

WESTMEATH STRATEGIC HERITAGE PLAN 2024-2030



Acknowledgements

Westmeath Heritage Forum and Westmeath County Council wish to acknowledge the role of the Heritage Council in supporting the preparation of this Heritage Plan, in association with Westmeath County Council. In addition, the Forum and Westmeath County Council acknowledge the support of the Heritage Council through its contribution to the funding of the post of the Heritage Officer and the implementation of projects under the Heritage Plan 2018-2023, in association with Westmeath County Council.

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Some members of the Westmeath Heritage Forum at the Old Gaol in Fore, in 2022 following conservation works to the monument

Design by Ruth Murray

Cover Image (L-R clockwise): Athlone Castle, Bee Orchid, Belvedere House, Gardens & Park, Mullingar, The Catstone at The Hill of Uisneach, Heritage Week event, Cloncrow Bog 2022, Sundew © T. Kelly

Photos taken by Melanie McQuade unless otherwise stated

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Foreword

Message from the Cathaoirleach and Chief Executive of Westmeath County Council

We are pleased to welcome the Westmeath Strategic Heritage Plan 2024 - 2030. This is the fourth Heritage Plan for County Westmeath. It builds on the achievements of the preceding plans and reflects the ongoing commitment of Westmeath County Council's executive and elected members in caring for our Heritage.

Westmeath has a rich and varied heritage of which we can be proud. The Strategic Heritage Plan 2024 - 2030 sets out four objectives and provides practical actions to ensure greater awareness, understanding, protection and enjoyment of our heritage. It is a dynamic plan which can respond to evolving opportunities. The actions of the Plan will be evaluated by the performance indicators.

The Westmeath Strategic Heritage Plan 2024 - 2030 aligns with our broader vision for economic, tourism and community development, as well as biodiversity and climate action as outlined in the plans and policy documents of Westmeath County Council.

We would like to thank all the organisations and individuals who generously gave of their time and worked in partnership through the Westmeath Heritage Forum on the preparation of this plan. The implementation of the Strategic Heritage Plan will be overseen by the Heritage Forum with support from Westmeath County Council, the Heritage Council and other partners. The support of these partners is gratefully acknowledged.

We look forward to the delivery of the Westmeath Strategic Heritage Plan 2024 - 2030 and the benefits it will bring to those living, working in and visiting Westmeath.



Cllr. Liam McDaniel
Cathaoirleach



Pat Gallagher
Chief Executive

Message from Chair of Heritage Forum

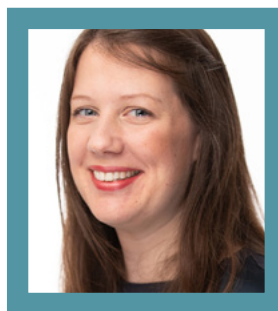
Westmeath has a rich tapestry of heritage from lakes, rivers and wetlands, walled towns, historic estates and traditional high streets, music, language, storytelling, skills and crafts. As Chair of the heritage forum in Westmeath, I have seen how vibrant and valuable our heritage is in our communities and the ongoing work around the county to record and protect it.

In this plan we aim to safeguard our heritage both tangible and intangible and make heritage more accessible and inclusive for all. This publication of the fourth Westmeath Heritage Plan is important and timely. It is a framework to assist us all in discovering, protecting, enhancing, and celebrating our collective heritage. The plan builds upon the previous plans and work carried out by the Westmeath heritage office and the many heritage groups that work tirelessly year in year out.

The plan has been crafted by our Heritage Officer, Melanie McQuade, the membership of the heritage forum with input from the public through consultations and submissions. I want to sincerely thank all contributors to the plan. I acknowledge the support of Westmeath County Council and the Heritage Council through the preparation of this plan and in facilitating the implementation.

The document is for use by all people and groups that interact with our county's heritage. I encourage everyone to read through the plan and get involved in Heritage Action by joining a local group, attending events and workshops or undertaking your own work to protect and promote our county's heritage.

Ní neart go cur le chéile.



Cllr. Louise Heavin
Chair of the Westmeath
Heritage Forum

Introduction

What is Heritage?

The Heritage Act 1995 defines Heritage as *buildings, monuments, archaeological objects, heritage objects, architectural heritage, flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, seascapes, wrecks, geology, heritage gardens and parks, and inland waterways*. These all refer to tangible heritage. In 2003 UNESCO adopted the inclusion of intangible cultural heritage into the meaning of heritage. This recognises the importance of the sense of place and of memory, and of pride and appreciation of what has gone before.

What is the Heritage Plan?

The Westmeath Heritage Plan 2024-2030 sets out a framework for the work of Westmeath County Council Heritage Office, in partnership with groups and agencies, to deliver heritage projects within the County. This is the fourth Heritage Plan for Westmeath. It aims to build on the achievements of the previous plans and is written in the context of the national Heritage Plan, *Heritage Ireland 2030*, and the Heritage Council Strategic Plan 2023-2028 '*Our Place in Time*'.

The Westmeath Heritage Plan has also been informed by Project Ireland 2040 and the National Development Plan, the National Biodiversity Action Plan, The National Peatlands Strategy 2015, the National Landscape Strategy 2015-2025, Government Policy on Architecture, Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan for Built and Archaeological Heritage, The National Policy on Architecture and the National Strategy for Vernacular Heritage.

The Heritage Plan works alongside the Policy objectives of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027, Westmeath County Council Corporate Plan, the Westmeath Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023-2027 and Westmeath Tourism Strategy 2023-2027. The Heritage Plan will also work alongside the Local Authority Climate Action Plan, Local Economic and Community Plan and Westmeath Biodiversity Plan.

Outcomes of the Westmeath Heritage Plan 2018-2023 include:

- Management of Invasive Alien Species at Belvedere House, Gardens and Park
- Audit of Geological Heritage sites in Westmeath
- Wetlands Survey (desktop and field survey)
- Survey of Industrial Heritage
- Training in best practice management and recording of historic graveyards
- Conservation works to Athlone Town Wall; The Old Gaol in Fore; Kilbixy Leper Hospital, Killefree Church in Castlepollard, St Owen's Church in Ballymore, Monasset Tower House and Phase 1 conservation works to Old Court Devenish House and the Number One Gun Battery in Athlone and to Templecross Church, Tristernagh.
- Conservation Management Plans have been prepared for Belvedere House Gardens and Park, the Hill of Uisneach, The Town Defences in Fore, St Feichin's Bath and Mill, Fore as well as Church and graveyard sites in Griffinstown, Killare, Castle lost, and Kilpatrick.
- Digital Interpretation of the Bronze Age Trackway in Mayne
- Lidar Survey of Hill of Uisneach
- Training in Oral History and an audit of Oral Heritage Recordings
- Westmeath Field Names Recording Project

*A full review of the Actions of Westmeath Heritage Plan 2018-2023 and links to related project reports is provided in [Appendix 2](#)



Athlone Town Wall at Church Street/St Mary's following conservation works funded by the Community Monuments Fund 2020 and 2021

Guiding Principles

Principles which underpin the objectives of the Heritage Plan include:

Sustainable Development - 'Development which meets the need of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.' The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by all the United Nations Member States in 2015 as part of the Agenda for Sustainable Development, which set out a 15-year plan to achieve the goals.

Diversity and Inclusion - every effort will be made to ensure that all events and projects undertaken as part of the delivery of this plan reflect the interests of the socially and culturally diverse community of the County and are accessible to everyone.

The Aarhus Convention - The UNECE (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe) Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters.

These principles will be borne in mind at all stages of implementation of the Heritage Plan.



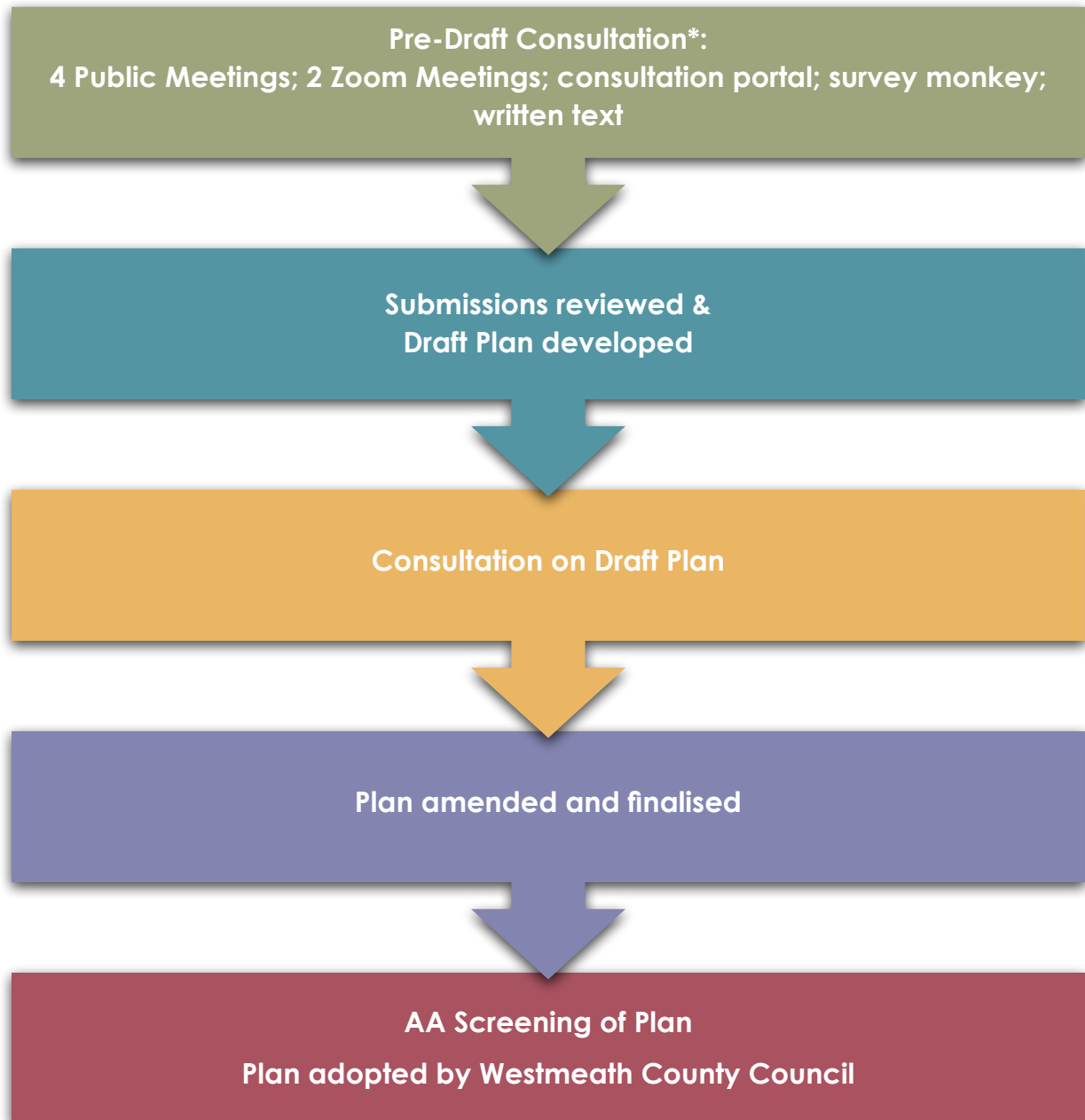
Launch of the Threading the Táin Exhibition in the Atrium, County Buildings, August 2022

The Westmeath Heritage Forum

The Westmeath Heritage Forum is a non-statutory group established by Westmeath County Council to provide advice, support and partnership on the preparation and implementation of the Heritage Plan. The forum meets quarterly, and these meetings allow for the exchange of information, the formation of partnerships and discussion on heritage programmes and projects. The current membership of the forum is as follows:

Name	Association	Sector
Louise Heavin - Chair	Cllr Athlone Municipal District	Local Government
Tom Farrell	Cllr Athlone Municipal District	Local Government
Orla McGann	Snr Executive Planner WCC	Local Authority
Triona Finnen	National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)	Government Department
Nicola Matthews	Dept Housing Heritage and Local Government	Government Agency
David Webster	Teagasc	Government Agency
Martin Moffatt	Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI)	Government Agency
Bernie Leavy	Westmeath Community Development (WCD)	Local Development
Seamus O'Brien	National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD)	Education
Paddy Donnelly	Irish Farmers' Association (IFA)	Agriculture
Ruth Illingworth	Westmeath Archaeological and Historical Society	Heritage Group
Tom O'Callaghan	Birdwatch Ireland	Heritage Group
Basil Mannion / Cathal Flood	Local Area Water and Communities Officer (LAWCO)	Community
Mary Fallon	Public Participation Network (PPN) Mullingar Municipal District	Community
Seamus McDermott	Public Participation Network (PPN) Athlone Municipal District	Community
Aidan Walsh	Museum Sector - archaeology	Community
Melanie McQuade	Heritage Officer	Local Authority
Benan Clancy	Architectural Conservation Officer	Local Authority
Christina Sweeney	Biodiversity Officer	Local Authority

How the Westmeath Heritage Plan was developed



*Pre-Draft consultation was carried out during Summer 2022. That phase of consultation was for a combined Heritage and Biodiversity Plan. In the Autumn of 2022, the Biodiversity Officer Programme was announced with the Biodiversity Officer to have responsibility for preparing and implementing the County Biodiversity Action Plan. Following this announcement, the model of individual Heritage and Biodiversity Plans was retained and the preparation of the Biodiversity Plan deferred until the appointment of the Biodiversity Officer.

How will the Heritage Plan work?

- The Heritage Officer will work with the Westmeath Heritage Forum to deliver the Plan.
- An annual work plan will be drawn up to guide the implementation of the Strategic Plan.
- Further collaboration on implementing the Heritage Plan by way of engagement programmes, information and promotion will be facilitated by the Architectural Conservation Officer (who leads on the delivery of the Built Heritage Investment Scheme and the Historic Structures Fund and advises on Protected Structures and historic buildings), the Biodiversity Officer, Westmeath Libraries and the Tourism Officer.
- The work of local communities and individuals, often in a voluntary capacity, continues to be an invaluable resource and a key driver of heritage action in Westmeath. Collaboration with and strengthening of supports for this sector will be essential to implementing the Plan.
- Financial resources for delivery of the Plan include Westmeath County Council budget provision and external funding opportunities such as The Heritage Council Grant Schemes, the Community Monuments Fund and the Creative Ireland Programme. Other national and/or EU funding opportunities, possibly in collaboration with regional and/ or transboundary partners, will be explored.
- The Performance Indicators will be reported on annually.
- The Heritage Plan will be evaluated at the end of the plan period (2030).

AIM

To increase awareness and appreciation of our County's Heritage and safeguard it for present and future generations.

VISION

To ensure this Heritage Plan is a plan for all people in Westmeath, that it will build capacity across the heritage sector and ensure our Heritage is celebrated appropriately and managed with care.



Photo: Heritage Week event, Cloncrow Bog 2021

Objectives and Actions

Four strategic objectives have been established with a series of actions set out under each objective to guide the implementation of the Plan. Each of the actions has performance indicators, which will be used to monitor the implementation of the plan.

The objectives are as follows:

Objective 1 Encourage and support a greater awareness and appreciation of our Heritage

Objective 2 Expand knowledge, develop skills, deepen research and understanding of our heritage

Objective 3 Protect and safeguard our County's Heritage

Objective 4 Ensure our Heritage is accessible and inclusive



An Táin March in Athlone 2022

Objective 1

Encourage and support a greater awareness and appreciation of our Heritage

Actions proposed	Performance Indicators
1. Raise awareness of our Heritage, including the findings of new research, by all appropriate means.	Number of Press releases, social media posts and regular mail outs. Heritage content on Westmeath County Council/ Westmeath Culture websites updated.
2. Collaborate with colleagues and external partners including LAWPRO, The Heritage Council and Irish Wall Towns Network (IWTN) to raise the profile of our heritage.	Collaboration on messaging and communication wherever relevant.
3. Continue to implement the All Ireland Pollinator Plan as part of our partnership agreement with the National Biodiversity Data Centre. Support and promote this and other key initiatives including the Creative Ireland Strategy, The Heritage Council's 'Heritage in Schools Programme' and other relevant plans and programmes that arise during the life of the Plan.	Westmeath County Council Pollinator Actions submitted annually to the National biodiversity Data Centre. Initiatives promoted and supported; Number of schools engaging in Heritage Council's 'Heritage in Schools Programme'.
4. Support, organise and promote heritage events and digital outputs, in conjunction with our local communities, with particular emphasis on key national and local calendar events which include Heritage Week, Culture Night etc.	Number of heritage events and/or digital outputs organised and supported annually. Participation/ engagement and feedback measured, where possible.
5. Continue Westmeath Heritage Social media channels. Find and embrace new opportunities and innovative ways to engage with and communicate about our Heritage and aim to reach new audiences.	New models of communication and engagement in heritage used. Participation/ engagement and feedback measured, where possible.
6. Promote sustainable and appropriate Heritage Tourism.	Sustainable and appropriate Heritage Tourism initiatives promoted.

Objective 2

Expand knowledge, develop skills, deepen research and understanding of our heritage

Actions proposed	Performance Indicators
1. Address gaps in knowledge and expand baseline data by supporting and undertaking projects to identify, record and research aspects of our diverse heritage.	Number of projects completed; data gathered on different aspects of our heritage.
2. Work to publish and disseminate new data and research findings about Westmeath's Heritage.	Reports/datasets made available in Local Studies Section of Library; online and/or published (as appropriate).
3. Support individuals and communities to explore, record and document our heritage by providing training and expert guidance.	Number of training/mentoring opportunities provided at local and/or county level.
4. Acknowledging the crucial role played by volunteers in Heritage groups, support the development of local Heritage groups by promoting networking, capacity building and knowledge sharing.	Deliver an annual heritage event that encourages knowledge sharing, networking and capacity building.
5. Acknowledge the heritage significance of Traditional Skills and practices, such as building skills and vernacular crafts, and encourage documenting and sharing of these skills.	Number of Traditional skills documented and workshops delivered.



Rethatching Clonaboy 2022 funded by the Built Heritage Investment Scheme

Objective 3

Protect and safeguard our County's Heritage

Actions proposed	Performance Indicators
<p>1. Input and advise on county and regional policy, plans and programmes where relevant to, or likely to impact on, Heritage including Climate Adaptation, URDF, RRDF, ERDF, Just Transition Fund, Town Centres First and others that may arise during the life of the Plan.</p>	<p>Heritage considered and incorporated into policies, plans and programmes where relevant.</p>
<p>2. Work closely with the Biodiversity Officer, the Climate Action Officer, Architectural Conservation Officer and relevant external partners to ensure that Biodiversity and Climate Adaptation are key considerations in all Heritage Projects and communications.</p>	<p>Biodiversity and Climate Adaptation considered and appropriate measures incorporated into Heritage Projects and communications.</p>
<p>3. Collaborate on the implementation of Westmeath Biodiversity Plan and the Westmeath Climate Action Plan and support implementation of Built and Archaeological Heritage and Biodiversity Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plans.</p>	<p>Relevant actions of the (emerging) Westmeath Biodiversity Plan and Climate Action Plan identified and implemented.</p>
<p>4. Engage with the custodians of heritage (sites, objects, archival material and intangible heritage) in public and private ownership, and in the care of communities to ensure the appropriate care and management of our heritage.</p>	<p>Owners and custodians advised on best practice care and management of heritage.</p>
<p>5. Prepare Conservation Management Plans for key heritage sites and monuments and implement existing Conservation Management Plans in order of priority needs. (To date Conservation Management Plans have been prepared for Belvedere House, Gardens and Park; Athlone Town Wall; The No. 1 Gun Battery, Athlone; Court Devenish House, Athlone; St Feichin's Bath and Mill, Fore; Fore town defences, church and graveyard sites in Killare, Griffinstown, Castlelost and Kilpatrick).</p>	<p>Number of Conservation Management Plans prepared, and conservation projects undertaken.</p>
<p>6. Develop and resource maintenance programme focusing on sites where conservation works have taken place.</p>	<p>Maintenance undertaken in collaboration with relevant partners.</p>

Objective 3

Protect and safeguard our County's Heritage

Actions proposed	Performance Indicators
<p>7. Work with relevant partners and private owners to attain relevant permissions, secure funding and carry out appropriate works, in line with best practice and building climate resilience, in order to protect Historic Buildings, Archaeological Monuments (including historic graveyards) and Heritage objects.</p>	<p>Number of projects funded and implemented in line with best practice.</p>
<p>8. Continue to work with all relevant partners and stakeholders to progress the Royal sites of Ireland, (Navan Fort in Armagh, Rathcroghan in Roscommon, The Hill of Tara in Meath, Dún Ailinne in Kildare, the Rock of Cashel in Tipperary and the Hill of Uisneach in Westmeath) towards nomination for inclusion on UNESCO's World Heritage List.</p>	<p>Royal sites progressed towards nomination for inclusion on UNESCO's World Heritage List.</p>
<p>9. Support the management of and access to archives held by Westmeath County Council and seek to appoint an Archivist.</p>	<p>Professional archivist working on archive collections held by Westmeath County Council, subject to national funding support.</p>



Site meeting, during conservation works at the 'Leper Hospital' in Kilbixy

Objective 4

Ensure our Heritage is accessible and inclusive

Actions proposed	Performance Indicators
1. Celebrate and explore the heritages of all our communities.	Inclusive programming.
2. Encourage and support communities and individuals to develop (appropriate) heritage projects and secure funding for same.	Number of Heritage Projects developed and funded.
3. Encourage increased accessibility to Heritage sites and work with relevant partners to facilitate this where appropriate and sustainable.	Increased accessibility encouraged where appropriate and sustainable.
4. Liaise with the Tourism Officer and all relevant partners, including appropriate professionals, to research and develop sustainable visitor access, heritage trails and accurate information regarding Heritage sites.	Number of Heritage Trails developed, sustainable access and increased information developed in collaboration with relevant partners and professionals.
5. Work with relevant partners and professionals to develop accurate and appropriate Heritage interpretation which may include signage, publications and/or digital interpretation.	Heritage signs/publications and digital heritage interpretation developed with professional input.
6. Explore and develop digital means to facilitate greater access to and interpretation of our heritage including digitisation of documents and archives, digital modelling etc.	Number of digital heritage projects developed, and documents digitised.
7. Ensure information generated by the implementation of this and previous plans is accessible to all and widely available.	Number of reports and datasets made available.

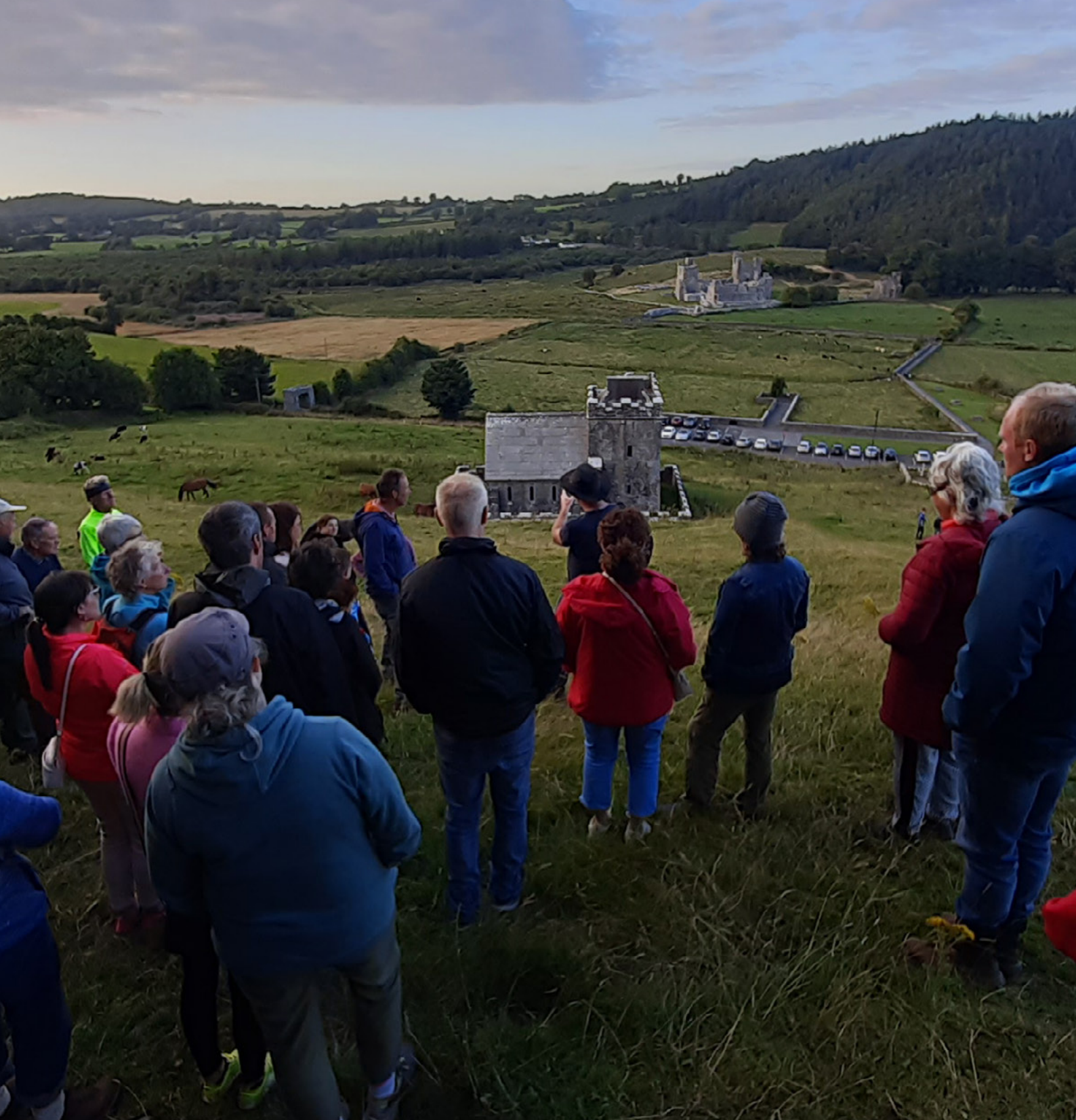


Photo: Heritage Week event in Fore, 2022

Appendix 1 - Glossary

CARO

Climate Action Regional Office

ERDF

European Regional Development Fund

IWTN

Irish Walled Towns Network of the Heritage Council

LAWPRO

Local Authority Waters Programme

NBDC

National Biodiversity Data Centre

RRDF

Rural Regeneration Development Fund

UNESCO

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

URDF

Urban Regeneration Development Fund

Vernacular

Designed to meet local needs, using available materials and reflecting local traditions.



Participants on the Butterfly identification workshop, Coolure Demense, June 2022

Appendix 2 -

Review of Actions of County Westmeath Heritage Plan 2018-2023

Objective 1: Raise awareness of the heritage of Westmeath and increase understanding of its value		
Action	Objective 1: Raise awareness of the heritage of Westmeath and increase understanding of its value	
	Action	Progress to Date
1.1	Disseminate information on all aspects of the heritage of the county through the use of digital technologies, via social media and all appropriate means.	Ongoing implementation via Heritage Office Newsletters, and social media (Westmeath Heritage facebook, X and Instagram). Digital models of Heritage sites & Features created – Bealin High Cross 2018; Mayne Bronze Age Trackway 2021; Dysert High Cross, Athlone Carved Head, Ballymore architectural fragments, Rathwire Way side crosses, Rattan High Cross 2022. Supporting the provision of the Heritage Council's Heritage Map Viewer- www.heritagemaps.ie
1.2	Support and organise conferences, talks, seminars and events on heritage themes relevant to the conservation and promotion of Westmeath's heritage.	Advice for care and Conservation of Historic Graveyards 2018; Talk on the route of the Táin Bó Cúailnge in Westmeath 2019; Training for WCC staff on identification and management of Invasive Alien Plant Species, Advice on Archiving family photographs 2023.
1.3	Promote accessibility by hosting and supporting public events at heritage sites, both publicly and privately owned.	Heritage Week tour of Athlone Town Wall including parts on privately owned land; Butterfly identification workshop Castlepollard Library and Coloure Demense; Bat Walks; Supported and promoted Heritage Week events on privately owned lands; e.g. Knockastia, Tullynally, Hill of Uisneach
1.4	Promote wider awareness of all aspects of heritage through participation in national programmes and events such as Heritage Week, Water Day, Biodiversity Day, Tree Week, Decade of Commemorations, Creative Ireland and other appropriate events that may arise during the life of the Plan.	Ongoing implementation e.g. World Wetlands Day events; events for Biodiversity Week; Heritage Week; Decade of Centenaries events 2018-2023. Creative Ireland has supported Oral History Training; Audit of Oral History in Westmeath; Creation of 'Threading the Táin' Tapestry; Storytelling events;

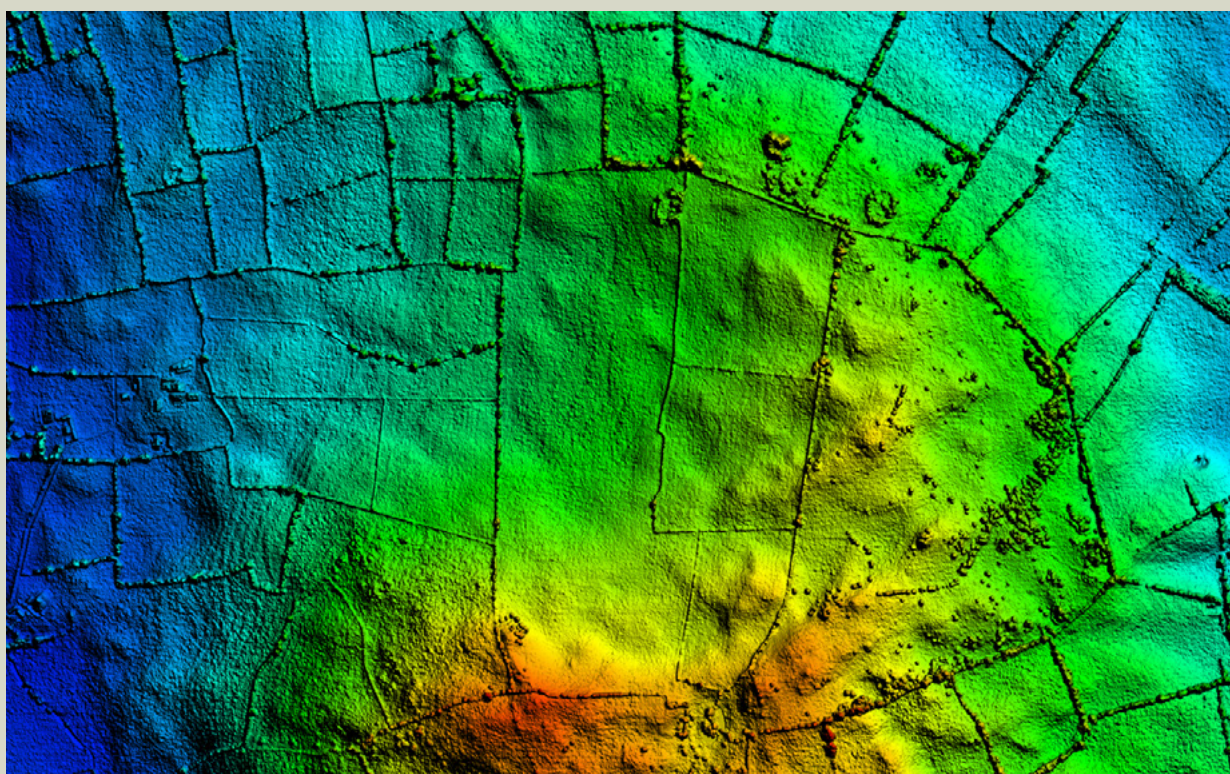
Action Objective 1: Raise awareness of the heritage of Westmeath and increase understanding of its value		
	Action	Progress to Date
1.5	Promote participation in heritage awareness-raising programmes for schools, such as the Heritage Council's <i>Heritage in Schools</i> programme and other similar initiatives.	Ongoing implementation, 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage – Primary School's Art Competition with winner getting a visit from 'the Big Dig' for their school, also funded Heritage in Schools Specialists visits to several schools in 2022.
1.6	Promote and support the implementation of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015-2020 (and any revisions to the plan thereafter).	Ongoing implementation. Westmeath County Council signed up as partners on the Plan in 2019 and Council actions reported annually.
1.7	Support and advocate for the provision of a biodiversity education service in the region.	Ongoing – provision via Heritage in Schools and Green Schools.
1.8	Support the Local Authority Water and Communities Office (LAWCO) and work with them to encourage public participation in helping to enhance our water quality.	Ongoing implementation.



Screening of the film 'Memories of the Big House', Tuar Ard, Moate 2022

Action <i>Objective 2: Record the heritage of Westmeath and disseminate data</i>		
	Action	Progress to Date
2.1.	Audit existing surveys/inventories of heritage in Westmeath. Address knowledge gaps by developing and implementing a prioritised programme for research and surveys, in partnership with local, regional and national bodies. Where practical, collate and make available relevant survey data generated through public projects.	Audit of Graveyard recordings 2018; Survey of Industrial Heritage 2019 (desktop and focused field survey 2020); Oral History recording of past industries (2019); Wetland Survey; desktop (2019); field surveys (2020-23); Survey of Thatched Buildings in Westmeath 2021; Community recording of wrought iron gates 2023.
2.2.	Carry out an audit of County Geological Sites in partnership with Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI), with the results informing how best to promote, conserve and develop geosites and geological heritage in Westmeath.	Survey of Geological Heritage 2018;
2.3.	Develop and support projects which record memorials in historic graveyards, in line with best practice and employing relevant technologies where appropriate.	Training offered 2018 and funded recording of memorials in St Owen's Graveyard Ballymore; https://historicgraves.com/graveyard/st-owen-s-ballymore/wm-bmre
2.4.	Initiate and develop a project to record field names in partnership with local communities.	Commenced as a Pilot Project 2018 and continued 2019; 2020; 2021; 2022; 2023.
2.5.	Support the participation of individuals and communities in recording heritage data of all types (natural, built, cultural, tangible and intangible) by providing information, guidance and structured training.	Oral History Training provided 2020; Workshop in Butterfly ID and training in surveying Marsh Fritillary webs in 2022.
2.6.	Ensure that any information generated through the implementation of this plan, previous Heritage Plans and the Biodiversity Action Plan (2014-2020) is accessible to all and widely available.	Reports uploaded to website and, where appropriate, hard copies made available to Local Studies Section of Westmeath Library.

Action Objective 2: Record the heritage of Westmeath and disseminate data		
	Action	Progress to Date
2.7.	Encourage and support best practice in researching, compiling and producing books, posters and leaflets on various aspects of the heritage of Westmeath.	Ongoing implementation e.g. include Archaeology Ireland Heritage Guides to the Route of the Táin Bó Cúailnge in counties Westmeath and Meath, Athlone Castle and the Hill of Uisneach.
2.8.	Endeavour to work with partners to digitise historical records and make these available where feasible/ appropriate.	Digitised a selection of the Tullynally Archive, glass negatives from the Howard-Bury Collection, minutes of the Mullingar Union 1913-1921, Westmeath County Council 1912 – 1924 and Mullingar Town Commissioners 1908-1923 and made these available in the Local Studies Section of Westmeath Libraries.



LiDAR image of the Hill of Uisneach, funded by Community Monuments Fund 2020 © Bluesky World

Action <i>Objective 3: Promote best practice in Conservation and management of heritage</i>		
	Action	Progress to Date
3.1.	Support the implementation of actions in the County Westmeath Biodiversity Action Plan 2014-2020 (BAP) and support the review and update of this plan as required.	Ongoing implementation. Commenced consultation on new Plan 2022 and appointment of Biodiversity Officer in 2023 will progress this.
3.2.	Support the preparation of Habitat Management Plans at Natura 2000 sites and other relevant sites in the county.	Habitat Management Plan prepared for Council owned lands at Lough Ennell, Biodiversity Enhancement Plan prepared for Council owned lands at Coolure Demense, Kerinstown/Balrowan, Ranelagh, Bogganfin and Culleenmore.
3.3.	Support the conservation and development of the architectural heritage of the County through the provision of appropriate expertise by Westmeath County Council.	Conservation Architectural Heritage Officer appointed in 2023.
3.4.	Implement conservation and management plans prepared to date (<i>Athlone Town Walls and Defences Conservation Plan, Fore Special Heritage Area Management Study</i>) and others that are completed during the life of the Plan. Liaise with stakeholders, including landowners, to support the preparation of conservation management plans for key sites including, but not exclusive to, Kilbixy and Ardnurcher.	<p>Conservation works to Athlone Town Wall 2020-23.</p> <p>Worked with Heritage Groups and landowners to implement Conservation Plans for No. 1 Gun Battery; Kilbixy 'Leper Hospital'; St Owen's Church, Ballymore; Monasset Tower House; The Old Gaol, Fore; St Feichin's Bath Fore. Phase 1 conservation works completed at Killafree Church, Castlepollard, Old Court Devenish House, Athlone and Templecross Church, Tristernagh.</p> <p>Conservation Plans prepared for The Hill of Uisneach; Belvedere House, Gardens and Park; the Town Defences in Fore, St Feichin's Bath and Mill, Fore, as well as Church and graveyard sites in Griffinstown, Killare, Castle lost, and Kilpatrick (near Collinstown).</p>

Action <i>Objective 3: Promote best practice in Conservation and management of heritage</i>		
	Action	Progress to Date
3.5	Engage with key stakeholders to consider proposals for and explore the feasibility of working towards developing nature conservation areas and biodiversity access projects at key locations such as the River Inny Basin, while also taking into consideration the rich archaeological and cultural heritage of this area.	Ongoing; exploring the possibility of creating Lough Ree UNESCO Biosphere in conjunction with NPWS and neighbouring Local Authorities.
3.6	Work with relevant stakeholders to encourage appropriate alternative uses for vacant heritage buildings and structures.	Ongoing implementation.
3.7	Develop a guidance “tool kit” for use at community and professional level for heritage project managers to assess management effectiveness.	Ongoing – further work required.
3.8	Engage key stakeholders in implementing best practice care and conservation of historic graveyards and archaeological monuments in Co. Westmeath, with particular focus on those monuments deemed to be at risk.	Ongoing implementation via the Community Monuments Fund and other appropriate funding streams
3.9	Develop heritage assets register for Westmeath County Council to ensure that heritage sites and collections in the care and/or ownership of the Council are appropriately managed, interpreted and accessible to all.	Ongoing. Work done on the visit Westmeath App makes information accessible.
3.10	Continue to support the promotion of Uisneach as one of the Royal Sites of Ireland, by means such as the proposal for the designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and /or other appropriate initiatives. (The Royal Sites of Ireland are on the Irish Tentative List of properties for future nomination to the UNESCO World Heritage List).	Ongoing implementation. Following full review in 2020-1 The Royal Sites was listed on the revised Irish Tentative List of properties for future nomination to the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Action Objective 3: Promote best practice in Conservation and management of heritage		
	Action	Progress to Date
3.11	Work with all relevant stakeholders to explore and support the most appropriate means and measures for the protection, promotion and interpretation of the Bronze Age wooden road and trackway at Mayne Bog.	Digital Interpretation of Mayne Bog Trackway funded via the Community Monuments Fund in 2020 and available on Westmeath Archaeological and Historical Society website: http://whahs.ie/mayne-bog-trackway/
3.12	Liaise with key stake holders in the care and maintenance of built heritage in Co. Westmeath through best practice guidance, promotion of heritage led regeneration, public realm planning, and promotion of traditional building skills.	Ongoing implementation.
3.13	Identify partners with whom to explore the possibility of developing and implementing a series of workshops & knowledge transfer sessions in traditional skills such as building with lime mortar, and vernacular crafts.	Ongoing – to be developed further. Workshops in spinning, basket making and heritage lace delivered in 2023.



Action Objective 4: Promote enjoyment and accessibility of heritage		
	Action	Progress to Date
4.1.	Where physical access is limited, explore new technologies to bring understanding of archives, heritage objects and sites to a wider audience by using digitisation, modelling and related technologies and making these accessible on-line where possible / appropriate.	A series of digital models of Archaeological monuments and features created including Bealin High Cross and other High Crosses, Ballymore Shrine, the Athlone Head and Wayside Crosses Killucan/Rathwire; http://www.westmeathcoco.ie/en/ourservices/planning/conservationheritage/heritageresources/ LiDAR survey of Uisneach; https://dcenr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=b7c4b0e763964070ad69bf8c1572c9f5 Mayne Bog Trackway: http://whahs.ie/mayne-bog-trackway/
4.2.	Liaise with the Tourism Officer and other relevant partners to publish a list with accompanying maps of heritage sites which are open to the public in Co. Westmeath.	Ongoing. Fore map revised and printed; digital mapping available on Visit Westmeath App.
4.3.	Support efforts to promote sustainable and appropriate heritage-related tourism, ensuring best conservation practice. Carry out Appropriate Assessment where required, and encourage input from appropriate professionals at all stages including interpretation.	Ongoing. Worked in partnership with the Tourism Office to create the Visit Westmeath App 2020/1.
4.4.	Research and develop heritage trails in partnership with the Tourism Officer and relevant community groups, landowners and other stakeholders/ organisations.	Ongoing implementation.

Objective 4: Promote enjoyment and accessibility of heritage		
Action	Action	Progress to Date
4.5.	Liaise with relevant sectors in the development of greenways/walking trails/cycling routes to ensure that such projects are developed in a sustainable manner and that every opportunity is taken to promote the natural and built heritage and its interpretation along such routes.	Ongoing. Worked with Tourism Office and NRDO to develop Story Boards along old Rail Trail Greenway 2020/1.
4.5.	Promote dialogue and engagement between the arts, heritage and cultural sectors through initiatives such as the Creative Ireland and the Westmeath Culture and Creativity Strategy 2018-2022.	Ongoing. Arrivals and Departures was a Creative Ireland Project that celebrated the lifecycle of Swifts in 2018; Athlone Bridges Project 2023 celebrated the history and architecture of Athlone's bridges.
4.6.	Encourage and assist museums in the county to work towards the Heritage Council's Museums Standards and Accreditation Programme (MPSI).	Ongoing.



Screenshot of 3D digital model of carved head from Athlone

<http://www.westmeathcoco.ie/en/ourservices/planning/conservationheritage/heritageresources/>

© Digital Heritage Age

Action	Objective 5: Promote community participation in heritage plans and projects	
	Action	Progress to Date
5.1.	Build the capacity of local communities to engage in sustainable heritage projects by providing the necessary advice, information and training.	Ongoing implementation. Egs of training delivered to date include Oral History, Know Your Locality Training, Care and Conservation of Historic Graveyards, Recording graveyard memorials, sustainable gardening course provided.
5.2.	Identify and promote heritage projects where professional heritage groups and communities can work together with shared responsibility to increase community capacity development.	Ongoing implementation, for example facilitated through the Community Monuments Fund and the Heritage Council's Community Heritage Grant Scheme.
5.3.	Encourage and support communities in applying for funding for (appropriate) heritage projects.	Ongoing implementation and presentations made at annual PPN funding workshops.
5.4.	Promote Citizen Science programmes which aim to involve everyone in the collection of data on natural heritage.	Ongoing implementation.
5.5.	Facilitate interactive sharing and community-base learning between different groups.	Ongoing implementation.



Volunteers from the Women's Shed planting native tree saplings into an area cleared of Laurel, Belvedere House, Gardens & Park, Mullingar 2022



Filming on site for the Westmeath Wrought Iron Gates Project 2023

Three videos available on Westmeath County Council YouTube Channel

- Discovering Wrought Iron Gates – Our Vernacular Heritage:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=te8x0U3iy-g>
- Tips for maintaining and conserving painted wrought iron gates:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= loLrOmahE0>
- Maintenance and Conservation of unpainted wrought iron gates:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WSgXgyuEFuA&t=52s>

