The story so far …

An overview of the Pan-Wales Heritage Interpretation Plan

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

www.cymru.gov.uk

'There are probably few places in the world where a nation can consider the interpretation of its history, culture, landscape and historic environment as coherently as Wales'

✤ Cadw

We love a good story in Wales and perhaps that's not surprising given our exciting, rich and diverse heritage and culture. Wales's stories, and the means we use to convey them, have the potential to inspire people and enhance their lives. The Pan-Wales Heritage Interpretation Plan gives us a unique opportunity to take these stories and interpret them for the benefit of our own people and our visitors.

Many heritage sites across the country already celebrate elements of our heritage and history, but there is a lack of coordination and the physical and thematic links between places and sites are often missing. The pan-Wales approach is an opportunity to join up the pieces, so that people can follow stories between sites with the help of inspiring interpretation.

We want audiences across Wales, local or visiting, to be met with creative, exciting, engaging and thought-provoking experiences — which are fun too. The benefits of getting this right are far reaching — socially, culturally and economically. Everyone involved in interpretation in Wales has a role to play in helping our country to reap these rewards.

Front cover: The Guard by John Merrill, Conwy Castle.

Right: Strata Florida.

How does it work?

The Pan-Wales Heritage Interpretation Plan takes a practical approach. It provides a framework for anyone involved in interpreting the history of Wales — irrespective of the scale of their project or budget. To help in this, the stories have been divided into a number of strands, each with its own supporting interpretation plan or plans. There are also practical suggestions and support for linking story strands across Wales, including the adoption of easily recognised 'Follow the Story' icons.

Time for action

Interpretation is high on the Welsh heritage agenda thanks to a number of factors including strong ministerial support, a review of Cadw's own interpretation, the National Museum Wales' aspiration to create a hub for Welsh history at the National History Museum, St Fagans, and the European Union funded Heritage Tourism Project which has helped kick-start capital investment in heritage interpretation.

Against this backdrop, Cadw, the Welsh Government's historic environment service, is taking the lead in creating a heritage interpretation framework for the whole of the country, one which has people at its core. The aim is to 'shape the interpretation to focus on visitor-orientated implementation packages yet still give a 'national' overarching narrative[1]. This 'country wide' approach is so far unique to Wales.

Heritage — Ministerial Priorities

The all-Wales approach is endorsed by the Minster for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage in his Historic Environment Strategy for Wales, which includes the following commitments:

'The Programme for Government has set objectives for the delivery of the Pan-Wales Heritage Interpretation Plan, the Heritage Tourism Project and the Heritage and Arts Framework' and **'We want to ensure that heritage sites are accessible and enjoyable places both for visitors to Wales and for people who live in Wales.'**

'We will be imaginative in our approach using creativity as a principle of delivery.'

'Developing new and broader audiences for the historic environment is a priority and we will develop new approaches to engaging and involving people in exploring and celebrating our history'.

The Historic Environment Strategy for Wales can be found at: www.cadw/ Historic Environment/Policy/Historic Environment Strategy

[1] Cadw, Pan-Wales Heritage Interpretation Plan

The challenge

Wales is a proud and complex nation, with a rich heritage that is unique yet intertwined with the fortunes of the rest of Britain. The concept of Wales as single entity dates to the thirteenth century — though the borders have waxed and waned. But the story of the people who lived and worked here is much, much older, stretching back into prehistory at least a quarter of a million years. This is a story of peoples ingenuity, power struggles, politics and creativity; of a small nation that often punches above its weight on the global stage. The historic environment in Wales is at the core of our rich and diverse culture. Yet, for most people, the depth and significance of the story our historic sites can hold is not always apparent or easy to grasp.

This is the challenge currently facing Wales's heritage industry — how do we present complex stories and sites to audiences that know little about the place or its history? Moreover, how do we make the stories accessible and relevant? If we get it right, packaging the story of Wales in a more attractive and meaningful way has the potential to:

- enhance local and national pride in our heritage assets;
- provide opportunities for people to learn something new;
- improve understanding and awareness of our rich stories;
- improve the visitor experience;
- positively reinforce Wales' image;
- make Wales more competitive within the global tourism market;
- increase appreciation of the historic environment and so contribute towards its conservation.

We can do this by coordinating and improving the interpretation of the story on a Wales-wide basis.

Our historic environment has wide appeal. It attracts visitors from overseas, from throughout the UK and from local communities: 'Visiting heritage sites is the single most popular holiday activity for tourists in Wales — heritage-based tourist attractions … are often among people's reasons for visiting Wales'.

We want to attract as broad a range of visitors as possible, representing all walks of life and all levels of interest. The family market is particularly important to heritage attractions, representing well over 50% of all visits to Cadw sites, for example.
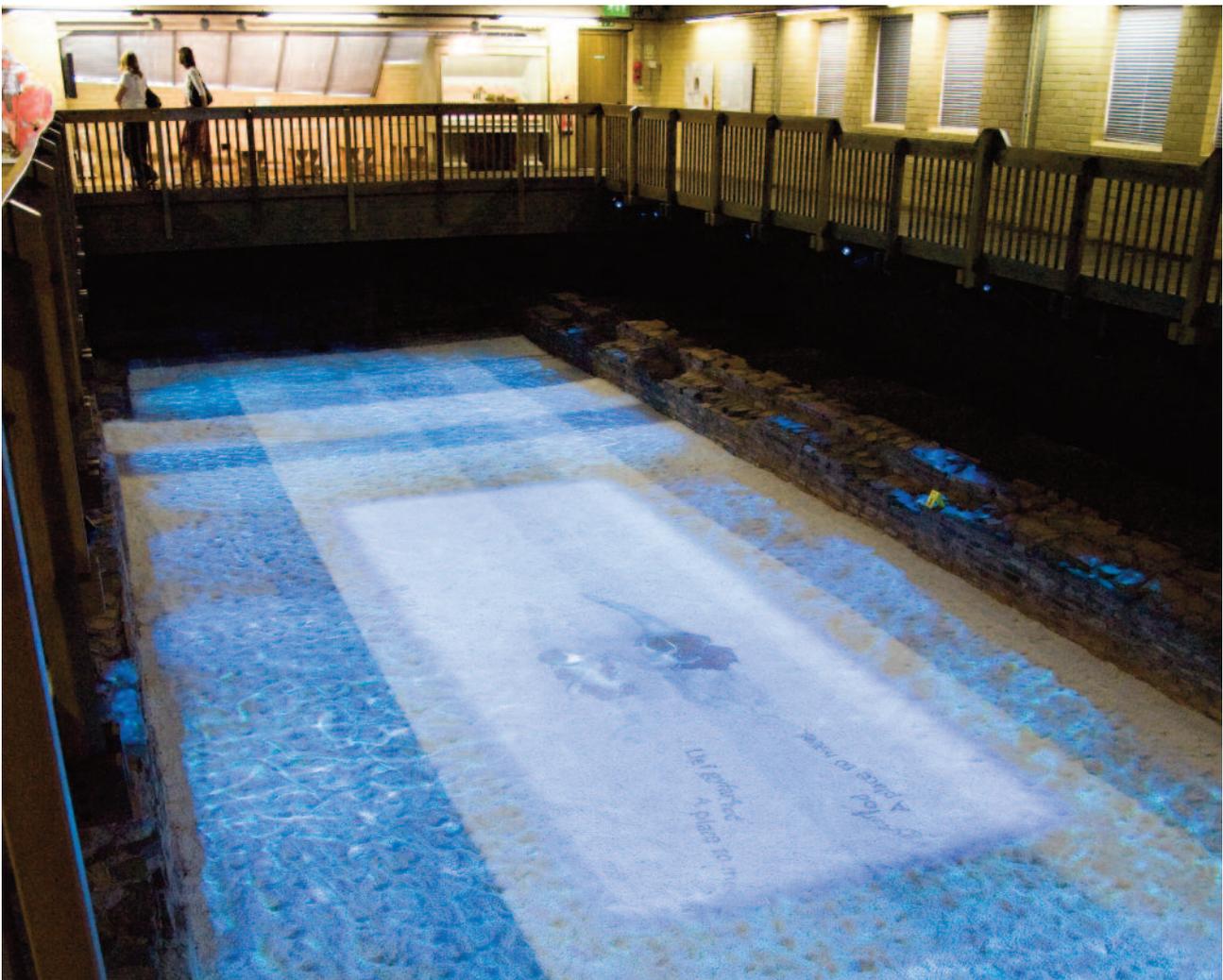
Providing more interpretation for 'children and family groups ' is a priority, not least because of the important role cultural activity can play in helping to address child poverty, which affects a third of all children living in Wales. Keith Towler, the Children's Commissioner recently spoke about the ability

of culture to light a 'spark' that can help children in poverty 'to develop both personally and professionally so that they have the confidence and capabilities to escape the poverty trap'.[2]

'So perhaps some of you are asking — why worry about cultural participation? Well the quick answer is — because it matters. Not only because children have a right to participate in cultural activities but also because there is growing evidence to suggest that cultural engagement supports better educational engagement and outcomes.'[3]

Through the pan-Wales approach, the Welsh Government recognises and supports the role of the heritage sector in providing 'transformational chances' for all children in Wales.

Below: Caerleon Roman Fortress Baths.

[2] http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/2012/07/18/museums-are-key-to-beating-child-poverty-says-keith-towler-91466-31414063/#ixzz213nbNbX9
[3] Ibid

Cadw's role

Cadw has been charged by the Welsh Government to provide support and leadership in delivering the Pan-Wales Heritage Interpretation Plan. This is reflected in Cadw's priorities for 2012–16 which include promoting 'access to and appreciation of the stories tied up in historic places, engaging the public through interpretation and creativity'.[4]

To inform the process, Cadw has held a number of conferences and ministerial events which brought partners together from the heritage, arts and tourism sectors. This collaboration and consultation will continue.

The Heritage Tourism Project, which is being managed by Cadw, is providing financial support for interpretation and conservation projects. This complements other grant providers such as the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Caerphilly Castle.

The Heritage Tourism Project

… is a £19 million investment project which will maximise the economic value of heritage to Wales by increasing the number, length and value of visits. Through better interpretation, Wales's outstanding heritage will be opened up to a wider audience; making it more enjoyable both for visitors and for people who live in Wales. Running since 2009 until 2014, the project is largely funded by the Welsh Government and from EU Convergence Funds. Led by Cadw for the Welsh Government, it involves a range of partners with an interest in heritage and tourism from across all sectors.

'The success of the Heritage Tourism Project hinges upon an integrated presentation of heritage sites and the development of meaningful and memorable storylines, making connections between sites, places, people and communities', Marilyn Lewis, Director, Cadw, Heritage interpretation and tourism in Wales, August 2011.

[4] Ibid, Huw Lewis AM
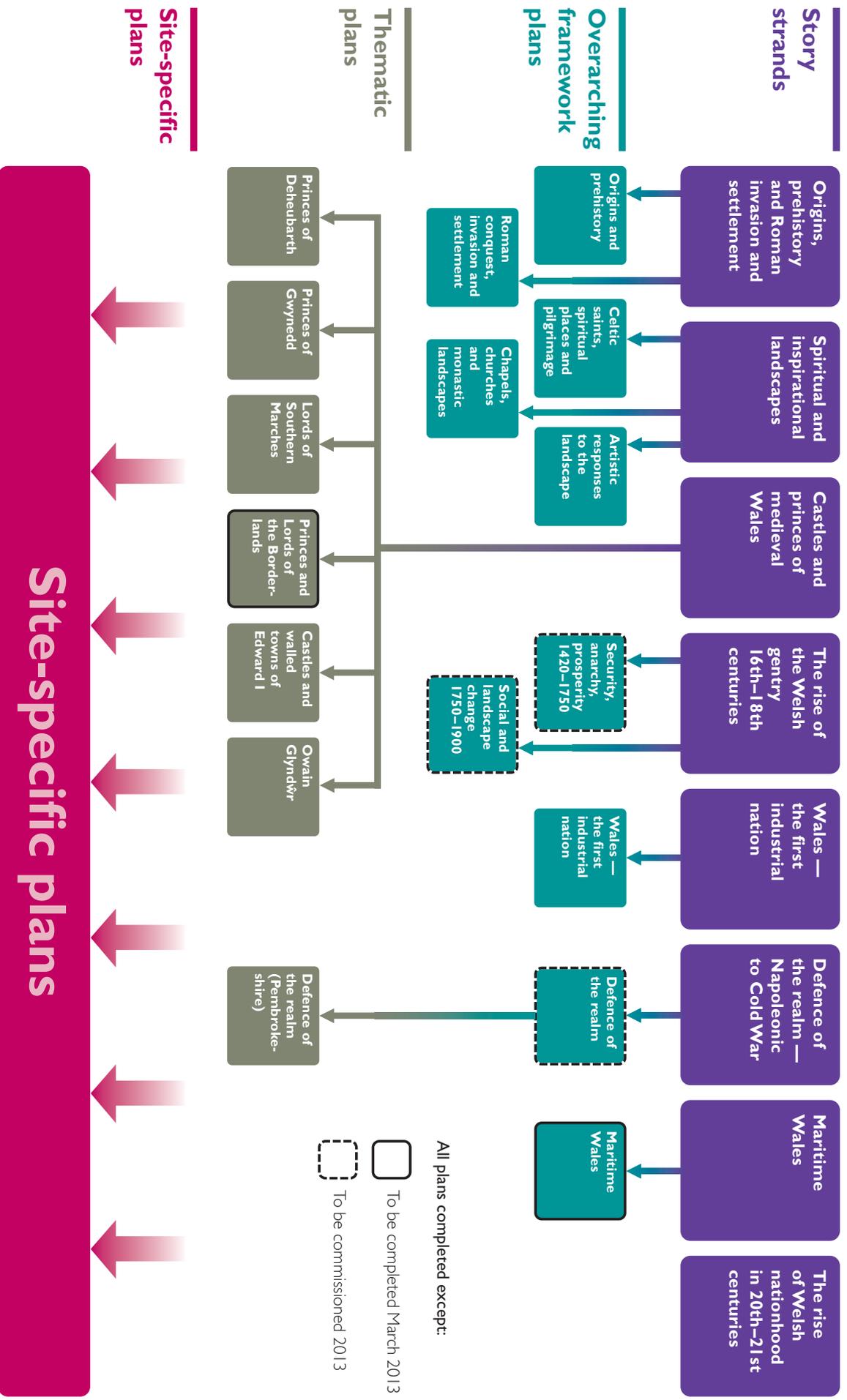
Setting out the stories

Cadw apps.

Our country has millennia's worth of stories to tell and crystallising these into recognisable story strands was the first step in delivering interpretation on an all-Wales basis. Following consultation, eight 'national, chronological and/or thematic story strands' emerged:

- Origins, prehistory and Roman invasion and settlement.
- Spiritual and inspirational landscapes — religious, spiritual and cultural inspiration from prehistory to the present day.
- Castles and princes of medieval Wales, including the native princes, Norman and Edwardian conquest, and the fight for Welsh independence.

- The rise of the Welsh merchant and gentry, sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. The growth of towns, vernacular architecture and Welsh manor and town.
- Wales— the first industrial nation from earliest times to the present day.
- Defence of the realm, from the Napoleonic Wars to the Cold War.
- Maritime Wales.
- The rise of Wales and Welsh nationhood in the 20th and 21st centuries.

This list is fairly comprehensive but is not exhaustive, and may be expanded in the future.

Figure 1 Pan-Wales Heritage Interpretation

Story strands

Overarching framework plans

Thematic plans

Site-specific plans

Story strands	Overarching framework plans	Thematic plans
Origins, prehistory and Roman invasion and settlement	Origins and prehistory	Princes of Deheubarth
	Roman conquest, invasion and settlement	Princes of Gwynedd
Spiritual and inspirational landscapes	Celtic saints, spiritual places and pilgrimage	Lords of Southern Marches
	Chapels, churches and monastic landscapes	Princes and Lords of the Border-lands
	Artistic responses to the landscape	Castles and walled towns of Edward I
Castles and princes of medieval Wales		Owain Glyndŵr
The rise of the Welsh gentry 16th–18th centuries	Security, anarchy, prosperity 1420–1750	
	Social and landscape change 1750–1900	
Wales — the first industrial nation	Wales — the first industrial nation	
Defence of the realm — Napoleonic to Cold War	Defence of the realm	Defence of the realm (Pembroke-shire)
Maritime Wales	Maritime Wales	
The rise of Welsh nationhood in 20th–21st centuries		

All plans completed except:

☐ To be completed March 2013

☐ (dashed) To be commissioned 2013

Planning for success

An important step in delivering interpretation on a pan-Wales basis is the preparation of interpretation plans related to the story strands outlined above.

The programme to develop these plans continues. In some instances, they adopt a broad framework approach towards the story strand, for example Wales — the first industrial nation. Other story strands have been dissected further to create meaningful and detailed interpretation plans, for example castles and princes of medieval Wales has been divided in to six sub-story strands.

The plans reinforce the principle of using the historic environment as the canvas on which to paint the stories of past people from all walks of life and represent various viewpoints.

The plans do not replace site-specific interpretation plans. Rather they seek to ensure that individual sites are not seen in isolation, but are instead equipped to fit in to the broader context of the overarching story strand.

Each plan developed to date is available at: http://cadw.wales.gov.uk/interpretation/interpretationplans/?lang=en

Making the links

This coordinated approach is not just new to the heritage sector; it is new to our visitors too. It is important to build up some form of familiarity, a way of helping them intuitively understand that 'this site relates to that one', and that 'If I go to that site, I'll get a bit more of the story' etc. To that end a series of icons has been developed. These can be used on interpretation to suggest what the key story (or stories) at a site, and where the visitor might like to go next to 'follow that story'. Project partners are encouraged to download guidance notes on how to use the icons and the 'Follow the Story' strapline from: http://cadw.wales.gov.uk/interpretation/guidancenotes/?lang=en

Arlunwyr Artists

Amddiffyn Defence

Deheubarth

Gwynedd

Edward I

Diwydiant Industry

Arglwyddi'r Mers Marcher Lords

Arglwyddi'r Mers Marcher Lords

Gwreiddiau Origins

Rhufeinwyr Romans

Mannau Sanctaidd Sacred Places

Owain Glyndŵr

Working together

Community interpretive project at Nevern Castle.

Pan-Wales Heritage Interpretation involves a wide range of partners. Cadw, as lead body, has engaged with some contributors through consultation exercises, and a continuing programme of events will further encourage dialogue and joint working.

Cadw continues to pursue actively an 'interface with the needs and requirements of other heritage providers and with tourism marketing strategies'[5]. Mechanisms for doing this include:

- The Housing, Regeneration and Heritage Minister's Historic Environment Group — a strategic forum of organisations with an interest in the historic environment.
- The Cultural Tourism Steering Group — coordinated by Visit Wales and consisting of directors and officers from the main heritage agencies.
- The Heritage Tourism Project Steering Group — drawn from a number of heritage,

tourism and third sector interests with a view on heritage tourism.
- Dialogue with local authority tourism departments, tourism organisations and destination partnerships.
- Dehongli Cymru — a grouping of national and regional bodies committed to encouraging excellence in interpretation in Wales.

Fostering the pan-Wales approach is a continuing process (see 'Delivering the way forward' below). Cadw also raises the Pan-Wales Heritage Interpretation Plan's profile through:

- Presentations at events and conferences, including Association of Heritage Interpretation and Dehongli Cymru, as well as articles in magazines such as *Heritage in Wales*.
- Events and support which actively encourage participation.

[5] Cadw; Pan-Wales Interpretation Strategy briefing note 2010

Delivering the way forward

Cadw is committed to developing the Pan-Wales Heritage Interpretation Plan. 'Promoting public access, appreciation and enjoyment of the historic environment'[6] is one of Cadw's four strategic priorities for 2012–16. Within that priority, 'making heritage sites enjoyable, relevant and stimulating to visit' is highlighted, as is the 'completion of the Pan-Wales Heritage Interpretation Plan to promote intellectual access to the historic environment of Wales in general and Cadw sites in particular'. Cadw's engagement priorities are: collaboration with partners to 'present a dynamic and authentic image of heritage and culture to the world' is also identified.

This commitment has been reflected in the significant capital investment that has already been made through the Heritage Tourism Project and Welsh Government Challenge Funding. This funding has enabled the adoption of the approach at a critical mass of sites, including many iconic Welsh monuments. This is important in creating awareness both within the heritage sector and, crucially, amongst visitors.

It is expected that as the project rolls out and the benefits are realised, more partners and sites will become involved. It is recognised that physical intervention at some sites may be a longer-term proposition and subject to resources becoming available. In such instances, new technologies and media could provide 'quick win' opportunities for adopting the pan-Wales approach to heritage interpretation. As visitors become increasingly demanding and visitor attractions more competitive, it is important that heritage interpretation keeps pace with these demands and expectations. However, it is also important that interpretation is driven by the story and the needs of the site rather than any delivery mechanism.
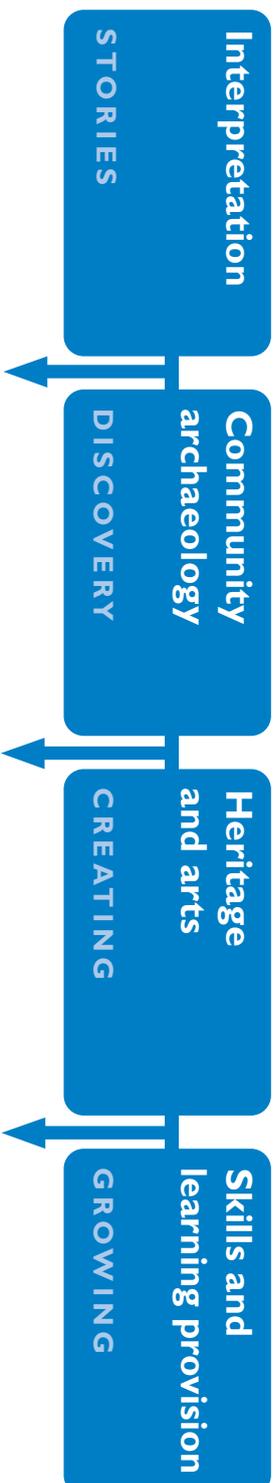
New technologies are playing an important role in delivering authentic, meaningful and engaging interpretation. At Cadw monuments digital projections have been used to light fireplaces, games-based mobile phone apps to encourage exploration of Conwy's town walls. Monmouth is the first Wikipedia project in the world to interpret the whole town using QR codes and interactive touchscreens are becoming more common at heritage visitor attractions across Wales, such as the Copper Kingdom in Amlwch.
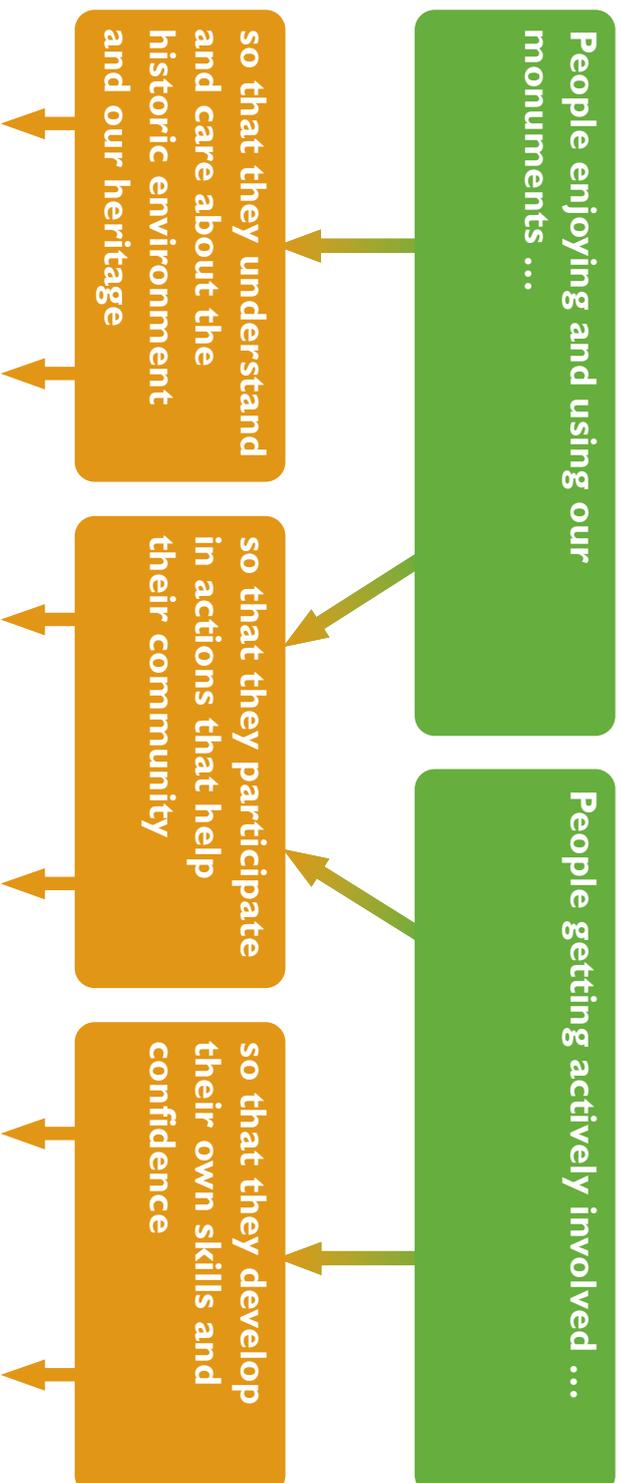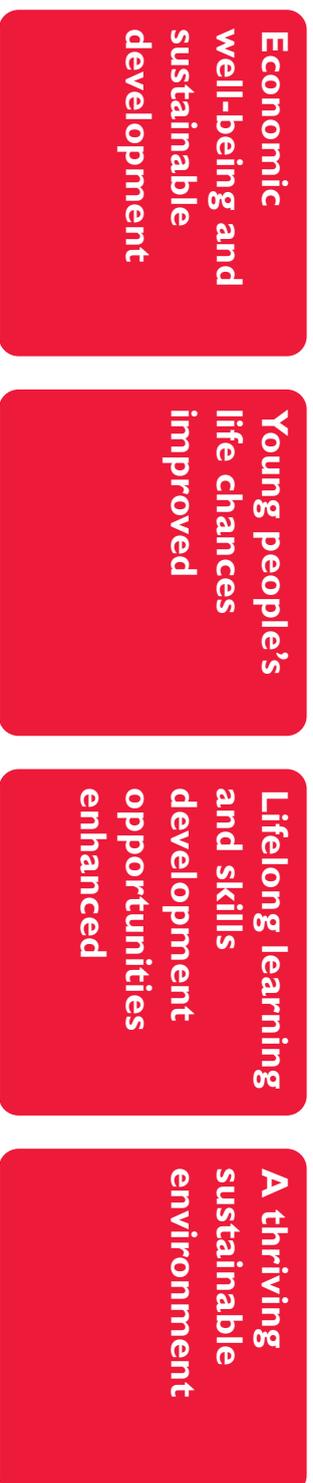

Conwy Castle.

Cadw priority public engagement interventions

Interpretation
STORIES

Community archaeology
DISCOVERY

Heritage and arts
CREATING

Skills and learning provision
GROWING

Activity focus

People enjoying and using our monuments …

People getting actively involved …

Outcomes

so that they understand and care about the historic environment and our heritage

so that they participate in actions that help their community

so that they develop their own skills and confidence

Strategic outcomes

Economic well-being and sustainable development

Young people's life chances improved

Lifelong learning and skills development opportunities enhanced

A thriving sustainable environment

Making sure it works — evaluating the pan-Wales approach

Extensive time and resources are being committed to this approach. It will be important to measure its impact for a number of reasons:

- To show that the concept is working and if not, highlighting what needs to be done to make it more effective.
- To justify future investment.
- Positive results would act as a tool to attract more partners.
- To see if it is making a real impact on visitors.

What do we need to measure?

We need to measure:

- The take-up of the approach amongst heritage providers
  Regular surveys should be conducted to see how many partners have implemented new interpretation projects. Of those, record what percentage have adopted the pan-Wales approach including use of the 'Follow the Story' phrase, icons and associated straplines. Heritage Tourism Project funded interpretation is required to adopt the pan-Wales approach as a condition of the grant aid.

- The effectiveness of the pan-Wales approach on the visitors' experience
  Undertake research including — interviews/ questionnaires at locations where the pan-Wales approach has been adopted to see if the interpretation is attracting new audiences.

- Visitor reaction and understanding
  Research into what visitors 'take' from our interpretation. This could be done in conjunction with bodies such as National Museum Wales who also wish to commission research in this area. This would be an opportunity to find out if people 'got' the concept and what they 'took away' from it.

The results of the evaluation would be shared with partners.

Denbigh Castle.

Illuminata at Caerphilly Castle.

Finally

For the pan-Wales approach to achieve its greatest impact, it needs buy-in from partners across Wales, from the public, private and voluntary sectors. It works at all scales and is just as relevant to community heritage projects as it is to Cadw and our 128 sites. This approach brings heritage and tourism providers together, allowing us to be part of a much greater whole — all playing our roles in delivering the fascinating stories of Wales in inspirational and creative ways.

Further information

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Cadw

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Delivering the way forward — Action Plan

1. Story- based interpretation plans

- Evaluation of the story-based interpretation plans written so far:
  Do they meet the needs of Cadw and project partners?
  If not, what are the failings and how can these be addressed?
  Are they impacting upon visitor satisfaction and understanding?
- Standardisation of the format of the plans, to make them easier to understand and navigate.
- Commission further interpretation plans to fill identified gaps in the pan-Wales story.
- Set up a review group consisting of bodies with expertise/involvement in interpretation.

2. Implementing the plans

- Lead by example at Cadw sites and other sites funded by the Heritage Tourism Project.
- Develop an award scheme to exemplify practical use of the pan-Wales approach.
- Provide incentives which could include:
  a specific grant scheme (additional to the HTP and available throughout Wales);
  interpretative training (in partnership with Interpret Wales);
  an advisory service for bodies lacking in-house interpretation specialists.

3. Building awareness of the pan-Wales approach

- Recruit/engage heritage interpretation champions across Wales who can advocate the pan-Wales approach.
- Further engage potential partners to advocate the benefits of being involved.
- Influence decision makers in the public/third sector who will advocate the approach within their organisations.
- Talk to other heritage funders, e.g. Heritage Lottery Fund re guiding applicants towards the approach.
- Create links from web sites such as 'Interpret Wales' and the 'Association for Heritage Interpretation'.
- Undertake an active PR programme to celebrate interpretation achievements.

4. Measuring success

- Monitor:
  number of projects completed
  number of projects in the process of being implemented
  take up of the approach by partner organisations
  visitor numbers at sites
- Undertake formal interpretative evaluation at sites that have adopted the approach to see if it is making a positive difference to our visitors.

5. Leading by example

- Implement the actions identified in the Historic Environment Strategy for Wales, Headline Action Plan.
- Continue to roll out high-quality interpretation at Cadw's 128 monuments which exemplifies the pan-Wales approach.
- Explore the role of the proposed National Museum of Wales's 'hub' at National History Museum as an exemplar of the pan-Wales approach.