



Comhairle Contae Chill Dara
Kildare County Council



Funded by

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council

DRAFT HERITAGE PLAN 2025-2031

DISCUSSION PAPER

HAVE YOUR SAY!

Kildare County Council, working with the people of Kildare, intends to produce a new Heritage Plan to protect, improve and explain our shared heritage for the next five years.



Unwrapping Kildare Round Tower after conservation work

But first- **what is “Heritage”?** Heritage refers to anything from the past that merits passing onto future generations: inherited traditions, monuments, objects and culture. According to the Heritage Act 1995, the national heritage of Ireland includes monuments, archaeological objects, heritage objects, architectural heritage, flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, wrecks, geology, heritage gardens and parks, and inland waterways. Heritage can also be less tangible, for example local history, folklore, place names, culture, traditions, historic documents, language, rituals, symbolism, spirituality and genealogy. Heritage is an important facet of the community, contributing to a sense of identity and place; it is important that our rich heritage is available for future generations to appreciate.

Heritage is protected and managed by a wide range of local and national public bodies, as well as a large number of community groups and individuals. At a national level, the Heritage Council is the statutory body established to manage heritage projects and to promote heritage nationally. They also support the preparation of county Heritage Plans and are responsible for implementing Ireland’s National Heritage Plan. The Heritage Council is a wonderful resource in terms of funding opportunities, advice and support for a wide range of heritage issues:

www.heritagecouncil.ie

What is a Heritage Plan? It is a document that facilitates a co-ordinated approach between the council, the community and other agencies to determine the general principles and objectives for the protection and development of our heritage for future generations. The Plan celebrates what Kildare has in terms of heritage but also highlights how Kildare’s heritage should develop for the future. It is not an exhaustive list of all heritage in the county, but is a necessary step to collectively focus on what is best for Kildare’s heritage given limited resources, and the demands placed on heritage by modern life.

What is the purpose of the Plan? The purpose of the heritage plan is to ensure that the Council and the wider community focus on ensuring that

Kildare's heritage continues to be protected, communicated and appreciated.

Some of the **objectives and benefits** of a heritage plan. Heritage is an exceptional resource offering opportunities for employment, recreation, health, learning and enjoyment. There are many benefits of having a plan to guide future development. Some of these are as follows:

- A catalyst for local development, tourism, job creation, and potentially attracts investment.
- Contributes to a sense of place, community pride, and local identity.
- Promoting traditional crafts and skills, such as thatching, weaving, blacksmithing, lime and drystone walling.
- Maximising the resources and expertise of many agencies working in the heritage area.
- Supporting existing community development initiatives.
- Acquiring knowledge through survey and research in heritage in Kildare, and to make available heritage information to the wider public in a user-friendly manner.
- Promoting best practice in heritage conservation and management.

What is **the process** in making a Heritage Plan? This discussion paper is the first step in the preparation of a Heritage Plan for county Kildare. This Paper, along with the submissions received will feed in to in the preparation of the proposed plan. Written submissions/observations are invited from groups and individuals. Following this, the Kildare Heritage Forum will look at the submissions submitted and will integrate them as appropriate into the Draft Heritage Plan.

Heritage Topics

The following are the main heritage areas that the Heritage Plan will cover:

Archaeology There are over 1,300 known archaeological sites and monuments in Kildare. These represent the culture, society and economy of the area from the earliest times. These sites vary from the glorious architectural masonry in our medieval buildings to a simple standing stone. Some are owned and cared for by the state and attract thousands of visitors a year. Others are seen only by the farmer bringing in the cows. But they are all part of a shared heritage. New sites are added to the list each year. Despite this, the archaeology of an area is a fragile and finite resource. The National Monuments Act 1930-2004 (Amendments) and the Planning Acts serve to protect our archaeological heritage. Kildare County Council is committed to protecting archaeological sites and their setting. The best protection, however, is an increased public awareness, understanding and appreciation of the archaeological heritage which increases their value and places them at the core of the community.



Possible 9th century AD metal book strap discovered during construction of Sallins Bypass

©John Sunderland

The **built environment** is a unique connection with times past and records human activity throughout the ages. It has been shaped by people responding to the surroundings they inherit, and embodies the aspirations, skills and investment of successive generations. People value this historic environment as part of their cultural and built heritage. Kildare's built historical heritage is an asset that can be threatened from demands such as: development, land use changes, lack of awareness of the value of heritage and more recently, the impacts of climate change. The council uses a number of protective measures to conserve historical buildings and structures. These include:

- The designation of Protected Structures, and the maintenance of the Record of the Protected Structures.
- The designation of Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) Including mandatory objectives in Development Plans and Settlement Plans for the protection of Protected Structures and preservation of the character of ACAs through Statements of Character.
- Applying for funding from central government to undertake conservation works on protected structures in the care of the council.
- Encouraging owners of protected structures to apply for funding for conservation works.



Rope wear marks from horse-drawn canal barges

Kildare's **natural heritage** is a wonderful resource for those living, visiting and working here. The natural environment is often threatened by human activity. These threats are varied and many and some of the key threats are: pollution caused by agricultural, forestry, industrial and domestic effluents, the introduction of alien species, and climate change.

Ireland as an EU Member State has committed to halting biodiversity loss and indeed, reversing the trend. The council is committed to safeguarding natural heritage as a non-renewable asset. However, these issues must be

addressed by all involved. We also need to recognise that opportunities exist for improvement at small and large scale.



Irish Hare- unique in the world as it's coat does not turn white in winter

Modern Architecture and Public Realm. For future generations it is important to acknowledge the contribution of modern design to Kildare's heritage, to ensure that new design of buildings and spaces, and refurbishments respects its context, with suitable and appropriate materials and construction. It is important that we continue to raise awareness of the value of good design, its impact on public realm, and its value for all citizens.



Athy Library (formerly the Dominican Church) built 1963

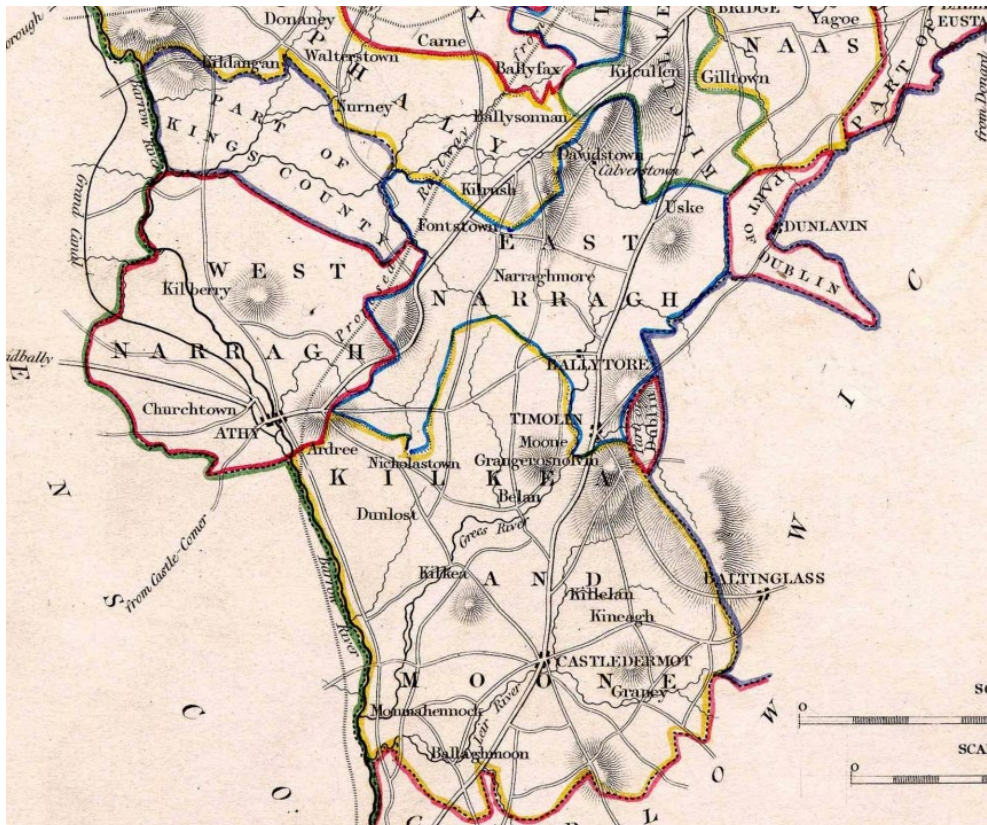
Cultural Heritage is the heritage of tangible and intangible heritage that we inherit from past generations. Tangible culture includes buildings, photographs, archive materials, books, works of art, and artifacts. Intangible culture includes folklore, traditions, language, and natural heritage, including culturally significant landscapes such as The Curragh.



Prosperous in the 1980's

©Prosperous Heritage Society

Local History Kildare has a fascinating and storied history with a wealth of information on local history available. These resources include a range of maps, journals, and other written sources at the Kildare County Archives which holds the records of local government, and a wide range of other material on folklore and genealogy. There are also many local history groups throughout the county, working together under the banner of the Kildare Federation of Local History Groups. The Federation aims to exchange ideas, share information, and raise awareness of local history.



Map shows the baronies of Kildare

Samuel Lewis, A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland (London, 1837)

Questions and issues for the Heritage Plan

We want the people of Kildare to tell us what they want to see in the plan as well as what they don't want to see! So please feel free to send in your comments, ideas and hopes and fears to be included in the plan. Some topics to consider:

- How can heritage ‘move with the times’ in terms of modern expectations such as social media, digitalisation and modern technology to a broader audience given scarce resources including funding?
- What are the threats to Kildare’s heritage?
- What are the gaps in our knowledge?
- How can information on heritage matters be disseminated to local communities to encourage community ownership and appreciation?
- How can heritage be made inclusive to ensure future generations engage with and value heritage?
- How can the community, the council and state agencies be proactive in enhancing, protecting and raising awareness of the county’s heritage?

This Discussion Paper is the first step in the preparation of a new heritage plan for Kildare. There is now an opportunity to raise the issues and views that you may have via our on-line Consult submissions portal or to write in to the council.

To make an online submission, go to:

<https://consult.kildarecoco.ie/>

and register for an account to make a submission. The registration process is a one-time process and your account can be used for all of the council's online public consultations. You will be able to record your submissions across multiple consultations and save the progress of partially completed submissions to complete at a later date. Assistance with this is available here:

[HideiconVideo: How to make an online submission](#)

Your personal information such as contact details collected as part of the consultation process and your engagement on this platform is protected by GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. Please consult the platform's privacy policy [here](#) and the privacy statement of Kildare County Council [here](#).

If you wish to send in a written submission, please post to:

“Draft Heritage Plan Submission”

Heritage and Nature Team

Planning Section

Kildare County Council

Áras Chill Dara

Devoy Park

Naas

Co. Kildare

W91 X77F

Or email heritage@kildarecoco.ie with the subject line “Draft Heritage Plan Submission”

Submissions must be received by Friday 11th July 2025 at 4 pm

Following consideration of submissions received at this first stage, the Heritage Forum will consider all the submissions received and this will inform the draft plan. The draft heritage plan will then be put on public display for a period of eight weeks during August-September for consultation. It will also be made available in our libraries and on the council’s website www.kildarecoco.ie

After adoption by the Councillors at the end of this year, the final Heritage Plan is expected to be published in early 2026.