

# An Chomhairle Oidhreachta | The Heritage Council

## Supporting Jobs, Education and Tourism in Local Communities







## *Vision*

*The Heritage Council's vision is that the value of our heritage is enjoyed, managed and protected for the vital contribution it makes to our identity, well-being and future.*



# Supporting employment, education and tourism in local communities

The Heritage Council is a public body working in the public interest. Our priorities are to support jobs, education and heritage tourism in local communities. Ireland's heritage has a value that is both economic and inspirational. Its impact is immediate and long term. The Heritage Council's work in supporting jobs is an essential part of the outlook that will deliver longer term, sustainable economic recovery.

The Heritage Council is energetic, flexible and innovative in supporting communities to care for the national heritage. In practical programmes in communities across Ireland, the Heritage Council is changing perceptions and delivering results. Improving understanding of the under-realised potential of our national heritage is a priority. By putting in place infrastructure and networks to enable communities to take responsibility for and participate in the development and conservation of their heritage assets a difference is being made and jobs are being created. Success is measurable and readily identifiable. It represents lasting value in return for a very modest investment now.

The Heritage Council complements but importantly builds on the work of other state heritage bodies which have primary responsibility for the care of property in state ownership and the designation of protected areas. Through partnerships in the community the Heritage Council ensures that economic opportunity is linked with the natural and built environment.

The skills and the commitment of the members of the board of the Heritage Council are an invaluable conduit of ideas and energy that enable the organisation lead, respond and deliver effectively. The application of knowledge and experience of board members has brought a real return for a minimal investment over the years.

The staff of the Heritage Council is a small, flexible and highly motivated group of people. Their expertise, independence and their focus on heritage define the organisational culture. By intervening at an early stage to secure the long-term care of finite heritage assets, the Heritage Council ensures that heritage is a value that is preserved effectively now and in ways that reduce costs to our economy and society subsequently. The heritage infrastructure it has established directly supports 70 jobs in public and private bodies throughout Ireland. These jobs are held by people who are energizing and delivering on an incredibly dynamic agenda. That agenda in turn is delivering on the value now and in the future of Ireland's heritage.



# Community Focused

From its beginning in 1995 community involvement has been at the heart of the Heritage Council's vision for national heritage. That's meant successfully working with a wide range of community groups in every county and building a deserved reputation for delivering expertise and support. Partnerships with the Heritage Council are delivering a rich tourism experience and better practice in the care of valuable heritage assets.

- Works with local communities, Local Authorities, voluntary groups, Government Departments, various agencies and cultural institutions.
  - Promotes greater public awareness of the value of our natural and built heritage.
  - Works across the natural and cultural heritage sectors in a fully integrated manner.
  - Supports a wide network of highly skilled heritage jobs including conservators, thatchers, builders, ecologists, archaeologists, conservation architects and museum curators through training, bursaries and expertise.
- Provides policy advice for Government on heritage issues, including sustainability, landscape management, high nature value farming, forestry, and climate change.
  - Originates and promotes policies include establishing the Heritage Officer Network and the National Biodiversity Data Centre as well as work on the Water Corridor Studies, the Heritage in Schools scheme, landscape and Village Design Statements.
  - Securing recognition for excellence through numerous awards nationally and internationally.
  - The Heritage Council's standing enables community groups to leverage additional sources of support for projects supported by Council. There is confidence in the Heritage Council's ability to deliver because of its reputation and its statutory basis.



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## Boosting Employment & Tourism

80% of Council's annual budget is allocated to a wide range of heritage grants, county heritage projects managed through the Heritage Officer network and a range of heritage organisations ranging from the Landmark Trust to the Wicklow Uplands Council.

### Grants

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- In 2010, Heritage Council projects attracted approximately 18,700 tourists.
- In 2010, the Heritage Council grants fund of €6.2m supported an estimated 449 jobs.

### Heritage Officer Programme

The Heritage Council has links with 28 counties through its Heritage Officer Programme which it part funds with Local Authorities.

- A €6.15m investment in County Heritage Plans (2004 - 2008) supported the creation of 1,012 full-time jobs in small businesses, with an estimated return of €30.1m to the economy, leading to an additional investment of around €10m from other sources<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The values are based on research undertaken by independent economist, Jim Power, for the Heritage Council.



# Tourism

According to Fáilte Ireland, in 2010 2.9 million overseas visitors engaged in cultural activities in Ireland, including visits to places of historic/cultural interest and gardens, attending festivals/events, and tracing roots/genealogy. While other areas of tourism decline internationally, cultural tourism and activity holidays based on our natural landscapes and countryside continues to grow, outperforming all other tourism sectors. This growth requires ongoing investment in national heritage if the quality of what is being marketed is to be sustained.

## Value of the Historic Environment

The Heritage Council recently commissioned research on the economic value of Ireland's historic environment<sup>2</sup>. It states that Ireland's historic environment, i.e. our built heritage, offers huge economic potential but it is under-capitalised, under-promoted and under-realised.

Traditionally, a case for public investment in the built heritage has been made on the grounds of ensuring the protection and enhancement of built heritage. This study

highlights the strength of the economic rationale for investment in our built heritage to maximise the contribution it can make to the nation's sustainable economic development.

- The historic environment is a highly significant contributor to Ireland's national economy, directly supporting almost 25,000 FTE jobs.
- Including indirect and induced effects, it is estimated that the historic environment sector supports approaching 40,000 FTE employment positions in Ireland.
- In terms of contribution to national income, Ireland's historic environment is estimated to account for some €1.5 billion to the nation's Gross Value Added (GVA).
- Within the context of Ireland's economy, it is estimated that the historic environment contribution to the national economy is equivalent to 1% of total Irish GVA, and some 2% of overall employment.

<sup>2</sup> Economic Value of Ireland's Historic Environment Ecorys & Fitzpatrick Associates February 2012

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# Overview of Heritage Council Activities

## National Heritage Week

The Heritage Council coordinates and promotes National Heritage Week.

- In 2011, over 600,000 people attended a record 1,500 events around the country during the week in August ([www.heritageweek.ie](http://www.heritageweek.ie)).
- It involved over 700 event organisers from community groups and volunteers, cultural institutions, and state agencies.

This is the largest example in Ireland of diverse stakeholders across state agencies and civil society successfully working together to promote the value of Ireland's heritage.

## The National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) ([www.biodiversityireland.ie](http://www.biodiversityireland.ie))

Established by the Heritage Council in 2007, the National Biodiversity Data Centre maps Ireland's biodiversity and provides an overview of the national biodiversity resource.

This information is vitally important to inform decisions on agriculture, disease control, climate change, the overall management of our natural heritage resources and compliance with environmental legislation. It also acts as a shared service for the exchange of important data.

## The Irish Walled Towns Network (IWTN)

Established and led by the Heritage Council, IWTN is an all-island partnership between Local Authorities, Government and associated communities. Most significant is the impact a relatively small amount of funding (€120,000) can deliver for rural communities not previously on the tourism map.

- In Rindoon, Co. Roscommon, the conservation of the town wall and other structures of this abandoned medieval town have led to the increase of visitors from almost zero to 7,000 in 2011.

## Walled Towns Capital Conservation Projects

- In 2011, €600,000 was invested in ten IWTN conservation projects. This funding supported 40 construction jobs and 30 professional jobs<sup>3</sup>.
- They include (i) the restoration of Talbot's Tower in Kilkenny, which will be a central part of the tourism infrastructure of the City, and (ii) the conservation of Cashel's town walls, an integral part of the Town Council's plan to develop a heritage trail to bring tourists from the Rock of Cashel to the town centre.

## Heritage in Schools

Heritage in Schools has over 165 specialists on its panel, from folklore to wildlife experts. Initiated and funded by the Heritage Council, the Heritage in Schools scheme is currently administered by the Irish National Teachers Organisation.

- In 2011, the Heritage in Schools Scheme facilitated 1,595 school visits reaching 118,620 children. 80% were outdoor events, ensuring a greater appreciation by children of natural and cultural heritage, as well as encouraging a healthy lifestyle.

## Museum Standards Programme of Ireland (MSPI)

This programme has over 50 participating members, ranging from the smallest private museum to the major cultural institutions. By promoting best practice in the care of collections, the MSPI is helping improve the visitor experience in our museums.

<sup>3</sup> The values are based on research undertaken by independent economist Jim Power for the Heritage Council in 2009







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The Discovery Programme has a European reputation for technological innovation.

The Irish Landmark Trust is conserving and restoring heritage buildings that are at risk of being lost through neglect, or inappropriate use.



The Heritage Council has recently provided input to major infrastructural development proposals.

## Overview of Heritage Council Activities

### Irish Landmark Trust

The Heritage Council provides core funding to the Trust, which is conserving and restoring heritage buildings throughout the island of Ireland that are at risk. These unique properties are all subsequently re-used as holiday lettings to earn income for the Trust.

### The Discovery Programme

The Discovery Programme is the State archaeological research body whose projects have included archaeological surveys at Tara, excavations at Dun Aengus on the Aran Islands, as well as studies on medieval Gaelic settlement. It is now studying the influence of the Roman empire on early Ireland. The Discovery Programme has a European reputation for technological innovation in areas such as landscape survey, laser scanning and IT.

### High Nature Value Farming (HNVF)

The Heritage Council has pioneered this initiative in partnership with local farming communities in the west of Ireland. It seeks to support farming methods which contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of Ireland's rich biodiversity. It fully involves local people in the process and builds on their knowledge and commitment to maintain a quality environment.

### Planning

The Heritage Council is a prescribed body under the provisions of the Planning Acts 2000-2010 and provides an independent voice on a wide-range of critical environmental planning matters. It provides policy advice in relation to the preparation and delivery of the National Development Plan, National Planning Guidelines and Strategies, Regional Planning Guidelines and County Development Plans.

In partnership with local authorities the Heritage Council has sought to ensure that the heritage sector is fully integrated within the strategic planning process. It has recently provided input to major infrastructural development proposals including the Kilkenny Central Access Scheme, the Slane By-Pass (N2) and the proposed Children's Hospital at the Mater in Dublin.

By involving communities in the planning and management of their environment overall planning structures relating to the national heritage are improved. This includes Community-led Village Design Statements and collaborative Public Realm Plans for historic towns.



# Future of the Heritage Council

The Heritage Council has finalised its Strategic Plan 2012-2016 which sets out 16 key objectives for 2016. These prioritise employment, education and the quality of heritage tourism. At a time of huge change and adjustment within Irish society the Plan responds to that change and ensures the focus of its work is acutely relevant to current economic imperatives.

The Heritage Council enables and encourages its partners to invest in, and realize, the potential of our national heritage to contribute to economic and social recovery. It draws on an established reputation and independence

of action to motivate communities and volunteers. It successfully delivers social and economic benefits to the State at minimal cost. Those huge social dividends are encompassed in a broad range of programmes and expert policy advice efficiently and effectively on a very modest budget. It is Council's view that it represents and has amply demonstrated all that is positive and effective in a modern public sector.

[The Heritage Council 2012](#)



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