



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Welsh Government

Consultation on a proposal for regulations required by the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and four guidance documents

Annex 4

Draft

Managing Historic Character in Wales

The Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016 was enacted to make important improvements to the existing systems for the protection and management of the Welsh historic environment. It also stands at the centre of an integrated package of secondary legislation, new and updated planning policy and advice, and best-practice guidance on a wide range of topics. Taken together, these will support and promote the careful management of change in the historic environment in accordance with current conservation philosophy and practice.

This draft document has been published as part of a twelve-week consultation on a proposal for regulations and various guidance documents linked to the implementation of the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016. It will close on 13 January 2017. The consultation document, the response form and all of the associated draft guidance documents are available from the Welsh Government's consultation web pages (<https://consultations.gov.wales/>).

This document has been prepared alongside a revised chapter 6, 'The Historic Environment', of *Planning Policy Wales* and the new *Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment*. It can profitably be read in conjunction with them.

A public consultation on chapter 6 of *Planning Policy Wales* closed on 13 June 2016. The chapter is still available on the consultation web page (<https://consultations.gov.wales/consultations/proposed-changes-planning-policy-wales-chapter-6-historic-environment>) and any citations of *Planning Policy Wales* in the current document refer to this version. A final version of chapter 6, incorporating any changes arising from the consultation, will be published later this year.

A public consultation on *Technical Advice Note 24* closed on 3 October 2016 and the analysis of the responses has begun. *Technical Advice Note 24* is still available on the consultation web page (<https://consultations.gov.wales/consultations/proposed-technical-advice-note-tan-24-historic-environment>) and any citations of *Technical Advice Note 24* in the current document refer to this version. A final version of the technical advice note, incorporating any changes arising from the consultation, is expected in spring 2017.

19 October 2016

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

19 October 2016

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Managing Historic Character in Wales

Managing Historic Character in Wales

Statement of Purpose

Managing Historic Character in Wales explains why it is important to recognise historic character and use it as an evidence base for conservation, regeneration and planning work. It shows how policies and programmes to manage change can take inspiration from the past to help create and sustain distinctive places for the future.

Managing Historic Character in Wales does not impose another layer of designation or consent, but encourages the best use of our historic environment to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. This means managing change, not preventing it.

Managing Historic Character in Wales is best-practice guidance, which supports *Planning Policy Wales* — Chapter 6: The Historic Environment¹ and *Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment*.² It also highlights how an understanding of historic character can be used in many ways beyond the planning system.

Managing Historic Character in Wales, together with *Managing Lists of Historic Assets of Special Local Interest in Wales*,³ focuses on those aspects of local heritage that have considerable value for local communities, including those that are not designated for their special national interest or importance.⁴

Managing Historic Character in Wales is aimed primarily at local authority conservation, planning, housing, regeneration and development departments, as well as Welsh Government departments. It will also be of interest to local communities and third sector organisations that have a vital role in identifying, promoting and caring for local historic character.

¹ *Planning Policy Wales* — Chapter 6: The Historic Environment

² *Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment*

³ *Managing Lists of Historic Assets of Special Local Interest in Wales*, Welsh Government, Cadw, forthcoming

⁴ [Planning \(Listed Buildings and Conservation Area\) Act 1990](#), [Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979](#), [Historic Environment \(Wales\) Act 2016](#)

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Fast Facts

- Historic character helps to make every place unique.
- Historic character is expressed through patterns of land use and settlement, and building traditions.
- Historic character can be identified anywhere in Wales — from cities and suburbs to small rural hamlets and landscapes.
- By understanding historic character, we can make informed decisions about what we keep, how we care for it and how to accommodate change.
- Understanding historic character can encourage communities to get involved in caring for their place and provide opportunities to learn new skills.
- National guidance encourages planning authorities to understand, record and use historic character as part of their evidence base to guide the management of change and inspire regeneration and renewal.

Introduction

The historic environment is a vital part of our shared cultural heritage. It shapes our sense of place and contributes to our well-being and quality of life. Some elements of the historic environment have been identified as having special national interest or importance — our scheduled monuments, listed buildings, conservation areas and registered historic parks, gardens and landscapes. Historic character, however, is more than the sum of these nationally recognised assets. The ordinary and everyday may contribute as much to historic character as a grand old building. This means that even somewhere with few designated historic assets can have a rich historic character.

Historic character confers identity, creates a sense of belonging and contributes to the quality of the places where we live, work and visit. It can also be an asset for economic vitality and regeneration.

By studying historic character, we can compile an objective evidence base which can be used for many different purposes. It can inspire regeneration activity, planning, development and design to help sustain local distinctiveness. It can also help us to make informed decisions about what we keep, how we care for it and how we accommodate change so that we celebrate the individuality of a place and make the best use of its heritage. By working with local communities, we can learn what makes a place special for them and encourage local people to care for it.

Understanding historic character can help how we plan for the Wales that we want to live in today and in the future.

1. What is Historic Character?

The historic character of a place has been shaped by the activities of people over tens, hundreds, or even thousands of years. Many of the distinctive qualities of a place result from its history in the same way that the character of a person is formed over time. These can include its origins and significant periods in its history — how and why

it developed and changed. It can also include particular activities and traditions, communities and people, or events associated with a place. These elements all contribute to historic character: they have both a tangible legacy in the form and fabric of a place and an intangible legacy in the names, stories, art and culture associated with it.

Historic character makes every place unique and contributes to its significance, especially for local people.

1.1 What to Look For

We can find historic character anywhere in Wales and studies can range in area from a few streets to whole towns and landscapes. The essential elements are not difficult to identify; they include:

1.1.1 The Overall Form and Layout of a Place

This may have survived for much longer than individual buildings and features. The pattern of settlement can be identified in the units of development, the shape of building plots or fields and the relationship between buildings and spaces. These elements, together with the character of boundaries and open spaces, the views and the networks of roads and paths, deserve respect and can offer a distinctive framework in which to accommodate change.

1.1.2 Buildings

Seemingly unexceptional or ordinary buildings are vital to the character of a place. They may contribute just as much as notable historic buildings or landmarks. Most places are marked by their own distinctive traditions of building which developed over a period of time in response to the needs of local people, the availability of building materials, and the development of local styles, techniques and skills. It is important that these traditions — and the skills to maintain and care for them — are kept alive and used to inspire and influence new design and development.

1.1.3 Changing Landscapes

Large parts of Wales may look uninhabited now but almost every part of the landscape has been altered by people in some way. Traces of this past activity contribute to historic character and can take many forms including ancient sites ranging from prehistoric hut circles to industrial ironworks. Evidence of past land use — such as quarries and mines, hedgerows and stone walls — and transport infrastructure — such as footpaths, bridges, roads, railways and canals — all reflect human activity. Individual elements may be protected and some landscapes may be registered, but a holistic approach to identifying and understanding how and why the character of discrete areas has evolved through time can stimulate management and regeneration initiatives.⁵

⁵ *Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales*, Cadw, Countryside Council for Wales and ICOMOS, 1998; *Register of Landscapes of Special Historic Interest in Wales*, Cadw, Countryside Council for Wales and ICOMOS, 2001; [Caring for Historic Landscapes](#), Cadw, Welsh Assembly Government, and Countryside Council for Wales, 2003

1.1.4 Hidden Histories — Archaeological Potential

Even apparently empty spaces may have hidden features that survive from earlier land use. These can be recovered through research and investigation and, where appropriate, protected or used to inform and inspire development or redevelopment.

1.1.5 People's Stories

A place may have important cultural traditions, literary, artistic and political associations, or connections with notable individuals, which add colour and layers to its identity. Stories about a place and its people are often treasured by local communities. Finding ways to tell these stories, for example, through guidebooks, apps or information panels, can enrich the experience of a place for residents and visitors alike.

Wherever you are in Wales, these elements create a unique story of people and place. Decisions about change that respect the evidence for this story will foster local identity and distinctiveness.

2. Understanding Historic Character

Just as an understanding of historic character has many uses, so the analysis can be done by a range of people including local planning authority officers and specialist contractors and consultants. **With proper support from the local planning authority or third sector organisations, such as Civic Trust Cymru, local voluntary groups can make a very valuable contribution by conducting surveys and compiling reports.** The evidence of historic character collected in this way can be very robust.

2.1 Detailed Assessment

A structured approach to understanding historic character — in a way that can be shared and understood by local people, planners and developers — provides a robust evidence base that can be used positively to encourage conservation and inspire appropriate change. **It can, for example, inform area statements,⁶ local well-being plans, local development plans and place plans.** It can also support specific regeneration initiatives, such as Townscape Heritage or housing renewal programmes.

2.2. Community Engagement

Studying historic character can capture local knowledge which people often hold as memories, experiences and observations but rarely write down. This valuable evidence is often uncoordinated making it inaccessible to the community and the local authority. But local people are one of the best sources of knowledge and, once equipped with the tools and training, are willing and able to study local historic character.

Involving the local community can encourage people to deepen their understanding and appreciation of their place, helping to instil a sense of ownership and local pride. It

⁶ [Environment \(Wales\) Act 2016](#). Area statements will set out the priorities, risks and opportunities for managing natural resources sustainably, and associated actions.

can help local groups increase their capacity to influence decision making and provide a focus for community involvement in the day-to-day care of places.

Understanding historic character can also create opportunities for local people to develop or learn new skills. These can range from traditional building skills and tour guiding through to developing analytical skills and report writing.

2.3 Getting Started

Before beginning an analysis of historic character, it is a good idea to find out what information is already available.

2.3.1 Sources of Information

- The local historic environment record is a good starting place for anyone seeking to understand more about the historic character of their area. Historic environment records are managed by the four Welsh archaeological trusts and their core data can be accessed online through Archwilio.⁷
- The National Monuments Record of Wales is the national archive for the historic environment of Wales. It is a good source of historic photographs and drawings of places in Wales, including aerial photographs. Online public access is provided through Coflein.⁸
- The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales maintains and develops the Historic Wales portal⁹ as an online gateway to national and regional records about the historic environment.
- The Welsh Government's Historic Environment Service (Cadw) holds the definitive records for listed buildings, scheduled monuments and registered historic parks, gardens and landscapes. These are available through Cof Cymru — Cadw's online record of the national historic assets of Wales.¹⁰
- Local planning authorities hold records of conservation areas.
- Cadw has studied the historic character of a number of towns in Wales.¹¹ This work can be used not only for information about specific places, but also as a model for other local studies.
- The Welsh archaeological trusts have carried out detailed studies of some historic towns. They have also identified and analysed historic landscape character areas for each registered historic landscape in Wales.¹²

⁷ [Archwilio](#) — The historic environment records of the Welsh archaeological trusts

⁸ [Coflein](http://www.coflein.gov.uk/) <http://www.coflein.gov.uk/>

⁹ [Historic Wales](http://www.historicwales.gov.uk/) <http://www.historicwales.gov.uk/>

¹⁰ [Cof Cymru — National Historic Assets of Wales](#) Registered historic parks and gardens will be added to Cof Cymru during 2017.

¹¹ Cadw [Understanding Urban Character](#)

¹² See the individual websites of the Welsh archaeological trust's websites and *Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales*, Cadw, Countryside Council for Wales and ICOMOS, 1998;

- Natural Resources Wales maintains LANDMAP,¹³ which is the recognised landscape baseline resource in Wales for planning and decision making. It includes mapped and survey information about historic and cultural landscapes. LANDMAP defines discrete geographical areas of historic landscape based on the identification of historic land uses, patterns and features. Each area is accompanied by a survey detailing historic character. These areas may lend themselves to character study in greater depth and the information captured by LANDMAP may provide a starting point for more detailed investigation.
- Civic Trust Cymru has worked with a number of community groups and local authorities to produce detailed character studies of several towns in Wales.¹⁴

Existing studies are a valuable resource where they are available. In future, initiatives are likely to benefit from taking a partnership approach which involves the local community. For example, a community-based group might take the lead, but work closely with the local planning authority.

2.3.2 Toolkits

There are already some practical resources available to help communities get involved in understanding historic character.

Civic Trust Cymru (formerly the Civic Trust for Wales) has developed resources to support local people and community groups to explore the character of their towns in a structured way. Modelled on Cadw's series of understanding urban character studies, *Exploring Your Town: A Manual and Tool Kit*, explains the components of character and how to record them.¹⁵ Civic Trust Cymru continues to work with local groups and local authorities to support their studies.

The Design Commission for Wales has also produced a practical toolkit to encourage residents to investigate and analyse where they live and plan for its future.¹⁶ As a first step, it recommends establishing a town team, with representation from local residents, businesses, volunteer and community groups.

The Welsh archaeological trusts can also provide information, advice and support. Their detailed historic landscape characterisation studies provide good models for communities investigating their local heritage.¹⁷

2.3.3 Funding

Some financial support for survey activity that involves community participation may be available from, for example, Cadw or the Heritage Lottery Fund.¹⁸

Register of Landscapes of Special Historic Interest in Wales, Cadw, Countryside Council for Wales and ICOMOS, 2001

¹³ [LANDMAP](#)

¹⁴ [Civic Trust Cymru: Character and Place](#)

¹⁵ [Exploring your Town: A Manual and Tool Kit](#), Civic Trust for Wales, 2013

¹⁶ [Shape my Town](#), Design Commission for Wales, 2014

¹⁷ [For historic landscape characterisation methodology see The Gwent Levels Historic Landscape Study: Characterization and Assessment of the Landscape](#), Stephen Rippon, Cadw and Countryside Council for Wales, 1995

¹⁸ [Heritage Lottery Fund](#)

2.3.4 What to Do with Your Study

It is important that completed studies are made freely available and accessible. They should be deposited in the appropriate historic environment record, managed by one of the four Welsh archaeological trusts.

3. Historic Character and Sustainable Development

Many activities can have an impact on historic character. Development and redevelopment, regeneration and renewal can each either reinforce or undermine character. But, when these activities take into account the historic character of a place — and not just the individual designated assets — they are more likely to have a positive impact on local distinctiveness.

Responding to historic character is not about preserving a place in aspic and trying to keep everything. Instead, it is about managing change so that we keep what makes a place special and use the legacy of the past to inform and integrate new development, and to identify opportunities for positive change and enhancement.

The sustainable development principle¹⁹ is at the heart of planning for the Wales we want to live in now and in the future. This means making long-term, joined-up plans to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. Recognising and understanding historic character can contribute to the evidence base for this holistic planning.

3.1 Local Well-being Plans

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 sets out seven well-being goals to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.²⁰

For each local authority area in Wales, public service boards must compile a local well-being plan. This contains objectives for the seven well-being goals based on an assessment of local well-being.

One of the goals is a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language, in which our heritage is promoted and protected. A detailed analysis of historic character can contribute to the evidence base for an assessment of heritage and help to highlight areas for action in the local well-being plan. A community-driven analysis will best express local priorities.

Local well-being plans inform the preparation of local development plans.

¹⁹ The sustainable development principle seeks ‘to ensure the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.’

²⁰ [The Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#)

3.2 Area Statements

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 aims to establish a more integrated approach to managing natural resources in a more sustainable way, so that we do not put the future resilience of the environment at risk whilst we create a thriving society today.²¹

To help achieve this, Natural Resources Wales must compile area statements to implement national natural resources policy at a local level.

Natural resources are not separate from historic resources: they are simply different aspects of one environment.²² Area statements could therefore recognise the value of local historic character when setting out the priorities, risks and opportunities for managing natural resources sustainably, including the impact of climate change.

Area statements inform local well-being assessments and plans, and local development plans.

3.3 Planning Policy and Development Management

3.3.1 National Planning Policy

Planning Policy Wales sets out the Welsh Government's land-use planning policies. Technical advice notes provide detailed planning advice to be read alongside *Planning Policy Wales* when preparing local development plans.

Chapter 6 of *Planning Policy Wales* promotes an understanding of historic character to highlight the distinctiveness of urban and rural areas of Wales and to guide decisions about their future.²³

Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment recommends that historic character is taken into account in the management of change to sustain local distinctiveness and a sense of place. It recommends the use of an objective, structured approach to identify the elements of historic character and create an evidence base.²⁴

3.3.2 Local Development Plans

Local planning authorities must prepare local development plans which take into account area statements, local well-being plans and national planning policy. These plans provide the principles for decision making in the planning process and local land allocations.

Local development plans may include policies to protect and enhance local character and distinctiveness, and promote high design standards for both new development and existing buildings where alteration, extension and change of use come within the scope of the planning process. Such policies carry considerable weight in the planning

²¹ [Environment \(Wales\) Act 2016](#)

²² See [LANDMAP](#)

²³ *Planning Policy Wales* — Chapter 6: The Historic Environment, para.6.3.5

²⁴ *Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment*, para. 1.13

process. They can also set a framework for the introduction of Article 4 Directions to restrict permitted development.

A sound evidence base for these policies is necessary and a detailed analysis of historic character can be useful, especially when linked to supplementary planning guidance.

3.3.3 Supplementary Planning Guidance

Local planning authorities can adopt supplementary planning guidance which supports existing policies about local character and distinctiveness in the local development plan. Supplementary planning guidance is a material consideration in the planning process and can provide clarity about policies so that they are well understood and can be applied effectively.²⁵

A detailed analysis of historic character can be part of the evidence base for supplementary planning guidance which may be site, area, or topic specific, such as design and the built environment. Local planning authorities may also decide to adopt a statement of historic character as supplementary planning guidance either on its own or to support other guidance.

3.3.4 Place Plans

Place plans encourage greater community engagement in local planning decision making. They are prepared by town and community councils with help from the local planning authority. Place plans supplement policies set out in the local development plan and are adopted as supplementary planning guidance which means that they are a material consideration when deciding planning applications. Place plans can cover a range of local issues; for example, they could specify the finer details of planning proposals to reflect local distinctiveness or they could take the form of a development brief.

A consistent evidence base which captures local historic character, particularly when developed from within the community itself, could be a valuable tool for place plans.

3.3.5 Master Plans and Development Briefs

Master plans and development briefs will benefit from fine-grained detail about specific areas and sites. An analysis of historic character can make an important contribution to this process. It can provide an account of underlying structure and pattern, help to identify what is significant, and consider both those elements that are lost and those that are not acknowledged by statutory designation. An analysis can help establish a general framework for change and inform the development of design principles that respect the legacy of the past and reinforce distinctiveness.

It is good practice to specify an analysis of historic character in the brief for any master plans and development briefs. Master plans and development briefs may be adopted as supplementary planning guidance.

²⁵ *Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment*, para. 2.4

3.4 Design

Technical Advice Note 12: Design sets out objectives and principles for delivering good design.²⁶ Sustaining or enhancing local character is one of the objectives and an understanding of historic character is recognised as a fundamental principle of the design process.

The starting point for delivering good design is an appraisal of the context of an area, including its character, through attention to its history, topography, historic land use, street and field patterns, archaeology, architecture and building materials, distinctive features and traditions — the vernacular elements of the landscape and its cultural resources. The process of analysing historic character should identify design features in an area, building features and urban design features.

This does not mean that design should be a pastiche or copy, but it should respect and respond to the local context, for example, in terms of scale, massing and orientation. Innovative, contemporary design can make a positive contribution to local distinctiveness.

Context appraisal for design can inform local development plan policy, supplementary planning guidance and development briefs, as well as applications for specific proposals. Detailed analysis of historic character should be part of this appraisal process.

The Design Commission for Wales can advise on design and planning for sustainable buildings.²⁷

3.5 Conservation

A detailed analysis of historic character may identify areas of special architectural or historic interest which meet the criteria for designation as conservation areas. A structured approach to understanding historic character is an essential part of conservation area designation, appraisal and review and may also offer opportunities to involve the community.²⁸ Local planning authorities designate conservation areas and administer conservation area consent.

An analysis of historic character is also a useful base from which to identify historic assets of special local interest.²⁹ Local planning authorities are responsible for local designation and protection.

Occasionally, the analysis may highlight a historic asset that should be listed, scheduled or registered by Cadw on behalf of the Welsh Ministers. Processes for requesting national designation are explained on Cadw's website.

²⁶ [Technical Advice Note 12: Design](#)

²⁷ [Design Commission for Wales; Practice Guidance: Planning for Sustainable Buildings](#), Welsh Government, 2014

²⁸ *Managing Conservation Areas*, Welsh Government, Cadw, forthcoming

²⁹ *Managing Lists of Historic Assets of Special Local Interest*, Welsh Government, Cadw, forthcoming

3.6 Regeneration

Historic character should be a vital element of any plans for regeneration and renewal. Not only does it create distinctiveness and identity, but it also contributes to quality of life and quality of place. Heritage can also drive renewed community confidence and investment.

Individual historic assets can be a focus for specific regeneration investment, but historic character is present everywhere, irrespective of age or perceived quality. It is part of the unique identity of a place. Recognising that character and strengthening it or complementing it in new development helps to sustain distinctiveness. It also provides opportunities for fostering engagement and developing skills, and supports the well-being of local communities.

An analysis of historic character can help support positive action by

- Identifying characteristics or features that should be retained or respected in both large- and small-scale renewal schemes, including distinctive patterns of development, specific buildings, or particular building traditions.
- Suggesting areas where grant aid or other incentives would be most effective. The Heritage Lottery Fund is an enthusiastic supporter of understanding historic character, which it uses to help target investment.

Further Information

Planning Policy and Guidance

Planning Policy Wales: Chapter 6 — The Historic Environment

Technical Advice Note 12: Design

Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment

Best-practice Guidance

[*Caring for Historic Landscapes*](#), Cadw, Welsh Assembly Government, and Countryside Council for Wales, 2003

Conservation Principles for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Wales, Cadw, Welsh Assembly Government, 2011

[*Guide to Good Practice on Using the Register of Landscapes of Historic Interest in Wales in the Planning and Development Process*](#), Second Edition, Cadw, Welsh Assembly Government, Countryside Council for Wales, 2007

Historic Environment Records in Wales: Compilation and Use, Welsh Government, Cadw, forthcoming

Managing Change to Listed Buildings in Wales, Welsh Government, Cadw, forthcoming

Managing Conservation Areas in Wales, Welsh Government, Cadw, forthcoming

Managing Lists of Historic Assets of Special Local Interest in Wales, Welsh Government, Cadw, forthcoming

Managing Scheduled Monuments in Wales, Welsh Government, Cadw, forthcoming

Understanding Listing in Wales, Welsh Government, Cadw, forthcoming

Understanding Scheduling in Wales, Welsh Government, Cadw, forthcoming

Toolkits

[Civic Trust Cymru — Exploring your Town Toolkit](#)

[Design Commission for Wales — Shape my Town Toolkit](#)

Sources of Historical Information

[Archives Wales](#) — An online catalogue enabling searches of information in more than 7,000 collections of historical records in the holdings of 21 archives in Wales.

[Archwilio](#) — The historic environment records of the Welsh archaeological trusts.

[Cof Cymru](#) — Cadw's online record of the national historic assets of Wales, which includes listed buildings, scheduled monuments, protected wrecks, World Heritage Sites and registered historic landscapes.³⁰

[Coflein](#) — The online database for the National Monuments Record of Wales, the national collection of information about the historic environment of Wales.

[Historic Wales](#) portal — an online gateway to national and regional historic environment records **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**

[LANDMAP](#) — The online landscape baseline resource maintained by Natural Resources Wales. LANDMAP datasets are also published for download for use in a Geographical Information System (GIS) on

<http://lle.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue?lang=en&text=landmap>

Natural Resources Wales (2015) LANDMAP Methodology: Guidance for Wales. Historic Landscape

³⁰ Registered historic parks and gardens will be added to Cof Cymru during 2017

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Natural Resources Wales (2015) LANDMAP Methodology: Guidance for Wales.
Cultural Landscape

Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales, Cadw, Countryside
Council for Wales and ICOMOS, 1998

Register of Landscapes of Special Historic Interest in Wales, Cadw, Countryside
Council for Wales and ICOMOS, 2001

Contacts

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Unit 5/7 Cefn Coed, Parc Nantgarw, Cardiff CF15 7QQ

Tel. 01443 336000

cadw@wales.gsi.gov.uk

www.gov.wales/cadw

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales

Ffordd Penglais, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, SY23 3BU

Tel. 01970 621200

nmr.wales@rcahmw.gov.uk

www.rcahmw.gov.uk

National Monuments Record of Wales

nmr.wales@rcahmw.gov.uk

www.coflein.gov.uk

You can arrange to visit the public search room in Aberystwyth where staff will explain the resources available in the National Monuments Record for researching historic character, including historic maps, drawings, photographs and survey records.

Natural Resources Wales

Natural Resources Wales

c/o Customer Care Centre

Ty Cambria, 29 Newport Road, Cardiff CF24 0TP

Tel: 0300 065 3000

enquiries@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk

<http://naturalresources.wales/>

Natural Resources Wales can provide information and advice on using LANDMAP historic and cultural landscape information and seascapes.

The Heritage Lottery Fund

<http://www.hlf.org.uk/>

Civic Trust Cymru

1/07 Creative Quarter, Morgan Arcade, Cardiff, CF10 1AF

<http://civictrustcymru.org.uk/>

Design Commission for Wales

4th Floor, Cambrian Buildings, Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff CF10 5FL

Tel: 029 2045 1964

connect@dcfw.org

<http://dcfw.org/>

The Design Commission for Wales can provide advice and guidance about design proposals.

Local Planning Authorities

Local planning authorities' conservation officers can be contacted via the relevant local authority website.

Welsh Archaeological Trusts

Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust
41 Broad Street, Welshpool SY21 7RR
Tel. 01938 553670
trust@cpat.org.uk
www.cpat.org.uk

Dyfed Archaeological Trust
Corner House, 6 Carmarthen Street, Llandeilo SA19 6AE
Tel. 01558 823121
info@dyfedarchaeology.org.uk
www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk

Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust
Heathfield House, Heathfield, Swansea SA1 6EL
Tel. 01792 655208
enquiries@ggat.org.uk
www.ggat.org.uk

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust
Craig Beuno, Garth Road, Bangor LL57 2RT
Tel. 01248 352535
gat@heneb.co.uk
www.heneb.co.uk

Managing Historic Character in Wales Case Study — Cefn Mawr and District

The village of Cefn Mawr and its surrounding settlements cling to the steep sides of the Dee valley. They overlook the Llangollen Canal, which runs alongside road and river and a now abandoned railway. Close to the World Heritage Site of Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal, much of Cefn Mawr and the villages around it lie within the World Heritage Site's buffer zone — an area which contributes to the site's Outstanding Universal Value.

The unique historic character of Cefn Mawr and district is intimately linked with an industrial history based on the exploitation of the abundant natural resources in the area and the development of a distinctive industrial transport system, both of which have helped shape the pattern of settlement. There is a characteristic organisation of space that is often haphazard and small scale. It is threaded by a web of connections — surviving, damaged and lost — and contains a variety of building traditions using locally sourced or manufactured materials.

Industry continued to dominate the area until the beginning of the twenty-first century when two of the biggest employers in the area, the Flexsys chemical works (Cefn Mawr) and Air Products plant (Acrefair), closed leaving behind them derelict factory sites and economic decline.

Nevertheless, the World Heritage Site offers exciting new opportunities for the regeneration of Cefn Mawr and its adjoining villages. The canal is a world-class leisure facility, which attracts tourists from around the world, and could make the area desirable for high-quality residential and commercial redevelopment.

With this in mind, Cadw's study of the historic character of Cefn Mawr and district set out to provide an objective evidence base to inform planning decisions and support positive conservation and regeneration in and around the World Heritage Site and its buffer zone.

The value of the study as a material consideration in planning decisions and appeals was recognised when Wrexham Council adopted it as supplementary planning guidance. In practice, it is used in conjunction with the Wrexham unitary development plan and emerging local development plan, and the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site supplementary planning guidance. It has been used successfully at least once to refuse a development in the World Heritage Site buffer zone in order to protect one of the distinctive irregular plots of land so characteristic of the area.

The study has informed development briefs too. One of the villages included in the study was Acrefair, not far from Cefn Mawr and just outside the World Heritage Site buffer zone. The site of the redundant Air Products factory in the heart of the village has been identified in the emerging Wrexham local development plan as a Mixed Use Regeneration Opportunity. When the council issued a planning brief for the site, it referred developers to the study to inform their appraisal of local character when developing their approach to design.

Consultants working on the Design and Access statement and illustrative masterplan to support the outline planning application for the site responded to historic character positively recognising that:

*'A character or vernacular study is not about creating a pastiche, but using the qualities of the local area to influence modern design, ensuring places are unique, complementary to their setting and are identifiable as a locally responsive solution, rather than being 'anywhere places'. e*scape Urbanists*

As well as referencing local patterns of settlement and architectural styles, the illustrative masterplan recognised the significance of historic transport routes in the area and used the route of a former tramway as the focus for the main avenue through the site. Understanding the historic urban character not only inspired the developer to retain a link with the past but also to capture local distinctiveness in the design for the future.

The study will continue to have value as an evidence base that will be used to re-assess the Cefn Mawr conservation area boundary and to review and update the associated character assessment and conservation area management plan, which could support applications for further funding for the Cefn Mawr Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI).

The study has already inspired THI-funded traditional skills training to conserve and repair traditional brickwork and terracotta — a prominent character trait of buildings in the area — as well as in joinery, lime mortar repointing and plastering, traditional methods for the eradication of damp and traditional stonemasonry.

[Cefn Mawr and District: Understanding Historic Character](#) can be accessed on Cadw's website.

SUMMARY BOX

Understanding the historic urban character of Cefn Mawr and district has identified a distinctive pattern of settlement and the legacy of historic transport routes, which should be cherished and used to inspire the design of new development. The study has:

- been adopted as supplementary planning guidance to help guide the management of change and is a material consideration in decisions and appeals
- demonstrated how local character can inform development briefs and masterplans for major regeneration projects
- contributed to the protection and enhancement of the Outstanding Universal Value of the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site.
- provided the evidence base for the future revision of the Cefn Mawr conservation area boundary and character assessment and management plan
- inspired traditional skills training.

Managing Historic Character in Wales

Case study — The Vale of Llangollen and Eglwyseg

The Vale of Llangollen and Eglwyseg in north-east Wales provides a spectacular natural backdrop to a range of archaeological and historic sites. Like all landscapes, it is a palimpsest and provides evidence for a rich variety of changing land uses through time.

This picturesque part of the Dee Valley includes Castell Dinas Brân — an impressive thirteenth-century stronghold built within the remains of an Iron Age hillfort — medieval Valle Crucis Abbey, and the remains of later mineral extraction and industrial sites, which include significant communications and transport systems. There are also important historic cultural and artistic associations, which continue today with the annual Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod.

Although the area contains individual and area designations — including scheduled monuments, listed buildings, conservation areas, registered historic parks and gardens and part of the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site — the Vale of Llangollen and Eglwyseg has been recognised as one of 58 historic landscapes in Wales registered for their outstanding or special historic interest. A brief entry is included in the register.

But more detailed information about historic character at the local level is vital for the management of change. The Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust carried out a detailed character survey of the registered area and identified five broad historic themes which capture the essence of its character:

- Environment and boundaries — by nature, a broad rift valley sculpted by ice action; by history, part of the kingdom of Powys, Powys Fadog, the marcher lordships of Chirkland and Bromfield and Yale, and eventually Denbighshire.
- Land use and settlement — increasing landscape management from prehistoric and Roman times through to medieval settlement based on agriculture and characterised by farmsteads, townships and parishes; changes in the pattern of land holdings, improved communications and the growth of industry had a notable impact on the landscape and building traditions in the post-medieval and modern periods.
- Transport and communications — notably the Llangollen branch of the Shropshire Union Canal, Telford's Holyhead road, which connected London with Ireland via Holyhead, and the railway all enabled the movement of people and products in and out of the area.
- Industrial landscapes — stone and slate quarrying, lead mining, brick and tile manufacture, and milling have altered the natural landscape and influenced settlement patterns and building traditions.
- Cultural landscapes — eighteenth- and nineteenth-century artists, writers and tourists visiting the picturesque landscape and the Ladies of Llangollen at Plas Newydd; modern tourists visiting the railway and canal, the historic sites and the international eisteddfod.

The survey also identified 17 individual historic character areas based on the range and distribution of surviving archaeological and historic features, and the main types of historical land use patterns. Now stored in the local historic environment record and on LANDMAP, this information not only provides the evidence base for policy, plans and decision making, but also an authoritative and accessible resource for learning, research and community engagement.

Although the register is non-statutory and there is no additional consent regime, Denbighshire County Council has followed national planning policy and included policies in its local development plan to protect registered or locally designated historic landscapes from development that would adversely affect them. It recognises that development proposals should maintain and, wherever possible, enhance these areas for their characteristics, local distinctiveness, and value to local communities in Denbighshire.

Retaining the historic character that has attracted tourists for more than 200 years is especially important to the economic and cultural well-being of the area. Development that is sympathetic and enhances local distinctiveness will encourage visitors and reinforce the area as a major national attraction in Wales.

Historic landscape evidence also informs environmental stewardship and ecosystem service management through agri-environment schemes — such as Glastir and woodland design and planting operations — which encourage a holistic and integrated approach to managing the landscape. Small but inappropriate changes can have a detrimental impact over time but this can be avoided by integrating small-scale management solutions, such as retaining traditional field boundaries, into rural land-use management regimes.

Welsh Government policies recognise that farmers and land owners need to be able to make appropriate and sympathetic changes to a dynamic working landscape, which also respects and values biodiversity, the historic environment and public access.

The registered historic landscape was also used to support the nomination and inscription of the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site and funding applications for conservation work and interpretation at Castell Dinas Brân and the Horseshoe Falls.

The [historic landscape characterisation of the Vale of Llangollen and Eglwyseg](#) is accessible online on the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust's website.

SUMMARY BOX

Understanding the historic landscape character of the Vale of Llangollen and Eglwyseg has provided an evidence base for:

- Historic environment records and LANDMAP
- Local development plan policies and decision making to protect and enhance historic landscapes and improve economic and cultural well-being
- Agri-environment schemes to encourage sympathetic and appropriate environmental stewardship

DRAFT Managing Historic Character in Wales

- Learning and community engagement to improve social well-being
- World Heritage Site nomination and inscription.
- Funding applications for conservation and heritage interpretation.

Using Historic Character — Summary Diagram

What is historic character? – it's the unique identity of a place which is a product of its history and expressed in its buildings and layout
Why is it useful? – it provides a single objective evidence base to identify local distinctiveness
Where can you use it to make the best use of the historic environment?

