

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf /Our ref: SF/HL/6538/11

Nick Ramsey AM
Chair - Enterprise and Business Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

07th November 2011

Dear Nick,

I am pleased to submit additional information to the Committee ahead of my appearance on the 24th November.

Cadw's role in regeneration and sustainability

The historic environment makes Wales and its people distinctive; it helps give us our identity. Conservation areas and historic buildings, whether or not they are on the statutory lists, give towns their character.

Our policies and actions for the historic environment aim to help people in Wales to gain a sense of the heritage around them – an appreciation of what makes their community special, how it has developed and what they can do to protect and promote it for the benefit of present and future generations. It promotes civic pride.

Research published last year demonstrated that conservation of the historic environment contributes significantly to the Welsh economy through heritage regeneration schemes, employment opportunities, skills development and tourism. There is a strong economic case for regenerating historic buildings, for the benefit of the building and also the wider area and community. Castles in Cadw's care, such as Caernarfon (160,000 visitors in first 6 months of 2011/12), Conwy (140,000) and Caerphilly (68,000), attract large numbers of visitors, providing significant economic benefit to the town centres.

Cadw has carried out a number of characterisation studies across Wales which highlight the distinctiveness of a particular place and what makes it special. Characterisation work provides an information base that enables regeneration activities to be informed by historic character, and to sustain or enhance the sense of place. In taking this initiative forward, Cadw works closely with local authorities, who recognise the potential for characterisation to help drive the planning process in a number of areas.

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English Enquiry Line 0845 010 3300
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0845 010 4400
Correspondence: huw.lewis@wales.gsi.gov.uk
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Characterisation studies now routinely support the Heritage Lottery Fund's Townscape Heritage Initiatives, for example in Dolgellau, Aberdare and Merthyr Tydfil. Such schemes across Wales are proving successful in acting as an important catalyst for economic and community regeneration in town centres through historic building repair and restoration. The initiative is driven by funding partnerships of key interests, including my officials in Cadw and Regeneration.

THIs are tightly focussed within conservation areas, but the HLF expects similar standards to be adopted beyond the limits of the initiative. Characterisation studies take a broader geographical focus, enabling the THIs to be integrated with their wider urban context. In Merthyr, characterisation helps to ensure connectivity between various heritage-led regeneration projects and their wider townscape context. In Cefn Mawr, Wrexham, the characterisation study has been used to inform an updated Conservation Area Character Assessment and Conservation Area Management Plan, both of which assisted Wrexham County Borough Council in securing funding for Phase II of the Cefn Mawr Townscape Heritage Initiative. It is anticipated that all three documents will be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance with public consultation due to commence in January 2012.

Characterisation studies also have a role in promoting community engagement in local heritage. In Snowdonia, the Dolgellau characterisation study was a key document in the National Park Authority's successful Stage 2 THI bid for the Dolgellau conservation area. Funding from the THI enabled the Dolgellau Partnership of leading town interests, including the tourist association, to print bi-lingual copies of the study which, together with a book of old photographs of the town, is being used to promote awareness of and civic pride in local history, as well as being a point of interest for visitors. The funding raised is being reinvested in eligible historic environment awareness raising projects and the study is also informing local planning decisions.

Other regeneration activity can make an important contribution to sustaining character and distinctiveness. Cadw is working with regeneration officials on town improvement grants and housing renewal proposals in Aberystwyth, to help ensure that they respect traditional character and performance, and make a positive contribution to the distinctive quality of the townscape.

Characterisation provides a framework that can ensure an integrated approach to urban planning. In Holyhead, for example, characterisation work, undertaken in close collaboration with the local authority, will help identify opportunities to enhance and reinforce the historic character of the town. This will help ensure the successful integration of both conservation activity and new development, and support the promotion of the town as a distinctive destination.

My officials are also working closely with the Vale of Glamorgan Council to ensure that regeneration activity in Barry, and especially in Barry Island, draws on historic character to reinforce its sense of place.

An understanding of historic character can usefully inform master planning exercises and design briefs for redevelopment. The characterisation study of Cefn Mawr is currently being used to inform a planning brief for the Acrefair Works Site (formerly the British Ironworks site and subsequently Air Products). The 11.38 hectare site is located within the Buffer Zone of the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site and is expected to be developed for a mixture of residential and commercial use. The characterisation study will be used to ensure the careful integration of any new development within the historic context of the site. The study will also be used in future master planning for the former Flexys site. Through its proximity to, and historical associations with, the World Heritage Site,

redevelopment of this site will have a direct impact upon the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site. The study will be used in the formulation and consideration of development proposals within the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site and Buffer Zone in conjunction with the World Heritage Supplementary Planning Document, on which there is an ongoing consultation. In Caernarfon, a study of the water-front is informing emerging proposals for the redevelopment of the Slate Quays.

My officials are working closely to support other historic building and monument restoration programmes that have made a significant contribution to the revitalisation of town centres. A major project of works by Cadw to Swansea Castle will help make the castle a focal point of the city. Once the work is completed, visitors will be able to visit the castle for the first time in four decades, benefiting residents and visitors. Outside the city centre, Cadw is working with the University and the City and County of Swansea on the steering group of the Cu@Swansea project for the regeneration of the Hafod Copper works, together with a characterisation study which the council intends to adopt as a driver for local planning that will integrate the copper-works project with the surrounding area.

Cadw encourages the development of comprehensive programmes for heritage-led regeneration that integrate area-based schemes, individual projects and broader planning objectives. It is working closely with regeneration officials, as well as with Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and the HLF, in the delivery of the built heritage strategy for Merthyr. The Authority is using this strategy actively to drive regeneration in the town, including the designation of Pontmorlais as a Conservation Area which has led to a successful bid for a THI scheme. Other town-centre heritage projects include the adaptation of the grade II* listed former Town Hall (a building at risk) as an arts centre, and the re-use of a former chapel as a theatre.

Finally, studies have shown that tourism expenditure from evening events has a considerable impact on the local economy. Cadw has been developing a programme of evening events which will offer a new visitor experience, and is currently considering options to introduce "illuminata" - a digital sound and light show, to Caernarfon. Cadw believes that, by working in partnership with local organisations such as Galeri offering evening events, and outside the usual tourism season, it can deliver economic benefits to the region.

Grants the Welsh Government currently provides to support town centre regeneration

The Welsh Government has a range of policy levers and grant mechanisms to draw upon to support town centre regeneration. These are often not delivered in isolation but as part of a wider regeneration strategy and working in partnership with many other organisations.

Our involvement ranges from the historic and built environment, housing, business support, transport and tourism.

The main interventions are provided as a summary in the Appendix of my evidence paper to the Committee.

Urban Investment Grants

The powers set out in sections 126-128 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 were conferred on the National Assembly in 1999 and were subsequently transferred to the Welsh Ministers in 2007. These powers allow the Welsh Ministers to give grants in respect of regeneration and development.

Reference has been made to Section 130 of the 1996 Act. This section created functions in respect of the Welsh Development Agency. Following the abolition of the Agency in 2006, those functions are no longer necessary and Section 130 is no longer in force.

There appears to be some confusion in this respect. Allow me to clarify with a brief history of Section 130 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.

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| 1976 | The WDA is established and has grant-making powers in accordance with the 1975 Act; |
| 1996 | The Secretary of State is given specific grant-funding powers in the field of regeneration and housing in accordance with sections 126 -128 of the 1996 Act: this power covers England, Wales and Scotland;
In Wales, Section 130 of the 1996 Act provides that the Secretary of State may ask the WDA to carry out his functions under Sections 126 -128 of the 1996 Act; |
| 1999 | The National Assembly takes over the functions of the Secretary of State under the 1996 Act; |
| 2006 | The WDA is abolished. Section 130 of the 1996 Act and Section 10A of the 1975 Act are both repealed. So, the National Assembly can give grants in accordance with Section 126-128 of the 1996 Act (and Section 130 is no longer needed); |
| 2007 | The powers of the National Assembly (under the 1996 Act) are transferred to the Welsh Ministers. |

Although the terms used to describe particular grant schemes, such as 'Urban Investment Grants', are not statutory the scope and function for what they were previously used could be undertaken via the Powers set out in Section 126-128 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.

Yours sincerely,



Huw Lewis AC / AM

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