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in Éirinn

World Heritage in Ireland

# Strategy for World Heritage in Ireland

2025–2035



Prepared by the  
National Monuments Service  
[gov.ie](http://gov.ie)



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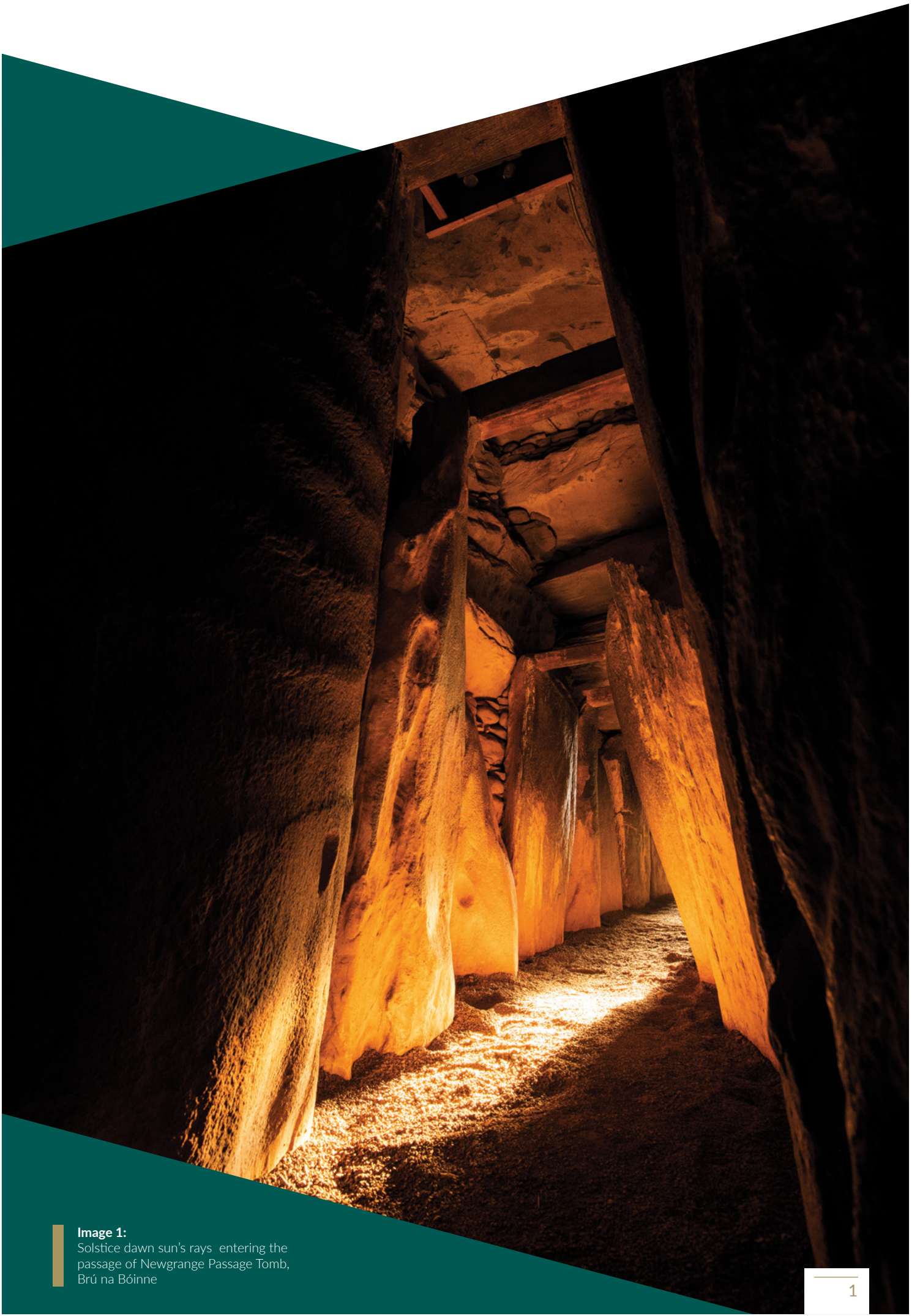
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**Image 1:**  
Solstice dawn sun's rays entering the  
passage of Newgrange Passage Tomb,  
Brú na Bóinne



# Executive Summary

## Ireland's Obligation to the World Heritage Convention

Ireland ratified the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) World Heritage Convention in 1991 and Ireland's two World Heritage Properties were inscribed on to the World Heritage List in 1993 (Brú na Bóinne) and 1996 (Sceilg Mhichíl). The Convention is an international treaty between States Parties - and calls for State processes, initiatives, oversight and management of World Heritage backed by public and community support, engagement and participation. As a signatory to the Convention, Ireland is under an obligation to conserve, present and transmit to future generations the Outstanding Universal Values of its existing and future World Heritage Properties.

## The Need for a Strategy

The key reasons for developing this national World Heritage Strategy are:

- To protect the Outstanding Universal Value of World Heritage Properties in Ireland, to contribute to UNESCO goals for global peace and recognition of human capabilities and to ensure future generations, and particularly future generations of people in Ireland, benefit from this provision.
- To fulfil Ireland's obligation as a signatory to the World Heritage Convention to implement its objectives, requirements, and policies.
- To build World Heritage capacity, capability and knowledge across key stakeholders and communities.
- To enhance local stakeholder engagement, participation, and communication in the management of the existing and future World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites.



**Image 2:**

Launch of "The Megalithic Art of the Passage Tombs at Knowth" Excavations at Knowth Vol 7 in the Knowth Visitor Centre, Brú na Bóinne

- To raise awareness of the requirements and obligations of the World Heritage Convention, the significance and values of World Heritage status, the processes required by UNESCO for progressing World Heritage Property nominations, and the potential benefits that inscription to the World Heritage List can bring.
- To foster a more integrated, inclusive, and interdisciplinary approach to World Heritage protection and management both nationally and locally.
- To ensure the protection of existing and future World Heritage Properties is in alignment with the wider framework of sustainable development.

## Future for World Heritage in Ireland

This Strategy will provide the overarching framework for implementing the Convention over the next ten years. The vision for fostering World Heritage in Ireland is the exemplary protection and management of World Heritage Properties, empowered local communities and stakeholders, enhanced awareness and understanding of World Heritage generally, and the inscription of further Irish properties on the World Heritage List.

The effective protection and management of World Heritage Properties will bring both national and local benefits. At a national level, as strategic and globally significant “heritage sites”, World Heritage enhances Ireland’s international profile and influence. At a local level, World Heritage Properties can generate enhanced income for local tourism economies and encourage a sense of pride in place and a unique focus of identity for local communities. Some of these beneficial effects are already evident at the existing Irish World Heritage Properties and the Strategy offers the potential to increase and expand these. The Strategy will also provide local authorities and other stakeholders with a more consistent context for planning local World Heritage communication, engagement, participation and investment.

## Goals of the Strategy

The seven goals that will need to be achieved to realise the above aspirations are:

1. Increase the number of Irish sites inscribed on the World Heritage List and undertake a regular review of Ireland’s Tentative List;
2. Provide statutory and non-statutory guidance for developing and managing World Heritage in Ireland;
3. Enhance the capacity and capability of all stakeholders for protecting and managing World Heritage in Ireland;
4. Support the protection, conservation, management, interpretation, and presentation of Ireland’s World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites;
5. Integrate World Heritage into the wider framework of sustainable development to demonstrate and promote the benefits of heritage management in Ireland;
6. Contribute to World Heritage initiatives, including research and international collaboration; and
7. Communicate the values and benefits of World Heritage inscription effectively and widely.

These goals are fully aligned with the aspirations and principles of the UN Sustainable Development Goals outlined in [Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), [Heritage Ireland 2030](#), the [Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework](#), the [Regional Action Plan of Europe and North America \(2024-2031\)](#), and the strategic objectives of UNESCO’s World Heritage Convention, commonly known as “the Five Cs”.





**Image 3:**  
The monastery on Sceilg Mhichil  
towards Sceilg Bheag

## Implementation of the Strategy

The Strategy sets an ambitious yet practical framework to plan the appropriate scale, timing, and resources needed for the fostering of World Heritage in Ireland over the next ten years. Since the necessary capacity building and awareness raising will take time, a phased approach will be adopted to implement the Strategy. An Implementation Plan sets out a series of strategic objectives and associated actions to be delivered under seven goals. The successful implementation of the Strategy will require an all-of-Government approach and effective coordination with a range of partners, in Ireland, with UNESCO and other States Parties to the Convention. Some of the key objectives are highlighted below:

- Submit potential World Heritage Properties for nomination to UNESCO;
- Develop guidelines on the management and protection of World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites, the nomination process, and the Tentative List process;
- Support capacity and capability building measures to ensure the development of World Heritage in Ireland;
- Seek to ensure that the Outstanding Universal Value and authenticity and integrity of World Heritage Properties

are protected and managed through the adoption of best practice management strategies;

- Support the establishment of participatory management at World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites, including representation from local authorities, landowners, and local communities, and other key stakeholders;
- Support the further integration of climate change adaptation, mitigation measures and risk assessment in World Heritage Property and Tentative List site management plans;
- Support and establish partnerships between the World Heritage Unit, the OPW as appropriate, third level institutions, youth and other relevant bodies to promote research, collaboration, enhance mutual knowledge and develop educational activities and outreach, including for youth; and
- Communicate greater understanding and appreciation of World Heritage and its benefits among key stakeholders and the wider community, including youth organisations, older people, disadvantaged groups, people with a disability or disabling condition and young people by leveraging digital platforms to broaden awareness and involvement.

# 1. Developing World Heritage in Ireland

## Introduction

Ireland ratified the 1972 UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (the “Convention”) in 1991 and Ireland’s two World Heritage Properties, Brú na Bóinne and Sceilg Mhichíl, were inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1993 and 1996 respectively. World Heritage Properties are only inscribed on the World Heritage List after they have been carefully assessed as representing the best examples of global cultural and natural heritage. As a State Party to the Convention, Ireland is obliged to protect, conserve, present, monitor and transmit to future generations the Outstanding Universal Value of Irish World Heritage Properties.

There are many benefits to a property being inscribed on the World Heritage List, including increased international profile, increased tourism and increased opportunities for heritage-based socio-economic regeneration of communities in line with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals contained in the UN’s [Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) particularly in terms of cultural landscapes, and better management and protection of the property. At a local level, World Heritage inscription promotes a sense of pride, provides a unique focus of identity for communities, and develops a sense of collective responsibility and stewardship for heritage. Realising these benefits takes planning, preparation and extensive consultation (locally, nationally, and internationally).

This Strategy aims to ensure that World Heritage in Ireland is developed and managed in line with the requirements of the Convention. It sets out seven non-hierarchical strategic goals to achieve this over the next ten years, as follows:

1. Increase the number of Irish sites inscribed on the World Heritage List and undertake a regular review of Ireland’s Tentative List;
2. Provide statutory and non-statutory guidance for developing and managing World Heritage in Ireland;
3. Enhance the capacity and capability of all stakeholders for protecting and managing World Heritage in Ireland;
4. Support the protection, conservation, management, interpretation, and presentation of Ireland’s World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites;
5. Integrate World Heritage into the wider framework of sustainable development to demonstrate and promote the benefits of heritage management in Ireland;
6. Contribute to World Heritage initiatives, including research and international collaboration; and
7. Communicate the values and benefits of World Heritage inscription effectively and widely.

It should be noted that the term ‘Property’ is used by UNESCO to define the area/site which has Outstanding Universal Value, rather than with reference to ownership. In an Irish context, the word ‘property’ implies ownership and therefore can be misleading. World Heritage status does not affect ownership or property rights in Ireland and World Heritage Properties do not become public property, nor does their ownership pass to any international body. Ownership remains as it was prior to inscription, and Irish laws still apply.



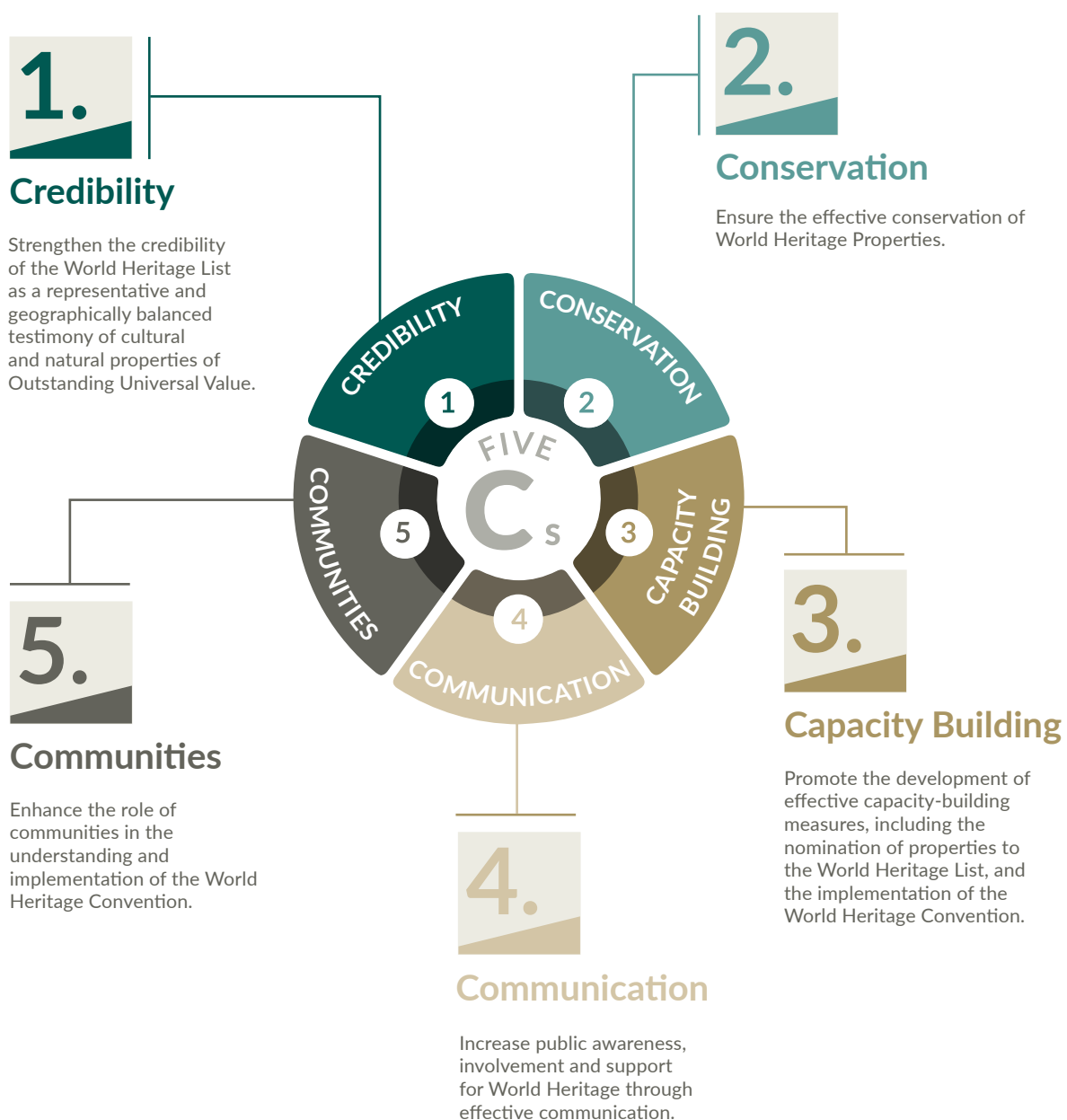


**Image 4:**  
Exhibition (2019)  
in the Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre

## 2. A Vision for World Heritage in Ireland

The vision for World Heritage in Ireland is the exemplary protection and management of World Heritage Properties, empowered local communities and stakeholders, enhanced awareness and understanding of World Heritage generally, and the inscription of further Irish properties on the World Heritage List over the next ten years.

This vision supports UNESCO's five strategic objectives that aim to ensure a sustainable, comprehensive and inclusive implementation of the Convention. These are commonly known as the "Five Cs" and are as follows:



**Figure 1:**  
UNESCO's "Five Cs"





**Image 5:**  
Dowth North Passage,  
Brú na Bóinne



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## 3. The International Context

### The World Heritage Convention

UNESCO was founded at the end of the Second World War to build peace and security through international cooperation in the fields of education, the sciences and culture. UNESCO continues to strive to build networks that foster and support international unity and cooperation in all areas of its cooperation.

In 1972, the World Heritage Convention, formally the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, was adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO. It reflects the idea that some cultural and natural heritage is priceless and irreplaceable and may possess such exceptional qualities as to be considered to have Outstanding Universal Value, making it worthy of protection for the benefit of humanity as a whole. 'World Heritage [Properties] belong to all the peoples of the world, irrespective of the territory on which they are located'.<sup>1</sup>

Currently, [196 States Parties](#) have ratified the Convention, including Ireland in 1991, making it one of the most widely recognised and most successful UNESCO Conventions. In adopting the Convention, States Parties assume a responsibility to identify, protect, conserve and present World Heritage. To achieve this mission, the World Heritage Committee manages a list of cultural and natural heritage sites, called the World Heritage List, which it considers as having Outstanding Universal Value.

The World Heritage Convention began as a peace objective between nations concerning culture and environmental protection. It has since added sustainable development, cultural diversity, and climate change to its agenda.

### Definitions of Cultural and Natural Heritage within the World Heritage Convention

Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we hope to pass on to future generations. Our cultural and natural heritage are both irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration. Article 1 of the Convention defines the following as “cultural heritage”:

- **Monuments:** architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;
- **Groups of buildings:** groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;
- **Sites:** works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view.

Article 2 of the Convention, defines the following as “natural heritage”:

- Natural features consisting of physical and biological formations or groups of such formations, which are of outstanding universal value from the aesthetic or scientific point of view;
- Geological and physiographical formations and precisely delineated areas which constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation;
- Natural sites or precisely delineated natural areas of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty.

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO World Heritage Centre - World Heritage

By regarding heritage as both cultural and natural, the World Heritage Convention reminds us of the many ways in which people interact with nature, and of the fundamental need to preserve the balance between the two.

## World Heritage Committee

The UNESCO World Heritage Committee meets annually and includes representatives from 21 States Parties elected by the Committee's General Assembly standing for four-year terms. The Committee work includes:

- Determining and reviewing the strategy for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention;
- Deciding on nominations for inscription as World Heritage Properties;
- Monitoring the state of conservation of World Heritage Properties through Reactive Monitoring and Periodic Reporting processes;
- Evaluating whether properties should be included on, or removed from, the List of World Heritage in Danger or deleted from the World Heritage List entirely;
- Considering requests for international assistance; and
- Raising awareness of World Heritage and promoting educational activities.

To date, Ireland has not served as a committee member.

## UNESCO World Heritage Centre

The World Heritage Centre, located at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, is the Secretariat of the Convention and the focal point and coordinator within UNESCO for all matters relating to World Heritage. The Centre oversees the day-to-day management of the Convention, organises the annual sessions of the World Heritage Committee, provides advice to States Parties in the preparation of site nominations, coordinates the evaluation of the nomination files, organises approved international assistance from the World Heritage Fund upon request, and coordinates the reporting on the condition of World Heritage Properties (Periodic Reporting, Reactive Monitoring, and Advisory Missions). The Centre also organises technical workshops, liaises with World Heritage partner organisations and keeps the public informed about World Heritage issues.



**Image 6:**

Sunrise on kerb stone K52  
at Newgrange Passage Tomb,  
Brú na Bóinne



## International Advisory Bodies (IUCN, ICOMOS, ICCROM)

Three international, non-governmental or intergovernmental organisations are named in the Convention to assist and advise the Committee in its deliberations. They provide expert review and commentary on whether or not individual nominations have Outstanding Universal Value, meet the conditions of integrity and (when relevant) of authenticity and meet the requirements of protection and management. The three Advisory Bodies are:

- **The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)**

IUCN is a membership union uniquely composed of both government and civil society organisations. It provides the World Heritage Committee with technical evaluations of natural, mixed, and cultural landscape heritage sites and, through its worldwide network of specialists, reports on the state of conservation of World Heritage Properties. The IUCN was established in 1948 and is based in Gland, Switzerland ([www.iucn.org](http://www.iucn.org)).

- **The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)**

ICOMOS is a global non-governmental organisation that works for the conservation and protection of cultural heritage places. ICOMOS provides the World Heritage Committee with evaluations of cultural, mixed, and cultural landscapes nominations and recommendations concerning the state of conservation of World Heritage Properties. The organisation was founded in 1965, and its international secretariat is headquartered in Paris, France ([www.icomos.org](http://www.icomos.org)).

- **The International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM)**

ICCROM is an intergovernmental organisation working in service to its Member States to promote the conservation of all forms of cultural

heritage in every region of the world. It provides expert advice on conservation and training. ICCROM was established in 1956 and is located in Rome ([www.iccrom.org](http://www.iccrom.org)).

## Operational Guidelines

UNESCO's [Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention](#) ("Operational Guidelines") outline how the Convention is to be implemented by States Parties, including the precise criteria for assessing the significance of a potential World Heritage Property, the application process, and the longer-term requirements for protection and management. First adopted by the Committee in 1977, they are regularly revised by the Committee to reflect new concepts, knowledge or experiences. At the time of publishing this Strategy, the most recent version was updated in 2023.

## Other Guidance

Since the inception of the World Heritage Convention in 1972, the growing World Heritage List has evolved to include increasingly complex properties such as transnational serial sites or extensive cultural landscapes. Most World Heritage Properties are places which can contribute significantly to local economies and are much valued by the communities who live and work there and often rightly claim stewardship of their heritage. The balancing of site conservation and development change in such properties has also become increasingly complex. In response, the World Heritage Centre has, over the last 20 years, produced a wide range of guidance, policies, and programmes to assist States Parties in the protection and management of their properties. Individual States Parties have also produced some guidance and manuals to guide the local management of their World Heritage Properties.

## Outstanding Universal Value

Outstanding Universal Value is the common denominator underpinning all World Heritage Properties and is defined in the Operational Guidelines as:

**[A property's] cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity. As such, the permanent protection of this heritage is of the highest importance to the international community as a whole.**

For a nominated property to be inscribed on the World Heritage List, it must demonstrate Outstanding Universal Value by meeting one or more of ten criteria required for inscription (described below), meet the conditions of integrity and/or authenticity (for cultural and mixed sites), demonstrate community and stakeholder support and engagement and must have an adequate protection and management system in place.

The ten criteria for inscription are:

1. Represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;
2. Exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;
3. Bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilisation which is living or which has disappeared;
4. Be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;
5. Be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with

the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;

6. Be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. This criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria;
7. Contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;
8. Be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant ongoing geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;
9. Be outstanding examples representing significant ongoing ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals; and/or
10. Contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of science or conservation.

Mixed properties are those that meet both cultural and natural heritage criteria. Cultural properties include cultural landscapes which represent the 'combined works of nature and of [humanity]' as designated in Article 1 of the Convention. There are three main types of cultural landscapes: landscapes designed and created intentionally by people; organically evolved landscapes; and associative landscapes.

Worldwide there are now over 1,200 World Heritage Properties inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. These are typically a defined area located within the borders of a single country. There are, however, exceptions to this that reflect the spirit of the Convention as a tool for international cooperation, collaboration and celebration and creating opportunities for shared approaches in relation

to World Heritage and better management and conservation practices. These exceptions are as follows:

- A serial World Heritage Property is comprised of a number of separate locations within a single country that all contribute to a single statement of Outstanding Universal Value;
- A transboundary World Heritage Property is located on the territory of adjoining jurisdictions having adjacent borders i.e., the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland;
- A serial transnational World Heritage Property is another form of serial World Heritage Property but in this case components are located in the territory of two or more countries that do not share a contiguous or adjacent border.

## Values and Attributes

The values of a site are the reason it is considered to have Outstanding Universal Value. Values are determined by a range of social and cultural factors: aesthetic, architectural, biological, ecological, historic, geological, social, spiritual etc. These are embodied in the attributes of a site, i.e., the tangible, intangible and procedural things that need to be protected and conserved to maintain the site's values and therefore its Outstanding Universal Value. Attributes can be physical qualities relating to the material fabric and other tangible features, but can also be intangible aspects such as processes, traditions, social arrangements or cultural practices, as well as associations and relationships which are reflected in physical elements of a World Heritage Property.

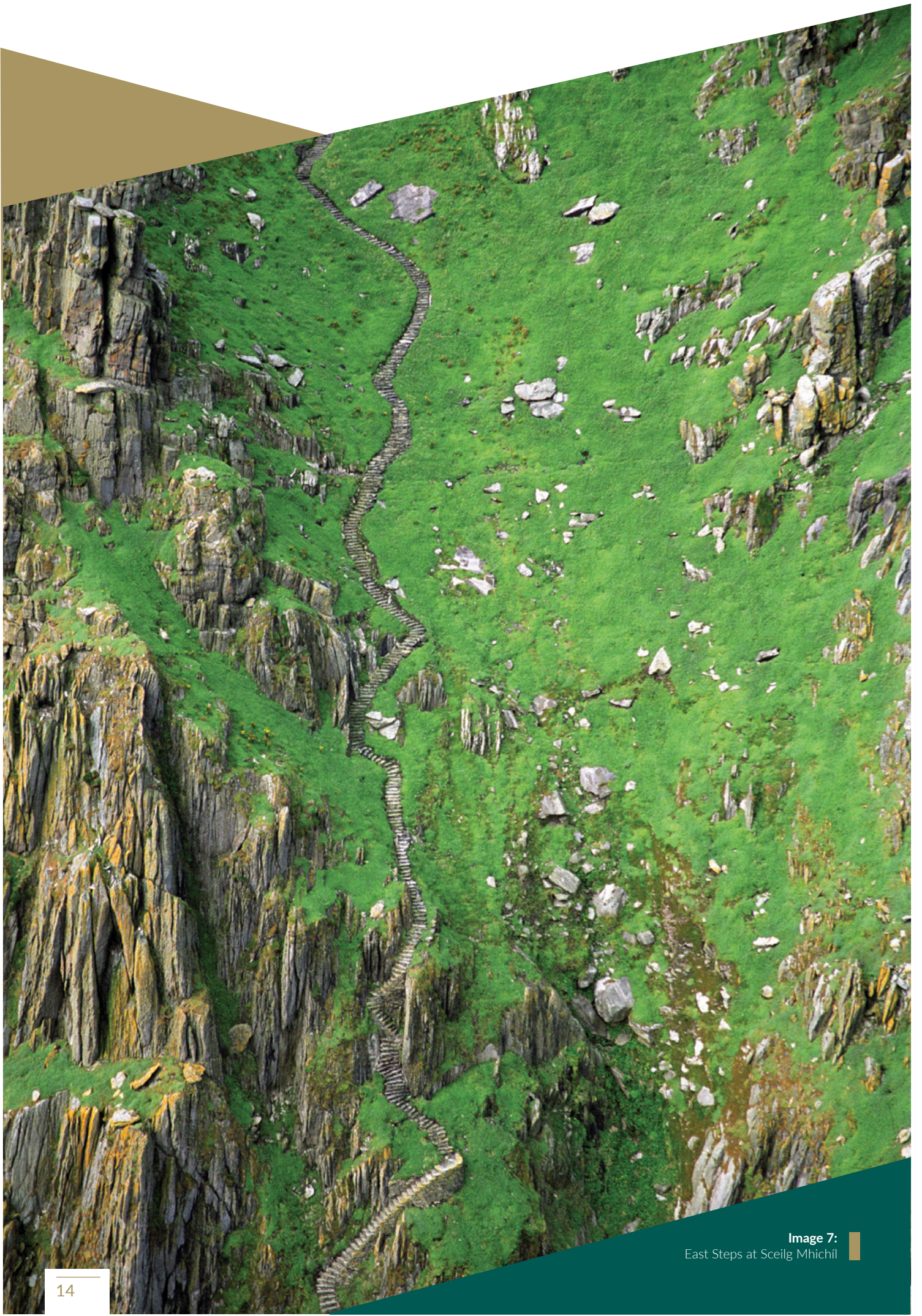
**Identifying values and attributes is central to understanding the authenticity and integrity of a World Heritage Property. They are the focus of measures to protect, conserve and manage the site. Any potential threats or risks (current and potential) to a World Heritage Property must be considered through their impact on the values and attributes of the Property.**

## Obligations under the Convention

The Convention sets out the framework for protecting World Heritage and requires that each State Party cooperate and ensure the permanent protection of the Outstanding Universal Value of World Heritage Properties. Article 5 (d) of the Convention states that each State Party shall endeavour "to take the appropriate legal, scientific, technical, administrative and financial measures necessary for the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and rehabilitation of the heritage". The States Parties to the Convention are required to:

- Identify sites at national level that are of potential global significance and nominate these for inclusion on the World Heritage List;
- Safeguard and protect the Outstanding Universal Value, the authenticity and integrity of World Heritage Properties through appropriate legal, planning, and management systems at both national and local levels;
- Maintain, monitor, and report on the state of conservation of their World Heritage Properties;
- Provide the appropriate assistance and expertise for evaluating potential risk and danger to the Outstanding Universal Values of World Heritage Properties;
- Support the building of adequate capacity for awareness raising and for the management and conservation of World Heritage Properties; and
- Encourage the full engagement and participation of local populations and stakeholders in World Heritage, including the nomination process and ongoing planning and management.





**Image 7:**  
East Steps at Sceilg Mhichíl



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## 4. The National Context

### States Parties

Ireland is one of 196 countries (States Parties) that have ratified the Convention. As part of this responsibility, States Parties identify sites from their national territory to be considered for inscription on the World Heritage List (the Tentative List), protect and conserve World Heritage Properties and adopt measures which ensure their continued protection and management. The Minister of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (“the Minister”) is the competent authority for Ireland in relation to these responsibilities. Acting on behalf of the Minister of State with responsibility for the Office of Public Works (OPW), the OPW is responsible for the conservation and presentation of the State-owned parts of Ireland’s World Heritage Properties and Tentative List Sites. Both Ministers act in cooperation with such other Ministers of the Government as may be appropriate in relation to World Heritage.

### The National Monuments Service

The National Monuments Service plays a key role in the protection of Ireland’s archaeological heritage. Through its World Heritage Unit, it acts on behalf of the Minister overseeing the overall implementation of the Convention. These responsibilities include:

- Providing general guidance and advice in relation to the effective management of Irish World Heritage Properties;
- Leading on the drafting and implementation of management plans for World Heritage Properties in State ownership or where the State is a major stakeholder, in partnership with the OPW;
- Encouraging, coordinating, and strengthening the engagement and participation in World Heritage matters across Government including the implementation of the World Heritage Strategy;
- Preparing and maintaining Ireland’s Tentative List;

- Preparing, with key stakeholders as appropriate, communications strategies and materials related to the World Heritage Committee’s decisions;
- Providing support to lead proponents responsible for preparing nominations including the provision of expert independent advice;
- Reviewing each draft nomination at various stages and ensuring that it meets UNESCO standards;
- Providing strategic direction on the preparation of a nomination, facilitating on-site evaluation, and addressing any subsequent requests by the World Heritage Centre for additional information;
- Formally submitting the nomination dossiers to the World Heritage Committee on behalf of the Minister and managing communications between Ireland and the World Heritage Centre; and
- Supporting capacity building, promotion and management of World Heritage Properties in Ireland.

### Office of Public Works

The OPW manages the State’s property portfolio, and works to preserve and promote our national heritage. As part of its remit and working in partnership with the National Monuments Service, the OPW has responsibility for:

- Conserving, maintaining, interpreting, and presenting National Monuments in the Minister’s ownership or guardianship;
- Managing the State-owned elements of Ireland’s two World Heritage Properties, Sceilg Mhichíl and Brú na Bóinne;
- Managing the State-owned elements of Ireland’s Tentative List sites;
- Participating in the management structures at World Heritage Properties;
- Participating in the Tentative List review process and in the nomination structures at Tentative List sites;



- Contributing to the Periodic Reporting and Annual Reporting in respect of Ireland's World Heritage Properties;
- Contributing to the development of statutory and non-statutory World Heritage guidelines for Ireland;
- Ensuring that statutory and non-statutory World Heritage guidelines are integrated into the management and protection of World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites;
- Supporting capacity and capability-building measures for World Heritage in Ireland at national and local levels;
- Promoting research, collaboration, knowledge and educational activities in relation to World Heritage; and
- Facilitating active cooperation and participation by landowners and local stakeholders in the stewardship of World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites.

The OPW also has responsibility for conserving, maintaining, and presenting other historic artefacts, buildings, gardens and landscapes in the State's property portfolio, both in the Commissioner's ownership and in guardianship.

## National Parks and Wildlife Service

The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) has responsibility for managing, maintaining and conserving State-owned National Parks and Nature Reserves. The NPWS is also responsible for the protection of Natura 2000 sites for nature conservation designated under EU legislation and for sites of global importance under certain international conventions. The NPWS is a key stakeholder in relation to World Heritage Properties and potential natural, mixed, or cultural landscape nominated sites, particularly if they include State-owned lands or marine habitats and involve the conservation and management of important ecosystems.

## Ireland's National Commission for UNESCO

The Department of Education is the secretariat of Ireland's National Commission for UNESCO. The National Commission is comprised of representatives from a number of different departments involved in UNESCO's mandate, including the National Monuments Service. The National Commission and the Department of Education are essential partners in promoting and advocating for World Heritage and UNESCO nationally and through the education system.

## The Department of Foreign Affairs

The Department of Foreign Affairs, through Ireland's Permanent Representation to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and UNESCO, plays a vital role facilitating dialogue with the World Heritage Centre in Paris, and in promoting Ireland's work and priorities in the field of World Heritage at UNESCO, working closely with the UNESCO Secretariat and with other States Parties to the World Heritage Convention.

## Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media

The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media is responsible for the implementation of the UNESCO [2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage](#). Whereas the World Heritage Convention deals primarily with tangible heritage, the aim of the 2003 Convention is to safeguard specific expressions of intangible heritage: these are practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills that communities recognise as their cultural heritage and wish to ensure their continuing renewal and transmission to future generations.

This includes the vital role of language in the expression and transmission of living heritage. An important goal of the Department is to support the Irish language and implement the [20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030](#). The Strategy promotes a holistic, integrated approach to the Irish language which is consistent with international best practice. Supporting the Irish language and intangible heritage will be an important part of the management of World Heritage Properties.

## Local Authorities

The support of local authorities (executive management and elected representatives) is vital for nominations to succeed. Local authorities play an important role in protecting and preserving sites and supporting site management structures through the inclusion of specific objectives to protect and manage properties in county and city development plans. This is critical to the success of nominations as well as providing for the long-term protection and management of nominated sites. It is envisaged that the role of local authorities as key partners in the custodianship of World Heritage Properties will be enhanced under this Strategy. It is recognised that the development and implementation of effective planning practice plays an important role in responsible stewardship of heritage.

## Lead Proponent/s

The lead proponent/s is the organisation/s which undertakes responsibility for initially proposing and submitting an application for a site to go onto the Tentative List. This can be central government, local authorities, site owners or managers, local community groups, the private sector or non-governmental organisations, or a combination of any of the above.

## ICOMOS Ireland

The Irish National Committee of ICOMOS offers advice and support to the State Party concerning the implementation of the Convention in Ireland and comments on matters relating to Irish World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites in Ireland. ICOMOS Ireland serves as a forum for discussion and reflection linking public authorities, institutions, professionals, local authorities and individuals interested in cultural heritage conservation.

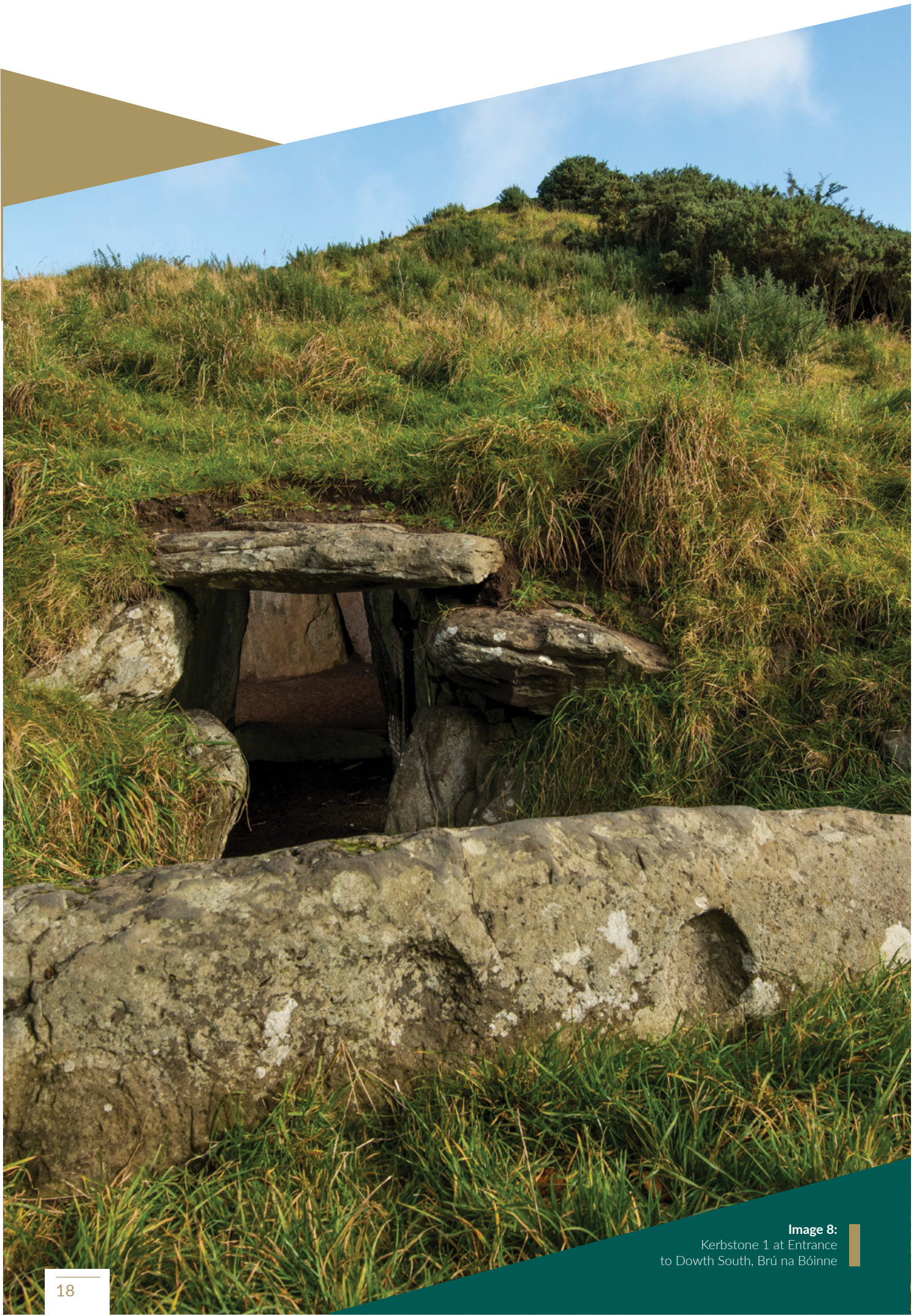
## Heritage Council

Established under The Heritage Act 1995, the Heritage Council is a public body whose mission is to develop a wide understanding of the vital contribution that our heritage makes to our social, environmental and economic wellbeing. The Heritage Council has a particular responsibility to promote interest, education, knowledge and pride in Ireland's heritage. In its current strategic plan [Our Place in Time](#), the Heritage Council has set out its core principles and goals.

## Fáilte Ireland

As the National Tourism Development Authority, Fáilte Ireland's role is to support long-term sustainable growth in the economic, social, cultural and environmental contribution of tourism to Ireland. It works in partnership with the National Monuments Service and OPW, as well as other Government departments, State agencies, local authorities, representative groups and industry, to develop tourism across Ireland by creating destination development plans and networks, and investing in infrastructure, activities, visitor attractions and festivals.





**Image 8:**  
Kerbstone 1 at Entrance  
to Dowth South, Brú na Bóinne



## Landowners and Tenants

Landowners and tenants play a significant role as custodians/managers of land and property in many of Ireland's Tentative List sites and in part of one of its existing properties. Their responsible stewardship is key to the long-term protection and sustainable management of these sites enabling participatory and inclusive governance.

## Civic Society

In addition to the above, a range of other representative groups and bodies have a vested interest in World Heritage such as rights-holders, heritage groups, non-governmental organisations, and local communities.

Collectively, across Government and society, all the above are key stakeholders that will play an important role in the success of this Strategy.

## The Legal Framework

Ireland's international obligations under the World Heritage Convention, including the associated Operational Guidelines enshrined within the framework of the Convention, are implemented through three key strands of legislation, as follows:

1. The Historic and Archaeological Heritage and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill was enacted in 2023. It defines World Heritage Property in Irish legislation for the first time and along with the National Monuments Acts 1930 to 2014 provides for the protection of historic and archaeological heritage.
2. Wildlife and habitats are protected under Wildlife Acts 1976 to 2022 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011–2021 which transpose Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the Habitats Directive) and Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (the Birds Directive) into Irish law.
3. The Planning and Development Act 2024 provide a broader framework for the inclusion of cultural and natural heritage protection including UNESCO designations in local authority county and city development plans. This includes a requirement that planning authorities shall prepare a strategy for the conservation, protection, management and improvement of the natural, archaeological and built heritage and landscape and this strategy shall include objectives for the conservation, protection, management and improvement of World Heritage Properties and candidate sites (Tentative List sites).

Other key conventions, declarations, programmes, regulations and initiatives provide an international framework for the protection of heritage. These are summarised below.

**Venice Charter of 1964 on the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites** (ICOMOS) which codified internationally accepted standards for conservation practice and has informed the process for assessment of cultural sites from the outset.

**Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict**, 1954 and its two (1954 and 1999) Protocols. Ireland ratified the Convention and its 1999 Protocol in 2018.

**UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme.** The MAB Programme was created in 1971 to examine the relationship between humanity and nature. Biosphere reserves are 'living laboratories' that balance sustainable development with biodiversity conservation. There are two biosphere reserves designated in Ireland: Dublin Bay (1981) and Kerry (1982).

**UNESCO Global Geoparks (UGGp).** The Global Geoparks Network was formed in 2004 and rebranded in 2015 as 'single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development'. On the island of Ireland, there are four UGGps: Cuilcagh Lakelands Global Geopark (world's first transnational Geopark) in Co. Cavan and Co. Fermanagh, Copper Coast Global Geopark in Co. Waterford, Burren and Cliffs of Moher Global Geopark in Co. Clare, and Mourne Gullion Strangford Global Geopark in Co. Armagh and Co. Down.

**UNESCO Memory of the World (MoW) Programme.** The MoW Programme was established in 1992 to protect and preserve humanity's documentary heritage. Ireland has two elements of documentary heritage inscribed on the MoW Register: The Book of Kells (2011) and The Irish Folklore Commission Collection 1935–1970 (2017).

**UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN).** The UCCN was founded in 2004 to promote cooperation with and among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development. The seven creative fields comprise Crafts and Folk Arts, Media Arts, Film, Design, Gastronomy, Literature, and Music. There are three Creative Cities on the island of Ireland: Dublin UNESCO City of Literature (2010), Galway UNESCO City of Film (2014), and Belfast UNESCO City of Music (2021).

**Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe, Granada, 1985 (Council of Europe).** Ratified by Ireland in January 1997 and entered into force May 1997, this confirms the State's desire to protect architectural heritage through inventories and provision of statutory procedures for designation and protection.

**European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (revised), Valletta, 1992 (Council of Europe).** Ratified by Ireland in March 1997 and entered into force September 1997. The aim of the Convention is to 'protect the archaeological heritage as a source of the European collective memory and as an instrument for historical and scientific study' (Article 1).

**European Landscape Convention, Florence, 2000 (Council of Europe).** Ratified by Ireland in 2004 and entered into force in the same year, this encourages public authorities to adopt policies and measures at local, national, and international levels for protecting, managing and planning landscape throughout Europe to maintain and improve landscape quality and enhance the recognition of the value and importance of landscape.

**Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, Faro, 2005 (Council of Europe).**

Ireland is not yet a signatory but this Convention provides an important framework for protection of cultural heritage and puts emphasis on meaningful engagement with communities and stakeholders. Key objectives of the Convention include the strengthening of the connection between cultural heritage, quality of life, identity, and sustainable development in society.

**Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, Bern, 1979 (Council of Europe).** This was signed in 1979 and ratified by Ireland in 1982. It came into force in August 1982.

**Convention on Biological Diversity, Rio de Janeiro, 1993 (United Nations).** Ireland signed in 1992 and ratified in 1996.

**Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat, Ramsar, 1971 (UNESCO).** The Convention entered force in Ireland in 1985 and Ireland currently has 45 sites designated as Wetlands of International Importance.

**Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, Paris, 2001 (UNESCO).** The Historic and Archaeological Heritage and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023 contains provisions that enable the ratification of the 2001 Convention.

**Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Paris, 2003 (UNESCO).** This was ratified by Ireland in 2015. The Representative List, launched in 2008, is made up of intangible cultural heritage elements that help demonstrate the diversity of humanity's heritage and raise awareness of its importance. Ireland has four elements inscribed on the Representative List: Uilleann Piping (2017), Hurling (2018), Irish Harping (2019), and a multinational inscription Falconry, a living human heritage (2021).

In addition to the above, various Government policies and strategies support the aims of this Strategy. [Heritage Ireland 2030](#) contains key actions to provide for the development of World Heritage as does [Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework](#).



It is envisaged that specific World Heritage guidelines (statutory and non-statutory) will be prepared by the National Monuments Service to assist local authorities, landowners and stakeholders to manage World Heritage Properties, their context and their settings. It is intended that World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites will be integrated into national planning policy with an overall commitment to protection and sustainable

management. This will ensure World Heritage objectives are fully integrated into local planning policies, strategies and commitments.

This Strategy is intended to be a dynamic document that will periodically be reviewed to reflect evolving legislative and policy developments that relate to cultural and natural heritage.



**Image 9:**  
Orthostat 050 from  
Knowth Passage Tomb, Brú na Bóinne



## 5. World Heritage Opportunities

### A Future for World Heritage in Ireland

Worldwide, there are over 1,200 World Heritage Properties inscribed on the World Heritage List and more are added each year. Ireland is rich in natural and cultural heritage that is of international significance and which may be suitable for inscription on the World Heritage List. World Heritage designation not only protects the exceptional value of this heritage for future generations, but can also bring environmental, cultural, social and economic benefits to stakeholders and local communities, fostering values of diversity and inclusivity. There is an inherent synergy between the World Heritage Convention and the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in relation to supporting and

protecting intangible aspects of our culture such as the Irish language, oral traditions, social practices, rituals, folklore, mythology and local knowledge.

World Heritage status encourages collaboration, peace and valuable intergovernmental connections between neighbours and across the globe. The associated narratives about identity and values have the potential to greatly contribute to Ireland's international visibility and profile. Transboundary and transnational World Heritage Properties and the Organization of World Heritage Cities, in particular, provide opportunities for international cooperation, collaboration and celebration of heritage and identities. They also create opportunities for shared approaches to World Heritage and better management and conservation practices.

**Image 10:**  
Great Stone Circle,  
Brú na Bóinne





**Image 11:**  
View of church and bee-hive huts  
and of Sceilg Bheag from the  
monastery on Sceilg Mhichíl

## Benefits Arising from World Heritage Inscription

The motivation for nomination for many of the World Heritage Properties in Europe during the 1980s and 1990s was primarily driven by the desire to protect their Outstanding Universal Value and the need for improved conservation measures. However, since then, there has been greater attention given to the potential social and economic benefits that could accrue from World Heritage status.

There is increasing evidence that World Heritage Properties do bring a significant range of advantages and benefits to local communities and stakeholders. The mix of benefits, the scale of impact, and the influences that have created the opportunities vary from site to site but the range includes the following:

- Generate a sense of local stewardship and ownership for the protection of Outstanding Universal Value for future generations;
- Enhanced inward investment for conservation, protection, interpretation, and presentation of the property and for community regeneration;
- Support for the local tourist economy and businesses and contributing to a quality and responsible brand;
- Enhanced civic pride, identity and sense of place, which encourages community stewardship and promotes social wellbeing;
- Raised awareness of intangible cultural heritage including language, folklore, performing arts, rituals, mythology and music;

- Raised awareness of the global values of World Heritage; and
- Provide a framework of values for managing change within and around World Heritage Properties in a sustainable manner.

This Strategy aims to support and encourage these and other benefits for local communities and stakeholders over the next ten years.

Effectively managing, conserving, presenting, and protecting a World Heritage Property or Tentative List site requires a close examination of existing practices and proposals, a consideration of impacts on the site and surrounding environs, and thinking longer term in a wider/international context. This may either be a challenge or an opportunity. For example, designation as a World Heritage Property can lead to increased tourism and the need for associated visitor infrastructure. If the management plan is well written in consultation with local communities and key stakeholders and implemented by an effective governance structure, increased tourism will become a benefit.

World Heritage can be perceived negatively, particularly at a local level, as a new restriction on planning, environment, development, and livelihoods. In practice, however, World Heritage usually means applying existing constraints and good management practices to an area with more care, cohesion, and oversight of the overall benefit of the site to the local community; for example, addressing the impacts of animal management or agricultural practices on archaeological sites and/or habitats or considering visual impacts of development in sensitive landscapes.



## 6. World Heritage and Sustainability

### Sustainable Development

World Heritage has potential to contribute to social, economic and environmental goals. The [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) adopted by the UN General Assembly integrated, for the first time, the role of culture, through cultural heritage and creativity, as an enabler of sustainable development across 17 Sustainable Development Goals. As with all heritage, protecting, conserving and managing World Heritage Properties can play a crucial role in the wider wellbeing of communities, and can help support and maintain sustainable urban and rural socio-economic development. World Heritage inscription can enable new approaches that demonstrate the relevance of heritage for sustainable development whilst respecting its primary purpose and mandate of managing the Outstanding Universal Value of World Heritage Properties.

In 2015, the World Heritage General Assembly adopted a [Policy on the integration of a sustainable development perspective into the processes of the World Heritage Convention](#).<sup>2</sup> The overall goal of the policy is to harness the potential of World Heritage Properties and heritage in general to contribute to sustainable development and therefore increase the effectiveness and relevance of the Convention whilst respecting its primary purpose and mandate of protecting the Outstanding Universal Value of World Heritage Properties. In line with the UN 2030 Agenda, this new policy revolves around the three dimensions of sustainable development, namely environmental sustainability, inclusive social development and inclusive economic development, all of which should underpin the development of the management plan for a World Heritage Property. These reflect the concern for 'planet, people, prosperity and peace', identified as areas of critical importance in the 2030 Agenda.

The Sustainable Development Goals, climate change, and tourism are interlinked, not always constructively. World Heritage provides an opportunity to reverse this and promote positive scenarios where addressing one issue also helps another. For example, sustainable or regenerative tourism is usually greener and of greater benefit to local communities. In turn, local communities play an important role in the stewardship of World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites and in contributing to sustainable practices at them.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on how heritage can address the Sustainable Development Goals see Labadi et al. (2021) and Engels, B. (2017).



**Image 12:**

Sea Pink/Thrift (*Armeria Maritima*) on Sceilg Mhichil

## Climate Change

UNESCO adopted the [Policy Document on Climate Action for World Heritage](#) in November 2023. The policy recognises that climate change has become one of the most significant threats to World Heritage, impacting on Outstanding Universal Value and also on the economic and social development of communities. Nevertheless, World Heritage has the potential to promote adaptation and mitigation measures and stimulate research and collaboration in the field of climate change. The ICOMOS report [Future of Our Pasts: Engaging Cultural Heritage in Climate Action](#) (2019), the [Built & Archaeological](#)

[Heritage Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan](#) (2019) and the [Biodiversity Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan](#) (2019) promote an interdisciplinary approach to examining the effects of climate change on natural and cultural heritage. Investing in climate research at World Heritage Properties will help us make informed decisions in relation to climate change mitigation and adaptation practices. In turn, this will raise awareness of the impact of climate change on both natural and cultural heritage. As emotive and iconic places, World Heritage Properties are also powerful sites to promote climate action more widely both within Ireland and globally.

**Image 13:**  
Puffins on Sceilg Mhichíl







**Image 14:**  
Razorbills on Sceilg Mhichil

## Sustainable and Regenerative Tourism

[Sustainable] Tourism takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities (UN World Tourism Organization).

Regenerative Tourism focuses on fostering innovative positive relationships between visitors, host communities, and the socio-ecological system, while also promoting long-term resilience and well-being for communities.

Heritage destinations provide a major opportunity to attract local and overseas visitors seeking experiences that help them to connect with Ireland's culture, landscape and people. Over the last two decades, the OPW, Fáilte Ireland, various Government departments and local authorities have invested in numerous iconic attractions of national and international significance that deliver world-class visitor experiences.

The 2022 ICOMOS International Charter for Cultural Heritage Tourism, the UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme, and the 2011 IUCN Sustainable Tourism and Natural World Heritage stress that responsibly managed tourism can be a powerful vehicle for the preservation of Outstanding Universal Value and for sustainable development, and conversely, poorly managed tourism can have deleterious effects on sites, and may jeopardise their World Heritage status. The importance of sustainable heritage tourism and ecotourism is increasingly recognised in a range of Government policy statements<sup>3</sup>. [Heritage Ireland 2030](#) promotes the local and national benefits that sustainable tourism can bring and it is acknowledged that World Heritage Properties offer considerable potential in this regard. Nevertheless, while there is some appreciation of the value of the World Heritage 'brand', the full potential of World Heritage has yet to be fully realised and utilised in Ireland to promote sustainable and regenerative tourism whilst supporting local economies.

## Gender Equality

Gender equality in society is where all individuals, regardless of their gender, can live in safety and dignity and have the ability to realise their full potential, both contributing to and benefiting from economic, social, cultural and political development. It relates to gender dynamics within families, societies and cultures and the roles and responsibilities of all genders. Achieving gender equality is one of UNESCO's two global priorities and is a full Sustainable Development Goal (No. 5), it is a human rights issue and integral for realising sustainable development.<sup>4</sup>

In line with the [UNESCO Priority Gender Equality Action Plan \(2014-2021\)](#) (2019) and the [Policy on the integration of a sustainable development perspective into the processes of the World Heritage Convention](#) (2015) Ireland will harness the potentials of World Heritage to promote gender equality in the effective implementation of the Convention. These include equal opportunities for all individuals to engage in the field of World Heritage conservation in collaboration with UNESCO, ensuring respect for gender equality in all World Heritage processes, ensuring equal social and economic opportunities for all genders in and around World Heritage Properties, and ensuring equal consultation, participation and opportunities for leadership and representation all genders within activities for the conservation and management of World Heritage Properties.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> A working group was established under the Tourism Action Plan 2019–2021 to review international policy and best practice in sustainable tourism. [The Report of the Sustainable Tourism Working Group](#) sets out the ambition that "Ireland will seek to be amongst the world-leaders in sustainable tourism practices" and it also sets out accompanying Guiding Principles for Sustainable Tourism.

<sup>4</sup> UNESCO's other global priority is 'Priority Africa'

<sup>5</sup> For further information on gender and World Heritage see Labadi, S. (2018) and Whittington, V. (2022).





**Image 15:**  
River Boyne winding through  
Brú na Bóinne



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## 7. A New Approach to World Heritage

Since the inscription of Ireland's first two World Heritage Properties in the 1990s, UNESCO's requirements for the management of World Heritage Properties and the nomination of additional properties have become more complex. This in part reflects the increased diversity and complexity of properties being inscribed on the World Heritage List and the many complex and interconnecting challenges facing the further enhancement of World Heritage at national and local levels. There is general agreement that a new approach to World Heritage in Ireland is now required. At the strategic level, the key issues to address are as follows:

- The absence of a national World Heritage Strategy, to date;
- The need for the building of capacity and competence for the future conservation and management of World Heritage Properties at central government level and local levels;
- The limited stakeholder and community engagement, participation, and support in World Heritage decision-making, planning and management;
- The need for more guidelines for underpinning future World Heritage protection and management;
- The fragmentation and lack of integration in the roles and responsibilities for World Heritage planning, protection, and management;
- The need for establishing a revised, credible, and balanced World Heritage Tentative List;
- The low awareness and limited communication of World Heritage values and obligations across Government and amongst other stakeholders;
- The lack of coordination between strategies for World Heritage and tourism; and
- The need for increased international participation by Ireland in World Heritage initiatives.

This Strategy commits to reviewing Ireland's approach to World Heritage, putting in place revised procedures for nomination and management, periodically reviewing Ireland's Tentative List, and creating a National Heritage Label to recognise important cultural and natural sites. This will provide an opportunity to reach a wider audience and raise awareness of World Heritage in general.

### The Tentative List

Ireland's first Tentative List was announced in 1992 and revised Tentative Lists were submitted in 2010 and in 2022. UNESCO's Operational Guidelines encourage States Parties to review their Tentative Lists at least every ten years. Before a property can be submitted to the World Heritage Committee, it must be included on the State Party's Tentative List of potential World Heritage Properties for at least one year.

Since regular revision of the Tentative List is an objective of this Strategy, a clear rationale for future Tentative List selection and revision is important. The ICOMOS [Guidance on Developing and Revising World Heritage Tentative Lists](#) (2020) emphasises the need for the Tentative List selection process to be open, credible and transparent. The Guidance provides comprehensive advice on how to differentiate between the national value of a country's heritage (both cultural and natural) and potential global significance.

In developing the Tentative List, the Guidance encourages States Parties to take a variety of approaches to selecting sites. It is an objective of this Strategy to publish specific guidelines on developing the Tentative List in line with the ICOMOS Guidance including community participation in the process.

It is envisaged that the Tentative List will be reviewed every five to ten years. The revision will include a reassessment of the sites that are already on the list. Proposed transnational or transboundary sites with a credible Outstanding Universal Value may be added to the Tentative List outside of revision periods in cooperation with other States Parties.



## National Heritage Label

The ICOMOS Guidance recommends that during Tentative List revisions States Parties identify sites of potential Outstanding Universal Value from a national list of cultural and natural heritage known as a 'preliminary list'. Over the course of the Strategy, consideration will be given to the creation of a new National Heritage Label to fulfil the purpose of this 'preliminary list'. The National Heritage Label will acknowledge, celebrate and promote representative diverse examples of Irish cultural and natural heritage sites that are of outstanding national significance and reflect or symbolise Ireland's unique landscape and culture.

It is envisaged that this national label may be awarded to sites already designated at an international, national, regional, or local level and which may already be managed and protected by a range of agencies or be in private ownership. For example many of the properties, monuments, historic landscapes, and sites in OPW care have the potential to be awarded the label. Links with the European Heritage Label and the Council of Europe's Cultural Routes and other relevant international designations will be explored through the development of the national label.

During Tentative List revisions, it is anticipated that the State may invite sites with the National Heritage Label with the potential to demonstrate Outstanding Universal Value to apply to be on the Tentative List. **This will not preclude sites without the label from also applying to the Tentative List.**

**Image 16:**  
Newgrange Passage Tomb,  
Brú na Bóinne



## World Heritage Inscription

The progression of sites onto Ireland's Tentative List and towards nomination and inscription on the World Heritage List is a key priority of this Strategy. World Heritage Properties are nominated by States Parties and a detailed application, including a nomination dossier and a management plan, is submitted to the World Heritage Committee for evaluation by the Advisory Bodies. The timeline required to prepare a nomination and have it assessed is set out in the Operational Guidelines.

In order to be inscribed on the World Heritage List, a nominated property has to meet one or more of the ten criteria listed in Section 2 to assess its Outstanding Universal Value. A potential World Heritage Property must also meet the required standard of authenticity (for cultural and mixed properties) and integrity (for all properties). In addition, the nomination dossier must include a global comparative analysis of similar properties to demonstrate the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the nominated property. The dossier should also demonstrate that adequate legal protection and management systems are in place to protect the property's Outstanding Universal Value.

This Strategy commits to developing specific national guidance (statutory and non-statutory): this will include Tentative List process, nomination process, and guidance on the management of World Heritage Properties, etc.

## Capacity Building for World Heritage

Implementing the Strategy over the next decade will require increased capacity and knowledge building to fully meet the obligations of the World Heritage Convention and ensure long-term sustained transgenerational delivery of World Heritage goals in a way that provides a model of best practice for countries across the globe and appropriately conserves our heritage. Cross-sectoral and institutional support for World Heritage will be encouraged and a capacity building programme supported to demonstrate Ireland's commitment to the wider national and international importance of World Heritage. In order to reflect the sectoral cross-cutting nature of World Heritage status, a more integrated approach to national and local responsibilities in respect of World Heritage promotion, presentation, interpretation, protection, and management will be adopted. This will include a more aligned approach across Government and among key policy makers and alignment with national policies such as the National Planning Framework and National Development Plan.



## Empowering Local Communities

Article 5 (a) of the World Heritage Convention highlights the importance of giving cultural and natural heritage a prominent role in the life of the community and integrating the protection of that heritage into local planning. The importance of full participation and engagement by local stakeholders in the nomination process, as well as in management structures is emphasised in the Operational Guidelines and other World Heritage guidance documents.

This Strategy will seek to promote good practice by supporting the establishment of World Heritage steering and advisory groups, community fora, and ensuring a dedicated, empowered and locally based World Heritage manager is present at each existing and prospective World Heritage Property. World Heritage managers are responsible for liaising with communities, stakeholders, landowners, and local authorities, linking local management actions with national World Heritage policies and strategies, coordinating the implementation of management plans and for monitoring the state of conservation of properties and also for periodically reporting to UNESCO.

## Resources

Sufficient resources, human and financial, will be sought at central and local government levels to support the implementation of the Strategy over the next decade. It is recognised that this is critical to support the conservation and protection of World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites and to support the implementation of respective management plans.



**Image 17:**  
Sceilg Bheag from window of  
St Michael's Church on Sceilg Mhichil



## 8. World Heritage Goals for Ireland

This Strategy provides the overarching vision to deliver an ambitious future for World Heritage in Ireland over the next ten years. This includes the exemplary protection and management of World Heritage Properties, empowered local communities and stakeholders, enhanced awareness of World Heritage generally, and the inscription of further Irish properties on the World Heritage List over the next ten years, chosen to represent the best of Irish cultural and natural heritage.

Specific guidelines and policies on World Heritage will be developed to help protect and manage World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites and promote high standards of conservation that in turn will contribute to the social and economic wellbeing of communities and stakeholders in a positive and sustainable way.

The National Monuments Service will oversee the implementation of the Strategy on behalf of the Minister in partnership with the OPW and other key stakeholders. The support of lead proponents, key stakeholders, local authorities and local communities will be critical to its success.

This Strategy and its vision will be achieved through seven specific goals and associated objectives, as follows:

### Goal 1:

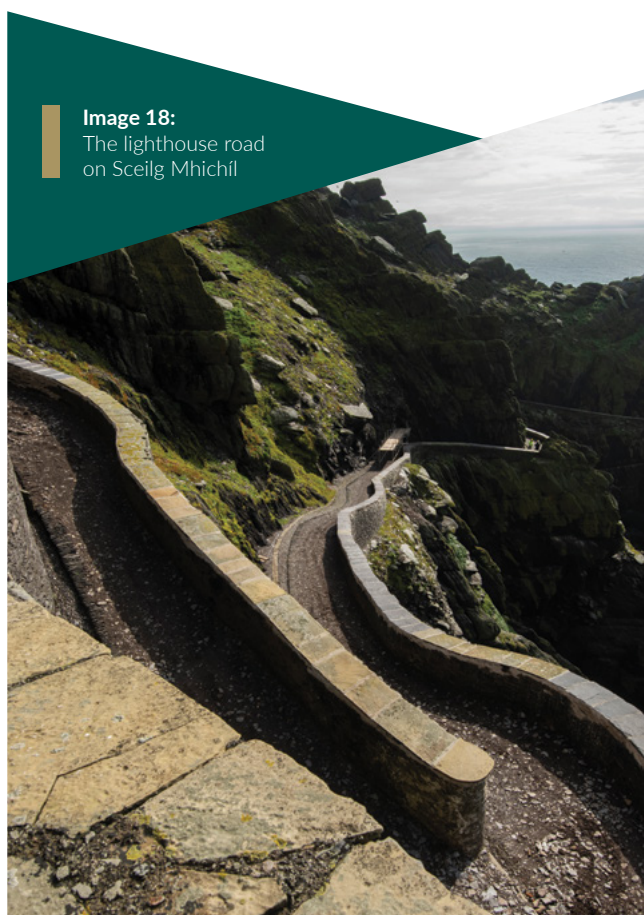
**Increase the number of Irish sites inscribed on the World Heritage List and undertake a regular review of Ireland's Tentative List.**

#### Strategic Objectives:

1. Ensure a credible, representative, and balanced World Heritage Tentative List is regularly revised and updated;
2. Support lead proponents during the nomination process and engage with other States Parties in relation to transnational and/or transboundary nominations;
3. Submit potential World Heritage Properties to UNESCO for nomination; and
4. Explore the development of a National Heritage Label that will recognise cultural and natural heritage sites of outstanding national significance.

**Image 18:**

The lighthouse road on Sceilg Mhichíl



## Goal 2:

**Provide statutory and non-statutory guidance for developing and managing World Heritage in Ireland.**

### Strategic Objectives:

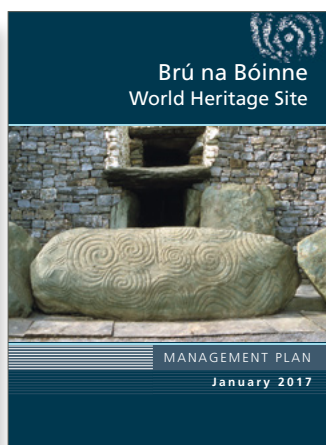
1. Prepare and issue statutory and non-statutory guidelines giving lead proponents, local authorities, key stakeholders and local communities the knowledge and tools to understand, manage and protect World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites;
2. Seek to include the definition and protection of the boundaries of Tentative List sites and their buffer zones in local authority county or city development plans; and
3. Promote the integration of the actions and objectives of World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites management plans with local authority, county or city development plans.

## Goal 3:

**Enhance the capacity and capability of all stakeholders for protecting and managing World Heritage in Ireland.**

### Strategic Objectives

1. Support capacity and capability-building measures to underpin the development of World Heritage in Ireland;
2. Support collaboration and cooperation between and among key stakeholders, landowners and tenants, and civic society to increase understanding and awareness of World Heritage; and
3. Support knowledge exchange and the networking of World Heritage managers and management teams;
4. Support appropriate cross-disciplinary training and awareness of World Heritage and ongoing professional development among public planning professionals; and
5. Support an integrated national approach to the development of appropriate traditional skills to support the longer-term protection, conservation, and management of Ireland's World Heritage Properties.



**Image 19:**  
Management plans for  
Sceilg Mhichíl and Brú na Bóinne



**Image 20:**  
A site inspection of the  
lighthouse road, Sceilg Mhichíl



## Goal 4:

Support the protection, conservation, management, interpretation, and presentation of Ireland's World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites.

### Strategic Objectives:

1. Seek to ensure, in partnership with key stakeholders, that the Outstanding Universal Value and authenticity and integrity of World Heritage Properties is protected and managed through the adoption of best practice management strategies;
2. Facilitate active cooperation and participation by landowners and local stakeholders in the stewardship of World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites, recognising their importance as living landscapes whilst balancing that with the protection of their Outstanding Universal Value;
3. Explore the feasibility of registering World Heritage Properties in the International List of Cultural Property under Enhanced Protection under the Second Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention;
4. Support the establishment of participatory management systems at World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites, including representation and participation from local authorities, landowners, local communities, and other key stakeholders; and
5. Promote an appropriately resourced and more integrated, inclusive, and interdisciplinary approach to the management, conservation, interpretation, and presentation of World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites.

## Goal 5:

Integrate World Heritage into the wider framework of sustainable development to demonstrate and promote the benefits of heritage management in Ireland.

### Strategic Objectives:

1. Ensure that the management and protection of World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites is based on the principles of environmental sustainability and inclusive social and economic development;
2. Support and promote sustainable regenerative tourism objectives for World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites;
3. Support the integration of climate change adaptation, mitigation measures and risk assessment in World Heritage Property and Tentative List site management plans;
4. Support the integration of the protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems in World Heritage Property and Tentative List site management plans; and,
5. Promote the sustainable integration of diversity, equity, gender equality and rights-based approaches in management practices and relevant policies;
6. Support the integration of the Irish language and other forms of intangible heritage such as the oral tradition, literature, folklore and mythology into the management of World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites; and
7. Support the integration of improved accessibility World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites including disability access, as required under the Disability Act 2005.

**Image 21:**  
Brú na Bóinne  
Visitor Centre



**Image 22:**  
Photograph of Newgrange (1968)  
within Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre  
Exhibition



## Goal 6:

**Contribute to World Heritage initiatives, including research and international collaboration.**

### Strategic Objectives:

1. Support the development of a World Heritage research framework/s for Ireland including international partnerships focused on research and conservation technologies, and sharing best practices globally.
2. Support and establish partnerships between the National Monuments Service, the OPW as appropriate, third level institutions, youth and other relevant bodies to promote research, collaboration, enhance mutual knowledge and develop educational activities and outreach, including for youth;
3. Collaborate with UNESCO World Heritage Centre and Advisory Bodies, (ICOMOS, ICCROM, IUCN) to support World Heritage goals and World Heritage at risk at an international level;
4. Collaborate with transnational and transboundary partners to strengthen World Heritage on the island of Ireland and across the globe; and
5. Support local communities in sharing knowledge, collaborating, and developing links nationally and internationally.



**Image 23:**  
Archaeological Excavation,  
Dowth Hall, Brú na Bóinne

## Goal 7:

**Communicate the values and benefits of World Heritage inscription effectively and widely.**

### Strategic Objectives:

1. Communicate greater understanding and appreciation of World Heritage and its benefits among key stakeholders and the wider community, including youth organisations, older people, disadvantaged groups, people with a disability or disabling condition and young people by leveraging digital platforms to broaden awareness and involvement;
2. Promote and support initiatives to raise awareness of World Heritage in primary and secondary schools and among young people in collaboration with the Department of Education and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth;
3. Support the concept of World Heritage advocates and champions at national and local level to raise awareness of the importance of World Heritage values and properties; and
4. Support the establishment of networks of volunteers to participate in awareness-raising and outreach activities in relation to World Heritage.



**Image 24:**  
A site inspection of the  
Upper Lighthouse on Sceilg Mhichíl



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## 9. Implementation

The goals and strategic objectives in the Strategy will be achieved through the World Heritage Implementation Plan (see Appendix I) containing specific actions, outputs and responsibilities that will be updated at regular intervals.

It is recognised that, with World Heritage becoming more diverse, the focus of the Strategy may change over time. As such, following an assessment of the effectiveness of each action in achieving its objective, the Implementation Plan will be updated as required, and informed by the work of the National Monuments Service, the OPW along with key partners and stakeholders.

Updates on the Implementation Plan will be published on the [World Heritage Ireland](#) website to ensure key partners and stakeholders and the wider community are fully informed on the progress of developing World Heritage in Ireland.



**Image 25:**  
Close up of steps on Sceilg Mhichíl



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## List of Relevant Documents

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UNESCO 2021. [Guidance on Developing and Revising World Heritage Tentative Lists](#). Paris, UNESCO / ICCROM / ICOMOS / IUCN.

UNESCO 2022. [Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context](#). Paris, UNESCO / ICCROM / ICOMOS / IUCN.

UNESCO 2023. [Enhancing our Heritage Toolkit 2.0 Assessing Management Effectiveness of World Heritage Properties and Other Heritage Places](#). Paris, UNESCO / ICCROM / ICOMOS / IUCN.

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UNESCO 2024. [Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention](#). Paris, UNESCO World Heritage Committee.

UNESCO 2024. [Regional Action Plan of Europe and North America \(2024-2031\)](#). Paris, UNESCO.

## General Links

- [whc.unesco.org/en/publications](https://whc.unesco.org/en/publications)
- [World Heritage Policy Compendium](#)
- [UNESCO World Heritage Centre - World Heritage](#)

## Relevant National and Regional Policies

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Whittington, V. 2021. [Gender and Human Rights Within UNESCO's International Heritage Discourse: An Analysis of the World Heritage and Intangible Heritage Conventions](#). *Heritage & Society*, 14(2–3), pp. 242–266.

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# Glossary

The definitions of the terms included in the glossary are distilled from official UN, UNESCO and Advisory Body publications and manuals.

## Advisory Bodies

The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) are mandated by the World Heritage Convention as Advisory Bodies to UNESCO. They respectively provide the World Heritage Committee with evaluations of cultural and of natural sites nominated. The third Advisory Body is the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), an intergovernmental organisation which provides the Committee with expert advice on conservation of cultural sites, as well as on training and capacity-building activities.

## Attributes

Attributes are the elements of a heritage place that convey its values and make them understandable. They can be physical qualities, relating to the material fabric and other tangible features, but can also be intangible aspects such as processes, social arrangements or cultural practices, as well as associations. For cultural heritage places, attributes can be buildings or other built structures and their forms, materials, design, uses and functions but also urban layouts, agricultural processes, religious ceremonies, building techniques, visual relationships and spiritual connections. For natural properties, attributes can be specific landscape features, areas of habitat, flagship species, aspects relating to environmental quality, scale and naturalness of habitats, and size and viability of wildlife populations.

Attributes may extend over vast areas and may depend on processes occurring outside a World Heritage property.

Attributes must be identified as they are vital to understanding authenticity and integrity, and are the focus of protection, conservation and management.

For natural properties, it is also common to speak of 'features', although the word 'attributes' is sometimes used.

## Authenticity

Authenticity applies to cultural heritage, and refers to the degree to which knowledge and understanding of the property's heritage values are understood and believed to be credible: whether their cultural values are truthfully and credibly expressed through attributes including form and design; materials and substance; use and function; traditions, techniques and management systems; location and setting; language and other forms of intangible heritage; spirit and feeling; and other internal and external factors.

## Boundaries

A World Heritage Property is defined by a boundary. Boundaries should be drawn to incorporate all the attributes that convey the Outstanding Universal Value and to ensure the integrity and/or authenticity of the property. In most cases, a World Heritage Property should also be surrounded by a formally recognised World Heritage buffer zone(s) which supports the protection of the property's Outstanding Universal Value and attributes.

## Buffer zones

Buffer zones are clearly delineated areas outside a World Heritage Property and adjacent to its boundaries which contribute to the protection, conservation, management, integrity, authenticity and sustainability of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property. Although buffer zones are not regarded as part of the inscribed property, their boundaries and relevant management approaches should be evaluated, approved and formally recorded at the time they are proposed by a State Party. Where buffer zones are defined, they should be seen as an integral component of the State Party's commitment to the protection, conservation and management of the World Heritage Property. The functions of the buffer zone should reflect the different types and levels of protection, conservation and management needed to protect the attributes that sustain the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Property.



### Civil society

Civil society is the “third sector” of society, along with government and business. It comprises civil society organisations and non-governmental organisations. The UN recognises the importance of partnering with civil society, because it advances the organisation’s ideals and helps support its work.

### Climate change

Climate change means a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change).

### Communities

Communities should be understood in the meaning of Article 5 (a) of the World Heritage Convention, which asks each State Party to the Convention “to adopt a general policy which aims to give the cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the community and to integrate the protection of that heritage into comprehensive planning programmes”.

According to the Committee working document WHC-07/31.COM/13B, “[communities] involves all forms of non-State actors. That is, from the smallest groups of citizens, in whichever form they manifest themselves. They may range from groupings of peoples as indigenous, traditional and/or local peoples. They may be presented as, inter alia, community groups, tribes, nongovernmental organizations, private enterprise and/or local authorities. The defining characteristic of communities, in this setting, is what they possess. They all possess a direct connection, with relevant interests, to individual sites and often they have a connection that has endured over time. Typically, these communities share a close proximity with the sites in question. These peoples and/or entities are not necessarily directly representing official state positions, and may actually be in dissent from official positions”.

### Governance

Governance is a comprehensive and inclusive concept of the full range of means for deciding, managing, implementing and monitoring policies and measures. Whereas government is defined strictly in terms of the nation-state, the governance is a more inclusive concept that recognises the contributions of various levels of government (global, international, regional, sub-national and local), and the contributing roles of the private sector, of non-governmental actors, and of civil society to addressing the many types of issues facing the global community. Governance may take place at different levels (local, regional/provincial/state and national federal) and should be understood in a wide context to include legislation/institutional arrangements/democratic processes/citizens etc. (Climate Change and Heritage Working Group).

According to the World Heritage Resource Manual [Managing Cultural World Heritage](#) (UNESCO 2013), good governance refers to “the relationship between governing bodies, citizens and democratic processes, and the ability to deliver effective, functioning forms of government”.

### Heritage Impact Assessments

States Parties have committed to protect and conserve World Heritage while optimising its potential to contribute to sustainable development. When actions or developments are proposed in a World Heritage context, an impact assessment (carried out following the 2022 UNESCO guidelines) should be used to evaluate the need for such action/development, and its consequences, so that environmental, social and economic outcomes can be achieved without damaging Outstanding Universal Value. The assessment should clearly address all potential impacts on the attributes and values of the property and identify fundamental incompatibilities between proposed actions/developments and the primacy of protecting Outstanding Universal Value.

## Integrity

Integrity is a measure of the wholeness and intactness of the natural and/or cultural heritage and its attributes: the extent to which the property includes all elements necessary to express its Outstanding Universal Value; whether it is of adequate size to ensure the complete representation of the features and processes which convey the property's significance; and whether it has been protected from adverse effects of development and/or neglect.

## Interpretation and presentation

Presentation is the explanation of a property and its values to the public (visitors and local people) from established, authoritative information sources; as such it is a largely one-way process of communication.

Interpretation, on the other hand, embraces a much wider concept (in fact, presentation is just one element of interpretation) which refers to the full range of potential activities intended to heighten public awareness and enhance understanding of a site. These activities can include print and electronic publications, public lectures, on-site and directly related off-site installations and/or activities, educational programmes, community activities, ongoing research, and training and evaluation of the interpretation process itself.

The Outstanding Universal Value of a World Heritage Property is the starting point for interpretation of its values.

The presentation and interpretation of natural World Heritage sites should, as noted in the Convention text, increase people's awareness, understanding and appreciation of the need to preserve cultural and natural heritage, ensure that future generations understand the values associated with this heritage and help to increase the participation of stakeholders in the protection and presentation of heritage.

## Management system

According to [Managing Cultural World Heritage](#), a management system is a framework made up of three elements: a legal framework, which defines the reasons for its existence; an institution which gives form to its organisational needs and decision-making; and resources (human, financial and intellectual) which are used to make it operative.

Management systems may vary according to different cultural perspectives, the resources available and other factors. They may incorporate traditional practices, existing urban or regional planning instruments, and other planning control mechanisms, both formal and informal.

The purpose of a management system is to ensure the effective protection of the Outstanding Universal Value of a nominated property for present and future generations preferably through participatory means.

## Mixed cultural and natural heritage properties

According to paragraph 46 of the Operational Guidelines "properties shall be considered as 'mixed cultural and natural heritage' if they satisfy a part or the whole of the definitions of both cultural and natural heritage laid out in Articles 1 and 2 of the Convention".

## Monitoring

Monitoring is the continuous process of observing the conditions of a World Heritage Property and analysing the information collected to determine whether its global condition is improving, stable or degrading over time or in reaction to a specific event/threat. Monitoring allows the World Heritage Committee and States Parties to accurately assess the conditions at the site-level and decide on possible measures to guarantee that the Outstanding Universal Value is satisfactorily preserved.



### **Nomination dossier**

The nomination dossier is the official document submitted to UNESCO by States Parties for the potential inscription of a property on the World Heritage List. This dossier is the basis for the evaluation of the property by the Advisory Bodies and subsequent decision by the World Heritage Committee whether or not to inscribe it on the World Heritage List. The purpose of the nomination dossier is to set out as clearly as possible:

- What the property consists of and how it is documented;
- Why it has potential Outstanding Universal Value;
- The state of conservation and the factors affecting the property; and
- How the property is to be protected, conserved, managed, presented and monitored in relation to its potential Outstanding Universal Value.

### **Outstanding Universal Value**

[A property's] cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity. As such, the permanent protection of this heritage is of the highest importance to the international community as a whole.

### **Periodic Reporting Exercise**

Periodic Reporting is one of the core conservation monitoring mechanisms of the World Heritage Convention. States Parties are regularly invited to submit to the World Heritage Committee a Periodic Report on the application of the World Heritage Convention in their territory.

### **Protection and management**

Protection and management relate to how a property's Outstanding Universal Value, including its integrity and/or authenticity, are sustained and enhanced over time.

### **Sustainable development**

Sustainable development is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (defined by the Brundtland Commission and multilaterally agreed by the UN Conference on Environment and Development – Rio 1992). The 2002 Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development introduced the notion of the three pillars of sustainable development, that is, the environmental, the social and the economic, considered as "interdependent and mutually reinforcing".

### **Sustainable and regenerative tourism**

Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities (UNWTO).

Tourism which makes optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity. In addition it respects the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserves their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contributes to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.

Regenerative tourism departs from the sustainable development paradigm by designing tourism activities that can develop the capacities of places, communities and their guests to operate in harmony with interconnected social-ecological systems. Regenerative tourism does not focus exclusively on neutralising tourism's negative impact but on generating widespread positive impacts.

### **Tentative List**

The Tentative List is a draft list of potential World Heritage Properties, which provides a forecast of the properties that a State Party may decide to submit for inscription in the next five to ten years. The World Heritage Committee cannot consider a nomination for inscription on the World Heritage List unless the property has already been included on the State Party's Tentative List for at least a year.

States Parties are encouraged to prepare their Tentative Lists with the participation of a wide variety of stakeholders, including site managers, local and regional governments, local communities, non-governmental organisations and other interested parties and partners.

### **Transboundary**

Transboundary World Heritage Properties may occur where the features of a property span international boundaries. Transboundary nominations are inscribed as a single property on the World Heritage List and require joint nomination by the States Parties involved.

According to the Operational Guidelines, paragraph 134, a transboundary property may occur:

- On the territory of a single State Party, or
- On the territory of all concerned States Parties having adjacent borders (transboundary property).

### **Transnational**

Transnational serial World Heritage Properties may occur within the territory of different states.

According to the Operational Guidelines, paragraph 138, a transnational property may occur:

- Within the territory of different States Parties, which need not be contiguous and is nominated with the consent of all States Parties concerned.

### **UNESCO Category 2 Centres**

In various regions of the world, capacity-building institutions dealing specifically with World Heritage have been established and granted the status of "category 2 centres under the auspices of UNESCO".

UNESCO Category 2 Centres (C2Cs) are organisations which operate under the auspices of UNESCO and are committed to engage in support of UNESCO's strategic programme objectives.

They are funded directly by Member States where they are located. The C2Cs are difficult to characterise in general because they take on different structures. Some are regional in scope while others cover more than one region or are organised around a thematic issue. Many are involved in capacity building and research, while several are set up as foundations or funds to support those activities carried out by other organisations.

For more information please visit:

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/category2centres/>

### **Values**

Values refer to specific manifestations or qualities of a site that can be considered important to a particular stakeholder group. A site can have multiple values, both natural and cultural, for multiple stakeholder groups. Not all values will necessarily be considered relevant to the Outstanding Universal Value.



### Wider setting

Wider setting is the immediate and extended environment that is part of, or contributes to, a property's significance and distinctive character. It may relate to the property's topography, natural and built environment, and other elements such as infrastructure, land-use patterns, spatial organisation and visual relationships. It may include related ecological and hydrological connectivity, social and cultural practices, economic processes and other intangible dimensions of heritage such as perceptions and associations. The wider setting might also play an essential role in protecting the authenticity and integrity of the property, and its management is related to its role in supporting the Outstanding Universal Value.

### World Heritage List

The World Heritage List is a list of cultural and natural heritage as defined in Articles 2 and 3 of the World Heritage Convention, deemed to be of Outstanding Universal Value. It is established, updated and published by the World Heritage Committee as per Article 11 of the World Heritage Convention and is drawn from the national inventories referred to in Article 11.1 of the World Heritage Convention.

### World Heritage status

If a place has World Heritage status, it means that it has been deemed to have Outstanding Universal Value and has been inscribed on the World Heritage List.

Consult the World Heritage List:  
<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>

**Image 26:**  
View of the Upper  
Lighthouse on Sceilg Mhichil

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## Appendix 1: Implementation Plan

The vision for World Heritage in Ireland is the exemplary protection and management of World Heritage Properties, empowered local communities and stakeholders, enhanced awareness and understanding of World Heritage generally, and the inscription of further Irish properties on the World Heritage List over the next ten years.

The Strategy aims to ensure that World Heritage in Ireland is developed and managed in line with the requirements of the World Heritage Convention and sets out seven goals to achieve this over the next ten years, as follows:

These **seven goals** will be achieved through associated **33 strategic objectives** and **90 actions** tabulated in the Implementation Plan below.

The National Monuments Service will lead on progressing the Implementation Plan with the support of key organisations. The Implementation Plan will be published on the World Heritage Ireland website to ensure key partners and stakeholders and the wider community are fully informed on the progress of developing World Heritage in Ireland.

<b>Goal 1</b>	Increase the number of Irish sites inscribed on the World Heritage List and undertake a regular review of Ireland's Tentative List.
<b>Goal 2</b>	Provide statutory and non-statutory guidance for developing and managing World Heritage in Ireland.
<b>Goal 3</b>	Enhance the capacity and capability of all stakeholders for protecting and managing World Heritage in Ireland.
<b>Goal 4</b>	Support the protection, conservation, management, interpretation, and presentation of Ireland's World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites.
<b>Goal 5</b>	Integrate World Heritage into the wider framework of sustainable development to demonstrate and promote the benefits of heritage management in Ireland.
<b>Goal 6</b>	Contribute to World Heritage initiatives, including research and international collaboration.
<b>Goal 7</b>	Communicate the values and benefits of World Heritage inscription effectively and widely.

## Goal 1:

**Increase the number of Irish sites inscribed on the World Heritage List and undertake a regular review of Ireland's Tentative List.**

No.	Strategic Objective	Key Organisations	Target Date	Actions
1.1	Ensure a credible, representative, and balanced World Heritage Tentative List is regularly revised and updated.	National Monuments Service (NMS), Office of Public Works (OPW), local authorities, ICOMOS Ireland	1. 2030	1. Review and update Tentative List every five to ten years. (Evaluate applications for potential Outstanding Universal Value.)
			2. Ongoing	2. Evaluate viable transboundary and transnational sites for inclusion on the Tentative List as proposals arise.
1.2	Support lead proponents during the nomination process and engage with other States Parties in relation to transnational and/or transboundary nominations.	NMS, OPW, local authorities, ICOMOS Ireland, relevant government departments	1. Ongoing, as required	1. Progress Tentative List applications towards inscription on World Heritage List.
				2. Put resources in place to support the development of nomination dossiers at both national and local levels.
				3. Liaise with other relevant States Parties to ensure compatible progression on transnational and transboundary nominations.
1.3	Submit potential World Heritage Properties for nomination to UNESCO.	NMS	1. 2025 onwards	1. Periodically assess and evaluate nomination dossiers of Tentative List sites to determine readiness and order for submission.
			2. 2025 onwards	2. Submit first Preliminary Assessment to UNESCO (only one submission allowed per year).
			3. 2027	3. Submit first draft nomination dossier to UNESCO (only one submission allowed per year).
			4. 2028 onwards	4. Submit first nomination dossier to UNESCO (only one submission allowed per year).
1.4	Explore the development of a National Heritage Label that will recognise cultural and natural heritage sites of outstanding national significance.	NMS, OPW, National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), Heritage Council, ICOMOS Ireland, Heritage non-governmental organisations (NGOs), relevant government departments	1. By 2030	1. Explore development of qualifying criteria and assessment methods for new designation.
				2. Explore linkages with the European Heritage Label and the Council of Europe Cultural Routes and other international designations.



## Goal 2:

### Provide statutory and non-statutory guidance for developing and managing World Heritage in Ireland.

No.	Strategic Objective	Key Organisations	Target Date	Actions
2.1	Prepare and issue statutory and non-statutory guidelines giving lead proponents, local authorities, key stakeholders and local communities the knowledge and tools to understand, manage and protect World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites.	NMS, relevant government departments, agencies and stakeholders	1. By 2030	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prepare non-statutory guidance on nomination process.</li> <li>2. Prepare non-statutory guidance on Tentative List process.</li> <li>3. Prepare non-statutory guidance on management and community engagement.</li> <li>4. Prepare statutory guidance on planning, impact assessment and appropriate development aligned with other planning guidelines and frameworks/strategies/programmes.</li> <li>5. Review and update guidance as required to reflect evolving legislation, international, national, and local policies, guidance and strategies, and research.</li> <li>6. Prepare non-technical guidance for communities.</li> </ol>
2.2	Seek to include the definition and protection of the boundaries of Tentative List sites and their buffer zones in local authority county or city development plans.	NMS, local authorities, Regional Assemblies	1. Ongoing, as required	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Define and protect Tentative List sites and buffer zones in relevant local authority development plans, after being defined in consultation with local community.</li> </ol>
2.3	Promote the integration of the actions and objectives of World Heritage Property and Tentative List site management plans with local authority county or city development plans.	NMS, OPW, NPWS, local authorities	1. Ongoing, as required	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reference management plans of World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites in relevant local authority development plans.</li> </ol>
2.4	Ensure this Strategy aligns with relevant cultural and natural heritage legislation and policy.	NMS, OPW, NPWS	1. 2030	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review and revise this Strategy, subject to environmental assessment, on a periodic basis to reflect evolving legislative and policy developments that relate to cultural and natural heritage.</li> </ol>

### Goal 3:

#### Enhance the capacity and capability of all stakeholders for protecting and managing World Heritage in Ireland.

No.	Strategic Objective	Key Organisations	Target Date	Actions
3.1	Support capacity and capability-building measures to underpin the development of World Heritage in Ireland.	NMS, OPW, NPWS, ICOMOS Ireland	1. 2025	1. Identify gaps in capacity and capability and develop a capacity-building plan/programme.
			2. 2025 onwards	2. Organise workshops on various aspects of World Heritage for lead proponents and key stakeholders on planning, appropriate development and impact assessment, management and protection.
			3. Ongoing, as required	3. Update World Heritage Ireland website with key information (attributes, values, mapping) on World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites.
3.2	Support collaboration and cooperation between and among key stakeholders, landowners and tenants, and civic society to increase understanding and awareness of World Heritage.	NMS, OPW, NPWS, ICOMOS Ireland, local authorities, third level institutions, relevant government departments	1. 2025 onwards	1. Organise awareness-raising workshops/seminars for local communities and key stakeholders on benefits and implications of World Heritage inscription.
3.3	Support knowledge exchange and the networking of World Heritage managers and management teams.	NMS	1. 2025	1. Establish an Irish World Heritage Coordinators and Manager Network established.
			2. 2027	2. Expand network to include Northern Ireland and international World Heritage managers.
3.4	Support appropriate cross-disciplinary training and awareness of World Heritage and ongoing professional development among public planning professionals.	NMS, local authorities, Regional Assemblies	1. Ongoing	1. Develop supports as part of capacity-building programme.
3.5	Support an integrated national approach to the development of appropriate traditional skills to support the longer-term protection, conservation, and management of Ireland's World Heritage Properties.	NMS, OPW, National Built Heritage Service (NBHS), Heritage Council, local authorities, relevant government departments	1. Ongoing	1. Support the All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme.

## Goal 4:

Support the protection, conservation, management, interpretation, and presentation of Ireland's World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites.

No.	Strategic Objective	Key Organisations	Target Date	Actions
4.1	Seek to ensure, in partnership with key stakeholders, that the Outstanding Universal Value and authenticity and integrity of World Heritage Properties are protected and managed through the adoption of best practice management strategies.	NMS, OPW, NPWS, local authorities, relevant government departments	1. Ongoing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Implement World Heritage Property management plans using SMART (Specific, Measurable, Assignable, Realistic Time-related) goal setting for actions.</li> <li>2. Address threats to World Heritage Properties addressed and support the drafting of impact assessment when required (urbanisation/development, tourism, natural disaster/climate, and conflict/war).</li> <li>3. Include risk management plans in management plans.</li> </ol>
4.2	Facilitate active cooperation and participation by landowners and local stakeholders in the stewardship of World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites, recognising their importance as living landscapes whilst balancing that with the protection of their Outstanding Universal Value.	NMS, OPW, NPWS, ICOMOS Ireland, local authorities, relevant government departments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 2027</li> <li>2. 2030</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish community/stakeholder fora at World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites and hold regular meetings.</li> <li>2. Establish network of community/stakeholder fora to facilitate exchange of ideas by local communities on different topics related to their stewardship of World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites.</li> </ol>
4.3	Explore the feasibility of registering World Heritage Properties in the International List of Cultural Property under Enhanced Protection under the Second Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention.	NMS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 2025</li> <li>2. 2027, if required</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Scope out the feasibility of registering World Heritage Properties.</li> <li>2. Register World Heritage Properties for enhanced protection, depending on outcome of above scoping exercise.</li> </ol>



## Goal 4:

Support the protection, conservation, management, interpretation, and presentation of Ireland's World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites.

No.	Strategic Objective	Key Organisations	Target Date	Actions
4.4	Support the establishment of participatory management systems at World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites, including representation and participation from local authorities, landowners, local communities, and other key stakeholders.	NMS, OPW, NPWS, local authorities	1. 2027	1. Appoint World Heritage Property managers/coordinators.
			2. 2025 onwards	2. Establish World Heritage Property implementation groups and steering groups.
			3. 2025	3. Appoint Project managers at Tentative List sites.
			4. 2025	4. Establish nomination teams and other appropriate organisational structures at Tentative List sites.
4.5	Promote an appropriately resourced and more integrated, inclusive, and interdisciplinary approach to the management, conservation, interpretation, and presentation of World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites.	NMS, OPW, NPWS, local authorities	1. Ongoing	1. Maintain a panel of interdisciplinary experts that can advise on relevant issues on an ad hoc basis.
			2. 2025	2. Establish a national level procurement framework in line with Green Public Procurement Guidance.

## Goal 5:

**Integrate World Heritage into the wider framework of sustainable development to demonstrate and promote the benefits of heritage management in Ireland.**

No.	Strategic Objective	Key Organisations	Target Date	Actions
5.1	Ensure that the management and protection of World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites is based on the principles of environmental sustainability and inclusive social and economic development.	NMS, OPW, NPWS, local authorities, NGOs, relevant government departments	1. As required	1. Develop a socio-economic plan at local level to demonstrate benefits of designation for inclusive social and economic development.
			2. Ongoing	2. Promote initiatives for environmental sustainability at World Heritage Properties..
			3. Ongoing	3. Support farming and living communities through implementation of locally led agri-environment schemes, which also assist in the management of change and the protection of monuments and natural features at World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites.
			4. Ongoing	4. Ensure an awareness, at all relevant levels of decision making of the symbiosis between World Heritage values, national strategic goals, and the overall approach to sustainable development necessary for Ireland's contribution to delivery of SDGs.
5.2	Support and promote sustainable regenerative tourism objectives for World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites	NMS, OPW, NPWS, Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC), relevant government departments	1. Ongoing	1. Adopt and support sustainable/regenerative tourism objectives at World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites by developing specific strategies and action plans.
			2. Ongoing	2. Align management of World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites with sustainability best practice and guidance according to global standards for sustainable travel and tourism (e.g., Global Sustainable Tourism Council, ICOMOS International Cultural Heritage Tourism Charter).

## Goal 5:

Integrate World Heritage into the wider framework of sustainable development to demonstrate and promote the benefits of heritage management in Ireland.

No.	Strategic Objective	Key Organisations	Target Date	Actions
			3. 2030	<b>3.</b> Liaise with DECC on Ireland's implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal targets, particularly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Target 8.9 - By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.</li> <li>Target 12.b - Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.</li> </ul>
5.3	Support the integration of climate change adaptation, mitigation measures and risk assessment in World Heritage Property and Tentative List site management plans.	NMS, OPW, NBHS, NPWS, relevant government departments	1. Ongoing, as required	<b>1.</b> Integrate relevant actions of <a href="#">Biodiversity Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan</a> and <a href="#">Built &amp; Archaeological Heritage Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan 2019</a> and <a href="#">Heritage Ireland 2030</a> integrated into World Heritage Property and Tentative List site management plans and draft site-specific adaptation plans drafted
			2. 2030	<b>2.</b> Make World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites exemplars for carbon mitigation through carbon sinking and sustainable practices and implementing the national policy of decarbonisation to achieve carbon-neutral management plans.
5.4	Support the integration of the protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems in World Heritage Property and Tentative List site management plans.	NMS, OPW, NPWS, relevant government departments	1. Ongoing, as required	<b>1.</b> Promote and support the integration of biodiversity and ecosystems protection and restoration in management plans.
				<b>2.</b> Promote integration of the <a href="#">National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017–2021</a> , <a href="#">Biodiversity Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan 2019</a> , <a href="#">Heritage Ireland 2030</a> , and <a href="#">EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030</a> during drafting of management plans, when relevant.



## Goal 5:

**Integrate World Heritage into the wider framework of sustainable development to demonstrate and promote the benefits of heritage management in Ireland.**

No.	Strategic Objective	Key Organisations	Target Date	Actions
5.5	Promote the sustainable integration of diversity, equity, gender equality, rights-based approaches in management practices and relevant policies.	NMS, OPW, NPWS, local authorities	1. Ongoing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Include in the next reviews of the management plans' objectives to equalise socio-economic opportunities, wellbeing, promote rights-based initiatives for equal and active citizens following the principles of the <a href="#">Diversity Equality and Inclusion Strategy 2022-24</a>.</li> <li>2. Ensure respect for gender equality throughout the full cycle of World Heritage processes.</li> <li>3. Ensure equal and respectful consultation, full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership and representation of all genders within activities for the conservation and management of World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites.</li> <li>4. Promote equal representation by all genders in the field of World Heritage conservation and contribution to World Heritage education within the framework of UNESCO-related projects and initiatives.</li> </ol>
5.6	Support the integration of the Irish language and other forms of intangible heritage such as the oral tradition, literature, folklore and mythology into the management of World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites.	NMS, OPW, Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, local authorities, NGOs, relevant government departments	1. Ongoing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promote and support the Irish language and intangible cultural heritage in management plans.</li> </ol>
5.7	Support the integration of improved accessibility to World Heritage Properties and Tentative List sites including disability access, as required under the Disability Act 2005.	NMS, OPW, NPWS, local authorities, NGOs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ongoing</li> <li>2. 2031</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Engage with stakeholders, communities, Disabled Persons' Organisations and people with a disability or disabling condition with a view to identifying barriers to accessibility and potential solutions to improving accessibility and interpretation strategies to encourage broader participation and pride in Ireland's contribution to World Heritage.</li> <li>2. Develop multi-lingual resources to encourage broader participation and pride in Ireland's Heritage.</li> </ol>

## Goal 6:

### Contribute to World Heritage initiatives, including research and international collaboration.

No.	Strategic Objective	Key Organisations	Target Date	Actions
6.1	Support the development of a World Heritage research framework/s for Ireland including international partnerships focused on research and conservation technologies, and sharing best practices globally.	NMS, OPW, Heritage Council, Discovery Programme, third level institutions	1. 2032	1. Develop an overarching research framework for World Heritage in Ireland.
			2. 2030	2. Develop and update research frameworks for World Heritage Properties.
			3. 2035	3. Develop research frameworks for Tentative List sites.
6.2	Support and establish partnerships between the National Monuments Service, the OPW as appropriate, third level institutions, youth and other relevant bodies to promote research, collaboration, enhance mutual knowledge and develop educational activities and outreach, including for youth.	NMS, OPW, DFA, third level institutions, relevant government departments	1. Ongoing	1. Establish partnerships between NMS and third level institutions in relation to research and development of educational activities.
			2. 2026	2. Hold discussions with Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) concerning Action 5.1 of <a href="#">ESD to 2030</a> : "Foster, support and expand links and collaboration between education providers and their local communities, NGOs, local authorities to educate, raise awareness and understanding of the need for action and engagement on sustainable development."
			3. 2028	3. Participate in events such as the Young World Heritage Ambassador Programmes (or other youth initiatives) and International Day of Sites and Monuments.
			4. Ongoing	4. Support the establishment of a World Heritage Centre (Category 2 Centre) that will become an International Centre of Excellence.

## Goal 6:

### Contribute to World Heritage initiatives, including research and international collaboration.

No.	Strategic Objective	Key Organisations	Target Date	Actions
6.3	Collaborate with UNESCO World Heritage Centre and Advisory Bodies (ICOMOS, ICCROM, and IUCN) to support World Heritage goals and World Heritage at risk at international level.	NMS, OPW, DFA, Department of Education (as the Irish National Commission for UNESCO)	1. 2031	1. Complete Periodic Reporting and attend related Focal Point Meetings, as required.
			2. Ongoing	2. Complete State of Conservation Reports, if requested.
			3. Ongoing	3. Update World Heritage Centre concerning threats to World Heritage Properties or relevant matters of interest.
			4. Ongoing	4. Support initiatives/studies.
			5. Annually	5. Attend World Heritage Committee meeting.
			6. On going	6. Consider and respond to other UNESCO and Advisory Bodies requests for information or collaboration.
			7. Annually	7. Contribute to World Heritage Fund.
			8. 2028	8. Be actively involved in UNESCO's World Heritage educational programme.
6.4	Collaborate with transnational and transboundary partners to strengthen World Heritage on the island of Ireland and across the globe.	NMS, OPW, DFA	1. Ongoing	1. Collaborate with transnational and transboundary partners to strengthen Ireland's World Heritage.
			2. 2027	2. Develop All Ireland World Heritage Manager Network.
			3. 2030	3. Develop All Ireland trail of World Heritage Properties.
			4. 2033	4. Explore expansion of trail to include all UNESCO designations.



## Goal 7:

Communicate the values and benefits of World Heritage inscription effectively and widely.

No.	Strategic Objective	Key Organisations	Target Date	Actions
7.1	Communicate greater understanding and appreciation of World Heritage and its benefits among key stakeholders and the wider community, including youth organisations, older people, disadvantaged groups, people with a disability or a disabling condition and young people by leveraging digital platforms to broaden awareness and involvement.	NMS, OPW, NPWS, Fáilte Ireland, local authorities	1. 2026	1. Communication strategy prepared to identify and target the differing information and engagement needs of World Heritage audiences.
			2. Ongoing	2. Initiatives to raise understanding and appreciation of World Heritage supported as they arise.
			3. 2027	3. Communication campaign developed and promoted by NMS in collaboration with local authorities and community groups (i.e., 'Protect our Past', National Heritage Week, National Biodiversity Week).
			4. Ongoing	4. Support best practices in interpretation and presentation to communicate the values of a site, ensuring multiple perspectives are considered.
			5. Ongoing	5. Use existing networks to engage with stakeholders and the broader community.
7.2	Promote and support initiatives to raise awareness of World Heritage in primary and secondary schools and among young people in collaboration with the Department of Education and Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.	NMS, OPW, Department of Education, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Heritage Council	1. 2028	1. Form working group to scope out viable initiatives (i.e. CPD for teachers, Transition Year trips).
			2. 2029	2. Collaborate with the Heritage Council and Department of Education on Action 2.6g of <a href="#">ESD to 2030</a> : "Increase the number of visits to primary schools, exploring the links between Climate Change and Biodiversity through the Heritage in Schools programme."
			3. 2030	3. Implement new initiatives in primary and secondary schools.

## Goal 7:

Communicate the values and benefits of World Heritage inscription effectively and widely.

No.	Strategic Objective	Key Organisations	Target Date	Actions
			4. 2032	4. Prepare World Heritage education packs for teachers and students outlining World Heritage global significance and responsibilities.
			5. 2034	5. Collaborate with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and Ireland's youth ambassador to UNESCO to ensure that children and young people have a voice in World Heritage consultation, participation structures and initiatives .
7.3	Support the concept of World Heritage advocates and champions at national and local level to raise awareness of the importance of World Heritage values and properties.	NMS, OPW, local authorities	1. Ongoing	1. Identify and support suitable advocates and champions at national and local level.
7.4	Support the establishment of networks of volunteers to participate in awareness-raising and outreach activities in relation to World Heritage.	NMS, OPW, NPWS, local authorities, NGOs	1. 2029	1. Establish volunteer networks to participate in World Heritage awareness-raising activities linked to the World Heritage Volunteers Initiative within the UNESCO World Heritage Education Programme.







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