

# Historic Environment Strategy for Wales



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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John Griffiths AM  
Minister for Culture and Sport  
May 2013

 **Cadw**



## Foreword by Minister for Culture and Sport

It is a privilege to introduce the second edition of the Welsh Government's historic environment strategy, produced to reflect the ambitions and connections in my new portfolio. It is an exciting set of responsibilities, designed to promote activity, access and creativity — bringing together enjoyment and protection of much of the country's natural as well as its historic environment.

The traces of our past in our landscape and townscapes make Wales distinctive. Instinctively, it seems, we know that; we write about it and we sing about it. The Culture and Sport portfolio, which includes responsibility for the historic environment, is well placed to deliver tangible social, economic and environmental benefits for Welsh communities.

As a Government, we recognised the contribution of the historic environment to the quality of life in Wales when we identified priorities for it in the Programme for Government, through the following actions:

- Introduction of a Heritage Bill with supporting policy activity and public engagement;
- Implementation of Cadw's Heritage Tourism Project;
- Delivery of Cadw's Pan-Wales Heritage Interpretation Plan, Lifelong Learning Strategy and Heritage and Arts Framework; and,
- Delivery of Cadw's conservation programme for monuments in State care, alongside the designation of further heritage assets.

These measures will enable the protection of our heritage and encourage public access, enjoyment and participation. They will contribute to quality of life and quality of place, enhance people's life chances and address the tackling poverty agenda. They will also create individual and community confidence and a sense of belonging.

We published the first edition of this strategy in October 2012, following an extensive consultation exercise with heritage specialists, stakeholders and the general public to inform the development of this strategy and the preparatory work for the Heritage Bill. That consultation highlighted diverse expectations and some competing aspirations both for the future protection and for realising the potential of the historic environment. Some of the issues raised may form part of the legislation in 2014/15; some can be progressed without legislation; and some will require further discussion and research to develop. This strategy summarises the areas which the Welsh Government will prioritise for action during the course of the next three and a half years.

Building on our previously stated priorities this second edition of the strategy is equally ambitious, but also equally realistic, not least about the financial realities facing our country — funding needs to go further. We have to be resourceful and collaborative in pursuit of new funding and new opportunities, and we need to ensure that the activities and assets that really matter are protected for the future.

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*Left: John Griffiths AM at Caerphilly Castle, where Cadw has used arts and new technologies to complement traditional forms of interpretation to engage with a wider range of audiences.*

## Context

There is no part of Wales where we cannot find evidence of the lives, struggles and achievements of our ancestors and visitors over the last millennia and that is why I would say that the historic environment of Wales is absolutely everywhere. Those traces are so diverse, ranging from substantial World Heritage Sites to small, locally important landmarks and memorials. At the top of the hierarchy are the statutorily or formally designated heritage assets — listed buildings, scheduled monuments, registered landscapes and the like.

I am pleased, however, that in recent years, the value of the local — the 'ordinary' — has started to be appreciated as characterful and meriting a second glance when we are looking at how our communities might develop. There are now 128 sites in State care — with a 129th in the offing. This is a simple but significant Snowdonia cottage. This and the acquisition of a Valleys terraced house in 2012 demonstrate how the perceptions of what is significant have moved on in recent years.

The way we think about our visitors has also been transformed. Wales is the first country in Europe, perhaps in the world, to develop a heritage interpretation plan, which looks across the whole country and across all time periods. It provides a framework for presenting heritage

sites — whoever runs them — to local people and tourists. Implementation is backed up by £19 million investment in Heritage Tourism.

We have launched our Heritage and Arts Framework, which outlines a distinctive, inclusive and imaginative approach to melding the magic of heritage with the vital spark of creativity. Together with the Community Archaeology Framework, which is nearing completion, this provides an exciting means of advancing our interpretation, learning and public participation programmes. How better to celebrate a people with so great a sense of history and culture?

## Valuing and using our historic environment assets

The headline statistics are impressive — there are 30,000 listed buildings, 4,000 scheduled ancient monuments and 3 World Heritage Sites. The historic environment sector supports over 30,000 jobs and contributes around £1.8 billion in output and £840 million to Wales's national gross value added (GVA).

*Part of Vale Street, Denbigh, which is benefiting from Cadw's urban characterisation project to identify what makes a place special and distinctive; and helps inform regeneration plans.*

The historic environment is clearly appreciated and enjoyed by both the people of Wales and visitors from other countries. Our National History Museum at St Fagans is the most popular heritage attraction in Wales, with over 600,000 visitors a year at present and with exciting plans which will see that increase. The most popular heritage sites charging for admission are Portmeirion and Cardiff, Caernarfon and Conwy Castles, each welcoming around 200,000 visitors a year. Heritage plays a significant role in the promotion of Wales as a destination; it is one of the top 'reasons to visit' cited in Visit Wales research. The stories inside these attractions and monuments are the essential bedrock for articulating the personality, the draw and the vitality of Wales to the world.

Tourism is a major contributor to the Welsh economy, but it is vulnerable to a number of external factors; heritage tourism is particularly dependent upon the weather and the spring and summer of 2012 were not kind to Welsh heritage attractions. It is clear we need to work harder to maintain or, better still, develop our visitor appeal and weatherproof at least some of our product. I am convinced that people will always seek out unique and high-quality experiences, however, and I will look to develop what we offer at our top, iconic heritage sites.

We value and appreciate our tourism visitors, but we also conserve, maintain and open up our heritage sites because we want the people of Wales to visit, enjoy them and, so, get a sense of ourselves. Heritage has long been wrestling with the challenge of its visitor profile — how can we engage sections of Welsh communities which do not typically visit or involve themselves with the historic environment? How can we satisfy the increasingly sophisticated expectations of our current customers while ensuring that we introduce more people to what heritage can offer them?

The other significant challenge for the sector is that of its resilience and future capacity to sustain, let alone develop activities and service delivery. There are 25 local planning authorities in Wales and their capacity to deliver specialist conservation and archaeology services is variable. The historic environment third sector comprises many small, often under-resourced organisations, some of which may be competing

for declining resources. We are talking about new ways of working and synergies, and I am expecting these discussions to make constructive progress in the near future.

Leaders in the sector in Wales are Cadw, the Welsh Government's historic environment service, which benefits from its position within a broad strategic portfolio and connections across Government to other portfolios. Additional significant contributions to the protection of and provision of public access to the historic environment are made by Amgueddfa Cymru—National Museum Wales, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, the Welsh Archaeological Trusts, the Civic Trust, National Trust and numerous other national and local organisations across Wales. All are represented at my advisory and consultative bodies, the Historic Environment Group and Built Heritage Forum. I am, however, considering whether there is scope for other, wider vehicles for representation and support for this diverse, multifaceted and lively sector.

## Headline issues and areas for action

Underpinning all of our actions lies our commitment to a set of published Conservation Principles which both advocate sustainable management of the historic environment and provide a coherent framework for articulating the values of heritage sites so that they can be fully understood, protected and sensitively managed. Many of our actions are also directly linked with improving our information resources, knowledge and understanding about the past.

For our historic environment to survive and thrive it has to be valued; and to be valued it has to be understood. We are committed to sustaining and developing the knowledge, records and information on which all our conservation, public interpretation and enjoyment of our historic environment is founded. Our knowledge of our past has moved on greatly in recent years and we must not lose the passion for or the capacity to keep on exploring and researching. We propose developing an all-Wales collaborative framework



that will facilitate the delivery of actions supporting three inter-related areas of activity relating to the historic environment: conservation and sustainable management; the advancement of our knowledge and understanding; and the promotion, interpretation and provision of public access.

## Heritage protection and sustainable development

The current system of heritage protection in Wales dates back in some cases to the 1970s and is considered by many consultees to be complex and lacking transparency. There are concerns that statutory designation of heritage assets — in particular that for listed buildings — does not provide a means of identifying (and consequently protecting) assets of more local significance. Other concerns are associated with the protection of historic areas. Action is already under way to establish a Register of Historic Battlefields and the possibility of introducing a formal status for registered battlefields and historic parks and gardens is now under active consideration.

Policy relating to the management of historic assets is seen to be interpreted inconsistently across local planning authorities. Some owners have expressed concern that the application of policy on listed buildings can be inflexible and can be a barrier to development. This issue is increasingly expressed by representatives of faith groups who wish to dispose of or modify religious buildings. In some cases more flexible management arrangements, perhaps through partnership agreements, may provide a way forward. Conversely, others have raised the difficulties faced by local authorities and others when taking enforcement action over unauthorised works. Indeed many heritage assets across Wales are 'at risk' as a consequence of a range of factors, including climate change, and this situation has been exacerbated by the impact of the recession on the resources of owners and the public purse to maintain, conserve or regenerate them. Clearly, a balance has to be struck between recognising the economic reality faced by owners and managers

who need to ensure a sustainable future for historic assets, while at the same time ensuring that damage and neglect is dealt with appropriately.

There are opportunities as well as challenges here. The Heritage Bill provides a long overdue opportunity to provide Wales with a simpler, more coherent, more transparent heritage protection framework. Consultation on proposals will begin in the summer of 2013. In some key areas we need not wait for legislation and we clearly need to move with the times with regard to policy guidance for the conversion and modification of religious buildings, for example.

We are also seeking to support the owners of heritage assets and communities in addressing incidents of heritage crime, such as metal theft and vandalism.

Connections are being made across portfolios. I am eager to encourage the work already begun on heritage-led or heritage-informed regeneration and some exciting projects are being developed to exemplify this approach. Historic character can contribute to the distinctiveness and liveability of places and the stories about historic places can help provide a way for people to connect with the place where they live.

Cadw's acquisition of Heritage Cottage in Cwmdare in 2012 provides a human-scale opportunity to demonstrate how a traditional house can be renovated and made fit for contemporary living while retaining its essential character — and what we now call thermal performance. So many of our homes in Wales are traditionally built and this little cottage provides an opportunity both to celebrate a past familiar to most of us and also consider how such homes can have a sustainable, energy-efficient future.

In the Welsh countryside, the protection and management of historic assets are already well established through the Glastir agri-environment scheme and we look forward to engaging with Natural Resources Wales to take forward the 'Living Wales' agenda. The 129th property to be taken into State care will be Cae'r Gors — a small cottage in the hills above Caernarfon, an appropriate rural complement to Heritage Cottage.



Wales's contribution to the world's industrial heritage has already been recognised with the inscription of the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape and the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal as World Heritage Sites. Both sites have exemplar management arrangements, but other industrial heritage sites fare less well and I will commission an audit of the condition of industrial heritage assets to gauge the nature and extent of the challenges we face.

## Skills and opportunities

The historic environment sector provides employment for about 30,000 people across Wales. This includes specialist and technical jobs and a range of opportunities for young people with academic qualifications or practical capabilities to enter employment. Thirty-five per cent of buildings in Wales were built before 1919. Their upkeep requires traditional skills that we are in danger of losing unless we promote the value of conservation craft skills and encourage young people to train in such

*Heritage Cottage is a time capsule, which has remained almost unaltered since it was built in 1854. It gives Cadw a unique opportunity to present a typical Valleys house in context and show how houses like this can have a sustainable future.*

skills. Working with the Deputy Minister for Skills, my predecessor held a Traditional Building Skills Summit in March 2012 and I will be pursuing the summit action plan for stimulating both supply and demand.

There are opportunities in the historic environment sector for both modern and traditional apprenticeships: for work experience, training placements, and opportunities to develop transferrable skills and build confidence through volunteering. In these ways the historic environment has the potential to help tackle poverty across Wales. It can also provide stimulating and meaningful opportunities for young people who may have experienced difficulties with formal education and adults with literacy and numeracy needs to develop skills and confidence through active participation in informal and family learning, community



archaeology and Foundation Phase learning programmes. National Museum Wales has led the way for the sector in addressing the challenges of child poverty and inclusion. And Cadw has pursued innovative pilot schemes to rehabilitate young offenders and support school referral units, drawing upon the power of heritage to stimulate a sense of history and belonging, and allowing a reconnection with parent communities.

Equally there is scope to provide graduates with the opportunity to enhance their employment prospects through work-experience placements such as the Skills for the Future and Creative Apprenticeships programmes.

I am looking to Cadw, National Museum Wales and other key partners to develop a Historic Environment Lifelong Learning Framework so that informed, joined-up discussions can be held with education service providers and strategists.

## Public participation, understanding and enjoyment

We want to ensure that heritage sites are accessible and enjoyable places both for visitors to Wales and for people who live in Wales. The Programme for Government has set objectives for the delivery of the Pan-Wales Heritage Interpretation Plan, the Heritage Tourism Project and the Heritage and Arts Framework. I am keen to see connections being developed further between the bodies responsible for promoting access to the natural and historic environment.

The coastal path runs close by literally hundreds of heritage sites, for example.

Developing new and broader audiences for the historic environment is a priority and we will develop new approaches to engaging and involving people in exploring and celebrating our history. I want to build on the excellent work undertaken in Wales through events like Black History Month to highlight the diversity of our communities and, while the long history of this country gives testimony to a less equal past, we can use it to affirm our commitment to equality, inclusion and human rights.

We will be imaginative in our approach, using creativity as a principle of delivery, building on the relationships formed and energy generated through the Cauldrons & Furnaces project. Events, drama, spectacle and more intimate vehicles, such as storytelling and hands-on participatory activities, will increasingly take the forefront — the traditional interpretation panel is now a supplementary, rather than the only, form of interpretation.

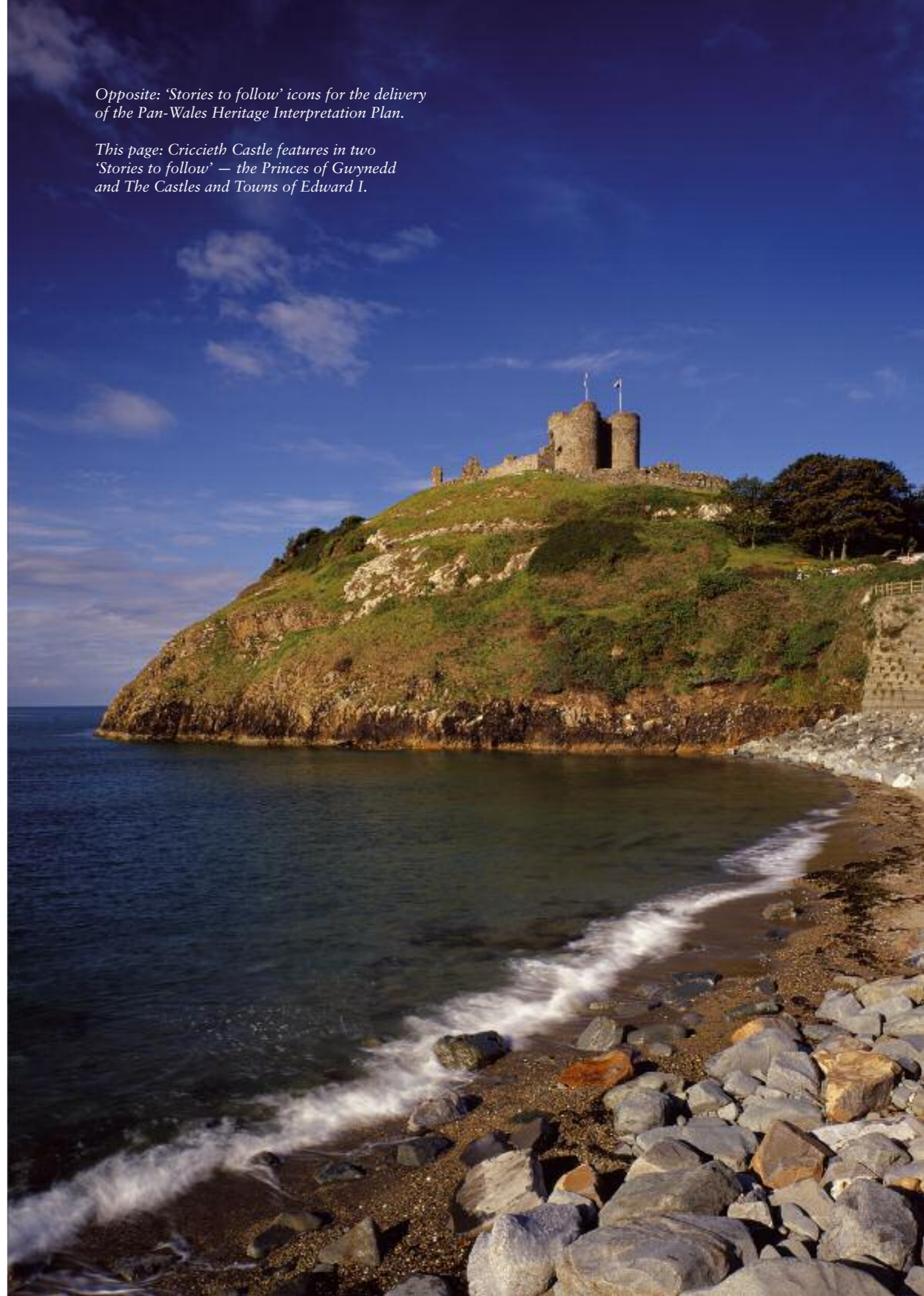
Many opportunities are afforded by digital technology, both to maximise the accessibility of core information resources such as the National Monuments Record and the regional Historic Environment Records and to provide a wealth of means for people of all ages, in Wales and globally, to explore, delve into and enjoy the stories and historic places of Wales.

Young people not only learn and develop as a result of their involvement with heritage, but heritage can benefit from the energy, imagination and new perspectives young people can bring to identifying priorities and solutions to heritage management. Young people can and should be involved in charting the future of their historic environment and for that reason we will be looking to work with the Children's Commissioner and others to map out a lively, participative process to assist Welsh young people to develop their own strategy for the Welsh historic environment, to complement the Welsh Government's document.

It is important that people of all ages have the opportunity and the tools to get involved in decisions and practical action to protect, conserve or maximise the local value of heritage assets which matter to them. The Heritage Bill and policy reform will seek to provide a means for assets

*Opposite: 'Stories to follow' icons for the delivery of the Pan-Wales Heritage Interpretation Plan.*

*This page: Criccieth Castle features in two 'Stories to follow' — the Princes of Gwynedd and The Castles and Towns of Edward I.*





which have local, but not national, significance to be highlighted and appreciated — perhaps through the development of a framework and guidance for local lists and a national blue plaque scheme. We will explore these and other options.

There are over 500 societies and voluntary organisations in Wales with an interest in history or the historic environment. The knowledge, expertise and energy of these people are a tremendous resource and they can act as a network of ambassadors or advocates for our heritage. We want to encourage people to volunteer for heritage causes, both for their personal satisfaction and stimulation and for the contribution they can make for the benefit of Welsh heritage. We are finalising a Community Archaeology Framework which will provide opportunities for short- and longer-term involvement with heritage sites, field archaeology and monuments at risk, for example from coastal erosion across Wales.

## Economy

Heritage and the historic environment contributes around £840 million to Wales's GVA and supports around 30,000 full-time equivalent jobs. Tourism is a significant factor but heritage makes a wider contribution through actions which enhance the vibrancy of places, providing memorable destinations and icons, and delivering events and activity which bring towns and villages alive.

The Heritage Tourism Project which runs to 2014 is delivering £19 million investment into

*Cadw's Heritage Tourism Project has helped fund Blinc — a spectacular light show — developed alongside the Conwy Feast.*

heritage sites and towns across the Convergence Funding area. There is a need now to maximise the impact and visibility of Wales's heritage icons, including its World Heritage Sites. The historic environment contributes to the positive image of Wales in the UK and internationally and to Wales's overall tourism and leisure offer. Yet our headline sites, such as Caernarfon Castle and the National History Museum at St Fagans have facilities and a profile which is not commensurate with their significance and potential pulling power. I welcome the vision and planned investment in St Fagans and would point to the need to have equally ambitious plans for Wales's other top sites.

Even a modest historic asset can make a contribution to the vibrancy of the local economy. I want to pay tribute to the local enterprise which has led to sites such as Oystermouth Castle and St Dogmaels Abbey being a focal point for community heritage and cultural activity. Local food and music festivals are held in heritage sites across Wales; the heritage offer, including storytelling and now a sparkling light show, has developed alongside the Conwy Feast; and many of our best-loved heritage sites (such as National Museum Cardiff, Caerphilly Castle and Castell Coch) regularly make appearances as film and TV locations. To keep pace with public expectations, a competitive tourism environment and the global reach afforded by technology, the historic environment sector in Wales needs to keep its

approach fresh and contemporary. The core assets are from the past but our presentation of them to our publics cannot be antiquated. Heritage service providers, including private owners and public organisations, need to generate income both to maintain and conserve historic fabric and to reinvest in the product and the core purpose of the service. This is a challenge in the face of reduced public sector funding and the impact of the recession on the disposable incomes of our potential customers.

## Partnership and delivery

Local authorities have a key role in heritage management, but there is an inconsistency of resourcing in terms of specialist staff and, sometimes at least, an inconsistency in the application of policy. Like the rest of the public sector, these services are under pressure — a recent survey has indicated a significant loss of key conservation specialist staff over the last few years. We need to explore together future working models which balance local knowledge with the need for consistency and the sharing of expertise. I value the work of the four Welsh Archaeological Trusts, a model unique to Wales but much admired. Established more than 30 years ago, the trusts have moved with the times, responded to changing expectations and needs and will be vital contributors to the forthcoming Community Archaeology and Lifelong Learning Frameworks.

I want also to pay tribute to the contribution of the third sector, which offers so much to all aspects of this strategy. But its diversity is a double-edged sword — the multiplicity of perspectives is important, but so many small bodies with quite restricted resources may not have the resilience to survive any reduction in funding or the loss of one or two key individuals. We will explore the potential for new support structures, which could include a Welsh Heritage Alliance, or perhaps a national heritage preservation trust.

The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales has a deservedly strong reputation and I am considering options to secure the future of its core functions.

Partnerships and connections have already been forged across my Ministerial portfolio and also across Government; in particular with Housing and Regeneration, Tackling Poverty, Education and Skills, Visit Wales and with other Bill teams.

Strategic partnerships have also been forged between Cadw, National Museum Wales, the National Trust and Arts Council Wales and beyond Wales with the other Home Countries. We will seek to enter into a formal agreement with the Scottish Government to exchange ideas, good practice and staff development opportunities in the historic environment sector. We will need to forge further strategic partnerships to develop fresh ideas for service delivery and to maximise opportunities for income generation and to bid for additional resources such as EU and Lottery funding.



*Community archaeology projects — like this one at St Lythans in the Vale of Glamorgan — help engage local communities with their heritage.*

Most heritage assets in Wales are privately owned — listed historic houses, scheduled field monuments on farmland, modest traditional houses in industrial towns. Others are in the care of bodies whose primary purpose is not heritage protection — such as trustees of a chapel, or managers of a school or hospital. While responsibility for the conservation of a heritage asset rests with its owners, we need to do what we can to explode the myths surrounding heritage protection — designation is not a preservation order; change and development are possible and often to be welcomed — as long as this takes account of the character of the heritage asset and our published Conservation Principles.

## Framework for action

Complementing this strategy will be a number of documents and programmes of activity, including:

- Heritage Bill consultation — summer 2013.
- Pan-Wales Heritage Interpretation Plan (launched November 2012).
- Community Archaeology Framework (launch summer 2013).
- Historic Environment Lifelong Learning Plan (launch autumn 2013).
- Young People's Historic Environment Strategy (2013 onwards).
- Third sector resilience review and potential establishment of Wales Heritage Alliance (began 2013).
- Heritage Crime seminar and partnership (begin 2013).
- War memorial initiative (begin 2013).
- *Overcoming the Barriers* accessibility guidance review (begin 2013).
- Wales History Festival (to be developed for 2015 onwards).
- Traditional building skills initiative (begin 2013).
- Heritage and Arts Framework (launched 2012).

Cadw yw gwasanaeth amgylchedd hanesyddol Llywodraeth Cymru, yn gweithio i sicrhau amgylchedd hanesyddol hygyrch a ddiogelir yn dda i Gymru.  
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Cadw is the Welsh Government's historic environment service working for an accessible and well-protected historic environment for Wales.  
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## Monitoring and accountability

The Historic Environment Group was established in 2004 as the Ministerial advisory body for historic environment issues; older bodies, such as the Ancient Monuments Board and Historic Buildings Advisory Council — non-statutory and advisory in their last days — were discontinued in 2010. Less formal public engagement and sector consultative arrangements have been introduced, for example, Treftadaeth conferences and roadshows; but a new advisory panel for Cadw could provide a vehicle for peer review and challenge — and perhaps provide support for any new arrangements linked to improving the levels of transparency and accountability for our heritage protection system. Efforts to establish a fully independent Heritage Network have met with no success in the past but a new Wales Heritage Alliance, learning perhaps from the experience in England, could prove a valuable vehicle for collaborative action across the public, private and third sector interests. Such an organisation could need some Welsh Government support. In addition and to ensure that fresh voices and ideas are heard, a Young People's Historic Environment Strategy is proposed — this would build on Cauldrons & Furnaces to engage young people actively and creatively in articulating priorities for the future of the Welsh historic environment.

## Measuring success

Relevant Programme for Government indicators are in place for most key Cadw activities and there are milestones for the Heritage Bill.

Each constituent framework and initiative arising from this strategy will have its own action plan with additional success measures and milestones. The Headline Action Plan which accompanies the published strategy will be monitored and updated quarterly by Cadw.