

Heritage Stewardship Fund 2027

Application Guidance Document

This guide is designed to assist you in preparing an application for the Heritage Stewardship Fund (HSF) 2027. It provides clear tips and examples to help you present your project effectively and explain why it matters.

Information Webinar for Applicants
27 November 2026 at 2.30pm
Register here

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council

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Objective of the fund

The objective of the Heritage Stewardship Fund is to provide financial support for heritage focused projects undertaken by public sector bodies - including local authorities, state agencies, and educational institutions with responsibility for heritage assets or programmes.

The scheme is designed to assist staff whose core remit may not be fully focused on heritage but whose work has a significant impact on heritage. This includes employees of state agencies and educational institutions proposing heritage-focused projects, as well as local authority-based museum curators, archivists, archaeologists, and architectural conservation officers.

Projects that build climate resilience and deliver nature-positive outcomes are a particular area of focus for the fund. By supporting initiatives that safeguard heritage while promoting sustainability, the fund aims to ensure heritage assets are protected and enhanced for the benefit of communities and the natural world.

Who can apply

You can apply if you work in a public sector organisation and play a key role in Ireland's heritage infrastructure. This includes staff in:

- **Local authorities**
- **State agencies**
- **Educational institutions**

Examples include museum archivists, curators, archaeologists, architectural and conservation officers based in local authorities. Staff in state agencies and educational institutions engaged in heritage-focused projects are also eligible.

Please note: This scheme is not open to Local Authority staff participating in the Ceangal programme, including Heritage Officers, Biodiversity Officers, Archivists and other Ceangal-supported roles, as the activities and projects they deliver are supported through Ceangal programme funding.

Funding available

You can apply for funding of between **€5,000 and €30,000**. Most successful projects are expected to receive between **€20,000 and €30,000**, and we aim to support around **20 projects** through the scheme.

Your Contribution: Applicants must provide a **minimum financial contribution of 10%** of the total project cost. This scheme **does not cover staff payroll costs or administrative overheads** - so make sure these are excluded from your budget.

How to apply

- Applications must be submitted through the Heritage Council's **online grants system**.
- The Heritage Council accepts online applications only. We cannot accept submissions by post or email.
- The **application deadline is 5:00 PM on 29 January 2027**. To ensure fairness, late applications or documents submitted after this time will not be accepted.
- We will contact you in writing in **March 2027** to let you know whether your application is successful.

If you are successful, your project must **start after the offer date in March 2027** and be **completed by 14 November 2027**. Make sure your schedule fits within this timeframe when planning your activities

Examples of projects we can fund

✔ **Conservation of Heritage Assets**
Projects that manage and conserve heritage buildings, habitats and objects to accepted professional standards.

✔ **Improving Access to Heritage**
Initiatives that make heritage more accessible, with a strong focus on inclusion and diversity.

✔ **Climate-Resilient Conservation Planning**
Plans that strengthen the resilience of heritage buildings, habitats, or collections against climate change.

✔ **Partnership & Networking Events**
Activities that bring organisations together to address common challenges and share solutions.

✔ **Community Training & Skills Development**
Training in traditional building and craft skills and advice sessions and support that increase awareness and access to heritage.

✔ **Policy & Decision-Making Support**
Projects that inform policy development and improve management of heritage assets.

✔ **Data Collection & Research**
Research that supports future policy and advice – especially urban initiatives and climate adaptation strategies for heritage sites.

✔ **Digital Heritage Projects**
Development of digital heritage resources, including digitisation, online exhibitions, oral history recordings, podcasts, and films.

Important: Any digital outputs created with grant funding must be **publicly available, open and accessible to all**.

What you can apply for

When you're putting together your application, you can include costs like:

- **Third-party supplier fees** – this could be for heritage audits, conservation plans, training, or hands-on conservation work on buildings, objects, habitats, or sites.
- **Professional supervision fees** – if your project needs oversight from a qualified expert (like a conservation consultant with at least RIAI Grade 3 or equivalent, or an ecologist or archaeologist), you can include those costs too.
- **Specialised equipment or materials** – anything that helps with conservation or makes heritage more accessible. Think museum-grade display cases, environmental monitoring tools (for humidity, temperature, light), multimedia or interpretation equipment, or archival boxes to protect fragile documents.
- **Volunteer travel and subsistence** – if volunteers are helping out, you can cover their travel at €0.43 per km and daily subsistence (for five hours or more) at €19.25.

What you can't apply for

There are a few things this grant doesn't cover, so keep these in mind when planning your budget:

- General overheads or administration fees
- Internal recharges
- Salaries for staff
- International travel
- Any costs you've already incurred before the grant offer date
- Alcohol
- Promotional merchandise

If you're unsure about a specific cost, it's always a good idea to check before including it in your application.

You can find a list of projects that aren't covered by this grant scheme on Page 7.

Timescale & what to expect

Here's a quick overview of the key dates and what happens at each stage of the grant process:

- **Applications open:** 20 November 2026
- **Deadline to apply:** 29 January 2027 at 5pm sharp
- **Assessment period:** February-March 2027
  Your application will be reviewed by both our in-house team and an external panel of assessors.
- **Final decision:** Late March 2027
  The Heritage Council Board will make the final approval.
- **Outcome notification:** Late March 2027
  You'll receive a written update via the online grants system.

If your application is successful, you'll need to agree to our Terms and Conditions and provide your organisations bank account details.

Important: All successful applicants must commit to public engagement, promoting their project and acknowledging our funding. This includes hosting an **in-person event during National Heritage Week 2027**, where members of the public can learn more about your funded work.

How we assess your application

Once your application is submitted, we will first check it to make sure it meets the criteria for eligibility and that all supporting information has been provided. Applications that do not pass this stage will not be assessed further.

Applications that pass the initial checking stage proceed through the following stages:

The four main criteria

Your application will be scored based on:

Heading	Description	Marks Available
Quality and Structure of the Project	Assesses how well the project is designed and delivered, including clarity of objectives, use of qualified heritage professionals, and alignment with good heritage practice. Also considers how the project avoids negative impacts on natural heritage and contributes to sustainability.	**25 marks**
Benefit to the Community and Public Engagement	Evaluates the anticipated benefits for the community, inclusivity of public engagement activities, and how the project promotes awareness, accessibility, and participation.	**25 marks**
Feasibility and Timeliness	Reviews the realism and clarity of the work plan, including key milestones between March and 13 November 2026, and the capacity of the team to deliver the project on time.	**25 marks**
Best Value and Responsible Use of Funds	Assesses whether the project offers good value for money, including cost-effectiveness, long-term impact, and responsible use of public funds. Includes consideration of environmental and social value.	**25 marks**

Stage 1: Initial check – screening and eligibility

Before your application is scored, we check to make sure everything's in order. Here's what we look for:

- Your proposal meets the fund's basic requirements
- You've submitted all the required documents and information

Important: Eligibility is assessed on a **pass/fail** basis. If your application doesn't meet all the criteria at this stage, it won't move forward to full scoring.

Stage 2: Review and scoring

Eligible applications are then:

- Scored by assessors based on the published criteria
- Compared against internal benchmarks to ensure consistency
- Reviewed for any outliers, with adjustments made if needed to ensure fairness
- Shortlisted based on the highest scores and available budget

Important: To be considered for funding, applications must score **at least 10 marks in each of the four scored section**s. If an application scores below 10 in any one area, it will not be eligible for funding - even if the overall score is high.

Stage 3: Expert panel assessment

Shortlisted applications move on to an independent panel of assessors which:

- Reviews the scoring
- Makes funding recommendations to the Heritage Council Board

Funding is offered to applications that:

- Receive the highest scores
- Clearly align with the fund's goals and priorities
- Show strong potential for impact and successful delivery

Supporting information for your application

To help us understand your project and assess your application properly, you'll need to upload some supporting documents. Here's what to include:

- **Quotes or estimates** to back up your costs—this could be from suppliers or even last year's costs if they're still relevant.
- **Clear, up-to-date photos** of the building, place, object, or collection you're working with.
- **Any necessary approvals or permissions**, such as licences or consents.
- **For conferences or events**: include a programme outline, proposed speakers, venue details, and dates.
- **For commissioned reports, surveys, or audits**: upload a draft brief showing what you plan to cover.
- **For conservation projects** (buildings, objects, habitats): include a specification of works prepared by a suitably qualified heritage practitioner, current photos, and a map (for buildings or habitats).
- **For digital resources**: provide a user journey, sample graphics or visuals, draft text, technical specifications, metadata standards, copyright information, and how you'll handle personal data (including images). You will also need to provide details of how the digital outputs created will be made publicly available, open, and accessible to all.
- **If you're digitising archives**: outline how the original material will be handled during digitisation and share your plans for its care afterward. Digitisation projects will only be considered if the collection has already been catalogued, and evidence is provided that it has been, or if cataloguing is included in your proposal. Review the guidance for organisations undertaking digitisation projects, detailing the essential phases of the process.
- **You need to provide at least two letters of support** from your local Heritage Officer and any other key stakeholders.

This list isn't exhaustive - you're welcome to include other relevant documents. Just keep things **comprehensive but brief**.

✦ **A few practical tips:**

- The number and type of documents will depend on your project.
- Make sure your **file names clearly reflect the content**.
- Uploads must be in **PDF or JPEG format**, and **each file should be no larger than 10MB**.

Projects we can't fund

Some types of projects are outside the scope of this grant scheme. Please check this list before applying:

✘ **Public Sector Responsibilities**
We can't fund work that falls under a public sector body's statutory duties.
Examples: Activities linked to European Directives on habitats, birds, Water Framework, or Marine Strategy Framework.

✘ **Academic Studies**
Undergraduate or postgraduate students cannot apply for work that forms part of their academic studies (including PhDs).

✘ **Archaeology**
Archaeological excavations or post-excavation analysis and reporting are not eligible.

✘ **Primary School Projects**
Projects aimed at primary schools are funded through the Heritage in Schools scheme.
www.heritageinschools.ie

✘ **DNA Analysis**
We do not fund projects involving DNA testing or analysis, as policies in this area have not yet been developed.

✘ **Installations & Memorials**
The creation of new memorials, plaques, sculptures, artist installations, or replica builds is not eligible.

✘ **Signs & Information Boards**
Directional signage is not funded. Information boards will only be considered if they specifically address accessibility needs for people with disabilities.

✘ **Amenity Landscaping Works**
Landscaping or amenity improvements are not covered
Examples: Tarmacking car parks, installing benches, or adding litter bins.

✘ **Retrospective Projects**
We cannot fund work that has already started or been completed before the grant offer date.

✘ **Privately owned places, collections, or objects (including buildings)**
We don't fund projects involving privately owned places, collections, or objects (bold) unless they are genuinely accessible to the public. Because this is a public grant scheme, any investment of public money must deliver a clear and meaningful public benefit that outweighs any private gain. If you're working with a privately owned heritage asset, you'll need to make sure the public can access, experience or learn from it in a real and demonstrable way - this could be through regular opening hours, programmed visits, guided tours or other forms of meaningful public engagement.

Need help?

- Join the Information Webinar for Applicants 27 November 2026 at 2.30pm
- Contact us at: grants@heritagecouncil.ie

Final submission checklist

- All sections completed clearly
- Supporting documents attached
- Submitted online before **29 January 2027 at 5:00pm**

Appendix 1: HSF Application Form

Full text questions & example answers

The following is a fictional sample application provided for general guidance only. It is intended to demonstrate the level of detail and type of information that may be included in a strong application. Every funding strand is different and questions may vary, so applicants should adapt their responses to reflect their own organisation, objectives, and local context. All names, locations and project details used here are illustrative.

Section 1: Applicant Details

- **Name of Applicant:** Fiona Walsh
- **Job Title:** Museum Curator
- **Organisation Name:** Museum & Heritage Centre
- **Organisation Type:** Local Authority
- **Email Address:** fiona.walsh@Museum&HeritageCentre.ie
- **Phone Number:** 056-7789000
- **Project Location:** Kilkenny

Section 2: Project Overview

Question 1: What is the title of your project?

Guidance: Choose a clear and descriptive title that reflects the main goal or theme of your project.

Answer: Enhancing Climate Resilience and Accessibility of Kilkenny's Heritage Collections

Question 2: What is the overall aim of the project?

Guidance: Summarise what your project is trying to achieve. Focus on the heritage value, public benefit, and any environmental or accessibility improvements.

Answer: To improve the environmental conditions and public accessibility of Kilkenny County Museum's heritage collections through conservation upgrades and digital engagement.

Question 3. How will your project demonstrate good heritage practice and contribute to environmental sustainability, including avoiding negative impacts on natural heritage?

Guidance: Describe how your project will follow recognised heritage standards, use appropriate materials, and be guided by qualified professionals. Explain how it supports climate resilience, biodiversity, or energy efficiency, and how you'll minimise environmental impact.

Answer: All conservation and accessibility improvements will be guided by Museum Consultancy Service Ltd, with over 20 years experience in collections care and its environment, who will oversee the installation of museum-grade environmental monitoring equipment and advise on appropriate storage upgrades.

We will use archival-quality materials, including acid-free boxes and UV-filtering film, to protect vulnerable items in the Kilkenny County Museum's collection. To reduce our environmental

footprint, we will replace outdated lighting with LED systems and install passive ventilation to improve air quality without increasing energy use.

Public engagement will include an inclusive exhibition titled “Climate & Culture”, featuring tactile displays, large-print guides, and guided tours for local schools and community groups. All work will be documented through condition reports, photography, and digital records, ensuring transparency and long-term care.

All project work will be guided by the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland.

Section 3: Project Work Plan – Design and Delivery

Guidance: Break down your project into clear steps. For each step, describe what will happen, how it will be delivered, when it will take place, and who will be responsible. Make sure your timeline fits within the funding period (March–14 November 2026).

Step	What will happen?	How will it be delivered?	When will it happen?	Who is responsible?
1	Finalise project team and permissions	Internal planning meeting, confirm roles, gather required documents	May 2027	Fiona Walsh / Museum Team
2	Heritage advisor input	Site visit and written advice on climate resilience and accessibility improvements	May–June 2027	Museum Consultancy Service Ltd
3	Install environmental monitoring equipment	Contractor installs temperature and humidity sensors in storage areas	June 2027	Museum Facilities Team / Contractor
4	Upgrade storage conditions	Replace outdated shelving with archival-grade units and UV-filtering film	June–July 2027	Museum Staff / Heritage Advisor
5	Digitise key collection items	ICT specialist scans and catalogues selected documents and photographs	July–September 2027	ICT Specialist / Museum Archivist
6	Public engagement activity	Host “Climate & Culture” exhibition with tactile displays and guided tours	August 2027	Fiona Walsh / Outreach Coordinator
7	Final reporting and sharing outcomes	Submit final report, share results online and with local stakeholders	November 2027	Fiona Walsh / Museum Admin

Section 4: Budget

Guidance: List all expected costs, grouped by category (e.g. professional fees, equipment, materials). Include a short description for each item and the estimated cost. Make sure your budget is realistic and shows good value for money.

Cost Category	Description	Estimated Cost (€)	Quotes/ Estimates Attached?
Third-party supplier fees	Digital exhibition developer	€6,000	Yes
Professional supervision and advice fees	Museum Consultancy Services Ltd	€10,000	Yes
Equipment or materials	Environmental monitors, archival boxes	€10,000	Yes
Volunteer travel & subsistence	€0.43/km and €19.25/day (5+ hrs)	€1,000	Yes
Other eligible costs	Graphic design, accessibility tools	€6,000	Yes
Total Project Cost		€33,000	
Applicant Contribution (≥10%)		€3,000	
Amount Requested from HSF		€30,000	

Section 5: Public Engagement Commitment

Question 1: What public engagement activities are planned as part of the project?

Guidance: Describe how you will involve the public - through exhibitions, talks, workshops, school visits, or online content. Explain how these activities will be inclusive and accessible.

Answer: As part of the project, we will host an inclusive exhibition titled “Climate & Culture: Caring for Kilkenny’s Collections” during National Heritage Week. The exhibition will feature digitised items from the museum’s archives, tactile interpretation panels, and large-print guides. We will also offer guided tours tailored for local schools, older adults, and community groups, with a focus on how heritage collections can be protected in a changing climate. A short video will be produced to showcase the project and shared online.

Question 2: How will the event be promoted and who is the target audience?

Guidance: List the communication channels you’ll use (e.g. social media, radio, posters). Identify your target audience and explain how you’ll reach and include them.

Answer: The event will be promoted through our website, social media channels (Facebook and Instagram), local radio (KCLR), and printed posters distributed to libraries, schools, and community

centres. We will also send press releases to local newspapers and share the event through the Heritage Council's National Heritage Week listings. Our target audience includes local families, schools, older adults, people with disabilities, and heritage enthusiasts. We will ensure the event is inclusive by offering wheelchair access, sensory-friendly materials, and guided tours with visual and audio support.

Question 3: How will the Heritage Council's support be acknowledged?

Guidance: Explain how you'll publicly recognise our funding - through logos, signage, verbal acknowledgements, and online content.

Answer: We will acknowledge funding in all promotional materials, including posters, social media posts, press releases, and the exhibition signage. The Heritage Council's logo will be displayed prominently at the exhibition venue and in the video produced for the project. During public talks and guided tours, we will verbally acknowledge the Heritage Council's contribution. The museum's website will also feature a dedicated project page with a statement of thanks and a link to the Heritage Council's website.

Section 6: Permissions & Approvals

Guidance: Confirm whether your project involves protected structures, designated sites, or activities requiring licences. Upload relevant approvals or indicate if they are pending. Clearly state who owns the land, building, or object involved.

Requirement	Applicable?	Status	Notes
Work on a Protected Structure	Yes/No	Approved / Pending	Upload planning permission or declaration
Work near a SAC, SPA, NHA or NNR	Yes/No	Approved / Pending	Upload NPWS consent letter
Work on a Recorded/National Monument	Yes/No	Approved / Pending	Upload NMS or NMI approval
Destructive sampling or analysis	Yes/No	Approved / Pending	Upload agreement from relevant institution
Foreshore licence (if applicable)	Yes/No	Approved / Pending	Upload licence from Foreshore Unit
Wildlife licence (if applicable)	Yes/No	Approved / Pending	Upload licence under Wildlife Act
Other relevant permissions or consents	Yes/No	Approved / Pending	Please specify

Who owns the land, building, or object involved in the project?
Example: Kilkenny County Council owns the museum building.

Additional notes (if any):
Example: Planning permission submitted and expected by February 2027.

Section 7: Supporting Documents

Guidance: Upload all required documents. Use the checklist on the Application Guidance to make sure nothing is missing.

- Quotes from suppliers
- Breakdown of volunteers and roles
- Photos of current archival storage
- Permissions from Local Authority
- Draft digital exhibition content
- Letters of support from Heritage and Conservation Officers

Section 8: Declarations

Guidance: Read the declaration carefully and confirm that you understand and agree to the terms. Make sure the person signing is authorised to submit the application on behalf of your organisation.

By signing this application, Fiona Walsh confirms:

- I am authorised to submit the application.
- All information is accurate and complete.
- I have read and understood the guidance document.
- The project will begin after the offer date and finish by 14 November 2027.
- All work will follow good heritage practice and relevant legislation.
- Drafts of all outputs will be submitted for approval.
- The project will be showcased during National Heritage Week.
- The Heritage Council will be acknowledged in all outputs.
- Biodiversity data will be submitted to the National Biodiversity Data Centre.
- Archaeological discoveries will be reported to the National Monuments Service.
- The Heritage Council will be kept informed of any changes.

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