

Welsh Ways - Making a Mark

A proposal for a national tourist route in Wales by Design Commission for Wales

Project Introduction

Welsh Ways is a proposed Wales-wide project which will harness the power of good design and planning to enhance people's experience of the magnificent landscapes in Wales, whilst adding value to the tourism industry and rural economies.

The project will identify and promote scenic routes around Wales and commission interventions along those routes which engage people with the landscape and its natural resources and heritage.

The routes will allow for a variety of travel modes, including driving, walking, cycling and public transport options, with interventions including viewing areas, picnic spots, rest areas, public toilets and transport stops. Each intervention will be carefully designed in response to a deep understanding of its place in order to showcase the beauty of the landscape setting, design talent and craftsmanship.

To achieve best value from the project, a number of organisations will collaborate to coordinate the various aspects of the project which will be led by the Design Commission for Wales. The ethos of the project closely follows the seven goals of the Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act by addressing issues of economy, resilience, environment, tourism, culture, heritage, health, community and inclusivity. The commissioning of design and construction teams for each of the interventions will encourage innovative and collaborative practice, supporting and promoting design talent.

As a core project of the Wales' National Development Framework (NDF), Welsh Ways provides a useful strategic, nation-wide project which meets Welsh Government's objectives for sustainable place-driven planning with minimal capital investment. Welsh Ways can be used as an exemplar early-win to demonstrate the value of the collaborative, integrated, strategic approach to planning and place-making in Wales endorsed by the NDF.



Designed interventions along an identified route will add value to Wales' landscape assets

Landmarks: a primer and evidence for Welsh Ways

Through its **Landmarks** events and exhibition in autumn 2015, the Design Commission for Wales sought to dig deeper into the relationship between natural resources and human intervention to inform and inspire a future for design in our landscapes in Wales. Both inspirational and provocative, **Landmarks** highlighted the challenges we face in delivering design quality in rural settings, whilst demonstrating the good value that can be achieved when the right approach is taken. Useful lessons were learned through **Landmarks** which support the Welsh Ways proposal as an NDF project.

With its magnificent mountains, verdant valleys and characterful coastline, Wales is renowned for the beauty of its natural landscape. Yet, over centuries, it has been transformed by the designs of mankind. Farming, industry, transport, energy, wars, religion and tourism have all left their marks on the Welsh landscape in the form of field boundaries, deforestation, roads, canals, quarries, mines, power stations, factories, monuments, pylons, wind turbines and the like. Historically, people used their local surroundings out of necessity; but today a romantic attachment to the 'natural' landscape leads to a focus on preservation, deeming new interventions negative and requiring hiding or mitigation. We believe that this narrow, increasingly prohibitive attitude obstructs value-adding good design. Moreover, the evidence of many examples examined through our national Design Review service, illustrates a trend toward pastiche and inappropriate design and construction, closing down opportunities for beauty in living landscapes fit for a modern world.

Landmarks highlighted the value of rural landscapes, which are often neglected in discussions about design and planning. Debates about new housing, for example, tend to focus on urban development and green-belts; but rural housing is an important issue in Wales, with around one in three people living in areas classified as rural, so design quality in rural landscapes will have a significant impact on people's everyday lives in Wales. At a large scale, landscapes tend to be 'managed' rather than designed, but a coordinated, collaborative and holistic design approach has the potential to make better use of natural resources in a way which is more sustainable. A multi-disciplinary approach to design is required to achieve the best value and tackle the complex issues involved in designing in rural landscapes. A coordinating 'National Vision', such as the NDF has potential to provide, will encourage the kind of collaboration which is needed.



Landmarks exhibition and conference at Ruthin Craft Centre

For the **Landmarks** exhibition at Ruthin Craft Centre, DCFW curated the work of several designers which creatively and critically responds to the complex issues and challenges of working with the Welsh landscape, whilst highlighting the value of good design. It is this design talent that must be harnessed and nurtured to sustainably develop and enhance landscapes across Wales, deliver beneficial infrastructure which we are proud of, and create places which add value and delight to people's lives. Excerpts of their work are included in the **Landmarks** publication.



The Landmarks Publication is available at www.dcfw.org

The **Landmarks** publication serves as a lasting reference to the themes and thoughts which have been uncovered through **Landmarks**. The Design Commission for Wales selected nine illustrated essays, each of which demonstrates a critical response to the theme of **Landmarks** and, in doing so, stimulates and contributes to the debate.

Alister Kratt's essay for **Landmarks**, 'Welsh Plan: A national Vision and the National Plan', explores the potential for a National Development Framework to, 'coordinate, orchestrate and make the investments made in Wales work hard so that the outcome is more than the sum of the parts', and to deliver 'coordinated benefit to local communities, the environment and the Welsh economy'. The Welsh Ways proposal seeks to fulfil these potentials by taking a holistic, interdisciplinary approach to national travel infrastructure, tourism and the rural economy through exemplar value-adding design in the landscape.



Important Factors: *This word map highlights the issues which people think are and will be important in shaping Welsh landscapes. These issues could be addressed at a national level, through the NDF; and at a local level through smaller projects and interventions.*

Welsh Ways and the NDF

The Welsh Ways project has the potential to tie together many of the strands which emerged from **Landmarks**, coordinating various organisations and design disciplines to demonstrate how good design can add value to rural landscapes across a wide range of interests. The project could be a useful way to 'test' an approach to delivering the vision of the NDF at a relatively small scale of intervention and capital investment.

Welsh Ways & the Well-being of Future Generations Act

We know that good design contributes to sustainable communities, health and well-being, increased tourism and overall good value. Through design, the Welsh Ways project works towards all seven of the well-being goals set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, whilst encouraging integration, collaboration and involvement.

A prosperous Wales

- Improve tourism, creating employment opportunities and investment
- Generate income from landscape and design tourism
- Use of local resources, skills and labour
- Exemplars of sustainable, place-specific design
- Highlight and create education opportunities around the value and resources of Welsh landscapes
- Support and encourage local young design talent
- Create opportunities in rural Wales

A resilient Wales

- Promote sustainable, responsible tourism
- Highlight and educate people in importance of ecosystems and biodiversity in Welsh landscapes
- Exemplars of resilient design and response to climate change

A healthier Wales

- Promote walking and cycling to improve physical and mental health
- Encourage and improve experience of rural landscapes of Wales to improve mental well-being
- Create education opportunities around health and mental well-being

A more equal Wales

- Exemplars of inclusive design
- Improve accessibility to national walking/cycling routes
- Improve accessibility to rural landscapes in Wales

A Wales of cohesive communities

- Connect rural communities, tourism walking/cycle routes and road networks
- Exemplars of good design which enhance sense of place
- Create opportunities to discover, learn, better understand and share in our common culture

A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language

- Highlight and promote value of Wales' heritage and culture
- Use good design to enhance people's enjoyment of landscape, culture and heritage in Wales
- Create opportunities to involve local artists, designers and communities
- Encourage greater participation in walking and cycling for leisure

A globally responsible Wales

- Exemplars of sustainable design which take environmental, economic, social and cultural well-being into account, both at local and global levels
- Promote Wales' world-leading approach to the well-being of future generations through global tourism
- Promote and respond to climate change through design excellence, in the interests of a more resilient Wales

Making the Welsh Ways project a core part of the NDF would facilitate and encourage collaboration between the various public bodies and other organisations which need to be involved to make it work and achieve the best value for Wales overall.

The following bodies and organisations have been identified as having a potential role to play in maximising the value of the project:

Design Commission for Wales (coordinator)	Landscape Institute Wales?
Welsh Government*	RSAW?
Local Authorities*	RTPI Cymru?
National Parks Authorities*	ICE Wales?
Visit Wales	CPRW?
Sustrans	Cardiff Airport?
Natural Resources Wales*	Traveline Cymru?
Cadw	Trawscymru?
Arts Council for Wales*?	First Great Western?
National Trust?	Arriva Trains Wales?
Wales Coastal Path?	Michelin, AA or RAC?
Canal and River Trust Wales?	

*Organisations named in the Well-being of Future Generations Act

There may also be opportunities to involve local suppliers, manufacturers, crafts-people and contractors through sponsorship.

The Value of Tourism

Landscape is an important attraction in Wales' tourism industry. Visitors are drawn to the variety of landscapes Wales has to offer for walking, cycling, history, water sports, camping, food and more; and interventions in the landscape, such as paths, historic buildings, impressive infrastructure and amenities often add to the attraction. In many parts of Wales, the tourism economy is crucial to the sustainability of communities. Therefore, we should not neglect the potential for good design in landscapes to benefit tourism.

The Welsh Ways project aims to help increase tourism to Wales directly, whilst encouraging private-sector investment in the tourism industry. This, in turn, will help to stimulate entrepreneurship and boost employment and economy in the rural areas of Wales. The project will also benefit destinations, attractions, activities and visitor accommodation which already exist close to the route; and good information, publicity and coordination with the tourism industry can maximise those benefits.

Sustrans and the Active Travel Act

Initial conversations with Sustrans Wales about the project have been positive and they have indicated that they would be keen to be involved. Sustrans Wales provided the following statement:

The National Cycle Network offers a unique way to experience the breath-taking and diverse landscape of Wales. The Network is a series of traffic-free paths, country lanes and quiet roads that paves its way through coastal towns, villages, vibrant cities and dramatic mountain ranges.

Providing access to scenic rural Wales, it provides the opportunity to absorb unrivalled sights and sounds, from deep woodland valleys and river corridors to expansive views along the Atlantic coast. At an everyday level the Network helps to connect communities, catering for journeys to school, work, for shopping and visits to local centres and attractions. The importance of everyday journeys on bike and by foot is captured by the Active Travel Act (Wales), introduced in 2013 which aims to make walking and cycling the most natural and normal way to get around for everyday journeys.

Whether it is everyday journeys or day trips and visits for people wanting to experience Wales' culture and panoramic views. Travelling by bike and on foot provides an alternative experience and can provide opportunities for social interaction, a closeness with nature, exposure to fresh air and exercise – all helping to support health and wellbeing with a greener footprint - offering a truly holistic experience and helping to create a more resilient Wales.

There has always been a strong relationship between art and the Network. Sustrans believes Welsh Ways will add an exciting dimension to the National Cycle Network that will enhance and broaden its appeal, generating cycling and walking trips to visit. It presents an opportunity for new journeys of discovery that celebrate the landscape and encourage people to explore their surroundings in a way that benefits their health and the environment.

Sustrans makes smarter travel choices possible, desirable and inevitable. We're a leading UK charity enabling people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys we make every day. We work with families, communities, policy-makers and partner organisations so that people are able to choose healthier, cleaner and cheaper journeys, with better places and spaces to move through and live in.



The National Cycle Network



Cadw, Heritage and Innovation

Welsh Ways offers a chance to highlight some of the heritage assets of Wales. Contemporary, innovative and inclusive design can be used to help people engage with the history, culture and traditions of the Welsh landscape. Historic buildings and landscapes already attract tourists, and the Welsh Ways project can help to increase this value.

Initial conversations with Cadw about the project have been positive and they have indicated that they would be keen to be involved.



Registered Historic Landscapes

Changing Culture

The **Landmarks** events served their purpose - to stimulate thinking and discussion about value-adding design in Wales' landscapes - but a critical and ambitious culture must be cultivated and sustained if we are to make a meaningful and lasting positive impact. There is great potential for Wales become an exemplar for contextual rural design, but this requires us to invest time, effort and care in shaping the culture and wider plans in which this kind of development can happen. A long-term, nation-wide view is essential

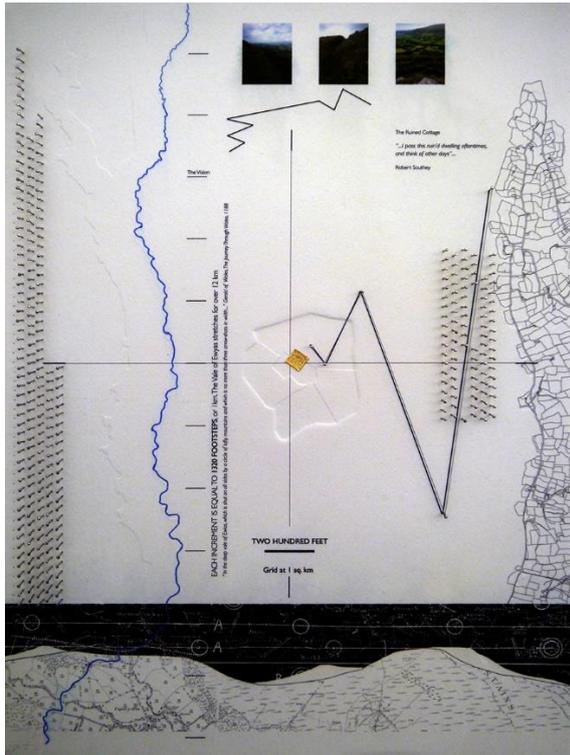
Culture change does not happen overnight, but small examples which demonstrate what can be achieved can act as a catalyst and help gather momentum. The commissioning of small scale interventions, which are informed by a deep understanding of place, and which add value and delight to people's experience of the landscape, would be an excellent step in the right direction. A Welsh Ways pilot phase would demonstrate the multi-benefits that can be achieved in relation to the following issues:

- Tourism
- Rural economy
- Design talent
- Craft/construction skills
- Place making
- Roads & infrastructure
- Walking & cycling
- Transport
- Natural resources
- Biodiversity
- Culture
- Creative industries
- Heritage & history
- Innovation
- Brading
- Traditions
- Forestry/timber industry

Capturing the Value of Place

The Welsh Ways route will take in some of Wales' most dramatic, beautiful and interesting landscapes, and the project will propose interventions at a variety of sites along the route where there is an opportunity to maximise the positive impact of the landscape on visitors' experiences.

Good design makes the most of its context and setting, enhancing the sense of place and engaging visitors with the many layers of history, culture and environment which make that place distinctive. For each intervention, good analysis and a deep understanding of each site and its context will be a vital part of the design process to capture the value of the place.



Rhian Thomas' study of 'place' for Landmarks

Successful Precedents

We can also look to examples elsewhere in the world where, over time, good quality design has become truly ingrained in local culture. There are a number of notable projects which demonstrate the success of such an approach:

Norway National Tourist Routes

The National Tourist Routes scheme in Norway is being developed by the Norwegian Public Roads Administration to make the most of the country's beautiful landscapes. 18 roads have been selected as part of the route, and local design teams have been commissioned to design installations along the route. These include viewing platforms, rest areas, architecture and artworks that 'reinforce your experience of the magnificent landscape through which you are driving'. The routes are becoming not only transport infrastructure, but a way to better understand the culture, nature and history of the place. The ambition is to attract both domestic and international tourists to holiday in Norway, encouraging the tourism industry to develop the other services it offers, such as food, accommodation attractions and activities. This will improve the experience of visitors whilst helping to invigorate rural towns and villages.



Norway Tourist Routes

Scottish Scenic Routes

The Scottish Scenic Routes Initiative is modelled on the Norway scheme and 'aims to enhance the visitor experience of Scotland's world famous landscape by creating innovatively designed viewpoints... as well as connecting Scottish design talent to enterprising opportunities'. A pilot project in 2013 saw a competition for three installations, organised to 'harness the talents of newly graduated and recently qualified architects and landscape architects and help them gain important practical experience'. Two further pilot competitions have been subsequently launched.

With initial funding from the Scottish Government, the initiative is supported by Visit Scotland, Transport Scotland, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority, Cairngorms National Park Authority, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Canals, Forestry Commission Scotland, Sustrans and Edinburgh Napier University.



Scottish Scenic Routes Winning Designs

Vorarlberg, Austria

Over the last half a century, the Vorarlberg region of Austria has developed an international reputation for its radical yet sensitive and considered approach to architecture, design and building. A combination of innovative architects and clients, liberal building and planning regulations, an aspiring regional government and open-minded public has paved the way for a built environment and culture with design quality at its heart. Ecological sensitivity, the value placed on traditional and innovative crafts and skills, investment in young designers, and good understanding of local materials and landscape all contribute to the Vorarlberg phenomenon. This has boosted tourism in the region, with visitors going to experience the contemporary architecture and design as well as the beautiful landscapes.

Krumbach is a community with a population of around 1000 in the Austrian federal state of Vorarlberg. The village is scattered through a very beautifully cultivated landscape, typical of the Vorderbregenzerwald region, with large green, predominantly agricultural areas. People from the Bregenzerwald are generally seen as proud of their roots and open to new ideas. This has shaped their region through the collaboration between humankind and nature, tradition and modernism, handcraft and the culture of building. The local community instigated the Krumbach Bus Stop project which saw seven architects, from seven different countries, design seven bus stops. The architects worked closely with local craftsmen to use traditional materials and skilled manufacturing techniques in a bid to bolster the town's annual influx of more than 30,000 tourists.



The Krumbach Bus Stops

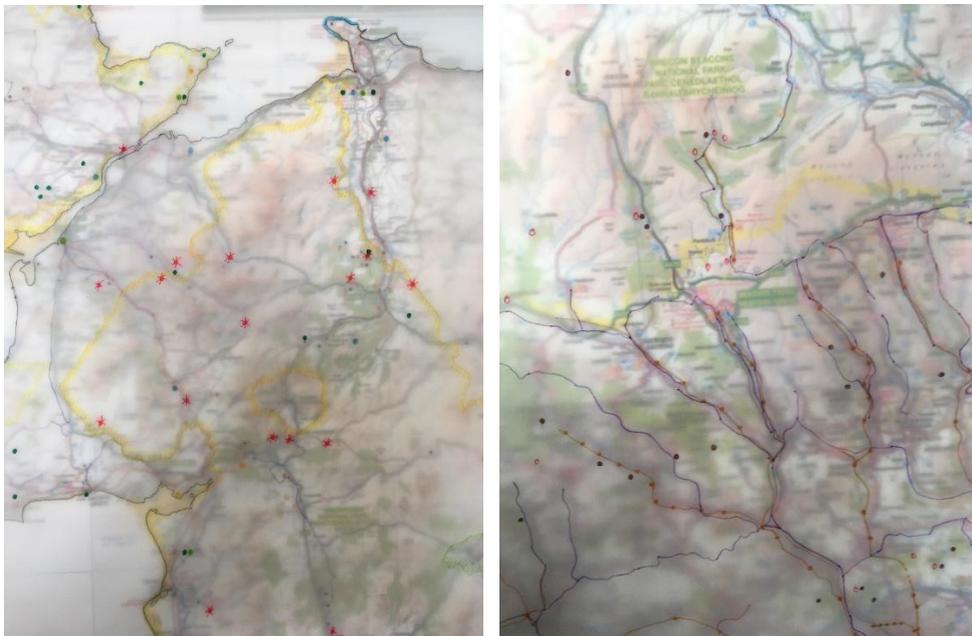
The *Getting Things Done: Evolution of the Built Environment in Vorarlberg* travelling exhibition showcases the architecture of Vorarlberg. Focussing on promoting the transformational power of design through conversations about the culture of place-making, crafts and design, and in a bid to inspire and share best practice and encourage Wales to aspire to a similar design led transformation, the Design Commission for Wales supported the exhibition's stop-over in Wales in partnership with the Welsh School of Architecture in 2016.

The Vorarlberg region in Austria is a shining example of the power of design and how our designers can create a positive impact, enhancing the surrounding area and inspiring local people and visitors.

Welsh Ways – Proposed Project Process

The following steps outline a potential project delivery process, coordinated by the Design Commission for Wales:

1. Connect with potential stakeholders to create support network and encourage collaboration (invited event/symposium coordinated by DCFW)
2. Identify routes and potential intervention sites (including workshop with stakeholders, facilitated by DCFW)
 - Map national walking and cycle routes and scenic road routes
 - Map National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
 - Map Heritage site sites and significant cultural and heritage attractions close to the identified routes
 - Finalise 'The Routes'
 - Create long list of potential intervention sites along 'The Routes'



Mapping existing routes and landscape assets will help identify sites

3. Project branding and marketing exercise
 - Route signage
 - Maps
 - App?
 - Tourism marketing (launch in line with pilot project delivery)
4. Identify three to four sites for a pilot project
5. Run pilot project (DCFW to coordinate) (Procurement route TBC)
 - Project launch and promotion
 - Invite expressions of interest
 - Shortlist two to three design teams for each site to conduct Place Study and initial proposal
 - Place Studies undertaken – publishable, visually rich outputs
 - Initial design proposals undertaken
 - One team selected to work up each design for each site including technical and costs
 - Construction of pilot installations
 - Review process and refine for next steps

6. Roll out further installation projects
7. Ongoing maintenance of route, interventions.
Continued marketing strategy to maximise long-term benefits.

Initial Thoughts on Design Procurement & Commissioning

The Welsh Ways project offers an opportunity to capture the value of good design and encourage fresh-thinking design talent. The scheme will showcase good design practice in Wales to the world, so the very best design teams must be selected on their ability, design quality and approach to design. The long-term value of good design should not be underestimated, and requires proper investment in terms of time and fees.

To fully harness the design talent and skills available, the procurement or commissioning process should be free from barriers which make it difficult for younger designers and newer or innovative practices to be appointed. Pre-Qualification Questionnaires which require designers to demonstrate high turnover or professional indemnity insurance cover should be avoided. Instead, the brief and procurement/commissioning process should capture designer's imaginations and encourage innovation and collaboration.

The design procurement process should:

- Select designers based on design quality and approach to design
- Encourage collaboration, multi-disciplinary teams and consortia
- Be simple, yet engaging and inspiring
- Promote innovative design and practice
- Allow proper time for design
- Support young design talent
- Attribute value to sustainable, inclusive design for well-being
- Consider long term value
- Avoid PQQs which are obstructive to small or young practices
- Encourage sustainable place-making, informed by a deep understanding of site and context

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