

HERITAGE ASSET REPORT

How to complete a Heritage Audit

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Introduction

The historic environment plays an important role in providing a sense of place and identity, supporting well-being, and promoting economic growth and community cohesion. As such, it is crucial that it is understood, valued, protected and made accessible to current and future generations.

In order to effectively protect, manage and realise value from our heritage assets, it is important to collate and critique information and understanding of the heritage we have and of what organisational assets are available to enable that heritage to reach its potential. Heritage will be a mix of the tangible (the structures) and the intangible (the stories, and the feel of a place as shaped by its history).

The aim of a Heritage Audit is therefore to collate information on the heritage assets in an area, and the extent to which they are being used and valued, in order to gain greater understanding, stimulate discussion, and allow their value to be further realised. This will include a consideration of opportunities and challenges, including any particular blockages to the proposed work and how these can be addressed. Both the tangible and intangible assets and their uses will need to be explored, understanding that there will on occasion be a tension between the best-understood history of place, and the way it is perceived, used and valued by those in a community.

Each audit examines the heritage assets of a defined area, alongside the capacity and activities of the relevant heritage organisations. This allows us to identify issues facing heritage, potential connections and opportunities, and what support is required to maximise those opportunities. The audit process will bring together a significant amount of information about an area. Taken together, the series of audits will create a snapshot of the state of NI's heritage assets and sector, their potential to support Programme for Government and Community Plan outcomes, and the actions that need to be taken to enable this to be achieved.

Nine audits were completed in an initial pilot phase, four in 2017-18 and five in 2018-19. This Guide has been informed by those audits and a review of how the approach worked. It has been created to allow a range of organisations and individuals to complete Audits of further areas (as set out on the Audit map at <https://dfcgis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=bdfd4e5151c64647a2392873ac66d4d5>) to allow further insights and understanding of heritage across Northern Ireland.

'Heritage assets' include significant archaeological sites and monuments, historic buildings, industrial sites, artefacts, historic gardens and other elements of our historic environment.

These are tangible connections to our past, and should be considered a finite resource. They also create important intangible heritage – including stories – which increase value and which become an important part of the asset. It is important that the Audit considers both the tangible and intangible heritage of an area, and considers how these in combination create a sense of place across and within communities and settlements.

Following a review of the audit process in November 2019, it was agreed that there are two principal audiences for the audits:

- People living in, connected with or interested in an area – to learn more about the heritage there, to understand its potential and how they may play a part in realising that, and the activity that already exists that they can connect with
- Decision makers in investment decisions in an area, particularly district councils and other funders, as context for decision making – as the reports provide an understanding of what there is and how people are engaging and can engage with it. The reports do not set out to be definitive appraisals, but give a flavour of what is being achieved and what more can be achieved

Those conducting an audit need to keep these two audiences in mind throughout the process.

Overview of process

Identification of audit area

Based on the pilot audits undertaken during the pilot phase, HED has created a map of proposed audit areas in Northern Ireland (<https://dfcgis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=bdfd4e5151c64647a2392873ac66d4d5>). These boundaries are based on Governmental boundaries and care needs to be taken to look at the audit area in a wider geographical context. There may be possible connections and significant sites or organisations outside the bounds of an audit area.

Desk based research

General

It is useful to gain an overview of the heritage of the audit area. This can be achieved through general research of the area's history and heritage and learning about the planning context. The RSA's Heritage Index can also provide a useful baseline at a council area scale.

Recorded Heritage Assets

It is important to gather information on the recorded heritage assets of the area such as:

Historic Buildings:

- Listed buildings
- Locally listed buildings
- Buildings at Risk

Sites and Monuments:

- Scheduled monuments
- State Care monuments
- Areas of Significant Archaeological Interest
- Areas of Archaeological Potential
- Recorded Sites and Monuments
- Industrial archaeology
- Maritime sites
- Battle sites
- Defence
- Historic Parks and Gardens

Other

- Conservation Areas
- Museums
- Archives
- Artefacts

Much of this information will be to hand in the Historic Environment Record of NI (HERoNI) managed by Historic Environment Division, and in previous reports on heritage in an area. The purpose of a Heritage Audit is not to reproduce or duplicate this material, but to draw it out, test the level of understanding of it with local stakeholders, and explore with those in the local area how the assets can best be used to support the local community and visitors to the area.

Another key element to attempt to draw out is an understanding of why certain assets are in the area (or are absent from the area). As the assets shape the heritage of an area, the work needs to explore why as well as what.

Identification of key stakeholders

Begin by contacting Local Councils (the tourism and planning divisions may be most useful); local museums and libraries; The National Lottery Heritage Fund and Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF). They may help to identify other local contacts or groups in the area. Significant heritage assets identified through desktop research may already be established as a site or attraction and contacts easily identified.

Many groups involved in heritage will be keen to be given the opportunity to put forward their views and identify any issues there may be. Identifying key stakeholders and engaging with them as soon as possible is a good way to get a feel for the 'on the ground' issues and opportunities which can help build suitable recommendations. They will also be able to provide links to or copies of previous work that will be important background and input to the Audit.

Fieldwork

A key aspect of the process is stakeholder engagement, allowing a better understanding of the area, and particularly the issues and opportunities facing heritage. Meeting with individuals and groups is time consuming and needs to be allowed for.

Organise to meet some stakeholders and visit some of the more significant sites to get a feel for the heritage of the area. This may identify further interested parties and will provide a deeper understanding of any unique issues and potential opportunities.

It is useful to be aware that there may be very enthusiastic groups or individuals who are very focussed on their individual site. It is important to listen to stakeholders, but remember that the audit should be at a fairly 'high level', and should have regard for a wide range of opinions.

Questionnaire

Questionnaires are a useful way to get stakeholder input, and to gain an understanding of the capacity of groups in the audit area. See Appendix 2 for sample questionnaires.

Surveys and discussions allow for a much better understanding of heritage and the issues and opportunities in each area. Each area will be faced with different issues and opportunities only revealed through in-depth engagement. These are therefore a very important aspect of the Audit, as they 'ground' the work and the report, and bring up to date previous work.

Asset assessments

The process of desktop research, fieldwork and stakeholder engagement should highlight important heritage assets of the audit area. Asset assessments provide the opportunity to bring together a structured consideration of individual assets, and the chance to consider how these could best be used/protected/developed. They can also reveal potential obstacles or threats. An audit will only allow the detailed consideration of a subset of heritage assets in the area. The selection will rely on the author's judgement, taking into

account assets that are designated, and assets that stakeholders see as important. The assessment should be focussed on the second part of the template – the benefits, potential and constraints – with the description of the asset included as reference material. See Appendix 1 for a sample asset assessment.

SWOT Analysis

The audit process should provide a deeper understanding of the area's heritage and organisational assets. It should also reveal any issues, along with potential opportunities for the heritage and organisational assets.

With the information gathered from desktop research, stakeholder engagement and fieldwork, it should be possible to identify the audit area's specific strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Recommendations

Once the area's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats have been analysed, it should be possible to develop a series of recommendations on how heritage organisations and others in an area can better utilise the heritage assets.

The recommendations should draw on the mix of in depth findings of the audit process. They should take into account the tangible and intangible heritage assets, available organisational assets and reflect the diversity of interests identified. Recommendations should not be dependent on available resources.

'Treasure the Past; Enrich the Future'

<http://niheritagedelivers.org/downloads/niheritagedelivers.pdf> (produced March 2018 by the Department for on behalf of Heritage Delivers) is a useful publication, providing a new approach and vision for Northern Ireland's historic environment. This document sets out a compelling narrative built on the belief that 'protecting and investing in our heritage is essential to creating a better future, because it supports our prosperity, strengthens our society, and shapes our character'. The themes identified can also provide a useful basis on which to categorise recommendations.

Report structure

To enable reading between different Audit reports, it is helpful to use a consistent structure across the reports, using the following general format:

- Brief summary of the purpose of the report (what it is and what it isn't) and the methodology applied; and that it is part of a connected series
- General background to the area and its history – which gives context for why certain assets/ classes of assets/ organisations are present or not
- What distinguishes the area from other areas
- An overview of assets in the area, with a balanced approach to the types of assets and activity
- A summary of the findings of engagement with local groups on their views on the local heritage and the local heritage sector
- Assessment of important assets in an area (as identified through their designation and through how they are seen in the local area – with the final selection of a manageable number being made by the report's author) – in a template, including their history but focusing on engagement and potential
- A SWOT analysis and general findings
- Some recommendations

It is helpful to the reader to include example of good practice, some quotes from those involved, and a good level of photography and other images (including maps).

A common template for the cover page has been created to allow the documents to be seen as part of a series. The template is used on the Audit reports provided at www.niheritagedeivers.org and the template itself is also available on the site.

Sources of information

- Local Council and Government websites
- RSA Heritage Index – organised by Council Area and can be downloaded from the page below: <https://www.thersa.org/action-and-research/rsa-projects/public-services-and-communities-folder/heritage-and-place>
- The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) will have information on any past projects in the audit area: <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/in-your-area/northern-ireland>
- Historic Environment Division, Department for Communities as the custodian of the Historic Environment Record of NI(HERoNI) including:
 - Historic Environment Digital Datasets (for majority of historic buildings and sites and monuments records): <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/historic-environment-digital-datasets>

- Historic Environment Map Viewer:
<https://dfcgis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=6887ca0873b446e39d2f82c80c8a9337>
 - Built heritage at risk: <https://apps.communities-ni.gov.uk/Barni/>
 - Access to other information and includes links to Listed Buildings Database and Sites and Monuments Record <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/topics/historic-environment>
<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/natural-stone-database> (Second Surveyed Buildings will include historical information about the buildings and may include refs which can be used for further research) (The sites and monuments records may include copies of articles written about sites)
- Identifying Conservation Areas and associated information:
https://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/policy/planning_statements_and_supplementary_planning_guidance/conservation.htm
- Public Records Office Northern Ireland, PRONI may be useful for old maps etc:
<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/proni>
- Historic Buildings in the area may have been taken on by a Buildings Preservation Trust. If they are part of Heritage Trust Network they will be here:
<http://www.heritagetrustnetwork.org.uk/about-us/areas/northern-ireland/>
- Local museums can be a useful source of information as well as being assets in their own right. Northern Ireland Museum Council is useful to identify registered/accredited collections:
<https://www.nimc.co.uk/find-a-museum/>
- Archives: http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/results/a?q=*&anc=95
- Libraries: <https://www.opendatani.gov.uk/dataset/library-locations-in-northern-ireland>
- Publication Sources:
 - Local libraries
 - Linenhall Library
 - Historic Environment Division

Appendices

Appendix 1: Sample Asset Assessment

Asset name/number	Clifton House, Belfast
HED ref number (if appropriate)	HB26/49/001 A
Heritage type	Built Heritage Collection Historic Garden
Location	2 North Queen Street, Belfast
Protection status	A
Condition/ Sensitivity	Good condition. Robustly built.
Ownership	Belfast Charitable Trust
Brief description [<i>generally drawn from HERoNI and included for reference</i>]	<p>Detached symmetrical multi-bay two-storey over basement with attic pedimented brick and stone Neo-Palladian former Poor House, dated 1774, to the designs of Robert Joy with central octagonal tower and spire and pair of pavilion wings terminating in a pair of single-bay gable-fronted pavilion blocks. Further wings to designs by W J Barre, by W Hastings and by G Ferguson.</p> <p>Despite the loss of some of the historic fabric and detailing, the original character has survived and it is a fine example of the work of several notable local architects. As the home of the Belfast Charitable Society, the building has much significance in the history of the City due to the role of the Society in the establishment of much of the city's civic amenities including water, policing, town planning and hospitals. The Gate Lodge (HB26/49/001B) and Burying Place (HB26/49/001C) complete a group of rarity and importance. The newly formed Society was made up of a group of leading Belfast citizens who played a key role in the development of Belfast and were at the forefront of providing welfare for its people.</p> <p>At the time, the care for the poor of Belfast was left to public-spirited citizens to do what they could and the Society was the driving force behind the Belfast Poor House.</p> <p>It is now a unique event venue featuring interpretation relating to the history of the poor house, including a large archive,</p>

	<p>antique and artefact collection. Space is available to hire for exhibitions, meetings, workshops and conferences.</p> <p>Tours of Clifton Cemetery are run on a regular basis.</p>
Context (Setting)	<p>Located on an elevated site to the south of the Westlink motorway, to the northeast of Clifton Street and to the west of North Queen Street with a gate lodge to the entrance on North Queen Street (HB26/49/001B), a large front lawn and a development of housing for the elderly occupying the north of the site.</p>
Auditor's appraisal of why the site is important to the local area and community	<p>This site is of local and national importance architecturally and historically.</p>
Benefits/ potential/ constraints	
Audience	<p>General public, education, visitors, interest groups, genealogists. Clifton House claimed 883 visitors in 2016 and no numbers previously submitted. There is a lot of potential.</p>
Partnerships	<p>North Belfast Heritage Group, QUB, NIEL, NIMC, local council</p>
Learning	<p>Interpretive display in house. Currently offer house and cemetery tours. Excellent potential to provide learning opportunities for schools, community groups, special interest groups and general public.</p> <p>Archive material dating back to 1752 with information regarding development of the Belfast Charitable Society and Belfast from town to city – access available for research. Excellent potential to develop archive for learning and research</p>
Community impact (involving communities)/regeneration/ volunteering	<p>The North Belfast Heritage Cluster aims to inspire community involvement – Clifton House has great potential for working with community groups</p> <p>Develop volunteer work</p>
Financial Implications – potential income opportunities and investment requirements	<p>Needs to be investigated – HED, local council, HLF, Belfast Charitable Trust</p>
Viability/constraints	<p>Funding/capacity/support from Council and local community/local development plans</p>

Comments	Clifton House is a highly significant heritage asset in north Belfast. It represents an important part of Belfast's social history and establishment of the Belfast Charitable Trust who played a key role in the development of Belfast and providing welfare for its people.
General recommendation	<p>Continue to develop North Belfast Heritage Cluster, lend support to less established groups</p> <p>Identify best options for developing archives and providing suitable storage/environmental conditions.</p> <p>General feeling that Clifton House is one of Belfast's most important heritage sites, but there is not enough public awareness. The recently awarded Great Places funding should work to address this issue for Clifton House and heritage along Crumlin Road.</p>

a: Small Organisations

1. Which area are you responding on?

2. What do you consider to be the most important historical buildings/sites in your area?

3. What do you think are the biggest issues facing heritage in your area?

4. What are the main opportunities for heritage in your area?

5. How would you define your geographic area of work or influence?

6. Do you feel the area's heritage is appreciated locally and regionally? Please explain your answer.

7. Can we put your name down as a consultee for this project?

Yes

No

If you answered "Yes" to the above, please leave your name and contact details below...

b: Large Organisations

1. Organisation Details

Organisation

Name

Email

2. Organisation Details - Relevant Location

3. Did you participate in NIEL's "Investing in Northern Ireland's Heritage" programme?

Yes

No

4. What sort of organisation are you? (Tick all that apply)

Public body

Company limited by guarantee

Voluntary organisation

Unconstituted interest group

Charity

Other (please specify)

5. How many staff do you employ?

0

6 - 10

1 - 2

More than 10

3 - 5

6. How many volunteers do you have?

7. Tell us about the kind of heritage that you are involved with

- Archaeology Community
 Built Heritage Natural Heritage
 Other (please specify)

8. Tell us what your main aims are

9. Can you summarise your biggest achievements (please include dates)

10. Tell us about the kinds of activities that you undertake (please tick all that apply)

- Exhibitions Research
 Education/Learning Tours
 Outreach and community programmes Talks/lectures
 Other (please specify)

11. What kind of facilities do you provide? (please tick all that apply)

- Permanent exhibition Shop
 Temporary exhibition Learning or community space
 Café
 Other (please specify)

12. Do you require financial resources to run your organisation?

- Yes
 No

13. If you answered "Yes" to the above, what are the main sources of your income?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> NI Government Grants | <input type="checkbox"/> Earned income |
| <input type="checkbox"/> EU Funding | <input type="checkbox"/> Membership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local Government | <input type="checkbox"/> Donations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trusts and Foundations | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) | |

14. Are your main sources of income increasing or decreasing?

- Increasing No change
 Decreasing

What do you think will happen in the future?

15. How much financial reserve do you have? Is it enough for...

- 1 - 3 months More than a year
 4 - 6 months No reserve
 Up to a year

16. What kind of fundraising capacity do you have in your organisation?

- Dedicated fundraising staff member Volunteer
 Included in a staff member's duties Consultant
 Trustee
 Other (please specify)

17. What are the main obstacles to fulfilling your ambitions?

- Financial Resources
 Staff
 Other (please specify)

18. What kinds of support would help you to achieve your targets?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Income generation support | <input type="checkbox"/> Health and Safety |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Governance | <input type="checkbox"/> Policies and Procedures |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Human Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> More connections with the heritage sector and other sectors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) | |

19. What sort of partnerships do you have? Who are your key partners?

20. What are the main opportunities for heritage in your area?

21. How would you define your geographic area of work or influence?

22. What do you consider to be the most important historical sites and organisations in your area?

23. What do you think are the biggest issues facing heritage in your area?

24. What do you think should be the vision for heritage in your area?

25. Would you be willing to share your experiences as a case study for others to learn from?

Yes

No

Please include your e-mail address so we can get in touch.