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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Welsh Government
Consultation – summary of response

Easy Access to Listed Buildings in Wales

October 2019

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

Introduction

1. Since the passage of the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016, Cadw has been implementing an integrated package of secondary legislation, new and updated planning policy and advice, and guidance on a wide range of topics. Taken together, these support and promote the careful management of change in the historic environment in accordance with current conservation principles.
2. *Overcoming the Barriers*, the Welsh Government's current guidance on improving access to listed buildings in Wales, was published in 2002. While its basic principles remain valid, the document needs updating to reflect changes in legislation.
3. Between 25 April and 19 July 2019, the Welsh Government conducted a twelve-week public consultation on new best-practice guidance — *Easy Access to Listed Buildings in Wales* — drafted to explain how to plan and improve access to listed buildings in Wales.
4. The consultation was published on the Welsh Government's dedicated consultation web pages, where the guidance document could be downloaded. The response form was available as an online form and as a downloadable Word document.
5. A variety of methods were used to publicise the consultation. It was signposted on Cadw's website, Twitter feed and Facebook page. The publication of the consultation was featured in Cadw's 'Historic Environment Update' which was distributed to around 350 stakeholders and interested members of the public. An email reminder was sent to the same recipients. It was also promoted more widely on the Welsh Government Twitter feed.

The responses

6. The consultation received 48 substantive responses. A full list of respondents is provided at Annex 1, with details omitted where individuals have requested anonymity.
7. Thirty responses were sent from Welsh addresses. While the rest were from outside Wales or undisclosed addresses, most reflected a direct involvement or interest in listed buildings and improving access to them.
8. The consultation responses have been categorised in Figure 1.

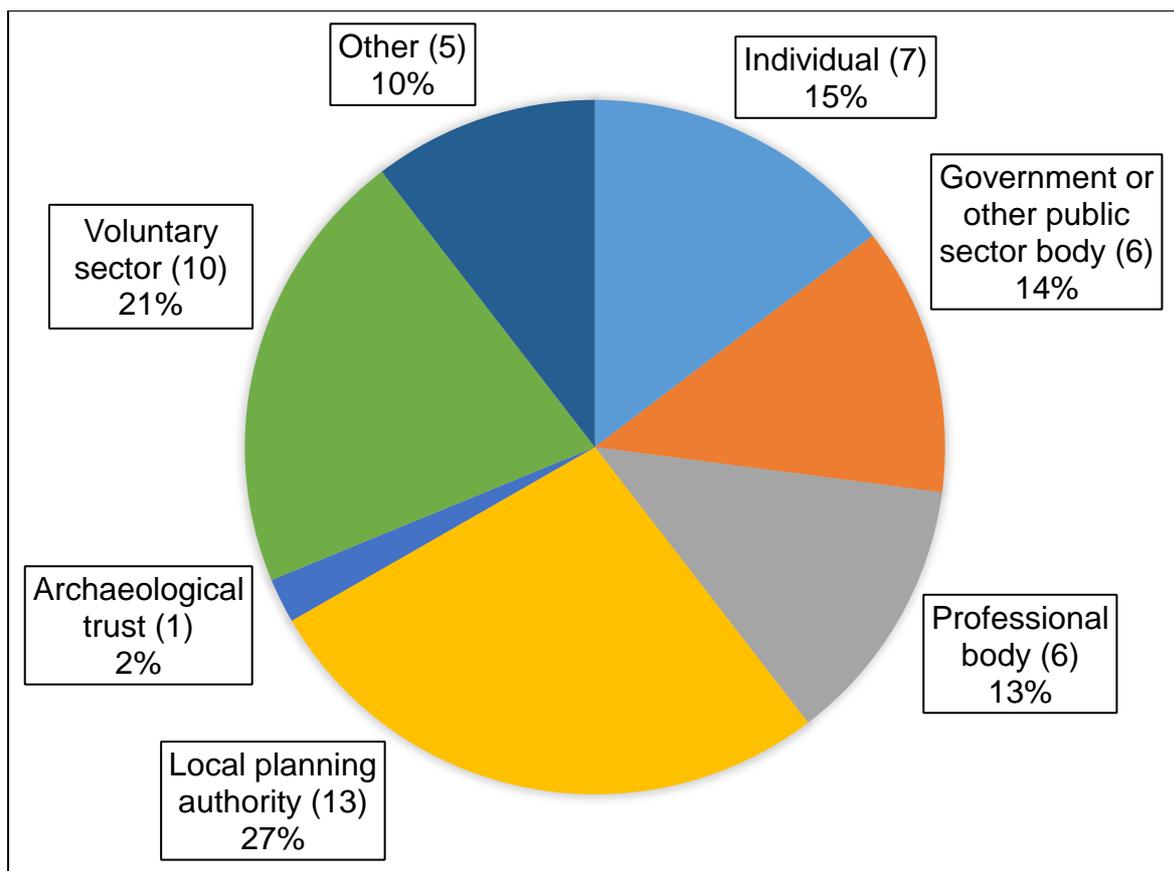


Figure 1. Consultation responses by category

Q1. Do you agree that section 3 of the guidance clearly explains how an access plan can be used to balance easy access for everyone while protecting the special interest and conservation needs of a listed building?

Agree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Comment Only	Total
25	6	7	6	44
57%	14%	16%	14%	100%

Summary analysis

9. The majority of consultees agreed that section 3 of the guidance clearly explains how an access plan can be used to balance easy access for everyone while protecting the special interest and conservation needs of a listed building. However a number of helpful and detailed comments were made on how to improve the guidance.
10. While the social model of disability has been adopted by the Welsh Government, a consultee identified a few areas where the language of the

guidance needed review; for example, the guidance referred to people with learning disabilities rather than cognitive impairments.

11. One consultee explained that every individual faces different barriers and there is a need to consider access in a holistic way. It was suggested that the access audit should include all potential barriers, even if it was not possible to address them, as the document could be used as evidence of consideration as well as the possible basis for an alternative solution in the future. All consultees agreed with the importance of involving a wide range of disabled people at all stages of plan development to understand the barriers and their needs and to assist in ensuring that access options are fully considered. However one consultee suggested that the guidance should emphasise the need to involve and engage with disabled people as equals in the process rather than simply as consultees.
12. One response explained that reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010 applied equally to providing auxiliary aids or support, such as hearing loops, communication support, audio information and other aids and support and to any provisions, criteria or practices that put a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage to a non-disabled person. It was felt that it was important to include these elements in the guidance and that they should also be reviewed in relation to barriers to access.
13. A number of consultees requested that the guidance give greater emphasis to the importance of the roles of local authorities' access and conservation officers in providing advice and information.
14. Organisations representing religious denominations suggested that the guidance could be improved by including some additional information for religious organisations and by making particular reference to ecclesiastical exemption. It was noted that significant projects were undertaken to reorder churches to create more flexible spaces and that these reordering projects were an opportunity to address accessibility issues.
15. Some consultees requested further guidance on defining 'reasonable change', and suggested that the proposed case studies could assist by providing context. In addition it was suggested that the section on Heritage Impact Assessments and its link to conservation assessments could be clearer. One consultee provided an alternative flowchart on how to compile an access plan.
16. A few responses suggested further guidance and advice that could be referred to in the document. They also emphasised that the British Standards should be adhered to as minimum standards rather than 'best practice'.
17. One organisation, representing older people, explained that, when considering access to listed buildings and their surroundings, it is vital that the built environment enables, rather than prevents, older people taking an active part in their communities. They welcomed the proposals that older people's needs should be taken into account in the access audit and access plans.

Welsh Government response

18. The Welsh Government is pleased that a majority of respondents found section 3 clear and useful, but is also grateful for the detailed and constructive comments offered for its improvement.
19. We have amended the text to clarify that the emphasis of this guidance is on physical adjustments to listed buildings. We have also reviewed the language throughout so that it is in line with the social model of disability. Although several respondents suggested that other types of access issues should be addressed, these fall outside the scope of this guidance document.
20. The Welsh Government considers that the document already highlights the role of local authority conservation and access officers in providing specialist advice on access to listed buildings. The guidance has been amended to stress the need to involve disabled people at all stages in developing an access plan.
21. Specific references to places of worship and their advice systems have been added to clarify the role of religious denominations with ecclesiastical exemption.
22. The text has not been amended to identify and provide examples of 'reasonable adjustments'. However the illustrative examples of good practice in providing easy access will assist in identifying 'reasonable adjustments'. The emphasis of the guidance is on the process that enables reasonable adjustments to be identified rather than providing a list of possible options.
23. The text has been amended, where appropriate, to clarify where standards are a minimum requirement and also to encourage exceeding these minimum standards as best practice. References to other relevant advice, guidance and organisations have been added to draw attention to other sources of information.
24. The Welsh Government considers that heritage impact assessment is adequately addressed in the guidance document. Cadw has already published *Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales* which should be read in conjunction with *Easy Access to Listed Buildings in Wales*. However, amendments have been made to the guidance to explain the relationship between the 'heritage assessment' and the 'heritage impact assessment'. In addition the terminology used has changed to refer to an 'assessment of significance' rather than 'heritage assessment' in recognition of the confusion that the terminology introduced. The flowchart on compiling an access plan has been amended to incorporate the suggestions received by consultees.

Q2.	Do you agree that the guidance will help service providers to meet their obligations to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people?
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Agree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Comment Only	Total
27	5	5	7	44
61%	11%	11%	16%	100%

Summary analysis

25. The majority of consultees agreed that the guidance would help service providers to meet their obligations to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people. A number welcomed the guidance and considered that it would be useful when considering how to manage improved access to listed buildings.
26. One respondent suggested that the guidance and policy aspirations could lead to an improved environment for projects and change to emerge, but the availability of resources and more innovative decision making would ultimately determine the nature and speed of change. It was acknowledged that case studies and examples would assist in illustrating key points.
27. Two organisations suggested that section 1 could set out more clearly the types of organisations to which the Equality Act applied, i.e. that the Act specifically applied to voluntary groups such as church councils or local building preservation trusts.
28. Two organisations welcomed the mention of ecclesiastical exemption, but suggested that the guidance make it clearer that, whilst different consent procedures might apply, the other considerations under the Equality Act and the guidance were relevant to exempt religious building.
29. A response from representatives of local authority conservation officers stated that it was important that the document acknowledged that improvements to a listed building must be balanced against the preservation of the finite resource that is the historic environment. They also suggested that the document could provide more details regarding how those in conservation/planning roles should decide whether adequate justification had been provided; examples of inadequate justification could also be helpfully included.

Welsh Government response

30. The Welsh Government is pleased to note that the guidance was welcomed and that it will be a useful resource when considering how to manage improved access to listed buildings.
31. The text has been amended to clarify that the Equality Act applies to other organisations, such as voluntary groups and church councils. It has also been

amended to emphasise that considerations under the Equality Act and guidance apply to denominations carrying out work to listed buildings under ecclesiastical exemption.

32. The Welsh Government believes that the guidance document sufficiently explains the balance that should be struck between improving access to listed buildings whilst not causing harm to the building’s special architectural and historic interest, and that the guidance provides the tools to enable this to be done effectively.

Q3.	Do you agree that section 4 covers the most common solutions to improving access and adequately signposts the detailed guidance available from other sources?
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Agree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Comment Only	Total
25	9	5	1	40
62%	22%	13%	3%	100%

Summary analysis

33. Consultees generally agreed that section 4 covered the most common solutions to improving access to listed buildings and that it adequately signposted the detailed guidance which is available from other sources.
34. They provided useful suggestions about further common solutions that could be included in the guidance. A few proposed that a more holistic approach should be taken as barriers could be considered as having physical, sensory, cognitive and cultural aspects. In addition, section 4 should include examples of creative and innovative solutions to these barriers, as the current document focused on making adaptations along traditional lines. It was noted that the guidance should reflect that in some situations multiple options may be required to meet the access requirements of disabled people.
35. The importance of involving a range of disabled people in the design solution was also highlighted. Their involvement should incorporate input on signage, information provision, interpretation, circulation around the site and navigation.
36. A few consultees stated that it was important to reiterate that the guidance document was an introduction to access consideration, and that further detailed guidance, advice and regulations must be referred to in all situations. Some suggestions were made about the additional guidance that was available as well as the way that it could be signposted.
37. A number of the responses included comments or additional information on some of the common solutions identified, for example, on gradients, lifts, car parking, handrails, lighting, hearing loops, stairs and contrast strips.

38. Another area which was highlighted by a consultee, was the need for suitable training for all those involved in the design, development, construction and ongoing maintenance and repair of any access solutions to historic buildings.
39. A number of consultees agreed that illustrations and examples would enhance this section. It was also suggested that examples of solutions for buildings in more rural areas, for example, small cottages or farms, would be useful. Such buildings are often simple and plain in design and it can be challenging to adapt and develop solutions without impacting on their character and significance.

Welsh Government response

40. The Welsh Government is pleased that most respondents agreed that the guidance covers the most common solutions to improving access to listed buildings and is grateful for the suggestions for useful additions.
41. Whilst the Welsh Government agrees that the barriers faced by disabled people are not only physical, the emphasis of this guidance is on physical adjustments and other types of access solutions are not within the scope of this consultation. However, the guidance signposts other available guidance that could be useful in considering access solutions.
42. The guidance has been amended to stress the importance of involving disabled people at all stages in the development of a project. The guidance reiterates that specialist advice should be sought on access considerations and signposts organisations that can help with this. The guidance also makes clear that pre-application discussion with relevant authorities will provide additional information on the solutions identified.
43. In illustrating the guidance, we will endeavour to use a variety of listed buildings. As part of the consultation exercise (Question 4) we encouraged consultees to provide examples of best practice.

Q4.

Please suggest examples of good practice in improving access in Welsh listed buildings that could be used to illustrate *Easy Access to Listed Buildings in Wales*.

44. Fourteen respondents provided examples of good practice in improving access to listed buildings.

Welsh Government response

45. We are grateful to everyone who provided examples of good practice in improving access to Welsh listed buildings. We will be following them up with the intention of including some in the guidance document, *Easy Access to Listed Buildings in Wales*.

Q5.

We would like to know your views on the effects that *Easy Access to Listed Buildings in Wales* would have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English.

Summary analysis

46. Twenty-one respondents provided substantive comments on the effects of the guidance on the Welsh language. Seven of the respondents commented that all signage should be bilingual and that Welsh should be first. Some respondents suggested that signage should be as clear and concise as possible to reduce complexity and the number of signs needed. Others expressed concern that bilingual signage may be so large that it affects the historic integrity of buildings. Other respondents suggested that universally recognised pictograms and symbols may help to alleviate this.
47. Other suggestions were made regarding the promotion of the use of Welsh using easily accessible methods such as digital technology. Another respondent commented that visitors may feel more comfortable discussing access issues in Welsh and that Welsh-speaking staff should be available to meet this need. Two religious groups felt that as activities in churches increase generally, more opportunities will arise to promote the Welsh language. Two respondents felt that the use of Welsh would have a positive impact on Welsh learners and enhance the appreciation of Welsh language and culture.
48. One respondent stated that consideration should be given to providing adequate signage for people with sight loss.
49. Three of the respondents stated that they thought that there would not be any or very little impact. One commented that they did not have the expertise to comment on the matter.

Welsh Government response

50. The Welsh Government is committed to ensuring that people have the opportunity to use Welsh and that the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than English.
51. The Welsh Government expects all public organisations to comply with the Welsh Language Standards in matters relating to signage and the provision of services in Welsh. *Easy Access to Listed Buildings in Wales* will be available in Welsh and English.
52. The guidance already considers the use of adequate signage for people with sight loss.

Q6.

We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues that we have not specifically addresses, please raise them here.

Summary of additional comments

53. Twenty-seven respondents provided substantive comments on a range of other related issues. Those directly relevant to earlier questions have been considered during the analysis of those aspects. Eight of these were very positive about the publication of the guidance and supported the principle of making listed buildings more accessible. One added that the guidance would be a valuable resource.
54. One respondent criticised the consultation for not being available in other accessible formats and expressed their disappointment that the document sometimes reflected the medical rather than social model of disability. Another respondent, however, praised the guidance for embedding the social model of disability at the start of the document.
55. A number of respondents, whilst agreeing with the principles outlined in the guidance, felt that it should address other issues such as sensory and cognitive impairment. The use of British Sign Language and understanding the needs of its users was also highlighted. One respondent added that it is important to understand what visitors want to discover and the way in which they want to experience it. Accessible toilets were also considered an important consideration by two respondents.
56. Two respondents accepted that historic buildings can be difficult to modify which may lead to a large financial burden. Another, however, stated that there should be a balance struck with other areas of accessibility which may not necessarily lead to structural changes to a building. Another consultee commented that how buildings were built in the past need not dictate how accessibility issues are addressed today. One respondent felt that the guidance focused too much on legal compliance rather than promoting best practice.
57. Three respondents thought that the guidance could be clearer about its target audience and asked if it could be extended to cover all historic buildings. Others felt that it wasn't clear that the guidance was aimed at public buildings. One respondent felt that it should be for individual owners to manage their buildings as they see fit.
58. One respondent remarked that the document should be explicit about the Welsh Government's obligations to children and young people in regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Consultation with children and young people should be a general expectation since their views and rights can often be lost.

Welsh Government response

59. The Welsh Government is pleased to note the positive comments about the draft guidance.
60. It is possible to request alternative formats for any Welsh Government consultation, but we are grateful for the feedback given about the ability to access alternative formats. We have reviewed the guidance and it amended where necessary to reflect the social model of disability.
61. Whilst the Welsh Government accepts that there are many access issues that affect disabled people, the focus of this guidance is on physical adjustments; other adaptations fall outside the scope of this consultation. However we have tried to signpost alternative guidance that is available.
62. We consider that the guidance strikes the right balance between making changes to a listed building to improve access for all, whilst ensuring that the architectural and historical importance of the building is not affected. The guidance also encourages innovative and thoughtful change without compromising a listed building's special interest.
63. The guidance states from the outset that although *Easy Access to Listed Buildings in Wales* applies specifically to listed buildings, the approaches described are applicable to any historic building in Wales.
64. We have taken account of many of the suggestions made to enhance the inclusion of children and young people within the scope of the guidance.

Annex 1 — List of respondents

Each entry gives the number of the consultation response, the name of the individual or organisation responding (unless anonymity has been requested) and the location of the respondent (if known).

No.	Name	Location
001	Caerphilly County Borough Council	Nelson
002	Blaenau Gwent People First	Ferndale
003	Arfon Access Group	Caernarfon
004	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority	Pembroke Dock
005	Office of the Future Generations Commissioner	Cardiff
006	John Killick	Not provided
007	Anonymity requested	Withheld
008	David Brute	Brecon
009	The Methodist Church	Manchester
010	Pembrokeshire Access Group	Haverfordwest
011	Design Commission for Wales	Cardiff
012	Construction Industry Training Board Wales	Bridgend
013	Ceredigion Museum	Aberystwyth
014	Anonymous	Not provided
015	K. Powell	Merthyr Tydfil
016	Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust	Swansea
017	National Trust	Wrexham
018	Newport City Council	Newport
019	Caerphilly County Borough Council	Caerphilly
020	Isle of Anglesey County Council	Llangefni
021	The Representative Body of the Church in Wales	Cardiff
022	Local Planning Authority (Partial response)	Not provided
023	Anonymous	Not provided
024	Conwy County Borough Council	Conwy
025	Anonymity requested	Aberystwyth
026	Cytûn – Churches Together in Wales	Cardiff
027	Historic England	Not provided
028	Institute of Historic Building Conservation Wales	Carmarthen
029	Anonymous	Not provided
030	Anonymity requested	Withheld
031	Carmarthenshire County Council	Llandeilo
032	Theatres Trust	London
033	Local Planning Authority (Partial response)	Not provided
034	National Deaf Children's Society Cymru	Not provided
035	National Lottery Heritage Fund	Cardiff
036	Diverse Cymru	Cardiff
037	Institute of Historic Building Conservation	Tisbury, Wiltshire
038	South Wales Conservation Group	Barry
039	Landscape Institute	Not provided
040	Royal Society of Architects in Wales	Cardiff
041	Children's Commissioner for Wales	Not provided

042	Local Planning Authority (Partial response)	Not provided
043	Snowdonia National Park Authority	Penrhyndeudraeth
044	Ceredigion County Council	Aberaeron
045	Anonymity requested	Withheld
046	Gwynedd Council	Pwllheli
047	Age Cymru	Cardiff
048	Historic Houses	London