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Draft Heritage Strategy Appendices December 2025

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Appendix 1 Potential Funding Sources

Funder / Programme	Type	Scale of Funding	Eligibility Focus
Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation	Trust/Foundation	Small–medium	Arts, heritage, skills, conservation
Architectural Heritage Fund	Trust/Foundation	Small–medium (grants, loans)	Building conservation, regeneration, community use
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council	Local Authority	Small–medium	Local projects, heritage, community
Community Foundation NI – Ultach Fund	Community Foundation	Small–medium	Cultural heritage, Irish language, shared heritage
DAERA Environment Fund	Government Fund	Medium–large	Environmental & biodiversity NGOs, councils
DAERA Nature Recovery Challenge Fund	Government Fund	Medium	Species, habitats, landscape-scale projects
DfC Historic Environment Fund	Government Fund	Small–medium	Built heritage repairs, conservation, skills
Esmé Mitchell Trust	Trust/Foundation	Small–medium	Heritage, arts, culture, community in NI
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation	Foundation	Medium–large (£30k–£500k)	Culture, natural world, fairer future, communities

Funder / Programme	Type	Scale of Funding	Eligibility Focus
International Fund for Ireland	Cross-Border Fund	Medium–large	Reconciliation, peacebuilding, youth, communities
National Churches Trust & Listed Places of Worship Scheme	Trust/Gov Scheme	Small–medium	Church repairs, listed places of worship
The National Lottery Heritage Fund	Lottery Distributor	Small–large (£10k–£5m)	All heritage: built, cultural, natural, intangible
NIEA Water Quality Improvement Fund	Gov Fund	Small–medium	Water quality, river catchments, councils/NGOs
Paul Hamlyn Foundation	Foundation	Medium–large (£30k–£300k)	Arts, education, cultural learning partnerships
PEACEPLUS	EU/UK/Ireland Cross-Border	Very large (€1.1bn total programme)	Peace, reconciliation, heritage, cross-border cooperation
Shared Island Civic Society Fund	Irish Gov Cross-Border Fund	Small–medium (€5k–€100k typical)	North–South civic & cultural collaboration
The Follies Trust	Trust	Small	Conservation of architectural follies
Ulster Community Investment Trust (UCIT)	Social Finance Provider	Loans (flexible, up to £500k+)	Community groups, social enterprises, heritage reuse
Ulster Garden Villages	Trust/Foundation	Medium–large	NI charitable grants for heritage, health, community

Ulster-Scots Agency

Cultural Agency

Small-medium

Ulster-Scots language,
culture, heritage projects

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Appendix 2 Engagement Findings

The Engagement Findings Appendix documents the collaborative process and learnings behind the development of the Heritage Strategy. The engagement process was designed to bring a broad range of voices into the conversation, from local residents, school pupils and community groups to council teams and sectoral stakeholders. It set out not only to gather ideas, concerns and aspirations, but to build momentum and collective stewardship around the borough's heritage future.

What follows is a detailed account of the insights gathered across a diverse programme of drop-ins, surveys, workshops, and conversations. Together, these inputs have helped shape a strategy that is both locally grounded and forward-looking. We extend a huge thank you to everyone who played a part in shaping the strategy.

a. Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council Engagement

Heritage Places Cross Departmental Workshop Market Place Theatre 26th September, 2pm-4pm	
Attendee no.	21 Council Officers
What is your favourite place in ABC?	Majority of answers referenced natural landscape or outdoors: The Mall x 4 / Gosford Park x 2 / Armagh x 2/ Newry Canal Towpath x 2 / Peatlands Park / Brownlow House / Home / Lurgan Park / Observatory Hill / Oxford Island / Black Water
What does heritage mean to you?	<p>Heritage as identity and place - A connection to place, space, and the landscape. Understanding where we come from, shared history, and cultural identity.</p> <p>Tangible and intangible heritage - Physical elements like buildings, landmarks, and open spaces. Intangible elements like stories, beliefs, and traditions.</p> <p>Evolving and layered history - Always changing, shaped by new narratives and uses of space over time.</p> <p>Transmission and legacy - What is passed down, shaping community memory and future generations.</p> <p>Emotional and experiential nature - Can inspire connection or disconnection, and be viewed as vital or irrelevant depending on perspective.</p>
What are the heritage priorities for your teams?	<p>Conservation and protection - Safeguarding buildings, natural assets, addressing climate change impacts.</p> <p>Accessibility and usability - Enhancing safety, usability, and inclusive access to heritage sites.</p>

	<p>Community engagement and education - Promoting heritage through education, partnerships, and community participation.</p> <p>Economic and tourism development - Using heritage to revitalise town centres, attract visitors, and support local business</p> <p>Investment and infrastructure - Upgrading and maintaining heritage facilities, securing funding, and ensuring long-term sustainability.</p> <p>Inclusive heritage - Celebrating diverse stories, ensuring heritage reflects everyone, and building shared community identity.</p>
<p>What are the heritage challenges or barriers for ABC?</p>	<p>Limited control and influence - Council lacks ownership, regulatory authority, and influence over many heritage assets.</p> <p>Funding and resource constraints - Insufficient funding, human resources, and investment, making it difficult to maintain and develop heritage sites.</p> <p>Policy and planning gaps - heritage policies not fully implemented, lack of planning updates, and limited enforcement.</p> <p>Political and strategic challenges - Conflicting political priorities, changing agendas, and lack of leadership impact heritage support.</p> <p>Knowledge and communication deficiencies - Limited heritage knowledge within the council, poor communication, and lack of awareness of heritage issues.</p> <p>Community engagement and value perception - Difficulty in gaining community buy-in and making people value heritage. Heritage seen as low priority or costly.</p> <p>Interagency coordination and partnerships - Lack of joined-up working, limited inter-agency partnerships, and competing priorities hinder cohesive action.</p>

	<p>Regulatory and bureaucratic barriers - Restrictions related to listed building consents, planning permissions, and legislative requirements.</p> <p>Managing risk and expectations - High costs, risk aversion, and contested histories complicate heritage projects and decision-making.</p>
<p>What heritage opportunities exist?</p>	<p>Funding & investment - Leverage heritage funding (e.g. HLF, NLHF) and match with other opportunities to support projects.</p> <p>Economic growth - Attract tourists, stimulate local investment, and support new business through heritage development.</p> <p>Community & partnerships - Strengthen relationships, engage communities, and build partnerships inside and outside council.</p> <p>Policy & planning - Develop policies to prioritise heritage conservation and encourage residential/business use of historic buildings.</p> <p>Capacity building & education - Increase awareness, provide training, and share knowledge to enhance heritage skills and workforce.</p> <p>Enhancing spaces & facilities - Utilise underused locations, enhance natural spaces, and develop landmark buildings and conservation areas.</p> <p>Raising heritage profile - Animate cultural heritage through crafts and arts, promote heritage pride, and create vibrant town centres.</p> <p>Health & wellbeing - Promote heritage as a contributor to community health, wellbeing, and pride of place.</p>

b. Drop-ins

DATE	LOCATION	NUMBERS
25 Nov 2024	Dromore Leisure Centre, Dromore	26
27 Nov 2024	South Lakes Leisure Centre, Craigavon	33
30 Nov 2024	The Mall, Georgian Day, Armagh City	74
3 Dec 2024	Farmers Mart, Markethill	23
4 Dec 2024	Tesco, Lurgan	32
5 Dec 2024	The Millennium Court, Portadown	27
5 Dec 2024	The Boulevard, Banbridge	70
TOTAL		285

Built Heritage

“Preserve old buildings”

“Improve access to built heritage”

Respondents expressed a strong connection to historic buildings, places of worship, ruins, and vernacular architecture, as well as archaeology. The general quality of the built environment, as well as key sites like Brownlow Castle, Gilford Mill, and other listed buildings were frequently mentioned.

Alongside concerns about neglect and underutilisation, people mentioned the lack of funding and support for maintenance (e.g. Gilford Mill, listed buildings in Dromore), and the limited public access and awareness of heritage buildings.

Natural Heritage

“I remember roses in Lurgan park, they used to be a feature which many people would take their wedding photos at. It’s now gone and the playpark put in its place.”

Parks and managed greenspaces such as Lurgan Park or Gosford Forest Park, and natural landscapes like the River Blackwater, are deeply cherished. Environmental conservation and safe access to green spaces were recurring themes, with peat bogs, heritage apple orchards, and biodiversity noted as key features. Respondents noted that climate change is threatening natural habitats and landscapes.

Cultural Heritage

“ABC is welcoming supportive and kind”

“Respect, discipline, traditions and history”

“Collaborate with local historians”

“Home: Where I’m from and where I grew up”

Rich traditions, including music, dance, crafts, and storytelling, were emphasised. Family recipes, oral histories, and folklore were seen as vital components of cultural identity, with a desire to pass them to future generations. There was a strong sense that ‘ordinary’ heritage mattered, in the form of personal items, homes and stories. Heritage was strongly linked to family connections, values, and intergenerational storytelling. Safe community spaces and inclusivity were highlighted, with an emphasis on teaching children about local history. Some

participants had settled in the borough from other places around the globe, and most people from this category commented on how welcoming communities in the borough had been. There was a perceived erosion of traditional roles and values.

Industrial Heritage

Land – Government and Legislation are making passing on land impossible”

“Change of farming over the years – there are new methods”

Farming and local industries like milling and linen production were integral to heritage identity. Respondents highlighted challenges such as inheritance taxes and strict regulations, threatening the sustainability of multi-generational farming.

They mentioned the decline in historic industries like linen and milling, but also how important they were to the history of the area.

c. Survey

Between 14th October and 20th December 2024, we conducted a borough-wide survey to understand what heritage means to people in Armagh City, Banbridge, and Craigavon Borough. We received an incredible 217 responses, offering deep insights into the community’s connection with heritage and their hopes for its future.

“A beautiful and diverse landscape full of nature. Not just in protected areas but in the wider countryside where farming allows wildlife to thrive and is not just focused on maximum production. Clean healthy waterways and lakes, bogs conserved and restored to support wildlife and hold carbon. Spaces for nature that are more, bigger, better and more joined up. Also towns and villages where historic and notable buildings are looked after and providing homes for people and spaces for business rather than neglected and at risk of

demolition. A thriving craft skill sector where re-use and restoration is providing jobs and opportunities.”

Who Took Part?

90.32% of respondents were individuals, showing strong personal interest and 8.29% responded on behalf of an organisation, project, or group. The majority of survey respondents were in the 61–70 years age bracket, followed closely by 51–60 years.

A combination of 90.32% of the survey respondents were aged 30+ years. This highlights a lack of engagement by children and young people via the survey. This was recognised during the engagement phase and separate activities for children and young people were delivered:

- Schools programme with 32 Schools (Primary & Secondary)
- Traditional Play activities

To further engage with persons with the Age Friendly category we attended PCSP Age Friendly Conferences and arranged an event as part of Age Friendly Month (Oct 2025).

How Important is Heritage?

An overwhelming 89.4% of respondents said heritage is very important/ important to them. This reflects a strong cultural pride and a desire to protect and celebrate the borough's unique history.

What Aspects of Heritage Matter Most?

Respondents ranked the most important elements of heritage, with the highest priorities being:

1. *Landscapes & Natural Spaces (95.86%)*
2. *History (95.85%)*
3. *Historic Buildings (94.47%)*
4. *Traditions & Practices (93.09%)*
5. *Craft Skills & People (91.71%)*
6. *Arts & Culture (91.7%)*

7. *Nature & Biodiversity (91.25%)*
8. *Archaeology & Local Stories (89.4%)*
9. *Music (88.02%)*
10. *Food & Drink (84.34%)*
11. *Celebrating Diverse Heritage (82.95%)*
12. *Sporting Heritage (73.74%)*
13. *Language (71.43%)*

This ranking highlights an appreciation for the borough's landscapes, history, and built environment, alongside a strong desire to protect cultural traditions, music, crafts, and biodiversity.

Favourite Heritage Locations

When asked about their favourite heritage places, people shared a strong connection to sites of historical, natural, and cultural importance, including historic & cultural sites, natural spaces, towpaths, waterways, and local towns. Highlights included:

- **Navan Centre & Fort** which was repeatedly mentioned for its historical and spiritual significance, rich mythology, and connection to heritage.
- **Brownlow House**, appreciated for its historical importance and connection to local stories.
- **Linen and Quaker History**. Locations like Lurgan and Tullylish showcase their deep-rooted connections to the linen industry and Quaker influences.
- **Armagh City** was valued for its historic buildings, cathedrals, and cultural landmarks, including the Robinson Library and Market Place Theatre.
- **Lurgan Park** was a standout favourite for its beauty and history.
- **Gosford Forest Park** was praised for recreational activities and natural trails.
- **Craigavon Lakes and Oxford Island** were frequently mentioned as tranquil and family-friendly outdoor spaces.
- **Clare Glen and Peatlands Park** were recognised for their scenic walks and biodiversity.
- **Newry-Portadown Canal** was admired for its history, natural beauty, and utility as a recreation area.
- **Towpaths and Lough Neagh** were highlighted for their serene settings and importance in local heritage.

- **Local towns and villages** - Places like Rathfriland, Banbridge, and Dromore are valued for their history, markets, and strong community spirit.
- **Cultural Centres** - Calls for improved cultural hubs and theatres to celebrate local arts and history.
- **Events and activities** - The significance of community spaces like the Millennium Court Arts Centre and Sloan's House is emphasised.
- **Connection to personal and family history** - Many responses highlight places with sentimental or familial ties.
- **Desire for accessibility** - Participants often stress the importance of maintaining, funding, and making heritage sites accessible to all.

What should be passed to future generations?

People passionately spoke about what must be safeguarded for future generations, which can be summarised into these core themes:

Cultural heritage

"A balanced narrative is important celebrating the history of all cultures in the area"

"The history of our borough and the people that came from here and the massive contribution they have made to society and the world."

"Stories, Folklore and local history are essential for establishing a sense of identity and self."

Respondents emphasised the need to preserve the borough's diverse local history, folklore, and stories as a means of maintaining identity. They noted language; sporting traditions; historical figures and their contributions. They also mentioned the need to maintain cultural traditions, and to protect traditional crafts and skills.

Built Heritage

“Sense of pride and community through the preservation of buildings that connect us...upholding the values which Archbishop Robinson foreseen in his vision for Armagh.”

“...passing on the local history and customs including maintenance of old buildings which the Townscape heritage scheme has excellently done in Lurgan.”

“Most importantly, the greatest need of all is to save the old buildings, preserve those who gone before us that designed & built the houses or structures. These were built in an era of very little equipment & self-learning. It is important to save these styles.”

“Vernacular buildings, particularly traditional cottages and farm buildings.”

“To enhance and preserve historic structures in the Council area so they can be appreciated and discovered by future generations. An appreciation for craft skills that keep these structures alive and make them distinct and unique places.”

“Town lands and their meaning, a unique system to here that gives a very local insight to the history, features and use of a small area and its surrounding community.”

People felt that it was important to protect and restore historic buildings, including churches, castles, mills, and cottages, and that sensitive development respects the character of towns and villages, giving an essence of place. Some people suggested repurposing heritage buildings for modern use (e.g., museums, community spaces). Many people mentioned the need to record and preserve townland names and historic landmarks.

Natural Heritage

“Our sense of connection to our past and how that connects us to the wider world and the environment”

“A healthy clean environment including our rivers and lakes.”

“Large nature areas full of trees, these are essential for creativity, grounding and health and wellbeing”

“Increase woodlands and protect landscapes for the future (leave it better than we found it)”

Survey respondents emphasised the importance of preserving green spaces, parks, forests, and walking areas, while also protecting biodiversity, woodlands, and farmland. They highlighted the need to maintain clean water sources and restore waterways, such as the Newry-Portadown Canal, and called for a balanced approach to conservation and development to ensure the long-term sustainability of the environment.

Community, values & wellbeing

“Respect, Pride, Value for people and area they live within. Passing on knowledge and understanding of traditions, heritage and culture”

Survey respondents noted the importance of passing on values of kindness, respect, and community participation to future generations. They highlighted the need to encourage intergenerational learning, fostering a sense of pride in local heritage and ensuring that younger generations stay connected to their roots. Additionally, there was strong support for promoting a shared history that embraces diverse traditions, helping to foster understanding, inclusion, and healing within the community.

Education and knowledge

“All this local knowledge needs captured now, digitalised for future generations.”

“Succession planning is vital. Many organisations across the Borough are struggling to bring on other volunteers. We need to find a way to help and build capacity. Stories are important to pass on.”

Survey respondents highlighted the importance of enhancing heritage education in schools, ensuring that younger generations develop a deeper understanding of their local history and traditions. Many mentioned the need for digitally recording oral histories, archives, and personal stories to safeguard the voices and experiences of the past. There was strong support for creating heritage centres and museums to make history more accessible and engaging. Additionally, storytelling, arts, and music were identified as powerful tools to inspire young people and connect them with their cultural heritage in meaningful and interactive ways.

Celebrating local heritage

“The next generation should feel safe to enjoy our heritage wherever that may be. Respect should be given to all traditions.”

“It is important we highlight the importance of the contribution to culture, food and drink, craft, and local stories and folklore that rural dwellers / farmers make.”

Survey respondents felt that it was important to highlight historical events and significant heritage sites, to deepen public awareness and appreciation of the region’s rich history. Many supported developing tourism-friendly heritage experiences, including guided tours, cultural festivals, and museum exhibitions, to attract visitors and engage local communities. Additionally, there was strong encouragement for supporting small businesses and artisans whose work contributes to heritage preservation, ensuring that traditional skills, crafts, and local storytelling remain a vibrant part of the area’s identity.

How Can More People Get Involved in Heritage?

Respondents identified several barriers to engaging in heritage projects and suggested solutions:

- *Training and workshops, with learning for crafts, conservation, and research.*
- *Better connections with heritage groups through networks and partnerships.*
- *Information sessions to help people understand how to get involved.*
- *Greater financial support for projects.*
- *Easier access to information through a dedicated heritage hub or council resource.*

“There don't appear to be very many heritage projects happening, if they are it's very hard to find out about them.”

“I genuinely just wouldn't know how to get involved, where I would fit with it, what ways I could get involved or even where.”

“Heritage Calendar: Making it easier for people in Armagh to identify specific heritage days, events or seasonal days”

What Needs to Improve?

While respondents deeply value their heritage, many expressed frustrations about accessibility, funding, and promotion. Key concerns included:

Lack of visibility with people not knowing what heritage projects exist or how to get involved.

Rural heritage needing more focus

“I feel like Armagh has much more of an identity associated with it than other areas of the borough. It would be good to learn more about other towns and areas and highlight parts of their heritage which should bring out new ideas and concepts. Create a visitor guide to ABC that includes as many areas as possible”

“Take a deep look into the heritage of the rural areas, stop concentrating on the large towns. Villages are steeped in history.”

Many historic buildings are being neglected or demolished. There were calls for guidance, funding, and heritage skills training to preserve historic structures and proposals to preserve traditional mud walled and thatched farmhouses.

“Owners need guidance and best practice help to preserve and keep them going as they are part of the landscape. There is a great diversity of structures in the borough and this can link in with the natural and cultural heritage of places which is already being done with the Lurgan and Armagh THI's which have been fantastic. Once they are finished it is important to keep up the momentum and keep courses and projects going while ensuring they are sustainable.”

“There’s no financial incentive here and we have an ever growing list of buildings at risk in our rural areas.”

“Too many older buildings being left abandoned. Historical buildings being neglected”

“The proportionate use of enforcement powers in relation to our heritage at risk and tackling dereliction for our heritage may help to release significant buildings for sustainable community uses. The establishment of heritage building skills training in the borough to tackle the lack of access to these skills for listed building owners.”

“we should be training our younger generation on maintaining old skills which will be lost from an aging generation”

Habitat destruction is a growing issue, with calls for biodiversity recovery efforts.

There were concerns over habitat destruction and inadequate enforcement of environmental surveys; emphasis on natural heritage and childhood connection to nature, such as hedgerows and wildflowers; and calls for biodiversity recovery efforts, like reducing grass cutting and promoting meadows and insects.

“Natural heritage is extremely important, I remember my mum telling me about the wild flowers growing along the hedgerows, eating clover, making daisy chains...this aspect of childhood is largely gone and so too is that connection and opportunity to explore nature. “

“We need more widespread biodiversity recovery. Organised events for children to explore nature will never be as valuable as having nature to explore on their doorstep and at their leisure.”

Under-promotion of literary heritage linked to figures like Swift, Yeats, AE Russell, and the Brontës.

“Literary heritage is a big and under promoted part of the borough's heritage offering - it stretches right across the area, Jonathan Swift, George Russell, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Helen Waddell, Sinead Morrissey, Paul Muldoon, W.R. Rogers, Bronte and Yeats connections...and many more.”

“Facilities such as the Bronte are being failed.”

Increased visibility, awareness, and interpretation of wider heritage of the borough

“Vital that our communities heritage is properly recorded celebrated and most importantly shared”

“Holistic approach to include all cultures and backgrounds connecting everyone from all walks of life and providing historic and cultural meaning to the place we live.”

“We have had the huge shiny tourist projects that ordinary people can't afford. It has always been true that the poor don't write history. Time for a change.”

“Craigavon, the new city, was built on a much older rural landscape. Farmlands, rivers etc are now becoming more incorporated into the new look. The history of the area is rich but mostly forgotten since the late 60s.”

“This is the oldest summit canal in UK and Ireland.” (Newry Canal)

“Food heritage has not been properly considered and importance of e.g. Local apples, fish, butter making, food preservation. Methods of cooking and baking etc”

“More investment needed in places like Navan Centre and Fort. Need to bring heritage to the 21st century within the area. Heritage needs to become a priority not an afterthought”

d. Georgian Day Survey

We were invited to add some strategy related questions to the wider Georgian Day Survey in December 2024. We had 277 respondents, and their answers are summarised below.

How relevant was heritage to people?

- The vast majority of respondents said that heritage is *very relevant* or *important* to them personally. Words like *vital*, *essential*, *extremely relevant*, and *10/10* were common. A minority of people said heritage was *not relevant* to them, some because they were not from the area (65.3% of respondents were based within the ABC Borough, whilst 23.1% were from elsewhere in Northern Ireland and 9.7% were from the Republic of Ireland, and the remainder were from elsewhere), others due to a lack of interest. These were few but notable.
- People expressed deep emotional ties to heritage, describing it as part of who they are, something that gives meaning to place, roots them in their past, and instils pride in their hometowns (especially Armagh).
- Many voiced concern that traditions, buildings, and cultural knowledge are being lost and that now is the time to protect and preserve what remains for future generations.
- There was a strong emphasis on *passing heritage on to children*, seeing it as essential for imagination, identity, and understanding society.

“Extremely relevant! Everything seems so temporal today - it's very grounding to see where we have come from and to appreciate the buildings and social ideas from the generations and generations before us. In many ways, we haven't changed much. Our heritage is a treasure worth celebrating and preserving.”

- Historic buildings, especially in Armagh, were frequently celebrated for their architectural beauty and craftsmanship. People want them protected, not replaced with “soulless modern blocks.”

- Heritage was described as a way to *learn, explore, and make sense of the present*. Many people said they love discovering the history of where they live, especially when made engaging or fun.
- Several people said they hadn't thought much about heritage before attending events like Georgian Day, but that it had opened their eyes and sparked new interest. Some saw heritage as a practical asset too, supporting tourism, economic growth, and community events.
- Some respondents noted that heritage must be *inclusive*, reflect everyone's story, and be made accessible in language, content, and format.

What did people want to pass on to the next generation?

- A huge number of respondents mentioned "history" as vital. Many said it helps us understand how far we've come and avoid repeating past mistakes.
- Traditions, folklore, local festivals, faith practices, and storytelling were seen as central to cultural identity.
- People want children to inherit a sense of where they come from and pride in their heritage.
- Respect, kindness, manners, gratitude, and appreciation were repeatedly mentioned.
- Some focused on moral or spiritual values while others emphasised community spirit and social cohesion.
- Personal and collective stories were valued for their ability to create identity and belonging.
- People talked about preserving family recipes, oral histories, and the everyday experiences of past generations, not just major historical events.
- Historic buildings, Georgian and Victorian architecture, landmarks, cathedrals, mills, and jails were consistently highlighted.
- People want to see these places preserved, reused, and celebrated as part of the living story of the borough.
- Concerns were raised about disappearing crafts, trades (e.g. thatching, stone masonry), and farming knowledge.
- There's strong interest in passing on how and why things were done—practical

knowledge tied to wisdom and sustainability.

- Respondents spoke about parks, trees, rivers, open spaces, growing food, and protecting the environment.
- There's a clear desire for younger generations to reconnect with the land, explore outdoors, and value biodiversity.
- A number of responses highlighted the importance of shared spaces, intergenerational exchange, and "third spaces" like the Mall.
- Community memory, pride of place, and maintaining a welcoming, inclusive culture were valued as heritage in action.
- People want schools and cultural events to play a role in educating young people about local heritage.
- There's strong support for making history engaging, fun, and accessible through museums, walking tours, festivals, and storytelling.
- Respondents often saw all these elements - stories, skills, nature, buildings, values, as interlinked.
- The emphasis was on a full, honest, and living account of the past that inspires pride, learning, and a sense of continuity into the future.

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e. Workshops

DATE	LOCATION	FOCUS	NUMBERS
8 Nov 2024	Armagh County Club	Built Environment	8
18 Feb 2025	Millenium Court, Portadown	Community	27
18 Feb 2025	Lough Neagh Discovery Centre, Oxford Island	Natural	12
19 Feb 2025	The Old Town Hall, Banbridge	Community	16
24 Feb 2025	The Palace, Armagh	General	16
3 June 2025	Market Place Theatre	Networking Day	32

Visioning

We asked workshop participants to imagine a thriving heritage place in 10 years' time. This is what it might look like:

A place that works for communities

- People want derelict and historic buildings restored for community use and sustainability - spaces that generate income, host activity, and bring people together.
- There's a strong desire to break down bureaucratic, financial, and social obstacles so communities can access and lead heritage projects.
- 'Forgotten towns' want investment, attention, and platforms to celebrate their distinct stories.

A place that is joined-up, inclusive, and connected

- Participants stressed the need to address fragmentation and ensure rural, urban, and isolated areas are connected physically and through shared identity.
- Calls for stronger, more visible partnerships across communities, organisations, and the council - working *with*, not *for* people.
- Heritage must reflect the full diversity of the borough, from Orange traditions to Irish language, from farming heritage to literary legends. People want to see *everyone* in the story.

A place that values nature, water, and wellbeing

- Heritage and nature are one, with rivers, boglands, orchards, hedgerows, and biodiversity deeply valued. There's a call for nature-friendly farming, access to natural spaces, and restoration of ecosystems like flax ponds and peatlands.
- Waterways as lifelines with the River Bann, canals, and Lough Neagh were repeatedly highlighted as vital heritage, economic, and cultural assets that need investment, storytelling, and reconnection.
- Wellbeing through heritage: from ancient wells to immersive arts, people expressed how heritage can support mental health, spiritual wellbeing, and a sense of wholeness.

A place that involves young people and the future

- Communities want children and young adults actively involved, as learners, creators, and cultural leaders.
- Utilising technology and creativity, there's a vision for digital trails, immersive exhibitions, and creative spaces, where folklore, crafts, and contemporary culture all thrive.

- Reviving traditional skills (stonework, weaving, farming) and connecting them to modern livelihoods is seen as key to sustainable heritage.

A place that shapes the narrative together

- People see heritage as the link between head, heart, and hand—between who they are, where they live, and how they engage with the world.
- There’s a strong plea for long-term thinking - investment that builds lasting capacity and connection, not short-term fixes.
- Tell the whole story, whether through trails, festivals, or archives, people want the rich, layered, and sometimes uncomfortable stories told, truthfully and creatively.

The workshops then focused on identifying challenges and opportunities around group mapping. This summary outlines the key points:

Challenges	Opportunities
<p>1. Perceived neglect and underinvestment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Many towns and villages were described as “forgotten” or “neglected,” ● Rural communities felt especially overlooked despite their rich heritage and strong community spirit. <p>2. Barriers to access and participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community groups face difficulties accessing and repurposing council- or government-owned buildings. 	<p>1. Celebrate and restore unique heritage assets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Revive historic buildings and sites, from mills and viaducts to manor houses, gaol, and railway stations - communities want to see these places restored, repurposed, and brought to life. ● Protect natural and archaeological heritage: Bogs, orchards, ancient wells, ponds, woodlands, and raised sites like Navan Fort and Lisnavaragh Fort offer educational and ecological potential.

- Bureaucratic processes are seen as complex, slow, and disempowering for local initiatives.
- Funding is short-term and fragmented, undermining long-term, sustainable impact.

3. Fragmentation and lack of joined-up thinking

- The borough is experienced as disconnected - geographically, socially, and administratively, with missed opportunities to unite rural, urban, natural, and cultural heritage.
- Heritage efforts often feel piecemeal, lacking coordination across towns, sectors, and communities.

4. Loss of heritage and local knowledge

- Traditional skills (e.g. weaving, stonework), languages, crafts, and farming knowledge are disappearing.
- Historic buildings are crumbling or being demolished due to lack of protection or vision.
- Cultural narratives (including folklore, place-based stories, and minority traditions) are under-recorded and under-celebrated.

5. Invisibility and misrepresentation

- Some communities feel their histories are sidelined or politicised

- Support local stories and heroes: Promote the legacy of figures like AE Russell, Joseph Scriven, Helen Waddell, the Brontës, and local families and clans. Celebrate the unsung and the well-known.

2. Connect nature, culture, and wellbeing

- Nature trails, greenways, and canals as nature-rich, heritage-connected experiences.
- Biodiversity and conservation tourism with species like the Cryptic Wood White and barn owls; manage peatlands, hedgerows, and habitats; and involve schools and communities in environmental stewardship.
- Promote activities that connect people to place through walking, storytelling, festivals, and healing environments.

3. Education, interpretation, and youth engagement

- Opportunities for walks, trails, dedicated children's tours, youth-led storytelling, and creative workshops that connect younger generations with heritage.
- Education officers and learning hubs, cultural centres, and training in heritage skills like boatbuilding, weaving, and dry-stone walling.

- People want factual, balanced representation, not fragmented or tokenistic storytelling.
- There's a call for wider recognition of diverse identities and contributions, past and present.

6. Gaps in youth engagement

- Young people are not adequately engaged in heritage activity.
- Current provision skews towards early years and older adults, leaving a gap in creative and meaningful opportunities for teenagers and young adults.

7. Nature and waterways under threat

- River corridors, boglands, and green spaces are being lost or disconnected.
- The natural environment is under pressure from neglect, poor access, and lack of conservation.
- Water heritage (rivers, wells, canals) is undervalued, despite its centrality to local identity and ecology.

8. Infrastructure and accessibility

- Poor public transport and limited active travel infrastructure prevent many from accessing heritage sites and nature.

- Support for immersive storytelling, arts-based engagement, film sets, music, murals, and tech-based trails.

4. Tourism and local economies

- Grow heritage-based tourism and embrace opportunities like St Patrick's Way, Apple Blossom tours, boat trips, historical villages, and war-time and industrial history trails.
- Promote locally rooted, community-led experiences such as festivals, walking tours, food, and crafts.
- Improve transport links, signage, tourist offices, public realm works, and promotion across the *whole* borough, not just Armagh city.

5. Cultural hubs and creative spaces

- Cultural centres and events: Support for spaces like Aonach Mhacha, storytelling centres, and revived museums (e.g. St Patrick's Trian), offering platforms for multilingual, inclusive cultural activity.
- Expand festivals and gatherings through existing programmes like the John Hewitt Summer School and support community-driven events celebrating music, folklore, crafts, and shared history.

6. Community involvement and ownership

- Lack of signage, interpretation, and visitor services limits both local engagement and tourism potential.

9. Council-resident disconnect

- Strong sense that council-led processes don't sufficiently include or empower local people.
- A perceived tick-box approach frustrates communities who want genuine, ongoing involvement.
- Calls for the strategy to be people-led, not institutionally imposed.

- Provide a platform for bottom-up/ grass roots approaches as communities want to be involved from the beginning, asking to shape strategy, advise on priorities, and co-lead developments.
- Explore asset transfer and stewardship through interest in taking on and caring for underused community buildings like disused schools, halls, and mills.
- Opportunities to build ownership, pride, and belonging through storytelling, creative activity, and celebration of place.

Community Networking Day

As part of the initial consultation with community stakeholders, it became clear that there was demand for a networking day, both to share updates on Heritage Places and to provide an opportunity for groups to meet, connect, and learn from one another about the wider heritage activities taking place across the borough.

The Networking Day was open to all community groups and stakeholders who had attended the February workshops, but it was not exclusive. New participants were also welcomed. In total, 32 people attended, including representatives from nine community groups engaging with the project for the first time.

During the workshop, stakeholders received an update on engagement to date and emerging themes for the Heritage Strategy. They also took part in an exercise to organise and prioritise the feedback summary points into a "top five" list, helping to identify the strongest community voices and needs.

Community groups valued the opportunity to meet each other, share ideas, and build connections. The forum was useful for trialling ideas and gathering suggestions for borough-wide benefit.

f. 1-2-1 meetings

We had 72 one-to-one conversations with a diverse range of organisations and groups, to start conversations and begin the process of building the relationships and partnerships which will be vital to programme delivery. These helped to shape the consultation process and identify the strategic priorities and opportunities, as well as some of the key issues and challenges that Heritage Places can help with.

All the conversations were valuable in highlighting the immense range of heritage activity that is already happening, both within the borough, and regionally. There is also a sense that a more collaborative approach is the next step, and that outcomes can be more deeply embedded through working together. Conversations also focused on what was not working so well, but were ultimately productive, being candid about why not, and what might be done about it.

Some highlights are as follows:

- *Heritage is alive, and not something to be preserved.*
- *There have been some good initiatives, but there needs to be a continuation plan.*
- *There are huge opportunities, for example land and buildings in public sector ownership.*
- *ABCBC can aspire to be a centre of excellence and a showcase in terms of best practice.*
- *Endeavours such as skills training need to be self-sustaining in the long term.*
- *We need to think about how climate change and environmental factors impact local heritage.*
- *Plans and strategies should overlap.*
- *There is room to strengthen and develop relationships between council, delivery organisations, and the community.*
- *Heritage is not just limited to one area – it's cross-cutting.*
- *We need to be better at telling the stories of what we are doing; it's hidden but should be valued.*
- *The state of built heritage is getting worse.*
- *Sometimes we don't even realise what we have – it's unique and there's great interest nationally.*
- *There is great potential in rural heritage, and lots of great projects already happening*

- *People are trying to do a lot but are struggling.*
- *We need champions.*

Challenges	Opportunities
<p>1. Fragmented systems & lack of coordination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Disconnect across departments, sectors, and councils. ● Missed opportunities for cross-border, cross-sector collaboration. ● Need for a unifying strategy to prevent duplication and align efforts (e.g. Lough Neagh, heritage and housing, green infrastructure). <p>2. Access, capacity & support gaps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Communities, especially rural or volunteer-led, lack capacity to navigate systems, access funding, or manage heritage assets. ● No coordinated support system for private or community owners. ● Lack of mentoring, training, networking opportunity or ongoing guidance for groups doing the work. <p>3. Policy & structural barriers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Planning enforcement is reactive and slow; outdated or inconsistent designations that have not kept pace of climate change. 	<p>1. Heritage as a tool for change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Leverage heritage for climate action (reuse, retrofit, biodiversity). ● Advance health, wellbeing, and social inclusion through place-based heritage. ● Link with live policy areas: net zero, rural development, tourism, active travel. <p>2. Creative collaboration and cross-sector working</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Build partnerships across housing, planning, education, farming, and culture. ● Expand cross-border potential (Shared Island Fund, Monaghan-Armagh links). ● Use THI, Nature Recovery Networks, and Place Plans as models for joined-up thinking. <p>3. New Models for Stewardship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Build on regeneration skills already in evidence, a centre of excellence, or collaborative maintenance scheme to

- Maintenance of heritage is not embedded in NI's Programme for Government.
- Council bureaucracy (e.g. around volunteering, funding mechanisms) is a barrier.

4. Language and perception

- The word "heritage" alienates some; biodiversity isn't always understood as "nature."
- Fear around designations (e.g. conservation, biodiversity) blocks progress.
- Limited public understanding of the value of heritage and how it connects to everyday life (e.g. cost savings, health, identity).

5. Declining built and natural assets

- Historic building stock across ABC is in poor and worsening condition.
- Peatlands, orchards, and biodiversity are under threat and under-managed.
- Lack of thermal guidance or incentives for retrofit in NI.

6. Inequity of access and inclusion

- Urban areas are often prioritised over rural, small towns, and villages.
- Youth, newcomers, and working-class voices underrepresented in heritage

support re-use, restoration, and retrofit.

- Expand Community Asset Transfer for buildings in public ownership.
- Establish stewardship frameworks for parks, churches, graveyards, vernacular buildings, and peatlands.

4. Skills, education & youth

- Scale up heritage skills training (e.g. thatch, joinery, digital interpretation).
- Link with Further and Higher Education institutions (e.g. QUB, SRC) for placements and student-led projects.
- Expand school and youth-led programmes in storytelling, soundscapes, crafts, and conservation.

5. Community leadership and legacy

- Strengthen local champions and grassroots groups (e.g. RCN, Lurgan THI).
- Recognise and invest in volunteering as a core heritage delivery model.
- Embed long-term outcomes, not short-term programmes.

6. Mapping, data and storytelling

- There is an opportunity to collect data around ownership and ensure

work.

- No regional heritage coordination body equivalent to Heritage Council (ROI).

regeneration solutions and guidance is targeted.

- Develop a shared mapping platform to track assets, stories, skills, and progress.
- Use participatory approaches to build community-led archives and interpretation.
- Link stories of food, farming, waterways, and biodiversity to wider borough identity.

g. Attending existing events

Age Friendly Drop Ins

We were invited to speak with Over 50s+ at pre organised events in Banbridge and Armagh. We asked people what they valued in terms of heritage. Over the two sessions, we recorded **50** responses. Here's what they told us:

Participants highlighted the importance of **intergenerational learning and respect** as a core aspect of heritage. They emphasised the need to educate younger generations about past sacrifices, to encourage respect for older people, and to pass on traditions such as family trees, manners, and social values. Intergenerational understanding was seen as vital for strengthening community ties and ensuring continuity of shared values.

Local history and identity emerged as strong themes. Farming legacies, including multi-generational family farms, were viewed as key parts of local heritage, alongside industries such as linen and railways. Historic sites and relics including Navan Fort, places of worship, castles, Milford, and granite kerbstones were seen as significant markers of place. Traditional trades and crafts such as stonemasonry and hedge maintenance were also considered important to preserve.

The **environment and landscape** were highly valued as part of heritage. Participants noted the importance of clean streets, well-maintained green spaces, and access to rivers, forests, and

walking routes, including the Blackwater River, Clare Glen, and Gosford Forest Park. Gardening, wildlife, and the responsibility to pass on townlands and local spaces in good condition for future generations were emphasised.

There was also a strong focus on **community and belonging**. Participants expressed a desire for greater community involvement and awareness, with respect and connection across cultures identified as important foundations for peace. Integrated schools and in-person communication were seen as ways of supporting stronger connections between people.

Culture and tradition were highlighted as anchors of identity. Stories, sayings, and folklore were mentioned alongside music, dance, and religion as important aspects of heritage that support continuity and wellbeing.

Finally, participants associated heritage with **wellbeing and safety**. Walking in nature was valued for peace, fitness, and positive mental health, while concerns were raised about road safety and the importance of caring for existing buildings and public spaces to ensure they remain safe and accessible.

Sports Forum Drop in

The Forum (25 participants) were very engaged on what the project would offer and how sports can be an example of heritage. They considered sports as Heritage including the places where and are they played (facilities), historic clubs and the sport themselves i.e. archery

They suggested a need for community sporting archives, but this would have to be a central archive rather than individual clubs. Many clubs would find it hard to commit to creating such. They highlighted the need for support and running of the clubs are more focused on sport, funding, volunteers, leagues etc. The majority of clubs would only consider sporting heritage in times of an anniversary or carrying on traditions (meals out after certain competitions etc). The main concerns about getting involved are obtaining funding and time and volunteer commitments.

Culture in the Park

We attended ABC's Culture in the Park in Solitude Park, Banbridge, where we spoke to 52 attendees. The newly created mobile museum cart was used as an engagement piece to ask attendees to define heritage and what was important to pass onto the next generation.

We learnt that:

- *Heritage can be mixed and varied. Many of the families we spoke to were multi-national and heritage cannot be inclusive to one community. Heritage must be inclusive of all communities within our borough.*
- *Heritage was associated with history, music, traditions.*
- *The majority of responses included the word 'culture' which is unsurprising at an engagement event centred around culture. Similar to heritage, culture can be inclusive of a wide range of intangible concepts including 'friendliness, humour, respect, and community.'*

Going Places

As part of the engagement and consultation with the Heritage Strategy, the team attended one of the art workshop sessions as part of the Going Places project, to speak to ethnic minority communities about their experience of Heritage within the borough. Attendees were asked what they considered as their heritage and what they wanted to pass onto the next generation. This was an informal conversation whilst the attendees were completing their artwork.

Lessons Learnt:

- *They described heritage as being rooted in traditions and in relationships with nature and the wider world.*
- *They emphasised that heritage can be inclusive when it reflects all cultures, and that all forms of heritage deserve respect.*
- *One delegate highlighted the integration of Polish and Northern Irish traditions, noting the warmth of community connections while also stressing the need for greater respect and education to ensure heritage is truly encompassing.*

h. Creative Engagement and Partnerships

Through creative events and cross-sector partnerships, Heritage Places has developed engaging ways to connect people with heritage, from oral history and storytelling to outdoor activities, festivals, and innovative living history experiences.

Clare Memories

Clare Memories was an event organised in collaboration with the Rural Community Network. Open to all members of the community with an interest in oral history, it explored how best to collect and preserve local stories. Co. Clare Memories, a community organisation based in Co. Clare, has the strategic aim of gathering as many community memories as possible to ensure stories and traditions are not lost over time.

Designed as a mentoring-style session, the event enabled the Co. Clare Memories team to share their learning with other community groups, offering guidance and inspiration. It was hosted in the Navan Centre & Fort in Armagh and attracted 29 participants, the majority of whom were community groups from within the ABC Borough, with others travelling from Hilltown, Co. Down and Belfast.

Lessons learnt:

- *There is clear demand for oral history, which should be reflected in the Heritage Strategy.*
- *Peer-to-peer learning between community groups is highly valuable, particularly for networking.*
- *The Co. Clare Memories team were both inspiring and refreshingly honest, which participants found especially helpful.*

Bloodshed at Brownlow: A WW2-Inspired Murder Mystery

To help break down barriers around heritage and its associations, an interactive event was created, drawing on the borough's local history. Held at Brownlow Castle in collaboration with the Castle team and Living History colleagues in the Tourism, Arts and Culture Department, the event featured a murder mystery based on the story of US officers stationed at the Castle during World War II.

Themed to encourage accessible and enjoyable participation, the event attracted 48 attendees.

- *100% rated the living history performance and storytelling as excellent.*
- *90% said the event encouraged them to engage further and learn more about their local heritage.*

“Our party of four had an amazing experience at the Bloodshed in Brownlow event! I’d never been in this property before so was incredibly impressed by the architecture, interiors and all offset by meeting the ‘murder suspects’ as we walked to our seats.”

Love Parks Week

Heritage Places supported the ABC Council’s Climate, Parks and Sustainability Department in delivering a series of activities as part of Love Parks Week. The initiative aims to inspire communities to use their local parks and open spaces, reconnect with nature, and explore natural heritage. This collaboration strengthened cross-departmental working and extended the reach of Heritage Places.

Over the course of the week, **30 activities** were hosted across the borough:

- *Armagh: Gosford Forest Park, Palace Demesne, Loughgall Country Park*
- *Banbridge: Solitude Park, Dromore Park, Scarva Park*
- *Craigavon: People’s Park, Lurgan Park, Oxford Island, Edenvilla, Tannaghmore Gardens*

Activities included archery and fire building, bushcraft, bug hunts, multi-sport sessions, forest school tasters, foraging tours, heritage skills days, heritage walks, no-dig gardening workshops, storytelling, traditional playground games, tree trail walks, and more.

Heritage Cycle Tours on the Black Paths

On 22 August, 28 September and 11 October, Heritage Places partnered with Cycul to deliver three cycle tours on Craigavon's 'Black Paths'. These relaxed cycles showcased the area's unique heritage and history while encouraging people to engage with their local environment in a new way.

- *88% of surveyed participants had never attended a heritage-related activity before.*
- *97% of participants rated their experience and enjoyment levels as either enjoyed or extremely enjoyed*
- *100% of participant suggested that they would be interested in participating in similar heritage-related activities.*

"Really enjoyed the interesting facts and history by Stephen. I got to see so many areas that I'd never think of visiting!"

"I liked the sense of community. Learning of how people were connected to the subject we gathered to learn about"

i. Schools Programmes

Between January and June 2025, we engaged with 1440 young people through an extensive schools programme. We invited all 90 primary, secondary, and special schools across the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough to get involved in our schools' programme which focused on breaking down the barriers of what heritage is and discovering what is important for the young people of our borough to save or pass on to the next generation. The Heritage Place Engagement Officer managed and facilitated the process

Numbers of schools who responded	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 29 Primary schools in total (9 were visited and 17 were sent packs)• 6 Secondary Schools (max capacity)• 1 Further Education – Southern Regional College
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Findings

Primary Schools

The Primary programme was inspired by the Duchas Folklore School Collection. We asked P6 and P7 pupils across the Borough to complete our Heritage Activity Packs; inside was a variety of activities which encouraged and challenged the pupils to consider what is their heritage. One activity involved recording an inter-generational story or a family recipe and working in collaboration with the AmmA Centre, our next generation of storytellers were born! We delivered our Heritage Packs to over a quarter of primary schools in the borough and visited 9 primary schools with local illustrator and author, Jonathan Hackett to help unleash the students' creativity and begin to think about what heritage inspired places and people could feature in a story of their own creation.

Findings:

- Pupils associated heritage with anything old. They didn't really see it as something to do with them. The pupils didn't consider contemporary items or culture as heritage (video games, tv, music etc.)
- Their stories:
 - shared **family history and ancestry**, describing ancestors' lives, work, and places, as well as heirlooms and land passed down through generations.
 - captured **childhood memories**, showing what daily life, school, play, and growing up were like for parents, grandparents, and children at different times.
 - highlighted **traditions and celebrations**, such as Christmas, Easter, local fairs, holidays, and cultural or religious customs.
 - included many **family recipes and food stories**, where cooking, baking, and eating together carry memory and meaning.
 - reflected on **objects and hobbies**, from heirlooms and tools to music, sport, crafts, and favourite pastimes.
 - explored **change over time**, comparing past and present experiences of childhood, school, technology, community, and place.
- Heritage is a complex term, and many pupils did not understand the fluidity of what heritage can refer to. Their understanding of such was very dependent on the teacher despite multiple activities and accompanying videos to explain it.
- Having a range of activities and workshops makes heritage fun and appealing.
- More education on heritage and its relevance in today's society is needed.

Secondary Schools

- In our Secondary Schools' Programme, we focused on how to make heritage relevant and engage with young people through a medium which was accessible to them. Working in collaboration with the AmmA Centre, Armagh and Archival Footage from Northern Ireland Screen's Digital Film Archive, we asked Year 8 and 9 students to create short videos (45 seconds each) on what they understand is their 'heritage.' Under the expertise of the AmmA Centre, students were taught digital storytelling skills to help communicate their heritage message in a fun, educational and interactive manner.
- We visited 6 secondary schools across the borough and delivered an interactive workshop. Special thanks to Northern Ireland Screen and HERoNI for use of their archival footage and historical photographs.

Findings:

- The Year 8/9s have a good grasp and understanding of what heritage is. The students so far have been really enjoying using the medium of videos as a tool to engage them in the borough's past. When asked, the students understand the importance of looking back and remembering. They found editing the videos fun and they were all engaged. Students have the opportunity to make 1 of 4 types of videos: comparison, reactionary, explanatory and spotlight (what is heritage).
- Many pupils didn't think that heritage was for them and they struggled to see the value or relevance of heritage. However, digital technologies seemed to appeal to the pupils. This was an accessible medium which many had prior experience of doing in their own free time. Pupils were asked whether more workshops / historical things should be made in this manner and there was an overwhelming response of yes.

“It was overwhelmingly positive. Many talked about the fun they had, mentioning learning more about heritage, discovering Armagh in the past and then the story content of the films themselves. They enjoyed the film making. Students commented on the editing, voice recordings, using animations- the whole process. They liked watching each other’s videos and sharing ideas there. They greatly emphasised how friendly, kind and helpful Aoife, Ciarán and Niall were.”

“From my point of view, it was a fantastic day. The students were fully engaged, and I feel they benefited greatly from the experience and this opportunity. The day was so well organised and pitched at exactly the right level for Year 8.”

Appendix 3 Policy & Strategy Review

This presents the summary findings from a comprehensive review of existing research, data, and policy relevant to heritage in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough. Serving as a foundation for the Heritage Strategy, this review brings together insights from local, regional, and national sources, providing a sense of current activity and understanding, and where it sits within a wider policy framework. This desk-based research provides essential context for the engagement work and helps identify both opportunities and gaps in how heritage is understood, valued, and supported across the borough.

Borough-wide	
ABC25 UK City of Culture Bid (2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Borough-wide bid for culture-led regeneration as listed in the Community Plan (Connected). Responding to the needs of the borough over 5 themes:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Arts and Cultureb. Placemaking, infrastructure and the environmentc. Social and wellbeing.d. Organisations and partnerships.e. Economy• The plan raised the borough's UK profile through heritage themes ("Nurture & Nature," "Traditions for the Future"); Galvanised communities, inspired investment & tourism; Set foundations for cultural infrastructure incl. Heritage Places.
Age-Friendly Strategy (2022–2025)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The vision includes creating a borough that is inclusive and accessible; considering the different wants, needs, and abilities of all as they get older.• Values older generations' contribution to heritage.• Encourages volunteering & intergenerational activity.• Supports inclusive, accessible places with capacity-building.

Agriculture Strategy (2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Places agriculture as a strong part of ABC borough’s identity. • Describes potential for the farming sector to expand beyond agri-food, for example looking at the role of farms and farming in the heritage of the area. • Community trails and greenways and activity programmes are specifically mentioned in the Strategy. • It mentions preserving the region's rich farming heritage while promoting sustainable practices.
Air Quality Action Plan (2022–2024)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean air supports wellbeing, tourism & heritage-led regeneration.
Armagh Place Plan (2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocates for a collaborative approach to the revitalisation of Armagh, acknowledging culture and heritage as critical pillars within its future development and lays out a series of key actions designed to achieve economic spatial, cultural and community priorities. These include: • Ensuring that local communities are at the heart of the development process, with a focus on improving health, well-being, and social cohesion. • Regenerating and revitalising the city centre whilst sustaining its historic character. • Promoting key heritage sites and developing events that showcase the city’s culture and history. • Improving public spaces, reducing congestion and enhancing connectivity across the city. • Incorporating environmentally sustainable practices into future developments to ensure that Armagh remains resilient in the face of climate change and other global challenges.

Arts, Culture & Heritage Framework (2021–2031)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognising heritage as central to placemaking, tourism, civic pride, skills development, and inclusion, and highlighting the need for investment in both tangible and intangible heritage. • Heritage Places supports those ambitions by foregrounding the stories, landscapes, buildings, and traditions that shape local identity, while also contributing to regeneration, cultural tourism, and community wellbeing.
Banbridge Place Plan (2024)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets out community-led vision to enhance the town’s vibrancy, sustainability, and inclusivity, with heritage playing a central role in shaping its future. • Actions include reconnecting the town centre with the River Bann and Solitude Park, celebrating the town’s linen legacy, and revitalising key historic spaces. • By embedding conservation, storytelling, and adaptive reuse into its proposals, the plan ensures that Banbridge’s distinctive identity and historic fabric contribute to its social and economic renewal.
Climate & Sustainability Action Plan (Draft 2025)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability & heritage interlinked • Aligns with green tourism & historic asset care
Community Plan ‘Connected’ (2017–2030)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The plan outlines a long-term vision for improving the quality of life for residents across the council area, under the themes of community, economy and place. • Recognises arts, culture, and heritage as integral. • Archaeology & built heritage valued. • Engagement showed renewed pride post-City of Culture bid. • Links heritage to environment & wellbeing.

Corporate Plan (2023–2027)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is a key focus in the Corporate Plan, and includes commitments for place-shaping, looking after historic assets, wellbeing and enhancing cultural identity, ensuring that heritage contributes to a vibrant and inclusive future. • Commitments include addressing climate change, preserving heritage, and creating attractive, accessible spaces to ensure sustainability for future generations.
Culture Connects (2023)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlights key issues and opportunities related to heritage across the island of Ireland. • Showed that cultural exchange can support understanding of place, identity, and shared history. Initiatives such as shared commissions, residencies, and connect people and places. • Emphasis on reuse of existing buildings, aligned with environmental goals, also reflected a more sustainable approach to heritage development.
Dromore Place Plan (2025)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrates heritage protection into the regeneration vision. • Key actions include the "Over and Under Project," which aims to restore the historic Dromore Viaduct; enhancing connections between the River Lagan and the town centre, Motte and Bailey, and Dromore Park.
Environmental Policy Statement (2018)	<p>Key commitments include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserving Natural Resources. • Protecting the Built and Natural Environment: managing land to maintain and enhance wildlife habitats and biodiversity within the borough. • Inclusive Engagement in environmental protection efforts: encouraging public and partner participation in environmental protection efforts.

Our Community Engagement Strategy (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports inclusive engagement relevant for heritage projects. • It identifies challenges to engagement and provides insight and guidance on best practice which should be followed during the delivery of the Heritage Strategy.
PEACEPLUS Action Plan and Summary (2025)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The action plan includes plans that align well with the heritage strategy with themes including ‘local community regeneration and transformation’ and celebrating cultures and diversity’.
Regional	
A Way Forward: The Report of the Culture, Arts & Heritage Taskforce (DFC, 2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage as catalyst for wellbeing, regeneration, resilience. • Calls for integrated, collaborative approaches. • Links heritage to community resilience, climate & green growth.
Arts Council NI 10 Year Strategy (ACNI, 2024–2034)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links arts projects with societal challenges. • Represents strong drive for innovation and partnerships. • Develop participation and widen audiences.
Children & Young People’s Strategy (DE, 2020–2030)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing safe and well-cared for places and spaces such as parks, nature, open areas, where children and young people can play, exercise and have fun. • Encouraging inter-generational work and activity • Ensure that they have chances to explore the countryside and learn to understand, respect and care for nature.

Environmental Improvement Plan (DAERA, 2024)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outlines strategy to enhance the region's environmental quality, through collaborative and cross-sectoral efforts, aimed at having thriving, resilient and connected nature and wildlife, healthy and accessible environment and landscapes. • Concerning air, water and land quality, sustainable production and consumption, zero waste and the circular economy, and climate resilience.
Food Strategy Framework (DAERA, 2024)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food culture is closely aligned to identity & tradition. • Aligns with landscapes, farming heritage, culinary memory. • Food production aligned with care for landscape.
Green Growth Strategy, DAERA (2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values align with heritage stewardship & sustainable reuse. • Promotes collaboration & innovation.
Heritage, Culture and Creativity Programme Framework (DCF, 2025)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positions heritage as a core strand alongside culture and creativity. • Provides a structured approach for resourcing, protecting, and celebrating heritage assets.
Heritage Delivers: NI Heritage Statistics Recorded as of 31 March 2019, (DCF, 2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even modest public investment in heritage can unlock significant wider value — in tourism, jobs, community benefits, wellbeing, and place-making. • Quantifiable data - for every £1 invested by the Department in grant aid, £7.65 is invested.

<p>Heritage Skills in the Heritage Sector in NI, (DFC, 2018)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical shortage of heritage craft skills, particularly among stonemasons, joiners, blacksmiths, and thatchers - many nearing retirement and few formal training pathways available. • Initiatives include Heritage Skills Programmes (DfC/King’s Foundation) and the All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme.
<p>High Street Task Force – Delivering a 21st Century High Street (MAG, 2022)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledges the value of towns as key contributors to local identity, potential to cater to a variety of community needs, and the prevalence of high-quality historic buildings. • Encourages local involvement, collaborative approaches, and integrating environmental sustainability into development.
<p>Impact of Climate Change on the Historic Built Environment (DfC, 2021)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outlines climate change risks threatening the long-term sustainability of NI’s historic buildings. • Offers strategies for assessing, monitoring, adapting, and mitigating impacts. • Acknowledges that re-use of existing buildings is an important response to climate change and the revitalisation of place.
<p>Manifesto for Landscapes in Northern Ireland (Landscapes NI, 2024)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocates for a comprehensive, area-based approach to landscape management. • Recommends integration of environmental, cultural, and community considerations.

<p>Market Failure Analysis of the Heritage Sector in Northern Ireland (DfC, 2025)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlights benefits and challenges of historic environment. • Reasons for underfunding include high maintenance costs, dispersed ownership characteristics, low returns, tensions between public-good and private investment. • Recommends stronger partnerships and collaborations, improved data collection, and innovative financing mechanisms.
<p>Mid South West Regional Economic Strategy, (DFI, 2020)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NI Executive has allocated £252M to a Mid-South West (MSW) Growth Deal. • Collaborative regional approach. • Pillars for action - skills base, digital capacity, develop tourism/heritage economy.
<p>Programme for Government (2024–2027)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Protecting Lough Neagh and the Environment’ is one of nine priorities, with focus on environmental conservation and protection of natural resources.
<p>Regional Development Strategy 2035 (DFI, 2012)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicit commitments to conserve & enhance built and natural heritage, landscape character and identity. • Supports green infrastructure and the protection of the historic environment, promoting community cohesion and wellbeing.
<p>Shaping Sustainable Places: Investing in Our Villages, Towns and City Centres (consultation, 2025)</p>	<p>Comprehensive regeneration strategy aimed at revitalising Northern Ireland's villages, towns, and city centres through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocates community-led regeneration and the combining of physical, environmental, and public space improvements. • Promotes climate resilience by embedding sustainable practices and adaptation to environmental challenges.

<p>Study on the Economic Value of Northern Ireland’s Historic Environment (2012)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Findings include that the historic environment contributed approximately £532 million in annual economic output, supporting around 10,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs, and generating about £250 million in GVA (Gross Value Added).
<p>Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (DAERA, 2016)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Framework to alleviate rural poverty and isolation with focus on community development and social inclusion initiatives. Communities can leverage their cultural assets to foster pride, attract tourism or venues for social and cultural activities, and create economic opportunities.
<p>The Heritage, Culture and Creativity Programme: Purpose and Framework (DfC, 2024)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aims to conserve, protect, and promote the region's cultural heritage and historic environment, while fostering curiosity, active engagement, and creativity, particularly through the arts.
<p>The Lough Neagh Report NIE (2024)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addresses the severe ecological crisis facing Lough Neagh and identifies key contributors to the crisis.

Other	
Heritage Ireland 2030, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lays out a vision for Ireland’s heritage, based on shared responsibility, collaborative, co-operative and inclusive. Includes a Shared Island approach, which promotes working on a cross-border basis and development of strong all-island partnerships.
Nature Positive, UK Government, Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outlines how we can meet commitments to reverse biodiversity loss and protect 30% of our land and sea for nature by 2030 (‘30 by 30’), proposing transformational change in how we protect, use, value and engage with nature across the UK.
Nature Recovery Networks, DEFRA (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic, long term and creative approach to nature’s recovery, aspiring to landscape scale conservation through a coherent and interconnected network of ‘more, bigger, better and more joined up’ wildlife rich spaces; combining protected and unprotected sites, providing wildlife corridors, stepping stones and buffer areas.
The 2030 Agenda – UN Sustainable Development Goals, UN (2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goals include combating climate change as well as promoting peaceful and inclusive societies.
UK Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener, HM Government, Department for Business,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sets out a binding target to reach net zero emissions by 2050.

Energy & Industrial Strategy, (2021)	
UK Water Framework Directive, EU (2000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mechanism to assess and manage the water environment, with the aim of improving the quality of all inland and coastal water bodies through holistic River Basin Management Plans.• Relevant given the centrality of rivers and Lough Neagh to borough identity.

ENDS.

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