



# Regeneration

THE VALUE OF OUR BUILT HERITAGE

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Position Paper 2017



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### **6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations**

# Executive Summary and Recommendations

This paper has been prepared by the Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) for Architecture and the Built Environment. The aim of the paper is to highlight the key asset Northern Ireland holds in its built heritage. The paper studies the potential social and economic value of regenerating built heritage and how regeneration can encourage more people to want to visit, work and live in town and city centres.

## STRUCTURE

The first part of the paper explores how heritage can add **social value**. It sets out the good foundations laid by the voluntary and community sector in the form of Building Preservation Trusts and explains the resulting incremental benefit to neighbourhoods by restoring even one building at a time. This section also considers the value in engaging with owners and the local community – how sharing the process through media, government and voluntary organisations can lead to collaborative working and regeneration of entire urban areas.

The second part of the paper looks at the **potential economic benefit** to be gained from regeneration of heritage. It reviews several case studies throughout Northern Ireland and beyond and refers to studies on the economic benefit of regeneration that have been undertaken by the former Department of the Environment (DOE) and the Heritage Council of Ireland.

The third part of the paper studies **policy and its impact on built heritage**. It examines existing planning policy including the listed

building process and Conservation Areas. It explains the importance of protecting and enhancing listed buildings and Conservation Areas through policy and guidance and looks at how policy might be enhanced to enable this. It also highlights the new opportunities for government to take action on built heritage through area planning and community planning.

The fourth part of the paper moves the focus to **Lisburn**. In this section the city's experience with the Townscape Heritage Initiative is studied in more detail in an aim to encourage and inform other council areas.

The paper then looks at **factors influencing the success of funding**, and how councils can attract investment.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1:

**Heritage needs to be included and protected within the Council Local Development Plans and Community Planning**

Recommendation 2:

**Councils need to build up expertise in Heritage**

Recommendation 3:

**More collegiality between departments**

Recommendation 4:

**More engagement with the public on the importance of our built heritage**

Recommendation 5:

**Support further heritage work in the voluntary and community sector**



Recommendation 6:  
Create more Conservation Areas

Recommendation 7:  
More protection and funding for listed buildings  
and Conservation Areas

Recommendation 8:  
Better enforcement of listing

Recommendation 9:  
Councils should consider the creation of  
'Heritage Towns'

Recommendation 10:  
The commissioning of an architectural series of  
'Stewardship and Design Statements' for small  
villages and settlements should be considered

#### CONSULTATIONS

This study has been informed by discussions  
with a range of organisations and individuals.  
A full list of these can be found at the end of  
the paper.

# Introduction

Northern Ireland has a unique architectural heritage and unrealised key asset in the buildings and street patterns of its towns. Yet often town centre buildings lie empty and unlet, not only at street level but on several floors above.

Planning authorities and developers / clients often encourage even brand new buildings to appear 'traditional' - yet the authentic built heritage appears to be under-valued. This is not the case in other cultures and places.

The legislation for listing buildings in Northern Ireland arrived much later than in Great Britain and the culture of appreciating the built environment is less mature. Legislative and investment priorities have been (and continue to be) elsewhere. However, Northern Ireland has a detailed Planning Policy Framework and Architecture and Built Environment Policy which value its built heritage, as does Scotland. England and Wales do not have architecture policies at present. MAG was pleased to contribute in July 2013 to the Farrell Review consultation on Architecture and the Built Environment in England.

Often older town centre buildings are perceived as unable to compete; they are viewed as an inconvenience with internal layouts not suited to modern retail and office tenants. Councils are trying to attract footfall

and business to towns whilst faced with the challenge of competing with internet shopping, out of town retail and entertainment centres with large areas of free car parking; it is perhaps understandable that modern buildings with large floor spaces are seen as the only solution.

Yet built heritage adds social and economic benefit and is crucial for retaining a sense of place and identity. As we will see later in this paper, it has the ability to draw people to live in and visit towns, increase tourism and encourage business. Throughout Northern Ireland, councils and owners are looking at examples from elsewhere and beginning to see the previously unrealised potential of older building stock. As can be seen from the ongoing revitalisation of Derry~Londonderry, studied in this paper, renovation work, well designed shop fronts and initiatives to upgrade property and streetscape are encouraging more people to live, work and visit our urban centres<sup>1</sup>. People are discovering that our historic towns offer an experience that cannot be found outside town centres – and that they are in possession of a great asset.

This paper highlights the value of older building stock and the added qualities it can bring to our villages, towns and cities. Its purpose is to give a greater appreciation of the historic and listed buildings in our urban centres and

<sup>1</sup> It is estimated that 90% of residential units and 75% of retail units created and repaired through the THI scheme in Derry~Londonderry are currently occupied **Walled City Partnership Sep15**

to emphasise the benefits of enhancing and protecting this heritage for future generations. The paper will focus on the social and economic value of this under-appreciated built heritage. It will look at issues affecting the reuse of older building stock and examples of council areas where initiatives to regenerate urban centres have brought success and investment. It will also look at issues that face owners and councils wishing to regenerate property.

The paper will focus on the experience of regeneration in Lisburn City and its initiatives to attract people into the city centre. The impact of the 2010 Lisburn City Centre Masterplan will be considered – its successes and drawbacks.

How can lessons learned from the experience of Lisburn inform new decision making in the City and elsewhere in Northern Ireland? How do town centres attract investment and how can this be improved? What is stopping owners of older buildings from refurbishing them in order to bring in a rental income? The paper will investigate future plans for similar regeneration schemes in Lisburn and learn from similar schemes that demonstrate the positive aspects of heritage buildings in town and city centres. Interviews with experienced practitioners, relevant council members, local business owners and property stakeholders have informed the conclusions.



Railway Street Lisburn – part of Lisburn’s Historic Quarter



# Part One: Social Value

## How Heritage can add social value

### 1.1 SOCIAL – CREATING A VISION FOR THE COMMUNITY

Heritage can make an important contribution to social value. Buildings are inextricably linked to people. Older buildings cannot survive without the will of the people who own them and the community which uses them. A technical report submitted to the former DOE in 2012 states:

‘Built heritage can be a private good, in that it may be owned or used by an individual, a company or a trust (use values). However, the protection of the historic environment cannot be left solely to the market as it is likely to be valued by people other than the owner, including local residents, people from outside an area and, indeed, generations who have yet to be born. As such the historic environment has characteristics of a public good.’

#### **STUDY OF THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF NORTHERN IRELAND’S HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT BY EFTEC AND RSM MCCLURE WATERS**

The community needs to understand that reuse of an existing asset is not only sustainable, but can bring vibrancy and increased footfall to urban centres. Councils are ideally placed to promote existing publications and visual material

to explain the social and economic benefit of heritage to the community. With the formation of new Councils, there is an ideal opportunity to create ‘Local Lists’ that identify places valued for local reasons and involve the community in protecting and planning a future for the places that matter to them. (See paragraph 3.4.4.) Whilst the local lists may not offer the statutory protection afforded to listed buildings, they ensure that the heritage interest identified can become a material concern in the determination of planning applications, even before the preparation of Local Development Plans. Guidance on sustainable reuse of buildings should be available for owners of older properties. (See Recommendation 4.)

#### **1.1.1 BUILDING PRESERVATION TRUSTS**

The expansion of the building preservation trust movement in Northern Ireland since 2000 reflects a growing awareness of the importance of our material heritage. Trusts work in collaboration with councils and funding bodies to facilitate the regeneration of built heritage. Throughout Northern Ireland over twenty Building Preservation Trusts have been established - empowered by funding and advice from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Architectural Heritage Fund and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. Trust and funding bodies often adopt a partnership approach, mentoring councils and owners throughout the regeneration process.

### **1.1.2 CASE STUDY – BELFAST BUILDINGS TRUST**

One of the longest established Trusts is the Belfast Buildings Trust. The Trust has a stated commitment to restoring to Belfast those buildings that make it special, that support the development of sustainable neighbourhoods and that are landmarks in the heart of the city's communities. Belfast Buildings Trust has an ambition for buildings and clients to create 'a sense of place'. The Trust sees itself as having a civic responsibility to encourage people and communities to have a voice. Its aim from the outset has been to protect, secure and enhance through rescuing those buildings for which no apparent use can be found. The Trust selects 'meaningful' buildings to save that will have a 'knock on' beneficial effect on their community. Buildings chosen for refurbishment must have firm business cases and offer either social or physical community benefit. The Belfast Buildings Trust website states:

'At the heart of our work to deliver heritage-led regeneration is awareness that buildings are more than simply bricks and mortar. Successful and sustainable buildings depend upon successful and sustainable communities.'

Successes include St. Patrick's National School on Donegall Street, Belfast – the former school building now offers a mix of office, retail and conference use in a city centre environment. The building is also used for conservation workshops and training, showcasing the benefits of restoration by example. The Trust's main driver is successful regeneration, aiming to create vital and prosperous communities:

'We actively support the development of strong communities. Regeneration requires a sense of ownership and community effort. It needs communities with vision, capacity and ambition. Civic engagement is crucial to securing a future for our historic buildings and cities.'

#### **BELFAST BUILDINGS TRUST**

The beneficial effects of regeneration can also be seen elsewhere in Northern Ireland.

### **1.1.3 CASE STUDY – HEARTH REVOLVING FUND**

Hearth Revolving Fund (originally formed in 1972 as the Historic Environmental and Architectural Rehabilitation Trust) purchases and restores buildings for resale. Like Hearth Housing Association, the Trust is non-profit-making, has charitable status, and is registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act.

Its scope was greatly enhanced when, in 1989, the former DOE provided capital for work in Conservation Areas through an associated Conservation Area Revolving Fund. The principle of a revolving fund is that a relatively small amount of capital can be used over and over again to buy, restore and sell or lease successive buildings; and any profits made on one scheme will finance a more ambitious project the next time round. The Fund concentrates on schemes which for one reason or another might be considered financially unattractive by a private developer. It aims to restore buildings of importance which would otherwise be lost, rather than to make profits from its operations.

Between 1978 and 2012, Hearth Housing Association has restored or built 102 dwellings at a total cost of some £7 million, and over that time has carried out further extensive improvements to many of those properties; and Hearth Revolving Fund has restored 40 dwellings, a restaurant and a community theatre at a total cost of a further £5 million. In addition a further 34 buildings have been restored in partnership with some private individuals, councils and bodies such as the Irish Landmark Trust. In doing so Hearth has provided high quality housing and also contributed to the preservation of the character of many of the towns and villages of Northern Ireland. The work of Hearth has been recognised by the receipt of many conservation awards.

Portrush Town Hall is a good example of how refurbishment of a loved building with meaning for the community can revitalise a town centre. The Town Hall dates from 1870 and was designed in the Scottish baronial style by Lanyon, Lynn and Lanyon. Constructed of red brick with striking bands of cream and black brickwork, the building formed an important group with the nearby Victorian railway station. Internally too, it was an imposing construction with its circular reading room as an unusual central feature. In association with Hearth Revolving Fund, and thanks to generous grant support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Coleraine Borough Council carried out a complete refurbishment and upgrade of the premises. After extensive refurbishment the hall is now leased back from Hearth Revolving Fund to the local Council and hosts a full programme of community events

## **1.2 ENGAGING WITH OWNERS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY – SHARING THE PROCESS**

Understanding why a heritage asset is important and appreciating its value is fundamental to the protection and sustainable use of this finite resource. The role of the media is key to this – but so are community and voluntary groups who do much to highlight the importance of built heritage.

### 1.2.1 PRINT AND BROADCAST MEDIA

Several high profile series on architecture and the built environment have been broadcast on television and radio. Reality and documentary TV shows including famous names such as Grand Designs, Location, Location, Location, and The Restoration Man have highlighted built heritage with reference to design, neglected buildings, renovations and residential sales.

Recent local programmes have included Northern Ireland House of the Year and UTV's programmes on archaeology. There is a proliferation of magazines which feature traditional homes and newspapers regularly carry stories of built heritage under threat. The popularity of European Heritage Open Day illustrates an increased awareness of Built Heritage. Last year, 52,720 people visited over 400 properties and events not normally accessible to the public in one weekend. Interest is growing in much loved buildings such as the 'Floral Hall' in Belfast through social media and a realisation that if a building such as this is lost, there is an accompanying loss for the whole community. The Facebook page to save the Floral Hall in Belfast has currently over 13,000 'likes'.

People need to be aware of and value their environment in order to want to protect and preserve it. Publications and events can

be used to educate and heighten public awareness of our built heritage.

### 1.2.2 VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY, PROFESSIONAL AND GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS

Voluntary and community organisations work tirelessly for heritage. Professional organisations such as the Royal Society of Ulster Architects offer continuing professional development courses in conservation and several specialist conservation organisations such as the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB), the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) have members in Northern Ireland. The government has contributed to the protection of built heritage through the Department for Communities' Historic Environment Division and the MAG. Councils also support the work in various ways.

**THE NATIONAL TRUST**, a charity, operates in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It is well known for its ownership and management of important buildings and land. The National Trust defines conservation as "the careful management of change" and its website states,

"While we're very passionate about open spaces and historic places,

we're working hard in other areas too. We care about energy, the environment, food, farming, transport and heritage - to name just a few of our concerns."

[WWW.NATIONALTRUST.ORG.UK](http://WWW.NATIONALTRUST.ORG.UK)

**ULSTER ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE SOCIETY (UAHS)**, a charity, was instrumental in encouraging the introduction of legislation for the protection of historic buildings in 1972. The Society's published lists covering buildings in different parts of Ulster preceded statutory listing in Northern Ireland. The UAHS is a pressure group that campaigns, lobbies and comments on key issues surrounding the protection of historic buildings in Northern Ireland. It also specialises in education, events and publications to promote built heritage and works in partnership with the DfC Historic Environment Division on the Built Heritage at Risk programme [www.uahs.org.uk](http://www.uahs.org.uk)

**BELFAST CIVIC TRUST**, a charity, has organised exhibitions, conferences, accompanied and unaccompanied walking tours, bus tours, lectures and events that all help to create an awareness of our surroundings and give a sense of 'value of place' for both tourists and locals. The Trust's most recent publications include a Christian Heritage tour. [www.belfastcivictrust.org.uk](http://www.belfastcivictrust.org.uk)

**HEARTH** was set up by the National Trust and the Ulster Architectural Heritage Society to restore historic buildings in Northern Ireland which are at risk of dereliction or loss. It now comprises two independent charities managed by the same committee. See 1.1.4 [www.hearth-housing.org.uk](http://www.hearth-housing.org.uk)

**FOYLE CIVIC TRUST**, a charity, has undertaken a variety of projects including exhibitions, conferences, heritage trails, lectures, an archaeological dig and conservation activities. It is one of the partners in the Walled City Partnership. [www.foylecivictrust.org](http://www.foylecivictrust.org)

**PLACE BUILT ENVIRONMENT CENTRE**, a charity, has instituted guided walks and tours, exhibitions, workshops, studios, photographic essays and sketching to enlighten young people and the general public about the value of design and the built heritage, including older groups of buildings and more modern examples of high quality architecture. PLACE activities are presented regularly through its website at [www.placeni.org/](http://www.placeni.org/) Subscribers can join free of charge to receive regular updates and access to a blog.

**HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT DIVISION** is a Division within the Department for Communities, whose events such as 'European Heritage Open Days' (EHOD), offer a first-hand opportunity for people to learn about the buildings that shape their community. [www.communities-ni.gov.uk/topics/historic-environment](http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/topics/historic-environment)



The open days are part of a programme of seasonal events which ran in 2014 and 2015 from April to October and are published on the Northern Ireland Tourist Board website.

[www.discovernorthernireland.com](http://www.discovernorthernireland.com)

All the organisations have impressive lists of publications available on their websites.

### **1.2.3 LEADERSHIP AND SUPPORT**

The evidence shows that charitable voluntary organisations have consistently led society and government in heritage appreciation. Supporting and developing the volunteer-led work of these organisations is a resource-efficient way for the private sector, local and central government to encourage greater public awareness and interest in the value of the built heritage. The culture change which is needed must be supported by a variety of means, often at low cost, if it is to effectively encourage appreciation of the qualities of heritage and the opportunities to make it economically viable.

(See Recommendation 5.)

## **EUROPEAN HERITAGE OPEN DAYS**

The EHOD scheme was initiated in 1991 by the Council of Europe to raise appreciation for Europe's rich and diverse cultural assets and their need for care and protection. A joint action by the Council of Europe and the European Commission,

the scheme aims to reflect our common and varied European Architectural Heritage across 50 European countries. On EHODs, key heritage buildings are opened to the public for one or two days per year. In Northern Ireland, the scheme is run by the Department for Communities (DfC), with significant cooperation with many building owners and users. EHOD remains Northern Ireland's most popular celebration of built heritage, last year seeing over 52,000 visitors across all of the properties and events.

European Heritage Open Days are an excellent example of an initiative that has consistently increased public involvement and appreciation of Northern Ireland's heritage year on year.

[www.heritageopendays.org.uk](http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk)

Councils have the ability to give areas of their towns meaning by emphasising each area's unique urban character and identity. An example of this is the creation of Belfast Cathedral Quarter, where regeneration has been encouraged by the naming of a coherent district, coupled with sponsored initiatives by Laganside Corporation, succeeded by the DfC. Nearby pubs and restaurants benefit from the new start-up businesses, giving the area character and life beyond the working day and into the evening and weekends. This new identity and the addition of the Merchant Hotel are helping to attract investment, visitors and tourists to the

Cathedral Quarter and regenerating this area of the City.

The work of the Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) encourages a ‘catalytic’ effect on regeneration. By focussing on small areas at a time, the community can witness at first hand the positive benefits of regeneration and are encouraged to support and work together in future phases of restoration.

As discussed in the Case Study in paragraph 1.1.3, Belfast Buildings Trust believes that a change in owners’ perspectives will help to regenerate our surroundings. By informing owners of the regenerative potential and distinctiveness of place and by showing them through positive examples of success, people learn about the transformative effects of regeneration. The work of the Townscape Heritage Initiative seeks to concentrate on small areas to encourage this catalytic effect. The Trust is adopting this approach with Carlisle Memorial Church in Belfast.

#### **1.2.4 CASE STUDY – CARLISLE MEMORIAL CHURCH, BELFAST**

Carlisle Memorial stands at the entrance to North Belfast as a well-known but abandoned landmark. Opened in 1875, a rapidly shrinking congregation caused the church trustees to sell the Church Halls in the late 1970s and to finally close the church in 1982.

In 2009 Belfast Buildings Trust published a report ‘Carlisle Memorial Church: Reuse and Restoration’, following a major community consultation that sought the views of local people and government. The consultation found widespread political support for the building to be placed at the heart of a heritage-led regeneration effort.

Research established four main ‘drivers’ for the church building:

- Food
- Health and Wellbeing
- Music
- Intergenerational Activities

Each of these uses resonates with a wide sector of the diverse local community. It is anticipated that a regenerated building that can provide or combine each of these ‘drivers’ will result in an offering for the entire local community. The building will draw people in organically and ‘mix’ the neighbourhood unselfconsciously, providing a shared resource with an efficiency of scale.

‘Restoration of Carlisle Memorial is not about the past. Rather, it is a statement of confidence for the future that anticipates when the building will again become a vibrant and contributing place’.

#### **BELFAST BUILDINGS TRUST**

In the interim, the Trust is working with partners to use Carlisle Memorial for community benefit through a youth-centred meanwhile use. This phased approach to regeneration ensures stewardship of the building, giving it a purpose whilst full funding is secured. Vitally, a phased approach also contributes to the positive benefits of the scheme ensuring the enthusiasm of the local community as they see at first hand the benefits of regeneration.

#### **1.2.5 CASE STUDY - GLENARM**

The County Antrim village of Glenarm has also benefitted from community consultation. In 2010, the Prince's Foundation for Building Communities held a three day 'Inquiry by Design' concerning the future of the village. The inquiry collected information and ideas from the local residents and business owners, who had a range of concerns, from the relationship of the harbour to the village to the inaccessibility of the main shopping

street. The resulting Masterplan proposes an ambitious but appropriate development for the Conservation Area that will benefit both local residents and visitors alike. Getting the village 'on side' contributes to smooth running of the process from property acquisition to a successful development result.

The co-operative approaches seen in Belfast and Glenarm remove 'top down' initiatives that are perceived to be 'out of the hands' of the local community. There is a need to work with the community to establish what assets they already hold; a need to find ways to encourage people to appreciate their assets (human as well as physical) and to think harder about their ambition for their place, how they want it to look and feel in the future. More widespread community involvement and understanding will encourage better long term appreciation and protection for built heritage.

# Part Two: Economic Benefit

## Economic Benefit – the added Value of Regeneration

Whilst the social and community benefit of heritage regeneration may be easily recognised in the wider world, the economic benefit may take longer to realise. Councils have an economic imperative to justify their plans for regeneration in town and village centres. Often the opportunity to realise what an older building may become is hampered by an inability to visualise the end result. By looking at the success of similar projects and schemes elsewhere, owners and councils can learn how their property and town centres can be reinterpreted for the future.

### **2.1 STUDY OF HERITAGE ECONOMIC VALUE IN NORTHERN IRELAND (MAY 2012)**

The ‘Study of the Economic Value of Northern Ireland’s Historic Environment’, submitted to the former DOE in May 2012 by effec and RSM McClure Watters, looked at case studies around Northern Ireland, including Derry City Walls and the Cathedral Quarter in Belfast. The study found that each £1 invested in Heritage by the public sector generates some £3-4 spend by the private sector. The study also reports that the historic environment in Northern Ireland produces a lower level of output, employment and Gross Value Added (GVA) than the Republic of Ireland, Scotland and Wales, when assessed on a per capita basis. It concludes that there is significant potential to further

develop the historic environment sector in Northern Ireland, thereby increasing economic benefit. One of the study’s key recommendations is that future investment in the historic environment should be informed by a coherent strategy and implementation plan. The study also recommends that public sector funding should be increased to realise further economic and social benefit and to encourage private sector involvement.

Economic benefits of regenerating built heritage highlighted in the report include:

- Increased footfall into town centres
- Attracting new business to the area
- More people wanting to live in the area
- Increase in tourism
- Beneficial ‘knock on’ effect on rest of town

### **2.2 STUDY OF HERITAGE ECONOMIC VALUE IN IRELAND (2011)**

A similar study of the economic benefit of regeneration was made to the Heritage Council of Ireland in 2011. The report highlights the success of regeneration in Westport, County Mayo, stating that;

‘Much of the economic activity of the town can be attributed to its heritage’.

It looks at the wider impact of the historic environment and praises joint achievements such as:

‘a high level of community and voluntary activity in the town; a high level and quality of its accommodation base; its diversification into new activity-based tourism markets in recent years; .... an ongoing demonstration effect from Westport to other Irish towns which have aimed to emulate its success and development processes; attractiveness of the town for other types of investment. Westport’s development in recent decades can therefore be seen as an example of a distinctive heritage town creating an ambience which is attractive to residents, investment and tourists’.

#### **ECONOMIC VALUE OF IRELAND’S HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT, ECORYS AND FITZPATRICK ASSOCIATES**

##### **2.2.1 HERITAGE TOWNS**

The Irish government recognises the growing significance of cultural heritage tourism.

‘Recent research has shown that not only does cultural tourism constitute one of the central planks of the Irish tourism industry, but that it is also one of the fastest growing areas of tourism internationally.

‘The Survey of Overseas Travellers 2008 shows that over €2.2 billion was generated by the 3.3 million visitors to sites of historical/cultural interest in Ireland... culture and heritage tourists tend to stay in Ireland for longer periods and spend more.’

#### **FÁILTE IRELAND, HISTORIC TOWNS IN IRELAND**

Research also shows that historic towns constitute a significant part of the attraction for culture and heritage seekers. In 2008, almost 57% of respondents to Fáilte Ireland’s Visitor Attitudes Survey singled out the attractiveness of Ireland’s historic towns as being ‘very important’ to them in considering Ireland for their holiday. These historic towns are likely to become increasingly important to tourism in the future, as visitors continue to travel to urban areas for short breaks. The unique characteristics of the towns, the stories they tell, the people that live in



them and the opportunities to engage with aspects of traditional culture, generate a strong appeal to visitors.

In 1991, 30 Irish towns were chosen to become Heritage Towns from over 600 submissions. These towns were chosen for their unique heritage resources and potential to achieve tourism development and growth given Heritage Town status.

The principle of the scheme was that a number of towns with a strong physical heritage would be developed as being representative of the heritage of Ireland. This development would have the two-fold effect of helping to protect the built environment and providing a marketing tool for the tourism industry in those towns and the country at large.

In line with the proposals set out in the 1994 Bórd Fáilte document 'The Heritage Town Concept' development in the designated towns included:

- Opening conserved historic buildings to visitors.
- Devising a number of themes including historic, architectural, archaeological, literary, religious, linking individual points of interest.
- Devising an integrated signage system.
- Developing an integrated traffic management plan incorporating car parking and pedestrian routes.

- Developing and managing a Heritage Centre.

The core part of the Heritage Town Programme was the development of a visitor centre. This Heritage Centre would provide an orientation point, a gathering place and an information centre for the project.

There is an opportunity for councils to tie in with this initiative in Northern Ireland and take advantage of the tourism it generates throughout Ireland. (See Recommendation 9.)

## **2.3 ECONOMIC BENEFIT - CASE STUDIES**

Regeneration can begin with one key listed building, be undertaken within a specified Conservation Area, or a combination of both approaches. Seeing the positive effects of regeneration in other cities, such as the Merchant City in Glasgow and Grainger Town in Newcastle upon Tyne, can illuminate unseen opportunities for owners and partners from the private sector.

### **2.3.1 CASE STUDY - GRAINGER TOWN**

Grainger Town is within Newcastle's Central Conservation Area, one of the first to be designated in England. A programme of property development and environmental enhancement was started in 1993 with Newcastle City Council and English Heritage. This tackled most of the

worst buildings at risk and began to stop the decline of the area. In 1996, Newcastle City Council, English Heritage and English Partnerships decided that the area was in need of significant assistance.

In 1996, EDAW were commissioned to produce a regeneration strategy for Grainger Town and to prepare a bid for Government funding. The proposals aimed to turn Grainger Town into a dynamic and competitive location in the heart of the city. The aim of the project was to make Grainger Town a high quality environment appropriate to a major European regional capital. A plan was developed to make this a reality over a six-year period. The Grainger Town project commenced in April 1997 and by its close in March 2003, over £174 million had been attracted into the area including £146 million from the private sector, exceeding the Project's target by a massive £100 million. Today, the area around Grey's Monument and Grey Street is expanding fast with high quality shopping outlets, designer fashions and jewellery. The Central Exchange, with its tiled Edwardian Central Arcade offers retail and the Newcastle Tourist Information Centre.

### **2.3.2 CASE STUDY - ST GEORGE'S MARKET**

Belfast City Council faced this issue in the 1980s, when deciding the future of St George's Market, the last of Belfast's

thriving Victorian markets. The Market was in decline and the site was earmarked for redevelopment. Increasing maintenance costs, changes to hygiene regulations and its once-a-week usage prompted consideration of other uses for the listed building. A council-led campaign resulted in a £3.5 million refurbishment programme in 1997, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the former DOE. During the two-year restoration period, St George's Victorian character was brought back to life. Original drawings were used to repair the badly deteriorated brick and stonework and the Bangor Blue slate and glass roof was reinstated. Thanks to the vision of Belfast City Council the market is now one of the city's most popular tourist attractions, drawing people from all over Ireland and beyond into Belfast city centre. The existence of the market brings people into the city centre outside office hours, increasing footfall and income for the retailers and restaurants.

### **2.3.3 RESTORATION SUCCESSES IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

Other restoration successes in Belfast include the Merchant Hotel, a high quality refurbishment and conversion of a Grade A listed Ulster Bank (1867) and the neighbouring Grade A listed Ulster Buildings (1869) to luxury hotel accommodation. Part of this building was proposed for demolition by its owner in

the mid 1990's. This was opposed on the grounds of listing. Though the owner moved out and the building was vacant for the next ten years, listing allowed the building to be protected while its

important new use was found. This magnificent building is now the jewel of the city's Cathedral Quarter, and has been recognised for its contribution to the regeneration of the city.



Merchant Hotel, Belfast



### 2.3.4 CASE STUDY - DERRY~LONDONDERRY

In recent years the city's built heritage has come to the fore, catalysing its economic and social regeneration. A number of separate initiatives have been instigated which seek to utilise this potential and improve the city's heritage tourism offering. Almost £33 million of public funding has now been spent or earmarked for heritage projects or closely connected works. The city walls were the early focus of the project. These remain in the ownership of the Honourable the Irish Society (now a charitable trust), but have

been maintained by the State since 1955. DfC Historic Environment Division carries out ongoing major conservation works and sections of the walls have been re-opened to public access after decades of closure during the Troubles.

The former DOE's paper on heritage led regeneration in the city<sup>2</sup> explains how the Walled City Signature Destination Project has built upon this investment by improving signage and lighting and running associated events. In a complementary project, 32 cannons restored by the city council were mounted upon historically accurate cradles; the



Ferryquay Gate in Derry~Londonderry by Tom Bastin - see References for full credit.

<sup>2</sup> [www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/heritage-led-regeneration-derry-city-council-area](http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/heritage-led-regeneration-derry-city-council-area)

idea being that the walls would become the focus for visitor orientation and be complemented by related historical interpretation and improvement works.

A significant programme of heritage repair work was undertaken in the form of a Built Heritage Fund developed as part of the Signature Project. Key buildings near to the Walls were repaired including: The Playhouse; the Guildhall; First Derry Presbyterian Church; St Columb's Cathedral; Aras Colmkille (former school beside Long Tower Church) and the Apprentice Boys Memorial Hall.

To date over £47m of public and private investment has been committed to restoring the city's heritage, funded by a range of bodies including Tourism Northern Ireland, the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Arts Council, the DfC Historic Environment Division and property owners.

Walled City Partnership (WCP), set up in 2002, comprises the Foyle Civic Trust, Derry City Council (now Derry City and Strabane District Council), and City Centre Initiative. In 2003 the partnership applied to deliver a Heritage Lottery funded THI for the city, and its successful bid was the trigger for action.





Granted £1 million, almost £4.5 million was levered in from several sources for the first phase. To date, 26 buildings inside the walls have been rescued and repaired. These range from Georgian buildings in Shipquay Street, to more modest Victorian buildings at Waterloo Street and Castle Street. Some are independent shops, with flats above, bringing new life inside and out.

The THI flagship projects include the former Northern Counties Hotel at Magazine Gate. This impressive landmark Edwardian building now accommodates retail units on the ground floor and boasts as much as 95% occupancy on its upper floor office accommodation. Another significant project is the former Irvine's Printing works, straddling Waterloo Street and Hangman's Bastion on the city walls. Home to 'Echo Echo Dance Company' and 'In Your Space' events company, it also houses ground floor retail and café outlets on the Waterloo Street side.

THI initiated the removal of solid steel roller shutters from shop fronts in Waterloo Street – a key requirement of gaining funding through this grant scheme. Counter to expectations those properties whose shutters have been removed have been largely vandal and graffiti free.

Walled City Partnership is well advanced in its delivery of THI Phase II through which it delivers Northern Ireland's first dedicated THI education programme – an innovative, interactive programme designed to raise heritage awareness in a wide range of target audiences.

Derry~Londonderry's post conflict regeneration and rebranding process gained momentum thanks to its designation as 'Derry~Londonderry UK City of Culture 2013'. Painstaking work behind the scenes over the previous twelve years, repairing the city's built heritage, meant this was ready for showcasing during this prime year in the city's cultural fortunes. It formed a distinctive backdrop to such major events as the All Ireland Fleadh Cheoil, Colmcille, the magical Lumière and the Turner Prize, all of which attracted high visitor numbers and generated excellent publicity and positive press for a city, previously known internationally primarily for bombings and rioting.

The ReStore scheme, administered by City Centre Initiative on behalf of the former DSD, is designed to spruce up shop fronts and also includes provisions for the removal of unsightly external roller shutters. The approach was first used in Boston as a town and city

centre revitalisation project targeting the restoration of shop fronts. Key stakeholders dovetailed the THI and ReStore schemes, ensuring that whole clusters of buildings were upgraded together. One complements the other, often transforming entire streets. ReStore is just one of the smaller, complementary schemes that has breathed new life into Derry~Londonderry.

The transformative impact of the new Peace Bridge, allied with removal of city centre parking from Queen's Quay, opened up river and riverfront, creating places to walk, cycle and relax. Investing in heritage has brought an increased profile for the city and a greatly heightened sense of pride and belonging for everyone in the community.

# Part Three: Policy Impacts

## Policy and its impact on Built Heritage

### 3.1 PLANNING POLICY

Policy has a direct impact on heritage regeneration. Planning policy that permits large scale out of town development inhibits development in towns, where retailers and businesses need to work with existing building stock. It is difficult for retailers in town and village centres to compete if filling stations with annexed shops open alongside them.

#### 3.1.1 CONSERVATION APPROACH

Measures need to be taken to allow change of use for older buildings and to encourage a ‘conservation approach’ to maintaining existing heritage in Conservation Areas. This is important to prevent a ‘dropping off’ of quality and authenticity in these areas and to ensure their full potential for regeneration and attracting tourism can be realised.

A recent example was seen in Portaferry, where representatives of the minimarket in the town square wanted to demolish the historic coach arch adjacent to their premises to allow easier access for deliveries. By working with the Heritage Lottery Fund, the owner was persuaded to look at similar examples in Bath, where retailers have adopted different strategies to adapt to modern uses whilst retaining a respect for their building and for the historic fabric of the town.

### 3.2 LOCAL PLANS

Area planning and community planning are the two key ways in which new local councils can take action on built heritage.

Incorporating Heritage, as is currently proposed, into each council’s new Local Development Plan will enable consideration to be given to the existing heritage assets within each council area. Councils will have the power to draw up tailored planning policy for the historic environment in their new Local Development Plans. Built Heritage, good place making and community input to Local Plans benefit the community and the local economy. (See Recommendation 1.)

### 3.3 COMMUNITY PLANNING

MAG recommends that heritage buildings are incorporated and made a priority in new council community planning. The protection and promotion of Heritage should be integrated into community plans and new planning policy. Policy needs to be integrated and support building users. (See Recommendation 1.)

### 3.4 LISTING OF BUILT HERITAGE

Section 80 of The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 sets out the requirements for listing of Built Heritage:

‘The Department-  
(a) shall compile lists of buildings

of special architectural or historic interest; and

(b) may amend any list so compiled.

(2) In considering whether to include a building in a list compiled under this section the Department may take into account not only the building itself but also—

(a) any respect in which its exterior contributes to the architectural or historic interest of any group of buildings of which it forms part; and

(b) the desirability of preserving, on the ground of its architectural or historic interest, any feature of the building which consists of a man-made object or structure fixed to the building or which forms a part of the land and which is comprised within the curtilage of the building.’

The former DOE Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) published in 2015 is designed to simplify and replace all existing Planning Policy Statements.

The SPPS must be taken into account in the preparation of Local Development Plans, and is also material to all decisions on individual planning applications and appeals.

During the transitional period whilst councils are preparing their Local Development Plans, planning authorities will apply existing policy together with the SPPS. Section 6 of the SPPS concerns Listed Buildings:

6.12 Listed Buildings of special architectural or historic interest are key elements of our built heritage and are often important for their intrinsic value and for their contribution to the character and quality of settlements and the countryside. It is important therefore that development proposals impacting upon such buildings and their settings are assessed, paying due regard to these considerations, as well as the rarity of the type of structure and any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

6.13 Development involving a change of use and / or works of extension / alteration may be permitted, particularly where this will secure the ongoing viability and upkeep of the building. It is important that such development respects the essential character and architectural or historic interest of the building and its setting, and that features of special interest remain intact and unimpaired. Proposals should be based on a clear understanding of the importance of the building/place/heritage asset, and should support the best viable use that is compatible with the fabric, setting and character of the building. Applicants should justify their proposals,

and show why alteration or demolition of a listed building is desirable or necessary.

6.15 Proposals for the total demolition of a listed building or any significant part of it must not be permitted unless there are exceptional reasons why it cannot be retained in its original or a reasonably modified form. Where consent to demolish a listed building is granted, this should normally be conditional on prior agreement for the redevelopment of the site and appropriate arrangements for recording the building prior to its demolition.

Planning Policy Statement 6 (PPS 6) relates to Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage. Section 2 of PPS 6 highlights the importance of listed buildings:<sup>3</sup>

‘2.15. Such buildings are important for their intrinsic value and for their contribution to the character and quality of settlements and the open countryside of Northern Ireland. There are currently over 8,500 listed buildings and more will be added to and some removed from the statutory list as the process of building survey and resurvey is ongoing.

2.16. The list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest

records the best of our architectural heritage.

It includes every type of building, ranging from grand mansions and cathedrals to warehouses and vernacular architecture. As well as conventional buildings, the list may include man-made objects or structures not normally considered as buildings, for example tombstones, telephone kiosks, postboxes, gates, war memorials, bridges, docks and other industrial structures’

Ireland has over 8,500 listed buildings. This is in line with other parts of the UK, where fewer than 2% of buildings are listed. In the Republic of Ireland, where listed buildings are designated as ‘protected structures’, The Heritage Council has estimated that there are 38,171 ‘protected structures’. Although more buildings are being added to the register of listed buildings in Northern Ireland, some are being removed due to loss of interiors or a perceived loss of quality. DfC Historic Environment Division explains that following an holistic assessment, inside and out relative to published criteria, these buildings no longer meet the legislative test. MAG responded to this issue in its response to the consultation on the criteria for listing in 2010:

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<sup>3</sup> PPS6 will be superseded by Area Development Plan policies once these are published.

‘The issue of delisting is very contentious. It is accepted that delisting may happen where the Department has listed on erroneous grounds, and once a building has been demolished. In all other cases a listed building should remain listed. The general public understands a listed building to be protected from alteration and demolition, and expects the Department to see that it remains listed. It is not the building’s fault if someone has seen fit to alter or demolish it, and the perpetrator of the damage should be required to reinstate it.’

MAG therefore recommends that legislation should advocate the repair of a listed building where it no longer meets the requirements of published criteria. (See Recommendation 8.)

Listed buildings and Conservation Areas have the ability to attract investment and people to entire areas. More investment and support needs to be given to listed properties and to repair those that have suffered damage. Creating partnerships and other forms of collaboration and collegiality with other branches of government, private sector and charities is a proven method of delivering regeneration. (See Recommendations 3, 7 and 8.)

Listing needs to be bedded in the context of neighbouring buildings that are, often unprotected. Planning officers dealing with planning applications adjacent to listed buildings, whether or not they are in a Conservation Area, are able to call upon and to heed specialist advice from their network of conservation architects who are skilled and experienced in both conservation and design. This specialist advice should be recommended to councillors so that they can fully appreciate the juxtaposition of new and old for the benefit of the place and its assets. Areas such as Spitalfields in London exhibit a vibrant mixed use of buildings of all ages whilst maintaining a strong sense of urban character.

#### **3.4.1 REPAIR FOLLOWING LOSS OF QUALITY**

Even when there is a perceived loss of quality of heritage buildings, due to the removal of detail or unapproved alterations to interiors, this can often be repaired and restored now or in the future. The Ulster Architectural Heritage Society recently stated,

“Unlike scheduling, listing does not imply that a building cannot evolve and change, only that alteration must be done appropriately. The state of repair of a building is not deemed to be a relevant consideration for listing” (Annex C of PPS6)



DfC Historic Environment Division, in association with the Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, maintains and regularly updates an online register of built heritage at risk in Northern Ireland (BHARNI) and a register of professional, trade and craft skills in historic building restoration. Using these resources to encourage owners and those responsible for the stewardship of the built heritage, with relatively small amounts of money, produces measurable benefits for society as outlined in Part 4.0 of this paper, 'The Experience of Lisburn'.

#### **3.4.2 RETENTION OF LISTING; DISMANTLING AND STORAGE**

MAG recommends that once a building has been listed for its special architectural or historic interest, it should continue to be listed. Where a building does not meet the legislative test, consideration should be given to whether it is capable of repair. Under Section 80 of the Planning Act a structure must be of special architectural or historic interest to be listed. The Department has delisted buildings found to no longer meet this test. MAG would argue that the benefit to NI of retaining as much heritage as possible is such that buildings should be retained on the list if they are capable of repair (even if enforcement action to reinstate such features is not possible) and owners encouraged to restore lost features.

In exceptional circumstances, where it is essential to public interest that a listed

building must be demolished, MAG recommends consideration be given to dismantling and saving some or all of the building elements so that the building can be rebuilt on the same or a different site, immediately or in future. Consideration could be given to the reuse of features - historically, this was undertaken successfully at St George's Church on High Street, Belfast, where a portico reused from another building formed part of its new façade and is now listed. Some of the listed wall at one of Belfast's most historic buildings, Clifton House, was carefully dismantled and rebuilt to ease traffic while retaining the character of the place. (See Recommendation 8.)

#### **3.4.3 HERITAGE CRIME**

It is vital that protection of listed buildings is enforced to protect our heritage. Deliberate destruction and defacement of listed buildings, scheduled monuments or buildings in Conservation Areas is a criminal offence. Collaborative working including the former DOE, the district councils and the Police Service of Northern Ireland was instituted during the Heritage Crime summits called by the then Environment Minister, Alex Attwood. This collaborative working should be a permanent part of the process of protecting the built heritage.

### 3.4.4 LOCAL LISTING

The councils have the opportunity of creating local lists of buildings that are not statutorily listed, but are valued by their local community.

Local lists of non-statutorily protected historic buildings in a council area could be defined within an area plan or through community discussion.

Local lists with tailored policies in each council's area could allow heritage interest to become a material consideration in relation to planning applications. The value of local listing is highlighted in advice produced by Historic England on Local Heritage Assets. Historic England has developed the first comprehensive guide to developing local heritage lists, based on examples of good practice from around the country:

“Local lists play an essential role in building and reinforcing a sense of local character and distinctiveness in the historic environment. Local lists can be used to identify significant local heritage assets to support the development of Local Plans. Encouraging the use of local lists will strengthen the role of local heritage assets as a material consideration in the planning process. ...At its heart,

local listing provides an opportunity for communities to have their views on local heritage heard. It recognises that the importance we place on the historic environment extends beyond the confines of the planning system to recognise those community-based values that contribute to our sense of place”.

[WWW.HISTORICENGLAND.ORG.UK/LISTING/WHAT-IS-DESIGNATION/LOCAL/LOCAL-DESIGNATIONS/](http://WWW.HISTORICENGLAND.ORG.UK/LISTING/WHAT-IS-DESIGNATION/LOCAL/LOCAL-DESIGNATIONS/)

Local listing may help redress the balance in protecting places with meaning. It will identify heritage assets valued for a local reason, which in turn will strengthen the sense of place and identity for the community. Councils can encourage meaningful local involvement in preparing for Local Development Plans by inviting people to suggest buildings to be considered for local listing. This can and should be an action in all Statements of Community Involvement. It is rewarding, productive and engaging.

### 3.4.5 FUNDING

Owners of listed buildings need funding support to help maintain them. The amounts of funding required are often small when considered against the economic, social and tourism value of the heritage asset to society. Although

many owners are keen to restore their properties, this can be onerous without public sector and private funding. Without restoration, the subsequent economic, social and community benefit is lost. For those who are interested in obtaining funding, the current arrangements for grant aid for listed buildings are described on the website of DfC Historical Environment Division at [www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/historic-environment-support](http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/historic-environment-support)

DfC Historic Environment Division's listed building grants are one of, if not the only source of funds available to individuals to maintain listed buildings, a responsibility that owners are bound to abide by law. Overall there is a return of £7.65 on every £1 of listed building grant given, demonstrating excellent value for money.<sup>4</sup> Funds for listed building grants were significantly reduced in 2015/16 following significant cuts in the former DOE's budget.

### 3.4.6 APPROPRIATE CHANGE

The allowance of appropriate change can enable the reuse of abandoned listed properties. Listed buildings need to accommodate appropriate change.

One of the key Regional Strategic Objectives within Section 6.4 of the SPPS is to:

'deliver economic and community benefit through conservation that facilitates productive use of built heritage assets and opportunities for investment, whilst safeguarding their historic or architectural integrity'.

The Irish Landmark Trust restores unique and interesting buildings throughout Ireland, turning them into self-catering holiday accommodation. Public and private owners typically agree to let properties on 50-year leases that allow the Trust to make them suitable for holiday accommodation. Once a lease expires, the property reverts to the owner. Successful examples can have a wider regenerative impact on their towns and villages as well as attracting visitors to the area.

### 3.5 CONSERVATION AREAS

Northern Ireland has 61 Conservation Areas. Compare this with England where there are 9,300<sup>5</sup>, or the 600 Conservation Areas in Scotland<sup>6</sup>. The discrepancy may be explained by the fact that some areas in Northern Ireland, that may have been

<sup>4</sup> NIEA, 2012 [www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/study-economic-value-northern-irelands-historic-environment](http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/study-economic-value-northern-irelands-historic-environment)

<sup>5</sup> [www.historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/conservation-areas/](http://www.historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/conservation-areas/)

<sup>6</sup> [www.gov.scot/Publications/2005/03/29141519/15200](http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2005/03/29141519/15200)

deemed suitable as Conservation Areas, may instead have been designated as Areas of Townscape Character as part of Area Plan processes. This designation does not exist elsewhere in the UK. With relatively fewer Conservation Areas, Northern Ireland is potentially missing out on associated protection and funding.

Areas of Townscape Character, Areas of Village Character and Local Landscape Policy Areas should all be considered for the more formal designation of Conservation Area which would allow them to attract funding that is not available at present. Alternatively, funding bodies should be encouraged to include these other designated areas within their own criteria. (See Recommendation 6.)

### **3.5.1 PROTECTION OF THE COUNTRYSIDE**

The Northern Ireland countryside is covered by a Planning Policy Statement (PPS21) that will potentially permit, over the 15 year period of a Local Development Plan, almost 50,000 new dwellings to be built on farms. Such a large opportunity to build new homes in the countryside may negate any planning endeavours to reuse built heritage in both rural and urban areas, further reducing the capacity to find viable new uses for existing buildings. MAG responded In March 2009 to the public consultation on PPS21.<sup>7</sup>

MAG advised that the countryside itself should be designated as a Conservation Area, responding to the European Landscape Convention that ‘all places matter’. Designation of a Northern Ireland Countryside Conservation Area would allow decision making about the extent of development in the countryside to be made in accordance with good planning practice that gives appropriate weight to all material considerations in determining a planning application, rather than solely on the basis of PPS21 which permits a new dwelling every ten years on each registered farm. The MAG recommendation of 2009 would require Conservation Area consent to be obtained to demolish buildings in the countryside.

### **3.5.2 QUALITY, PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS**

The quality of Conservation Areas is heightened by the fine grain of architectural and landscape detail and care should be taken to ensure it is not lost. Existing buildings in Conservation Areas need to be protected and demolition avoided if at all possible. Demolition in Conservation Areas can affect the quality of the entire setting and of listed buildings within it. Conservation Areas are best protected and enhanced by working creatively with owners of properties, including listed property, and helping to recommend productive uses and fund

<sup>7</sup> [www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/DOE-consultation-draft-planning-policy-statement-21-sustainable-development-countryside](http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/DOE-consultation-draft-planning-policy-statement-21-sustainable-development-countryside)

the necessary repair and upgrade of built fabric to make up the 'conservation deficit' that can be caused by any excess cost over replacement buildings. All too often Conservation Areas are marred by inappropriate street furniture and crude road traffic signage, or insensitive road layouts. There is little point in having granite kerbs and paving alongside inappropriately scaled and implemented traffic management solutions. There is a need for better liaison or collegiality between departments at brief stage and information on a 'Conservation Area' approach to design guidance and policy that will ensure stewardship of these areas.

This has been undertaken successfully at Holyrood Park in Edinburgh, for example, where a different set of road signs and markings has been used to avoid visual intrusion into the park. Councils' Building Regulation function allows for the ability to relax regulations when dealing with listed buildings. Other Government departments such as DfC and Department for Infrastructure (DfI) (Transport NI) could adopt similar policies, to prioritise the qualities of places and recognise the Conservation approach. This would enable an integrated holistic approach and protect historic town centres. (See Recommendation 3.)

Conservation Areas attract substantial funding and investment from bodies

such as the Heritage Lottery Fund. The experience of Derry~Londonderry shows that Townscape Heritage investment often attracts further private and public investment and economic benefit for the town.

Consideration should be given to creating more Conservation Areas in villages, such as Greyabbey, to attract investment for regeneration. (See Recommendation 6.) Even if the MAG advice of 2009 to designate the Northern Ireland countryside in its entirety as a Conservation Area is not followed, there is potential to set up rural Conservation Areas in places such as Cleenish Island in Fermanagh, where twelve stone houses remain that were provided for returning soldiers to rehabilitate after The First World War. Potential also exists to protect other historically significant areas such as Roe Valley in Londonderry, where an industrial landscape of importance should be better protected. The edges of Conservation Areas need to be considered and sometimes enlarged, to protect a 'dropping off' of quality at their boundaries. Much of this quality change is visual and cumulative. Windows and doors are important elements of listed buildings and some buildings in Conservation Areas. Historically and visually inappropriate replacements are installed by people who do not value architectural heritage. They opt instead for promised lower maintenance and



higher energy performance. The loss of quality includes not only replacement windows and doors but also changes to architectural detail, roof materials, fences, hedges, walls, gates and paving. The changes are specifically allowed by permitted development rights embedded in planning legislation.

There is also a lack of adherence to conservation guidance within Conservation Areas. PPS 6 needs to be rigorously applied on an individual basis in planning applications to prevent a loss of character and diminution of quality. However, PPS6 only applies to development that requires permission and this Planning Policy Statement has no effect on permitted development rights. MAG advises that the quality of the built environment is compromised by the exercise of permitted development rights without respecting the existing quality of the buildings. (See Recommendation 7.)

### **3.5.3 PROFESSIONAL CONSERVATION AND DESIGN SKILLS**

The appointment of an architect or conservation planner within each council planning department, ensures greater protection for our Heritage and the integration of new development as appropriate. A dedicated officer with both conservation and design qualifications and experience will ensure that Conservation Areas can be appraised and reviewed at

agreed intervals to maintain their quality. (See Recommendation 2.)

An experienced Conservation Officer will be able to differentiate between those aspects of Conservation Areas where the setting is a huge part of the quality and character of the area and those where detail really counts and Article 4 Directions should be inserted from the time of designation. This is a matter of very fine judgement that requires well-honed design appreciation and skills.

The commissioning of an architectural series of 'Stewardship and Design Statements' for villages and settlements should be considered. Such statements would assist owners with new proposals and inform why their place is important and what makes it special. They would also assist planners in applying planning policy and could be incorporated as part of new area plans or masterplans with the agreement of the local community and council. (See Recommendation 10.)

Such work was undertaken in Belfast as part of the development of the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) and in Derry in regard to guidance for its three Conservation Areas.

In the Republic of Ireland, similar Characterisation Studies have been undertaken for villages such as Clones.

# Part Four: Lisburn

## The Experience of Lisburn



Market House, Lisburn

Heritage led regeneration is driving the sustainable economic development of the Historic Quarter in Lisburn. Lisburn has showed a clear vision and coherent plan for the future by designating its Conservation Area within the city centre as its 'Historic Quarter'. The Lisburn Historic Quarter Partnership was established in 2000 as a partnership between central and local government and business and voluntary organisations. The aim of the Partnership is to restore the historic core of the city as it was first laid out in the 17th century, in a bid to achieve social and physical regeneration. Over the last decade much has been achieved under the seven themes identified in the original Lisburn Historic Quarter Development Strategy.

In 2011 a new strategy for Lisburn Historic Quarter was developed covering the period from 2011 - 2021. Amongst measures outlined as part of the Development Strategy, bespoke signage was introduced that unified and identified the designated Quarter. Guidance was also laid out for treatment of lighting, street furniture and shop fronts within the Conservation Area. Within the guidance, the importance of ground level design is emphasised as this is what pedestrians experience at street level. Lisburn also appreciates local talents and encourages good stewardship, using regular events to strengthen the identity of the Historic Quarter and community links to it. Through the Historic Quarter Arts

Group, the council arranges events such as a monthly 'Art on the Rails' on Castle Street and a Lisburn Heritage Festival. By showing an appreciation of the urban heritage particular to Lisburn, the city is able to market itself as having a unique visitor experience and to strengthen links with the local community. This move away from 'cloned' towns with similar masterplans is vital as it retains the identity and variety of our urban heritage.

#### 4.1 LISBURN AND THE TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE

The Townscape Heritage programme is run as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund. The programme offers funding incentives

to help communities regenerate deprived towns and cities across the UK by improving their built historic environment. Townscape Heritage schemes help to reverse the decline of our best-loved historic townscapes. Local, regional and national organisations work together to repair buildings in Conservation Areas and bring them back to life. Schemes help create attractive, vibrant places that people want to live, work, visit and invest in. They also inspire communities to find out more about their townscape heritage, and give local people the chance to learn new skills, adding to our social and economic capital.



Adjacent properties on Bridge Street before and after refurbishment



View of Bridge Street looking towards Lisburn Cathedral

Lisburn made its first proposal for the Bridge Street Townscape Heritage Initiative in 1999. Bridge Street was traditionally one of the main arterial routes into and out of the city, lined by a mix of shops, public houses and residential accommodation. Unfortunately due primarily to a 1970's realignment of the main route into the city, Bridge Street was isolated from the rest of the town and fell into serious decline. Bridge Street THI was formed of representatives from each of the funding partners, namely, Lisburn City Council, Heritage Lottery Fund, the former DOE Planning and Northern Ireland Housing Executive, and was managed by Lisburn City Centre Management through the Bridge Street Partnership. Through grant assistance from the Heritage Lottery

Fund, matched by the City Council, the former DOE Planning, the Down Lisburn Trust and the Housing Executive, and attracting substantial further private investment, 19 projects involving 16 buildings were completed in the first five years.

This initiative included the creation of twelve apartments 'over the shop', which are helping to bring residents back into the street. Through the success of phase one, funding for phase two was secured in 2006. By the end of this phase the initiative will have delivered an additional 10 Commercial Units; 25 Residential Units; 1 New Access Route connecting Castle Gardens to Bridge Street and 1 Communal Green Space.



The success of Lisburn's regeneration of Bridge Street can be attributed to the city's clear vision for and understanding of its heritage. Lisburn benefitted from proactive leadership of the partnership plus a good understanding of what the City has to offer. The success of Lisburn's regeneration of Bridge Street can be attributed to the city's clear vision for and understanding of its heritage. Lisburn benefitted from proactive leadership of the partnership plus a good understanding of what the City has to offer. An extensive scheme of work ran alongside the Bridge Street work and contributed to its benefit. This included the restoration of Lisburn Cathedral and reinstatement of the 17th century terraces and 19th century formal park in nearby Castle Gardens. Bridge Street shows how resurgence in town centre living and mixed economy can be encouraged to happen and how regeneration can deliver real social and economic benefit. Since the creation of the Historic Quarter in 2000, we are witnessing a change in shopping habits. A recent study for Channel 4 'Dispatches' found that supermarkets were suffering the effects of this, as customers shun large out-of-town stores in favour of smaller convenience stores. People are now tending towards several smaller shops per week and want locally sourced, sustainable goods. There is a trend towards healthy living and eating and away from hypermarkets. Industry body IGD has forecast that by 2019 sales in small neighbourhood stores will

increase 31%, to £49bn, accounting for nearly a quarter of all grocery sales. That could be good news for high streets, boosting visitor numbers and opening up opportunities to tempt shoppers with fresh produce and specialist foods not stocked in run-of-the-mill high street grocers. People are happy to go to specialist shops - in many areas of Northern Ireland we are fortunate to have retained a strong trade in independent butchers, bakers and greengrocers that rely on customer loyalty and that market themselves as individual. This individuality and smaller scale suits older properties and helps create a sense of place that attracts people to want to live and work in the area. In Northern Ireland, villages such as Moira and Saintfield are thriving examples of this. Rather than attempt to compete directly with out of town retail, Lisburn is beginning to learn to be creative with retailers, making the most of the unusual spaces offered by older buildings, and opportunities for smaller, craft led business. An example is 'The Hat Shop' on Bridge Street, where a balcony was added to the back of the shop so that customers can try on hats in daylight. The upgraded street helps people want to live in the town – the incorporation of residential accommodation with retail brings life to the street, security to the town centre out of business hours and business for local retailers. In the case of Bridge Street, owners were aided by a scheme run by the Housing Executive, which helped with the cost of upgrading residential accommodation. Encouraging



people to live in towns is vital to improving their economy and one of the key factors councils should consider. The success of Bridge Street and the surrounding area is having a 'knock on' effect on other areas of the City, helping to attract new

business and giving confidence to similar regeneration schemes elsewhere. The public realm scheme outlined in Lisburn Masterplan of 2010 was completed in 2015 and is a signal of the City Council's confidence in the city centre.

#### **4.1.1 NAVIGATION HOUSE**

On the banks of the Lagan Canal, Navigation House will be the new headquarters of the Lagan Canal Trust, with the Trust having leased the site from Hearth Revolving Fund through Ulster Garden Villages. In 2012, the house and stables were spot-listed by the then Environment Minister, Alex Attwood, after a planning application proposed to demolish them and build six units in their place.

#### **4.1.2 RATHVARNA HOUSE**

Further from the city centre on Pond Park Road, Rathvarna House, an Italianate villa owned by the South Eastern Education and Library Board, hit headlines in 2009 when the owners applied for permission to demolish it. A local campaign petitioned to save Rathvarna House as a landmark building important to the community as one of the few older buildings in the area. With the support of Lisburn City Council, the house was listed, the trees around it made the subject of a preservation order and today it is being restored for use as a resource centre for the community.

### **4.2 THE FUTURE FOR LISBURN**

The success of Bridge Street in Lisburn shows how incremental improvements can provide economic and social uplift to a whole city. However there is still much

work to be done throughout Lisburn and considerable potential for other areas to attract investment. Focus needs to be made on Lisburn's existing heritage assets, with rigorous attention paid to proposals within the Conservation Area and adjacent to listed buildings. Careful attention needs to be paid to Planning Policy guidance set out within PPS6, and within Local Development Plans once these are published, so that the quality of existing heritage buildings is not depreciated by changes such as the replacement of windows and doors. Conservation Area designations remove some permitted development rights; but legislation and guidance simply 'encourage' owners to follow conservation guidelines for important aspects such as replacement windows or doors.

Future areas to be targeted within The Lisburn Masterplan of 2010 include Castle Street and Railway Street. Both streets have several listed buildings and are also within the Conservation Area.

Opportunity also exists for the Council to encourage tourism in historically significant areas such as Hilden. The monumental Barbour Mill has been acquired by Clanmil Housing Association for a mixed use development. Adjacent to the Mill, Hilden Brewery already has an attractive premises and restaurant with on-site locally brewed beer.



Gap site Castle Street, Lisburn

Nearby, the Edwardian Hilden Primary School has recently been acquired by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council

which plans to restore the derelict school house to provide space for community based social enterprise.



Hilden Mill, Lisburn by Bobby McKay - see References for full credit

# Part Five: Funding Factors

## Factors influencing the success of funding; how can councils attract investment?

The recent ten year evaluation of the Townscape Heritage Initiative for Conservation Areas established several benefits of the initiative:

- Attracts further investment from public and private sector
- Encourages footfall in towns
- Makes people want to live in towns
- Potential to increase night time and weekend economy
- Potential to increase tourism
- A sense of optimism and confidence for towns and communities

Since its inception the THI has given £229M to 252 schemes across the UK including £17M to 23 schemes in Northern Ireland. However, no successful bids have been made here since the revised Townscape Heritage scheme was introduced. The principal revision to the revised Townscape Heritage scheme has been the removal of the applicant's rating on the poverty index as a factor to be taken into account before a decision on funding is reached. This has prevented villages such as Saintfield from receiving approval for funding in the past. Now however, more towns and villages are eligible to apply for funding.

So what is hindering the uptake of THI funding in Northern Ireland? This can be attributed to several factors including:

1. Fewer Conservation Areas in Northern Ireland Northern Ireland has 61 Conservation Areas, compared with 9,300 in England and 600 in Scotland.

2. Demolition in Conservation Areas Demolition within Conservation Areas has a severely detrimental effect on their historic quality. Unauthorised demolition has directly led to the loss of funding bids made by towns in Northern Ireland. Where buildings have to be demolished, they should be replaced by designs of high quality. High quality design has the potential to reinvigorate the area as can be seen in cities such as Bath or Edinburgh. The document 'New Design in Historic Settings', by Historic Scotland, sets out ways of thinking and working to achieve good quality design in Historic Settings.

**The report states:**

'the introduction of a successful new building will enhance the historic setting, will become a valued addition for current and future generations and contribute to a sense of place'.





Pier Arts Centre, Orkney - An example of sensitive design in a historic setting

### 3. LACK OF UPTAKE WITH INDIVIDUAL BUILDING OWNERS

The Townscape Heritage scheme only funds the 'conservation deficit' (caused specifically by the repair and restoration of heritage) and owners may not have the financial means to make the required investment to gain funding. It is not necessarily therefore seen by owners as economically viable. Owners do not want to be tied to a strict 'Conservation' restoration approach, which is often perceived as more expensive. Owners are not educated in the Economic Value of heritage – they need guidance and engagement.

A case officer for the Heritage Initiative states that successful Townscape Heritage bids require:

- Coherent vision
- Statement of need
- Evidence that owners will get on board

The recent ten year evaluation of the Heritage Lottery Fund includes the experiences of regeneration in Newry and Draperstown. The experience shared by the cities, towns and villages shows that the THI is a force for good which can be the harbinger of further investment in Northern Ireland.



# Part Six: Conclusion and a Recommendations

## Conclusion and Recommendations

### 1. **RECOMMENDATION: HERITAGE NEEDS TO BE INCLUDED AND PROTECTED WITHIN THE NEW COUNCIL LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND COMMUNITY PLANNING**

Heritage adds social and economic benefit and is crucial for retaining a sense of place and identity. It has the ability to draw people to live and visit towns, increase tourism and encourage business.

MAG recommends that buildings and heritage are incorporated and made a priority in new council community planning. The protection and promotion of heritage should be integrated into community plans and new planning policy. Policy needs to be integrated and support building users. Buildings need to change to live and they need permission for reuse. Councils may also bear in mind the opportunity to create ‘positive envy’ by leading with their own townscapes, as seen from the study on Westport in 2.2.

New local community plans give people the opportunity to propose designations of their own locally listed buildings or historic neighbourhoods worthy of Conservation Area status, Councils could debate and designate these early, without having to wait for years for a Local Development Plan, which may come too late to save places. Conservation Areas can be made statutory

before Local Development Plans are made or adopted. Local listings would be a material consideration which would be increased in weight if incorporated in a masterplan, community plan or ward vision and could then be included by the council in the Local Development Plan to make them statutory. Some villages or neighbourhoods could become ‘Heritage Towns,’ conservation villages or neighbourhoods if people want this, again such designations while not statutory would be material considerations in development management, offering some degree of encouragement of heritage.

Community involvement in local heritage may encourage an emphasis on conservation principles right across a Local Development Plan area so that the whole District can appreciate the benefits of valuing heritage in their place.

### 2. **RECOMMENDATION: COUNCILS NEED TO BUILD UP EXPERTISE IN HERITAGE**

Each council area should have continuing access to a Conservation Architect or Planner who also has design ability and the capacity to advise and maintain the quality of the Council’s Conservation Areas by encouragement of owners as well as rigorous application of policy.

Close attention should continue to be paid to planning applications in Conservation Areas by ensuring that councils have access to skilled planners and architects, with both appreciation of heritage and design skills, to avoid a loss of the ‘fine grain’ details that enhance these very important places.

### **3. RECOMMENDATION: MORE COLLEGIALLY BETWEEN DEPARTMENTS**

MAG defines collegiality as organically changing leadership and support in pursuit of a common objective whilst retaining independence. Councils’ Building Regulation function allows for support of the retention of heritage by the ability to relax regulations when dealing with listed buildings. Other government departments such as DfC and DfI (Transport NI) could support councils’ endeavours to retain and reuse heritage by adopting similar policies, to prioritise the qualities of places and recognise the conservation approach. This would enable an integrated holistic approach and protect historic town centres, many of which are over four hundred years old. The government has led the way in this with the publication in 2011, of the Protocol for the Care of the Government Historic Estate. Endorsed by the Executive, it recommitted the Northern Ireland Government to the vision

that it should ‘lead by example’ in the management of its heritage assets. It was also agreed that this good practice would be commended to local government. The 2015 Biennial report is now published on the DfC website.<sup>8</sup>

All too often Conservation Areas are marred by inappropriate street furniture and signage, or insensitive road layouts. There is a need for better liaison at brief stage and information on a ‘Conservation Area’ approach to design guidance and policy. Conservation Area guidance should include a section on the use of road signs and traffic markings. There is a case for further developing communication in placemaking between Planning, Environmental Health and Building Control so that urgent works within Conservation Areas are allowed in order to protect buildings, eg temporary metal roofs where slates are loose. A ‘Dangerous Structure Notice’ can lead to quick demolition.

### **4. RECOMMENDATION: MORE ENGAGEMENT WITH THE PUBLIC ON THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR BUILT HERITAGE**

Councils should highlight the existing publications and visual material the public can use to explain the social and economic benefit of heritage to the community.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/protocol-care-government-historic-estates>

The community needs to understand that reuse of an existing asset is not only sustainable, but can bring vibrancy and increased footfall to urban centres. With the formation of new Councils, there is now an ideal opportunity to create ‘Local Lists’ that identify places valued for local reasons and involve the community in protecting and planning a future for the places that matter to them. Guidance on sustainable reuse of buildings should be available for owners of older properties. Councils could assist with distribution of the range of existing advice which is available from DfC Historic Environment Division.

**5. RECOMMENDATION: SUPPORT FURTHER HERITAGE WORK IN THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR**

Evidence shows that charitable voluntary organisations have consistently led society and government in heritage appreciation. Supporting and developing the volunteer-led work of these organisations is a resource-efficient way for the private sector, local and central government to encourage greater public awareness and interest in the value of the built heritage. The culture change which is needed must be supported by a variety of means, often at low cost, if it is to effectively encourage appreciation of the qualities of heritage and the opportunities to make it economically viable.

**6. RECOMMENDATION: CREATE MORE CONSERVATION AREAS**

Conservation Areas attract Townscape Heritage Funding, which in turn attracts further private and public sector investment. Existing Conservation Areas should be reviewed or enlarged to ensure a ‘dropping off’ of quality does not happen at their boundaries. Existing Areas of Townscape Character and Village Character as well as Local Landscape Policy Areas have been identified as important places and share similar attributes. Where the necessary standard is or could be reached, they should be considered for re-designation as Conservation Areas to increase recognition and enable funders to consider investments in them which are not possible at present. In parallel, funders could be lobbied to include these existing designated areas as eligible for funding. New buildings within Conservation Areas should be of high quality, not ‘mimic’ the design of their neighbours. Consideration needs to be given to the stewardship and management of town centres whilst heritage regeneration building work is taking place. Unlike listed buildings, legislation allows for enhancement to be insisted on for Conservation Areas. This is particularly important for public realm work which can be disruptive to image, pedestrians and businesses.

**7. RECOMMENDATION: MORE PROTECTION AND FUNDING FOR LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS**

Listed buildings and Conservation Areas have the ability to attract investment and people to entire areas. More investment and support needs to be given to listed properties. Creating partnerships and other forms of collaboration and collegiality with other branches of government, private sector and charities is a proven method of delivering regeneration. In Conservation Areas, PPS6 needs to be rigorously applied on an individual basis in planning applications to prevent a loss of character and diminution of quality. Clear policies should be written into the new Local Development Plans that will uphold the requirements of PPS6 when it is superseded. However, PPS6 only applies to development that requires permission and this Planning Policy Statement has no effect on permitted development rights. MAG advises that

the quality of the built environment is compromised by the exercise of permitted development rights without respecting the existing quality of the buildings and settings and that this should also be considered in the preparation of Local Development Plans.

**8. RECOMMENDATION: BETTER ENFORCEMENT OF LISTING**

Without better enforcement of listing there is no protection of our heritage. This means completion of the Second Survey by the Department to improve available data and robust and timely action by local planning authorities. Before devolution of enforcement powers to Councils, the former DOE engaged in concentrated work to ensure that enforcement would be prioritised. The Second Survey reinforces the protection offered to listed buildings by means of greater detail. Completion of the Survey by DfC's Historic Environment Division remains important in this regard.

Listing should be permanent and even if the quality of a listed building deteriorates, the essence of its historic and architectural character remains and detail can be restored. Current legislation needs to be amended to allow for such restoration.

**9. RECOMMENDATION: COUNCILS SHOULD CONSIDER THE CREATION OF 'HERITAGE TOWNS'**

The Republic of Ireland has designated 30 Heritage Towns of Ireland:

‘because of their unique character provided by a combination of architectural styles, often spanning many centuries, which gives them – and their visitors – a special feeling for the past’.

[WWW.IRISHHERITAGETOWNS.COM](http://WWW.IRISHHERITAGETOWNS.COM)

**NICOLA WADDINGTON  
CHAIR OF THE HERITAGE SUBGROUP OF MAG**

There is an opportunity for councils to tie in with this initiative and take advantage of the tourism it generates.

**10. RECOMMENDATION: THE COMMISSIONING OF AN ARCHITECTURAL SERIES OF 'STEWARDSHIP AND DESIGN STATEMENTS' FOR SMALL VILLAGES AND SETTLEMENTS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED**

This can be part of the Ward Visioning process which has been recommended by MAG, and could be undertaken within the context of community planning. Often existing local knowledge, historic photographs, maps and other records are more readily available in the local community than in official records. Stewardship and Design Statements could form a better evidence base for the new Local Development Plans for each council area.



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