



MONMOUTHSHIRE ANTIQUARIAN ASSOCIATION

Patron: Professor C. Williams

President

Mr. J.K. Knight B.A., F.S.A.

Chairman

Mr. F.A. Aberg B.A., F.S.A., F.R.G.S.

Secretary

Mrs. C.L. Hutchings M.Ed., M.A.

Chair/ Cadeirydd Bethan Jenkins AM/ AC:
Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

25 October 2016

Dear Bethan Jenkins AM

The Monmouthshire Antiquarian Association wish to express their concern following the Randerson Report, 'Investing in the Future to Protect the Past', which suggests that the Welsh Government should create a new body called 'Historic Wales' merging the commercial and financial functions of National Museum Wales (NMW) and Cadw. We urge you to provide more clarity about exactly what such a merger would entail and to undertake a consultation process to assess to what extent the independence of NMW and Cadw would be compromised and whether such a merger is advisable. To this end we wish you to consider the following.

Cadw is an organisation that is the Welsh equivalent of similar arms of government in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland concerned with the legislation for the protection of ancient monuments and historic buildings, and confusion might arise if it is amalgamated with NMW. Any merger in Wales would not be matched in the other parts of the UK and risks diverting Cadw from its government duties. Cadw's duties for the enforcement of legislation on monuments and buildings in private possession can at times generate conflict which could be detrimental to NMW if it is associated with government actions to protect and conserve Welsh Heritage. It might affect donations and damage public relations.

NMW has the duty of the management, conservation and interpretation of collections belonging to the Welsh nation, unlike Cadw, whose remit applies only to monuments and buildings within Wales. NMW for example, organises exhibitions that draw on specimens from across the world for art, geology and the other subjects it must represent as part of its duties. The collections are in fact of international significance. For example in geology the fossil material includes specimens that set the standard across the world. Its education policy aims to introduce the full international scope of its collections to Wales, and not merely the physical remnants of Welsh history which is Cadw's remit. It operates in a different spectrum to Cadw, even in producing the catalogues for these exhibitions, and we should not limit its ability to operate in this orbit.

Both agencies have arms that publish, market and arrange events to benefit Wales and its visitors from across the globe and other parts of Britain. NMW has a much wider range of subjects than Cadw because of the breadth of subjects. A visit to the shop in NMW Cardiff illustrates this range of subjects. There is a risk that if Cadw was involved in this, its excellent range of guides and interpretive events would be diminished. Different types of expertise are necessary and could be harmed by amalgamation.

We would question whether this review should be considered. Both Cadw and NMW have had to make radical changes in recent years to meet the financial cuts to their budgets and a period of stability is needed for these to be absorbed. Both institutions have barely had time to plan future policy with reduced resources. A merger creates more problems for these organisations which are making heroic and difficult decisions which involve losing staff with valuable expertise. Surely limiting their independence could make such decisions more problematical.

Finally we request that there should be public sector consultation before any decision is made to merge the commercial functions of these two organisations. As a body that exists to scrutinise Government policy we request that you ensure that more information is given to the public and that you consider carefully if Historic Wales should become a reality.

Yours sincerely

Alan Aberg
Chair of Monmouthshire Antiquarian Association