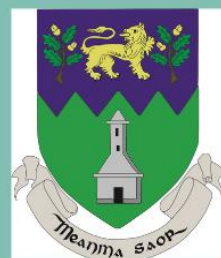


DRAFT COUNTY WICKLOW HERITAGE PLAN 2025-2029

A PARTNERSHIP PLAN PREPARED BY
THE WICKLOW HERITAGE FORUM



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Foreword

Text to be added from Cathaoirleach/ CE and Chair of Heritage Forum

Acknowledgements

The Heritage Officer and Heritage Forum would like to thank all of the individuals, groups and organisations that inputted to this Plan by sharing their views as part of the Heritage Plan consultation process, responding to the survey, attending meetings in libraries or making written submissions.

The Irish landscape is clothed in a rich heritage of monuments, history, mythology, folklore, and placenames. Throughout Ireland, places of natural diversity and fragility such as mountains, bogs, plains, rivers, lakes and the coast have historical, religious, mythological and legendary associations. These resonances of the past are a central part of our cultural heritage. They are also key components of the complex ecosystem of which we are part and on which we all depend. President Michael D. Higgins, June 2015.

Introduction

In county Wicklow, heritage is a very visible part of our landscape. We are surrounded by our tangible built, natural, and cultural heritage from monuments, buildings, historic places and archives to seascapes, geology, and wildlife. Our heritage also includes our 'intangible heritage,' our history, culture, music, customs, crafts, traditional skills, placenames and folklore, all of which collectively define the unique character and distinctiveness of the county.

This, the fourth Heritage Plan for County Wicklow is a framework for better management and protection of our heritage assets. At its core lies the recognition that our Wicklow heritage is a unique and precious resource for all and is essential to our health and wellbeing.

Heritage in Wicklow – an overview

The county is known traditionally as 'The Garden of Ireland' a reference to the scenic beauty and diversity of its landscape which includes coastline, sandy beaches, rugged mountains, blanket bog, woodlands, farmland, lakes and rivers. The county has long been a popular outdoor destination, and it is perhaps no surprise that the Wicklow Way was the first long-distance way marked walking trail in Ireland.

The Wicklow Mountains dominate the centre of the county providing the largest unbroken highland area in the country punctuated by Lugnaquilla (Log na coille – hollow of the wood) at 925 m. Composed largely of granite and mica schist and much older rocks such as quartzite, this underlying geology and topography has historically influenced settlement and economic activity, being directly linked with stonecutting, mining, farming, forestry and tourism.

The importance of our natural heritage is reflected in the statutory designation of various sites in the county. We are fortunate to have Wicklow Mountains National Park which encompasses over 205 km² of the county and provides the hub for dedicated education, recreational and conservation programmes. Wicklow also has a number of other protected sites and multiple positive nature conservation projects, many spearheaded by National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) in partnership with non-governmental organisations such as Birdwatch Ireland and focussed on particular species for which Wicklow has a stronghold such as Goosander on the Avonmore River, and the Little Tern colony at Kilcoole.

Other ambitious programmes such as the blanket bog restoration at Liffey Head Bog through rewetting and bare peat stabilisation are building climate resilience and restoring nature.

Wicklow's Protected Heritage



1 National Park
6 Nature Reserves



4 Special
Protection Areas



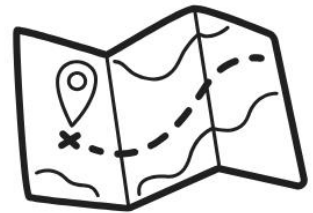
112 Tree
Protection Orders



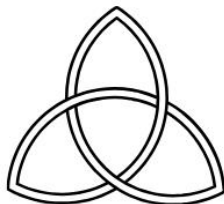
16 County
Geological Sites



15 Special
Areas of Conservation



35 Proposed
Natural Heritage
Areas



2704 Recorded
Monuments



782 Protected
Structures



16 Architectural Conservation Areas

The Heritage Plan has initiated and delivered projects and programmes focussed on Brittas Bay Biodiversity, Wicklow Barn Owls, and Wicklow Swifts all of which entail considerable community engagement. The Plan supports existing community actions on an ongoing basis by nature awareness activities, advice, workshops, training and the creation and dissemination of pollinator / biodiversity resources.

Wicklow's cultural and built heritage is likewise rich and varied. Our archaeological sites and monuments reflect the long history of settlement in the county. Some sites like the Glendalough Monastic Settlement, Baltinglass Hillfort Complex and Rathgall Hillfort are nationally and even internationally renowned while hundreds of other monuments are widely dispersed throughout Wicklow and make a significant contribution to our archaeological resource.

At local level, many communities have an active interest in researching, protecting, and managing local monuments and archaeological sites and the Heritage Plan plays an important role in supporting this. These efforts have been greatly facilitated in recent years by dedicated funding through the Community Monuments Fund (CMF) from the National Monuments Service, administered through the Heritage Office of Wicklow County Council. Additionally, a recent initiative of the Heritage Plan saw the roll out of a part time Community Archaeology Service within Wicklow County Council, co-funded by The Heritage Council. This pilot role has resulted in the compilation of valuable baseline information about our archaeological assets and empowers the capacity within local communities to better manage them. Another successful example of collaboration is that with the School of Archaeology, UCD through the Glendalough Heritage Forum which delivers an annual programme of community excavations and engagement activities.

Architectural heritage strongly influences the character of our towns and villages, contributing to a sense of place and reflecting our history, evolution and local building materials. From the early medieval traces in coastal towns like Wicklow and Arklow, to the Victorian seaside towns of Bray and Greystones, to the distinctive estate villages of Enniskerry and Shillelagh and the rich stonecutting tradition most obvious in villages such as Ballyknockan and Aughrim, each place hosts a unique Wicklow heritage story that is intimately connected with its architecture.

Wicklow's well known estate houses and designed landscapes such as at Powerscourt, Russborough and Killruddery, are not only valuable in terms of architectural heritage but also have records, archives and collections that are of great cultural significance. The Military Road and associated barracks constructed in the early 1800's provide a unique insight to Wicklow's rebel history, while former industrial and maritime activity including mining, shipbuilding, milling and wool production can be traced through many associated structures all over the county.

The provision of funding to owners through the annual conservation grant schemes (Built Heritage Investment Scheme and Historic Structures Fund) co-ordinated by the Heritage Office of Wicklow County Council provides significant assistance to making these buildings more climate resilient, promoting good conservation practice and supporting heritage professionals and tradespersons. There has been a broadening of the scope of built heritage grant schemes in recent years to encompass vernacular buildings and historic shopfronts which is very welcome news for Wicklow's built heritage.

There is a committed, strong and active community and voluntary sector engaged with protection, management and promotion of heritage in Wicklow; some of these include Irish

Community Archive Network (ICAN) members, Brittas Bay biodiversity volunteers, Re-wild Wicklow members, Tidy Towns participants, local biodiversity recording groups, historical societies, and community archaeology collectives. The collaboration and active citizenship among these groups continues to play an important role in protecting our heritage and responding to the challenges presented by the climate crisis and biodiversity loss.

About the County Wicklow Heritage Plan 2025-2029

The Heritage Plan is a strategy for how we will identify, protect and manage our heritage, nurture awareness, foster appreciation and facilitate people enjoying it in a sustainable way. The Plan is informed by relevant national and local policy and the views of relevant agencies, organisations and the local community. It sets out the vision and goals for the management and protection of heritage in the county and provides a framework for how we will achieve our vision by working in a collaborative way.

Developing the Heritage Plan – The process

The Heritage Plan was prepared by the Wicklow Heritage Forum, a widely representative advisory group established by the Council to provide advice on the preparation and implementation of the Heritage Plan. The Wicklow Heritage Forum is a partnership made up of elected representatives, and representatives of heritage organisations, local agencies, and the community, facilitated by the Heritage Officer (See Appendix 1 for members). The plan was developed in line with the Heritage Council's guidelines for Local Authority Heritage Plans (2024). The Draft Heritage Plan was adopted by Wicklow County Council in November 2024, when a second period of consultation inviting submissions and responses commenced.

Consultation

During the pre-draft consultation phase (May-July 2024) organisations, relevant state and semi-state agencies, local heritage and community groups, and the public were invited to give their views in relation to Wicklow's heritage. An explanatory video was produced, and submissions were invited through an online survey (75 responses received) and in writing (11 submissions received). Pre-draft Heritage Plan Consultation meetings were hosted in Wicklow, Arklow, Blessington, Bray and Greystones branch libraries (29 attendees).

The consultation was promoted through Wicklow County Council's online consultation hub <https://consult.wicklow.ie/>, the Our Wicklow Heritage website <https://heritage.wicklowheritage.org/>, on social media, in local newspapers and on East Coast Radio. Members of the Wicklow Heritage Forum and the Public Participation Network (PPN) were invited to raise awareness of the consultation process and encourage engagement among their members and the wider community. A report on the findings of the pre-draft consultation process was compiled and informed the development of the draft Heritage Plan.

The pre-draft consultation process set out to explore people's views on why heritage is important to them, priority themes in terms of managing, protecting and connecting people to heritage, and the key perceived challenges or threats to Wicklow's Heritage. Ways to make it easier for people to engage with heritage and levels of interest in community heritage projects and training were also explored.

Participants in the pre-draft consultation survey regard heritage as important for a host of reasons, most frequently related to our social history, the story of the community and the fact

that heritage is an irreplaceable, finite resource which enhances where we live. The value of heritage as legacy for future generations and the importance of protecting and recording it was also highlighted.

In terms of ranking priority themes for this plan, conservation and care for heritage emerged as a clear priority. Those consulted described priorities relating to protecting built heritage, including archaeological heritage e.g. holy wells, ringforts, and specific sites like the Baltinglass Hillfort Complex, and the architectural heritage of towns and villages such as Bray, Greystones and Delgany. Others described protecting biodiversity through for example, rewilding, rewetting bogs, protection of trees, landscapes and wildlife, and addressing coastal erosion. Prioritising the protection of aspects of cultural heritage was also raised from genealogy, heraldry, and traditional crafts and skills, to maritime heritage. Written submissions to the consultation also touched on these themes with many focussing on the protection of specific heritage sites or assets. Some consultees highlighted the need for more funding and investment, and additional capacity within the County Council for heritage protection and management.

Inclusion of heritage considerations in local authority decision making was also seen as a priority. There was strong support for prioritising more of a focus on Wicklow's unique heritage, addressing climate change and biodiversity loss, and enhanced engagement, awareness and heritage education. Sustainable approaches to tourism and recreational use that align with priorities for protection of heritage and enhanced, inclusive, managed access to heritage sites were raised in both survey responses and written submissions.

The main challenges perceived to heritage in Wicklow included the threats posed by population growth and housing, wind farm developments and the associated negative impacts on communities, biodiversity, landscapes, and the architectural and cultural heritage of towns and villages. Concerns were raised about ensuring that statutorily protected buildings and other vernacular architecture are protected sufficiently during development.

Conflicts between protection of heritage and development of tourism or recreational uses, with some sites oversubscribed and others underdeveloped were raised, as was the potential for low density, sustainable tourism. Lack of investment, neglect and inappropriate management practices are seen as resulting in loss or deterioration of the condition of built heritage and lack of protection for biodiversity. The issue of coastal erosion and impacts of climate change on heritage were also raised in the survey, at library meetings and in written submissions.

In terms of connecting people to heritage the priorities for survey respondents included providing heritage training opportunities and celebrating and communicating heritage. Supporting and building capacity within communities to actively engage with local heritage and making heritage more accessible to all were also seen as important.

Ongoing consultation and dialogue with the community to facilitate people having a voice and being involved, and a diverse and regular programme of heritage events were identified as key ways to enable people to engage with heritage. Effective education programmes through schools, communication, awareness raising and access to information relating to heritage were also mentioned. The development of museum facilities was raised in survey responses and a written submission was received on the future of Arklow Maritime Museum as a venue for education, culture and tourism.

Improving physical access to heritage sites (e.g. free entry to state owned sites, public transport, car parks and boardwalks) and provision of interpretation of heritage assets (both digitally and on site) were seen as enablers of engagement. The importance of access and interpretation was also reflected in written submissions to the consultation, relating to a community-led heritage audit with an integrated, and a holistic approach to local heritage identification, interpretation and signage and enhanced, inclusive, managed access to the countryside for a range of recreational uses.

There is strong interest among those consulted in having opportunities to take part in a diverse range of heritage training and projects from recording biodiversity and local history research, capturing community stories, and restoration of dry-stone walls, to climate action, wildlife emergency response and digital skills for present heritage data in accessible ways.

Putting the Heritage Plan into action

Implementation of the Plan will be overseen by the Wicklow Heritage Forum and co-ordinated by the Heritage Officer through development and delivery of an annual work programme, funded by Wicklow County Council, the Heritage Council and through other relevant funding streams. The delivery of ambitions in the Heritage Plan will require an ongoing cross departmental approach within the Council which will be actively pursued by the Heritage Officer. This will be supplemented by collaborations with key colleagues such as the Biodiversity Officer, Archivist, Local Studies librarian, Town Regeneration Officer, Community Archaeologist, Forward Planning Team, the Climate Action Team and the Culture and Creativity Team where work areas align.

A collaborative partnership between all stakeholders will continue to be the key to successful delivery of the Heritage Plan. Wicklow County Council will work with the Heritage Council, state agencies, non-governmental organisations, and heritage groups, to implement the Plan with the engagement, support and participation of the community.

The Heritage Forum will meet quarterly to monitor and evaluate progress in implementation of the projects and actions in the annual work programme and working groups will be convened as required to support delivery of the Plan.

The policy context for the County Wicklow Heritage Plan 2025-2029

The aims and objectives of this Heritage Plan are aligned with a range of policies at international, national, and local level relevant to the management, care and protection of our heritage.

International

~ **United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 and provide a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. The SDGs are a call to action for global partnership to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. There are 17 goals and associated actions and targets for long term action and strategic thinking to address complex challenges.



Heritage, natural and cultural, tangible and intangible is recognised as being fundamental to addressing the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) sets out a policy directive ‘to harness the power of heritage to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs’, and express a call to mobilize under the “5 Ps” (People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnerships) the interrelated nature of the SDGs as follows:

- ~ The knowledge and resources transmitted through heritage to achieve the wellbeing of **People** (SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11);
- ~ A ‘Culture-Nature’ approach and landscape-based solutions to achieve the wellbeing of the **Planet** (SDGs 6, 7, 11, 13, 14, 15);

- ~ The shared resources embodied in heritage to achieve **Prosperity** of communities (SDGs 5, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14);
- ~ The connecting power of heritage for social cohesion and dialogue to achieve **Peace** within and among societies (SDGs 10, 11, 16); and
- ~ The shared medium of heritage and its connections with all aspects of human life to create **Partnerships** (SDGs 11, 17).

National

- ~ **Heritage Ireland 2030, A Framework for Heritage 2022, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage**

Heritage Ireland 2030 is built around a vision of our heritage being at the very centre of local and national discourse, valued by all and cared for and protected for future generations. The framework has three themes: communities, leadership and partnerships.

- ~ **Our Place in Time, Heritage Council Strategic Plan 2023-2028**

The Heritage Council Strategy sets out a comprehensive vision for heritage conservation and management in Ireland consolidated into six strategic pillars and corresponding actions: Leadership and Stewardship, Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss, Research, Partnership, Communities, and Education and Engagement.

- ~ **The National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030**

Ireland's fourth National Biodiversity Action Plan aims to ensure that everyone has an awareness of biodiversity and its importance, and of the implications of its loss, and understands how to "act for nature". The plan also seeks to respond to the recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss.

- ~ **All Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025**

The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP) for 2021-2025 provides a road map to help bees, other pollinating insects and wider biodiversity. In 2019 Wicklow County Council officially signed up as a partner to the AIPP and is committed to working with the National Biodiversity Data Centre to deliver relevant actions.

- ~ **The National Landscape Strategy 2015-2025**

Ireland signed and ratified the Council of Europe's European Landscape Convention (ELC) in 2004. The National Landscape Strategy is used to ensure compliance with the ELC and is a framework to achieve balance between the protection, management and planning of the landscape.

- ~ **The Climate Action Plan 2024**

The third annual Climate Action Plan sets out actions to meet the national climate objective of pursuing and achieving the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy by 2050.

~ **Culture 2025**

Culture 2025 is a Policy Framework the purpose of which is to ensure a unified and coherent approach to cultural policy across government and to planning and provision across the cultural sector. The Government's Creative Ireland Programme is the implementation framework for the promotion and strengthening of culture and creativity throughout Ireland.

~ **The National Volunteering Strategy 2021 – 2025**

The purpose of this strategy is to recognise, support and promote the unique value and contribution of volunteers to Irish society. The economic, cultural and social benefit of volunteering permeates through a diverse range of activities including heritage.

County Plans and Policies

~ **Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028**

The County Development Plan sets out a strategic spatial framework for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Wicklow. The Plan is based on three overarching cross-cutting themes: placemaking, climate change, and economic development.

~ **Wicklow Local Community and Economic Plan 2024-2029**

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 provides for the formulation by every local authority of a Local Community and Economic Plan (LECP). The plan sets out measures necessary to promote and support community and economic development in County Wicklow.

~ **Wicklow County Council Corporate Plan 2019-2024**

This is organisation wide strategic approach encompassing the activities of Wicklow County Council across the five municipal districts, which sets out objectives in relation to social inclusion, equality, human rights, migrancy and climate change and sustainable development, quality service and community leadership.

~ **The County Wicklow Biodiversity Action Plan**

A new Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) for Wicklow is in preparation. The BAP is a targeted and coordinated approach to biodiversity conservation in the county, identifying priority habitats and species, the actions needed to secure their future, and opportunities for partnership.

~ **Wicklow Climate Action Plan 2024-2029**

The goal of the Plan is to transition to a climate resilient, biodiverse, sustainable, and carbon-neutral county by 2050. Mitigation and adaptation measures will be delivered across the services and functions delivered by the Council.

~ **Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2020 to 2025**

The strategy provides a blueprint for further realising the potential of County Wicklow, which is already an established and well used outdoor recreation setting. The Strategy looks at consolidating the recreation resources, and ensuring its delivering

economically to the locality, in recreation terms for users, and in an environmentally responsible way.

~ **Culture and Creativity Ireland Strategy, Wicklow 2023-2027**

Wicklow County Council deliver a Creative Communities programme to allow Wicklow citizens to reach their full creative potential. The strategy supports delivery of Council policy in other areas including Heritage.

~ **Wicklow Tourism Strategy & Marketing Plan 2018 – 2023**

The tourism growth strategy aims to maximise off-peak visits, deliver business year-round, be high value, attract international and domestic visitors and maximise the positive economic impact. Wicklow's Development Plan outlines the potential for sustainable rural tourism, niche tourism and entrepreneurship.

Our Vision

To embed an appreciation of our natural, built and cultural heritage in the hearts and minds of all in County Wicklow, ensuring that our heritage is celebrated and managed with care.

Our Aim

The aim of the Plan is to support better protection and promotion of our heritage by fostering awareness, building capacity in the heritage sector and building climate resilience in our heritage assets.

Our focus is on the following six key strategic themes:

- ~ Protecting Our Heritage
- ~ Connecting People and Place
- ~ Sharing and Celebrating Our Heritage
- ~ Collaboration and Partnership
- ~ Building and Sharing Knowledge
- ~ Responding to Climate Change



*Wicklow Barn Owl Project
(See Appendix 2 for details of this, and other previous heritage projects)*

Protecting our Heritage

“Wicklow is a hugely important remnant of Ireland's formerly vast biodiversity, that, if protected properly, can act as a source population for wildlife to recover across the rest of the island of Ireland.” (Consultation participant)

Support better protection and management of Wicklow’s Heritage through increasing the capacity of the Heritage Sector and progressing evidence-based action.

Actions	Outcomes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advocate for enhanced capacity within Wicklow County Council to meet the demands for local authority heritage services through the resourcing of additional multidisciplinary heritage expertise. 2. Support the Wicklow County Archives Service in preserving and making accessible the archival heritage of County Wicklow. 3. Sustain and grow the Wicklow Community Archaeology Scheme and the valuable conservation, research and community engagement activities it delivers. 	<p><i>Enhanced heritage capacity, skills, resources and expertise within Wicklow County Council.</i></p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Support the inclusion of robust heritage protection policy into county and Regional Plans and programmes (i.e. County Wicklow Development Plan, Local Area Plans, Urban Regeneration and Development Fund¹, Rural Regeneration and Development Fund² Climate Adaption and Town Centre First Policy³). 5. Support the development of evidence led policy advice to better protect the historic character of towns and villages. 	<p><i>Heritage policy is reflected in all Council programmes and plans.</i></p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Support the preparation and implementation of conservation management plans as best practice for managing heritage assets under Council control and explore partnerships as relevant to promote this approach for other assets outside of Council control. 	<p><i>Additional Conservation Management Plans prepared for key and vulnerable sites.</i></p>

¹ The Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) aims to deliver more compact and sustainable development, as envisaged under Project Ireland 2040 by part-funding regeneration and rejuvenation projects in Ireland’s five cities and other large towns <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-housing-local-government-and-heritage/>

² The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) is a key capital investment scheme which directly supports the objectives of Our Rural Future and the Town Centre First policy <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-housing-local-government-and-heritage/>

³ The Town Centre First Policy, launched on 4 February 2022, is a major cross-government policy that aims to tackle vacancy, combat dereliction and breathe new life into our town centres. It advocates for a holistic, place-based approach to sustainable rural development <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/473d3-town-centre-first-policy/>

Actions	Outcomes
<p>7. Support heritage led regeneration and adaptive reuse of built heritage in villages, towns and sensitive landscapes through promoting best practice guidance and public realm⁴ planning.</p> <p>8. Promote and support the use of traditional building skills in the care and maintenance of historic structures.</p>	<p><i>More appropriate care and maintenance of historic structures.</i></p>
<p>9. Leverage funding opportunities such as the Community Monuments Fund⁵, Built Heritage Investment Scheme⁶, the Historic Towns Initiative⁷ and Croí Cónaithe Scheme⁸ to enable the care, conservation, and promotion of archaeological monuments and architectural heritage by the Council, private owners, custodians and community groups.</p> <p>10. Promote awareness of funding streams to support community heritage projects, such as the Heritage Council's Community Heritage Grants Scheme⁹, Community Foundation Ireland's climate action and biodiversity funds¹⁰.</p>	<p><i>Increased investment in protection of heritage.</i></p>
<p>11. Support the roll out of a dedicated conservation advice scheme to help communities and individuals to better manage and protect heritage assets.</p> <p>12. Enhance the capacity of local communities to better manage and record heritage through providing training and support.</p>	<p><i>High quality community-led heritage projects are enabled.</i></p>
<p>13. Work with the Biodiversity Officer to support the development and implementation of the County Wicklow Biodiversity Plan 2025-2030 to protect key habitats and species.</p> <p>14. Work cross departmentally with the Climate Action Team to support initiatives to enhance the climate resilience of our natural, built and cultural heritage.</p>	<p><i>Enhanced protection of Wicklow's heritage.</i></p>

⁴ Publicly owned spaces and facilities.

⁵ The Community Monuments Fund was first established in 2020 to provide investment in Ireland's archaeological heritage. Funding is prioritised for local authorities, private owners and custodians and community groups for the care, conservation, maintenance, protection and promotion of archaeological monuments <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-housing-local-government-and-heritage/>

⁶ The Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS) and the Historic Structure Fund (HSF) are annual grant schemes to support the repair and conservation of Protected Structures and other historic buildings and support associated heritage skills, tradespersons and contractors. <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-housing-local-government-and-heritage/>

⁷ The Historic Towns Initiative is an initiative to promote heritage-led regeneration and to improve the quality of our historic towns and villages for residents and tourists <https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/>

⁸ The Croí Cónaithe (Cities) Scheme is a vacant property refurbishment grant to bring vacant properties back into residential use. <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-housing-local-government-and-heritage/>

⁹ The Community Heritage Grants Scheme is an annual grant scheme for community groups and not-for-profit non-governmental organisations around the country for heritage projects <https://www.heritagecouncil.ie/>

¹⁰ Community Foundation Ireland and its donors are a philanthropic organisation, which provides knowledge, expertise and information to ensure effective and strategic giving.

Connecting People and Place

“Heritage fosters a deep connection between people and their surroundings, promoting stewardship and sustainable practices. It also serves as an education resource, enriching knowledge and appreciation of future generations” (Consultation participant)

Increase appreciation of the richness of Wicklow’s heritage by stimulating curiosity, enhancing access for all and providing more opportunities for people to engage with heritage in new and innovative ways.



*Glendalough Heritage Forum
(See Appendix 2 for details of this, and other previous heritage projects)*

Actions

15. Record and highlight interconnecting aspects of Wicklow’s tangible and intangible heritage including history, people and landscapes, places, geological heritage, fieldnames, food heritage and traditions.
16. Reinforce and expand the Irish Community Archive Network (ICAN) in County Wicklow in partnership with the National Museum of Ireland and The Heritage Council as a vehicle to help communities connect with and record their local heritage.

Outcomes

Enhanced knowledge and understanding of Our Wicklow Heritage.

Actions	Outcomes
<p>17. Work with relevant Council departments, Town Teams and other local stakeholders to embed a community led placemaking approach into new public realm works and to new trail and active travel infrastructure.</p> <p>18. Work with Town Teams and other community-based groups to encourage the use of vacant spaces and non-traditional venues and formats to animate local heritage.</p>	<p><i>Increased visibility and acknowledgement of local heritage in public spaces.</i></p>
<p>19. Work collaboratively to improve access to Wicklow’s National Monuments and publicly owned archaeological sites through universal design and a range of inclusive approaches to interpretation, both site-based and digital.</p> <p>20. Seek opportunities to embed heritage into other community-based programmes centred on health and wellbeing, with a particular focus on inclusivity through engaging with new and marginalised communities.</p> <p>21. Encourage a sustainable approach to tourism and recreation that protects sensitive landscapes and maximises opportunities for meaningful connections with natural and cultural heritage.</p>	<p><i>Better access for all to Wicklow’s heritage.</i></p>

Sharing and Celebrating our Heritage

“Keep the heritage story alive for generations to come.” (Consultation participant)



*ICAN Irish Community Archive Network
(See Appendix 2 for details of this, and other previous heritage projects)*

Raise awareness and enthusiasm for Wicklow’s heritage through providing opportunities for engagement and learning that nurture a sense of pride of place and enable everyone to cherish and celebrate what we have. Continue to support the committed, strong and active network of community groups, volunteers and organisations in the county.

Actions	Outcomes
22. Celebrate and explore the diverse heritage of all our communities in Wicklow and seek ways to share and celebrate this in public platforms.	<i>Wicklow’s Heritage is widely celebrated and shared across the county.</i>
23. Develop an annual communication programme to highlight and celebrate achievements under the Wicklow Heritage Plan. Include within this, opportunities for in-person networking and knowledge sharing events, as well as online content, social media posts and promotion.	
24. Maximise the opportunities offered by National Heritage Week and National Biodiversity Week to celebrate our Wicklow heritage and explore opportunities to embed heritage in other initiatives such as Culture Night and Engineers Week, Climate Action Week as capacity allows.	
25. Celebrate and share our Wicklow heritage through the production of exhibitions, publications, digital technology, traditional and social media.	

Actions	Outcomes
26. Optimise the use of the excellent resources available through Wicklow Libraries, Local Studies and County Archives services to support local historical research, training and knowledge sharing.	
27. Work in partnership with providers to support the delivery of inspiring and relevant heritage education for children, young people and teachers in a range of setting with an emphasis on the outdoor classroom and nature-based learning.	<i>Children and young people get to connect with and spend more time in nature.</i>

Collaboration and Partnership

The Heritage Plan will act as a catalyst for partnership action to enhance the management and protection of our heritage and embed community engagement.

Actions	Outcomes
<p>28. Strengthen key heritage partnerships to facilitate the implementation of national programmes on a local level such as Heritage Keepers¹¹, the Heritage in Schools Scheme¹², Adopt a Monument, the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan¹³ and the work of the Wicklow Uplands Council.</p> <p>29. Avail of opportunities to work with third level institutes and others to further research aspects of Wicklow’s heritage.</p> <p>30. Sustain and develop existing models of community heritage collaboration such as Irish Community Archive Network (ICAN) and the Glendalough Heritage Forum and explore opportunities to develop new ones.</p> <p>31. Support the crucial role played by volunteers and heritage groups, by facilitating networking, capacity building and knowledge sharing.</p> <p>32. Develop multi-disciplinary, creative, artistic and cultural collaborations through Wicklow’s Culture and Creativity Strategy and the Creative Ireland Programme¹⁴ as a catalyst to connect people to heritage.</p> <p>33. Liaise with Screen Wicklow to explore collaborations to celebrate Wicklow’s unique film heritage.</p> <p>34. Support the work of Arklow Maritime Museum and advocate for the development of a more secure and sustainable operational model.</p>	<p><i>A range of active and vibrant collaborations are in place that result in enhanced protection and promotion of Wicklow’s heritage.</i></p>

¹¹ The Heritage Keepers Programme is open to community groups and primary schools from all across Ireland to support planning a project that promotes or preserves an aspect of local built, cultural, or natural heritage. Heritage Keepers can also provide a grant towards completing this action <https://www.heritagekeepers.ie/>

¹² Heritage in Schools Scheme provides specialists who visit primary schools (in-person or virtually) to help children and their teachers learn about and appreciate their local heritage. <https://www.heritageinschools.ie/>

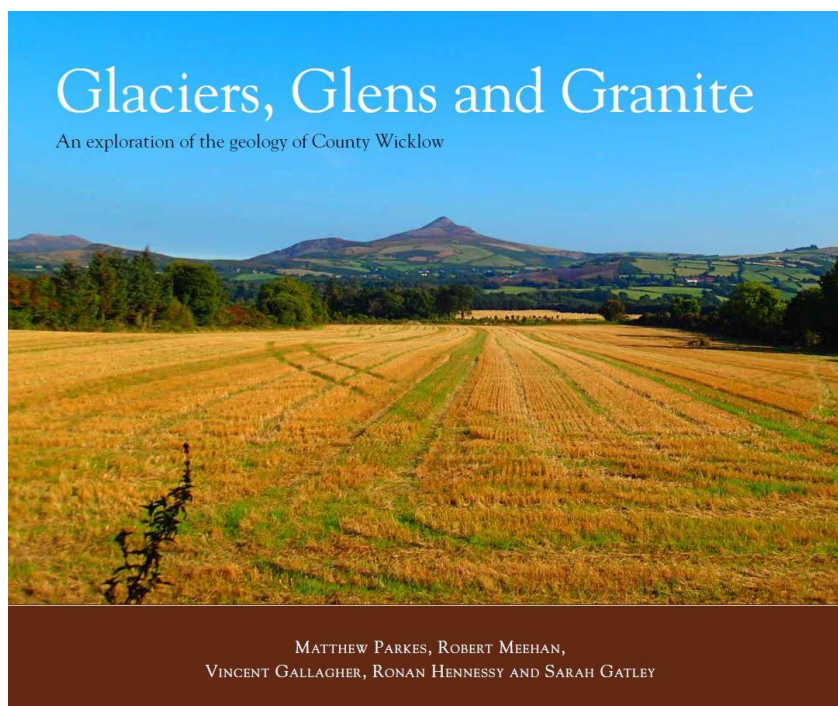
¹³ The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is a framework bringing together different sectors across the island of Ireland to create a landscape where pollinators can survive and thrive. Implementation is coordinated by the National Biodiversity Data Centre <https://pollinators.ie/>

¹⁴ The Creative Ireland Programme is the Government’s implementation framework for the promotion and strengthening of culture and creativity throughout Ireland <https://www.creativeireland.gov.ie/en/>

Building and Sharing Knowledge

Enhance and expand the knowledge base for cultural, natural and built heritage and address knowledge gaps.

Actions	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 35. Support projects to identify and record aspects of Wicklow’s heritage to address information gaps, focussing in particular on intangible cultural heritage. Seek to document and share this aspect of our Wicklow heritage. 36. Develop GIS and other tools to better embed identification, mapping and protection of heritage into the process of planning and sustainable delivery of green infrastructure. 37. Audit oral heritage collections in Wicklow, identifying conservation needs and supporting the development of appropriate and sustainable access. 38. Audit heritage collections of Wicklow origin in National Cultural Heritage facilities with a view to creating and displaying an online catalogue of these on Our Wicklow Heritage. 39. Share research relating to Wicklow’s Heritage by supporting the production of publications and events, using traditional and digital media in creative and innovative formats. 	<p><i>An expanded knowledge base on Wicklow’s heritage.</i></p>



Supporting Geological Heritage in Wicklow
 (See Appendix 2 for details of this, and other previous heritage projects)

Responding to Climate Change

Protect the county’s heritage from the impact of climate change by adopting a place-based approach that accounts for local circumstances, establishing a baseline for adaptation and mitigation, and taking nature-based measures to reduce impacts. The Heritage Officer as part of the Climate Action Team, will contribute to the delivery of the following actions.

Actions	Outcomes
<p>40. Support delivery of the National Sectoral Climate Adaptation Plans¹⁵ for Biodiversity, Built and Archaeological Heritage in Wicklow, the Local Authority Climate Action Charter¹⁶ and the County Wicklow Climate Action Plan.</p> <p>41. Support the embedding of climate resilience as part of all plans under the Rural Redevelopment Fund¹⁷, Urban Regeneration and Development Fund¹⁸, Town and Village Renewal Scheme¹⁹ and the CLÁR Programme²⁰.</p> <p>42. Implement national guidelines on climate risk assessment of Council owned heritage assets (natural and built) and identify priority areas for action.</p> <p>43. Support and encourage nature-based measures to address coastal erosion and best practice sustainable management of Wicklow’s uplands, natural heritage, habitats, and landscapes e.g., bog restoration, coastal protection, fire control, rewilding of river banks and restoring uplands for downstream benefits.</p> <p>44. Support and promote best practice in adaptive reuse of historic structures and build climate resilience of architectural and archaeological heritage through schemes such as the Built Heritage Investment Scheme, Historic Structures Fund²¹, Historic Towns Initiative, Irish Walled Towns Network²² and the Community Monument Fund.</p>	<p><i>Heritage considerations are integral to Wicklow County Council’s approach to addressing climate change.</i></p>

¹⁵ Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications Sectoral Adaptation Planning <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/51df3-sectoral-adaptation-planning/>

¹⁶ Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications Sectoral Adaptation Planning [gov - Local Authority https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d914a-local-authority-climate-action-charter/](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d914a-local-authority-climate-action-charter/)

¹⁷ The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) is a key capital investment scheme which directly supports the objectives of Our Rural Future and the Town Centre First policy <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-housing-local-government-and-heritage/>

¹⁸ The Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) aims to deliver more compact and sustainable development, as envisaged under Project Ireland 2040 by part-funding regeneration and rejuvenation projects in Ireland’s five cities and other large towns <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-housing-local-government-and-heritage/>

¹⁹ The Town and Village Scheme is one of a series of national and local support measures designed to rejuvenate small rural towns and villages throughout Ireland, under the Department of Rural & Community Development’s Rural Development Investment Programme <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-rural-and-community-development/>

²⁰ The CLÁR programme (Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais) provides funding for small-scale infrastructural projects in rural areas to support sustainable development in identified areas by attracting people to live and work there <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-rural-and-community-development/>

²¹ The Historic Structures Fund supports conservation and enhancement of historic structures and buildings for the broader benefit of communities and the public <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-housing-local-government-and-heritage/>

²² The role of the Irish Walled Towns Network (IWTN) is to unite and co-ordinate the strategic efforts of local authorities and community groups involved in the management, conservation and enhancement of historic walled towns in Ireland, both North and South <https://irishwalledtownsnetwork.ie/>

45. Encourage communities to engage in climate action projects that protect heritage by collaborating with other stakeholders to deliver Climate Action Week and promotion of An Taisce Green Schools Programme, the Heritage in Schools Scheme and other programmes that encourage active engagement on climate and biodiversity.

Appendix 1. County Wicklow Heritage Forum Members

1.	Cllr. John Snell	Wicklow Municipal District
2.	Cllr. Caroline Winstanley	Bray Municipal District
3.	Cllr. Gerry Walsh	Baltinglass Municipal District
4.	Cllr. Orla Finn	Greystones Municipal District
5.	Cllr. Peir Leonard	Arklow Municipal District
6.	Alison Keogh	County Wicklow Partnership
7.	Lorna Kelly	Wicklow Uplands Council
8.	Ann Fitzpatrick	Wicklow Mountains National Park/NPWS
9.	Donnchadh Byrne	Inland Fisheries Ireland
10.	Chris Corlett	National Monuments Service
11.	Ann Lyons	County Wicklow PPN
12.	John Goodman	County Wicklow PPN
13.	Niamh Fitzgerald	Birdwatch Ireland
14.	Joan Kavanagh	Local Historian
15.	Catherine Wright	Wicklow County Archives Services
16.	Gerlanda Maniglia	Wicklow County Library Service Local Studies
17.	Hannah O'Kelly	Biodiversity Officer Wicklow County Council
18.	Yvonne Whitty	Wicklow Community Archaeology Service
19.	Deirdre Burns	Heritage Officer Wicklow County Council

Appendix 2. A Selection of Previous Heritage Plan Projects

Wicklow Barn Owl Project

This is an initiative to improve the breeding population of Barn Owls in Wicklow, which at the outset of the project in 2022 was recorded as a meagre two pairs for the entire county. The focus of activity is on encouraging the reporting of Barn Owl sightings from members of the public; collation of information to a GIS database and the installation of artificial nesting habitat (boxes).

To date the group has installed over 70 nesting boxes (indoors and outdoors) and recorded multiple sightings. An active public engagement programme includes the production of calendars and posters, regular talks, events for Heritage Week such as the ‘Poo and Pellets’ workshop in 2024 and an annual presence at events such as Tinahely Agricultural Show.



In 2024 Wicklow Library Service adopted the Wicklow Barn Owl as its mascot in the new library card with a link to our web resources. Our efforts have borne fruit! 2024 was a bumper year for Barn Owls in Wicklow with twenty four fledglings recorded, the majority using our nesting boxes. This project is funded through the County Heritage Plan fund and the Local Biodiversity Action Plan Fund and receives considerable in-kind contributions from local National Parks & Wildlife staff, Birdwatch Ireland and volunteers.

Wicklow Community Archaeology Service



The Wicklow Community Archaeology Service (WCAS) is co-ordinated by the Heritage Officer and supported as a pilot project by The Heritage Council through the Heritage Plan. WCAS provides professional archaeological services to communities to support the researching, protecting and managing of local archaeological sites and monuments. WCAS plays an invaluable role in stimulating applications to grant schemes such as the Community Monuments Fund (CMF) and The Heritage Council’s Community Heritage Grant Scheme, and facilitating community based historic graveyard recording projects and interpretation.

Public outreach is an important part of the role and our project archaeologist, Yvonne Whitty disseminates information regularly through social media posts, articles on *Our Wicklow Heritage* website, and via in-person meetings, talks, presentations and Heritage week events. WCAS has generated considerable updated baseline information on medieval church sites in the Wicklow, information to support future assessment on the vulnerability of heritage assets as part of the Council’s climate actions.

Glendalough Heritage Forum



This non- statutory body of stakeholders including state agencies, researchers and local residents was established in 2015 to promote wider understanding and collaboration in exploring the remarkable cultural heritage of the Glendalough valley.

Since then, the Heritage Office, through the County Heritage Plan, supports key deliverables of the group, including an annual community excavation programme co-ordinated by UCD School of Archaeology. An annual programme of outreach activities including talks, walks, open days, exhibitions, and children's events such as the 'Big Dig' and Lego workshops are run during Heritage Week and throughout the year.

Other outputs include the production of three short films (available on [Wicklow Heritage You tube channel](#)) and the publication of two *Archaeology Ireland* inserts, one exploring the Glendalough Monastic Settlement and the other, Glendalough Upper Lake

The *Our Wicklow Heritage Community archive*

Community Archives are website based platforms that empower local communities to curate the heritage story of their local people, place and topics. The Irish Community Archive Network (ICAN) is co-ordinated on a National level by the National Museum of Ireland, and on a local

level in Wicklow by the Heritage Office of Wicklow County Council and the Archives services & Local Studies Library as an action of the County Wicklow Heritage Plan. Having originally signed up to ICAN as a county site in 2012, the Wicklow network expanded to a multi-platform website in 2020 with the addition of six new community groups. In 2023 following an open call, we are welcoming four additional community websites to our network by the end of 2024, bringing the total to eleven for county Wicklow.

A key part of the journey for participants involves upskilling in a range of digital, historical research, content creation and other skills, and the invaluable opportunity to network, sharing knowledge and experience with other groups and individuals all over Ireland. See www.wicklowheritage.org for more.



Geology of County Wicklow

Geology is a fundamental asset of Wicklow and a key part of our natural heritage. It provides a very visible backdrop to our landscape, biodiversity, scenery and the fabric of people's lives, influencing historic and current settlement and socio economic activity. An audit of county geological sites was undertaken as a Heritage Plan action in 2014 in partnership with Geological Survey Ireland and The Heritage Council. On foot of this research, these sites were included as 'County Geology sites' in the County Development Plan and provide the basis for outreach activities and an exhibition.



In 2022 we were pleased to launch a county publication to build upon previous efforts and present this information in a new format. “Glens, Glaciers and Granite – An Exploration of the geology of county Wicklow” by Matthew Parkes, Robert Meehan, Vincent Gallagher, Ronan Hennessy and Sarah Gatley is available to purchase in local bookshops and from www.gsi.ie. A free copy was distributed to all secondary schools in county Wicklow to assist their curriculum studies.

Community Monument Funded projects



The Community Monuments Fund (CMF) from National Monuments Service was introduced in 2020 and offers funding to support private owners, local authorities and other custodians and to protect, manage, research and enhance access to archaeological sites and monuments, and improve climate resilience. The CMF is co-ordinated in Wicklow by the Heritage Officer and offers up to 100% grant aid to successful projects. Since 2021, twenty five projects in county Wicklow have benefited from a total investment of €566,420.

Projects range from physical repair works such as at Arklow Castle and Mullinacuff Church, to the preparation of conservation plans for Newcastle Castle, Kilpipe Church and Hollywood Church, the undertaking of a LIDAR survey of Baltinglass Hillforts, Geophysical surveying at Kilbride, the production of a podcast on Castlekevin, digital surveying of historic graveyards and the production of information signs.

Brittas Bay Biodiversity



The Heritage Officer initiated the production of a conservation management plan for council owned land at Brittas Bay beach and dune complex, a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). An annual programme of actions was then rolled out over a five year period 2019-2023. Conservation measures include the creation of trial grazing and mowing plots, fencing, the introduction of grazing cattle, the control of sea buckthorn, botanical, butterfly and bird monitoring.

An interpretation study was carried out and new branding and interpretation installed. The participation of volunteers in the mapping and removal of invasive species (sea buckthorn) is a key part of the programme along with the specially created ‘Behind the Beach’, an annual calendar of educational and awareness raising talks, walks and workshops. This project received a Silver award in the All Ireland Community & Council Awards 2020 under the Best Environmental/ Ecological initiative

category. The programme continues in 2024 overseen by the Biodiversity Officer and supported through the Local Biodiversity Action Plan fund.

Supporting Built Heritage

The Architectural Heritage division of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage operates annual grant schemes for owners and custodians of protected structures and other historic buildings. The focus of the schemes is on enabling small-scale, labour-intensive projects to repair and conserve our historic built environment and make it more climate resilient. The schemes also provide vital support for local jobs in conservation, traditional skills and construction.



The Heritage Office co-ordinates the schemes in county Wicklow (Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS) and the Historic Structure Fund (HSF). In the six years from 2019 to 2024 (inclusive) architectural projects in Wicklow have benefited from just over €1m investment.

Wicklow County Archives Digitised collections

Wicklow County Council Archives Service has an extensive collection of digitised archives on www.wicklow.ie, which continues to grow. County council archive collections tell the story of the development of communities and the administrations who served them. They hold the records of county councils and their predecessors

including the Grand Juries, Boards of Guardians, and Town Commissioners. The collections of Wicklow County Council Archives Service paint a vivid picture of life in our districts and also include the private papers and business archives of the families who administered, lived and worked in the county.

Researching local archives promotes a greater understanding of historical events and their legacies and thus encourages communities toward further exploration and reflection. It is a tangible demonstration of the benefits of free public access to authentic local archival sources, including online access to digitised archives such as those available on www.wicklow.ie.



Wicklow Local Studies Schools Project

As part of their Schools Programme, Wicklow County Council Library Service produced a series of educational packs to support teachers and students completing their Junior Certificate History Classroom Based Assessments (CBAs). This included a 'Teacher and Student Guide to the Local Studies Library' and a number of supporting digital resources. The Guides were distributed to schools and class visits were carried out by the Local Studies librarian to promote the resources.

The project culminated with an exhibition of the student's work in Wicklow Town Library branch to showcase the rich history of county Wicklow while, at the same time, highlight the diverse heritage of the

students attending local secondary school, Coláiste Chill Mhantáin. The exhibition contained over 40 displays from around the Wicklow district and from as far afield as Moldova, Lithuania and South Africa. The exhibition ran for over three weeks from March to April 2023. A video montage of the student's work was submitted for Heritage Week 2023.



Creative Ireland - Wicklow's Wonder Women

To mark the 100th anniversary of the People's Representation Act of 1918 which allowed women to vote for the first time, members of the public were invited to submit stories of Wicklow women who have made a contribution to our local areas, county Wicklow, nationally or internationally. As a result of an overwhelming response, the stories received were contributed to a National exhibition, as well as producing a travelling exhibition entitled Our Wicklow Women.

Talks and events included a very entertaining re-enactment event in Greystones harbour courtesy of local schoolchildren and a souvenir booklet was also produced. This project was expanded under Creative Ireland, featuring on the Mná 100 project and also an exciting programme featuring the lives of two trailblazing Wicklow women – Averil Deverell and Kate

Tyrell who were celebrated with special events. The 'Wicklow's Wonder Women' programme featured a spectacular light show, historical talk, experiential Brehon workshop and fascinating salon event. This project is a collaboration with Herstory Education Trust, a multi-disciplinary storytelling platform illuminating and celebrating female role models.



Decade of Centenaries - Archives Civil War Project

Wicklow Gaol Comrades: A Civil War Autograph Book is one of several Decade of Centenary projects by the Wicklow County Archives Service. The project, a collaboration with Wexford County Archive, consists of a publication, exhibition and video and tells the stories of the men held in Wicklow Gaol during the Civil War.



The prisoners feature in a 1923 autograph book, which was donated to Wexford County Archives many years ago. It consists of rhymes, messages, sketches and cartoons, all recalling the men's humanity, courage and humour in the grim

surroundings of Wicklow Gaol, where they faced an uncertain future. The men hailed from Wicklow, Wexford, Carlow, Kildare, Westmeath and Dublin. As part of the project, relatives of the prisoners were traced and were welcomed to Wicklow Gaol on the night of the launch and thanked for their invaluable contributions to the publication, video and exhibition. Archives play a key role in reassessing and understanding this pivotal period in our history. Indeed, county archives are a rich and fruitful source for research during the revolutionary period and early years of the

Irish state, particularly in relation to the stories of the ordinary men and women who were so much impacted during this time. The project was supported by Wicklow and Wexford County Councils and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media under their Decade of Centenaries funding. This project is one of several Decade of Centenary projects by the Wicklow County Archives Service, which include publications, exhibitions, talks, podcasts and online resources.

Appendix 3. Consultation and Contributors

Thank you to all of the individuals, groups and organisations who engaged in the pre-draft consultation process.

Donard Imaal History, as a member of ICAN

Wicklow Uplands Council

Understory

Genealogical Society of Ireland

Coollattin Canadian Connection

Save Wicklow's Ancient East

Greystones Town Team

Arklow Maritime Museum

Keep Ireland Open

Delgany Community Council

South East Coastal Protection Alliance DAC

Tessa Stewart and Rosemary Warner

William Hourie

The Heritage Council

Geological Survey of Ireland

Transport Infrastructure Ireland

Inland Fisheries Ireland