Valuing People and Place
The Heritage Council 2018-2022
Consultation Document
Message from the Heritage Council

This consultation document provides an indication of where the Heritage Council believes its resources should be dedicated during the period 2018-2022. We are seeking feedback and advice from stakeholders, local and national government and all interested parties. We will welcome responses to the specific questions which are included or on other issues that we may not have identified.

Michael Parsons
CHAIRMAN
What is heritage?

Heritage is the foundation of culture. In contemporary Ireland, the heritage we have inherited from the past is experienced in the present and interpreted in many creative ways for the future. Heritage comes to us in many forms, some communal and official, but it is also something very personal. It includes the natural environment and our built and cultural inheritance, both tangible and intangible. We share a common heritage based on what we see and who we are. Sharing our heritage and celebrating cultural difference contributes to a sense of belonging and wellbeing at local, national and European level.

Mission of the Heritage Council

The Heritage Council aims to ensure that our heritage is nurtured, managed and conserved to enrich the lives of people for now and the future.

Vision 2017-2022

Our vision is for an enhanced identification of individuals and communities with their locality. To achieve this vision the Heritage Council will:

- Insist upon the highest standards of heritage care
- Remain committed to values of collaboration, accessibility and honesty
- Deliver quality programmes that are cost effective, positive in their social and economic impact, and regularly reviewed to ensure they remain relevant to changing national circumstances
- Commit to collaborative ventures with national and local government, voluntary, educational and other organisations
- Support heritage initiatives that ensure a lasting legacy
- Encourage heritage ventures that celebrate the diaspora and those new to the local area.

Have your say... what do you think?

1. What does heritage mean to you?
2. What do you think of the Mission and Vision set out above?

We value your feedback

Please email all responses to mail@heritagecouncil.ie by the closing date of 20th November 2017
Contributing to society

Heritage has built-in value of its own. It also has other values including an economic one, for example in relation to tourism and rural and urban development. In recognition of this fact, heritage issues have been given prominence in government initiatives such as Creative Ireland, Culture 2025, the National Landscape Strategy, Growing Tourism to 2025 and the Action Plan for Rural Development.

For this practical value to be sustained and to allow this important national asset to be maintained and cultivated, heritage management and development require a robust programme of investment.

The heritage sector is vibrant and has potential for further development. Through its networks and partnerships, and drawing on the energy of the voluntary community sector, the Heritage Council can contribute to solutions to complex social issues such as the current housing crisis, Brexit and climate change.

Ireland is currently experiencing a housing crisis and the Heritage Council notes that solutions to this may involve the rejuvenation of some of our city, town and village centres, which for the most part are historic places. The possible regeneration of these areas will be complex and will likely involve the conservation and refurbishment of existing buildings to create sustainable dwellings. The Heritage Council has a contribution to make in addressing the heritage issues involved and will endeavour to work with others to facilitate their expeditious development.

The Heritage Council will explore with others the cultural and identity issues that could arise as a result of Brexit. It is generally recognised that relationships and national commitments will change within Europe because of the UK’s departure from the European Union, and nowhere more so than within this Island, North and South. There could also be an international dimension to a changing identity, which will have heritage and cultural links.
Strategic objectives 2018-2022

To achieve the vision for the Heritage Council outlined in this document, our focus will be principally on three key areas of activity. These are: (1) to advance national heritage priorities; (2) to nurture belonging through a sense of identity and place; (3) to ensure a vibrant heritage sector.

1. Advance national heritage priorities

Heritage, natural and cultural, enriches the lives of citizens and is a driving economic and creative force. The quality and beauty of our natural heritage contributes to a sense of national pride and well-being. Irish heritage is also an important component of European heritage and forms a link with Irish communities world-wide. During the life of this plan the Heritage Council will:

- fulfil the statutory responsibilities set out in the 1995 Heritage Act and, where necessary, seek improvements in the legislative framework to advance national heritage priorities
- commit to providing leadership in delivering policy advice
- support the development of programmes that care for natural, built and cultural heritage in Ireland
- develop and implement a National Heritage Plan with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, as a contribution to Realising Our Rural Potential: Action Plan for Rural Ireland
- support the aims and objectives of Creative Ireland
- ensure that the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 (EYCH), in recognising the significance of Ireland’s place in European heritage, will generate a heritage legacy
- engage with local and European heritage networks to identify their benefits for Ireland.

Have your say... what do you think?

3. Are there other relevant policy areas that need to be addressed?

4. Are there aspects of heritage to which you feel the Heritage Council should be devoting more attention?
2. Nurture belonging: a sense of identity and place

In a world of increasing complexity, heritage enables people to feel that they belong. It is at the heart of a changing understanding about Ireland as new identities emerge in local communities. The Heritage Council understands the importance of social strategies to support minority and marginalised communities and ethnic groups, distinct urban and rural ways of life and the growth of a more multicultural society. In response to these circumstances the Heritage Council will:

- contribute to the re-invigoration of urban centres by addressing associated heritage issues
- assist in improving the housing situation by developing strategies with local authorities that deal with unused historic buildings
- contribute to the National Planning Framework
- respond to the challenges of Brexit by addressing any resulting identity issues and by focusing on areas where heritage has a relevance so as to minimise any potentially negative impacts
- implement programmes and initiatives, such as grants supports and Heritage Week, that reward creative ways of promoting a sense of belonging and a celebration of difference within local communities
- contribute to the National Landscape Strategy by maintaining investment in existing landscape partnerships and by encouraging new collaborations
- work with central and local government and local communities to examine the access and indemnity issues associated with places of special cultural or natural interest
- develop proposals to improve the quality of heritage management including, for example, in areas such as conservation and invasive species
- endeavour to create more opportunities for young people to participate in and to lead heritage projects.

Have your say... what do you think?

5. What has been your best experience of a heritage project? Explain why.

6. What supports do you think are necessary to help communities develop a sense of place and identity?
3. Ensure a vibrant heritage sector

The Heritage Council’s initiatives generate benefits for local communities, augmenting the work of Government and other agencies in making heritage a matter of pride and a catalyst for cultural and economic creativity. To strengthen the foundations of research and communication from which economic and social value flows, the Heritage Council will:

- support the Heritage Officer Network and review how the range of local heritage services can be expanded to maximise the involvement of local communities in caring for heritage
- develop the digital platform for Irish heritage by building on the Heritage Council’s Heritage Maps initiative [www.heritagemaps.ie] while being alert to the vulnerability of digital heritage assets
- support the generation and communication of information on natural and cultural heritage
- increase the quality of online information to advocate for heritage, to provide a comprehensive national resource and to connect heritage groups and interests
- support and review a range of heritage organisations such as the National Biodiversity Data Centre, the Discovery Programme, the Irish Landmark Trust, and the Wicklow Upland Council
- promote the educational and leisure benefits of community heritage projects
- encourage the involvement of culturally diverse groups in heritage-related activities
- provide support for future generations in their appreciation of the value of heritage through schools programmes at first and second-level
- examine the integration of heritage in the formal education system with a view to using new and emerging curricula to showcase the value of heritage research
- develop heritage research programmes that nurture innovation and foster communication among stakeholders, building on the success of the respected Irish National Strategic Archaeological Research (INSTAR) Programme.

Have your say... what do you think?

7. How might heritage education be developed more effectively?
8. Are we supporting the right organisations to do the right things?
9. What are we missing?
Evaluation process

The Heritage Council’s priorities will be translated into a work programme for 2018-2022 and an annual operational plan to ensure the delivery of key targets and objectives. The work programme will be reviewed regularly against agreed key performance indicators; there will also be a special review of progress early in 2019.

Next steps

This consultative document is being circulated widely. Responses to its contents, and specifically, to the questions identified, are invited from as many stakeholders as possible. The feedback will be used to shape the next draft of the Heritage Council’s strategic plan. It is proposed to finalise a new Strategic Plan in early 2018.

We value your feedback

Please email all responses to mail@heritagecouncil.ie by the closing date of 20th November 2017
The Heritage Council operates under the aegis of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The priorities and work of the Heritage Council are primarily established by the Heritage Act, 1995. The functions of the Heritage Council are laid out in Sections 6-11 and include the proposing of policies and priorities for the identification, protection, preservation and enhancement of the national heritage, including monuments, archaeological objects, heritage objects, architectural heritage, flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, seascapes, wrecks, geology, heritage gardens and parks and inland waterways.

**The Heritage Council shall in particular:**

- promote interest, education, knowledge and pride in, and facilitate the appreciation and enjoyment of the national heritage
- co-operate with public authorities, educational bodies and other organisations and persons in the promotion of the functions of the Council
- promote the co-ordination of all activities relating to the functions of the Heritage Council.

- Council may make recommendations to the Minister on any matter relating to the Council’s functions and may make such recommendations public.
- Council may consult with or advise a public authority in relation to the maintenance, preservation, restoration, upkeep and improvement of any heritage building owned by the authority.
- Council may co-operate with and provide assistance and advice to any person or body, including a public authority, in respect of any matter which is related to the performance of its functions as it considers desirable.

The Heritage Council is also a prescribed body under the Planning and Development Regulations 2001.