

Y Pwyllgor Cymunedau, Cydraddoldeb a Llywodraeth Leol

Lleoliad:
Ystafell Bwyllgora 2 – Y Senedd

Dyddiad:
Dydd Mercher, 18 Ionawr 2012

Amser:
09:30 – 11.30

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



I gael rhagor o wybodaeth, cysylltwch â:

Bethan Davies
Clerc y Pwyllgor
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CELG.committee@wales.gov.uk

Agenda

1. Cyflwyniad, ymddiheuriadau a dirprwyon
2. Bil Is-ddeddfau Llywodraeth Leol (Cymru) – Sesiwn Dystiolaeth
Cyfnod 1: Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru (CLILC) 09:30 – 10:30
(Tudalennau 1 – 6)

LGB(4)-02-12: Papur 1

Steve Thomas, Prif Weithredwr, CLILC
Daniel Hurford, Pennaeth Polisi (Gwella a Llywodraethu), CLILC
Rod Jones, Cynghorydd CLILC, Dinas a Sir Abertawe

3. Bil Is-ddeddfau Llywodraeth Leol (Cymru) – Sesiwn Dystiolaeth
Cyfnod 1: Un Llais Cymru 10:30 – 11:15 (Tudalennau 7 – 12)

LGB(4)-02-12 : Papur 2

Lyn Cadwallader, Prif Weithredwr, Un Llais Cymru

4. Bil Is-ddeddfau Llywodraeth Leol (Cymru): Trafod y dystiolaeth
(Sesiwn Breifat) 11:15 – 11:45 (Tudalennau 13 – 17)

Caiff y Pwyllgor ei wahodd i benderfynu gwahardd y cyhoedd o'r cyfarfod ar gyfer eitem 3, yn unol â Rheol Sefydlog 17.42(vi):

Caiff pwyllgor benderfynu gwahardd y cyhoedd o gyfarfod neu unrhyw ran o gyfarfod:

(vi) lle mae'r pwyllgor yn cyd-drafod cynnwys, casgliadau neu argymhellion adroddiad y mae'n bwriadu ei gyhoeddi; neu'n ymbaratoi i gael tystiolaeth gan unrhyw berson.

LGB(4)-02-12 Papur 3

5. Papurau i'w nodi

LGB(4)-02-12 : Papur 4 (Tudalennau 18 – 23)

Gwybodaeth ddilynol gan Cartrefi Cymunedol Cymru ar ôl y cyfarfod a gynhaliwyd ar 9 Tachwedd

LGB(4)-02-12 : Papur 5 (Tudalennau 24 – 25)

Gohebiaeth gan y Gweinidog Tai, Adfywio a Threftadaeth ynghylch adroddiad y Pwyllgor Cymunedau a Diwylliant ar gynllun gweithredu Hygyrchedd gweithgareddau celfyddydol a diwylliannol yng Nghymru

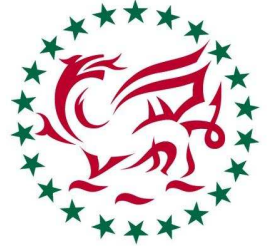
LGB(4)-02-12 : Papur 6 (Tudalennau 26 – 35)

Y wybodaeth ddiweddaraf gan Lywodraeth Cymru ynghylch adroddiad y Pwyllgor Cymunedau a Diwylliant ar Hygyrchedd gweithgareddau celfyddydol a diwylliannol yng Nghymru

LGB(4)-02-12 : Papur 7 (Tudalen 36)

Gwybodaeth ychwanegol gan Gyngor Sir Gaint i'r ymchwiliad i ddarpariaeth tai fforddiadwy

Local Government Byelaws (Wales) Bill
LGB(4)-02-12 Paper 1: WLGA



WLGA Response

9th January 2012

**National Assembly for Wales' Communities, Equality
and Local Government Committee Consultation**

WLGA • CLILC

Local Government Byelaws (Wales) Bill

Introduction

1. The WLGA welcomes the introduction of the Local Government Byelaws (Wales) Bill.
2. The Bill will streamline and simplify the Byelaws making process in Wales and provides greater discretion to local authorities in making and enforcing byelaws.
3. Due to the timescale of the Committee's consultation, the following response has been produced in advance of many local authorities' own consultation responses, and whilst it has sought to reflect and take into account authorities' views, it should be read together with authorities' responses submitted by the final consultation deadline.

Consultation Questions

Q1. Is there a need for a Bill to revise and consolidate legislation about the making and enforcement of byelaws? Please explain your answer to this question.

4. This question can be interpreted and therefore answered in two ways:
5. First, is there a need to reform the procedures for the making of byelaws? The Explanatory Memorandum clearly articulates the Welsh Government's policy for reforming byelaws which is based on evidence gathered from local authorities and others through prior consultation. The broad view from local government is that the present byelaw procedures (underpinned by the current legislative framework) are cumbersome and require streamlining and that enforcement could be made more effective with additional powers such as the issuing of fixed penalty notices.

6. Secondly therefore, in order to introduce the Welsh Government's policy intentions regarding reform of byelaws in Wales, legislation is required as the proposals could only be implemented through the amendment of existing legislation.
7. The Byelaws Bill however goes further and also usefully recasts and consolidates the broad range of existing legislation which currently relate to byelaws in Wales.

Q2. Do you think the Bill 'will serve to provide for local authority [and some environmental] byelaws to become a more effective regulatory mechanism' (as stated in paragraph 3.16 of the Explanatory Memorandum)?

8. There are mixed views regarding the regulatory effectiveness of the existing byelaw regime, largely due to the options currently available to authorities to enforce byelaws. As the Explanatory Memorandum (paragraphs 7.2 - 7.3) notes "...byelaws can be difficult to enforce because action through the Magistrates Courts can be onerous and time consuming...As a result, byelaws may not always be as effective a regulatory mechanism as they should be."
9. However, the proposals within the Bill to enable authorities to more readily issue fixed penalty notices should improve the regulatory impact of byelaws. The Bill provides flexibility as it also provides an option for authorities to continue to take matters to the Magistrates Court where appropriate.

Q3. Are the sections of the Bill appropriate in terms of reforming existing laws relating to byelaws? If not, how does the Bill need to change?

10. The Bill's sections appear appropriate in terms of consolidating and amending existing byelaw legislation.

Q4. (a) How will the Bill change the current approach to byelaws and what impact will such changes have, if any?

11. The Bill will streamline procedures, reduce administrative burdens, and should potentially speed up the byelaw making process in Wales and will provide greater flexibility to local authorities in terms of enforcement.
12. The Explanatory Memorandum suggests that only 4-5 new byelaws are made in Wales each year and the Welsh Government does not anticipate that this figure will necessarily increase as a result of the Bill. Although it is not anticipated that the number of new byelaws made will increase

significantly, given the streamlining of the byelaw procedures, the Bill may encourage authorities to consider amending or revoking historical or obsolete byelaws where relevant where the current procedure may be regarded as a disproportionate deterrent. The proposed flexibility around regulation may also allow authorities to more effectively enforce byelaws in the future.

Q4 (b) In particular, does the Bill achieve its aim of seeking to streamline the procedures for making byelaws (primarily by removing the requirement for confirmation by the Welsh Ministers of specified new byelaws)?

13. The removal of the requirement of confirmation by Welsh Ministers will streamline the procedures for making byelaws. Consultation feedback from local authorities suggested that the current process with confirmation by Welsh Ministers of specified new byelaws added no significant value, but added delays and additional administrative burden for both authorities and the Welsh Government.

Q5. What are the potential barriers to implementing the provisions of the Bill (if any) and does the Bill take account of them?

14. There are no specific barriers to implementing the provisions of the Bill as the provisions provide greater local discretion and flexibility in how authorities might make or enforce byelaws.
15. There are potential financial consequences in making and enforcing byelaws, given the need in particular to consult effectively. Therefore, when considering making, amending or revoking byelaws, financial impact and proportionality will remain key considerations. Similarly, a wider use of fixed penalty notices may have an impact in terms of training and support for relevant officers and may have implications in terms of officer capacity. However, given this is a discretionary power, authorities would need to consider the financial and staffing implications when making and, subsequently, enforcing byelaws.

Q6. What are your views on the procedures for making byelaws (sections 6 to 9)?

16. The proposed procedures for making a byelaw are appropriate and proportionate.

Q7. Are the consultation provisions outlined in the Bill satisfactory in terms of ensuring appropriate consultation takes place prior to revoking, amending, making or confirming byelaws (sections 4 to 8)?

17. The consultation provisions for local authorities making a byelaw are appropriate and proportionate. Under Section 6 (5)a and Section 7 (4)a it may be appropriate for the Bill to clarify that 'one or more local newspapers circulating in the area to which the byelaw is to apply' could include an authority's own newspaper/newsletter where produced. This would reduce costs to the council and would also achieve a wider circulation than adverts placed in paid for local newspapers.

18. Section 5 'Revocation by the Welsh Ministers' permits Welsh Ministers to 'revoke any byelaw made by a legislating authority which they think is obsolete'. Similar consultation provisions (as included for 'legislating authorities' in Sections 6 and 7) should also apply to Welsh Ministerial powers of revocation, to ensure that 'persons [*and authorities*] ...likely to be interested in, or affected by, the issue' should be consulted prior to revocation.

Q8. (a) Are you content with the enforcement provisions in the Bill (sections 10 to 15)?

19. The enforcement provisions, in particular the option to issue fixed penalties, are welcomed as they provide authorities with greater range of options with which to enforce byelaws.

Q8 (b) In particular, do you have any observations on the seizure proposals in section 11, and the penalties proposed in sections 10(2) and 14(3)?

20. The proposals in Section 10(2), 11 and 14(3) are appropriate.

Financial Implications

Q9. What are the financial implications of the Bill, if any? In answering this question you may wish to consider Part 2 of the Explanatory Memorandum (the Regulatory Impact Assessment), which estimates the costs and benefits of implementation of the Bill.

21. Byelaws inevitably vary in terms of their scope, geographical coverage and the potential scale of contravention and/or enforcement. It is therefore difficult to provide an exact figure for the potential financial impact of the proposed byelaw making and enforcement procedures as outlined in the Bill.

22. However, the financial estimates as outlined in the Explanatory Memorandum (paragraphs 8.4-8.13) could be regarded as a realistic

indication of the current costs for an average byelaw. In particular, the option for authorities to issue fixed penalties as an alternative to prosecution via Magistrates Courts could realise some financial savings. Whilst fixed penalty notices are primarily designed as a deterrent, inevitably, if fixed penalties are issued and paid, they will provide some revenue to an authority. It is unlikely however that this would be significant and would be offset by additional administrative, staff capacity and/or training requirements.

Q10. Are there any other comments you wish to make about specific sections of the Bill?

23. Section 2 regarding powers to make 'Byelaws for good rule and government and suppression of nuisances' recasts and therefore uses much of the same terminology as Section 235 of the Local Government Act 1972. Both the 1972 Act and the Bill therefore refer to the powers to make byelaws applying to 'county borough councils' and 'county councils'. It would provide clarity however, given the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, if the Bill could specify whether the proposed powers to make byelaws are functions of the Executive or the full Council.
24. Section 5 'Revocation by the Welsh Ministers' permits Welsh Ministers to 'revoke any byelaw made by a legislating authority which they think is obsolete'. The rationale behind the powers in Section 5 however is not included on the face of the Bill but is referred to in paragraph 17 of Annex 1 of the Explanatory Memorandum; this power would only be used 'where the power to revoke the byelaw, or the identity of the authority which should otherwise revoke the byelaw, is unclear'. It may therefore be beneficial to include this on the face of the Bill to provide clarity regarding the situations in which Welsh Ministers may seek to exercise the power.
25. There is a requirement to have regard to Welsh Minister's Guidance (Section 18). It would be helpful to state whether this guidance would include regard to the format of Model forms of byelaw published by Welsh Ministers. Consultation feedback from authorities indicates that model byelaws would be welcomed and would support consistency across Wales.

Subordinate Legislation

Q11. What are your views on powers in the Bill for Welsh Ministers to make subordinate legislation (i.e statutory instruments including regulations and orders)?

26. It is appropriate that Welsh Ministers have powers to make subordinate legislation regarding byelaws. It is important that the list of subject matters of byelaws (Schedule 1) should be kept up-to-date, with new subject matters added or obsolete matters removed as a matter of course. Subordinate legislation would therefore appear to be the most proportionate and timely method of amending future byelaw legislation.

Q12. Do you have any observations on whether the subjects referred to in the Schedules are, in fact, appropriate to be regulated by byelaws?

27. The subjects referred to in the Schedules are appropriate to be regulated by byelaws. Ministerial powers to make subordinate legislation should ensure that the matters included within the Schedules can be reviewed and amended when appropriate.

Eitem 3

Local Government Byelaws (Wales) Bill

LGB(4)-02-12 Paper 2: One Voice Wales

One Voice Wales Response to the Local Government Byelaws (Wales) Bill

9 January 2012

One Voice Wales is recognised by the Welsh Assembly Government as the national representative body for community and town councils in Wales. It represents the sector on the Local Government Partnership Council and over 70% of the 735 community and town councils are in membership. As well as our representative role, we also provide support and advice to councils on an individual basis and with Welsh Assembly Government support deliver a modular training programme for councillors. We believe strongly that community and town councils are well-placed to develop the economic, social and environmental well-being of the areas they serve and, as such, are active and proactive in debating key issues such as strategic planning, partnership working and their role and place within the public sector generally.

Whilst individual councils might respond to this consultation exercise, One Voice Wales wishes to submit this short statement on behalf of the sector although it has not had an opportunity due to the timing of the consultation period to consult with its National Executive Committee nor its membership organisations.

One Voice Wales is pleased to support the principles encompassed in the Local Government Byelaws (Wales) Bill and particularly welcomes the proposals for the simplification of procedures for making and enforcing local authority byelaws and welcomes the proposal for an alternative, and more efficient, means of enforcement through fixed penalty notices in general. The Bill will enable greater local ownership of the byelaw process as a means of addressing local issues. From a community and town sector perspective there is however specific issues that will need to be addressed to enable the first tier of local government to fully participate in the proposals set out within the Bill and these are addressed in the responses to the consultation questions below.

Annex 1 - Consultation Questions

1. Is there a need for a Bill to revise and consolidate legislation about the making and enforcement of byelaws? Please explain your answer to this question.

Response: Yes. One Voice Wales considers there is a need to revise and consolidate legislation about the making and enforcement of byelaws in Wales as the existing system is overly bureaucratic, time consuming and the costs associated to implementing a byelaw prohibitive. Subject to a full survey of all community and town councils across Wales there has been relatively little activity in this area by community and town councils under the current arrangements and a simplification of the system for enacting byelaws is consequently welcomed. The proposals provide opportunities for community and town councils to re-consider their approach to administering byelaws within their area and provide scope for potentially greater local control. It is important however to note that given the costs associated to the development or amendment of a byelaw – as set out in section 8.6 of the Explanatory Memorandum - that it will only be the larger town councils who are likely to have

the resources in the immediate future to act on the proposals set out within the Bill. Currently over 75% of community and town councils in Wales precept less than £50,000 per annum (Source – Welsh Government Survey of Community and Town Councils 2010 – Social research number 07/2011) so the likelihood of spending between £7,000 and £9,000 on implementing or amending a byelaw will be prohibitive to smaller councils. Conversely for the larger councils the potential reduction in time to introduce the byelaw may provide the catalyst for them to address local issues in an effective manner, reduce bureaucracy and foster greater ownership of local laws. The larger councils will also have greater capacity to address the training and development issues associated with new activity.

2. Do you think the Bill ‘will serve to provide for local authority [and some environmental] byelaws to become a more effective regulatory mechanism’ (as stated in paragraph 3.16 of the Explanatory Memorandum)?

Response: For the reasons set out above the potential effectiveness of the Bill in terms of the community and town council sector will largely be determined by the individual authority’s resource position. For a small community council – and 60% precept less than £20,000 per annum (Source: Welsh Government Community and Town Councils Survey Findings 2010) – the ability to deploy the necessary resources to manage the operation of local byelaws is potentially cost prohibitive as well as not necessarily having the personnel capacity to manage such processes – 56% of community councils in Wales employ a Clerk for less than 10 hours per week (Source: Welsh Government Community and Town Councils Survey Findings 2010). For such councils the need to recruit personnel or contract in resources to administer a byelaw process as well as the costs of appropriately marketing any byelaws may act as a deterrent to take-up. So in essence the effectiveness of the proposals in the Bill for the community and town council sector will largely be determined by the resources that are available within each individual community council.

3. Are the sections of the Bill appropriate in terms of reforming existing laws relating to byelaws? If not, how does the Bill need to change?

Response: Yes – no additional comments to add.

4. (a) How will the Bill change the current approach to byelaws and what impact will such changes have, if any?

Response: One Voice Wales agrees that the Bill will provide for potentially increased ownership of byelaws by the community and town council sector. The requirement to carry out consultation as part of the evidence base for implementing byelaws will increase local accountability and transparency and ensure local residents and interest groups views are taken into account however the consultation requirement may act as a barrier to up-take. Findings from the Welsh Government Community and Town Councils Survey 2010 identified only one in ten community or town councils have a community engagement policy in place and of these none had a specific budget for community engagement in place. Section 8.12 of the Explanatory Memorandum references estimated consultation costs at £2,000 - £3,000 which equates to 15% to 23% of median precept across Wales at £13,300. As such it is arguable that until resources are identified and put in place by community and town councils or made available to them it will be difficult to see how the Bill will have a significant impact on the sectors ability to enact the proposals. Precept increases based on

the percentages in the ranges suggested above will be difficult for many community or town councils to justify to the electorate.

(b) In particular, does the Bill achieve its aim of seeking to streamline the procedures for making byelaws (primarily by removing the requirement for confirmation by the Welsh Ministers of specified new byelaws)?

Response: The processes set out within the Bill for the implementation or amendment of byelaws is streamlined however for the reasons set out above it is questionable whether the uptake by the community and town council sector will change dramatically as a consequence. Concern has been raised within the sector that the removal of Ministerial confirmation will reduce the credibility of any byelaws introduced at the very local level especially if they are controversial and could result in contestation. This issue aside the processes proposed within the Bill should ensure greater consistency of approach across Wales which is welcomed and encourage the sharing of best practice that potentially will assist in the driving down of costs in the longer term – for the community and town council sector this will be of particular relevance and importance.

5. What are the potential barriers to implementing the provisions of the Bill (if any) and does the Bill take account of them?

Response: Given the relatively low use of byelaws by the community and town council sector there will need to be an up skilling of those involved in the development or amendment of byelaws if the Bill is to be enacted by the sector. It will be the legislating authority's responsibility to make sure it is acting within its powers and that byelaws are properly drafted and made. Furthermore there will be a need to ensure that community and town councils acting on the proposals set out in the Bill demonstrate responsibility in using the powers correctly, proportionately and legally. There are a number of cost, capacity and training issues that the sector will need to address on all of these points. Unlike unitary authorities who already have arrangements in place to enforce byelaws the community and town councils are less likely to have such capacity to administer byelaws and this is likely to result in additional staffing needs to oversee the process and consequently new costs. It has been identified that it is likely to cost circa £500 – see section 8.10 of the Explanatory Memorandum – to undertake awareness training for staff. Again, based on the findings of the Welsh Government Community and Town Councils Survey 2010, only three in ten community or town councils have a training budget in place and these ranges from £30 to £7,000. How this resource will be realised is not entirely addressed within the Explanatory Memorandum.

It will be important that clear guidance is available to the community and town council sector on making byelaws and will be a prerequisite for ensuring adoption of the procedures set out in the Bill are implemented diligently. This is clearly addressed within the Bill by the Ministers intention to provide guidance.

6. What are your views on the procedures for making byelaws (sections 6 to 9)?

Response: For the community and town councils sector there are a few practical issues that will need to be addressed by councils before they will be in a position to adhere to the proposals as set out in the Bill as not all have the appropriate infrastructure. Reference is made to publishing via the 'authority's website' however from the Welsh Governments own survey in 2010 only 47% of

community and town councils have a website. There is no reference within the Explanatory Memorandum on how councils without a website could comply and guidance on this would be welcomed. Additionally, the methods for consulting with relevant individuals and stakeholders will need to be spelt out to ensure that the evidence base for determining whether a byelaw is the most appropriate route to take to address a local issue is robust and would stand up to scrutiny. An assumption is made that consultation skills are prevalent within the community and town council sector however it is likely that training will be needed for those undertaking such activities in the future to acquire the necessary social science survey skills.

Additionally reference is made that for each legislating authority that 'a copy of the draft is deposited at its principal office'. For the community and town council sector and in particular smaller councils there may not be a 'principal office' rather the Clerk works from home and consequently there may be issues of accessibility. Again, guidance is needed to set out how this obstacle may be overcome.

Finally, guidance and/or training will be required for those given the responsibility for writing a byelaw within the community and town council sector and the intention of the Minister to introduce regulations and guidance prescribing how this is undertaken is acknowledged and welcomed.

These issues aside the procedures on the whole appear workable and clear albeit they may be cost prohibitive for many community councils across Wales.

7. Are the consultation provisions outlined in the Bill satisfactory in terms of ensuring appropriate consultation takes place prior to revoking, amending, making or confirming byelaws (sections 4 to 8)?

Response: Yes – subject to the issues raised above in responding to question 6.

7. (a) Are you content with the enforcement provisions in the Bill (sections 10 to 15)?

Response: The provisions relating to enforcement are at face value workable however the availability of adequate resources to enforce byelaws will be the determining factor as to whether they will be utilised and if used whether they will be effective or not. Potentially key to the success of the enforcement provisions for the community and town council sector will be the conditions relating to the 'accredited person' who will administer the scheme. Details of the conditions to be satisfied by a person before a community council may authorise them for the purposes of giving notices is not clearly set out in the Explanatory Memorandum and further clarity would be welcomed on this matter.

(b) In particular, do you have any observations on the seizure proposals in section 11, and the penalties proposed in sections 10(2) and 14(3)?

Response: Given the potential conflict that could arise in relation to any seizure process and/or discharging of fixed penalty notices One Voice Wales would welcome guidance on each of these processes to ensure the health and safety of those administering the process is comprehensively addressed and that clear procedures are set down prescribing how each process is enacted by the legislating authority. It is not entirely clear however whether the powers relating to seizure are relevant to community and town councils.

The suggested penalties appear to be set at a reasonable level however the management of non-payment of fines may be a potential issue for community and town councils.

Financial Implications

8. What are the financial implications of the Bill, if any? In answering this question you may wish to consider Part 2 of the Explanatory Memorandum (the Regulatory Impact Assessment), which estimates the costs and benefits of implementation of the Bill.

Response: The Explanatory Memorandum references the benefits financially to both local authorities and the Welsh Government under sections 8.14 and suggests the financial impact for local authorities to be minimal in sections 8.10 to 8.12 and indeed savings are likely to be accrued as a result of enforcement through fixed penalty notices. One Voice Wales notes that commentary on the implications for the community and town councils is not directly addressed in the Explanatory Memorandum and considers that the financial implications for the community and town councils sector costs will not be minimal rather will potentially form a large percentage of their annual precept should they wish to implement or amend byelaws within their areas. The implementation of byelaws will have training and development costs attached and this will naturally be a determining factor in deciding whether to adopt them.

One Voice Wales considers that there may be opportunities for collaboration on byelaws through the Charters with Unitary Authorities and that this may be a way of making the management and administration of byelaws financially viable into the future at the very local level. One Voice Wales would welcome the opportunity of further discussions on this topic with Welsh Government and the WLGA.

9. Are there any other comments you wish to make about specific sections of the Bill? Ffon / Tel: 029 2089 8147 Ffacs / Fax: 029 2089 8021 Minicom: 029 2082 3280 E-bost / E-mail: celg.committee@wales.gov.uk

Response: Nothing to add over and above those points set out above.

Subordinate Legislation

10. What are your views on powers in the Bill for Welsh Ministers to make subordinate legislation (i.e statutory instruments including regulations and orders)?

Response: One Voice Wales supports the ability of the Minister to make subordinate legislation. However in doing so would wish that One Voice Wales be consulted and engaged in the process of the development of any regulations and orders prior to implementation.

11. Do you have any observations on whether the subjects referred to in the Schedules are, in fact, appropriate to be regulated by byelaws?

Response: The subjects referred to within the Schedules relating to community and town councils appear to be appropriate for regulation by byelaws.

The responses to the Local Government Byelaws (Wales) Bill are the views of One Voice Wales the Welsh Government recognised national representative organisation for community and town councils in Wales. The views of One Voice Wales may be published on the National Assembly for Wales's website.

9 January 2012

Yn rhinwedd paragraff(au) ix o Reol Sefydlog 17.42

Mae cyfyngiadau ar y ddogfen hon

Eitem 5a

LGB(4)-02-12 : Paper 3 : Paper to Note

Following the meeting on the 9 November CHC Cymru agreed to provide some examples of Housing Associations who are working in partnership with Local Authorities to bring empty private sector homes back into use. Please find attached two examples that they have provided, one from Wrexham County Borough Council and the other from United Welsh Housing Association.

UW recognised the growing importance of the Empty Homes Agenda about 2 1/2 years ago. We were concerned that our LA partners were not utilising their statutory powers and also saw an opportunity to develop a partnership with the LA's around this agenda.

We hosted a conference which was hosted by a chap by the name of Chris Skinner. Chris is a legal expert in empty homes and presented to a wide audience the various legal mechanisms to bring the homes back into use. He commended UW of taking the initiative and suggested that in England the RSL sector did not operate in this way.

2 years on we haven't delivered a single unit..... solo..... about 6 months ago we grabbed the bull by the horns. We have commissioned Andrew Lavender (No Use Empty) and Chris Skinner. We have established an internal Empty Homes Team. We have set up a partnership with Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen to tackle this issue head on (including the cynics within the LA themselves). This is not about strategies and policy. It is about getting the job done.

Immediately we have:

- Agreed to underwrite the enforcement process (one of the common excuses was cost in relation to enforcement – although we have found that there is little experience of individual enforcement across our areas).
- Held detailed workshops with our partners and Andrew looking at specific cases and setting programmes to deal with the individual units.
- We are acting as an information bureau for all partners – what is working and what isn't.
- We are taking LA officers to appropriate events (Empty Homes conferences and training programmes).
- We are committing to receive the properties – regardless of condition (although the condition is reflected in the valuation).

In the medium term:

- We intend to undertake the improvements using a Social enterprise with an emphasis on practical skills / training and employment.

We are on the cusp of receiving our 1st units with a further 10 or so in the pipeline. The trick is by negotiation where possible, but be real and diligent if enforcement is necessary. There is "easy low lying" fruit so to speak and we are tackling them 1st.

My aim is to set up a team in April of 2 officers covering the 3 areas dedicated to delivering units – we will be applying to the WG to match fund the posts over 2 years; following which we feel the programme will be self funding.

The outcome is to get homes occupied again (not necessarily in the ownership of the RSL). We have discussed with our partners what this means; for example it is probable that the 1st one will be renovated and then sold; any surplus being recycled back into the programme; general needs; LCHO and intermediate rents are also options. The key addition to our service is the project management of properties that some owners wish to retain (this may also include a rental management option); whatever it takes to bring the property back.

Obviously we are excited about the prospect of some funding coming forward, we have a lot of knowledge in this field and would welcome the opportunity to discuss what we are doing with other partners.

NEWS RELEASE /

Wrexham County Borough Council and The Pennaf Housing Group



For Immediate Release: December 7

Area: Wrexham

Partnership takes on Empty Homes opportunity

Wrexham County Borough Council are working in partnership with a local housing association to provide an innovative scheme helping owners of empty homes in the County bring their properties back into use.

As part of the Local Authority's Empty Homes Strategy officers from Wrexham Council have identified empty homes in the County which have the potential to be rented out to local people.

The Council has now teamed up with Clwyd Alyn Housing Association, a member of the Pennaf Housing Group, which has offered to assist with necessary renovations for each property up a maximum of £5,000 under a Leasehold and Management Scheme.

The property owner would in turn agree to a three year lease contract with Clwyd Alyn, allowing them to recoup the repair costs as the properties are rented out by Offa, a separate part of the Pennaf Housing Group which specialises in property management and lettings in the private sector.

During the initial lease period the property would be let at rent below current market value. Following the deduction of renovation, management and letting costs the remainder of the rental income will provide a regular income for the house owner.

“For some people who own empty properties, the prospect of letting can seem quite daunting, particularly if they are faced with financing renovations to meet the necessary statutory requirements,” said Mr Deiniol Evans, Director of Development and Technical Services for the Pennaf Housing Group

This new initiative provides a really excellent opportunity for property owners to access professional help at the same time as turning an empty property into regular income.”

Wrexham Council has identified more than 150 properties across the County that have been empty for 6 months or more and has set a target of seeing 35 of these properties returned into use by the end of the current financial year.

Quote to come from Cllr Mark Pritchard, Lead Member for Housing and Planning,

“As a Local Authority we are aware of the impact many empty properties can have on local communities in terms of anti social behaviour or loss of a much needed home, and also how difficult it can be for owners of empty properties to bring them back into use.

“We also appreciate the impact it may have on neighbours who may live next door to an empty property through no fault of their own. We are therefore eager to assist in any way we can in collaboration with our partner organisations by providing practical support and advice.”

If you are an owner of an empty home that wishes to work with Wrexham County Borough Council and Pennaf Housing Group, or wish to report an empty property in the County please contact Siôn Wynne, Housing Partnership Officer on 01978 315 587 or sion.wynne@wrexham.gov.uk; or Carla Hewitt, Leasehold and Marketing at Offa on 0845 111 0309 or carla.hewitt@offaltd.co.uk

ENDS

Note to Editors:

For More information about Empty Homes Week from 5 December 2011 Please see The Empty Homes Website : www.emptyhomes.com or click below

<http://emptyhomes.com/what-we-do-2/campaign-demands-2/campaign-demands/1765-2/>

About the Pennaf Housing Group

The Pennaf Housing Group's agreed Primary Purpose is **Opening Doors – Enhancing Lives.**

Our five Core Principles continue to underpin all our operations, committing our staff and Board Members to undertake their duties within this framework. These are:

Integrity – Honesty and trust in all that we do

Care – Looking after yourself, others and communities

Accountable – Taking responsibility for our actions

Respect – Respect yourself and others

Equality – Accepting differences and treating everyone fairly

As portrayed within the Group's corporate identity, Pennaf provides a nucleus for the Group, with each entity having its own unique individual identity and role, whilst at the same time benefitting from the mutual support of other Group members.

Pennaf Ltd is a Registered Social Landlord, and serves as an umbrella organisation for subsidiaries, offering a range of high quality corporate services to each of the Group Members – including Housing with Care & Support,

Leasehold & Marketing, Financial Management, Development, Planned Maintenance, Human Resources, Administrations and Information Systems.

Clwyd Alyn is a Registered Social Landlord and a charitable subsidiary of Pennaf. The Association manages the Group's housing services functions including general needs accommodation, supported living schemes, care homes, extra care schemes, housing with care and support and a wide variety of home ownership options.

Tŷ Glas Housing Society is a Registered Social Landlord and a charitable subsidiary of Pennaf. The Society directly manages the Wrexham Care & Repair Agency which provides advice and assistance to people aged over 60 and persons with disabilities to enable them to remain in their homes.

Offa is a non-charitable subsidiary of Pennaf. Its role is to undertake projects that fall outside of Clwyd Alyn's charitable rules and to develop projects that are not dependent upon the receipt of Social Housing Grant from the Welsh Government. Offa's main role to date has involved delivering a lettings and property management service for private sector landlords who own houses in multiple occupation and offering specialist advice on licensing criteria.

Tir Tai is a subsidiary of Pennaf, established as an unregistered company limited by guarantee. It acts as the development arm, undertaking all development activities on behalf of Group Members with the facility to 'gift aid' and surpluses generated to other Members of the Group.

For further details, please contact:

Judith Gavin, Pennaf Housing Group,

**72 Ffordd William Morgan, St Asaph Business Park, St Asaph, Denbighshire, LL17
0JD Tel: 01745 536914 email: judith.gavin@pennaf.co.uk**

Huw Lewis AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Tai, Adfywio a Threftadaeth
Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref MB/HL/07487/11

Ann Jones AM
Chair
Communities Equality and Local Government Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

11 December 2011

Dear Ann

I am writing to you in your capacity as Chair of the Communities Equality and Local Government Committee with responsibility for Culture and Heritage matters.

As you will be aware, during 2010 the Communities and Culture Committee undertook an Inquiry into the accessibility of Arts and Cultural Activities in Wales. The Committee published a report of the findings of this Inquiry in February 2011. The report outlined 16 recommendations, 14 of which were accepted, in whole or in part, by my predecessor the Minister for Heritage.

I fully recognise the importance of the issues covered in the report and I am committed to taking forward the agreed recommendations for the benefit of the people of Wales. I am, therefore, pleased to enclose an update on the progress made against the recommendations contained in this report.

This Action Plan sets out the detail of each recommendation and identifies which organisation has been tasked with delivering it. The comments / progress section provides a comprehensive update on the activity that has already taken place and an outline of future activity. The individual actions cover a variety of different initiatives and require a number of different approaches if they are to be successfully delivered. Due to the comprehensive nature of the responses obtained from each organisation and in order to make the document more user-friendly, my officials have broken these down by organisation/department. For example, on a number of recommendations there are updates on progress from the Arts Council of Wales, Cadw, CyMAL, the National Library of Wales and Amgueddfa Cymru-National Museum. Where appropriate, these have been brought together with an overview of my own/Welsh Government's commitments.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
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You will note that the recommendations within the initial report are wide-ranging and in many cases will take some time to fully implement if they are to achieve their maximum potential. I therefore propose to review this Action plan with my officials on a six monthly basis to ensure that the momentum already generated is maintained. I also propose to provide the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee with a formal update on progress annually.

I hope you will find this approach satisfactory and trust you will find the Action Plan both informative and reassuring.

Best Regards



Huw Lewis AC / AM

Y Gweinidog Tai, Adfywio a Threftadaeth
Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage

Communities and Culture Committee Report into the Accessibility of Arts and Culture: ACTION PLAN

Tudalen 26

Eitem 5c

Recommendation	Comments / Progress
<p>Recommendation 1. We recommend that the Welsh Government facilitates a sharing of good practice (for increasing accessibility) between organisations involved in delivering arts and cultural experiences. (Page 31)</p>	<p>ACW: the ACW is encouraging more people to enjoy and take part in arts events, and this is a priority in ACW's future plans. The practical actions ACW is taking include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Equalities Strategy - commits ACW to a series of actions designed to broaden the range of those who benefit from its funding and services (ii) ACW's work with specialist agencies such as Disability Arts Cymru, Voluntary Arts Wales and BVSN Wales on targeted projects to improve accessibility (iii) ACW's Marketing Symposium: every year this focuses on a range of audience development initiatives (iv) ACW is investing more money in touring, and is extending the reach of its 'Night Out' initiative. <p>Cadw: Cadw, the National Museum, the Historic Houses Association and the National Trust are planning joint research in 2012 to better understand the barriers to access by targeting segments of the community, and to measure the impact of their various initiatives.</p> <p>The National Museum has suggested joint work to evaluate visitor responses to the current ways in which the sector presents Welsh history to the public. Three meetings on the 'History Agenda' were held in 2011, and Cadw is actively supporting this. Heritage organisations also see the forthcoming 6 part BBC Wales TV series "The Story of Wales" as a key vehicle for reaching more people, and are planning collaborative activities to run alongside this. Cadw and partners are working with the BBC to support the series.</p> <p>Cadw's research priorities for 2011-16 are to support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best practice in engaging young people and families in history and the wider historic environment and character of place. • Best practice in engaging with communities and maximising socio-economic benefit. • Best practice in tackling 'barriers to access'. • The measuring and monitoring of visitor attendance, satisfaction and outcomes, ideally in partnership with other partners in the sector. • A programme of research which helps Cadw understand user and non-user attitudes to Welsh history and heritage sites. <p>CyMAL: The 3 national cultural heritage institutions and other partners are working together to deliver 'The People's Collection Wales' (PCW), and are sharing good practice and developing knowledge in the course of this. The PCW website follows accessibility guidelines and the project provides advice on good practice</p>

	<p>relating to digitisation and ensuring accessibility.</p> <p>As public bodies, the National Library and National Museum are required to comply with statutory duties such as the 2011 public sector equality duty, and as part of this duty are required to develop a Single Equality Scheme. For example the Library's Equalities Plan is reviewed every 4 months. The Library is also participating in the Welsh Government Sponsored Body network on sexual equality and disability which is being led by the National Museum. The Library has extensive accessibility information on its website: http://www.llgc.org.uk/index.php?id=accessibility</p> <p>CyMAL is supporting professional bodies in Wales to deliver seminars and conferences, to facilitate best practice sharing. CyMAL also publishes a twice yearly magazine to highlight best practice.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2. We recommend that the Welsh Government seeks to increase media coverage of Wales' arts and cultural experiences, and to challenge the perspective that arts and cultural experiences are for "an élite few". (Page 35)</p>	<p>ACW: persuading the media to report on culture in a more informed and more comprehensive fashion is a difficult challenge. However ACW is working to build interest by funding and promoting excellent projects that the media <u>wants</u> to feature. Recent projects include National Theatre Wales' <i>Passion</i> in Port Talbot, the winning of WOMEX 2013 for Cardiff, the launch of the Cultural Olympiad programme in Wales, and the Literature Wales' launch of the Young People's Laureate.</p> <p>Cadw: During 2011 Cadw has been developing its website, in particular to accommodate digital "apps" and social networking. This has started to transform its capacity to engage more directly with diverse audiences.</p> <p>CyMAL: CyMAL is working with the museums, archives and libraries sector to develop its skills and to provide assistance in promoting its contribution to arts and cultural activities. For example, CyMAL is supporting an all-Wales audience development initiative for libraries – this includes the issuing of national press releases, and templates to assist regional and local press releases by services and an annual all-Wales Library Festival. The National Museum and the National Library also have successful public relations programmes, to increase media coverage of Wales' arts and culture.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3. We recommend that the Welsh Government continues to prioritise supporting the development of arts and cultural experiences (including those taking place within "community venues") over and above the development of new, "purpose-built" art venues. (Page 40)</p>	<p>ACW: ACW attaches great importance to encouraging more people to enjoy and take part in the arts. It broadly accepts the recommendation that new purpose-built facilities should not be a priority, and its new Capital strategy to be issued in 2012 is likely to endorse this. However having accessible, fit for purpose venues of quality can be a very effective way to increase access. Whilst the new strategy will probably concentrate on improving and repairing existing buildings, ACW does not wish to dismiss the possibility of new build projects, especially if they can improve access in areas of cultural or geographical disadvantage.</p> <p>Cadw: Cadw is working with a number of communities and arts organisations to enable venues to be used as much as possible for cultural events. All Cadw staff are encouraged to be proactive in seeking such</p>

	<p>opportunities. At the national level, Cadw is being supported by ACW to develop its own arts policy to give the individual initiatives a framework and momentum. Cadw is also developing partnership programmes with Literature Wales for 2012.</p> <p>Five key programmes for development and arts activity began at selected Cadw sites in summer 2011:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plays at a number of Cadw's monuments, produce by 'Taking Flight' - a UK based professional theatre company that works to break down the barriers which can prevent participation in the arts. • Work with Sculpture Cymru on a sculpture exhibition inspired by Kidwelly Castle (summer 2012). • The Cadw Festival of Heritage Arts & Crafts – an annual programme of 8 one day events, offering opportunities for visitors to work with artists to create artwork inspired by Cadw sites. • Songs From Stones - a 5 year arts based Cadw education programme involving 125 - 150 young people each year, to produce animations interpreting Cadw sites. These films will be shown at a annual 'grand premiere', and will be uploaded onto the Songs From Stones website. • Storytelling & literacy - an annual creative writing project, involving primary school classes in creative writing. The stories are uploaded on to the learning pages of the Cadw website. <p>CyMAL: The Welsh Government grants programmes administered by CyMAL division and its advisory services support existing local museums, archives and libraries to provide arts, culture and heritage activities in over 400 locations across Wales. The Museums Strategy commits the Welsh Government to support existing museums and will not normally support the foundation of new museums. Funding through grants for museums in Wales is only available to those that meet the Accreditation standard.</p> <p>One of the aims of the Welsh Government's Community Learning Libraries Capital Grant Programme (administered by CyMAL) is to enable public libraries to develop attractive flexible spaces to stage more community activities. This has been extremely successful in increasing the number of community activities, often held in partnership with other organisations, in our public libraries. Almost 80 public libraries across Wales have been modernised as part of this grant programme.</p> <p>The National Museum and the National Library are providing access to high quality cultural experiences in their buildings, online, and through a series of outreach events in communities across Wales.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4. We recommend that the Welsh Government ensures that decision makers determining the public funding provided to particular arts and cultural experiences, effectively and thoroughly take into account the</p>	<p>Welsh Government: We propose to emphasise the importance of equality and accessibility issues in the 2012/13 Remit Letters to our Sponsored Bodies. Equality Action Plans will be assessed and monitored throughout the year. We are also considering approaching WLGA, to see whether it would like to extend this to venues that only receive local authority funding.</p> <p>Welsh Government (Cadw): Cadw is interested in applying CyMAL's access summary template to ensure that its access information is meaningful to potential visitors.</p>

accessibility of such experiences for people with disabilities, and LGB people. (Page 49)

The Cadw Interpretation Planning process seeks to improve intellectual access to heritage sites. There is a rolling programme of work on site interpretation improvements. Work on a new programme of site access audits and improvements (for people with physical and sensory impairments) will begin in late 2011 and will run thereafter on a 5 year rolling programme, with review milestones.

Work is under way to review Cadw action on access to its sites, and to benchmark this against other heritage organisations' access plans by March 2013.

Welsh Government (CyMAL): Both the National Museum and the Library have invested heavily in ensuring that their buildings, online resources and services meet and exceed accessibility standards.

CyMAL has run consultation sessions to identify the access priorities of disabled people across Wales. Representatives from access and disability groups as well as museums, archives and libraries identified the need for better information about access provision. In response, CyMAL has awarded a tender to Enable UK to develop an Access Summary Template. The project is on target for delivery of phase 1 in March 2012. The draft template is currently being tested (Nov' 2011), and interest in using the template has been expressed by other heritage organisations including Cadw, CCW and the Forestry Commission.

A survey for the research project 'Spotlight on Museums 2011' resulted in information being submitted by 106 organisations. The final publication is on track to be published by December 2011/January 2012. The study includes information on current physical and sensory access to museums and museum collections.

One of the main aims of the *Community Learning Libraries Capital Grant Programme* administered by CyMAL is to improve accessibility through the library modernisation programme. Promoting access and equality is a key priority within all CyMAL grants schemes. Libraries across Wales are also providing assistive software and hardware to help disabled people to access library resources.

ACW: One of the targets included in ACW's *Disability Action Plan* is to establish how venues are working to reduce the barriers disabled people face when seeking to engage with the arts. ACW is drafting an 'Access Questionnaire', with input from Disability Arts Cymru and Hearing Loss UK (previously RNID). The survey will be sent out in December 2011 or January 2012, to all ACW funded organisations, including those receiving capital funds for venues and galleries. ACW expects to have aggregated and analysed the results by March 2012. It will then bring together the agencies that helped to design the Questionnaire, to assist in assessing the results.

ACW's draft *Equality Strategy* is out for consultation but includes an objective to: "Develop and publish arts specific Equality and Diversity Best Practice Guidance, covering each of the protected characteristics [in Equalities legislation] as well as general issues. Introduce this to the arts sector and encourage its use."

<p>Recommendation 5. We recommend that the Welsh Government ensures that an audit is taken of the accessibility of all publicly-funded sites intended for the provision of arts and cultural experiences. (Page 50)</p>	<p>ACW: See recommendation 4 above.</p> <p>Cadw: As above, work on a new programme of Cadw site access audits and improvements (for people with physical and sensory impairments) will begin in late 2011 but will run thereafter on a 5 year rolling programme, with review milestones. Audits were last undertaken in Cadw in 2007; the next round of audits is due to take place in 2012.</p> <p>CyMAL: Access audit – please see information regarding the Access Summary Template under Recommendation 4. The Remit Letter issued by the Minister to the National Museum and National Library contains a reference to the requirement for both institutions to comply with the Single Equality Duty.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6. We recommend that the Welsh Government accepts that it has accountability, at a strategic level, for the funding decisions undertaken by Assembly Government Sponsored Bodies, such as the Arts Council of Wales. (Page 59)</p>	<p>Welsh Government: This has always been the case, and the Welsh Government accepts its responsibility in this area. We will continue to convey Welsh Government strategic priorities through the Minister's annual Remit Letters to our Sponsored Bodies. This will assist those bodies to focus their resources at specific areas. However, the Welsh Government does not accept responsibility for individual or programme funding decisions taken by sponsored bodies. These remain the responsibility of these bodies, who are ultimately best placed to make these decisions and to assess their impact and benefits.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7. We recommend that the Welsh Government works with partners to enable the identification of geographic areas in Wales where people have particularly limited access to arts and cultural experiences. Following this work, we anticipate that the Welsh Government would then encourage partners to strategically utilise such information to develop increased access to arts and cultural activities in areas where people have particularly limited access to arts and cultural activities. (Page 70)</p>	<p>ACW: ACW is currently aggregating and working its way through a huge amount of data including RFO Annual Survey, LA Survey and Arts in Wales 2010. ACW has also been given some free consultancy from Ordnance Survey as part of training in the use of the GIS mapping technology that it has acquired.</p> <p>ACW has identified through its Investment Review an opportunity for improving digital interconnectivity to encourage virtual shared programming. Live screenings are already happening with productions from London's National Theatre and the New York Metropolitan Opera regularly screened at venues across Wales. There are three issues here: the hardware (ie: the digital satellite kit), the content (and the contract conditions that apply to its 'transmission') and production costs. As part of its new Capital strategy ACW is looking at providing funds for venues to acquire the hardware, in effect creating a digitally connected <i>One Wales</i>. It is currently exploring a pilot with Theatr Mwldan, where the Theatre will lead a consortium of potential venues. The contractual and rights issues are challenging as some companies put restrictions on what venues are able to show. However ACW plans to investigate these further during 2012.</p> <p>Cadw: Audience development is a priority for Cadw. Cadw continues to take steps to ensure that historic sites are increasingly accessible and enjoyable to visit - for visitors and people who live in Wales and, particularly, for people from groups currently under-represented in its visitor profile. A visitor survey was carried out in September 2011 and Cadw will use the data to inform its visitor profiling and targeting.</p>

	<p>An internal review of audience development, events, education and lifelong learning programmes has taken place in Cadw. The review concluded that the staff resources available to deliver community focused programmes were inadequate and resources have been prioritised to enable further posts to be created in this business area. Recruitment will commence shortly.</p> <p>CyMAL: Museums, archives and libraries provide local access points to the arts, culture and heritage in over 400 service points across Wales. In addition public libraries provide mobile and/or housebound services for those people unable to utilise their local static library - albeit that there has been some reduction in mobile library services in Wales as a result of funding reductions. There are also innovative schemes such as the <i>Fan Hyn Fan Draw</i> mobile library service in Ceredigion that delivers access to a wider range of services such as information on public services, including the arts, and internet access.</p> <p>The 'Sharing Treasures' programme, administered on behalf of the Welsh Government by CyMAL in partnership with the National Museum, provides grant funding to enable the national collections to be displayed at local museums across Wales.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8. We recommend that the Arts Council of Wales continue to prioritise the development of a strategy for Children, Young People and the Arts as urgent. (Page 76)</p>	<p>ACW: ACW's new strategy for children, young people and the arts, <i>Young Creators</i> was published in November. A companion document related specifically to targeting Child Poverty has also been published alongside <i>Young Creators</i>. Regular updates on progress and the impact of these documents will be provided to the Welsh Government, to ensure that accessibility to the arts for children and young people is at the heart of ACW's agenda.</p> <p>Welsh Government: We will be closely monitoring the impact of ACW's Young Creators strategy (and Child Poverty annex) to ensure it delivers on its ambitions in accordance with Welsh Government priorities for Children and Young People. A full assessment of progress will be provided during the next update.</p>
<p>Recommendation 9. We recommend that the Welsh Government brings forward a measure to place a statutory duty on local authorities to support arts and cultural experiences in their local areas. (Page 83)</p>	<p><i>We did not accept this recommendation.</i></p> <p><i>(Nonetheless the Welsh Government is encouraging sponsored bodies to develop their links with local authorities through partnership working and sharing of good practice; this will be reflected in the Minister's annual Remit Letters).</i></p>
<p>Recommendation 10. We recommend that the Welsh Government has dialogue with the Arts Council of Wales to ensure that reductions in funding</p>	<p><i>We did not accept this recommendation.</i></p> <p><i>(Nonetheless, we understand that provided that its funding is maintained at intimated levels, the ACW has no plans to reduce its funding to its Revenue Funded organisations over the three years from 2011-12).</i></p>

<p>for its revenue funded clients are limited to around 4% over a three year period from 2011-2012, as set out by the Minister for Heritage. (Page 86)</p>	
<p>Recommendation 11. We recommend that the Welsh Government continues to seek to persuade the UK Government to enable them to provide three-year funding deals to bodies such as the Arts Council of Wales, with year-end flexibility. (Page 92)</p>	<p>Welsh Government: Continued uncertainty over the UK Government's deficit reduction plans makes a positive decision on this issue unlikely in the short to medium term. Consequently no formal discussions have taken place on this issue to date.</p> <p>In the meantime, the Welsh Government has been able to provide indicative budget figures to WGSBs in line with its own three year budget management programme covering the years 2011-12 to 2013-14. While these budgets are indicative only, they do allow the sponsored bodies to plan their funding over the coming years. It is hoped that this can be built upon following the initial three-year cycle.</p> <p>Welsh Government Heritage officials will continue to monitor this situation closely with their Central Finance colleagues. The Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage will review the position at the beginning of 2013-14 and, if necessary, will ask the Finance Minister to open discussions with the UK Government to resolve this matter.</p>
<p>Recommendation 12. We recommend that the Welsh Government clarifies its total current expenditure towards arts and cultural experiences, across all Government Departments. (Page 93)</p>	<p>Welsh Government: Unfortunately, there is no existing mechanism in place to facilitate compliance with this recommendation although officials have been actively seeking a way forward. Following initial scoping work on the new Welsh Government Grants Management System it became apparent that the level of input required to break down funding activity across the whole of the Welsh Government would be disproportionate to the benefits of having this information to hand. There are fundamental difficulties in providing an accurate figure, not least (i) the definition of precisely what should be classed as an arts/cultural activity, and (ii) how to determine what portion of a grant should relate to arts/community/equality/education etc.</p> <p>For this reason, we are unable to make significant progress with this recommendation at present, although we will continue to review this issue with a view to taking action in future. In the meantime, we will be closely monitoring spend on arts and cultural experiences within the Heritage MEG, and will continue to seek to incorporate funding from other sources into the cultural sector.</p>

<p>Recommendation 13. We recommend that the Welsh Government continues to promote a co-ordinated approach between its various departments in their support for the arts and culture experiences in Wales. (Page 94)</p>	<p>Welsh Government: This is an ongoing commitment that is inherent to the work undertaken by individual departments. Existing collaboration includes work with Health Department colleagues on the Arts and Health and Wellbeing Action Plan, and with Education colleagues on 'Reach the Heights' and the forthcoming Review of Arts in Education. This commitment is being monitored closely, in order to identify additional opportunities to work with other Departments and organisations from within the Culture/heritage sector. The Minister for Housing, Regeneration & Heritage wishes to see closer co-ordination and joint working between individual departments within his portfolio while initiatives such as SCIF funding in Bangor and Swansea are bringing economic, artistic and educational benefits across the country.</p> <p>Cadw: Cadw is an active member of the Cultural Tourism Steering Group/Partnership and the NE Wales Cultural Partnership, and is engaged in joint planning work with NMW and ACW (as outlined above).</p> <p>CyMAL: CyMAL actively contribute to cross departmental priorities such as literacy, digital inclusion, health and well-being and Welsh language, and works closely with Cadw to protect our cultural heritage.</p>
<p>Recommendation 14. We recommend that the Welsh Government continues to encourage the development of regional arts services across local authority areas. (Page 96)</p>	<p>ACW: ACW is continuing to promote the value of partnerships such as the 'Arts Connect' consortium of local authorities, and is keen to develop other initiatives elsewhere in Wales. Work is in progress to assist WLGA, CORL and individual local authorities to implement the 'Simpson Compact' commitment for <i>'local government...to review the scope for collaboration in the future delivery of culture and leisure services by March 2012'</i>. An important focus for ACW's future work on this subject will be the development of a series of strategic local/regional arts partnerships.</p> <p>ACW has acknowledged that during the current Welsh Government term there will be more collaboration and joint working across local authorities and other public bodies, organised around defined localities or regions. Being part of these developments will provide an efficient means of identifying future joint priorities and areas for partnership, of which Arts Connect is one obvious example. ACW is taking advice from the WLGA in developing its new approach, but has committed in principle to putting in place partnership agreements with local government, nationally, regionally and individually.</p> <p>CyMAL: CyMAL is supporting local, regional and national partnership working in promoting access to the collections of museums, archives and libraries across Wales. CyMAL has worked with public and academic libraries in opening-up public access to their collections including supporting regional inter-library loan schemes. CyMAL is supporting regional co-operation between museums in delivering educational activities. CyMAL is also working closely with the WLGA in order to encourage closer regional working between museums, archives and libraries across Wales.</p>

<p>Recommendation 15. We recommend that the Welsh Government sets out a strategic message that all public funding arrangements for arts and cultural experiences should be reviewed to ensure that they promote, rather than prevent, partnership working between organisations delivering arts and cultural experiences. (Page 102)</p>	<p>Welsh Government: Partnership working is being encouraged at every opportunity and will again be included as a specific requirement within the 2012/13 annual Remit Letter. Similarly, ACW will again be required to include this as a standard term in its agreements with its funding clients. This will continue to be emphasised during discussions with ACW and other key stakeholders.</p> <p>Cadw: Cadw has embraced collaborative working; for example it is already working closely with ACW. This follows on from the successful Heritage and Arts Summit in October 2010 which focused on the arts as a means of engaging communities and connecting with audiences who are typically hard for the heritage sector to reach. The Heritage Interpretation and Tourism Summit in December 2010 explored how effective presentation of heritage can boost Wales's tourism offer. Cadw also provides the Secretariat to the HRH Minister's Historic Environment Group which brings a number of key partners together including ACW. Since 2007 HEG has been supplemented by regular "Treftadaeth" conferences and a series of thematic "summits" which have fostered dialogue across a very diverse interest base, including national and very local organisations.</p> <p>CyMAL: The Welsh Government's grant schemes, administered by CyMAL to support the museums, archives and libraries sector, actively encourages partnership working in improving access to our rich and diverse culture and heritage.</p> <p>Partnership is highlighted as a Ministerial priority in the National Museum and the National Library's Remit Letters for 2011-12, and will be emphasised again in the 2012-13 Remit Letters. The Remit Letters provide specific examples of partnerships in which the Museum and the Library are involved.</p> <p>The National Museum, the National Library and the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments Wales are working together to deliver the People's Collection Wales (PCW). This is an innovative bilingual digital platform to collect, interpret and display the story of Wales' history, culture and heritage. It also encourages individuals and community groups to contribute to the story of Wales alongside our cultural heritage institutions.</p>
<p>Recommendation 16. We recommend that the Welsh Government continues to emphasise the obligation of Wales' National Arts and Cultural bodies to the people of Wales as a whole. (Page 104)</p>	<p>ACW: In its post Investment Review document <i>Renewal and transformation</i> the ACW stressed its expectations for national companies to act as exemplars and leaders across the full range of arts development functions. A detailed list of expectations is set out in <i>Renewal and transformation</i>. ACW is currently in dialogue with the six National organisations it supports about extending the range and extent of their educational and outreach programmes. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The Welsh National Opera's highly regarded WNO MAX programme – National Theatre Wales' touring to locations of all scale across the country – BBC NOW's work in providing Teachers Resource packs as part of its wider educational activity – Literature Wales promotion of Writers Squads and the Young Person' Laureate

- The Film Agency Wales’s recently launched Cinema Club
- Wales Millennium Centre’s Learning and Participation Programme

CyMAL: The charitable object of the National Museum, as stated in the Royal Charter, is the advancement of the education of the public:

- (i) primarily, by the comprehensive representation of science, art, industry, history and culture of, or relevant to, Wales, and
- (ii) generally, by the collection, recording, preservation, elucidation and presentation of objects and things and associated knowledge, whether connected or not with Wales, which are calculated to further the enhancement of understanding and the promotion of research.

The National Library was also established by Royal Charter. Its key purpose is to collect, preserve and give access to all kinds and forms of recorded knowledge, especially relating to Wales and the Welsh and other Celtic peoples, for the benefit of the public including those engaged in research and learning.

The National Museum and the National Library meet these objectives by operating comprehensive education and outreach services, covering formal and informal learning.

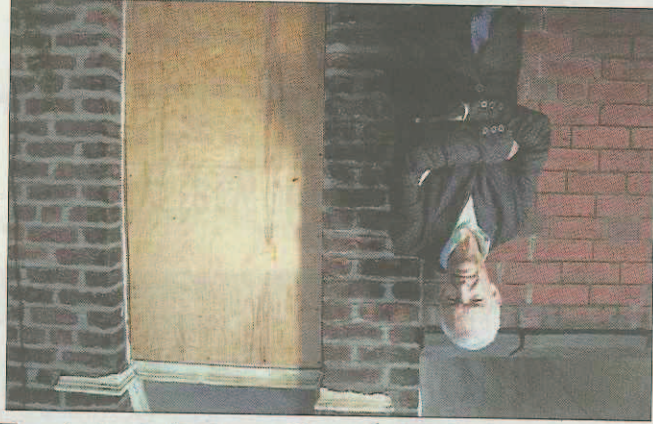
The National Museum is a key partner in the delivery of *A Museums Strategy for Wales*, sitting on the strategy steering group, and working in partnership with organisations across Wales to improve services to the public. It offers the benefit of its skills and experience in the areas of developing professional skills, learning, conservation, and collections knowledge.

The National Library will be a key partner in the delivery of the Welsh Government’s *Libraries Inspire* strategic library development framework and is a member of the strategy steering group. The National Library is leading on the procurement and delivery of all-Wales online resources for Welsh libraries.

A section of the People’s Collection Wales website is dedicated to formal and informal learning audiences – tools, resources and material for this section is currently being developed as a key area of programme activity, working with learning professionals.

WHILE NATIONAL PROBLEM GROWS, MORE PROPERTIES PUT TO USE HERE County bucks trend by filling empty property

by Trevor Sturgess
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Steve Grimshaw, project manager of the KCC No Use Empty scheme; David Ireland, chief executive, Empty Homes charity

KENT has bucked the national trend by bringing 2,000 empty properties back into use. National Empty Homes Week has highlighted the travesty of empty while thousands of people struggle to put a roof over their heads. But Kent's pioneering No Use Empty campaign has defied the odds to transform scores of properties and improve local neighbourhoods.

For six years, an award-winning partnership between Kent County Council and district councils has created a scheme widely regarded as a role model. Bristol has already copied the idea and other authorities are looking to Kent to see how it can be done in their area.

Empty shops, warehouses, a redundant chapel, an old school house as well as homes have been transformed by the scheme.

Steve Grimshaw, KCC's regeneration project manager, said: "Empty homes are not only a drain on owners, they are a drain on the community as a whole, in that they often prove to be a magnet for anti-social behaviour and crime, decrease adjacent property prices and deter investment into the area."

Jon Snow on Channel 4 programme Dispatches, which is running a series of programmes on empty homes and problem landlords

Factfile

- The number of empty properties brought back into use since 2008 across mid and west Kent:
- Maidstone: 80 homes restored to use, but 533 remain vacant.
- Tonbridge and Malling: 25 with 252 still unused. The more.
- Tunbridge Wells: 54, with 430 remaining idle.
- Sevenoaks: 48, with 455 unused for six months or more.

Kent's No Use Empty project was launched in 2005, when 9,000 unused properties were identified across the county. Since then, nearly 2,000 have been returned to use, helping David Ireland, chief executive of Empty Homes, said: "It's made a significant impact on numbers," said Mr Grimshaw, adding that the scheme had safeguarded 300 jobs.

of the Empty Homes charity, praised the Kent scheme, saying it was the first time a county council had been involved. The scheme won a Regeneration and Renewal Award for Partnership Working.

Around £5.3 million has been advanced already, bringing in a further £10.9 million of other money, boosting total investment to more than £16 million. KCC and the districts are poised to bid for up to £10 million to extend the scheme to 2018.

Mr Grimshaw called on the public to notify the council of empty properties.

"We've got a proven track record and a history we can share with everybody," he said.

A BUDDING young chef from Maidstone has picked up the top prize for his culinary skills in the KM Kent Cooks competition.

James Waterson, a pupil at St Simon Stock Catholic School, was the overall winner of the contest with his stuffed chicken wrapped in bacon and banana sweet.

Tonbridge Grammar School student Isabelle Gale won the video category of the competition and there were finalists from Oakwood Park Grammar School and Invicta Grammar School. Amy Monk from Invicta Grammar School won the kmhealthy-15 event, which brought together 15 finalists from primary and secondary schools in Kent and Medway.

Each student had to cook their signature dish for a panel of judges which included representatives of Channel 4's first

WINNER: James Waterson with his prize dish



James is top kid cook in our contest

Sign language course starting

SPACES are available for Holy's Hands sign language course, starting on Friday, January 6.

The five week project for children is held at the Sunshine Children's Centre, in South Borough Primary School, Stagshaw Close, Maidstone, between 1am and noon, every Friday. To book call Cathy on 01622 752 285.

Kidney support

HELP raise funds for people suffering with chronic kidney disease by sending a dedicated charity your unwanted postage stamps and foreign money.

Donations can be sent to the Mary Jordan, British Patient Association, 3 The Windmills, Turk Street, Alton, Hampshire, GU34 1ER. For more details call 01420 541 424.

Solo album

THE front man of Maidstone band One Day Elliott, Paul Richards, known as El Captain, has released his first solo album, *Myself* and Others, which includes 12 tracks, is available to buy from iTunes and Amazon.

Festive cheer

VILLAGERS are invited to spread some festive cheer with Carols on the Green in Sutton Valence, on Friday, December 16. The event, in Lower Road, will start at 6.30pm. For more information call the parish council on 01622 844 135.