

Westmeath Heritage Plan 2018-2023



Draft Issues Paper

Westmeath County Council and Westmeath Heritage Forum are beginning the process of writing a new Heritage Plan for County Westmeath and would like to hear your views on what actions should be contained in the new Plan.

If you are a member of a community group, tidy towns group, historical society, wildlife group or an individual interested in the heritage of County Westmeath you are invited to make a submission on the new Plan by 20 December 2017.

If you make a submission you are ensuring that the specific views of the people of Westmeath are considered in writing the Plan. The submissions made will feed directly into the Draft Heritage Plan. The Draft Plan will be put on public display for a period of 6 weeks, during this time the public will be able to comment on its content.

What is Heritage?

Our heritage is all around us. The 1995 Heritage Act defines Heritage as including 'monuments, archaeological objects, heritage objects, architectural heritage, flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, seascapes, wrecks, geology, heritage gardens and parks and inland waterways'.

Heritage is both tangible and intangible. It is how we identify ourselves and define a sense of place. Cultural heritage can include local history, folklore, traditions, place names and genealogy.

Some aspects of our local heritage are regionally, nationally and/or internationally important and are protected by national or international legislation. As we plan for our future we need to plan for the future of our heritage also. This will ensure that our heritage, which enhances our communities and enriches our lives, will be passed on to our children and to their children in turn.

What is the County Heritage Plan?

The Heritage Plan is a series of actions compiled from input from organisations and individuals who have an interest in the heritage of County Westmeath. It is a five year document, which details how heritage in the county shall be managed and protected on a partnership basis. It is an opportunity to identify heritage issues and heritage needs at a local level and to address them locally within a national framework.

The writing of a Heritage Plan is overseen by the County Westmeath Heritage Forum, which is a representative group of organisations or individuals within the county who work in the area of heritage or have an interest in heritage.

The Current County Westmeath Heritage Plan

The aim of the Heritage Plan is 'to identify, conserve, raise awareness and promote enjoyment of all aspects of the built, natural and cultural heritage of the county'. It contains the following objectives:

1. *To identify the natural heritage and built heritage of Westmeath*
2. *To conserve all aspects of heritage*
3. *To promote awareness of heritage in the whole community*
4. *To integrate all aspects of the protection and enhancement of heritage into the development process*

Specific actions were detailed under each objective. A similar approach will be used in drafting the new Heritage Plan. **You are invited to help define the objectives of the new plan and to help prioritise areas for action in the new Plan which will run from 2018-2023.**

What has been done already?

The existing Heritage Plan (2010-2015) contains 88 actions. Progress has been made on implementing of most of these actions and several actions are on-going.

Here is an example of some of the projects carried out:

- *Survey of prehistoric barrows in Westmeath*
- *Leaflets with advice notes on historic doors and windows*
- *Restoration of beehive at Adolphus Cooke's resting place*
- *Fore Conservation Management Plan (2010)*
- *Schools Workbooks on 'Important Habitats of Westmeath'*
- *Produced Westmeath Biodiversity Action Plan*
- *Information signs erected at 6 Conservation status lakes in Westmeath*
- *Information leaflets on 6 lakes with conservation status in Co. Westmeath*
- *Seminar for owners of Protected Structures*

- *Seminars and leaflets on good practice for biodiversity*

Have your say....

Everyone's views are considered in drafting the Heritage Plan so anyone can make a submission.

Your submission should include your name, address, contact number and email. State what group you represent (if any) and tell us about your group's interests.

The main part of the submission should include details on which aspect/s of heritage you are interested in and what action/s you think need to be taken.

Then, post or email your submission before 20 December 2017 to the Westmeath Heritage Office.

You can also complete the Heritage Plan Consultation Form which is available, along with further information on: [//www.westmeathcoco.ie/ heritage plan](http://www.westmeathcoco.ie/heritageplan)

What happens then?

A draft heritage Plan will be written. This plan will be put on public display. You can then see how your opinions and ideas have been taken into account.

There will be public workshops to discuss the Draft Heritage Plan and there will be opportunities to comment on the draft plan.

Once a final Heritage Plan has been written, it will be presented to Westmeath County Council for adoption. We then start carrying out the actions.

If you would like to be informed of the progress of the county Westmeath Heritage Plan and other Heritage Issues in the county fill in the submissions form and return to the Heritage Officer:

Post: Heritage Plan Submissions
Melanie McQuade
Heritage Officer
Westmeath County Council
Aras an Chontae
Mullingar
Co. Westmeath
Email: heritageplan@westmeathcoco.ie