

# Historic Environment Records in Wales: Benchmarks and Standards





# Statement of Purpose

Historic environment records in Wales have been created as a result of decades of research and investigation. They are maintained and updated for public benefit and use in accordance with national and international standards.

*Historic Environment Records in Wales: Standards and Benchmarks* explains how the standards should be met and the benchmarks against which historic environment records will be measured every five years.

While this guidance has been prepared specifically for organisations responsible for the delivery of historic environment records in Wales, it will be of relevance to a range of other public, voluntary and private sector bodies, and individuals with an interest in the historic environment of Wales.



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**OGL** 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.

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# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>04</b>	<b>Further Information</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>1. Audit</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>Contacts</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>2. Benchmarks</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>Links from this document</b>	<b>14</b>
2.1 Content and Coverage	06	<b>Endnotes</b>	<b>15</b>
2.2 Data Standards	08		
2.3 Public Access and Engagement	09		
2.4 Service Delivery	10		

# Introduction

The historic environment of Wales has been shaped by past generations. It highlights where we have come from and enhances our quality of life. The history that surrounds us gives us a sense of place and helps to define us as a nation.

The historic environment is also a fragile, vulnerable, non-renewable and finite resource. Our ambition to provide effective protection and management of the historic environment relies on access to good quality, authoritative information.

Historic environment records must meet certain standards, which are set out by MIDAS Heritage<sup>1</sup> and developed for use in Wales by the Historic Environment Data Standards Working Group for Wales<sup>2</sup>. Maintenance of the standards is measured by compliance with the benchmarks published in this guidance. Compliance with these benchmarks will be reviewed by an audit every five years.

Best practice advice for developing and managing historic environment records can be found in the UK Historic Environment Record Manual.<sup>3</sup>

# 1— Audit

**Under its operational arrangements with the Welsh Government, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (the RCAHMW) has responsibility for the oversight of records relating to the historic environment<sup>4</sup>.**

On behalf of the Welsh Ministers, the RCAHMW will monitor the standards and service levels of historic environment records in Wales by coordinating and validating audits. Audits will take place on a five-year cycle to review data quality, evidence performance against each of the indicators and identify needs for enhancement.

Following each audit, five-year plans will be produced to identify priorities for enhancement work, including responding to feedback from users.

On behalf of the Welsh Ministers, Cadw, the Welsh Government's Historic Environment Service will publish an online summary report of the audit of historic environment records. A summary of every historic environment record audit will be published online by Heneb: the Trust for Welsh Archaeology.<sup>5</sup>

## 2— Benchmarks

The RCAHMW has developed a series of benchmarks against which all historic environment records will be assessed to make sure that they meet the required standards. In order to meet these standards, historic environment records must meet benchmarks in four key areas:

1. Content and coverage
2. Data Standards
3. Public Access and Engagement
4. Service delivery

### 2.1 Content and Coverage

**Benchmark 1: A historic environment record including site, event and bibliographic information that complies with the content and coverage requirements of section 194 of the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023.**

There should be no temporal limits on the information recorded in a historic environment record: it should include data relating to all periods, from the earliest human activity to the present day.

The geographic limit of a historic environment record will be defined by the administrative boundary of the local authority or authorities that it covers. In the case of local authorities with coastlines, the seaward

extension of a historic environment record's geographic coverage beyond the administrative boundary is likely to enhance the authority's contribution to the production of Shoreline Management Plans and marine planning, as well as providing a more complete picture of their area's past. For example, to record the impact on cultural heritage of coastal erosion or rises in sea level as a consequence of current and past climate change.

The RCAHMW maintains the Welsh maritime record which comprises records of offshore shipping and aviation casualties, and areas of high archaeological potential. This record is part of the National Monuments Record of Wales<sup>6</sup>, is available for use by the local planning authority and is used by the Welsh Government in offshore planning.

Historic environment records require active management if they are to reflect properly the changing nature of the historic environment and our understanding of its significance<sup>7</sup>. Historic environment records must be kept up to date with accurate information, including:

- new discoveries and interpretations
- new and amended designations
- latest research and publications
- records and outcomes of new investigations
- significant changes to the historic assets already recorded.

Such information will come from a variety of sources, ranging from chance finds by members of the public and unexpected discoveries by property owners, developers and land managers to systematic investigations undertaken as part of national surveys, university-led research, developer-funded fieldwork and recording, community projects or private research.

Arrangements should be in place to ensure that information about heritage assets and the wider historic environment, which is generated as part of the planning process, is submitted to the appropriate historic environment record. The project archive should also be deposited with an accredited archive repository such as the RCAHMW.

### Indicators

- a. Regularly updated data.
- b. Comprehensive coverage of the historic environment resource.
- c. An information system integrating spatial data with text-based digital and hard-copy information.
- d. Arrangements for liaison at least annually with local authorities and National Park authorities in Wales, and Natural Resources Wales to review their contribution to, and application of, historic environment record data.

## Benchmark 2: A supporting reference collection of hard-copy and digital material that is catalogued and managed.

A historic environment record needs to hold collections of published reference materials and working copies of archival material that supplement the digital information contained in its database.

Supporting reference collections serve a valuable role to answer enquiries. Collections should be housed and maintained in appropriate environmental and storage conditions to ensure their long-term preservation.

### Indicators

- a. Supporting reference material must be housed and maintained in appropriate environmental conditions.
- b. The catalogue of reference collections must be cross-indexed with the computerised record.
- c. A programme for digitising material under the direct management of the historic environment record should be included in annual forward plans where appropriate.

### Benchmark 3: Statement of policy for depositing primary archive.

Original archival material that is managed or acquired by the historic environment record (where the data creator does not have responsibility for deposition and/or no enforcement options are

available) should be deposited with an accredited archive such as the National Monuments Record of Wales.<sup>8</sup> The RCAHMW can offer advice and should be consulted at an early stage whenever possible.

#### Indicators

- a. Primary archive material (digital and non-digital) managed or acquired by the historic environment record should be deposited with an accredited archive such as the National Monuments Record of Wales.
- b. A disposal policy for staged transfers, including time criteria, will be required.

## 2.2

### Data Standards

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#### Benchmark 4: Compliance with national data standards.

National data standards are defined by the MIDAS Heritage standard for historic environment records.<sup>9</sup> Effective searching (and cross-searching) of a historic environment record relies upon the quality of the data indexing and the existence of good spatial data and mapping. Use of nationally agreed terminology is vital. A collection of agreed terminology 'vocabularies' is maintained by the Forum on Information Standards in Heritage (FISH)<sup>10</sup>. This is the definitive source of information about national terminology recommended for use in conjunction with the MIDAS Heritage standard.

The RCAHMW facilitates the development and maintenance of data standards in Wales and convenes the Historic Environment Data Standards Working Group for Wales, which disseminates best practice. HER staff across Wales are expected to participate in this group.

#### Indicators

- a. Compliance with the basic MIDAS Heritage standard as applied in Wales and with terminology agreed by the Historic Environment Data Standards Working Group for Wales.
- b. Compliance with national standards for spatial data and guidance on geographic information system (GIS) good practice.
- c. A supporting recording manual that sets out data input rules, protocols and standards.
- d. Participation in the Historic Environment Data Standards Working Group for Wales to develop, promote and implement data standards in Wales.



## Benchmark 5: Data sharing and exchange with other relevant organisations.

Historic environment records should be capable of providing, and of receiving and incorporating, digital data in formats designed to assist the exchange of data between appropriate compatible information systems. In particular, they should be interoperable with the corporate GIS systems and back-office planning systems of the local planning authorities which they cover.

Regular data sharing and collaboration between the principal record holders of historic environment

information in Wales, including the historic environment record, is established by the Historic Environment Data Standards (HEDS) Working Group, convened, and chaired by RCAHMW. The group promotes and facilitates the principles of easy access, data sharing and collaboration to enable participating organisations to have the information necessary to further their business needs. Historic environment record staff are expected to participate in the actions and priorities agreed by the group.

### Indicators

- A regular programme of sharing and exchanging information with other information providers in the historic environment sector in line with the practice of the Historic Environment Data Standards (HEDS) Working Group.
- Regular provision of data to Historic Wales<sup>11</sup> in a format agreed with the RCAHMW.

## 2.3

## Public Access and Engagement

### Benchmark 6: Facilities provided for user services including visitor, postal, telephone and online enquiries, in accordance with s195 of the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023.

Historic environment records must be made available for public inspection, information provided in response to reasonable requests, including for copies of part of the record, and assistance provided to help access and interpret the information.

Users of historic environment records typically include developers, planning/environmental consultants, statutory undertakers, property owners, land managers, farmers, academic researchers, local societies, amateur historians/archaeologists, teachers, students and interested members of the public — as well as historic environment professionals working in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Consequently, both conventional and online content may require mediation and interpretation, depending on the user.

Each user is likely to have specific needs, requiring different levels of support and varying timeliness of access. In order to maximise public access, a range of access arrangements will be required, including, for example, facilities for visitors to the historic environment record and for handling telephone and electronic enquiries.

Historic environment record staff should be capable of delivering an effective service to all users, while also managing other demands on their time. A specified response time should be published for enquiries and this should be viewed as a maximum response time.

Historic environment record services should be accessible online and clearly signposted from relevant websites including those of the local authorities covered by the service. Relevant online content should also be made accessible through the Historic Wales portal maintained by the RCAHMW.<sup>12</sup>

### Indicators

- An appropriately equipped and managed work area for users, including supervision by staff able to respond to enquiries.
- Arrangements for responding to visitor, postal, telephone and email enquiries within the published response times.
- Online free public access to at least the site index of the historic environment record database via the internet.

## Benchmark 7: An effective method of receiving feedback from visiting, remote and online users.

Historic environment records should be proactive in improving their service for users by consistently collecting and acting upon feedback.

### Indicators

- a. A maintained record of users and their types of enquiry from both local and remote use (for example; web usage, telephone enquiries and visits by researchers).
- b. Systematically collected information on user satisfaction.
- c. A mechanism for consulting key stakeholders and service users for the development of forward plans.

## Benchmark 8: Outreach activities based on the historic environment record to promote wider knowledge and use of the historic environment record

Each historic environment record or host organisation should have an outreach programme that advocates the historic environment record and promotes its wider use. This is essential for:

- identifying and targeting new audiences for the historic environment record
- retaining and encouraging existing historic environment record users
- creating opportunities for the participation of local communities in the maintenance and enhancement of the historic environment record
- developing synergies with outreach delivered by other heritage and environmental services.

### Indicators

- a. Develop, identify and evaluate the effectiveness of outreach activities to develop new audiences and promote wider use of resources based on user responses and market research. These might range from new media and data formats to exhibitions, leaflets, trails, open days, field programmes, etc.

## 2.4

## Service Delivery

## Benchmark 9: Policies and services are clearly defined and available for users electronically and in hard copy.

In order to manage a historic environment record effectively, historic environment record services must develop and regularly review policies that are compliant with relevant legislation, including but not restricted to:

- Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023<sup>13</sup>
- Equality Act 2010<sup>14</sup>
- Data Protection Act 2018<sup>15</sup>
- Freedom of Information Act 2000<sup>16</sup>
- The Environment Information Regulations 2004<sup>17</sup>
- Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011<sup>18</sup>
- Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015<sup>19</sup>
- Planning (Wales) Act 2015<sup>20</sup>
- Environment (Wales) Act 2016<sup>21</sup>

Policies for the management of their record must be compliant with UK copyright law<sup>22</sup>. In general, copyright in relation to the content of a historic environment record should be established and protected in a way that ensures its unrestricted public use for the future.

In practice, content will come from a wide variety of sources. Those contributing information must be advised that it will be in the public domain and a waiver of copyright ownership signed wherever possible.

Historic environment records will need to take account of third party copyrights and licences relating to material they acquire in order to avoid infringements.

### Indicators

- a. Levels of service set out in written policies covering:
  - the purposes for which the historic environment record is maintained
  - the scope, geographic coverage and content of information resources accessible through the service (digital, non-digital and reference collections)
  - the professional and public user groups it aims to serve
  - records access, including arrangements for servicing the needs of different types of user
  - arrangements for depositing primary archival materials.
- b. Publication of details of public use, including opening hours and charging policy.

## Benchmark 10: Staff to manage the historic environment record and its services.

Historic environment record service providers must employ dedicated, appropriately qualified and competent curatorial staff to create their record and keep it up to date, and to communicate effectively with the diverse audiences that use it.

Staffing should include personnel with the qualifications and experience appropriate for compiling, curating, interpreting and mediating access to an extended range of historic environment information resources.

Maintaining the skills of historic environment record staff is essential if they are to provide high-quality information and advisory services adhering to the relevant Standards and Guidance of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. They should therefore have access to relevant continuing professional development (CPD) and training.

### Indicators

- a. Staff should include personnel with qualifications, experience, and membership of relevant professional bodies appropriate for managing an extended range of historic environment information resources.
- b. A training plan to support continued staff development.
- c. The number of Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff should be commensurate with the level of service and volume of work required.

## Benchmark 11: Infrastructure and support agreements for critical systems and a service continuity plan.

Sufficient space must be provided to allow the effective daily operation of the historic environment record, including provision for public access and for the storage of non- digital resources.

Robust data storage, security, risk management and disaster recovery procedures must be implemented to protect against, detect and correct malicious behaviour so that critical technology and services are resilient to disruptive challenges such as cyber attacks. All software must have clear and up-to-date system documentation, particularly where it is bespoke.

### Indicators

- a. Policies for data and information system security that mitigate applicable threats.
- b. Risk assessment and emergency preparedness plan to protect service continuity.
- c. Arrangements for information system support.
- d. Robust data licensing processes in place to minimise the potential for the misuse of data provided by the historic environment record, and policies in place to enable action to be taken if data is found to be misused.
- e. Periodic review of support agreements.
- f. Compliance with current best practice digital security requirements.



# Further Information

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## Legislation and Guidance

[Historic Environment \(Wales\) Act 2023](#)

[Historic environment records — Cadw](#)

[Forum on Information Standards in Heritage](#)

[MIDAS Heritage — Historic England](#)

## Records in Wales

Archwilio — provides online public access to baseline information in the historic environment records. Archwilio is maintained and supported with further information held by the Welsh archaeological trusts.

[Welcome to Archwilio — Archwilio](#)

Cof Cymru — Cadw's online record of the national historic assets of Wales, which includes listed buildings, scheduled monuments, protected wrecks, World Heritage Sites, registered historic landscapes and registered historic parks and gardens. [Cof Cymru — Cadw](#)

Coflein - [The online catalogue of archaeological sites, historic buildings, industrial and maritime heritage in Wales](#)

Historic Wales — an online gateway to national and regional historic environment records. [Historic Wales](#)

LANDMAP — the online landscape baseline resource maintained by Natural Resources Wales.

[Natural Resources Wales / LANDMAP — the Welsh landscape baseline](#)

LANDMAP datasets are also published for download for use in a geographic information system (GIS) on DataMap Wales. [Data catalogue — DataMapWales](#)

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. [Home — Historic Place Names of Wales](#)

National Trust Heritage Records Online — provides information on historic assets located on National Trust landholdings. [Home — National Trust Heritage Records — National Trust Heritage Records Online](#)

The Inventory of Historic Battlefields in Wales <http://battlefields.rcahmw.gov.uk/>

Tithe Maps of Wales — historic tithe maps providing a very useful source of information relating to the historic environment. [Tithe Maps of Wales — Home](#)

# Contacts

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Cadw [Contact us](#)

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales [RCAHMW — Contact or Order](#)

National Monuments Record of Wales [RCAHMW — National Monuments Record of Wales](#)

Planning Authorities. Conservation and planning officers can be contacted via the relevant local authority website.

National Park authorities' conservation officers can be contacted via the relevant website.

[Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority](#)

[Pembrokeshire Coast National Park — A Wonder Filled Coast](#)

[Eryri National Park](#)

Natural Resources Wales [Contact us](#)

## Links from this document

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# Endnotes

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- 1 MIDAS Heritage — The UK Historic Environment Data Standard, v1.1, Forum on Information Standards in Heritage, 2012  
[MIDAS Heritage — Historic England](#)
- 2 Historic Environment Data Standards Working Group for Wales  
[www.rcahmw.gov.uk/discover/historic-environment-data-standards/](http://www.rcahmw.gov.uk/discover/historic-environment-data-standards/)
- 3 [UK HER Manual — Knowledge Hub](#)
- 4 Summary report of the audit of historic environment records in Wales.  
[Historic environment records — Cadw](#)
- 5 [Heneb: the Trust for Welsh Archaeology](#)
- 6 The National Monuments Record of Wales is the national archive collection of information about the historic environment of Wales. It can be accessed online through Coflein.  
[Coflein — The online catalogue of archaeological sites, historic buildings, industrial and maritime heritage in Wales](#)
- 7 For significance, refer to Cadw’s Conservation Principles for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Wales, Cadw, Welsh Assembly Government, 2011  
[Conservation Principles — Cadw](#)
- 8 The National Monuments Record of Wales is the national archive collection of information about the historic environment of Wales. It can be accessed online through Coflein.  
[Coflein — The online catalogue of archaeological sites, historic buildings, industrial and maritime heritage in Wales](#)
- 9 MIDAS Heritage — The UK Historic Environment Data Standard, v1.1, Forum on Information Standards in Heritage, 2012  
[MIDAS Heritage — Historic England](#)
- 10 [Forum on Information Standards in Heritage \(FISH\)](#)
- 11 Historic Wales is an online gateway to national and regional historic environment records in Wales  
[Historic Wales](#)
- 12 Historic Wales is an online gateway to national and regional historic environment records in Wales  
[Historic Wales](#)
- 13 [Historic Environment \(Wales\) Act 2023](#)
- 14 [Equality Act 2010](#)
- 15 [Data Protection Act 2018](#)
- 16 [Freedom of Information Act 2000](#)
- 17 [Environmental information Regulations 2004](#)
- 18 [Welsh Language \(Wales\) Measure 2011](#)
- 19 [Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015](#)
- 20 [Planning \(Wales\) Act 2015](#)
- 21 [Environment \(Wales\) Act 2016](#)
- 22 [Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988](#)

