

Inquiry into the Welsh Government's Historic Environment Policy  
Response from F. Alan Aberg

**Heritage Bill, Wales. Consultation Questions**

1) The present provision is between museums, CADW and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, although the National Library can claim an advisory role on archive standards. At present the division seems to work smoothly with CADW carrying out its executive role for protection and conservation relatively efficiently, although it might seek to do more to protect monuments in the underwater zone and extend its public image. There is a scheme for people to join CADW as members but it is not promoted as effectively as that of English Heritage or the National Trust and the benefits of membership are not particularly attractive. The Royal Commission remains the most admired heritage organisation because of its maintenance of the National Monuments Record, high standards of survey for monuments and buildings and the aerial photography programme. CADW cannot open its records to the public because of confidential issues with private landowners and house owners, but the Royal Commission does provide a reassuring service for the people of Wales under the expert guidance of its Commissioners. The National Library provides appropriate advice on record storage and conservation to both organisations and I do not see its separate status is a hindrance to this co-operation.

2) All heritage organisations managed by the Welsh government have a web site and publish books on their research, survey and monuments in care. It is important I believe to maintain the level of record at the Royal Commission since CADW's records are basically for management guidance, while the Royal Commission's depth of survey provides more detailed and scholarly data, such as required by the Tourist Board or by submissions for World Heritage Status such as Blaenavon. Tourism should make more use of the National Monuments Record for monuments not in state care, and the Welsh government could do more to support awareness of this wonderful resource.

3) I believe more could be done to make the people of Wales aware of links with heritage for sustainable energy, and, although our legacy of watermills and windmills is limited, local communities should explore these as well as the large scale developments that attract all the headlines. It could help to regenerate local communities' use of their own resources. These facilities also have a tourist value which large wind farms do not.

4) I can see no advantage of merging the functions of CADW and the Royal Commission unless it can be proved there would be substantial cost savings. Relocating CADW to Aberystwyth or the Royal Commission to Nantgarw would, I suspect, involve considerable capital costs, and the expansion of the site at Nantgarw could rob the Welsh people of access to the National Monuments Record since public transport is so poor.

One loss to the Welsh people as a result of a merger would be the expert advice of the Commissioners. These give their scholarly services free of charge, and their absence would force the Welsh government into an increased use of consultants. Would we have needed a Chitty Report if we could have set up a panel of the Commissioners and members of the now defunct Ancient Monuments Board, which, chaired by a senior civil servant, could have provided a better overview. The breadth of opinion available from the Commissioners, drawn from academic and other institutions, could not be replaced in a merger with CADW.

The concept of a single historic environment record for Wales is an attractive one but I do not see that it cannot be accomplished by enhancement of the present National Monuments Record. CADW is responsible for legislation to protect and manage the heritage of Wales which means negotiations with land and property owners that must remain private. Any amalgamation would therefore prejudice

the availability of National Monuments Records since some records would not be in the public domain, and setting up the protocols for access could be complicated and expensive.

I do not think that the lessons from amalgamation of the Royal Commission for Historic Monuments of England with English Heritage are a good model. It has led to a loss of standards in survey, and there are instances when survey staff have been refused access to property because they are employed by a government department that is responsible for legislation which might restrict the rights of a private owner.

5) I assume that within this question we include in Wales the four archaeological trusts, although they are not local authority and the agencies or government organisations responsible for conservation in the marine and land environments.

The four archaeological trusts have an important role in implementing the Welsh government's historic environments policy, and in liaison with local authorities on development issues. Support should be continued and consideration might be given to allowing them responsibilities for conservation of protected monuments instead of CADW. I think CADW could also on an annual basis or other regular timetable meet the officers responsible for conservation issues within the local authorities as a means to implementing and improving government policies.

Within the National Parks CADW has successfully liaised with their officers, and the Welsh government should enlist the support of other environment agencies who do not always understand policies concerning the historic heritage. This is particularly important for the marine environment where discussions on ecological or fishery matters do not always take account of wrecks or other monuments under water. A policy might be developed with the Irish government and Northern Ireland to ensure total protection within the Irish Sea, comparable with that for the Baltic, and CADW might take a lead role in such an initiative.

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