

# Valuing Wales's past, building the future

**H**istoric Houses Wales represents almost 100 independently owned historic houses and gardens across the country, including some of Wales's most iconic and historic places. In 2024, Historic Houses Wales members welcomed nearly 387,000 visitors and generated a visitor spend of two million pounds for the Welsh economy. Many of these historic places are vitally important tourist attractions, small businesses and local employers in what are often fragile economies in rural parts of Wales.

We want to work with the Welsh Government to ensure a policy environment where our heritage attractions and regional economies have the right conditions to put themselves onto a more sustainable footing both economically and environmentally, and to encourage tourists to travel the length and breadth of Wales.

## 1. Protect heritage from unintended consequences

Our unique national heritage relies upon a supportive fiscal and regulatory framework. Changes to regulations, such as with short-term lets, can threaten the viability of a historic house



business. The Welsh Government must commit to considering the potential economic impact of changes to the regulatory framework on fragile heritage and to consulting in earnest with the sector.

## 2. Make Wales a competitive and sustainable tourism destination

Creating a sustainable, vibrant tourism market is vital to both our member houses and rural communities across Wales. We support the Welsh Government in making heritage tourism a priority but this can only happen with appropriate tourist infrastructure throughout Wales, including encouraging short term lets where they do not impact local housing need and ensuring that any

visitor levy is implemented for the benefit of the local visitor economy.

## 3. Unleash the potential of the rural economy

Historic house businesses bring many benefits to their local rural economies but they are held back by poor connectivity. Greater commitment from the Welsh Government to work together with the UK Government is needed to

improve rural infrastructure and allow the rural economy to grow.

## 4. Support renewable and sustainable energy use

Property owners and custodians must be able to implement sensitive energy efficiency measures in a way that protects Wales's unique historic buildings. As outlined in the Heat Strategy for Wales, the planning system must enable our pursuit of net zero. Greater investment in renewable energy for off-grid rural communities will help reduce carbon footprints and fuel costs, whilst increasing self-sufficiency. By integrating heritage sites with green energy projects, we can create a sustainable future for Wales's historic and traditional buildings.

## 5. Stimulate investment in repair projects

The Welsh Government must petition the UK Government to introduce a VAT relief scheme on structural repairs and maintenance to heritage attractions open to the public. This is essential in enabling heritage attractions to invest in vital repairs and sustainability, and will stimulate local economies.

