



Cymdeithas Melinau Cymru

Welsh Mills Society

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

Dear Sir,

Inquiry into the Welsh Government's historic environment policy

I write in response to your invitation seeking views on the above.

The Welsh Mills Society is an active national society established in 1984 with the following aims: to study, record, interpret and publicise the wind and water mills of Wales; to encourage general interest; to advise on their preservation and use, and to encourage working millers. Membership of the Society is open to anyone with an interest in the above on payment of an annual subscription and members are involved in a range of voluntary activities. The Society aims to work with Cadw, the Royal Commission and the Welsh Archaeological Trusts to further the understanding and protection of historic mills throughout Wales and would like to improve and formalise these arrangements.

In relation specifically to wind and water mills, and more generally, to historic industrial monuments, we consider the Welsh Government needs to improve the current systems for protection and management. Current legislation is not well-suited to these types of structures and monuments which often consist of several individual components, such as the mill building itself and the leat or channel that carries the water to the waterwheel. The integrity of the mill is potentially compromised if one component is unprotected and at risk of destruction or alteration but this is frequently the case as the buildings are often listed but the leats are not. An additional issue for wind and water mills is that the machinery within the mill is of fundamental importance; the mill cannot function without it. Although listing

descriptions now include a note of the machinery, which is very welcome, many mills appear to be rejected for listing because the building itself is unremarkable architecturally, although the machinery may be particularly important technologically. The Society raised this point with the Head of Listing at Cadw some 10 years ago and received a verbal undertaking that all mills retaining most of their machinery would be accorded II* status in the 're-listing' programme, thus securing additional protection for the rapidly dwindling number of mills in this category. Unfortunately this appears to have been achieved for only a very few mills. In view of the particular importance of industry to the heritage of Wales we consider the Welsh Government should improve the legislation to, in effect, protect industrial *processes* rather than individual structures that often remain out of context in inappropriate settings.

The Society is keen to help with the management of the historic environment in relation to mills and has on many occasions responded to requests from local authorities for specialist advice. We have a good working relationship with the Royal Commission and are frequent users of the on-line Coflein service. Our own records and research are given to the Commission and held in the national archive and this in turn enhances the Coflein record. We consider the archive, on-line and outreach services provided by the Commission to be very effective in promoting the historic environment of Wales in totality as there are many sites of interest un-protected by legislation but which are identified, located and interpreted by the Commission.

We believe more can be done to tie policies for the historic environment in with wider policy objectives. For example, nurturing interest in the local historic environment and helping provide a sense of place are positive actions to aid the regeneration of communities and we feel we contribute to this ourselves through events such as the national mills open weekend.

We find it difficult to identify any advantages in merging the functions of the Royal Commission with the functions of other organisations, including Cadw. We are aware of the two recent reviews of the Royal Commission and the positive conclusions about the organisation and the wider context of the historic environment sector. It is difficult to understand, in view of these, why merger is even being considered. There would appear to be no significant cost savings unless functions which the reviews found necessary are cut and, in addition, there is the risk of significant disruption to the public services which we value highly. We also value being able to consult, and often work with, the expert staff at the Royal Commission and are concerned that this mutually beneficial arrangement might be removed by a merger.

Finally, as a third sector organisation, we consider we have a significant role in relation to historic mills through our specialist knowledge and we would welcome closer working with Cadw to match that which we enjoy with the Royal Commission and, increasingly, with the Archaeological Trusts.

Yours faithfully,



Gerallt D. Nash
Cadeirydd/Chairman