

The Plan 2001-2005

The Heritage Council

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Foreword

I am delighted to contribute the foreword to the Heritage Council's challenging and ambitious Plan 2001 to 2005.

One would be forgiven for not realising that the Heritage Council was established as recently as 1995. In the relatively short time since its establishment, the Council has raised its profile to a remarkable degree and developed into a powerful voice for Ireland's heritage. It is a voice that challenges us to remain alive to the value of our heritage, especially in times of the remarkable economic development which is underway at present. The Council has emerged as a professional organisation with committed members served by dedicated staff.

This Plan will help the Council to deepen further its role and relevance in proposing policies and priorities for our heritage. This is its key function under the Heritage Act, 1995. In fulfillment of this duty, the Council will, I am sure, provide high quality independent advice for the protection of our national heritage.

The Plan is ambitious in its financial targets and, of course, the Council may seek and accept funding from a wide variety of sources. To date, most of its funding has been supplied by my Department and in that respect I would note that since I came to office in 1997, funding for the Heritage Council has increased by 167%. The Council will continue to have my support.

I look forward to further constructive co-operation with the Heritage Council for the benefit of our national heritage.



Síle de Valera
Minister for Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht & the Islands

Chairperson's Message

Since my appointment to the Chair of the Heritage Council in July 2000, the thing that has struck me most forcibly is the wide range of views among the public about what our heritage actually is. In many ways the word 'heritage' has taken on a meaning so broad so as to be difficult to define; whilst on the other hand, many people have adopted a very restricted view of what constitutes our heritage. A survey of heritage awareness, carried out by the Heritage Council at the beginning of 1999, found that heritage is viewed primarily in terms of the historic built environment, our historic buildings and prehistoric sites, rather than the everyday physical environment.

Commenting on the results of the survey, writer, painter and former Council member, Peter Pearson, observed that "People consider heritage not to be the everyday physical environment, of which they themselves are owners and which they could have a role in protecting... they think heritage is something possessed by other people, managed by the state and minded by bodies such as An Taisce".

To promote a concept of a diverse heritage which is inclusive of all aspects of our built, natural and cultural heritage, and inclusive of everyone on this island, is the central aim of the Heritage Council. Our heritage, however, is not just the physical products of activities in the past, but also the traditions that underlie those activities. This link to tradition is made by the poet and philosopher John O'Donoghue: "Tradition is a huge archive of wisdom, shadow and memory. It holds the lived experience of a people latently present as a possibility. It offers a mirror to current identity and provides stepping stones to the future".

As we step forward into this future, we do so in an Ireland which is rapidly changing. The pattern, use and ownership of land is altering to a much greater extent now than ever before, and more people are moving about faster and further than at any time in the past. The character of our landscape is evolving amidst these changes, and our monuments, buildings, wildlife, waterways and natural resources are being subjected to increasing pressures from this rapid change. Managing this change poses enormous challenges for central and local government who have to ensure that the current rising tide will bring benefits to the greatest number of people. This can best be achieved through having clear policies in place, and priorities identified for all aspects of our national heritage; policies and priorities which recognise the value of our heritage to all our daily activities and our quality of life.

Heritage management is the process of making conscious and informed decisions about the future of our heritage. Whether we are aware of it or not, we are making choices every day about what aspects of our heritage to keep and what to discard. These decisions are often unconscious but are always informed by our values and our understanding of that heritage. We must all take responsibility for our own actions and activities and be aware of the implications they have for our heritage. Over the next five years, the Heritage Council will work to facilitate a greater understanding of our heritage among government and communities to ensure that we make the most informed decisions possible concerning the future of our shared heritage.

Furthermore, as we move forward, we are constantly creating the heritage of tomorrow. We must begin to ensure now that we will be proud of the kind of urban,

rural and suburban landscapes that we will leave behind for future generations to inhabit, work in, and enjoy. We cannot predict what will be valued in the future; we can only move forward and ensure that our decisions faithfully reflect our own values, and are informed by a comprehensive understanding of our heritage.

The Heritage Council cannot achieve its objectives alone. We rely on the creation of positive partnerships with other bodies and agencies in all sectors to ensure that the greatest benefits are brought to our heritage now and for the future. This plan sets out how the Heritage Council will work towards a more inclusive understanding of our heritage in partnership with all those who have an interest in creating a vibrant future for our heritage.

Tom O'Dwyer

Chairperson

Introduction

The Heritage Council was established under the Heritage Act, 1995. It is an independent body which has a statutory responsibility pursuant to section 6 of the Heritage Act, 1995, "to propose policies and priorities for the identification, protection, preservation and enhancement of the national heritage".

National heritage is defined in the Act as including:

monuments	Architectural heritage	Wildlife habitats	Geology
Archaeological objects	Flora	Landscapes	Heritage gardens and parks
Heritage objects	Fauna	Wrecks	Inland waterways

In particular, the Heritage Act, 1995, charges the Heritage Council with the responsibility to:

- promote interest, education, knowledge and pride in, and facilitate the appreciation and enjoyment of the national heritage;
- co-operate with other bodies in the promotion of its functions; and
- promote the co-ordination of all activities relating to its functions.

This plan identifies priorities for the Heritage Council for the period 2001-2005, and includes current key initiatives identified in the Council's previous plan for [1997-2000](#). In implementing its plan the Heritage Council recognises the vital and complementary role to be played by key partners such as Dúchas The Heritage Service of the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands, the local authorities and other non-statutory bodies. Enhancing existing partnerships and identifying new ones will remain a priority for the Council.

The Aim of the Heritage Council

Over the period of this plan, the Heritage Council will seek to protect and enhance the richness, quality and diversity of our national heritage for everyone. It will work with its partners, particularly at local level, to increase awareness of our national heritage and to highlight its importance to public policy and everyday life.

Key Performance Areas

1 Heritage Information - collection and dissemination

To advise on and contribute to the development of a comprehensive heritage database, and to ensure the effective use of heritage data in policy formulation and decision-making.

2 Advice to the Minister

To propose high quality advice to the Minister on policies and priorities relating to the national heritage.

3 Placing heritage at the heart of public life

To influence the shaping of public policy, ensuring that it is fully informed and takes full account of heritage issues.

4 Local authorities and heritage management

To support local authorities, as the Council's key partners, in the integration of heritage conservation into their activities, and the enhancement of heritage at the local level.

5 Raising awareness and appreciation of our heritage

To facilitate and build on increased awareness, understanding and enjoyment of the heritage among the community.

6 Best practice in heritage conservation and management

To promote and advise on best practice standards for heritage conservation and management among practitioners.

STRUCTURES TO DELIVER THE PLAN

The main elements of the structure of the Council are:

- The Heritage Council
- The Committees
- The Working Groups
- The Staff

Within the first year of the Plan 2001-2005, the Council will devise and publish a communication plan which will set out the communication structures between the above elements, as well as how it will communicate with its partners and the public. The communication plan will set out clearly the open and transparent manner in which the Council intends to implement its operational plan and achieve its objectives, and will build upon the statement of strategy outlined at the start of this plan. It will contribute to the continued development of an organisation that is accessible and flexible in its approach will build upon all that has been achieved in this regard over the past five years.

The Council

The Heritage Act, 1995, sets out the statutory responsibilities of the Heritage Council. The Council's chairperson and sixteen members are appointed by the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands. The Council determines policy for the organisation and devises the organisational programme, together with procedures and performance review.

The Committees

The Council has four standing committees on:

- wildlife
- archaeology
- architectural heritage
- inland waterways

In addition to the above, the Council has also established three additional committees:

- museums and archives
- education and awareness
- audit and finance

All Committees are chaired by a member of Council and may contain persons who are not Council members. The Minister for Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands may appoint three persons who are not Council members to each of the standing committees. The Council has produced standing orders relating to the role and functions of the committees which are provided to assist committees in carrying out

their work in the most efficient and effective manner. The role of all committees is to perform functions delegated by the Council, and to advise on policy and action relating to their functional areas, within the framework of the Plan 2001-2005.

Working Groups

The Council may establish small working groups to carry out specified tasks within the specified time. They will normally be chaired by a member of Council. Individuals invited to form working groups are likely to have particular expertise not readily available within the Council membership or its staff.

The Staff

The Council has appointed a staff of 15, including a Chief Executive, supported by professional and administrative staff. The function of the staff is to conduct the day-to-day business of the Council and to provide the Council and its committees with expert policy advice. The Council will work to increase its staff complement to 18 over the period of this plan.

The Council has established a system of performance management for all its staff which achieves the standards set under government strategic management initiatives. A training programme for continuing professional and personal development is also in place for all staff.

The Heritage Council is an equal opportunities employer.

The Key Partners

The Council cannot achieve its objectives alone, and will seek the participation of key partners in all of the work it carries out. Over the past five years, the Council has built a number of successful partnerships which have been based on a new integrated approach and philosophy to the conservation, management, promotion and enhancement of our heritage. The Council intends to develop this approach by strengthening existing partnerships and forging new ones in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Evaluating the Plan 2001-2005 will involve assessing whether the Plan actually achieved what it set out to achieve, how well it did that, and whether or not it could achieve the same objectives more effectively and efficiently through some other means.

To be undertaken properly, it must be based upon clearly defined performance indicators which are related to the objectives of the plan, in order to provide the Council with information for improving the decisions regarding the original design, implementation or modification of the plan. These indicators will be developed by the Council during 2001. The primary indicator, however, will be the completion of the priority actions which are set out in the Plan.

The evaluation of the Plan will, therefore, be expressed in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

Evaluation criteria

The evaluation should focus on the implementation of the priority actions and their contribution to the achievement of the objectives.

Probity

Have the resources allocated for the action been spent on what they were intended for, or were they spent on something else?

Effectiveness

For the value of the resources invested in the action, have the best possible results been produced, or can the objective be better achieved by reallocating the resources in a different way?

Efficiency

For the results that have been achieved, can some of the resources spent on the actions be reduced to achieve the same level of quality, or can they be reallocated in another way to achieve better results?

Appropriateness

Given the results that have been achieved, are these the results that the Council wants, or has the plan produced an outcome that is less desirable than the one that was originally intended?

The monitoring and evaluation programme will consist of a combination of ongoing evaluation, annual performance review (incorporated into the Annual Report), and a long-term plan evaluation in 2005.

FINANCIAL PLAN 2001-2005

The Heritage Council's financial allocation for 2001 is IR£7,986,000.
This compares with the allocation for 2000 as follows:

SUMMARY OF ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE 2001 AND FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS 2002-2005

	2001	2000
	IR£'000	IR£'000
Admin	1,061	951
Non Capital	1,585	1,500
Capital	5,340	4,050
Total	7,986	6,501

Area	2001	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
	IR£'000	€000	€000	€000	€000	€000
Heritage Information - collection and dissemination	400	508	620	820	940	950
Advice to the Minister	425	540	590	690	750	820
Placing Heritage at the Heart of Public Life	500	635	660	845	1,070	1,200
Local Authorities and Heritage Management	465	590	610	710	825	950
Raising Awareness and Appreciation of our Heritage	435	552	585	820	820	880
Best Practice in Heritage Conservation and Management	500	635	660	820	940	950
Administration and staffing	1,061	1,347	1,375	1,650	1,790	2,030
Grants	2,050	2,603	2,800	4,010	5,155	6,280
Discovery Programme	930	1,181	1,250	1,460	1,590	1,750
Irish Landmark Trust	220	279	305	340	370	400
Headquarters	1,000	1,270	1,155	200		
Totals	7,986	10,140	10,610	12,365	14,250	16,210