



Llywodraeth Cymru
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A review of Cadw's governance arrangements: Welsh Government response

Response by the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Social Justice to the 'A review of Cadw's Governance arrangements' report.

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General introduction

I was pleased to be appointed Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Social Justice by the First Minister in March 2024. Culture and heritage play critical roles in shaping our identity, enriching our communities and inspiring future generations. They can also be important tools for enabling social justice. Participation in cultural and heritage activities is recognised to bring positive outcomes for individuals, communities and wider society's well-being. Bringing these areas together into one portfolio, provides an excellent opportunity to capitalise on these benefits.

The recommendations in Theme F around supporting Cadw being for all people and embracing a modern Wales through its work and practices, acknowledges heritage should be accessible and relevant to everyone who lives and visits Wales, whatever their socio-economic background, race, religion, age, sexuality, gender, disability or health.

My predecessor with responsibility for Cadw, Dawn Bowden MS, Deputy Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism, and I wish to extend our thanks to all Members of the Task and Finish Group who have given their time and expertise to undertake this review. Our particular thanks to Roger Lewis who chaired the Group. We are grateful for the active engagement and consultation the Group undertook with Cadw staff and its many stakeholders. This has helped inform the report and the 29, wide-ranging recommendations.

Cadw has consistently performed well in recent years with significant achievements in the many roles it undertakes. We were pleased, to see this confirmed by the review team in the Chair's introduction with the statement 'the Cadw team are to be congratulated for delivering impressively upon its mission and purpose across all its many and varied areas of responsibility over recent years'. These include its role in supporting the protection of the wider historic environment of Wales, its role as a major visitor business and in conserving and

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delivering safe public access to 131 historic sites in its direct care. The Review rightly recognises the ‘breadth, scale and complexity of Cadw’s work is not to be underestimated’. It was particularly pleasing to read in the Chair’s opening remarks “Cadw is, without doubt, a wonderful, high-achieving organisation, which celebrates and reinforces Welsh identity, staffed by wonderful people and deservedly it is something for us all to cherish and to be proud of”.

The recommendations range in scope and include several which are intended to help clarify the role of the Cadw Board and the ways in which Government procedures might be adapted to allow Cadw to operate even more effectively. Several recommendations suggest how Cadw works with its partners can be reinforced. Others consider how some of Cadw’s wide-ranging activities can be enhanced to assist its core purpose.

The Report helpfully identifies some recommendations as priorities, including some which could be put in place relatively quickly, whilst others are recognised as more operational and longer-term ambitions. Whilst I acknowledge the intention of all the recommendations are to be helpful and supportive of Cadw’s role, I recognise some have financial implications which would be challenging to deliver in the current financial climate, a point recognised by the Review team.

The recommendations in the report are grouped into a series of 6 themes, I shall respond to the recommendations under each theme heading.

Theme A

“ Creating greater agility, flexibility and dynamism for Cadw through the return of agreed delegated authorities to the Cadw Senior Executive Team (SET), whilst remaining as an Internal Agency of Welsh Government. ”

I support the 3 recommendations in this Theme. My officials in Cadw are in the

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process of devising a detailed timetable to implement those recommendations which can be taken forward in the short term. They will need support from officials in other Departments, in particular, from human resources and governance teams, when considering a number of the recommendations such as revisiting the Internal Agency framework document. This plan will need to be fully costed and affordable given the challenging financial context we are currently operating in.

Theme B

“ Clarifying the role of the Cadw Board and for the Board to develop a closer and direct relationship with the Deputy Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism (DMAST) alongside the Director of Culture Sport and Tourism (DCST), or with the Minister and department responsible for Cadw in the future. ”

In principle I agree with all 4 recommendations. As the new Cabinet Secretary with responsibility for Cadw, I would welcome a closer relationship with the Board and agree it is timely to undertake a review of its effectiveness. In the short time since its establishment, the role of the Board has evolved and new Members with different perspectives have been recruited. I value the advice and expertise of the Board in supporting Welsh Ministers to take decisions.

Theme C

“ Focussing on people and modifying Welsh Government processes and procedures where they relate to Cadw, particularly regarding HR, procurement and the recruitment, promotion and retention of staff. Ensure

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the processes and procedures are appropriate to the work, the skills of the staff and the particular issues and challenges facing Cadw. Most importantly, ensure that actions are delivered in a timely manner. ”

There are 9 recommendations in this Theme, including 4 which are not governance related. I am aware some of the work of Cadw is not the traditional kind of work associated with the Civil Service, including running popular historic attractions which make an important contribution to the visitor economy, with all the associated conservation, event and retail functions which must take place throughout the year including weekends. I recognise Civil Service processes and procedures can be seen as a barrier to undertaking this work in an efficient and timely manner and may appear to restrict the flexible and agile way in which Cadw needs to operate. However, this needs to be balanced against the principle that Cadw must act responsibly and be able to demonstrate value for public money. Senior officials within the Welsh Government will need to consider these recommendations. I am aware there is broader activity underway to streamline policies, processes and procedures and it is critical the recommendations of the report and the needs of Cadw and its stakeholders are taken in to account in that work. I do recognise the challenges the Report has identified and the drive for greater flexibility to be given to Cadw so it can take more innovative approaches. However, it is important the Civil Service principles around equality, fair and open processes are retained, underpinned by Welsh Government values of creativity, fairness, partnership and professionalism.

It should also be recognised the implementation of a number of these recommendations will have financial implications for Cadw, for example a review of staffing levels and grades. Any new roles would need to be carefully considered on a case-by-case basis and would need to demonstrate they would be directly linked to ‘invest to grow’ or ‘invest to save’ initiatives, for example, through the generation of additional commercial income or through achieving savings by a change in approach, or can be demonstrated they are essential in order to deliver statutory responsibilities. With a 10.5% reduction in Cadw’s

budget for 2024 to 2025, prioritisation will need to be given to fill critical posts within the structure.

In principle, I can see the merit of establishing a Welsh school of heritage and conservation skills. However given current financial constraints, this is unlikely to be achievable in the short term without significant external partnership funding. It would require reprioritisation of current resource and funding. However, great progress has been made in improving qualifications available for heritage skills, including the development of training opportunities. We will continue to work alongside Further Education bodies and the Private Sector to develop these qualifications wherever we can.

Cadw has made great strides in developing its volunteer offer in recent years. I agree in order to attract more volunteers, there is a requirement to streamline and simplify the recruitment process. Cadw will also work with Amgueddfa Cymru, Wales Council for Voluntary Action and others, to learn more about their experience of offering volunteering opportunities. There may be opportunities to work more closely with external volunteering organisations, for example, through 'adopt a monument' schemes. However, this needs to be undertaken in consultation with the Trade Unions and in a systematic and thorough way, to ensure health and safety arrangements and employment implications are not compromised.

Theme D

“ Reinforcing partnerships which support Cadw’s role in the wider heritage sector and services through closer relationships with cultural, creative, historic and visitor organisations across Wales and the UK. ”

I agree the Historic Wales Partnership needs to be reset to encourage closer

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collaboration, sharing of knowledge and expertise in areas of common interest. I am aware some progress has been made recently between individual partners, for example, between Cadw and Amgueddfa Cymru, in developing a joint vision for Caerleon, working alongside the Local Authority. However examples such as this, need to be accelerated with wider collaboration and sharing of resources becoming the norm.

The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW) has undertaken excellent work over the last few years such as through its collaborative CHERISH programme. However I agree with the Review it would be timely to explore the relationship between it and Cadw. The RCAHMW is a small organisation and, in common with others across the sector, is facing significant financial challenges, so any opportunities to share resources and shape common work programmes need to be carefully considered. Both organisations need to look closely at their functions and responsibilities and identify synergies and different ways of delivering. All options need to be considered, from more closely aligning work programmes to full amalgamation, as has happened to similar organisations in England and Scotland.

The Report recognises Cadw already has a strong relationship with local authorities across Wales, particularly through their building conservation and planning services. However, I agree there may also be opportunities to work more closely on research, outreach and public education. I note there is already a well understood mechanism for the delegation of powers in respect of listed building consents, based on the professional skills within local authorities. Any proposals for further delegation would need to recognise the resource implications for all parties and need assurance this would not put the protection and conservation of the historic environment at risk.

The final recommendation in this Theme, is not directly governance related and states the Historic Wales Partnership should collectively develop a specific cultural tourism strategy for Wales. The Government is currently consulting on the Culture Strategy for Wales. This will cover the contribution that cultural

organisations can make to tourism in Wales. I am not convinced a separate cultural tourism strategy is currently necessary.

Theme E

“ Enhancing some of Cadw’s wide-ranging activities to assist its core purpose, including building on Cadw’s commercial work as a significant visitor attraction and commercial enterprise, and its role as a keeper and promotor of the historic heritage of Wales. ”

This Theme includes 4 recommendations. The Report rightly acknowledges Cadw’s commercial performance has improved significantly in recent years, in particular following the most recent review of its commercial performance undertaken 6 years ago. Indeed, Cadw continues to review the way it operates, including commercial activities, staff skills, resource levels and its relationship with external partners. However, there is always a need to reconsider its approach and seek external advice where appropriate.

In recent years, Cadw has endeavoured to sell Welsh products within its shops, support and promote Welsh companies in running the cafes at sites, and work with Welsh creative companies in developing and promoting events at the sites. I am mindful this has to be undertaken in the context of procurement rules and obtaining best value for public money.

I am less convinced by the recommendation on improved flexibility in relation to communications and marketing. There is currently a good and productive working relationship between the Welsh Government press and communication teams and Cadw when working on key policy and Ministerial and Government Business announcements. Communications plans adopted by Cadw, dovetail with wider Welsh Government communications and messaging such as through

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Visit Wales, net zero, where Cadw's van fleet is now all electric, and Anti-racist Wales Action Plan. Alongside this, Cadw enjoys significant freedom and flexibility in relation to its commercial, PR, marketing and website activities to promote both itself and its monuments. These arrangements work well and rarely do any challenges or issues arise.

The recommendation to examine the potential benefits of creating a standalone arms-length, charitable vehicle is appealing. This has previously been considered and thought to be challenging in the context of charity laws. However, I agree there could be merit in re-investigation to establish whether the proposed benefits are in fact realistic and also to identify all the pros and cons.

The final recommendation in this section is not governance related but recommends Cadw should regularly review its survey programmes to re-address priorities. The Review recognises the leading role that Cadw has played in enhancing our understanding of the historic environment. Along with completing many thematic scheduling enhancement archaeological surveys, Wales is the only UK nation to undertake a comprehensive national survey of buildings in all communities, the re-listing survey completed in 2005. Specific thematic surveys continue to be undertaken, for example 20th Century buildings and archaeological sites associated with coasts and rivers. However, I recognise it is vital, this work maintains momentum to stay ahead of the many threats, both natural and manmade, facing our historic environment, not least through the impact of climate change. Cadw has always undertaken this work in partnership with others, and ensuring an active programme of research and protection remains a priority.

Theme F

“ To support Cadw being for all people and embracing a modern Wales

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through its work and practices. ”

It is without doubt an ambition to attract more diverse audience to Cadw sites and, in particular, to recognise the heritage of Wales should be accessible to everyone and reflect the different people and cultures who call our country home. Attracting a diverse workforce into Cadw remains a challenge, although strides are being made on outreach activity and in removing the barriers for people, working with colleagues and partners with expertise in this area. The Anti-racist Wales Action Plan has provided the platform for innovative work to be undertaken in this sphere, especially around lifting obstacles for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities to access heritage sites and cultural collections.

Progress is being made on recruiting Welsh speaking custodians to Cadw's sites, but it remains a challenge to attract sufficient numbers, especially in some areas of Wales. We will continue to work closely with the Welsh Language Commissioner to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language across all of Cadw's functions.

Cadw also makes a valuable contribution to delivering the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The last decade has seen a growth in evidence showing that engaging with heritage, culture, nature and physical activity supports mental well-being. Cadw will continue to engage with all the Welsh Commissioners in publicising the positive contribution heritage can make to young people, older people, the Welsh language and future generations.

As acknowledged in the Report, Cadw has made strides in recent years to improve accessibility to the sites in its care, for example, the access bridges into Harlech and Caernarfon castles and more recently the lift allowing access to the top floors of the King's Gate at Caernarfon. However, there is much more to do. An audit and review of access to Cadw sites for disabled people will be

conducted. Alongside a planned audience development plan, this will allow Cadw to enhance its methods of engaging diverse visitors both remotely and physically. Some of the educational material developed by Cadw already uses British Sign Language, but subject to available resource this should become the norm.

Cadw's membership base is incredibly important to the sustainability of Cadw and now stands at over 53,000 members. Cadw recognises the value of this support and will continue to ensure membership offers good value for money and continue to explore how this relationship can be further developed and enhanced.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I have asked my officials to start work on implementing the recommendations which can be taken forward in the short-term, taking account of the difficult budgetary environment, which is unlikely to improve in the near future. I commit to updating you on progress.

I wish to reiterate my thanks to the Chair, Roger Lewis, and members of the Task and Finish Group listed in the report who worked so diligently. It is evident from the content of the report, it has been undertaken by individuals with real expertise from across the heritage sector and beyond. It will hold Cadw in good stead as it strives for continuous improvement into the future.

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