

# Towards a Heritage Bill

## Summary report on the Horizon Scanning workshops held in Cardiff, Aberystwyth and Llandudno Junction February/March 2012

Cadw, June 2012

### Background and Approach

During February and March 2012, Cadw hosted three stakeholder workshops designed to capture a diverse range of perspectives on the Welsh historic environment and the factors likely to impact upon it in the future. The workshops were attended by ninety individuals with a professional or personal interest in the historic environment sector.

The workshops formed the first stage of a scoping exercise to inform future policies and strategies, including the content of the proposed Heritage Bill scheduled for introduction in 2014–15.

This initial phase involved horizon scanning which is the process of gathering new insights and identifying new and emerging trends and developments which will have an impact in the future. The intention was not to try to predict what is going to happen in twenty, thirty or forty years time, but to build up a picture of a world that plausibly could happen. This challenges us to think about what that would mean, whether it should be welcomed, and how the negative consequences might be avoided. It was hoped that undertaking horizon scanning at the start of the scoping exercise would stimulate and support subsequent discussion on future policy for the historic environment of Wales.

The outputs of this horizon scanning will inform the next phase of activity, a series of sector-specific workshops co-convened with partner organisations, to consider focused discussions on the strengths and weaknesses of the current heritage protection system.

This report explains the approach taken and summarises the discussions that took place over the three workshops.

### Key themes emerging from discussion on the role of the Historic Environment

The first session of each workshop involved a facilitated discussion in which participants identified the many different roles played by the Historic Environment. Several distinct themes emerged from the discussion demonstrating the diverse ways in which the Historic Environment functions, impacting variously through **practical, psychological, economic, educational and environmental** means.

These discussions not only highlighted the inter-dependencies between the work of Cadw and other

heritage organisations but also the need to look beyond the heritage sector and take into account policy development in other areas e.g. education, economy, health the environment and many others, in order to ensure that the historic environment is fully taken into account. It was suggested that there was a need for the historic environment sector to take a more proactive role in championing its value and potential.

It was suggested that Cadw is well-placed to develop a proactive role in ensuring that policy makers in other areas within the Welsh Government are made aware of the historic environment. For example, this approach has already started with discussions taking place with Welsh Government Planning Division. Other areas will follow during the policy development process.

The discussions also highlighted the fact that the historic environment plays a variety of often contrasting roles — from a purely economic one to the far less tangible 'sense of place', a recurring theme across the three workshops. There was also a wide interpretation as to what the historic environment constitutes. Whilst the terminology was kept deliberately general in the context of the discussions in order to generate a wide-ranging debate, there may be a need to be more focused and specific about what is meant by the historic environment. This will help aid the understanding of the wider public and also clarify Cadw's role.

Finally, the discussions also reinforced the value of an inclusive approach to reform, engaging a wide variety of interest groups in order to understand the issues facing the historic environment.

More specific articulations of the roles identified during the workshops included:

#### Social and psychological role

##### *Linking people, place, and past*

- Linking people to places, a sense of identity and pride, essence of place, a feel for place, helping individuals understand how they are connected to their place, creating a sense of place
- Linking the people of Wales with the past
- Building a collective memory related to place
- Acting as a backstop to the past and a grounding of where we are. Giving something to hold on to in a world changing at an ever-increasing pace. Providing an anchor

### **Community, social history, local identity**

- Defining the character of an area or community
- Providing a focus for the community, prompting civil action (e.g. a community coalescing around a school closing)
- Providing a sense of identity and pride
- Communicating social history
- Providing a glue for holding communities together

### **National identity, status**

- Acting as a foundation of Wales' identity
- Developing a sense of citizenship
- Giving Wales a status in the world
- Giving an opportunity to enhance our reputation through the way we value our heritage

### **Other**

- Supporting and benefitting health — both physical and mental
- Representing civilisation

### **Economic role**

#### **Tourism potential**

- Providing potential for tourism
- Representing the distinctiveness that Wales offers in terms of buildings and landscapes and giving us an identity to sell to the world

#### **Regeneration and jobs**

- Supporting and providing a focus for regeneration
- Creating jobs, both directly related to conservation and also tourism.

### **Education and skills development role**

#### **Lessons from the past, context for today**

- Providing lessons from the past that we can learn from, e.g. effects of climate change.
- Providing a record of what has happened, a physical link with the past; tactile, real evidence of what has happened
- Source of knowledge about the past — the Nation's memory
- Evidence of human and industrial activity giving a context to where people live

#### **Informing the future, firing the imagination**

- Looking to the past can inform the future
- Stimulating education and learning
- Encouraging debate, raising questions
- Standing in the place where things have happened can fire one's imagination

#### **Developing traditional, practical skills**

- Providing an opportunity to develop traditional, practical skills
- Teaching and driving the need for skills, e.g. traditional conservation skills

#### **Practical role**

- Providing context, a starting point for architects to build from
- Providing authenticity in a virtual world
- Providing homes, businesses (one third of housing in Wales is pre-1919)
- Creating an attractive environment in which to live, work; aesthetic appeal

### **Environmental role**

#### **Old can be better than new**

- Some historic buildings can perform better environmentally than modern ones
- Historic buildings provide a huge stock of materials that may be useful again in future years
- Historic environment often comes from a low-carbon economy, so works within the constraints of a low-carbon economy

#### **Source of information about the past**

- Providing information which can inform future actions and decisions.

## **Key trends impacting on the historic environment in the future**

The second session undertaken at each workshop involved a STEEP analysis, facilitating thinking about wider issues that may impact in the future by the consideration of changes in the following areas:

- Social
- Technological
- Economic
- Environmental
- Political

Participants, working in groups, were invited to identify trends and developments in the wider world that may have an impact on the historic environment of Wales.

The following key themes emerged:

- Climate change and global warming — direct impact on historic assets of changing climate and rising sea levels and the impact of mitigation measures to limit future climate change (e.g. windfarms; harnessing tidal energy)
- Decline of resources — in particular future global shortages (eg water, food, fossil fuels etc).
- Economic development (growth or decline)
- The relative impact of technological change on the historic landscape and heritage assets
- The relative impact of technological change on people's behaviour
- The changing nature of the structure of the economy
- Short or long-term-ism in terms of both economic and political decision making
- The perceived value of heritage — whether traditional expert-led or local/community based
- The pace and extent of political devolution
- The impact of globalisation — including the changing geo-political environment and the rise of new global powers
- The changing nature of society — whether becoming more or less fragmented
- The availability, awareness and application of research technology
- The increasing need to develop alternative energy resources
- The importance of the value of the historic environment to the sustainability agenda
- Developing economic divide between the rich and poor
- The level of community spirit and cohesion.

- Whether accountability for decision-making on public resources lies locally or centrally
- The role of civic-minded societies
- Changing work patterns e.g. more remote working
- Changing demographics e.g. ageing population, migration
- Design/manufacturing/services economy — balance versus imbalance
- Importance of non-economic factors e.g. well-being
- Resources — availability, impact e.g. on transport
- Impact of new global powers: China and Brazil, India, Russia e.g. on tourism, resources
- Welsh identity and attitudes towards Welsh nationhood
- Community (localism)
- Education curriculum changes

## Scenario Development

In order to decide the lines upon which the future scenarios would be based, participants in each workshop were asked to vote for which themes they thought:

- would have the biggest impact on the historic environment of Wales; and
- which were the most uncertain

A plenary discussion was held, outlining the chosen scenarios which were expressed in terms of four quadrants: on axes from one extreme to the other, depending on whether in the future they might have either a positive or negative effect. The basis for developing the narratives for future scenarios were as follows:

### Workshop 1 — Cardiff

Traditional view of heritage	Traditional view of heritage
Negative impact of new technology	Positive impact of new technology
Community view of heritage	Community view of heritage
Negative impact of new technology	Positive impact of new technology

### Workshop 2 — Aberystwyth

Positive technology	Positive technology
Negative economy	Positive economy
Negative technology	Negative technology
Negative economy	Positive economy

### Workshop 3 — Llandudno Junction

Negative economy	Positive economy
Positive impact of climate change	Negative impact of climate change
Negative economy	Positive economy
Negative impact of climate change	Positive impact of climate change

## Issues to reflect on and implications for policy development

In the final sessions, a plenary discussion identified several emerging issues. The following are some of the views expressed by participants:

### Engagement

- Heritage assets can, through the local pride they inspire, provide a positive means of engendering engagement with local communities and enabling regeneration. Local communities need to be empowered to make decisions about what is important to them.
- Some buildings that might be greatly valued by their local communities might not be valued at a national level by the 'heritage establishment'. Is there scope for a system to exist at a local community level running parallel with the designation system with decision-making based on different criteria?
- Is there a need for greater engagement with communities in the need to protect their own heritage?
- The need to engage a wider demographic in the debate about the historic environment. Younger people may have a different perspective on what is important, and will have a different attitude to technological enhancements.

### Impact of Technology

- The demand for a greater 'simulated' experience will impact on authenticity.
- 'Big tickets' which can offer a sophisticated experience are likely to maintain their appeal but factors such as virtual access and transport challenges may mean smaller heritage assets will struggle to attract visitors and income.
- Technological change (e.g. social networking) is facilitating greater democratisation of decision making — opportunities for a greater 'bottom-up' approach.
- The development of virtual reality applications has significant implications for heritage assets but alongside this there is still a demand for the live experience. How do we ensure that the virtual experience complements, rather than competes with, the real experience?
- The need to embrace new technology that offers opportunities to increase engagement and develop knowledge of the historic environment e.g. mobile phone applications that can teach children about history and get them involved in ways relevant to them.
- The exposure of individuals to the wider world via digital communication channels and increasing isolation from their immediate community may impact adversely on a distinctive Welsh culture and language.
- The need to ensure that we have the capability to maintain archives and records — as the virtual environment will one day become part of the fabric of the historic environment. We need to consider digital preservation e.g. moving records from tape to digital.

## Economic issues

- Consideration needs to be given to improve ways of maximising the potential of our heritage assets in relation to their economic contribution.
- The opportunities for economic benefit offered by our heritage assets and the need to consider the role of the private sector in maximising their potential.
- It can be difficult to realise the economic potential if those elements of the historic environment that are more intangible.
- We mustn't go down the route of over-commodifying the historic environment.
- There is a risk to the Historic Environment if we wait for the 'good times' to invest. Heritage regeneration can be a creator of growth and we need to 'weather the storm' while the economy is bad and protect things for the future.
- The sector needs to make the case to politicians or investors of the value of the historic environment.
- There is a need to deal with the challenges and constraints of economic growth.
- There is a need to recognise custodianship in the form of private ownership in a clear way and find ways to 'sweeten the pill'.

## Cultural issues

- Should the emphasis on statutory obligation be wider than listing/designation, perhaps to include an obligation to invest / advance culture/knowledge?
- The richness of the available media and other factors may encourage an even greater focus on 20th century and recent history and a decline in interest in, and respect, for older heritage assets.
- Need to take advantage of the fact that the historic environment is what makes Wales special and this should be taken into account when decisions are made.
- It is important that we maintain our vision and communicate what our values are as a society.
- We need to have ambition for the things that people do and the places where we live — we need a set of aspirational values and actions for the historic environment sector.
- The Heritage Bill should contain a formal articulation of what matters.

## Environmental issues

- There is need to increase knowledge and correct misinformation about the performance of historic buildings compared to new buildings in relation to ecological and environmental factors.
- All of the scenarios developed acknowledged that the historic environment can be a barrier to development.
- There is a danger that heritage is being sacrificed for climate change mitigation.

- Climate change has a twofold effect on the historic environment — mitigation impacts (wind turbines etc) and direct impact e.g. flooding, sea level rises, extreme weather events.
- Our current policy is failing to deal with some new developments e.g. UPVC windows. We need a better balance between sacrifice and survival.
- If we accept that climate change mitigation needs to occur, we need to make it happen where it will have the least effect on the historic environment.
- Citizens can come to the defence of the historic environment when government decides aspects are not worth saving.
- The future may see more polarisation of communities — farmers may benefit economically from housing wind turbines on their land but others may think that it ruins their 'rural idyll'.
- Need to mainstream the historic environment and link in to work going on in the natural environment.
- Industrial heritage is good for a low carbon economy.

## Decision-making

- The historic environment is diverse and contains a wide range of different types of heritage assets. But whose role is it to determine what is important to conserve? Is this a function for local or national bodies?
- Cadw and other expert bodies need to engage with and empower local communities to participate in protecting their own heritage, through awareness raising and sharing of knowledge/guidance.
- Government decision-making might come under greater pressure for a more populist approach and could find itself inundated with demands e.g. e-petitions for listing particular buildings and information.
- Legislative and policy change needs to reflect an emerging shift from a 'material/fabric' based conservation decision making process to a 'values' based decision making process — that is taking into account social, community and economic values.
- Need a more positive voice for Cadw and local authorities — who often are seen as controllers. An interim body may offer this option.
- Should decisions rest with 'heritage experts'/local people/communities? There could be increasing pressure on the current regulatory environment — as being irrelevant and 'out-of-touch'.
- The increasing emphasis on community engagement may lead to a position where 'everything is important'. This suggests the need to put obligations on to 'authorities' or 'heritage professionals' to ensure that decisions are transparent and based on accepted principles.
- Identifying 'trusted partners' who look after properties would allow local authorities and Cadw to concentrate resource where its needed.