Irish Landmark Trust

save • share • sustain

Strategic Plan

2023-2028





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1. Introduction from the Chairman

Irish Landmark Trust (ILT) was founded in 1992. For the past 30 years we have operated as an all-island educational charity and limited company in the heritage, education and tourism sectors, making our collection of distinctive buildings available for short-stay lettings. All of the revenue generated is used to support our mission, which is summarised by three words – 'Save, Share, Sustain'. This strategic plan gives new life to those words.

The buildings within our care include gate lodges, lighthouses and vernacular cottages, and are located across the island of Ireland. Many of these buildings were unsuited to alternative uses and faced an uncertain future prior to our involvement. We see ourselves as the custodians of these vulnerable and unique properties.

This plan covers the period 2023 to 2028. It has been developed in consultation with our Staff, House Managers and Trustees. Their contributions have helped to refine and to refresh our vision, our mission and our values. Arising from this process, we have a renewed sense of purpose and an agreed set of priorities and objectives to be delivered over the next five years. I want to record my gratitude to our Chief Executive Officer, Niamh Lunny, for her energy and hard work during the development of this plan.

The implementation of the previous **Strategic Plan 2020-2023** took place against a backdrop of unprecedented uncertainty and disruption to our work. Irish Landmark Trust successfully navigated the challenges of the Covid pandemic, a post-lockdown spike in domestic bookings, and the emergence of a cost of living crisis, without losing focus on the core objectives of that strategic plan. During this period we completed quinquennial condition reports for all of our properties, streamlined our finance and booking systems, allocated Staff resources to communications, relaunched our website, and established a new sub-committee of the board to focus on communications and development. This progress would not have been possible without the support of our management team, House Managers, Trustees, Partners, Stakeholders and Visitors.

As an organisation, we are ambitious for the part that we can play in the conservation and reuse of built heritage across the island of Ireland. Our work will continue to focus on best practice in conservation, reuse and celebration of this built heritage.

We are particularly grateful to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and The Heritage Council for their ongoing support in the Republic of Ireland. We look forward to developing our relationship with the Department of Communities in Northern Ireland. We share a vision with these organisations that recognises the potential of built heritage to contribute positively to communities and Visitors across the island. We all seek to ensure best practice in built heritage management and to give vulnerable heritage buildings a sustainable future.



This strategic plan recognises the challenge that climate change creates for the planet. As custodians of a significant portfolio of domestic scale heritage buildings, we are uniquely placed to provide leadership on energy efficiency and sustainability in heritage management and to share the resulting outcomes as part of our educational remit. The identification of opportunities for sustainable and appropriate energy improvements to our existing buildings already forms part of our quinquennial inspection process and will become a key component of the refurbishment of future additions to the portfolio. Over the life of this strategic plan, ILT will also examine issues around accessibility at each of our properties.

After a period of consolidation, Irish Landmark Trust is well-placed to enter a new phase of growth in its development. We are ambitious to increase our portfolio and will look to align potential new heritage properties with best practice in conservation, energy efficiency, sustainability and regenerative tourism.

Michael O'Boyle

Chairman – Irish Landmark Trust



2. Introduction from the CEO

Irish Landmark Trust has a wonderful 30-year history of saving buildings and sharing them with the public. I am looking forward to building on that legacy with this new strategy. This plan sets out the organisations key strategic objectives to enable us to fulfil our mission over the next five years.

The organisation is at an exciting moment in its history. Post-pandemic, we have experienced a renewed interest from the public in our work and it is vital that we build on this sense of momentum and engagement. Irish Landmark Trust sits across three sectors – heritage, education and regenerative tourism. This strategy gives us the scope to fully harness the combined strength and opportunities of those three sectors and in doing so, to sustain a robust organisation and ensure that it is ready for the next chapter of our history.

ILT's role as prudent custodians of the buildings in our care is the cornerstone of our reputation. This strategy recognises that it is only through our continuous maintenance programme and careful management of the guest experience, alongside our educational and conservation activities that we can stake our claim as exemplars of best practice in heritage protection, education and regenerative tourism. By promoting financial stability and organisational agility, this strategy will help us to engage our v, pursue successful partnerships and enhance our visibility. This will ensure our core mission is widely understood and cherished.

Irish Landmark Trust carefully restores heritage buildings and gives them an appropriate and sustainable use. Our Visitors tell us that our buildings combine an unforgettable holiday with an inspirational and educational experience. We invite our guests to come with us, beyond the velvet rope of a traditional museum setting, to a place where they can experience, learn about and appreciate different ways of life and buildings from a different time. Every holiday with ILT is helping us fulfil our mission to save, share and sustain built heritage . A stay with us is an opportunity to feel good and do good. We want our guests to feel as passionately about our heritage buildings as we do.

I want to thank the House Managers, Management Team, Trustees and Chairman for their work on this strategy, I believe it reflects the values, ethos and ambition of everyone at Irish Landmark Trust. I look forward to working towards our shared vision for ILT.

Niamh Lunny

CEO

3. Context

Irish Landmark Trust has been working to save, share and sustain our unique built heritage for over 30 years. In the early 1990s the organisation grew from the vision of a few far-sighted and inspired individuals. They recognised the importance of educating the public about the significance of our unique built heritage and the necessity to find a sustainable use for smaller buildings that might otherwise be overlooked. In that time, we have grown from being custodians of a single building to saving over 40 properties across the whole island of Ireland.

ILT's growth has been steady, surviving the economic crisis post-2008 and the recent pandemic. As an organisation we have been tested by these events and we have demonstrated our resilience. Whilst these were challenging times, they offered the opportunity to re-evaluate, consolidate and strengthen our operation. We have always been grateful to receive the support of our Donors, Sponsors, Visitors and Funders – including The Heritage Council and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in the Republic of Ireland and the National Lottery Heritage Fund in Northern Ireland.

Our portfolio is constantly evolving. Since our inception we have saved over 40 buildings across the island and our current portfolio contains 32 properties. In saving these buildings that otherwise might not have had a sustainable future, we have provided the public with interesting and unusual places to stay. Without this new use many of these buildings might still be vacant and derelict. The vital role we fulfil in preserving these buildings and giving them a new life has grown steadily over the past thirty years. The core mission of Irish Landmark Trust – to save, share, and sustain – is likely to become increasingly important over the coming years as the practice of sustainable building conservation becomes ever more relevant.

The act of bringing a historic building back into use is an inherently sustainable activity. It harnesses the embodied carbon in the existing fabric and materials of the building with a consequent reduction in carbon emissions. We recognise the urgency of protecting and sustaining the finite resource of our built heritage. The buildings we conserve and maintain demonstrate what can be achieved. Irish Landmark Trust is an exemplar organisation in the field of conservation, sustainability and the continued education of the public about the value and future potential of our heritage.

We look forward to working with all of our Partners and communities in heritage, tourism and education to realise this strategy and write the next exciting chapter for Irish Landmark Trust.

4. Our Vision

Our vision is that built heritage is recognised, preserved and celebrated across the island of Ireland. We work to ensure that the unique and vulnerable buildings in our care are secured for the future so that they can be appreciated by the guests that stay in them and the communities that surround them.





5. Our Mission

SAVE

To save and conserve buildings of character and architectural distinction on the island of Ireland, particularly those threatened by decay, redundancy or neglect.

SHARE

To share these buildings by providing unique holiday experiences to our guests.

To share our knowledge as custodians of these buildings in partnership with local communities and Stakeholders.

SUSTAIN

To sustain these buildings through the adoption of best conservation practice in providing an appropriate long term new use, and by educating to encourage appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of their architectural significance and to highlight their potential to stimulate local employment.

6. Our Values

Inspiration	We work to inspire our guests and local communities by highlighting the importance of our unique built heritage. Our conservation programmes and tourism activity demonstrate that vacant and underused historic buildings can be provided with a sustainable future.
Leadership	We offer a compelling case to ensure the preservation and reuse of vulnerable heritage properties of character and architectural distinction.
Excellence	We place high priority on organisational and governance standards. We seek to deliver the best lasting outcome for the heritage properties in our care. Through our work we promote education about heritage and an understanding of its importance.
Visitor Welcome	We aim to provide a consistently excellent experience across our portfolio of heritage properties. We put our Visitors at the centre of all our activity. The warmth of our welcome combined with their experience of our unique heritage properties is at the heart of the Irish Landmark Trust experience.
Sustainability	We focus on environmental, financial and societal sustainability in all of our work. In our heritage conservation and management, we recognise the importance of sustainable practice and the necessity of promoting conservation-led energy retrofitting. We are committed to a regenerative approach to tourism, that proactively makes a positive impact on local communities and the environment.
Partnership	We operate with integrity and work with our internal team and external Partners and Stakeholders in a spirit of collaboration, trust and respect. We seek to put equality and inclusion at the core of all our activities.

7. Priorities and Objectives, 2023-2028

Strategic Priority I: Property Portfolio

Our portfolio of heritage buildings is at the heart of our work. Our priority is to ensure that the conservation, maintenance and care of these buildings follows best conservation practice.

The following objectives will support the delivery/achievement of this priority:

1. We will develop a rolling maintenance, repair and retrofit schedule for all our properties, to be informed by the ongoing cycle of quinquennial property inspections, viewing each property as an individual entity to be budgeted for and managed.
2. We will seek opportunities to expand our heritage property portfolio in a planned and proactive way.
3. We will prioritise phased delivery of capital works on the small number of legacy projects in our portfolio.
4. We will review and refine our selection criteria to assist decision making for property acquisitions.
5. We will adopt a standard legal agreement for all new properties, which will inform a review of the lease/ownership model currently in place for all existing ILT properties.
6. We will build on the existing risk register for the organisation to develop an individual risk register for each property.
7. We will encourage and support the use of best conservation practice by our panel of conservation professionals, and we will review opportunities for the use of sustainable materials, energy efficiency and accessibility as part of the ongoing work in our buildings.

Strategic Priority II: Funding

In line with the Charities Governance Codes in place in the UK and the Republic of Ireland, we work to ensure we have the financial means to fulfil our charitable remit.

The following objectives will support the delivery/achievement of this priority:

1. We will plan for the future financial needs of the organisation using the rolling maintenance and retrofit schedule for each property as a tool to evaluate, plan and prioritise future maintenance work.
2. We will work to optimise the revenue opportunities from each of our properties.
3. We will explore new funding models for all existing and new properties in collaboration with our existing Partners and local communities.
4. We will actively seek new Partners and Sponsors to support the delivery of our mission.
5. We will create an organisational fundraising opportunities calendar.
6. We will develop a policy on the acceptance and management of bequests.

7. Priorities and Objectives, 2023–2028

Strategic Priority III: Visitor Welcome

Our Visitors are our greatest supporters. We recognise the vital role that House Managers play in the work of Irish Landmark Trust. They are the point of contact for our Visitors, help to interpret our buildings and are at the frontline in providing preventative maintenance.

The following objectives will support the delivery/achievement of this priority:

1. We will pursue the delivery of an excellent and consistent visitor experience at all of our properties.
2. We will conduct a review of the House Manager role, with a view to empowering House Managers in their work and increasing educational and training opportunities for them.
3. We will seek feedback from our Visitors to assist in enhancing the guest experience and to build loyalty and relationships with new and repeat Visitors to our properties.
4. We will maintain and encourage regular structured communication with and between our House Managers, to support their engagement with ILT and foster camaraderie, harnessing new technologies where appropriate.
5. We will further develop our relationships and presence in the tourism sector to broaden our reach to potential new guests in support of our mission.

Strategic Priority IV: Education & Communities

As an educational trust and custodians of a diverse portfolio of heritage properties we have a unique opportunity to contribute to the promotion of best conservation practice.

The following objectives will support the delivery/achievement of this priority:

1. We will develop a new education policy to refine and clarify our educational remit.
2. We will seek to increase Irish Landmark Trust's educational role as an all-island heritage organisation.
3. At each of our properties, we will review and improve the architectural and historical information on the building and the area in which it is located, as an educational resource for our guests.
4. We will encourage the conservation specialists we work with to promote their work with us through lectures, site visits, publications and the pursuit of awards. We will build a requirement for shareable educational content in our engagement with them.
5. We recognise that the conservation projects we undertake provide valuable learning, training and apprenticeship opportunities. We will support and develop our relationship with the All-Island Heritage Skills Programme and other relevant educational institutions and initiatives.
6. We will examine specific funding and staffing needs required to fulfil our ambition in education.

Strategic Priority V: Sustainability and Regeneration

The work of ILT in repurposing historic buildings is an inherently sustainable activity that contributes to the regeneration of local communities. We recognise the enormous challenge that climate change presents to current and future generations and the important leadership role that the heritage sector can play in meeting climate targets. ILT carefully monitors the condition of all the buildings in our portfolio together with evidence of the impact of climate change where this arises.

The following objectives will support the delivery/achievement of this priority:

1. We will develop our current sustainability policy to include an energy efficiency, sustainability and carbon reduction plan for each property in our portfolio.
2. We will include recommendations on the conservation-led retrofitting of our heritage properties for energy efficiency and sustainability in all quinquennial property inspection reports. We will seek to programme these works as an integral part of our ongoing maintenance and repair work.
3. We will monitor and record energy usage in all our heritage properties so that the reductions associated with future energy efficiency upgrades can be quantified.
4. Where new properties enter our portfolio, we will ensure that an appropriate energy efficiency strategy is in place.
5. In addition to improving on-site energy efficiency, we will develop a policy for the use of sustainable products, materials and services, and the promotion of green transport options for our guests. We will explore ways to align our work with best practice standards to achieve accountability in the area of sustainable tourism.
6. We will seek to ensure that the impact of landscaping and garden maintenance activity on biodiversity at our properties is minimised.
7. We will work with our Partners and Stakeholders to share information and support communications that emphasise and highlight the importance of sustainable and regenerative principles in conservation and tourism.

7. Priorities and Objectives, 2023-2028

Strategic Priority VI: Communications

Effective communication is centrally important to the success of our mission. We aim to be respectful and informative in reaching a wide, engaged audience. In the rapidly changing landscape of communications and GDPR, this will require a strong focus and the targeted allocation of resources.

The following objectives will support the delivery/achievement of this priority:

1. We will continue to work closely with our supporting Funders in the Republic of Ireland, including the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and The Heritage Council. We will seek to grow our relationships with heritage and tourism organisations in Northern Ireland, including The Department of Communities and the National Lottery Heritage Fund, to advance our shared vision for built heritage.
2. We will seek to continuously improve our message and communications to increase awareness and understanding of the work done by Irish Landmark Trust as a strong advocate for the conservation and appreciation of our built heritage.
3. We will explore options for enhanced communication and engagement with our core support base and benefactors, particularly in relation to patrons and friends schemes.
4. We will seek new Partners and Sponsors for our work who align with our mission and values.
5. We will communicate regularly and transparently with our Funders, Stakeholders and communities.
6. We will develop and resource an annual marketing plan to ensure we increase awareness of our properties and attract and motivate more Visitors to stay with ILT. We will engage with our Partners in the tourism sector to achieve this objective.

Strategic Priority VII: Governance and Organisational Development

Irish Landmark Trust has a strong reputation as custodian of a growing portfolio of heritage properties. We acknowledge the support of our Stakeholders and recognise the central role of strong governance in everything we do. We recognise that this is an ambitious strategy for the organisation which will require appropriate staffing and expertise to deliver in full.

The following objectives will support the delivery/achievement of this priority:

1. We will work to ensure we have the organisational resources to deliver this strategy over the next five years.
2. We will develop policy and documentation around the control and management of our digital and paper archives.
3. We will continue to ensure that our Board has an appropriate skills mix, including members with expertise in heritage, finance and tourism and that Board composition is diverse and includes representation from across the island.
4. The Board and the Executive will collaborate to ensure transparency, accountability and robust stewardship in the evolving work of ILT.
5. The Board will review progress on this plan every 6 months and will evaluate this strategy's continued suitability on an annual basis.



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