

# Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee Inquiry into the Welsh Government's Historic Environment Policy Response from Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust

## INQUIRY INTO THE WELSH GOVERNMENT'S HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT POLICY

### RESPONSE BY THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

#### About the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust

The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust is one of the four Welsh Archaeological Trusts established in the mid 1970s that are involved with the identification, management and interpretation of all aspects of the Welsh historic environment. In order to enable it to carry out its activities the Trust receives project funding from public and private sector bodies, including the Welsh Government departments (principally Cadw), the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales, local authorities, and public and private developers. As a charitable company, the Trust's principal object is the education of the public in archaeology.

#### Consultation Questions

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

In comparison with other parts of the United Kingdom the current systems employed by the Welsh Government for protecting and managing the historic environment are broadly appropriate and reasonably successful in achieving their aims. As noted in the independent report on the *Welsh Historic Environment Assessment Exercise* (2011), recently commissioned by the Welsh Government, a particular strength of the arrangements for protecting and managing the historic environment in Wales is the unique partnership that has evolved between public bodies and independent heritage organisations such as the Welsh Archaeological Trusts. The introduction of a Heritage Bill provides an opportunity to streamline and strengthen this synergy. To be successful, it is vitally important that the opportunity is taken to make this provision more transparent in certain respects, especially at local and regional levels. Something which we feel would contribute to this objective would be the creation of a single category of historical assets to replace the current multiplicity of statutory and non-statutory designations (Listed Buildings, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Historic Landscapes, Parks and Gardens Registers etc) which can cause uncertainty and confusion in the minds of members of the general public and sometimes even amongst professionals in other allied sectors.

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

Cadw in particular has taken a lead role in recent years in devoting greater attention to the promotion of the historic environment of Wales. This has involved successful

collaborations with a wide variety of other bodies, including local authorities and third sector organisations. We are less informed on the question of the economic success of the Welsh Government's policies in terms of tourism, but in our view the renewed emphasis on promoting the historic environment of Wales through initiatives such as those relating to historic landscapes, monuments and community awareness, are already beginning to pay dividends in terms of greater consciousness and involvement in historic environment issues, especially at a local level.

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

Historic environment issues touch upon a wide range of Welsh Government policy objectives including, for example, economic regeneration, social inclusion, local distinctiveness, tourism, education, health and well-being, and the natural environment. It is disappointing to note, however, that on occasion little more than lip-service is paid to the historic environment by some other sectors. This is exemplified by the absence of any reference to historic environment issues in the recent consultation paper for the Environment Bill.

- *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?*

The current vibrancy of the Welsh historic environment sector is in no small measure due to the complementary roles played by public, third sector and independent sector organisations. For the continuing benefit of the people of Wales it is vitally important, especially in the current economic climate, that the roles played by these bodies as well as the skills and expertise of their staffs are safeguarded. Assuming that the transition can be appropriately managed, there may be more advantages than disadvantages in merging the functions of Cadw and the Royal Commission. This would potentially offer the prospect of streamlining and strengthening the Welsh Government's provision for the historic environment and provide an opportunity for creating a single, more distinctive, and even more effective champion for the historic environment sector in Wales.

- *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?*

As we have noted above, the effectiveness and current successes of the historic environment sector in Wales is due to the complementary roles played by public and independent bodies and the continuing dialogue between them. Local authorities and third sector organisations such as the Welsh Archaeological Trusts play a vital role in supporting and delivering the Welsh Government's historic environment at a community and regional level throughout Wales.