

Howth Community Heritage Audit

Created by Abarta Heritage on behalf of Fingal County Council and the Howth Peninsula Heritage Society

Comhairle Contae
Fhine Gall
Fingal County
Council



Acknowledgements

The Howth Heritage Audit was undertaken by Abarta Heritage on behalf of Fingal County Council's Heritage Office and the Howth Peninsula Heritage Society in 2024 with funding from Fingal County Council.

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We also wish to sincerely thank the local Howth community for sharing their time, knowledge, and experience of Howth with us.

All images, unless stated, are credited to Abarta Heritage.

Due to printing constraints, the appendices are only available digitally. Please contact info@abartaheritage.ie for more details.

Howth golf course

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1.0 Introduction & Project Background

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Abarta Heritage carried out the Howth Heritage Audit in the spring and summer of 2024. The area's built, natural, and cultural heritage was reviewed and recorded as part of the project.

A community survey was created, and two community workshops were held in Howth to gather information from the residents. This allowed the local community to share stories, memories, objects and express their feelings and desires for the future of their area's heritage.

Over one hundred sites were researched and narrowed down to 21 key points of interest that were visited and evaluated by the project team. The results of this evaluation and key recommendations from the audit can be found in this report.

In addition, information gathered throughout the project was condensed and packaged into a usable database (see Appendix 4). In the future, the report and database may serve as a valuable framework for developing interpretative, educational and heritage resources for local people and visitors to Howth.





Howth Community Heritage Audit area



2.0 Background, Biodiversity & Context of the Project Area

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Dublin's eastern coastline is made up of a vast, crescent-shaped bay, of which the peninsula of Howth forms the most north-easterly boundary. The highest point on the peninsula, the Ben of Howth, rises approximately 171 m above sea level and on clear days offers stunning views of the Dublin Mountains, Slieve Donard, Co Down, the Sugarloaf, Co. Wicklow and Mount Snowdon in Wales.

The peninsula of Howth forms the southern boundary of Fingal County and is approximately 18 km north of Dublin City Centre. It is connected on its western side to Sutton and the mainland by a golden isthmus. To the north is Ireland's Eye and Lambay Island and to the south is Dublin Bay, a UNESCO Biosphere (an intergovernmental scientific programme that examines the consequences of human interaction with the environment).

The landscape of this peninsula comprises 550 million-year-old Cambrian rocks and 300 million-year-old lower carboniferous rocks separated by a fault line, which can still be seen at Balcadden Bay. Howth has been a place of significance for humans, flora and fauna for millennia. Palaeolithic Giant Irish Deer once roamed here, and their remains have been discovered in the 'Bog of the Lough', now Howth golf course. While on the boundary of Burrow, Mesolithic hunter-gatherers have left their mark. The remains of ancient human activity can also be found on Howth's summits and promontories that attest to this being a landscape of significance for our Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age ancestors.

These prehistoric monuments and Howth's landscape in general are imbued with myths and legends; from Cú Chulainn to the Fianna, Diarmuid & Gráinne, Aídean's grave, and Grace O'Malley. It is a place that has inspired not just ancient tales but modern artists and poets such as W. B Yeats and Samuel Ferguson.



Howth Harbour

Overseas raiders and traders have used Howth as a safe place to dock for centuries. Castles, churches and even the surnames of the local people attest to overseas influences.

Important royal figures have also graced Howth's port, including King George IV, Prince Thomas of Lancaster and the powerful Lord Deputies who essentially governed Ireland on behalf of the English monarch. Throughout this time, the harbour was full of local fishermen and those from Ulster and Scotland who came to catch the large schools of herring until the late 20th century.

Since Howth was a vital connecting point with Britain, the harbour was enlarged again and again and land was reclaimed. The harbour became the centre for the mail packet in the early 19th century until Dún Laoighaire replaced it. The harbour remained important for local fishermen but was also tied to rebellion and war. In 1914, the Asgard yacht, owned by Erskine and Molly Childers, sailed from the coast of Belgium into Howth Harbour. There, it unloaded weapons and ammunition to the Irish Volunteers, who would later use these weapons in the 1916 Rising.

Howth was not only connected to rebellion but also to the Great War. Many of those raised on the peninsula went off to fight in Europe, but unfortunately the war came to Howth in 1918 when a German submarine attacked two local fishing vessels, the St. Michan and Geraldine, killing five men.

Though Howth was considered quite rural for centuries, heavy investment in infrastructure such as the expansion of the harbour, improvement of lighthouses, railway lines and tramlines, made it accessible to the wider Dublin population and it is now a key tourist attraction for Dubliners and overseas visitors.

Howth's Biodiversity

In modern times, this affluent coastal suburb of the capital presents a wealth of incredible scenery and biodiversity to explore. Areas of the Howth peninsula have been recognised at both regional and national levels for their exceptional character and were designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) and have a Special Amenity Areas Order (SAAO). These are powerful recognitions that protect the local ecology, history and heritage of the peninsula. Being part of these recognised special areas affords Howth's natural environment a high level of safeguarding.

The local community are very proud of these recognitions and work hard along with the vigilant SAAO management committee which is composed of members of Fingal County Council and local groups to ensure the area is safe guarded.

The SACs and SPAs of Howth are also Natura 2000 sites and are thought to be of "exceptional importance in terms of rare, endangered or vulnerable habitats and species within the European Union". In addition, parts of the audit area are within the Dublin Bay Biosphere, recognised by UNESCO, and the Bull Island Special Protection Area.

Howth comprises a variety of habitats, including but not limited to undisturbed shingle beaches, coastal grasslands, small raised valley bog, dry acid grasslands, heathland, bracken, woodland, farmland, intertidal platforms and sea cliffs. Much of which can be seen from the well-maintained Loop Walks that pass through and around the SAAO area of the Peninsula. These walks include, but aren't limited to the Cliff Path, Black Linn and Tramline. The walks themselves are a fantastic amenity based on the rights of way given by the St Lawrence family and are enjoyed by all.

The flora in the area is varied from natural heathland plants such as Bell heather, Ling Heather and Western Gorse to more exotic plants such as rhododendron



and Hottentot Fig, a South African plant that has naturalised and is now the most northerly recorded version of the species. In addition, two nationally protected species, the bird's foot and the green-winged orchid, can be found within Howth's grasslands.

These diverse habitats make for a wonderful home for a collection of avians, mammals and insects. The bird colony on Howth Head is the largest mainland seabird colony in the east of Ireland. They use Howth as a staging post during spring and autumn migrations. Howth also offers shelter as a wintering ground for a number of Brent geese, bar-tailed Godwit and Redshank. Within our study area is Ireland's Eye, a designated SAC and SPA under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives, which has been used as a safe zone for breeding seabirds; these include gulls, kestrels, fulmars, gannets, puffins and kittiwakes. In the past, Ireland's Eye was also a breeding ground for goshawks.

In the waters surrounding Howth and Ireland's Eye are grey seals, harbour seals, porpoises, and bottlenose dolphins. Mammals found on the peninsula include foxes, badgers and bats. In addition, the Old Goat Society and Fingal County Council have established a conservation grazing project on Howth's cliffs, where critically endangered Irish goats are helping to combat wildfires by reducing the amount of bracken and gorse, which in turn, also helps to improve the quality of the heathland. Fingal County Council have also started trialling grazing highland cattle in the area as well. Regarding insects, Howth is home to several butterflies, the rare ant *Trechus Rubens* and the rare *Phaonia Exoleta* beetle. In addition, the variety of flora help to support sixty varieties of bees including the Carder Bee which is not found in any other part of Ireland.



3.0 Project Methodology

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3.1 Defining the audit area

The Howth Community Heritage Audit covered the following townlands: Howth, Censure, Sutton South, Sutton North, Howth Demesne and Quarry. It also includes the island of Ireland's Eye. It is an area of approximately 10km with over one hundred and twenty sites of archaeological, architectural, cultural, and historical significance.

3.2 Desk Based Research

As an initial exercise, all of the historical, archaeological and architectural sites of the defined research area in Howth were identified using the following sources: The Heritage Council's Map Viewer (www.heritagemaps.ie), the National Monuments Service's Archaeological Survey of Ireland (www.archaeology.ie), the Record of Protected Structures for Dublin City, the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, Ordnance Survey Maps (www.osi.ie), and aerial imagery (Bing Maps and Google Maps).

Further information about these sites and their locations was uncovered using the Placenames Database (loganim.ie), the Geological Survey (www.GSI.ie), Biodiversity Maps (www.maps.biodiversityireland.ie/), the Irish Newspaper Archive and the British Newspaper Archive. We also extensively searched the Schools Folklore Collection (www.Duchas.ie) and the Dictionary of Irish Biography (www.DIB.ie).

A number of archives and databases were accessed, as were academic publications, books and journals kindly supplied by Christine Baker and Philip O'Connor. Any relevant information gathered was added to the accompanying database, which formed the basis for the audit.



Howth Community Heritage Audit project area

3.3 Creating the Community Survey

An initial project meeting was held in the Old Courthouse on the 20th of February, 2024, with Christine Baker, Heritage Officer for Fingal County Council, the Howth Peninsula Heritage Society and Abarta Heritage. The extent of the project area was identified, and the project parameters and dates for community workshops were discussed.

In addition, the framework for a community survey was established. This survey, made up of fourteen questions, sought to investigate the community's desires and interests in relation to heritage. Once examined and agreed upon by the partners, the survey was distributed on Fingal County Council, Howth Peninsula Heritage Society and Abarta Heritage's social media pages. In addition, hard copies were printed by Abarta Heritage and distributed at the two community workshops. The surveys were also emailed to anyone who signed up for the mailing list.

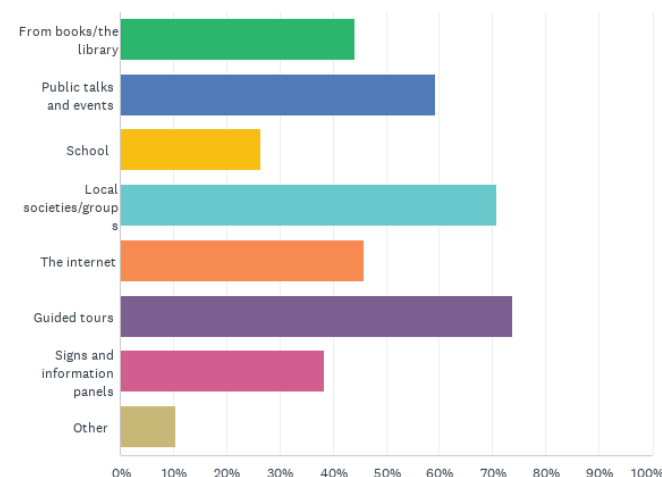
The survey was live on SurveyMonkey from April 12th to May 24th and over 295 responses from the local community were collected. The survey questions and answers were as follows;

Q1. On a scale of 1-10, how well do you feel you know Howth's history and heritage? (10 being you know it well, 1 being you know it very little).

A. The community rated their knowledge as 6.3 out of 10.

Q2. Where do you think people learn about Howth's heritage and history?

A. The majority of respondents rated guided tours as their number one source of information, followed closely by local societies and groups and in third position public talks and events.



Q3. Please list in order of preference, the historical or heritage sites in Howth that are the most important, significant or interesting to you.

A. Howth Castle dominated this response followed by the Martello tower and Aideen's grave. However, the community did mention almost every other site in Howth as well.

Q4. Why are these places so meaningful for you?

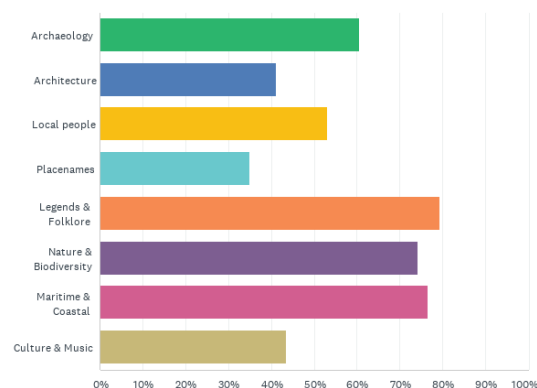
A. We received a variety of responses from the community including 'Family connections' and 'Historical significance'.

Q5. What would you like to see implemented to promote Howth's heritage?

A. This question aimed to discover what the community wanted to see implemented over all and gave the option to add their own thoughts and ideas. They were keen to have 'more events' closely followed by 'community projects such as oral history recordings', a website and more talks.

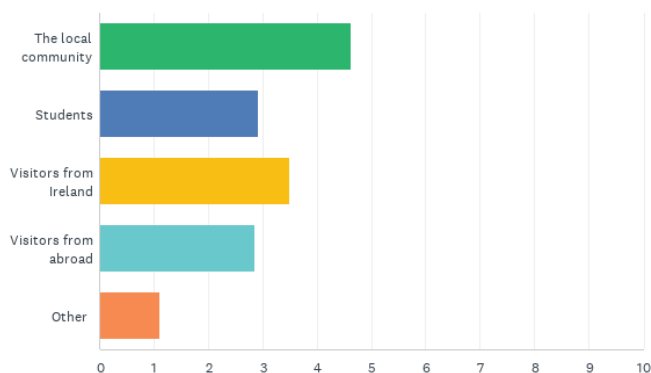
Q6. What aspect of Howth's Heritage are you most interested in?

A. The top three choices were Legend & Folklore, Maritime & Coastal, Nature & Biodiversity.



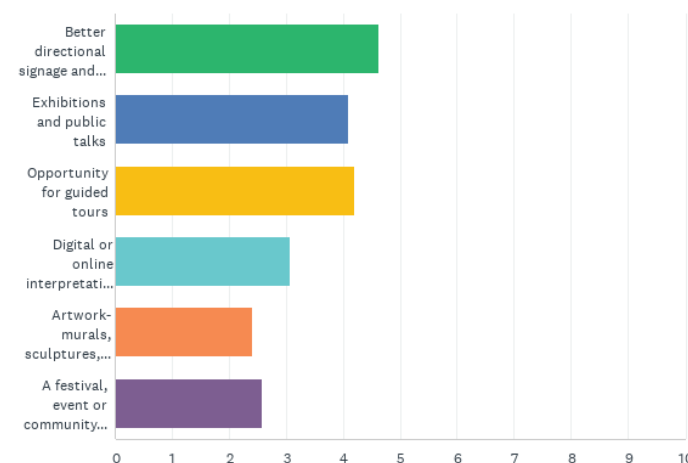
Q7. Rank whom you consider to be the most important audience for Howth's heritage (with the most desired at the top).

A. The top three answers were the local community, visitors from Ireland and students. Interestingly visitors from abroad came fourth.



Q8. Rank these heritage interpretation changes or improvements in order of priority for you (with the most desired at the top).

A. This question gave the community a specific set of interpretation options to rank which let us know what their priorities are. 'Better directional signage and information panels at points of interest' was the top priority followed by 'opportunity for guided tours' and 'exhibitions and public talks'.



Q9. Are you interested in participating or volunteering in future heritage-focused projects or events held in Howth?

A. 55% said yes, 36% said no.

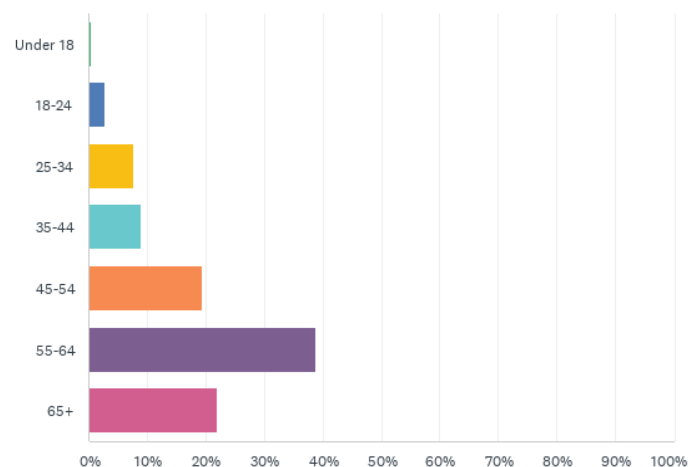
Q10. Do you have any other thoughts on how best to celebrate the heritage of Howth?

A. We received a variety of answers to this question, which can be read in full in Appendix 3. Some of the top answers included establishing an annual festival, creating an indoor space museum/community centre where the heritage of Howth can be easily accessible and displayed (the Garland of Howth was especially mentioned). There was also a strong response to wanting more protection for heritage sites and continued right-of-way access to established walks. Furthermore, there were a number of complaints about over-development.

Q11. Please add your name (optional).

Q12. How old are you? (optional)

A. The most responses at 38.8% were from the 55-64 year old age bracket, followed by 21% who were 65+ and 19% were 45-54.



Q13. Do you live in Howth?

A. 56.9% said 'yes', 26.9% said 'no' and 16% said 'other'.

Q14. Are you part of any organisation or group in Howth at present? If yes, please state which:

A. A large number of groups connected to Howth and Sutton kindly contributed to this survey, including members of the Howth Peninsula Heritage Society, Howth Yacht Club, Howth Sutton Community Council and Resurrecting Monuments.

To see all the responses collected from the survey, please see Appendix 3.

3.4 Story-Drop Community Workshops

Two community show and tell workshops known as ‘Story Drops’ were organised as part of the Howth Community Heritage Audit. The first Story Drop was held on Saturday, the 20th of April, while the second was held on Saturday, the 18th of May, 2024 and both events took place at The Old Courthouse/Howth Tourist Information Centre.

Promotional images were created by Abarta Heritage and distributed through Fingal County Council, the Howth Peninsula Heritage Society and Abarta Heritage’s social media accounts. The Howth Peninsula Heritage Society contacted local groups and individuals directly which helped promote the events.

Approximately twenty people attended the first Story Drop where Abarta Heritage gave a presentation on the project, promoted the survey and handed out hard copies of the survey for those who may not have computer access. We spoke about what makes Howth unique and special to those who lived there and got a great response from all who attended; this led to a number of stories being shared on geography, place names and local families which, where appropriate, have been added to the project database and appendices.

The second Story Drop attracted over twenty people including a large number of the older members of the community who had a strong maritime background. Stories about swimming in the sea, festival days, boats, past residents and nicknames were shared. The community also discussed living in Howth and how it is rapidly changing. These events gave a lovely sample of some of the rich local oral heritage, memories and stories that are remembered in Howth. After the events, some people emailed additional stories and information to the project team. The stories and insights, where appropriate, have been added to the project database and appendices. The Story Drops and the accompanying appendices are a great starting point which can be built on as set out in the Recommendation section.





May Story Drop Event



Martello tower Ireland's Eye

4.0 Evaluation of Heritage Sites

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4.1 The Process of Evaluation

Over a hundred and twenty archaeological, historical, cultural and architectural sites were identified within the catchment area of this audit. These were narrowed down to 21 key points of interest (POI). These sites were visited during the course of this audit to evaluate their potential and make recommendations. Site visits took place before each Story Drop (20th of April and 18th of May) and on the 9th of May. Our final visit took place on the 5th of June, 2024 with archaeologist Aidan Giblin who obtained access to sites such as Corr Castle and other important archaeological sites in the area.

The exact locations of the sites were photographed in high- resolution using state-of-the-art DSLR cameras.



Each site was then evaluated to assess tourism potential and suitability according to the following criteria:

Consent & Access

– Is there consent from the landowner (such as Fingal County Council, relevant church authority, Office of Public Works, private landowner) for public access to the point of interest? Is there safe access or parking for vehicular transport? Are there existing signposts or waymarkers?

Environmental Impact

– Will the inclusion of the site as a point of interest negatively impact on flora or fauna habitats? What can be done to mitigate the impact? Will the increased footfall cause erosive damage to the point of interest?

Visual Aspect

– Is the point of interest (or journey to it) likely to excite and enthuse visitors?

Story

– Does the particular point of interest have an engaging story? Does it fit within the developing 'brand'?

Each criteria carries a five point score with a maximum overall score of twenty. The sites in light green have the highest potential as tourism offerings with little infrastructural work required; these are essentially sites of the first rank which offer the opportunity for 'quick wins'. Sites in darker green have future potential but are not very accessible at present.

Table outlining Potential Heritage Sites

Point of Interest	Consent & Access	Environment Impact	Visual Aspect	Story	Total
Howth Harbour	5	4	5	5	19
Howth Castle Demesne	4	4	5	5	18
Aideen's Grave	4	4	5	5	18
Martello Tower/Ye Olde Hurdy-Gurdy Museum	4	5	4	5	18
St Fintan's Church and modern graveyard	4	5	4	4	17
Ireland's Eye (birds, St Nessans and martello tower)	3	4	5	5	17
Éire 6 Sign	5	4	4	4	17
Bailey Lighthouse	3	4	5	5	17
Howth Old Courthouse	4	5	4	4	17
Howth Summit Cairns	5	4	3	4	16
Balscadden Beach	5	3	4	4	16
St Mary's Abbey	3	3	5	5	16
Catholic Church of the Assumption	4	5	4	2	15
Howth Library	5	5	3	2	15
Corr Castle	0	5	4	4	13
College of Howth	0	5	4	4	13
St Mary's Church of Ireland	2	4	4	3	13
Howth Presbyterian Church	2	4	4	2	12
Garda Station	1	5	3	2	11
Balscadden House	0	4	2	3	9
St Fintan's Holy Well	0	-	-	2	2



5.0 Howth Points of Interests

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Howth Peninsula contains an impressive and diverse collection of heritage sites. From history, archaeology, heritage, maritime, mythology, culture, and biodiversity, there is something for everybody to enjoy.

The key points of interest that both locals and visitors alike can enjoy are listed and mapped below. Many of these sites can be found on existing trails, such as the Bog of Frogs Loop, Cliff Path Loop, Tram Line Loop and Black Linn Loop, but others, such as St Fintan's Church, are not featured. By highlighting these points of interest it will help to raise the consciousness of the local community in its heritage.



Howth summit path

Possible Howth Peninsula Points of Interest

Site name	Things to see & do	Rational	Ownership & Access
Howth Harbour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The full harbour walk from East to West piers. • The lighthouse. • King George IV footprints. • Lifeboats and yacht club. • Marine biodiversity. • Howth Seafarers memoria including the victims of the U-boat tragedy of 1918. • Views over Ireland's Eye and access to boat tours. • Memorial plaque to the 1914 Gun Running beside the harbour lighthouse. • Story of the many important figures and armies who landed here. 	This iconic part of Howth is easily accessible, with free parking, and is ideally located beside public transport hubs. There are plenty of amenities in the area, including restaurants, shops, pubs, cafes, and a visitor centre. It is also where boat tours around the cliffs and islands sail from.	Freely accessible and in public ownership.
The Old Courthouse/ Howth Tourist Information Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interesting architectural features. • Former place of worship for fishermen. • Story of its former use as a rent collection office and courthouse. • Scenic photographs of Howth inside. • Story of the wooden carvings located outside. 	A useful stop for people to find out more information about the area they wish to explore.	Freely accessible owned by Fingal County Council.
Balscadden Bay Beach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View the fault line that separates Howth's two main rock formations. • Enjoyable beach. • Great views. 	Quaint beach with lovely views and interesting geology. However, it is inaccessible for those with mobility issues.	Public, but not accessible to all due to the steep steps.
St Mary's Abbey and College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remains of a medieval church and college. • Contains a number of interesting features including the double effigy tomb of Christopher St Lawrence & Anna Plunkett. • Story of its foundation by Sitric the Viking ruler of Dublin. • Story of the Garland of Howth. • Story of the French monks visiting. • Unfortunately, the church is locked at all times. 	A fantastic heritage site with lots of history that is easy to find. It's visual impressive and accessible.	Accessible (although steps lead down to the site). Site managed by the Office of Public Works.

Possible Howth Peninsula Points of Interest

Site name	Things to see & do	Rational	Ownership & Access
Ye Olde Hurdy Gurdy Museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Napoleonic Martello Tower. Site of an Anglo-Norman motte & bailey. Working museum of communication history. Story of the St Lawrence's arrival in Howth. Story of Guglielmo Marconi and Lee de Forest's innovative work. Information on the Preventative Water Guards anti-smuggling work. 	Visually impressive, accessible with a strong and diverse history.	<p>Small fee payment required.</p> <p>Owned by Fingal County Council.</p> <p>Outside the building is publicly accessible.</p>
Cliff Walk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cliff walk with stunning views. Biodiversity. Views over south Dublin. Quarries. Views of cairn sites including Kilrock. 	Already a very popular destination in Howth. The area offers great views over the sea within a natural environment.	Freely accessible.
Town Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catholic Church of the Assumption. 19th-century vernacular town architecture. 1930s Library. 1854 National School Building (now St Columbanus Hall). Former residents of the town include Captain William Blythe of Mutiny on the Bounty. Lovely shops, restaurants and cafes. Story of former church (now Renaissance Products) construction by local dock workers, temporary rail line and carts used with external cart carvings. 	A charming town centre that unfortunately tends to be overlooked because of the attractions of the harbour and cliff walks. There is much to see and enjoy here, particularly from an architectural perspective, and there are fantastic amenities.	Freely accessible and open to the public.
Éire 6 Sign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Story of Howth's connection to WWI and WWII. Information on the Howth Éire Restoration Group. Information on local nature and biodiversity. 	Provides great views over the Irish Sea as well as a chance to see Howth's impressive nature and biodiversity at this stop.	Freely accessible.

Possible Howth Peninsula Points of Interest

Site name	Things to see & do	Rational	Ownership & Access
Bailey Lighthouse or view point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> History of the lighthouses in Howth. Story of King Crimthann and the promotory fort. Story of the Vikings. Information on the shipwrecks that have occurred in this area. Irish Lights Museum 	Incredible views and history.	The lighthouse is visible but not fully accessible. In the care of Irish Lights.
St Fintan's Church and Cemetery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The remains of an old church, early ecclesiastical enclosure and cross can be found in the graveyard. Folklore connected to the church and nearby holy well. Information on interesting graves including those of Phil Lynott and Pádraic Column. 	Interesting archaeology and connections to major musicians and literary figures.	Publicly accessible in the care of Fingal County Council.
Corr Castle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> History of Corr Castle. Story of the races being viewed from here. Information about the quarry. 	This is not an official stop as accessibility is limited but a view of the castle is available from the external footpath.	Not accessible. Owned by Corr Castle Management Company
Howth Presbyterian Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impressive architecture. 	Possibly a short architectural stop as accessibility is limited.	Freely accessible, in church ownership
Claremont Beach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beautiful golden beach. Views towards Ireland's Eye and Lambay Island. Nice place for swimming. Story of land reclamation here. 	This stop shows of the variety of terrains Howth has to offer.	Freely accessible and in public ownership.

Possible Howth Peninsula Points of Interest (continued)

Site name	Things to see & do	Rational	Ownership & Access
Howth Demesne (including castle, transport museum, gate and medieval church)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on the Gaisford-St Lawrence family and their connection to Jonathan Swift. • External view of the castle's architectural features including the gate lodge. • Information on St Mary's Church of Ireland. • Encourage a visit to the National Transport Museum. • Story of Grace O'Malley's visit. • Folklore of Lord Howth and the rat. • Story of the elm tree and the mermaid connected to the family. 	Significant part of Howth's history. Visually very impressive. Multiple sites to see including a museum, castle, gate house, church etc.	Currently owned by Tetrarch Capital.
Aideen's Grave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archaeological information on this large portal tomb. • Story of Howth's connection to the Fianna, particularly the story of Aideen. • Information on Ferguson's poem; Aideen's Grave. 	Impressive archaeological site with a mythological connection. This site is very important to the people of Howth. The path to the site is particularly beautiful when the Rhododendrons are in bloom.	Currently owned by Tetrarch Capital.
Ireland's Eye	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on St Nessan's church. • Story of the Garland of Howth and the devil. • Story of the Kirwan murder. • Information on large Martello tower. • Biodiversity on the island. 	Beautiful island with fantastic history and biodiversity that can be enjoyed from a distance. Provides the option to take a boat trip.	Currently owned by Tetrarch Capital.

Locations:

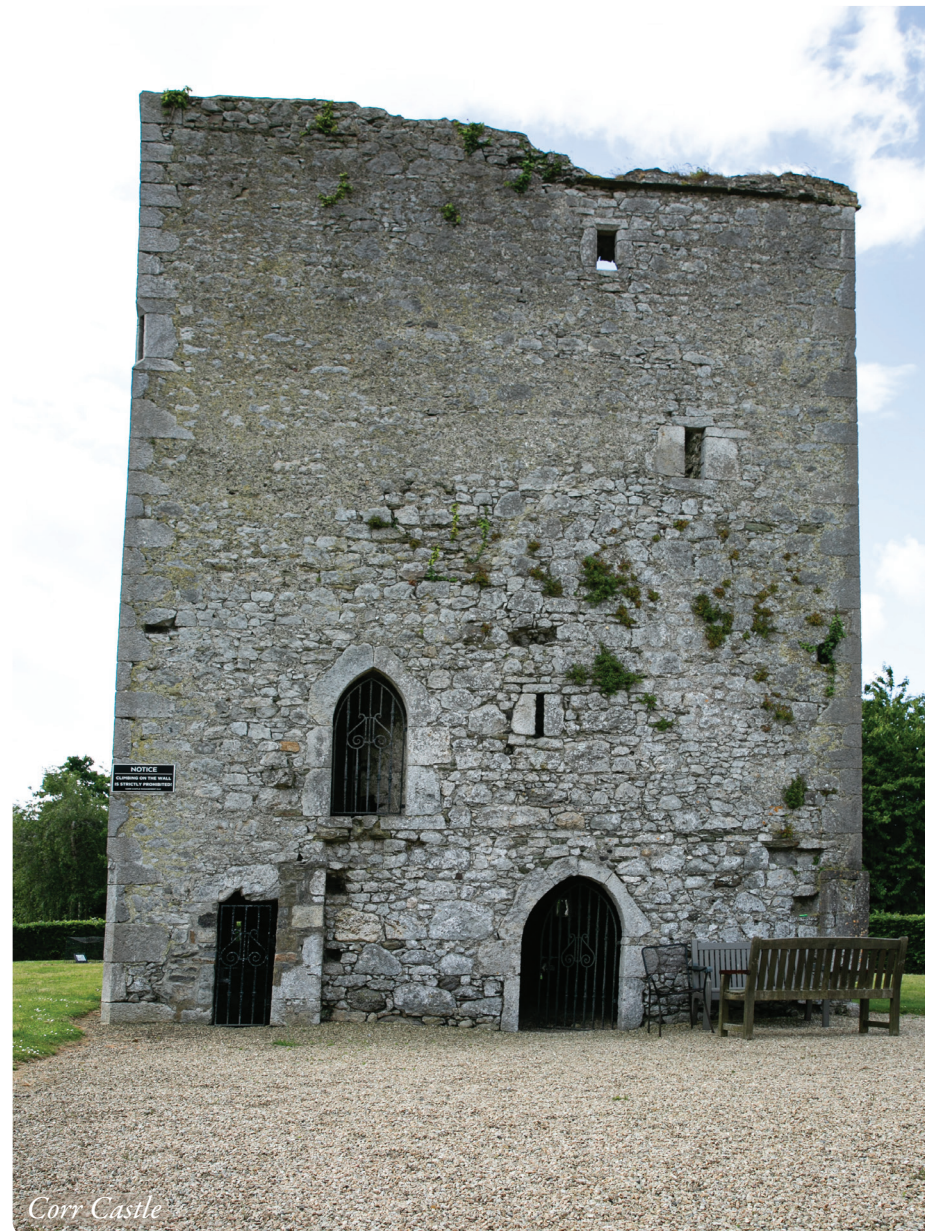
1. Howth Harbour
2. Howth Old Courthouse
3. Balscadden Bay Beach
4. St. Mary's Abbey
5. Ye Olde Hurdy Gurdy Museum Of Vintage Radio
6. Town Centre
7. Howth Cliff Walk
8. Eire Sign
9. Bailey lighthouse
10. St Fintan's Church and cemetery
11. Corr Castle
12. Howth Presbyterian Church
13. Claremont beach
14. Howth Castle Demesne
15. Aideen's grave and Rhododendron gardens
16. Howth boat tours



Map of possible Howth Peninsula Points of Interest

Recommendations for Consideration

- Work with a local artist to create a bespoke map and/or leaflet highlighting Howth's impressive points of interest. These maps should be online, available to download, in brochure format and on map boards around Howth, particularly at access points.
- Erect sensitive way-marking and interpretation signage to help people navigate the route. This should be clutter-free and in accordance with Fingal County Council's signage standards; see Heritage Signage & Heritage Trail Guidance: <https://www.fingal.ie/sites/default/files/2021-06/a4-fcc-heriage-signage-booklet-eng-web.pdf>. For sites that are not accessible, such as Corr castle, we recommend working with the owners to discuss ways of including the sites, perhaps by off-site interpretation accessible through QR codes.
- Promote these interesting sites online perhaps by using a future Howth website or StoryMap (see recommendations). The online information can be added to over time by including additional information about the sites as well as stories, folklore, videos and photographs.
- Examine the potential of regular guided walks that highlight different elements of Howth's heritage and biodiversity at different times of the year, e.g. a bird-watching walk or a plant survey walk.
- Explore organising expert talks at the sites on significant days to keep the trails and their history vibrant and renewed. Each year, slightly new perspectives should be drawn on how to achieve this. For example, experts talking at the Éire 6 sign, the Bailey lighthouse and Martello tower.
- Organise events such as re-enactments to promote Howth's heritage, e.g., the Howth gunrunning.
- Consider recording an audio guide about the key points of interest for people to listen to from the comfort of their homes or while out exploring the sites (see recommendations).



Corr Castle



6.0 Recommendations

6.0 Recommendations

The Howth Community Heritage Audit brought a number of recommendations to light which are listed below in no particular order. A table at the end of this section details short, medium and long term actions that can be undertaken by the community.

Recommendation: A Community Arts, Heritage, Cultural Space

The community survey results and the two Story Drop workshops have made it clear that the people of Howth would like a space to host events and permanently exhibit their heritage. Many remember the previous community space and would like to see the funds from the sale of that site go towards establishing a new and modern premise.

A site has already been proposed, and plans with the local church to establish the centre have been discussed, though any plans to develop a Community Arts, Cultural and Heritage Space must adhere to the Fingal Development Plan and would be subject to planning and the availability of funding. Proposed plans would need to be further explored with Fingal County Council. An important initial step in the process would be the preparation of a business plan by an experienced and reputable company to consider the viability of a centre. A business plan would investigate and outline the potential funding streams and financing options, the benefits, costs and impacts of a centre as well as potential operation and governance models. Ongoing support and guidance from Fingal County Council will be required and visits to other community run heritage centres could be useful to explore other potential uses for the site.

A community heritage centre in Howth could be a useful resource for many community groups, including arts groups. Engagement with these groups will be important in order to gather their input into a business plan and demonstrate that the needs of these groups has been considered. A permanent exhibition on Howth's history could be housed in such a centre, along with

displays of other important community projects such as Barry Lacey's map of families living in 19th century Howth or some of the impressive items from Howth Castle that local people have purchased at auction.

It is also recommended that other opportunities are explored for the display and exhibition of the wonderful heritage of Howth in other public spaces in Howth to raise awareness and increase social capital.



Impressive stone work at Howth Castle gate house

Recommendation - Host an oral history project

Howth is an ever-changing place. What was once a rural part of Dublin where many families worked in the agricultural or maritime professions is now a wealthy suburb and commuter area. Howth's distant history has been proudly recorded and safeguarded, but the not-so-distant history of the mid-to-late 20th century is disappearing with the increased development happening on the peninsula. We recommend that Howth conduct an oral history project where the older members of the community and anyone else who wishes to share information can have their stories recorded. The Oral History Network of Ireland (www.oralhistorynetworkireland.ie) has lots of resources on the website to advise on developing projects as well as in person or online training courses and sample consent forms that must be used when interviewing people.

A wonderful example of a community oral history project was created for Rathanna National School called 'Memories of our School Days' by Ulab Studio which can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e9IihQvy6TM>. Howth could also take inspiration from Waterways Ireland who have an oral history program specifically focused on waterways: <https://archive.waterwaysireland.org/oral-histories>.

Once complete, the recordings could be shared with the whole community on a dedicated Youtube channel, town website, iCan page, StoryMap or with some of the maritime and transport museums Howth has a connection with, e.g. Ireland's National Transport Museum, Orange Transport Museum in California, where the No. 2 Howth tram is preserved or the Belfast Transport and Folk Museum, where tram No. 4 is held.

Recommendation - Interpretation signage

While auditing Howth's key points of interest, it became clear that many people, both local and visitors, were making excellent use of the cliff walk maps and signage but were looking for more information about the area's history and biodiversity. This has additionally been highlighted in the Howth Community Heritage Survey results.

We do not recommend that Howth become inundated with signage. However, a small number of sites could be selected for strategic signage covering key stories relating to the heritage of Howth; see Appendix 1 for further details on the interpretation suggestions.

Any signage created should be sympathetic to the area and in keeping with Fingal County Council's signage standards, which can be found here:

<https://www.fingal.ie/sites/default/files/2021-06/a4-fcc-heritage-signage-booklet-eng-web.pdf>.

QR codes could be added to the signs to offer further information and access to useful websites, such as a town webpage.



Fingal County Council signage from Donabate-Portrane courtesy of Christine Baker

Recommendation - Establish Howth Points of Interest

Howth has so much to offer, from stunning views, diverse wildlife, heritage sites, unique culture, folklore and enchanting myths and legends. Unfortunately, many don't realise how much there is to see and enjoy as Howth's heritage is spread across the peninsula and not always easy to find. A beautifully designed map or brochure could efficiently guide locals and visitors to Howth's most compelling sites. This could be supported by online interpretation which will help to ensure that the unique story of Howth is shared, reduce congestion in certain areas and ensure that routes stay open and active.

A bespoke map could be made available online, in brochure form in visitor centres, and on map boards. Simple, non-intrusive directional and interpretation signage at key points will also be required. However, they should not be invasive or create unnecessary clutter. For more guidelines, see Fingal County Council's Heritage Signage & Heritage Trail Guidance: <https://www.fingal.ie/sites/default/files/2021-06/a4-fcc-heriage-signage-booklet-eng-web.pdf>.

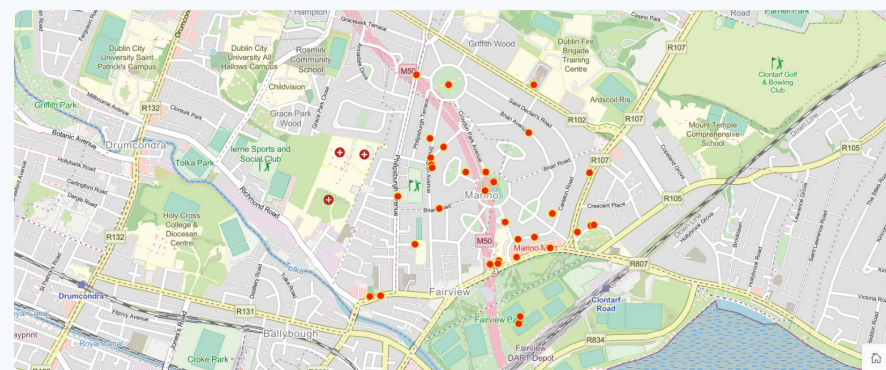
Further interpretation interventions could include creating a booklet, podcast, audioguide or videos offering more details about the area's heritage sites but also its biodiversity and intangible heritage.

Recommendation - Howth StoryMap

The survey and two Story Drop sessions highlighted the number of stories and memories that many people have and were too numerous to record in this report. A StoryMap would be a great online platform to record these stories for Howth. This could be interactive and would allow people to easily contribute memories, upload videos and photographs, or make oral recordings. Recording days could be hosted in the future to help those that might not have easy access to a computer, to add their stories. Examples of this type of project can be seen here: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/4866426c67754073ae5bbcd52cd1b73a>.

If a StoryMap for Howth is created, it should remain up for a number of years to capture as much information from the public as possible; thus creating a bank of stories relating to Howth. The StoryMap would also allow interpretation to be shared without installing signage; it could highlight a future Howth Points of Interest and be colour-coded to correspond with some of the area's key themes such as Mythology & Folklore, Conquest-Military-Revolution, Inspiring Artists, Transport & Engineering.

Funding for a Howth StoryMap could be sought through the Heritage Council's Community Grants Scheme.



Marino Heritage Project Storymap

Recommendation - Create a virtual heritage space

Though Howth features on major websites such as www.visitdublin.com and www.fingal.ie, it has yet to have its own dedicated website. Community websites can be highly beneficial for sharing information, especially history, videos and a calendar for local events. It can also act as a virtual exhibition space and heritage centre.

Community websites or StoryMaps provide a safe and reliable space to share local stories, photographs, memories, historical documents and research.

In addition, it might be worth approaching Irish Lights about their exhibition in the Bailey Lighthouse, which is only accessible by appointment. If part of this excellent exhibition were made available on a Howth website, it will raise awareness about the story of the lighthouse and make this exhibition more accessible.

Recommendation - Interpretation for children

Developing interpretation for younger age groups is a great way of passing on the stories and love for heritage to a younger generation. This could be done in the form of a fun colouring book that features the stories of Howth such as; Fionn McCumhall, Aileen's grave, Diarmuid & Grainne, Grace O'Malley, etc. A local artist could be commissioned to illustrate this booklet, or an art competition could be held in local schools.

In addition, a Howth Heritage Passport could be created to help children learn about Howth's maritime past. The passport would be a fun way to learn how Howth was once an important landing place, e.g., for the Vikings, Anglo-Normans, King George IV, Prince Thomas of Lancaster, and the crew of the Asgard.

In addition, the passport could highlight Howth's points of interest, where families could discover other historic sites and see the area's fantastic biodiversity. A simple quiz on Howth's history with hints found on any future interpretation panels could make for an intriguing treasure hunt aspect. The Howth passport could be available online or in the community centre, train station or the Old Courthouse. Once completed, the passport could be brought to the Old Courthouse, where it would gain an official Howth stamp or sticker.

Recommendation - Story Sharing Nights

Howth has a great literary tradition that has inspired many artists over the centuries. The peninsula also has a fantastic array of myths and legends that have captured the imaginations of many. Stories of the Tuatha de Danann, the Fianna, Grace O'Malley, etc. This tradition should be kept alive through a number of story-sharing nights each year. These could be held in exciting venues such as Balcadden Bay Beach, Aileen's Grave, local caves or lighthouses with a mix of professional and amateur storytellers.



Recommendation - Community Projects

Howth has a fantastic community interested in researching and expanding the wealth of knowledge about their area. The Howth Community Survey also showed a real appetite amongst the locals for community projects to be undertaken and a willingness to volunteer. We recommend that a number of community projects should build on the understanding of the area and so we have outlined some examples below:

- The shipwrecks surrounding Howth, with in-depth research of crew and passengers.
- Fishermen marks; each local fisherman buoy had a unique mark to identify them. This project could record those marks and expand by looking into how these buoys were made from cured mountain goat skin.
- Maritime artefacts, items connected to Howth's maritime history, can be found in several places, including the National Maritime Museum in Dun Laoghaire. It would be worth creating an online database of where these objects can be found, how they are connected to Howth, and having them professionally photographed.
- Nicknames: Both people and places in Howth have nicknames that relate to events and are part of the area's intangible heritage. It would be great to record these names and the meaning behind them before those memories are lost.

The information gathered could be added to Howth's digital databases, such as a possible future StoryMap. In addition, a series of community heritage booklets could be created that could form the basis for exhibitions in any future Howth Community Arts, Cultural & Heritage space.

Recommendation - A Maritime Gathering

A 'gathering-type' festival could be held to commemorate Howth's long fishing tradition. Descendants of the fishermen (from Howth, Donegal and Scotland) who seasonally caught herring in Howth could celebrate their ancestors and local tradition. This would be a great opportunity to host an oral history project where people could meet and exchange stories and memories. For example, at one of our Story Drop events, the group mentioned that they would often know more about fishermen from Donegal than they would about fishermen in other parts of Dublin.

In keeping with the traditions unique to Howth, there could be a recreation of the psalms sung on the East pier, a blessing of the boats, a crowning of the queen and a service in the mariner's hall. Some of the jobs could be reenacted, such as mending netting or gutter girls. This would bring Howth's history to life. An excellent example of a successful annual maritime festival is 'Seafest' held in Cromane, Co. Kerry: <https://www.cromaneseafest.com/events-activities> which Howth could take inspiration from.

It's important that this event really focuses on community participation rather than tourist numbers. To help this we recommend engaging with local groups and develop a programme which local schools can participate in.

Recommendation - Short films

A number of small towns and villages across Ireland have created short videos to tell the story of their area in a way that engages the modern audience. These have proved to be an excellent way of sharing unique stories and offer locals a chance to have fun and get involved with telling their community's history. This has been successfully achieved by the Tipperary Excel Heritage Company who told the story of Dan Breen's wedding during the War of

Independence. This video is now housed on YouTube for all to enjoy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0h0y7E4ZLo>.

Howth has so many fascinating tales that could be successfully told through this medium, including The Adventures of Seán Óg and Séamus found in Pearse McLoughlin's *Winds and Waves and Running Streams*. The short video could be hosted on a community website or YouTube channel. It could also form an excellent community project for Heritage Week, and the arts community in Howth could get involved. Funding for this project could be sought from Creative Ireland.

Recommendation - Audio Guide

We recommend that the community consider creating an audio guide to highlight the impressive history, culture, and heritage of their area. The guide could tie into the Howth Points of Interest mentioned in Chapter 5 or focus on intangible heritage that can not be seen or visited.

Audio guides can be crafted to be used on a tour of Howth and equally enjoyable from the comfort of your own home. In this way, an audio guide acts as a powerful and perpetual online brochure that tells the area's unique story.

We recommended that local voices from Howth's community be used throughout the guide to tell the story of their area. The audio guide could be featured on any future town website and connected to future interpretation panels using QR codes.

However, care should be taken as to the mechanism by which a user can find and utilise the audio guide. We recommend avoiding standalone apps, as they are expensive to produce, limited in capacity, difficult to maintain, and require a user to download the app using their limited storage. Instead, make the audio guide accessible on platforms visitors already use to access audio entertainment such as Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Audible, Acast and more.

Recommendation - Eco walk

Howth's varied landscapes are home to a fantastic array of flora and fauna. Each plant, insect, bird and animal requires a certain set of circumstances to flourish. We recommend establishing regular eco walks in Howth to increase awareness of environmental issues. These walks could also be used to highlight the importance of the protection and enhancement of the natural heritage.

Recommendation -Footfall Counters

Footfall counters are used to monitor visitor numbers on the cliff walks around Howth. However, it would be worthwhile to also monitor visitor numbers to some of the key heritage sites in Howth as well. For example, footfall counters could be installed at St Mary's Abbey to monitor and better understand the flow of visitors to this fantastic site.

Recommendation -Ireland's Eye

Ireland's Eye has a fascinating history and important archaeological sites. Additionally it is an important breeding ground for sea birds. Any access or interpretive developments on the island must adhere to the policies and recommendations set forward in the Conservation Management Plan that was developed for the island.

Below, we have broken down the recommendations into simple short, medium and long-term tasks. Implementation will rely largely on local community endeavour, with the support of state bodies and the local authority where appropriate.

Table of Community Recommendations

Recommendation	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
Community, Arts, Cultural and Heritage Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the community, Fingal County Council and relevant local interests. • Work with professionals to create a business plan. • Seek the incorporation of a strong local heritage aspect in the centre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow the business plan recommendations. • Speak to other heritage centres about their experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employ a permanent manager. • Consider permanent displays (Howth castle items that the community have secured). • Host community events.
Conduct an Oral History Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact a professional oral historian. • Identify themes and potential speakers. • Tie in with other events such as a maritime gathering festival or story sharing night. • Consider where the recording will be stored and displayed long term. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get consent from local voices and host a number of recording sessions. • Reach out to maritime and transport museums and centres that might like to participate in the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Store the stories in a place that is accessible for the public and researchers.
Promote Howth's Points of Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek funding for way marking and interpretation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research information for signage and other forms of useful interpretation including an audio guide. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish signage. • Promote the brochures and audio guide. • Host events connected to these sites.
Interpretation signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine possible sites for signage. • Consider potential of overlap with current looped trails. • Seek funding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and create appropriate content. • Source images. • Consider QR codes to websites. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erect signage that benefits the area.

Table of recommendations based on site (continued)

Recommendation	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
Howth StoryMap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage a professional to create an online interactive Howth StoryMap. Add some key stories, memories, videos, images. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote and encourage people to contribute. Add information from key talks held in Howth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host 'Story Drop' sessions to help the community add their stories if they are not computer literate.
Virtual Heritage Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider options for a virtual space, would a website, YouTube channel or StoryMap best suit Howth's needs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employ a professional to create a town website and Youtube channel. Add information in the form of text, photographs, recordings and videos. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update the content on a biannual basis.
Interpretation for children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pick a collection of Howth myths and legends for a children's colouring book. Seek funding through the Arts Council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with an artist to recreate the stories in a colouring book. Work with the artist to create the passport. Work with local schools to create an active heritage program for children to participate in. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish the booklet and make it available online for Heritage Week. Have Howth Passports available locally. Have a stamp/sticker collection ready at the courthouse for children who complete the booklet.
Story Sharing Nights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a feasibility study to host story sharing nights in interesting locations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact professional and amateur story tellers. Promote events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host events and consider changes for the future.
Maritime Gathering Festival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey the community to see if there is an appetite for a festival. Seek funding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a business plan. Reach out to communities connected to Howth's maritime heritage. Engage with local heritage groups and schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host event with reenactments. Host oral history recordings. Consider making this a regular festival.

Table of recommendations based on site (continued)

Recommendation	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
Short films	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify suitable stories. Work with the Arts Council and local art and film groups. Identify community members willing to participate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a script. Organise set and costumes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise days for filming and editing. Host content on town website and YouTube channel.
Eco Walks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Fingal County Council's Biodiversity Officer to plan possible eco walks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host training for eco walks. Invite specialists to give walks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote upcoming walks. Encourage feedback for monitoring of biodiversity in the area.
Audio Guides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider possible points of interest and stories suitable for the audio guide tracks. Determine potential grant funding for the guide. Identify possible local voices who might like to tell their stories on the audio guide. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with professionals to create a script. Record and produce the audio guide. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the guide. Make the guide available to the public through a town website.



7.0 Conclusion

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During the creation of this audit, it became clear that Howth has a true wealth of heritage to explore. From archaeological sites to biodiverse landscapes to myths and folklore, this rich heritage is matched by an enthusiastic and engaged local community, who are keen to preserve this heritage.

The audit gives a road map with many recommended projects that can engage the community to record and preserve the heritage for future generations. The database and audit can be used as a solid foundation for the future development of the area. Since the town is not fixed in time but continues to grow and develop, the database should not be considered a finished product. Instead, it is a working document that can be expanded in the future as more information comes to light.



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