

Welsh Archaeological Archives National Database Feasibility Study

During 2003 the Council of Museums in Wales (CMW), the National Museums & Galleries of Wales (NMGW) and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW) undertook a survey of archaeological archives in Wales. The resulting report, *What's in Store?: towards a Welsh strategy for the management of and access to, the archaeological evidence of our past*, published in March 2004, made a series of strategic recommendations for improving access to, and the management of, these collections.

One of these recommendations concerned the creation of a database of Welsh archaeological collections. The vision is therefore to establish a national database, accessible remotely and inclusively to the public via the internet, that will provide knowledge of the archaeology held in Welsh museums and enable searching of their holdings. The database should allow interrogation geographically or by archaeological site, type, object or period and be interoperable with other archaeological databases. The initial focus for the database will be on collection level information but where item level data exists this will be catered for in the system.

The existing *Coflein* database has been chosen as a basis on which to create this new database. *Coflein* provides free internet-based public access to the National Monuments Record of Wales archive, and currently provides details of thousands of archaeological sites and references to related archive items. *Coflein* has been produced through the RCAHMW/RCAHMS' SWISH partnership, and its development allies closely with the vision for archaeological archives.

Overall responsibility for acting on the *What's in Store* report now rests with the Historic Environment Group (HEG), which has been established by the Minister for Culture, the Welsh Language and Sport, and brings together representatives of appropriate organisations concerned with the historic environment in Wales under the chairmanship of the Chief Executive of Cadw. A sub-group of the HEG has been set up in order to deal with the report's specific recommendations, including the national database for archaeological archives. To this end the group has secured funding from CyMAL, in order to take forward the issue.

Phil Parkes has now been appointed the consultant who will be taking this project forward so we would be grateful if you could assist him with a questionnaire and a follow up telephone call over the coming few weeks.

Elizabeth A. Walker
Secretary to the Working Group for the Delivery of the Recommendations of the *What's in Store?* Report