



Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref

Justin Albert

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Dear *Justin*

Historic Wales – A roadmap towards Success, Resilience and Sustainability for the Heritage of Wales

I was delighted to receive the report: Historic Wales – A roadmap towards Success, Resilience and Sustainability for the Heritage of Wales on 2 February and have considered its content with great interest.

Firstly, I would like to record my thanks to you for your work as the Chair of the group, and to each of the institutions, trade unions and my officials for working so constructively together to produce such a measured and well-considered report. I am heartened that the suite of recommendations has been produced with the agreement and consensus of all the organisations involved and am excited about the opportunities that they will create for the benefit of the sector as a whole when they are delivered.

The nine recommendations fall into two broad themes:

- The future of Cadw
- The establishment of a Strategic Partnership and its future work programme

and I have set out my views on each of these below:

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

1. The future of Cadw

Recommendation 4.1 proposes a new national institution for Wales outside of Government. Cadw's core role is to conserve our national heritage and make it available for our current and future generations and it should be very proud of its achievements, particularly in recent years. Cadw is performing exceptionally at the moment whilst being in Government, and I want to ensure that success continues. My aim is to allow the organisation as much freedom and flexibility as possible to enable it to fully realise its commercial potential and also build on its very impressive improvement to the visitor experience and increase in visitor numbers and membership. I therefore believe it is timely to assess whether the existing governance arrangements are truly helping Cadw fulfill its potential, as there could be potential benefits of moving the organisation to a more arms-length status. This could enable Cadw to adopt an even more commercially focused approach to support the vital work that needs to be done to continue to maintain and protect the heritage of Wales, as well as provide greater scope for Cadw to work in partnership with other institutions.

That said, I would not, at this stage, want to focus simply on the two options identified in the report. Whilst an executive agency or a charitable body are two clear options, there are others such as an internal realignment or Welsh Government Sponsored Body and I would therefore like the business case to identify and explore the whole range of options available before being narrowed down to a preferred option. It is imperative that we test all options thoroughly against the status quo of retaining Cadw within Government. There will need to be clear and demonstrable benefits for proposing any change.

Recommendation 4.2 follows on from Recommendation 4.1 and the preferred model for the future of Cadw will dictate how this recommendation is taken forward. Cadw's statutory duties, in particular, are fundamental to the conservation of our national heritage and the importance of these functions, along with the provision of advice and guidance to owners of historic assets should not be diluted by any change to the status of the organisation. I will expect this to form part of the development of the business case for recommendation 4.1.

I accept both these recommendations with the caveats detailed above and will ensure resources are identified within the Welsh Government to take these forward with full staff and trade union engagement.

2. Strategic Partnership

I am excited by the recommendations for much greater collaboration between our leading heritage institutions and the vision for the partnership of a more coherent and joined up heritage sector. We face a number of challenges ahead, not least maintaining and protecting the heritage of Wales when public finances are under severe pressure. I believe that part of the answer to these challenges lies in the establishment of such a partnership. The steering group has convinced me that the recommendations highlight a real opportunity to bring a sharper focus and clearer identity to the commercial work of our national institutions and that it is right that we test these opportunities and evaluate their impact before exploring whether a formal merger may be effective. Bringing commercial functions closer together will not undermine the independence or identity of the individual institutions. Rather, it will enable them to build on the strengths of each organisation and share that expertise for the benefit of the sector as a whole. But I need to be clear: now is the time for each of our national organisations to start realising their full commercial potential and to provide the leadership necessary to bring a much sharper commercial focus to the work they do. I will be monitoring the progress of the strategic partnership closely.

Recommendations 4.3 to 4.7 are at the heart of my own vision. We have to find new ways for our heritage and cultural institutions to innovate and be ambitious about the role they play in our national life, working together to form a compelling vision of that future.

We also have to increase the number of people using our heritage and cultural institutions and develop novel ways to attract new audiences. By working together more closely and marketing and promoting our cultural and heritage institutions more vigorously and effectively it will create wider opportunities to open up all our sites to families and younger people in a way we never have before.

Recommendation 4.8 sits well alongside these activities. The skills, passion and expertise of people working in our institutions, bring them to life just as much as the cultural assets that they contain. We need to give greater respect and recognition to these people, and those working in the wider sector and offer them greater opportunities for them to develop their careers in the field and we need to retain our staff to conserve, protect and interpret our inheritance for future generations.

Lastly, I recognise that Recommendation 4.9 touches on an important issue Cadw and the other national institutions are well known and respected brands and whilst 'Historic Wales' has been a working title for this significant initiative, I agree that it should be tested, alongside alternatives, before any changes are implemented. Whatever the outcome, I want to see a strong brand that represents the sector and will enable it to market our world-class cultural assets more effectively, not just to the people of Wales but to the world stage.

I accept all of these recommendations relating to the Strategic Partnership. In order to sustain an equal partnership approach, I recognise, as outlined in Recommendation 4.3, that a formal agreement is needed and this approach has my full support. The Welsh Government will play its part in supporting and contributing to the partnership but I believe, in order for it to reach its full potential, it needs to be led and driven by the institutions involved, with their adequate resources put behind it. I therefore look forward to discussing the vision for the establishment of the Strategic Partnership and its forward work programme with the national institutions at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely

*Very best wishes,
Ken*

Ken Skates AC/AM

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi a'r Seilwaith
Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure

