

Pwyllgor Diwylliant, y Gymraeg a Chyfathrebu
Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee
CWLC(5)-06-16 P9

8 Corndon Drive
Montgomery
Powys
SY15 6RE
Tel: 01686 668166
Email: PL@loveluck38.freemove.co.uk

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Bethan Jenkins AM
Chair
National Assembly Culture, Welsh Language and Communications
Committee
Cardiff Bay CF99 1NA

Annwyl Bethan,

Historic Wales

I understand your Committee is considering the Inquiries it might undertake in the forthcoming session. Could I urge that high priority be given to an Inquiry into the Welsh Government's proposal to set up Historic Wales, merging into that organization the commercial arms of Cadw and the National Museum and perhaps those of other organisations too.

As you may be aware I have some background in this area as President of the National Museum for nine years (2002-2011) and at an earlier stage in my career as Chief Executive of the Wales Tourist Board (1984-1996) in which capacity I got to know the visitor attractions of Wales pretty well. I have been a trustee of the North Wales Mountain Zoo in Colwyn Bay for around fifteen years and currently serve as the Deputy Chair of the Wales Tourism Alliance, the umbrella body which represents the various sectors of the industry including as one of its members the Wales Association of Visitor Attractions.

The proposal to set up Historic Wales has very significant implications for the National Museum and as in any major reorganization there is the danger that it impacts adversely at the very least on the short to medium term objectives of the organizations involved. In the case of the Museum, it is currently heavily involved in delivering a £25 million development at St Fagans and at the same time coping with the need to reduce staff numbers

because of budgetary constraints. Moreover there could well be implications for its charitable status and some would argue that it would be a threat to its independence as one of Wales' premier cultural organisations.

But the proposal does not only have implications for public sector organisations. The creation of a more powerful commercial public sector attractions organization, inevitably with very close links to the Welsh Government, will represent a greater challenge to private sector attractions in a variety of ways. We need to see consideration being given to some ground rules to ensure fair play. It is noticeable that none of the organizations on the Steering Committee which has been set up could be said to be from typical private sector attractions.

For the above reasons I would urge the Committee to look into the rationale and justification behind the proposal to set up Historic Wales, the full implications for the public sector organisations involved and also, importantly, the need for some ground rules to safeguard the interest of private sector attractions.

Yn gywir

Paul Loveluck