

PRESS RELEASE

Thursday 3rd December 2020

€1.5 million available for heritage-led regeneration of towns in 2021

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Heritage Council continue support for Ireland's Historic Towns

A total of €1.5 million has been allocated for the heritage-led regeneration of towns around the country.

The funds, which will be released next year, will be particularly welcome by urban areas hard hit by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The scheme was announced today by Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Malcolm Noonan, TD.

"I am delighted to launch another year of the Historic Towns Initiative, which will support the regeneration of even more Irish historic towns. This Initiative will make €1.5 million available to a number of towns which will in turn help drive investment and renewal," said Minister Noonan.

"Heritage-led regeneration can breathe new life into a town, helping to provide an attractive environment where people can live and work. The renewed vibrancy in the heart of a town brings its own economic benefits as footfall and visitor numbers increase and new light shines into once-vacant commercial and residential premises."

The Historic Towns Initiative (HTI) 2021 is a joint undertaking by the Department and the Heritage Council.

To date, a total of 18 towns have benefitted under the scheme with a variety of projects funded over the past three years.

This year, those that received financial assistance are: Ramelton, County Donegal, Roscommon town, County Roscommon, Sligo, Co Sligo, Clones, Co Monaghan, Ballina, County Mayo, Callan, Co Kilkenny and Tralee, Co Kerry. These included streetscape conservation projects such as works to traditional railings, render and joinery and historic roof maintenance.

Welcoming the launch, Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien, TD, said: "By investing in the rich built heritage of our towns, The Historic Towns Initiative conserves and celebrates the features which make them unique. I am very proud of this partnership between the Heritage Council and my Department and I am delighted that the expanded 2021 scheme will enable us to work together to support even more towns in their heritage-led regeneration."

Commenting on the Historic Towns Initiative, Chairman of the Heritage Council, Mr Michael Parsons said: "Programmes such as this rely on the strength of local communities and

businesses in caring for their historic town. With support from local and national government we can use heritage to improve the quality of life in all in our historic towns.”

Virginia Teehan, Heritage Council CEO, said: “This blending of the old and the new is a key factor in the regeneration of our towns. And this initiative clearly fulfils this objective. Over the past year there have been some outstanding examples where the fusion of community effort, coupled with expertise in the heritage field, have come together with a common purpose.

“We are confident that in the coming year, we will see further examples of projects and initiatives, which improve the quality of life for residents and visitors, while at the same time preserving the integrity of our past.”

A town seeking to benefit from the Historic Towns Initiative should possess significant cultural and heritage assets and have an indicative minimum population of 1,500 inhabitants.

The HTI 2021 is open for applications from local authorities from 11th December 2020.

Funding applications must be submitted via the Heritage Council’s online grants system. The closing date is 5th February 2020.

The Heritage Council will host an online workshop for local authority personnel interested in applying for the HTI 2021 on 14 January

For more information about the Historic Towns Initiative visit <https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/projects/historic-towns-initiative>

Assessment criteria can be accessed at <https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/funding/historic-towns-initiative-2021>

Applications will be assessed by the HTI National Steering Group who will make recommendations to the Board of the Heritage Council for funding under the programme.

For further details contact: Mark O’Regan, Heritage Council, Tel: 085-8590378 / Joanne Ahern, DHR Communications, Tel: 087-9881837.

Note to Editors:

About the Heritage Council: The Heritage Council was established under the Heritage Act 1995 with responsibility to propose policies and priorities for the national heritage. It works in co-operation with a range of agencies, communities and individuals to promote education, enjoyment and understanding of our national heritage. For further information, visit: www.heritagecouncil.ie.

ENDS