



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

Y Pwyllgor Cymunedau, Cydraddoldeb a **Llywodraeth Leol** **The Communities, Equality and Local Government** **Committee**

Dydd Mercher, 11 Gorffennaf 2012
Wednesday, 11 July 2012

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Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir
trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd.

The proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee. In
addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation is included.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Peter Black	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Janet Finch-Saunders	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Mike Hedges	Llafur Labour
Mark Isherwood	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Julie James	Llafur (yn dirprwyo dros Kenneth Skates) Labour (substitute for Kenneth Skates)
Bethan Jenkins	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Gwyn R. Price	Llafur Labour
Joyce Watson	Llafur (Cadeirydd dros dro) Labour (Temporary Chair)

**Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance**

Catherine Hardman	Comisiynydd a Chadeirydd y Pwyllgor Archifau, Comisiwn Brenhinol Henebion Cymru Commissioner and Chair of the Archive Committee, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales
John Howells	Cyfarwyddwr, Tai, Adfywio a Threftadaeth, Llywodraeth Cymru Director, Housing, Regeneration and Heritage, Welsh Government
Huw Lewis	Aelod Cynulliad, Llafur (Y Gweinidog Tai, Adfywio a Threftadaeth) Assembly Member, Labour (Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage)
Marilyn Lewis	Cyfarwyddwr, Cadw Director, Cadw
Dr Peter Wakelin	Ysgrifennydd Comisiwn Brenhinol Henebion Cymru Secretary of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales
Steve Webb	Cyfarwyddwr Datblygu, Croeso Cymru, Llywodraeth Cymru Director of Development, Visit Wales, Welsh Government
Dr Eurwyn Wiliam	Cadeirydd Comisiwn Brenhinol Henebion Cymru Chairman of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales

**Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance**

Sarah Bartlett	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Gwyn Griffiths	Uwch-gynghorydd Cyfreithiol Senior Legal Adviser
Leanne Hatcher	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Marc Wyn Jones	Clerc Clerk

Sarah Sargeant Dirprwy Glerc
 Deputy Clerk
Gareth Williams Clerc
 Clerk

*Dechreuodd rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod am 10.47 a.m.
The public part of the meeting began at 10.47 a.m.*

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Joyce Watson:** I welcome committee members to this part of the meeting. The meeting is bilingual and headphones can be used for simultaneous translation from Welsh to English on channel 1 or for amplification on channel 0. I respectfully ask all Members to turn off mobile phones and any other electronic equipment, as they will interfere with the recording. As this is now a formal public meeting, you do not need to touch the microphones, because they will be operated automatically. In the event of a fire alarm, please follow the directions of the ushers. I have a number of apologies: from Ann Jones, who usually chairs this committee, and from Kenneth Skates and Rhodri Glyn Thomas. Julie James is substituting for Ken Skates, and I welcome her to the meeting. Also, two Members, Mark Isherwood and Peter Black, have asked to leave early.

[2] I will declare an interest as I am a member of the National Trust. Does anyone else wish to declare an interest?

[3] **Julie James:** I am also a member of the National Trust.

[4] **Joyce Watson:** Is there anyone else? I see that there is not.

10.49 a.m.

Ymchwiliad i Bolisi Llywodraeth Cymru ar yr Amgylchedd Hanesyddol— Sesiwn Dystiolaeth Inquiry into the Welsh Government’s Historic Environment Policy—Evidence Session

[5] **Joyce Watson:** We are carrying out an inquiry into Welsh Government’s historic environment policy. We have in front of us members of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales, and I would like to welcome you to our meeting. We have Dr Peter Wakelin, Dr Eurwyn Wiliam and Catherine Hardman. As you have worked out, we are running late, so I am going to go straight into questions. We have read your paper; you can be sure of that, and it was quite informative.

[6] I will start with the first question. I also remind you that we are under a time constraint, so if you can give us good answers, succinctly, then we can ask more questions. Could you briefly explain how your work in maintaining records contributes to how the historic environment of Wales is conserved and enjoyed?

[7] **Dr Wiliam:** Bore da, good morning. Briefly, I will sketch out what the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales is and what it does. It is the investigation body and national archive for the historic environment—that is what it is in a nutshell. We have a lead role in ensuring that Wales’s archaeological, built and maritime heritage is authoritatively recorded and is then available to be presented to the public.

[8] The commission was founded in 1908. I will not go into its history, but, in essence,

we do three things, which are interrelated and are available to the sector and to the public equally. First, we are an investigation body: we investigate and undertake surveys and record work on archaeological sites, on maritime remains, historic buildings and landscapes. We lead the sector in field survey; others do it, of course. We also lead in the interpretation of buildings and so on. Crucially, we provide expert, impartial advice to all parts of the sector, whether local government, interested bodies or heritage organisations.

[9] The second point to make, and this is also pretty fundamental, is that we are a national archive. We are the recognised national place of deposit for records of the historic environment in Wales. We take in records from Cadw, the Ministry of Defence, the Welsh archaeological trusts, private owners and contractors and so on. Our archive—the national monuments record of Wales—is the largest visual archive in Wales. It has over two million photographs and millions of pages of text and so on. So, it is literally the largest visual archive in Wales. Much of that underpins what the sector does in its entirety. A major development over the past few years has been the change to digital technology, which means that we have to adapt. Catherine is an expert on that and I am sure that she will be pleased to answer questions on it. However, we are sector leaders in developing digital technology.

[10] Thirdly, we are very much a contributor to public and professional engagement throughout the sector and Wales. Like National Museum Wales and the National Library of Wales, we preserve the cultural and historical memory of the nation. That is a bit high-flowered, I agree, but, nevertheless, fundamentally, that is what we do. We do things that enrich the national curriculum and we produce publications and have online resources. Perhaps, Chair, you will allow us to pass around a few copies, which Members can browse through. We publish quite a lot of material.

[11] If I may, I will introduce just one item in evidence, which is our latest publication, *Historic Wales from the Air*. This does a number of things: it is not just a coffee table book—which it could well be—because it shows our role in survey and interpretation. It uses our archive to show change, because these photographs are updated all of the time. It shows the change in the landscape, as new photographs are added to our archive. Through that, we fulfil duties such as monitoring scheduled ancient monuments for Cadw. It is about relaying information to the public. Specific information is produced, as I hope you will agree, in a user-friendly and approachable way. Interestingly, this particular book was co-authored by a senior member of commission staff and by someone who was on an externally funded placement with us. So, although it may look a pretty book—it is pretty, and I commend it to you—it encapsulates, in many ways, what the commission is all about.

[12] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you for that brief outline. We will now move to Gwyn for the first question.

[13] **Gwyn R. Price:** Could you expand on your comments that you were surprised to see no reflection of the Chitty report in the Minister's priorities? Which specific omissions have caused you most concern?

[14] **Dr Wiliam:** The Chitty report was commissioned by the Welsh Government and published in early 2011. First, it concluded, from the commission's perspective, that we were playing a significant and important role in the sector generally, but, essentially, that the architecture of the sector, as it existed, was doing the job that it should do and doing it pretty well. However, it also proposed that we should be working together as a sector more. That is the fundamental point, and that is what we have been doing up to this point. The conclusion was that Cadw, the Welsh archaeological trusts and the commission should work together more closely, and meetings have started on that. However, we would have hoped that that might have been recognised formally in this process. It has the potential to work very well. Working together is fundamental to the sector. It is a small sector and times are getting

increasingly hard, so we think that it is crucial that the recommendations of the Chitty report be fully implemented.

[15] **Gwyn R. Price:** You say in your paper that any new legislation in this area should be drafted with considerable care. What should the main priorities be and what are the main pitfalls?

[16] **Dr Wiliam:** I will ask my chief executive, Peter Wakelin, to respond to that, if I may.

[17] **Dr Wakelin:** The scale of the heritage protection review, which was started in England a few years ago, focused very much on producing legislation to ensure that the listing of buildings and the scheduling of ancient monuments were carried out effectively and that there were opportunities to bring in new forms of protection for world heritage sites, which currently have no statutory protection, and for parks, gardens and battlefields, none of which has any statutory protection. That was the original aim—the crystallisation in people's minds that new legislation was needed. The Minister has rightly taken the view that we should start from a much broader position than that and ask what legislation in this field is for and where policy should be going, not just with regard to specific protection, but heritage in a broader sense. There are some important things to be achieved through heritage, and I would say that top of the list is statutory protection for those additional assets that do not fit into the existing framework of listing and scheduling.

[18] There have also been concerns for years about particular loopholes. Legislation goes back to the 1940s in the case of listing, although it has been refreshed. There is a great deal of case law backing that up now. There have been many court cases that have helped to refine exactly what you can and cannot do through listing and what owners can and cannot do. A great deal of that needs to be codified now.

[19] **Peter Black:** How can we, first of all, promote the historic environment in Wales?

[20] **Dr Wakelin:** As the Chitty report said, working together is very important. All of us in the field—the Welsh archaeological trusts, Cadw and us, as well as the enormous number of small charities and organisations and people with broader roles but significant heritage assets, such as local authorities, the Canal and River Trust and so on—have really important roles in the promotion of heritage and public engagement. They are responsible for different assets. In our case, we are responsible for this major archive, which is an asset with which to engage people. We do it through educational resources and through being able to tell people what is in their locality, because our database has something like 100,000 sites on it. People can look at their local areas online free of charge and find out what there is and what archive material is held. These different resources, roles and positions in relation to the community or different groups in society play different parts through the way they engage.

11.00 a.m.

[21] We need to ensure that we are not duplicating but complementing one another's activities. It is particularly important that we do more to get the benefits of heritage through to hard-to-reach groups and isolated communities. We find, over and over again in the evidence about the people who visit heritage sites or have watched the television programmes that we produced on the BBC's *Hidden Histories* series, that there is a structure to that audience. It is largely made up of older people, and of younger people as well; it is people in the middle of their lifetimes who are least involved in heritage. In terms of social classes, they tend to be at the upper end of the spectrum. So, there is important work to be done in making sure that we are reaching out to more people, and I hope that we are doing that, as others are as well, through our community outreach activities, working with schools in underprivileged areas and so forth. We are providing a lot of resources that are freely accessible and open to all.

[22] **Peter Black:** I will class myself as a younger person who is interested in heritage. [Laughter.] We all accept that investigation and research are crucial in promoting the historic environment; however, the Minister's priorities, which he published in January, make no mention of them. Can you expand on your concerns in that respect?

[23] **Dr Wiliam:** As Peter has started, at least, to explain, we think that that is a crucial matter that should be included in this. It is entirely fundamental. We can throw clichés around—I am as good as anybody at doing that—but this is all fundamental stuff. If we do not get people engaged in their heritage, we will simply lose it. It is fundamental. It is easy to engage people locally, because people are really interested in what happens in their own square mile. You are all politicians, and I should not be preaching to you, because you will know this far better than I do, but if we can interest people in what is happening locally—it is about community building, reshaping and the great society, is it not? It is all that stuff and it plays a fundamental and an easy and accessible part.

[24] **Peter Black:** If the Minister were to prioritise this issue, would we be talking about additional resources, about making better use of existing resources or about the Minister highlighting to existing organisations that it needs to be one of their priorities?

[25] **Dr Wiliam:** In an ideal world, it would be extra resources, but we are not there, are we? We are not going to be there either. It would be helpful if the Minister were to lead and make this a priority. The sector needs to talk and divvy up roles so that we can work together and do something on that. However, it is a fundamental priority.

[26] **Peter Black:** So, it is about leadership.

[27] **Dr Wiliam:** Yes.

[28] **Mike Hedges:** First, I congratulate you on the publication of *Copperopolis*, which is an excellent publication. What are you doing in the lower Swansea valley to engage the communities there? I speak as someone who lives in the lower Swansea valley.

[29] **Dr Wakelin:** As a small national body, our emphasis is very much on working with the local delivery agencies, namely other people who can do things on the ground, and providing the resources to facilitate their ability to do that. Partly in answer to Mr Black's question about research, *Copperopolis* is a good example of where detailed research has provided a serious understanding of a series of historical assets that might well have been lost. That has resulted in more protection of those assets, and an appreciation of how hugely important the history of the lower Swansea valley was. It was the world centre of the copper industry.

[30] **Mark Isherwood:** Do you agree with the Welsh Local Government Association that there has sometimes been a lack of a joined-up approach, where there are a number of different organisations, in marketing different heritage sites? If you agree, what do you feel should be done about it?

[31] **Dr Wiliam:** Probably. We do not feel competent to answer the question. Having said that, the fundamental point remains in relation to everything we do. We are a small enough nation, and in all spheres of activity, we must talk and do things together. I do not think that I can provide specific good examples of this. However, partly due to the economic situation, we are getting increasingly better these days at bringing in external funding from Europe and other places. That demands co-working, not just within Wales, but with other countries as well. That is a route that we are firmly committed to taking. In Wales, this will bring people together. In relation to the copper trail, for example, the copper was smelted and made into

something in Swansea, but it came from Anglesey. So, there are stories that can be used to build genuine links, rather than trying to create something that is a bit artificial. That is probably the way to do this: you have to identify those strong Welsh stories. Regarding the Welsh Valleys, for example, when I was working for National Museum Wales, we tried to link Big Pit at the east end with Swansea at the bottom end, thereby showing an arc of industry right across the Valleys. So, this is about identifying stories that can be linked. These are meaningful links, rather than a case of ticking boxes or whatever.

[32] **Julie James:** I wish to pursue the issue of links. One other link that we have looked at is linking policy areas together—so, linking the historic environment and its preservation and recording with regeneration, tourism and other things. Could you comment on how well you think that is going at the moment? We have been told by other organisations, such as the WLGA and so on, that things could be better with regard to linking. Could you comment on that?

[33] **Dr Wiliam:** I will ask Peter to comment again in a little more detail in a moment. From my perspective, however, the question, once again, is: what is heritage for? Okay, it is nice, and it is important, and we should preserve it for its own sake, but we are where we are, and regeneration, and using the heritage assets that we have meaningfully, is entirely fundamental. Why put up huge multi-million-pound buildings when we already have historic buildings that need to be preserved and can—at a much lower cost—be usefully adapted? It makes total sense, but I am sure that Peter will have better examples.

[34] **Dr Wakelin:** I will just say very briefly that I think that we all agree that heritage is a fundamental contributor to wellbeing. That is what we are all after, really: wellbeing in society, and greater opportunities in society. Heritage can be a great stimulant for that, as well as creating good environments. The Minister is absolutely right in his ambition to get better joining up, particularly across the responsibilities of the Welsh Government. A lot of resources go into regeneration that could be melded with heritage. At the end of that, if we can do better than we have in the past to get more bang for our buck in heritage, that would be very useful. It worries me hugely, in walking down here, that you go past so many first-class listed buildings that are still sitting there in an area with lots of redevelopment, regeneration and new investment activity. I am referring to the Cory's Building, the Coal Exchange, and the Taff Vale railway station, which was the first railway station in Wales and it incorporated the boardroom of the Taff Vale Railway Company. They are sitting there derelict. Something has been wrong for decades in the way that caring for our heritage has fed through into regeneration and the culture of our towns and cities.

[35] **Bethan Jenkins:** Hoffwn ofyn cwestiynau am y cynlluniau i uno Cadw â'ch comisiwn. Rydych wedi defnyddio geiriau eithaf cryf yn eich tystiolaeth, gan ddweud nad yw cyngor Cadw i'r Gweinidog yn ddiuedd, a'i fod hefyd yn ymddangos fel pe bai'n *predatory* tuag at y comisiwn. A allwch chi ehangu ar y sylwadau hyn, ac ynghylch pam y mae'r broses hon wedi bod yn un anodd i chi? **Bethan Jenkins:** I would like to ask some questions about the plans to merge Cadw with your commission. You have used quite strong words in your evidence, stating that Cadw's advice to the Minister is not impartial, and also that it appears to be predatory towards the commission. Could you elaborate on these remarks, and on why this process has been difficult for you?

[36] **Dr Wiliam:** Mae'n rhaid i mi gyfaddef bod y broses hon wedi bod yn anodd. Roedd hwn yn ddatblygiad annisgwyl. Mae'n dod ar gefn dau adroddiad a gomisiynwyd gan y Llywodraeth—un yn 2010 a'r llall yn 2011. Mae'r cyntaf yn **Dr Wiliam:** I have to admit that the process has been difficult. It was an unexpected development. It comes on the back of two reports commissioned by the Government—one in 2010 and the other in 2011. The first praises the work of the commission to high

canmol y comisiwn i'r cymylau ac yn dweud mor wych yw'r gwaith yr ydym yn ei wneud am gyn lleied o arian, a'r ail yn dweud bod y sector wedi ei rannu'n addas iawn i'r amgylchiadau ariannol sy'n ein hwynebu. Nid ydym yn gweld bod dim byd yn arbennig wedi newid ers hynny. Felly, roedd yr argymhelliad hwn yn dipyn o syndod.

[37] Pe bai'r argymhelliad wedi ei eirio fel bod gwahoddiad i'r Gweinidog ofyn i Cadw a CyMAL drafod â ni sut y gallwn fynd ymlaen i gryfhau'r sector a sut i gydweithio'n well—ac efallai un o'r canlyniadau wedi hynny fyddai rhyw fath o uno—byddem wedi bod yn hollol hapus ac ni fyddai gennym *issue* gyda'r peth o gwbl. Fodd bynnag, fel y cafodd ei eirio, gan nad oeddem wedi bod yn rhan o'r broses, roeddem yn gweld bod sawl gwendid yn yr argymhelliad ac rydym yn sylfaenol yn poeni y bydd y pethau yr ydym ni yn eu hystyried yn hanfodol, fel yr archif, y gwaith cofnodi a'r gwaith dehongli, yn cael eu dibrisio. Fel rydym wedi ei ddweud sawl gwaith eisoes y bore yma, rydym yn meddwl bod y gwaith hwnnw yn hanfodol i'r sector yn ei gyfarwydd.

[38] **Bethan Jenkins:** Rydym wedi gweld yr opsiynau gwahanol yr ydych wedi eu rhoi gerbron, sy'n cynnig nifer o syniadau o ran sut y gellir datblygu'r syniadau hyn. Pa opsiwn sydd orau gennych, neu ba opsiwn a fyddai gwaethaf gennych? Er enghraifft, rwyf wedi darllen y byddai'n llai tebygol y byddech yn cael cyllid neu arian allanol petaech yn uno â Cadw gan ei fod yn gorff o fewn y Llywodraeth, neu yn rhan o'r Llywodraeth. Fel elusen, rydych yn gallu cael gafael ar arian na fyddai'r Llywodraeth yn gallu ei gael. Pa opsiynau yr hoffech eu gweld yn hynny o beth, felly?

[39] **Dr Wiliam:** Rydym wedi argymhell dau opsiwn, ac rwy'n siŵr bod mwy o opsiynau, oherwydd dim ond ar y ffordd o drafod yr ydym ar y funud. Rydym yn argymhell yn arbennig ddau opsiwn. Mae un opsiwn strategol ac un mwy realistig. O ran yr opsiwn strategol, er fy mod yn gwybod na ddylai Cymru, o anghenraid, ddilyn yr hyn y mae gwledydd eraill y Deyrnas Gyfunol yn ei wneud, y sefyllfa yn Lloegr yw bod corff wedi ei gyfuno y tu allan i'r Llywodraeth ac

heaven and says what excellent work we are doing for so little funding, and the second states that the sector is divided in a way that is very well suited to the financial circumstances that we face. We do not see that anything much has changed since then. Therefore, this recommendation came as something of a surprise.

Had the recommendation been worded as an invitation to the Minister to ask Cadw and CyMAL to discuss with us how we could go forward to strengthen the sector and collaborate more effectively—and perhaps one of the outcomes of that would have been some sort of merger—we would have been entirely happy and we would have no issue with that at all. However, given the way that it was worded, and because we had not been part of the process, we found many weaknesses in the recommendation and we are fundamentally concerned that the things that we consider to be essential, such as the archive, the recording and interpretation work, will not be valued as highly. As we have said many times this morning, we think that that work is crucial to the sector in its entirety.

Bethan Jenkins: We have seen the alternative options that you have proposed, which offer a number of ideas with regard to the way in which these ideas could be developed. Which option do you prefer, or which option would be the worst for you? For example, I have read that it would be less likely that you would receive finance or money from external sources if you were to merge with Cadw as it is a governmental body, or a body that is part of the Government. As a charity, you can access funds that the Government could not access. Therefore, what options would you prefer?

Dr Wiliam: We have recommended two options, and I am sure that there are more options, because we are only beginning to talk about this at present. We recommend two options in particular. There is one strategic option and another that is more realistic. With regard to the strategic option, although I know that Wales should not necessarily follow what the other countries in the United Kingdom are doing, the current situation in England is that there is a merged body

mae'r adroddiad diweddaraf o'r Alban yn argymhell yn union yr un peth yn y fan honno. Dyna, fel mae'n digwydd, y byddem ni wedi ei argymhell fel opsiwn strategol: bod y comisiwn a Cadw yn cael eu huno yn gorff newydd sy'n annibynnol ar y Llywodraeth; bod y corff cyfunol hwnnw yn elusen; a'i fod yn wir yn hollol gyfatebol yn ei natur i'r amgueddfa genedlaethol a'r llyfrgell genedlaethol. Yna, bydd gennych dri chasgliad cenedlaethol gyda'i gilydd.

[40] Fodd bynnag, rydym hefyd yn sylweddoli ac yn derbyn bod costau i hynny; byddai pris iddo. Rydym yn argymhell, felly, fel cam tuag at hynny, a rhywbeth nad yw'n cau'r drws ar hynny, yr opsiwn tymor byr o newid yn fwy araf, sef newid y ffordd o lywodraethu'r comisiwn a'i droi o fod yn gomisiwn brenhinol, sy'n gorff braidd yn od a hen ffasiwn erbyn hyn, a dweud y gwir, i fod yn gorff wedi ei noddi gan Lywodraeth Cymru, unwaith eto fel yr amgueddfa a'r llyfrgell, a'i fod yn mynd yn gorff elusennol llawn—nid ydyw ar y funud—a bod y comisiynwyr yn troi'n ymddiriedolwyr i'r corff hwnnw. Byddai hynny'n ateb na fyddai'n costio ond ychydig iawn. Byddai'n ymateb pragmataidd, byddai'n rhywbeth y gallem ei wneud yn syth ac ni fyddai dim o'r problemau sy'n codi fel arall.

[41] **Bethan Jenkins:** Hoffwn ofyn cwestiwn ar y pwynt hwnnw. Rwy'n cydnabod eich bod wedi dweud bod hwn yn ffordd effeithiol o weithio, ond, os caiff corff ei greu o'r newydd, efallai na fydd blaenoriaethau'r Llywodraeth yn cael eu rhoi gerbron. Er enghraifft, os oes problemau o ran sut mae'r Llywodraeth yn ymdrin â threftadaeth, rydym ni fel gwleidyddion yn gallu codi hynny gyda'r Llywodraeth. Pe bai'r corff yn elusen, efallai byddai hynny yn tynnu'r pŵer hwnnw yn bellach oddi wrth bobl. A ydych yn cytuno â hynny?

11.15 a.m.

[42] **Dr Wiliam:** Nac ydw. Mae fy nghefndir yn yr amgueddfa genedlaethol, sy'n elusen. Byddai'r amgueddfa a'r llyfrgell genedlaethol yn dweud eu bod yr un mor atebol i chi yn y bôn. Nid oes cwestiwn o gwbl am hynny. Y Llywodraeth a'r

outwith Government and the latest report from Scotland recommends exactly the same approach there. That, as it happens, is what we would have recommended as a strategic option: the commission and Cadw should be merged into a new body, independent of Government; the merged body should become a charity; and it should be truly on a par with the national museum and the national library. Then, you will have three national collections together.

However, we also realise and accept that there are costs attached to that; there would be a price to it. We therefore recommend, as a step towards that, and something that would not preclude that, the short-term option of changing more slowly, by altering the governance of the commission and changing it from being a royal commission, which is now a slightly odd and old fashioned body, if I am honest, into a body that is sponsored by the Welsh Government, once again like the museum and the library, with full charitable status—it does not have that at the moment—with the commissioners as trustees of that body. That would be a solution that would cost very little. It would be a pragmatic response, it would be something that we could do immediately and there would be none of the problems that might otherwise arise.

Bethan Jenkins: I would like to ask a question on that point. I acknowledge that you have said that this is an effective way of working, but if a body is created anew, perhaps the Government's priorities would not accord. For example, if there are problems in how the Government deals with heritage, we as politicians can raise that with the Government. If the body were a charity, perhaps that would move that power further away from people. Do you agree with that?

Dr Wiliam: No. My background is in the national museum, which is a charity. The museum and national library would say that they were just as accountable to you in essence. There is no question about that. The Government and the relevant Minister lay the

Gweinidog perthnasol sy'n rhoi'r sylfeini polisi ac mae'r corff yn dilyn y rheini. Mae'r arian hefyd yn dod o'r Llywodraeth. Gyda chorff elusennol, rydych yn cael, yn rhad ac am ddim, arbenigwyr mewn gwahanol feysydd o waith y corff yn cynnig ystod eang o arbenigedd. Mae Catherine, sydd yma heddiw, yn arbenigwr ar archifau digidol. Mae ei chyfraniad hi yn hollol amhrisiadwy i'r hyn yr ydym yn ei wneud. Mae Cymru, yn ei chyfanrwydd, yn cael hynny am ddim.

policy foundations and the body follows those. The funding is also provided by the Government. With a charitable body, what you get, free of charge, are experts in various areas of the body's work providing a wide range of expertise. Catherine, who is here today, is an expert in digital archives. Her contribution is immeasurable in terms of our activity. Wales, as a whole, gets that service free of charge.

[43] **Bethan Jenkins:** Gadeirydd, a gaf ddweud fy mod yn credu ei bod yn bwysig ein bod yn edrych ar beth sy'n digwydd yn Lloegr a'r Alban? Pan fyddwch yn meddwl bod gennych fodel ar gyfer y dyfodol yng Nghymru, byddai'n helpu pe baem yn gallu cymharu â'r hyn sy'n digwydd yn Lloegr a'r Alban.

Bethan Jenkins: Chair, may I say that I think that it is important that we look at what is happening in England and Scotland? When you think that you have a model for the future in Wales, it would assist us if we could compare that with what is happening in England and Scotland.

[44] **Joyce Watson:** I am happy to take that on board.

[45] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** What types of future delivery options would the royal commission most object to? Can you outline why such options would be detrimental to the future of the historic environment in Wales?

[46] **Dr Wiliam:** Where we are is that the commission itself put forward a whole raft of possible options—something like a dozen—and we recognise that some of them were simply non-runners. Where we are in our discussions with the Government at the moment is that we are homing in on three serious possible options, which need further work to develop them. One is a commission with revised governance, such as I just described. Another is a merger within Government—taking the commission inside the Government. The other is the option that I also outlined, which is a merger outside Government. All those need considerable analysis and work. All we plead for at this stage, which I am sure will be listened to, is that the process is not hurried. Ample time should be given to explore all the options. Other options could then emerge that we have not thought of.

[47] The two fundamental things that we want from the process are ample time and in-depth and open discussion, and secondly to emphasise that we think that the functions that the commission provides are vital in terms of what it offers to the people of Wales. Catherine and I, on behalf of the commission, should both stick up our hands and say that we did not join for fun—occasionally, it can be, but it has been a bit rocky lately. We are publicly appointed people with finite terms of office, so there is no gain in it for us. We honestly believe that we are committed to the historic environment sector in Wales.

[48] **Julie James:** On the theme of which option you like best, I was struck in your paper by the conversation around the difficulties that being inside the Government's IT systems might cause. I am keen on the digital aspect of the commission. Can you expand on that?

[49] **Dr Wiliam:** Finally, I am relieved to call upon our specialist commissioner Catherine Hardman.

[50] **Ms Hardman:** There are difficulties. First, I add to what Eurwyn said in response to the last question that one of the things that we would be very concerned about is if any of the

options were to try to degrade or make small of the role of the archive within the role and function of whatever the merged body may look like. It is not a self-serving thing; it is a means by which we can add and develop information about the historic environment for everyone working within the sector in Wales, from Cadw to volunteers to the Welsh archaeological trusts. This then feeds into the great leaps that have been made by the royal commission in what it has done with its digital technologies. This is again twofold. It looks towards the production and development of a digital archive, which is where my expertise comes in, in that, in my day job, I work for the University of York's archaeology data service, one of the few digital archives looking specifically at historic environment sector data, which is special. It is not just pictures and text; it is very different types of data—and anyone who has watched the *Time Team* will have seen them bounding across the fields with their resistivity meters.

[51] So, there is the digital archive element, and the royal commission, in partnership with other people—including us, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, and English Heritage—has worked towards developing policies surrounding that and actual infrastructure to be able to cope with it. That is very much tied up with the dissemination aspects of it. We have been quite innovative in the sort of work that we have done. Indeed, it is royal commission staff who have led the strand on innovation in the People's Collection Wales, where we have looked at new and innovative ways of providing a dissemination method for the underpinning archive. This comes back to some of your previous questions about trying to reach out to audiences we would not otherwise get to. We have been trying very hard to do that.

[52] One of the benefits of being a small, semi-independent organisation is that we have had the flexibility and the speed to respond to changes in digital technology, which, as I am sure all of us around this table are aware, seems to get speedier and speedier as the days go by. However, it means that we have been nimble in being able to work with it. The fact that we have been able to attract outside funding has also helped with that, as we have been able to supplement our income and respond in a timely fashion.

[53] I would hope that, in the future, we would be able to continue those sorts of developments.

[54] **Joyce Watson:** Mike, do you want to finish this session?

[55] **Mike Hedges:** I mentioned the lower Swansea valley earlier. I could take you there to show you a whole range of buildings that are in various stages of decay, some of them threatened. We have talked a lot, not about structures, but about joining things or not joining them. How do we improve outcomes?

[56] **Dr Wiliam:** As a Swansea lad and an authority on industrial archaeology—and he is very good on outcomes—I think that I will ask Peter, our chief executive, to have a stab at that.

[57] **Dr Wakelin:** I think that it comes down to the quality of the people you have trying to make the outcomes happen. It is about having a lot of people who are really committed to their work, who understand how to negotiate and how to knock heads together. A fundamental role is in local authorities, where conservation officers and elected members have a big part to play in trying to make things happen.

[58] The Hafod and Morfa site in Swansea has had problems year after year. My father was with Swansea local authority when I was growing up, and he put the roof back on the canteen building at Hafod and Morfa on two different occasions, but both were stolen in no time at all. It is still in a terrible state. We now have a project coming together, and we are

working with Swansea University on its proposals to get a really good community project there that is meaningful, that has a use for the buildings, and that will see them being cared for in the future. It comes down to that level of local commitment, detail and hard work, but within a policy framework that helps wherever possible.

[59] **Joyce Watson:** I thank you very much for attending this meeting. I remind you that a transcript will be made available, which you can check for accuracy, but you cannot remove what you have said. Thank you very much. Diolch. We will take a five-minute break now.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 11.24 a.m. ac 11.31 a.m.
The meeting adjourned between 11.24 a.m. and 11.31 a.m.*

**Ymchwiliad i Bolisi Llywodraeth Cymru ar yr Amgylchedd Hanesyddol—
Sesiwn Dystiolaeth
Inquiry into the Welsh Government's Historic Environment Policy—Evidence
Session**

[60] **Joyce Watson:** I welcome to the meeting the Minister, Huw Lewis, as well as Marilyn Lewis, John Howells and Steve Webb. As you know, we are carrying out an inquiry into the Government's historic environment policy, and we want to ask you some questions. As time is limited, Minister, with your agreement, I would like to go straight into questions. Is that okay?

[61] **The Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage (Huw Lewis):** Of course.

[62] **Joyce Watson:** Can you expand on why you believe that the system for protecting and promoting the historic environment in Wales will benefit from a programme of streamlining and modernisation?

[63] **Huw Lewis:** I think that those are the words that I used about prioritising the need for changing the regime, if you like, for the historic environment. If we take as an example the legislation that currently applies to the Welsh historic environment, we see that it is a bit of a hotchpotch, a piecemeal evolution of things that have happened on an England-and-Wales basis very often, over 30 years or more. To my mind, that is where the streamlining comes in for sure. We have an opportunity now with our primary legislative powers to put together a package of legislative support for the historic environment that suits Wales specifically. However, there is also an opportunity, I think, to go down a particularly Welsh path—and this is where modernisation comes in, as opposed to streamlining—and to talk about how Welsh communities are connected to the historic environment around them and what kinds of access they have to their own historic environments. Who benefits from those, and how do communities make best use of them in an educational, cultural and an economic sense? The time is good for that kind of fundamental rethink of how we want legislation and the regime of guidance and support surrounding the historic environment to fit together.

[64] **Gwyn R. Price:** What are the main elements that you will be seeking to change, and why have you decided that primary legislation would be required to achieve this?

[65] **Huw Lewis:** Primary legislation has been mooted. The heritage Bill is in the programme for government, and that gives us the opportunity to set the direction and, as I say, to set up a regime of support around the historic environment that is fit for purpose, modern and, most particularly, suits Wales. However, it is only a part of things. There is also secondary legislation to consider, as well as guidance, policy directions and so on. So, the whole suite of measures is up for discussion in the run-up to the White Paper and beyond.

[66] However, if you want some bullet points on why it should be primary law, I think that we need more clarity. There is something of a clutter around the evolution of this over the past few decades. I think that there is a problem with the currency and relevance of some of that legislation. It may well be fit for purpose with regard to things such as protection, but I think that we are entering a new era when it comes to things such as interpretation, for instance. How do we interpret the historic environment and to whom, and why are we doing that? How do we promote understanding and a sense of ownership around it? Critically, of course, we are in a completely different era when it comes to issues to do with access, whether that is physical access or intellectual access to the historic environment.

[67] I can well remember sitting in committees early on in the life of the Assembly, even, and, thinking back, some of the questions being asked about access to the historic environment were met with a blank lack of recognition by some partners. They were thinking things like, ‘What has disabled access got to do with the historic environment?’ I would like to think that we are in a very different place now. That kind of conversation needs to be a part of the root-and-branch way in which we address the historic environment, from primary legislation upwards.

[68] **Joyce Watson:** Bethan has a quick point on this.

[69] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, I want to come in on this because I am a bit confused about what you mean by a ‘hotchpotch evolution’ and the ‘clutter’ surrounding this agenda. I am not clear from your responses what you mean by that in relation to what is happening on the ground now. For example, some would argue that there are services there but that they need to work together more effectively. Is that what you are saying, or are you saying that services need to change fundamentally because people do not understand where to go or how to access them? I would just like some clarity, really.

[70] **Huw Lewis:** Is a little of both, really. I need to be clear here and make a distinction. When I use the words ‘hotchpotch’ and ‘clutter’, I am talking about legislation, not the various groups and bodies and third sector organisations that are partners in all this. I am not describing them as a hotchpotch. I am talking about the legislative framework within which everyone operates. Yes, I think that there are issues with people coming together. The Welsh Government is now having to step up to take a strategic lead on the direction in which we take everything in Wales, but with recognition of the fact that there are multiple partners out there that need to be valued in how the whole agenda comes together. However, a little bit of everything that you have mentioned is part of the mix here.

[71] **Gwyn R. Price:** Can you explain how you will move forward from the publication of the historic environment strategy towards the Bill in 2014-15? What will the process entail?

[72] **Huw Lewis:** I can give you a headline timetable. There has been a series of workshops, which kicked off in January with the statement that I published then, and the workshops up and down Wales have been looking at things in thematic ways. It has been happening throughout this year. There have been seven workshops altogether. That will culminate in a heritage conference on 19 July. That will be the culmination of that preliminary consultation procedure where all conceivable partners will get together. That will feed in to an historic environment strategy, which is for the autumn. So, there will be a published strategy that will come about through that in the autumn. A lot of that stuff will not need legislation to make it happen. A lot of it will be about guidance, policy guidance, and audience development—who are we attempting to attract to do what in the historic environment. Third sector support and voluntary engagement will also be a part of all that.

[73] Then, we will build up to a White Paper and a consultation towards actual primary legislative change. I anticipate that we will have a White Paper in the early part of 2013.

[74] **Julie James:** Good morning, Minister. We have had some evidence from the Welsh Local Government Association and other organisations, including the commission, for example—and you have just spoken a little bit about the multiplicity of organisations—that there is a lack of joined-up marketing of the historic environment and really a lack of a joined-up feeling about what we are trying to achieve in terms of heritage, regeneration, tourism and so on. Can you comment a bit on that and your proposals to sort this out?

[75] **Huw Lewis:** Yes, we have been getting that sort of input through the consultation work that has been going on during the year. There is some weight to that argument. There is always room for joining things up a bit better, particularly when it comes to marketing. It is essential to get this right with regard not just to protection, but to issues such as tourism. However, I would expand this beyond marketing to looking at the awareness of people in Wales of their own historic environment, their access to it and their ability to interact with it and be proud of it, as well as to understand it and explain it to others.

[76] There are issues here and this is a big agenda around different organisations working together. It is about things such as IT and how that all fits together when someone first comes to take a look at the Welsh historic environment. For someone sitting in Basingstoke considering a holiday who is interested in Welsh castles, we should immediately be able to offer an online experience that is highly accessible but that is also about the sheer wealth of Welsh culture. It should be easy to navigate and understand. Someone has to lead all of that. Although we have to value the multiplicity of organisations involved in looking after the Welsh historic environment, unless the Welsh Government leads on ensuring that that sort of marketing, a window on Wales if you like, is a coherent whole, it just will not happen spontaneously. This will not just grow of its own accord. It has to be worked for.

[77] For example, things such as the heritage interpretation plan that Cadw has put together, which is a first in Europe, is the sort of initiative that is part and parcel of ensuring that everything sings and dances to the same tune. This will be a major part of the consultative conversations we are going to have around the White Paper, and this conference on 19 July will have this as a major theme running through it as well. We have to open up the historic environment of Wales in terms of marketing to, of course tourists, visitors and so on, but also to the Welsh. Some of our communities live cheek by jowl with the most astonishing pieces of built heritage, for example, and yet there is a lack of awareness, understanding or sense of ownership within those communities. Certainly, we could be a very long way from people in those communities actually doing well by the fact that they have this asset, economically within their communities. I think that that is something that has been done rather better in other countries. Mind you, they tend to do the weather rather better too, so we have to take that on board as well.

[78] **Julie James:** Minister, I really welcome that. I wonder whether you can do two things for me. First, can you expand a little more on how you intend to get to those harder-to-reach communities, in Wales in particular and across the globe? Secondly, another concern of mine, which I have just raised with a previous witness, is that, although I absolutely agree with you about the digital inclusion agenda and so on, I am aware that, sometimes, being inside the Government IT net can be a bit of a drag on digital innovation and speed, and I am aware that English Heritage had terrible problems with procurement, tendering and so on in the IT sphere. I am a bit worried that if we take the Government bubble model, we will actually put ourselves in a position where we are not as state-of-the-art as we might be in digital inclusion terms. I would welcome your comments on that as well.

11.45 a.m.

[79] **Huw Lewis:** Certainly in terms of harder-to-reach groups, as you mentioned, this has

to start with politicians. I believe in the role of politics in all this, and that Chamber over there, and our deliberations in this committee room—this is where it begins. We have to decide basic things like who benefits from all this. Why are we protecting the historic environment? Why are we interpreting it, and for whom? Who is getting their lives enhanced by all this stuff? Who decides what the heritage is in the first place? It was not so long ago that there was a lively debate in political circles about whether anything that was not a stately home could be described as heritage, and we have moved on that. However, there is still an argument and a debate to be had about who decides exactly what heritage is, who it is for, who celebrates it and values it, who looks after it and to what purpose. That political debate begins, as I say, in this place.

[80] It is absolutely true that, if you look at the statistics surrounding visitor numbers to Cadw sites—it does not have to be just Cadw sites, but let us take them for instance—there is clearly a socioeconomic distinction in terms of what kind of family and community is taking advantage of all the marvellous cultural and educational experiences that are on offer. To my mind, that is a problem in terms of social justice and the way that things have been done in the past, and it sends signals about how we should change. The changes in legislation have to reflect that. The Welsh historical environment is for everyone in Wales and for all our guests from the rest of the UK and overseas, and if we are not enabling everyone to benefit from it then we are not running it properly. It is not just a question of preserving things because some people are enthusiasts for preservation. This is not just a question of satisfying the academic need of a particular group. It is not about doing it for the sake of it. Lord bless the enthusiasts and anoraks and the people who stand in the rain looking at bits of industrial heritage, because were it not for them, a great deal more of our industrial heritage would already have been lost. However, taking this agenda forward is about a great deal more than that sort of enthusiasm, or some kind of walled garden of high-end academic interest.

[81] It is difficult to get down to specifics. Obviously, I could list a load of specific points here about the good progress that has been made, but we have to reach that general consensus first politically. In terms of IT, I would point to the development of Cadw's website, for instance, which has come along hugely in the last two or three years. There have been enormous strides in terms of making that a really good-quality portal. However, you are right to say that there is quite a journey to be undertaken in terms of IT access across the board. It needs to be high-quality, accessible and navigable, and yet unites the various organisations and sites—hundreds of sites—so that someone can walk through, in a virtual sense, into the Welsh historic environment and take a comprehensive look around, being held by the hand and guided through it. We are not there; we are nowhere near that. There are some good examples. I will be going up to Scotland in the autumn to talk about some of these issues. I am quite a fan of the way that Historic Scotland has taken its IT provision, but I would stop to congratulate ourselves because I think that we have made great strides over the last two or three years in this regard.

[82] **Mr Howells:** It may be helpful to add, Minister, that I think that the key challenge for the historic environment sector in developing new IT tools is that of working together across the sector. The other standout example over recent years is the People's Collection, which has involved all of the cultural organisations involved in the historic environment sector coming together under Government leadership to develop something that is quite innovative and engages communities. However, we do not have the sufficient critical mass within the historic environment sector to develop these tools, unless we do that on a joint basis.

[83] **Huw Lewis:** The People's Collection is fantastic. However, I would regard it as embryonic. Conceivably there are partners beyond Government—obviously, those third-sector organisations that are part of this—that could be drawn into assisting with this agenda. Apart from anything else, there are enormous educational implications for this stuff, and for schools and students across Wales and further afield.

[84] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you for that succinct answer, Minister.

[85] **Huw Lewis:** It was not succinct, really.

[86] **Joyce Watson:** Mike wishes to ask a very short question.

[87] **Mike Hedges:** Some things are very cheap to do, such as local trails, which are a bit like town trails. There is one for Morriston, for example. They provide an opportunity for young children, via the schools, and older people to learn about their communities. Do you see a way of promoting what is a relatively cheap means of getting people interested in their own heritage?

[88] **Huw Lewis:** Yes. I think that we could all, within our constituency areas, point to an interesting trail idea that is either being developed or has been around for a while. It has largely been within the remit of local authorities to make that sort of thing happen. However, I think that there is learning to be done, particularly when you think about things like the Wales coastal path, in terms of how the Welsh Government could enhance that kind of work by showing the way with things like IT introduction to all of this stuff, marketing and so on, and creating better links. The comments of the WLGA will be very interesting to hear in this regard. In terms of linking up marketing tourism with the changes that we are talking about at Welsh Government level, it is very important that whatever guidance, legislation and so on that I develop over the next 12 months or so complements that sort of work. In the main, I think that the kinds of trails that you are talking about have been part of the ambit of local authorities. We need to be supportive of that.

[89] **Joyce Watson:** I wish to ask a short question, Minister. Visit Wales seems, on the whole, to be doing a decent job of getting people to Wales. However, how will we move from getting them here to where they actually want to be in Wales? I did some research last summer that clearly demonstrated that people knew how to get to Wales and knew why they were here, but once they were here they were not always clear about the next stages. What I am really saying is that there is a need for all the parts to fit together, so that once you are here you know exactly where you are going.

[90] **Huw Lewis:** Yes. I will bring Steve in shortly, but I think that you are asking an absolutely critical question. It is a matter of not just getting people here, but of the quality of what happens when they have arrived. There are implications here, among other things, for my portfolio, linking together as one unit. There are, certainly, visitor attractions within Welsh communities where the job of heritage alongside the job of regeneration is very important in changing the quality of the visitor offer, holding onto people for longer periods of time in terms of the visits that they make, and trying to move away from the idea of dashing off a tour bus and into a monument, buying a souvenir and dashing back on to the bus. That does very little good for the communities in which these things are embedded. We need people to linger and stay; people will do that only if the environment and the visitor experience around them are good. It is not just about the monument; it is about the community around it. Are there places to visit, are there places to eat, and are there secondary visits that can be undertaken from that point? Is there a clear direction in terms of transportation from one to the other? We have all seen places where this operates rather well. I had a fantastic experience in the west of Ireland last August, where that job of local linkage seemed to be happening very well; it was not perfect, but it was happening rather well and there are lessons to be learned from other places when we look at this. I will bring Steve in to comment.

[91] **Mr Webb:** You are right; Visit Wales has two basic functions. There is the marketing function, but there is also a development function that sits behind that. If marketing is all

about making the promise, what we are trying to do on the development side is deliver against that promise. The only issue, I suppose, is that tourism is a pretty complex mix of different experiences: it is about places to stay, things to do, places to eat and drink and all those sorts of things that need to have a quality label attached to them, but are probably only ever delivered properly at a local level. What we are trying to do increasingly is to encourage the development of what we are calling—although it does not matter what we call them really—‘local destination partnerships’. Those bring the local community together with the local authority and other key bodies, such as ourselves, Cadw and the National Trust—if it has an interest in that particular sort of community—to ensure that they sit around a table and talk through what is important to get right for their community from a tourism perspective and give them whatever support and advice we can to ensure that they are able to deliver that. You are dead right; unless people come to Wales and have a good experience, they are not going to come back or recommend us to others or spend as much money as we hope they do in Wales. It is the spend that creates and generates jobs.

[92] **Julie James:** To develop that theme a little, we were looking at how well the policies link together. You talked a little, Minister, about linking your portfolio together, but it goes across other portfolios, as well as your own—economic development and so on. Can you tell us a little bit more about the links and how you plan to push them forward?

[93] **Huw Lewis:** First, I will say a little bit more about my own portfolio in this regard, because I am determined that we will push forward with this, perhaps with some exemplar projects in the near future. I do not think that there is much room anymore, particularly in the atmosphere of public spending cuts that we are being pushed into by the UK Government, for freestanding projects that are fine in themselves, but address only one issue. When we are looking at the regeneration of a community, we should simultaneously be looking at the heritage of that community and how that ties in to the regenerative prospects of that place. What are the implications for civic pride, for job creation and for the economy of the area, and, critically, what skills could we develop among local people to look after that heritage? That encompasses everywhere in Wales. I do not think that there is a community in Wales that does not have some sort of heritage, whether built heritage or a piece of the historic environment, that belongs to them.

[94] This will be a continuous theme within my portfolio, as will housing. Mike Hedges and I have talked at length about housing renewal, which needs to be a tool that feeds into the heritage agenda as well, so that we get those added benefits. You are right to point to the Minister for Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science, the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development, and, also, the Deputy Minister for Skills, as being key allies in ensuring that this agenda comes together, and I have held regular talks with all three of those colleagues on this very issue.

12.00 p.m.

[95] Let us take skills as an example. We need an all-Wales steer in terms of how people get skilled up in traditional building skills, for instance, in order to look after our built heritage. However, we are now widening that conversation to talk about the wider skills market. What does it mean that someone living not in a listed building, but a semi-detached Edwardian house, cannot find anyone in the local building fraternity to look after that home sympathetically? There is a huge shortage in the type of skills that translate from the high-end work undertaken in castles and cathedrals to a Victorian built environment, which, in some instances, has been comprehensively vandalised since the 1950s.

[96] We have the opportunity to carve a new path in Wales. It does not seem to be an agenda that is exciting the UK Government at all, but we can do this in Wales, I think. We can address, at one end, a high-end skills issue and also a jobs issue more widely, spinning off

from that, in terms of the need for people to be able to access reliable, skilled tradespeople to look after their own homes as well as those public buildings that are part of our communities. However, the job of joining up is notoriously difficult and slippery—it is a very big job. I have just mentioned one sliver of it there in terms of skills, but there is also the whole question of tourism and of the landscape and environment, which John Griffiths and I will be working on.

[97] **Joyce Watson:** We will now move on to the advantages and disadvantages of merging functions and Bethan will ask questions on those.

[98] **Bethan Jenkins:** Cyn i mi ofyn y cwestiynau, hoffwn wneud pwynt am y gwrthdaro posibl yn eich portffolio chi o ran tai, er enghraifft. Mae'n rhaid i chi ystyried, fel Gweinidog, bod rhai adeiladau yn cael eu dymchwel er mwyn codi tai cymdeithasol. Os ydych yn mynd i gael y gynhadledd hon ac os yw'r Bil hwn yn mynd i ddigwydd, mae'n rhaid i chi ystyried hynny fel Gweinidog.

Bethan Jenkins: Before I ask the questions, I would like to make a point about the potential conflict in your portfolio with regard to housing, for example. You must consider, as a Minister, that some buildings are demolished in order to build social housing. If you are to have this conference and if this Bill is going to happen, you must consider that as a Minister.

[99] Mae fy nghwestiwn ar y posibilrwydd o uno Cadw gyda Chomisiwn Brenhinol Henebion Cymru. Rydym wedi gweld llythyr a anfonwyd atoch chi gan y comisiwn ar 2 Gorffennaf. Roedd y llythyr wedi'i eirio'n gryf ac roedd hyd yn oed yn honni bod cyfarwyddwr Cadw wedi torri cod y gwasanaeth sifil yn sgîl yr hyn sy'n digwydd ar hyn o bryd o ran trafodaethau. Credaf fod problemau mawr gyda'r trafodaethau ar hyn o bryd ac mae'r llythyr hwnnw'n dangos hynny'n glir. A allwch ddweud wrthym a ydych wedi ymateb i'r comisiwn? Beth sy'n digwydd ar hyn o bryd i dynnu pobl at ei gilydd mewn ffordd bositif oherwydd, ar hyn o bryd, teimlaf fod llawer o deimladau negyddol am y broses?

My question is on the possible merger of Cadw and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales. We have seen a letter that the commission sent to you on 2 July. The letter was strongly worded, and even alleged that the director of Cadw had breached the civil service code in light of what is currently happening in terms of discussions. I think that there are significant problems with the discussions at present and the letter clearly demonstrates that. Can you tell us whether you have responded to the commission? What is happening at present to draw people together in a positive way because, at the moment, I feel that there are many negative feelings about the process?

[100] **Huw Lewis:** Thank you for those important questions, Bethan. On a conflict with social housing, there are always tensions in terms of the decisions that have to be made locally about prioritisation. There is a chronic need for more social housing, but what does that mean in terms of planning locally within a local authority area? Each case has to be resolved on its own merits. I would like to see a future, however, where we are increasingly not seeing the historical built environment as an option, which we preserve instead of, for example, developing social housing. I would like to see the historic built environment being a part of the solution in terms of how we develop social housing. Welsh town centres, for example, are often a Victorian built environment, and there is huge potential for social housing to be a part of the regeneration of such areas, with, for example, accommodation above shops and the conversion of buildings from serving a failed retail purpose, perhaps, towards serving a residential purpose. There are all sorts of positive conversations to be had around that.

[101] Moving on to the letter from the royal commission and the plea for positivity that you have made, I would make the same plea. I think that we need a conversation here, which is made necessary—let us not forget this—by the need to make the historic environment sector

resilient in the face of what are going to be some of the most stringent public spending conditions that any of us have ever seen. Certainly, within my political generation, this will be unprecedented. The pressure that will be put on the public purse is certainly far worse than it has even been in my political lifetime. We need to be ready for that. Within that, we need to ensure that statutory functions are preserved. That is part of my job; I cannot let things go by the wayside because I was not ready. I would appeal to all the partners involved. This is just a first conversation with the royal commission. The pressures on public spending will hit any organisation that is in receipt of public money, as well as the third sector as those pressures work their way through. This is just a first conversation, really, in many ways.

[102] **Bethan Jenkins:** You say that it is a first conversation, but a merger working party has been set up, so I just want to understand—

[103] **Huw Lewis:** It is not a merger working party. It is a working party looking at options for the future, of which a merger may be one option. I would appeal to everyone in the conversation for more light and less heat in terms of what is going on here. I am interested in protecting core services and the statutory duties that are involved. I am interested, because of my political values, in holding on to jobs and to not having organisations collapse because, in a budgetary round sometime in the future, we simply cannot sustain things the way they are at the moment. I want to preserve jobs as best I can. In this particular instance, I am very aware of the value of those jobs to the place in which they are located, Aberystwyth, and so I am very keen to hold on to them.

[104] However, I want all organisations involved in this to understand that I have minimal interest in the vested organisational interests of one group or another. I am really not very concerned about vested interests. I am very aware that people, quite rightly, can be very proud of the track record of the organisation that they work for—there is nothing wrong with that—but, in the atmosphere in which now we find ourselves, even those at the heart of Welsh political life in this place can sometimes forget quite the degree to which we are going to be put under pressure when it comes to budgets over the next few years. It will be something that has not really entered our political universe since devolution. Everyone needs to understand that we need to be prepared for that. The discussions around the royal commission are being had for very good reasons, because those budgetary pressures are coming and because of certain characteristics of the commission—it is relatively small, and it is very dependent on public money—and because there will be a need to avoid any kind of wastage of any kind of public resource, so that all organisations involved are resilient through into the future. I am not concerned with preserving things as they were, necessarily, because of any kind of organisational preference that people have. It is the outcomes that matter.

[105] **Bethan Jenkins:** I have to press the point, though, Minister. The perception is that Cadw lacks impartiality and is being predatory towards the commission. The allegations are very serious. I agree with you that it should not be that one organisation takes precedence over another, but when an organisation such as the royal commission, which is held in high esteem in Wales, brings these concerns to you, I think that you need to take that seriously, because it would not be doing that if it was not concerned. We need to have a more open debate on this than has been the case so far.

[106] **Huw Lewis:** There is no question of there being a closed debate or of anything going on in secret. I think that everyone is agreed on what the underlying needs are here. We need greater collaboration, and we need the sector to be financially robust and resilient so that we can look after those skills and preserve them for the future. We need the statutory duties to be fulfilled; we have to do that. What are the practical implications of all that? One of them could be that a merger is a sensible thing, or it could be that the conclusion is otherwise. I am waiting for the working group to come back to me with recommendations about how all that pans out. It does not help to get involved in slinging hyperbolic sentences about, using the

word ‘predatory’ and so on. That does not interest me. It is a pity if groups of professionals, upon whom we rely and upon whom the public relies and trusts, in terms of the job descriptions that we give them, get involved in that kind of conversation. It adds nothing to the need to come to a sensible solution about the future. It is heat and not light.

[107] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** I—

[108] **Joyce Watson:** Janet, if this is on the same point, then the Minister has answered.

[109] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** I am not content with that answer.

[110] **Joyce Watson:** It has been answered, and I am the Chair. If you want to pursue it further, you can, but it is using up an inordinate amount of time. If you want to move on, that is fine.

[111] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Would you recognise or acknowledge the concerns of the commission that its crucial investigating and recording role could be diluted or lost sight of in a larger organisation?

[112] **Huw Lewis:** It is not going to be lost sight of. As to whether it would be lost sight of because it might take place within another organisation—that is a moot point. I will make a decision based on the recommendations that the working group comes back to me with. Those things must be done and are, as far as I am concerned, taken as read. They are a necessary feature of the way we do things in Wales. They are going to be preserved, but within which organisation or label is a matter of secondary consideration.

[113] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Acknowledging the high esteem in which the royal commission is held in Wales, why was it not included in the original discussions about setting up and looking at a merger? That is another criticism that it has pointed out in its deliberations via letter.

[114] **Huw Lewis:** Not included in the original discussion?

[115] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Yes, it wanted to be included right at the beginning.

[116] **Huw Lewis:** It is part of the working group.

[117] **Mr Howells:** It might be helpful, as the chair of the working group taking this matter forward, if I explained that the working group, which includes the royal commission, has been seeking to identify a range of options by which the commission’s functions could evolve in future. It is important to stress that the commission has contributed fully to those discussions. We have drawn heavily on some of the thinking that the commission has already given to this area. Discussions on change are uncomfortable for all organisations. I regret the slightly personal element to some of the comments made by the commission. The job of all officials in the Minister’s department is to advise him on how we can maintain all of the important things for which the Minister carries statutory responsibility. That includes the historic environment. This committee would be allowed to be concerned had we not been advising the Minister that there were certain questions that needed to be looked at as we contemplate a future where, as the Minister said, there is going to be less money to divvy up. We have to consider how we are going to maintain a range of statutory services, including those discharged by the commission, in a difficult phase. What is important is that the commission is contributing to a process that will generate comprehensive advice to the Minister on how we take this discussion forward. One of the options considered by that group is the do-nothing option. It will be for the Minister to decide, based on comprehensive advice to which the commission has contributed, where he wants to take this next.

12.15 p.m.

[118] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** To what extent have you asked the working group to give consideration to the Chitty report from April 2011, which made several recommendations about the roles of the historic environment bodies funded by the Welsh Government?

[119] **Huw Lewis:** The Chitty report in 2011 was part of what the previous One Wales Government did. It was quite narrow in its remit. It focused on looking at whether there was duplication and overlap of activities, asking whether we could do things in a more streamlined way. The working group that I have asked to look at options around the future of the royal commission is looking at much more fundamental issues. As I have said, the pressure on the public purse in Wales will grow to such an extent that it would be very imprudent of me to sit back and not look at these issues now and just hope that everything will be affordable in, let us say, the 2015 budget round. Those pressures are of such a degree that, if we attempted to carry on without getting ready for this sort of pressure, I could well wake up some morning in 2015 and find that the statutory duties listed, some of which the royal commission addresses, are unaffordable or unsustainable or that the salary bill cannot be paid. I cannot allow that to happen, and the prudent thing is to ensure that we are ready for that.

[120] The conversation will have to go further and wider than the royal commission. It is the largest third sector heritage body and it is very dependent on public money, so that is a place to start, and an obvious and prudent place to start when it comes to this conversation. However, this conversation will have to be had across all ministerial portfolios and in terms of the relationship we have with all third sector organisations. All Ministers will have to face up to this sort of preparation.

[121] **Mike Hedges:** You said that the working group on a possible merger would give you a report by July 2012. Is that still the case? What happens next?

[122] **Huw Lewis:** Yes, it is the case. I expect that report before the end of the month, and I will consider the next steps at that point. What I am hoping comes through the process is a list of options. There might be a preferred option in that. I would not want to move precipitously on that, but there will be room for more conversation and consultation at that point. It is very important to me that staff are kept on board and that they are part of the process. I have been very careful that the trade unions are involved and engaged in all this, for example. However, I am waiting to see what those experts, which is what they are after all, come back to me with in terms of options, before the end of July as you rightly say.

[123] **Joyce Watson:** Minister, you have recognised the vulnerability of the historic environment third sector in your paper and its reliance on public funding. Therefore, do you have a strategy to address that?

[124] **Huw Lewis:** This is one of the very valuable spin-offs of the conversation that we have been having in the run-up to the heritage Bill. The bringing together of dozens of partners at the July conference will be another valuable opportunity to get everyone's bearings on this. We have to start with first principles here. We have to be very clear about what we are asking of the sector with regard to things such as interpretation, exactly what is protected and why. We all want to see a vibrant third sector. I do not want to curtail the very heterogeneous nature of the groups that are part of looking after and interpreting the historic environment in Wales. That is certainly something to avoid. It is very important that, as we talk this all through, everybody pulls together for the sake of the first principles that we agreed on. Why are we doing this? Who are we doing it for? Are we being careful about not duplicating effort? Is there a more streamlined, co-operative way in which we could proceed? There are lots of conversations within this that need to be had.

[125] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** In your evidence you say that you acknowledge the tensions around buildings that might be valued by local communities but do not meet the criteria for statutory protection. How do you intend to find solutions to this?

[126] **Huw Lewis:** This is a very strong theme that is coming through in the consultation around the heritage Bill, for instance. I also know that it is a theme that is coming through politically in our own Chamber. It seems that there is a rising tide of political and professional opinion about the need for something to be done. I cannot come at you with a smart answer to this as yet, but one thing is very clear: we need to think about how communities are empowered to not just point to something that they value, but to go on and do something about the fact that they value that piece of built heritage. It need not fulfil academic expectations about what a listed building is. There are buildings and monuments that have resonance with people locally but would never get anywhere near any kind of historical listed status. I think that it is our job as politicians—I hope that we will be able to develop something that is quite distinctive for Wales—to enable this sort of stuff to happen. There are problems around misconceptions about what listing actually means, and what it enables you to do. We need to find a new vocabulary for talking about the valuing of monuments or buildings that communities would like to get stuck into, but are currently restrained from doing so because there is no way for them to intervene on the future of those monuments or buildings. We should empower them to intervene.

[127] Local authorities will have to be an absolutely central partner in how this pans out. We cannot have some kind of chaotic situation whereby, just because someone points at a post box and says, ‘I love that post box’, it is preserved for all time. We have to balance the tensions around local planning and development with what we are talking about here. We will have to come up with a whole new set of criteria. No-one has done this stuff before, to my knowledge, and it is quite exciting that it has opened up in this way. To be honest, it was not something that I expected to emerge from this consultation, but it has come through as one of the strongest themes, and needs to be addressed.

[128] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** In line with that, the WLGA has told us about the issues faced by local authorities with run-down and dilapidated buildings. They face difficulties in recovering the cost from the owners, and that is something that I have had a lot of experience with in my own constituency. Do you recognise those concerns, and do you have any idea about how to address them?

[129] **Huw Lewis:** Of course I recognise them. I think that all of us, as local representatives, will have bumped up against these problems over and over again. I do not think that the current situation is something that we should accept as just one of those inevitabilities of life. We have to figure out, alongside our local government partners, how to share the burden of risk. Local authorities have sweeping powers to do things with listed buildings, for instance, but the risk involved can be extreme. It can also be extraordinarily time consuming for officers within local authorities, in particular, but for others, too. We need some kind of system that spreads the risk a little, so that we are not expecting local authorities necessarily to take on the whole burden of a multi-million-pound refurbishment job because a listed building has become dilapidated because an owner is recalcitrant or incapable of doing anything about it. That would involve an all-Wales lead. We have to think about putting an all-Wales arm around the shoulder of conservation officers and the local authorities in which they work, and finding some vehicle for ensuring that the local authorities are not left holding the baby, financially speaking. We know what happens when they are: very few of them will make forward progress, because they will avoid the risk. Quite how that shapes up, I am not too sure. Ideas on a postcard, please.

[130] **Joyce Watson:** If you can answer in a minute and a half and, Mike, if you can ask it

in less than half a minute, I will allow you a quick question.

[131] **Mike Hedges:** I certainly can. I know a lot of listed buildings, and listing a building does not stop it from becoming dilapidated.

[132] **Huw Lewis:** Of course. No, it does not. Listing serves a particular purpose, but it does not necessarily serve a regenerative purpose nor does it necessarily fulfil the wishes of a community. We have the chance now to go much further and broader than the traditional ideas around nominating things for listing, of pointing a governmental finger at something and saying 'That is listed'. The conversation around it is much more important. 'All right, that is listed—so what?' What happens next? How does the community benefit from this? How is it part of our regeneration package? How do we tie in partners properly so that we can resource any kind of future for this particular piece of the environment that we have singled out? The next 12 to 18 months in just this one regard will be very exciting for policy development.

[133] **Joyce Watson:** I thank you, Minister, and your officials for attending this meeting. I remind you that you will be sent a copy of the transcript of the meeting to check for accuracy, but you will not be invited to take away anything that you have said. Thank you. I now close the meeting.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 12.27 p.m.
The meeting ended at 12.27 p.m.*