

IRISH HERITAGE TRUST

Bringing Places to Life

Strategic Plan

2023 - 2033



Heritage
brought to
Life
for
everyone

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We are about People,
Place and Participation



Introduction from the Chairperson

On behalf of my fellow directors/trustees, I am pleased to present the Strategic Plan for the Irish Heritage Trust for the next decade. Since its formation in 2006, the Trust has grown and has evolved to meet the challenges of an ever-changing landscape. As an independent, not-for-profit enterprise, the Irish Heritage Trust has successfully collaborated with a wide variety of partners – public and private sector, corporate and individuals – to ensure that the special heritage properties and collections in our care are conserved, nurtured, developed and shared so that they survive and thrive for generations to come.

The environment in which we outline our new strategy (2023-33) is one that is emerging from a global pandemic, is grappling with the challenges of climate change and is at the same time faced with many uncertainties, among them the international political and economic environment. While the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic required us to take difficult measures to survive and grow, I am pleased to say that the Trust has emerged, stronger and more resilient and I am grateful to our colleagues, members, partners and stakeholders for their unceasing determination and commitment. It is therefore with great ambition and optimism that we approach the next decade, a period in which we will focus on expanding the network of properties in our care and will bring them to an ever increasing and diverse community of members, visitors and volunteers.

Our Strategic Plan 2023-2033 expands and sharpens our focus on sustainability at every property in our care, across the key pillars of economic viability, environmental protection and social equity.

We will look to direct the Trust's resources in a manner which is aligned with the development and achievement of ESG goals and sustainability will increasingly be at the heart of decision making as we continue to grow.

The role of the Irish Heritage Trust in sharing our heritage is a key focus of our new strategy. We will continue to develop immersive, engaging visitor experiences as we grow our brand in the heritage tourism sector, with the support of tourism bodies such as Fáilte Ireland. Our strategic priorities will include the development of our digital engagement with audiences worldwide, so that the stories we tell transcend borders and cultures. The preparation of this Strategic Plan involved an active and sustained process of planning, reflection, consultation and review. There was significant engagement with a broad spectrum of stakeholders, among them board members, colleagues, funders, government and private sector partners and I would like to thank all those who contributed to the development of our new strategy.

This plan sets ambitious targets for the decade ahead and will be reviewed through a series of rolling multi-year plans. At the Irish Heritage Trust, we will endeavour to build leadership in the wider culture and heritage community and we will play our part in supporting the aims and objectives of the Government's national plan, *Heritage Ireland 2030*.



Clare McGrath
Chairperson
The Irish Heritage Trust

“Our Strategic Plan 2023-2033 expands and sharpens our focus on sustainability at every property in our care, across the key pillars of economic viability, environmental protection and social equity.”

Introduction from the CEO

As we close the chapter on the Irish Heritage Trust's 2013 Strategic Plan, we celebrate the growth that has been achieved, not just in terms of the heritage portfolio in our care but also in terms of the deeper and broader engagement with the communities we serve.

We are about People, Place and Participation and having launched membership in 2019, we are grateful to those 8,000 members whose support we receive regularly at Trust properties.

Through our research and engagement preparatory to this Plan, we realised that the independence of our organisation provides legitimacy to our activities in the areas of philanthropy and community support, such as volunteering. Our volunteers have grown to almost 300 in number and make an immense contribution across so many areas of activity, allowing us to leverage all our resources to best effect. We will shortly launch a new Irish Heritage Trust Complete Guide to Volunteering, designed to shape our growing relationship with an increasingly diverse community of volunteers at every location where we operate.

We recognise that our people, our colleagues, are the most important resource that the Trust has available to achieve its vision and mission and we are committed to delivering on our Strategic Objectives always in a manner that is aligned with the Trust's core values, that nurtures and develops the talent of our colleagues and promotes learning and teamwork in a culture that encourages openness and diversity.

Our shared passion for telling the stories of our Irish heritage in an authentic and immersive way will, we believe, help us to build audience both in Ireland and around the world. We will harness new technologies to help us establish ourselves as an internationally recognised leader in heritage visitor attractions and will foster collaborative long-term partnerships that recognise this ambition.

We recognise the need for sustainability at the heart of everything we do and will incorporate ESG into our Strategic Action Plans. The Irish Heritage Trust continuously reinvests in the properties in its care and we will target a strengthening and diversification of the partnerships and financial supports that will ensure we continue to care for our properties and collections in line with international best practice.

It is clear that the only constant in the world will continue to be change. However, with the continuing support of our funding partners, government, colleagues, communities and volunteers, we will embrace change and deliver on our vision for the next 10 years. During that time, we will continue to be *proudly a work-in-progress*, investing in conservation, celebrating and interpreting the amazing history and collections of the properties, gardens, and landscapes in our care.

Our heritage provides us with the opportunity to connect, to share, to educate and to learn. I am convinced that, working together, we will pass on the heritage portfolio that has been entrusted to our care in the certain knowledge that it will survive for future generations to enjoy.



Anne O'Donoghue
CEO
The Irish Heritage Trust

“We are about People, Place and Participation and having launched membership in 2019, we are grateful to those 8,000 members whose support we receive regularly at Trust properties.”



Context to Our Strategy 2023–2033

Through active participation, we want to create a lasting connection between people and these special heritage places.

Established in early years of this century, the Irish Heritage Trust is now a leading national organisation. We have significant achievements to show for our work over the course of our first strategy document, which covered the timeframe 2013 to 2023.

We are now well placed to embark on the next phase of our development with the motivation of ensuring a strengthened understanding of the importance of Ireland's built and natural heritage.

This Strategy (from 2023 to 2033) is rooted in our ambition to be internationally recognised as the partner of choice, innovator and leader in the conservation, sustainable development and interpretation of built and natural heritage in Ireland.

The work of the Trust would not be so successful without the active participation of our volunteers, visitors and staff. We are also fortunate in having strong relations with key partners including the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

We support the ambition in the Government's national heritage plan, *Heritage Ireland 2030*. We will work positively to assist in achieving the plan's ambition that by 2030 'our heritage, of which we are merely the custodians, is in as good a condition as it can be for future generations.'

We are also committed to working in partnership with Government and state tourism bodies including Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland to ensure investment in tourism protects our heritage and delivers a world-class experience for an expanded number of visitors (both in-person and online) to these special places.



The work of the Trust would not be so successful without the active participation of our volunteers, visitors and staff.



Securing the future sustainability of Ireland's built and natural heritage is fundamental to the work of the Irish Heritage Trust.

Each of the heritage properties in our care is at the heart of the communities in which they are located. Each property has its own story and offers a unique heritage and cultural experience to visitors. Over the period of this Strategy – and as the Trust expands in the years to come – we will continue to work with our partners including local government authorities to deliver our shared vision and ambition.

In all our activities, we will work to deliver on the different aspects of sustainability (social, environmental and financial) in keeping with the principles outlined by UNESCO in recognising the importance of heritage to current communities and future generations.

We are conscious of the many challenges in the external environment – and the impact of these wider issues on all areas of Trust activity and the activities of our partners. In that regard, we are committed to reviewing the Trust's business plan underpinning the delivery of our Strategy at regular three-year intervals.

Our Vision our Purpose and our Ambition

Our vision is to secure the future sustainability of Ireland's built heritage, and by working in the public interest to establish a strengthened understanding of the importance of our built and natural heritage, and through active participation to create a lasting connection between people and these special heritage places and their collections.

Our purpose is to conserve, manage, sustainably develop, and interpret built and natural heritage in Ireland, and to allow people to participate and engage with these unique special heritage places and collections.

Our ambition is to be internationally recognised as the partner of choice, innovator and leader in the conservation, sustainable development and interpretation of built heritage in Ireland.

Our Shared Values

Professional — ‘Best in Class’

We maintain excellence in governance, in our visitor experience, and in our engagement with our staff and stakeholders. We are committed to delivering excellence in every aspect of our custodianship of our heritage collections.

Trusted — ‘A Trusted Partner’

We work as a trusted partner in collaboration with national and local government, and other bodies and organisations. We place high value on these relationships and are committed to developing them as a leading national heritage organisation.

Independent — ‘Working in public interest’

We operate as a leading private and commercial not-for-profit organisation that works in the public interest. We are committed to the highest standards of ethical and sustainable behaviour in our decision-making with a motivation that is driven by the common good.

Ambitious — ‘Heritage as part of our future’

We work as the national innovative leader for heritage in Ireland, educating people about this heritage and advocating for its conservation, sustainable development and interpretation. Our actions every day are motivated by our ambition to secure the future of Ireland's special heritage places.

Community — ‘Our wider family’

We work with every part of society and are deeply committed to active engagement with our staff, volunteers and visitors. We strive for high levels of participation and advancing education about our unique shared heritage. Our engagements with our partners are defined by respect and integrity.

Our Strategic Priorities & Objectives, 2023-2033



1. Property Portfolio
& Heritage Collections



2. Reputational Positioning



3. Communities



4. Financing & Philanthropy



5. Organisational Excellence



These five strategic priorities are associated with specific objectives to help achieve each individual priority. These priorities and objectives will underpin our Business Plans from 2023 to 2033, and combined they are directed at achieving the vision in this Strategic Plan.



Property Portfolio & Heritage Collections

The following objectives will support the delivery/achievement of this priority:

- Maintain and develop the Trust's current heritage properties and collections;
- Expand the number of properties and collections;
- Consider the type/profile and location of future properties;
- Develop a criteria-based approach and business case model for evaluating potential properties and collections;
- Manage all properties and collections to best international standards;
- Strengthen sustainability (environmental, social and financial) in all areas of the Trust's work including at all properties.



★★★ *Reputational Positioning*

The following objectives will support the delivery/achievement of this priority:

- Work with national and local government and other partners to elevate public support for protecting and bringing to life heritage properties in Ireland;
- Engage with government and other partners to enhance the place of heritage in public policy decision-making;
- Strengthen the wider external profile of the Trust as a leading national heritage organisation;
- Develop a communication plan that builds greater understanding of the Trust and assists in advocating for its key objectives.



Communities

The following objectives will support the delivery/achievement of this priority:

- Attract and retain a core constituency of volunteer members;
- Offer a first-class experience for visitors to Trust properties;
- Diversify the profile of Trust volunteers and visitors to include new communities to Ireland;
- Expand our offering to online visitors (national and international) by increased use of digital technology;
- Strengthen relationships with national and local government and other key agencies/organisations including third level institutions.



Our Strategic Priorities & Objectives, 2023-2033



Financing and Philanthropy

The following objectives will support the delivery/achievement of this priority:

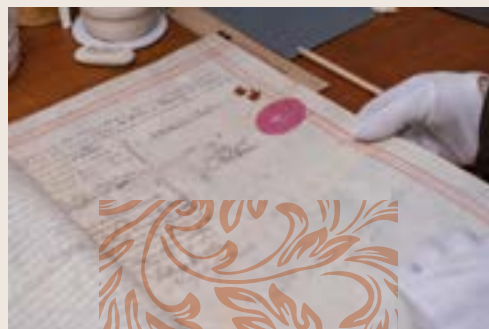
- Implement policies to ensure that all Trust properties are financially secure and sustainable;
- Identify a diversity of funding sources to achieve financial independence for the Trust and its properties;
- Be the trusted organisation and first-choice for donors (private, corporate and foundation) and others who support and cherish Ireland's heritage.



Organisational Excellence

The following objectives will support the delivery/achievement of this priority:

- Promote and implement policies to be the leading partner for managing and operating heritage properties in Ireland;
- Adhere to the highest standards of governance at all levels in the organisation;
- Use digital technologies to enhance all areas of Trust activity including expanding online visitors to our heritage properties and collections;
- Develop a climate-first ethos in all Trust initiatives.
- Focus on the role of retention, career development and succession in recognising the importance of Trust staff.





IRISH HERITAGE TRUST

Bringing Places to Life

Irish Heritage Trust

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The Irish Heritage Trust CLG
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**THE NATIONAL
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