# Researching Heritage craft skills at Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales

# Summary

Sustainability is a key part of Amgueddfa Cymru’s Vision 2030. [[1]](#footnote-1) We are committed to retaining and narrating the heritage craft skills of Welsh communities, past and present to tell the story of Wales. Across our sites we have skilled craftspersons demonstrating a huge variety of skills from vernacular crafts, industrial crafts such as blacksmithing, slate splitting, operating heritage looms and heritage gardening, historic building construction techniques much more. However, there is currently no comprehensive policy for the heritage craft skills being retained or re-established at Amgueddfa Cymru. We are at risk of skills soon being lost due to staff retirement, and we need to develop an innovative offering to ensure that these valuable skills are passed on.

Our site at St Fagans first opened to visitors in 1948, focusing on rural life, the rural traditions, and crafts of Wales. Iorwerth Peate, First Curator of St Fagan’s wished…

*“… not to create a museum which reserved the dead past under glass but one which uses the past to link up with the present to provide a strong foundation and a healthy environment for the future of their people.”*

It is with this mission in mind that this placement will research heritage skills and intangible culture at Amgueddfa Cymru.

We are seeking a social sciences PhD researcher with experience in conducting literature reviews, interviews and/or workshops and a professional or personal interest in the heritage sector. In this research project, the student will have the opportunity to apply their skillset to 1) analyse leading sector initiatives and 2) work in collaboration with Amgueddfa Cymru staff and craftspersons to develop and better understand the current training provision to develop policy and a “Heritage Craft Skills Action Plan”. Internally, this Action Plan will build on existing policies, practice and succession plans to enhance our work, and create a difference, across a variety of Welsh heritage crafts. Externally, this work will be disseminated through networks such as the Heritage Crafts Association and inform heritage practice within Wales, the UK and Europe.

# The Organisation

Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales is committed to undertaking high quality research across the natural sciences, social sciences, arts and humanities. We have identified research as a key enabler to better understand our collections, improve visitor experience and support our move towards net zero carbon operation. As the only Independent Research Organisation in Wales, we use the unique elements of our collections to deliver research that others cannot.

We have a dedicated team who support all those undertaking work placements with us. We are committed to supporting people from diverse backgrounds and those with protected characteristics. We support workplace adjustments to ensure that all employees have an environment in which they can thrive.

# The organisation has a policy of flexible working hours. In January 2023 Amgueddfa Cymru also commenced a one-year trial of hybrid working, where staff have the flexibility to work from their base site or from home. The Placement

The placement will involve working closely with the Heads of Sites of our National Wool, National Slate and St Fagans National Museum of History and identified departments (see project outline below).

Through this placement the candidate will:

* Conduct a literature review and case study heritage skill and craft Museums from across the UK and worldwide.
* Undertake interviews with Heads of Sites, existing craftspersons from across our sites, and retired craftspersons.
* Review and capture the current practice of succession planning including apprenticeships. This includes the Big Pit National Coal Museum Staff Succession Plan 2021-30 that is currently in progress.
* Facilitate a workshop with Heads of Sites and curatorial teams to identify potential gaps in bringing our collection items back into use / visible alongside contemporary skills and machinery where historic machinery use is not possible.
* Apply their research skills to review and analyse sector leading examples and best practice, and existing policies, to make recommendations on how these could be implemented at Amgueddfa Cymru
* Develop their understanding of how to apply their research skills in a practical setting, including the generation of a draft action plan / policy and a report with recommendations.

# The project

The candidate will:

* Review current practices, and offering at National Wool, National Slate and St Fagans National Museum of History, Big Pit, Historic Buildings Unit, Buildings and Gardeners.
* Review the “Red List of Endangered Crafts 2021” [[2]](#footnote-2)and assess the risks for Amgueddfa Cymru in terms of heritage skills no longer demonstrated at our sites, and those at risk of being lost.
* Work with identified sector leading examples and staff at Amgueddfa Cymru to develop a draft action plan/policy.
* Work across departments to carry out this work and gather data, including HR.
* Conduct interviews and/or lead workshops with a range of staff across the organisation to demonstrate the breadth of activity.
* Develop a report that sets out best practice and recommendations.

Anticipated outcomes:

1) A report that will enable us to develop an Action Plan / Heritage Craft Skills and sets out:

* Current practice with regards, in-house training, skills transfer, off-site training / apprenticeship opportunities
* Best practice opportunities and recommendations.
* Draft policy for consultation with wider Visitor Experience directorate.
* Potential research/information gathering into pathways into crafts for young people.

2) Sharing the findings of the project and summarising the report at a workshop with all Heads of Sites and Director of Visitor Experience. Heads of Sites will further share with their appropriate/relevant sector networks.

Working Arrangements

The Placement will last for three months, during which time the student’s PhD project will be paused by their home institution. The student will be paid the equivalent of their stipend during their internship. Over and above leave policies, time for existing PhD commitments can be arranged on discussion with line managers. E.g. research groups meetings and conference presentations. Applications are encouraged from part-time students.

It is anticipated that the successful applicant will adopt a hybrid working approach in line with our current working practices, although these may be subject to change following Government guidelines. Hot desking at St Fagans National Museum of History, will be arranged as required (alternatively at our National Wool Museum, or National Slate Museum if preferred). Amgueddfa Cymru has a policy of flexible working, and this can be arranged on discussion with line managers.

The internship will last for a period of three months full-time or the part-time equivalent. For students registered on a part-time studentship, this internship is available on a part-time basis over a longer time frame, this would be negotiated between the Amgueddfa Cymru and the successful applicant. If you would like to be considered on a part-time basis, please specify your preferred working hours in your application.

Amgueddfa Cymru welcomes placements with a range of abilities for the skills and experience they bring. If you require any reasonable adjustments due to any disability, health or cultural reasons, please give information in the application form.

# Student Specification

The student must have:

* Excellent communication, verbal and written skills
* A sound understanding of the importance of the heritage sector in Wales
* Excellent analytical skills and the ability to sample data
* Experience of conducing literature reviews and a willingness to apply this skillset in a practical work setting.
* Experience of working with people in a research, professional or voluntary capacity
* Sound understanding of communication
* A knowledge of how to communicate research findings to different audiences
* A research background or practical experience in a relevant field of expertise, for example, social sciences, public sector policies, business, and environmental management

Desirable criteria

* An understanding of the importance of craft skills retention
* Experience of delivering and facilitating workshops
* Welsh language skills

# Anticipated Start Date

The start date for this placement is flexible but the placement can start no later than 1st October 2023.

1. [Strategy 2030 | Museum Wales](https://museum.wales/about/policy/strategy-2030/) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [The Red List of Endangered Crafts | Heritage Crafts](https://heritagecrafts.org.uk/redlist/) and [Categories of risk | Heritage Crafts](http://heritagecrafts.org.uk/redlist/categories-of-risk/). Note a 4th edition is anticipated May 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)