



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

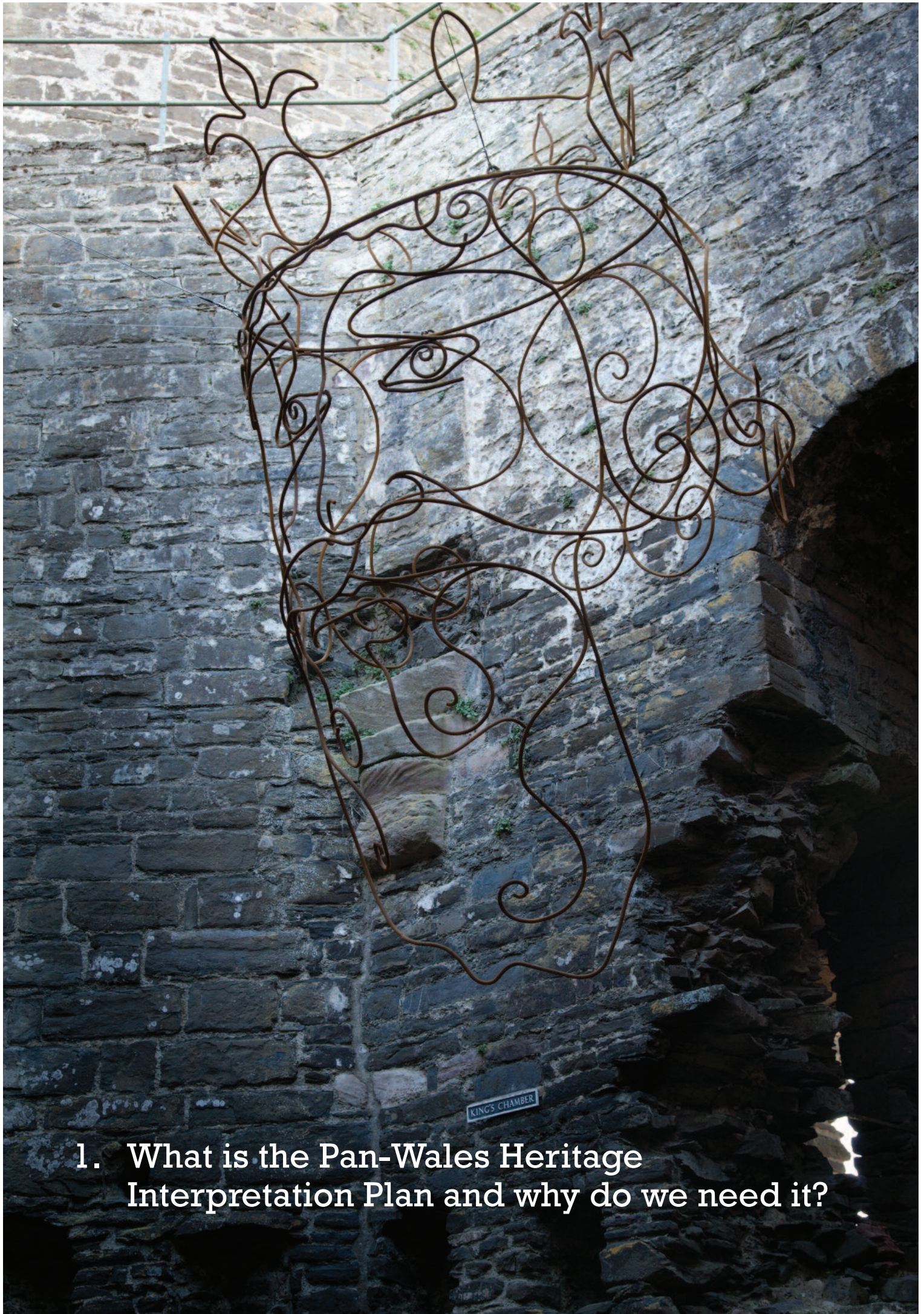
Practitioners' Guide

Pan-Wales Heritage Interpretation Plan

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 Cadw



1. What is the Pan-Wales Heritage Interpretation Plan and why do we need it?

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 since. 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 punched 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 stories our historic sites can hold are 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 them accessible and relevant? If we get it right, packaging the stories of Wales in a more attractive and meaningful way has the potential to:

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

To do this we need to coordinate interpretation on a Wales-wide basis — 'a Pan-Wales Heritage Interpretation Plan would provide the foundation for a more coordinated and coherent approach to interpreting Wales's heritage and culture'.¹

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'². This 'country-wide' approach is so far unique to Wales.

¹ Lewis, M., Cadw, Heritage interpretation and tourism in Wales, August 2011

² Cadw, Pan-Wales Heritage Interpretation Plan 2010

2. Background

‘We want to ensure that heritage sites are accessible and enjoyable to visit both for visitors to Wales and for people who live here in Wales’,³ Huw Lewis AM, Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage.

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, and the European funded Heritage Tourism Project.

Cadw’s review provided a rationale for developing a pan-Wales approach to interpretation stating that: ‘New interpretation needs to be able to look out into the landscape, make connections with other monuments of similar period or function, and be able to tell the story across a suite of different monuments’.⁴

Cadw’s four guiding principles for interpreting the historic environment are:

- **History happened here — the site’s historical significance**
- **I live here — giving a voice to those who lived and worked at historic sites from the poorest to the most powerful**
- **Look here — encouraging visitors to examine and question what they see**
- **We care — influencing how visitors feel towards their heritage and to conservation more generally.**



Cadw aims to deliver interpretation that is:

- **imaginative**
- **innovative**
- **interactive**
- **engaging**
- **inspiring**
- **makes appropriate use of new and emerging technologies**
- **is inclusive**
- **is bilingual in Welsh and English**

As such Cadw relishes the role of providing support and leadership in delivering the Pan-Wales Heritage Interpretation Plan. This is reflected in our priorities for 2011–16 which include promoting ‘access to and appreciation of the stories tied up in historic places, engaging the public through interpretation and creativity’.⁵ The aim is to deliver this through a number of guiding principles and values including maintaining a people focus; providing leadership and fostering partnerships; and applying a creative spark to delivering services.

The Heritage Tourism Project has been useful in kick-starting the pan-Wales approach. This five-year project (2009–14) was initiated to maximise the economic value of heritage by increasing the number, length and value of visits to Wales. Through better interpretation, the project aims to open Wales’s outstanding heritage to a wider audience by making it more enjoyable both for visitors and for people who live in Wales. 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 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’.⁶ This background bodes well for the pan-Wales approach to heritage interpretation. However, for this approach to reach its potential, it is important that as many heritage providers as possible get involved.

³ Huw Lewis AM, Ministerial Priorities for the Historic Environment of Wales, 2012

⁴ Atkins, 2009, Interpretation Planning for the Historic Environment of Wales, p. 52

⁵ Cadw Priorities 2011–16, July 2011

⁶ M. Lewis, Cadw, Heritage interpretation and tourism in Wales, August 2011



Strata Florida.

3. Who is it aimed at?

‘Effective interpretation is targeted to its appropriate audiences’⁷

The historic environment has a wide appeal. It attracts visitors from overseas, from throughout the UK and from the local community:

‘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’.⁸

The UK market is extremely important during peak times, whilst local and other day visitors are the mainstay of the off-peak periods.

Cadw’s own research⁹ indicates that heritage sites typically appeal to higher socio-economic groups (A, B, C1 socio-economic classes). The pan-Wales approach is intended to break down barriers and increase visitation amongst C2, D, E socio-economic classes (i.e. unskilled or semiskilled working class and those on the lowest levels of subsistence¹⁰) while adding value to the visit for existing visitors.

Research¹¹ suggests that barriers to visiting include:

- **apathy (this is strong amongst local markets who think ‘I can always go tomorrow’);**
- **perceived cost (often the perception is worse than the reality);**
- **issues around value for money (e.g. cost compared to time / value from the visit)**
- **perceived lack of suitability for families.**

The family market is very important to heritage sites. They represent well over 50% of all visits to Cadw’s properties — this despite the fact that the research indicated that most people did not find the interpretation at sites particularly ‘family friendly’. Families are so important that the review, whilst identifying that an ‘inclusive audience focused approach to interpretation and engagement should be adopted’¹² also singles out the need to provide more for ‘children and family groups’¹³ as a priority.

4. What’s the story?

We all know that the story of Wales is not a single narrative, but rather several millennia’s worth of stories; passionate, intriguing, sometimes simple, sometimes complex, overlapping and intertwined. Luckily we have a wonderful historic environment in Wales that provides the canvas on which these stories can be painted.

⁷ Atkins, 2009, Interpretation Planning for the Historic Environment of Wales, p. 20

^{*} This list is fairly comprehensive but is not exhaustive and could be expanded in the future

⁸ Welsh Historic Environment: A Celebration 2009, p. 5

⁹ Beaufort Research 2009

¹⁰ <http://www.businessballs.com/demographicsclassifications.htm#nrs-social-grade-definitions-uk>

¹¹ Beaufort Research in to underrepresented groups at Cadw sites 2009

¹² Atkins, 2009, Interpretation Planning for the Historic Environment of Wales, p. 44

¹³ Atkins, 2009, Interpretation Planning for the Historic Environment of Wales, p. 58

The first challenge in delivering pan-Wales heritage interpretation was to crystallise the stories of Wales into understandable and interlinked story strands. Following consultation, a number of key topics were identified:

- **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 twentieth and twenty-first centuries.**

These topics have been used to inform a range of interpretation plans.

5. Making plans

An important step in delivering the ambition of heritage interpretation on a pan-Wales basis is the preparation of interpretation plans related to the story strands outlined above. Crucially, there are a number of core values which each plan needs to demonstrate:

- **All interpretation needs to be planned and guided by clear themes and measurable objectives**
- **The stories of Wales must be expressed within the plans regardless of political (including local authority) boundaries, site ownership or funding areas**
- **Plans must be developed in conjunction with expert academic advisors, in order to ensure the ‘history’ is authenticated/validated and relevant to today’s understanding**
- **Plans need to be visitor focused**

- **Consultation must take place with stakeholders such as the four Welsh Archaeological Trusts, National Trust, National Museum Wales, local authorities, regional tourism partnerships and other site owners.**

Expediency and practical necessity have to some extent governed the order in which the interpretation plans have, and are being developed, but the goal is to complete all plans in the short term. In some instances, the plans adopt a broad framework approach towards the story strand, for example, Wales — the first industrial nation. Other story strands have been dissected in order to create meaningful and detailed interpretation plans, for example, Castles and Princes of Medieval Wales has been divided in to six sub-story strands. Figure 1 shows the relationship between story strands and the interpretation plans.

The plans all 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.

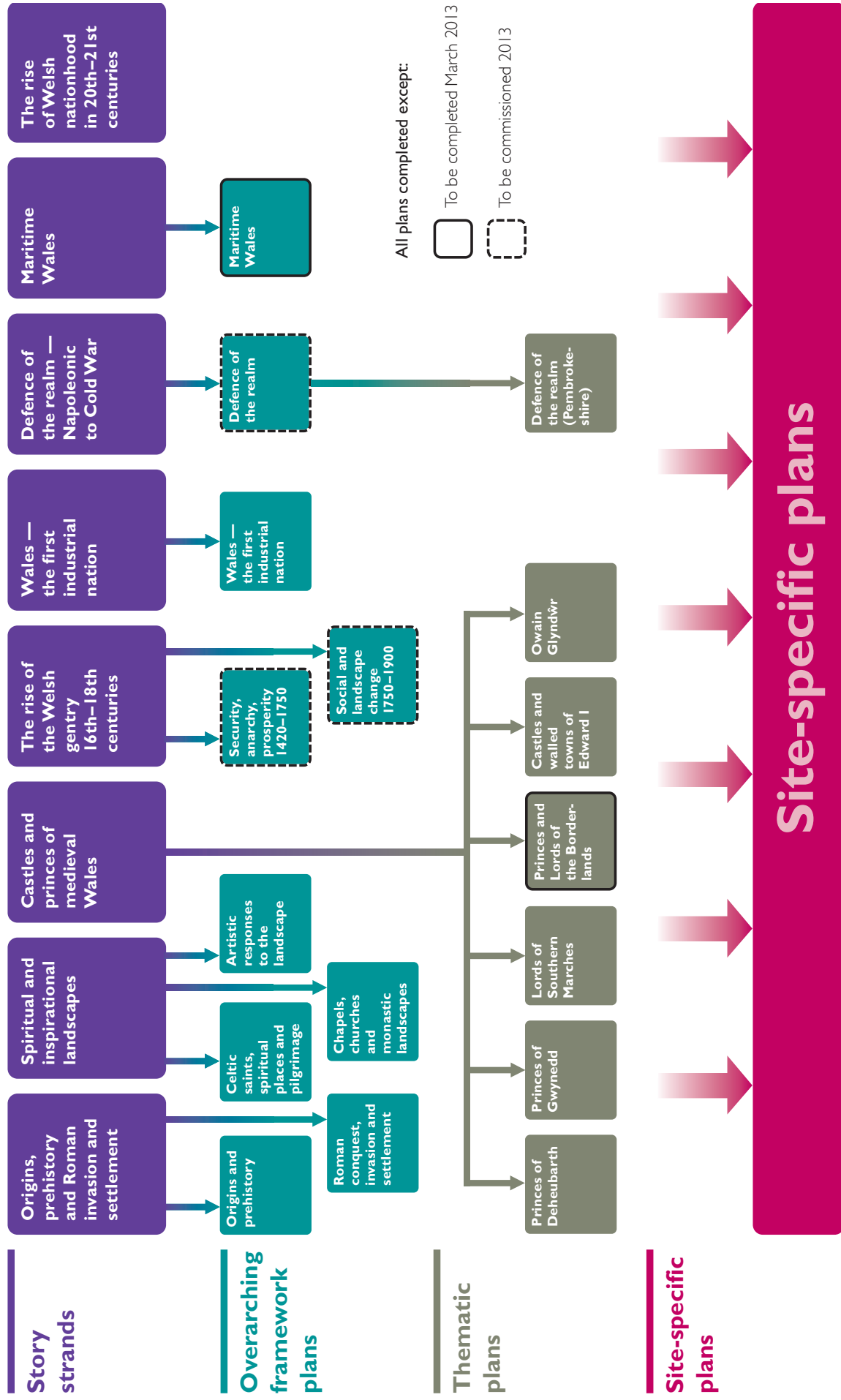
These plans are not intended to replace site-specific interpretation plans though they do sometimes suggest media for individual sites. They are intended to provide an umbrella under which site-specific interpretation can sit, to ensure that each site is not seen in isolation, but is instead equipped to tell its story in the broader context of the overarching story strand. The plans can be downloaded from <http://cadw.wales.gov.uk/interpretation/interpretationplans/?lang=en>



Denbigh Castle.

Pan-Wales Heritage Interpretation

Figure 1



6. Making sure the plans deliver

With a number of plans completed or in development, Cadw has evaluated those written to date in order to inform the development of future plans. The evaluation addressed some basic short-term questions:

- **Do the plans meet our needs and the needs of potential project partners?**
- **If not, what are the failings?**

In the longer term evaluation will be needed to find out how the plans impact upon visitor satisfaction and understanding.

The initial review suggests that future plans should be written to a standard format in order to make them easier to navigate. Plans should also aim to be comprehensive in scope and provide broad interpretative overviews for the story strands they represent without being overly prescriptive.

7. Making the links

This coordinated approach to interpretation is not just new to the heritage industry; it is new to our visitors too. It is important to build up some form of familiarity, some mechanism for making our audiences 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 (shown below) which represent the story/sub-story strands. These can be used on interpretation to suggest to visitors the key story (or stories) at a site and where the visitor might like to go next to follow that story. Guidance notes on how to use the icons and the 'Follow the Story' strapline are available to download at <http://cadw.wales.gov.uk/interpretation/guidancenotes/?lang=en>





8. Why take part in pan-Wales heritage interpretation?

The pan-Wales approach can provide significant benefits to partners in that it:

- is part of a unique national programme with Welsh Government backing;
- puts the participant's site(s) in to a wider context for visitors;
- can lead to an increase in visitors – through cross-referral of visitors between sites (big and small);
- provides a new marketing focus for reaching the UK and international markets;
- offers opportunities to piggyback on joined-up marketing activity;
- provides new PR opportunities/different PR angles;
- leads to closer working relationships nationally, regionally and locally.

Cadw yw gwasanaeth amgylchedd hanesyddol Llywodraeth Cymru, yn gweithio i sicrhau amgylchedd hanesyddol hygrych a ddiogelir yn dda i Gymru.
www.cadw.cymru.gov.uk

Cadw is the Welsh Government's historic environment service working for an accessible and well-protected historic environment for Wales.
www.cadw.wales.gov.uk



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9. Getting involved

For the pan-Wales approach to achieve its greatest impact, it needs buy-in by 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.

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