



CELG(4) HIS 36

## Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

### Inquiry into the Welsh Government's Historic Environment Policy

#### Response from Dyfed Archaeological Trust

Dear Sir,

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

Thank you for your letter of 31 May 2012 and the opportunity to contribute to your inquiry. This contribution is from the Dyfed Archaeological Trust.

The Dyfed Archaeological Trust is a non-profit making educational charity and a private limited company. The Trust was established in 1975 as part of network of four independent archaeological organisations covering the whole of Wales. The object for which the Trust is established (in its *Memorandum and Articles of Association*) is to advance the education of the public in archaeology. The Trust's mission statement is: to improve the understanding, protection and promotion of the historic environment and maintains a strong regional commitment to southwest Wales. Longer practice details of the Trust are attached to the end of this letter.

Below are the responses to your five questions:

#### **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 legislation, supporting guidance, and registers provide adequate protection and management of the historic environment in Wales. However, the legislation and other documentation is somewhat dated and would benefit from updating to suit the 21<sup>st</sup> century Welsh political, social and economic landscape. The plethora of legislation and supporting documentation can also be confusing; simplification would benefit all users. We therefore welcomed in principle the proposals included in the Draft Heritage Protection Bill of 2008.

Historic Environment Records (HERs), managed by the four Welsh Archaeological Trusts, are essential for the effective management of the historic environment, but currently are not a statutory tool. We would welcome proposals that would strengthen the position of HERs.

During the last Government the development of the *Welsh Historic Environment Strategic Statement* and associated action plan provided clear work programmes for Cadw and the RCAHMW and some of their partners, and demonstrated how the Welsh Government's statutory duties and non-statutory ambitions were to be delivered. The

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*Welsh Historic Position Statement* demonstrated how these duties and ambitions had been successfully achieved, and by extension the success of these elements of the Welsh Government's systems.

Looking at the organisation systems, then the short answer to question is that they are appropriate and successful, but as with all systems they would benefit from review and adjustment where appropriate. The Cadw-commissioned *Welsh Historic Environment Assessment Exercise* of 2011 gave the organisation systems a general clean bill of health. The Assessment noted several areas of overlap between organisations involved in protecting and managing the historic environment, but also noted that overlap does not necessarily mean duplication, and that some things are best done at a local/regional level and others at a national level. Clearly at the interface careful coordination is required to forestall the risk of duplication rather than mutually complementary activities and functions. This is why close coordination between Cadw, the RCAHMW, the four Welsh Archaeological Trusts (and others where appropriate) has recently been strengthened.

## **2. How well do the Welsh Government's policies promote the historic environment in Wales?**

Promotion of the historic environment is an important element of Welsh Government thinking, and has become an increasingly strong element over the past six-seven years. However, this is not reflected in the *Programme for Government* document, which has little specific on the promotion of the historic environment.

Promotion of the historic environment features more prominently in *the Ministerial Priorities for the Historic Environment of Wales* and the 'Everyone will be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment' section of Cadw's *Conservation Principles*. These documents allude to a wide-ranging and inclusive programme of works, the implementation of which will successfully promote the historic environment. However, greater promotion of the historic environment in relation to economic regeneration (e.g. the conservation and re-use of historic buildings and structures), social and physical well-being (promoting the historic environment as being fundamental to a sense of place and community) and as a significant tourism resource is needed.

## **3. How well do the policies for the historic environment tie in with wider Welsh Government policy objectives?**

In some areas there is some tie in, such as the inclusion of an historic environment element in the Glastir agri-environment scheme. Historic characterisation also has the potential to contribute to the regeneration of urban landscapes. However, there does seem to be a lack of acknowledgement of the potential importance of the historic environment in many of the Welsh Government's objectives. For instance, in the document 'Programme for Government' the only place that 'heritage' is mentioned is in 'Chapter 12: The Culture and Heritage of Wales', despite the fact the Cadw's Heritage Tourism Project has the potential to deliver some of the tourism aspirations set out in Chapter 1. The absence of any mention of the historic environment in the Environment Bill consultation paper is the cause of great concern, and reflects a lack of joined-up thinking within the Welsh Government.

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

One of the advantages of merging the functions of the RCAHMW with other organisations is the potential for administrative and other overhead savings; these could be an almost immediate gain, a positive factor in these times of financial austerity. Merging some of the functions with Cadw may also allow Cadw to take more direct control of the delivery of the policies of the Welsh Government.

Important things could be lost, especially some of the highly skilled and experienced RCAHMW staff and some of the 'research' elements of the Commission's national role. Splitting the current functions of the Commission between different organisations could lead to a loss of symbiosis between its record/archive function and its survey and investigation function. There is also a danger that the record could 'fossilise' with little or new material being inputted.

The issues of overlap/duplication and the possible merging of records held by different organisations were addressed in the 2011 Welsh Historic Environment Assessment Exercise. The RCAHMW holds the National Monuments Record (NMR), the four Welsh Archaeological Trusts hold the Historic Environment Records (HERs) and Cadw hold records mostly for statutory purposes. The records serve very different purposes. The Welsh Historic Environment Assessment Exercise recommended the integrated management of records, essentially the merging of some functions. Implementing such a recommendation would benefit the historic environment and by extension the people of Wales, but the short- to medium-cost of achieving it would be considerable, perhaps unacceptably so in the current financial climate, and overcoming technical and operational problems would not be a quick process. There may also be some savings in adopting a single software platform for the management of records, but this would have to follow a detailed cost-benefit analysis of all the current systems.

#### **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?**

Many third sector organisations assist in implementing the Welsh Government's historic environment policy. However, as we are not aware of the level of support they receive, we will limit our response to the role of the Welsh Archaeological Trusts and their relationship with local authorities, with an emphasis on the Dyfed Archaeological Trust.

Local authorities implement the Welsh Government's historic environment policy through planning, and some maintain local museums, record offices and other facilities. Some local authorities employ conservation officers, archivists and museum officers, but other than these they have little in the way of historic environment expertise and rely on the external support mainly provided by the four Welsh Archaeological Trusts.

The Welsh Archaeological Trusts, as third sector organisations, make valuable contributions to the protection, management and promotion of the historic environment, all of which assists in implementing the Welsh Government's historic environment policy.

The Trusts receive Cadw grant-aid for projects that comply with Cadw's guidance documents for grant aid. In the current financial year the Dyfed Trust will receive £284,867 Cadw grant-aid, plus a small contingency grant, if appropriate. Grant-aid is

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project based – the Trusts receive no core funding – and is generally directed towards the protection and management of the historic environment. Individual sites and monuments are investigated, but only where a clear threat to site can be demonstrated and where no other source of funding for investigation is available. Opportunities are always taken for public participation during these investigations. Within these constraints, a wide range of projects is undertaken. For instance, regarding protection and management, over the past twenty years all archaeological sites and monuments in Wales from the earliest prehistoric period to the medieval period have been assessed (in most cases visited) and recommendations made for statutory protection as Scheduled Ancient Monuments. Wales is probably the first country to have achieved this remarkable feat. Where appropriate these surveys were regionally based, but when required the four Trusts adopted a coordinated approach to ensure consistency of the assessment record and of the recommendations to Cadw. Records created during the assessments were fed into the four regional Historic Environment Records (HERs), managed by the four Trusts.

The four regional HERs are a key tool for recording the on-going processes of understanding and interpretation, and are vital for the protection, management and promotion of the historic environment in Wales. As a publicly accessible resource used by communities to explore their heritage the record is also built upon by community generated information. Comprising documents, drawings, photographs and an increasingly important digital element, the HERs are the most complete record of archaeological sites, monuments and other heritage assets in Wales. All four regional HERs have passed the Stage 1 benchmark as defined by the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers, four of only a handful of HERs to have done so in the UK.

The four Archaeological Trusts receive grant-aid from the RCAHMW to manage and maintain the HERs. The Dyfed Trust receives grant-aid sufficient to employ a HER manager for approximately 0.75 of a year. In addition, data collected during Cadw grant-aided and other-funded projects (including commercial projects) are added to the HER by Trust staff. In order to efficiently manage and improve the digital HERs the four Welsh Archaeological Trusts have collaborated in order to develop (and continue to develop) a HER software package. Through this system HER data can be viewed by the public online at [www.archwilio.org.uk](http://www.archwilio.org.uk). This robust and efficient system was developed out of the Trusts' surpluses generated through their commercial work.

The Trusts act as archaeological/historic environment advisors to local authorities, in particular to planning departments. Part of the Cadw grant-aid to the Trusts supports this role, supplemented in the case of Dyfed by funds from Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire County Councils, and from the Pembrokeshire Coast and Brecon Beacons National Park Authorities. In total funds received are sufficient for the Dyfed Trust to employ c.1.7 FTE planning archaeologists. Planning advice is a key element in the effective management and protection of the historic environment of Wales.

All four Trusts carry out commercial work, some of which arises out of the planning system. Although this type of work is aimed primarily at the management and protection of the historic environment, the Trusts always seek opportunities to maximise the promotional potential of commercial projects. This can be quite low key, such as providing tours around a site to the local community, but can involve

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substantial community participation and extensive promotion through radio, the local press and social media. It is the surpluses made through commercial work that allows the Trusts to help promote the object for which they were established.

The object for which the Trusts are established is to advance the education of the public in archaeology, and although this can be achieved in many different ways, the Trusts see outreach and public participation as a key means of delivering this object. Only a small proportion of the Cadw grant to the Dyfed Trust is dedicated to outreach (£15,119 in 2012-13). Maximum use of this is made by seeking opportunities to use it as match-funding and by organising events and activities in partnership with other organisations. The Dyfed Trust also takes the opportunity to engage with communities and others in other Cadw grant-aided projects such as excavations and surveys, and is always investigating the potential for using the Cadw grant as match-funding to other grant-awarding organisations. The Dyfed Trust has been particularly successful over the past few years in obtaining grant-aid from a wide range of organisations to undertake projects in which public participation has been an important element.

Yours faithfully

K Murphy  
Chief Executive Officer

### Dyfed Archaeological Trust: Practice Details

Based in Llandeilo, Carmarthenshire, Dyfed Archaeological Trust is an independent organisation dedicated to the effective protection, investigation, recording and promotion of the historic environment. Whilst retaining a strong regional commitment, the Dyfed Archaeological Trust offers professional services over a wide area, both within Wales and beyond. Dyfed Archaeological Trust was established in 1975 as part of a comprehensive network of four archaeological organisations covering the whole of Wales. It is constituted as a Private Limited Company and as a Registered Charity. Its membership provides a source of wide-ranging academic and professional expertise in archaeology and related fields.

Dyfed Archaeological Trust is an Institute for Archaeologists Registered Organisation.

Organised into three main operating divisions: Field Services, Heritage Management and Central Services, Dyfed Archaeological Trust has a highly motivated professional workforce with a wide range of in-house skills and experience. This is complemented by long-established contacts and partnerships with external specialists and specialist

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organisations enabling the Trust to offer extensive consultancy and implementation services.

Field Services has investigated sites, complexes and landscapes of all periods from the prehistoric to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It operates in a wide range of environments – upland, lowland, urban, wetland, coastal and intertidal. Field Services undertakes large and small excavation projects and it has extensive experience in the survey and recording of buried remains, earthworks, standing buildings and other structures, and it has also undertaken numerous desk-top assessments, historical research projects and historic landscape characterisation programmes. Field Services frequently manages larger scale projects in partnership or association with other organisations. It has the ability to respond quickly and effectively to a variety of development demands: large scale commercial developments, major and minor road schemes, single or multiple housing schemes, afforestation, agricultural improvements, pipe laying and service developments, land reclamation schemes, and urban and rural regeneration projects.

The Heritage Management section maintains the regional Historic Environment Record for southwest Wales and, as a partner in the Extended National Database, provides an access point to a comprehensive index of sites and monuments throughout Wales. It also provides extensive information, research services and regional curatorial advice for a wide variety of users and has long established working relationships with national heritage agencies. This includes the provision of information and advice to the local planning authorities and other statutory authorities, agencies and private developers on the implications of development on the historic environment, and on the formulation of strategic policies and plans. Advice is also provided within broader schemes such as Welsh Assembly Government agri-environment schemes. Heritage Management have a growing outreach programme including the development of new and innovative methods of working with local communities to develop the potential of their historic environment.

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