



An Roinn Cultúir,  
Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta  
Department of Culture,  
Heritage and the Gaeltacht

# Historic Towns Initiative:

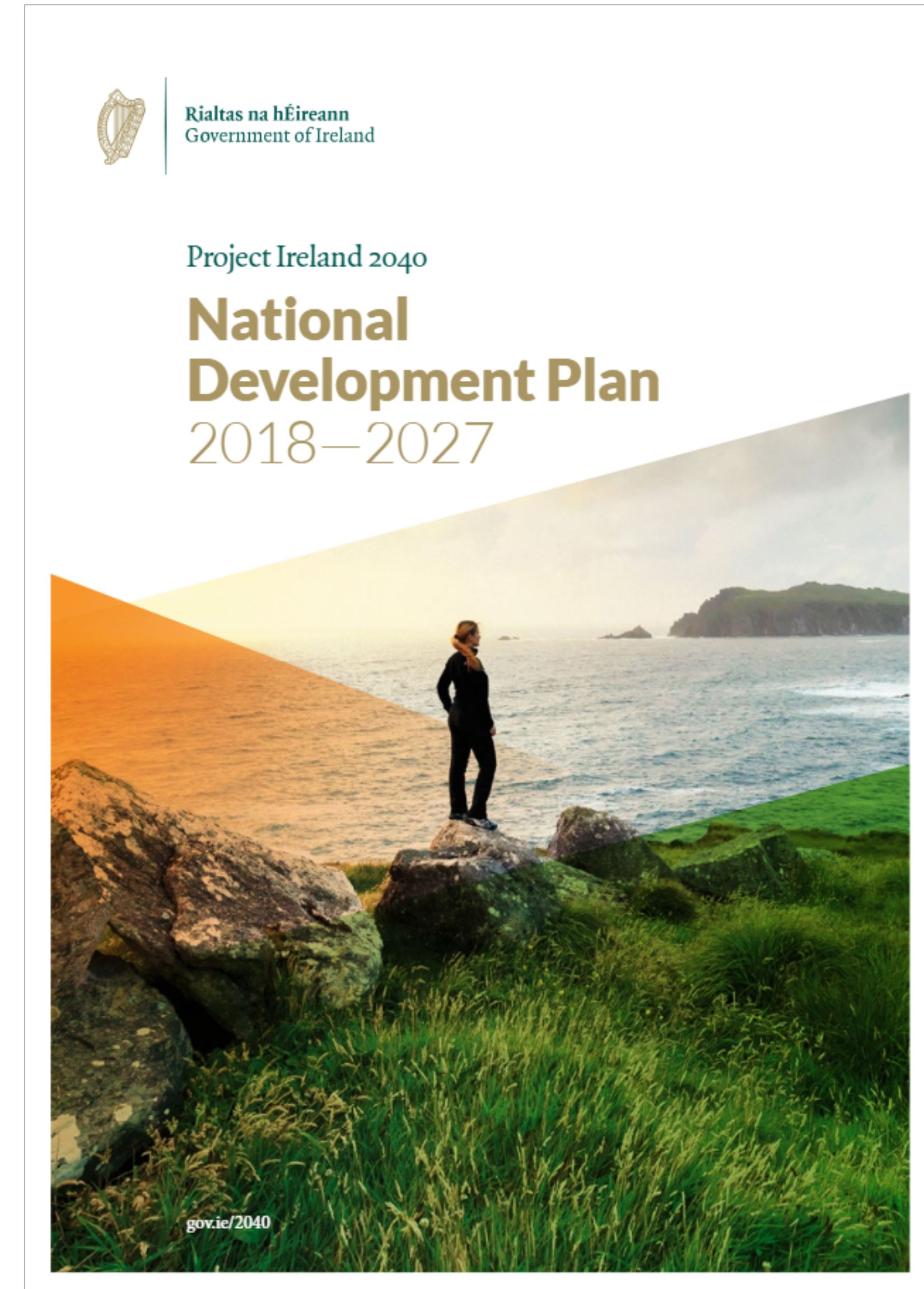
## Harnessing the potential of Ireland's town centres

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Built Heritage & Architectural Policy  
21 June 2018

# Project Ireland 2040



- National Development Plan 2018-2027 has ten Strategic Outcomes
- National Strategic Outcome No. 7: Enhanced Amenity and Heritage
- Cultural investment component was launched on 10 April this





# Project Ireland 2040

Ten-year plan for capital investment of almost €1.2 billion in Ireland's culture, language and heritage €85 million of which will be for investment in the historic environment including initiatives to revitalise the historic cores of urban centres



# Project Ireland 2040



## Caring for our Historic Environment

*‘This plan will include significant investment to revitalise the historic cores of our cities, towns and villages and bring historic buildings back into use*

*‘Capital funding for towns will included support for the national roll-out of the Historic Towns Initiative... The supports for historic towns under this plan will complement and support other rural and urban regeneration initiatives under the NDP’*



# Historic Towns Initiative pilot 2013-14



The HTI was set up in June 2012 to undertake a pilot heritage-led regeneration programme

Joint undertaking of the Department, Fáilte Ireland and the Heritage Council

The steering committee, including representatives of the three towns, drew up a Framework for the pilot which was launched in February 2013 by Minister Jimmy Deenihan, TD



## HISTORIC TOWNS INITIATIVE

### Framework for the Pilot Phase

Listowel ■ Westport ■ Youghal  
2013 – 2014



# Heritage-led regeneration



- Heritage-led regeneration is a recognised policy across Europe
- Projects have shown that heritage is key to successful urban regeneration
- Private sector investment is encouraged by public sector investment in restoring landmark historic buildings and enhancing public space
- Repair of historic buildings creates a need for specialist skills
- Restored historic buildings make ideal locations for creative businesses and attract skilled workers, tourists and other visitors



# Heritage-led regeneration



- The cultural heritage of a town provides a sense of specialness and distinctiveness
- Putting heritage at the forefront of regeneration strategies ensures that local distinctiveness, community spirit, values and traditions are retained and enhanced while allowing new interventions to take place
- The townspeople are an essential component of what makes a place special and their participation is critical to success

# Heritage-led regeneration



- The character and distinctiveness of the historic built environment are central to the future success of Ireland's towns
- Planning for the regeneration of a historic town needs an integrated approach balancing the protection of the built heritage and the sustainable development of the historic urban area with the needs of modern living
- A common vision for the town needs to be developed supported by a coordinated and integrated series of objectives and a programme of realistic and achievable actions



# Historic Towns Initiative Framework



This outlined a recommended 6-step process for undertaking a heritage-led regeneration strategy in a town

The steps were:

1. Understanding the town and its heritage
2. Assembling support
3. Assessing the issues facing the town
4. Defining a vision and setting goals
5. Implementation
6. Monitoring and reviewing





# Historic Towns Initiative pilot



- The pilot ran from February 2013 to June 2014
- The Department provided funding for programmes of capital works with further investment by the local authorities and private property owners
- Fáilte Ireland provided funding for non-capital tourism-related projects including surveys of the attitudes of residents, visitors and businesses in the towns
- In total, almost €1 million was invested in the three towns during the course of the pilot





# Lessons learned from the pilot



- The surveys of visitors, residents and businesses found a high overall appreciation of heritage in the towns and the benefits it could bring
- Towns which had a clear vision for the town supported by a well-considered action plan used the funding to best advantage
- Local authorities need to take a strong leadership role in driving heritage-led regeneration
- The participation of townspeople is critical to success





# HTI Pilot: Youghal, County Cork



- Public realm works around 'Tulip Area'
- Historic core painting scheme
- Advertising of Youghal app
- St Mary's Collegiate Church trail
- Branding and launching of Raleigh Quarter
- Maritime History trail
- Exhibition of archaeological findings at St Mary's Collegiate Church
- Filming of works at St Mary's





# HTI Pilot: Youghal, County Cork



- Nealons Quay public realm works and completion of sea wall
- New footpaths around courthouse
- Repair works to courthouse
- Public realm works at O'Rahilly St, Emmet Place and Barry's Lane
- Access improvements at College Green





# HTI Pilot: Youghal, County Cork



*Public realm works, branding and trail signage*



# HTI Pilot: Westport, County Mayo



- Wyatt windows project
- Emergency structural report on Bridge House
- Façade painting scheme
- Public realm works to provide setting for new sculpture
- Restoration of gates to walled garden of Westport House
- Westport House study day
- Animation/interactive interpretation; costumes and training

**WESTPORT STORY**

AN ENCHANTING 60 MINUTE DRAMATIC WALKING TOUR THAT WILL WANDER THROUGH THE STREETS AND LANEWAYS OF WESTPORT – THE TOWN IS A WALKING TOWN AND IS ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S DEMONSTRATION TOWNS FOR SMARTER TRAVEL.

FROM THE OCTAGON AT 2.00pm  
MONDAYS, THURSDAYS  
AND SATURDAYS

Presented in an engaging and humorous way, the tour, will take participants on an enchanting journey back in time. Written by Paraic Breathnach, and featuring local actors from St Patrick's Drama Group, the tour will visit the town's most historic landmarks. This unique tour based on historical fact and humorous observation brings to life great Westport stories, larger than life Westport characters and historical events. Westport Story is for both visitors to Westport who would like to get more out of their sojourn, and even for natives of the county who would like to learn more about this great town. At the end of this leisurely (approximate 60 minute walk) having had a taste of Westport you will want to continue this adventure on your own and feast on the delights of exploring this wonderful area with an informed eye..

All tours depart from The Octagon. Wheelchair friendly, suits most walking abilities and levels. Guided tours for groups of 10 or more by prior arrangements. ADVANCE BOOKING, THOUGH NOT ESSENTIAL, IS ADVISABLE. BOOK AT ACTIVITY AMBASSADORS DESK AT WESTPORT LEISURE PARK, JAMES STREET, WESTPORT. T: 098-29160 E: westportactivityambassadors@gmail.com

ADULTS: €10  
SENIORS, STUDENTS AND UNWAGED: €6  
GROUP RATE (20+): €4 PER PERSON

Logos for 'Westport Activity', ' Fáilte Ireland', and 'St Patrick's Drama Group' are visible at the bottom of the poster.



# HTI Pilot: Westport, County Mayo



- Creation of a linear orchard
- Conservation works to the Clew Bay Heritage Museum
- Shopfront conservation scheme
- Structural assessment of a locomotive shed
- Conservation assessment of murals in Holy Trinity Church
- Conservation of Chinese wallpaper in Westport House





# HTI Pilot: Westport, County Mayo



*Peter Street public realm works associated with 'The Sentinel' art work commission*



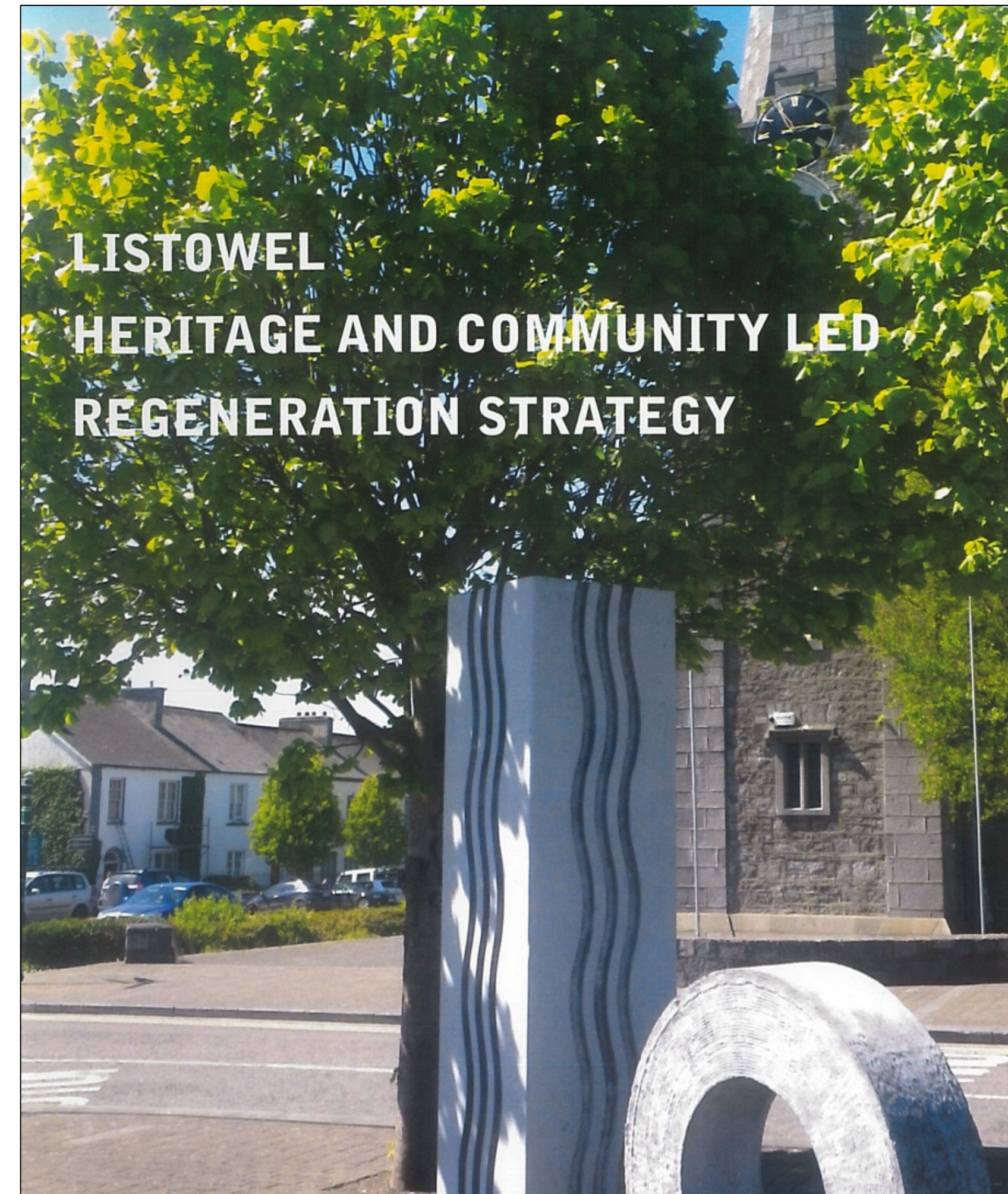
- Landscape 1 04/05/2012 10:08 Page 2
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- # LISTOWEL heritage trail
- ## Listowel Town
- The name 'Listowel' derives from the Irish, *liss Tuathail*, which means 'Tuathail's region'. It is a market town in
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- County Kerry on the River Suir, the largest river in south Kerry. The population of Listowel town is 6,312 in 2006.
- The town developed around Listowel Castle, which was positioned at a strategic river crossing. It became an important trading and market town whose relative affluence derived mainly from trade in butter and grain.
- The town is sometimes described as the Literary Capital of Ireland and 2003 an annual 'Writing Week' festival. A number of internationally known playwrights and authors are from, or based in Listowel, including Brian Friel, John Banville and Seamus Heaney. The annual Debut Fest is an important national event in the town's calendar.
- Additional points of interest on the Heritage Trail
- John & Anne's Pub
  - Listowel Courthouse
  - Gungahoe Free Library
  - St Michael's Cemetery
  - Church House
  - Church Lane
  - Church Tower
  - Church of the Holy Spirit
  - Church of the Holy Spirit
  - Church of the Holy Spirit
- ### Town Square
- The Town Square is the cultural and commercial focal point for the town. Set out around 1810, it has changed little since the 1800s. Listowel is famous for its colourful, cotton-reel-style shop frontages. Many of these were created in the late 1800s and early 1900s, for the posterwork craftsmen, for instance, for McHale's.
- ### Listowel Writers
- Many famous writers came from or lived in Listowel. These include John Galsworthy, Brian MacMahon, Brendan Kennelly, Gabriel Byrne, Maurice Walsh and others. Listowel Writers' Week, held annually in May/June, is the largest literary festival in Ireland.
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- ### St John's Church
- Built as a Protestant church in 1810, St John's is now an Arts and Heritage Centre.
- ### St Mary's Church
- Built in 1825, with the parish, tower and spire added in 1875, St Mary's is the Catholic Church for Listowel.
- ### Female Graveyard
- Female Graveyard was the first resting place of thousands of women dead from the famine period many of whom died in the nearby workhouse.
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- ### Listowel Museum and Archives
- The Listowel Archaeological Museum was the only one of its type in the world. It was invented and developed by a French engineer, Charles Lavigerie. The first ran for 30 years, until 1863. The museum and interpretive centre has a working replica of the town on 200 of tracks.
- ### Church Tower
- The tower is a feature of the full history of 'Church Tower'. Though it is thought to have been built in the early 1700s, on the site of a 13th century church. Today,
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- only the tower remains, as material was removed in 1852 for the tower of St. John's Church in the town square.
- ### St. Michael's Graveyard
- The graveyard is one of the most famous in the world. Many famous Listowel people and famous Irish people are buried here. The remains of a church can be seen in the old part of St. Michael's graveyard. It dates from the early 18th century possibly on the site of a 13th century Norman church.
- ### Listowel Castle
- Listowel Castle dates from the 13th century or earlier. It belonged to the Fitzmaurice family, lords of Barry, English lords, succeeded by Sir Charles Wilmot. The castle was destroyed by fire in 1688. The ruins were declared a National Monument in 1923.
- ### Listowel Racecourse
- Listowel Racecourse is the town's favourite and is one of the most popular events in the Irish horse racing calendar. Races have been held here annually since 1855.
- ### River Walk
- The walk by the banks of the River Suir is just over a kilometre long. It passes the Big Bridge and offers views of the town and castle. A wide variety of wild flowers, trees, butterflies and birds can be seen along the route.
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- ### The 'Big Bridge'
- This fine cast-iron stone bridge was built in 1848 by Sir Richard Wallace, Engineer of Public Works for Cork, Limerick and Waterford from 1812 to 1853. The bridge is a masterpiece of the iron bridge era, built to a standard of quality that has inspired many other bridges in the world.
- ### Children's Park
- The town park has many amenities including a modern woodland area, a large open grassy area, a children's play area, a tennis court, a football pitch, a basketball court, a community centre and a cafe.
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- ### Garden of Europe
- These beautiful gardens were created in 1998 by the Listowel Garden Society. They are a testament to the town's history and its commitment to the environment.
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- For more information on the Listowel Heritage Trail, visit the website at [www.listowelheritagetrail.ie](http://www.listowelheritagetrail.ie). The website offers a wealth of information on the town's history, culture and heritage. It also provides a map of the trail and a list of the points of interest.
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# HTI Pilot: Listowel, County Kerry



- St Michael's Church tower conservation works
- Display units and signage at the Seanchaí Centre
- Storyboard at Lios Tuathail ringfort
- Archaeological programme
- Conservation of McAuliffe stuccowork
- Commencement of conservation plan for town (published in 2017)





# HTI Pilot: Listowel, County Kerry



*Façade painting and repair scheme  
Conservation of the Celtic Revival stuccowork of Pat McAuliffe*



# Historic Towns Initiative 2018



- There is a dedicated HTI grants programme for 2018
- An allocation of €1 million (capital funding) has been made under the programme for historic towns engaged in heritage-led regeneration
- HTI is administered by the Heritage Council
- A workshop was held in Kilkenny in January 2018 to inform local authorities of the roll-out of the programme
- A call for applications issued in February
- Applications were assessed by the HTI National Steering Group who then made recommendations to the Board of the Heritage Council for funding under the programme



# Historic Towns Initiative 2018



- Historic towns include those of medieval and pre-medieval foundation, plantation towns, planned estate towns and those established around local industries
- A town seeking to benefit from the HTI should possess significant cultural and heritage assets and have a distinctive sense of place
- Each local authority was invited to apply in respect of one historic town with an indicative minimum population of 1,500 inhabitants



# Historic Towns Initiative 2018



Priority was given to projects that were ‘plan-led’ and likely to make a meaningful contribution to the heritage-led regeneration of the town, including:

- HTI Management Plan based on the HTI Framework
- A Conservation Plan
- A Public Realm Plan
- A Town Centre Health Check Plan
- or any plan equivalent to the above



# Historic Towns Initiative 2018



Applications were assessed under the following criteria:

- Significance of the town and its heritage
- Town's track record to date in heritage-led regeneration
- Extent to which the application fulfilled the aims of the HTI and was likely to make a significant contribution to the regeneration of the town
- Quality of the project(s) proposed
- Presence of a vibrant and engaged community who would support the implementation of the Initiative



# Historic Towns Initiative 2018



- Local authorities were expected to show evidence of support from partnerships in delivering projects
- Projects had to be achievable within the funding timeframe (i.e. within the 2018 financial year)
- Projects had to show strong public engagement and give examples of how they proposed to engage and inform the public with the project
- As part of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018, successful towns will be expected to hold an event about their project during Heritage Week 18-26 August



# Historic Towns Initiative 2018



HTI projects are now underway in seven towns:

- Youghal, Co. Cork
- Portlaoise, Co. Laois
- Kilmallock, Co. Limerick
- Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo
- Kells, Co. Meath
- Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary



*Former Courthouse, Kells, County Meath*



