



ALGAO:Cymru
Countryside Committee
Virtual Meeting
20th December 2023 @ 13:00
MINUTES - DRAFT

In attendance

Jenny Emmett, Gwynedd Archaeological Trust and Chair of ALGAO:Cymru
Jill Bullen, Natural Resources Wales
Alice Thorne, Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority
Alice Pyper, Dyfed Archaeological Trust
Ian Halfpenney, Cadw
Tom Fildes, Gwynedd Archaeological Trust
Alex Powell, Dyfed Archaeological Trust
Claudine Gerrard, National Trust
Tomos Jones, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority and Vice-Chair of ALGAO:Cymru

Apologies

Zoe Arthurs, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust
Abi McCullough, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust
Guy Salkeld, Cadw
Matt Williams, RSPB
Neil Redfern, CBA
John G. Roberts, Eryri National Park Authority

1. Minutes of previous meeting/Matters arising

Minutes of the previous meeting dated 14th November 2022 were accepted, although Jenny clarified that she needed to edit text highlighted in red after receiving clarification in the meeting.

Actions were updated as follows:

ACTIONS	STATUS
Ian to keep Committee updated on developments regarding sustainable farming.	Ongoing (see comments under item 2).
Ian to setup meeting regarding peat projects with relevant attendees of the Committee.	No progress.
Ian to circulate the guidance produced by Fiona Grant.	Ongoing (see comments under item 5).
Ian to invite John to the national forest meeting when convened to deliver presentation. Also, Chris to attend meeting.	Ongoing.

2. Strategic update (legislation, policy, guidance)

Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS)

Ian provided the following update:

- Some of the technical guidance from Glastir is being proposed for the SFS, but this is to be slimmed down and will part of universal actions.
- Proposing a one- or two-pages document providing guidance for landowners to carry out work like scrub clearance and the repair of a scrape without the need for involvement of technical expert. This technical guidance will be reviewed and revised in early 2024.
- The SFS consultation was published last week and is open until March 2024 - [Sustainable Farming Scheme | GOV.WALES](#)
- Developments of SFS are progressing as expected.
- National minimum standards are off the table.
- SFS will commence in 2025, but it is expected that the current Glastir scheme will gradually come to an end over time as people come off the scheme. As such, it is not expected that all will be on the scheme immediately in 2025, rather a gradual transition to the new scheme from the old one.
- More work needs to be done with stakeholders.
- The involvement of the Archaeological Trust not discussed yet, but it is expected that there will be some sort of farming advisory service for the historic environment.

Guidance and consultations

Jenny explained that it had been a bumper year for guidance and consultations, but there weren't necessarily relevant for countryside. ClfA guidance for fieldwork was published, but there has been debate about the terminology. Main concern regarding trying to have one international standard, but not necessarily applicable for all countries, due to different ways of working and focus. There has also been work around applicable to planning archaeology, such as resources, public benefit in commercial archaeology and heritage management.

A householder's guide to archaeology and planning in Wales guidance

Alice Thorne requested that this guidance be retained after the merger of the Welsh Archaeological Trusts completes. This is useful for planning colleagues and applicants and provides consistency.

Jenny explained that there had been a meeting amongst planning colleagues within the trusts about the merger and the adoption of this guidance was raised. It is unclear how it will be used after the merger, but it is unlikely to be completely dispensed.

It was agreed that the continued use of the guidance would be useful, although what work would be done to this document as part of the merger was unclear.

Action: Jenny to feedback comments internally about the guidance and its continued use post-merger.

Bannau Brycheiniog Plans and audit

Alice Thorne explained that plans within the National Park Authority were adopted during autumn 2023 including the Management Plan and the Historic Environment Action Plan (HEAP). The latter reflect a lot of the work done by partners within the National Park area. HEAP is an useful way to disseminate this work amongst different departments and managers in the Park. HEAP is not a static document and will continue to develop over time.

Alice Thorne added that the Park was currently carrying out a heritage audit and they have a consultant supporting them with this work. It is exploring elements like metrics and data collection. The consultant may have been in touch with some of those present in the meeting or will be in the near future.

Historic England Landscape and Seascape Guidance Development

Jenny explained that Historic England have approached ALGAO for representative to work on the development of guidance in England relating to landscape and seascape. Jenny has put her name forward as she is interested in this area of work and Wales has done a lot of work on this already. Once Jenny has more info, she will be in touch with Neil Maylan, Cadw, Jill Bullen, NRW and John Briggs, NRW in due course who have done work on this previously.

Action: Jenny to contact Neil Maylan, Cadw, Jill Bullen, NRW and John Briggs, NRW in due course.

Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023

Ian highlighted that the consolidation work has been completed and the legislation has now received royal assent. The legislation will come into force over the next 12 months.

3. Forestry/Woodland planting

UK Forestry Standard

Jenny highlighted that the UK Forestry Standard has now been published - [The UK Forestry Standard - Forest Research](#)

Ian has read the document and explained that it was a slim down version of previous iterations. The guidance does not come into force until October 2024, but it is worth familiarising with the document.

Jill explained that a lot of good stuff seem to have been taken out in the new document, some of the links are not quite right and take you to general Cadw pages, rather than specific relevant webpages.

Ian suggested contacting UK Forestry Standard if there are issues with links, although it is not clear if the document can be changed as it is only reviewed every five years.

Eryri Woodland Management Plan

Jenny explained that Eryri National Park Authority have engaged with the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust on the production of a woodland management plan.

Tom explained that he attended a meeting on policy. The development is at a very early stage and the meetings are high level regarding overall strategy. Historic environment not currently a feature. They are not clear at this stage what they are going to develop. John G. Roberts was not present at this meeting.

Ian confirmed that Cadw had not been contacted either.

Concern was raised that consultation did not seem to be taking place with the National Park's Archaeologist.

Alice and Tomos highlighted a similar issue in their National Parks. National Park Authorities are not focussed specifically on the historic environment, as such it is not always on the mind of other sections and staff working on the development of policies etc. The input of external organisations and colleagues from the Historic Environment Sector is crucial, particularly at senior level.

Pembrokeshire woodland planting research pilot

Jill highlighted that the prospect of the woodland planting research pilot in Pembrokeshire is still exciting, however this needs Cadw to fund it. The cost should be just under £5k and it might be better for it to take place earlier in the year to ensure funding is available and that it happens.

Ian explained that the pilot is ready to go but they did not have funding available for revenue expenditure. The Welsh Government have announced a 20% cut to Cadw's budget for the financial year 2024-25, so it could be a challenge to get funding for this.

Claudine suggested that this could be carried out as part of a study by a student if funding is not available, such as the South, West and Wales Doctoral Training Partnership - [Why collaborate with us? | SWWDTP Studentship : SWWDTP Studentship \(sww-ahdtp.ac.uk\)](#)

4. Historic Landscapes

Planning consultations and registered historic landscapes

Jill is currently working on a report regarding the planning consultations that the Welsh archaeological trusts do, 70% of this report has been completed. Once complete, Jill will be able to identify potential areas to focus on. Regarding registered historic landscapes, we can look at the planning application monitoring and link with monitoring LANDMAP to explore what changes might be happening in this landscape. A summary narrative could be developed to bring in additional new information such as nature recovery, climate change sector adaptation plan and historic environment and tranquillity for example. Useful to take a selection of landscapes and explore working them up as an example.

Action: Jill to arrange short dedicated meeting regarding the above in due course.

State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR)

Jill explained that elements of the historic environment could potentially be included with landscape in SoNaRR. Jill mentioned that this was raised at the HEG Climate Change Adaptation workshop on 13 December 2023.

Further info on SoNaRR available at [Natural Resources Wales / Research and reports](#)

Action: Jill to see if can incorporate elements of the historic environment in SoNaRR.

Jill added that the desirable future landscapes could be adapted to include more obvious historic environment elements and it not necessarily cost too much. It is possible to do this as part of other existing work.

5. Peat

Jenny explained that the joint NRW/Cadw guidance is ongoing. Also, several European Union funded peatland restoration projects ongoing.

Ian added that he and Fiona Grant from Cadw are still attending the UK peatland group. Fiona is considering adopting guidance from England as best practice, as it has not been possible to develop something bespoke for Wales. The brief for this work has been produced, but this was revenue expenditure and funding was not available.

6. Wildlife/Nature recovery

Consultations

Jenny explained that the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust had been consulted by the North Wales Wildlife Trust regarding conservation work with beavers. They are receptive to historic environment advice.

Alice Pyper added that the Dyfed Archaeological Trust had also been consulted by the North Wales Wildlife Trust on beaver work in Pembrokeshire.

Historic environment best practice for natural environment projects

Ian explained that Cadw are currently working on a document to advise organisations and those involved in natural environment projects of historic environment factors to consider as part of their work. Cadw did not want to call this a nature recovery document as it will cover a broader range of activities. They are exploring what to call this document as certain wording will impact the process for adopting the document.

Jill – suggested that they consider calling it ‘best practice guidance’, NRW as part of a working group are looking to take this approach for dark skies guidance.

Action: Ian to consider calling the document a ‘best practice guidance’

Action: Ian to share a draft of the document with Jill in the new year.

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority Nature Recovery update

Tomos explained that archaeology now sits under the Nature Recovery department as part of the recent restructure. It is its own distinct section.

Tomos added that there are a few nature recovery themed projects currently ongoing, such as Connecting the Coast. This scheme invites landowners to submit applications to the National Park Authority to help fund activities like rebuilding field banks, fencing and planting. Tomos has done a quick screen of the applications that have been received to check for any historic environment factors to consider. He has also advised that his colleagues should get in touch with Cadw and the Dyfed Archaeological Trust for those applications with historic environment implications. The biggest concern is the fact that many of the initiatives have been developed before consultation with him or relevant external organisations has occurred. He has stressed to his colleagues that this needs to take place at the development stage of a scheme. There have been recent cases where he has had to advise against funding work, when this promise has already been made to landowners before he has been able to consider the proposals.

7. Climate change

Ian explained that the HEG Climate Change Adaptation workshop took place on 13 December 2023 with a number of attendees from this meeting present. The workshop seems to have been a success.

Jenny noted that there was a lot of virtuous talk, but not much practical action taking place within development control.

Ian added that internal discussion are taking place amongst Welsh Government departments to explore areas of mutual interest in relation to climate change.

8. Heritage crime

Jenny highlighted that a North Wales Heritage Watch meeting will take place in January amongst key stakeholders.

Tomos explained that the Dyfed-Powys Heritage Watch scheme is ongoing. Including patrols, publicity, public awareness events, patrols, reporting, investigating and carrying out repair work where possible.

Tomos also added that the Inspector Reuben Palin, Police All-Wales lead for Heritage Crime had retired. The lead for Dyfed-Powys Police is Sgt. Paul Roberts, but the person who has taken over from Reuben was not clear.

Action: Tomos to contact Paul to identify the new All Wales lead for Heritage Crime.

Claudine explained that she had struggled to get in contact with the coordinator for the Gwent Heritage Watch scheme.

Tomos advised Claudine that the coordinator is PC Dan Counsell and Amelia Pannett, Cadw has a good working relationship with Dan.

Action: Claudine to approach Amelia Pannett for Dan Counsell's contact details.

9. Training, conferences, networks

Attendees highlighted the following had taken place:

- EIA Agriculture training was delivered by the Welsh Government earlier this year.
- Mine exchange took place earlier this year.
- NRW hosted two Heritage Liaison days this year, focussed on forestry. One was held with North Wales colleagues and the other with those in South Wales.

Attendees highlighted the following were upcoming:

- Two upcoming events delivered by the British Dam Society with a Welsh connection -
 1. Thursday 21st December 12pm - 12.30pm - Reparation of Llyn Uchaf / Canol project in the National Botanic Garden of Wales James Smith, Head of Operations & Facilities at the National Botanic Garden of Wales.
 2. Monday 8th January 2024: 6pm – 7.30pm: Historic Structures and Dams Mark Roberts of National Trust, Dr Jonathan Berry of CADW, David Littlemore of Stillwater, Craig Goff of HR Wallingford, Richard Terrell of Binnies. – <https://britishdams.org/meetings-and-events/events-calendar/>
- Sustained Past Sustainable Future training to be delivered by the University of Oxford in 2024.

- River restoration annual conference to be hosted in Llandudno in 2024.
- CifA conference to be hosted in Chester in 2024. Tomos has been approached to deliver a talk on the monitoring activities of volunteers in the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. NRW have also been approached to deliver a talk on forestry archaeology, but they have not confirmed if they will be delivering talk.
- NRW Catchment Forums, including Conwy and Anglesey. There may be more across Wales.

Action: Attendees from the archaeological trusts/Cadw to send ideas/contributions to Jill by early January 2024 on aspects to include in a woodland creation and historic environment training event when the NRW MOU training will be finalised.

10. Members' updates (including current conservation projects/community work/ research)

The National Trust

Claudine announced that she will be leaving her post with the National Trust. In the interim, her post will be covered by Kathy Laws on increased hours, but they will be recruiting in due course.

All attendees thanked Claudine for her work as National Trust archaeologist for South Wales. Many of those in attendance stated that they had a good working relationship with her and her contribution had been invaluable. Attendees wish Claudine the best.

Cadw

Ian provided the following update:

- Guy Salkeld has been appointed as Regional Inspector of Ancient Monuments and Archaeology for NE Wales.
- Aimee Henderson, Inspector of Historic Buildings (Conservation of N Wales)
- The Welsh Government have announced a 20% budget cut to Cadw for financial year 2024-25. It is not clear yet where these cuts will affect, but it is likely that there will be a cut to the funding for the merged Archaeological Trust. It will not be possible to do some things anymore.
- There has been a rearrangement of policy areas for historic environment staff.

National Parks

Tomos noted that based on the Welsh Government announcement the budget looks flat for National Parks for 2024-25.

11. AOB

Jenny asked whether attendees found the Countryside committee useful and would like to continue with meetings going forward.

Attendees unanimously agreed that this committee was useful and to continue to hold meetings.

12. Date of next meeting

04/12/2024 @ 2PM