

Inquiry into the Welsh Government's Historic Environment Policy  
Response from Dr E Williams

**Inquiry into the Welsh Government's Historic environment policy,  
by the  
Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee.**

**Submission by Emyr W Williams.**

The following submission is presented with particular reference to the fourth question listed by the Committee, namely :-

*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?*

1. The issue of whether or not the above functions should be merged, revolves around the question of whether the resulting organisation would be fit for purpose. In order to assess that matter, the role of the two key organisations under review need to be considered.

On the one hand the Royal Commission has a long established role in investigating, recording and interpreting aspects of the historic environment. In turn it provides access to the public to its records, and its publications fulfil a key role in interpreting the ancient and historic monuments of Wales.

By contrast Cadw has a quite different role of sustaining the historic environment and promoting access to it.

2. In considering whether it would be appropriate to merge the functions of the Royal Commission with those of Cadw, it is appropriate to consider the organisational nature of Cadw.

I understand that Cadw was originally established as an Executive Agency of the Welsh Office, but was subsequently drawn into the Welsh Office bureaucracy under the Welsh Assembly. It is part of the state bureaucracy, and it is of importance to recognise the implications of that reality.

The state bureaucracy is essentially a top down structure, designed to implement political decisions taken by the government of the day. As long as its role is limited to implementing such decisions then it is likely to full its role in an entirely satisfactory manner.

3. It must be noted however, that the role of the modern state extends beyond such bureaucratic functions, for in a market economy it has had to assume responsibility for a wide range of undertakings which the private sector would never fulfil. It seems clear that the responsibilities of the Royal Commission fall into the latter category. The key question concerns whether or not the

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responsibilities of the Royal Commission are best fulfilled within a bureaucratic framework, or require a different organisational structure.

4. It is apparent that the established role of the Royal Commission in investigating, recording and interpreting aspects of the historic environment, is not a top down function best fulfilled within a bureaucratic framework. To the contrary it is a function whose role is best fulfilled at an arms length from government, where there is an opportunity to pursue the creative aspects to its responsibilities. Indeed it could be argued that the weakness with the Royal Commission as at present constituted is that it operates within a civil service framework – a structure which is inappropriate to its role, and a deficiency which needs to be corrected.
5. On the basis of the above analysis, it appears that it would be a grave mistake to merge the functions of the Royal Commission with the functions of Cadw. Rather an alternative approach needs to be considered.
6. It is a well known feature of organisations, that they expand to take up available resources. The key question concerns the extent to which both the Royal Commission and Cadw have so expanded. In a context of economic retrenchment, there is an initial need to assess the extent to which both organisations have expanded beyond their core remit. Given such an assessment, it should be possible to identify areas in which the activities of both organisations could be pruned back, thus securing significant savings, but sustaining the organisational integrity of both.
7. In proceeding from within such a framework, it would also be appropriate to consider the management functions of both organisations so as to assess whether some of those functions could be merged so as to reduce costs.

Emyr W Williams (Dr)  
26 June 2012.