

Baroness Randerson

Lines to take – Review of heritage services in Wales

Background

- The Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism has announced the appointment of Baroness Jennifer Randerson to lead a review of national heritage services in Wales. This review is specifically looking at commercial and property operations, rather than the statutory/inspectorate functions
- The aim of the group will be to present Ministers with options that ensure national heritage bodies across Wales enhance outcomes and resilience, and deliver synergies in a range of areas
- The Task and Finish group will be asked to prepare a feasibility study exploring a number of options by 31 March 2016
- The study will be presented to Ministers, and following the election in May 2015 the new Government will decide how to progress with the recommendations

1.1. What is the scope and objectives of the review?

The aim of the group will be to present Ministers with options that ensure heritage bodies Wales work together more closely, including:

- Creating a stronger, unified identity for the Welsh heritage sector;
- Improving the commercial performance of heritage sites and the contribution of the wider heritage sector to the Welsh economy;
- Realising opportunities for joint working in key areas including events, retail, promotions, marketing, communications, lifelong learning, conservation, research and interpretation;
- Ensuring the heritage sector delivers the objectives of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

There is no predetermined agenda – the group will be reviewing a range of options and models – including potentially merging some functions, strengthening the relationship between bodies in their existing form and introducing Service Level Agreements and Memorandums of Understanding to ensure partners work together effectively.

The review will take into account previous work including the work done in relation to the RCAHMMW. It will consider recent changes across the rest of the UK, including the recent changes in England and Scotland – evaluating their strengths and weaknesses.

The aim of the review is to strengthen and grow the heritage sector, to capitalise on synergies and opportunities for improving performance and working together to deliver the objectives of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Based on this evaluation the group will recommend the best ways to progress to Ministers.

2.2 Which partners are involved?

The work is being undertaken by PWC with a steering group that includes our major national heritage organisations - Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales, The National Library of Wales, The National Trust, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales and representatives of the TUS, Cadw, MALD and the department of Heritage, Tourism and Sport.

There are clearly many other partners in the sector including Local Authorities, third sector organisations, the education sector and members of the Historic Environment Group and there will be a consultation strategy as part of the work.

2.3 Will it reopen the debate about the RCAHMW?

The scope of the review is more about creating a stronger identity for the Welsh heritage sector, working together in key areas and improving the commercial performance to increase the heritage sector's contribution to the Welsh economy, and will not be considering the statutory side of the historic environment.

The Royal Commission will be sitting on the group and involved in all discussions, and the work undertaken as part of the review of the merger of the Royal Commission and Cadw a few years ago will be shared with the group to help inform and contribute towards discussions.

That work certainly identified a lot of opportunities for closer working between the organisations.

Note: Considerable work was done on a merger between RCAHMW and Cadw between 2012 and 2014. At the end of the project the then Minister John Griffiths decided not to merge the two 'for the time being' More recently the issue re-emerged during the debate on the Historic Environment of Wales Bill. In CELG the Deputy Minister said:

"Since becoming the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism, I have to say, I've been impressed by the work of the royal commission. But, I'm unable to support this amendment that, for the reasons given by Alun Davies, would essentially tie the hands of a future Government if it wished to look at alternative delivery options. So, I would urge Members to resist this amendment".

2.4 How will it relate to other reviews such as the Expert Review of Local Museum Provision in Wales?

This review will focus on the work of our core national institutions – but it is important to understand what is happening in the wider sector including in Local Authorities. Reports such as the Expert Review of Local Museum Provision in Wales led by Dr Haydn Edwards provide an important context for this work and we will be taking those into account.

2.5 Scotland and England have recently made big changes in how their heritage organisations work – are you proposing to do the same thing?

England has created two separate organisations – Historic England and English Heritage, whilst in Scotland a new organisation called Historic Environment Scotland has been created. We will certainly be looking to learn lessons from the strengths and weaknesses of those approaches.

2.6 Why is this review being undertaken now?

A recent review of Cadw’s commercial operations recommended that more could be done to encourage joint working across the wider heritage sector in Wales.

The findings of the project will be presented to a new Government at the start of a new Assembly term. It will be for them to decide how to proceed in future.

This is the first step of what could potentially lead to a larger exercise. If the group recommend high-level, significant structural changes are made to the heritage sector in Wales, and if the new Government agrees and decides to progress with this, then a more substantial review will be undertaken to determine the feasibility and practicalities of carrying out these changes.

2.7 How does the review relate to the Historic Environment (Wales) Bill?

The Historic Environment Wales Bill currently going through the Senedd is an important once-in-a-lifetime chance to improve the way the historic environment of Wales is protected and cared for.

This review is perfectly timed to build on and complement the new provisions in the Bill by looking at how heritage services are delivered for the public. The question of how heritage services are delivered in Wales was raised as part of the early consultation on the Bill and the evidence from this will all be considered by the review.

2.8 What does this mean for staff?

Until we see the outcomes of the group's discussions and the new Government determines what direction and actions to take, it's difficult to determine the impact, if any, on staff.

The Trade Union Side Chair will be involved in all discussions and group meetings where Welsh Government staff could be impacted – and staff are encouraged to contact their local union representative if they have any concerns.

You have emphasised from the outset that engaging with all staff to gather feedback and opinions will be a priority for the group whilst the review is undertaken.

Senior officials will hold regular meetings with staff to update them on progress, via e-mail and staff meetings and updates. A full update on progress to date will be given to all staff at the away day planned for 23 February.

Staff are encouraged to speak to their line managers, or with Cadw's Directors, at any point to discuss any queries or concerns they may have.