging the functions of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales with the functions of other organisations, including Cadw.

#### **Answer:**

There would be theoretical advantages to a merge of functions. There are clear linkages and areas of common interest between RCAHMW and Cadw. However a merger of the two organisations raises concerns in practical terms. Cadw is undoubtedly increasingly under pressure to meet its obligations and wide ranging advisory demands.

There is a concern that a merger would place additional pressure on the research function of the RCAHMW. Nevertheless the promotional objectives of the two organisations clearly dovetail and if merging brings further opportunities to increase outputs this would be welcomed.

There would also be a concern amongst mid/ north Wales authorities that a physical merger would make the RCAHMW even less accessible to them.

Resources that are currently available to conservation organisations across the board are stretched. Collaboration is seen as a potential option to increase productivity. This view should be treated with caution in my opinion as specialist resources (those individuals with a high level of direct knowledge and experience of historic buildings and areas) are very limited in number.

#### **Question 5**

5. What role do local authorities and third sector organisations play in implementing the Welsh Government's historic environment policy and what support do they receive in this respect?

**Answer:**

Local authorities are the pivotal conservation organisation in Wales in terms of local objectives and actions. They play important statutory roles but also provide local stakeholders with information and advice about the historic environment. Local conservation teams have a wide ranging list of activities and these often provide the only such specialist expertise within an area that is free of charge. Stakeholders that are advised and supported include:

1. Owners of historic properties.
2. Businesses in conservation area etc.
3. Interest groups and local Civic Societies.
4. Politicians
5. Experts and practitioners.
6. The councils own needs as an owner etc of historic properties.

There are no national service delivery guide lines on the nature and extent of local conservation services and each unitary authority applies its own priorities and levels of resources to service provision. There are wide variations in staffing resources and the vision for local service delivery between different authorities. In the main local teams struggle to tackle the more strategic outputs of local conservation which invariably benefit the management of historic assets. I have mentioned some of these in answer to the first question.

Collaboration could improve the vision, consistency of service delivery and quality of advice and could possibly tackle much needed management issues however the shortage of expertise is a real potential obstacle to achieving these improvements. The north Wales officer collaboration report of 2009, the IHBC survey of conservation resources 2012 and the current work of the Simpson Compact are and will be useful references on the ability of existing resources to adapt to give better overall service.

Compartmentalisation is still a key drawback to progress. For instance the Simpson Compact will have two separate reports for planning and specialist conservation services.

The conclusion on present arrangements is that local authorities are potential best placed to work on the local management of historic assets. They have the ability and vision in many cases to provide a holistic service to the public and other agencies. However the existing teams are small, under continuous pressure and are often lacking in strategic and even corporate support. Vital areas such as galvanising community/ business engagement in local historic areas/ assets are beyond most teams at the moment. The objective is further impeded by the relative limited capacity of the third sector in Wales. Much work could be carried out by, Cadw, amenity bodies and local authorities to develop their roles, however there is no co-ordination, leadership over all sectors and resources to carry out effective management are currently virtually non-existent. These exercises need to commit resources over longer periods and they require on-going local leadership and support in order to

achieve self-sustaining conditions. Local authority is currently incapable of providing this in the majority of cases/ areas.

Collaboration may provide avenues for improvement however at the moment I have doubts as to whether there is adequate slack in the system to even begin to introduce and manage this type of initiative properly.

Having said this collaboration and integration of diverse services and organisations must be the way forward. Delegation of decision making to authorities must be the goal. However this must preferably be implemented in a way that ensures consistent standards and sound principles and policies (and a minimum requirement of resources) are achieved for each team afforded delegation. Collaboration can make this happen.

The sourcing and obtaining of funds to increase capacity say for community initiatives focused on raising awareness, knowledge and commitment to the architectural and historic environment and other regeneration schemes is going to be vital to the better management of these assets. Money spent in these areas will reduce the resources aimed at controlling and policing. Who is best placed to apply and use these funds? The third sector needs co-ordination or direction otherwise a quite chaotic situation could develop that would be characterised by conflict, rivalry, duplication of work, wasteful investment on task of lesser priority.

## Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

Thursday 19 July 2012

### Welsh Government Historic Environment Policy

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The purpose of this paper is to set out written evidence to the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee in relation to their enquiry on the Welsh Government's Historic Environment Policy.

#### 2. Summary

- 2.1. This paper outlines the importance of the Historic Environment to Welsh tourism and provides information on activity undertaken by my officials in Visit Wales and its partners to maximise the value of to the Historic Environment to the Welsh visitor economy.

#### 3. Welsh Tourism and the Historic Environment

- 3.1. Tourism is one of our key economic sectors, worth £4.7 billion to the Welsh economy each year; the historic environment is an important component of the sector.
- 3.2. Visitors are looking for distinctive, authentic experiences that allow them to get to know the real Wales. Visitor research shows that having a distinct, authentic Welsh experience is an important factor in influencing trip satisfaction. Our culture and heritage are a core part of what makes Wales appealing to visitors, differentiating Wales and providing a reason to visit.
- 3.3. In terms of the historic environment, visitor encounters can be either generic i.e. architecture, character of towns and villages, sense of place or landscapes or specific such as visits to heritage attractions, museums, places of worship, heritage railways.
- 3.4. Visitor figures confirm that visits to heritage attractions are amongst the most popular activities undertaken by domestic visitors after general sight seeing/ relaxing. Visiting castles/ historic sites, heritage and interpretation centres and scenic railways are all relatively more popular on trips to Wales than to other parts of the UK.
- 3.5. In the 2011 visitor survey, 38% of domestic visitors cite visiting places of interest and historic sites as a motivating reason to visit Wales, whilst over a third of Overseas Visitors say that visiting historical sites and attractions is their *main reason* for visiting Wales. However, Wales as a destination, and its strong heritage offering, is relatively less well

known amongst international visitors and has a strong potential to drive additional visitor growth.

3.6. Visitor perceptions of Wales are strong for castles and industrial heritage including railways but our gardens and museums/ galleries are less well known. Overall, Wales suffers from a perception that although Wales is endowed with plenty of natural beauty, there is little else to see and do.

3.7. Castles and palaces are top on the list of things that overseas visitors want to see most when they come to Britain. In a recent VisitBritain survey, more than 10,000 foreign tourists were given a list of 18 things that can only be done in Britain and asked to pick the ones they'd like to do most. The top three choices were, in order of importance: to go on a tour of Welsh castles (34%), visit Buckingham Palace (32%) and stay the night in a Scottish castle (29.1%).

## **Visit Wales Activity**

### **4. Cross Departmental and partnership work**

4.1. My officials work through the Cultural Tourism Partnership to co-ordinate the work of partners involved in heritage, cultural and tourism development. The Partnership includes a mix of internal and external bodies and it aims to pool ideas for future action and to take forward joint projects.

4.2. My department co-ordinates a cross-departmental group that is looking to capitalise on the potential of the designation of Pontcysyllte World Heritage Site through promoting and developing a wider cultural offer in North East Wales.

4.3. In relation to European Funded projects, my officials chair and manages the Environment for Growth (E4G) Strategic Steering Group as well as the E4G Strategic monitoring and evaluation group. Cadw are active partners of both groups through the Heritage Tourism Project.

4.4. In addition, my department is represented on the Heritage Minister's Heritage Environment Group (HEG) and contributed to the research study undertaken into the economic Value of Historic Environment. The research estimated that the historic environment sector supports over 30,000 full time equivalent (FTE) jobs in Wales and contributes approximately £840 million to Wales' national gross value added (GVA), which is equivalent to 1.9% of Wales' total GVA.

## **5. Marketing**

- 5.1. Culture and heritage are an intrinsic part of the Wales visitor offer and therefore heritage tourism product features strongly across all of Welsh Governments' tourism marketing campaigns.
- 5.2. Since the majority of visitors to heritage attractions are casual and accidental heritage tourists, as opposed to culture and/or heritage being the main purpose of their trip, promoting the attractions to them in the right way is vital if they are to be captured. Marketing campaigns provide reasons to visit and top things to do whilst at the destination, increasingly focusing on social media and PR as well as more traditional advertising and direct marketing approaches.

## **6. Destination Management**

6.1. My department is encouraging the development and promotion of destinations through a destination management programme that is being rolled out across Wales. The destination management approach establishes effective public/private partnerships to identify priorities for improving the visitor experience at particular destination. The development of a destination's heritage assets has featured in many of the Destination Management Plans that have been prepared to date. Monmouthshire, for example, will be developing the following aspects of the visitor offer of the county towns and major villages:

- Castle interpretation and visitor facilities;
- Church and churchyard interpretation and visitor facilities;
- Museums;
- Heritage sites;

6.2. An interesting opportunity for the historic environment sector is how we enhance the experience of some of our heritage attractions/ towns. There is scope to further develop and improve focal heritage towns that have a critical mass of heritage attractions to improve their overall appeal to visitors.

## **7. Capital Investment**

7.1. Through the Tourism Investment Support Scheme (TISS), my department is able to support projects to improve facilities at heritage sites and attractions that contribute to the overall appeal of a destination to visitors. Recent examples of projects that have been funded through this scheme include:

- Cardiff Castle - £25k to restore the view at the entrance to the castle

- Silver Mine Attractions Ltd , Mid Wales - £50k to upgrade all of the existing mines, exhibits and facilities.
- Oystermouth Castle - £238k to help realise a 'conserved heritage attraction with full public access' (part of wider Heritage Tourism project led by Cadw)
- Pontsystyllte Aqueduct - £50k to extend and upgrade a visitor interpretation centre, together with related infrastructure works, at Trevor Basin, in support of the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site.

## **8. Interpretation**

8.1. Assisting visitors to understand or interpret the story relating to a place is key to the overall visitor experience particularly at heritage attractions. Digital means are increasingly being utilised to bring sites to life. Moving and interactive elements assist learning, enhance the overall experience and widening the appeal. Digital interpretation (mobile information/ augmented reality/ self guided tours etc) can be very effective method used along side more traditional written methods, first person interpretation and re-enactment.

8.2. My department is supporting the development of digital interpretation at heritage sites and attractions via the European Funded Digital Tourism Business Framework for example using video gaming technology to enhance the visitor experience at key cultural heritage and tourism sites.

## **9. Future direction for Welsh Tourism**

9.1. The Tourism Sector Panel is currently undertaking a review of the Welsh Government's Tourism Strategy. The review will, in part, be informed by new consumer research that has been recently commissioned to investigate the key barriers and opportunities to visiting Wales by UK tourists. This research will help inform how we promote our historic environment alongside other tourism products in our future tourism activity.

**Edwina Hart, Minister for Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science**

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Our ref: PT/SMH

Ask for: Peter Tyndall

Your ref:



01656 641150

Date: 6 July 2012



The Chair  
Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
CARDIFF  
CF99 1NA

Dear Chair

**Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee – 5 July 2012**  
**Item 6 – Consideration of annual report by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales 2011-12**

Thank you for the opportunity to give evidence to the Committee on my Annual Report for the year 2011/12. I welcomed being able to discuss the work of my office and I hope that Committee Members found this useful.

As you are aware, time was against us at the meeting and I, therefore, gave an undertaking to provide a written answer in respect of the question asked about the Advisory Panel which I have established.

I have now completed the recruitment process for the Panel and the first meeting will be taking place on Wednesday, 11 July. Those appointed to the Panel are:

- Mr Ceri Stradling (who has also been appointed as the Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee) – former Senior Partner with the Wales Audit Office.
- Mrs Jan Williams – former Chief Executive, Cardiff & Vale University Health Board.
- Mr John Williams – former Director of Social Services, Conwy County Borough Council.
- Mr Bill Richardson – who will join the Panel in September when he retires from his current role as Deputy Chief Executive at the office of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman.

I took the decision to form the Panel having undertaken a review of governance arrangements of other ombudsmen schemes, where similar arrangements are in place in some cases. I saw that there were real benefits to be obtained from having an external perspective in the development of strategy and practice. The role of the Advisory Panel is provide me with support, advice and challenge in providing leadership and good governance of my office of the PSOW.

I feel very fortunate that I was able to appoint such high calibre, well respected people to the Panel and I look forward to working with them in the future. Their combined breadth of experience across the public sector and of other ombudsmen schemes will enable them to support me in the further development of the services that I am able to offer.

Oversight of financial controls and risk management of the office remains with the Audit & Risk Committee. The Committee assists me in my Accounting Officer responsibilities by ensuring that the assurance I receive is comprehensive and reliable and that the public money for which I am accountable is utilised in an effective and compliant manner.

Finally, should the Committee find it useful, I would welcome further opportunities to present evidence to its meetings in the future.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Tyndall', written in a cursive style.

Peter Tyndall  
Ombudsman