

The Strategic Mission of the Irish Heritage Trust 2013-2023

Introduction

Ireland has changed dramatically over the last few years. When discussions began shortly after the millennium, about the possibility of creating a charitable heritage property trust, nobody predicted the economic hardships that lay ahead.

Recession has however rekindled traditional values and increased interest in protecting, celebrating and sharing the stories and places that form part of our history and heritage. I'm pleased to report that the Trust has adapted successfully to the changing economic climate. After five years of fundraising, hard work and tremendous community support we can demonstrate at Fota House, Arboretum & Gardens, Cork the philosophies upon which we were founded; conservation, public participation and benefit for everyone.

When the Trust was five years old in July 2011 a review was initiated by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

The Review has now been finalised and concluded that the Irish Heritage Trust should continue to be supported directly by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht based on a renewed focus set out in a Strategic Plan developed by the Trust in consultation with the Department.

This Strategic Plan responds to the Department's review and its recommendations, and puts in place an approach to guide the work of the Trust over the next decade.

In addition it addresses the feedback received through the Review process and includes the potential to support central and local government in the areas of marketing heritage, participation initiatives for community engagement, volunteering & education and historic town/place renewal.

This plan also sets out our ambition to ensure that Ireland's rich heritage is brought to life, protected and celebrated in a way that is accessible, delivers multiple benefits and has contemporary benefit and relevance. This can be directly through tourism, employment and economic activity or indirectly through the wellbeing that comes from taking time in a beautiful place or learning in an informal environment.

We are committed to creating as many ways as possible for our local communities and visitors to get involved with heritage or to actively participate and support our work.

Supporting and encouraging volunteers, students and other engagement activities takes time and money; however we believe that it is worth the effort because of the understanding, passion, commitment and reward it generates both for everyone involved and the place.

We are publishing this plan at a time when there is increasing positive activity in Ireland and we are looking forward to the coming decade with optimism, excitement and commitment to ensuring our heritage is cared for and presented for everyone to enjoy.

James Osborne
Chairman
May 2013

Mission Statement

The **Mission** of the Irish Heritage Trust is

To protect and bring to life Irish heritage properties for the benefit of society.

The Trust is committed to pursuing its mission by growing local community involvement in and applying best conservation practice to the active management of properties under our control. We will work in partnership with the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and others, both nationally and internationally active in this pursuit.

Our **ambition** is:

To be the pre-eminent authority, manager and the partner of choice of those interested in sustaining and realising the potential of Ireland's heritage properties.

Our Strategy

Over the decade we will concentrate our efforts on three core objectives:

- 1) Inform and lead the debate on protecting, presenting and realising the value of Ireland's heritage properties by;
 - **Advocacy:** The Trust will seek opportunities to influence the national debate through public commentary and dissemination of its insights into the challenges and successes of participation and protection.
 - **Demonstration and Development:** The Trust will continue to demonstrate best practice and to seek both national and international recognition and validation of its work. It will develop new approaches to challenges and document its learning so as to contribute to knowledge in this area.
 - **Participation and Collaboration:** Work with the Department of Arts, Heritage & Gaeltacht and other partners involved in the heritage sector and participate in the National Forum to be established on planning for how our heritage is to be supported and conserved in the future.
- 2) Growing and managing our portfolio of assets to verifiable best international practice by:
 - **Fota:** Developing a three year strategic and operational plan for Fota House, Arboretum and Gardens.

- Acquisition: Completing the acquisition of an additional property with a different profile to Fota to help broaden our understanding of the challenges and opportunities from heritage properties across the spectrum.
 - Operating: Being the preferred manager and operating partner of at least one heritage property owned separately to the Trust
 - Visitor Experience: The Trust will devise strategies to improve the visitor experience to properties in its portfolio and will monitor and publish its results in this area.
 - Learning, access and participation: The Trust will create and implement innovative programmes to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to experience and enjoy our heritage.
 - Funding, Legislation & Incentives: Supporting the Department in the examination of current tax and financial provisions for Heritage Properties.
 - Fundraising: We will develop fundraising initiatives to provide the Trust with new sources of capital.
 - Membership: We will examine and develop new membership and participative structures to harvest the considerable good-will in local communities and society in general towards the work of the Trust.
 - Partnerships – we will actively work with other bodies, private & public, and individuals to preserve and promote heritage.
- 3) Ensuring that the Trust is governed and managed to best standards by:
- Adopting best practice in the composition, structure and operation of our Board. Specifically the Trust will:
 - 1) Review the composition of the Board to ensure it has the necessary skills and experience to meet the Trusts objectives and deliver this strategy.
 - 2) Establish a nominations and governance committee to oversee this process.
 - 3) Formalise the roles of the boards and its committees and publish these on its web site.
 - 4) Review the effectiveness of the Board and its committees annually.
 - 5) Communicate clearly and frequently information on Trust initiatives and Board activity.

- Developing a rolling three year work plan with associated budgetary controls to oversee and guide the Executive's implementation of our strategic plan. The Trust will incorporate the reporting on the delivery of this strategic plan and the associate business plans in the annual report. We will also develop a set of impact indicators to help the Trust and its partners evaluate its performance.
- Recognising the central role that our dedicated staff and volunteers make to the success of the Trust's work and to the quality of the visitor experience we will produce an annual training and development plan for our team to help them in delivering in this challenging environment. We will actively use a performance management system within a human resources environment to support the effective management of our staff.
- Agreeing a new protocol with the Department on the operation of the Trust.
- Work with the Department on all their recommendations outlined within their Review of the operation of the Trust 2006-11.

Shared values guide the work of the Trust;

Cherish our Heritage

We recognise the unique and fragile nature of our heritage and our imperative to pass it on to the next generation in an improved state.

Participation

We are committed to creating as many opportunities for everyone to get involved with heritage as possible.

Public Value

We will work hard to ensure that any funds we raise through commercial activity, fundraising, grants and visitors is spent in a way that delivers our mission and creates wider economic, social and cultural benefits.

Transparent Accountability

We will use our websites, newsletters, publications and other tools to allow everyone to see how we work and what we do.

Respect

We will seek and listen to the views of our staff, volunteers, visitors and wider partners in delivering our mission

Safety

We will seek to ensure that all properties are managed with due care and attention to the safety of those who work in or visit them

Innovation

We are committed to continuously reviewing our practices and trying new means of delivering on our mission

May 2013