



Comisiwn Brenhinol
Henebion Cymru
Royal Commission on the Ancient
and Historical Monuments of Wales

Operational Plan 2022–26

Our mission is to help everyone understand, value and enjoy the historic environment of Wales in all its diversity.

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn y Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.



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1. Introduction

This Operational Plan expands the principles set out in our Strategic Vision and explains how we plan to deliver the requirements of the Royal Warrant and our Welsh Government remit over the next five years.

2. The Royal Warrant

Our core mission is enshrined in our Royal Warrant, which charges us to:

- provide for the survey and recording of ancient and historical monuments and constructions connected with, or illustrative of, the contemporary culture, civilisation and conditions of the life of the people in Wales from the earliest times (including the ancient and historical monuments and constructions in, on or under, the seabed within the United Kingdom territorial sea adjacent to Wales)
- by compiling, maintaining and curating the National Monuments Record of Wales as the basic national record of the archaeological and historical environment:
- by identifying, surveying, interpreting and recording all buildings, sites and ancient monuments of archaeological, architectural and historic interest in Wales or within the territorial sea adjacent to Wales,
- in order both to enhance and update the National Monuments Record of Wales, and also to respond to statutory needs: by providing advice and information relevant to the preservation and conservation of such buildings, sites and ancient monuments of archaeological, architectural and historic interest:
- by collecting and exchanging data with other record holders and providing an index to data from other sources: by promoting the public use of information available in the National Monuments Record of Wales by all appropriate means: by establishing and maintaining national standards in surveying, recording and curating of records relating to archaeology and historical architecture and providing guidance on these matters to other bodies and by exercising responsibility for the oversight of local Sites and Monuments Records.

In addition, the Royal Commission is a statutory consultee in the Welsh planning and development control process, which means that we are required by the Westminster, Welsh and local governments to give advice on

applications for listed building consent involving partial or total demolition of listed buildings, and to comment on national infrastructure projects, including marine planning applications.

Working with Cadw we support local government conservation officers with pre-planning advice relating to listed buildings, and we carry out at-risk survey and research work and emergency survey work for significant sites and buildings that are at risk.

Our expertise is sought by the various Welsh, UK and international advisory boards and panels on which we sit, and UK and international panels, such as the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority’s Heritage Forum, the Digital 4Culture Forum, the UK Industrial Archaeology Network, the Welsh Historic Places of Worship Forum, the Historic Environment Group, the Historic Built Environment Group, the Architectural Archives Panel, the Welsh Local Heritage Initiative, the Welsh Archaeological Research Framework Steering Group, the People’s Collection Wales Management Group, and the Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales World Heritage Site Management Group.

3. Welsh Government remit

Because we rely on the public purse for a proportion of our funding, we deliver our Royal Warrant work in ways that demonstrably contribute to the targets in the Programme for Government and to the objectives set out in our Remit Letter from the Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport. We believe that there is a high degree of convergence between the two remits in the following four areas, and it is these that we will prioritise over the next five years:

1. **A greener Wales:** addressing the climate and nature emergency.
2. **The digital strategy for Wales:** achieving a digital transformation in the delivery of our public services.
3. **Welsh language and history:** developing the List of Historic Placenames of Wales, contributing to the National Curriculum for Wales and its emphasis on Welsh history and supporting the goal of a thriving Welsh language.
4. **Cultural strategy:** contributing to the formulation and delivery of Wales’s cultural strategy and facilitating community engagement with the historic environment of Wales.

4. Core principles

In contributing to these objectives, we will continue to emphasise the centrality of our **Royal Warrant** and the co-dependence of the Royal Commission's **survey work** and its curation of the **National Monuments Record of Wales (NMRW)**. It is the **interconnectedness** of these activities, and the public services based upon them, that makes us unique as a national institution in Wales.

Through our survey work we create **new knowledge** which is used to enhance the NMRW, thus ensuring that the record continues to grow as a resource that is up-to-date and enables users to understand, value and enjoy the diverse histories of Wales and its historic environment.

By focusing our survey work on **heritage at risk** and the impacts of **climate change**, we aim to create a record for posterity of change in the historic environment and to provide the evidence base and the knowledge that is needed to decide which buildings and monuments should be protected through various forms of scheduling and to underpin local and national government conservation, planning and development control policy and decision-making.

We will support Cadw and the Welsh Government in **meeting Wales's statutory and international treaty commitments** with regard to planning, conservation and responsible stewardship of the historic environment, including the protection and management of the newly inscribed World Heritage Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales.

We will ensure that the **National Monuments Record of Wales (NMRW)** is managed to the highest standards of conservation, cataloguing and public access, as befits one of Wales's three national collections (alongside the National Library and Amgueddfa Cymru) and in compliance with our Archive Service Accreditation and our status as a Recognised Place of Deposit for public records.

We will continue to make this unique resource available through **Coflein** and our dedicated **Enquiries Service** which is staffed by trained professionals to ensure the highest standard of customer service. We will promote our resources to the widest range of users and for the widest range of purposes, in order to enable people to understand, value and enjoy the heritage of Wales and their own communities.

We will continue to lead the sector in the use of new **technology and innovation**, not least in ensuring the widest possible access to the material held in the NMRW through our Coflein platform, our Enquiries Service and in the pioneering work that we are undertaking to push the boundaries of map-based data integration and analysis, digital survey of sites and buildings, and digital interpretation of, and engagement with, heritage sites and narratives.

We will share our knowledge with partner organisations through our **oversight of Historic Environment Records** and the **Digital Past** conference as well as through our work with the National Library and the University of Aberystwyth to develop a bilingual **Trusted Digital Repository** for the arts and humanities in Wales. We will make use of innovative digital technology, increased digitisation of our archive and online platforms as a means of enabling worldwide engagement with our data and outreach activities.

We will demonstrate the relevance of our work and collections to diverse communities in Wales and help them to tell stories about their lives and heritage. By providing access to the rich holdings of the NMRW, and working in **partnership** with the other heritage, tourism, educational and cultural bodies in Wales and internationally, we will maximise our impact and project a positive image of the heritage of Wales to the world.

We will work towards the framing and delivery of Wales's cultural strategy and towards a more integrated approach to the protection, promotion and enhancement of the natural and cultural heritage of Wales across different Welsh Government portfolios.

We will continue to provide a fully bilingual public service and actively encourage the use of the **Welsh language** in all our activities.

We will celebrate diversity and aim to eliminate inequality in all its forms and align our work to the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** and the Welsh Government's **Economic Action Plan**, ensuring that our procurement processes support local supply chains and contribute to the principles of fair work, sustainability and help to develop the industries and services of the future.

The relationship between the employer and the trade union at the Royal Commission is based on **social partnership**. We believe our goals can best be achieved by management and the trade union working together to give staff a real say in the workplace, ensure that the interests of staff are promoted and

protected, help reduce inequalities and improve terms and conditions for all, especially in such areas as pay, terms and conditions, policies and procedures and workforce planning and organisational change.

We will support the **physical and mental health** of our workforce, encourage a ‘one team’ approach among colleagues, building on what we have learned from the pandemic to promote agility and adaptability combined with collaborative and supportive behaviours. We will review working spaces and practices (including working from home) to support efficiency and productivity and environmental gains. We will help staff develop through training, coaching and learning from each other. We aim to increase the diversity of our workforce and our Welsh language capacity and ensure that we are inclusive and welcoming to everyone.

5. Operational Plan 2022–2026

1. A greener Wales: addressing the climate and nature emergency

We will:

- Chair the HEG Climate Change subgroup and lead delivery of the Historic Environment and Climate Change Sector Adaptation Plan.
- Complete the CHERISH project during 2022–23 with a year of activity to promote awareness of the impacts of climate change on the heritage of Wales and appropriate mitigation and adaptation measures.
- Maintain the strong Welsh/Irish partnership that has delivered the CHERISH project and work to secure follow-on funding for further work to monitor the impacts of climate change on the historic environment with the aim of providing both an early warning mechanism and a range of mitigation and adaptation measures.
- Continue to monitor and understand the impacts of climate change on the historic environment of Wales through our aerial and drone survey work, our maritime survey work and our archaeological field work. This includes continuing our work as a statutory consultee for marine planning and contributing to infrastructure planning for renewable energy schemes, re-forestation and coastal and river defence projects, to ensure that the historic environment is not impacted negatively by mitigation and adaptation measures.

- Continue our work of recording 20th century built heritage at risk, including the most significant of the schools that are due to be replaced under the Welsh Government’s 21st-century School and Colleges Programme, post-war civic centres and places of worship.
- With academic partners, seek research council funding to deliver a project to study the conservation needs of 20th-century buildings and the issues relating to embodied energy and carbon and retrofitting as an alternative to building replacement.
- Develop new initiatives to target specific areas of Wales’s maritime cultural heritage that are under particular threat from climate change, including coastal archaeology and the inter-tidal zone, small historic harbours and upland archaeological sites.
- Support the work of the Royal Commission’s Future Generations Working Group in delivering our Environmental Action Plan.
- Continue with our membership of the Fit for the Future and Climate Heritage Networks working across Wales and the wider world to share best practice.
- Mitigate the environmental impact of our own operations by enabling those staff who are able to work from home to do so, minimising commuting journeys, maximising the number of business-related journeys that are taken by sustainable modes, reducing waste across the Commission to achieve zero waste targets, supporting the work of our Green Champions and ensuring that the biodiversity impact is given due consideration in our decision making.
- Encourage users of our services to make fewer journeys by digitising and making available online more archive material from the NMRW and providing a full digitisation service wherever possible, subject to copyright restrictions.

2. The digital strategy for Wales: achieving a digital transformation in the delivery of public services

We will:

- Ensure that our ICT systems are robust and secure.
- Develop and enhance Coflein as a portal to the resources of the NMRW by a continuing programme of review and data improvement; audit Coflein content to ensure that it supports diversity objectives; and

define a standard for Coflein data to guide future content creation and respond to user expectations.

- Review and decide on the future development of our other sites, including the Battlefields, Chapels, Placenames, Historic Wales and corporate websites.
- Encourage greater digital access to the NMRW collections by expanding the volume of material available via Coflein.
- Build on the work carried out by the Enquiries Service during the pandemic to encourage users to make greater use of our remote access services, answering enquiries digitally wherever possible.
- Subject to funding, make the complete aerial photographic coverage of Wales available as a priority, being the part of the NMRW that is most in demand.
- Take in and catalogue the Cadw archive collection and make it available via Coflein.
- Seek UKRI funding for a bi-lingual Trusted Digital Repository for the arts, humanities and social sciences sector in Wales and play a leading role in the management and delivery of the project in partnership with the National Library of Wales and Aberystwyth University.
- Develop and extend our pioneering work in the area of map-based data integration as a means of bringing together disparate sources of data about the historic environment in ways that are most useful to government, planners, utility and infrastructure managers, developers, heritage managers, students, academics and communities.
- In partnership with other data-holding organisations (including Cadw, Natural Resources Wales, the National Trust, the Ministry of Defence and the Welsh Archaeological Trusts) consider ways of providing a comprehensive one-stop shop for Welsh historic environment data.
- Recruit a Geomatics Officer to support our development and implementation of new survey technologies in the recording of archaeological sites and historic buildings as well as processing and manipulation of this data to inform understanding and programmes of restoration and conservation.
- Speed up the transition of field data to public access via Coflein and other data platforms (including SketchFab), to enable users to draw upon the most up-to-date survey results.

- Continue to investigate and develop our use of digital survey technologies including laser scanning, photogrammetry, gigapixel photography, drone and LiDAR data capture, geophysical survey and marine survey, ensuring sites are recorded to the highest levels of accuracy and detail.
- In partnership with other organisation seek funding to continue our sector-leading digital interpretation work for enhanced public understanding of sites and buildings and their narratives, including virtual reconstructions, digital animations, interactive resources and mixed reality products.

3. Welsh language and history: developing the List of Historic Place Names of Wales, contributing to the National Curriculum for Wales and its emphasis on Welsh history and supporting the goal of a thriving Welsh language

We will:

- Respond to the Cymraeg 2050 strategy by supporting Welsh-language learners with training, encouraging the use of Welsh at work and in meetings and public lectures and in structured social interactions (such as our weekly ‘Sgwrs dros Baned’ sessions).
- Continue to comply with our Welsh Language Standards by providing a fully bi-lingual public service, creating and sharing Welsh language content online, encouraging the use of the Welsh language in all of our outreach activities and recruiting Welsh speakers to vacant posts wherever possible, thereby creating an environment conducive to the government goal of a million Welsh speakers.
- In partnership with our heritage-sector partners, maintain our presence at the National Eisteddfod by presenting lectures, talks, activities and displays in Lle Hanes (the Heritage Pavilion).
- Work with one or more schools in Wales to develop learning materials to enable students to study the history and architecture of their own school buildings as part of the Wales-focused Cynefin curriculum.
- Work with schools and partners in the heritage sector to contribute modules to the Hwb to support the teaching of Welsh history.
- Through activities such as in-person and virtual group visits continue to support learning at all levels, promoting our resources and expertise in

the history of Wales and its historic environment, and the innovative technologies we use to record it.

- By providing access to the rich holdings of the NMRW continue to aid teachers and students to undertake research related to the histories of sites and communities across Wales.
- Through the provision of volunteer opportunities engage and support people from all walks of life to gain skills in such areas as librarianship, archive and data management, survey and excavation techniques, local history research, dendrochronology, mapping and photography.
- Continue to play a leading role in the development of People’s Collection Wales and to develop its scope and usage.
- Continue to enhance the List of Historic Placenames and increase awareness and use of the List to promoting the importance, value and retention of historic place names and Welsh place names in particular.
- Set up and facilitate the work of a task-and-finish group to assess current progress, identify future objectives and make recommendations to the Royal Commission on how we can enhance and promote the List of Historic Place Names.
- Respond to the recommendations of the Placenames task-and-finish group to identify future objectives and programmes of enhancement, promotion and partnership working.

4. Cultural Strategy: contributing to the formulation and delivery of Wales’s Cultural Strategy and facilitating community engagement with the historic environment of Wales

We anticipate that the Cultural Strategy will reinforce the following Programme for Government commitments:

- Address all forms of inequality and achieve an anti-racist Wales.
- Ensure that the histories and cultures of our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities and LGBTQ+ people are properly represented and celebrated.
- Improve access to heritage and support participation in discovering and sharing the diverse heritage of Wales.
- Promote health and well-being; create opportunities for social prescribing to tackle isolation and support well-being

- Enable people in vulnerable or disadvantaged groups and those in under-represented communities to participate in cultural activities.
- Create opportunities for young people, the elderly and under-represented communities.
- Make our cities, towns and villages even better places in which to live and work.
- Ensure that communities can thrive as centres of social exchange, leisure, sport and cultural activities.
- Project a powerful and positive image of Wales to the world.

In response to the Cultural Strategy we anticipate that we will undertake some of the following:

- Subject to National Lottery funding, deliver a community engagement project based on Pendinas hillfort in partnership with the Penparcau Community Forum and local schools and charities.
- Subject to National Lottery funding, support the Jewish Heritage Foundation in its project to establish a physical centre and a digital hub for exploring the heritage of the Jewish Community in Wales based in the former synagogue in Merthyr Tydfil through the creation of a series of innovative digital resources for interpretation and education.
- Highlight the heritage of the seldom heard communities in our projects, exhibitions, website and social media content, ensuring that the histories and cultures of our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities and LGBTQ+ people are properly represented in the Royal Commission's research and outreach work.
- Actively promote the heritage of all faiths in Wales; investigate partnership working with Dr Abdul-Azim Ahmed, Cardiff University, on a project on the heritage of Islam in Wales; and continue to Chair the Historic Places of Worship Forum, showcasing best practice in keeping places of worship in community use, contributing to the Welsh Government's objective of making our cities, towns and villages even better places in which to live and work and promoting pilgrimage and faith tourism in fulfilment of the Visit Wales tourism strategy.
- Support the Welsh Government's commitment to being an age-friendly nation through our volunteering programme, our curation of the People's Collection Wales 'Memory Archive' and promotion of NMRW

archival photographs for memory work with people living with dementia.

- Strengthen our partnerships with voluntary organisations and communities through our work for the People’s Collection Wales, working closely with local and regional archives, libraries and museums to promote the project and encourage participation.
- Support slate communities in northwest Wales in maximising the benefits of World Heritage status; encourage sustainable tourism and support the protection and management of the slate landscape by contributing to management group activities and delivering actions in the Property Management Plan, including bi-lingual publication of ‘Caring For Slate Landscapes of Wales’.
- Through the work of the enquiries service, continue to encourage life-long learning and engagement with the history and culture of Wales by individuals and local groups thereby helping to overcome educational inequalities.
- Present the results of our work back to the communities in which we undertake research by means of live and online talks, guided blogs and website material so as to encourage participation in discovering and sharing diverse heritage at a local level.
- Continue a programme of varied publication (media articles, pamphlets, popular books, research reports, papers in peer-reviewed journals, chapters in edited works, monographs) that promotes the heritage of Wales at national and international level.
- Improve pride in local community and enable community-led heritage and conservation activities through supporting enquiries by local researchers and community groups in undertaking research and obtaining relevant records.
- Continue to provide assistance and facilitate access and participation for D/deaf communities and for those living with other disabilities, including hidden disabilities, by our staff trained in such areas as British Sign Language, are Dementia Friends and Mental Health First Aiders, as well as the provision of such equipment as an induction loop, a high contrast, large key computer keyboard and magnifiers for the visually impaired in the search room.
- Support young people into work by creating work experience, training and mentoring opportunities, and support the sector skills audit that will

be conducted under the aegis of the skills sub-group of the Historic Wales Strategic Partnership. When creating new posts, consider recruiting trainees wherever possible, and seek additional funding for formal apprenticeships leading to full time employment with the Commission.

- Use the new network of Disabled People’s Employment Champions to help close the gap between people with disabilities and the rest of the working population.
- Support the principles of ‘Reflecting Wales in Running Wales’ by improving diversity in the workforce and at board level and encourage diverse applicants for posts and Commissioner roles.
- Continue to engage with people from around the world, including the Welsh diaspora, by making more of the NMRW available online and connecting with our global enquirers and customers through our public services activity and our growing Friends’ network. Work with sector partners (including the Welsh School of Architecture, the Discovery Programme in Ireland and Maastricht University) in undertaking climate-change research on an international basis, including hosting international conferences and day schools, and look for opportunities for learning exchange programmes.