

Heneb: the Trust for Welsh Archaeology

The Corner House

6 Carmarthen Street

Llandeilo

Carmarthenshire SA19 6AE

Delyth Jewell MS

Chair Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee

Welsh Parliament

Cardiff Bay

CF99 1SN

Dear Ms Jewell,

9 January 2024

Heneb: the Trust for Welsh Archaeology. Funding Arrangements

I write on behalf of the Board of Trustees of the newly formed Heneb: the Trust for Welsh Archaeology to express concern about the significant level of cut to the funding settlement for Cadw in the draft budget for 2024/25. We feel that we should explain our anxiety about the likely implications for the management of archaeology in Wales, both on the work of Cadw and of the Trust, given the inevitable reduction in funding that Cadw will be able, in turn, to offer to the Trust.

As you will be aware, the four Welsh Archaeological Trusts (Clwyd-Powys, Dyfed, Glamorgan-Gwent and Gwynedd) were formed by Government in the mid 1970s to counteract threats to the preservation of the historic environment in Wales. This was part of a UK-wide response to the increasing pressure from development, but the system adopted in Wales was unique. The four trusts from the start supplied a unified and consistent service throughout the whole country, developing, over nearly 50 years, to add planning advice, conservation and survey, community and educational projects to their initial programmes of pure excavation. For many years the trusts have undertaken the maintenance of the Historic Environment Record on behalf of Welsh Ministers, upon whom this statutory responsibility rests, thereby ensuring the continuation of sustainable development, and economic growth. The system rapidly became, and remains, the most successful model for archaeological services in the UK, flourishing as the trusts responded effectively to objectives set by the Welsh Government such as sustainable development, the Well-being of Future Generations, increasing the opportunities for participation within communities, especially those hard to reach or disadvantaged, as well as the championing of regional identities.

Ever mindful of the need for the four trusts to demonstrate their efficiency and to become more financially resilient, the Boards of Trustees, over the last two years, have been working towards merger as a means to improving output, increasing our archaeological offer and developing new specialisms. This is much needed to ensure that the provision of archaeological services in Wales remains on an equal footing with their counterparts elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Consequently,

we have decided to merge to form the new pan-Wales Heneb: the Trust for Welsh Archaeology, which should become fully operational on 1 April 2024.

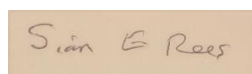
The trusts currently employ in the region of 80 people from all parts of Wales, notably in less affluent areas, and work in partnership with local authorities and other bodies to create an environment better maintained and enjoyed for communities. The work of the trusts has always been supported and encouraged by Cadw, the government body that supplies about half of the trusts' budget – the half that undertakes those advisory, protection and community-based projects mentioned above. We are very concerned that the proposed cut to the government funding of Cadw of over 22% will have a severe impact upon the output of the new pan-Wales Trust Heneb, and may jeopardise programmes of work so painstakingly developed over the last decade in response to Welsh Government objectives.

Cadw has considerable success in implementing its conservation programmes, as identified in the recently published 2023 Independent Review of its Governance Arrangements. It has a significant positive impact upon tourism in Wales, and is a very evident advertisement for approachable and accessible Welsh culture. Yet Cadw appears to be faced with a cut of 22.3%, higher than any other similar department, which seems to us to be counterproductive. We fully understand the necessity for stringent economies at this time, and you may be assured that we in Heneb will continue to work hard to overcome and mitigate the impact of any reduction in our funding. Nonetheless, while we note that the majority of other Culture sector bodies are also receiving a cut in their funding, at 10.5% this is considerably less than that proposed for Cadw and the Royal Commission, even though, as with Cadw, they have a similar capacity to attract other revenue streams.

If the cut of over 22% is implemented this will undoubtedly impact upon its grant aid to the trusts and could pose an adverse impact upon the successful operations of the merged Trust Heneb. We are fearful that this will require significant numbers of redundancies from all part of Wales and our CEOs, having studied the figures, suggest that it will result in the elimination of most of the non-statutory elements of the Trust's programmes. This will leave Heneb merely able to continue to undertake for Welsh Ministers their statutory responsibilities of the maintenance of the Historic Environment Record, planning advice and development control.

We would be most grateful were you to feel able to provide appropriate challenge on the proposed Cadw budget when you come to scrutinise the draft budget settlement in your forthcoming session with Ministers. We are fully appreciative of the difficult decisions government has to make at this time but the level of cut proposed for Cadw seems disproportionate and will have inevitable and serious consequences for third sector heritage bodies such as ourselves and on the management and celebration of the Welsh historic environment.

Yours sincerely

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sian E Rees".

Sian E Rees (Interim Chair of Heneb; the Trust for Welsh Archaeology)

cc Dawn Bowden Deputy Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism
Tom Giffard, Shadow Minister for Culture Tourism and Sport
Heledd Fychan, Plaid Cymru Spokesperson on Culture
Jason Thomas, Director of Culture, Sport and Tourism