



## Agreed Policy Paper on the Heritage Council and Partners' Collaborative Town Centre Health Check (CTCHC) Programme

June 2020

*“Over the long term, places with strong, distinctive identities are more likely to prosper than places without them. Every place must identify its strongest, most distinctive features and develop them or run the risk of being all things to all persons and nothing special to any....”*

Nobel Prize Laureate Robert Merton Solow<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Overview and Background to the CTCHC Programme: Project Charter (2016), Programme Objectives, Outputs, Outcomes and Benefits/Impact

Ireland's Collaborative Town Centre Health Check (CTCHC) Programme, created by the Heritage Council and its Partners in Autumn 2016, aims to establish a collaborative and robust approach to undertaking Town Centre Health Checks in Irish Towns. This is to guide the design, delivery, and evaluation of heritage-led regeneration, socio-economic development and investment programmes - both public and private – at various levels. The CTCHC Programme supports the implementation of the **National Planning Framework (NPF) and National Development Plan 2018-2027: Project Ireland 2040**, particularly in relation to the stated National Strategic Outcomes, National Policy Objectives and Strategic Investment Priorities. The NPF (Section 1.2), entitled *Making the Vision a Reality*, includes the powerful statement:

***“A major new policy emphasis on renewing and developing existing settlements will be required, rather than the continual expansion and sprawl of cities and towns out into the countryside, at the expense of town centres and small villages....”***

The CTCHC Programme is based on the premise that changing demographics and living/travel to work patterns, along with changing consumer preferences and trends, are all impacting on the overall vitality and viability of our historic town centres. The recent Covid-19 Pandemic has vastly exacerbated the complex and multi-faceted challenges facing historic town centres in Ireland.

Indeed, many historic town centres were already struggling before the lockdown. Robust data that qualifies and verifies the overall performance of historic town centres needs to be radically progressed and upgraded in Ireland, as part of effective monitoring and evaluation processes and systems.

---

<sup>1</sup> Cited in *The Economics of Uniqueness: Investing in Historic City Cores and Cultural Heritage Assets for Sustainable Development*, The World Bank, Urban Development Series, 2012.

As such, the CTCHC Programme seeks to close existing data gaps and to create innovative partnerships, that will ultimately build social capital and public value within our historic town centres.

A detailed business case for the innovative CTCHC Programme is set out in the Project Charter<sup>2</sup> (16 pages), which Ali Harvey prepared during the conception and initiation phase of the programme in 2016. A visual summary of the CTCHC Programme is provided at **Appendix A**. The CTCHC Programme's seven key objectives are reproduced in **Box 1** below.

**Box 1: CTCHC Programme Objectives – 7 no. (Source: CTCHC Project Charter, 2016)**

The CTCHC Programme has seven key objectives - namely to:

1. Develop a co-ordinated CTCHC action-learning training programme, consisting of training workshops and mentoring support, for a representative number of historic towns to co-ordinate, plan and promote the concept of collaborative town centre health checks (CTCHCs) and the creation of CTCHC Baselines; and to promote the wide-ranging benefits as a tool for enhancing socio-economic activities and development, and cultural heritage and tourism growth<sup>3</sup>;
2. Develop a collaborative and shared knowledge and exchange network to influence policy and decision-makers responsible for the management of historic town centres, and to champion the implementation of a resources framework for the long-term management of valuable assets within Ireland's historic town centres;
3. Support and enhance collaboration and co-operation and partnerships within Ireland between national, regional and local partners involved in town centre planning and management and to assist in the enhancement and promotion of tangible and intangible heritage associated with Ireland's historic town centres;
4. Enhance and promote Ireland's historic town centres as an 'enterprise growth pole' for EU-wide heritage/tourism led socio-economic development and balanced regional growth in Ireland, building on the existing commercial base/mix and civic infrastructure, including visitor/heritage centres, museums, etc.;
5. Promote the integration of existing and new technologies and ICT solutions, e.g. GIS, that support the innovative development of the commercial and cultural tourism sectors in Ireland;
6. Build research partnerships with universities and professional institutes in Ireland and to develop a focused research programme to enhance the management, growth and development of historic town centres; and
7. Enhance understanding and exchange of procedures and available tools to encourage participation of the general public, local and regional authorities, and other parties with an interest in the drafting, formulation, implementation and monitoring of historic town centre policies in Ireland.

Since its inception the CTCHC Programme, which has 70+ programme partners, has enabled the Heritage Council to be recognised as a 'champion' of heritage-led and evidence-based historic town centre regeneration, both nationally and internationally.

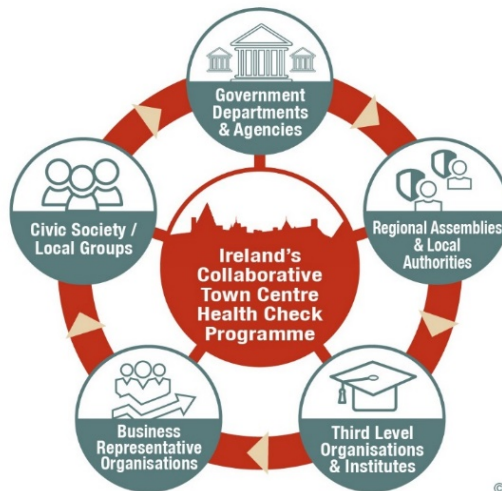
---

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/content/files/town\\_centre\\_health\\_check\\_project\\_charter.pdf](https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/content/files/town_centre_health_check_project_charter.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Tourism (including Cultural Tourism), an abstract export industry, is included in the invisible balance of the national balance of trade, which measures the relationship between our national imports and exports – i.e. whether we operate what is termed a trade surplus or a trade deficit.

## Ireland's Collaborative Town Centre Health Check (CTCHC) Programme

### How We Work?



© A. Harvey, Heritage Council, 2020

As illustrated below, the CTCHC Programme currently works with six government departments and three government agencies including the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

## Ireland's Collaborative Town Centre Health Check (CTCHC) Programme

### Government Departments and Agencies



© A. Harvey, Heritage Council, 2020

The Department of Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht (DCHG) is a key stakeholder in promoting the revitalisation of historic town centres and has had a central role in the development of innovative policy, guidance on best practice in the reuse of existing buildings and the development of high quality public realm, concepts which have been supported through annual funding programme for towns and their building fabric. In support of the vision of the National Development Plan, the Department is developing a National Policy on Architecture (NPA), under several themes, all of which are applicable to the future sustainable development of historic town centres i.e. research strategies required to inform planning and development, heritage-led regeneration and climate change adaptation and the design of high quality places for people.

## Need for a Policy ‘Shift’ Towards Putting Town Centres First

The operations of the CTCHC Programme, along with the programme’s published reports, have clearly identified that in order to repurpose and regenerate historic town centres, Ireland requires a major policy shift towards ‘Putting Town Centres First’. In pursuit of this policy shift, the CTCHC Programme started using/promoting this tag line in November 2019. A ‘Town Centres First’ policy has been included in the agreed Programme for Government published on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

In relation to national policy gaps, it should also be highlighted that there are no Section 28 Guidelines<sup>4</sup> (as amended by the 2010 P&D Act) in place for Ireland’s Town Centres. Local Authorities are currently planning and managing historic town centres using the *Retail Planning Guidelines*<sup>5</sup> (2012). As a result, current policy tends to deal with one land use in isolation to other important town centre land uses including civic, entertainment, residential, enterprise, etc.

This is not the way that other EU Member States are operating. Clearly, the Irish Planning system needs to innovate and evolve to ensure that our historic town centres survive and thrive.

## Key CTCHC Programme Outputs - Macro:

The CTCHC Programme has created the following macro outputs since its inception:

1. Creation of a 15-Step CTCHC town centre assessment process for the CTCHC Programme at the outset i.e. a standard methodology that can be adopted by all town centres - all programme partners/town centres follow this 15-Step methodology, which enables comparison of data results in the programme in Ireland and beyond;
2. Creation of a GIS building/landuse colour-coding system at the outset using GOAD classification plus additional building uses, e.g. enterprise, residential, etc. This colour coding is used to create Step 2 of the 15-Steps – e.g. historic town centre landuse surveys are mapped using CTCHC GIS colour coding – this enables a comparison of towns throughout the country – this is the first time that landuse maps have been prepared for historic town centres in Ireland as Local Area Plans (LAPs) tend to be development/zoning led – the CTCHC GIS Colouring-coding system is provided at **Appendix B**;
3. Setting up of two CTCHC Programme strands – due to exponential demand for the programme from the outset, it was necessary for the Planning Officer to create two programme strands for Border Towns and Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) Towns – there are currently 15 no. towns in the programme with 16+ towns on a waiting list mostly located in the East of the country;
4. Creation of a ‘data-driven’ programme as recommended by the OCED in its report entitled – *The Path to Becoming a Data-Driven Public Sector*<sup>6</sup> (#DDPS) – the CTCHC Programme creates robust baselines of key performance indicators for historic town centres, i.e. the creation of first-time ‘verified data’ (all the data is peer reviewed) – the baseline data created during Phase 1 can then be compared within the programme and with other EU Member States, etc (Phase 2 is the formulation of Town Renewal Action Plans);
5. Publication and ministerial launches of first-ever CTCHC Summary Reports, Consumer Survey Reports and landuse maps for historic town centres in the programme.

---

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/30/section/28/enacted/en/html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/migrated-files/en/Publications/DevelopmentandHousing/Planning/FileDownload,30026,en.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/ireland/the-path-to-becoming-a-data-driven-public-sector-059814a7-en.htm>

## CTCHC Programme – Key Outcomes

A list of potential Key Envisaged Outcomes for the CTCHC Programme, as outlined in the original Project Charter (2016) are reproduced in **Box 2** below.

### ***Box 2: CTCHC Programme - Envisaged Outcomes, as listed in the Project Charter, 2016***

1. Creation of collaborative partnerships and networks of civic leaders within an overall Irish Town Centre Management Programme, which supports the delivery of the National Planning Framework (NPF) and enhances strategic planning, effective management and sustainable development at a local level;
2. Enhances understanding and awareness of how to undertake and measure the overall performance of historic town centres in Ireland using [standardised] Key Performance Indicators (KPIs);
3. Raises awareness of the crucial role that good planning and design, and quality public realm plays in creating a safe historic core (and streetscape) with a unique 'sense of place', which in turn attracts visitors and tourists to a town centre – i.e. the public realm is the 'main stage' of a historic town;
4. Stimulates socio-economic regeneration, revitalisation, wealth creation and growth in the locality and acts as a focus/'lightening rod' for investment (both public and private); and
5. Enhances overall quality of life, health and well-being and sense of belonging within communities living and working in Ireland's historic towns.

The Heritage Council and Partner's CTCHC Programme has created a greater awareness and understanding of the importance of historic town centres and the role of heritage-led regeneration in contributing to the emerging circular economy, meeting climate change targets, delivering proper planning and sustainable development, enabling sustainable communities and renewable energy. The programme has also led to the creation of effective partnerships and collaboration between the public, private and civic sectors – i.e. the creation of social capital – and robust data baselines (i.e. generation of public value) for historic town centres for the first time ever.

The CTCHC Programme also builds and enhances 'Trust' in the public sector and highlights what is needed to ensure that Ireland moves towards an evidence-based planning system and public sector, as stated in Planning Policy Statement 1 (2015). The programme is also data-driven, as recommended by the OECD in its publication on the need for a data-driven public sector in Ireland, November 2019.



## Benefits and Impact of the CTCHC Programme – June 2020

A summary of the key benefits and impact of the CTCHC Programme as of June 2020, are listed in the **Box 3** below.

**Box 3: CTCHC Programme – Benefits and Impacts, June 2020<sup>7</sup>**

### 3. Benefits & Impact of CTCHC Programme

- Data-driven Programme = Evidence-based spatial planning + VFM
- Support for Commercial SMEs in Town Centres, e.g. on-line data
- Creation of Social Capital + Public Value - Ireland needs Social Cost Benefit Analysis (SCBA)
- Creation of Local Regeneration 'Engines'
- Enhanced Collaborative Processes + Participative Democracy
- Regeneration of Historic Town Centres – focus for Local Communities
- Enhanced Sense of Place, Civic Pride and Belonging.....



(Source: A. Harvey, June 2020.)

## CTCHC Programme and International Collaboration

In addition, the CTCHC Programme has facilitated a widening and a deepening of relationships with the EC and other EU Member States, e.g. the Planning Officer was invited to give a presentation to an EC DG GROW Seminar in Brussels in February 2019 and a Dutch Delegation of Provinces visited Ireland and the Dundalk CTCHC Project in June 2019 to learn more about Ireland's planning policy for town centres and the CTCHC Programme.

The study visit report from the Dutch Delegation formed part of the Dundalk CTCHC Project's written submission to Louth County Council in late 2019 on the review of the Louth County Development Plan 2015-2021 – the submission was entitled '*Putting Town Centres First*'.

The CTCHC Programme has also enhanced collaboration with England and Scotland e.g. the Planning Officer was invited to take part in an expert panel at the ATCM Conference in London in Feb 2019 and the Planning Officer also organised a workshop with Scotland's Towns Partnership<sup>8</sup> in Dundalk in December 2019 – see Dundalk CTCHC Workshop Feedback Report, February 2020<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> This slide is an extract from a presentation/talk given by A. Harvey on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2020 at a joint Dept of Culture/RIAI Workshop on Town Centres to inform the emerging National Policy on Architecture.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.scotlandstowns.org/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/content/files/Ireland-Scotland-Collaboration-on-Town-Centres.pdf>

## 2. Demand for the CTCHC Programme: 2016 to Date?

Demand for the CTCHC Programme has grown exponentially since its inception. For example, c. 70 people attended the first workshop in Naas (September 2016) and c. 130 people attended the second workshop in Dublin Castle (March 2017), which is a 90% increase. As a result, the CTCHC Programme's Founding Co-ordinator - Ali Harvey – created two key programme strands in mid-2018, namely:

1. **Border Towns Network (BTN)** – the first CTCHC Workshop for Border Towns was held in Monaghan in June 2018 in partnership with Monaghan County Council. A Border Towns CTCHC Workshop Feedback Report<sup>10</sup> was published by the Heritage Council in December 2018. Approximately, 60 people attended the first workshop in Monaghan and a second workshop for c. 65 people was held in Dundalk in April 2019<sup>11</sup>. The first-ever Dundalk CTCHC Report had a ministerial launch in June 2019<sup>12</sup>; and
2. **Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) Towns** – the first AEC CTCHC Workshop for AEC Towns was organised by the Heritage Council in partnership with Mayo County Council and partner government departments in November 2018. As with the Border Towns Workshop, a workshop feedback report circulated to all attendees (c. 60) for comment/input before finalisation and publication.

There are **15 no. towns**<sup>13</sup> involved in the Collaborative Town Centre Health Check (CTCHC) Programme, with over c.70 project partners involved from the public, private and civic sectors in Ireland and further afield. There are **16 towns on a waiting list for the programme, mostly in the east of the country**. It is envisaged that a strand to service the East of the country will be created once additional resources are made available to the CTCHC Programme.

A map illustrating the two strands of the CTCHC Programme – Border Towns Network and the Atlantic Economic Corridor (AEC) Towns is provided overleaf.

---

<sup>10</sup>[https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/content/files/Future\\_Proof\\_Your\\_Historic\\_Border\\_Town-Feedback\\_Report.pdf](https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/content/files/Future_Proof_Your_Historic_Border_Town-Feedback_Report.pdf)

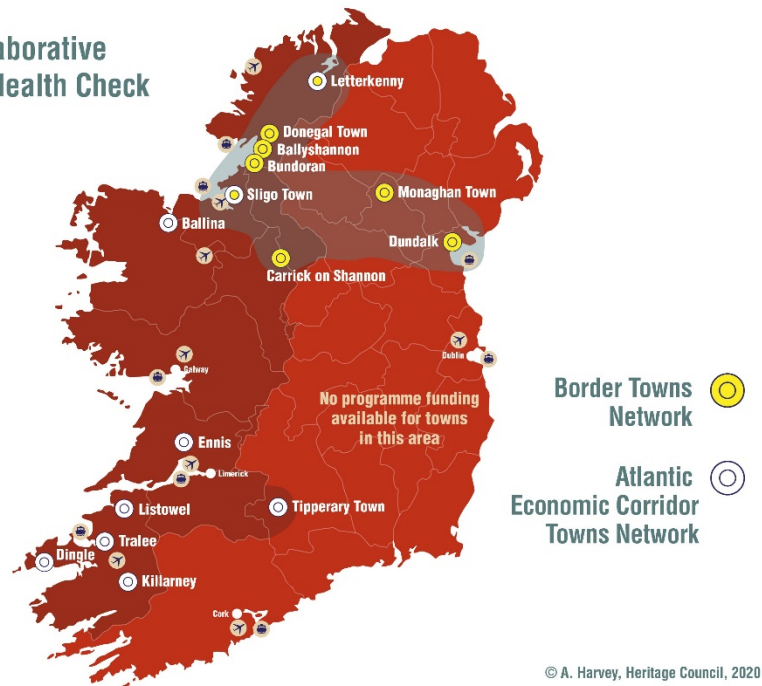
<sup>11</sup> <https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/content/files/Dundalk-Collaborative-Town-Centre-Health-Check-Report-2019.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/content/files/Dundalk-Town-Centre-Health-Check.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Tipperary Town joined in September 2019 at the request of the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. Drogheda BID has written to the minister to request that the town joins the CTCHC Programme asap.



## Ireland's Collaborative Town Centre Health Check Programme



### CTCHC Programme and National Awards

Historic Towns in the CTCHC Programme have been conferred with several prestigious national awards. For example, Tralee won the Bank of Ireland's Most Enterprising Town in Ireland Award in November 2017, three months after the first-ever Tralee CTCHC Summary Report was launched by Minister English TD at Kerry County Museum in the town centre. In 2018, Letterkenny won the same BOI National Award, two months after the launch of the first-ever CTCHC report was published. Towns in the CTCHC Programme have also won KPMG Property Excellence Awards and awards from the Irish Planning Institute (IPI).

### 3. CTCHC Programme - Key findings in relation to National Data Gaps and Systemic Problems

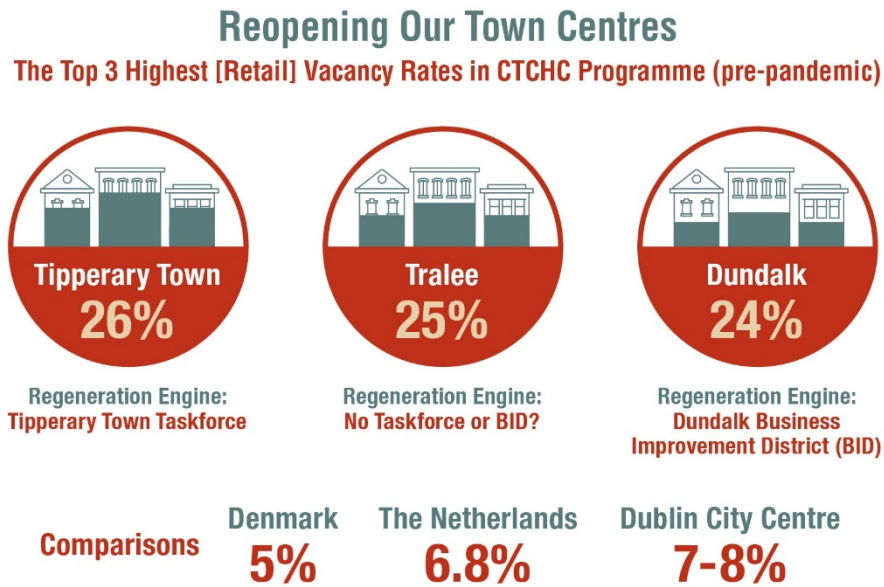
#### Historic Town Centres and the 'Triple Whammy' Data Gaps!

One key finding, which is of huge significance and concern, is that the CTCHC Programme has revealed that [pre-pandemic] vacancy levels in Irish town centres are very high – much higher than any of our European counterparts. For example, according to the programme's survey results, Tipperary Town Centre has a ground floor retail vacancy rate of 26% (2019), Dundalk Town Centre has a retail vacancy rate of 24% (2019), Sligo Town Centre has a ground floor vacancy rate of 18% (2020) and Tralee has a ground floor vacancy rate of 25% (2020). (The CTCHC Programme also estimates that vacancy levels on the upper floors are 80%+).

In comparison, ground floor [retail] vacancy levels in Denmark and the Netherlands, are at 5% and 6.8%, respectively (pre-pandemic). The accepted target ground floor retail vacancy rate for European countries is 5% (pre-pandemic).



Vacancy rates in the CTCHC Programme compared to other levels in Denmark and the Netherlands are illustrated in the visual below.

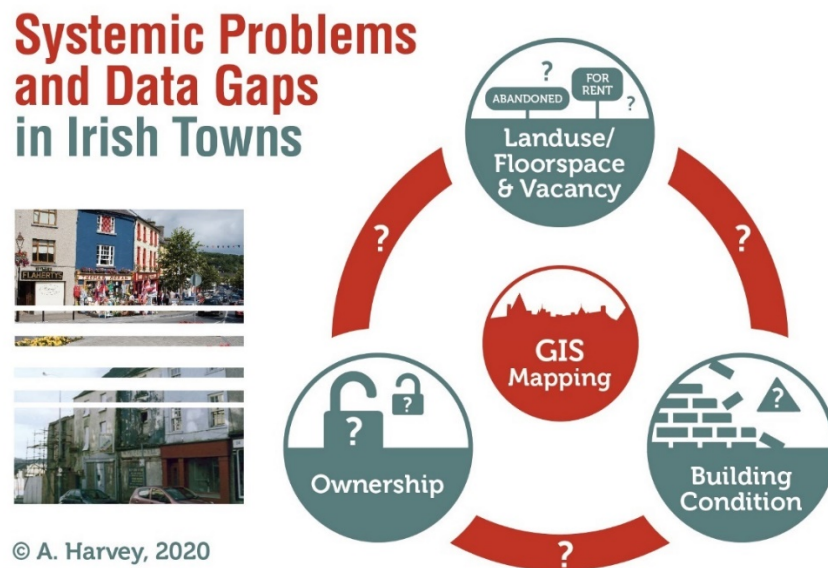


©CTCHC Programme, Heritage Council, June 2020

An analysis of the CTCHC Programme's survey findings has also revealed that there are three major data gaps at a national level in Ireland, which cumulatively have created a 'triple whammy' blocking the regeneration of historic town centres:

- i. Land/Building Use and Vacancy;
- ii. Building and land ownership; and
- iii. Building condition.

These systemic problems and data gaps are illustrated in the visual below.



In relation to national data gaps for historic town centres, it should be highlighted that there has not been a national building condition survey in Ireland since 2001. Consultation with the National Housing Agency (NHA), reveals that a national building condition survey was planned in 2007 but was cancelled due to the recession. The building condition survey was never rescheduled. Hence, unlike other EU Member States, Ireland's building condition data is almost 20 years old.

In addition, Ireland is currently without a national building stock management programme. It should be noted that the Heritage Council raised the need for a national building stock management programme in its submission to the emerging National Planning Framework in November 2017<sup>14</sup>. Nothing has happened in this regard.

### **Need for Conservation and Repurposing Expertise in Regional Assemblies and Local Authorities**

In relation to the conservation and reuse of traditional buildings in town centres in Ireland, it should also be highlighted that the three Regional Assemblies are without any in-house conservation and repurposing expertise. In addition, not all local authorities have Architectural Conservation Officers (ACOs) in place. An overview of the provision of LA ACOs and the CTCHC Programme is provided in **Table 1** below.

**Table 1: CTCHC Towns - Local Authorities and provision of Architectural Conservation Officers**

<b>CTCHC Town</b>	<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Architectural Conservation Officer in place?</b>
Dundalk (Drogheda*)	Louth County Council	<b>No Architectural Conservation Officer</b>
Monaghan Town	Monaghan County Council	<b>No Architectural Conservation Officer</b>
Carrick on Shannon	Leitrim County Council	Yes - Conservation Officer
Letterkenny	Donegal County Council	Yes - Conservation Officer
Donegal Town		
Ballyshannon		
Bundoran		
Sligo Town	Sligo County Council	<b>No Architectural Conservation Officer</b>
Ballina	Mayo County Council	Yes - Conservation Officer
Ennis	Clare County Council	Yes - Conservation Officer
Tipperary Town	Tipperary County Council	<b>No Architectural Conservation Officer</b>
Listowel	Kerry County Council	Yes - Conservation Officer/ Heritage Officer
Tralee		
Dingle		
Killarney		

\*Drogheda Business Improvement District (BID) has formally requested that it join the CTCHC Programme asap. However, due to a lack of resources, the programme currently does not have a strand to support towns in the east of the country. (Dundalk is in the Border Towns Network/BTN of the CTCHC Programme).

It should be highlighted that two of the largest towns in the State – Dundalk and Drogheda (north) – are without any LA conservation and/or repurposing expertise. The resourcing of building conservation and repurposing expertise at a regional and local level needs to be addressed as soon as possible if our historic town centres are to regenerate and transform.

A sample of building vacancy data from towns in the CTCHC Programme is provided in **Table 2** below.

**Table 2: CTCHC Towns – No. of Vacant Buildings in the Town Centre**

<i>Historic Town</i>	<i>No. of Vacant Buildings in the Town Centres (all Uses)</i>
Dundalk	93
Monaghan	86
Sligo	200

(Source: CTCHC Programme.)

Given the very high level of vacancy in our town centres, it is imperative that building conservation, condition and reuse expertise is made available at a regional and local level, to inform the undertaking of option appraisals and social cost benefit appraisals for the reuse and repurposing of vacant/underused traditional building stock [and attendant lands]. Indeed, it is worrying that LA development management and forward planning processes are continuing to operate with this ongoing deficit in relation to the effective management of heritage assets.

#### **Commercial/Retail SMEs in Town Centres Online Presence (Step 4 of the 15-Step CTCHC Process)**

CTCHC Programme surveys also reveal that a very low percentage of the commercial sectors (retail SMEs) in historic town centres had any online presence before going into the Covid-19 lockdown back in March 2020. For example, according to the results of CTCHC commercial surveys (as published in the CTCHC Summary Reports) Dundalk, Ennis and Tralee had an online presence of only 23%, 28% and 38%, respectively. This very low online presence, coupled with the provision of government grants for web design in April 2020, has resulted in a run on demand for web design services for retail SMEs during the lockdown and, hence, a substantial hike in the overall cost of web design services, which are being funded by the public purse. Clearly, historic town centres need a co-ordinated, strategic approach to support all their activities and operations. It should be noted that EC DG GROW recommends that the target rate for online presence and selling in town and city centres is 80%.

#### **4. Recommendations based on key findings of the CTCHC Programme 2016 to date**

The CTCHC Programme objectives, outputs, outcomes and impacts provide the imperative, as well as the basis, to create a more robust planning and landuse management system that will support the long-term viability of historic town centres. A new approach is vital as we emerge from Covid-19 lockdown with a unique opportunity to focus through a single lens and create integrated and interconnected government policies, and funding/investment opportunities, that ensure maximum benefits accrue for Irish society, now and in the future.

Key Recommendations for the Heritage Council are set out under the following headings:

- A. Review of Existing Structures and Potential EU Funding Opportunities,**
- B. Addressing Policy Gaps – National, Regional and Local; and**
- C. Need for New Programmes – National Building Condition Programme, etc.**

##### **A. Review of Existing Structures and Potential EU Funding Opportunities:**

1. Heritage Council should strongly support the upscaling of the CTCHC Programme (Phase 1: CTCHC Baselines and Phase 2: CTCHC Town Renewal Action Plans) based on costings already submitted to Minister of State for Housing and Urban Development in early 2019 – e.g. a CTCHC GIS Officer is needed to support the ongoing work of the Co-ordinator along with a Project Managers/Urban Planners for each programme strand and a Communications person to support the existing operations in the Border Towns and AEC Towns, i.e. the programme outgrew one person around a year and a half ago;
2. The CTCHC Programme should support the preparation of *CTCHC Town Renewal Action Plans* (Phase 2) for historic Town Centres that have already published an agreed CTCHC Summary Report – see Tralee, Ennis, Letterkenny, Dundalk, Ballyshannon, etc. Due to the very low starting point in the country re. verified data collection, the CTCHC Programme has had to focus on Phase 1 since its inception i.e. creation of CTCHC Baselines. More resources (i.e. funding and staff) are needed to implement Phase 2 of the CTCHC Programme, as envisaged;
3. Create an EU-focused funding plan for the CTCHC Programme with other member states with low vacancy rates – e.g. Dutch and Danish. A new post of Heritage Council EU Officer should be created to support this funding opportunity along with other EU funding opportunities for heritage-led regeneration programmes and projects, e.g. European Green Deal, EU INSPIRE Directive, etc. – link CTCHC Programme to other national funds such as URDF, etc;
4. A *National Taskforce for Historic Town Centres* should be set up by the next government and supported by the Heritage Council – the CTCHC Programme has highlighted that historic town centres were struggling before the lockdown – the CTCHC Programme should support the work of the National Taskforce. Ireland Inc. must have a data-driven response to public policy in the interests of the public purse and its citizens;
5. Heritage Council should support the provision of Building Conservation and Repurposing expertise in the three regional assemblies to assist town centres, i.e. there is no in-house conservation and repurposing expertise at present;
6. Heritage Council to undertake a full review of Building Conservation expertise in local authorities, e.g. the two largest towns in the State – Dundalk and Drogheda (north) are without a LA Architectural Conservation Officer. County Tipperary is also without an Architectural Conservation Officer, as is County Sligo;

**B. Addressing Policy Gaps – National, Regional and Local:**

7. Heritage Council to formulate Enabling Development Policy asap for backlands and infill development in Historic Town Centres, in order to finance the conservation and reuse of traditional buildings on the street – see Historic England’s Enabling policy<sup>15</sup>, which was prepared in 1995. It is recommended that this policy is formulated in partnership with the Department of Culture, EIB and the Irish League of Credit Unions;
8. There are no Heritage Plans at a regional level in Ireland, i.e. there is a missing layer in the heritage policy hierarchy. The Heritage Council should undertake a gap analysis in parallel with the EU-focused funding plan, i.e. EU funding comes through the Regional Assemblies in Ireland;
9. Heritage Council to introduce the formulation/delivery of Heritage Action Plans (HAP) for Historic Town Centres in Ireland in collaboration with Local Authorities – see recently published Tipperary Town Heritage Action Plan<sup>16</sup> as part of the Tipp Town Taskforce, which was set up by Minister English TD;
10. The Heritage Council should lobby for the formulation and implementation of Section 28 Guidelines for Town Centres asap from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government – this is a statutory instrument of the Irish Planning System<sup>17</sup>;
11. A National Project Support Office (PSO) and a National Investment Strategy are needed in relation to Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) in Ireland – primary legislation was introduced in 2006 and there is no strategy in place since enactment of the 2006 Act – this legislation belongs within the Dept of Housing;
12. A *National Land Management Strategy* is needed to support the transformation of Town Centres and to reduce vacancy levels to a sustainable level – work with partners on this – link to EC SEA, EIA and AA – e.g. Dept of Housing, Land Development Agency, etc;
13. A review of the role of ACAs in historic town centre regeneration should be undertaken as soon as possible – public participation and engagement must be a key element in the overall ACA designation process, as per the key tenets of the UNECE Aarhus Convention;
14. An up-to-date methodology of how to undertake ACA assessments needs to be prepared in partnership with local communities and owners;

**C. Need for New Programmes, e.g. National Building Condition Programme, etc:**

15. Heritage Council to set up a *National Building Condition Survey Programme* for historic buildings in town centres in partnership with the Department of Culture and the National Housing Agency – this should be updated every two years initially for the first six years and then every three years – the survey programme should link to the cycle of statutory county/city development plans and the EU Green Deal<sup>18</sup>;
16. An Irish Building Health Check Methodology is required for traditional buildings in town centres as soon as possible – link to above. Initial work is currently underway in partnership with the SCSi, RIAI, etc., and it is planned that any output will be internationally ‘peer reviewed’ by the Dutch and/or Danish;

---

<sup>15</sup> <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/enabling-development-and-the-conservation-of-significant-places/enablingwebv220080915124334/>

<sup>16</sup> Tipp Town HAP by A. Harvey for Tipperary Town Taskforce – the plan will be formally launched in August 2020.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/30/section/28/enacted/en/html> - as amended by the P&D Act 2010

<sup>18</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en)

17. Heritage Council should establish a town centre and 3D building modelling programme to support the ongoing operations of the CTCHC Programme. It is important that the data is presented in 3D to ensure that new technologies are embraced and utilised – the Heritage Council should also support a Building Information Modelling (BIM) programme and projects for historic town centres;
18. Heritage Council to design PR campaign and programme around the above recommendations and the role of the CTCHC Programme in the transformation of town centres – link to other HC initiatives. The Heritage Council is still without a Communications Officer; and
19. Heritage Council should expand networking and partnership opportunities with Scotland – Scotland's Towns Partnership and Historic Scotland, etc. through the bi-lateral review of collaboration between Ireland and Scotland – Establish an Ireland-Scotland Historic Town Centres Collaboration Programme.

**Alison Harvey MIPI**

**25<sup>th</sup> June 2020**

**[aharvey@heritagecouncil.ie](mailto:aharvey@heritagecouncil.ie)**



## Appendix A: Overview of the CTCHC Programme

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta  
The Heritage Council

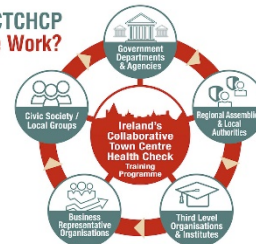


# Ireland's Collaborative Town Centre Health Check Programme

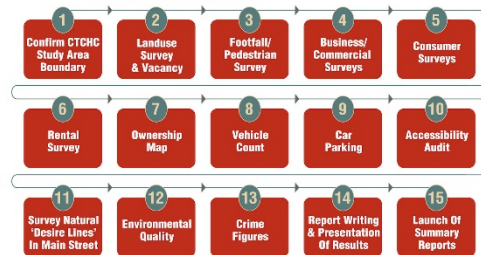


The Collaborative Town Centre Health Check (CTCHC) Programme engages and facilitates the private, public and civic sectors in Irish Towns in order to create 'data-driven baselines' and innovative 'Town Renewal Action Plans' that support our unique, historic town centres.

### CTCHCP How We Work?



### CTCHCP 15-Step Process



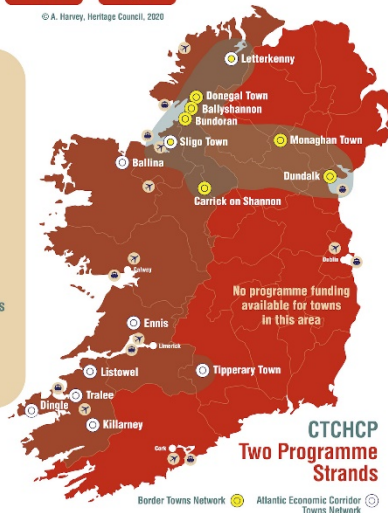
CTCHC Programme  
Phase 1: Establish the CTCHC Baseline  
Phase 2: Formulate a CTCHC Action Plan e.g. Town Renewal Action Plan

© A. Harvey, Heritage Council, 2020

Town Centres are extremely important in terms of national, regional and local growth and development, economic activity and cultural heritage.

- Create local distinctiveness, identity, and a unique sense of place
- Are traditionally where major social and economic activity takes place
- Are a shared historic space – a place for people to live, meet, exchange good/trade, engage with their fellow citizens
- A base for local government and a focus for entertainment and cultural activity

Overall, Town Centres contribute to the flourishing of civic pride and overall quality of life.



### CTCHCP Government Departments and Agencies














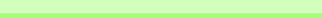






The Key Aims of the CTCHC Programme are to raise awareness, understanding and appreciation of the critical role that historic town centres play and the wide-ranging impacts that their vitality and viability have on overall socio-economic, environmental and cultural growth and development, and on quality of life for citizens and visitors alike.

For more information contact:  
Ali Harvey, Co-ordinator, CTCHC Programme E. [aharvey@heritagecouncil.ie](mailto:aharvey@heritagecouncil.ie) T. 087 419 3458  
[www.heritagecouncil.ie/projects/town-centre-health-check-training-programme](http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/projects/town-centre-health-check-training-programme)



## Appendix B: CTCHC Programme GIS Colour Coding for Step 2 Land Use Surveys

	A	B	C	D	E
1	<b>CTCHC Training Programme 2020 - Agreed Town Centre Health Check Land/Building use Classification</b>				
2					
3	<b>Town Centre Boundary - TCHC Study Area</b>	3 pts	Solid black line		Preferably from the Local Area Plan (LAP)/County Development Plan (CDP), as per CTCHC methodology
4	<b>Primary Retail Area (PRA) - optional</b>	3 pts	Solid Red line		Sourced from LA Retail Strategy or other adopted documents and strategies - optional - please state
5					
6					
7	<b><u>GOAD Classification:</u></b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Fill RGB</b>	<b>Fill (on GIS land use map)</b>	<b>Description of use</b>
8					
9	<b>Comparison</b>	COM 1 - COM36	255-0-0		Non-food/non-perishable items e.g. Clothes, jewellery, footwear, furniture, etc.
10	<b>Convenience</b>	CNV 1 - CNV 11	255-127-127		Food items (perishable) e.g. Convenience stores, deli, bakers.
11	<b>Retail Service</b>	RS1 - RS13	168-0-0		Services' including hairdressers, post offices, dry cleaner, beauty salon, etc.
12	<b>Other Retail</b>	OR1	255-211-127		None of the above or listed - uses not listed in COM1-COM36, CNV 1- CNV11, RS1-RS13
13	<b>Leisure Services</b>	LS1-LS11	215-176-158		Bars, restaurants, cinemas, fast food takeaways, cafes, hotels/guest houses, theatres, etc.
14	<b>Financial and Business Services</b>	FBS1-FBS10	215-215-158		Building society, banks, legal services, legal services, financial services, etc.
15	<b>Health and Medical Services</b>	HMS1-HMS9	197-0-255		Dental surgery, health centre, nursing home, doctors surgery, veterinary surgery, etc.
16	<b>Public Service</b>	PS1-PS11	135-68-137		Council offices, library, tourist information, community centre, emergency services, etc.
17	<b>Religious Service</b>	REL1	230-152-0		Place of worship, churches, church halls, religious meeting rooms, etc.
18					
19	<b>Vacant Unit</b>	VAC1	255-0-0 GRID	Select Black Cross Hatch	Vacant premises - black hatch with previous or preceived use as an underlay, wherever possible
20					
21	<b>Storage and Warehousing</b>	STW1	207-207-128		Storage / Warehouse (excluding retail warehouse - see COM 4, 11, 12, etc.)
22					
23	<b>Residential</b>	RES1	255-255-0		<b>Residential - for vacant residential please use black hatch as overlay</b>
24					
25					
26	<b>Open Space</b>	OS1	211-255-190		Open space, park
27	<b>Walkways/cycleways/bridle paths</b>		163-255-155		Walkway, cycleway, bridle path
28					
29	<b>Other Buildings</b>		152-152-152		For buildings generally outside the study area.
30					
31					
32	<b>Car Park - Surface</b>		0-0-255	 Parking Symbol	Surface car park
33	<b>Car Park - Multi-Storey</b>		0-0-0	 Parking Symbol	Multi-Storey car park
34					
35					
36	Prepared by Heritage Council, UCD, Kerry County Council, Tipperary County Council, Louth County Council and DoHPCLG, December 2016 -January 2020				
37					