

Valuing Wales's past, building the future

Historic 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.

Wales's historic house businesses are still dealing with the challenges brought about by the energy and the cost-of-living crises. The introduction of new regulations has created additional challenges for historic houses, especially where tourism is the main, or even sole, source of income. Without supportive regulation and legislation, the custodians of our heritage are looking at an extremely difficult future.

We want to work with the Welsh Government to ensure a policy



OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Protect heritage from unintended consequences**
2. **Make Wales a competitive and sustainable tourism destination**
3. **Unleash the potential of the rural economy**
4. **Support renewable and sustainable energy use**
5. **Stimulate investment in repair projects**

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.

Where heritage is accessible to everyone, we know it supports

health and wellbeing and is a key driver for regional economic growth. It is important that the UK and Welsh Governments recognise the community value of our irreplaceable historic houses and gardens and give assurances and policies to ensure that they can continue to play a significant role for future generations.

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 have a devastating impact on fragile historic house businesses, and make the difference between a viable visitor attraction and an insolvent business. The Welsh



**HISTORIC
HOUSES
WALES**



Visitors enjoying Hay Castle

implement sensitive energy efficiency measures in a way that protects Wales's unique stock of valued traditional buildings. As outlined in the Heat Strategy for Wales, we need a planning system that enables our pursuit of net zero. Greater investment in renewable energy for off-grid rural communities will help reduce carbon footprints, lower fuel costs, and increase 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. Following the UK Chancellor's Autumn Budget, this is essential to enabling heritage attractions to invest in vital repairs and sustainability. This in turn generates work and economic vitality for Wales's rural communities whilst keeping our heritage alive for centuries to come.

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, like so many rural businesses, 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



Photo courtesy of Picton Castle