

# **Heritage Strategy for Waterford City and County 2025-2030**

## **Conservation, Collaboration and Communication**



Comhairle Cathrach & Contae Phort Láirge  
Waterford City & County Council

# Acknowledgements

Waterford City and County Council and the Waterford Heritage Forum wish to acknowledge the support of The Heritage Council in the preparation of the Waterford City and County Heritage Strategy, through its part-funding of the Heritage Officer post and the provision of annual funding for the implementation of Waterford Heritage Plan projects. Waterford City and County Council and the Waterford Heritage Forum acknowledge the role of cultural and heritage services team, elected members, heritage practitioners and interested bodies in formulating the City and County Heritage Strategy and of all those who took part in the consultation process.

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# Contents

Introduction

Policy and Legal Framework

Working in partnership for the conservation and enhancement of Waterford's Heritage

Key Issues for Heritage in 2024

Strategic Objectives

## Foreword

**Mayor, Waterford City & County Council, Cllr. Jason Murphy**

The Waterford Heritage Strategy 2025-2030 is a strategic management plan for the heritage of our city and county. Waterford people are greatly proud of our heritage as heritage is all about people and place. Heritage is what sets us apart from other places- our *Dinnseanchas*<sup>1</sup>. By looking after, investing in and promoting our heritage we gain benefit in cultural, social and economic development.

I am delighted to welcome the publication of this new Heritage Strategy for Waterford. This is our fourth Waterford Heritage Plan and it puts a framework in place to promote conservation, collaboration and communication of our heritage. This strategy builds upon the success of previous heritage plans where the focus was to identify, survey, raise awareness of and develop policy for our archaeological, built, cultural and natural heritage. We will continue to research, conserve, manage, promote and interpret our unique Waterford heritage. This intention will be realised by continually improving resources for heritage services, providing an advisory service to both the wider public and within the local authority on heritage funding, policy and legislation and engaging and supporting communities in the management of our heritage. This will be delivered through ongoing collaborative work programming with heritage expertise and practitioners promoting best heritage practice and commissioning new research.

On behalf of Waterford City and County Council, I would like to thank the members of the Waterford Heritage Forum for their work in preparing our new Heritage Strategy and to thank all those who inputted to the process and to help shape our heritage vision for 2025-2030. I would like to thank the Heritage Council for its continued support for the preparation and implementation of the Waterford City and County Heritage Strategy. I look forward to your participation and its successful implementation in the coming years.

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<sup>1</sup> The lore of a place associated with place names, traditions, events and characters of particular areas.

## **Foreword**

### **Chief Executive, Sean McKeown**

The preparation of local heritage plans and establishment of local heritage fora has been Government policy since the National Heritage Plan (NHP) of 2002. This Heritage Strategy sets out the priorities for heritage in Waterford over the next 5 years and is a cross-agency framework with input from a wide sector who are involved in heritage projects, policy and work programmes across the city and county.

As Waterford is Ireland's oldest city we recognise the role of heritage in urban regeneration and economic growth. The City's built heritage and archaeology offer ongoing potential for living history projects complementing enhancement of the public realm. Outside of Waterford City, we have a rich heritage of great houses, landscape demesnes and gardens that can be enjoyed from Waterford City to the Suir and Blackwater Valleys. Waterford has the benefit of a UNESCO designated Geopark- one of only three geoparks on the island of Ireland. The diverse festival offering promoting Waterford's culture and heritage is a firm base to attract more visitors to the city and county while national initiatives such as Ireland's Ancient East offer opportunities for more heritage sites to be made accessible and interpreted.

The Waterford Heritage Strategy can support delivery of Waterford's Local Economic and Community Plan and Development Plan which contain many heritage based actions relating to heritage tourism, urban regeneration, coastal and marine and town and village renewal. Waterford City and County Council seek to promote sustainable heritage tourism across Waterford City and County. We recognise that by identifying and promoting a unique sense of place that is Waterford we can inspire pride in maintaining our heritage resource and this in turn stimulates interest from visitors and investors in exploring the city and county.

Along with supporting cultural economic development, Waterford City and County Council recognises the potential of the Waterford Heritage Strategy to promote lifelong learning, training and education in heritage research, management and conservation. We are keen to promote public engagement with heritage and enhancement of our natural capital as a fundamental requirement for maintaining quality of life. With the ongoing innovation of technology it is a key tenet of the Waterford Heritage Strategy to promote access to heritage information and communicate to new and wider audiences through the range of available digital media.

Waterford City and County Council is committed to delivering on the objectives in the new Waterford Heritage Strategy by working in partnership with local communities, heritage organisations and state agencies. There is a lot to be gained from a strategic and co-ordinated approach as this strategy sets out to do and I wish the Waterford Heritage Forum well in the delivery of their vision for conservation, collaboration and communication of all aspects of heritage in Waterford City and County 2025-2030.

## **Vision**

To increase the conservation, collaboration and communication of all aspects of heritage in Waterford City and County and provide an opportunity for all in Waterford to play a role in the sustainable management of our heritage.

## **Mission Statement**

To set out a strategic and co-ordinated approach for heritage in recognition of the benefits that heritage delivers; supporting cultural, social and economic development and a sense of place and well being for residents of and visitors to Waterford.

# Introduction

## What is Heritage ?

As per the Heritage Act of 1995 and development of heritage policy and practice over 25 years heritage is understood as encompassing;



## Intangible Heritage

Along with the forementioned categories of heritage there exists a range of intangible elements which are significant to people’s sense of place, folk memory and lived heritage. Guidelines on Cultural Heritage Impact Assessments published by Transport Infrastructure Ireland<sup>2</sup> are comprehensive in the types of features and practice that imbue heritage identity in any given locality.

| Category                    | Types  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Boundaries                  | Townland, parish, civil parish, barony, county, provincial and State                                       |
| Conflict                    | Locations of ambushes, assassinations, executions, faction fights and battles                              |
| Cultural expression         | Language, dancehalls, festivals, traveller culture   |
| Devotion                    | Pilgrim Paths, pattern festivals, mass rocks, holy wells rag trees   |
| Food and agriculture        | Fields, creamery stands, ice ponds, fish ponds, fish traps areas of commonage                              |
| Memory                      | Roadside memorials, commemorative monuments  |
| Myth and legend             | Sites with legendary or mythological associations (story places), fairy forts, fairy bushes, rivers, hills |
| Resource Gathering          | Quarries, bogs, brickmaking sites, Stone depots , clay extraction, turf harvesting, wells                  |
| Sport and Recreation        | Sports grounds, courses, road bowling, racecourses, fox coverts, duck decoys                               |
| Trade and exchange          | Locations of fairs, markets, marts co-operative societies  |
| Transport and communication | Ferry crossings, milestones, piers   |

Waterford people are greatly proud of their heritage, sense of place and identity going back to the third century when the King of Munster granted the Desii, lands from the Suir to the sea and from Lismore to Creadan Head, embracing almost all the present County of Waterford. In the 9th century the Vikings came to Waterford first settling at Woodstown and then developing Waterford City.

Waterford’s urban medieval walls are a significant landmark in the City. Originally there were up to seventeen towers protecting the city, of which six of the structures have survived.<sup>3</sup> Waterford City and County has an architectural heritage that ranges from the early Christian period through Viking, Medieval, Georgian and Victorian times to the present day. Ecclesiastical heritage can be explored at churches and monasteries such as Ardmore, Lismore, Kilbunny, Molana Abbey and Mothel. Waterford City is shaped by its Viking history, which is celebrated today through the many visitor attractions in the Viking Triangle including six museums. The influence of the Normans can be seen at Reginald’s Tower and numerous

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.tiipublications.ie/library/PE-ARC-02009-01.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> The City’s Best Kept Secret-Interpretation Plan for Waterford’s Medieval City Walls (2021)



medieval churches such as Greyfriars. The wealth of the Georgian era can be seen with fine civic buildings such as the Bishop's Palace along the City Mall and the many Country Houses and Demenses along the Blackwater and Suir valleys. Industrial heritage is represented through a range of mills, and mines such as those at the Copper Coast, while vernacular architecture is particularly well represented with around 170 thatch houses around the county. The architectural interest of Waterford continues to the present day with the building of the award winning Medieval Museum, development of the Viking Triangle, regeneration of Cathedral Square, and Chairman's Arch, Parade Quay, George's St. and Lady Lane all celebrating our built heritage and enhancing the public realm.

Waterford has a rich coastal and maritime heritage encompassing built, cultural and natural heritage. Landmark features including navigational pillars from Brownstown Head and the Metal Man to Mine Head Lighthouse and shipwrecks from Ardmore to Tramore reflect the legacies of past generations that derived a living from the sea. The long history in shipping and fishing of Cheekpoint, Waterford Port, Dunmore East and Helvick holds great cultural and industrial importance for many and contributes to the identity of Waterford. Connecting all of this is the intangible cultural heritage of Waterford's coast -place names, skills, knowledge and stories.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The Maritime Heritage of Waterford Estuary (2021 Port of Waterford)

# Policy and Legal Framework

## Policy Framework

### **Heritage Ireland 2030 (Department of Housing, Heritage and Local Government)**

Heritage Ireland 2030 provides a strategy for the protection, promotion and management of Ireland's heritage under three themes: Communities and Heritage, Leadership and Heritage and Heritage Partnerships. Heritage Ireland 2030 recognises that local authorities have a critical role in all aspects of the protection and promotion of heritage as owners of national monuments, as regulatory authorities in relation to planning and economic development of areas with potential for heritage-led regeneration. It is an objective of Heritage Ireland 2030 to enhance support for local authorities and others working in community heritage engagement.

### **Ireland's 4<sup>th</sup> National Biodiversity Action Plan (Department of Housing, Heritage and Local Government)**

Ireland's 4<sup>th</sup> National Biodiversity Action Plan recognises the essential role that local authorities play in engaging with communities to support local biodiversity. It is a target of the NBAP to have increased capacity to facilitate and implement all required duties relating to biodiversity at the local level. Waterford City and County Council appointed a Biodiversity Officer and commenced preparation of the Waterford Biodiversity Plan in 2024.

### **Water Action Plan 2024- A River Basin Management Plan for Ireland (Department of Housing, Heritage and Local Government)**

The Water Framework Directive, adopted in 2000, required that "good status" is achieved in all water bodies by 2027. The eutrophication of rivers, lakes and tidal waters is one of the main threats to surface waters with agricultural runoff and municipal discharges being the key contributors. Under the Water Framework Directive a management plan must be prepared for all River Basin Districts (RBDs). The third RBDMP plan was published in 2024 and outlines the water quality status of our waters, environmental objectives for our waters, and the programme of measures necessary to achieve these objectives. The plan commits to developing catchment management plans for each of the 46 catchments in the country. These will identify the measures needed for water quality protection and improvement and the structures and supports for action to achieve water quality outcomes.

### **National Climate Action Plan (Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications)**

A coastal county such as Waterford is at risk from climate change events; climate adaptation measures and nature-based solutions are required to be inherent to all future land use planning and development proposals. The 2021 Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act commits a move to a climate resilient and climate neutral economy by 2050. The Program for Government commits to a 7% average yearly reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions and to achieving net zero emissions by 2050. The Waterford Climate Action Plan

2024-2029 includes a number of objectives for climate change and heritage. <https://waterfordcouncil.ie/services/environment/climate-action/our-climate-action-plan/>

### **The Heritage Council Strategic Plan *Our Place in Time***

The Heritage Council Strategic Plan acknowledges the 25 year collaboration between local authorities and the Heritage Council through the Heritage Officer Programme with a commitment to engage communities more actively in heritage through increased support for Heritage Officers and other heritage services offered by local authorities to enhance partnership and secure the protection of heritage and best practice in heritage management.

### **National Restoration Plan 2024-2026 (Department of Housing, Heritage and Local Government)**

The National Restoration Plan seeks to underpin the implementation of nature restoration measures across the country and contribute to the ambition of the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and global restoration targets. Commenced in 2024, the plan will identify the design, targets and incentive schemes to deliver restoration measures, including consideration of national and EU funding opportunities and a comprehensive assessment of funding needs. Completion of the Plan will be aligned with the opening of the Government's €3.15bn Climate and Nature Fund in 2026. This fund is expected to play an important role in resourcing the measures in the National Restoration Plan to address biodiversity loss.

### **Legal Framework**

#### **Historic and Archaeological Heritage and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023**

This Act repeals the National Monuments Acts 1930 to 2014 and replaces those Acts with provisions for the protection of historic heritage, provisions for the protection of archaeological heritage, provisions for the regulation of certain activities in the interests of such protection and provisions enabling the State to ratify or accede to certain international conventions which relate to such protection or regulation; to give effect to the EIA Directive and the Habitats Directive in relation to the carrying out of works at, on, in, under, to, or within the immediate surroundings of monuments; to give further effect to the Valletta Convention; to consequentially repeal or amend certain other enactments; and to provide for related matters.

#### **Planning and Development Act 2024**

An Act to consolidate and revise the law relating to planning and development; to provide for proper planning and sustainable development in the interests of the common good; to provide for the licensing of events; for those purposes to repeal and replace the Planning and Development Act 2000; to amend certain other enactments; and to provide for matters connected therewith.

Section 50 (1) sets out an obligation to prepare strategy for conservation of natural and built heritage. A planning authority shall prepare a strategy for the conservation, protection, management and improvement of the natural, archaeological and built heritage and landscape in the functional area of the planning authority.

# **Working in partnership for the conservation and enhancement of Waterford's Heritage**

## **Archaeological Heritage**

### **Gallows Hill Community Archaeology Project**

**Partners- Waterford County Museum, Waterford City and County Council, The Heritage Council- Adopt a Monument Scheme, Creative Ireland**

The Gallows Hill Community Archaeology Project was established by Waterford County Museum in 2015. The aim of the project was to uncover the mound's hidden history and ensure its future conservation. The project was one of five nationwide projects supported by the Heritage Council's first Adopt a Monument Scheme in 2017. With the support of local volunteers and professionals the community led project revealed a unique heritage site and Dungarvan's oldest standing monument.

A geophysical survey of the fort was undertaken in 2015 and in July 2016. The group carried out a series of exciting archaeological digs that revealed fascinating insights into the monument, including the evidence of 16th century burials and a coin dating from the time of Henry II. Awareness raising initiatives included a Heritage Week Medieval Day which featured on RTÉ Nationwide along with a children's archaeology Big Dig event and installation of a Heritage Interpretation Panel designed by Archaeologist, Dave Pollock.

### **Knockboy Medieval Church**

**Partners- Ogham in 3D, DIAS, National Monuments Service, Waterford City and County Council, The Heritage Council- Adopt a Monument Scheme,**

Knockboy Parish Church of Seskinan (WA013-034) is unique in having seven ogham stones, six of which are built into the 14th-century church. All lintels except that over the N doorway have ogham inscriptions and a seventh ogham stone is in the church. Features of interest include ogee headed windows, pointed doorways, a stoup and an aumbry. The church was at risk of ruin having already lost half of the bellcote, loss of mortar in the stonework and being encroached by a dense covering of Ivy. Initiated by Ogham Expert Dr. Nora White, Knockboy Graveyard Committee worked with the National Monuments Service and Waterford Heritage Office to develop a conservation plan for the site and programme of works funded through the Heritage Council's Adopt a Monument Scheme, Community Heritage Grant Scheme and the NMS Community Monument Fund to complete stabilisation and conservation works on the site in 2023. Thanks to the expertise of stone mason Tom Pollard, Conservation Engineer James Powell, Archaeologist Dave Pollack, Ogham expert Nora White and Adopt a Monument Advisor Neil Jackman the church is now conserved much to the pride and delight of local residents and visitors to Knockboy which is a very special place. The project was featured in an RTE Nationwide Programme in 2021 and won the County Waterford Heritage Week award in 2022.

## **Woodstown Viking Site**

**Partners-TII, National Monuments Service, Waterford City and County Council, The Heritage Council, UCC, NMI, Norwegian Embassy, Abartha Heritage, The Discovery Programme**

The discovery of a viking site in Woodstown along the River Suir in 2003 is one of the most significant archaeological discoveries ever made in Ireland. Although only 5% of the site was excavated Woodstown produced information and artefacts that have given us new insights into the earliest phase of Viking settlement in Ireland. In 2020 Waterford City and County Council published a Conservation Management Plan for the site. The vision of the plan is to develop Woodstown Viking Site as an engaging and active site that researches knowledge gaps on Viking life, provides opportunity for experimental archaeology and training in artefact analysis and conservation. Geo-technical surveys by the Discovery Programme and Vestfold and Telemark Council in Norway have revealed exciting indications of house plots and metal working pits. The Woodstown Viking festival Aonach na nDéise hosted during Heritage Week celebrates the Viking Heritage of the area. A website and GIS Story Map will be developed in 2024 marking the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the discovery of the site.

## **Built Heritage**

### **Cappoquin Regeneration**

**Partners- Waterford City and County Council, Waterford Leader Partnership, Cappoquin Regeneration Company, Tomar Trust , local community and Department of Rural and Community Development**

Cappoquin is a town with a great sense of heritage and past endeavour. Waterford City and County Council, working in collaboration with Waterford Leader Partnership, Cappoquin Regeneration Company, Tomar Trust and the local community were allocated €1.2 million under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) in 2023. This funding was bolstered by match funding provided by the Council and by Tomar Trust with the aim of ensuring future vibrancy, sustainability and growth for the historic town. Funding was allocated to address five main issues:

- Vacancy and dereliction in the town centre
- Lack of recent investment in the town centre's public domain
- Lack of appropriate enterprise and housing opportunities
- The potential in improving access to the River Blackwater
- The lack of community and tourist-oriented recreational infrastructure

Waterford City and County Council, working closely with Cappoquin Regeneration Company acquired a number of derelict and vacant properties to improve the physical appearance and attractiveness of the town centre, access to the river, the creation of a number of new

recreational trails as well as the development of an innovative town centre housing pilot. The collaborative approach being taken in Cappoquin was cited in the government's "Town Centre First" policy.

Works commenced in summer 2024 to transform three vacant terraced townhouses at 6, 7 and 8 Main Street into three new homes with ancillary mews accommodation at the rear on Green Street and the derelict former Moore's Hotel transformed into residential upper floor accommodation over ground floor commercial premises.

The project is a model for addressing vacancy and dereliction in a town centre and investment in a town centre's public domain.

## **Great Houses and Gardens -Mount Congreve**

### **Partners- Mount Congreve Estate, Waterford City & County Council, OPW and Fáilte Ireland**

Mount Congreve Gardens is one 12 different garden attractions across Waterford and is renowned for the extensive collections of camellias, magnolia, azalea, maple and for one of the largest collection of rhododendron in the world. The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) describes the historic site as being of artistic, architectural, historical and social interest and it is rated as being of national importance

Adjacent to the gardens is a 13 bay house set out in the Palladian manner, with screen walls and low ranges linking the house across courtyards to the end pavilions. Following the death at 104 of the owner Ambrose Congreve the House and Gardens were transferred in 2011 to a Trust made up of the Mount Congreve Estate and Waterford City & County Council, with legal title vested in the OPW.

In 2022, Mount Congreve Trust, with the support of Fáilte Ireland, carried out major improvements to enhance the site. New visitor facilities were created including an interpretative exhibition, café, retail outlet, glamping pods, accommodation, integrated constructed wetlands and additional car parking. Mount Congreve overlooks the River Suir and is located adjacent to the Waterford Greenway and Waterford Suir Valley Railway and thus is a very popular site on the heritage tourism trail in Waterford.

## **Vernacular Housing- Thatch**

### **Partners- Waterford City and County Council, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage**

The first comprehensive survey of thatched houses in County Waterford was carried out in 2006<sup>5</sup> and listed 201 thatched houses. A 1991 County Council Survey listed 250 thatched houses highlighting a loss of some 20% over that 15 year period. Interviews conducted during the 2006 survey repeatedly told of the loss of considerable numbers of houses within

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<sup>5</sup> John Cronin and Associates for Waterford County Council

living memory. In 2024 Waterford has 166 thatched houses of which 79 are listed on the Record of Protected Structures.

Thatched houses are widely distributed in Co. Waterford with particularly high concentrations in the southern half of the county. There are significant clusters of houses around the settlements of Dunmore East, Lismore and Tallow, and in the southern part of the county around Dungarvan, Kinsalebeg and Bunmahon. The northern half of the county displays a very low incidence of thatched houses.

The tradition of thatching continues in County Waterford but with a decline in available craft workers due to retirement and a declining pool of available expertise and technical skills. The majority of thatch houses are in good condition indicating a willingness by property owners to maintain the vernacular stock. There are several newly built thatched houses which, while not part of the vernacular tradition, are important in sustaining the craft of thatching.

Challenges to maintaining the stock of thatch in Waterford include fire safety, insurance, maintenance costs and available expertise. Increased funding for thatch maintenance is a positive development with €500,000 ringfenced under the Built Heritage Investment Scheme for thatching projects in 2024.

*A Living Tradition A Strategy to Enhance the Understanding, Minding and Handing on of Our Built Vernacular Heritage* was published in 2021 by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

## Cultural Heritage

### Logainmneacha na nDéise Waterford Placenames

**Partners- Archivist and Irish Officers of Waterford City and County Council,  
Waterford City and County Council Coiste Logainmneacha**

Townland names and field names are a fascinating source of local history, culture and folklore. Waterford is fortunate in having a long established interest in and continuing research in this area. From the invaluable historical work of Canon Power's *The Placenames of Décies* (1907) to Liam Suipéil's *Personality of a Coastline* (2019) Waterford continues to document and explore local placenames. In 2022 Waterford City and County Council's Archivist and Irish Officer developed [www.deiselogainm.ie](http://www.deiselogainm.ie) which provides a portal highlighting the rich heritage and connection to the landscape in Waterford. The website collates and builds on the work carried out through a Creative Ireland funded schools placenames project and the expertise of Waterford Council's Coiste Logainmneacha (Placenames Committee) which advise on the naming of new developments reflecting the local heritage and landscape of the site.

## **Scríobhneoirí na nDéise Story Map**

**Partners-Ofigeach Gaelach, Archivist, Heritage and GIS Officers of Waterford City and County Council, Nioclás Mac Craith, Professor Pádraig Ó Macháin, Head of the Irish Department in UCC, The Heritage Council**

The rich cultural heritage of Irish writers from Co. Waterford is celebrated through the development of an ARC GIS storymap and wallchart depicting over 100 Irish language writers of the Déise that was launched in Coláiste na Rinne during Heritage Week 2019. The project was developed by the Irish language, Archivist and Heritage Officers of Waterford City and County Council with Professor Pádraig Ó Macháin, Head of the Irish Department in UCC. The interactive website and wall chart are based on the work of Nioclás Mac Craith (1923-2018) historian and scholar from Rinn Ó gCuanach in Waterford, an area known for its rich Irish language folklore and literary heritage. The wallchart was circulated to all schools in County Waterford and the GIS Story Map is available on <http://bit.ly/Scribhneoiri-na-nDeise> . The project was funded by the Heritage Council through the Heritage Plan Fund.

## **Decade of Commemorations**

**Partners- Waterford City and County Council Commemorations Committee, Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport, and Music**

Waterford City and County Council Commemorations Committee delivered an extensive programme during the Decade of Commemorations 2014-2024. Through the media of film, publications, conferences, exhibitions, GIS Story Mapping and on-line seminars Waterford City and County Council commissioned a number of projects to mark the historical events that took place in Waterford 1914-1924. This commenced in 2015 with hosting of the Revolutionary Roadshow in partnership with UCC History Department and culminated in 2024 with the screening of *The Aftermath-The Long Shadows of the Civil War in Waterford*. An engaging programme of community events was enabled thanks to Decade of Commemorations funding from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport, and Music. Waterford is very proud of its commemorations research and dissemination and legacy projects. Details of all events and projects can be viewed on [www.waterford1916to1923.com](http://www.waterford1916to1923.com).



## Natural Heritage

### Pearl Mussels in Peril

**Partners- Waterford City and County Council, Uisce Éireann, LAWPRO<sup>6</sup>, IFI<sup>7</sup>, NPWS<sup>8</sup>, Portlaw Heritage Group, Friends of the Clodiagh and local landowners**

The Freshwater Pearl Mussel is a very rare mussel that only occurs in three river systems in Waterford - the River Clodiagh, River Blackwater and River Licky. Pearl Mussels are fascinating in that they can live to be 140 years old but need very high water quality in which to survive.

Without active intervention the population of freshwater pearl mussels in the River Clodiagh is in danger of extinction. To arrest the decline Waterford City and County Council developed a conservation project in partnership with Uisce Éireann, LAWPRO<sup>9</sup>, IFI<sup>10</sup>, NPWS<sup>11</sup>, Portlaw Heritage Group, Friends of the Clodiagh and local landowners. An assisted breeding centre was set up at Kilmeaden water treatment plant where 20 Freshwater Pearl Mussel were translocated under licence by NPWS from the River Clodiagh to a stocked fish tank. In 2023 50 juveniles were bred and survived to 5 months of age. Environmental DNA testing was carried out on 23 water samples throughout the River Clodiagh catchment to detect presence of Pearl Mussel DNA. Freshwater Pearl Mussel eDNA was present in 11 out of 23 samples. Raising awareness is key in the conservation of this unique species. Waterford City and County Council delivered the *Pearls of Wisdom* project with three schools in the River Clodiagh Catchment- Rathgormack, Clonea-Power and Portlaw. The project involved a Heritage in Schools ecologist visiting the schools to teach them about the life cycle and history of the Pearl Mussel followed by a creative project whereby the students produced a display of their work arising from lessons learned from the project.

The next element of the project is catchment improvement and identifying suitable stretches of the river to receive juvenile FPMs from the hatchery by 2030. This will be progressed through a local Catchment Management Plan in collaboration with LAWPRO under the River Basin Management Plan.

### Ardmore Goat Grazing Project- Community engagement in local habitat management

**Partners- Ardmore Tidy Towns Group, Waterford City & County Council, William Walsh- Billy's Rent a Goat**

In 2019 the Waterford Heritage Office in partnership with Ardmore Tidy Towns Group commissioned a botanical survey of Ardmore Coastal Path which recorded 175 plant species

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<sup>6</sup> Local Authority Water and Communities Office,

<sup>7</sup> Inland Fisheries Ireland

<sup>8</sup> National Parks and Wildlife Service

<sup>9</sup> Local Authority Water and Communities Office,

<sup>10</sup> Inland Fisheries Ireland

<sup>11</sup> National Parks and Wildlife Service

along the trail. Ardmore Head is designated a Special Area of Conservation for its sea cliff vegetation and coastal heath. Due to a lack of grazing over recent decades the habitat was being encroached by invasive Bracken and Common Gorse. Funding from the Heritage Council through the County Heritage Plan Fund enabled Ardmore Tidy Towns to rent a herd of goats to graze and trample the invasive vegetation over a period of 6 weeks between May and July 2023 and August and September 2024. William Walsh of Billy's Rent a Goat supplied eight grazing goats for the site and being located along the Ardmore Head coastal walk proved a great interest for walkers along the trail. William was on site to explain the project to visitors and pupils from the local school. The coastal heath conceals an Éire 20 sign from WWII and the project helped reveal this historic sign by stripping back the overlying vegetation.

### **Brent Geese Tagging Project**

**Partners- Waterford Eco Group, Waterford City and County Council, the Irish Brent Geese Research Group, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage**

Dungarvan Harbour is an important SPA<sup>12</sup> for wintering waders and wildfowl including Light-bellied Brent Geese that are frequently sighted on grassland and playing fields at the edge of town. Funding from the Local Biodiversity Action Plan Fund enabled Waterford City & County Council in collaboration with Waterford Eco Group and the Irish Brent Geese Research Group to undertake a scientific project investigating the local movement patterns and migration of the Brent Geese in Dungarvan. Funding was used to purchase GPS-GSM tags which were fitted to adult Brent Geese caught by licenced experienced cannon-netters and colour ringed in 2022 and 2023.

A key component of the project was involvement with local schools - Birdwatch Ireland carried out visits to four local schools in March 2020 and pupils from St. Josephs attended the tagging in 2022. EZ Films produced *Where the Wild Geese Go* for RTE junior incorporating the Brent Geese Tagging project and project work with St. Mary's local primary school and to be broadcast on RTE in 2024. Tracking of the Brent Geese feeding and migration patterns through mobile data and the RTE and School project have helped to raise awareness on the species and its conservation requirements.

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<sup>12</sup> Special Protection Area under the EU Birds Directive

## **Developing new Heritage Networks**

### **Shared Island Initiative**

Funding through the Creative Ireland Strand of the Government's Shared Island Initiative has enabled the exploration of our shared cultural and industrial history with heritage colleagues in Northern Ireland. The project aims to develop connections between communities in Mid and East Antrim and Waterford through a variety of culture and heritage projects. Mid and East Antrim Borough Council hosted a heritage exchange visit by Arts, Culture and Heritage Staff of Waterford City and County Council along with members of Portlaw Heritage Group in September 2024. The delegation visited a number of heritage sites in Antrim including Raceview Mill, a 200 year old woollen mill and winner of the Heritage Angel Award in 2024 on account of its success as an industrial heritage regeneration project. The group visited the village of Gracehill which was designated a World Heritage Site in 2024 for a number of Moravian Church settlements established in the 18th century across Europe and the United States. Waterford City and County Council will host a return visit in November 2024 with visits to Portlaw Industrial Heritage Town and Heritage Centre, Curraghmore Estate, Waterford Museum of Treasures and SETU. The objective of the ongoing collaboration is building bridges, sharing knowledge and face to face meetings on common cultural and heritage interests.

### **Viking Studies Network**

A key action in the 2020 Conservation Management Plan for Woodstown Viking Site is to build connections and share expertise, an approach supported by the Faro Convention where heritage has a trans-boundary significance. Waterford City and County Council have hosted visits to Woodstown Viking Site by the Norwegian Embassy and delegates from the University of Stavanger. In 2021, the Heritage Office hosted a collaborative workshop with 18 participants from Ireland, Scandinavia and the UK, involving the leading experts in Viking-Age archaeology. The aim of the workshop was to bring together experts on the Woodstown site and Viking archaeology to interpret data from a 2018 geophysical survey carried out by Vestfold Fylkeskommune (Norway) & Ludwig Boltzmen Institute for Archaeological Prospection (Austria). Geophysical surveys were carried out in 2018 and 2024 by Dr. Petra Schneidhofer and Christer Tønning from Vestfold Fylkeskommune. The Woodstown Viking Project has particularly benefitted from a collaboration with the Discovery Programme since 2022 which has enabled completion of range of further geo-physical surveys including earth resistivity, ground penetrating radar and magnetometry along with development of a composite GIS of survey data from the site. These surveys have helped to underline the international significance of Woodstown and brought a number of insights as well as recommendations for further research.

## **Diverse Waterford**

### **Documenting the influence of diverse cultures and nationalities on Waterford**

Diverse Waterford is a project documenting the influence of diverse cultures and nationalities on Waterford City and County. Waterford (Vedrarfjord in Norse) was established as a base by the Vikings and throughout its history, Waterford has facilitated the introduction and intermingling of visitors with the local population. The aim of this project is to empower groups and individuals to tell their stories and to give people a chance to hear a broad range of Waterford voices. This involves recording a range of different voices and experiences in order to tell the full story of Waterford and its people. Waterford Libraries Local Studies and Waterford City and County Archives Service collaborated with Dr. Tomás MacConmara to create a set of guidelines and forms for use by community groups and individuals to help them set up Oral History projects that will be preserved long term and shared with as broad an audience as possible. Online and in person training on carrying out oral history projects is provided along with providing equipment on loan to groups and individuals to facilitate the recording projects. Diverse Waterford is funded by Waterford City and County Council (Waterford Libraries, Waterford Archives) and Creative Waterford [www.diversewaterford.ie](http://www.diversewaterford.ie).

## **Key Issues for Heritage in 2024**

Following consultation with Waterford Heritage Forum, Waterford City and County Council Culture and the Heritage Services Team and elected members of Waterford City and County Council the following key issues were identified for consideration in the new heritage strategy.

### **Archaeology**

Conservation and maintenance of historic graveyards and support for local community groups.

### **Archives**

Advocacy for capital funding and human resources for development of best standard facility for preservation of and public access to the archives in Waterford.

Continued recognition of the importance of archives as part of Waterford's rich cultural heritage.

Support for role of Archives in Tourism and Visitor Numbers.

Digital strategy for heritage objects such as archives at national and local levels.

Collaboration and outreach and archival and commemoration events in the community.

### **Biodiversity**

Forces for change -declining quality and quantity of habitats through habitat loss, disturbance, pollution, invasive species, climate change and loss of dark sky cover.

Enforcement of legislation.

Achieving Biodiversity Net Gain, delivery of Biodiversity Action Plan and National Restoration Plan.

Ecological Corridor Mapping, Catchment based approach, acknowledging Nature's Contribution to People.

Collaboration and outreach and biodiversity events in the community.

### **Built Heritage**

Promotion and Conservation of Waterford City Walls.

Loss of Thatched houses, Insurance, loss of expertise in traditional building skills and crafts.

Training and development of Traditional Building Skills courses.

Resources in support of delivery of Conservation Work Programme.

Collaboration and outreach on built heritage projects.

Project development incorporating energy efficiency and biodiversity.

### **Geological Heritage**

Promotion, conservation and development of the UNESCO Copper Coast Geopark.

## **Irish Language**

Focus on supporting and underpinning the linguistic and cultural importance of Gaeltacht na nDéise – in planning and housing policies<sup>13</sup>, as well as through cultural development – identify as an area for advocacy and support.

Support for the Language Planning Process in both Gaeltacht na nDéise and Dungarvan as a Gaeltacht Service Town – planning and organisation of Irish language/bilingual events and activities across the cultural services.

Gaeltacht na nDéise as a cultural tourism destination – inclusion in Heritage Tourism policies and proposals.

Research, interpretation and promotion of our Dinnseanchas.

Resources in support of delivery of Oifigeach Gaelach Work Programme.

## **Heritage Interpretation**

Holistic and collaborative approach to heritage.

Audience attraction and engagement , investment in new technology and digital media.

New communities and inclusivity in delivery of heritage outreach programme

## **Maritime Heritage**

Recording and promotion of Waterford’s coastal and maritime heritage, heritage boats and heritage fisheries.

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<sup>13</sup> Housing and Physical Planning Matters in the Gaeltacht Dáil- input to Working Group on Gaeltacht Planning Matters and Joint Committee on the Irish language, the Gaeltacht and the Irish speaking community (Comhchoiste na Gaeilge, na Gaeltachta agus Phobal Labhartha na Gaeilge)

## **Key Themes for Waterford Heritage Strategy 2025-2030**

1. Advancing a holistic and collaborative approach to heritage involving;  
the conservation, enhancement and promotion of Waterford's archaeology, built, cultural, natural and intangible heritage and integration of heritage into work programmes and practice and promotion of heritage policy.
2. Advocacy for capital funding and human resources for the effective delivery of heritage as a core service in the local authority.
3. Collaboration with heritage groups, practitioners and agencies through project development, plan making and heritage events programming.
4. Developing heritage services in the green and digital transition.

## **Strategic Objectives**

### **1. Policy and Advocacy**

We will develop and implement heritage policy in accordance with national strategies and legislation and advocate for the development of policy for gaps in heritage best practice.

### **2. Delivery of Heritage Service**

We will advocate for continued investment in local authority heritage services to support the increasing demands on delivery of the service and seek to secure additional heritage specialists where appropriate<sup>14</sup>.

### **3. Collaboration on projects working with key partners and policy stakeholders to support heritage in Waterford**

We will continue to collaborate on projects working with key partners and policy stakeholders to support heritage in Waterford.<sup>15</sup>

We will continue to support and facilitate heritage committees such as the Woodstown Viking Site Committee, Waterford Placenames Committee, Decade of Commemorations Committee, Irish Walled Towns Committee and any other project dedicated committees as may arise over the course of the strategy.

### **4. Supporting delivery of other plans**

We will continue to support the delivery of plans that guide the conservation and promotion of Waterford's Heritage such as; Waterford City and County Development Plan, Waterford Climate Action Plan, Waterford Biodiversity Action Plan, Creative Waterford, Catchment Action Plans for Water Quality, Archives Plan, Irish Language Plan, Library Plan, Regional Spatial Economic Strategy, County Recreation Strategy and Waterford Tourism Plan.

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<sup>14</sup> Expertise may include County Archaeologist, Field Monuments Advisor, Ecological Clerk of Works.

<sup>15</sup> Partnerships may include The Heritage Council, The Discovery Programme, Southern Regional Assembly, SETU, LAWPRO, Biodiversity Forum

## **5.Continued support of Community Heritage Projects**

We will build on the success of community engagement in heritage projects such as Decade of Commemorations, Care and Conservation of Historic Graveyards, Adopt a Monument Scheme, Community Monuments Fund and Local Biodiversity Action Fund and continue to support local communities in their efforts to audit, research, conserve and interpret their local heritage.

We will encourage the involvement of new communities in conserving and celebrating Waterford's heritage.

## **6.Continued support of Heritage Events**

We will build on the success of public engagement with Archives Awareness Month, Behind Closed Doors, Biodiversity Week, Heritage Week and Seachtain na Gaelige and develop an annual event programme to disseminate key heritage projects, funding schemes and initiatives.

## **7. Heritage Dissemination**

We will engage with new technologies and media for dissemination of heritage and promote access to heritage information and communicate to new and wider audiences through the range of available digital media.

## **8.Heritage Funding**

We will continue to avail of local, regional, national and EU funding initiatives for the conservation, research and education in all areas of heritage.

## **9.Incorporation of heritage into design and development**

We will promote the incorporation of heritage into design of new developments to preserve archaeological, built, cultural and natural heritage.

## **10. Heritage in Rural and Urban Regeneration**

We will ensure the conservation of heritage is delivered in national and regional investment schemes targeting rural and urban regeneration.

## **11.Heritage Tourism**

We will collaborate with key partners to develop a sustainable visitor experience to Waterford's heritage sites based on stories and sense of place and promote the development of local heritage guides.

## **12.Heritage Training**

We will promote the application of best practice in traditional skills, craft work, heritage surveys, heritage guiding and funding applications.

## **13. Heritage of the Gaeltacht**

We will support the linguistic and cultural importance of Gaeltacht na nDéise highlighting it as a cultural tourism destination and deliver Irish language/bilingual events and activities across the cultural services.



#### **14. Heritage Networks**

We will strengthen existing and develop new heritage partnerships and networks such as Shared Island initiatives and Scandinavian Viking Studies.

## Tracking Progress

Waterford City & County Council is committed, in partnership with the City & County Heritage Forum to the delivery of the strategy. Waterford City and County Council’s Heritage and Cultural Services Team will co-ordinate and manage the day-to-day implementation of the Waterford Heritage Strategy. The Heritage Forum will monitor progress of the delivery of the strategy at its quarterly meetings.

| <b>Strategic Objective</b>   | <b>Progress Indicator</b>  |
|--|--|
| Policy and Advocacy  | Number of submissions issued in response to public consultation processes relating to heritage issues  |
| Delivery of Heritage Service   | Annual investment in local authority heritage services   |
| Collaboration on projects working with key partners and policy stakeholders to support heritage in Waterford | Number of collaborative projects developed and delivered over the course of the strategy   |
| Delivery of other plans  | Number of heritage related projects delivered under other plans  |
| Support of Community Heritage Projects   | Number of community heritage projects supported over the course of the strategy  |
| Heritage Events  | Number of Heritage events delivered per annum  |
| Heritage Dissemination   | Range of media used and number of events to disseminate heritage information over the course of the strategy   |
| Heritage Funding   | Investment and expenditure incurred under local, regional, national and EU funding initiatives relating to heritage  |
| Incorporation of heritage into design and development  | Restoration of vacant and derelict vernacular and industrial heritage properties . Increase in application of Nature Based Solution and SuDs measures in new developments. |
| Heritage in Rural and Urban Regeneration   | Investment and expenditure incurred in Heritage-led Rural and Urban Regeneration schemes over the course of the strategy.  |
| Heritage Tourism   | Enhancement and interpretation of new heritage tourism sites across the city and county  |
| Heritage of the Gaeltacht  | Delivery of Irish language/bilingual events and activities over the course of the strategy   |
| Heritage Networks  | Strengthen existing heritage partnerships and networks such as Shared Island initiatives and Scandinavian Viking Studies and development of new networks                   |

## **Developing the Waterford Heritage Strategy 2025-2030**

Presentation to Planning SPC December 2023 on process and timeline of developing the Waterford Heritage Strategy 2025-2030.

Q1 2024-Review of delivery of Waterford Heritage Plan 2027-2022, review of policy and legal framework and scoping of new strategy.

Meeting of Heritage Forum May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2024 -agreement of key themes and discussion on strategic objectives.

Meeting of Heritage Forum September 6<sup>th</sup> 2024 – presentations by Archivist, Biodiversity Officer, Conservation Officer , Irish Officer and Community Archaeologist. Collation of key issues and development of key themes and strategic objectives.

Preparation of Draft 1 Heritage Strategy and sign off by Heritage Forum- September 2024

Presentation of Draft Heritage Strategy to Waterford City and County Council-10<sup>th</sup> October 2024

Public Consultation on Draft 1 Heritage Strategy -October 15<sup>th</sup>- November 8<sup>th</sup> 2024

Presentation of Amended Plan to Waterford City and County Council- December 2024

Adoption of Waterford Heritage Strategy

Preparation of Annual Heritage Action Plan Work Programme guided by the Waterford Heritage Strategy

## **Heritage Forum 2024**

Cllr. Joe Conway- Waterford City and County Council  
Mary Conway- Waterford City & County Council Librarian  
Alan Cullagh- Inland Fisheries Ireland  
Captain Darren Doyle –Port of Waterford  
Michael Farrell -Decade of Commemorations Committee  
Willie Fraher- Waterford County Museum  
Mary Flynn, Heritage Tourism- Nells Cottage, Rathgormack and Comeraghs Wild Festival  
Robbie Galvin- Geologist, Copper Coast Geopark  
Cllr Damien Geoghegan- Waterford City and County Council  
Catherine Keena- Countryside Management, Teagasc  
Bernice Kelly- Archaeologist, Transport Infrastructure Ireland  
Dr. Liam Lysaght – CEO, National Biodiversity Data Centre  
Ray McGrath- Barony of Gaultier History Society and Waterford Placenames Committee  
Mary Molloy – Planner, Southern Regional Assembly  
Sharon O’Brien -Department of Architecture, SETU  
Maeve O’Callaghan - Archaeologist, National Monuments Service  
Cllr. John O’Leary- Waterford City and County Council  
Cliona Purcell- Curator, Waterford Museum of Treasures  
Christine Rossi -CEO, Waterford LEADER Programme

