



Addoldai Cymru

Noddwyr : Patrons

Huw Edwards

Yr Athro : Professor Anthony Jones CBE

28/07/2020

The Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee
Inquiry into Covid-19 & its impact on Heritage Sector

Ymddireidolaeth Addoldai Cymru | Welsh Religious Buildings Trust

Addoldai Cymru (Welsh Religious Buildings Trust) is a charity set up by Cadw and the WCVA to take into ownership a selection of redundant chapels that are historically and/or architecturally significant to the story of chapel building and Nonconformity in Wales. We have to date acquired eight redundant chapels across Wales and across denominations and we are in the process of acquiring two more buildings. We continue to work to secure the funding needed for the repair and development of each of the buildings and to identify new uses where possible, returning them to the cultural heart of their communities.

We are managed by two part-time staff and trustees whose work is heavily reliant on the goodwill of local communities, volunteers and interested parties. We aim to tell the story of Welsh chapels from their humble beginnings to their becoming the building type described as the “national architecture of Wales”, as well as helping to retain something of an important legacy for the benefit of future generations.

Our chapels are acquired as a prescribed charity under the Redundant Churches and Other Religious Buildings Act 1969 and we have a duty to look after these in perpetuity, although ten buildings form a very small percentage of the c. 6,500 or so Nonconformist chapels built in Wales. We have identified over 160 chapels of especially high architectural and/or historical importance which deserve to be saved for the nation.

Active chapels in Wales are not just religious buildings since they are often the cultural and community hub of their communities. They have no doubt been hit hard during this crisis. The Nonconformist denominations are heavily reliant on the dwindling resources of individual chapels. The inherent problems of furloughing ministers and loss of income from wider community/cultural use, together with the likelihood that some older members will not return to regular services, will have a substantial impact on many chapels, with inevitable closures, thus exacerbating the loss of many important chapels across Wales.

Impact of COVID-19 on the Trust

The two members of staff have been able to work from home, but with limited resources we have been unable to provide any significant online presence. Live projects have been difficult to deliver but funders have to date responded with flexibility towards application deadlines and conditions, and hopefully this will continue.

We have fallen outside the eligibility criteria for the Welsh Government grant funding mechanisms for businesses/charities that have a rateable value as our buildings are redundant chapels, yet we have lost important income from tenants, volunteer activities and fundraising events. This will also be an issue for those active chapels that have diversified to wider community use and have lost important revenue.

The Trust relies on core funding from Cadw, and therefore our major concern will be the continuity of funding for our work going forward. Any loss in grant aid would put the continuation of the Trust in serious doubt and our building stock at even greater risk.

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