

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

Inquiry into the Welsh Government's Historic Environment Policy

Response from Peter Howell

I wish to submit the following responses to two of the Consultation Questions.

How appropriate and successful are the current systems employed by the Welsh Government for protecting and managing the historic environment in Wales?

So far as the protection of ecclesiastical buildings are concerned, they are not 'appropriate and successful', in that nothing whatever has been done to follow up the **Review of the System of Ecclesiastical Exemption in Wales**, which I was commissioned to prepare by the Welsh Assembly Government, since it was published in **2004**. This lack of action by either the WAG or Cadw was confirmed to me by a recent visit to the Representative Body of the Church in Wales, and by my own experience as a member of the Roman Catholic Historic Churches Committee for Wales and Herefordshire. I have contacted both the relevant Minister of the WAG and Cadw several times about the matter. My most recent letter on the subject, from Matthew Coward, is dated 28 February 2012, and he assured me that my report would be taken into account in this Inquiry. Matters have moved on since I wrote the report, and I should be happy to give further evidence if that would be of assistance.

What would be the advantages and disadvantages of merging the functions of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales with the functions of other organisations, including Cadw?

The phrasing of this question is curious, as I understand that the only organisation wanting to swallow up the RCAHM is Cadw. I can see no advantages, except perhaps the geographical one, that it would be easier for Cadw to make use of the resources of the RCAHM if they were in Cardiff or Nantgarw rather than in Aberystwyth, and there would be great disadvantages, in the loss of independence for the RCAHM. The merger of the English National Monuments Record with English Heritage has led to many disadvantages for users other than the EH staff based in Swindon. In particular, if the RCAHM is merged with Cadw, it is essential that it should be located in central Cardiff, and not in Nantgarw.

Peter Howell