Setting of Historic Assets in Wales

May 2017
Statement of Purpose

Setting of Historic Assets in Wales explains what setting is, how it contributes to the significance of a historic asset and why it is important.

Setting of Historic Assets in Wales also outlines the principles used to assess the potential impact of development or land management proposals within the settings of World Heritage Sites, ancient monuments (scheduled and unscheduled), listed buildings, registered historic parks and gardens, and conservation areas. These principles, however, are equally applicable to all individual historic assets, irrespective of their designation. The guidance is not intended to cover the setting of the historic environment at a landscape scale. This is considered by separate guidance.¹

This best-practice guidance is aimed at developers, owners, occupiers and agents, who should use it to inform management plans and proposals for change which may have an impact on the significance of a historic asset and its setting. It should also help them to take account of Cadw’s Conservation Principles for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Wales (Conservation Principles) to achieve high-quality sensitive change.²

Decision-making authorities and their advisers should also use this guidance alongside Planning Policy Wales,³ Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment,⁴ Conservation Principles and other best-practice guidance to inform local policies and when considering individual applications for planning permission and listed building, scheduled monument and conservation area consent, including pre-application discussions.

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Cadw is the Welsh Government’s historic environment service, working for an accessible and well-protected historic environment.

Mae’r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

Fast Facts

Introduction

1 What is Setting?

2 When Should Setting be Assessed?
   2.1 Managing Historic Assets
   2.2 Submitting a Planning Application
   2.3 Listed Building, Scheduled Monument and Conservation Area Consent

3 Who Should Assess Setting?

4 How to Assess the Impact of Change or Development within the Setting of Historic Assets
   4.1 Stage 1: Identify the Historic Assets
   4.2 Stage 2: Define and Analyse the Setting
   4.3 Stage 3: Evaluate the Potential Impact of Change or Development
   4.4 Stage 4: Consider Options to Mitigate the Impact of a Proposed Change or Development
   4.5 Document the Assessment

5 Offsetting

6 Enhancing the Setting

Annex

Planning Applications within the Setting of a Scheduled Monument — Criteria Triggering Consultation with Cadw

References

Further Information

Contacts
Fast Facts

1. Setting is important to the way in which historic assets are understood, appreciated and experienced, and contributes to their significance.

2. Setting often extends beyond the property boundary of an individual historic asset into a broader landscape context. Intangible as well as physical factors can be important to understanding the setting of a historic asset. These may include function, sensory perceptions or historical, artistic, literary and scenic associations.

3. National planning policy encourages local planning authorities to take the settings of historic assets into account when preparing development plans and when determining planning applications.

4. When change or development is proposed, it is important to identify the historic assets that might be affected, define their setting and understand how that setting contributes to the significance of the historic assets.

5. If a proposed change or development is likely to have an impact on a historic asset and its setting, the applicant should prepare a proportionate and objective written assessment of that impact to inform the decision-making process.

6. Development proposals should aim to avoid any harmful impact on a historic asset and its setting.

7. It is good practice for applicants to discuss with their local planning authorities whether a planning application should include an assessment of the impact of the proposed development on the historic asset and its setting.

8. It is good practice to make the written report understandable to non-specialist readers. The applicant should lodge a copy of the report with the appropriate historic environment record.
Introduction

The historic environment is central to Wales’s cultural heritage and sense of identity. It is made up of a range of historic assets, including archaeological sites, ancient monuments, historic buildings, historic parks and gardens, historic landscapes and conservation areas. These components of the broader landscape and townscape of Wales may have been in use for many years and evolved over a considerable period of time.

The historic environment is a resource that we need to cherish and protect for future generations. Protection, however, need not prevent change. Positive change can increase the long-term sustainability and economic viability of historic assets. It can also bring improvements to our understanding and appreciation of the historic environment as well as social and economic benefits through increased regeneration and tourism. Together, these benefits will help create the Wales we want in the future by meeting the well-being goals set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. But change to the historic environment needs to be managed and the impact of change may extend well beyond individual historic assets, which is why we need to consider their settings.

1. What is Setting?

The setting of a historic asset includes the surroundings in which it is understood, experienced and appreciated, embracing present and past relationships to the surrounding landscape. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive, negative or neutral contribution to the significance of an asset.

Setting is not itself a historic asset, though land within a setting may contain other historic assets. The importance of setting lies in what it contributes to the significance of a historic asset.

Setting often extends beyond the property boundary of a historic asset and into the surrounding landscape or townscape. Although many historic assets are visible and their settings are obvious, those that are buried also have a setting.

The setting of a historic asset can include physical elements of its surroundings. These may be boundary walls, adjacent fields or functional and physical relationships with other historic assets or natural features. For example, the setting of a listed farmhouse might be its physical agricultural surroundings, both built and landscape features such as buildings, boundaries or fields. Equally, the setting of a scheduled industrial steam engine house might be its associated industrial landscape of quarries, tramways or waste heaps.

The setting of a historic asset can also include less tangible elements. These may include function, sensory perceptions or historical, artistic, literary and scenic associations.
Although views to and from a historic asset are often the most obvious factors, other sensory elements can also affect setting — for example, the noise from a road set in a cutting, noise intrusion from above such as aircraft or drones, or the sounds and smells of a new industrial process in an existing building. Such elements can be more subjective and more difficult to assess than physical factors, but might also contribute to the setting of a historic asset.

The setting of a historic asset is not fixed and may change through time as the asset and its surroundings evolve. These changes may have a negative impact on the significance of an asset; for example, the loss of the surrounding physical elements that allow an asset to be understood or the introduction of an adjacent new development that has a major visual impact. But changes can also have a positive impact that may enhance the setting, such as the removal of traffic from part of a historic town or the opening up of views, or the return of a sense of enclosure to sites where it has been lost.

In Wales, there is a published register of historic landscapes. These historic landscapes often form elements of the setting of individual historic assets. However, this guidance is not intended to cover the impact of change within the setting of the historic environment at a landscape scale. This is considered by separate guidance.

### Factors Contributing to the Setting of a Historic Asset

Setting describes the relationship of a historic asset to the surrounding landscape or townscape. Its importance lies in what it contributes to the significance of a historic asset. Setting may include a range of factors:

- functional and physical relationships with other structures/historic assets and how these have changed over time
- topographic features that influenced its location
- physical character of the surrounding landscape or townscape, including any formal design or land use
- the original layout of the historic asset and how this has changed
- potential buried or archaeological elements surrounding the historic asset
- views to, from and across the historic asset or place
- formal or planned vistas
- the prominence of the historic asset in views throughout the surrounding area
- views associated with the aesthetic, functional or ceremonial purpose of the asset; for example, defensive sites, beacons or designed landscapes
- historical, artistic, literary, place name, cultural or scenic associations might all contribute to the significance of a historic asset
- other sensory elements — noise or smell associated with the historic asset
- tranquillity, remoteness, ‘wildness’.
2. When Should Setting be Assessed?

2.1 Managing Historic Assets

It is good management practice to understand the setting of historic assets that you own or manage. The definition and analysis of the setting of a historic asset should be part of any statement of significance or conservation management plan. It is part of the baseline evidence that enables a full understanding of a historic asset and its significance. An assessment of setting is helpful whether or not a proposed change needs planning permission or other consents. Change can include repair, renewal, restoration and reconstruction, new work or alteration, and demolition.

2.2 Submitting a Planning Application

Applicants for planning permission should provide the local planning authority with sufficient, but proportionate, information to allow the assessment of the likely impact of proposals for development on a historic asset and its setting in:

- a World Heritage Site
- a nationally important ancient monument or archaeological remains (scheduled or unscheduled)
- a listed building
- a conservation area
- a registered historic park and garden.

Understanding the setting of a historic asset can help you to draw up appropriate development proposals. This process can be used to identify alternative approaches and lead to improvements in the planning and design of your proposals so that they minimise harm and maximise benefit to the significance of a historic asset and its setting. This information will help the local planning authority to understand the reasons for your proposals when they are determining your planning application.

Before you submit a planning application, it is good practice to discuss your proposal with the local planning authority and, where appropriate, with the Welsh Government’s Historic Environment Service (Cadw). At a pre-application discussion, you can find out whether a proposed development is likely to have an impact on the significance of a historic asset and its setting, and what assessment may be necessary.

The scale of an assessment needs to be proportionate and will be determined by the likely impact of the proposal. For proposals involving a minimum impact on a single asset, a simple checklist approach to the assessment with a short statement for each of the four stages described below may be sufficient. For projects involving multiple assets or changes considered likely to have a major impact on significance, a more detailed analysis will be necessary. Significance is explained more fully in Conservation Principles.

Certain types of development require an environmental impact assessment (EIA), which might include assessing the impact of a development on a historic asset and its setting.
Further information and advice about EIA can be found on the Welsh Government website.\textsuperscript{13}

Local planning authorities must consult Cadw on development proposals which in their opinion are within the setting of a scheduled monument (see Annex)\textsuperscript{14} or affect a registered historic park or garden or its setting, or likely to have an impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of a World Heritage Site.\textsuperscript{15}

2.3 Listed Building, Scheduled Monument and Conservation Area Consent

Setting is a consideration in applications for listed building, conservation area and scheduled monument consents. Your assessment of setting may form part of a heritage impact statement. For more information, see \textit{Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales} and \textit{Managing Change to Listed Buildings in Wales}.\textsuperscript{16}

3. Who Should Assess Setting?

For the purpose of planning applications — especially complex cases — the definition, analysis and assessment of the setting of a historic asset should be carried out by a qualified and competent expert.\textsuperscript{17}

For management purposes — such as the preparation of a conservation management plan — and depending on the complexity and extent of historic assets and their settings, owners or local groups may be able to analyse setting as set out in stages 1 and 2 below. However, for complex cases, it is advisable for a qualified and competent expert to carry out the analysis.

4. How to Assess the Impact of Change or Development within the Setting of Historic Assets

This section outlines the general principles that both assessors and decision makers should consider when assessing the impact of a proposed change or development within the setting of historic assets. Essentially, there are four stages.

\textbf{Stage 1}: Identify the historic assets that might be affected by a proposed change or development.

\textbf{Stage 2}: Define and analyse the settings to understand how they contribute to the significance of the historic assets and, in particular, the ways in which the assets are understood, appreciated and experienced.
Stage 3: Evaluate the potential impact of a proposed change or development on that significance.  

Stage 4: If necessary, consider options to mitigate or improve the potential impact of a proposed change or development on that significance.

4.1 Stage 1: Identify the Historic Assets

A key starting point is to look for existing information in the historic environment records (HERs) for each local authority area, which are curated by the Welsh archaeological trusts. Other sources of information include Cof Cymru — Cadw’s online record of national historic assets in Wales, the National Monuments Record of Wales and local record offices.

Where appropriate, various techniques can help identify which historic assets and settings may be affected by the proposed change or development. For example, zones of theoretical visibility (ZTV) can be particularly effective for large-scale or complex projects. Otherwise, a visual assessment from a range of viewpoints may be sufficient.

Stage 1 should:

• consider details of the location, size and scale of the proposed change or development
• consider the location of the identified historic assets
• where appropriate, include a plan overlaying the zone of theoretical visibility on the sites of the historic assets.

Stage 1 will help the assessor, the local planning authority and, where appropriate, Cadw, agree the level of analysis needed to determine the likely impact of the change or development within the settings of the historic assets. In large-scale or complex projects, stage 1 might result in a short written assessment allowing the scope of stages 2 and 3 to be agreed.

A conservation management plan for a historic asset should include any historic and natural features outside its boundary, but which are visible to or from the historic asset and may contribute to its significance.

4.2 Stage 2: Define and Analyse the Setting

The setting of a historic asset is made up of:

• its current surroundings
• our present understanding and appreciation of the historic asset
• what (if anything) survives of its historic surroundings.

Setting does not depend on public rights of way or current ability to access the asset or viewpoints, though these can contribute to the significance of a historic asset and its setting. Likewise, the number of visitors to a site or viewpoint does not affect the importance of the setting.
Stage 2 should identify the key factors relating to setting which contribute to the significance of each historic asset. Assessing significance is explained in more detail in Conservation Principles. Answering the following questions can help define the significance of the historic asset, which can assist the stage 3 evaluation of the potential impact of a proposed change or development within its setting.

- How do the present surroundings contribute to our understanding and appreciation of the historic asset today?

- Thinking about when the historic asset was first built and developed:
  - what were its physical, functional and visual relationships with other structures/historic assets and natural features?
  - what topographic or earlier features influenced its location?
  - what was its relationship to the surrounding landscape/streetscape?
  - was it constructed to take advantage of significant views or to be a part of a significant view? Although there may be a 360 degree view, some areas of the view may be more significant than others.

- Thinking about changes since the historic asset was built:
  - has its function or use changed?
  - what changes have happened to the surrounding landscape/streetscape?
  - have changes happened because of changes to the historic asset or to its historical setting?
  - has the presence of the historic asset influenced changes to the landscape, for example, where a monument has been used as a marker in the layout of a field enclosure?
  - has the presence of the historic asset influenced the character of the surrounding landscape/streetscape?
  - have historic and designed views to and from the historic asset changed?

- Thinking about the original layout of the historic asset and its relationship to its associated landscape:
  - were these relationships designed or accidental?
  - how did these relationships change over time?
  - how do these relationships appear in the current landscape; are they visual or buried features?

- Are there other significant factors, such as historical, artistic, literary, place name or scenic associations, intellectual relationships (for example, to a theory, plan or design), or other non-visual factors such as sounds or smells that can be vital to understand the historic asset and its setting?
Stage 2 should also identify the viewpoints from which the impact of the proposed change or development should be assessed, taking into account, for example:

• views to, from and across the historic asset that were designed and developed when the historic asset was first created — for example, in the case of a defensive or ritual structure

• views to, from and across the historic asset which are linked with a time in its history — for example, a historic artistic depiction of the site

• important modern views to, from and across the historic asset – for example, popular visitor viewing points.

4.3 Stage 3: Evaluate the Potential Impact of Change or Development

The impact of a proposed change or development within the setting of a historic asset can be a material consideration in determining a planning application or other consents. Therefore, it is important to consider whether the change or new development can be incorporated sensitively.

Factors to be considered when assessing the impact of a proposed change or development within the setting of a historic asset include:

• the visual impact of the proposed change or development relative to the scale of the historic asset and its setting

• the visual impact of the proposed change or development relative to the location of the historic asset

• whether the proposed change or development would dominate the historic asset or detract from our ability to understand and appreciate it — for example, its functional or physical relationship with the surrounding landscape and associated structures and/or buried remains

• the presence, extent, character and scale of the existing built environment within the surroundings of the historic asset and how the proposed change or development compares with this

• the lifespan of the proposed change or development and whether or not the impact might be reversible

• the extent of tree cover, whether it is deciduous or evergreen, and its likely longevity

• the impact of artificial lighting — for example, on night-time views

• the capability of a landscape setting to absorb change or new development without the erosion of its key characteristics

• the impact of the proposed change or development on non-visual elements of the setting and character of the historic asset, such as sense of remoteness, evocation of the historical past, sense of place, cultural identity or spiritual responses

• the impact of non-visual elements of the proposed change or development, such as the removal or addition of noises and smell
the cumulative effect of the proposed change or development — sometimes relatively small changes, or a series of small changes, can have a major impact on our ability to understand, appreciate and experience a historic asset.

Bearing in mind that the assessment and evaluation should be proportionate to the likely impact of the proposal, photographs from the viewpoints identified in stage 2 can be helpful to assess and explain the impact of the proposed change or development. Photomontages showing the proposed change or development in these views may also be very helpful. Geographic information system (GIS) packages may support useful interpretative tools such as wireframes, viewshed analysis and digital terrain models.

At the end of stage 3, the historic environment assessor should be able to identify the impact that any proposal has within the setting of a historic asset. It is helpful to express this impact as positive, neutral or negative and give an indication of its magnitude.

Depending on the level of impact, mitigation measures to reduce the negative impact of the proposals should be considered.

### 4.4 Stage 4: Consider Options to Mitigate the Impact of a Proposed Change or Development

Mitigation is the action taken to avoid or minimise any harm to the significance of a historic asset and its setting.

Mitigation could include, for example, modifications to the design, the relocation of a development or certain elements, or the introduction of screening. Some measures could improve the setting of the historic asset, such as the removal of a structure or tree belts which block identified significant views. For planning purposes, such measures would need to be within the application boundary.

However, some mitigation measures could have a negative impact within the setting of the historic asset. For example, a screen of trees could be an alien form in an otherwise treeless landscape or obscure the intended planted design in a historic park or garden.

If damaging impacts within the setting of the historic asset have been identified and mitigation has been introduced, the level of impact should be re-assessed and included in the final assessment. Mitigation proposals should be submitted to the local planning authority as part of the final report to support the planning application.

### 4.5 Document the Assessment

It is good practice for the results of the assessment to be presented in a written report which is understandable to non-specialist readers.

The applicant should deposit a copy of the report with the appropriate historic environment record for future reference.
5. Offsetting

The introduction of offsetting or compensatory proposals, such as public access or interpretation panels, will not reduce the impact of the development within the setting of the historic asset and should not be accepted as mitigation. But, proposals for offsetting should nevertheless be presented to the decision-making authority so that it can weigh the benefits of the scheme, including the compensatory measures, against the impact of the development on the historic asset and its setting.

6. Enhancing the Setting

The positive management of a historic asset, for example, through the preparation of a conservation management plan, could propose measures to enhance the setting of a historic asset.

Enhancement measures could include the removal of trees to open up an intended view, improved public access to a viewpoint or the provision of appropriate interpretation. Care should be taken when recommending enhancement measures so that the improvement to the setting of one historic asset does not have a negative impact on another.
Planning Applications within the Setting of a Scheduled Monument — Criteria Triggering Consultation with Cadw

Local planning authorities must consult the Welsh Government’s Historic Environment Service (Cadw) on all planning applications which in their opinion are within the setting of a scheduled monument and meet the following criteria. Applications will need to include sufficient information to assess the impact of the proposal on the historic asset and its setting, but this should be proportionate to the likely impact of the proposal.

Criteria

Development likely to be visible from a scheduled monument and which meets one of the following criteria:

- it is within a distance of 0.5 kilometres from any point of the perimeter of a scheduled monument
- it is within a distance of 1 kilometre from the perimeter of a scheduled monument and is 15 metres or more in height, or has an area of 0.2 hectares or more
- it is within a distance of 2 kilometres from the perimeter of a scheduled monument and is 50 metres or more in height, or has an area of 0.5 hectares or more
- it is within a distance of 3 kilometres from the perimeter of a scheduled monument and is 75 metres or more in height, or has an area of 1 hectare or more
- it is within a distance of 5 kilometres from the perimeter of a scheduled monument and is 100 metres or more in height, or has an area of 1 hectare or more.
References

http://cadw.gov.wales/docs/cadw/publications/LandscapesRegisterGoodPractice_EN.pdf

2 Cadw is the Welsh Government’s historic environment service.

3 Planning Policy Wales (Edition 9), Chapter 6: The Historic Environment
http://gov.wales/topics/planning/policy/ppw/?lang=en

4 Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment
http://gov.wales/topics/planning/policy/tans/?lang=en

5 Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2015/2/contents/enacted

6 This definition of setting expands that given in Conservation Principles.

7 Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment, para. 1.25
http://gov.wales/topics/planning/policy/tans/?lang=en

http://cadw.gov.wales/docs/cadw/publications/LandscapesRegisterGoodPractice_EN.pdf

9 See Conservation Principles

10 Planning Policy Wales (Edition 9), Chapter 6: The Historic Environment, para. 6.5.5
http://gov.wales/topics/planning/policy/?lang=en

Development Management Manual, Welsh Government

12 Conservation Principles
13 Welsh Government guidance on environmental impact assessment.  

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2016/59/schedule/2/made 
See Annex 1 for criteria relating to scheduled monuments.

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2016/59/schedule/2/made

16 Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales, Welsh Government, Cadw, 2017  
Managing Change to Listed Buildings in Wales, Welsh Government, Cadw, 2017  

17 A qualified and competent expert will need to demonstrate their qualification and experience, but could include archaeologists, landscape architects, historians or garden history specialists depending on the nature of the assets being assessed.  

18 For more detail about significance, see Conservation Principles  

19 Cof Cymru — National Historic Assets of Wales  

20 National Monuments of Records of Wales  
www.coflein.gov.uk

21 ZTV studies define the areas from which a development may be totally or partially visible by reference to surrounding topography. The analysis does not take into account any landscape artefacts such as trees, woodland, or buildings; hence the study is called a zone of theoretical visibility.  

22 Conservation Principles  

23 The best possible views should be used. Do not use views with buildings or vegetation if positions giving unobscured views are available.  

24 Subject to other regulations, such as Tree Preservation Orders.  

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2016/59/schedule/2/made
Further Information

Policy and Guidance

Planning Policy Wales (Edition 9), Chapter 6: The Historic Environment
http://gov.wales/topics/planning/policy/ppw/?lang=en

Technical Advice Note 12: Design
http://gov.wales/topics/planning/policy/tans/?lang=en

Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment
http://gov.wales/topics/planning/policy/tans/?lang=en

Development Management Manual

Best-practice Guidance


http://cadw.gov.wales/docs/cadw/publications/LandscapesRegisterGoodPractice_EN.pdf

Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales, Welsh Government, Cadw, 2017

Managing Change to Listed Buildings in Wales, Welsh Government, Cadw, 2017

Managing Change to Registered Historic Parks and Gardens in Wales, Welsh Government, Cadw, 2017

Managing Change to World Heritage Sites in Wales, Welsh Government, Cadw, 2017

Xi’an Declaration on the Conservation of the Setting of Heritage Structures, Sites and Areas, ICOMOS, 2005
Sources of Historical Information

Archives Wales — an online catalogue that allows you to search information in more than 7,000 collections of historical records in the holdings of the 21 archives in Wales. www.archiveswales.org.uk

Archwilio — provides online public access to the historic environment records for each local authority area in Wales. Archwilio is maintained and supported with further information held by the Welsh archaeological trusts. www.archwilio.org.uk

Cof Cymru — Cadw’s online record of the national historic assets of Wales, which includes listed buildings, scheduled monuments, protected wrecks, World Heritage Sites and registered historic landscapes. Registered historic parks and gardens will be added to Cof Cymru in 2018. http://cadw.gov.wales/historicenvironment/recordsv1/cof-cymru/?lang=en

Coflein — the online catalogue for the National Monuments Record of Wales, the national collection of information about the historic environment of Wales. www.coflein.gov.uk

Cynefin — an online resource to research Welsh tithe maps and their indexes. http://cynefin.archiveswales.org.uk/

Historic Wales — an online gateway to the national and regional historic historic environment records. www.historicwales.gov.uk

List of Historic Place Names of Wales records the various forms and spellings used for the names of topographical features, communities, thoroughfares, structures and other aspects of the landscape recorded in sources that predate the First World War. https://historicplacenames.rcahmw.gov.uk/

The National Library of Wales www.llgc.org.uk
Contacts

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http://cadw.gov.wales

**Local Planning Authorities**
Local planning authorities’ conservation and planning officers can be contacted via the relevant local authority website.

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**National Monuments Record of Wales**
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**Welsh Archaeological Trusts**
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info@dyfedarchaeology.org.uk
www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk

Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust
Heathfield House, Heathfield, Swansea SA1 6EL
Tel. 01792 655208
enquiries@ggat.org.uk
www.ggat.org.uk
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust
Craig Beuno, Garth Road, Bangor LL57 2RT
Tel. 01248 352535
gat@heneb.co.uk
www.heneb.co.uk

Amenity Societies

Ancient Monuments Society
http://ancientmonumentssociety.org.uk/

Council for British Archaeology (CBA)
http://new.archaeologyuk.org/

Georgian Group
www.georgiangroup.org.uk

Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB)
https://www.spab.org.uk/

Twentieth Century Society
www.c20society.org.uk

Theatres Trust
http://www.theatrestrust.org.uk/

Victorian Society
www.victoriansociety.org.uk

Welsh Historic Gardens Trust
http://www.whgt.org.uk/

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