

Back to the future - *a new direction*

International best practice and local management

Conference Report, December 2015



Back to the future – *a new direction*

A conference on :

International best practice and local management

Thursday 10th December 2015,
The Playhouse, Derry~Londonderry

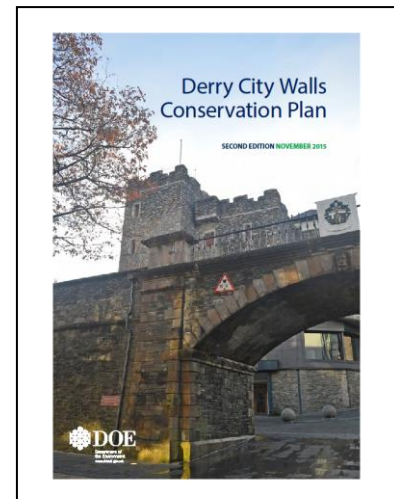
Aims:

- To illustrate the potential of adopting international best practice.
- To illustrate how “international stand out” can deliver for the local economy.
- To encourage councils and communities to use community planning, and local planning powers, to grasp this potential.



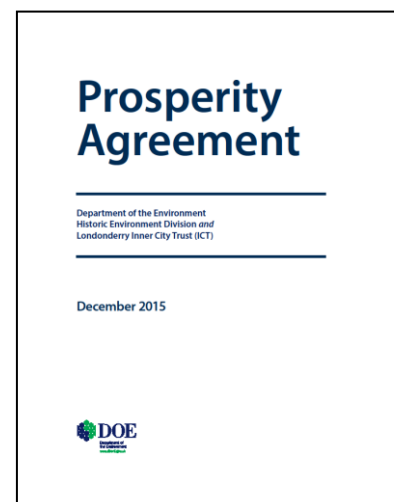
In advance of the conference Minister Mark H Durkan:

- **Launched the Second Edition of the Conservation Plan for Derry's Walls.** This explains what is important about the largest monument in State Care in Northern Ireland, why this should be considered important and sets out 46 agreed holistic policies for the future development of the structure. In line with international best practice, the original plan of 2007 was reviewed and updated within a defined period and the revised policies were subject to stakeholder consultation and discussion before adoption.



This document can be downloaded from: www.doeni.gov.uk

- **Launched the First Prosperity Agreement between DOE and a Historic Environment Stakeholder.** Such agreements aim to encourage partners to go 'beyond compliance' and to imbed best practice working into their whole approach to the environment. The Londonderry Inner City Trust and the DOE have agreed to put in place a framework to enable the Trust to move their business further towards long term prosperity by:
 - Working together to develop best practice for the management of historic buildings and heritage construction projects undertaken by the Trust.
 - Encouraging excellence in heritage development and management to improve environmental performance and reduce costs.
 - Working with key stakeholders in the Derry/Londonderry area to develop a strategic approach to the management of historic assets within the walled city.



This document can be downloaded from: www.doeni.gov.uk

Agenda:

9.30 Registration, tea/ coffee and exhibitions.

9.45 Welcome and Keynote speech: Mark H Durkan MLA, Minister of the Environment.

Session 1 – International Ideas

10.00 The UNESCO approach to management of the Historic Urban Landscape and to managing rural areas – Karim Hendili, Coordinator of Cities Programme, UNESCO.

10.30 Grasping Potential: Guidance for Urban Areas - Heritage Council of Ireland.
Colm Murray, Architecture Officer, the Heritage Council.

10.45 Tea/coffee break

Session 2 – Realising potential for Community and Economy

11.00 Strategic heritage tourism – Signature Projects and the future
– Martin Graham, Tourism NI.

11.10 Integrating Heritage with Business, Community and Regeneration
– Paul Mullan, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund, Northern Ireland.

11.20 Lateral Thinking - dealing with city centre change
– Helen Quigley, Chief Executive, Londonderry Inner City Trust.

11.30 Active Community engagement - Heritage Streets Alive
– Mary Kerrigan, Architect, SPAB Scholar, and community engagement animateur.

11.40 Realising potential - panel discussion
– Gabriel Cooney, Chair, Historic Monuments Council

Session 3 – Bringing it all together

12.15 UNESCO city and region. Can NI council areas really stand out? A look at the range of current initiatives and the latent potential of one council area
– John Kelpie, Chief Executive, Derry City and Strabane District Council

12.30 Thanks – Mark H Durkan MLA, Minister of the Environment

Exhibitions:

Derry City and Strabane District Council – The Built Architectural Heritage Project.

Derry City and Strabane District Council in partnership with Guildhall Press, and with the financial support of DOE through the NIEL 'Challenge Fund', have carried out important work over the last year to conserve, digitise and make accessible to the public a large selection of the building plans submitted for bye-law approval to the old Londonderry Corporation and to the Londonderry Development Commission. Museum staff, community activists and volunteers worked to catalogue all of the historic building plans, selecting 300 of the most at risk items for this pilot project. Plans were subsequently scanned for archive purposes and an online catalogue developed by the Guildhall Press. The work has revealed a wealth of detail on the buildings of the city and will form an important resource for the future. The exhibition is normally displayed in the Guildhall and a booklet has been published to accompany the launch of the website.

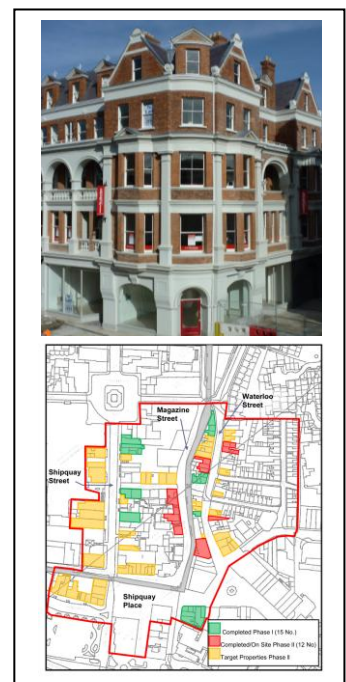
The website can be accessed at: www.nwbuiltheritage.com



Walled City Partnership – Townscape Heritage Initiative Project.

The Walled City Partnership Limited (WCP) comprising the Foyle Civic Trust, Derry City and Strabane District Council and the City Centre Initiative was formed in July 2002 with the purpose of preserving and enhancing the architectural and historical character of Derry both within and around the historic city walls. Nineteen listed and unlisted buildings in a tightly focused district within the Walled City Conservation Area have subsequently been conserved to a high standard through the operation of two phases of the Heritage Lottery Fund's Townscape Heritage Initiative. DOE Conservation Area Grant supported the work and DOE Listed Building Grant supported repair works to listed buildings. The purpose of the Townscape Heritage Initiative is not only to enhance the visual appearance of the environment but to improve the physical economic and social conditions of the Conservation Area. The work carried out has transformed the area and is a testament to the effectiveness of community partnership working.

More information on the project can be accessed at: www.walledcitypartnership.com



Foyle Civic Trust – The Living City Project.



The Foyle Civic Trust was established in 1989 to promote high standards of planning and architecture, to provide education in geography, history, natural history and architecture and to secure the preservation, protection development and improvement of features of historic or public interest in the following former NI district council areas: Derry, Limavady, and Strabane. It also covers the Inishowen Peninsula of Co Donegal. The Trust is managed on a voluntary basis and is a registered charity.

Its Living City Project comprises a survey of all historic buildings within the City Walls. This takes the form of descriptions, historical information, maps, drawings, and photographs and is an important resource now accessible online. The work was supported by the former Derry City Council and by DOE. The Trust has also carried out a complementary audit of the historic landscape of the Foyle Valley.

More information on the projects and Trust can be accessed at: www.foylecivictrust.org

Sion Mills Building Preservation Trust – Sion Stables Project.



The Sion Mills Building Preservation Trust was founded by Celia Ferguson (nee Herdman) in 1989 with the primary purpose of rescuing the Old Herman's Mill and associated buildings. The vision of the Trust is to restore and conserve to international standards an outstanding Irish Linen site and bring it back into use for the benefit of the community.

In 2003 the trust employed Donald Install Associates to compile a Conservation Plan for the village and a master plan for the restoration of the Mill. In 2004 it carried out the Railway Recreation Area Project and in 2007 carried out works to conserve the mill chimney. In 2009 work was carried out to convert the Mill maintenance block to work units. Over the last few years it has worked with Hearth to deliver the restoration of the former stable block to Sion House. DOE listed building grant aid supported most of these projects.

In 2015, the Sion Stables Heritage Trail App, developed by the Trust, won a major award as 'Best Travel and Tourism App' at the all-Ireland 2015 APPYs Awards.

More information on the projects and Trust can be accessed at: www.sionstables.com

Ulster Architectural Heritage Society.



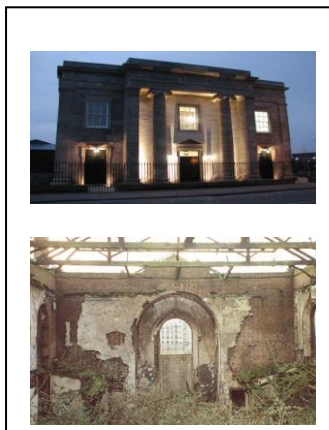
A not for profit organisation, with a wide membership, operating across the nine historic counties of Ulster, the Society aims to: *'promote the appreciation and enjoyment of good architecture of all periods and to encourage the conservation, restoration and re-use of Ulster's built heritage to regenerate and sustain our communities.'*

The Society campaigns strongly for historic buildings, organises an annual series of lectures and visits, provides advice, and has a distinguished history of publishing books on the region's architectural heritage.

Since 1993, the Society has been funded by DOE to develop a project to tackle the issue of built heritage at risk in Northern Ireland. As part of this it has published information on Traditional Building Skills, a number of catalogues and a comprehensive on-line register (BHARNI)

More information on the Society and its work can be accessed at: www.uahs.org.uk

Belfast Buildings Trust.



Belfast Buildings Trust is a registered cross-community charity that exists to *'deliver physical and social regeneration through rescuing those buildings for which no apparent suitable use can be found'*. It is of a view that successful regeneration is born in the ambitions and visions of local people. It aims to create vital and prosperous communities through the reuse of Belfast's heritage.

The charity has a track record of tackling buildings in a particularly poor state and of developing sustainable uses and futures for these structures. They become 'landmarks in the heart of the city's communities'

More information on the Trust can be accessed at: www.belfastbuildingstrust.org

Welcome and Keynote speech.

Due to the unavoidable attendance by the Minister at a meeting of the NI Executive, the keynote speech was delivered by Mr Iain Greenway, Director of the DOE Historic Environment Division.

He noted that the historic environment is something that is precious to us all. It forms the familiar landscape of where we live, it reminds us of our history, and it holds out great potential to support our well being and to help our economy into the future.

The Minister had asked for the conference because he is passionate that we work together to realise this potential. In his view, ***'a well understood and well used historic environment reinforces the distinctiveness of our places and delivers a character which is attractive to investors and to visitors. It also gives pride to our population and helps to encourage our young people to remain and make a life here and contribute to the vibrancy of our society. Investment in our heritage, through its continued use, therefore, creates a virtuous circle.'***

The Minister sees a key opportunity in Northern Ireland at present to realise this potential and to make progress towards the international standards advocated by bodies such as UNESCO. Community Planning and the powers that have been devolved from regional to local government allow a new paradigm to be put in place. *'We really can go back to the future and create a new direction'*.

In the Community Planning process, councils are being asked to think holistically, along with statutory partners and their populations, about the future of their areas. They have to consider needs and opportunities and how they can work together to make the most of their assets. This has strong parallels to the Historic Urban Landscape Approach being put forward by UNESCO.

Though DOE will continue to designate and look after State Care Monuments, it is Councils and their communities which are now firmly in the lead when it comes to setting a strategic direction for their Historic Environment. ***'So I would like to say to those elected representatives, chief executives and council officials present here today: please grasp this opportunity – it is a major one with great potential.'***

To illustrate this point the Director quoted statistics, gathered in 2012, on the economic value of the historic environment:

- **NI historic environment generates circa £532 million of output per annum, creates/sustains a total of circa 10,000 FTE jobs and generates circa £250 million of Gross Value Add each year.**
- **In NI, the historic environment accounts for three jobs per thousand of the population. But the figure is 8.1 in Ireland and 11.8 in Scotland.**
- **If the NI sector could perform at an equivalent rate to Scotland, it could be generating £1.5 billion annually and supporting 20,000 jobs i.e. three times its present output and twice as many jobs.¹**

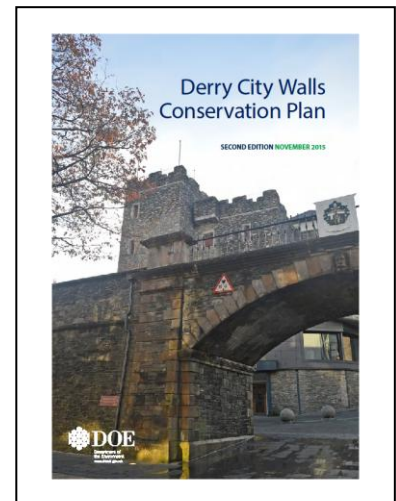
¹ Study of the Economic Value of Northern Ireland's Historic Environment. June 2012.
www.doeni.gov.uk/publications/study-economic-value-northern-irelands-historic-environment

The Department is putting significant investment into its suite of Monuments in State Care to help realise this. Its work is being targeted at the major monuments where we see the maximum potential to make a significant impact. Capital works are underway or have been commissioned to realise the potential of: Dundrum Castle, Carrickfergus Castle; Dunluce Castle; and Tullaghoge Fort - the ancient inauguration site of the O'Neills near Cookstown. Major repair works on Derry's Walls have also been completed over the last 20 years and they are now of a better standard than they have been for much of their history.

The Department has also invested over recent years in its smaller monuments and most of these are now in very good condition. However, there is a need to ensure that these assets are accessible, well signposted and regularly opened to the public. **Partnerships with councils and with local communities are likely to be key to how we realise the full potential of such sites and ensure that we jointly maximise their impact.**

In this city, the Walled City Signature Destination project has helped organise and deliver a set of key interventions in the built heritage. **As part of this ongoing work the Minister has today launched the Second Edition of the Conservation Plan for the City Walls.** This is a document which sets out what is important about the monument and explains why it is important. It then sets out a series of 'policies' to guide decisions as we move forward.

It is vital that such a document is understood as an agreed approach because it deals with a much wider remit than just what DOE is responsible for. Stakeholder discussion has been central to its development. Key changes include a clearer acknowledgment of the contribution being made by the venues and museums which surround the monument and that the work of the management group be supported by a dedicated coordinator/ manager. **The Minister is keen that this is provided and has asked officials to work with the District Council to see how we could together deliver such a role - perhaps as part of a wider partnership or pilot project emerging from the community plan.**



Over the last year, a very welcome Friends organisation has also been founded for the monument with ambitious plans. The group has a committee representative of a wide range of public interests and has great potential to support our efforts to realise its full possibilities. **To that end, the Minister would like to invite the organisation to nominate a representative to attend the Management Group.**

The Friends have also written to the Minister proposing a number of projects including the development of an education pack to supplement existing visitor information, the development of junior wardens and the support of preparatory works towards summer animation. These proposals are all very positive and the Minister is keen that the Department supports and encourages the efforts of this new group. He has asked that the Friends' proposals are brought to the Management Group for consideration, to ensure that the maximum possible value is realised from our combined work on the monument.

The Walls also have a very effective warden service, provided by the City Centre Initiative, which is quick to respond to incidents. DOE has supported this role via an annual investment of £12,000 and I am glad to report that though in year monitoring the Minister has also been able to allocate such funds again this year. Further investment in the monument this year

includes the removal of graffiti, the replacement of vandalised lights and regular maintenance work, as required, by our specialist craft team.

A second initiative which the Minister is launching today also seeks to build on and develop partnership. This is the first Prosperity Agreement for historic buildings in Northern Ireland. The idea of a Prosperity Agreement is that the Department works with a partner to encourage it to go 'beyond compliance' and achieve a greater benefit for the environment.

The Inner City Trust provides a very good case study for the development of this initiative. This is because they are a group who, through their aim to deliver social and economic regeneration, have come to focus on the potential of heritage as a means to this end. They did not start out as a specialist heritage charity. Since the 1970's they have acquired a large number of listed and unlisted historic buildings within the city. Through this agreement they are signing up to best practice. They will treat unlisted historic buildings as if they were listed and seek to train and improve the awareness of their staff.

DOE will support them in regard to this task and encourage them to deliver best practice. This should deliver benefits for more than just the parties involved and encourage others to aspire to such an approach. A key proposal is that the Trust works with the council and others to agree how the historic city core is best developed into the future.



DOE Office, Ebrington Square, Derry~Londonderry.

In support of these two initiatives and also in support of the District Council, whose Chief Executive has agreed to take on a leading role in considering how heritage potential can best be realised by our new local authorities, **I can also announce today the creation of a branch office of the Historic Environment Division, based in the Minister's current offices at Ebrington.**

This will ensure that relevant departmental officials are more available to progress and deliver these initiatives and to work with the Council as it develops the historic environment parts of its community plan.

So in conclusion, the Minister would like to emphasise again the great potential which he sees in regard to the Historic Environment in Northern Ireland and the great opportunity which exists today to realise this to international best practice standards.

DOE is happy to work with you and to be creative as you explore and develop what this may mean for your area. It is the Minister's firm view that we can stand out as an area which delivers heritage conservation, management, and development, to the highest international standards.

Session 1- International Ideas:

The UNESCO approach to management of the Historic Urban Landscape and to managing rural areas.

Karim Hendili, Coordinator of Cities Programme, UNESCO

Mr Hendili thanked DOE for his invitation to speak at the conference. He explained that the integrated management of heritage within cities is seen as vital by his organisation for the sustainable management of this resource into the future.

He started his talk by explaining that the UN, in recent statements on urban development, expected that 70% of the world's population would be living in cities or urban environments by 2050. He stressed that cities were important centres of innovation and development characterised in some instances by aggressive urban growth and a lack of infrastructure, impoverishment, uncontrolled constructions and pollution.



Bilbao- investing in culture as a key economic driver for growth and tourism



Resolutions and reports from the UN and UNESCO [see Resolution 66/208 of 2011 on Culture and Development] had confirmed culture as an important a tool for social inclusion and economic growth. This placed culture at the heart of development. An example was Bilbao, where the city has invested heavily in culture as a key economic driver. The Guggenheim had become the symbol of the city.

Heritage, he argued, can play an vital role in such growth and in the economic development of cities. Tourism is important but this can lead to gentrification. He stressed that future urban development should aim to be both sustainable and just.

The role of UNESCO in producing the World Heritage List is principally as a facilitator. It identifies the most important heritage of humanity but it is the duty of the international community as a whole to cooperate in order to protect it. Each of the World Heritage sites contributes to the design of the larger global picture. There are now 1031 properties inscribed of which 802 are cultural and 197 natural. Urban heritage is numerically the best represented category. There is no limit to the list and he stressed that the issue is not the number of sites but their effective conservation.



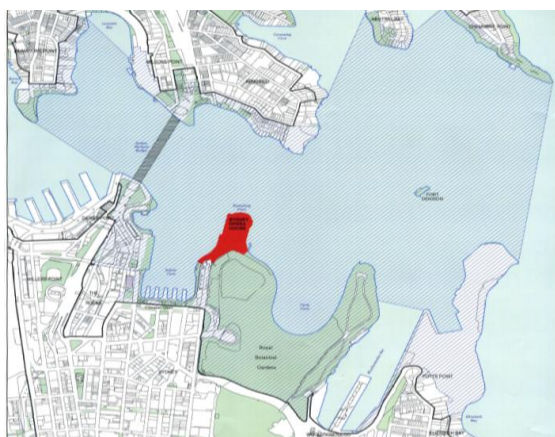
Venice – Impact of tourism.

Culture is an important factor of social inclusion and poverty eradication, as well as a vector of economic growth.

Placing culture at the heart of the process which defines development policies is henceforth considered as a key condition to the sustainability of the actions undertaken in favour of human development

The UN General Assembly;
Resolution 66/208 of 2011 on
Culture and Development

He illustrated the challenges of protecting sites with examples from: Quito Ecuador; Rio; Vienna; Dresden; Seville; Liverpool and Panama. A key lesson is that, in many cases, developments creating high visual impacts outside the buffer zones of world heritage sites, are putting their outstanding universal value [OUV] at risk. Mr Hendil explained that to counteract this, UNESCO had conceived of a theoretical framework or '**laboratory of ideas**'. This culminated in an holistic approach to sites looking at the layers of '*social values; economic processes; hydrology; connectivity; cultural identity; topography; infrastructure; urban structure; geomorphology; built environment and open spaces*'.



Sydney opera House - buffer zone.

By its Decision 29 COM 5.D, the World Heritage Committee also encouraged "*States Parties to integrate the notion of historic urban landscape in nomination proposals and in the elaboration of management plans of properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List*" and also "*to integrate the principles expressed in the Vienna Memorandum into their heritage conservation policies*" (paragraphs 4 and 5 of the decision).



Challenges to the setting of heritage cities through high-rise construction

He explained that the World Heritage Cities Programme, of which he is coordinator, is one of six thematic programmes formally approved in 2001 by the World Heritage Committee. It aims to assist States Parties in the challenges of protecting and managing their urban heritage. The programme is structured along a two-way process, with:

- 1) the development of a theoretical framework for urban heritage conservation;
- 2) the provision of technical assistance to States Parties for the implementation of new approaches and schemes.

New concepts such as “**visual integrity**” have been adopted by the World Heritage Committee while addressing conservation issues involving high-rise or contemporary architectural interventions in historic cities and urban landscapes of heritage value.

UNESCO relied on these experiences and research to conduct the work which resulted in the **Recommendation of the Historic Urban Landscape (2011)**. This synthesizes the reflection, research and works carried out since the mid-1970’s on the conservation of the cultural heritage of cities in all its forms.

It concludes that the management of historic urban landscapes has to give **priority to increased sustainability of planning and design interventions** by taking into account the existing built environment, intangible heritage, cultural diversity, socioeconomic and environmental factors along with local community values.

He explained that, in the way we look at cities, it is essential to have the correct “reading” if we are to have a proper sustainable conservation of urban heritage. He also noted that apart from cities and urban ensembles, it is important to consider one off sites whose conservation takes place in an urban context.

On 13 December 2013, the World Heritage Centre organized a reflection meeting on the implementation of the Recommendation, two years after its adoption (“HUL+2” meeting). Thirty six experts attended this meeting which led to the adoption of an action plan. This recommends that:



- partnerships with other institutions and organizations be developed in order to promote the Recommendation at the global level.
- knowledge about the Historic Urban Landscape concept be built by involving universities and raising students' awareness of this approach and that awareness of public authorities and town and urban planners be raised in all regions.

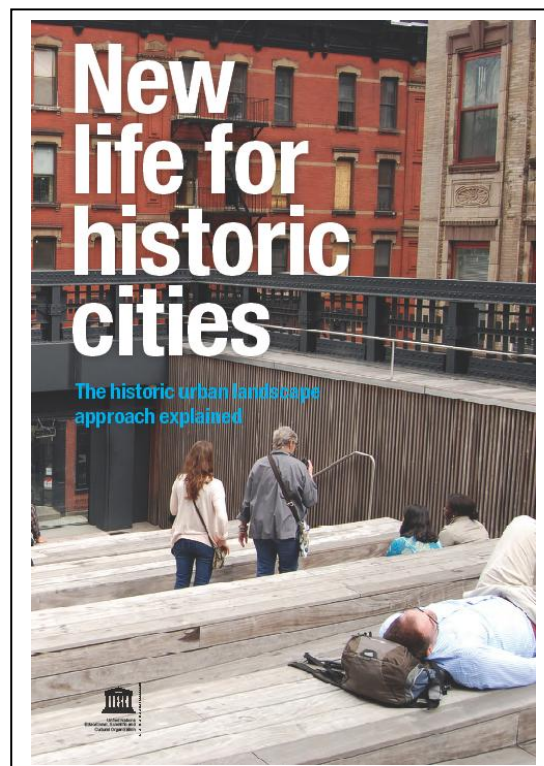
The 2013 meeting also highlighted the strong link within the Historic Urban Landscape approach between economic and social strategies, on the one hand, and urban conservation, on the other. The experts recommended that the work on case studies be pursued, focusing henceforth on problems linked to governance and that a common framework for these case studies be developed in order to have comparable results.

The World Heritage Centre, has since developed a series of activities to promote the HUL approach including publishing the summary document 'New life for historic cities' (which was included in conference packs). A consolidated report on the implementation of the recommendation was examined by the Executive Board at its 197th session and then by the General Conference at its 38th session in autumn 2015.

The 'New life' document sets out seven actions which summarise the UNESCO approach. Mr Hendili commended them to the conference.

The Historic Urban Landscape Approach in Action:

1. Undertake a full assessment of the city's natural, cultural and human resources;
2. Use participatory planning and stakeholder consultations to decide on conservation aims and actions;
3. Assess the vulnerability of urban heritage to socio-economic pressures and impacts of climate change;
4. Integrate urban heritage values and their vulnerability status into a wider framework of city development;
5. Prioritize policies and actions for conservation and development, including good stewardship;
6. Establish the appropriate [public-private] partnerships and local management frameworks;
7. Develop mechanisms for the coordination of the various activities between different actors.



More information on the HUL approach can be found at: www.whc.unesco.org/en/cities

Session 1- International Ideas

Grasping Potential: Guidance for Urban Areas.

Colm Murray, Architecture Officer, The Heritage Council of Ireland.

Colm Murray outlined the background and work of the Heritage Council to assist in managing the natural and built heritage. Set up in 1995 by statute, the Council is an arm's length body which aims to *'engage, educate and advocate to develop a wider understanding of the vital contribution that our heritage makes to our social, environmental and economic well-being'*. It also makes policy proposals to Government to ensure that heritage is seen and managed holistically. He referred to the international principles which lie behind their current analysis in regard to heritage-led urban renewal for Irish Society and its economic recovery: the Burra Charter, the ICOMOS Washington Charter of 1987, and the Valetta principles. These approaches resonate with the work that the Council has encouraged, since its inception, to put communities at the forefront of action to conserve and realise the potential of heritage in all of its forms.

He referred to the ICOMOS Washington Charter of 1987- ***'Heritage includes the various functions that the town or urban area has acquired over time'*** and outlined that local communities must be actively mobilised, and involved in developing plans to revitalise their towns and villages. Despite the return to economic growth in the Republic of Ireland, unemployment in rural towns and villages remains disproportionately high. A lack of vision, and inadequate financial support, has led to a prolonged pattern of declining town centres and increasing regional gaps in quality of life. He quoted a 2014 speech of a rural politician:

*"We've lost our small shops
We've lost our small pubs,
We've lost our small creameries,
We've lost our hardware shops,
What more do they want?"*

Michael Healey- Rae
Leinster House February 2014



Utilising local people's knowledge of their heritage, and fully involving them in solving their own problems, has, in the view of the Heritage Council, the potential to deliver economic and social benefits, as well as ensuring these places maintain their unique and distinctive character. A new paradigm in urban heritage management has been proposed by UNESCO - Historic Urban Landscape- which requires stakeholder ownership and involvement. In order for this to work, a new and different form of engagement with the public than the State has conventionally provided is required.

The heritage value of towns is an important component of Irish urban policy. Managing their cultural, amenity and environmental value makes a contribution to 'proper planning for

sustainable development'. The heritage perspective can generate an important and relevant point of view of the value of the Irish town.

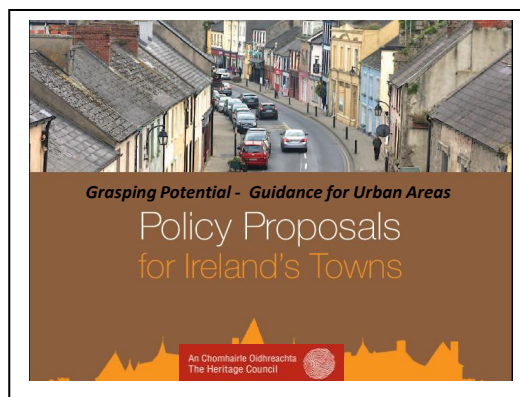
The Heritage Council has experience with alternative models of engagement through its early adoption of landscape management principles, initiatives such as the Irish Walled towns network, Community led Village Design statements, Landscape Partnerships and support for new actions such as the Historic Towns Initiative. The Council has therefore published policy proposals focused on the creation of a **Rural Towns and Villages Network**. Its aim is to rejuvenate more of Ireland's town and villages and highlight the need for bottom-up community involvement, and for additional financial resourcing. This network model is largely based on the very successful **Irish Walled Towns Network (IWTN)** which now includes 26 towns in the Republic and two in Northern Ireland. Through the proposed Rural Towns and Villages Network, the Heritage Council will work with local communities to empower them through funding, training and guidance.

'UNESCO has since 2011 recommended a 'Historic Urban Landscape' approach to the management of urban areas. Accepting that the way a town is used, that the activities that happen in it are part of heritage value, recognises an important principle that the Heritage Council has promoted in the twenty years of its existence: that people matter in heritage. Implementing this principle sets authorities on the course to partnership approaches with the communities that inhabit, animate, possess and enjoy the places they live in.'

Policy Proposals for Ireland's Towns, Heritage Council, November 2015.

Six recommendations

1. Rural Towns and Villages Network
2. Ireland needs an Urban Policy
3. Fiscal incentives for Heritage-led Urban Regeneration
4. Rural Economic Development means improving small towns and villages
5. Local authorities' support and new approach is crucial
6. Let's keep tabs on what is going on



Mr Murray cited research by James Pike on the 'Living over the Shop' initiative, together with research on local authority initiatives providing a planning framework for urban renewal in the four distinct geographical areas of: Temple Bar; Cork City Centre; Kilkenny; and the Liberties. All were based on stakeholder involvement and their outcomes are related to the negotiating and sharing of a vision or strategy. They represent the new and successful achievements of collaborative planning between planning authorities, conservationists and owners. The Historic Towns initiative seeks to use templates such as these to further develop practice for heritage-led urban renewal. He emphasised that, to be successful, the commitment required must be deep and strong.

More information on the proposals can be accessed at: www.heritagecouncil.ie/architecture

10.45 Tea/coffee break



Session 2 – Realising potential for Community and Economy

Chaired by Dr Gabriel Cooney, Chairman of Historic Monuments Council, this session consisted of a panel of speakers each asked to talk for ten minutes about their subject area with time for discussion at the end.



Session 2 – Realising potential for Community and Economy

Strategic heritage tourism – Signature Projects and the future

Martin Graham, Tourism NI.

Martin Graham, outlined the work undertaken to invest in key parts of Northern Ireland's tourism offer since the development of the Signature Project idea in the early 2000's. Focused on the Walled City, the Causeway Coast, Titanic, the Mournes, and St Patrick's and Christian Heritage, this had included works to conserve structures, improve signage, connections, improve facilities, encourage related business development and extend usage periods. It had provided product of a high standard which could then be marketed internationally and encourage repeat visits.



Much of this investment had been in heritage features and their presentation which, along with the landscape in which they are found, provides a key resource for the region. He quoted the Office for National Statistics [ONS] which had reported that the UK Tourism industry had doubled in output relative to other industries since 2008. This had the knock on benefits of: increased wealth; job creation; and direction of economy. **In Northern Ireland the revenue from the tourism sector had exceeded that of the agriculture sector for the first time in 2014.** A good partnership approach with strong relationships had been key to the success of the signature projects. He reported that some work is still ongoing.

Mr Graham explained that the 2014-2020 strategy builds on previous work to raise awareness of Northern Ireland's assets and to change received impressions. It marks a move to internationalise the NI offer. The direction is towards what is authentic, indigenous and owned by the community. This will include developing a strong sense of place; telling stories and bringing assets to life. A new tourism strategy will be completed by May 2016 and heritage will form an important part. The focus will be on pillars of work to **Develop** [product]-**Cluster** [partnership working] and-**Promote** [to domestic and international audiences] the region's assets. This, therefore, no longer needs to be at the scale of a signature project, but is about realising the great potential that exists right across the region for tourists to visit and to return.

Session 2 – Realising potential for Community and Economy

Integrating Heritage with Business, Community and Regeneration

Paul Mullan, Heritage Lottery Fund.

Recapping on previous presentations, Mr Mullan emphasised that heritage was at the heart of the Tourism NI funded signature projects, and that heritage presents great opportunities, particularly when people are engaging with the environment to realise the value of a sense of place. To fully capitalise on the full potential of heritage and regeneration, it is important that Government Departments work more closely together. He emphasised that **engaging with community planning is key to realising the value of heritage within the wider conversation.**

He explained that Heritage Lottery fund (HLF) are now celebrating 20 years providing funding amounting to some £6 billion of funding to more than 37,000 projects across the UK. UK businesses based in listed buildings make an estimated annual contribution to GDP of £47 billion. Approximately 1.4 million people across the UK work in listed buildings. **‘Heritage provides us with a sense of who we are; the better we understand this, the better we can place heritage at the heart of what we do. There is a wonderful reservoir of heritage and stories to tell; the more strategic the approach, the better arguments can be made for funding. The more thoughtful we can be, the stronger the argument’.**

Research commissioned by HLF: **New Ideas Need Old Buildings** has confirmed that historic buildings are the very places where new ideas and new economic activity are most likely to happen. The transformative impacts of investing in heritage in Derry, a case study in the booklet, were confirmed by Mr Mullan. He stressed that the successful Townscape Heritage Initiative [THI] scheme of the Walled City Partnership had helped create a platform from which the city’s successful bid for City of Culture had been awarded. This had placed Derry on the UK-wide map.



Heritage Enterprise awards are a second initiative with recent awards to the Northern Counties Hotel of the Inner City Trust and to the Titanic Drawing Offices. For Titanic Belfast, the building alone was not enough; the authentic heritage of Nomadic and HMS Caroline helped back up the larger project.

A key recent HLF community scheme was the Battles Bones and Bridges scheme at Arney in Co Fermanagh. The community found common cause in establishing the site of the battle of the ford of the Biscuits through funding by HLF. The community has found itself reinvigorated and with a renewed appreciation for the heritage of the local area.

Session 2 – Realising potential for Community and Economy

Lateral Thinking - dealing with city centre change

Helen Quigley Londonderry Inner City Trust.

Mrs Quigley explained the work of the Trust from the 1970's in purchasing burnt out and derelict buildings with no obvious future. These had been restored through ACE schemes and youth projects to contribute to the rebuilding of the city. The Tower Museum and associated Craft Village had been a key project in the late 1980's/ early 1990's bringing new uses and residents back inside the walls. Parallel work on Magazine Street and Butcher's Street had put new uses on derelict sites. In the run up to 2013 City of Culture the Trust worked quickly to commission a report to get funding delivered for craft businesses and roofed over the square in the Craft Village providing a new outdoor venue. It also delivered a temporary gallery space. Changing usage of inner city shopping and the economic downturn, however, was having an impact upon the inner city area increasing vacancy and reducing footfall. The view of the Trust was that: *'Change is inevitable- we can be witnesses to change or real catalysts for change'*

The Board determined that they were not going to be bystanders witnessing further loss of vibrancy in the city and developed a holistic and thoughtful view of what would work to reinvigorate its buildings. A Partnership approach of working with DSD, DOE, HLF- helped to take the long view to get footfall back. Key vacant historic buildings were acquired to form the centrepiece of this approach and a Building Preservation Trust created.



The former Northern Counties Club, vacant for over ten years, is currently being converted into a boutique hotel at the upper part of the historic city. With support from DOE, DSD and the HLF's Enterprise fund, it is set to transform activity in this area. The former Custom House at 31-33 Shipquay St, on the quieter side of what is the city's main street, is now a fashion and Textile centre- sustaining the future of the building and a skill set with a long and historic association with the city. Unlisted historic buildings to each side have also been acquired by the Trust and will also be given sustainable uses. The Prosperity Agreement with the DOE, signed this morning, will help to develop this approach in partnership with the Council and stakeholders. This has to be the best way to maintain the vibrancy and attractiveness of the inner city and to realise its full potential.

Mrs Quigley concluded by outlining a mnemonic which summarised the approach of the Trust:

- H** Heritage Investment makes sense
- E** Economic activity underpins a sustainable project
- L** Longer term view of restoring the built environment
- P** Partnership working to deliver quality heritage buildings

Session 2 – Realising potential for Community and Economy

Active Community engagement -Heritage Streets Alive

Mary Kerrigan, architect, SPAB Scholar and community engagement animateur.

HERITAGE STREETS
ALIVE 2015



Mary Kerrigan introduced partners from the project 'Heritage streets Alive', which focused on three streets in Derry and Letterkenny, Co Donegal, in the summer of 2015. She described this as a '**new conversation on the collective value of heritage**'.

The project was a cross-border funded scheme involving '**enquiry into the strengths of the three streets**'. These were: Church Lane in Letterkenny; and Chamberlain Street; and Fountain Street in Derry. All three, were characterised as being side streets off a main thoroughfare with differing degrees of dereliction, malaise and transient residential communities. All had buildings suffering from vacancy and at risk of decay.

Ms Kerrigan explained that detailed investigations had been undertaken over the course of a number of months with the residents, looking at the physical, social, historical and architectural strengths of the areas. Crucially this involved participation with the residents young and old. Participants were also asked to consider how streets might develop their strengths by 2020. As part of Heritage Week each street developed a vision and visits to each were organised. The result was huge creativity and representatives from each street explained their outcomes to the conference: improved streetscape proposals and the enactment of a hiring fair in Letterkenny; proposed interventions in gap sites and a celebration of the wider history of Chamberlain Street; ambitious plans for a cultural centre and work to revitalise Fountain Street. Mary Kerrigan explained that project clearly demonstrated the importance of what the local people can do for their local area. The project could be rolled out as a pilot for examination of other locations across Ireland.

HERITAGE STREETS ALIVE 2015



Session 2 – Realising potential for Community and Economy

Panel discussion

Gabriel Cooney, Chair, Historic Monuments Council

Mrs Primrose Wilson, Follies Trust, congratulated the speakers with the inspirational presentations and commented that it would be important that heritage images are imparted as part of the NI Tourism presentation.

Accepted and confirmed this would be undertaken.

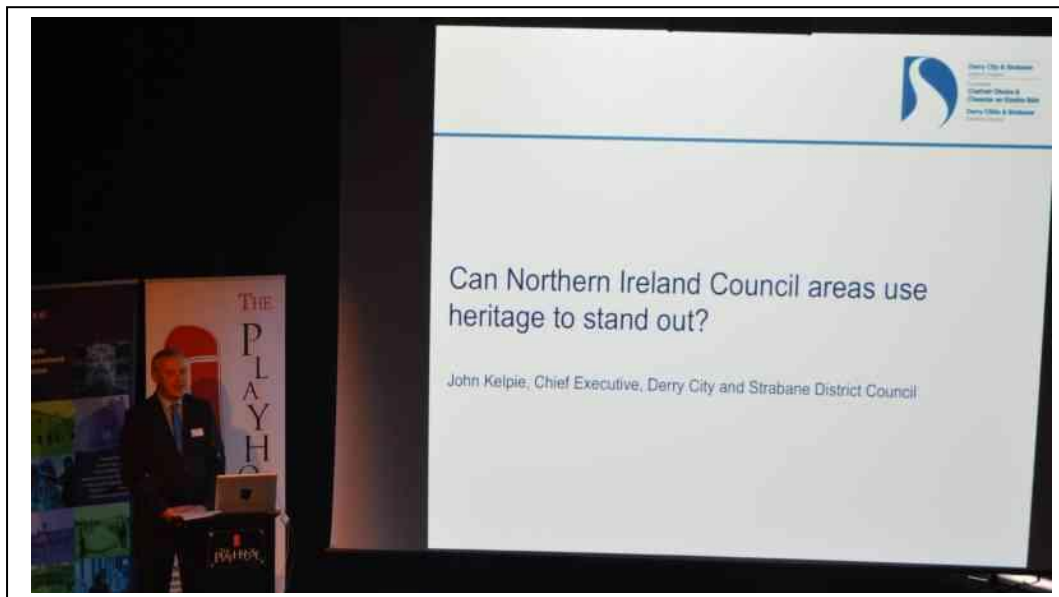
Mrs Emily Smyth, CNCC, requested information on the UNESCO case study referred to by Colm Murray. Mr Murray confirmed that this was Julian Smith 'Marrying the Old with the New in Historic Urban Landscapes', in UNESCO World Heritage Papers 27 'Managing Historic Cities', 2010, p. 51. In this research into the market area of city in Canada it had been shown that three different users – Buyers and sellers, residents and tourists all perceived the area in a different way. However the authors concluded that character of the area depended on the tension between these user groups and developed policies to support this.

Ursula Duddy Derry News commented on local projects like Boom Hall and whether there was HLF funding available. Paul Mullan confirmed that it was up to the leaders of the city to develop the environment wherein proposals would be taken forward. He confirmed that Derry had a track record of making successful applications to HLF.

Session 3 – Bringing it all together

UNESCO City and Region. Can NI council areas really stand out? A look at the range of current initiatives and the potential of one council area.

John Kelpie, Chief Executive, Derry City and Strabane District Council



As the newly appointed CX for Derry City and Strabane District, Mr Kelpie explained that he had a background in construction and fully appreciated the benefits of reusing heritage. The link between heritage and economy was powerful and could create a further 10,000 jobs if NI matched up to Scotland's output. Common themes which had emerged from the morning's discussion were clearly:

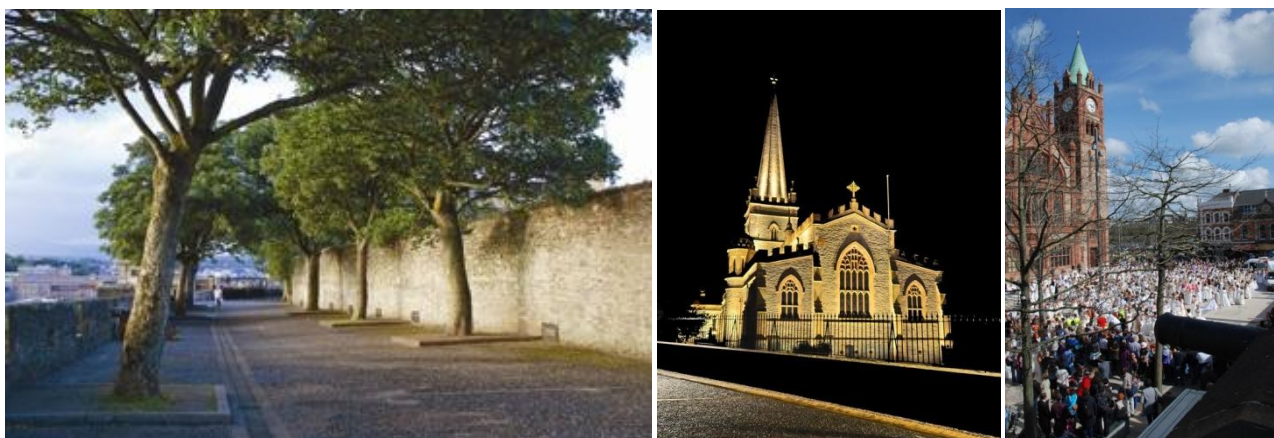
- a focus on communities and empowering people as a key way to move forward
- the importance of not treating heritage in isolation from other concerns.

He explained that Community Planning provides a unique opportunity to take these issues on board, and to work in partnership and to shape the way forward for Northern Ireland's council areas. In the Derry City and Strabane District council area, the Council had worked hard over recent months with over 600 individuals and groups to develop a first draft of its community plan. The approach taken was to follow the strategic vision of the legislation and to organise three thematic pillar groups –

- 1 Social Cohesion and community development - to improve the quality of life of all people in the DCSD.
- 2 Economic development and wellbeing – to grow and sustain the DCSD economy to create more and better employment opportunities for everyone.
- 3 Physical development and wellbeing – to live in a low carbon, sustainably designed and connected region.

He explained that within these pillars a series of 8 thematic working groups had been developed. These are being challenged by four cross cutting themes: good relations; sustainability; rural development and communications. The task that the Council is now working on is to refine these down to the key strategic actions that can inform and help prioritise achievable projects.

In regard to heritage, he cited the example of the Guildhall, reopened in 2013, which has vastly exceeded initial hopes of 100,000 visitors per year. He also identified the City Walls. Visitors to these doubled from 213,000 in 2007 to 410,000 in 2013 and were 370,000 last year. Over the same period they went from the sixth most visited attraction in Northern Ireland to the fourth. But he felt that more that could be done to add to the experience, to jointly market them with nearby venues and to ensure that their potential is fully reached. He noted that much work is already underway; being delivered by statutory agencies, by Visit Derry, the Friends of the Walls, TRIAX, the National Trust and by individual owners, but partnership working could ensure that this is coordinated and complementary.



City Walls and nearby attractions are a key draw.

At Ebrington, he noted that Ilex has conserved a second set of city walls and historic buildings in a former military base. It has struck a very confident note in regard to the modern interventions to accommodate new uses. The square has become a key civic space. It, along with the iconic peace bridge linking the site to the conserved guildhall, and the Walls beyond, have reinforced an impression of a modern confident city at ease with its history- a place well worth visiting. A master plan for the site has now been produced and it is important that the quality approach taken to date carries through in the future.

Across the city and region he highlighted that there are underused buildings with great potential to add to the interest, diversity, life and attractiveness of the area. Buildings such as: An Gaeleras on Gt. James' St, The Convent on Pump Street, Boom Hall and the Waterside Station. All of these have champions of various levels of influence currently seeking to realise this potential. He asked *'how can we work together to help realise these visions?'* Complementing this is the work the council is developing at Brook Park with the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund to bring back to full use a formal Victorian Park. Then there is potential to build on the skills needed to conserve all of this heritage. -The development of specialist heritage training in a specialist heritage city?

Moving to a consideration of the rural area he suggested that there are a wide range of heritage features along the river. Is there the potential to develop a formal landscape partnership and seek associated European funding? Could the 'Foyle Valley' be branded as a complementary historic and natural environmental draw to the 'Walled City'? How do we work together to realise this potential? Then there is the train to the city from Coleraine which is much more than a transport link. It could be marketed along with a refurbished train station as a key draw. Linked to this are the greenways along the Foyle. We are currently working to extend this in partnership with Donegal County Council. But is there not the potential to develop a North West Greenway linking Derry to Omagh along the route of the Great Northern railway? This would link an interesting and exciting range of heritage features such as the river features, Strabane, Sion Mills, Harry Avery's Castle. The Westport Greenway has become one of the most visited tourist sites in the Republic, why not do it here?



Rural heritage assets, could they be better linked?

Then there are linkages between rural settlements via themes on: the Plantation; rural industry; landed estates; the medieval landscape etc. Good work has already been done on this, but it needs to be coordinated and to be easily and intuitively available. And then there is Sion Mills, a key historic asset for the council area. It is a purpose designed mill village, located within a beautiful landscape but it is a place which has had a rocky few years. There is a strong need to work together to find a sustainable future for the problems it faces. Its unique heritage, however, will clearly be part of its solution. He noted that he had illustrated a lot of potential, but that this was only scratching the surface.

Looking at the UNESCO Historic Urban Landscape Approach, it is clear that it emphasises data gathering and so has the Council's Community Plan process. Building on the detail with a clear vision of how this is linked is what is required.

So what is that vision? He said that '*we need to work together in a more coordinated way and we need to be clear about our priorities*'. The UNESCO approach advises: research; agreement on conservation aims and actions; consideration of vulnerability; integration within a wider civic framework; prioritisation; partnerships; and coordination.

'That is exactly what we are attempting to do through the community plan process. We should therefore have no issue with adopting this best practice approach. Indeed as a strategic vision we could arguably go one stage further and call ourselves a UNESCO city and region.'

He said that doing that would reinforce a clear vision of quality and best practice and provide a distinctive brand. As part of this, the District could invest time and effort into seeking the much discussed World Heritage Site Status for the Walled City, but he argued that while this would be a great brand, it is tied up in international politics and would be very difficult to achieve. We need to get on and realise a complementary vision and then consider the benefit of investing in such a process.

He reported that there are two emerging themes from the community plan discussions: a vision from the physical and environmental regeneration group that *'our built and natural heritage assets are better protected, enhanced and shared so we increase biodiversity, attract economic growth and improve social well being.'* And from the tourism arts and culture group that: *'we live in the cultural desination of choice on the island of Ireland championing our people and place by delivering world class visitor experiences to our local and global audiences.'*

Organising the District as a UNESCO city and region could help coordinate and give focus to how the area addresses both of these aims. He suggested the following actions as initiatives that could follow on from this:

1. **Working with Visit Derry and stakeholders to develop an inventory of existing tourist trails and information.** Then organise this electronically to ensure that it is clearly and intuitively accessible by visitors and locals.
2. **Deliver a new Phase of the Walled City Signature Project** which develops the existing ideas but also integrates the separate work by groups on the walled city and surrounding area. Formal coordination could hold out the hope of bids for substantial funding or sponsorship and minimise nugatory work. Management of the area as a proto world heritage site could be considered as part of this work.
3. **We could look to create a landscape partnership focused on the Foyle Valley** to develop a similar coordinated series of heritage projects and reinforce its attractiveness as a place to visit. Again, we could look to leverage funds through a joined up approach, possibly with Donegal and the Causeway Coast and Glens Council.
4. **Targeted action could be focused on the important village of Sion Mills** in line with the UNESCO approach to ensure that the potential it holds is not lost.
5. **We could invest in researching the potential of developing the greenway along the Great Northern Line** to Omagh.

6. **We could invest in researching the potential of developing a civic specialism in heritage skills.** If the region is aspiring to stand out it should also work to stand out as a good place to acquire such skills.
7. **We could work to realise the catalytic potential of the train link to Coleraine** along with the refurbishment of the waterside train station.
8. **The delivery of a regenerated Ebrington** in a way that continues to reinforce and complement its heritage potential.
9. And a less measurable but none the less important **commitment to owners and community groups would be to deliver the resources to work with them to help ensure that they have well maintained heritage assets**, that their potential can be realised and that we will be prepared to take action to defend these assets when required.

Agreement on the detail and priority of such actions is, of course, for the community planning process to debate and agree, but such ideas are among those already discussed. The vision to aspire to international best practice however provides a good way of bringing these and other ideas together and prioritising them.



Can we use heritage to stand out?

So in answer to the initial question, can we use heritage to stand out? Yes I think that, with vision, we definitely can. I think that there is great potential in this area, and that as we have seen today, similar potential exists all across Northern Ireland. Working in partnership, we can grasp this and ensure that this is fully realised. The community planning process provides a key tool to bring this all together.

Session 3 – Bringing it all together

Thanks

Manus Deery, Assistant Director, DOE Historic Environment Division.

Mr Deery thanked everyone for attending what he hoped had been an informative and interesting event. He noted that Minister Durkan had set out three aims for the conference:

- To illustrate the potential of adopting international best practice.
- To illustrate how “international stand out” can deliver for the local economy.
- To encourage councils and communities to use community planning, and local planning powers, to grasp this potential.

He said that the range of presentations had reinforced these points. It had been made clear that there is major economic potential in making the most of the heritage buildings and assets handed down to us by preceding generations. We had heard that tourism has now exceeded agriculture in contributing to Northern Ireland’s economy and that heritage was a key ingredient in this. We had also heard that it was important to balance such development with community needs if we are to retain its distinctive character and authenticity. Partnership and holistic thinking had come across strongly from both international and local speakers as a key way of moving forward in this area. UNESCO’s template for urban heritage management had been shown to have strong synergies with Community Planning. This had been highlighted as an important way of grasping this potential and of integrating it with wider needs. It was now over to us to work together to realise these possibilities.

Mr Deery encouraged everyone to stay for lunch and, if they had not done so already, to look at the exhibitions. Individually, they detail some fascinating work and major achievements. Collectively, they illustrate the wide potential and interest that exists to work together to achieve more.

Report compiled by Caroline Maguire and Manus Deery
Heritage Advice and Regulation Branch
DOE Historic Environment Division

For more information contact 02871314161



DOE

Department of
the Environment

Department of the Environment
Historic Environment Division
6th Floor,
Causeway Exchange,
1-7 Bedford Street,
Belfast,
BT2 7EG

Tel: 028 9082 3177 / 028 9082 3126
Email: Historicenvironmentenquiries@doeni.gov.uk



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