

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

Inquiry into the Welsh Government's Historic Environment Policy

Response from Christopher Taylor

Dear Sir,

Amalgamation of Cadw and Royal Commission

This letter is sent a little late in the consultation process, myself having only recently become aware of the proposals for change to the status of Cadw and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales. However, I trust it will still be in order to make some representation on the matter.

My main concern as an ordinary admirer of both bodies would be that any changes will not lead to a diminution in the standards of excellence which both organisations have so manifestly established in Wales.

I have to declare a personal interest, in that I know that in the opinion of my late uncle Dr A J Taylor, one time Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments, and former member of the Royal Commission in Wales, the creation and establishment of Cadw was of a far higher order than that of the similar bodies established in England and Scotland, when the former infrastructure was broken up.

As I remember, he always said that the system adopted in Wales was exemplary in that, inter alia, it continued to respect the role of the Inspectorate as of primary importance in the practical conservation of the monuments and the built heritage. I think that he would have been extremely concerned that any further changes might in any way weaken that essential objective.

One of the important roles of Cadw is the presentation and interpretation of the monuments in its care, and the standards of its guide books and publications is absolutely first class - my uncle's guides to Caernarfon, Harlech and Beaumaris castles are still published by Cadw - and it would be sad indeed if this element of the task were to be affected by any changes.

The role of the Royal Commission on the other hand has always been more academic, and more concerned with the recording and archiving of the historic environment. This is a distinct role, complimentary to, but essentially different from, the practical conservation work of Cadw.

As a bookseller, I am extremely aware of the quality of some of the popular and up market publications by the Royal Commission, which help to make some of its important work available to the general reader, but this is only part of the story, and it is ultimately the academic strength of the Commission that makes these high quality publications possible.

In an ideal world, there should surely be no changes. I would have thought that the record of the Welsh Government in other recent reorganisations, such as those carried out to the Wales Tourist Board and the WDA, has not been exactly, and resoundingly, successful, and therefore one should probably and necessarily be extremely cautious and concerned about any further upheavals emanating from Cardiff Bay.

Yours sincerely,

Christopher Taylor.