

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru / National Assembly for Wales
Pwyllgor Diwylliant, y Gymraeg a Chyfathrebu / The Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee
Amgylchedd Hanesyddol / Historic Environment
CWLC(5) HE09
Ymateb gan Coed Cadw Woodland Trust / Evidence from Coed Cadw Woodland Trust

Background

Coed Cadw Woodland Trust is the UK's largest woodland conservation charity, working for a UK rich in native woods and trees, for people and wildlife. In Wales alone we have over 14,000 members and 85,000 supporters. We manage over 100 sites in Wales covering 2,697 hectares (6,664 acres). Wales is one of the least wooded countries in Europe, with woodland making up just 14% of the landscape and less than half of this is native.

Everyone benefits from trees, woods and forests – even if they never see or touch a tree, or walk in a wood. They help supply us with the essentials of life, such as clean air, water, building materials and fuel. Trees offer other riches too: our lives would be far poorer without their place in our landscapes, literature, language and livelihoods.

Implementation of the Historic Environment Act

We really welcome bringing Historic Parks and Gardens into statutory designation as a means to give them greater protection in the planning system. It will also presumably help prioritise them for subsidies and grants which will encourage owners to manage them to best practice to secure their legacy for present and future generations. Even so they may be extremely vulnerable as they are very attractive places for development. Their open structure gives the appearance that some development, for example golf courses or housing projects could be squeezed into parts of the area while keeping many of the main design features. This situation can be exacerbated if pre-emptive felling of trees takes place to expand available open space as the trees are not protected from this activity. We would like to see Local Authorities given a duty to carefully monitor such designated areas and applying S211 controls if they consider it expedient to do so because the trees are at risk.

We would like to see a duty to monitor and where necessary use S211 controls extended to designated Historic Landscapes. Many of these Historic Landscapes are made special by the rich age structure of the trees within them. Ancient and other veteran trees add a great deal to their special historic character and biodiversity but are extremely vulnerable. They are irreplaceable although many

can be felled or damaged within the space of half a day – little time for a Local Authority to become aware and act. It is our view that using S211 is a way to keep the burden on both owner and Local Authority to the minimum especially if a management agreement is put in place at the same time.

Historic Parks and Gardens are not the only historic tree landscapes at risk. Priority wood pasture and parkland is threatened and unlike historic parks and gardens or ancient woodland there is no source of information of their location and quality. We would like to see an inventory developed along the lines of the Historic Parks and Gardens to identify important heritage landscapes where man has had a significant, deliberate influence on the character of the area albeit one that has not been identified through landscape plans. They are as much the story of the landscape as those related to rich and powerful and deserve recognition. They should also be protected through planning policy.

Outside historic landscapes, wood pastures and parkland and historic parks and gardens there are heritage trees in the wider agricultural landscape. They are Very Important Trees (VITs). They have served society usually for several hundred years and in the case of yews perhaps for millennia. An inventory of VI Trees is being developed through a citizen science project run by a partnership of the Woodland Trust, Tree Register of the British Isles and the Ancient Tree Forum. Ancient and other veteran trees on this inventory should be considered as nationally important. Given the length of time that the Welsh Government Task and Finish Group on ancient trees has been in existence we would have thought it possible for the Welsh Government to have brought forward other specific proposals at this stage, such as the statutory register for Trees of National Special Interest which would encompass all ancient trees in Wales. We are concerned there will be further delays to making sensible changes and in the meantime valuable trees may be lost. Cadw should have a role in working across Government to accelerate this process.

Together with other nationally significant trees, we would like these historic trees to receive the recognition they deserve and their value to society supported through incentives to owners to manage them to best practice. Until they are protected by a Tree Preservation Order they can be damaged by poor management practice or felled within a few hours. We would like to see a more pro-active mechanism to identify and celebrate such trees so that if they are at risk there is a higher priority for the Local Authority to protect them through a TPO. These nationally important trees should also be protected from development through Welsh Government

planning policy.

Maximising the value of heritage tourism and Cadw's work to meet its income generation targets

Historic landscapes and historic trees make the Welsh landscape extremely special. For the benefit to Wales from tourism, these landscapes and the trees within them should be prioritised for government subsidies to help owners secure this rich heritage for future generations. Supporting the role of landscapes and special trees should be a major consideration within the design and targeting of the any future land management policies once we leave the EU and the Common Agricultural Policy is no longer in place. The Welsh Government has already indicated support for increasing the protection of ancient and veteran trees in its current consultation on taking forward the sustainable management of natural resources. Cadw has an essential part to play in the development of future land management policies.