

**Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru**  
**The National Assembly for Wales**

To: Organisations shown on the  
attached list

Parc Cathays / Cathays Park  
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CF10 3NQ

Eich cyf / Your ref  
Ein cyf / Our ref

Dyddiad / Date March 2002

## **THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE ANCIENT AND HISTORICAL MONUMENTS OF WALES**

As part of the programme of five yearly reviews of various Assembly bodies and activities, the Culture Minister, Jenny Randerson and the Finance, Local Government and Communities Minister, Edwina Hart have, on behalf of the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned jointly a review of the Royal Commission. I should be grateful for your views and comments (and those of any other individual or body who wishes to respond to this invitation to comment) to this important part of the review, 6 June 2002.

### **Purpose of Review**

The review will examine in particular whether there is a continuing need for the functions carried out by the Royal Commission and, if so, what might be done to improve its accountability and strategic effectiveness. Like all such reviews, someone unconnected with the body or its area of operation is carrying it out on an independent basis.

The review process is transparent and open to all with an interest in the historic environment of Wales. This is also a specific opportunity for the Royal Commission's partners, customers, staff and other stakeholders to submit their views and comments. The review report will be in the public domain; and it will be discussed by the Culture Committee in draft before the Assembly Cabinet comes to a view on its conclusions and recommendations.



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The carrying out of this review makes no presumption about the conclusions to which the review will come nor does it imply any criticism of the Royal Commission. Assembly Ministers have made it clear that options for the future must be examined on their merits.

### **The Review Process**

This review of the Royal Commission is being carried out in two stages. The first will cover the basic issue of whether there is a continuing need for the Royal Commission and its functions, or whether some other arrangement is preferable – responses to which will form the basis of an interim report which will be presented to the Culture Committee for comment.

The second stage will focus on whether:

- the current organisational framework is the most appropriate;
- the improvements should be made to the way in which the Royal Commission's functions are delivered; and
- adequate systems are in place to ensure that the Royal Commission manages its finances effectively and what progress it has made in improving the efficiency of its operations

The Environment, Planning and Transport Minister, Sue Essex, and the Finance, Local Government and Communities Minister, Mrs Hart, decided that I should undertake at about the same time as this review, the quinquennial review of Cadw. That was the subject of a further invitation to comment (the period to comment on which is now closed), and as well as a separate report, it is intended that a paper on linked issues arising from both reviews will be produced and submitted to the Culture Committee and the Environment, Transport and Planning Committee for their consideration.

The quinquennial review of the National Library of Wales has also been commissioned recently. I will be in touch with the reviewers conducting that exercise.

### **Consultation**

As the reviewer, I am issuing this letter as an invitation to a wide range of bodies and individuals working in the fields relevant to the historic environment of Wales. I attach a list of bodies and individuals to whom I am sending this letter to the version is being placed ([www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk)) on the National Assembly's, the Royal Commission's and Cadw's websites. Please feel free to share this invitation to comment with any other bodies or individuals within and beyond Wales, or to alert me to others with a potential interest.

## The Attached Consultation Paper

The questions in the attached consultation paper are intended to help you focus on these areas where you feel able to respond. Please do not feel obliged to attempt to answer all of them - nor constricted by them if there are issues you consider relevant which you think fall outside them. The questions are grouped as follows:-

- a) The Royal Commission's overall role and the strategic framework within which it operates.
- b) Planning and structure (the Royal Commission's Corporate Plan is available on its website, [www.rcahmw.org.uk](http://www.rcahmw.org.uk))
- c) The Royal Commission's achievements and performance.
- d) The Royal Commission's partnerships.
- e) The Royal Commission in relation to the National Assembly for Wales.

## Responses

The issues described in the consultation paper I attach, are ones where I would particularly welcome your comments. If you wish to contribute, please send one copy of your response, with "Consultation Paper on Royal Commission" as the title, **to arrive with me by 6 June 2002**, to:

Martin Rolph  
Quinquennial Review on the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical  
Monuments of Wales  
c/o National Assembly for Wales  
Cathays Park  
Cardiff CF10 3NQ

Please begin your contribution with a clear indication of which organisation (if any) you represent. Any queries relating to this consultation exercise should also be directed to me by telephone on 029 2080 1364 (or 029 2082 3775), or by e-mail to [martin.rolph@wales.GSI.gov.uk](mailto:martin.rolph@wales.GSI.gov.uk).

The results of this consultation may be published, so I intend to treat all responses as public, **unless** respondents clearly state that they wish their comments to be treated as confidential. I may still include such replies in summaries of responses, unless such summaries could be used to identify respondents who wished their comments to be confidential.

I would be very grateful if you could answer as many questions in the consultation paper as are relevant to you; and also set out your priorities, concerns and ideas about the Royal Commission and the context within which it works.

Martin Rolph

# **THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE ANCIENT AND HISTORICAL MONUMENTS OF WALES**

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 The Royal Commission is an Assembly Sponsored Public Body (ASPB) established in 1908, but now operating under a new Royal Warrant issued in 1992 and confirmed in 2000 by a further Royal Warrant promoted by the Assembly.

## **2. The Royal Commission's Roles**

### **2.1 The Royal Commission's Mission statement is:**

The Royal Commission has a national role in the management of the archaeological, built and maritime heritage of Wales as the originator, curator and supplier of authoritative information for individual, corporate and governmental decision-makers, researchers and the general public.

### **2.2 The Royal Commission does this by:**

- a. Compiling information by surveying, recording and interpreting terrestrial and maritime archaeological and historical sites, structures and landscapes, particularly those of national and local importance which are threatened with destruction.
- b. Creating and maintaining a comprehensive archive in the form of a National Monuments Record including a national index to regional Sites and Monuments Records.
- c. Publicising the scope and publishing the results of investigations carried out in pursuit of the above objectives.
- d. Advising on the survey, interpretation, preservation and conservation of ancient and historical monuments and constructions.
- e. Setting standards and providing guidance and funding to other organisations and individuals to survey, record and interpret the archaeological landscapes and historic buildings of Wales.
- f. Seeking to achieve progressive improvements in the quality and efficiency of the services provided, including working in partnership with others who have an interest in the historic environment.

## **3. The Royal Commission's Work Programme**

3.1 The Royal Commission's work programme is embodied within a Corporate Plan, which is published annually (the Plan and the Royal Commission's Annual Report, are available on the Royal Commission's website,

[www.rcahmw.org.uk](http://www.rcahmw.org.uk)) . The Commission has set out their intentions for the period up to 2005 as follows:

1. Completion of the survey and mapping of the uplands in twelve years, using archive and current aerial photography to target ground survey, and GIS to aid interpretation and resource map compilation.
2. Provision of information to Cadw for scheduling purposes and to the Ordnance Survey for map depiction from the uplands survey programme.
3. Maintain the aerial surveillance of scheduled ancient monuments.
4. Continue the emergency recording of historic buildings of all types and dates, particularly those listed buildings threatened with alteration or demolition.
5. Survey particular building types, namely chapels and public buildings, to enhance the NMRW archive and database, working wherever possible with the voluntary sector.
6. When opportunities arise, to carry out dendrochronological dating of structures.
7. To extend the availability of NMRW information on-line, and particularly catalogues and databases and the all Wales portal, CARN (Core Archaeological Record Index).
8. To use GIS to identify, create and make available a national map of the archaeological resource of Wales.
9. To ensure that the pre-1993 NMRW archive catalogue is linked to the national sites database.
10. To continue to develop the maritime database.
11. To work in partnership with Archaeology Data Service, English Heritage, and RCAHMS to develop the Historic Environment Information Retrieval Network (HEIRNET).
12. To strengthen the Extended National Database partnership of Cadw, National Museums and Galleries of Wales, and the four Welsh Archaeological Trusts.
13. To identify and satisfy the needs of NMRW users.
14. To develop a co-ordinated outreach programme within Wales and beyond, to promote an awareness and understanding of archaeology and the built environment and the Royal Commission's role in their interpretation and management.

15. To continue to publish specialist books, an Annual Report, a twice-yearly bilingual newsletter, to mount exhibitions, foster links with the broadcast media, and regularly to update the website.
16. To attach particular importance to the provision of expert advice to educational organisations at all levels, in support of the National Assembly's initiatives in Wales for life-long learning.

Performance against the targets contained in the Corporate Plan is subsequently reported upon in its Annual Report.

### 3.2 Some Questions relating to the Royal Commission's Role and Strategic Framework

- Q1 Does the Royal Commission's current work programme reflect its statutory duties and functions?
- Q2 Do you think that there is a need for the functions that are carried out by the Royal Commission to be performed at all? Which functions should, or should not, be performed at all? and why?
- Q3 What would be the impact if any, or all, the Royal Commissions functions were discontinued?
- Q4 Are there functions carried out by the Royal Commission that might advantageously be carried out by other bodies working in the fields of archaeology, preservation, conservation, presentation, recreation, and access (such as Cadw, the Countryside Council for Wales, local authorities, voluntary organisations, private sector organisations or other parts of the National Assembly for Wales itself)? Which function(s); and why?
- Q5 Should the Royal Commission be merged with another organisation? (e.g. Cadw, Countryside Council for Wales, National Library of Wales, National Museums and Galleries of Wales). If any, which and why?
- Q6 Are there any functions carried out by such bodies – or perhaps, not being carried out at all – that should be carried out by the Royal Commission. Which functions; and why?
- Q7 Is there scope to rationalise the functions of the Royal Commission and those of other bodies? Which functions? And how might they be better organised?
- Q8 Do the functions of the Royal Commission need to be carried out by a Sponsored Public Body? Are there other arrangements likely to be more effective?

## 4. **The Royal Commission Planning and Structure**

4.1 The Secretary is appointed by the Commissioners with the approval of the National Assembly. The Secretary has a personal responsibility to the Permanent Secretary of the National Assembly for Wales, who is the Accounting Officer for the Royal Commission. Other staff are appointed by, and are the employees of, the Royal Commission.

4.2 The Royal Commission staff complement currently 32, and 3 contract posts, based in Aberystwyth.

4.3 Some Questions relating to the Royal Commission Planning and Structure

Q8 How effective is the corporate planning of the Royal Commission in developing clear strategic direction, setting targets and priorities, and Delivering key targets and outcomes?

Q9 In addressing the full range of its responsibilities, how effective is the match between inputs, in terms of resources, and the objectives and targets it sets?

Q10 Do the staff of the Royal Commission generally understand and feel a sense of ownership of the corporate objectives?

Q11 Does the structure of the organisation of the Royal Commission enable regional, or other, needs to be fully recognised?

5. **The Royal Commission's Achievements**

5.1 The Royal Commission reports a number of achievements in the last 7 years since its last review:

a) **Survey**

1. Reviewed uplands survey programme and shortened timescale for completion by deploying aerial photography and computer-aided mapping to target fieldwork.
2. Completing all-Wales database of chapels, due to be fully on line 2002.
3. Completed all-Wales database of parklands and gardens, on line since 2001.

b) **Information management**

1. CARN (Core Archaeological Record Index) on line 2001.
2. Web site launched, rebuilt 2001.
3. New working arrangements with Ordnance Survey, which now identify RCAHMW as source of archaeological material, allow

access to digital mapping, and (in development) will allow electronic transmission of data.

4. Additional archive space commissioned, and improvements to environmental control in existing archive stores.
5. Acquisition of Cadw records, following recommendation of Public Record Office.

c) **Publications and Outreach**

1. Publication of specialist books maintained and diversified; electronic publishing using the web.
2. New and improved facilities for NMRW Library users, including relocated reading room and e-mail enquiry facility.
3. *COFNOD*, twice-yearly bilingual newsletter, launched 1999.
4. Evening lecture series by staff members, launched 2001.
5. Welsh Language Scheme drafted, awaiting approval.
6. Widespread exhibitions programme covering county shows, conferences etc.

d) **Partnerships**

1. Chapels project, with *Capel*.
2. Extended National database agreement with Cadw, NMGW, and Welsh Archaeological Trusts, enabling CARN (qv).
3. *Gathering the Jewels* with NLW, NMGW, and the Welsh Records Offices.
4. Blaenavon World Heritage Site partnership with Torfaen CBC, Cadw, CCW, NMGW, NT, Monmouth CC, BBNP.
5. Mynydd y Fynnon (Cambrian Mountains agri-environmental initiative) with ADAS, FE.
6. *Tir Gofal*, in support of CCW.
7. Portable Antiquities Scheme, with DCMS, British Museum, EH and NMGW.
8. Archive Network Wales with Archive Council for Wales.
9. Cardiganshire County History and Meirionnydd County History with relevant county committees.



e) **General**

1. Completion of scheme for disabled access at Plas Crug.
2. Completion of ISS Study for period up to 2005/6.
3. Income generation and efficiency savings maintained; all yearly expenditure within budget.
4. Flexible staff working has enabled performance targets to be met each year.

5.2 Some questions relating to the Royal Commission's achievements

Q12 How significant are these, or other, achievements?  
Is there more that could be done? If so, what?

Q13 What disappointments, or failures, have there been over this period?

Q14 How does a Royal Commissioner's performance compare with that of other, comparable, bodies?

6. The Royal Commission's Partnerships

6.1 The Royal Commission could not achieve its objectives without the support and activity of its partners. Such partners can include:

- a. Cadw
- b. Local Authorities
- c. Archaeological Trusts
- d. Countryside Council for Wales
- e. National Museums and Galleries of Wales
- f. National Library of Wales
- g. Landowners, farmers, and other managers of land.

6.2 Some questions about the Royal Commission's partnerships

Q15 Is there an effective understanding between the Royal Commission and your organisation (or other strategic partners, constituents or customers) about the role of the Royal Commission.

Q16 Does the Royal Commission have productive relationships with your organisation in terms of policy, planning and implementation?

Q17 How might these relationships be strengthened?

Q18 Similarly, is there a need to build closer connections between the Royal Commission and other bodies? If so which ones and on which issues?

- Q19 How accessible, or responsive, has the Royal Commission been to your organisation and to the public?
- Q20 Has the Royal Commission promoted its purposes and services effectively?
- Q21 Does the Royal Commission have your confidence as a body with which your organisation can do business? Are you broadly confident about its effectiveness in the delivery of its functions?
- Q22 What, if anything, would strengthen your confidence in the Royal Commission's service delivery?

7. **The Royal Commission in relation to the National Assembly**

7.1 Some questions about the Royal Commission's relationship with the National Assembly

- Q23 To what extent do the Royal Commission's aims and objectives reflect the guiding themes and values of the National Assembly – for example, in advancing sustainable development; tackling social disadvantage, equal opportunities; acting strategically; working in partnership; or being inclusive?
- Q24 Should the Royal Commission's aims and objectives be changed in any way to better reflect these themes?
- Q25 Does the Royal Commission need different freedoms and flexibilities to improve the delivery of its functions? If so, how might they be achieved while not weakening its overall accountability to the Assembly?