



Fermanagh & Omagh District Council

HERITAGE PLAN 2030



Fermanagh & Omagh
District Council
Comhairle Ceantair
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

FOREWORD



The launch of our Heritage Plan is a necessary, welcome and forward step. It provides a framework for all of us to tell our story and to both preserve and promote what is unique about our local history.

Heritage means many things to many people. Personally, I am fascinated by culture, language, sport, story-telling and music. Our railway and industrial heritage engages many people in our Council area and so do our historic buildings and monuments, many of these in our county towns of Omagh and Enniskillen.

The spectacular landscape of lakes, mountains and islands marks out our place as unique and attractive. There was a significant archaeological find in Derrygonnelly late last year (2025) just as there has been at Dunmisk, Carrickmore in the 1980s. I remember well.

Heritage of every kind is evident throughout our District; a place which is defined by its outstanding natural beauty, historic places, pastimes, people and traditions. The stories, characters, landscapes and waterways of Fermanagh and West Tyrone connect us across time.

This Plan recognises that heritage is a vital and tangible link connecting our past through to the present, and, in so doing, challenges us to reflect as to how we best shape an inclusive and shared future.

The Irish language/ An Ghaeilge is a huge part of our shared heritage, too, and there is a strong athbheochan or revival taking place among all ages at this time.

Whether showbands, marching bands or céilí bands, we have them all in our constitution. Whether Gaelic, Ulster Scots or other newcomers to our District, we have a right to reflect on our respective journeys and to do this in a respectful, inclusive way.

Our rich heritage in the Fermanagh and Omagh Council area provides us all with an excellent vehicle for taking this forward.

This plan helps hugely in making us think and to take cultural and heritage initiatives which are of us but which can also be shared with the world.

Súil amháin ar an am atá cáite agus súil eile ar an todhcháí.

Cllr Barry McElduff, Chair / Cathaoirleach



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This Plan recognises that heritage is a vital and tangible link connecting our past through to the present, and, in so doing, challenges us to reflect as to how we best shape an inclusive and shared future.

Our Plan highlights a series of priorities which were identified following engagement and consultation with all those who have an interest in the heritage of our District. We hope you agree that these reflect our mutual responsibilities regarding heritage and clearly demonstrate how we will protect what we have, improve access, work in partnership, and develop and promote all that is distinctive about our District. In doing so, we will safeguard our heritage, ensuring it continues to inspire pride, promote community wellbeing, and be shared with visitors in ways that are sustainable and meaningful.

Thanks to all those who contributed to the development of the Heritage Plan, and we look forward to its implementation.

Alison McCullagh, Chief Executive





“We don’t just remember our history – we live it, love it, and share it with everyone.”

01

INTRODUCTION

This is the first-ever Heritage Plan for Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, a crosscutting strategy designed not only to preserve our rich heritage but also to celebrate it and ensure it remains vibrant for future generations.

The Plan is a commitment by the Council to promote and protect our heritage and sets out the heritage priorities for the area over the next five years. It is not an exhaustive list of everything that needs to be done for heritage in the District but a strategic plan to frame our actions.

Across the District, history is a vibrant element of everyday life. It’s an area rich with natural beauty, historic buildings, and a culture rooted in language, storytelling, music and folklore and tradition. The landscape itself tells a story, with peaceful lakes, winding rivers, and varied terrain with a little piece of history around every corner.

In celebrating the past, we are also setting a course for our future.

VISION

“Fermanagh and Omagh is of a welcoming, shared and inclusive District, where people and places are healthy, safe, connected and prosperous; and where our outstanding natural, built and cultural heritage is cherished and sustainably managed.”

– Corporate Plan 2024-2028

THE VALUE OF OUR HERITAGE

“Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations. Our cultural and natural heritage are both irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration.”

(UNESCO)

Heritage in Fermanagh and Omagh embodies the valuable legacy handed down through generations and is an essential element of the fabric of life. From buildings and nature to traditions and customs, it helps define who we are, connects us to our history and shapes how we live today.

Heritage supports the economy by creating jobs and attracting tourism. But, more than that, it helps build and sustain strong, inclusive communities by giving people a sense of belonging and promoting cultural diversity.



NATURAL HERITAGE

Our environment - including waterways, landscapes, woodlands, bogs, uplands, and native wildlife and plants - forms an essential part of our heritage.

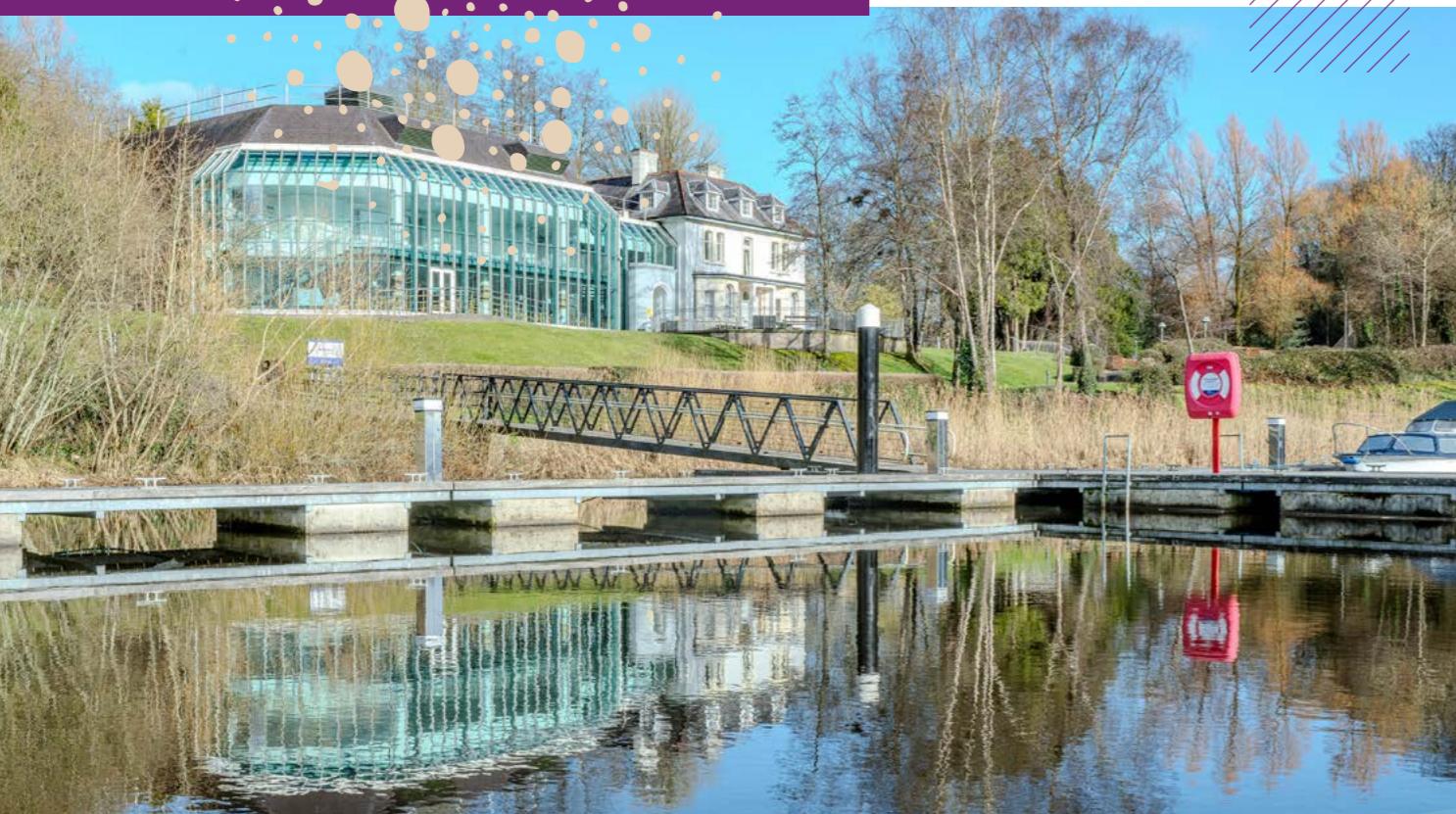
BUILT HERITAGE

This includes historical landmarks, buildings, monuments and other elements that show the physical presence of our past.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

The traditions, sports, music, language, dance, folklore, transport, pastimes, crafts and skills that have been passed down through generations and enrich our cultural identity.

Natural, built and cultural heritage are deeply intertwined, and while we've highlighted their unique elements, their connection is most evident in the landscapes of Fermanagh & Omagh.



NATURAL HERITAGE

UNESCO

“Natural heritage refers to natural features, geological and physiographical formations and delineated areas that constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants and natural sites of value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty.”

OUR HERITAGE

Fermanagh and Omagh District is renowned for its beautiful scenery, with the vast open landscapes of hills, lakes, rivers, woodlands and bogs incorporating the Sperrins Mountains Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Cuilcagh Lakelands UNESCO Global Geopark.

The area is rich in biodiversity, with a variety of flora and fauna creating a vibrant and diverse natural environment.

Our Biodiversity Strategy is designed to help us safeguard and maintain our unique natural heritage so it continues to thrive for future generations. It sets out our commitments to conservation efforts, such as preserving hedgerows and creating green spaces in urban areas, vital for the survival of local wildlife.

[Click Here for Existing Policy:](#)

www.fermanaghomagh.com/services/parks-and-open-spaces/biodiversity

PROTECT OUR HERITAGE

Fermanagh and Omagh contains a vast array of priority and protected habitats and species, evidenced by high numbers of protected areas.

We aim to maintain our District as a prime example of natural heritage, ensuring it remains a haven for biodiversity and a space where nature and history coexist harmoniously.



We implement a range of initiatives to nurture our environment and engage the community in conservation activities. Through careful planning, community engagement and a commitment to sustainability, we aim to foster a deeper connection between local people and the natural world, ensuring a greener, healthier future for all.



03

BUILT HERITAGE

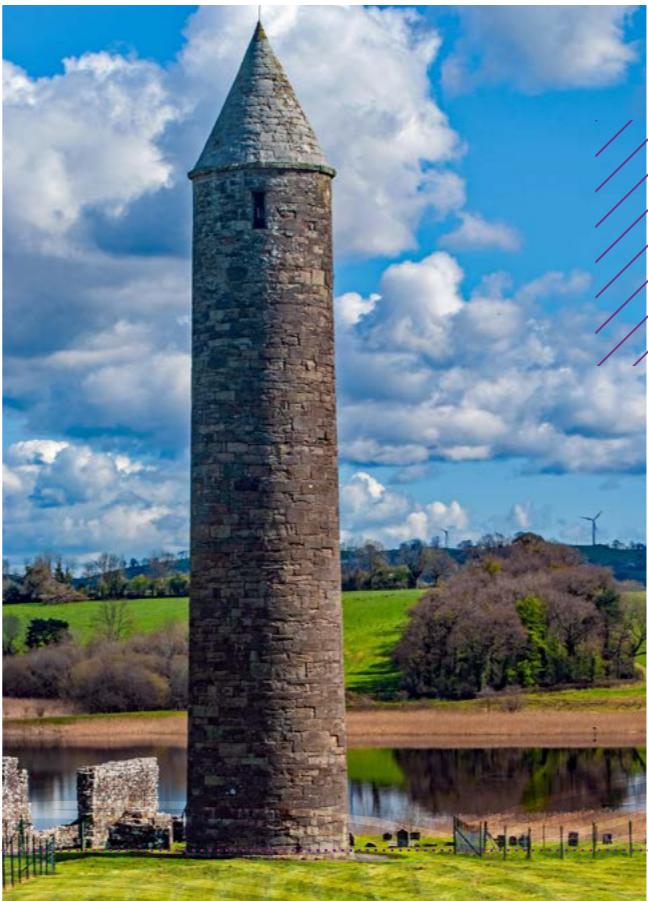
INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS & SITES

“Built heritage refers to physical structures, sites, and monuments that have historical, cultural, architectural, or social significance and are recognised for their value to society. These structures are tangible representations of a community’s past and contribute to its identity.”

OUR HERITAGE

Fermanagh and Omagh's story is deeply connected to its built heritage. The diverse and rich built heritage features ancient settlements, religious sites, places of worship, and historical monuments dating back to prehistoric times. From megalithic tombs, ancient churches and castles to grand houses and estates, these structures shape today's landscape. More than just physical buildings, they provide a window into the history of the area, connecting generations and their stories.

Stones and structures such as early medieval raths, crannogs, standing stones, and places of worship scattered across the landscape stand as tangible legacies of our past.



“The built heritage in the Fermanagh and Omagh District illustrates the vital connection between our past and present.”

Advancements in radiocarbon dating reveal the area's deep historical roots, including the presence of court tombs and early settlement artefacts.

Archaeological evidence also highlights significant transformations in our built heritage, such as the development of industrial mills, the construction of bridges and defensive sites, as well as the 17th-century Plantation of Ulster and the profound impact of the 19th-century industrial boom.

“They are living symbols of our resilience, creativity and innovation of our ancestors.”

CUILCAGH LAKELANDS GEOPARK

UNESCO Global Geoparks are places where outstanding and internationally important geological heritage is used to support sustainable development through conservation, education, community engagement and regenerative tourism that is driven and shaped by local community, businesses and stakeholders.

WITHIN FERMANAGH & OMAGH DISTRICT WE HAVE:



As part of our commitment to enhancing and promoting our built heritage, we are actively implementing specific measures in key areas.



Planning &
Regulation



Conservation
Areas



Advice &
Guidance



Collaboration with
Heritage Bodies



Public
Awareness



Education
& Awareness



Pro-active
Engagement



Citizen
Science



04

CULTURAL HERITAGE

UNESCO

“Cultural heritage includes artefacts, monuments, a group of buildings and sites, museums that have a diversity of values including symbolic, historic, artistic, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological, scientific and social significance.”

OUR HERITAGE

Preserving the stories of Fermanagh and Omagh District is about more than just remembering the past; the stories, language and traditions form the area's cultural fabric, maintaining its identity and connecting generations. Sharing these stories not only enriches understanding of our cultural heritage – or what we refer to as intangible heritage – but also enhances our connection to our physical surroundings.

The diversity of languages, particularly the Irish language and Ulster Scots traditions, provides a vehicle to preserve and share the District's heritage, through historical stories, folklore and traditional knowledge across generations.

Recording oral histories is essential for preserving the extensive legends passed down through generations. The area's musical heritage, in all its many forms, is highly valued in the community.



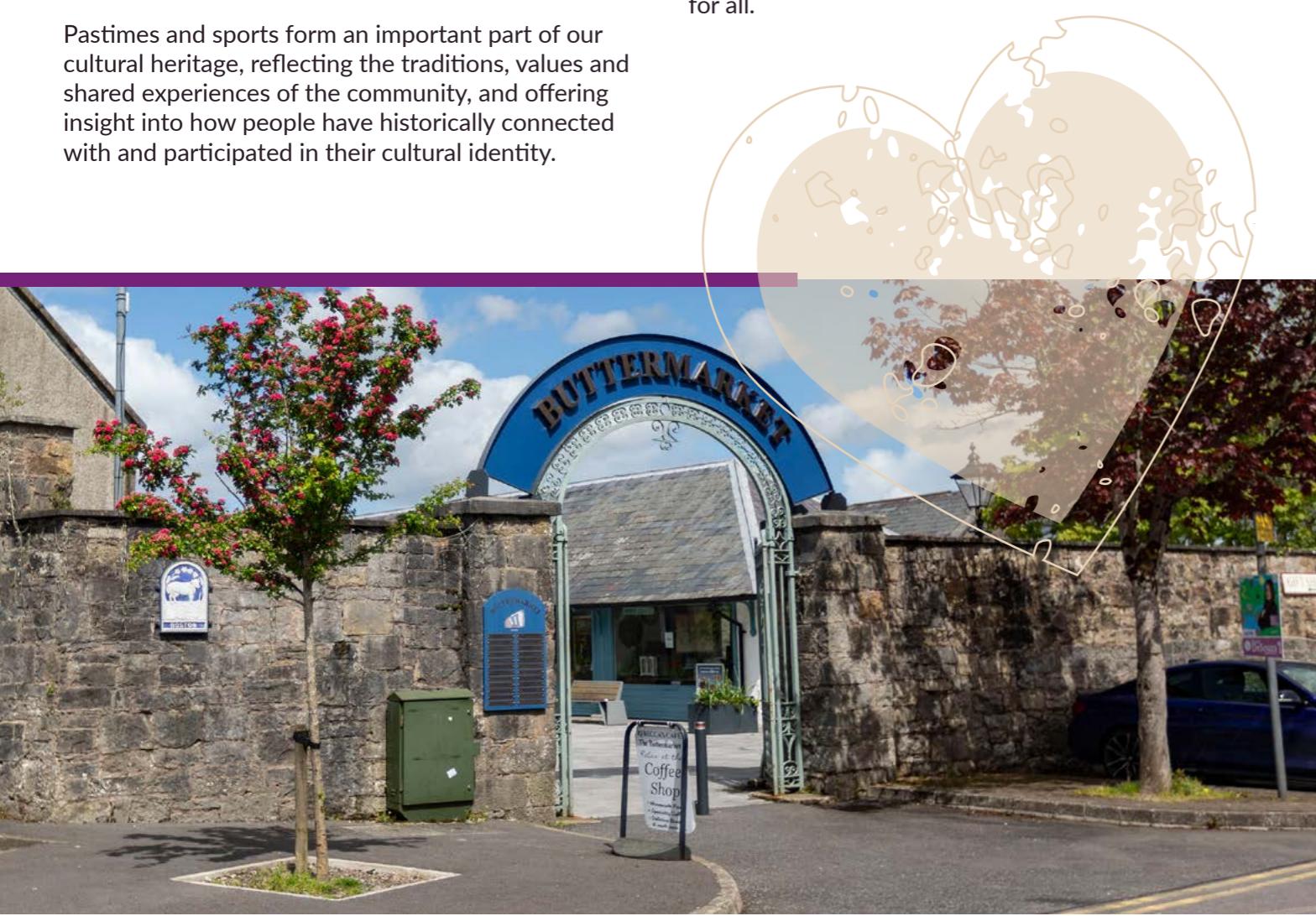
“The Fermanagh and Omagh District is renowned for its rich cultural heritage, defined by the strong ties of its people, their traditions and the environment.”

Our rich heritage is also reflected in place names, family names, and townlands, highlighting the deep roots of the community. Enniskillen Castle Museums, the Ardhownen, and the Strule Arts Centre play key roles in showcasing local culture through exhibitions, educational programmes, and events, while genealogy research connects us to the personal histories that have shaped this community.

Pastimes and sports form an important part of our cultural heritage, reflecting the traditions, values and shared experiences of the community, and offering insight into how people have historically connected with and participated in their cultural identity.

Transport heritage reflects a rich evolution, from life on the lough using cots to the advent of the railway, and everything in between.

This proud cultural legacy is at the core of the Heritage Plan, which aims to further develop, promote, and make our heritage experiences more accessible, ensuring they are inclusive and relevant for all.



Fermanagh and Omagh District Council delivers a range of activities to preserve and promote cultural heritage.



Documentation & Archiving



Education & Awareness



Support for Heritage & Cultural Events



Promotion of Language & Dialects



Collaboration with Community Groups



Heritage Projects



Grants & Funding

05

OUR PEOPLE, OUR PLACES, OUR PAST.

“Our heritage is rich, diverse and deeply rooted in the landscape and community’s identity, setting the Fermanagh and Omagh District apart as a place with significant heritage value.”



Fermanagh County Museum, part of Enniskillen Castle Museums, is committed to safeguarding the history of the local area as a source of enjoyment, education and culture for all. The Museum seeks to sustainably support and promote our unique local heritage from prehistory to the present, inspiring people locally, nationally and internationally to discover more. We seek to preserve our multi-disciplinary collections and heritage for future generations, engaging with people to accurately record and share information and knowledge.

We are committed to increasing physical and intellectual access to our collections and services for all communities, abilities and faiths. We seek to uplift people through enjoyment of learning through participation in an imaginative programme of exhibitions, events, school sessions, information service, online engagement, outreach activities and tours, reaching out to new and existing audiences. Fermanagh County Museum maintains full Accreditation under the nationally recognised scheme of standards for museums.

THREE CORE ELEMENTS

Fermanagh and Omagh District has a distinctive heritage delivered by the three core elements of:

UNPARALLELED NATURAL, BUILT & CULTURAL HERITAGE

CHARACTER & CONTRIBUTIONS OF OUR PEOPLE

A PROFOUND & UNIQUE HISTORY

The area's rich history, culture, and blend of built and natural heritage inspire local pride and attract tourism. Year-round heritage activities engage diverse audiences, with collaboration across sectors strengthening initiatives and community involvement.

The Council seeks to connect more people, especially young people, with heritage by sharing our unique story. By leveraging digital technology and strategic partnerships, we aim to broaden access, enhance conservation, and make heritage more inclusive. While heritage supports economic growth and regeneration, its positive impact on community well-being has shaped our plan, with the ambition to enhance and grow these benefits further.

HERITAGE IN CONTEXT

The value of heritage is demonstrated by its wide inclusion in governance policy and strategy.

The value of heritage is recognised as an effective tool for economic regeneration, an essential element of tourism, and a driver for urban and rural development.

The Heritage Plan will not exist in isolation. As heritage connects to so many aspects of our environment ranging from languages to sustainability, the Plan will support and be supported by a series of interlocking policy and guidance documents that affect governance in Fermanagh and Omagh.

It is important to note the number of strategic contexts and specific actions that will influence the Heritage Plan.

THE WIDER GOVERNANCE CONTEXT

Programme for Government

New Decade Approach

10X
Economic
Framework

Community Plan

Corporate
Plan

Local Development
Plan

Visitor Experience
Development
Plan

Place Shaping Plans
Enniskillen & Omagh

DfC Emerging
Culture, Arts &
Heritage Plan

Tourism Vision
& Action
Plan

HERITAGE PLAN

Irish
Language
Strategy &
Ulster Scots
Policy

Sponsorship
& Funding
Policies

Biodiversity
Plan

Cuilcagh
Lakelands,
Geopark
Development
Plan

Community
Wellbeing
Plans

Climate
Change &
Sustainable
Development
Plan

Linguistic
Diversity
Policy

Estates
Plan

Museum
& Heritage
Collections
Framework
Policy

Events &
Festivals
Strategy



07

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- Rich landscape and cultural heritage that fosters a strong sense of place and tells a compelling story.
- Strong educational programmes and emerging partnerships to enhance community engagement and heritage preservation.
- Effective use of existing resources, aligned policies, and innovative technologies to strengthen heritage initiatives.
- Robust governance and support from elected members ensure focused action and long-term sustainability.

WEAKNESSES

- Limited access to heritage assets, particularly in Omagh and private ownership.
- Insufficient and inconsistent funding hampers project development and sustainability.
- Need for better communication and identification of heritage synergies across the Council.
- Challenges include climate change, development impacts, and perceptions of heritage as primarily for older people.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Develop projects with soft outputs for a sense of place.
- Support heritage events fostering a sense of place.
- Utilise AI and new technologies for diverse engagement.

THREATS

- Revenue trail from new developments.
- Funding challenges for ongoing initiatives.
- Biodiversity and ecology impact of new developments.



08

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

IMPROVE ACCESS

Identify, explain and enhance access to our natural, built and cultural heritage, ensuring its value and conservation. This objective focuses on making heritage inclusive and accessible to transform hidden heritage into valued heritage and a source of inspiration, education and enjoyment.

WORK IN PARTNERSHIP

Collaborate with partners and stakeholders to create opportunities for awareness, engagement and participation supporting greater inclusion and diversity. By empowering individuals to learn, develop skills and explore heritage, this objective promotes inclusivity and a sense of belonging within the community through accessible and enriching opportunities.

DEVELOP & PROMOTE

Develop and promote our heritage assets to contribute to community wellbeing, heritage-led regeneration and tourism within the District. This objective enhances diverse heritage elements, attracting visitors and fostering economic growth while promoting a unique sense of place.

PROTECTING OUR HERITAGE

Champion the sustainable development, conservation and preservation of natural, built and cultural heritage. Taking action to protect our heritage ensures the sustainable development of future generations, preserves historical richness and leaves a lasting legacy for all. This objective prioritises the enduring vibrancy of our heritage in the community.

IMPROVE ACCESS

1. Heritage Events

Develop, deliver and support a calendar of annual heritage events and activities that celebrate local culture, history, and traditions across the District.

2. Stewardship & Access

Support, where possible, good stewardship, improved access and sharing of knowledge, information, artefacts and interpretation. Support rural and marginalised communities to promote equitable access to heritage opportunities.

3. Promote Local Stories

Explore, develop and promote the story of Fermanagh and Omagh, improve understanding about how particular heritage assets fit into the story and contribute to local significance, including recognition of places of worship as part of the Districts built and social heritage.

4. Community Heritage Surveys

Partner with community groups to conduct localised heritage surveys, such as vernacular building surveys, with professional guidance and support from the council.

5. Manage Collections

Continue to implement collection management policies (2024-2027) in line with Museum Accreditation standards.

6. Preserve Intangible Heritage

Support and deliver initiatives that integrate cultural and intangible heritage, including folklore, language, oral history, sport, pastimes, traditional crafts, music, and storytelling, to preserve and increase access to these practices within the community.

7. Enhance Fermanagh County Museum

Support Fermanagh County Museum, part of Enniskillen Castle Museums, in sharing the unique heritage of the local area through its collections and community engagement for new and existing audiences.

8. Build Heritage Skills

Offer a rolling programme of training sessions to build skills in areas such as oral history, conservation, archival research, and event planning.

9. Enhance Heritage Learning

Create and support initiatives that make learning about local heritage more accessible through workshops, talks, walks and tours, curriculum based school programmes, and community events.

10. Support Small Projects

Provide dedicated funding support for small heritage projects including European Heritage Open Day, Culture Night, Irish Language and Ulster Scots and providing access to heritage walks, talks and tours.

11. Signage & Digital Access

Improve access and understanding of key heritage sites through interpretation and digital access through online collections.

DEVELOP & PROMOTE

1. Promote Heritage Initiatives

Develop a clear and consistent communication plan to improve visibility, coordination and promotion of Council led and community partners heritage activity.

2. Storytelling Staff

Upskilling customer service staff to become storytellers of the place to develop staff skills and understanding and improve the visitor experience.

3. Integrate Heritage in Planning

Work cohesively to ensure that the care, conservation and enjoyment of heritage is integrated into planning processes and ensure heritage forms part of regeneration projects where appropriate.

4. Empower Heritage Champions

Identify and empower local volunteers and advocates to act as 'Heritage Champions', promoting heritage awareness and supporting community-led initiatives.

5. Explore Place Names & Stories

Prioritise projects that explore place names, family names, local stories, and the District's agricultural heritage including themes such as island life, railway history, ancient woodlands, and local folklore, to deepen understanding of people and place, promoting community cohesion.

6. Support Heritage Events

Support through sponsorship & grant aid heritage events to promote awareness and enjoyment of our heritage, attracting local communities and global tourists.

7. Celebrate Cultural Pastimes

Promote and support the inclusion of cultural pastimes such as native and traditional sports, local clubs, storytelling, and music to celebrate and preserve community traditions.

8. Develop Exhibitions & Activities

Develop, support, and showcase high quality, locally relevant exhibitions and associated activities, such as talks and workshops, to increase engagement with the District's natural, cultural, and built heritage.

9. Collaborate on Heritage Projects

Collaborate with local community groups, heritage organisations, and schools to co-create and deliver engaging heritage projects that reflect shared values and histories.

WORK IN PARTNERSHIP

1. Support Cultural Traditions

Support initiatives to explore Irish and Ulster Scots tradition. Strengthening connections with cultural traditions.

2. Explore Genealogy and Diaspora

Support local genealogy and explore diaspora initiatives within Fermanagh and Omagh District, develop projects with partners that highlight stories of place, including emigration, migration, and immigration.

3. Enable Community Heritage Projects

Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark is a place where outstanding and internationally important geological heritage is used to support sustainable development through conservation, education, community engagement and regenerative tourism that is driven and shaped by local community, businesses and stakeholders.

4. Sustain Heritage-led Projects

Continue to support the sustainability of the heritage led projects ie: Lough Erne Pilgrim Way, Enniskillen Workhouse, Omagh Workhouse, Omagh Music Trail.

5. Strengthen Collaboration

Develop links with Heritage Officers and Museums from neighbouring and cross border Councils to share knowledge, best practice, lessons learned and partner on suitable projects.

6. Build Heritage Networks

Create a facilitated network for local heritage groups and individuals to meet regularly, share learning, collaborate, and strengthen sector wide connections.

7. Highlight Local Archaeology

Collaborate with partners to explore and highlight the unique archaeology of the area, fostering discovery and preservation.

8. Host Schools Heritage Conference

Organise a yearly heritage conference for schools, featuring participation from local heritage groups. Empower students to select a new theme each year to ensure relevance and engagement.

9. Provide Community Toolkits

Provide resources to support independent project delivery, including guidance on funding, heritage project planning, and clear signposting on who to contact within council structures.



PROTECTING OUR HERITAGE

1. Enhance Funding Profile

Improve District's profile with funding bodies through project highlight reports showcasing the work of Council and communities.

2. Advance Community Engagement

Sustain our commitment to the community by advancing our school and community engagement initiatives. Including eco and forest schools and life long learning programmes.

3. The Sperrins and Cuilcagh Lakelands

UNESCO Global Geopark

Support the objectives of the Sperrins Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan, Cuilcagh Lakelands UNESCO Global Geopark Development Plan.

4. Promote Community Archaeology

Explore opportunities to support community focused archaeology initiatives that raise the profile of local sites, encourage education, and improve access.

5. Interpret Key Historical Events

Highlight the transformational impact of Famine and industrialisation, including emigration and language, through interpretation and storytelling.

6. Promote Sustainability and Protection

Collaborate to support and align with strategies and policies that promote sustainability and the protection of our natural, built, and cultural heritage - ensuring a joined up approach to environmental and heritage priorities across the District.

7. Heritage Regeneration

Integrate heritage considerations into Council and partner led capital projects, ensuring that the built and natural heritage objectives are embedded in the planning and development process of project mandates and business case development.



10

MONITORING & REPORTING

While the Heritage Action Plan sets a course of action over the next five years, our priorities will remain adaptable, ensuring resilience in the face of changing circumstances.

The vision and strategic objectives provide guidance, instilling confidence in the Council's commitment and fostering an environment conducive to sustained collaboration and investment.

A key driver is the active involvement of a diverse range of individuals in heritage activities. We are dedicated to including those currently under represented in heritage, creating opportunities for shared storytelling, and extending the benefits of heritage to all.

Monitoring and evaluation will be developed against the actions to track progress and the actions will be monitored through the Council's internal Heritage Forum with bi-annual updates to the Council.

The Council's Heritage Stakeholder Group will be drawn from organisations in the sector and stakeholders including but not limited to: Statutory Agencies, Education, Community Groups and Heritage Organisations and Groups.

10

HERITAGE HIGHLIGHTS

As a council, we are extremely proud of our rich heritage and remain committed to supporting heritage projects within the community. While we can't do everything alone, by working in partnership with others and creating space for collaboration, we can do our part to support and strengthen our shared heritage.

The Heritage Plan is not a reflection of activity but a strategic roadmap for the future, reinforcing our ongoing dedication

to preserving and promoting our unique heritage.

We take pride in our achievements to date and look forward to building on this success. While this document highlights some of our recent accomplishments, it is by no means exhaustive, as we continue to work towards even greater milestones.



ARCHAEOLOGY



NECARNE CASTLE



LOUGH ERNE PILGRIM WAY

BIODIVERSITY







Fermanagh & Omagh District Council

HERITAGE PLAN 2030



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