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# Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

## Inquiry into the Welsh Government's Historic Environment Policy Response from Battlefields Trust



Registered UK Charity: 1017387

Company No: 2786730

[www.battlefieldstrust.com](http://www.battlefieldstrust.com)

*Dedicated to the preservation, interpretation and presentation of  
battlefields*

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21 June 2012

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

Dear Committee Clerk,

### BATTLEFIELDS TRUST'S RESPONSE TO THE INQUIRY INTO THE WELSH GOVERNMENT'S HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT POLICY

The Battlefields Trust is most grateful for the opportunity to make some comments on this Inquiry at this early stage.

The Battlefields Trust (BT) is a UK charity (Registered No. 1017387, [www.battlefieldstrust.com](http://www.battlefieldstrust.com)) founded in 1991 whose aims are to save battlefields from destruction by motorways, housing developments etc., provide a range of battlefield-related activities and information, including the quarterly journal 'Battlefield', battlefield walks and conferences, liaise with local and national organisations to preserve battlefields for posterity and improve the interpretation and presentation of battlefields. We work closely with English Heritage and Historic Scotland. We also work with the Welsh Battlefields Society. We have a North West and [Welsh] Marches Region which may be responding separately and with more detailed comments on the situation in Wales.

At present battlefields as such enjoy no separate registration, recognition or protection in Wales, and the Trust hopes that the outcome of your Inquiry may be to grant this status in some way.

In England English Heritage maintains a Register of 43 battlefields, and inclusion on this Register makes the battlefield a material consideration in any planning considerations. This affords at least some English battlefields recognition if no protection as such. In Scotland Historic Scotland (HS) has recently introduced an Inventory of historic battlefields. The level of protection is no greater than in England, but the system is more flexible and dynamic and HS is currently consulting on extending its Inventory. This situation was partly created by the English Register being an exercise conducted in haste in response to some immediate serious threats to then unrecognised heritage assets – especially what is often seen as England's second most important battlefield at Naseby (1647). The Trust hopes that the Welsh Government will be able to institute more measured and considered provisions in Wales.

You have posed five questions, but because there is no statutory protection for battlefields in Wales at present, they largely do not apply to them for the time being. The Trust, though, would like to offer some more general observations that we hope can inform the Inquiry.

The Trust is concerned in England that there is a disconnect between different government departments and their policies that can prejudice battlefields. An example is at the battlefield of Shrewsbury (1403), which is also an important battle in Welsh history even though fought in England. This is a significant battle, important for English and Welsh history and writ large in Shakespeare. Local landowners and enthusiasts have preserved the battlefield and provided interpretation and a visitors' centre there. This is an important local and national heritage, educational and economic (in terms of tourism) resource. In another part of government, however, the highest priority for the area has been seen as a refuse incinerator that will prejudice the setting of the battlefield and the viability of the visitors' centre. The local authority decision to refuse permission for the incinerator was overturned by the Minister responsible for planning decisions in Westminster. Thus the parts of English government responsible respectively for heritage, planning policies and economic regeneration have been working at cross purposes. This episode goes to the heart of several of your questions and the Trust hopes that what happened at Shrewsbury can be a lesson learned in Wales.

The Trust asks the Welsh Government to give proper recognition to the importance of tourism in terms of people visiting battlefields. It is an important driver of economic regeneration as well as a cultural and educational asset in its own right. Too often in England (and potentially in Scotland) tourism is dismissed as icing on the cake and a less important consideration than – say – green energy, even though the latter creates no longer term local income and employment streams.

There are many battlefields in Wales that are significant for the national history and identity of the country (e.g. Pilleth, 1402). To lose them to uncritical development undertaken in ignorance of heritage issues would be a sad loss and one that diminished the nation.

Lastly, you might like to consult colleagues in Scotland on their perception of what has happened – and may happen – at the battlefield of Bannockburn (1314). This is the defining battle for Scottish history and identity, but the battlefield is at risk of being completely lost piece meal for technical reasons.

The Trust would be happy to put our experience and expertise at your disposal and work with the Welsh government on the development of battlefield identification and protection – as we have with the Scottish government recently. If there is further information or evidence (written or in person) we can provide, do please let us know.

Yours faithfully,

Peter Burley, National Coordinator