


Ken Skates AC / AM
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Diwylliant, Chwaraeon a Thwristiaeth
Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref:
Ein cyf/Our ref: LF/KS/0583/15

Christine Chapman AM
Chair of the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

 June 2015

Dear Christine,

Historic Environment (Wales) Bill

I write further to the letter that you received from Jocelyn Davies AM, Chair of the Finance Committee, identifying some financial issues that the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee might like to consider during its scrutiny of the Bill. I thought it might be helpful if I clarified some of the points raised in order to inform your further considerations.

A number of the Finance Committee's concerns echo those of respondents to the 2013 consultation on proposals for the historic environment, *The future of our past*. For instance, the Finance Committee has questioned the financial impact of the Bill on local authorities, citing concerns expressed by consultees, including Pembrokeshire County Council, in 2013. A similar point was raised with regard to Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council during my appearance before your committee on 4 June.

I should like to take this opportunity to stress that there are significant differences between the proposals that were put forward in 2013 and the provisions in the Bill.

Some of the consultation proposals were rejected because respondents believed that they would add costs for local authorities without bringing real benefits, such as a formal system for certifying that works would not require listed building consent. Other proposals were ruled out because local planning authorities were concerned that they might compromise the protection afforded to historic assets, such as the merging of conservation area consent and planning permission.

I believe, therefore, that the Regulatory Impact Assessment is correct in concluding that the additional costs imposed on local authorities by the Bill will be very modest.

Nevertheless, as Jocelyn Davies AM has pointed out, there will be potential costs for local authorities arising from the exercise of new discretionary powers in the Bill, including the extension in the scope of urgent works to listed buildings and the introduction of heritage partnership agreements. The Finance Committee expressed particular concern about the

likely costs and saving for local authorities entering into HPAs. These are, of course, voluntary arrangements and the expectation is that there will be long-term cost benefits and, more importantly, very real conservation gains.

I look forward to discussing these issues with the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee in due course.

I am copying this letter to Jocelyn Davies AM, Chair of the Finance Committee.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken', written in a cursive style.

Ken Skates AC / AM

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