



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru The National Assembly for Wales

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

**Dydd Iau, 19 Gorffennaf 2012
Thursday, 19 July 2012**

Cynnwys Contents

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introductions, Apologies and Substitutions

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

Ymchwiliad i Bolisi Llywodraeth Cymru ar yr Amgylchedd Hanesyddol—Sesiwn
Dystiolaeth (Cynhadledd Fideo)
Inquiry into the Welsh Government's Historic Environment Policy—Evidence Session (via
Video-conference)

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

Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog Rhif 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r Cyfarfod
Motion under Standing Order No. 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the Meeting

Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynndi 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
Bethan Jenkins	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Ann Jones	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)
Kenneth Skates	Llafur Labour
Rhodri Glyn Thomas	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

Eraill yn bresennol**Others in attendance**

Edwina Hart	Aelod Cynulliad, Llafur (y Gweinidog Busnes, Menter, Technoleg a Gwyddoniaeth) Assembly Member, Labour (the Minister for Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science)
Peter Jones-Hughes	Prif Swyddog Cadwraeth, Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Conwy Principal Conservation Officer, Conwy County Borough Council
Lucy O'Donnell	Cyfarwyddwr Cynorthwyol, Ymgysylltu â'r Cyhoedd a Llywodraethu, Cadw Assistant Director for Public Engagement & Governance, Cadw
Dr Emma Plunkett-Dillon	Pennaeth Cadwraeth Cymru, yr Ymddiriedolaeth Genedlaethol Wales Head of Conservation, National Trust
Steve Webb	Cyfarwyddwr Datblygu, Llywodraeth Cymru Director, Visit Wales, the Welsh Government

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
Rhys Iorwerth	Ymchwilydd Researcher
Marc Wyn Jones	Clerc Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.19 a.m.

The meeting began at 9.19 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon Introductions, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Ann Jones:** Good morning and welcome to the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee. I ask all Members to switch off their mobile phones, pagers and BlackBerrys, as they can interfere with the broadcasting and translation equipment. We are in formal session, and we therefore have the use of headsets. Channel 0 will provide the floor language, and channel 1 will provide translation from Welsh to English. Members know that they are free to use either language. We are not expecting a fire alarm, and at this point I always say that you should follow me if it sounds. The assembly point is by the Pierhead building, and the ushers will give us directions.

[2] We have not had any apologies for today's meeting. In that context, I would like to thank Joyce for stepping into the breach while I was away. I do not want any comments about whether Joyce was a better Chair than me, but we will see at the end of the meeting how we get on. Thanks very much, Joyce, for that. I also thank the committee for running without me in the Chair. I found it helpful that the committee could still go on, and it is reassuring and nice to know that the committee runs without the Chair. No comments, thank you, either under your breath or otherwise. [*Laughter.*]

9.21 a.m.

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

[3] **Ann Jones:** We will now move on. The committee has started taking evidence on the Welsh Government's historic environment policy. The aim of this inquiry is to try to assist the Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage to include things in his heritage Bill that we think would be advantageous. This session is with Dr Emma Plunkett-Dillon, who is the Wales head of conservation at the National Trust.

[4] You are very welcome here, Dr Plunkett-Dillon, and thank you for attending. Thank you also for your paper, which Members will have read. Do you have any brief opening remarks that you wish to make, or are you happy to go straight into questions?

[5] **Dr Plunkett-Dillon:** I am happy to go straight into questions. If members of the committee have any questions on my evidence or on wider issues, I am happy to take them. I believe that our introduction sets out our views. Maybe I could make a few comments, Chair. First, we are very grateful for the opportunity to come to the committee to discuss the historic environment with you, so thank you very much for this opportunity. Another thing that I wish to say is that the reason that we are very pleased to be here is that we care very passionately about the historic environment, because we think that it is very important to people, in terms of places and stories. These give people a sense of identity, a sense of confidence, a sense of belonging, a sense of where they came from, and a sense of values. This is a two-way dialogue. We need to listen to people and understand what they appreciate, as well as helping them to understand the historic environment.

[6] The other reason that we are very pleased to be here is that we acknowledge that the historic environment makes such an essential contribution to the financial security of Wales. We are aware that people come to Wales to visit our landscapes, our coasts, our mountains, our castles, our houses, our hills and so on. The golden thread that is woven through all of that is the historic environment: the stories that bring those places alive. If we are going to

continue to make sure that tourism plays the part that it can in our financial future, we need to do everything that we can to secure that future and to manage and protect in every way that we can.

[7] **Ann Jones:** Thank you very much for those remarks. I will ask the first question. The Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage has asserted that the system for protecting and promoting the historic environment in Wales

[8] ‘could benefit from a programme of streamlining and modernisation’.

[9] Is that your view?

[10] **Dr Plunkett-Dillon:** There is much to be recommended in the present system. If we were asked, we would say that the present system works very well for monuments, buildings and sites that are designated as being of national significance. Those of us who work in the third sector, in government, in local government and in archaeological trusts talk to each other. There is a lot of conversation with Cadw and with the agents of the Welsh Government who are responsible for upholding that statutory designation. We might agree with the Minister on what happens in between those bits. There are some wonderful parts of Wales that effectively have a black line drawn around them, because they are the designated areas; however, it could be argued that every single part of Wales has significance, in terms of the historic environment, to a greater or lesser degree. We believe that an ideal system, which would really put Wales on the map, would involve measures of protection that would acknowledge the importance of the bits in between. It is worth bearing in mind the intangible elements of the historic environment. Traditionally in Wales, music, stories and verse played an important part in our identity and it would be good if we could find some way of factoring them in. We acknowledge that we need to be realistic and pragmatic. We ask the Minister to consider a way of embracing the totality of the historic environment.

[11] **Peter Black:** Is primary legislation the best way of doing all of that?

[12] **Dr Plunkett-Dillon:** We could look at a mixture of primary legislation, guidance, policy, strategy, and the present legislation as it stands. Can we put a bit more enthusiasm into it? Can we support it in a different way? Can we change people’s mindsets? Can we channel the enthusiasm for the historic environment that organisations like the National Trust might have to work with the Welsh Government to find a better way of using the legislation that we have? It is time to look at the primary legislation to see if it is fit for purpose. I would not be complacent in any way. There are challenges around how the Welsh Government would deal with registered landscapes. Registered landscapes and registered parks and gardens are material considerations in the planning process, but they have no statutory protection. One of the features that a potential White Paper originating in Westminster picked out was what we would do about the registered landscapes in Wales. This is a different way of doing it, compared with what is done in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland. We think that it is something to be proud of, but those details need to be addressed.

[13] **Peter Black:** Would registered landscapes be one of the National Trust’s priorities?

[14] **Dr Plunkett-Dillon:** They would be, because we feel strongly that the landscapes embrace the totality. It is the little details that make up the landscape. If you erode the details, you lose the clarity of the bigger picture.

[15] **Peter Black:** Do you have any other priorities for legislation? What pitfalls should the Government avoid?

[16] **Dr Plunkett-Dillon:** Pitfalls would be avoided if it is realistic, deliverable, robust,

makes sense and the people of Wales feel that they have a voice. For instance, members of the committee will be aware that there is a lot of controversy about listed building consent and people being frustrated. So, we need to have clarity around the process. It has to be something that is readily understood so that people can sign up to it and it has to make sense.

[17] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Rydych yn dweud yn eich papur nad oes modd i chi ofalu am fannau arbennig sydd â gwerth am resymau haniaethol. Sut ydych yn dadansoddi beth sydd â gwerth haniaethol yn hytrach na gwerth o ran treftadaeth, hanes a diwylliant?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: You say in your paper you have no means of taking care of special places that are valued for intangible reasons. How do you interpret what has an intangible value rather than value in terms of heritage, history and culture?

[18] **Dr Plunkett-Dillon:** It is important that we differentiate between the two. That is what I was saying: we have to be pragmatic and realistic. The tangible would be the sort of structures that we have in place at the moment—the buildings, monuments and physical evidence that you can put your finger on. Cadw's conservation principles embody the difference between historic significance and associational significance—places that are associated with particular people. You will be aware of Dinefwr and the association with Lord Rhys, which gives it that sort of historical association. We have to differentiate between the two. In my earlier answer, I made reference to both. I acknowledge that it is a difficult challenge to embrace the intangible, but it is such an important part of life in Wales—the Eisteddfod, for example. It is there. We are not suggesting that you need to put legislation in place to deal with that, but you need clarity on the difference. For me, tangible is the physical; not only the physical that we see—the buildings and monuments—but the tangible that is under the ground, because a lot of archaeology is hidden from us. We need to put measures in place that make sure that archaeology and the historic environment that we are not aware of now is protected for future generations.

9.30 a.m.

[19] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Fe gyfeirioch yn eich ateb at deddfwriaeth ac ymgynghoriad y Gweinidog. A ydych yn teimlo eich bod wedi cael cyfle i sicrhau bod eich barn chi a'ch profiad chi wedi cael gwrandawriad gan y Gweinidog? A ydych chi'n hyderus y bydd hynny'n dylanwadu ar y penderfyniadau a fydd yn deillio o'r ymgynghoriad hwn?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: You referred in your response to legislation and the Minister's consultation. Do you feel that you have had an opportunity to ensure that your opinion and your experience have been heard by the Minister? Are you confident that that will influence the decisions that will come from this consultation?

[20] **Dr Plunkett-Dillon:** Yes. This is a welcome opportunity to speak to you today to give you our evidence, and we have been meeting with the Minister and have had regular liaison with Cadw. So, yes, we feel that we have been given the opportunity, but we would welcome any further opportunities to engage further with the Government and the Minister.

[21] **Mike Hedges:** In relation to the public interest in history and the historic environment, what needs to be improved to get more people interested in not just the big and popular things that you have? We have a lot of good things in Wales that people would really miss if they disappeared. I live in Morryston and we have the famous Tabernacle chapel. If that fell into decline and fell down, that would be a huge landmark that would be lost. In Landore, you have the Siloh chapel that fulfils the same role. How do you turn this general interest that people have in the historic environment into something more tangible?

[22] **Dr Plunkett-Dillon:** I will base my answer on the experience that we have had in the National Trust. We were moved as an organisation from an approach to our visitors of 'Stand

behind that rope' and 'You ought to be grateful that you are allowed to come in to appreciate this', which was more of a show, into something in which people can participate. So, we have moved to an approach that is based on understanding what our audiences want; it is about talking to people and valuing their opinion. The same process needs to be applied to the wider historic environment. I suggest that those of us who work in the historic environment need to reach out and listen to what people value, rather than telling them what is of value.

[23] We must be careful that our legislation is based on something that can be defended. So, if we are looking at protecting the tangible evidence of the historic environment, then it has to be robust enough so that we are confident that whatever measures go in place will protect. We believe that, around that, you can also engage with the wider public and promote, interpret and listen to what people value. You can put in place measures that deal with monuments and buildings on a national scale, and you can have a separate local scale that would have a local list of chapels, monuments, parks and particular areas of townscapes that are valued just for the way that the light falls on them in the evening and the sense of history, just in the visual, that can be treasured going forward into the future. There are different scales that we can work up, but key to this is listening to what people value.

[24] **Mark Isherwood:** You state that interpretation tends to focus on sites in Cadw's guardianship and those open to the public. Do you therefore feel that Cadw's promotional work is too focused on the sites in its care, and, if so, what could be done to improve matters?

[25] **Dr Plunkett-Dillon:** Cadw has done an excellent job, and I have been involved with the historic environment interpretation policy since the establishment of the Assembly. Cadw's approach to interpretation has changed out of all recognition. When I think of how it was dealt with when I first started to work in this way, we were, as an organisation, continually challenging Cadw. It has done a wonderful job and has brought lots of different audiences in. However, I think that in working in partnership with other organisations, it could possibly expand into different fields. It has done a certain amount of that with its interpretation strategy; it is trying to link the places for which it is responsible with the stories that make the connections, for example, the stories relating to the princes of Gwynedd and the Deheubarth. So, it is moving gradually in that direction, but there is still a journey to be travelled. I think that you would find that there are a lot of organisations that would like to work with and join Cadw on that journey.

[26] **Mark Isherwood:** Does it know that?

[27] **Dr Plunkett-Dillon:** We tell it—

[28] **Mark Isherwood:** Well, it does now. [*Laughter.*]

[29] **Dr Plunkett-Dillon:** We have been consistent in saying that we are always there to help, that we think that it does a great job, but that we think that everyone has a responsibility to take it out beyond the boundaries of its guardianship sites.

[30] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** In your evidence, you say that it is time to review the effectiveness of the historic environment group as a means of promoting the historic environment. What is the reason for that, and what are the group's main weaknesses?

[31] **Dr Plunkett-Dillon:** The historic environment group has been in existence for about 10 years, and I think that review is an essential part of any well-run organisation. I just feel that, after 10 years, it is time to look at the outputs and outcomes and at whether they match the original terms of reference. We should also look at whether we are delivering that in the most cost-effective way or working in the best way for the historic environment. It is time to take a step back and ask whether it is fit for purpose and whether there is a different way of

doing it. For example, I am minded to look at some of the other partnerships, such as the Wales biodiversity partnership and the Wales coastal and maritime partnership, to see how they work and to see whether we can learn lessons from what has come out of those partnerships as opposed to the way in which the historic environment group works. So, it is just a matter of timing. We need to step back to look at what is working well, what is not working well and whether we can do things differently.

[32] **Kenneth Skates:** Can you say more about the comment that the pan-Wales interpretation strategy and plan are overly complex, and about exactly how that is hampering delivery?

[33] **Dr Plunkett-Dillon:** In fairness, it is overly complex for reasons beyond the control of Cadw. We, Cadw and any other organisation receiving funds from the Welsh European Funding Office are bound by rules and regulations. I would just say that Cadw has adopted a two-phase approach, which has perhaps made it challenging, as well as a fantastic opportunity, for some organisations with limited resources to engage with this. Such organisations need to think very carefully about how they engage in a bidding process such as that. They have to consider whether it is worth putting in the money and the thought—the resources of people’s skills—if they are not sure what the outcome might be. You could come back at me and say that that applies to any bidding process, but we have found that, although we welcome the strategy and think that it is a fantastic way of doing it—and we really like this themed approach because there are really good stories—we just wonder whether we ought to take stock. If Cadw or another branch of the Welsh Government were to do it again, might there be a different way of doing it?

[34] **Kenneth Skates:** Turning to the promotion of heritage sites, the WLGA told us that there is sometimes a lack of a joined-up approach where there are a number of organisations, each marketing different heritage sites. Do you recognise that as an issue? I noted with interest that the National Trust has, I think, 17 paid-for visitor sites in Wales but only three saw a downturn in visitor numbers between 2009 and 2010. In contrast, the majority of local authority-operated attractions saw a downturn. Could that be because of a lack of joined-up marketing?

[35] **Dr Plunkett-Dillon:** There is always the potential for joined-up marketing, and Wales is too small for us not to maximise opportunities and talk to each other. I particularly welcome the way in which the Welsh Government has approached the heritage legislation by doing these scoping exercises and bringing people into round-table discussions where everything is on the table and people can exchange views. However, if you take that approach into the wider world and you look at interpretation, I think there is tremendous scope for joined-up thinking and working together. You have to balance that against reality. Are the resources there, for example? The mind might be willing, but the resources may not be. There may be a danger of people’s hearts getting ahead of the reality. They may want to work like that, but, when it comes to it, people retreat back into their silos because they have to protect their own funding source. There is perhaps a role for the Welsh Government in thinking of creative ways of supporting people to work together—and I do not mean through additional financial resources. I just think that a framework might encourage people to maximise opportunities. We have visitors coming into a sodden, wet Wales this year, so we should be working with each other to make sure that there is a wet-weather offer, because one organisation might benefit when the sun is shining, while another might benefit when it is pouring with rain. So, we need to think very carefully about how we might work more closely together.

[36] **Mike Hedges:** It is not only in Wales, as the borders are fairly artificial, in some respects. The south Wales coalfields, for example, probably start in the Forest of Dean and Somerset before ending up in Pembrokeshire. Is there a means by which we can work across

borders, either with England or with Ireland, which is just across the sea? Instead of looking at Wales in isolation, we should be trying to work with other places.

[37] **Dr Plunkett-Dillon:** I agree, and within the National Trust, we have recognised that. One of our strategies involves the Marches, and we are looking at trying to work across the border. We acknowledge the fact that quite a lot of our visitors are tourists who are coming for a holiday, and for a lot of the visitors from across the border, they are coming for a day out, because they are that much closer to the urban centres. We therefore have to try to up the day out from across the border and increase tourism on the other side, and if we work together, looking across the border, we can. However, we are also very keen that, when they come into Wales, they get a sense of a warm Welsh welcome and feel that they are in Wales and have a particularly Welsh experience, noting that there is a distinct difference.

[38] **Joyce Watson:** Going from joined-up working to joined-up thinking, I am going to quote something that you said, which is that the

[39] ‘National Trust welcomes the Welsh Government’s positive efforts with historic environment policy. But we feel the potential for the historic environment to deliver across the Government’s priorities such as regeneration, learning, social inclusion and Glastir has yet to be fully realised.’

[40] What should the Welsh Government do specifically to address that?

[41] **Dr Plunkett-Dillon:** We need clarity on what we are looking for. What is the vision and where are we heading? Taking a step back from that, perhaps we need to start from the point that we can use as a framework the fact that the environment is a whole—in other words, it is a continuum. We do not have the natural environment in one box and the historic environment in another; we have a continuum. There are very few parts of Wales where you cannot recognise the hand of man. There are a few sea cliffs and the tops of the highest mountains, but everywhere else you can see the hand of man. So, you are looking at a continuum.

[42] We start from that point and, as it were, sense-check each of the initiatives, strategies and White Papers and all the legislation coming out of Welsh Government to make sure that we have the links and the connections that acknowledge the continuum. That would be my starting point for how we could do that.

[43] **Joyce Watson:** I am sure that the hands of a few women were involved, as well. However, moving on, can you expand on the concerns about the potential loss of independence and expertise in any merger proposal involving the royal commission? What would be the impact of that from the National Trust’s perspective in particular?

[44] **Dr Plunkett-Dillon:** From our perspective, when managing our properties, we start from the premise that we think it essential to understand a property and understand its significance, to base any managerial policy or action on understanding why that property is important. We believe that the same should apply to managing the historic environment of Wales. We believe that the royal commission has contributed in a significant way to our understanding of the historic environment of Wales, to an exemplary and very high standard. So, our opinion in approaching a potential merger is that we should look at what the outputs would be. That is, we would ask what it is that we want from those parts of the Government that deliver for the historic environment, and then work back from that to get the structure that is needed. Our concern would be that, whatever the structure—and we do not feel that it is our place to comment on a particular structure—what we want to bring to the committee is our opinion that we do not want the loss of that expertise because, over the years, that has contributed in a great way to our understanding of what makes our properties special. So, we

understand what is important because of that work. It has been, in many instances, essential to a thorough understanding of how we can best manage that and make sure that what is valuable is preserved in perpetuity, which is our core purpose. So, for us, going forward, it is vital that that expertise be preserved, and we would suggest that all options be explored with a view to delivering what you, the Welsh Government, want in the long run.

9.45 a.m.

[45] **Bethan Jenkins:** Bu ichi ddweud yn gynharach bod Cadw yn gwneud gwaith gwych yn y sector hwn, ond pan ddaeth cynrychiolwyr y comisiwn brenhinol i mewn, roeddent yn eithaf beirniadol o Cadw yn y cyd-destun hwn. A oes modd ichi roi eich barn ar hynny neu a yw hynny'n rhywbeth nad ydych ar wneud sylw amdano? Rwy'n credu ei fod yn bwysig, gan eu bod yn credu bod Cadw efallai wedi pardduo'r broses o edrych ar uno Cadw a'r comisiwn.

Bethan Jenkins: You said earlier that Cadw is doing excellent work in this sector, but when the royal commission's representatives came in, they were quite critical of Cadw in this context. Is it possible for you to give us your opinion on that, or is that something that you do not wish to comment on? I think that it is important, because they think that Cadw may have prejudiced the process of looking at merging Cadw with the royal commission.

[46] **Dr Plunkett-Dillon:** My response would be that they do different things. Cadw, at its core, is charged with protecting the historic environment, so it puts in place measures, and it is also responsible for making the historic environment more accessible. The royal commission is charged with understanding significance, understanding what is important and why it is important. To my mind, they do different things, and if we are to have a healthy, sustainable historic environment that plays its part in delivering the Welsh Government's objectives, we need both, and I would not presume to comment on what the royal commission may or may not have said about one or other organisation. However, I feel that they do different things, and we need both of them.

[47] **Mark Isherwood:** In your initial reply, you referred to concerns about the loss of expertise, but could you also comment on your concerns about the loss of independence from the political institutions of the Welsh Government and the National Assembly?

[48] **Dr Plunkett-Dillon:** I just feel that an independent voice gives high-quality feedback to the Minister and a committee such as this, because it is one step removed.

[49] **Bethan Jenkins:** Rydych yn dweud yn eich tystiolaeth nad yw cyrff yn y trydydd sector sy'n ymwneud â'r amgylchedd hanesyddol yng Nghymru wedi'u trefnu'n rhwydwaith ffurfiol fel sy'n digwydd yn Lloegr. A oes modd ichi ehangu ar hynny ac esbonio pam y byddai rhwydwaith o'r fath yn helpu yma yng Nghymru?

Bethan Jenkins: You state in your evidence that the third sector organisations working in the historic environment in Wales are not organised into a formal network, as is currently the case in England. Is it possible for you to expand on that and also to explain why such a network would be beneficial here in Wales?

[50] **Dr Plunkett-Dillon:** It works well in England, but England is different. It is bigger and the organisations that work in Heritage Link in England are better resourced. Let us just be real about this, as there is no point in pretending otherwise. Over the years, we have explored the possibility of some sort of network to give the Minister the kind of independent voice that Mark Isherwood referred to. However, we have basically been held hostage to people's ability to deliver. It goes back to the response that I made earlier about people's hearts and aspirations being greater than their ability to deliver on the ground. We are reluctant to jump into this unless it has gravitas, stature and buy-in across the sector. So, we feel that attempts have been made to do it, and we are supportive of it in principle, but we

suggest that it requires support to get off the ground. There are different ways of doing it. We could look at it being a sub-group of the Wales environment link or we could have it as a stand-alone, but we need a range of organisations to step up and support it for it to get through.

[51] **Bethan Jenkins:** Felly, ni fyddai rhwydwaith o'r fath yn ddibynnol ar arian o reidrwydd ond ar gonsensws rhwng y mudiadau. Rwy'n gofyn oherwydd, yr wythnos diwethaf, dywedodd y Gweinidog fod y mudiad yn dibynnu'n ormodol ar arian cyhoeddus, ac wedyn, oherwydd y toriadau, mae problemau yn deillio o hynny. Felly, os oedd rhwydwaith, a fyddai hynny'n gwella'r broses neu'r datblygiadau, oherwydd bod proses mwy ffurfiol yn ei le?

Bethan Jenkins: So, such a network would not necessarily be contingent on funding, but on a consensus among the organisations. I ask that question because, last week, the Minister said that the sector was too dependent on public funding, and then, because of the cuts, problems arise as a result. If there were a network, would that improve the process or the developments, because there would be a more formal process in place?

[52] **Dr Plunkett-Dillon:** I agree. Again, in the current economic circumstances, with the possibility of cuts, we would have to look very hard as the National Trust as to how we might contribute to potential funding for such a network, and we would have to be very clear as to what the outcomes would be. I would imagine that the same process would apply to whatever organisation is entering or supporting that. I feel that, were we to set something up, we would have to be very clear as to what we were going to get out of it at the end. It is not something that I would go into without doing a great deal of heart-searching as to whether it really could add value.

[53] Taking a step back and looking at it at a slightly higher level, it is something that would undoubtedly improve the historic environment in Wales, so that, if funding were available, and the Minister was minded to support it, we would be 100% behind him, because it would be a way of delivering some of that dialogue that I was talking about earlier, with the Welsh Government listening to what the sector has to say. Such a network would channel those views through, and the Minister would be able to access that information in a readily comprehensible and digestible form. So, yes, I think that, if we could be clear as to what it was going to deliver, and how we were going to support it, being realistic about the resources that are needed both in terms of capacity and money, it would be great if we could get something like that going.

[54] **Bethan Jenkins:** A fyddech chi'n gweld hynny wedyn yn dod o'r Gweinidog, yn hytrach na'r mudiad ei hunan yn penderfynu dod at ei gilydd? Mae'n swnio fel eich bod yn dweud mai o'r Gweinidog y dylai'r arweiniad hynny'n dod. Efallai wedyn byddai hynny'n digwydd trwy'r Bil.

Bethan Jenkins: Would you see that coming from the Minister, rather than the sector itself deciding to come together? It sounds as if you are saying that that lead should come from the Minister. Perhaps that would happen through the Bill.

[55] **Dr Plunkett-Dillon:** I think that we could do both. Ideally, it would come bottom-up from the organisations. We have tried. There have been several attempts to bring people together, and they have all floundered for all the reasons that I have set out. There has been a lack of capacity, with some organisations having one or two people covering wide geographical areas, and so they do not have the time, let alone the resources. An organisation like Heritage Link is only as good as the input it gets. It does not work unless people commit to it. That is what has floundered in the past. The Minister might think, actually, that a way forward is to support these tiny organisations through some funding. So, my answer to your question is 'both'.

- [56] **Ann Jones:** Do Members have any other questions?
- [57] **Mike Hedges:** I have a very brief one. If you could put one thing into the Bill that did not cost any money, what would you ask for?
- [58] **Dr Plunkett-Dillon:** I suppose a way of listening to people, and building in dialogue. That is difficult to put in legislation, but if you are asking me for blue-skies thinking, that is what I would suggest. It should not always be top-down; it should be bottom-up as well.
- [59] **Ann Jones:** Thank you for coming today, and thank you for your evidence. You will get a copy of the transcript to check for accuracy, and then, hopefully, you can watch how this progresses, and we will send you a copy of any report that we do.
- [60] **Dr Plunkett-Dillon:** Thank you very much indeed for having me here and listening to my contribution.
- [61] **Ann Jones:** We will now take a break so that we can set up the video link.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 9.54 a.m. ac 10.08 a.m.
The meeting adjourned between 9.54 a.m. and 10.08 a.m.*

**Ymchwiliad i Bolisi Llywodraeth Cymru ar yr Amgylchedd Hanesyddol—
Sesiwn Dystiolaeth (Cynhadledd Fideo)
Inquiry into the Welsh Government's Historic Environment Policy—Evidence
Session (via Video-conference)**

- [62] **Ann Jones:** We will now take evidence from Peter Jones-Hughes, the principal conservation officer from Conwy County Borough Council. Can you hear us all right, Peter?
- [63] **Mr Jones-Hughes:** Yes, fine, thank you very much. Good morning.
- [64] **Ann Jones:** Good morning. Thank you for joining us today and for your paper. I am always nervous as the Chair when we are doing a video-conference, but I have been assured that it will be fine, so we will see how we go. Are you happy to go straight to questions, or do you have an opening statement?
- [65] **Mr Jones-Hughes:** I can go to questions. I think that my statement outlines the main points that I want to make and I am willing to take questions.
- [66] **Ann Jones:** Thank you very much. I will start with the first question. What are your views on the Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage's assertion that the system for protecting and promoting our historic environment could benefit from a programme of streamlining and modernisation?
- [67] **Mr Jones-Hughes:** Streamlining and modernisation are rather general terms, are they not? Conservation deals with specifics, in the main. There is a need to review the system at the moment. There is no doubt about that. I do not think that there has really been, until now, an opportunity to review the existing system to see whether any improvements can be made, and this is a good opportunity to do that. Several areas are being looked at at the moment, such as collaboration, which is an interesting way of looking at making improvements to the system, as well as looking at the legislation and how effective it has been in terms of the Welsh historic environment and its aims.
- [68] **Peter Black:** Do you agree that introducing primary legislation is the best way of

achieving these changes?

[69] **Mr Jones-Hughes:** In certain terms, primary legislation can achieve great improvements on the existing system. After all, the historical perspective that I have on it—I have been working in the sector for a few decades—is that the legislation has been put together on a relatively incremental basis, which has meant that legislation has been introduced to tackle various pressures on it. Aspects such as the conservation area legislative consent regimes need reviewing in terms of how effective they have been in preserving the distinctive historic character of our special areas.

[70] **Peter Black:** When this Bill comes forward, what would be your main priorities for it and what are the pitfalls that we need to avoid?

[71] **Mr Jones-Hughes:** As I said in my paper, the protection legislation on listed buildings is quite effective at the moment. The problem with it, as I put in my paper, is not the protection elements of that legislation, but the management of it. That goes to the crux of the matter; the management of the legislation is the important thing. Many areas could be looked at. One is the repair of listed buildings. I am struggling at the moment with various properties that are in a state of deterioration. It is not something that has been positively done by the owner; it is a negative, if you like—not doing things. The legislation in that respect is relatively weak and can be strengthened. Conservation area legislation can be strengthened, and it needs to be looked at in order to change it in the place where we find ourselves today. The national picture, as far as conservation areas are concerned, is very worrying in relation to Wales as far as I can see.

[72] There also needs to be an understanding of what sector is providing what resource in terms of the system. For instance, biodiversity, which I used to manage in my old authority, was moving towards a more holistic approach to the natural environment, which I thought was a very good idea. At the moment, we are just starting to explore that area with buildings of local interest, and so on, and we in Conwy have just approved supplementary planning guidance on buildings of local interest. To be honest, it worries me considerably what resources I will have available to carry out a proper survey of an area, because such a survey can systematically identify buildings of local interest that can bring the local community on board. The answer in that regard is to give the community and the third sector a role, but, if there is a current co-ordination role, it often depends on grant applications for further resources, and so on. So, on the one hand, these areas of weakness need to be looked at in the current legislation, and also how that has an impact on who provides that particular service and the resources they have.

10.15 a.m.

[73] **Ann Jones:** Ken has a supplementary question, and then we will take one from Mark.

[74] **Kenneth Skates:** Would you think that it might be advisable to look at the Scottish model? In Scotland, they have annual MOT tests, if you like, for listed buildings as a measure to prevent decline in the condition of those historic sites. Do you think that that could be looked at here?

[75] **Mr Jones-Hughes:** I do not really know very much about the Scottish system but it sounds like a very good idea. I was struck by the last Heritage Protection Bill consultation and how, for instance, Wales was distinguished from England on the basis that management plans for listed buildings and so forth could not be envisaged in Wales because we just did not have the resources. That kind of thing—management plans, MOTs and so forth—caused me a great deal of frustration. We have a buildings-at-risk initiative, which is co-partnered by Cadw in Conwy. It is about grants for buildings at risk. However, there is another side to that question,

which is proactivity in terms of hitting those buildings that are in the vulnerable category and ensuring that these, along with all listed buildings, do not fall into the at-risk category. That means carrying out those kinds of prescriptions, with which I would fully agree. Engagement with owners, and so forth, is a very good idea. However, if you look at a local level, you will see that Cadw, in general terms and on this side of the coin, currently has one officer that covers all of north and mid Wales. I have two conservation officers available, which includes me, and I have a management role for landscape and trees in my authority. You can just imagine what needs to be done. I have always thought about the concept of a critical mass in terms of the minimum amount of people that are required to get things moving to engage and to produce these proactively. It is the proactive things that make the statutory things much easier in the long term.

[76] **Mark Isherwood:** I want to pick up on one of your comments about buildings of local interest. I think that you said that you recently introduced new supplementary planning guidance. To what extent must or should local policy on buildings of local interest be subject to public consultation and/or member approval?

[77] **Mr Jones-Hughes:** It is fundamental at the moment because this is an area where there is a need to review the legislation. In terms of buildings of local interest, the current dilemma is that there is no protection, really, against demolition in the majority of cases, as you probably know if you designate a building of local interest. There is debate about whether article 4 directions can be used on that. However, I would imagine that a heritage protection Bill would address that. My view at the moment, therefore, is that taking the locals with you is absolutely vital in this, as is taking along the owners. Without their support, a strategy on buildings of local interest just cannot work.

[78] I am reminded that, in terms of buildings of local interest, there needs to be a bottom line. In our system and the supplementary planning guidance that we have worked on, the starting point is that you must have some kind of architectural or historical association, which is obviously a vital aspect because you have to be able to distinguish the special in local terms from the not so special. Having said that, that function could be carried out in partnership with the local community, as I think that it should have a central role.

[79] **Ann Jones:** There will now be some questions in Welsh from Rhodri Glyn Thomas. Do you have the translation equipment?

[80] **Mr Jones-Hughes:** I am afraid that I do not; I am alone in the room at the moment.

[81] **Ann Jones:** I think that the translation will come through the feed, Peter, so just tell us if it does not.

[82] **Mr Jones-Hughes:** Okay, thank you.

[83] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Gan obeithio eich bod yn clywed y cyfieithiad, rydych yn sôn yn eich papur—ac yr ydych newydd gyfeirio at hyn yn eich atebion—am y diffygion o ran rheoli asedau treftadaeth. A allaf gymryd o'ch atebion fod hynny'n fwy pwysig yn eich barn chi nag unrhyw fath o newidiadau radical mewn deddfwriaeth neu weithdrefnau? Rwy'n cael yr argraff o'ch atebion mai'r diffygion presennol yw diffygion adnoddau dynol a chyllid, ac mai'r rheini y mae angen i ni eu cryfhau er mwyn

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: In the hope that you do hear the interpretation, you mention in your paper—and you have just referred to this in your answers—the deficiencies in the management of heritage assets. From your answers, am I right in thinking that that is more important in your view than any kind of radical changes in legislation or procedures? I get the impression from your answers that the current deficiencies are deficiencies in human and financial resources and that that is what we need to strengthen in order to allow you

eich galluogi i reoli'r asedau hyn.

to manage these assets.

[84] **Mr Jones-Hughes:** Yes, I would agree with that. There needs to be a review of the legislation, but the proof of the pudding, as they say, is in the eating and, in terms of the outcomes that we are trying to achieve, those are all based on the approach to management. Of course, there is a difference between one person doing one task and a myriad of other tasks that are coming at him or her every day, and a properly resourced situation. The local government sector is an important one in conservation—it is one of the principal focal points of conservation. Resourcing in terms of the third sector is also important in a management-partnering and mentoring role.

[85] **Bethan Jenkins:** O ran hyrwyddo'r amgylchedd hanesyddol, rydych yn dweud bod angen i Lywodraeth Cymru gyfleu neges polisi clir ar y weledigaeth am bwysigrwydd yr amgylchedd hanesyddol yng Nghymru. Felly, pa gamau penodol y dylai Llywodraeth Cymru eu cymryd i fynd i'r afael â'r mater hwn?

Bethan Jenkins: On promoting the historic environment, you say that there is a need for the Welsh Government to give a clear policy message on the vision of the importance of the historic environment in Wales. Therefore, what specific steps should the Welsh Government take to address this issue?

[86] **Mr Jones-Hughes:** As I said in my paper, I think that the job that has been done on sustainability in relation to climate change in Wales is impressive—the fact that there is a clear message there and an emphasis that pervades all of the policies that we have. There needs to be a national vision for the historic environment and that should be based on an audit of the historic environment that we have at the moment. We have world-important assets in Wales and they need to be looked at. We have talked about buildings of local interest, but I think that our conservation areas, for example, possibly our historic parks, gardens and scheduled monuments—all of those things—need to be audited so that we can appreciate where the priorities lie, where our roles need to be strengthened and who needs to undertake them. In that respect, the Welsh Government has a great opportunity to establish a lead on this.

[87] **Bethan Jenkins:** Diolch am yr ymateb, ond mae'n amlwg eich bod wedi dweud nad oes gweledigaeth genedlaethol. Mae hynny'n destun pryder i rywun fel fi am fod cynifer o sefydliadau allan yno, fel Cadw a'r Comisiwn Brenhinol Henebion Cymru, sy'n gweithio yn y sector hwn. Sut ydych yn credu y gall y weledigaeth hon weithio a pham nad oes gweledigaeth ar ôl 10 mlynedd o ddatganoli?

Bethan Jenkins: Thank you for the response, but it is clear that you have said that there is not a national vision. That is a cause of concern for someone like me because there are so many organisations out there, such as Cadw and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, which are working in this sector. How do you think that this vision can work and why is there no vision after 10 years of devolution?

[88] **Mr Jones-Hughes:** That is an interesting question. Looking at the situation from various levels, I have a particular perspective from the local authority level and I also have a somewhat distanced perspective on Cadw. Cadw, at the national level, has struggled—that is how I perceive it—to carry out the important lead role on the historic environment, which may be moving away from its role as manager of its estate, which obviously takes an awful lot of resources and management. A lot of work is done, for instance, on awareness raising and education, from that point of view. It is only now, when collaboration has been raised as an issue, that people are beginning to realise how disparate the workings of all the sectors are.

[89] In north Wales, we have established a north Wales forum of conservation officers since about 1997. We link in with the built heritage forum in Builth Wells, which is held twice a year. Having said that, with regard to the Cadw grant schemes, if I had a grant scheme

in my authority in Conwy, for which Cadw was providing the money, I would not be given an indication of where it was—there is no advance working as regards resources. We are doing that now with our buildings-at-risk survey, but we are managing that and Cadw is managing its own grant schemes. As regards the national vision and achieving these improvements, it needs leadership. That is not a criticism of Cadw, because I have always had a good relationship with Cadw and found it very useful. Having said that, over the last two or three years that I have been in the authority in Conwy, I have probably met a Cadw officer about six or seven times, and it is getting less and less frequent. I have a three-year work programme and a one-year work programme but I have no idea what Cadw's work programme is. I have seen its statements on the environment and so on, but there is no conversation between us.

[90] **Bethan Jenkins:** Chair, I think that we should get some information on the north Wales network of conservation officers because it would be interesting to see whether that is a concept that could be rolled out across Wales.

[91] **Ann Jones:** Okay, thank you; we will do that. We are halfway through and still have quite a few questions, so we will try to focus on the questions, or we will not get the benefit of your expertise, Mr Jones-Hughes. We will try to move on a bit faster.

[92] **Mike Hedges:** The Welsh Local Government Association told us that there is sometimes a lack of a joined-up approach to promote areas where there are a number of organisations, each marketing different heritage sites. Is that an issue that you would recognise, and, if so, what needs to happen to improve things? Do you have any trails in Conwy, whereby people are moved in Conwy, or across north Wales, to visit sites of a similar type?

10.30 a.m.

[93] **Mr Jones-Hughes:** I will deal with the last question on trails first. I am aware that a pilgrim trail is being set up, but I have not really had any dealings with that. That is between somewhere in the north-east, Chester or wherever—it might be Holywell—and Bardsey Island. I am interested in this kind of thing and I think that there is a great deal of opportunity here. Clearly, having worked in Chester and places like that, you understand that conservation works best where it is really working and it is creating wealth, prosperity and an interest in culture. Therefore, these kinds of trails are a great opportunity. Locally, our townscape heritage initiative in Colwyn Bay, and a previous one that I did in Holywell, did set up trails and one of them was with the local community, which was leading on it. Will you remind me of the first question again?

[94] **Mike Hedges:** It was about a lack of a joined-up approach to promote areas. Do you recognise that? What is needed to get a more joined-up approach in the area?

[95] **Mr Jones-Hughes:** Marketing was a question. There could be better connection between local officers in terms of tourism and so on, for instance in Conwy and with regard to Cadw. To be honest, I believe that Cadw does quite a good job on its marketing. In terms of marketing our service for instance, that is a key area for us. Website development is a priority this year so that we can get out there and really market ourselves as a section that has information about the historic environment. It comes with a responsibility that, if you have a situation where you are going to increase demand, resources have to be put in place or the demand will be disappointed.

[96] **Kenneth Skates:** Peter, you say in your report that the balance between Welsh Government policies for the historic environment and other policy areas is not clearly set out and that this often results in cases of contentious issues that need to be resolved at a local

level. Can you expand on these concerns, and do you have any specific examples of issues that have cropped up and required attention at local level?

[97] **Mr Jones-Hughes:** There are quite a few examples that I can think of, unfortunately. One thing that we deal with every day is building regulations, for example. English Heritage has produced some very good information on how to balance these two aspects. Conwy is a joy to me, because I work very closely next door to our building control section, where there are two or three people who are very good. In other authorities, you get someone who is determined to play it by the book in terms of building regulations and it is an awful struggle, which does not give a very good picture. You can imagine the owner of a listed building being told by a building control officer to put barriers on a window that has a sill height of less than 900 mm, and then someone like me saying, 'Can we have a relaxation here?' I appreciate that relaxations need to be reasonable, and certainly in terms of fire and so on, I give those a high level of priority. However, that is one example where, nationally, there could be a clearer picture of where there are possible relaxations to the building regulations just to preserve our listed buildings.

[98] I have had experience of battles with housing associations that have buildings in conservation areas and, in some rare occasions, in listed buildings, and they wanted to do the same and put uPVC, for instance, into these buildings. They rely on their own standards for provision of accommodation. There are multiple meetings with heads of housing associations that have big contracts with uPVC companies in the main, and they want the economies of scale that will accrue from that. When they are told that factory-made, standard window units are not necessarily good in historic buildings, they say that the Welsh Government says that they have to improve accommodation and that there are precise standards to work to with regard to all those things. I could go on; those were just two examples.

[99] Holistically, we are now dealing with Arbed, which has good objectives that I agree with. However, in terms of the historic environment and the aesthetics of architecture and the creation of a solution that keeps the special character of our historic areas—Llandudno is well known as a UK-important conservation area and that is fine, but Colwyn Bay is outside the conservation area. It is surrounded by a high-quality mixture of Victorian houses. It is quite a unique establishment. It was established between 1870 and 1900. Arbed deals with external insulation, for instance, but it has always struck me that it does not particularly look at the aesthetics of a building. When it does, it ends up with a strange compromise, such as externally cladding the rear elevation but not the front elevation. There needs to be a definite look at sustainability. A final example is photovoltaic, where the legislation and guidance is vague and subjective as to whether something requires permission—if it is visible from a particular public viewpoint and so on.

[100] I have read the Royal Town Planning Institute consultation. I am a member of RTPI. I think that merging conservation legislation and listed building consents with planning is a recipe for diluting the whole thing. Pressures these days are incredible, compared with the nineteenth century. Listed buildings were in the same family with virtually no pressure for 50 years or so. Since the 1990s, everyone who moves into a house wants to do changes. We have to manage those changes, but it is extremely difficult with all these anomalies. I had a meeting the other day with a young couple who wanted to change their historic windows to uPVC. They live in Conwy, which is a world heritage site, and their house is listed. They have moved in and have a young family. They want to comply with the Welsh Government's objectives in relation to climate change and thermal efficiency. There are only 1,600 listed buildings in the Conwy area, which is a small proportion of the total stock. That makes it far more difficult to get the message across that there are other measures that can be taken that will be much more effective in terms of thermal efficiency than ripping out a historic sash and putting in uPVC windows.

[101] **Ann Jones:** We have six questions and around six minutes left. That is the challenge. We have one minute per question and answer.

[102] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** The WLGA told us that the Welsh Government's policies on economic development, sustainability and the historic environment could be better aligned. Do you agree with those comments and, if so, how should the Welsh Government respond?

[103] **Mr Jones-Hughes:** I agree with those comments, and as I have said before I think that the Welsh Government should produce something purely from a historic environment perspective. It can then identify those areas where compromises are possible, where management can solve problems and so on. However, that is very important in order that it can translate to the local arena.

[104] **Joyce Watson:** Good morning. I want to ask you about your views on the possible merger of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales and other bodies, such as Cadw. Further, do you have any thoughts on how any merger proposals might affect the work undertaken by local authorities?

[105] **Mr Jones-Hughes:** Sorry, was your question on whether I have any views on the select committee and Cadw? I welcome those organisations—

[106] **Joyce Watson:** No, I will bring you back to what I asked.

[107] **Mr Jones-Hughes:** Sorry, I missed it.

[108] **Joyce Watson:** Okay. Do you have any views on the possible merger of the royal commission and any other body, such as Cadw? Do you have any thoughts on how any merger proposals might affect the work of local authorities?

[109] **Mr Jones-Hughes:** Yes, I have had thoughts on that. One aspect that is an issue is that the database, if you like—the historic environment record—is disparate and managed separately at the moment. We in Conwy have been thinking about this. We have had meetings with the archaeological trusts, for example, to see whether we can use their expertise and combine to produce a local historic environment report. The royal commission does a very good job on the resources that it has, particularly given that it has a dynamic record. That is something that you always want to have—you want a changing record that is updated regularly. Within that, certain improvements could be made so that, for example, we all tap into the same basic database and use the same format, which I think is a very good idea.

[110] With regard to the royal commission and Cadw—this is not a criticism of Cadw, because it does an absolutely fantastic job on the resources that it has and all of us in the conservation sector do the job because we are interested in it and love buildings and so on—my fear is that the royal commission could be swallowed up by Cadw unless it is managed very robustly and its current tasks and activities are ring-fenced. We could find that it substantially weakens the current organisation—the commission's organisation. In theory, it would work, but you have to look at the practicalities and resources as well as the priorities of each organisation to see whether it would work in practice.

[111] **Mark Isherwood:** How do you believe the concerns that you expressed in your paper about the variation between local authority conservation services should be addressed?

[112] **Mr Jones-Hughes:** Looking back at the pre-1996 situation, there was a disparate group of local authorities based on three tiers, and there was not much specialist conservation advice at all. There was probably a great deal of damage done at that time to conservation assets. There was a great step forward in 1996, because it was the first time, in unitary

authorities, that specialist teams had been set up.

10.45 a.m.

[113] Nevertheless, as things stand today, the Institute of Historic Building Conservation survey shows that there is a disparity between authorities, which is worrying. A trick was missed in 1996, as I remember Tom Cassidy, who was the chief executive of Cadw at the time, going around local authorities trying to persuade them that having conservation sections was good, and he tried to share his thoughts on what they should provide. We should go a little further in Wales to provide this service and to specify what the vision is. This is not only about resources, but about the different vision in many authorities. In our authority in Conwy, that vision can encompass a lot of regeneration work and proactive work on the legislative side, relating to listed building consent. Some other authorities probably just have planners rather than specialist officers or single conservation officers. They really deal just with the basics. The answer has to come from above, and it has to be an agreement or a protocol created between Welsh Government and local authorities. Local authorities have a very important role to play in conservation, in my opinion.

[114] **Mark Isherwood:** You referred in your remarks there to vision. To expand on what you are saying, in your paper, you say that

[115] ‘Collaboration could improve the vision...however the shortage of expertise is a real potential obstacle to achieving these improvements.’

[116] Could you expand on that, and tell us how that might be addressed? In your paper, you also referred to the shortcomings of working with third sector organisations, local businesses and so forth. In responding, perhaps you could bear in mind the work of organisations that are located not far from you, such as the Gwrych Castle Preservation Trust, the Victorian Society, the historic gardens and the Georgian Group, which are reaching out to local authorities, offering that sort of free engagement.

[117] **Mr Jones-Hughes:** That is an area that we could be looking at. On collaboration, I was involved in the north Wales officer collaboration report of 2009, and we looked at the resources then. It might be a different story in south Wales, but in north Wales, the spread of the individual unitary authorities is such that collaboration is quite difficult to get your head around, on the basis of having 11 local authority officers. You need resources to start something like that up, and a great deal can be done with the electronic media and information technology, and so on.

[118] We would love to have the third sector on board. Take management plans for instance. We have already started a programme of management plans for our conservation areas. We need local fora and interest groups coming forward and doing a lot of this work. They can do surveys and appreciations of various things.

[119] Having had contact with interest groups, the one thing that I would say is that they are quite focused in the main and have clear, sometimes singular, objectives. Sometimes, it is difficult to give them the overall picture, and that definitely needs to be done with the third sector, to help it to police and appreciate the designations that are created. That is important, but how do you do that? In Llandudno, we are thinking of getting the Llandudno Historical Society to look at the local area and just to tell us the condition of it—the losses, the damage, and the good things about it. These are all what we should be getting into. I mentioned compartmentalisation in my report, for instance the Simpson compact, where we have two separate groups for planning and conservation. I am aware that, in Conwy, there is a fantastic amount of resource, for instance in tourism, possibly in community engagement, grants, which could all be freed up, for the local authority, too. At the moment, in a time of recession,

it is difficult to see and an awful lot of work is going on just to clear the in-tray daily, but that is no excuse. Conservation officers and others in local authorities are now used to multitasking. However, there is a limit to the capacity and to what you can do. There definitely needs to be a review of structures and resources, just to see how many people in the collaborative field we could pull in. Conservation officers are making a big difference, but, at the end of the day, you want to get away from the perception that it is the conservation officer in the local authority that is either the obstacle or the opportunity to do this kind of thing. It is a teams-based thing.

[120] **Ann Jones:** Thanks very much. We have run over time, and I am conscious that we have more items on the agenda. I know that Janet wants to come back with something, but I am sure that she can catch you another time and feed that information back in if it is of relevance to this inquiry. Thank you very much for giving us evidence today. We will send you a copy of the transcript to check for accuracy, and, when we finish our report, you will also receive a copy of the report. Thank you very much for joining us today by video-conference, and we look forward to your views forming a part of our report to the Minister.

[121] The committee will now take a break for five minutes just so that we can put the committee room back as it was before the video-conference.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10.52 a.m. a 10.57 a.m.
The meeting adjourned between 10.52 a.m. and 10.57 a.m.*

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

[122] **Ann Jones:** We will move on to item 4 on our agenda, which is still the inquiry that we are conducting into the historic environment policy. It is my pleasure to welcome Edwina Hart, Minister for Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science, who is also wearing a tourism hat today. I also welcome Steve Webb, who is the director of development at Visit Wales, and Lucy O'Donnell, who is the assistant director for public engagement and governance from Cadw. All three of you are very welcome. Minister, thank you very much for your paper. Do you have any opening statements to make or are you happy to go straight to questions?

[123] **The Minister for Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science (Edwina Hart):** I am happy to go straight to questions.

[124] **Ann Jones:** I will start. From a tourism perspective, do you have any views on the assertion of your colleague, Huw Lewis, that the system for protecting and promoting the historic environment in Wales

[125] 'could benefit from a programme of streamlining and modernisation'?

[126] **Edwina Hart:** These and some of the issues that he raised in committee are principally matters for the Minister for heritage, but I have some sympathy with what he is saying, particularly about how we get Welsh communities more involved in understanding their historic environment, because, if they understood it well, they would become ambassadors, as it were. That would then have a knock-on benefit for me, because we could have voluntary guides for tourism trails from that type of background. We support any reviews that could help to promote and protect the historic environment, and I understand that we might have to have legislative powers, but the jury is currently out on that. We also

support ensuring that local communities understand that, because it encourages sustainable tourism. So, from that point of view, I am as one with the Minister for heritage.

[127] I am also as one with him about the accessibility of heritage sites, because we have to remember when we talk about this agenda that we own buildings, the private sector owns buildings and other bodies own buildings and so to get an integrated report is rather like herding cats, in some ways. Is there also a requirement for more from the historic environment than we currently give? It is all very well walking somebody around a site, but they might sometimes like to see what that site would have looked like, which is why interpretation is so important. Sometimes, people like to have something physically done to a place to show what it looked like.

11.00 a.m.

[128] There are wider issues on this, too. Historic architects will not like what I have to say, but, in another life, I suggested that perhaps we should have a glass lift on the side of Caernarfon castle, and people looked with horror on that suggestion. I thought, ‘We are in a modern world, and we have to make heritage accessible and look at different ways of doing things’. That is quite important as well.

[129] **Ann Jones:** I think that we will move on rather than dwell on glass lifts.

[130] **Peter Black:** In terms of the importance of the sector for tourism in Wales, what input has your department had in the consultation exercise that Huw Lewis is running?

[131] **Edwina Hart:** We have been involved in the various workshops, and we have even got staff today in a workshop discussing some of the wider issues. The historic environment helps to differentiate us as a nation, and when people say, ‘You must have a modern Wales’, they should remember that the emblems of Wales internationally are castles. We have some of the best castles in the world, so how do you sell that? People want to see them. We had 40 travel writers across earlier in the year, did we not, Steve? They looked at the cultural and heritage attractions of Wales and we showed them these things and they were quite keen on that agenda. What I would say is that we work closely with Cadw in terms of how we market this and utilise our Visit Wales brochure, and how we have done our magazine to concentrate on some of the issues. We have done specific things on how we link up. We have done stuff on Conwy castle, Harlech, Ogmere, Llansteffan—according to my brief—Cardiff, Caerphilly, Beaumaris and Portmeirion. We are doing a lot more joint working and we have a very good relationship at official and ministerial level to take these particular issues forward.

[132] **Peter Black:** In terms of the development of the historic environment strategy and the White Paper, will the tourism part of your department be having an active involvement in that process?

[133] **Edwina Hart:** It has an active involvement already, and will continue to have one. It is important that we recognise that this goes across portfolios, and there are things that we can do in terms of the tourism strategy and how I help, really, in terms of tourism grants, and so on—I have a scheme there. Also, it is about how we work closely with Cadw and others on how we sell it. We do not currently have niche markets in some areas—we do not do niche marketing, except for golf as a result of the Ryder Cup—but I have asked the tourism panel to look at niche marketing and heritage, religious tourism, cycling, and so on. So, we now need to develop the niche marketing and branding for the rest of the world in terms of how we can do it.

[134] **Bethan Jenkins:** Rydych chi wedi **Bethan Jenkins:** You have told us that a dweud wrthym bod adolygiad yn digwydd ar review is taking place at the moment into the

hyn o bryd i'r panel twristiaeth ar ran y Llywodraeth. Pa mor agos yw hynny at y gwaith sy'n cael ei wneud gan Huw Lewis ar hyn o bryd ar y strategaeth benodol hon o edrych ar yr amgylchedd hanesyddol? Ydych chi'n rhannu syniadau?

Government's tourism panel. How close is that to the work that is being done by Huw Lewis at the moment on this particular strategy of looking at the historic environment? Do you share ideas in that respect?

[135] **Edwina Hart:** Yes, we do share ideas, and I am very fortunate, I might say, in my tourism sector panel. I have somebody from the National Trust, somebody from the Ffestiniog railway who actually understands the issues there, and somebody from the Heritage Lottery Fund who is also a member of the panel. We have a good linkage of ideas there, and of course officials have good linkage, which they report back into the panel. So, they are looking at a specific review of heritage attractions currently, which will mirror some of the work that is being done by other departments, and we will certainly do more on the marketing and PR side. Would you like to comment on how we deal with the PR and marketing side?

[136] **Mr Webb:** Yes, if I could add to what the Minister has said about the tourism sector panel's review of the national tourism strategy, the way that it is operating that review is to receive from officials a series of issue papers on various themes such as accommodation and transportation. It has recently received papers on heritage attractions and cultural tourism, to provide it with has an understanding of the challenges that affect those areas of activity. The panel then looks to develop those into a policy statement for the future that will form part of the review of strategy. In terms of that wider, PR and marketing issue, we work closely with Cadw, the National Trust and other heritage bodies because we appreciate, as you do, that the historic environment is a core part of what we have to offer as a tourist destination.

[137] **Mike Hedges:** You state in your paper that your department is encouraging the promotion of destinations through a destination management programme. What is that intended to achieve, and how will you monitor its success?

[138] **Edwina Hart:** Destination management is actually a very sophisticated issue now in terms of how you deal with it. A lot of resources in the department are geared around it, so if you do not mind, I will ask Steve, because that is his area of responsibility.

[139] **Mr Webb:** It is all about trying to ensure that Wales not only remains competitive, but that it actually improves its competitive position. With destination management, we are talking about trying to improve the quality of the visitor's experience at every stage of that tourism journey. Tourists get involved in a lot of different activities: they stay in hotels or at caravan sites; they visit attractions; and they eat and drink at local establishments. It is important that at every stage of contact with the local community, their experience is of as high a quality as it can be. The destination management process tries to bring together public sector, private sector and third sector interests at the local community level, to try to understand what is important to get right for the tourists. Do we need better car parking, better signposting, better toilets, or toilets that open for longer? These are the basic things that sometimes make the difference between a good experience and a bad one, and we think that those decisions are best made at the local level.

[140] **Mike Hedges:** A subject that I am very keen on, which Edwina, or the Minister, mentioned earlier, is that of trails. Looking at North America, it has the Virginia trail that follows the civil war battle sites through Virginia. There are English civil war trails, too. There are huge opportunities in Wales. There is the opportunity for an Owain Glyndŵr trail, and the opportunity for a chapel trail that follows the 1906 revival. You have opportunities for trails that follow the development of coal mining in Wales—

[141] **Kenneth Skates:** King Arthur.

[142] **Mike Hedges:** Thank you.

[143] **Ann Jones:** Or the translation of the Bible into Welsh: a Mary Jones trail.

[144] **Edwina Hart:** You are absolutely correct, and these are the types of issues that we are now trying to identify as we move along the bespoke route for us in terms of attractions. Do you want to give Cadw's perspective?

[145] **Ms O'Donnell:** As part of our European heritage tourism project, Cadw has developed an interpretation plan that touches on a number of the different themes that you mentioned across different areas and at different times. We are looking to roll it out by doing exactly that, to create the stories and have a focus on which we can build up not just Cadw sites, but third party sites, to bring the story to life.

[146] **Edwina Hart:** Am I right in saying that this is the first in the world in terms of interpretation?

[147] **Ms O'Donnell:** Yes, that is what we are attempting to do.

[148] **Mike Hedges:** As is done with Dylan Thomas, for example.

[149] **Edwina Hart:** Yes.

[150] **Kenneth Skates:** I have a quick supplementary question on marketing and promotion. Do you think that one of the problems with historic sites and with proposed historic sites is that marketing is often in the hands of local authorities that are only able or willing—I am not sure which—to promote them within their local authority areas, whereas with the National Trust, for example, because it is a national organisation, it can promote Erddig, Chirk castle or whatever nationally?

[151] **Edwina Hart:** We do a lot to bring local authorities together to look at these things on a regional basis in terms of a regional tourism strategy, but we must remember in these difficult times that neither economic development nor tourism is a statutory obligation for local government. When you have statutory obligations to social services and education, you will be more likely to have those key services rather than some of this. However, there has to be more co-ordination in tourism on that level, and that is why we try to encourage this local approach. However, it is not just about local authority co-ordination, but co-ordination between the public sector and the private sector. You only have to look at some of the most beautiful things that we have in Wales.

[152] If we give money for some historic sites to be done up, what will the buildings then be used for? What would be their final usage? There is no point in having a beautiful building that is all done up if you then have to ask what it is going to be used for. Are people just going to turn up? I do not know whether anybody here watches *Country House Rescue* on television, but you will see the difficulties when the business consultant goes in to try to encourage them to make a profit on what are beautiful houses and historic sites, with the trauma that that entails for the families and so on. I think that that is probably mirrored across Wales, in terms of getting the issues across.

[153] As for local government, we do try to work with it constructively in very real terms. Do you want to say more about the partnerships, Steve?

[154] **Mr Webb:** Absolutely. We have been working with local authorities in a very strong partnership approach probably for the last two decades. We try to make sure that the

resources that we in Visit Wales have to market Wales as a tourism destination are used alongside those that are available to local authorities to make those funds go further. So, all our websites link to one another and we ensure that our main brochures talk to one another. There is a branding approach that actually crosses across these media, to try to reinforce the messages and the overall values that we think are important to put across to visitors.

[155] **Edwina Hart:** We will of course be looking at the whole branding issue next, as we have a branding specialist coming in to look at the identification of the Wales brand, because I think that we need a much stronger brand. There are always discussions about how you work the brand and how you work the literature around it; I am quite old fashioned, because I like some of the VisitScotland adverts with the ship and the flight coming in. However, in terms of the PR and the branding, the stuff that we are doing has won awards in terms of what we have said about bringing people in and taking their story, and so on. So, it is quite important that we get the brand right and that we get the Wales brand right, which local government has to be a part of, because we cannot have a mixture of brands and a mixture of identities emerging.

[156] **Ann Jones:** Mark, do you have a supplementary question?

[157] **Mark Isherwood:** I would just like to pick up on your comment about the cross-border issues and Arthur, a Romano-Celtic term for the bear, the battle name for the original character. However, the areas of west Britain that he was fighting for straddled the border. Part of the kingdom of Powys was in Shropshire, Herefordshire, and so on. So, some of those trails would need cross-border work. The gunpowder plotters were on a pilgrim trail to St Winifred's well in Holywell when they plotted. We have the historic waterways, and the Canal and River Trust is being formally announced next week at the Royal Welsh Show. Once again, these are cross-border historical heritage issues. So, how do you propose to develop those approaches, which will involve cross-border partnership?

[158] **Mr Webb:** We work through our regional tourism partnerships. We already have a tourism partnership in north Wales and Capital Region Tourism in south-east Wales. These already have strong links with their respective local authorities and organisations across the border. So, where there are opportunities for joint marketing, for example, around the Wye valley, that is already in existence and there are strong traditional links between those areas. I suppose that the best example of where we as a nation—and I am talking about the UK now—have tried to make the most of a particular opportunity to market destinations has been the Olympic torch. That has gone around Britain over the last month or so and every destination on that route has taken any opportunity it can to make sure that they promote their town, village or community to a much wider audience.

[159] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Yn eich papur, rydych yn dweud bod Cymru'n dioddef o'r canfyddiad ei bod yn wlad o harddwch naturiol a thirlun, ond nad oes fawr arall i'w weld na'i wneud yma. Deallaf o'ch atebion yn gynharach nad ydych yn credu bod y canfyddiad hwnnw yn cynrychioli'r gwirionedd, ond sut fyddwch yn mynd i'r afael â'r canfyddiad hwnnw os dyna yw canfyddiad pobl y tu allan i Gymru?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: In your paper, you say that Wales suffers from a perception that although it is a country with considerable natural beauty and landscapes, there is little else to see and do here. I understand from your answers earlier that you do not believe that that perception represents the truth, but how will you address that perception if that is the perception of people outside Wales?

[160] **Edwina Hart:** What we have tried to do through our website and all our literature is to overcome that perception. However, I accept that there is such a perception, because we have historically sold Wales on its beauty—the fact that it has wonderful beaches, and so on, which can still be wonderful even if the weather is inclement. Perhaps sometimes we focus

too much on Welsh weather and we should see it as being an attractive thing in terms of the environment that we live in, because I think that it is far better to have the changing weather patterns that we have here than to live in a desert environment. However, we have concentrated on that, especially with our summer events and festivals, and I think that there is a lot more to be done in that area.

[161] That comes back to some of the issues relating to Cadw and buildings and the opening up of certain places for summer festivals. I am not talking necessarily about big, grand affairs that the major events unit is involved with, but quite localised events with local people and local drama groups perhaps putting on plays, and having that picnic-type feel that you can have with events, which opens things up. The point that Huw Lewis is making is to ask how you make it an environment for everyone, is it not? If someone is putting on a drama production in a beautiful location and you come with your picnic to that location, then it would not cost the same as it would to attend a grander event. So, there are issues around that.

[162] We need to do more on how we capture people's imaginations in terms of events. I have been very keen, when looking at local areas and people coming for weekend breaks, to consider whether we could have a system that would allow them to find out what else was going on in that area so that we could link to it. They might like to know that there was a flower festival taking place in the church or that a local charity was holding a strawberry tea, because they might like to attend such events to become part of the community. It would be good to do things like that. However, we support 13 areas across Wales with their marketing brochures so that they can highlight what they do. For the historic venues, we have put four pages into a brochure recently. However, there is a lot more work to do in that area of selling Wales. A number of concerts of different descriptions take place in Wales, and that has to be marketed far more heavily in the future so that Wales is seen as a total venue for visiting. Whether there is sunshine or rain, there is always something to do in Wales. I am not certain that we have got it quite right, but it is a key issue that the tourism panel is looking at.

11.15 a.m.

[163] **Mr Webb:** Digital technology gives us an opportunity to extend the coverage of information that we already hold on websites. We have a world first in that Monmouth is the first wikitown in the world. 'What is a wikitown?', you may ask. By all accounts, it is a town that receives and accepts information from the individuals in that community, such as stories about people and places. As people wander around, if they go past a QR code—news to me, but they are supposedly very important on a smart phone—and scan it with their smart phones, they will immediately be given the story about what that particular feature is all about, its history and where you might go to find more information. Digital technology will improve the way that we are able to sell what is going in Wales to visitors and local residents to a much greater degree than perhaps we are at the moment.

[164] **Ann Jones:** I am just having some thoughts about QR codes in Rhyl. Perish the thought, because you might not want people to know some of the stuff that has gone on when you walk past a particular site. [*Laughter.*] I think that that is a good point, though, as that is how we have to move forward.

[165] **Edwina Hart:** You made comments on Rhyl, Chair, and Rhyl is lovely. There are some lovely things going on in Rhyl, but we make assumptions about what people want to see. They were saying in Ynys Môn that, when Anglesey Aluminium closed down, they had cruise ships in and people off the cruise ships wanted to visit Anglesey Aluminium. Apparently, a lot of people who go on a cruise, especially Americans, want to visit different types of things. They probably even want to visit the steelworks in Port Talbot. Some of the things that we think about as work and industry are of enormous interest to people who are widely travelled and want to do different things.

[166] The point that was made to me in questions by Elin Jones about visiting each other's bits of Wales is enormously important, because I do not think that we recognise this sometimes. I live in Gower so I know all about Gower, and, to be honest, I am quite blasé about Gower. I think to myself, 'There's nice, they are off to the beaches', because that is what I have been born and brought up with, but how do I sell that in north Wales and how does north Wales sell that to me? It is about having far more of an internal tourism market within Wales, because we have so much to offer in what we can do.

[167] **Ann Jones:** I think that you are right. Snowdonia is on our doorstep in north Wales, and I do not think that we promote it. People say, 'Oh, yes, there is Snowdon', and they move on, but that is quite iconic for a lot of people. Sorry, I digress. Ken is next.

[168] **Kenneth Skates:** Minister, you have outlined a number of strategies that the Welsh Government has in place for better promoting Wales abroad. Are you able to outline how you will assess whether those strategies have been successful?

[169] **Edwina Hart:** I have to look at the economic benefits of the strategy, do I not, and what it will achieve in the development of a historic environment strategy? Will it create more job opportunities and will we see a growth in visitor numbers to Wales? We will be able to assess on that basis as the strategy is developed.

[170] **Mark Isherwood:** Although the WLGA told us in its evidence that good work is being done to promote certain sites, it also suggested that there was a lack of joined-up marketing of the historic environment between different organisations. That was reflected in evidence that we heard earlier from the National Trust, who questioned whether Cadw's promotional work is too focused on the sites in Cadw's care. A national park authority also said that the Welsh Government's policies for promoting the historic environment 'have achieved little' because of that lack of a joined-up approach. Do you recognise that, and beyond what you have already said about destination management, how can that be addressed?

[171] **Edwina Hart:** We recognise a bit of those criticisms, but all parties have a responsibility for sharing and partnership. It is very easy for someone to come here and say that not enough is being done. The question that you must ask them is what they are doing on this. We are being enormously proactive on this particular agenda because of the discussions that you have had across the piece and the discussions that we have with you. I do not know whether you want to comment on that, Lucy, from Cadw's perspective.

[172] **Ms O'Donnell:** I think that there is a very proactive and positive engagement on the fact that some things could be better tied up, and the thing that gives us the solution is the story. It is not necessarily Cadw or the National Trust that people are interested in, but the story or some substance to what they want to go to see, whether it is the trail or the area. There are a lot of people involved and there are a lot of vested interests, but sometimes that takes over in projecting an image that the visitor actually wants to see. We need to work harder on it, that is true.

[173] **Edwina Hart:** We can also learn a lot from our partners, such as the National Trust, because consider what its properties were like 20 years ago. You could not move outside the lines and someone would be behind you if you ever put your hand across any lines. That has been freed up to make more use of the buildings. Nowadays, you can sit on things and do certain things, and there are activities and everything. I think that it is a good way of making it an interactive experience, and not an experience like you probably would have had if you went on a trip to Italy in the nineteenth century: just being shown around. It is very real, and you can see what is happening. That is also quite important. Would you like to comment on

the partnership issue, Steve, because I think that Mark raised a very valid point about some of the issues surrounding this?

[174] **Mr Webb:** I think that we can improve, but that is not to say that we are not working together pretty closely as it stands. We have arrangements in place, such as the cultural tourism partnership, chaired by the Minister's tourism team, which includes representatives from Cadw, the National Trust, and all other heritage and cultural organisations, including the arts council. Their job is to try to steer the ship in such a direction as for there not to be so much duplication—in fact, we can reinforce each other's messages and stories—and to make sure that we understand whose role it is to take the lead on various activities, to carry the whole process of promoting our historic environment through in a much more joined-up way.

[175] **Edwina Hart:** I also think that we should look at our historic environment as something that we can use more fully. It should be seen as a Welsh resource, not as a resource for Cadw, the National Trust or the local authority. It should be seen as a national resource and co-ordinated appropriately. When we look at funding streams to help events and things, we need to look at it in that context. It does not matter who owns it, in many ways; it is the purpose that matters and how we can attract tourism.

[176] **Ann Jones:** You started to touch on the cultural tourism partnership, so would you like to follow with your question on that, Joyce? I will then come back to Janet afterwards.

[177] **Joyce Watson:** Perhaps you can tell us, Minister, how you think the cultural tourism partnership will promote the historic environment in Wales, and then how its effectiveness will be monitored.

[178] **Edwina Hart:** I recently had an update from my officials on the working of the cultural tourism plan, and I think that we have identified some areas that we want to take forward. Of course, we always identify areas of concern. In the main, I am pleased with the journey on which we are progressing, and I will be even more pleased in 12 months' time when we see a genuine change in some of the aspects on it. I do not know whether you wish to comment on the specific details, Steve.

[179] **Mr Webb:** A specific point that we probably need to flag up here is that some good work has also been done by CyMAL—Museums, Archives and Libraries Wales under the Minister for heritage's portfolio on the People's Collection. It is a website and a piece of work that has taken a lot of different organisations a long time to pull together. It is a magnificent resource for Wales. We were talking about town trails earlier, but individuals can go to CyMAL's site, the People's Collection, and develop their own trail, which can be shared with a much wider audience. So, the facility to get involved as an individual and to develop your own specific and bespoke town trail, or a trail on a particular issue, is there for anyone to take advantage of.

[180] **Edwina Hart:** The Dylan Thomas centenary is coming up, and I would be interested to see what more focus work we can do for that. We have the trail in Swansea, and you can visit, and go to his house. You can even stay in the house, can you not? It is important to show how something has been done well and has been well marketed. There must be other examples around Wales.

[181] **Ann Jones:** How confident are you that people are aware that the People's Collection exists?

[182] **Mr Webb:** That is a really good point, and there needs to be an element of more awareness raising so that people enjoy the opportunities that it provides them.

[183] **Ann Jones:** It is difficult. People know about the People's History Museum in Manchester but, to be quite honest with you, I had to really search to find the People's Collection online. Everyone looks at the Manchester museum, but they do not follow the People's Collection because it can often seem hidden. Perhaps we ought to be looking at how that plays out, because people's history is an important part of our cultural tourism.

[184] **Edwina Hart:** Perhaps it is a part of what we need to do on tourism. We need to look at how we signpost people coming into Wales to our websites and publications.

[185] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** How do you intend to ensure that any new policies that you bring forward in this area will enable harder-to-reach audiences and communities to benefit from what the historic environment of Wales has to offer?

[186] **Edwina Hart:** Forgive me, but can I have some clarification of what you mean by harder-to-reach audiences? To speak in real terms, are you talking about the people who do not know anything about the cultural environment? There are some people who do not want to know about it.

[187] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** I am thinking about those people who would not ordinarily be stimulated by the cultural environment, and about reaching out to them to make them aware of just what we have to offer in Wales.

[188] **Edwina Hart:** That goes back to the storytelling point that Cadw made. Everything has to have a story. You have to engage people and make them want to come in. You can engage them on things such as Merlin and King Arthur. That is easier because of television programmes. It is less easy sometimes to engage people on places such as Holywell. Do you know what I mean? It is a question of horses for courses in the development of material, I would say.

[189] **Mr Webb:** Cadw has been doing a really good job of developing the all-Wales interpretation plan. It also has other policies in place to reach out to the local community. Perhaps Cadw would like to comment on those groups of the population that have not traditionally visited Cadw sites.

[190] **Ms O'Donnell:** We commissioned research on whether we were attracting an audience of people with lower socioeconomic profiles or from different ethnicity, and the results came back that these groups did not find the offer relevant. The steps that we are taking are about the channels of communication, using digital means such as e-mail, e-mail databases and social media, and also about the tone of voice. It is about softening it and taking the academic tone out of it. It is also about events and having things to do at the sites that bring these sites to life. You mentioned Rhyl earlier. We have the Globe Theatre company, I think, coming to do a Shakespeare production in Rhuddlan Castle on one hand, while, on the other, they held a screening of the *Mamma Mia!* film in Laugharne Castle, which was a great success. In a sense, that is what success is looking like to us. It is about community engagement and buy-in. So there are a couple of things there: it is about events, the tone of voice, telling the stories and the one-to-one interpretation at the site. That is the journey that we are on to make it accessible.

[191] **Edwina Hart:** I often think that about people visiting Cardiff bay, who might look at the Wales Millennium Centre and the Pierhead building, but there is a story to tell that would be of interest to people about the history of Cardiff as a port and the diverse and multicultural nature of the area, about how the Somali community has come here and what has happened, how our heritage has affected Wales to make it the society and nation that we are now. There is a great deal more work to be done on this agenda.

[192] **Peter Black:** On harder-to-reach audiences, we have to think about the perception of Wales outside Wales, not just in England but internationally. We need to think about people's perceptions of our historic environment and why they want to come here. For example, in America, Dylan Thomas has a big following, but we do not really join together the Dylan Thomas trails in Swansea and Laugharne, for example, in an attempt to create a coherent heritage across local authority boundaries. Once we get them here for that, we do not seem to seek to widen their interest in what else they could see in Wales. Laugharne does not even have a proper website to market itself. This seems to be a big issue when it comes to attracting international visitors here. We have to think about how we pull their experiences together and broaden their interest in Wales more widely.

[193] **Edwina Hart:** That is a very good point about the links that need to be made. If you are interested in Dylan Thomas, you might be interested in poetry generally, so the next step must be to interest you in other poets from Wales. It will soon be 100 years since RS Thomas was born. I think that that is in just in a couple of years' time. We need to look at issues such as that. If you are interested in Dylan Thomas, why would you not be interested in Vernon Watkins and going around the Gower? So, there are links. Do you want to comment, Steve?

[194] **Mr Webb:** I just want to say that Laugharne has not gone without a certain level of investment. For example, Browns Hotel opened up again recently, and I think that the official launch is in September—

[195] **Peter Black:** Yes, but how is Browns Hotel being linked to the house in Swansea?

[196] **Mr Webb:** Absolutely. It is about ensuring that we cross over those local authority boundaries to make sure that the Dylan Thomas story is complete and integrated. Good work has been going on in Laugharne Castle as well through Cadw—the holding of events and so on—so the integration of that sort of approach is on the radar and will be taken forward.

11.30 a.m.

[197] **Edwina Hart:** I think the point Peter is getting at is about this partnership. You probably need a lead partner in some of these issues to bring the others together and that is something that concerns me. In all fairness, local authorities will do things individually within their budgets; it is about that linkage over and whether you have the facilities to do it, or should somebody else be taking the lead in terms of making that linkage for them and probably just saying, 'Can we have this much money to do this?' You know what I mean; it is that type of stuff.

[198] **Peter Black:** Just one more linkage—how is the Laugharne festival, funded by the Arts Council of Wales, linked in?

[199] **Edwina Hart:** Exactly.

[200] **Mark Isherwood:** You quite rightly questioned the definition of harder-to-reach audiences. I am interested in communities where perhaps there are higher levels of worklessness and economic and social disadvantage, but there are groups in the communities sponsoring local projects, often on a heritage basis. I am thinking for example of the Pontcysyllte world heritage site, the Llangollen railway to Corwen, Llay Miners, Brymbo Heritage, the Cefn Mawr canal group, the Dee Valley Tramway Trust and so on, which are all local community groups, using the built heritage to try to revitalise the local economy, as well as provide recreation and skills for local people. Sometimes, by engaging on that bottom-up basis with those people, we can join up and create regeneration across a wide area.

[201] **Edwina Hart:** We totally concur, because that is what we are trying to do in certain

areas and we have done work on that. When I spoke earlier, I talked about the importance of people who know their locality and their historic environment. That is also an advantage, because they sell that as part of the economic development and tourism strategy.

[202] **Mr Webb:** We do. For that north-east Wales quadrant around the Pontcysyllte world heritage site, we have had a partnership in place now for the last 18 months, trying to understand how we as different organisations and groups can work together in a more co-ordinated way to realise the potential of that very special world heritage site in Wales.

[203] **Bethan Jenkins:** I ba raddau mae eich hadran yn gweithio gyda Chomisiwn Brenhinol Henebion Cymru i wella dealltwriaeth pobl o'r amgylchedd hanesyddol, yn enwedig o safbwynt twristiaeth? Euthum i weld ei waith a gweld Casgliad y Werin Cymru a'i waith ar hynny. Gallai hynny gael ei ddatblygu, ynghyd â gwaith arall y comisiwn.

Bethan Jenkins: To what extent is your department working with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales to improve people's understanding of the historic environment, particularly from a tourism perspective? I went to see its work and saw the People's Collection Wales and the work that is being done on that. That could be developed, along with the other work of the commission.

[204] **Edwina Hart:** I know that the commission occasionally comes to the cultural tourism panel. We are looking at its work to add it to our tourist agenda in terms of attractions, and we are exploring ways of taking it forward with the work that it is undertaking. However, the issues around it as an organisation are not in my portfolio.

[205] **Mr Webb:** I do not have much to add to that, apart from the fact that it has a representative on that cultural tourism panel. We are working with it on the People's Collection Wales, to ensure, as I said earlier, that people's ability to put their own stories on that site are maximised and realised in the future.

[206] **Bethan Jenkins:** Rwy'n cydnabod yr hyn y mae'r Gweinidog newydd ei ddweud ynglŷn â'r ffaith nad yw cyfrifoldebau'r comisiwn yn dod o fewn ei chylch gwaith hi, ond a oes gennych farn ar y posibilrwydd y byddai'r comisiwn brenhinol yn uno gyda Cadw o dan gynlluniau posibl y Gweinidog yn y dyfodol?

Bethan Jenkins: I acknowledge what the Minister has just said about the fact that responsibilities of the commission do not fall within her remit, but do you have any kind of opinion on the possibility that the royal commission would merge with Cadw under the Minister's possible plans in future?

[207] **Edwina Hart:** I will await any possible plans that the Minister might lay in the future. We are concerned about outcomes in terms of tourism and organisational matters not in my portfolio do not diminish or enhance anything I do; I just have to live with them.

[208] **Ann Jones:** I call on Mark to ask question 13.

[209] **Mark Isherwood:** That is an unexpected pleasure, Chair.

[210] **Ann Jones:** Sorry. You are down to ask it on my list. [*Laughter.*]

[211] **Mark Isherwood:** What discussions, if any, have you had with the Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage about the possible merger of the royal commission with other bodies, and how could this impact on the way in which the historic environment is promoted and understood by visitors to Wales?

[212] **Edwina Hart:** We have obviously had discussions about how he uses everything that

he has within his portfolio for the benefit of tourism, but I have not had any specific discussions on that matter.

[213] **Ann Jones:** Minister, I will finish with a question. The Minister for heritage told this committee that he was concerned about the vulnerability of the historic environment's third sector due to its reliance on public funding. Do you share that concern, bearing in mind its importance to the historic environment and attractions?

[214] **Edwina Hart:** All Government Ministers share the concern that we have experienced large cuts in our budgets across portfolios and in terms of how we work together. So, I understand the concerns that the Minister for heritage has expressed.

[215] **Ann Jones:** Do Members have any further questions? I see that you do not. Thank you, Minister, and your officials for your insight into this area. You will receive a copy of the transcript to check it for accuracy and, no doubt, you will receive a copy of our report when we publish it.

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog Rhif 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r
Cyfarfod
Motion under Standing Order No. 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from
the Meeting**

[216] **Ann Jones:** I move that

the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order No. 17.42(vi) and (ix).

[217] I see that the committee is in agreement.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 11.36 a.m.
The public part of the meeting ended at 11.36 a.m.*