

Inquiry into the Welsh Government's Historic Environment Policy
Response from Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

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TRUST

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26th June 2012

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

Dear Sir/Madam

Consultation: Inquiry into the Welsh Government's historic environment policy

Thank you for your letter of 31 May inviting us to respond to this consultation. I include below a brief summary of our role and the work we undertake within the Welsh historic environment before offering a response to your questions.

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust is a non-profit making educational charity and a private limited company. The Trust was established in 1975 as part of a network of four Welsh archaeological trusts covering the whole of Wales. The object for which the Trust is established, as stated in its *Memorandum and Articles of Association* is to advance the education of the public in archaeology. Our objective is to improve the understanding, conservation and promotion of the historic environment within north-west Wales. We employ some 20 staff to undertake this work, and have a financial turnover of approximately £900K.

We advise the local authorities on heritage matters, both on a case basis and at a strategic level. We maintain the regional Historic Environment Record which provides the fundamental resource for the provision of advice, but which is also available for consultation by the public. We also advise the Welsh Government and other organisations, including Forestry Commission and Environment Agency, on the impact of proposals on the historic environment.

We undertake a wide range of archaeological work for public and private bodies, including archaeological excavation, survey and publication. This work makes a valuable contribution to our understanding and knowledge of the historic environment.

The Trust encourages an active volunteer policy which introduces and engages the community with their past. We also promote the historic environment through a range of activities including talks, guided walks, study days, leaflets and publications. We have developed a close relationship with schools within the area, and provide a complimentary service to help teachers and pupils understand the significance of their heritage.

Cadeiryddes/Chair - Yr Athro/Professor Nancy Edwards, B.A., Ph.D, F.S.A.
Prif Archaeolegydd/Chief Archaeologist - Andrew Davidson, B.A., M.I.F.A.

Mae Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd yn Gwmni Cyfyngedig (Ref Cof. 1180515) ac yn Elusen (Rhif Cof. 508849)
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust is both a Limited Company (Reg No. 1180515) and a Charity (Reg No. 508849)



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

The statutory protection of the historic environment is led by Cadw on behalf of the Welsh Government who, with the Unitary Local Authorities, are responsible for identifying and designating scheduled ancient monuments, listed buildings, conservation areas, parks and gardens, historic landscapes and wrecks. Enhancement and monitoring of the schedule, lists and registers is regularly undertaken, and buildings and monuments at risk are monitored. The results published in the successive *Welsh Historic Environment Position Statements* would suggest the current system is generally successful, though with some room for improvement. However this system has grown from the late 19th century when the Schedule was first established and this is a timely opportunity to look at streamlining the process. The advantages of a single designation (a unified register) were comprehensively examined in 2007 in advance of the former proposed heritage bill, and such a system could provide a clear, transparent and sustainable method of protecting designated sites. The advantages such a system would bring should be re-examined in the light of the forthcoming Heritage Bill.

However only a very small part of our heritage is designated, and it is equally important to manage the undesignated sites and landscapes, which often play a significant role in identifying community and place within Wales. The planning system has a vital role to play in the protection and management of this part of the historic environment, and the Welsh Archaeological Trusts are grant aided by Cadw and the Local Authorities to advise the Planning Authorities on the archaeological implications of planning applications and on wider policy issues. The Historic Environment Records (HER's) provide the necessary underpinning of this system, and the support and maintenance of these records is essential for the system to function effectively. The provision of heritage advice in this manner provides an efficient, comprehensive and consistent service; it is the envy of our English counterparts, and would benefit from being formalised within the legislative process.

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)?

Whilst *Planning Policy Wales* (Chapter 6 Conserving the Historic Environment) makes little reference to promotion of the historic environment, the key actions in *Programme for Government*, include 'widening access to our culture, heritage and sport, and encouraging greater participation', and this approach is further emphasised in the 'Aims and Priorities for the Welsh historic environment sector' as set out in the *Ministerial Priorities for the Historic Environment of Wales*. The Cadw led initiatives such as the Welsh Cultural Heritage Initiative, the Heritage Tourism Project and the All-Wales interpretation Plan should make a major contribution to this area. Similarly the RCAHMW has made a significant contribution through publication, broadcasting and other events. The four Welsh Archaeological Trusts, both through grant-aid from Cadw and other resources, have provided considerable regional initiatives to promote these policies.

How well do the policies for the historic environment tie in with wider Welsh government policy objectives?

Certain themes and policies, such as sustainability, economic growth and a fairer society, underpin the present *Programme for Government*; however despite this there is little evidence for tie-in between different areas of government. Heritage, though it runs across many areas, is only mentioned in Chapter 12 (The Culture and Heritage of Wales), despite the positive contribution it can make to the economy, and its importance in strengthening community values. The lack of inclusion of heritage policies in the Green Paper *Sustaining a Living Wales* is a typical example, though this will hopefully be addressed in the final paper.

What would be the advantages and disadvantages of merging the functions of the RCAHMW with the functions of other organisations, including Cadw?

The RCAHMW has made a very significant contribution to the recording and interpretation of the Welsh historic environment since its formation in 1908, and in more recent years has worked hard to disseminate this to a much wider audience through publication and through digital and broadcasting media. They have a national role in developing and promoting understanding of the archaeological, built and maritime heritage of Wales, and are the curator of the national monument record. These core functions should be retained within any future model.

A merger with Cadw has the potential to save costs, though it is difficult to see how the NMR could easily be managed from within Welsh Government, and perhaps a merger of this section of the organisation with the NLW or NMW should be considered. However, there would be inherent dangers in this approach, as a split from related archaeological services could result in the record becoming increasingly static and difficult to maintain.

A merger resulting in a single national body could provide the opportunity to streamline national resources devoted to the protection, management and interpretation of the Welsh historic environment. Such a body would have the expertise and resources to carry out the policies of the Welsh Government in an effective manner. There is a danger, however, that expertise and potential or existing research initiatives may be lost in such a merger.

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.

The Local Authorities are responsible for implementing planning policy at a regional level. This includes the need to provide advice and information on heritage matters to inform regional planning policy and planning decisions. Building Conservation Officers provide this advice within Local Authorities for listed buildings and conservation areas, whilst the Welsh Archaeological Trusts are the major providers of advice on archaeological matters. Cadw provides grant aid to the Trusts for the provision of pre-determination advice on planning applications, and for strategic advice on

policies and guidelines. A formal agreement exists between the Trust and relevant Local Authorities, who fund the Trusts to undertake monitoring of archaeological mitigation following determination of individual applications. The Historic Environment Record underpins this work, and maintenance of this is funded through RCAHMW. However the funding for both post-determination planning advice and HER maintenance is insufficient to provide a comprehensive service. In the case of HER maintenance the Welsh Archaeological Trusts contribute by using their own resources raised for charitable purposes, but this method of support is not necessarily sustainable.

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust is able to provide a wide programme of events which involve local communities, and enable and encourage local volunteers to participate in heritage projects. This work is mirrored on a regional basis by the other three Welsh Archaeological Trusts. The Trust also runs projects with local schools, and provides training for teachers. A part of this work is funded through grant-aid from Cadw, but a significant part is funded from the Trust's own resources as part of its charitable aims. Funds are raised through grants and commercial activities and allocated to community and outreach projects, many of which are run with other organisations as partnership projects.

We believe the success of the current system lies within the balanced delivery achieved through the combination of government bodies, local authorities and third sector organisations. The latter operate particularly effectively at a regional level, and organisations such as the Welsh Archaeological Trusts are able to play a crucial role in implementing the historic environment policies of the Welsh Government.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Andrew Davidson', written in a cursive style.

Andrew Davidson
Chief Archaeologist