

SEFYDLIAD YMCHWIL YSTADAU CYMRU INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF WELSH ESTATES

Dawn Bowden
Deputy Minister for Arts, Sport & Tourism
Welsh Government
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Thursday, 25th January 2024

Dear Deputy Minister,

RE: PROPOSED BUDGET CUTS TO THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE ANCIENT AND HISTORICAL MONUMENTS OF WALES (RCAHMW)

I am writing on behalf of the Institute for the Study of Welsh Estates at Bangor University to express our significant concerns regarding the cuts to Welsh heritage and historic environment bodies proposed in the Welsh Government's Draft Budget for 2024/25.

Whilst we recognise the extremely challenging budgetary environment conditioning the Welsh Government's spending, we feel obligated to highlight the immense damage that the proposed cuts to the funding of national heritage bodies will inflict on the cultural and intellectual life of Wales.

The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW), National Library of Wales, Amgueddfa Cymru and Cadw, collectively and individually, play an essential role as leaders of the Welsh heritage sector, supporting and facilitating an incredible diversity of activities, initiatives and resources which underpin the cultural vibrancy of our nation and our ability to make sense of our communities, identities, environment and place in today's world. Fundamentally, they are a vital part of the fabric of modern Wales, and should be fully resourced to deliver on the positive long-term contributions they make towards our civic life, wellbeing and future sustainability. The proposed cuts will dramatically reduce their capacity to act as important enablers of the Welsh Government's Wellbeing Goals.

We are especially concerned about the proposed 22% cut the budget of RCAHMW. If this reduction materialises it will unavoidably necessitate staff redundancies that will make the future operation of the organisation unsustainable. In effect, the Draft Budget is signalling the destruction of RCAHMW. This would be a devastating blow to the Welsh heritage sector.

RCAHMW has been an important part of the cultural and intellectual life of Wales for generations, and continues to play a leading role in building knowledge and understanding of our incredible historic environment, right across Wales, for local communities and international audiences. Having worked closely with the brilliant team at RCAHMW, we cannot fail to be impressed by the levels of expertise, commitment and innovation residing within the organisation. The National Monuments Record of Wales (accessed via Coflein) is an important public resource for the people of Wales, which requires continual development and modification by the RCAHMW team. In the sphere of digital heritage generally, RCAHMW is recognised an international leader, a status which allows the organisation to play an important role in showcasing the heritage of Wales to global audiences. The unique expertise residing in the organisation had proved to be of immense benefit to Welsh Universities. Partnership and collaboration with RCAHMW has underpinned several successful grant applications to UK and European funding bodies, thereby bringing funding into Welsh Universities and enabling innovation in research and public engagement. Our own AHRC-funded 'Deep Mapping' project (£0.25 million) was completely reliant on RCAHMW participation. All of this is at risk if the proposed cuts are allowed to materialise.



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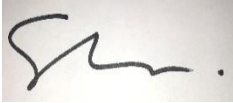


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We therefore urge the Welsh Government to reconsider the proposed cuts Welsh heritage and historic environment bodies and recognise the broader significance of these organisations to our society, culture and economy. We hope that the Welsh Government will continue to support these organisations, to enable them to deliver positive impacts in line with long-term policy objectives.

Cofion cynnes,

Dr. Shaun Evans

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Evans', on a light-colored background.

CYFARWYDDWR | DIRECTOR

Ccd. Delyth Jewell MS., Chair of the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee (Delyth.Jewell@senedd.Wales)