



## THEME 5: CULTURAL HERITAGE



### Introduction

Fingal has a very special identity, one founded on community and tradition interconnected with our rich heritage of coast and countryside, towns and villages. It encompasses our intangible heritage of traditions, song and language transmitted from generation to generation. Sustainable management of our cultural heritage will not only protect our archaeological sites, historic houses, landscapes, coastline and traditions but will support tourism, and leisure and promote well-being. The Council recognises the importance of identifying and protecting the archaeological and architectural resource of the county and this is reflected in its strategic aims and in its plans, policies and programmes.

### Background and Context

Our archaeological heritage has a powerful contribution to make to the quality of life of today's citizens in terms of social inclusion, environmental protection and sustainable development. It is not just about finding out 'what happened then' but how what happened informs now. The archaeological heritage of Fingal is a non-renewable resource, in that once an archaeological feature or site is excavated or removed it is gone forever from the landscape. There are currently 1151 known sites on the Sites and Monuments Record that encompass the story of the people of Fingal from churches and castles to Martello Towers and windmills; mounds, sub-surfaces sites, graveyards and burials, mill races and shipwrecks. There is an increased awareness that heritage has to connect with local communities and involve people in its care and management. The potential rewards from such approaches include a greater understanding of the local environment, inclusive social networks, active communities engaged with their local area, and new economic opportunities which harness the local archaeological heritage resource.

The historic, innovative or rare buildings and other man-made structures contribute to the attractive or special character of our towns, villages and countryside. Fingal's architectural heritage is a unique and irreplaceable resource that needs to be cared for and respected as Fingal develops and grows into the future. Architectural heritage is primarily protected under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), in particular Part IV. There are two principal mechanisms within this legislation for the protection of these assets: The Record of Protected Structures (RPS) and Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs). Protected Structures are defined as structures, or parts of structures that are of special interest from an architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical point of view. Places, areas, groups of structures or townscapes of special interest can be protected by being designated as Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs). Fingal County Council currently has 785 structures listed on its Record of Protected Structures (RPS) and has 32 Architectural Conservation Areas.

### Achievements since the Previous Development Plan:

The implementation of the policy and objectives relating to archaeological heritage in the current Development Plan 2017-2023 have included the development and implementation for a successful Community Archaeology programme comprising excavations at Swords Castle; Bremore Castle Big Dig Drumanagh Promontory Fort and Naul Community dig ; the Fingal Fieldnames project; exhibitions; a series of seminars and public information events and the publication of *Partnership & Participation: Community Archaeology in Ireland* (2020). It has also allowed for the preparation of the *Drumanagh Conservation and Management Plan 2018-2023* and the implementation of the *Community Archaeology Strategy 2019-2023*. Input of archaeological expertise into plans, programmes and the development management process of the Planning Department has also ensured the integration of the archaeological resource into place-making, walking and cycling schemes, infrastructure and housing developments.

In the period since the last review, the Record of Protected Structures has been re-examined and amended to form Appendix 2 of the Development Plan; the development management process has been used to deliver a large number of the architectural heritage objectives that relate to Protected Structures, ACAs, the historic building stock and vernacular heritage. To support owners to maintain their architectural heritage Fingal County Council has established a 'Stitch in Time Grant' and administers the Historic Structures Fund for large scale projects. It is intended that some of the remaining projects will be carried out in early 2021 in order to inform policy and objectives within the new Development Plan.

The use of the Irish language as part of everyday life is encouraged. Approximately 36% of the population of Fingal could speak Irish in 2016 (cso.ie). Fingal County Council is implementing the Irish Language Scheme 2018-2021.

## Key Issues for Next Development Plan:

### Impact of Climate Change

Changing climatic processes will have detrimental and differing effects on Fingal's archaeological resource, historic building stock and maritime heritage. Sites and monuments located along Fingal's coast and rivers will be particularly vulnerable. There will be potential impacts from storm damage, coastal erosion, soil movement, and increased variations between heat and cold which will affect the remains of our built heritage. There will also be indirect impacts arising from our responses to climate change, more intensive farming will impact on sub-surface archaeological sites or protection measures that may inadvertently have a detrimental impact on the heritage resource. With increased weathering and severe climate events, the repair cycle on the built heritage of our towns is likely to become shorter. The development plan process provides an opportunity to ensure that measures such as energy retrofitting of historic buildings does not damage the historic fabric/materials.

### Balancing development pressures with the protection of Fingal's heritage resource for future generations

Archaeology is more linked with 'real life' than any other part of cultural heritage. Land development, urban planning, transport infrastructure, environment protection, and agriculture all have a direct and detrimental impact on the archaeological heritage. Town and village centres are historic places with their own distinct identities. Sustaining these is a complex process that in many cases involves the conservation and re-use of existing buildings, the care of public spaces, the provision of community facilities, and the communication and interpretation of what makes the place interesting and unique. The ongoing challenge is to facilitate development while protecting our heritage resource.

### Engagement with Fingal's heritage resource

The values that society places on heritage is dynamic, changing as we learn more about the past. The opening up of Fingal's heritage to include other perspectives or new narratives can also identify heritage that has not been fully appreciated previously. The importance of well-being has been increasingly recognised. Studies have found that engagement with heritage can contribute to social cohesion, positive interactions and self-esteem. Intangible heritage plays an important role in Fingal's identity and allowing new communities to connect. Cultural Heritage also has a high value in underpinning the tourism industry. It is important to ensure widespread engagement with the heritage resource.



## KEY QUESTIONS

- How can we best protect against the detrimental effects of climate change on the heritage resource?
- How can we balance the need for new development with the protection and enhancement of Fingal's heritage resource?
- What policies and/or incentives do you think can encourage heritage-led regeneration with the retention and reuse of traditional and historic buildings?
- Can we better protect and promote our archaeological resource for the benefit of local communities and to attract tourism? How can technology help with highlighting the heritage resource to the tourist audience?
- How can we widen heritage engagement -physical, practical and virtual- with disparate audiences and new communities?
- Are there ways of ensuring Fingal's intangible heritage of traditions, folklore, language and song will be shared with future generations?
- Are there any individual buildings or groups of buildings, Industrial Heritage Sites and features that should be added to the Record of Protected Structures or designated as Architectural Conservation Areas?

