

Priorities for the Historic Environment of Wales

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Tourism and Sport



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Non
the
Welsh
Archaeology

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 **Cadw**



Our industrial monuments tell how Wales helped to shape the modern world. Here, in the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site, Big Pit, part of the National Museum of Wales, stands only a short distance away from Cadw's Blaenavon Ironworks.

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Cover photograph: Criccieth Castle and town looking across Cardigan Bay towards Snowdonia.

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Lord Elis-Thomas at Castell y Bere, Gwynedd, launching Cadw's new booklet about the castles of the lords and princes of Wales.

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Introduction

Wales as a nation has emerged from a shared cultural inheritance over thousands of years. However, at the end of the twentieth century our nation came of age with the devolution settlement and once again it now has law-making powers. It was fitting that one of the first pieces of legislation that was passed by the National Assembly for Wales was for the better protection of the historic environment. As a consequence of the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016, many observers, both inside and outside Wales, have hailed us for now having the most progressive legislation for the protection and management of the historic environment anywhere in the United Kingdom. This is important. The historic environment is the physical manifestation of Wales' cultural heritage; a precious inheritance that we must care for and pass on to our children to love, cherish and enjoy.

The layers of this history can be read in our landscapes and our townscapes, and in the countless historic buildings and ancient monuments that are all around us. The great castles and monuments of medieval Wales are familiar sites. They tell the stories of heroic Welsh lords and princes, and of conquest and political turmoil. The monuments of our more recent past tell us how Wales helped to shape the modern world. The story of industry can be told at Blaenavon and at the great aqueduct at Pontcysyllte, both now rightly recognised as World Heritage Sites. But the historic environment also makes the places in which we all live and work special; it contributes to the great pride that we have in our home cities, towns and villages. The chapel, the working man's institute, the local park, even the pub, school and countless private historic homes each hold a place in the hearts of our communities and tell extraordinary stories of our ancestors. All form part of the unique sense of place that exists in each part of our nation.

Much, much more is hidden as buried archaeology. Sometimes, it is revealed spectacularly during the course of new development, such as the unique medieval ship on the banks of the river Usk in Newport. This year, as a result of the dry summer, countless new archaeological sites have been revealed from the air as parch marks in the fields of our rural landscape. These new discoveries tell us that we have so much more to learn about this precious heritage. This is a journey of discovery that I want all the people of Wales to share.

However, our historic sites can make a contribution that extends beyond their value to society and to our knowledge of the past. They are also assets that contribute to the economic vitality of Wales. They make a significant contribution to tourism and to promoting Wales as a unique place for inward investment and as a very special place in which to live and work.

This brings me to the main themes of my ambition for the historic environment of Wales. Firstly, to build on the great strides that we have made in recent years in caring for our irreplaceable historic sites



In dry summers like 2018, aerial photography reveals buried archaeological sites like this enclosure in the Vale of Glamorgan.

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and to ensure that we have the skills across the sector to support their conservation. We also need to help people enjoy and appreciate our historic sites, and to encourage greater and more active participation in looking after our heritage. Finally, to realise fully the contribution that the historic environment can make to our economic well-being. These themes are interdependent. We cannot realise the economic value of our heritage if we do not care for it. We must identify and protect those individual historic sites or landscapes that matter to us and fully integrate their value in future plans for revitalising our communities. Similarly, we will build on how our historic sites are valued and appreciated by surrounding communities if we are also able to demonstrate that they are making a real contribution to the local economy.

Caring for and appreciating our historic environment is not a marginal activity. It can play a key role in realising wider Welsh Government objectives. It contributes to all four themes of the National Strategy, Prosperity for All, by helping to deliver a more prosperous, active, learning and united nation. It can help underpin the ambitions set out in our Economic Action Plan by recognising the special places that form the backbone of our local economies. But most of all, it is at the heart of our well-being goals and our sense of pride as a nation.



Capel Tegid, Bala. Chapels are at the heart of many communities.

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Caring for our historic environment



The recent conservation work on the Tudor house at Neath Abbey.

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Conserving and protecting our historic environment is the starting point for our ambitions. The Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016 is a landmark for the way in which we protect and manage our heritage. It includes historic firsts for Wales: statutory status for our historic environment records and a new statutory list of historic place names. It introduced new powers to protect nationally important sites and for improving the ways in which they are managed. I now want to make sure that the provisions of the Act live up to their promise. New guidance has already been published to support the Act and we have recently consulted on further guidance about how we manage change to our listed places of worship and scheduled monuments. More is on its way, including how we manage our unique marine heritage, and how we make the new statutory heritage partnership agreements and the list of historic place names work in practice. We will be consulting on drafts of new documents in the coming months.

My officials in Cadw are responsible for the conservation of the 130 monuments in State care. They continue to gather detailed information on the conservation priorities for this outstanding national collection and I have recently visited the work that has already been



The sealing of the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

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started on an ambitious, but necessary, programme of works at Conwy Castle, Beaumaris Castle and Neath Abbey. In coming years, this programme will be expanded to include other sites on the Cadw estate.

I recognise, too, that the majority of individual historic buildings, parks and gardens, and monuments are cared for by private owners, local authorities as well as dozens of voluntary groups, often embedded in local communities. Cadw officers already provide extensive advice to these custodians of our heritage. I was delighted to restart our grant programmes for those historic buildings that make a contribution to their local communities and I have now asked Cadw to look to expand our support for those responsible for managing our ancient monuments. A particular challenge will be to support our farming community in managing historic sites in our rural areas following our withdrawal from the European Union.

All of this work needs to be founded on good information about historic sites. The public now has greater online access to our heritage than ever before with information on our protected historic sites, historic environment records, heritage archives, historic battlefields and historic place names all now available at the touch of a button. Alongside the new guidance, this is essential if we are to succeed in our responsibilities as custodians of our heritage.

War memorials, such as this monument at Abergavenny, are a poignant and significant focal point for communities to remember those lost whilst fighting for their country. To commemorate the First World War, Cadw has provided grant aid to enable conservation and cleaning of war memorials.

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Making skills matter



Cadw's ambitious conservation programme includes repairs to the chimneys of Castell Coch.

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Protecting and conserving our historic environment depends on an understanding of its special qualities, and on a set of specific conservation craft skills. At least a third of all the buildings in Wales have been built using traditional construction methods. It is vital that we have the right skills in place to conserve, repair and maintain them. They are where we live, work, shop and enjoy our leisure time and they are essential to our infrastructure and transport networks.

Nevertheless, historic buildings are vulnerable to well-meaning, but inappropriate interventions such as the use of incompatible modern materials and techniques. This is because the special understanding and skills needed to maintain, conserve and repair these buildings, and to sustain them for the future, have for too long been overlooked by construction training.

I intend to support action to foster that understanding and grow the practical skills base. This will require 'mainstreaming' heritage craft skills into the wider construction industry and skills curriculum.



Conservation depends on traditional craft skills. Here, a Cadw stonemason is carefully repointing historic stonework at St Davids Bishop's Palace.

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There are already well-established examples such as the Tywi Centre in Carmarthenshire. Cadw's own small but experienced team of heritage craftspeople is also in a position to set an example for the sector by highlighting best practice. I am also pleased by the partnerships that have already been forged. Recently, I was able to launch the Heritage Construction in Wales project at the 2018 Royal Welsh Show. This initiative will deliver a series of training, education and networking activities and attract new entrants into heritage construction. It will also help heritage contractors to qualify their workforce through onsite assessment and training. This work supports the Strategic Skills Partnership that has already been established between the Construction Industry Training Board, Cadw, Historic Environment Scotland and Historic England.

Of course, heritage skills extend beyond specific conservation craft skills and I am pleased that the new strategic partnership between the four national heritage bodies in Wales is looking closely at the development of a sector workforce plan. I would like this to consider how more opportunities can be provided for work experience, placements and apprenticeships, and also for encouraging the development of course content by educational providers that reflects the needs of the heritage sector in Wales.



Specialist conservation in action on the chimneys of the Keep Tower at Castell Coch.

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Cherishing and enjoying our historic environment



Family fun at Chepstow Castle.

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A new bridge and new interpretation at Harlech Castle have made the site more physically and intellectually accessible.

Image courtesy of Geraint Roberts and DarntonB3

I want to encourage many more people to appreciate our historic environment and to visit our historic sites and places. In some cases, this requires an attitudinal change. We need to 'switch off' some of the barriers that might discourage people from visiting our sites and 'switch people on' to heritage. Of course, one barrier is cost. During 2016/17 over 1.4 million people visited Cadw's 24 staffed sites and of these, 547,945 visited free of charge. It is estimated that a further 1 million visited Cadw's 106 unstaffed and free-access sites.

However, we need to do more to encourage younger visitors. At Cadw monuments, we have recently reduced the entrance charge for those who are under 16 and educational visits continue to be free when arranged in advance. But, I would now like to see more family activities at Cadw monuments and engaging interpretation that provides greater opportunities to explore and celebrate our history, as we have done at Caerphilly.

I am also aware that our heritage belongs to everyone in Wales, whatever their background. If we are genuinely to break down the barriers, the stories that we tell at our sites need to be more accessible, relevant and enjoyable. We need to tell the human stories of the past that everyone can relate to.



Caergwrle Castle, the last castle built by a native Welsh prince, is a key part of our national story and is being taken into Cadw's care.

From the collections of the National Monuments Record of Wales: © Copyright: Paul R. Davis



Young people taking part in an excavation in Blaenrhondda to understand more about our 'unloved heritage'.

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We also need to continue the work on maximising access to those with mobility difficulties. We have made great progress with the access bridges at Caernarfon and Harlech castles. I now want to build on this by providing better access to the higher levels of some of our castles, such as Caernarfon, but in a way that is sympathetic to their historic character. Looking beyond its own sites, I have tasked Cadw to revisit the guidance on easy access for all to historic buildings and to bring it into line with the latest thinking. Access to Cadw sites also begins long before visitors arrive at the entrance. I have now asked for a review of how visitors make their journeys to Cadw monuments by road or public transport. This will consider signposting, parking, walking routes and cycle provision.

Cadw's sites are a truly magnificent collection and provide a unique opportunity to showcase the heritage that we have to offer as a nation. They can set the example that can transform attitudes. However, I am also aware that many great sites are managed by others, often in isolation. I would like to see Cadw enhancing its role, by working with these other partners by helping to join-up our overall heritage offer and story.

And we have some truly great stories to tell about Welsh history, from our prehistoric origins to the making of modern Wales. However, some of this is too often forgotten. I feel passionate about taking back 'ownership' of this heritage. For example, I want Cadw to tell the stories of our great Welsh lords and princes as well as the stories of the unnamed and uncelebrated men and women that made Wales the nation it is today. It was with great pride that I encouraged the last castle to be built by a native Welsh prince, Caergwrle Castle, to be taken into State care and the publication of a booklet about the castles of the Welsh lords and princes. But I am now keen to revitalise some of our interpretation, for example, at the great castle of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth at Castell y Bere, by building on what has already been achieved at Criccieth Castle.

Finally, to fully appreciate, understand and cherish our historic environment, we need greater participation in the decisions that affect its future and in the practical actions to investigate and conserve our historic sites. Next year, we celebrate the Year of Discovery, which provides not only an opportunity to encourage new research and scholarship, but also to maximise public participation so that as many people as possible can share in the excitement of new discovery. This is important just for the contribution it can make to healthy and active lifestyles, but also to mental health and well-being.

There are already hundreds of third sector organisations across Wales which have a heritage role, and we need to tap into this resource of potential volunteers. One good example is Open Doors, a celebration of the many hidden heritage treasures that are made open to the public every September with the help of local voluntary groups. With the help of funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, another partnership has been formed to support young people to develop projects and to explore our 'unloved heritage' — the heritage of the recent past that is often on our doorstep but can be sadly neglected or poorly understood. I hope this project will provide a catalyst to foster more innovative and genuine community-led heritage programmes. And we certainly need bold and innovative thinking about the future of the structures that remind us of our rich industrial past. This reminds us that appreciating the historic environment is not just about visiting historic sites; it is also about understanding and valuing the historic character of the places that surround us in our everyday lives.

Making our historic environment work for our economic well-being



Each place has its own unique character which can be used as the springboard for improved economic well-being. The townscape and castle at Cardigan have benefitted from significant grant aid which has re-invigorated the town as a place to live, work and visit.

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Further investment at Caerphilly Castle will benefit the local community and improve visitors' experience.

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The historic environment makes a significant contribution to the economy of Wales. In 2016 it was estimated that it contributes £963 million per annum to the Welsh economy and supports over 40,500 jobs through the heritage sector, heritage tourism and the heritage construction industry. Its value to tourism is well-known; 61 per cent of overseas visitors to Wales say that they come specifically to see historic buildings and ancient monuments.

But the economic value of our historic environment is more profound than this. It makes a contribution to the quality and vibrancy of the places in which we live and work. Although the full value of this is difficult to measure, the impact of major heritage attractions in towns such as Conwy is clear for all to see. I am of the opinion that we can do much more at other locations such as Caernarfon and Caerphilly, where the iconic castles provide significant opportunities to re-ignite the economy of their surrounding communities. I have been impressed by the work of



Cadw's visitor numbers have increased as a result of the award-winning marketing campaign that brought a dragon family to sites across Wales.

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Cadw in driving up its visitor numbers and income in recent years through award-winning marketing campaigns, new interpretation and improved visitor facilities at its monuments. But we now have to build on that by providing even more investment. I was delighted to announce recently that the Welsh Government will be spending £9.4 million over the next three years to further enhance the visitor experience at Cadw sites across Wales. The recently opened attractions at Caerphilly Castle have proved to be hugely popular, and we now intend to work with the local authority to transform Wales' largest castle into a world-class visitor destination.

Of course, not all of our communities have castles to act as a centrepiece for inward investment. However, each one of them has a unique historic signature that tells the story of both our distant and more recent past. This often tells a local or regional story; perhaps the story of coal mining, iron working, slate quarrying or agriculture, and the community values that emerged and still exist on the back of these industries. The regeneration of Blaenavon as a consequence of its World Heritage Site status provides an example of what can be achieved. We need to replicate this at other places, and we will be supporting Gwynedd County Council as it seeks World Heritage Status for the slate landscape of north-west Wales. Our heritage can do much to promote and protect Wales' place in the world and, in particular, through the distinctive identity that it has given to our regions. These are key themes of our Economic Action Plan. Conserving, enhancing and celebrating our historic sites and landscapes can contribute to distinctive places and resilient communities; they can attract inward investment and employment, and they can create attractive places in which to live, learn, work and invest.



The centrepiece of regeneration at Barry Island has been the seafront, including the historic shelters and sea wall, which celebrates the traditional seaside outing.

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Delivering through partnership



Dinefwr Castle and Park, including Newton House, are managed in a successful partnership between Cadw, the National Trust and the Wildlife Trust for South and West Wales.

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Funding from a number of partners and patrons, including the Heritage Lottery Fund and Cadw, has enabled The Landmark Trust to restore Llyn Celyn. This rare fifteenth-century house now has a sustainable future through community and commercial use.

Image courtesy of The Landmark Trust

In recent years, many of the successes of the historic environment sector have been founded on effective partnerships. An outstanding example is the extensive involvement of partners in the development of the new legislation and its associated advice and guidance. It was particularly pleasing to read the comment made by the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee following its recent inquiry into the historic environment that Cadw is regarded by many stakeholders as a helpful and trusted partner.

The Welsh local authorities act as the front line of delivery for so many of our ambitions for the historic environment. They are central to protection and enhancement of the historic environment at a local level, and to regeneration and place-making. However, they also face difficult financial pressures and I wish to encourage greater collaboration and sharing of experiences between authorities. The north Wales authorities have already made important progress and I wish to see these ideas shared across Wales.



Unloved Heritage, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, is a partnership project between the Welsh archaeological trusts, Cadw and the Royal Commission to engage, enthuse and inspire young people throughout Wales to get involved with their local heritage.

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At a national level, the new strategic partnership between Cadw and the other three national heritage organisations in Wales (Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, National Museum of Wales and National Library of Wales) provides a real opportunity to share skills and commercial experience, and I look forward to receiving regular reports on progress. This will be assisted by the new governance arrangements for Cadw with a new internal board being established in the coming months. This will provide both greater operational support and allow Cadw to operate more effectively alongside its partners in the commercial environment. However, the recent decision to keep Cadw inside government, means that it will also be able to take full advantage of the policy connections across government that are essential if the historic environment is to play its part towards the wider ambitions set out in Prosperity for All and the Economic Action Plan. It is all too easy for heritage to be an afterthought if it is not firmly embedded within the 'mainstream' of policy development and delivery.

Beyond government, the sector has already demonstrated the value of partnership through the Historic Environment Group, which has produced invaluable work as the sector faces up to future challenges, such as climate change and the implications of leaving the European Union. I will continue to encourage Cadw to share experiences with third sector organisations and funding partners, including the National Trust and the Heritage Lottery Fund. We will also continue to work with delivery partners, including the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales and the Welsh archaeological trusts, who have done so much to improve our understanding of the past, to access information and to engage people in active participation. Another partnership that is already demonstrating its value is the Welsh Places of Worship Forum, which is helping to tackle a consequence of declining religious congregations: the increasing numbers of chapels and churches, which were once at the heart of many of our communities, now becoming redundant.



The Cornish beam engine at Dorothea Quarry, Nantlle, is an evocative reminder of why the slate industry of north-west Wales is worthy of nomination for World Heritage Site status. Partnership working will be essential to the success of this bid.

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Conclusion



Pentre Ifan burial chamber in Pembrokeshire was one of the three monuments in Wales to be protected through the first historic environment legislation in 1882.

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These are challenging times for the historic environment sector, with financial pressures and many future uncertainties. But, they are also exciting times. That we have achieved so much in recent years is testimony to the successful partnerships that the Welsh Government, through Cadw, has forged with a wide range of stakeholders.

There is now a real opportunity for our outstanding heritage to be positioned at the centre of our future well-being. Heritage contributes so much to so many of our goals: a healthy and active lifestyle, our economic vitality, opportunities for lifelong learning and skills, a sustainable environment and resilient communities. And of course, returning to where I started, the historic environment sits at the very centre of our cultural identity as a nation. It tells the story of Wales' place in the world, from its early beginnings to its role at the heart of the making of the modern world.



Dolbadarn Castle, Gwynedd, built by Prince Llywelyn ap Iorwerth in the early years of the thirteenth century.

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