

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)

Policy Working Document



Preface

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, Section 42 also known as ‘The Public Sector Duty’

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, Paragraph 1 of Section 42:

- “(1) A public body shall, in the performance of its functions, have regard to the need to—
- (a) eliminate discrimination,
 - (b) promote equality of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the persons to whom it provides services, and
 - (c) protect the human rights of its members, staff and the persons to whom it provides services.
- (2) For the purposes of giving effect to subsection (1), a public body shall, having regard to the functions and purpose of the body and to its size and the resources available to it—
- (a) set out in a manner that is accessible to the public in its strategic plan (howsoever described) an assessment of the human rights and equality issues it believes to be relevant to the functions and purpose of the body and the policies, plans and actions in place or proposed to be put in place to address those issues, and
 - (b) report in a manner that is accessible to the public on developments and achievements in that regard in its annual report (howsoever described).”



The Heritage Council's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Policy is a key organisational framework designed to foster an inclusive environment that reflects the rich tapestry of Irish society. Recognising that heritage encompasses a multitude of voices, experiences, and cultural narratives, the Heritage Council is committed to ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their background, have the opportunity to engage with and contribute to the preservation and promotion of Ireland's heritage.

This policy is grounded in the belief that diversity enhances the Council's ability to fulfil its mission effectively. By embracing a wide range of perspectives, the Heritage Council aims to create a more equitable and accessible heritage sector that not only acknowledges but celebrates the contributions of minoritised and underrepresented communities. This DEI Policy outlines the Council's commitment to actively addressing barriers to participation and representation, ensuring that heritage initiatives are reflective of the diverse identities that comprise Ireland today.

In alignment with the strategic goals articulated in the Heritage Council's Strategic Plan 2023-2028, *Our Place in Time*¹, our DEI Policy serves as a roadmap for the Council's operations, decision-making processes, and stakeholder engagement. It emphasises the importance of collaboration with various partners, including community organisations, educational institutions, and cultural groups, to promote a shared understanding of heritage that is inclusive and representative.

Through the implementation of our DEI Policy, the Heritage Council seeks to cultivate an environment where all voices are valued, and where heritage is recognised as a dynamic and evolving concept that belongs to everyone. This commitment not only enhances the Council's work but also contributes to the broader goal of fostering social cohesion and mutual respect among diverse communities across Ireland.



Our Mission

The Heritage Council's diversity, equity and inclusion mission is to ensure that its work reflects the diverse and multicultural nature of Ireland's heritage, fostering a welcoming environment where everyone feels valued, respected, empowered and enabled to participate.



Our Vision

The Heritage Council envisions a future where the population that reflects Ireland's society today feel a sense of belonging and can engage fully in the exploration, understanding, and preservation of their shared national heritage.

Alignment with Our Strategy

The Heritage Council's strategic plan¹ outlines our commitment to Diversity and Inclusion as one of our four core values. Our plan emphasises a desire to embrace Ireland's diverse and multicultural heritage, ensuring accessibility for everyone, and empowering communities to preserve their unique heritage.

Our approach to diversity, equity and inclusion is further woven into our plan's strategic pillars, including:

Leadership and Stewardship

This pillar seeks to “inject heritage into policy making and community planning”, ensuring heritage benefits from a wider strategic context.

Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss

Through our plan, we seek to ensure that the voices and perspectives of minoritised communities, including those most affected by environmental change, are integrated into heritage conservation efforts.

Research

Our plan emphasises the importance of developing an evidence base that reflects the diverse narratives and experiences within Irish heritage, thereby ensuring that underrepresented voices are included in heritage discourse.

Partnership

This pillar speaks to the importance of collaboration with diverse stakeholders, including marginalised communities, to ensure that heritage initiatives are inclusive and reflective of Ireland's multicultural society.

Education and Engagement

Through our strategic plan, we aim to make heritage education accessible to all, and build community cohesion by encouraging active citizenship, especially for recent migrants.

Communities

Finally, this pillar prioritises engaging communities more actively in heritage and ensuring Traveller heritage is acknowledged and preserved.

¹Our Place in Time - Heritage Council Strategic Plan (2023-2028)
<https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/news/news-features/strategic-plan-2023-2028>

Alignment with Irish Equality Legislation

The Heritage Council's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Policy is closely aligned with Irish equality legislation, including the Employment Equality and Equal Status Acts², and in particular, the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty³ (Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act), which mandates public bodies to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, and protect the human rights of those they serve.

This alignment is evident in the Council's commitment to fostering an inclusive environment that recognises and values the diverse identities that comprise Irish society, as articulated in our strategic plan. In addition to the nine protected characteristics or "grounds" that are specified in the legislation, (namely age, civil status, disability, family status, gender, membership of the Traveller Community, race, religion and sexual orientation), a tenth ground of socioeconomic status, not yet in Irish equality legislation, is also recognised by the Heritage Council. Further, we recognise the intersectional⁴ nature of identity, and the fact that this can contribute to unique barriers for individuals and communities in engaging with heritage.

Our DEI Policy emphasises the importance of engaging with minoritised and underrepresented communities, such as the Traveller community, and ensuring that heritage initiatives reflect the multicultural fabric of Ireland. By codifying effective DEI practices and incorporating regular consultation and evaluation processes, the Heritage Council aims to uphold the principles of diversity and equity as outlined in Irish legislation, thereby enhancing its role as a proactive advocate for inclusion.

²IHREC - Equality Laws in Ireland - The Employment Equality Acts and Equal Status Acts | <https://www.ihrec.ie/your-rights/equality-laws-ireland/>

³IHREC - Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty | <https://www.ihrec.ie/our-work/public-sector-duty/>

⁴Intersectionality: the interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage "through an awareness of intersectionality, we can better acknowledge and ground the differences among us" | Oxford English Dictionary https://www.oed.com/dictionary/intersectionality_n?tl=true

Our Strategic Principles and DEI Principles

The Heritage Council's commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is a fundamental aspect of our mission to safeguard and promote Ireland's rich and diverse heritage. Recognising that heritage encompasses a wide array of cultural, historical, and social narratives, the Council aims to ensure that all voices are heard and represented in the stewardship of Ireland's heritage. This commitment is articulated through our strategic values of integrity, diversity and inclusion, collaboration and care - as set out in 'Our Place in Time: Heritage Council Strategic Plan 2023-2028'.

For the purposes of this policy, these overarching strategic principles have been further developed into a set of DEI principles that will guide our DEI policy, practices and initiatives. These principles are rooted in the belief that heritage is not a monolithic concept but rather a tapestry woven from the experiences and contributions of various communities, including those from underrepresented and marginalised backgrounds. The Heritage Council acknowledges the importance of fostering an inclusive environment where diverse perspectives are valued, and where all individuals, regardless of their background, can engage with and contribute to the country's heritage narrative.

Through ongoing collaboration with stakeholders, including community groups, educational institutions, and heritage organisations, the Heritage Council is dedicated to implementing these DEI principles in a manner that not only enhances the understanding and appreciation of heritage but also contributes to social cohesion and respect among diverse communities.



Our three DEI principles focus on:

1. Embracing Diversity

The Heritage Council recognises the diverse cultural and ethnic makeup of Ireland, valuing and celebrating the richness of different heritages.

“

Our 21st-century Irish nation is an exciting mix of ethnicities and origins. We delight in diversity; we embrace it as we seek to learn from other culture.

”

2. Promoting Inclusion

The Heritage Council strives to create a welcoming and inclusive environment where all citizens, residents, and all those who call Ireland home can participate in and benefit from heritage activities, regardless of their background, needs, or abilities.

“

The reach of heritage includes all citizens, residents and all those who call Ireland home whatever their age, background, physical or emotional needs.

”

3. Empowering Communities

The Heritage Council believes in fostering a sense of ownership and empowerment within local communities, recognising their central role in preserving and interpreting heritage.

“

We believe in a person-centred advocacy, in empowering communities by honouring their place in our land.

”

Heritage Council DEI Action Plan

The Heritage Council's DEI Policy Action Plan plays a crucial role in guiding the organisation's efforts to foster an inclusive environment that reflects the diverse identities within Irish society.

By outlining specific actions and outcomes, the plan ensures that diversity, equity, and inclusion principles are integrated into all aspects of the Council's operations, decision-making processes, and stakeholder engagement. It emphasises the importance of collaboration with various partners, including community organisations, educational institutions, and representative groups, to promote a shared understanding of heritage that is inclusive and representative.

Through regular reviews, data collection, and stakeholder feedback, the DEI Policy Action Plan provides a framework for continuous improvement and accountability, ensuring that heritage initiatives are reflective of the diverse narratives and experiences that comprise Ireland today.



DEI Policy Action Plan

The Heritage Council and its executive is committed to the principles and actions outlined in this policy. They are responsible for ensuring that the operations and programmes of the Heritage Council abide by both its Strategic and DEI Principles, as outlined in this policy. They will seek to further the Mission and Vision of this policy through all that they do. As such, the Council takes responsibility for the delivery of all the actions detailed in the Action Plan below as well as committing to the two key, Council-specific actions below:

- 1.** The Heritage Council and its executive recognises that true diversity, equity and inclusion will be an evolving and ongoing process that includes continuous self-development and learning. Therefore, the Council members commit to an ongoing programme of education and training that is proactive and holistic, specifically including meeting, engaging with and learning from individuals, groups and communities from marginalised and underrepresented groups (including the Traveller Community) in their spaces and places. This will ensure that the Council develops an understanding of people living lives different to their own, what heritage exists in different parts of the population and what that heritage means to different parts of the population.
- 2.** The Heritage Council also recognises that the membership of the Council does not currently reflect the diversity that exists within Ireland today. The Council commits to working with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage to ensure that the Heritage Council is diverse and furthermore, that the operations of the Council are equitable, inclusive and accessible.

In this way, the Heritage Council and its executive will execute their duties in the fullest manner possible, reflecting the needs and wishes of the entire constituency that the Heritage Council exists to serve.



DEI Policy Action Plan

Heritage Council Department - **Corporate Services**

Action	Outcome	Sponsor	Owner	Timeline
Conduct an Accessibility Audit for Heritage Council HQ.	Identification of accessibility barriers and development of a plan to address them, ensuring HQ is fully accessible.	Head of Corporate Services	SL	Q1 2026
Develop a DEI training programme for Heritage Council and its executive.	Enhanced understanding and implementation of DEI principles among the Heritage Council and its executive, fostering a more inclusive and respectful workplace.	Head of Corporate Services	SL	Q1 2026
Ensure DEI is integrated into the Heritage Council People Strategy.	A comprehensive People Strategy that reflects DEI values, promoting diversity and inclusion in recruitment, retention, Board selection and professional development.	Head of Corporate Services	SL	Q4 2025
Review potential of obtaining a robust DEI certification for the Heritage Council.	Achievement of DEI certification, demonstrating the Council's commitment to best practices in diversity, equity, and inclusion.	Head of Corporate Services	SL	Q3 2026



DEI Policy Action Plan

Heritage Council Department - **Communications and Public Affairs**

Action	Outcome	Sponsor	Owner	Timeline
Conduct an Accessibility Audit of all forms of Heritage Council communication.	Identification of accessibility barriers across all communication channels.	Head of Comms	SL	Q4 2026
Based on the audit findings, develop an Accessibility Plan for the Heritage Council.	Development of a comprehensive Accessibility Plan that addresses identified barriers, ensuring that all Heritage Council communications are fully accessible to individuals with diverse needs.	Head of Comms	SL	Q4 2026

Heritage Council Department - **Research, Learning and Cultural Heritage, Climate Change and Conservation**

Action	Outcome	Sponsor	Owner	Timeline
Create a National Study of Access to Heritage, informed by a Working Group composed of DEI representative bodies, sector stakeholders and Heritage Council representatives.	The National Study of Access to Heritage will provide comprehensive insights into the current state of access to heritage, particularly from minoritised communities.	Head of Research, Learning and Cultural Heritage	LS	By end 2027
Study findings to inform Heritage Council work and partnerships via a plan of work.	The findings will inform the Heritage Council's work and partnerships, leading to the development of a targeted plan of work that addresses identified barriers and promotes inclusive access to heritage for all communities.	Head of Research, Learning and Cultural Heritage	LS	2028

DEI Policy Action Plan

Heritage Council Department - **Finance**

Action	Outcome	Sponsor	Owner	Timeline
Conduct access audit and development of accessibility plan for Heritage Council grants.	Identification of accessibility barriers in the Heritage Council grants process and development of a comprehensive plan to address them, ensuring grants are fully accessible.	Head of Finance	RB	Phase 1 – Q2 2026 Phase 2 - Q2 2027

Heritage Council Department - **All Teams** (supported by Cultural & Inclusive Heritage Officer)

Action	Outcome	Sponsor	Owner	Timeline
Develop access audit methodology for Heritage Council projects and programmes (commencing with grants as priority area).	Development of a standardized access audit methodology to identify and address accessibility barriers within Heritage Council projects and programmes. Initially focusing on grants, this methodology ensures inclusive and accessible grant processes for diverse communities and will later be applied to other projects and programmes for consistent accessibility across all initiatives.	Head of Research, Learning and Cultural Heritage	AK	Q4 2026
Scope out evaluation and monitoring framework for Heritage Council's DEI Policy.	Creation of an evaluation and monitoring framework for the Heritage Council's DEI Policy, ensuring continuous improvement and accountability. This framework will include regular reviews, data collection, surveys, stakeholder feedback, and tracking the progress of action items.	Head of Research, Learning and Cultural Heritage	AK	Q4 2026

Monitoring and Evaluation of DEI Policy and Action Plan

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 includes Section 42, known as 'The Public Sector Duty'. With reference to monitoring and evaluation, Section 42 sets out the legal obligation of public bodies, including The Heritage Council, to do the following:

- 1. Assess** - Carry out an assessment of equality and human rights issues, relevant to the functions of the public body.
- 2. Address** - Identify the actions/policies/plans the public body propose to take to address the equality and human rights issues identified during the assess step.
- 3. Report** – Report on progress made under the Assess and Address steps in your organisation's annual report in a manner that is accessible to the public.

This policy fulfils both the **assessment** requirement of the Public Sector Duty and the requirement to **address** the outcome of that assessment (detailed here in the DEI Policy Action Plan). We already **report** progress on our DEI and Section 42 commitments and obligations through our annual report.

In addition, however, we wish to ensure that our commitments to DEI are comprehensively monitored and evaluated to fullest extent possible. Therefore, the Heritage Council has devised a comprehensive monitoring approach for this DEI Policy.

- Each specific item in the DEI Policy Action Plan will be tracked against the stated timeline and will undergo regular progress reviews and evaluations via the organisation workplan monitoring and review system.
- The DEI reach, effectiveness and impact of all Heritage Council public-facing programmes and initiatives will be monitored through regular surveys, focus groups or public forums and by ensuring inclusive and comprehensive public consultation forms part of all our policy and strategic development work. The findings from this monitoring and evaluation will be used to inform all Heritage Council operations, decision-making processes, and stakeholder engagement.

