

## ***Treftadaeth 2***

As in April, participants divided into workshops. Each of the three workshops reported back to plenary, and this feedback is recorded below. A detailed record was made of the work done within the workshops and this output has also been documented so as to have a full record of participants' outputs.

### **Outputs from workshops**

The Historic Environment Strategic Statement will be a key opportunity for the Welsh historic environment. Participants were asked to consider how we can build effective partnerships across the sector in order to address this opportunity constructively. Each of these focus questions structured the workshop sessions and the subsequent report back.

**Q1 What will be the priorities for the historic environment?**

**Q2 How can we build effective partnerships?**

**Q3 How can we recognise and strengthen the voluntary sector contribution to the historic environment?**

**Q4 What other issues should we address as a sector?**

### **Plenary presentations**

#### Group 1

This group's priorities emphasised jargon free communication, and a system that was accessible to experts and local alike. Dialogue between experts and local people needed to be encouraged and use clearer language. They likewise stressed education, including Welsh aspects of the curriculum, and the development of a Welsh Heritage Link as an umbrella body.

A link organisation was a key to building effective partnerships, and it should connect both with professionals and the voluntary sector to identify and address common goals. Partnership also needed resourcing. However, communications remained the key. The group also identified a separation between historic environment issues/policy and the planning system that needed to be addressed, not least if there were to be more effective joint working within local government and communities.

The voluntary sector needed to be properly resourced but there was also a need to promote its activity as a valuable asset. There was a need to build capacity to ensure the right skill and

individuals were available. Communication within the sector and engagement of the sector in consultation were part and parcel of ensuring that the sector was valued and fostered.

Amongst other issues, the groups suggested that there could be more focus on the “intangible” heritage – place-names for example – as well as a recognition of the “little tradition” alongside the “grand tradition”. The media needed to be addressed effectively, and local politicians engaged.

## Group 2

This group identified as priorities the avoidance of jargon; the need to overcome fear of heritage controls; the requirement to resource the local authority role effectively as well as to find ways of linking developers and resources. Education was seen as a route to enablement.

The group saw the creation of local, independent heritage champions as the means to engage communities. They wanted Cadw to be flexible and approachable, with respect, for instance, to technical advice and grant requests. Communities should be engaged in the listing process.

The voluntary sector would benefit from a coordinating structure that could be a heritage champion at an all-Wales level, and a means for facilitating effective third sector engagement and partnership. Thought also needed to be given to mechanisms for funding voluntary sector activity. Probably an all-Wales structure would build on existing networks

## Group 3

### **Priorities**

This group identified as a priority the need to address buildings at risk strategically. This was an acute problem and required the development of some sort of safety net to address serious cases. This could imply strengthened procedures to enable compulsory purchase and identify a new owner for a problem case. The issue was also financial. BAR could also be addressed through planning briefs and it was felt that the involvement of HBAC could be useful.

At an earlier stage, the involvement of owners in the listing process could be positive. However, there needed to be a robust framework of protection for historic assets and areas aided by tightened enforcement procedures.

Coordination across the sector was a major issue; outreach was fundamental. Better communications and public relations were essential if the challenge was to be addressed.

### **Partnerships**

With respect to BAR, planning briefs could be a profitable area for partnership involving local authorities, Cadw and other relevant parties. More broadly, funding was seen as a key to enabling the voluntary sector to be effective. A network could be a means to build capacity and engagement amongst smaller groups.

Communications were seen as central to partnership across the sector, as well as a means of sensitising owners to their responsibilities. Better communications would enable good practice and expertise to be shared. The net was an obvious means to address this deficit.

### **The voluntary sector**

Capacity building was central; the issue was not just one of money. Coordination and information through an umbrella organisation or network was regarded as a priority. This could also help develop local engagement and bring together local and national concerns and interests.

### **Other issues**

The group wanted voluntary effort should be recognised and valued. Individual voluntary effort could be celebrated, but also recorded as an element within a person's CV.

Otherwise Wales needed a chapels strategy; creative thought about education (both for young people, for whom history should come alive, and owners of heritage assets); and an imaginative response to the resource implications of legislation.

The group also wished to draw attention to the problems caused to teachers planning out of school visits by health and safety issues and the requirement to undertake complex risk assessments.

## **Chair's summary and close**

Prior to the chair's closing summary there was an opportunity for brief comments from the floor. Amongst these, Nerys Wynne Jones (the Rydal School) clarified the suggestion made in one of the workshops that there should be a means of formally celebrating the work of individual volunteers. She also commented on the place of Welsh studies in her own (private)school's curriculum.

Stuart Rivers (Llandudno Trust) commended the part played in the conference by the students from the Rydal School.

John Bradley (Denbigh CS) reflected on the discussion within the conference of a coordinating group for the Welsh Historic Environment and suggested that Cadw might take the lead in initiating its development.

Richard Cuthbertson began his closing comments by suggesting that on the basis of the conference discussion the first action point in the executive summary of the draft HESS needed amending to lay emphasis on the relevance of the historic environment to local communities. He also suggested that a reference to *enjoyment* be inserted alongside "understanding". He commented also on the lack of discussion during the event about climate change (it subsequently became clear that there had been animated discussion on this in at least one workshop – see addendum below).

He stressed that the historic environment needs to be understood as important throughout local and national government. It could not be compartmentalised. HE issues were relevant *inter alia* to

education, to planning policy, and to environmental strategy. There needed to be overarching input on HE concerns into government and governance.

Referring again to the executive summary he wondered whether the reference to “a confident nation” should be second on the list rather than at the bottom.

It was clear to him that the need for a Welsh Historic Environment link organisation had been clearly voiced. There could be a debate about how one might come about but there was no doubt in his mind that this needed to be a priority within government strategy.

Finally, he remarked on the enthusiasm and commitment demonstrated by participants at the conference. He noted that we are a small and close-knit nation, with a government that is close at hand. Taking a leaf from JFK, he suggested that we always needed to ask, not just what government could do, but what we could do *ourselves*, how could *we make a difference*.

## **Detailed record of workshop discussions**

### **Q1 What will be the priorities for the historic environment?**

Better communications.

Coordination across the sector.

An organisation to champion and coordinate activity across the sector

Build links between central organisations and local representatives within the amenity societies

Take advantage of new technologies.

Transparent delivery mechanism for the review.

Communicate clearly, so that professionals do not confuse with jargon. Experts should not be “the problem”, but the historic environment, although complex, should relate to ordinary people.

Local people should be involved in the management of their surroundings.

Education is important as is attention to access, both in physical terms and through interpretation.

Celebrate success and share our work.

Maintain the general health of the HE by reducing the number of buildings at risk through a publicly visible and accessible system that promotes public and private sector partnership.

Local authorities need more statutory teeth to tackle BAR and the government needs a stronger line against owners who allow historic assets to decay. HBAC could examine BAR registers to highlight problems and exert government powers.

Robust protection of listed buildings and conservation areas

Involvement: keep the community and owners of buildings informed and included before listing

Tighten planning enforcement, not least by tackling unauthorised works in conservation areas

Museums need to address the question of social benefits from understanding of the HE.

Increased funding.

Spread assistance to "our" buildings

Provide wider support to schools learning Welsh language and culture

Make the HE more interesting, for example via battle re-enactments

## **Q2 How can we build effective partnerships**

Better communications amongst all concerned.

Partnership within the sector would be helped by an umbrella body for the HE that is distinct from government.

We need a single point of contact equivalent to WEL, an umbrella body for all interested in the heritage.

Build on existing networks of professionals in the voluntary sector and public sector.

Break down barriers between government and conservation planning in Las.

Partnership is important, but structures need to be realistic, bringing together volunteers, owners, local government, Cadw, etc. Ownership is often a stumbling block to realistic partnership

Cadw and local authorities need to work together to generate planning briefs for developers. Dialogue is essential from the start.

Perhaps a person to act as a bridge between the public and the local authority would be helpful

Improve grant schemes to enable smaller and more local groups to access resources.

Money!

Improve confidence in the planning system

Identify the right decision-makers with whom to work.

### **Q3 How can we recognise and strengthen the voluntary sector contribution to the historic environment**

Facilitate communication amongst all relevant parties

Ensure a single point of contact that will enable coordination of groups within the sector

Share guidance and best practice

Build capacity; this is the key – the issue is not simply financial

Enable representation through a single voice

Create a centralised organisation as an information store

Recognise the enormous expertise within the sector; this needs a mechanism to enable it to be accessed

Enable effective voluntary sector input and ensure that voluntary sector views are valued

Recognise, value and foster the voluntary sector

Expand consultation to representatives of local and expert groups

Rapid notification of built (and natural) heritage issues by electronic communication

Develop links with other environmental disciplines, for instance, green business

Develop means to promote an holistic understanding and appreciation of the historic environment

Publicity and profile raising

### **Q4 What other issues should we address as a sector?**

Effective information for owners of heritage assets setting out right and responsibilities

A strategy to develop/utilise chapels

Education to involve and stimulate young people

Tie into existing community groups

Schools could benefit from activity days at historic sites.

There is a gap in history teaching between KS2 and college.

History needs to be presented in an interactive, “living” way.

Teachers need INSETS to inspire them to get children out of the classroom to see history in action.

Support local initiatives that promote learning about the HE, e.g. heritage weekends

Promote local engagement with recent history

Problems are posed (for schools?) by health and safety issues and risk assessment requirements.

Win support of local media for heritage issues

Persuade local politicians to develop an interest in the local HE

## **Addendum**

Not all the workshop discussion got written down, and an aspect of the plenary was that the chairman queried the lack of comment on climate change and sustainability issues. However, it was clear that one workshop at least began discussion of this problem. Architects present highlighted clients' increasing concern with energy use and professionals were worried that this could be a source of pressure for unsuitable alterations to historic buildings. Climate change could also affect the habitability of listed buildings by people with modest incomes. The research into this issue being conducted by the BRE and by English Heritage was noted, while Historic Scotland is interested in the embodied energy use of a building over time.

Frances Voelcker has pointed out in a subsequent communication that Sustainable Gwynedd is working with the National Trust, BRE Wales and the Welsh School of Architecture to investigate how massive rubble walls work in our climate and whether there need to be means to upgrade thermal performance while limiting the compromise to a building's appearance. She stressed in her note that historic buildings will only survive if they are in use; that to be usable they must address the issue of energy efficiency; and that there is therefore a need for the sector to investigate how historic buildings can best be made energy efficient.