

# Sustainability Strategy

2026–2030

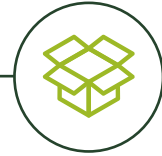


An Chomhairle Oidhreachta  
The Heritage Council





# Contents



|                                                                    | page      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>1 Introduction</b>                                              | <b>1</b>  |
| 1.1 Purpose of the Strategy                                        | 1         |
| 1.2 Context                                                        | 1         |
| 1.3 Understanding Impact                                           | 2         |
| <b>2 Legislative and Policy Framework</b>                          | <b>4</b>  |
| 2.1 European Framework                                             | 4         |
| 2.2 National Climate Legislation                                   | 4         |
| 2.3 Public Sector Mandates                                         | 5         |
| 2.4 Biodiversity and Adaptation Policy                             | 5         |
| 2.5 Heritage Policy                                                | 5         |
| <b>3 Data Analysis</b>                                             | <b>7</b>  |
| 3.1 Data Sources and Methods                                       | 7         |
| 3.2 Material Impacts                                               | 7         |
| 3.3 Non-Material but Relevant Areas                                | 7         |
| 3.4 Stakeholder Engagement                                         | 8         |
| <b>4 Current Status</b>                                            | <b>10</b> |
| <b>5 Capital Works to Áras na hOidhreachta</b>                     | <b>12</b> |
| 5.1 Ongoing Programme of Works (2024–2025)                         | 12        |
| 5.2 Appoint a conservation-led design team (2026)                  | 12        |
| 5.3 Develop a phased programme of works (2026–2027)                | 12        |
| 5.4 Consents and standards                                         | 13        |
| 5.5 Funding and phasing                                            | 13        |
| 5.6 Evidence and learning                                          | 13        |
| <b>6 Strategic Goals and Targets</b>                               | <b>15</b> |
| <b>7 Governance and Accountability</b>                             | <b>21</b> |
| <b>8 Monitoring, Evaluation, and Review</b>                        | <b>22</b> |
| <b>9 Engagement and Awareness</b>                                  | <b>24</b> |
| <b>10 Bibliography</b>                                             | <b>26</b> |
| <b>11 Appendices</b>                                               | <b>28</b> |
| Appendix 1. Baseline Data                                          | 28        |
| Appendix 2. Detailed Actions with responsible sections and targets | 31        |
| Appendix 3. Material Environmental Impacts                         | 35        |
| Appendix 4. Risk Summary                                           | 35        |



# 1 Introduction



The Heritage Council has a statutory remit through the Heritage Act 1995 to guide national policy and action for the conservation, understanding, and enjoyment of Ireland's natural, built, and cultural heritage. In recent years the Council has also taken on a leadership role in advancing climate action within the heritage sector, recognising that climate change is both one of the greatest threats to heritage and an area where heritage can make a positive contribution to adaptation and resilience.

This Strategy outlines how the Heritage Council will improve its environmental performance and lead climate action across the heritage sector for 2026–2030.

The Strategy is informed by evidence gathered through recent analysis and engagement. The Energy Audit of Áras na hOidhreacht (Antaris, 2023) established a clear baseline for energy use within the organisation, while the Sustainability Impact Assessment (Fehily Timoney and Co, 2024) extended the focus to staff travel, procurement, waste, water, and programme delivery, identifying where the Heritage Council can reduce negative environmental impacts and strengthen positives. Insights from staff, local authorities, national partners, and community groups further shaped priorities. Annual SEAI Monitoring and Reporting data, compiled under the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate, anchors the Strategy's targets and provides the reference point for ongoing progress.

This evidence base has informed the strategic priorities set out in the following sections, ensuring that action is targeted where the Heritage Council can make the greatest difference.

## 1.1 Purpose of the Strategy

The Strategy sets out how the Heritage Council will meet its statutory obligations under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 and the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate 2025, including annual SEAI monitoring and reporting, and the 2030 targets for emissions reduction and energy efficiency. It embeds sustainability within the Council's operations in ways that safeguard built, cultural, and natural heritage, while enhancing the positive impact of its programmes. It also aims to provide leadership and a credible model of measurable action for staff, partners, and grantees.

## 1.2 Context

Climate change is already affecting Ireland's heritage. Rising seas, heavier rainfall, shifting temperatures, and biodiversity loss are putting pressure on historic environments, cultural traditions, and natural ecosystems. The Heritage Council must reduce its own emissions and resource use while responding to these wider challenges as the climate continues to change.

Ireland's national and European climate and biodiversity commitments frame this Strategy. The Climate Act 2021 and the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate 2025 set legally binding targets for emissions reduction and energy efficiency, supported by the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023–2030 and the EU Nature Restoration Law. The full legislative framework for this strategy is outlined in Section 2.

### **1.3 Understanding Impact**

Analysis of recent data and assessments shows that the Heritage Council's main internal impacts arise from energy use and travel, with procurement, waste, and water playing smaller but still relevant roles in day-to-day practice. While the organisation's direct emissions are limited in the context of the overall public sector impact, its wider influence through programmes, grant schemes, and partnerships is far greater. Balancing these two spheres of impact—operational and strategic—is central to the Strategy.

The Climate Impact Assessment also identified key risks, including potential damage to historic fabric from poorly designed retrofit, tensions between conservation and decarbonisation, and challenges in applying sustainability standards to projects and funded partners. These findings have informed the Strategy's actions and governance approach.



## 2 Legislative and Policy Framework



The Strategy is based on International and national statutory obligations and policies.

### 2.1 European Framework

The European Green Deal (2019) is the overarching policy framework guiding the EU's transition to a sustainable, climate-neutral economy. It encompasses climate, biodiversity, circular economy, energy, and cultural initiatives, including measures to safeguard and adapt Europe's cultural and natural heritage. For the Heritage Council, its relevance lies in how it connects climate action with environmental protection, social inclusion, and cultural value. The Green Deal provides the strategic backdrop to the European Climate Law and the EU Nature Restoration Law, both of which shape Ireland's specific obligations. It also reinforces themes central to the Council's work, such as sustainable land use, energy efficiency in traditional skills and buildings, and the role of heritage in community resilience and just transition.

The European Climate Law (Regulation (EU) 2021/1119) gives legal effect to the Green Deal's ambitions, setting a binding target of climate neutrality by 2050 and at least a 55% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. It defines the framework within which all member states, including Ireland, must plan and report climate action. For the Heritage Council, it establishes the high-level direction that informs national legislation such as the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 and underpins the targets reflected in this Strategy.

The EU Nature Restoration Law (2024) introduces binding targets for restoring ecosystems, including wetlands, peatlands, and grasslands. This is directly relevant to the Council's biodiversity and landscape work and requires that restoration objectives be integrated into planning, funding, and advisory functions.

### 2.2 National Climate Legislation

At national level, Ireland gives effect to these European commitments through the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021. The Act establishes legally binding targets of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and a 51% reduction by 2030. It requires the preparation of carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings and places a duty on every public body to carry out its functions in line with these objectives. Section 15 (1) of the Act mandates that public bodies must perform their functions in a manner consistent with approved climate action plans, long-term strategies, adaptation frameworks, and the national climate objective. For the Heritage Council, this means that both operational activity and programme delivery must be demonstrably aligned with the Act, with climate considerations integrated into governance and decision-making.

The Climate Action Plans, including CAP 2025 and its successors, translate these obligations into specific measurable targets across all sectors. They provide the framework for the Heritage Council's internal actions and for its wider contribution in areas such as the built environment, public sector leadership, transport, and biodiversity.

### **2.3 Public Sector Mandates**

The Public Sector Climate Action Mandate 2025 sets direct obligations for all public bodies. These include cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 51% and improving energy efficiency by 50% by 2030, phasing out fossil fuel heating systems where feasible, and moving to low-emission vehicles for public fleets. Compliance is demonstrated through annual reporting to SEAI's Monitoring and Reporting system. This defines the Heritage Council's operational targets for energy use, travel, and procurement. The Council's annual SEAI reports form both the legal record and the performance baseline for this Strategy.

### **2.4 Biodiversity and Adaptation Policy**

The National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023–2030 (NBAP) sets national targets for the conservation and restoration of biodiversity. The Heritage Council's biodiversity programmes must therefore ensure that climate actions also support biodiversity, avoiding harm and creating opportunities for shared benefit.

The National Adaptation Framework (2024) outlines Ireland's approach to building climate resilience. It recognises heritage as a vulnerable sector requiring specific adaptation planning. Under this framework, the Heritage Council has two main roles: protecting heritage assets from climate impacts and helping communities adapt through heritage-based approaches.

### **2.5 Heritage Policy**

The Heritage Act 1995 established the Heritage Council and defines its remit across built, cultural, and natural heritage. All climate-related work must align with this statutory purpose to promote interest, education, knowledge, and pride in heritage.

The national policy statement Heritage Ireland 2030 provides the wider direction for heritage policy. It sets the context for the Heritage Council's leadership on climate and sustainability within the heritage sector.

Together, these frameworks require the Heritage Council to reduce emissions and energy use, integrate climate and biodiversity objectives across its work, and ensure that all actions align with its statutory remit under the Heritage Act 1995. Annual reporting through SEAI provides the mechanism for accountability and transparency within the national and European climate framework.



## 3 Data Analysis



Since 2016, the Heritage Council's energy use has been recorded annually through SEAI's Monitoring and Reporting (M&R) system, which provides the official baseline for the 2016–2018 period and tracks progress towards the 2030 Public Sector Mandate targets. The Energy Audit of Áras na hOidhreachta (2023) and the Sustainability Impact Assessment (2024) added detailed operational data on energy, travel, procurement, and waste, creating a clear picture of where impacts arise and where action is most effective.

The Audit found that heating, hot water, and HVAC account for over 80% of energy use and more than 70% of associated emissions at headquarters. It also identified opportunities for improvement through better monitoring, fabric upgrades, lighting, behavioural change, and renewable energy options.

The Impact Assessment confirmed that energy and travel are the largest internal emission sources. Commuting and business mileage represent significant shares, while procurement, waste, and catering contribute less but remain important for daily practice and engagement. It also highlighted the need to balance climate action with conservation requirements, particularly in retrofitting historic structures.

### 3.1 Data Sources and Methods

- ▶ Initial Energy and Carbon Emissions Reduction Strategy (Bluett and O'Donoghue, 2022)
- ▶ Energy Audit (Antaris, 2023)
- ▶ SEAI M&R dataset (2016–present)
- ▶ Stakeholder engagement (2024)
- ▶ Sustainability Impact Assessment (Fehily Timoney, 2024)

### 3.2 Material Impacts

The evidence shows that energy use and travel are the most material internal impacts. Procurement and waste have smaller carbon significance but are essential for embedding sustainable practice. Beyond operations, the Heritage Council's wider influence through programmes, grants, and partnerships offers far greater potential for sectoral impact.

### 3.3 Non-Material but Relevant Areas

Water, waste, and other routine resource use contribute little to emissions but remain in scope because they are visible to staff and visitors, align with national circular economy policy, and support low-cost improvements that reinforce core goals.

### 3.4 Stakeholder Engagement

Engagement undertaken with the Impact Assessment combined internal consultation, targeted discussions with partners, and a sector-wide online survey. Staff identified progress in reducing travel and embedding sustainability in grants, but also the need for clearer guidance and stronger energy management. External partners, including government departments, national institutions, and local authorities, highlighted climate risks to heritage and the need for practical adaptation support.

The online survey, with 44 responses, showed strong concern about flooding, erosion, extreme weather, biodiversity loss, and building adaptation. Respondents called for sustainability criteria in grants and more practical examples of good practice.

Across all engagement, there was consistent recognition that while the Council's direct emissions are modest, its leadership role and funding reach position it to influence national outcomes. Stakeholders expect it to provide credible evidence, guidance, and coordination across the heritage sector.

These findings highlight both the challenges and the opportunities for the Heritage Council to demonstrate leadership and shape sustainable practice across the heritage sector.

ay vs 2070  
rent trajectory)

sequences:  
change of way of life  
or many  
mobility may be  
necessary  
need for global  
solidarity

# Heritage Horizons

## *Pathways to the Future*

A National Conference by the Heritage Council

Heritage  
Horizons  
*Pathways to the Future*  
A National Conference  
by the Heritage Council



## 4 Current Status



The Heritage Council reports annually to the SEAI Public Sector Monitoring and Reporting (M&R) system, the official mechanism for tracking progress against the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate. The M&R dataset provides the 2016–2018 baseline and the benchmark for 2030 targets.

In 2024, total energy consumption at Áras na hOidhreachta was 200,754 kWh, generating 33.7 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> (Table 4.1). Compared with the baseline, this represents a 17% reduction in emissions and a 45% improvement in energy efficiency. A further 10 - 12 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> must be cut to meet the 2030 target.

While total emissions have fallen, this is largely due to national electricity grid decarbonisation. The Heritage Council's fossil CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, primarily from gas heating, have in fact risen since the baseline period. This reflects greater use of the building following a period of growth and a near doubling of staff numbers. The increase is understandable but remains a concern, highlighting the need to prioritise heating efficiency and the eventual move away from fossil fuel systems.

**Table 4.1 Heritage Council Energy Use and Emissions, 2016–2024 Baseline and 2030 Targets**

| Indicator                   | Baseline<br>(2016–2018 avg.) | 2024<br>(provisional) | 2030 target | Change<br>required |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| Total CO <sub>2</sub> (kg)  | 40,680                       | 33,705                | 14,685      | –56%               |
| Fossil CO <sub>2</sub> (kg) | 21,649                       | 24,488                | 10,608      | –57%               |
| Energy Efficiency<br>Index  | 100                          | 54.5                  | 50.0        | 4.5 points         |

The Energy Audit (2023) and Sustainability Impact Assessment (2024) explain the operational drivers behind these figures, identifying heating and hot water as the main energy loads and travel as the next largest emissions source. Minor differences between the Audit and SEAI data reflect reporting scope; for statutory purposes, SEAI data take precedence.

The Council's energy use accounts for only a tiny fraction of the public-sector total—about 0.003% of all energy consumed and 0.002% of emissions (SEAI 2024). Operational savings remain essential, but the organisation's wider climate influence lies in its funding programmes, partnerships, and policy leadership.

Further detail on energy performance, including breakdowns by fuel type, and data from the Energy Audit and Sustainability Impact Assessment, is provided in Section 11 Appendix 1.



## 5 Capital Works to Áras na hOidhreachta



The Heritage Council's headquarters building in Kilkenny is a Protected Structure and has been given a National rating in terms of its architectural significance. It is also protected under the National Monuments Act 1930-2014. As a national heritage organisation the Council has a duty to care for and protect the heritage significance of its building and to balance this with a need to show how buildings such as these can become exemplars of good practice in energy efficiency. Such an approach requires a measured and well thought out approach that achieves value for money and that also protects the significance of the complex. There is also a regulatory framework for such buildings that needs to be negotiated.

A summary statement of building retrofit works proposed is provided in this section. The scope and sequencing of works will be dependant on careful analysis of conservation implications, consents and funding.

### 5.1 Ongoing Programme of Works (2024–2025)

The Heritage Council has already begun improving the energy performance of Áras na hOidhreachta. Conservation-led window upgrades and lighting improvements are now at consent and tender stage, and heating controls are being reviewed to improve efficiency ahead of further retrofit. These actions form the first phase of a longer, structured programme that will continue over the next five years.

### 5.2 Appoint a conservation-led design team (2026).

A multidisciplinary team will build on the current works to prepare a detailed, costed programme of prioritised efficiency works and fabric improvements identified in the 2023 Energy Audit.

### 5.3 Develop a phased programme of works (2026–2027).

The design team will plan additional measures such as roof and ceiling insulation, draught-proofing, heating-system replacement, and possible integration of small-scale renewables, ensuring all interventions respect the building's protected status. The conservation status of the building will inform the development of retrofit projects at every stage.

Although the phases above are shown in order, in reality design development, funding applications, consent processes and construction of different elements will overlap. This approach reflects normal conservation practice and ensures that energy-efficiency improvements can move forward as soon as the necessary approvals and resources are in place.

To guide design and funding decisions, the following draft priority projects are set out for Áras na hOidhreachta. Detail and priority may change as more is learned about the needs of the building. Windows and lighting are not included here because those programmes are already underway and substantially progressed, with separate consent and procurement routes. The projects below focus on fabric, heating and renewables. The sequence reduces heat loss first, then plant demand, then decarbonises heat and adds renewables. All items are subject to conservation review and statutory consent.

#### **1. Reduce avoidable heat loss**

A fabric package will be planned and delivered in phases. Measures will include roof and wall insulation, and management of heat loss within the building.

#### **2. Research the heating and hot water approach**

An options study will be commissioned to determine the most sustainable solution that fits the building's conservation status and occupier comfort. The study will produce a concept design, phasing, capital and running costs, funding route, grid implications and an operations plan.

#### **3. Deliver plant changes**

The chosen heating and hot-water solution will be procured and installed with clear controls and user-friendly operation.

#### **4. Design and add renewables**

Following study of technical and conservation implications, suitable solar photovoltaic panels will be installed, starting with the Pavilion roof, with additional locations subject to conservation and planning.

Design development, statutory consent and funding preparation may proceed in parallel where this reduces programme time and disruption.

### **5.4 Consents and standards**

All works will be subject to conservation review and statutory consent. Procurement of equipment will require Triple-E listing for lighting, heating and mechanical systems, and EPA and OGP Green Public Procurement criteria will be applied where relevant.

### **5.5 Funding and phasing**

All proposed works are dependent on funding. A phased plan will be prepared in 2026–2027, consents and funding will be secured in 2027–2028, and installation works will be delivered from 2028–2030. Phasing will be arranged to minimise disruption to staff and public use of the building.

### **5.6 Evidence and learning**

Performance will be verified through SEAI Monitoring and Reporting and sub-metering. The aim will be that all projects will be written up as case material, including scope, decision rationale, consent conditions, costs, performance and post-occupancy findings. Áras na hOidhreachta will be published as a national case study once the first package of works is complete.



## 6 Strategic Goals and Targets



The Heritage Council's Sustainability Strategy focuses both on legally required actions and leadership measures that are achievable within existing resources. Delivery will depend on phased implementation and (as outlined in Section 5) where building works are involved, the engagement of a suitably qualified design team with conservation expertise.

**The five strategic goals** are designed to work in parallel rather than sequence. While the early focus is on meeting statutory obligations and advancing energy improvements at Áras na hOidhreachta, preparatory work, design, and funding applications will progress concurrently. This allows the Heritage Council to maintain momentum, make use of available opportunities, and adapt to new policy or funding developments over the five-year period.

**The goals are organised as follows:**

- ▶ **Compliance goals (1–3):** aim to meet statutory requirements under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2021 and the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate 2025.
- ▶ **Leadership goals (4–5):** aim to demonstrate credible national climate leadership.

The five goals have been selected to balance statutory compliance with achievable ambition. The Energy Audit indicates that significant improvements at Áras na hOidhreachta will require specialist design input rather than in-house delivery, and that deeper savings depend on integrated design, better monitoring, and systematic learning from completed works. It also identifies the building's potential to act as a pilot site for sustainable retrofit in protected structures. For this reason, Goal 5 has been framed not simply as an internal review process but as a commitment to innovation, demonstration, and shared learning—positioning the Heritage Council to use its own experience to inform wider practice across the heritage sector.

### Vision

The Heritage Council will meet its statutory climate obligations, manage its own impacts responsibly, and show how heritage conservation can contribute to climate and biodiversity outcomes.



## **Goal 1 Achieve measurable reductions in energy use and emissions at Áras na hOidhreachta**

Priority will be given to doing the right works in the right order, with a conservation ethos. SEAI Monitoring and Reporting will be maintained and the SEAI energy-management approach will be used as the core framework for delivery. A conservation-led design team will be appointed, a phased works programme prepared, and statutory consents and funding secured prior to tender. Works will be delivered on a rolling basis, focusing on fabric, services and controls appropriate to a protected structure. Progress will be communicated to build trust and share lessons across built, natural and cultural heritage.

### **Actions**

1. Continue annual SEAI Monitoring and Reporting and implement the SEAI energy-management programme as the core framework for delivery.
2. Appoint a conservation-led design team (2026).
3. Develop a phased programme of conservation and retrofit works (2026–2027).
4. Secure consents and funding (2027–2028).
5. Deliver planned retrofit works on a rolling basis (2028–2030).
6. Develop and deliver programme of communication and engagement throughout building retrofit works.



## **Goal 2 Embed sustainability in procurement and daily operations**

Procurement and daily decisions will align with practical guidance and will be checked for follow-through. Green public procurement will be applied across relevant categories using current EPA and OGP guidance. A proportionate approach will be used for grantees, with model documentation provided. ICT and plant purchases will meet public-sector standards, waste will be reduced and recycled appropriately, and the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate will be implemented.

### **Actions**

1. Update the procurement policy to ensure EPA/OGP Green Public Procurement (GPP) criteria are included in all relevant tenders.
2. Introduce a GPP compliance check in procurement audits.
3. Ensure ICT procurement meets required public sector standards for energy efficiency

4. Require all new lighting, heating, and mechanical systems to be on the Triple E register of products approved as being energy efficient.
5. Eliminate single-use plastics at meetings and expand recycling to include e-waste and batteries.
6. Implement resource-efficiency measures required under the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate including water, waste, food waste and paper.
7. Require all new food supply contracts to deliver a minimum of 10% of total annual spend as certified organic products, evidenced by valid certification and itemised invoices.
8. Reduce work travel and shift to lower-carbon modes, including introduction of travel options appraisal and recording of how decisions are made on the need for flights.



### **Goal 3 Strengthen skills and governance to support delivery**

This goal makes sustainability part of how the organisation is run, not an add-on. Staff, Senior Management Team and Board will build the skills needed to plan, procure and report credibly. Governance will tighten through annual reporting aligned with the Climate Action Roadmap reporting cycle, using SEAI M&R data and the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate. Expectations will be written into team plans, budgets and PMDS objectives. Short, practical guidance and online resources will help grantees and officer networks apply the same standards in their own work.

#### **Actions**

1. Deliver annual sustainability training for all staff and SMT. Council to complete additional climate-leadership training by 2028.
2. Publish an annual Progress Report aligned with SEAI M&R data and the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate.
3. Embed sustainability commitments in team plans, budgets, and PMDS objectives.
4. Develop short guidance sessions or online resources for grantees and staff on integrating sustainability into project planning and procurement.
5. Maintain an active internal Green Team to support staff-led initiatives, identify low-cost improvements, and promote practical day-to-day changes aligned with the Climate Action Roadmap.



## Goal 4 Demonstrate leadership and share learning across the heritage sector

The Heritage Council will show leadership by producing a small number of clear, useful outputs that others can use. Projects will be documented with guidance, including lessons when things do not work. Toolkits and events will focus on everyday decisions in built, natural and cultural heritage. Data will be open, methods will be repeatable, and the aim will be steady, proven improvements that local authorities, grantees and community groups can adopt.

### Actions

1. Publish the Áras na hOidhreachta retrofit as a national case study, including costs, performance data, lessons, and replicable guidance for other protected structures.
2. Produce one practical toolkit or policy paper every two years on sustainable retrofit, biodiversity, or low-carbon procurement.
3. Convene annual peer-learning events with local authority heritage professionals, linking local practice to national climate objectives.
4. Continue to embed climate-benefit criteria and objectives across all grant schemes. Enhance the priority of sustainability and climate-benefit within specific schemes by updating criteria and objectives. Provide simple guidance notes to help applicants respond effectively. Identify practical ways of measuring and reporting on the climate and sustainability impact of funded projects
5. Embed sustainability across national Research, Learning and Cultural Heritage programmes, including Heritage in Schools and the Museums Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI)
6. Embed sustainability across design and delivery of outreach programmes including National Heritage Week
7. Embed sustainability across design and delivery of built heritage programmes including Irish Walled Towns Network, Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme and Adopt a Monument
8. Develop a digital 'Heritage Stories' strand linking Heritage Council projects with research and interpretation on climate heritage adaptation and mitigation.



## **Goal 5 Maintain continuous improvement through regular review and evaluation**

The Heritage Council will use regular review to check whether actions are working, and to make changes where needed. Independent data and expert advice will support decisions that balance climate targets with conservation aims.

### **Actions**

1. Establish a small expert group to advise on technical, conservation and monitoring issues, and help translate lessons into national guidance and training.
2. Use Áras na hOidhreachta as a pilot site for innovation, publishing technical and monitoring results to inform national practice.
3. Update the Climate Action Roadmap within six months of each new national Climate Action Plan.
4. Commission a mid-term review in 2028 and a final evaluation in 2030 to assess effectiveness, efficiency, and compatibility with heritage conservation.



# Ceangal

A Heritage Council programme



An Roinn Tithíochta,  
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta  
Department of Housing,  
Local Government and Heritage



Cumann Lucht Bainistíochta Contae agus Cathrach  
County and City Management Association



## 7 Governance and Accountability



Delivery of the Sustainability Strategy will follow the Heritage Council's existing governance framework, with oversight by the Board and day-to-day coordination through the Green Team.

The Board of the Heritage Council, appointed by the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, holds ultimate responsibility for approving the Strategy, reviewing progress, and ensuring statutory compliance. The Senior Management Team integrates sustainability commitments into budgets, team plans, and operations, acting on regular reports from the Green Team.

The Green Team, chaired by the Head of Climate Change, coordinates implementation under the Climate Action Roadmap. It tracks progress, manages risks, and promotes staff engagement, reporting quarterly to the SMT and annually to the Board.

Section Heads and Programme Managers implement actions within their areas, while all staff are expected to support delivery through everyday practice.

This structure ensures that sustainability is embedded in corporate decision-making, that heritage considerations guide all actions, and that the Heritage Council can demonstrate transparent and accountable progress toward its climate and biodiversity obligations.

## 8 Monitoring, Evaluation and Review



Monitoring will ensure that the Sustainability Strategy delivers measurable results and remains compliant with national requirements. The Heritage Council will use the SEAI Monitoring and Reporting system and the Public Sector Climate Action Roadmap as its primary mechanisms for tracking energy and emissions performance.

Key indicators will align with the five strategic goals, covering energy use, procurement, training, programme delivery, and review. Progress will be verified using data from SEAI, procurement records, travel logs, and internal reporting.

The Green Team will provide annual updates to the Senior Management Team and an annual summary to the Board. Results will also be reported publicly through the Annual Report and website.

A mid-term review in 2028 and a final evaluation in 2030 will assess not only whether targets were met but whether actions were effective, efficient, and compatible with heritage conservation. Findings will inform the next strategy cycle and guide updates to the annual Climate Action Roadmap.



## 9 Engagement and Awareness



As outlined, the Heritage Council's direct environmental impact is modest, but its influence is wide. Real progress depends on using that influence to embed sustainability across heritage practice and to show how heritage can contribute to climate action. Engagement therefore runs through this Strategy as both a delivery tool and a measure of credibility.

Partnership with local authorities remains central. Heritage Officers, Biodiversity Officers and others are key conduits for putting policy into practice. The Heritage Council will work with them through joint training, shared tools and peer-learning events so that sustainability is consistently integrated into local heritage projects. Collaboration with the Climate Action Regional Offices will ensure that heritage perspectives are reflected in Local Authority Climate Action Plans.

Nationally, the Heritage Council will continue to cooperate with SEAI, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the National Biodiversity Data Centre, the Discovery Programme and other cultural and academic partners. Shared datasets coordinated reporting and joint demonstration projects will strengthen the evidence base for heritage-compatible climate action. Through the Climate Heritage Network and other European partnerships, Irish experience will be exchanged with international peers.

The Heritage Council will also share best practice from its own operations. The energy-management programme and conservation-led retrofit of Áras na hOidhreacht will be used as a learning tool for staff, grantees and the wider heritage community. Monitoring data, design choices and conservation lessons will be openly shared through workshops, guidance papers and digital platforms to help others retrofit historic buildings in a climate-responsible way.

Public engagement will focus on participation and shared learning. National programmes such as Heritage in Schools, Heritage Week, adopt a Monument, the Irish Walled Towns Network, the Traditional Skills training programme, the Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme, and other Heritage Council grant schemes will each include practical sustainability actions. Heritage in Schools will expand lesson content on climate and biodiversity; Heritage Week will feature recurring themes on heritage and climate action; Adopt a Monument projects will incorporate energy efficiency, adaptation or biodiversity measures; the Irish Walled Towns Network will promote low-carbon repair and reuse in funded projects; the Traditional Skills programme will highlight the role of conservation skills and sustainable materials in reducing carbon impacts; and the Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme and wider grants programme will continue to demonstrate how traditional techniques, local materials, and community stewardship support biodiversity, energy efficiency, and resilience in the built and natural environment.

A new digital strand, Heritage Stories, will connect these initiatives through the Heritage Maps platform. It will map community-led examples of climate and heritage action, pairing spatial data with photographs, video or short narratives that show how change is affecting sites and

how communities are responding. The result will be a living record of resilience and restoration, linking local experience to national and European goals.

Many of these programmes already demonstrate strong leadership on climate and sustainability, and the Strategy builds on that foundation. The Heritage Council will continue to support what works well while extending ambition where there is scope to do more. New measures will be phased in carefully, keeping demands realistic for staff and grantees, but with a clear intent to deepen impact and visibility over time. By taking this integrated approach, the Heritage Council will embed sustainability in its own culture while enabling communities, schools and partners to play an active role in Ireland's heritage-based response to climate change.

# 10 Bibliography



Antaris Consulting (2023) *Energy Audit of Áras na hOidhreachta*. Unpublished report to the Heritage Council.

Bluett, M. & O'Donoghue, J. (2022) Stage 2 Energy Reduction Report. Unpublished report to the Heritage Council.

Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021. (2021) *Oireachtas (Ireland)*. Available at: [www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2021/act/32/enacted/en/print](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2021/act/32/enacted/en/print) (Accessed: 25 September 2025).

European Commission (2019) *The European Green Deal*. COM (2019) 640 final. Brussels: European Commission.

European Union (2021) *Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 June 2021 establishing the framework for achieving climate neutrality (European Climate Law)*. *Official Journal of the European Union*, L243, pp. 1–17.

European Union (2024) *Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2024 on nature restoration, amending Regulation (EU) 2022/869*. *Official Journal of the European Union*, L1991, 29 July 2024.

Fehily Timoney & Company (2024) Sustainability Impact Assessment and Stakeholder Engagement Report. Unpublished reports to the Heritage Council.

Government of Ireland (2023) *National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023–2030*. Dublin: Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Government of Ireland (2024) *National Adaptation Framework 2024*. Dublin: Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications.

Government of Ireland (2025a) *Climate Action Plan 2025*. Dublin: Government of Ireland.

Government of Ireland (2025b) *Public Sector Climate Action Mandate 2025*. Dublin: Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications.

Heritage Act 1995. (1995) *Oireachtas (Ireland)*. Available at: [www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1995/act/4/enacted/en/print](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1995/act/4/enacted/en/print) (Accessed: 25 September 2025).

Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). (2024). *Annual Report 2024 on Public Sector Energy Performance*. SEAI. Available at: [www.seai.ie/sites/default/files/publications/Public-Sector-Annual-Report-2024.pdf](http://www.seai.ie/sites/default/files/publications/Public-Sector-Annual-Report-2024.pdf) (Accessed 25th September 2025)



# 11 Appendices



The appendices provide supporting material for the Sustainability Strategy and Climate Action Roadmap. They include baseline energy and emissions data and the risk register. These resources demonstrate how the findings of the Sustainability Impact Assessment and the Energy Audit have been applied in practice and provide the evidence base for delivery through the annual Climate Action Roadmap.

## Appendix 1. Baseline Data

The Heritage Council's energy and emissions performance is tracked through the SEAI Monitoring and Reporting (M&R) system, which provides the statutory baseline for the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate. The reference period is the 2016–2018 average.

**Table 11.1 Energy and Emissions Baseline (SEAI M&R Dataset)**

| Indicator                            | Baseline<br>(2016–2018<br>avg.) | 2024<br>(provisional) | 2030<br>Target | Change<br>Required |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Total CO <sub>2</sub> (kg)           | 40,680                          | 33,705                | 14,685         | –56 %              |
| Fossil CO <sub>2</sub> (kg)          | 21,649                          | 24,488                | 10,608         | –57 %              |
| Energy Efficiency Index (2009 = 100) | 100                             | 54.5                  | 50.0           | 4.5 points         |

### Current position

Overall emissions have fallen by 17 percent from the baseline, mainly due to grid decarbonisation. Fossil-fuel emissions have risen as building use has increased, underscoring the need for heating-system transition and fabric improvements to meet 2030 targets.

### Energy mix, 2024

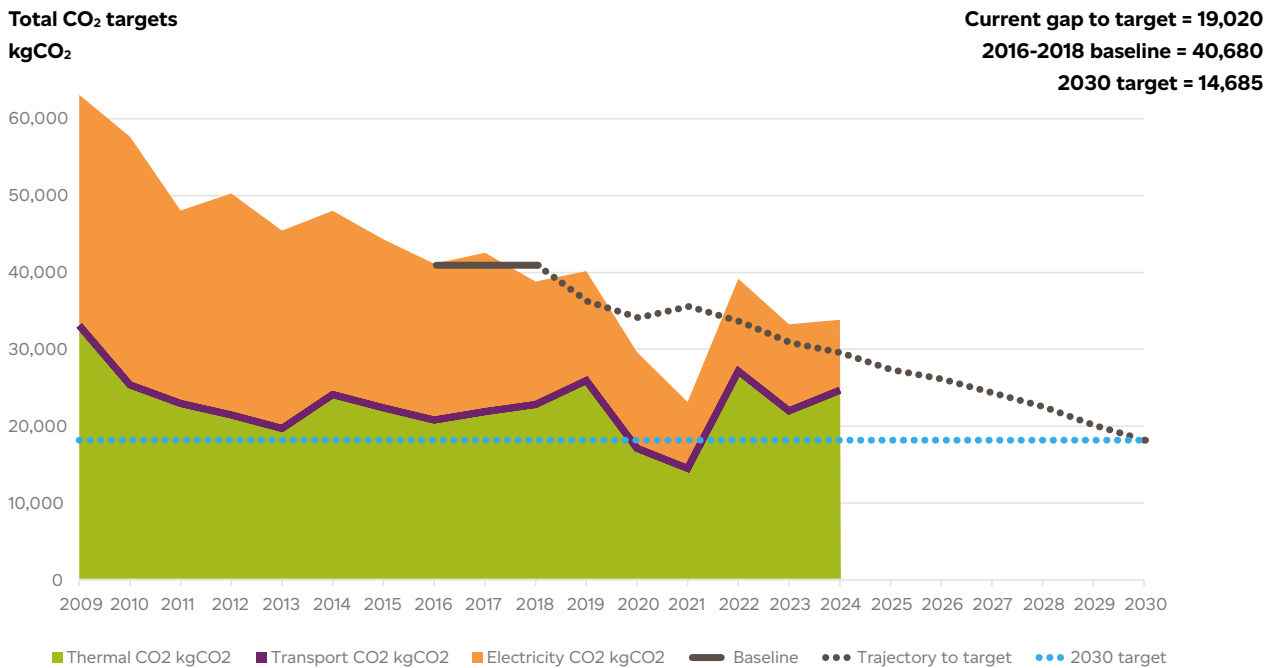
Electricity accounts for roughly 31 percent of total energy use (62,517 kWh) and 27 percent of emissions, while gas accounts for 69 percent of energy use (138,237 kWh) and 73 percent of emissions. The building therefore remains heavily reliant on fossil fuel for space and water heating.

**Table 11.2 Energy Use by Source (2024, SEAI M&R)**

| Energy Type   | Consumption (kWh, 2024) | Share of Total (%) | Associated Emissions (kg CO <sub>2</sub> , 2024) | Share of Emissions (%) |
|---------------|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Electricity   | 62,517                  | 31                 | 9,216                                            | 27                     |
| Thermal (gas) | 138,237                 | 69                 | 24,488                                           | 73                     |
| Total         | 200,754                 | 100                | 33,705                                           | 100                    |

**Figure 11.1 SEAI Total CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions Trend (2009–2024 with 2030 target line)**

(Source: SEAI Monitoring and Reporting Dataset)


**Figure 11.2 SEAI Energy Efficiency Index (2009–2024 with 2030 target = 50.0)**

(Source: SEAI Monitoring and Reporting Dataset)

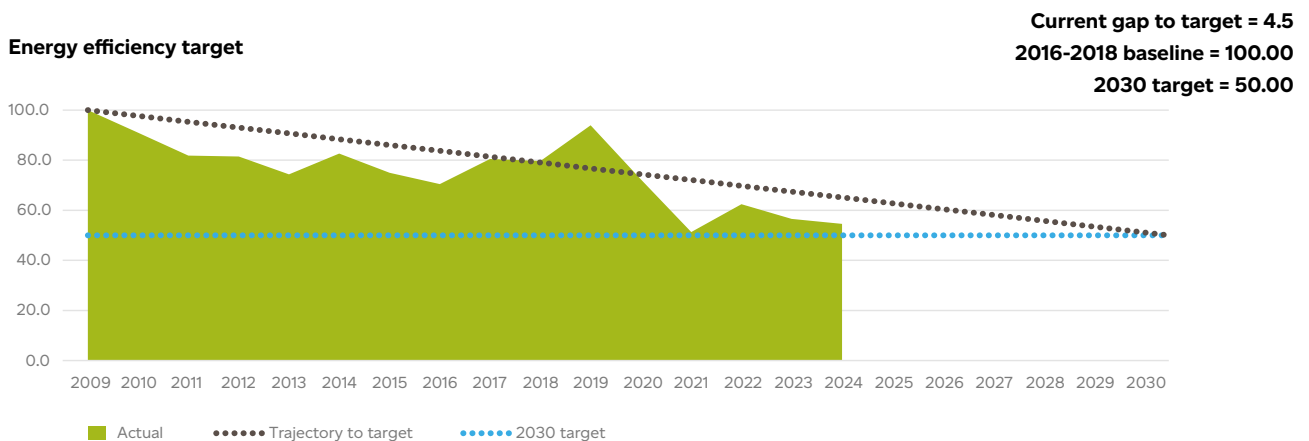
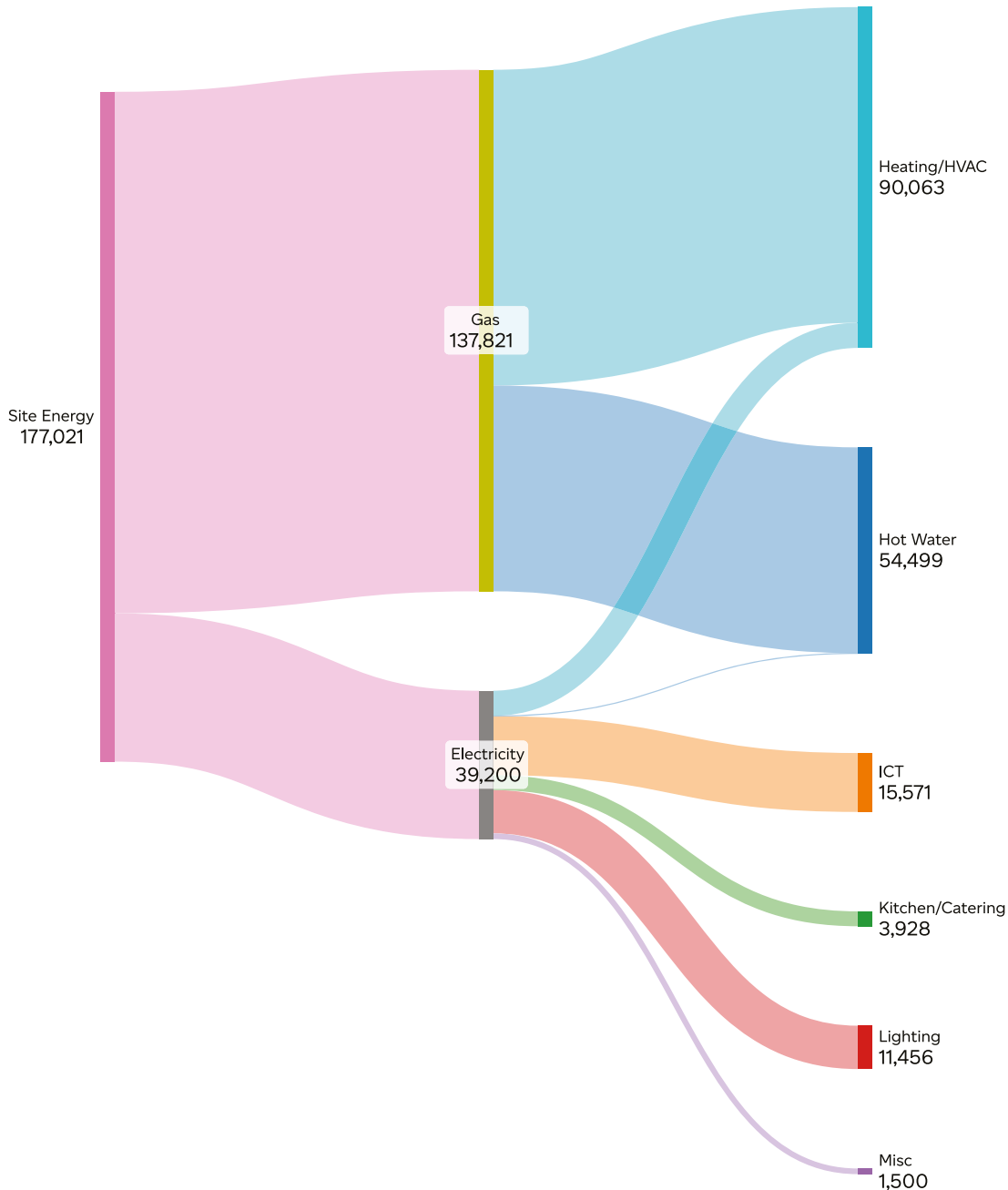


Figure 11.3 shows how energy is used within Áras na hOidhreachta. It breaks total 2023 consumption into heating, hot water, lighting, office equipment, and other utilities. This breakdown identifies where the greatest savings can be achieved and underpins the planned efficiency and retrofit measures set out in the Strategy.

**Figure 11.3 Energy Consumption (kWh) in the Heritage Council's headquarters in 2023, broken down by Energy Type and Utility**

(Source Energy Audit, Antaris, 2023)



All supporting technical data from the Sustainability Impact Assessment (2024) and Energy Audit (2023) are held on file and inform the annual Climate Action Roadmap and retrofit planning.

## Appendix 2 Detailed Actions with responsible sections and targets

### Goals

**Goal 1** Achieve measurable reductions in energy use and emissions at Áras na hOidhreacht

**Goal 2** Embed sustainability principles in procurement and daily operations

**Goal 3** Strengthen skills and governance to support delivery

**Goal 4** Demonstrate leadership and share learning across the heritage sector

**Goal 5** Maintain continuous improvement through regular review and evaluation

### Actions

| Action no. | Action text                                                                                                                   | Lead           | Support                                | Target date         | Projected outcome                                                      |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.1        | Maintain SEAI Monitoring and Reporting and implement the SEAI energy-management programme as the core framework for delivery. | Climate Change | Corporate, Conservation                | start 2026, ongoing | Consistent data and accountability for energy and emissions            |
| 1.2        | Appoint a conservation-led design team (2026).                                                                                | Conservation   | Corporate, Climate Change              | 2026                | Right expertise in place for compliant, conservation-appropriate works |
| 1.3        | Develop a phased programme of works (2026–2027).                                                                              | Conservation   | Climate Change; Corporate              | 2026–2027           | Clear works package, sequenced to reduce risk and disruption           |
| 1.4        | Secure consents and funding (2027–2028).                                                                                      | Conservation   | Corporate, Climate Change, Finance     | 2027–2028           | Permissions and finance in place to proceed                            |
| 1.5        | Deliver retrofit works on a rolling basis (2028–2030).                                                                        | Conservation   | Corporate; Climate Change, Contractors | 2028–2030           | Measured reductions in energy use and emissions at Áras na hOidhreacht |
| 1.6        | Develop and deliver programme of communication and engagement throughout building retrofit works.                             | Communications | Climate Change; Conservation           | ongoing             | Staff and stakeholders informed, lessons captured and shared           |
| 2.1        | Update the procurement policy to ensure EPA/OGP Green Public Procurement (GPP) criteria are included in all relevant tenders. | Corporate      | Finance; Climate Change                | Q1 2026             | Policy alignment with public sector requirements                       |
| 2.2        | Introduce a GPP compliance check in procurement audits.                                                                       | Corporate      | Grants & Finance; Climate Change       | Q1 2026             | Verifiable compliance with green criteria                              |

| Action no. | Action text                                                                                                                                                                    | Lead           | Support                                                | Target date               | Projected outcome                                                                                      |
|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.3        | Ensure ICT procurement meets required public sector standards for energy efficiency                                                                                            | Corporate      | Grants & Finance; Climate Change                       | from 2026, annually       | Improved energy efficiency of ICT assets                                                               |
| 2.4        | Require all new lighting, heating, and mechanical systems to be on the Triple E register of products approved as being energy efficient.                                       | Corporate      | Conservation; Grants & Finance                         | from 2026                 | Energy efficient equipment, meeting required standards                                                 |
| 2.5        | Eliminate single-use plastics at meetings and expand recycling to include e-waste and batteries.                                                                               | Corporate      | Climate Change; All Sections                           | During 2026               | Lower waste, better recycling                                                                          |
| 2.6        | Implement resource-efficiency measures required under the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate including water, waste, food waste and paper.                                   | Corporate      | Climate Change; Grants & Finance                       | from 2026, ongoing        | Mandated resource-efficiency actions embedded                                                          |
| 2.7        | Require all new food supply contracts to deliver a minimum of 10% of total annual spend as certified organic products, evidenced by valid certification and itemised invoices. | Corporate      | Grants & Finance; Climate Change                       | from 2026, annual review  | A minimum of 10% by value (€) of food sought under new contract arrangements will be certified organic |
| 2.8        | Reduce work travel and shift to lower-carbon modes, including introduction of decision trees for flights.                                                                      | Corporate      | Climate Change                                         | from 2026, annual review  | Reduced travel emissions, consistent practice                                                          |
| 3.1        | Deliver annual sustainability training for all staff and SMT. Council to complete additional climate-leadership training by 2028.                                              | Climate Change | Research, Learning & Cultural Heritage; Communications | start 2026; Board by 2028 | Raised capability across staff, SMT and Board                                                          |
| 3.2        | Publish an annual Progress Report aligned with SEAI MGR data and the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate.                                                                     | Climate Change | Corporate; Grants & Finance; Communications            | from 2026, annually       | Clear public reporting against targets and statutory metrics                                           |
| 3.3        | Embed sustainability commitments in team plans, budgets, and PMDS objectives.                                                                                                  | Corporate      | SMT; Grants & Finance; Climate Change                  | 2026 planning cycle       | Delivery incentives aligned with the strategy                                                          |

| Action no. | Action text                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Lead             | Support                                                | Target date                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Projected outcome                                                                                                                      |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.4        | Develop short guidance sessions or online resources for grantees and staff on integrating sustainability into project planning and procurement.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Climate Change   | Grants & Finance; Corporate                            | first releases 2027                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Practical help that improves planning and tenders                                                                                      |
| 3.5        | Maintain an active internal Green Team to support staff-led sustainability initiatives, identify low-cost improvements, and promote practical day-to-day changes aligned with the Climate Action Roadmap.                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Corporate        | Climate Change                                         | Ongoing from 2026                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Staff contribute to delivery through visible, low-cost actions; quick wins implemented; internal culture supports sustainability aims. |
| 4.1        | Publish the Áras na hOidhreachta retrofit as a national case study, including costs, performance data, lessons, and replicable guidance for other protected structures.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Conservation     | Climate Change, Corporate, Communications              | draft 2027; publish 2028; update 2030                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Credible case study for protected structures                                                                                           |
| 4.2        | Produce one practical toolkit or policy paper every two years on sustainable retrofit, biodiversity, or low-carbon procurement.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Conservation     | Climate Change; Grants & Finance; Communications       | every two years from 2026                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Usable outputs for local authorities and communities                                                                                   |
| 4.3        | Convene annual peer-learning events with local authority heritage professionals, linking local practice to national climate objectives.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Climate Change   | Conservation, Communications                           | annually from 2026                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Stronger community of practice                                                                                                         |
| 4.4        | Continue to embed climate-benefit criteria and objectives across all grant schemes.<br><br>Enhance the priority of sustainability and climate-benefit within specific schemes by updating criteria and objectives. Provide simple guidance notes to help applicants respond effectively.<br><br>Identify practical ways of measuring and reporting on the climate and sustainability impact of funded projects | Grants & Finance | Climate Change; Research, Learning & Cultural Heritage | Phase 1 (2025/2026): Updating criteria and objectives for the LBAP and HOSF; simple guidance for CHGS and HOSF.<br>Phase 2 (2026/2027): Updating criteria and objectives for all other relevant schemes. Prepare guidance for any other Scheme. Identify way to measure impact.<br>Phase 3 (2027/2028): Reporting on climate and sustainability impact of funded projects. | Strengthened climate and sustainability impact across all funded programmes                                                            |

| Action no. | Action text                                                                                                                                                                    | Lead                                    | Support                                                | Target date                                | Projected outcome                                                                                                                                   |
|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4.5        | Embed sustainability across national Research, Learning and Cultural Heritage programmes, including Heritage in Schools and the Museums Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI) | Research Learning and Cultural Heritage | Climate Change                                         | 2027 and ongoing                           | Public-facing programmes reflect sustainability commitments                                                                                         |
| 4.6        | Embed sustainability across design and delivery of outreach programmes including National Heritage Week                                                                        | Communications                          | Climate Change                                         | 2026–2027 and ongoing                      | Programming and delivery of Heritage Week features sustainability commitments                                                                       |
| 4.7        | Embed sustainability across design and delivery of built heritage programmes including Irish Walled Towns Network, Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme and Adopt a Monument      | Conservation                            | Climate Change                                         | Ongoing from 2026                          | By end 2028, the Irish Walled Towns Network, Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme and Adopt a Monument operate to a published sustainability standard. |
| 4.8        | Develop a digital 'Heritage Stories' strand linking Heritage Council projects with research and interpretation on climate heritage adaptation and mitigation.                  | Climate Change                          | Research, Learning & Cultural Heritage; Communications | launch 2027                                | Accessible stories connecting policy with action                                                                                                    |
| 5.1        | Establish a small expert group to advise on technical, conservation and monitoring issues, and help translate lessons into national guidance and training.                     | Climate Change                          | Conservation; External experts                         | set up in 2026                             | Independent challenge and better technical quality                                                                                                  |
| 5.2        | Use Áras na hOidhreacht as a pilot site for innovation, publishing technical and monitoring results to inform national practice.                                               | Conservation                            | Climate Change; Corporate                              | from first works package, 2028 onward      | Real-world performance data informing guidance                                                                                                      |
| 5.3        | Update the Climate Action Roadmap within six months of each new national Climate Action Plan.                                                                                  | Climate Change                          | SMT; all Sections via Corporate                        | first update 2026, then as CAPs are issued | Strategy aligned with national policy                                                                                                               |
| 5.4        | Commission a mid-term review in 2028 and a final evaluation in 2030 to assess effectiveness, efficiency, and compatibility with heritage conservation.                         | Climate Change                          | Corporate                                              | mid-term 2028; final 2030                  | Independent assessment of effectiveness and heritage compatibility                                                                                  |

### Appendix 3. Material Environmental Impacts

The Sustainability Impact Assessment identified the Heritage Council's most significant environmental impacts. It found that the organisation's direct carbon footprint is small, with energy use and travel accounting for most operational emissions. By contrast, the Council's programmes, funding, and policy work generate large positive impacts by promoting the conservation and enhancement of Ireland's natural, built, and cultural heritage.

Energy and travel are therefore treated as material impacts in this Strategy, while waste, water, and procurement are retained as non-material issues important for awareness and staff engagement.

A full breakdown of impact rankings is provided in Table 9-1 of the Sustainability Impact Assessment (Fehily Timoney & Company, 2024).

### Appendix 4. Risk Summary

The Sustainability Impact Assessment identified several risks associated with delivery of the Strategy. These have been refined into a concise risk summary for ongoing monitoring by the Green Team and Senior Management Team. A detailed risk register will be maintained internally.

| Risk                  | Description                                                                                     | Mitigation                                                                                                                 | Responsible Unit                  |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Conservation          | Energy-efficiency or retrofit measures may adversely affect protected fabric or heritage value. | Apply conservation-led design, independent peer review, and staged implementation.                                         | Green Team / Conservation Adviser |
| Staff engagement      | Staff may resist new travel policies or behaviour-change measures.                              | Early communication, visible leadership, and provision of practical alternatives (e.g. hybrid meetings, pooled transport). | HR / Operations                   |
| Grantee capacity      | Sustainability conditions may overburden grantees or smaller partners.                          | Introduce requirements gradually and apply proportional reporting.                                                         | Grants Team                       |
| Financial constraints | Budget pressures or capital funding delays may slow delivery.                                   | Stage investment, seek external co-funding, and align with capital works cycles.                                           | Senior Management Team            |
| Strategic focus       | Attention may drift toward minor or symbolic actions rather than material emissions reductions. | Regular Steering Group oversight and annual Board review.                                                                  | Green Team / SMT                  |

Áras na hOidhreachta, Lána an Teampaill, Cill Chainnigh, Éire R95 X264  
Áras na hOidhreachta, Church Lane, Kilkenny, Ireland R95 X264

**Tel:** +353 56 777 0 777 | **Email:** [info@heritagecouncil.ie](mailto:info@heritagecouncil.ie)

**[www.heritagecouncil.ie](http://www.heritagecouncil.ie)**



**An Chomhairle Oidhreachta**  
**The Heritage Council**