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PRESS RELEASE

Thursday, 13th May 2021

€1.5 million heritage fund to boost tourism and jobs

More than 180 projects across Ireland will share €1.5 million under two special grant schemes run by The Heritage Council.

The funding will boost local economies, grow tourism, and enhance community spirit by supporting local heritage projects.

Under the Community Heritage Grant Scheme, €1.2 million has been allocated to community groups and not-for-profit organisations. This follows on from an award of €374,599 made to community heritage projects in April 2021.

Among the key projects is a €15,000 grant to develop digital resources, and an online photographic record, for the Cork LGBT Archive.

The Donegal Railway Heritage Centre will receive €8,600, which will preserve actual voices and stories of those who had direct connection to one of the country's most historic transport links.

The Irish Film Archive has been allocated €11,400 for a project to restore a film made in 1969. With original music by Donal Lunny, it records the opening of the south Dublin outlet of Dunnes Stores in Cornelscourt.

As part of The Heritage Council's commitment to protect natural habitats, BirdWatch Ireland will receive €15,000 to map bird 'hotspots' on designated farmland.

The 'EIRE-6' sign on Howth Head - a large Second World War aerial recognition marker which contributed to the defence of Ireland's wartime neutrality - is to be restored.

The project was prompted by the Howth Eire 6 Restoration Group, who will receive €9,000.

Meanwhile, under the Heritage Council's Irish Walled Towns Network (IWTN), €299,000 is earmarked for conservation work and interpretation initiatives, which will protect and preserve the history and heritage of Ireland's walled towns.

Athenry's town walls are among the best preserved in Ireland, with over 70% of the walled circuit surviving. Galway County Council has been granted €15,000 for the provision of a heritage and educational experience during Heritage Week, which will provide a first-hand experience of the town's historic legacy.

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The Buttevant Heritage Group in Cork will use a grant of €7,700 to improve local knowledge and appreciation of the town's heritage, through the installation of four interpretation panels along its Main Street, greatly enhancing the visitor experience.

The Anglo-Norman de Barry family planned this walled town in a similar fashion to towns in Normandy, France. In 1317, England's King Edward II paid £105 towards the enclosure of the town with stone walls. The local community in Buttevant have made great strides in recent years to conserve and communicate this important heritage.

A walled town is a town that had walls and features like gates, towers, and earthen ditches built around it, to defend the occupants, and control the flow of people and revenue in and out of the town.

While some walled towns date back to the Viking period, the majority date from the Anglo-Norman / medieval period.

Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien, TD, stated: "I am delighted to note today's announcement by the Heritage Council. This funding is essential to safeguard our heritage while also providing much needed economic stimulus and providing employment in the sector. It is also a significant investment in this Government's commitments under the Programme for Government to promote and protect our heritage."

Commenting on the announcement, Minister of State for Heritage and Electoral Reform, Malcolm Noonan, TD, said: "I would like to acknowledge the fantastic work of the Heritage Council in supporting community heritage through this important scheme. As the scope and scale of these projects illustrate, communities play a vital role in caring for all aspects of our heritage. The new national heritage plan, Heritage Ireland 2030, which will be published later this summer, will recognise the role of communities in safeguarding our heritage and ensure that they continue to be supported."

Chairman of The Heritage Council, Michael Parsons, said: "These schemes continue to provide a central focus for the work of The Heritage Council. They are testament to the close collaboration between the Council, local authorities and community groups, all sharing a common purpose."

Virginia Teehan, Chief Executive of The Heritage Council, said: "The Heritage Council is delighted to fund such a diverse range of projects and initiatives, particularly at this point in time.

"It is especially gratifying that the primary work of The Heritage Council, in preserving and nourishing our history and traditions, has a spin-off by way of putting investment into communities around the country."

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Full list of recipients under the Community Heritage Grant Scheme and IWTN are available here:

<https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/content/files/2021-Community-Heritage-Grants-Tranche-2.pdf>

<https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/content/files/IWTN-Capital-Projects.pdf>

<https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/content/files/IWTN-Interpretation.pdf>

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Note to Editors:

- Heritage Council chief executive, Virginia Teehan, and Head of Conservation, Ian Doyle, are available for interview.
- A selection of photographs from the awarded projects is available via Dropbox: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/h5t6qos9ri4sba5/AAD83AMT32uqpq4ZbL6RxZ4xa?dl=0>

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.