WHAT WAS, WHAT IS, WHAT IF...

A Heritage-led Regeneration Plan for Wexford Town

June 2023

View of St Iberius' Church steeple from the northern end of North Main Street

CONTENTS

This plan is grouped into 4 chapters:

1. OVERVIEW OF THE PLAN AND PROCESS

View of pedestrianised North Main Street in Wexford town

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Small but mighty, Wexford town is abundantly rich in built, cultural and natural heritage. Founded by the Vikings in the late 9th or early 10th century, Wexford was named Veisafjǫrðr, 'the inlet of the mud flats'. Situated at the mouth of the River Slaney, its shallow estuarine waters suited Viking ships and it flourished as an active medieval port town. Thanks to its walled defences, medieval streetscape and laneways, Wexford town today is brimming with character.

Tourists are drawn to enjoy the Sunny South East, and to explore Wexford's many historic landmarks. From one of the longest surviving medieval town wall circuits in Ireland, to the breathtaking ruins of Selskar Abbey, historic graveyards and the grand twin churches of Wexford. A short and scenic train journey from Dublin and Rosslare, Wexford town is also a gateway to the region - including nearby attractions of the Irish National Heritage Park, Irish Agricultural Museum and Johnstown Castle. Wexford Harbour is famed for its mussel boats and designated a Shellfish Protected Area. The area is home to wildlife conservation areas, including Wexford Wildfowl Reserve, that provide habitats for rare and protected species like the Greenland White-fronted Goose. Its coastal location means the town has been the scene of many historic invasions and battles, from the Norman Siege of Wexford, Cromwell's 1649 sacking of the town, to the 1798 Rebellion.

Modern Wexford is home to the National Opera House and globally renowned Wexford Festival Opera, a vibrant arts and culture scene, and a passion for hurling. The recently refurbished Wexford Arts Centre exemplifies Wexford's ambition to celebrate its rich heritage and bright future, drawing residents and visitors alike to keep discovering the wonders of Wexford town.

View of Selskar Abbey through the gate on Temperance Row

This heritage-led regeneration plan celebrates the significance of Wexford's past, while acknowledging issues and challenges to be addressed, and imagining and paving the way to a more prosperous, resilient future.

Recognising the unique opportunities of the Town Wall, Selskar Abbey complex, Wexford Gaol, Bullring Market, the Quayfront, the historic laneways and graveyards, and many other sites, we set out a vision to ensure Wexford town values its unique heritage and cultivates new legacies for future generations.

Building on Wexford's plentiful assets and layers of built, cultural and natural heritage, this plan aims to draw together what makes Wexford town unique and sow the seeds for heritage-led regeneration, to support a high quality of life for its citizens, now and into the future.

The story of Wexford town - from past, to present, to future - is still being written, and the next chapter starts here.

The Wexford heritage-led Regeneration Plan has been endorsed by Her Worship the Mayor, Cllr Maura Bell and the Chief Executive of Wexford County Council, Tom Enright.

The Westgate Tower, within the curtilage of Selskar Abbey

Seating and trees at Wexford Quayfront

1.2 THE PLAN PROCESS

Wexford County Council received funding support from the Heritage Council and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage through the Historic Towns Initiative 2022 grant scheme for the undertaking of a Heritage-led regeneration plan for Wexford Town. The following document outlines the processes, research and stakeholder engagement which forms the basis for the resultant action plan which can be viewed in Section 4. The plan was undertaken by Urban Scale Interventions (USI) with support from the Heritage Section of Wexford County Council.

The research and development of this plan has brought together a wide range of stakeholders and residents to shape the future direction of the town together. It is clear that Wexford's residents and stakeholders are, rightly, proud of its unique and multi-faceted heritage.

The process recognised the need to take a holistic and collaborative approach to regeneration, informed by Wexford's history, character, assets and and challenges. The plan is made up of 3 key stages, reflected in the remaining chapters of this report:
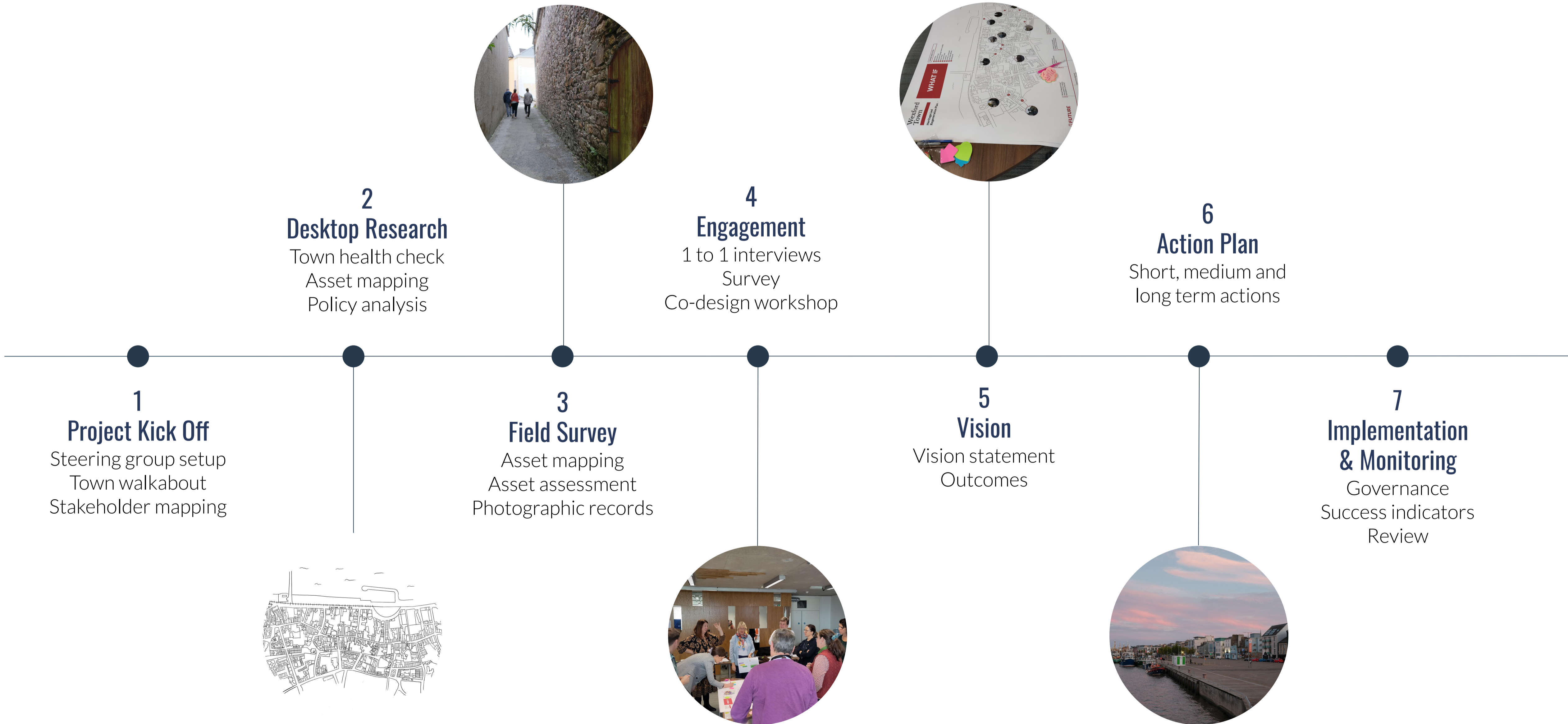
1. What Was: Discovering the built, cultural and natural heritage of Wexford town, its story from past to present.

2. What Is: Defining the case for change in the town, the policy and regeneration context, and the key issues, strengths and opportunities to take forward.

3. What If: Developing a shared vision for the future, supported by ideas for short, medium and long-term projects, that will help drive forward the heritage-led regeneration of the town and make Wexford town an even better place to live, work and visit.

Why a heritage-led regeneration plan?

"Regeneration is the process of bringing social, cultural, economic and environmental life back into an area. A heritage-led regeneration strategy recognises that it is the cultural heritage of a town that gives it a unique identity and which is central to the creation of a high quality of life for its inhabitants. Capitalising on the potential of the town's heritage to create an attractive, sustainable living environment requires an integrated approach that recognises the evolving needs of the town and its people now and into the future... Placing heritage at the forefront of the regeneration of our towns ensures that the local distinctiveness, community spirit, values and traditions are retained and enhanced while allowing new interventions to take place. Townspeople are an essential component of what makes the place special and their participation in the process of regeneration is critical to its success."

Historic Towns Initiative,
Framework for the Pilot Phase, 2012

1.2 THE PLAN PROCESS

2
Desktop Research
Town health check
Asset mapping
Policy analysis

4
Engagement
1 to 1 interviews
Survey
Co-design workshop

6
Action Plan
Short, medium and
long term actions

1
Project Kick Off
Steering group setup
Town walkabout
Stakeholder mapping

3
Field Survey
Asset mapping
Asset assessment
Photographic records

5
Vision
Vision statement
Outcomes

7
**Implementation
& Monitoring**
Governance
Success indicators
Review

St Iberius' Church, North Main Street

1.3 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

In order to co-create this heritage-led regeneration plan, we engaged with stakeholders and citizens through a variety of methods throughout September to November 2022, including:

Kick-Off Workshop:
A kick-off workshop with the project steering group was held to ensure the involvement of relevant strategic partners and to enable a discussion to identify the key challenges, opportunities, priorities and indicators for success.

Interviews:
We conducted 13 informal interviews with key stakeholders including statutory bodies (such as the Council, Fáilte Ireland, The Heritage Council) and interest groups (Wexford Historical Society, Wexford Arts Centre).

Online Survey:
We created an online survey (with print version) which was shared publicly across the County Council's network, key partners, residents and stakeholders. The aim of this was to understand the current challenges, the future ambitions and opportunities as well as identify any unique historical stories.

Creative Workshop:
A creative workshop with key stakeholders provided an opportunity to showcase findings to date and benchmark and share inspiring 'what if…' examples from reframed heritage assets around the world. Following this, participants engaged in a creative exercise to reimagine the possibilities of the town's heritage assets and contribute to the future vision for the town.

348

People engaged through…

20
Workshop
Participants

321
Online
Survey
Responses

13
Interview
Participants

1.3 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Prior to the project kick-off workshop, a steering group was established to lead the project and creation of the heritage-led regeneration plan for Wexford town. This group includes:

- Wexford County Council Heritage Officer
- Wexford Borough District Manager
- Wexford County Council Arts Officer
- Wexford County Council Special Projects Officer
- Wexford County Council Access Officer
- Wexford County Council Senior Executive Planner
- Wexford County Council Executive Planner
- Wexford County Council Property Manager
- Wexford County Council Tourism Development Officer
- Mayor of Wexford Borough

Further stakeholders engaged included:

- Wexford Tidy Towns
- Wexford Arts Centre
- Wexford Historical Society
- Visit Wexford
- County Wexford Chamber
- Fáilte Ireland
- The Heritage Council
- Wexford District Tourism Group
- Irish Walled Towns Network

2. WHAT WAS: THE WEXFORD TOWN STORY

Understanding Wexford town and its heritage

View of the River Slaney, Wexford Bridge, and Wexford town beyond, from Ferrybank

2.1 THE WEXFORD TOWN STORY

As the starting point and driving force for this plan, we explored what makes Wexford town unique and learned its story through the ages. Small but mighty, Wexford town has an abundance of assets, layers of heritage, and so much to offer. This chapter summarises and maps the character and history of the town, and its natural, built, social and cultural heritage, starting with a brief snapshot of Wexford town's story below:

A walled town founded by Vikings

Founded by the **Vikings** in the late 9th or early 10th century, Wexford was named *Veisafjǫrðr*, 'the inlet of the mud flats'. Situated at the mouth of the River Slaney, its shallow estuarine waters suited **Viking ships** and it was an active **medieval port** town. Wexford town today is brimming with character thanks to its **walled defences**, **medieval streetscape** and **laneways**.

A cornerstone of Ireland's Ancient East

Tourists are drawn to enjoy the **Sunny South East**, and to explore Wexford's many **historic landmarks**. From one of the longest surviving **medieval town wall** circuits in Ireland, to the breathtaking ruins of **Selskar Abbey**, historic **graveyards** and the grand **twin churches** of Wexford. It's also a **gateway** to nearby attractions like the **Irish National Heritage Park, Irish Agricultural Museum and Johnstown Castle.**

An estuarine port and scene of historic battles

A town with deep **natural and maritime heritage**, Wexford is home to the **Wexford Wildfowl Reserve**, a **Shellfish Protected Area** and a working **Harbour** famed for **mussels.** Due to its coastal location, the town has also been the scene of many historic **invasions and battles**, from the Norman **Siege of Wexford, Cromwell's 1649 sacking** to the **1798 Rebellion**.

A home for the opera, arts and culture

Modern Wexford is home to the **National Opera House**, a vibrant arts and culture scene, and a passion for **sports**. The recently refurbished **Wexford Arts Centre** exemplifies Wexford's ambition to celebrate its **rich heritage and bright future**, drawing residents and visitors alike to keep discovering the wonders of Wexford town.

2.1 THE WEXFORD TOWN STORY

1169
The Normans take Wexford. They expand the town further north creating sites such as Selskar Abbey, Westgate Tower and Wexford's town wall.

1649
Cromwell's Army capture Wexford castle and sack the town, slaughtering 2,000 of its citizens.

1798
Wexford town was held by the United Irishmen throughout the Wexford Rebellion and was the scene of a notorious massacre of local loyalists.

1911
Foundry owners locked out unionising workers, leading to violence, an eventual settlement and the formation of the Irish Foundry Workers' Union.

1951
Wexford town's Opera Festival is founded.

850-900 AD
Wexford town is founded by the Vikings.

MEDIEVAL PERIOD
A now extinct medieval dialect, known as Yola, was commonly spoken in Wexford County until it began declining in the mid-19th century.

1670-1730
Much of the architectural fabric of the town such as the gabled Dutch Billy houses on Main Street come from this period.

1874
Wexford Train Station is opened.

1922-23
As the Irish Civil War broke out, the National Army set up its headquarters in the Talbot Hotel in Wexford Town.

1974
Wexford Arts Centre is opened.

2.2 CHARACTER & HISTORY OF THE TOWN

Wexford is a historic port town in County Wexford, located in the south-east of Ireland. The town is situated on rising ground overlooking the Slaney estuary and surrounded by lowlands, mostly below sea level. The wider area features sloblands filled with wildfowl, long sandy beaches and dune systems. The location at the mouth of the River Slaney has long provided access from the town to the hinterland and seas beyond.

Wexford town was founded by Vikings between the late 9th and early 10th century. They named it Veisafjǫrðr, meaning "inlet of the mudflats", and the name has changed only slightly into its present form. For about 300 years Wexford continued as a Viking town and a city-state, largely independent and owing only token dues to the Irish kings of Leinster, and by the 12th century had become an important Hiberno-Norse port.

Wexford town still exhibits impressive remnants of its vibrant past. As a result of its early occupation by Vikings and then Anglo-Normans, and developments since, the historic town is situated within one of the longest surviving intact medieval town wall circuits in Ireland. The existing principal streets reflect the layout of the medieval town and are a surviving part of the medieval streetscape, along with the historic laneways. The major change to the townscape since its early occupation was the expansion of the town eastwards through reclamation of the shore area in the 19th century. Prior to this, Wexford Harbour contained a number of small islands which had supported early medieval ecclesiastical settlements. The harbour itself is relatively shallow and contains a number of fluctuating sand bars.
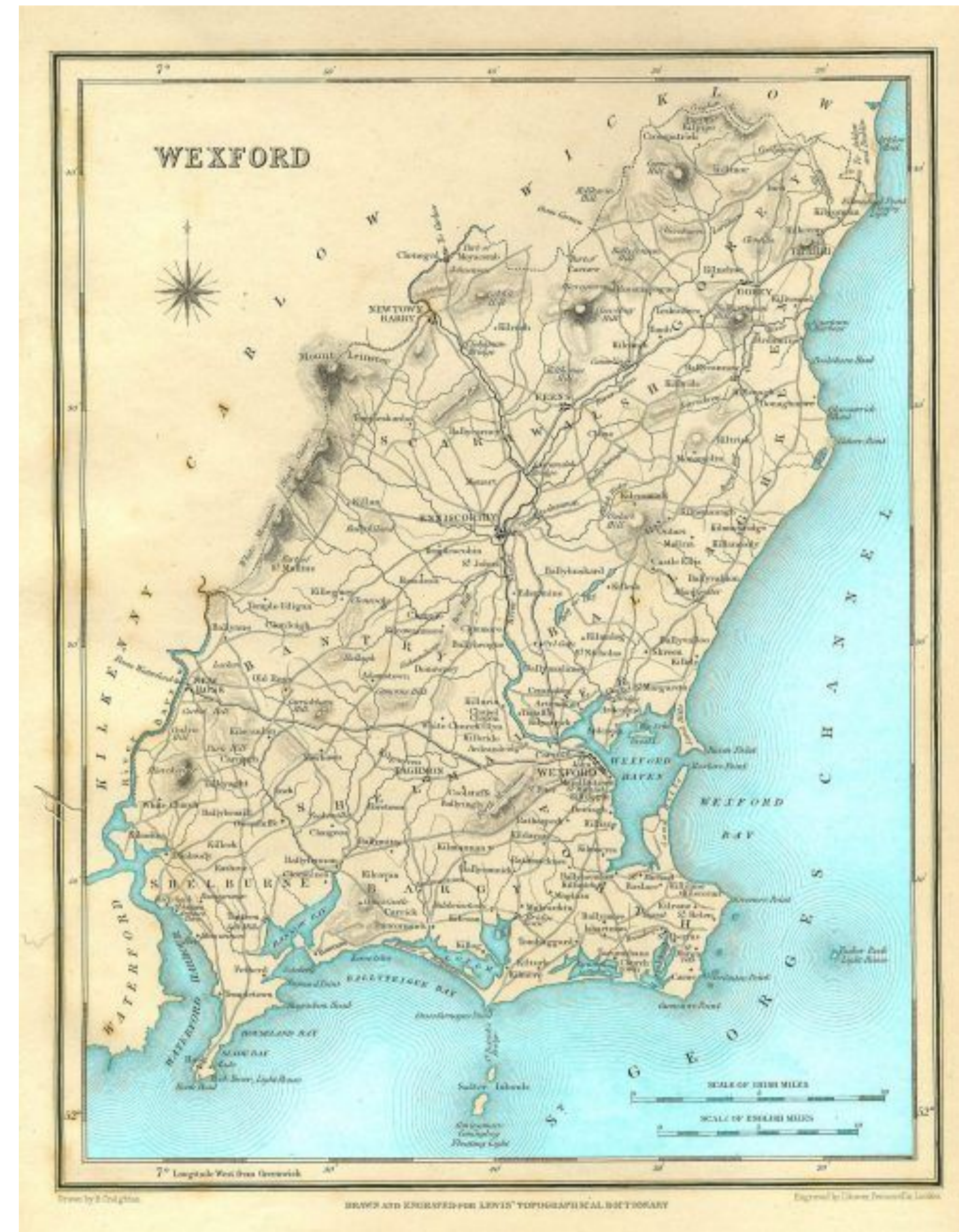
"Topographical Dictionary of Ireland" by Samuel Lewis, 1837

2.2 CHARACTER & HISTORY OF THE TOWN

In May 1169, Dermot MacMurrough, King of Leinster and his Norman ally, Robert Fitz-Stephen, besieged Wexford. The Norse inhabitants resisted fiercely until the Bishop of Ferns persuaded them to accept a settlement with Dermot. Wexford then became the first Anglo-Norman town in Ireland. The town remained a stronghold of the new colony and developed into an important medieval trading port.

Yola, a mixture of Middle English, French, Flemish and Irish is a now extinct local dialect. However Yola was not unique to County Wexford; the dialect is recorded as Fingallian in North County Dublin and elements of Yola are preserved in place names throughout the Pale in countries Kildare, Louth and Meath. The dialect was declining in the 19th century but was not officially extinct until the 1998 death of the last speaker, a local fisherman from Kilmore Quay named Jack Devereux. The Yola name for Wexford was Weiseforthe.

In the post-medieval and early modern period the town had a thriving maritime ship-building industry and relied on maritime trade. There were also several historic iron-works in the town, reflecting a rich industrial heritage. Amongst notable personalities from this period was William Lamport (1615-1659), the son of a wealthy Wexford merchant. He was an adventurous young man who escaped a treason charge in England at age 13, was captured by pirates, and then sent to Mexico as a spy for Spain. It was here that his exploits became so legendary he is believed to be the inspiration for the character of Zorro!

During the Rebellion of 1641 Wexford was one of the chief ports of the Confederate forces. In 1649 Cromwell marched on and sacked the town, slaughtering 2,000 of its citizens, and much of the town was burned.

St Patrick's church and graveyard, High Street

2.2 CHARACTER & HISTORY OF THE TOWN

County Wexford was then the centre of the 1798 rebellion against British rule. Wexford town was held by the United Irishmen throughout the Wexford Rebellion and was the scene of a notorious massacre of local loyalists by the United Irishmen, who executed them with pikes on Wexford bridge (historically located further north than the current bridge).

By the end of the 18th century, Wexford Harbour was Ireland's sixth busiest port. During the 19th century, a prominent Wexford family were the Redmonds. Through his land reclamation works on the north side of the harbour, John Edward Redmond provided essential employment to labourers, who travelled from all over the country, during the Great Potato Famine in the mid-1800s.

Unfortunately, a change in tidal flows led to a build-up of sand and clay (commonly referred to as silt), which made Wexford's harbour difficult for ships to traverse. By the 1950s, Wexford was no longer considered to be a viable port. In 1968 the quays were effectively closed to commercial traffic, and the harbour has since been used mostly by mussel dredgers and personal vessels.

Modern Wexford is home to the National Opera House and has a vibrant arts and culture scene. It is renowned for its historic town wall circuit and the town is now part of the Irish Walled Town Network. Wexford today is also one of the most popular counties for domestic tourism, and is considered a cornerstone of Ireland's Ancient East.
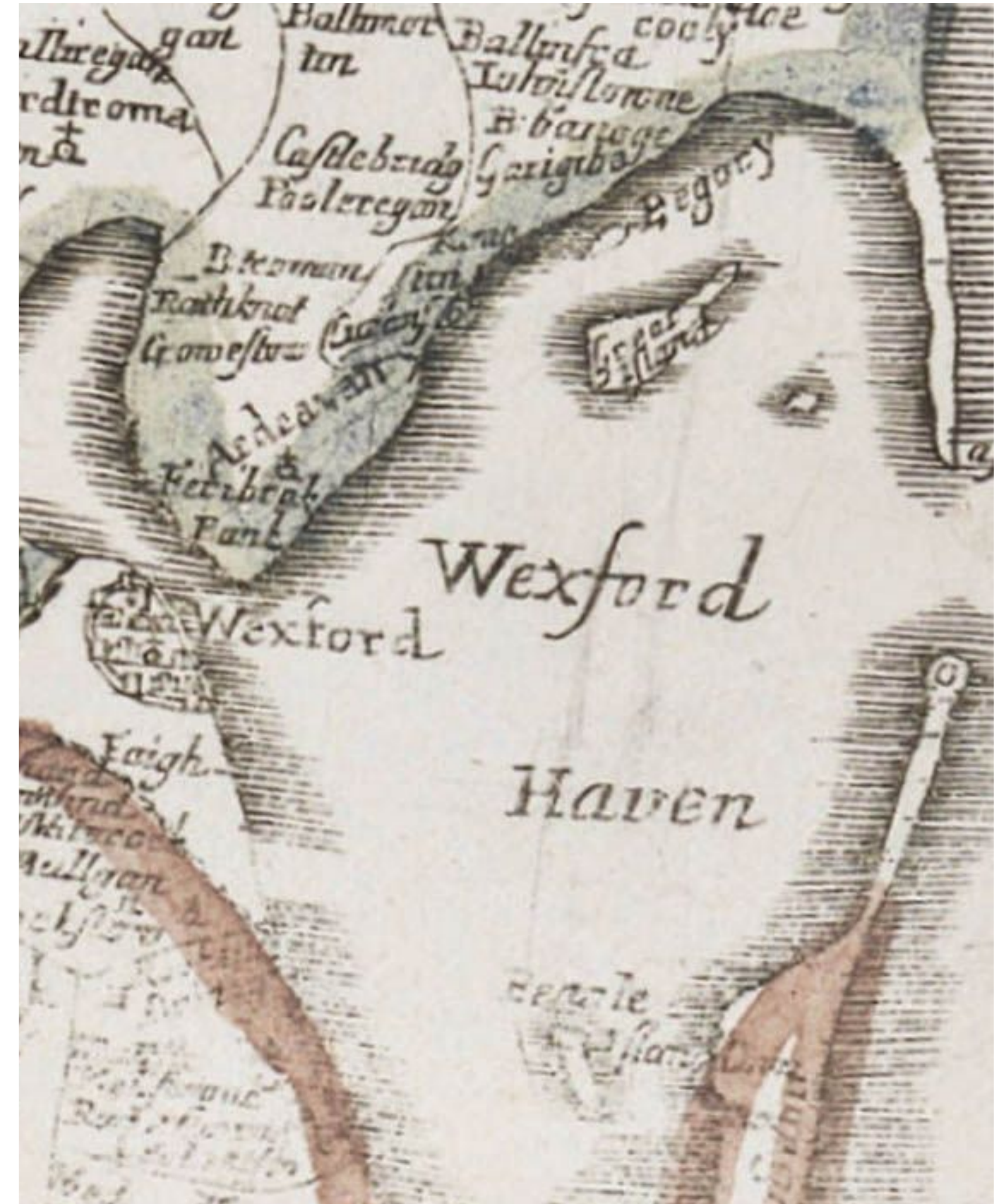
Map of Wexford Harbour by Sir William Petty (1657)

Mussel boats moored at Wexford Harbour

2.3 HISTORICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS

Wexford town has a wealth of historic buildings and structures that are symbols of the social, economic and cultural development of the town, wider County Wexford and Ireland. Many of these are listed for protection in the Record of Protected Structures, ranging from churches to private houses, shops and more (see map of existing heritage protection measures on page 39).

Further to this are a number of historical and archaeological sites throughout Wexford town and county, that are included on the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR, also mapped on page 39). The SMR contains details of all monuments and places (sites) where it is believed there is a monument known to the Archaeological Survey of Ireland (ASI) pre-dating 1700 AD, and also includes a selection of monuments from the post-1700 AD period.

One of Wexford's key archaeological sites, and a National Monument, is Wexford's town walls. Over the past 10 years, parts of the wall have been conserved with funding from the Irish Walled Towns Network.

There is one other National Monument located within Wexford town, St Selskar's Abbey, and a further 17 National Monuments throughout County Wexford. There are a number of other listed monuments throughout County Wexford, including over 60 different monument types, such as megalithic monuments, earthworks, castles, churches, ringforts and industrial sites.

View of the Town Wall and Westgate Tower from Westgate Park

2.3 HISTORICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS

Further archive collections relating to Wexford town include the National Museum of Ireland's topographical files, a national archive of all known archaeological finds from Ireland. They relate primarily to artefacts but also include references to monuments, including those in Wexford town, and contain a unique archive of records of previous excavations. Wexford County Archive is the official repository in the county for the archives, records of Wexford Local Authorities and for local private collections.

Located outside of Wexford town, the Irish National Heritage Park at Ferrycarrig includes various exhibits spanning 9000 years of Irish history, allowing the visitor to wander around re-creations of historic Irish dwellings including crannogs, Viking houses and Norman forts.

The grounds also feature an archaeological monument known as a ringwork, which is one of the earliest Anglo-Norman fortifications in Ireland. Also located just outside Wexford town is the significant 19th century Johnstown Castle Estate, Museum & Gardens, which houses the Irish Agricultural Museum, one of the most comprehensive displays of farming and rural life in the country.

Located within nearby Enniscorthy Castle is a significant collection of local agricultural, military and domestic items. The 13th century castle is where Edmund Spenser wrote The Faerie Queene, and Sir Henry Wallop lived at the castle, allegedly giving birth to the word 'wallop'. The castle was stormed by the United Irishmen in 1798 before they were defeated at the nearby Vinegar Hill.

Barney Doherty mending his fishing nets on the Quay. (Image Credit: John Scanlon Collection, Journal of the Wexford Historical Society, Vol. 28)

Pat O'Connor and Renee Walsh at the shop counter on South Main St. (Image Credit: Journal of the Wexford Historical Society, Vol. 28)

WEXFORD

ST SELSKAR'S

ST IBERIUS

ST PATRICK'S

ST MARY

ST DOOLOGE'S

ST BRIDGET'S

TOWNPARKS
Belg to the Par of St Peter's

Diocesan School
Fort View
County Infirmary
Gaol
Springhill Ho.
Church
Court Ho.
Draw Br.
Wooden

Reservoir

Bank of Ireland
Ballast Bank

St. Peter's College
R.C. Chapel

St Margaret's Well

Franciscan Priory
R.C. Chapel
Nat School Ho.

Friary Hospital
Summerhill Cross Roads

Barrack
Castle

Steam Packet Store Ho.

The areas of the Parishes in the Town of Wexford are as follow.

	A	R	P
ST BRIDGET'S	9	1	13
ST DOOLOGE'S	3	3	17
ST IBERIUS	15	2	10
ST MARYS	11	2	1
ST PATRICK'S	7	0	8
ST SELSKARS	21	0	18

A 23 R 3 P 4

OSI Historic 6 inch Colour (1937-1842)
(Copyright Government of Ireland)

2.4 PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES OF THE TOWN

Wexford town is largely defined by its surviving town wall circuit, that adopts a shallow 'C' shape, encompassing the main build-up of the historic town. The seafront forms the eastern boundary to the town. The historic town area within the walls consists of the initial Viking settlement area, the area of Hiberno-Norse expansion to the north, the area of Anglo-Norman expansion to the north and east, and the reclaimed shoreline. These phases of development are indicated in the map on the following page.

Within the historic town, each parish was extremely close-knit (shown on the historic map on the previous page), hence the closeness between the historic churches and graveyards of St Mary's, St Patrick's, and St Iberius'. This can also be seen throughout the many narrow streets and small lanes that situate themselves across Wexford town. In addition to the extra-mural parishes and other more immediate sites and structures, Wexford town's wider hinterland features a number of historic sites that relate to the area's more ancient past, dating back to the Mesolithic period.

While a number of pre Christian and early Christian sites are recorded in the area of Wexford town, it was the Vikings who first laid out Wexford's narrow streets and lanes from the 9th century onwards. Indeed, some of these streets and even their names survive to this day, such as Keyser's Lane, now signified by a plaque.

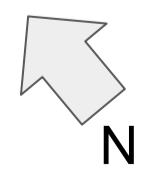View down Keyser's Lane from Main Street looking towards the quay

MAP SHOWING THE EVOLUTION OF WEXFORD'S HISTORIC TOWN

Initial Viking Settlement

Area of Hiberno-Norse
urban expansion

Area of Anglo-Norman
urban expansion

Approximate shoreline
before reclamation

Source: adapted from McLoughlin 2020

2.4 PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES OF THE TOWN

Little is known about Viking Wexford, however, some form of defensive wall was in existence by the time of the Anglo-Norman invasion in 1169. The Wexford Town Walls Conservation Plan (2008) states that it is "reasonable to speculate that the Viking town of Wexford was surrounded by an earthen embankment faced with a revetment stone wall surmounted by a wooden palisade and further surrounded by a fosse or ditch". The expansion of the town is also seen in the creation of new church sites and parishes. By the 12th century there were four small parishes within the Hiberno-Norse town and four outside it.

In the early 13th century, County Wexford began to emerge as a political unit with Wexford Castle as its administrative centre. At around this time it is assumed that the Anglo-Normans extended the town to the north, and there may have been some form of upgrading or rebuilding of the Viking wall. It is generally assumed that the southern parts of the Norman wall of Wexford followed the line of the Viking wall. The most likely northern extent of the wall was in the area of the Bull Ring where the ground slopes down to the waterfront. The Anglo-Norman expansion led to the addition of Selskar Abbey at the northern end of town, built on the ruins where the first Anglo-Irish peace treaty was signed by Diarmait Mac Murchada in 1169, and St John's just outside the town wall at Cornmarket. The Normans also constructed the stone castle to the south of the town by 1231 AD (demolished in 1725 to make room for a Military Barracks). A full kilometre of the Anglo-Norman era town wall stands today, including the dramatic Selskar Gate, now known as Westgate.

Section of Town Wall where it meets Westgate

2.4 PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES OF THE TOWN

Burgage plots, being long narrow strips of land granted to burgesses or townspeople, including street frontage and a garden for cultivation, were a key feature of Wexford town. The decline of these also reflects the decline of the town between the 13th and 17th centuries. Initially there were 365 burgages recorded in Wexford town, while in 1298 and 1325 there were, respectively, 128.5 and 221.5 burgages reported as waste. Descriptions of the castle and wall after that also refer to repairs needed, for example, a parliamentary inquiry held in Wexford in 1462-63 stated "Wexford is spacious within the walls, which require great repair and costs.." (Berry 1914). In 1537 a petition to the King from the sovereign (the Mayor) and commons of Wexford stated "the town lies open on one side and sustains great damage..." (Thomas, 1992, 211). The town was then described in 1635 as "...much impoverished and decayed" (Colfer 2002).

Wexford's town wall in the 17th century is still reported as a significant structure. In 1649 Oliver Cromwell, who was then marching on Wexford, described the town as "pleasantly seated and strong, having a rampart of earth within the wall nearly 15 feet thick" (Thomas, 1992. 210). This description most likely refers to the length of wall near St. Patrick's Church, which has an earthen embankment. His artillery bombarded the town and castle and no mercy was shown to the inhabitants. 1649 also saw Selskar Abbey destroyed by Cromwell, later built back up as a Protesant church in 1826. The town wall suffered much damage during this period. The town wall gates, including six in total and an additional private gate at Selskar Abbey, the precinct of which was bisected by the wall, were also recorded as being in existence at this time.

Selskar Abbey, the shell of a church built in 1826, on the site of a 12th Century abbey that was destroyed by Cromwell in 1649

Wexford Town Wall and George's St Tower at Westgate Park

2.4 PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES OF THE TOWN

From the 17th century onwards reference is found to building on the town walls. An interesting aspect of the town wall is mentioned in a property document from 1666 which describes a "…thatched house upon the town wall" (IRC, 15,106).

A further relic of this period in Wexford is the Bull Ring. This town square was a venue for bull baiting, a sport introduced by the butcher's guild. Tradition maintained that after a match, the hide of the ill-fated bull was presented to the mayor and the meat was used to feed the poor.

The square played a greater part in history in 1798, when the first declaration of an Irish republic was made here. A memorial statue honours the Irish pikemen who fought for the cause. Bull baiting was outlawed by the Cruelty to Animals Act of 1835, and the Bull Ring now is surrounded by shops, restaurants and market buildings.

Wexford's early and mid-18th century history is less frequently remembered than later periods. However, the impact of this period is evident from the architectural fabric of the town, such as the gabled Dutch Billy houses on Main Street. In 1759 all the town wall gates were taken down, and after the insurrection of 1798 the gates were all re-erected in a plainer manner, reportedly a wooden lightweight construction. These gates remained until 1835, when they were removed on account of being an obstruction to traffic.

View of the Bullring with the 1798 Monument (or Pikeman statue) which was sculpted by Irish nationalist Oliver Sheppard in 1905

2.4 PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES OF THE TOWN

In the 19th century there were major efforts of land reclamation along Wexford's waterfront, which significantly extended the town's urban build up and quay to the east. These efforts facilitated the subsequent construction of the railway along the quays, the iconic 'woodenworks' quays and a bridge across Wexford's Crescent Quay.

In terms of Wexford's town walls, sections of the walls forming integral parts of adjoining buildings became a common feature. In 1885, the wall was described as forming "a part of Mr Cameron Rogers' house in George Street, and one boundary of his garden for several hundred yards, ending in a tower forty feet high at one side, and forty-five at the other, in almost a perfect state of preservation" (Bassett, 1885). The removal of a section of wall in 1852 is also reported by Bassett. "A large square tower stood at the corner of Rowe Street, on the ground of the Church of the Immaculate Conception, until 1852, when it was thrown down to give increased space and light to the chancel window" (Bassett, 1885).

Up until the early 1920s, the quayfront was home to the Wexford Courthouse, which was situated directly across from the town-side entrance of Wexford Bridge. From 1899 to 1920, this courthouse building was also used as the headquarters for the Wexford County Council. On the 18th of June 1921, during the Irish War of Independence, the courthouse was badly damaged after being set on fire by the I.R.A. Later, the site was converted into a petrol station. In modern times, the area has been used as a car park and the location of an advertising billboard.

Catholic Church of the Immaculate Conception (Rowe Street Church), one of a pair of twin churches built in Wexford in 1850 - 1860

View of Wexford quayfront (reclaimed land) from Wexford Bridge

2.4 PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES OF THE TOWN

By the 1950s, Wexford was no longer considered to be a viable port, and by the 1990s, the 'woodenworks' along the quayfront had fallen into disrepair. These were subsequently demolished and replaced with the modern waterfront plaza and accompanying marina which exist today. The railway and a road run alongside the quay, unfortunately creating somewhat of a barrier between the historic town and seafront.

When viewing Wexford town's waterfront as it is today, it is worth noting that the Wexford Quay has been built on land that has been reclaimed over the centuries. Iconic places such as Crescent Quay, Paul Quay and Commercial Quay are all artificial constructs that began to appear in the early 1800s, built in reclaimed areas that were once a part of Wexford Harbour.

Throughout the 20th and into the 21st century the circuit of Wexford's town walls has survived remarkably intact. The town wall has a strong visual presence within the town of Wexford, however, an appreciation of the extent of its survival is not immediately evident due to the proximity of developments both within and outside the walls.

Selskar Gate, which formed a part of the curtilage of Selskar Abbey and was not a town gate, was restored in the 1980s and is now called Westgate. The Abbey Street tower was restored in the 1990s. Parts of the Town Wall have also benefited from restoration works over recent years.

View of Crescent Quay and the railway from the quayfront

35

Westgate Heritage Centre, Westgate Tower and Town Wall (left to right)

2.4 PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES OF THE TOWN

Statement of Significance of the Town Walls (from the Wexford Town Walls Conservation Plan 2008):

1. Wexford's Town Walls are a National Monument, a Protected Structure and are rated as being of National importance in the Wexford Town and Environs Development Plan 2008.

2. Wexford's Town Walls are an important survival and reminder of the long history of the town from its Norse origins in the 9th or 10th century, subsequent Norman colonisation when towns were developed as defended mercantile centres, to the present day as a regional administrative centre.

3. The influence of the Town Walls is clear in that it denotes the urban core of the town which preserves the layout of the medieval settlement with its streets, and burgage plots.

4. Although it is difficult to distinguish between Medieval fabric and later phases of rebuilding or repairs, the line of the walled circuit is still evident and plays an important part in the townscape of Wexford. In particular the survival of three towers, evidence of the rampart (in the garden of the former Clarence House and St Patrick's Graveyard), and the Westgate tower are significant features within the townscape.

5. The town wall has a significant relationship with a number of important buildings, both within and outside the enclosure, ranging from churches and public buildings to private dwellings.

6. In common with other walled medieval towns of Ireland, Wexford's Town Walls followed the line of the Norse defences and enclosed five parishes whose names indicate the Irish, Norse and Norman origins of the town. These include Doologe, Mary, Patrick, Iberius and Selskar.

7. The upstanding wall, and archaeological evidence adjacent to it, provides evidence not only for building techniques, but also for many aspects of social life and history in Ireland.

8. The Town Walls of Wexford are a source of immense county and local civic pride and contribute greatly to the overall quality of life and sense of place for residents and visitors to the town. (Wexford Town & Environs Development Plan 2002). Returning them to public consciousness as a prominent and valued feature of the town would be a stimulant to civic pride in an ancient community and provide opportunities for the informed and sympathetic creation of new spaces and ideas in the developing modern town and enhance the cultural heritage appeal of the town.

2.4 PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES OF THE TOWN

The principal threats to the contextual significance of the Town Walls, identified in the Town Walls Conservation Plan (2008) and remaining relevant today, are:

1. Lack of knowledge and failure to appreciate the asset.

2. Incremental degradation of the historic fabric as a result of natural weathering and erosion and mechanical damage caused by traffic and other uses.

3. Neglect or inappropriate management and maintenance regimes.

4. Inappropriate development which may have adverse visual and other impacts upon its setting.

5. Loss of potentially important open space adjacent to the walls.

6. Vandalism and anti-social behaviour resulting in physical damage and under-use.

7. Inappropriate modern interventions such as street furniture including seating, signage and railings.

8. Health and safety measures which might compromise authenticity.

Since 2008, additional threats to the town walls and other significant heritage assets include the degree of plant overgrowth, the increasing risk of extreme weather and flooding as a result of climate change, and increased traffic and pollution pressures.

View through Westgate, showing some graffiti

2.5 EXISTING HERITAGE PROTECTION MEASURES

Map showing Wexford town's existing heritage protection measures.

Legend:
- ■ National Monument
- ● Protected Structures (included in the local authority Record of Protected Structures)
- ■ Sites and Monuments (included in the Sites and Monuments Record, scheduled to be be added to the next Record of Monument and Places)
- ▭ Zones of Notification
- ▬ Architectural Conservation Areas
- - - Town Walls line
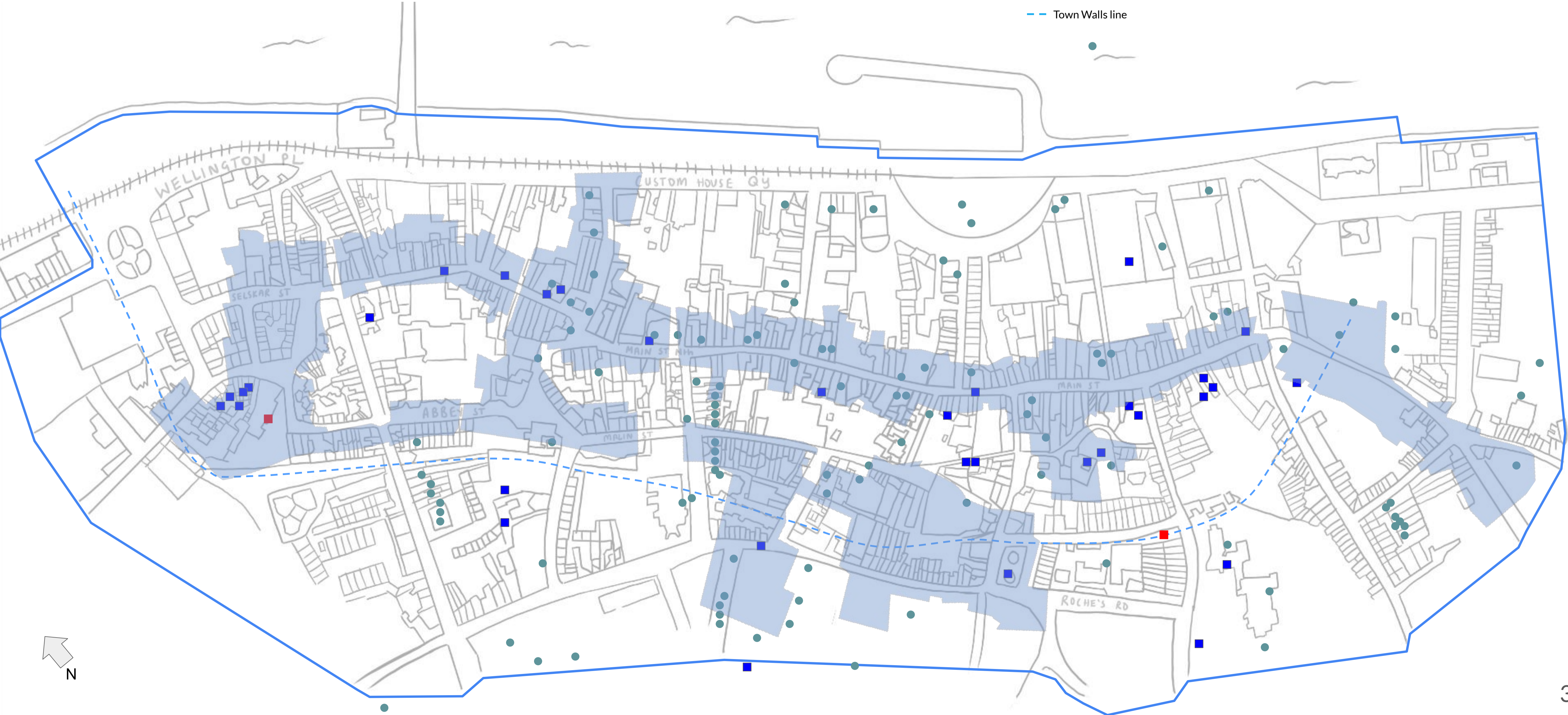
2.5 EXISTING HERITAGE PROTECTION MEASURES

There are a number of existing measures are in place to ensure the protection of Wexford's historic structures, sites and places. In terms of proposed regeneration and conservation efforts, and the introduction of new buildings, other structures and services, varying permissions must be sought, notifications made, and criteria met for consideration of approval of these proposals.

Record of Monuments and Places (RMP), The National Monuments Act

Wexford's sites and monuments listed in the statutory RMP, established under the National Monuments Acts (1930-2004), are legally protected, and generally referred to as 'Recorded Monuments'. In Wexford town, this currently includes the town walls (as a single entity) and Selskar Abbey, both of which are also National Monuments. Wexford town also includes a number of structures and sites listed on the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). The listing of a structure or site on the SMR database does not, of itself, confer legal protection, yet Wexford town's SMR listings are scheduled for inclusion in the next Record of Monuments and Places.

The National Monuments Acts require that Ministerial Consent be obtained from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage prior to any works to any monument which is in Local Authority ownership. Privately owned sections of Wexford's town walls and other monuments are also subject to this requirement, with an exception being made for minor upstanding sections of the walls or other that are deemed structurally unrelated to any part which is in Local Authority ownership.

Such sections are subject to the normal planning process. For those monuments, or sections, in Local Authority ownership, Ministerial Consent must also be obtained for repairs and interventions which may normally be classed as exempted development.

Zone of Notification

The context of an archaeological site is important and every archaeological monument is surrounded by a Zone of Notification. These zones do not completely exclude the possibility of development, but can indicate areas for particular consideration in relation to possible impacts on the site or monument in question. Any works intended on or close to a recorded monument, or within a Zone of Notification, requires two months prior notice in writing to the Minister of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, even if planning permission is not required. For National Monuments in the ownership or guardianship of the Minister or local authority, or subject to a preservation order under the National Monuments Acts, prior consent of the Minister is required for works at or in proximity to the monument. The entire historic core of Wexford Town is a Zone of Notification.

National Policy on the Protection of Archaeological Heritage

National policy emphasises the non-renewable nature of the archaeological heritage and that there needs to be a presumption in favour of its preservation in-situ. This is emphasised in the case of Wexford's town walls - a listed National Monument - by the National Policy on Town Defences (2008).

2.5 EXISTING HERITAGE PROTECTION MEASURES

Record of Protected Structures (RPS), The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)

Many of Wexford town's historic buildings are listed for protection in the RPS, as set out in the County Development Plan 2022-2028. It is the policy of the Council in general to seek the preservation and protection of structures on the RPS, to safeguard the character of the setting of these structures and to ensure that proposals for new uses are compatible with both the character and the setting of a protected structure.

The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH)

The NIAH is a state initiative under the administration of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, and established on under the provisions of the Architectural Heritage (National Inventory) and Historic Monuments (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1999. The purpose of the NIAH is to identify, record, and evaluate the post-1700 architectural heritage of Ireland, as an aid in the protection and conservation of the built heritage. NIAH surveys provide the basis for the recommendations of the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage to the planning authorities for the inclusion of particular structures in their Record of Protected Structures (RPS). The NIAH recommendations were assessed for the County Development Plan 2022-2028.

Each owner and occupier of a Protected Structure must ensure that a protected structure, or any element of a protected structure that contributes to its special interest, is not endangered through harm, decay or damage, or neglect. The protection applies to all parts of the structure that contribute to its character and special interest, including its interior, surrounding land or 'curtilage' any other structures on that land, and interiors. Exempted development provisions are removed in respect of protected structures, apart from minor works that do not materially affect the character of the structure, and unless a declaration is in place to re-exempt such works.

Architectural Conservation Area (ACA)

Wexford town contains a number of ACAs. The primary objective of the formation of an ACA is to protect the architecture and landscape character of an area, but does not mean it is compulsory to alter any features that existed when the ACA was designated. There is however a duty to protect the historic fabric, and in the event of proposed change all historic fabric should be retained and repaired and any replacement features should be historically appropriate. It is particularly important that any new development within the ACA is carefully planned and implemented with a full appreciation and understanding of area's significance.

View of the River Slaney estuary from Ferrybank

2.6 THE NATURAL HERITAGE OF WEXFORD

Not only is Wexford steeped in medieval history, it is rich in natural heritage too. County Wexford is located in the South-East of Ireland, with half of its border bounded by the sea. This coastal environment is home to a variety of habitats, supporting mammals, sea and bird life, including some rare and protected species. Boating, bait-digging and fishing occur in parts of Wexford Harbour, which is renowned for its mussel boats and is designated a **Shellfish Protected Area**.

Situated at the mouth of the River Slaney, Wexford Town borders a particularly important estuarine habitat. The coastal area to the north east of Wexford Town is designated as part of the **Slaney River Valley Special Area of Conservation (SAC)**. These are prime wildlife conservation areas in the country, considered to be important on a European as well as Irish level.

Wexford Harbour is an extensive, shallow estuary which dries out considerably at low tide exposing large expanses of mudflats and sandflats. The site supports populations of several species listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive, including Lamprey, Otter, Salmon, and small numbers of Freshwater Pearl Mussel. The Slaney is primarily a spring salmon fishery and is regarded as one of the top rivers in Ireland for early spring fishing.

Regionally significant numbers of Common Seal occur year-round in Wexford Harbour where sandbanks are used for breeding, moulting and resting. A nesting colony of Little Egret has recently become established within the site and birds are present in the area throughout the year. The sheltered estuarine habitat to the west of Wexford Bridge is the favoured location. The Slaney River Valley SAC also supports many of the mammal species occurring in Ireland, including Pine Marten, Badger, Irish Hare and Daubenton's Bat, which are listed in the Irish Red Data Book. Overall, the area is of considerable conservation significance.

Clockwise from top left: Common Seal, Irish Hare, Little Egret and Badger, all occur in the Slaney River Valley SAC (image credits: Conserve Ireland)

2.6 THE NATURAL HERITAGE OF WEXFORD

A little further off the eastern coast of Wexford Town is the **Wexford Harbour and Slobs Special Protection Area (SPA)**. Shallow marine water is a principal habitat, but at low tide extensive areas of intertidal flats are exposed. These flats support macroinvertebrate fauna, including cockles, crustaceans and mussels.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for a number of species, including Cormorant, Grey Heron, Bewick's Swan, Whooper Swan, Greenland White-fronted Goose and many others. Regularly supporting well over 20,000 waterbirds, the site is of international importance, and is one of the top three sites in the country for numbers and diversity of wintering birds.

Wexford Wildfowl Reserve, located within Wexford Harbour and Slobs SPA, is a Ramsar Convention site, a Biogenetic Reserve, a Statutory Nature Reserve, and an important centre for research, education and tourism.

For those looking to explore, Wexford County offers a number of beautiful walks through its varied landscape, including wooded, historic, coastal and mountain trails. From Wexford Town, there is easy access to Rosslare Harbour and the **Norman Way**, a heritage trail that runs along the south coast of County Wexford with medieval sites alongside quiet country lanes, beautiful seaside villages and stunning beaches.

Also running through the south of County Wexford, from Rosslare Harbour in the East to New Ross in the West, is the scenic **Eurovelo Atlantic Coast Cycling Route.** It stretches over 9,100km from Nordkap in Norway around the Atlantic Coast to Sagres in Portugal, with a 120km segment through County Wexford.

Clockwise from top left: White-fronted Goose and Whooper Swan, Wexford Wildfowl Reserve (image credits: Conserve Ireland)
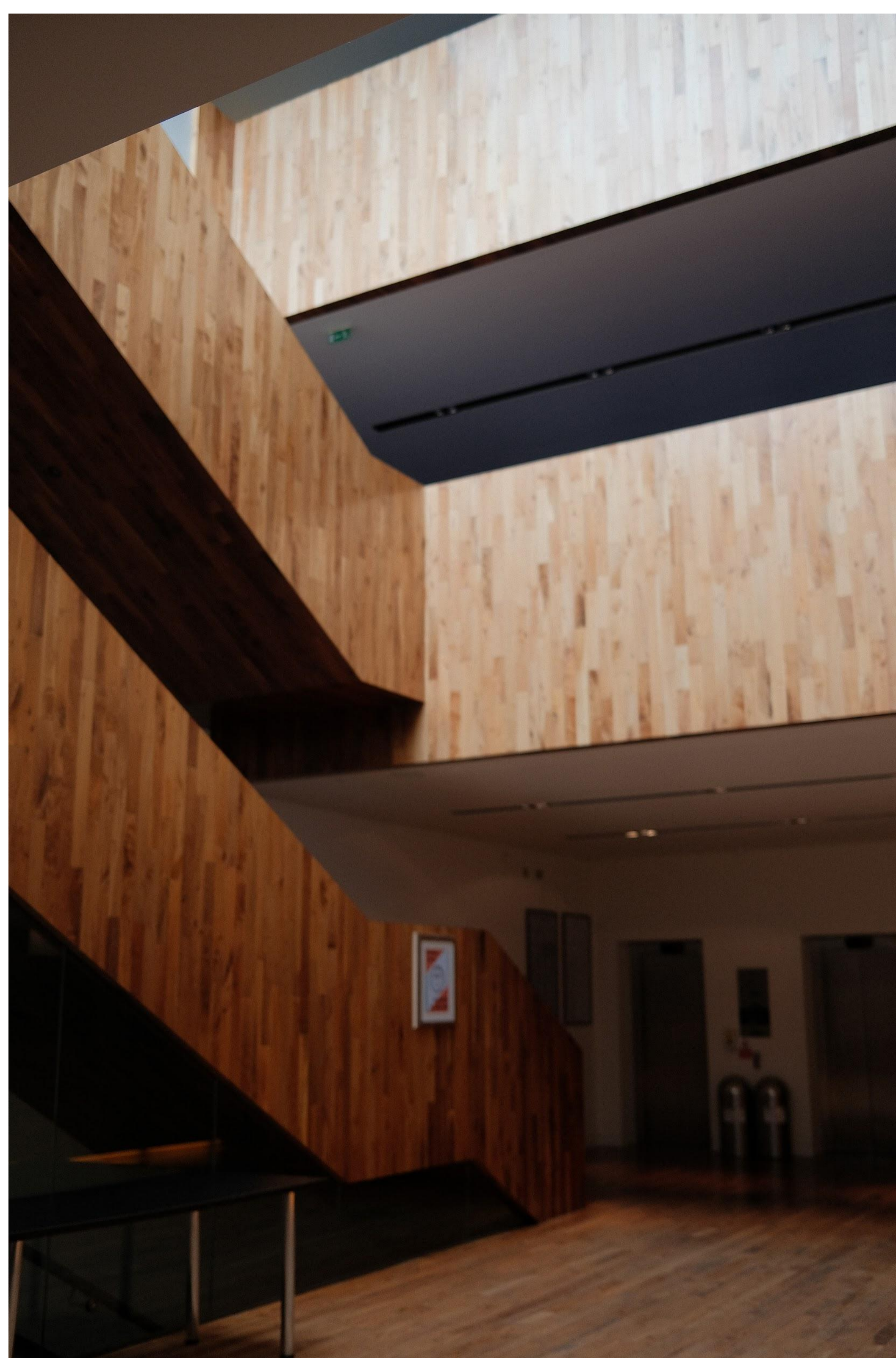
The National Opera House, Wexford High Street

2.7 SOCIAL & CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE TOWN

Since the first 'Festival of Music and the Arts' took place in October 1951, Wexford Festival Opera has grown into one of the world's leading opera festivals, winning Best Festival at the International Opera Awards in 2017. Balancing tradition with innovation, including live-streaming during the Covid-19 pandemic, the festival's reputation for high quality productions attracts thousands of opera-lovers from around the world each year. The 2022 festival included pop-up opera from a building on Main Street, making the experience accessible to all and drawing a large crowd (see image).

Alongside the Opera, Wexford is renowned nationally for its passion and skill for hurling, a game of ancient Gaelic Irish origin. A statue in Trimmer's Lane West pays tribute to Nickey Rackard, a local hurling legend whose league and championship career with the Wexford senior team spanned 17 years from 1940 to 1957 and many championship scoring records.

To the north of Wexford Town is Curracloe Beach, where the film 'Saving Private Ryan' was filmed. The Bull Ring in Wexford's town centre also featured in film in 1902, as part of the Mitchell and Kenyon collection, an amazing visual record of everyday life at the beginning of the twentieth century. The short film can be watched on YouTube here.

Yola, a now extinct medieval dialect which was commonly spoken in south Wexford until it began declining in the mid-19th century, became officially extinct in 1998 upon the death of the last speaker, a local fisherman from Kilmore Quay named Jack Devereux. A Yola word that remains in use locally is 'quare', translating in English to 'very' or 'extremely'. The Yola name for Wexford was Weiseforthe.

The Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann will be hosted in Wexford in 2024. This is the world's largest annual celebration of Irish music, language, song and dance. It attracts in the region of 700,000 visitors to the host town every year.

Pop-up opera in the historic core during Wexford Opera Festival 2022 (image credit: Ian Doyle)

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Statue in Trimmer's Lane West of Nickey Rackard, local hurling legend whose league and championship career with the Wexford senior team spanned seventeen years from 1940 to 1957. He established many championship scoring records, including being the top championship goal-scorer of all time.

2.8 THE WEXFORD TOWN HERITAGE MAP

HERITAGE & CULTURAL ASSETS

1. Redmond Monument
2. Wexford Gaol
3. Westgate Heritage Centre
4. Selskar Abbey
5. Wexford Bull Ring Market
6. Arts Centre
7. Creative Hub
8. Wexford Library
9. St Iberius' Church

10. Catholic Church of the Immaculate Conception (Rowe Street Church)
11. National Opera House
12. Peter's Square
13. Catholic Church of the Assumption (Bride Street Church)
14. Wexford Infantry Barracks (Site of Castle)
15. Franciscan Friary

- - - Town Wall (Site)
— Town Wall (Existing)
• Protected Structures
■ National Monuments
■ Sites and Monuments
⋯ Approximate shoreline before reclamation
- - Key Connecting Route Between Cultural Hubs
— Shore line before reclamation

Graveyards
1. St. John's
2. St. Patrick's
3. St. Mary's

Town Gates
1. West (Cow) Gate (site of)
2. Selskar Gate (existing)
3. St John's Gate (site of)
4. Keyser's Gate (site of)
5. Peter's Gate (site of)
6. Bride's Gate (site of)
7. Castle Gate (site of)
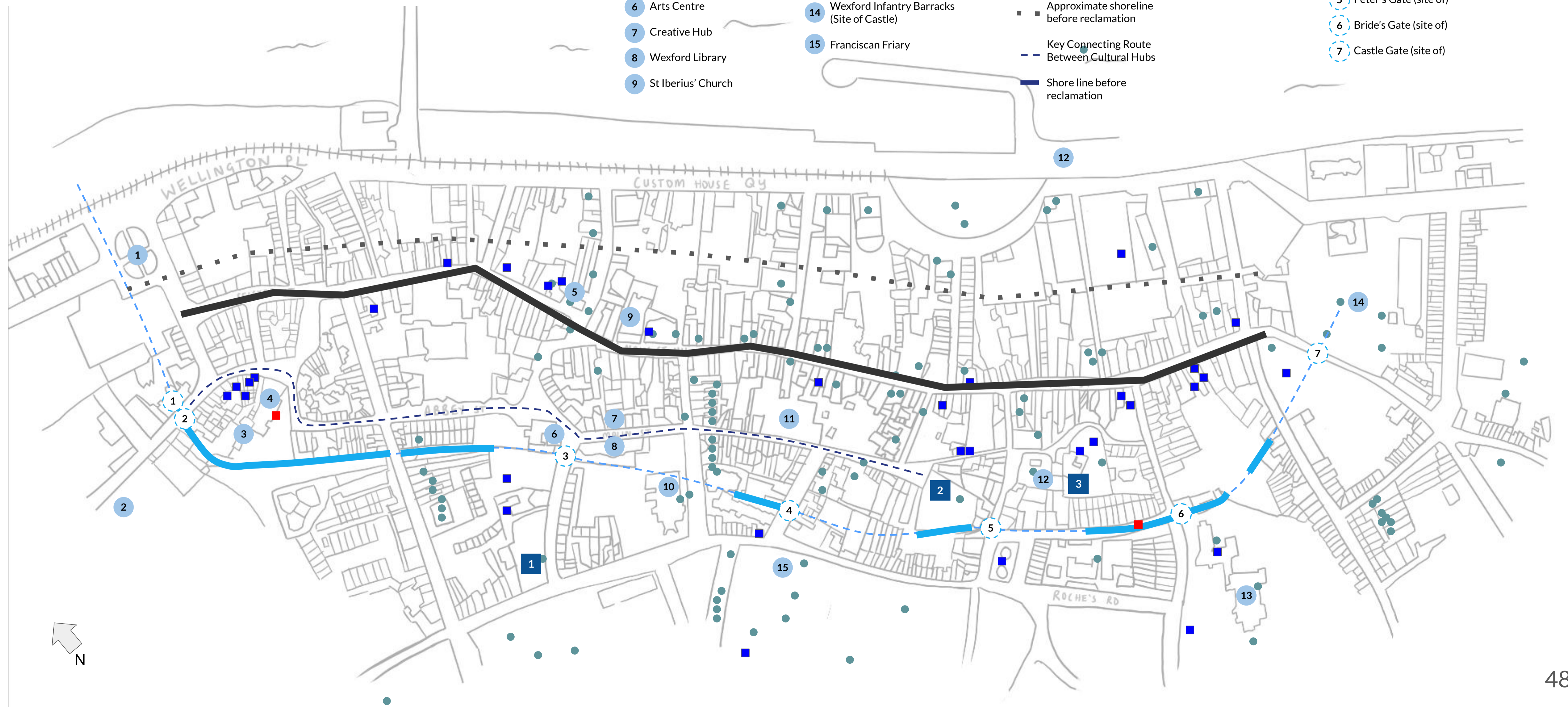
2.8 THE WEXFORD TOWN HERITAGE MAP

HERITAGE & CULTURAL ASSETS

1 Redmond Monument
Stone monument built to commemorate the Redmond family and its long-standing ties with County Wexford

2 Wexford Gaol
Complex built in the early 1800s, originally as a jail but also historically used as an infirmary & county hall

3 Westgate Heritage Centre
Currently vacant, within the curtilage of the important Selskar Abbey and Westgate Tower heritage complex

4 Selskar Abbey
Shell of a church built in 1826, on the site of a 12th Century abbey that was destroyed by Cromwell in 1649

5 Wexford Bull Ring Market
Pair of market buildings built in 1871 by the Wexford Corporation on the site where bull-baiting took place

6 Wexford Arts Centre
A market house built in 1775, now used as an art gallery and museum, refurbished and extended in 2022.

7 Creative Hub
A working studio, exhibition and a retail space supporting over 25 local artists, craft makers and musicians

8 Wexford Library
A modern building adjacent to the Town Wall and the historic Cornmarket site (now the Arts Centre)

9 St Iberius' Church
1760 Church of Ireland church, believed to be on an ecclesiastical site dating back to the time of St. Patrick

10 Rowe Street Church
Together with Bride Street Church, one of a pair of grand Twin Churches built between 1851 and 1858
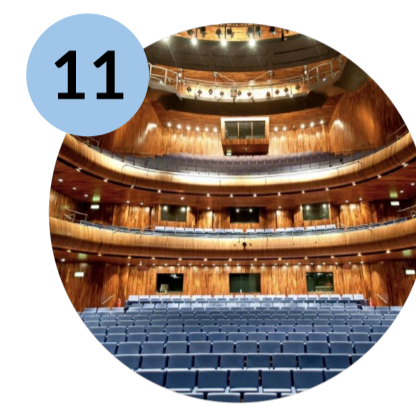
11 National Opera House
Ireland's first custom-built, opera house opened in 2008, on the site of the site of the 1832 Theatre Royal

12 Peter's Square
The site of St. Peter's Church, demolished in the mid 1800s.

13 Bride Street Church
The second of the Twin Churches that dominate the skyline of Wexford. Features intricate stained glass & mosaics, and a Convent building

14 Military Barracks
Soldiers' quarters blockhouse, opened 1725 on the site of Wexford Castle, just outside the Town Walls

15 Franciscan Friary
Founded during the middle of the 13th Century. The distinctive bell tower was added to the building in 1856

Wexford Town Walls
One of the longest surviving intact medieval town wall circuits in Ireland and a key townscape feature

1 St John's
Graveyard, mausoleum and resting place of members of the Redmond political dynasty

2 St Patrick's
Church ruins and graveyard housing the remains of many who died in the Rebellions of 1641 and 1798

3 St Mary's
Church ruins and graveyard of St Mary's parish, one of 5 parishes in Wexford Town's historic core

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The Convent of the Perpetual Adoration, located adjacent to the Catholic Church of the Assumption (Bride Street Church)

2.8 THE WEXFORD TOWN HERITAGE MAP

NATURE & PUBLIC SPACES

1 Redmond Park
2 Redmond Square
3 River Slaney Estuary
4 Westgate Park
5 Cornmarket Square
6 Bull Ring
7 Quayfront
8 St John's Graveyard
9 Crescent Quay
10 St Patrick's Graveyard
11 Peter's Square
12 St Mary's Graveyard
13 Wexford Wildfowl Reserve

Wexford Harbour & Slabs Special Protection Area
Slaney River Valley Special Area of Conservation
Wexford Shellfish Protected Area

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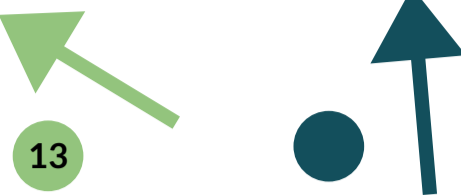
2.8 THE WEXFORD TOWN HERITAGE MAP

NATURE & PUBLIC SPACES

1 Redmond Park
Opened in 1931 as a memorial for Wexford-born politician and soldier, Major Willie Redmond

2 Redmond Square
Square with seating and a prominent monument commemorating the Redmond family, near the Train Station

3 River Slaney Estuary
An important estuarine habitat designated as part of the Slaney River Valley Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

4 Westgate Park
A linear park alongside a section of Town Wall and Westgate Tower, the largest green space within the town centre

5 Cornmarket Square
A historic designated marketplace for farmers to sell corn, flanked by the market building that is now the Arts Centre

6 Bull Ring
Centre to the town, the Bull Ring was a place of a cruel sport in the 1600s. Now contains the Pikeman Statue

7 Quayfront
A large open public space with seating, trees, and capacity for large events, situated on reclaimed land

8 St John's
Graveyard, mausoleum and resting place of members of the Redmond political dynasty

9 Crescent Quay
Known for its distinctive shape and bronze statue of Commodore John Barry, a gift from the USA in the 1950s

10 St Patrick's
Church ruins and graveyard housing the remains of many who died in the Rebellions of 1641 and 1798

11 Peter's Square
The site of St. Peter's Church, said to be demolished so that it's stone could be used to repair Wexford Castle

12 St Mary's
Church ruins and graveyard of St Mary's parish, one of 5 parishes in Wexford Town's historic core

13 Wexford Wildfowl Reserve
Part of a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive

View of the (overgrown) Town Wall and Church of the Immaculate Conception (Rowe Street Church) from St Patrick's graveyard

2.8 THE WEXFORD TOWN HERITAGE MAP

CONNECTIONS

1 Well Lane
2 Roman Lane
3 Fetitt's Lane
4 Keyser's Lane
5 Harper's Lane

6 Patrick's Lane
7 Mary's Lane
8 Oyster Lane
9 Sinnott Place
10 Slaughterhouse Lane

◄ Key View of Wexford Skyline
(Twin Church Steeples) from Wexford Bridge

◄ Key View of Franciscan Friary from Mary Street

◄ Key View of Town Wall and Rowe Street Church
from St Patrick's Graveyard

▲ Wexford Bridge

■ Wexford Train Station

▬▬ North Main Street (Pedestrianised)

▬▬ South Main Street (Not Pedestrianised)

━━ Railway

╌╌ Wexford Town Sli na Slante Walking Tour

⋯ Cycle Route

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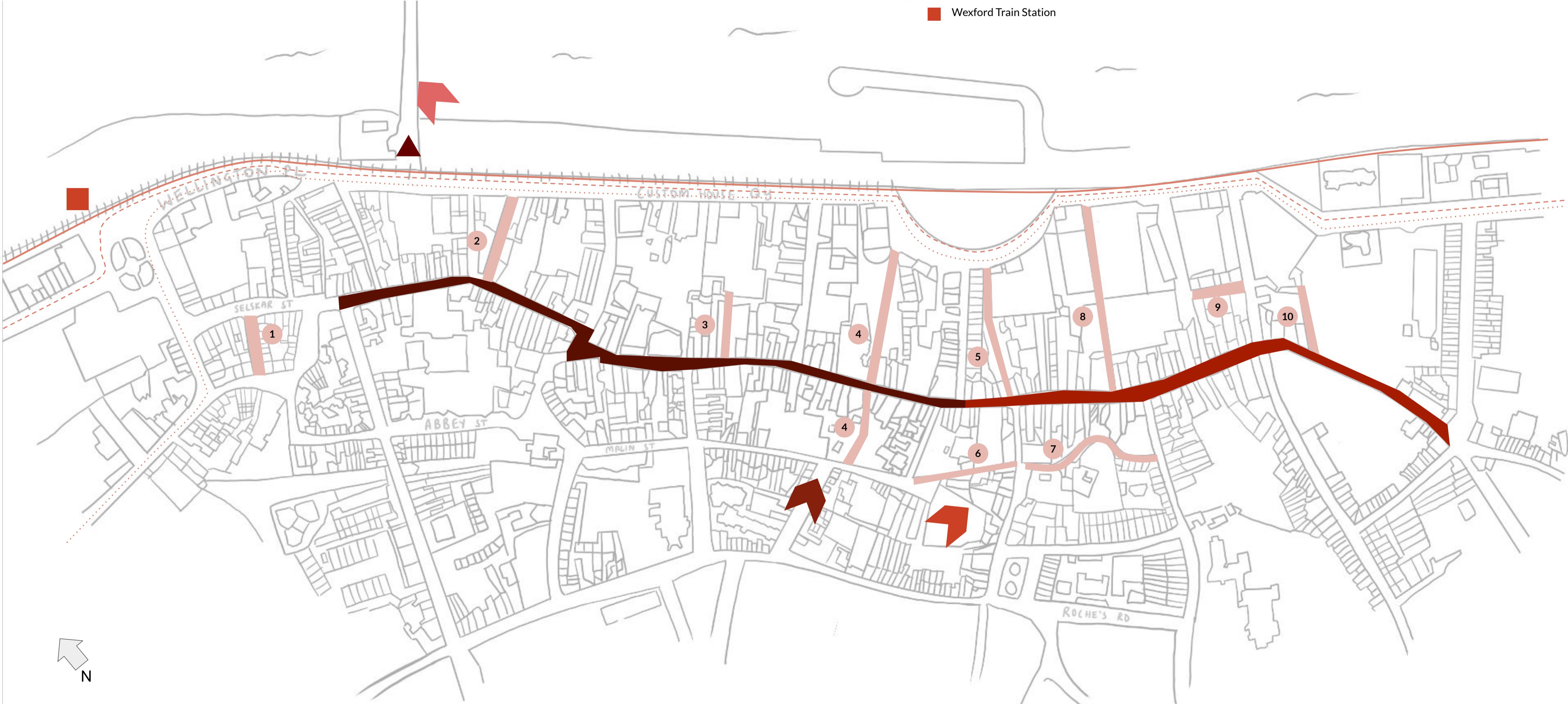
View of Franciscan Friary from Mary Street

2.8 THE WEXFORD TOWN HERITAGE MAP

AMENITIES

✉ Post Offices

♿ Accessible Toilets

1 Arts Centre

2 Library

Wexford Library from John's Gate Street with a section of Town Wall and the steeple of the Catholic Church of the Immaculate Conception behind

2.9 ANNUAL CULTURAL EVENTS CALENDAR

AUGUST

Enniscorthy Rockin' Food Festival

Taste of Wexford Farmers Market

The Tri the Hook Triathalon

National Heritage Week

Fleadh Cheoil 2024

OCTOBER

Wexford Festival Opera

Wexford Fringe Festival

Spiegeltent Festival

JUNE

Enniscorthy Street Rhythms Festival

Enniscorthy Strawberry Festival

Wexford Marathon

APRIL

Wexford Half Marathon

MARCH

St Patrick's Day

MAY

Wexford Food & Wine Festival

Jestfest

JULY

Seafood Festival Kilmore

Art In The Open-Plein Air Painting Festival

Wexford Maritime Festival

SEPTEMBER

Wexford Culture Night

Rosslare Small Boats Festival

Wexford Walking Festival

DECEMBER

Wexford Wonderland

Enniscorthy: Santa's Enchanted Castle

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View towards Selskar Abbey from Trimmer's Lane West

WEXFORD LITERARY & MARITIME HERITAGE

The tradition in Wexford, is that on St Martin's day, November 11th, no Wexford fishing boat should be put to sea.

Legend has it that on St. Martin's Day 1702, a huge shoal of herrings approached and the local fishermen defied tradition. As the fishermen rowed out of the port, St. Martin appeared riding a white horse and waved them back to shore. Two of the crews obeyed the saint's warning and turned back. The other fishermen cast their nets, looking forward to a huge catch. But before they could haul in their bulging nets a fierce storm arose and overwhelmed them. It is said that seventy of Wexford's fishermen drowned.
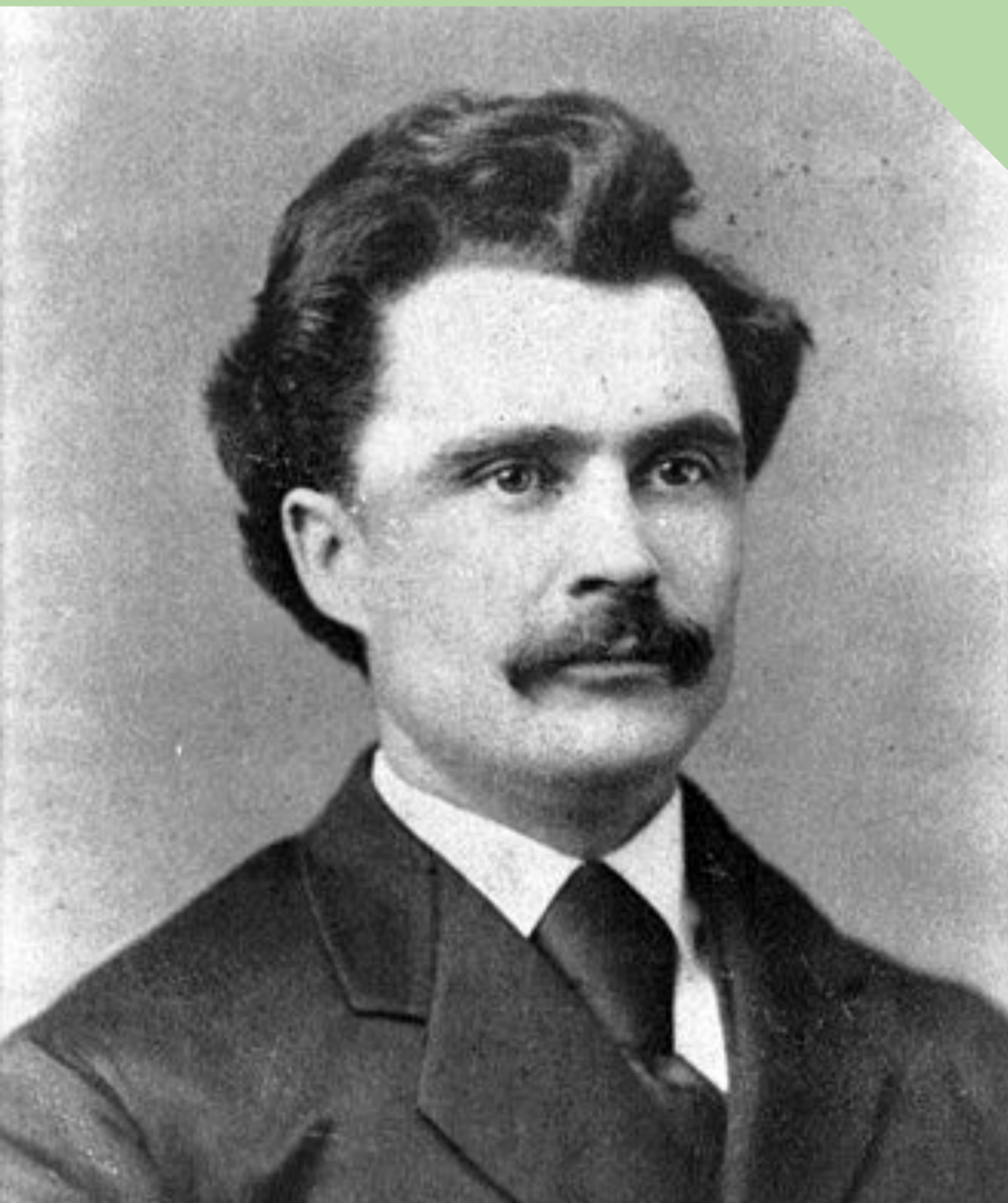
John Boyle O'Reilly

Irish poet, journalist, author and activist.

The Fishermen of Wexford
A Poem by John Boyle O'Reilly

There is an old tradition sacred held in Wexford town,
That says: 'Upon St. Martin's Eve no net shall be let down;
No fishermen of Wexford shall, upon that holy day,
Set sail or cast a line within the scope of Wexford Bay.'
The tongue that framed the order, or the time, no one could tell;
And no one ever questioned, but the people kept it well.
And never in man's memory was fisher known to leave
The little town of Wexford on the good St. Martin's Eve.

Alas! alas for Wexford! once upon that holy day
Came a wondrous shoal of herring to the waters of the Bay.
The fishers and their families stood out upon the beach,
And all day watched with wistful eyes the wealth they might not reach.
Such shoal was never seen before, and keen regrets went round—
Alas! alas for Wexford! Hark! what is that grating sound?
The boats' keels on the shingle! Mothers! wives! ye well may grieve,—
The fishermen of Wexford mean to sail on Martin s Eve!

'Oh, stay ye!' cried the women wild. 'Stay!' cried the men white-haired;
'And dare ye not to do this thing your fathers never dared.
No man can thrive who tempts the Lord!' 'Away!' they cried: 'the Lord
Ne'er sent a shoal of fish but as a fisherman's reward.'
And scoffingly they said, 'To-night our net shall sweep the Bay,
And take the Saint who guards it, should he come across our way!'
The keels have touched the water, and the crews are in each boat;
And on St. Martin's Eve the Wexford fishers are afloat!

The moon is shining coldly on the sea and on the land,
On dark faces in the fishing-fleet and pale ones on the strand,
As seaward go the daring boats, and heavenward the cries
Of kneeling wives and mothers with uplifted hands and eyes.

'Oh Holy Virgin! be their guard! ' the weeping women cried;
The old men, sad and silent, watched the boats cleave through the tide,
As past the farthest headland, past the lighthouse, in a line
The fishing-fleet went seaward through the phosphor-lighted brine.

Oh, pray, ye wives and mothers! All your prayers they sorely need
To save them from the wrath they've roused by their rebellious greed.
Oh! white-haired men and little babes, and weeping sweethearts, pray
To God to spare the fishermen to-night in Wexford Bay!

The boats have reached good offing, and, as out the nets are thrown,
The hearts ashore are chilled to hear the soughing sea-wind's moan:

Like to a human heart that loved, and hoped for some return,
To find at last but hatred, so the sea-wind seemed to mourn.
But ah! the Wexford fishermen! their nets did scarcely sink
One inch below the foam, when, lo! the daring boatmen shrink
With sudden awe and whitened lips and glaring eyes agape,
For breast-high, threatening, from the sea uprose a Human Shape!

Beyond them,—in the moonlight,—hand upraised and awful mien,
Waving back and pointing landward, breast-high in the sea 'twas seen.
Thrice it waved and thrice it pointed,—then, with clenched hand upraised,
The awful shape went down before the fishers as they gazed!
Gleaming whitely through the water, fathoms deep they saw its frown,—
They saw its white hand clenched above it,—sinking slowly down!
And then there was a rushing ' neath the boats, and every soul
Was thrilled with greed: they knew it was the seaward-going shoal!

Defying the dread warning, every face was sternly set,
And wildly did they ply the oar, and wildly haul the net.
But two boats' crews obeyed the sign, —God-fearing men were they,—
They cut their lines and left their nets, and homeward sped away;
But darkly rising sternward did God's wrath in tempest sweep,
And they, of all the fishermen, that night escaped the deep.
Oh, wives and mothers, sweethearts, sires! well might ye mourn next day;
For seventy fishers' corpses strewed the shores of Wexford Bay!

3. WHAT IS: THE CASE FOR CHANGE

Defining issues and opportunity areas in Wexford town

View of Selskar Abbey from Temperance Row

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets out the current context and baseline for the town of Wexford in order to define the case for change and the key issues, strengths and opportunities to take forward into the action plan.

It begins with an analysis of the policy context (at global, national and local scales), drawing out common themes to be prioritised, followed by an assessment of previous heritage-led plans and actions (notably the Wexford Town Walls Conservation Plan 2008). It then summarises some key developments and interventions that are proposed or already underway in Wexford town, so that interventions proposed in this plan can be aligned.

The findings and insights from the desktop research, field study and engagement activities (including the survey, interviews and workshops) are then considered holistically through the lens of a 'Town Health Check'. This analyses and summarises the challenges, opportunities, strengths and weaknesses of the town under four strategic themes: Liveability, Activity, Connectivity and Community. The Collaborative Town Centre Health Check Programme is a separate programme of the Heritage Council and this report is not a CTCHCP report.

The approach has been informed by the Historic Towns Initiative and the Collaborative Town Centre Health Check Programme, which strive to raise awareness, understanding and appreciation of the critical role that historic town centres play, and the wide-ranging impacts that their vitality and viability have on overall socio-economic, environmental and cultural growth and development, and on quality of life for citizens and visitors alike. Through the engagement and co-design process undertaken for this plan, members of the public, civic society, local authority, public agencies and business representatives were invited to share their views on their experiences in the town centre, to ensure their priorities are reflected.
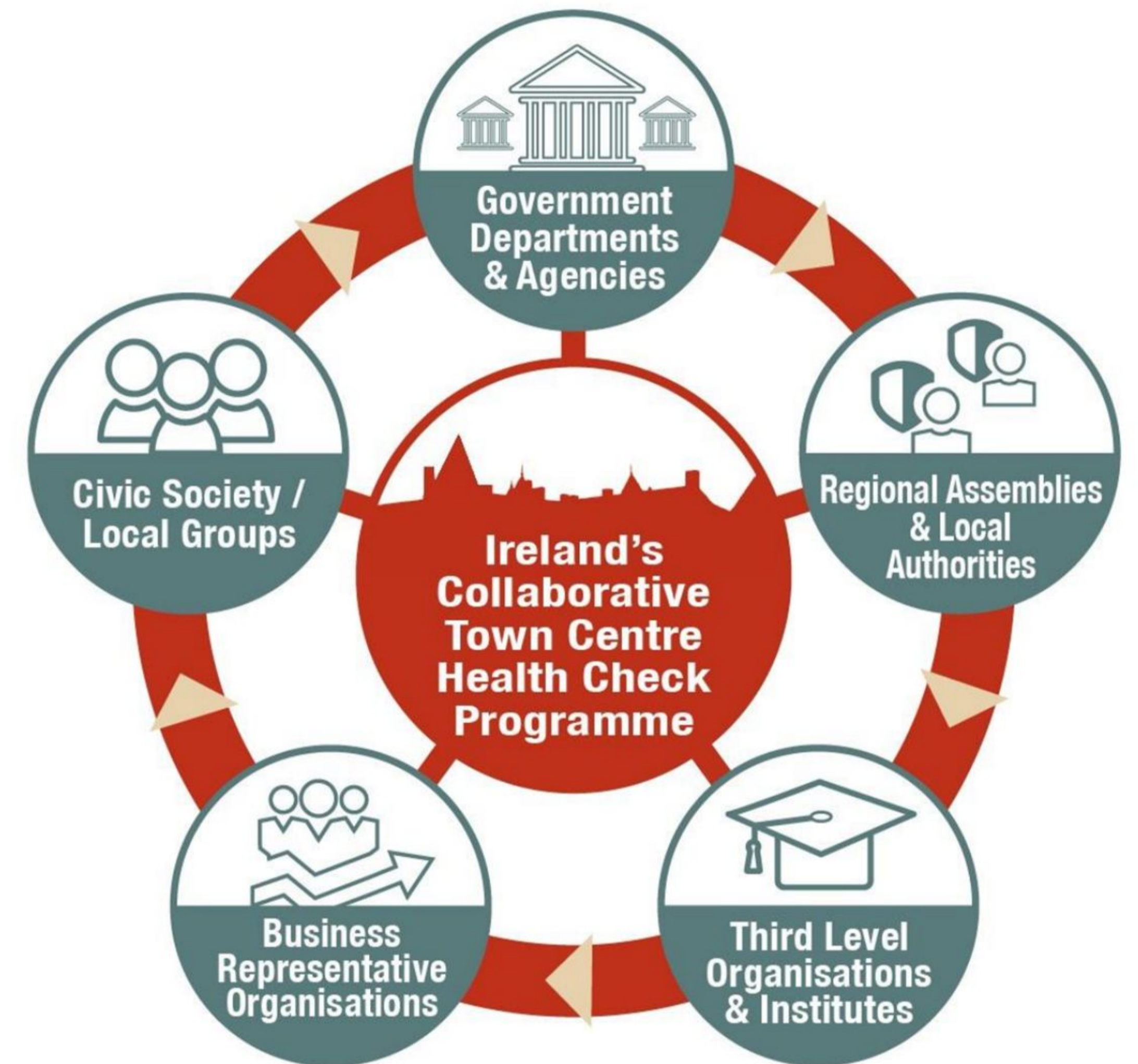
The Collaborative Town Centre Health Check Programme aims to establish an innovative baseline, to help monitor and drive the development of the town centre going forward.

View of the Town Wall at Cornmarket, next to the Wexford Arts Centre (which underwent refurbishment and extension in 2022)

3.2 POLICY CONTEXT

An analysis of the global, national and local policy landscape highlighted key themes and areas of priority that are relevant for the Wexford heritage-led regeneration plan.

Across the diverse array of policies, strategies and development plans lies a set of clear shared priorities (set out in the diagram on the next page); from conserving and celebrating heritage to nurturing biodiversity, promoting sustainable tourism and achieving community resilience.

Throughout policies and development plans there is a strong sense that heritage can be used as a tool to achieve socio-economic wellbeing and maximise civic pride and a sense of place.

The data reviewed highlights the strategic purpose of heritage-led regeneration, and its multiple benefits for the local community.
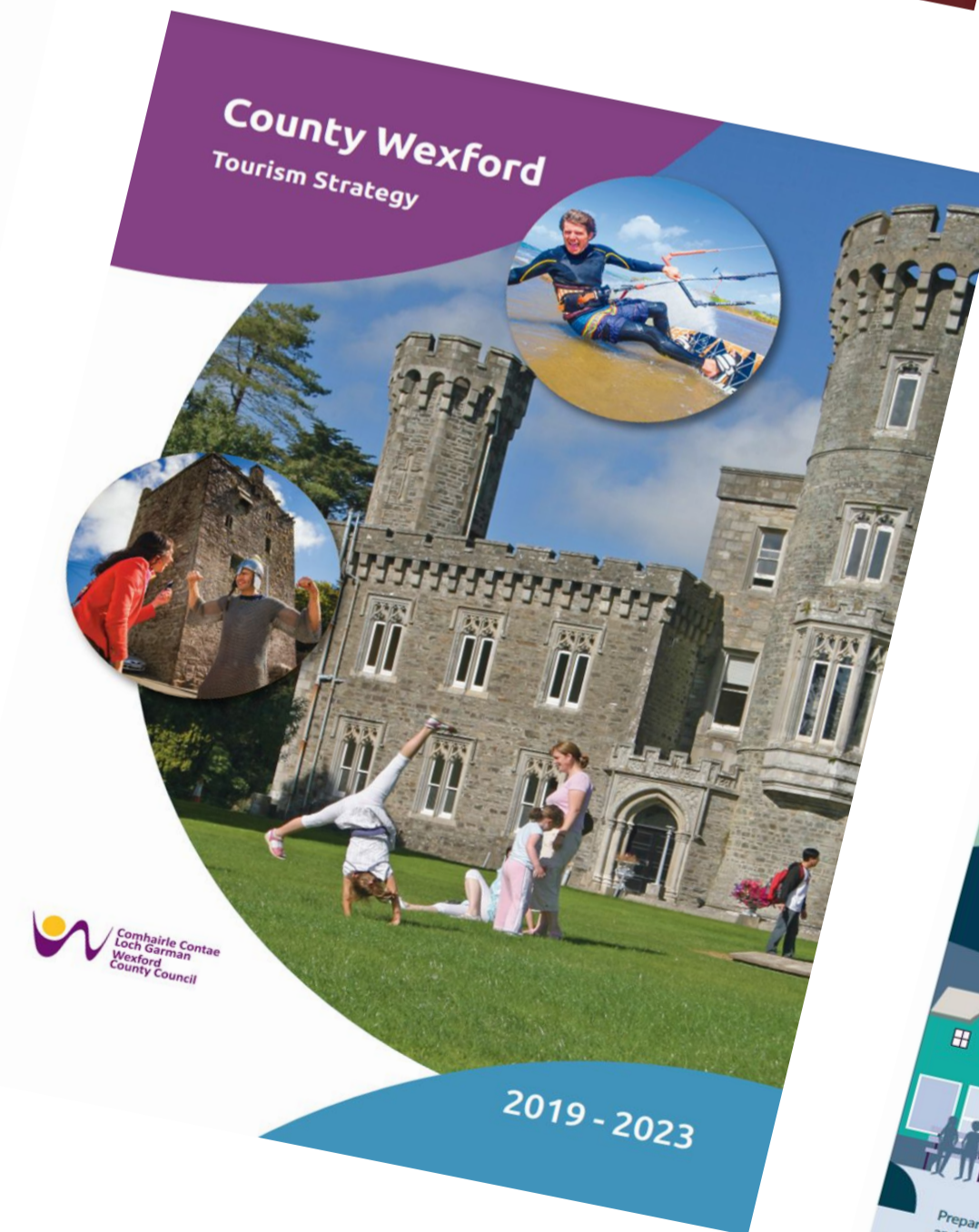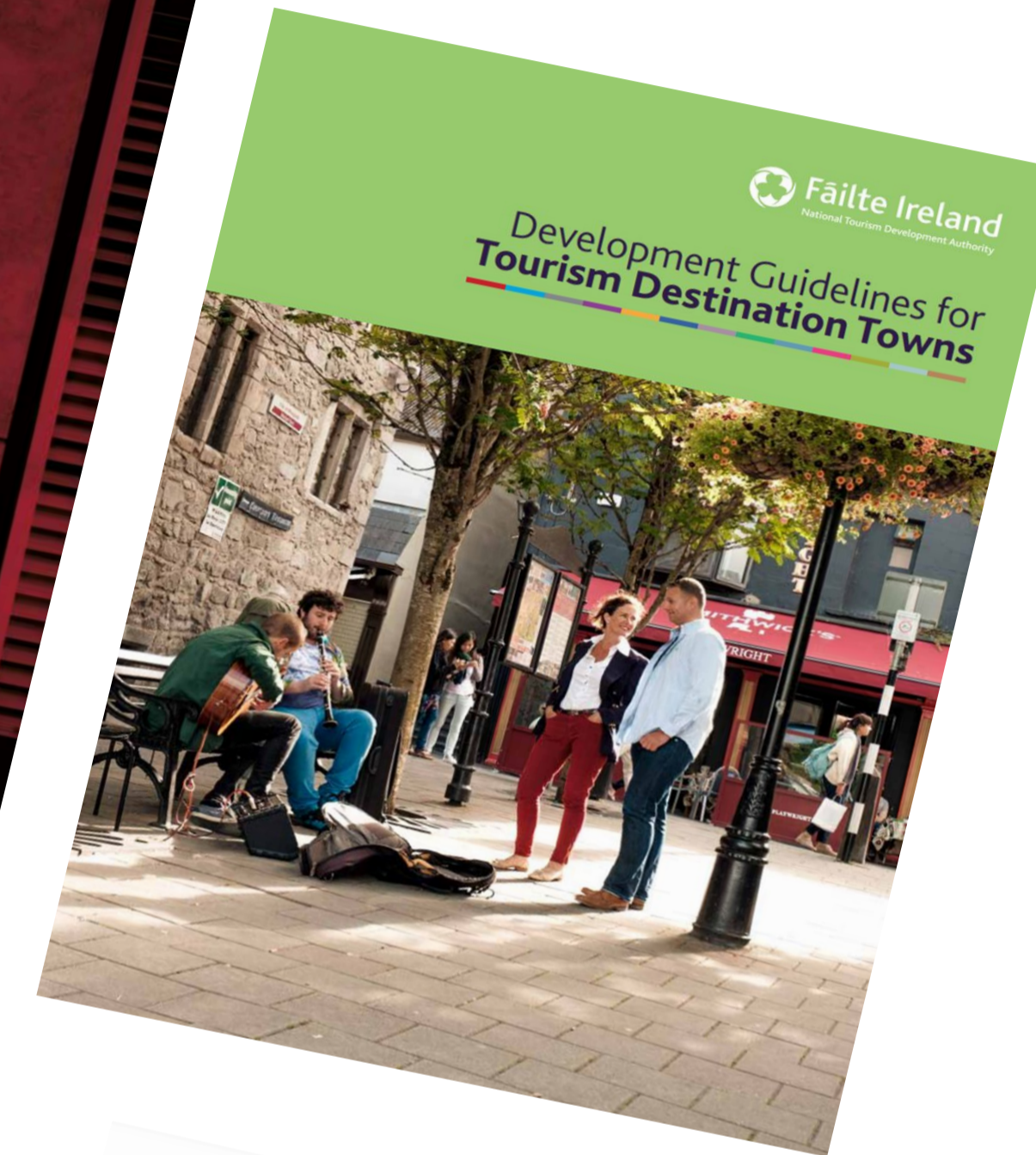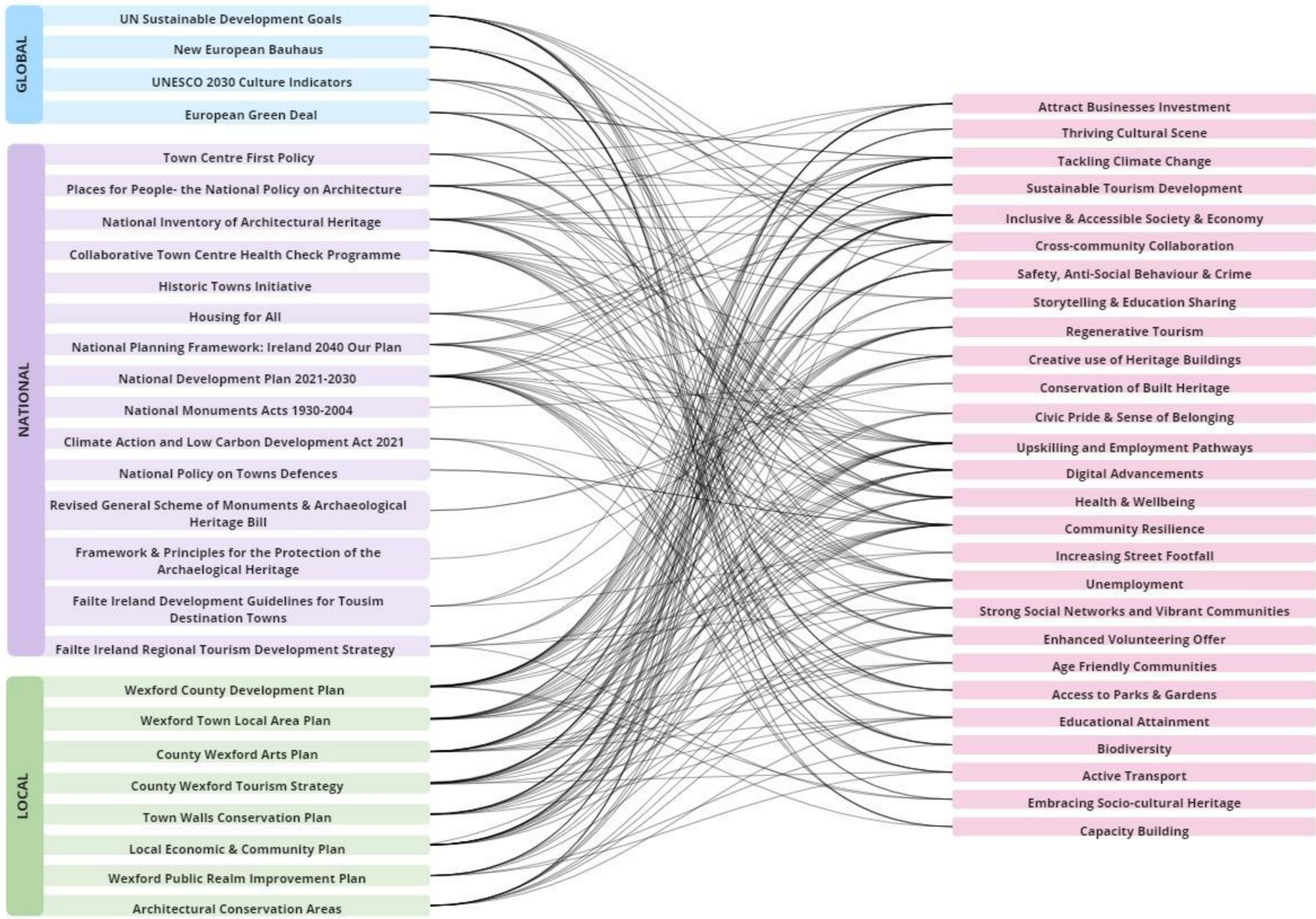
GLOBAL
- UN Sustainable Development Goals
- New European Bauhaus
- UNESCO 2030 Culture Indicators
- European Green Deal

NATIONAL
- Town Centre First Policy
- Places for People- the National Policy on Architecture
- National Inventory of Architectural Heritage
- Collaborative Town Centre Health Check Programme
- Historic Towns Initiative
- Housing for All
- National Planning Framework: Ireland 2040 Our Plan
- National Development Plan 2021-2030
- National Monuments Acts 1930-2004
- Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2021
- National Policy on Towns Defences
- Revised General Scheme of Monuments & Archaeological Heritage Bill
- Framework & Principles for the Protection of the Archaelogical Heritage
- Failte Ireland Development Guidelines for Tousim Destination Towns
- Failte Ireland Regional Tourism Development Strategy

LOCAL
- Wexford County Development Plan
- Wexford Town Local Area Plan
- County Wexford Arts Plan
- County Wexford Tourism Strategy
- Town Walls Conservation Plan
- Local Economic & Community Plan
- Wexford Public Realm Improvement Plan
- Architectural Conservation Areas

- Attract Businesses Investment
- Thriving Cultural Scene
- Tackling Climate Change
- Sustainable Tourism Development
- Inclusive & Accessible Society & Economy
- Cross-community Collaboration
- Safety, Anti-Social Behaviour & Crime
- Storytelling & Education Sharing
- Regenerative Tourism
- Creative use of Heritage Buildings
- Conservation of Built Heritage
- Civic Pride & Sense of Belonging
- Upskilling and Employment Pathways
- Digital Advancements
- Health & Wellbeing
- Community Resilience
- Increasing Street Footfall
- Unemployment
- Strong Social Networks and Vibrant Communities
- Enhanced Volunteering Offer
- Age Friendly Communities
- Access to Parks & Gardens
- Educational Attainment
- Biodiversity
- Active Transport
- Embracing Socio-cultural Heritage
- Capacity Building

66

3.2 POLICY CONTEXT

Global

The 17 **UN Sustainable Development Goals** (adopted in 2015) define the strategic global challenges (including those related to poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, peace and justice) that we need to address to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all.

Both the built environment and our cultural heritage are key dimensions through which the UN SDGs can be realised. A 2019 UNESCO report, '**Culture 2030 Indicators**', reinforces the importance of culture (which includes heritage alongside the cultural and creative sectors) in delivering sustainable development and sets out clear indicators for tracking progress.

Building on this idea, the recently launched **New European Bauhaus** is a creative and interdisciplinary initiative that aims to connect the UN SDGs and the **European Green Deal** (which set the goal of making Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050) to our living spaces and experiences. Through the aspirational idea of 'form follows planet', the aim is to transform the European Green Deal into a new cultural project, beyond its technological, economic, social and environmental dimensions.

The New European Bauhaus initiative aims to create a design movement that integrates three dimensions: sustainability, quality of experience (including aesthetics) and inclusion (also covering affordability and accessibility). It calls for architectural quality and design thinking to ensure a high quality living environment for everyone, and the establishment of more symbiotic relationships between our urban and natural worlds.

UNESCO THEMATIC INDICATORS FOR CULTURE IN THE 2030 AGENDA

"Over time, both our built environment and our cultural heritage have proven to be resilient and valuable societal assets which have greatly helped when dealing with and recovering from various threats and crises, both natural and man-made... Imagination matters because societies need a wide range of ideas and options to help them adjust, particularly to big challenges like climate change, demographic trends in aging societies and other challenges."

New European Bauhaus

3.2 POLICY CONTEXT

National

The **National Planning Framework** (NPF) through NSO 7, NPO 6 and NPO 60 highlights the rich qualities of our natural and cultural heritage and promotes their conservation, enhancement and revitalisation in a manner appropriate to their significance. National Policy Objective 6 States -Regenerate and rejuvenate cities, towns and villages of all types and scale as environmental assets, that can accommodate changing roles and functions, increased residential population and employment activity and enhanced levels of amenity and design quality, in order to sustainably influence and support their surrounding area.

The **Town Centre First** policy aims to create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community. The policy outlines how heritage-led regeneration can support and make best use of already existing resources. Several towns reap the reward of heritage-led regeneration and investment in public realm improvements, and the conservation of built heritage, including the promotion of natural assets and bio-diversity networks. The policy outlines the real benefits to be gained from the sustainable management and conservation of Ireland's urban built heritage. Not only are the built assets enhanced, but the ongoing, sustainable conservation and upgrading activity provides a market for specialised construction skills, which gives rise to demands for local up-skilling training in all built environment occupations.

This policy outlines the effects of insensitive developments on the character of a town. The location and use of buildings in and outside the town requires a significant degree of consideration to ensure the town centre has a bustling and vibrant atmosphere. For example, the location of a nightclub and casino along the Quay in Wexford has hindered vibrancy throughout the day, affecting the attraction of the area.

Prominent businesses and organisations should be encouraged to establish premises within the town centre, with knock-on effects for footfall, retail and hospitality. In Wexford, the location of council offices outside of the town centre is an example of a lost opportunity to animate and galvanise the town centre as the core of activity. However, there is opportunity through new developments, such as Trinity Wharf, to improve this.

In support of the Town Centres First policy, the **Historic Towns Initiative (HTI)** is a joint undertaking by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Heritage Council which aims to promote the heritage-led regeneration of Ireland's historic towns.

The HTI pilot developed a framework approach to regenerating a town based on the principles of heritage-led regeneration. The steps in the framework include an audit of the character and identity of the town, building up local support, identifying the challenges and opportunities, developing a vision for the future of the town, supported by an action plan to deliver and monitor these actions. This Historic Towns Initiative framework (2012) has been followed as the basis for this heritage-led regeneration plan for Wexford.

The **Places for People National Policy on Architecture** supports and promotes quality in researching, understanding, designing, managing, enhancing and reusing our existing built environment assets as well as delivering sustainable new places and spaces. The policy portrays the capability of built heritage to show us the way forward for the circular economy: to value the embodied carbon, work with buildings that have already proven their durability, reuse and incrementally repair them, valuing the human skills involved and limit new materials and components to those that are compatible, carbon neutral or low-carbon, and locally sourced.

3.2 POLICY CONTEXT

Regional

The **Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region** recognises the value of our combined heritage and the contribution it makes to our settlements and rural areas which are made up of a diverse range of key assets that require careful protection. Relevant objectives on the strategy include:

RPO 16g- To improve the public realm and attractiveness of the Wexford Town Centre through urban regeneration of key locations

RPO 203- Revitalisation of Historic Cores: It is an objective to promote the initiatives of local authorities, the Heritage Council, local communities, heritage property owners and other stakeholders pursuing the revitalisation of historic cores in our cities, towns and villages. Local authorities should ensure that visitor pressures do not impact negatively on the capacity of local services (including water, waste water) or facilities such as car parking. In this regard, heritage-led initiatives shall consider historical setting /landscape character and potential for negative effects related to visitor pressures. Local authorities should ensure that decision-making on heritage-related projects and developments are informed by an appropriate level of environmental assessment including assessment of impacts on other environmental receptors such as protected species.

3.2 POLICY CONTEXT

Local

The **Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028** recognises the need to integrate our built, cultural and natural heritage, which all have intrinsic value in defining the character of urban and rural areas and adding to their attractiveness and sense of place. Relevant objectives on the plan include;-

   -Objective TV09 To regenerate and revitalise our towns and villages, diversify and seek new roles and uses to stimulate economic and cultural development and provide necessary physical and social infrastructure.

   -Objective TV24 To encourage and participate in heritage led regeneration, including consideration of the potential to participate in the Heritage Council's Historic Towns Initiative, and to adopt a Town first approach to the revitalisation of historic urban centres which focuses on the repair and upgrade of existing historic buildings and their adaptation to new uses with regard to their architectural character and Significance.

   -Objective ED60 Maximise the tourism potential of the town through the development of the Wexford Town 'Maritime Town' brand, the planned greenways and the vibrant arts and cultural scene in the town. Focus on the regeneration of key sites in the town including the regeneration of the Commercial Quay and Monck Street area.

Wexford county council is preparing a new **Local Area Plan** for Wexford and public consultation is now underway for this. The land use policies of the plan will strive to protect the built and archaeological heritage of the town and the results of this heritage-led regeneration plan will inform the new LAP.

The **Wexford Tourism Strategy** outlines the vision to develop Wexford Town's profile as a unique and vibrant maritime town with rich Viking heritage. The plan explores Wexford's performance as a tourism destination with a strong domestic visitor base and well-established reputation as a domestic destination. However, the revenue contribution from overseas visitors had not grown from 2013 to when the strategy was written in 2019. Also noted is the intensifying of the domestic competition, and the need for Wexford to continue to innovate and develop its offering in order to continue to entice visitors.

The **Wexford Local Economic & Community Plan** highlights the need to protect and sensitively utilise the natural, built and cultural heritage and to combine this with the arts to achieve their economic potential.

View of the Catholic Church of the Immaculate Conception (St John's Parish), one of a pair of twin churches, from Rowe Street Lower

3.3 PREVIOUS HERITAGE-LED PLANS & ACTIONS

The Irish Walled Towns Network

Wexford town is one of the 29 member towns located across Ireland (both North and South) of the Irish Walled Towns Network (IWTN), and has received funding towards conservation of parts of the town walls from the IWTN over a number of years. The IWTN focuses on uniting and co-ordinating the strategic efforts of local authorities and communities involved in the management, conservation and enhancement of historic walled towns in Ireland.

Wexford Town Walls Conservation Plan 2009-15

This conservation plan for Wexford's town walls was commissioned by Wexford Borough Council, working in partnership with the Heritage Council through the Irish Walled Towns Network, and prepared by a consultancy team in collaboration with a local Steering Group. A number of key policies and actions are proposed in the Plan. The Plan provides the background to the Management Plan which was commissioned at the same time and is drafted to take into account the policies outlined in the Plan. Many of the actions proposed within this plan are still relevant today, so a review and recommendations of which actions should be taken forward is included within the Appendices to this Heritage-led Regeneration Plan.

Wexford Tidy Towns

Wexford Tidy Towns has been an ongoing initiative since it was established in 2000, and works closely with Wexford Council who offers both practical and expert support. Tidy Towns is a voluntary group passionate about making Wexford the best it can be. The aim has been, and continues to be, to make Wexford a cleaner, greener and more attractive town. Much of the volunteer work at the group clean-ups involves litter-picking, planting, sweeping, weeding, watering plants and painting.

St John's graveyard, Lower John Street, just outside the Town Wall

3.4 REGENERATION CONTEXT

Current & Future Interventions

1. Greenway from Wexford Town to Rosslare Strand

Wexford County Council is seeking to develop a Greenway as a recreational amenity, sustainable commuter corridor and tourism project from Wexford town to Rosslare Strand. The Greenway is expected to commence in the vicinity of the Ferrybank Caravan Park, playground and leisure centre extending along Wexford Bridge and Crescent Quay, tying in with the proposed new urban district development site at Trinity Wharf, then extending to the south and terminating at the Rosslare Strand beach car park. This project forms part of an overall vision and strategy for the development of an integrated network of safe greenways and blueways, as outdoor recreational amenities, for the South East region and beyond.

2. Trinity Wharf Development

The Trinity Wharf site will facilitate a new sustainable urban quarter with a high-quality public realm, a mix of modern office space, hotel accommodation, and residential units, a landmark cultural and events building, a multi-storey car park, a 64 berth marina, and a new boardwalk linking Trinity Wharf with Paul Quay and the Crescent. It will provide a location at the south end of Wexford Town that can be adapted for use for outdoor events, performances and festivals, and will significantly enhance Wexford town's profile as an attractive environment for businesses, investment and town centre living and working.

Proposed Greenway Route

Proposed Trinity Wharf Development

3.4 REGENERATION CONTEXT

Current & Future Interventions

3. Wexford Market, Bull Ring Area

There is a need to revamp the historic market place and square as a public amenity area given its strategic value at the centre of the town.

4. Irish National Heritage Park

Located just outside Wexford town, the Irish National Heritage Park is a unique heritage experience in Ireland and Europe that brings to life over 9000 years of Irish history. Wexford County Council, in conjunction with Fáilte Ireland, is developing a cluster of linked projects that will be promoted and marketed in a coordinated way to transform County Wexford and the wider South East region into an international tourism destination, with all the associated economic and social dividends. One of these projects is the Irish National Heritage Park, which will deliver a world class visitor experience and high end retail offering that is capable of attracting significantly increased visitor numbers. It will be strongly aligned with Fáilte Ireland's 'Ireland's Ancient East' brand.

Bull Ring Area

Irish National Heritage Park
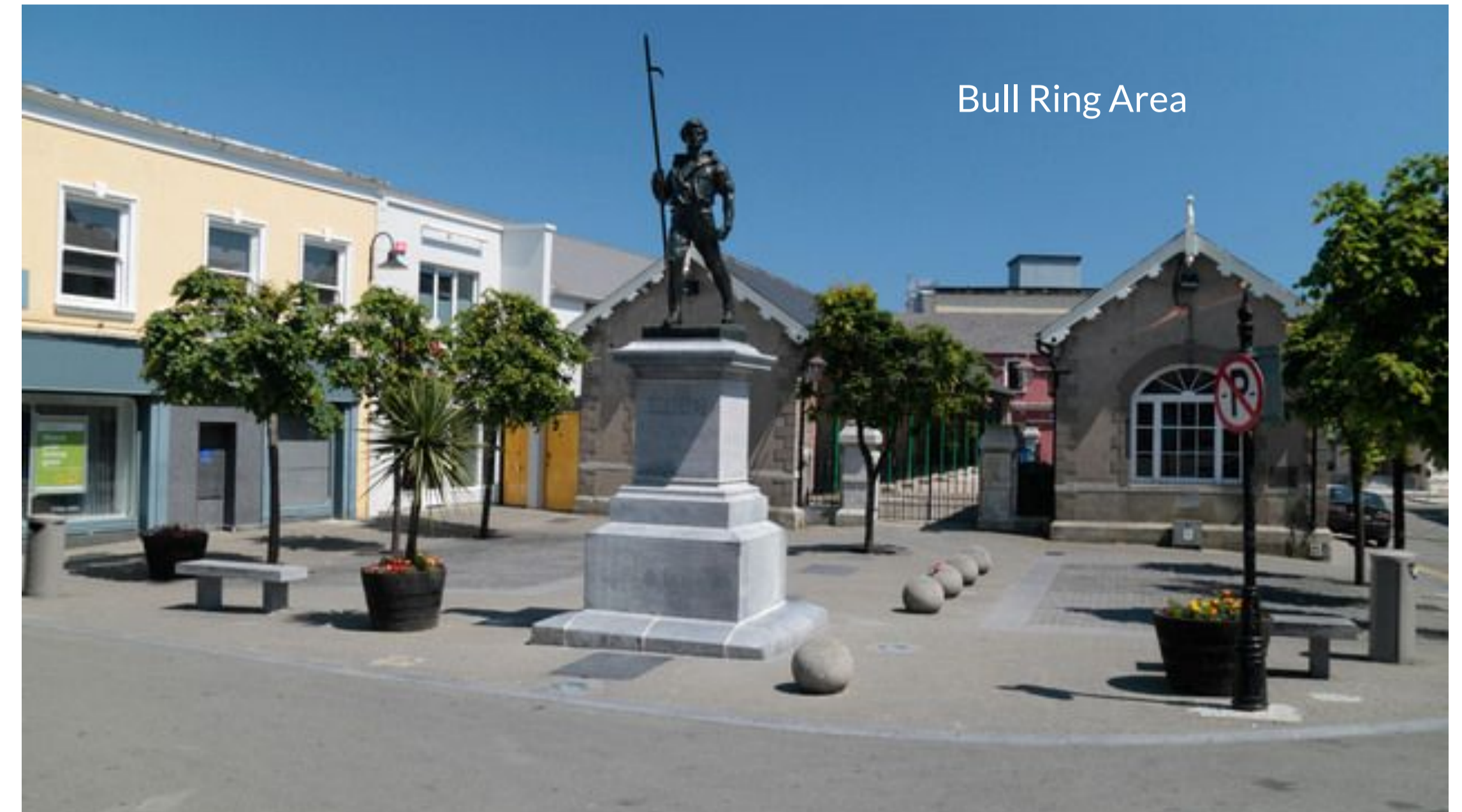
3.4 REGENERATION CONTEXT

Current & Future Interventions

5. South East Technological University (SETU)

The amalgamation of the Institute of Technology Carlow and the Waterford Institute of Technology has formed the South East Technological University with campuses in Wicklow, Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford and Wexford. There is currently a campus in Wexford which provides courses on business, social care and agriculture, and notably a BSc(Hons) In Tourism and Event Management. An additional campus with a varied offering is proposed for the town. The university aims to grow its student numbers to 25,000 and its staff numbers to 2,000 in the next 10 years, helping to boost the quality of higher education and research opportunities in the region with knock-on effects for employment, enterprise and skills creation, as well as socio-economic development.

6. Wexford Walking Trails

A network of walking trails throughout Co. Wexford established under a Wexford Local Development training programme. WWT collaborates with Wexford County Council, Coillte, Local Sports Partnerships, Fáilte Ireland, Waterford Institute of Technology, National Parks and Wildlife Services and Sport Ireland. In developing this network of trails, WWT intends to enhance the visitor experience in County Wexford and raise awareness of the quality, diversity and location of Wexford Walking Trails.

"We want to become a leading European technological university, transforming lives and driving growth through excellence in learning, research, collaboration and innovation. SETU will play a pivotal role in regional development, attracting talent, inward investment and research opportunities to the South-East."

Prof Veronica Campbell, SETU President
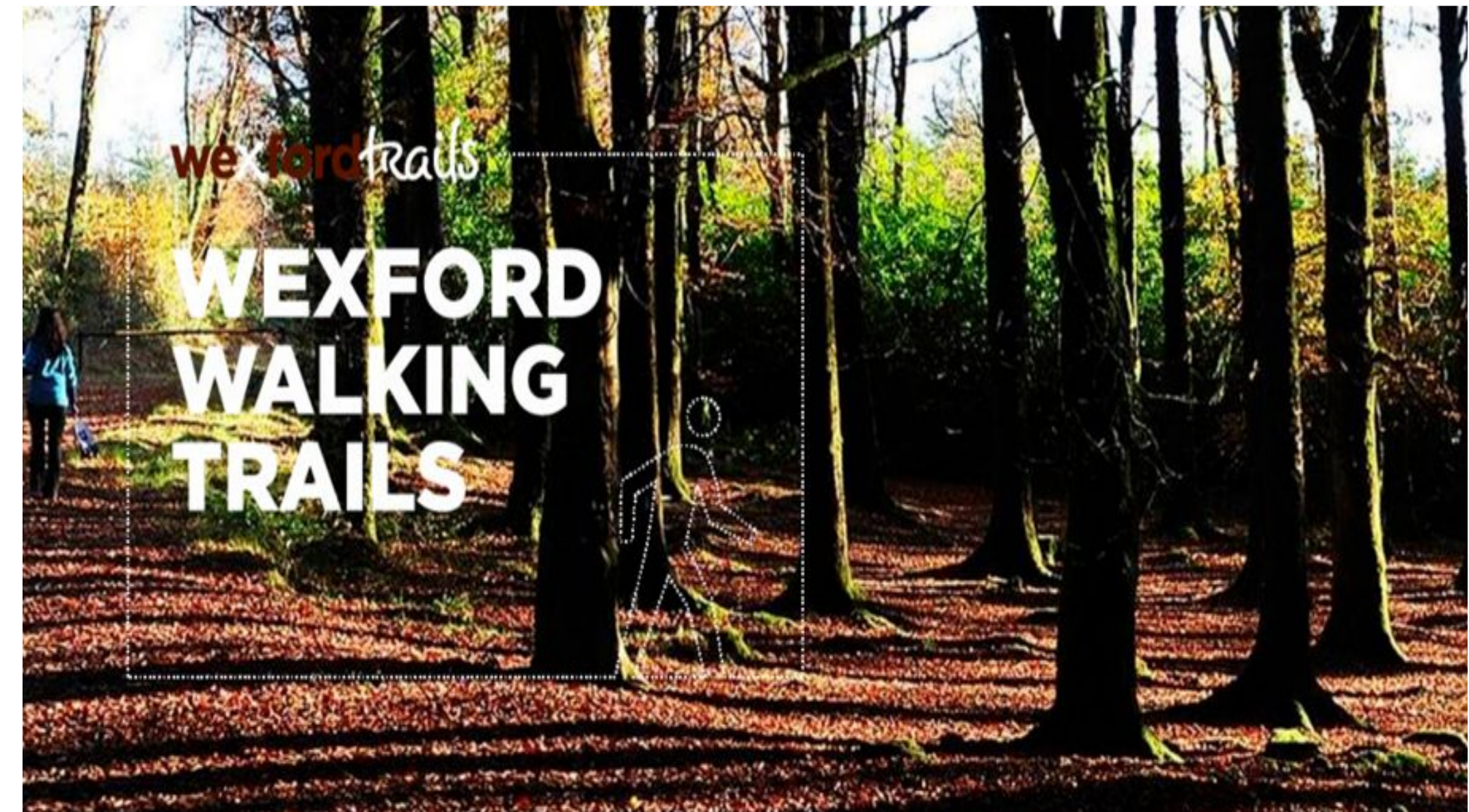
The Wexford Bullring Market, built in 1877 by Timothy O' Connor

TOWN HEALTH CHECK

Liveability

Main Street is partially pedestrianised (North end), with high footfall.

Lack of green spaces within the town centre.

High housing demand & limited supply.

Limited range of activities for young people.

Air quality is ranked as Fair.

The development of the Quay has enhanced resilience against sea flooding in recent years.

Heritage assets at risk of damage as a result of extreme weather and flooding.

Lack of connection to maritime heritage.

Activity

Limited activity from 5-7pm with shops shut.

Low levels of vacancies on the pedestrianised North Main St, with higher levels on South Main St.

Thriving arts scene with a range of clubs, activities, Creative Hub and redeveloped Arts Centre.

Anti-social behaviour present on some of the quieter laneways.

Range of industries present including IT, engineering financial services and food production.

Large domestic tourism market, with more limited numbers of international visitors.

Connectivity

Compact, walkable town centre.

Bus routes are frequent and reliable.

Rail service has limited routes, tickets sell out online in advance and times are infrequent.

Traffic dominated town with large number of car parking sites dispersed throughout.

Wayfinding is needed to encourage movement between the Quay and Main St.

Development of cycle lanes needed to encourage active transport.

Rosslare Europort is located 11 km south of Wexford town.

Community

Wexford County saw one of the highest levels of inward migration since 2016, with 9,487 people opting to move here (Census, 2022).

Wexford town has a moderate rate of young people aged 0 to 24 Years, 29.7%. This is below the County (33%) and State (33.2%) average (CSO, 2016).

Wexford town has a high population density, with 997.6 persons per km², significantly higher than that of the State average with 68.1 persons per km² (CSO, 2016).

There is a lower proportion of professional workers than the national average (Dáil Éireann, 2020).

3.5 TOWN HEALTH CHECK

Liveability

Housing demand was referenced as a significant issue for the Wexford community throughout engagement, with a low number of properties available to buy and/or rent. The Government's Housing for All Plan outlines the need to achieve housing for all through supporting home ownership and increasing affordability, eradicating homelessness, increasing social housing delivery and supporting social inclusion, increasing new housing supply, addressing vacancy and efficient use of existing stock. However, there has been a significant increase in the number of houses being built in the area, but affordability and proximity to the town centre remains an issue with housing.

The air quality is ranked as Fair (38 AQI/81 μg/m³), which is generally acceptable for most individuals. However, sensitive groups may experience minor to moderate symptoms from long-term exposure. Survey respondents and workshop participants mentioned the lack of green spaces within the town centre and the unfortunate reliance on a car to access nature outside the town. However, the Quay was referenced for outstanding natural views and enjoyed by many as a pleasant place for a walk. Another respondent mentioned the need to walk on the small roads near the Borough boundary to access nature, which felt dangerous to them. The need for a community growing space was also suggested to encourage more people to spend time outdoors and to eat healthily.

Wexford town has a high variety of clubs and activities including dance schools, GAA, and arts classes. However, there is a limited range of activities for young people that are not engaged in sports/arts. The Ferns Diocesan Youth Service holds youth meetings regularly but an active youth club is currently not in operation in the town. The Arts Centre is currently developing a Creative Youth Lab with funding from the Arts Council, enhancing skills and providing employment pathways to the Arts sector. The development of the South East Technological University campus is an exciting opportunity to develop a vibrant youth culture within the town.

Survey Responses to 'When would you say Wexford Town is vibrant/ full of activity?'
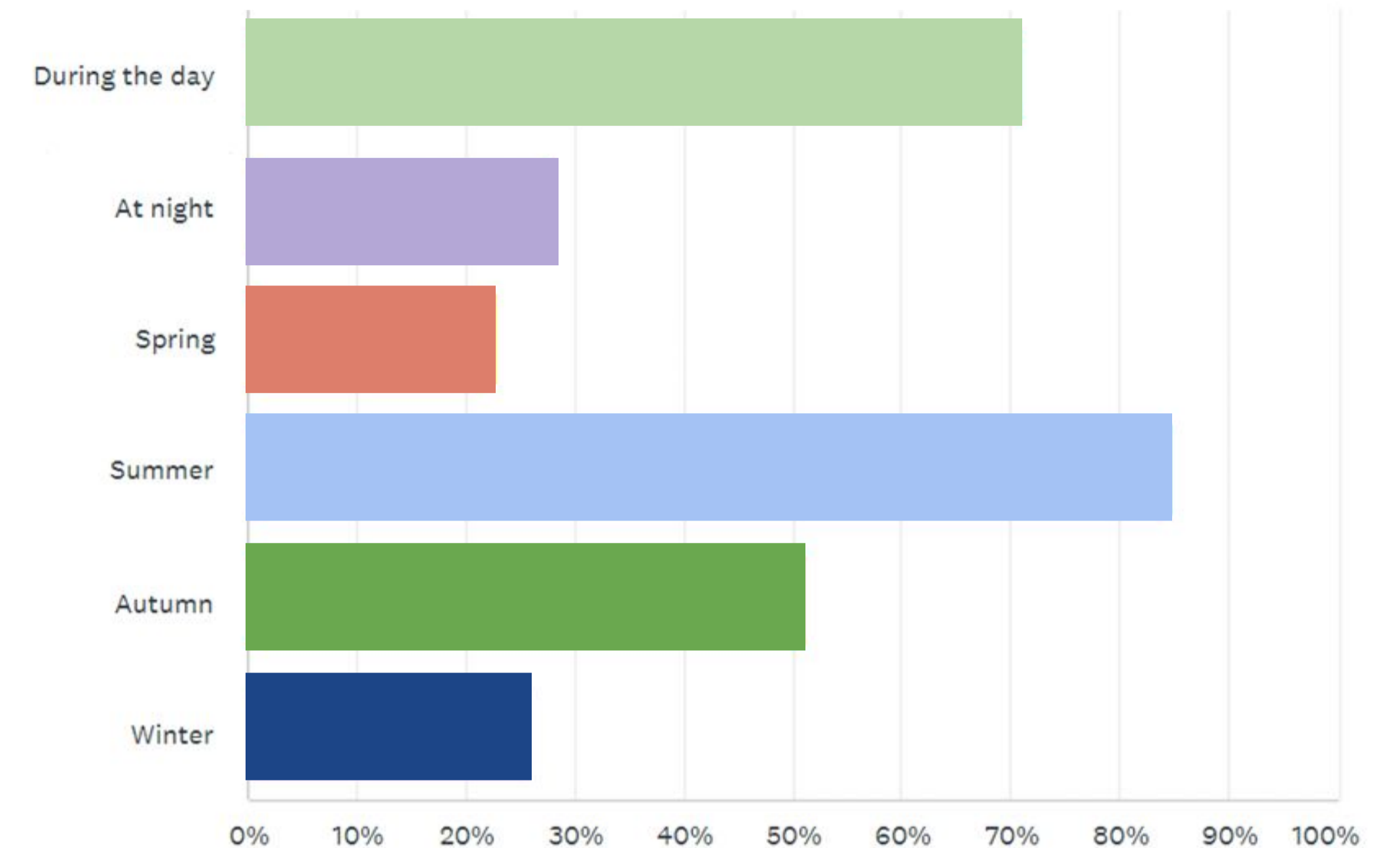
"Footfall is high on the main street but not everyone has plenty of disposable income, the town has suffered economically over the years."

"It's a beautiful coastal town with a gorgeous promenade & the town itself is lovely to walk through. Great shops to suit a diversity of needs. Pre-pandemic there was great energy, but now it's a bit flat."

"Usually go outside the town to find nature, there's a lack of trees or plants on my street or any adjoining street."

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View of Selskar Abbey and the Abbey Street Tower through the gates from Lower Abbey Street
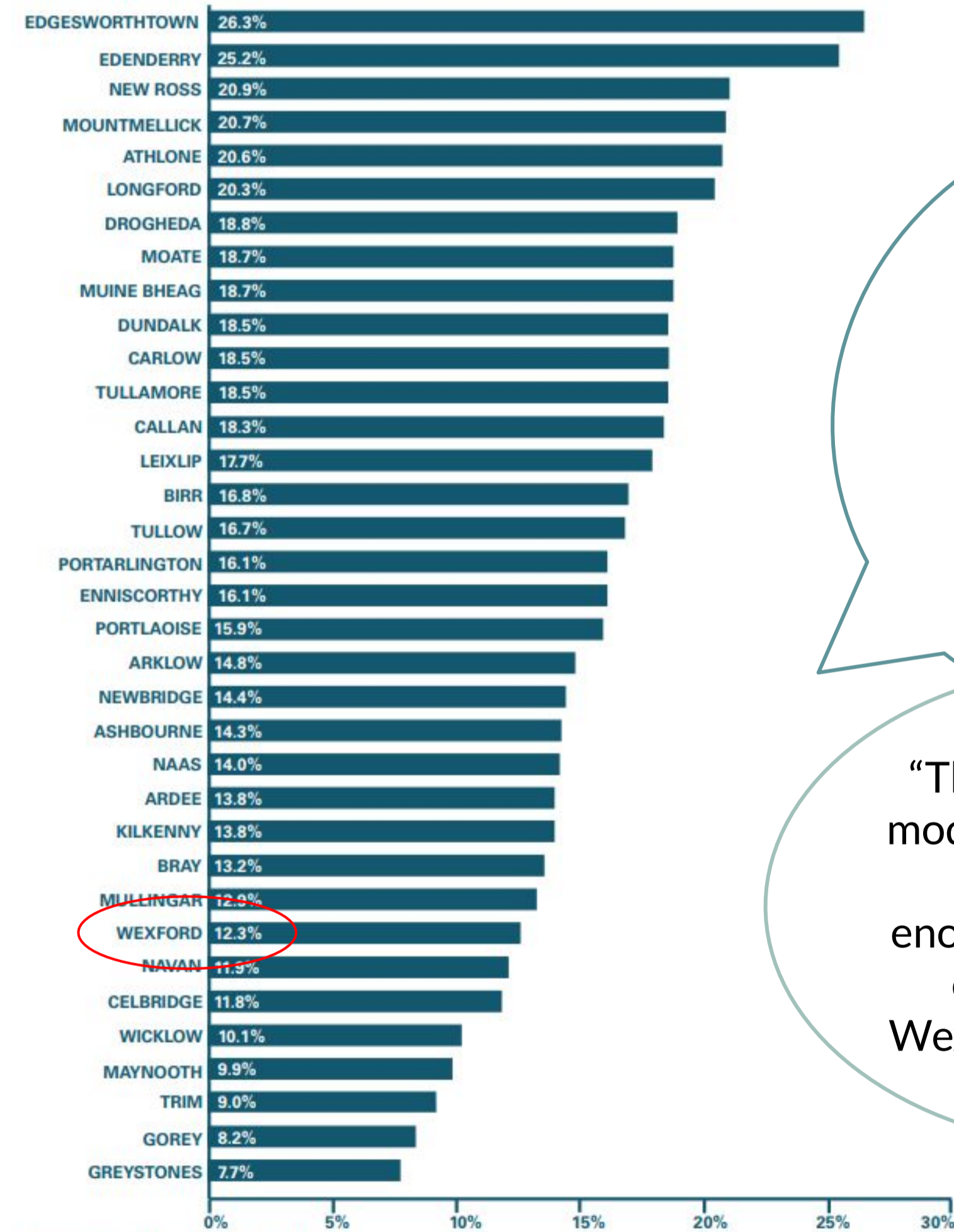
Activity

Wexford County Council's €120 million landmark development, Trinity Wharf, will act as a catalyst to support significant job creation, with world class commercial property solutions to attract inward investment from multinational companies. The economic investment programme will also provide high quality public realm, enhance the tourism offering and establish a cultural events and conference facility facilitating a new sustainable urban quarter. The decision to locate the headquarters of the recently established Maritime Area Regulatory Authority in Wexford Town has been referenced as an exciting opportunity to create upwards of 200 state jobs, adding to the diversity of opportunities in Wexford.

The town of Wexford has a 12.3% commercial vacancy rate, lower than the national average of 13.9%. Wexford is an attractive alternative to Dublin with a more competitive rental base for property and lower labour costs. Rents for office space in Wexford range between €10 and 15 per square foot, up to 60% less than Dublin City. There is a knowledge gap in relation to detailed vacancy rates for the study area, which could not be obtained for this report. This data gap will be addressed in future studies to be commissioned by the council, such as the Town Centre First Plan and the new Local Area Plan.

A broad range of sectors are present in Wexford Town including engineering, financial services, medical technology, food production and a growing IT presence. Employment opportunities and economic performance will be further enhanced by a €200 million investment at Rosslare Europort including plans to establish the port, its hinterland and the south-east region as Ireland's Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) Hub, with the potential to create up to 2,000 jobs. The establishment of the South East Technological University will also stimulate career opportunities within the town, particularly in the area of research, avoiding the loss of a younger population to cities and supporting a more vibrant, diverse economic environment in Wexford.

	Occupied units with NACE Code	Vacancy Rate Q4 2021 %	Vacancy Rate Q4 2022 %	Services %	Retail and Wholesale %	Health %	Construction %	Industry %	Education %	Financial %	Public Admin %
CO. WEXFORD	5,589	10.4	10.4	48.0	25.2	7.2	6.3	5.2	4.9	1.1	2.0
ENNISCORTHY	486	15.1	16.2	45.1	29.6	10.1	2.7	4.5	3.7	1.9	2.5
GOREY	503	7.8	7.1	49.9	31.8	8.7	1.4	1.8	3.2	1.6	1.6
NEW ROSS	326	20.3	20.9	46.3	30.4	9.8	3.1	3.7	2.5	1.5	2.8
WEXFORD	864	12.2	12.7	47.6	30.0	10.3	1.7	2.2	3.9	2.8	1.5

Commercial Vacancy Rates & Premises Use in Wexford Town Q4 2022

Town	Vacancy Rate
EDGESWORTHTOWN	26.3%
EDENDERRY	25.2%
NEW ROSS	20.9%
MOUNTMELLICK	20.7%
ATHLONE	20.6%
LONGFORD	20.3%
DROGHEDA	18.8%
MOATE	18.7%
MUINE BHEAG	18.7%
DUNDALK	18.5%
CARLOW	18.5%
TULLAMORE	18.5%
CALLAN	18.3%
LEIXLIP	17.7%
BIRR	16.8%
TULLOW	16.7%
PORTARLINGTON	16.1%
ENNISCORTHY	16.1%
PORTLAOISE	15.9%
ARKLOW	14.8%
NEWBRIDGE	14.4%
ASHBOURNE	14.3%
NAAS	14.0%
ARDEE	13.8%
KILKENNY	13.8%
BRAY	13.2%
MULLINGAR	12.9%
WEXFORD	12.3%
NAVAN	11.9%
CELBRIDGE	11.8%
WICKLOW	10.1%
MAYNOOTH	9.9%
TRIM	9.0%
GOREY	8.2%
GREYSTONES	7.7%

Source: GeoDirectory Database

"Bigger companies tend to have their secondary premises in Wexford with the primary office and higher value jobs based in Dublin"

"The development of a modern University in the town will be of enormous economic and cultural benefit to Wexford and the county"

Commercial Vacancy Rates throughout the Towns of Leinster (excl. Dublin) Q4 2022

3.5 TOWN HEALTH CHECK

Activity

Wexford has a strong domestic tourism market with limited international visitors. Throughout the peak tourism season, accommodation hosts are at capacity which is a challenge for the town as it strives to grow its international market. Over the years, the family and unconstrained adults market have been key. This is largely due to the range of events on in the town as well as proximity to beaches and caravan parks outside of the town.

Wexford has a significant opportunity as a destination within Ireland's Ancient East, to cross-sell with nearby destinations such as Waterford and Kilkenny. Lack of an attraction in the town centre has meant visitors are not compelled to spend time in the town. The need for a museum was conveyed throughout engagement, as a tool to invite visitors to connect with the rich heritage of Wexford.
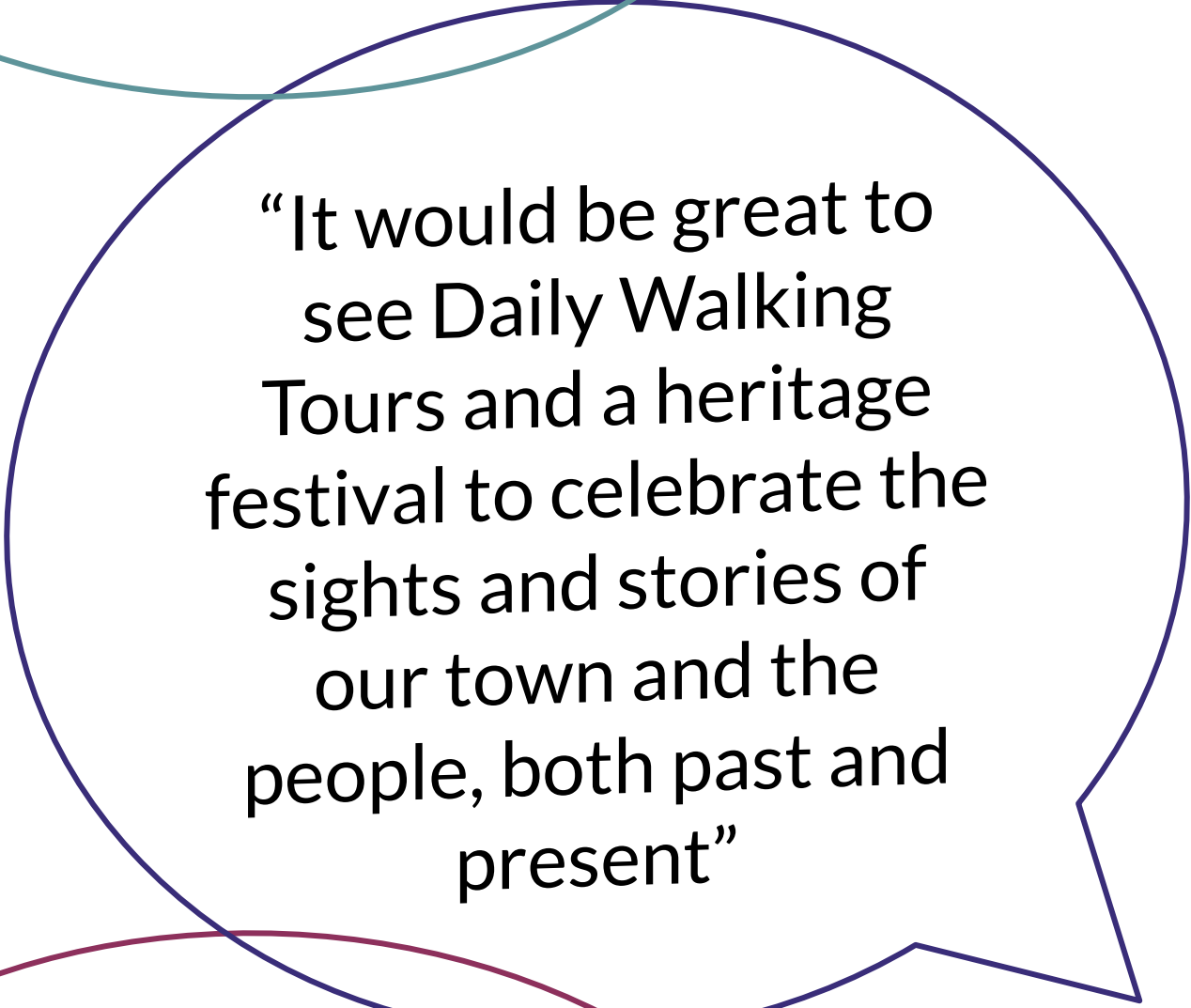
The Visit Wexford App is a platform for visitors to discover where to stay, what to do, where to eat and what's on across County Wexford, the best itineraries to get to know the area, and all the information that is needed to plan a perfect visit to Wexford. It is a fantastic tool to showcase the area but the local community were unaware of the app, so measures should be taken to promote it across the locality as well as to visitors through tourism social media accounts and blogs.

Wexford District Tourism Group is a cross-county network of tourism providers which ensures a coherent and consistent offering to visitors. Bringing stakeholders together to assess the complete user journey of visitors is a beneficial process to identify areas that need consideration and investment. The sense of arrival at the Wexford O'Hanrahan Train Station needs improvement, information should be provided to entice visitors to explore what Wexford has to offer and encourage them to spend time in the town centre. A connection between the Group and local retailers needs to be formed to engage them in the process of assessing the desires and needs of visitors, enhancing the appreciation of the tourism industry. It was felt by some of the respondents that Wexford Town could develop a greater appreciation of tourism and its economic contribution.

One challenge for the town is the closing of shops at 5pm, often with a gap before restaurants and bars start opening and filling up, leading to a quieter public realm in some evenings, particularly weekdays. However some respondents felt that the critical mass was not there to keep shops open past 5pm, with staffing difficulties and lower footfall. It was mentioned that it was attempted in Gorey in previous years but did not work. Perhaps it could be trialled on an intermittent basis, on Thursday and Friday evenings, especially in the peak tourism season.

"The family market and unconstrained adults are key markets for Wexford town"

"It would be great to see Daily Walking Tours and a heritage festival to celebrate the sights and stories of our town and the people, both past and present"

"There doesn't seem to be any awareness & appreciation for tourism in Wexford, we haven't fully grasped the impact of visitors"

View of (pedestrianised) North Main Street

3.5 TOWN HEALTH CHECK

Connectivity

As a compact, walkable town Wexford has an opportunity to be a sustainable leader and encourage active travel throughout the town. However the lack of cycle lanes and facilities means more have to travel to Wexford from the hinterlands by car. Further to this, the quantity of parking available encourages visitors to the town to travel by car. It was felt by some workshop participants that the quantity of parking was excessive, with many people opting not to use the multi-story car park. Others felt the parking was available in the wrong places. The Arts Centre would prefer if parking was located closer to their facility.

Traffic management was mentioned as a challenge for the town particularly from 4-6pm on weekdays as a Ferry arrives at 4:30pm. The connection to the Rosslare Europort (11km) was highlighted as a vital access point to export markets in the UK and France, and an attractive asset for businesses in the locality. However, this has enticed businesses to set up at the south of the town meaning at rush hour the bypass around the town cannot cope with traffic volume sending people through the town, causing the town centre to become choked up. The suggestion of a Park and Ride facility was made to discourage those coming into the town to travel by car, avoiding congestion.

Survey responses mentioned the challenges with the public transport system especially the rail times and infrequency of trains to Dublin, with tickets often booking out online a week in advance. A route to Waterford was described as necessary and highlighted as beneficial for tourists and the local community for travelling to work and college. The bus service appears to be more effective for travelling to and from Wexford. Bus Eireann run one bus to Waterford from Wexford at 2:30pm and one from Waterford to Wexford at 10am, daily Monday to Saturday. The private company 'Wexford Bus' run 17 trips to Dublin across a 24 hour period. Bus Eireann now also run 15 buses to Dublin daily, commencing June 2023. However, an effective train service connecting the destinations along Ireland's Ancient East would greatly enhance the strength and accessibility of the East coast as a tourism brand, while providing improved connectivity for residents.

Survey Responses to 'How do you travel around Wexford Town?'
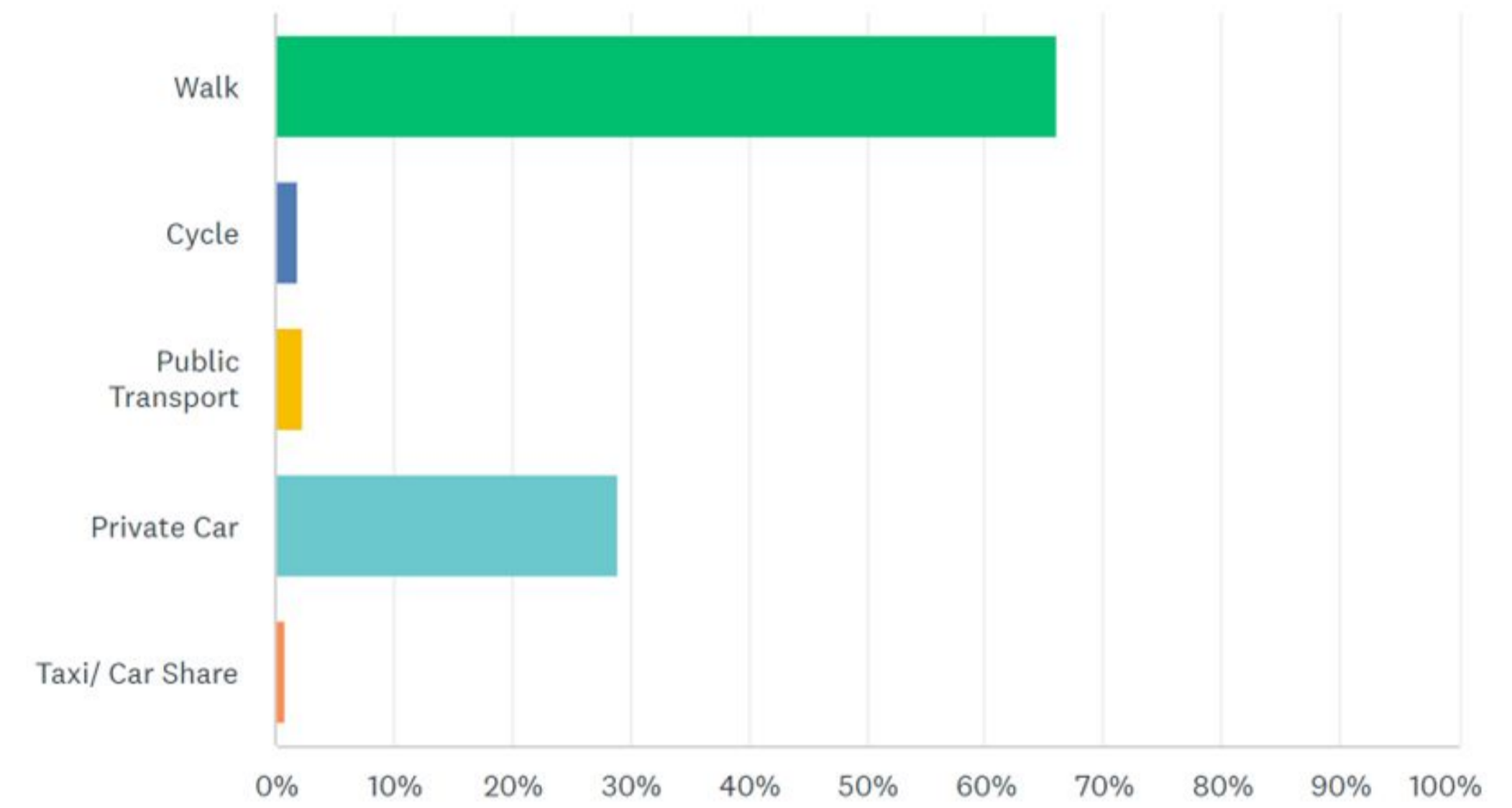
"There's a big need for better public transport, since moving here a year ago anytime I've wanted to go somewhere like Forth Mountain, Raven Point... they're impossible to access"

"A train service to Waterford would be great, I wouldn't have to drive to work and tourists could use it"

"Would love for us and the kids to be able to cycle around town and environs, it is the perfect size but no cycle lanes and too much fast-moving traffic."

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3.5 TOWN HEALTH CHECK

Connectivity

A signage audit throughout the town is necessary to assess the piecemeal and outdated material. There are currently QR codes directing those who scan it to an invalid webpage as well as a lack of wayfinding encouraging people to explore the laneways and Quay. The Fáilte Ireland 'Development Guidelines for Tourism Destination Towns' outlines the need for consistent and legible signposting to the town centre from all main entry routes, and a consistent and appropriate approach to signage around the town: not too many or too varied in type, but sufficient to ensure good support for exploration and wayfinding.

There is a need to make the heritage assets throughout the town accessible and safe for everyone, particularly less mobile visitors. Railings and lighting can greatly enhance a space and make it viable for exploration throughout the day and evening. Consideration must be given for visually prominent signage ensuring language needs are met, colours and symbols are distinct identifiers and exploration is encouraged. A Disability Steering Group is currently being considered for Wexford Town and this will be a valuable asset to identify any mobility and accessibility challenges that people using the public spaces have been faced with, and to advise on accessibility of sites and signage.

Throughout community engagement, the strong heritage connection in Wexford was evident. Survey respondents explained their desire to learn more about the history of their town, from the Yola dialect to the maritime heritage. The desire to share the history with visitors either through events or a museum was also made clear. Overall, the community would like to strengthen their connection with the past and harness this to invite visitors to their town and join them in discovery and celebration of Wexford's rich heritage.

Fáilte Ireland's Access, Orientation and Signage Checklist

❏ Consider the needs of key user groups in developing orientation, e.g. less mobile visitors, cyclists.
❏ Provide a variety of marked trails through the town to facilitate visitors' desire to explore on foot. They must be interesting and safe, and the number of them must be appropriate to the scale of the town. Consider developing a core orientation trail that loops around the town centre, picking up key locations and features of interest while avoiding re-tracing steps. This latter may be sufficient for smaller towns.
❏ Use public realm design to support orientation and wayfinding.
❏ Consider the role of key buildings, sites and attractions within the town as cues for wayfinding and/or as 'kick-off' points.
❏ Consider night time exploration, taking account of the varying characteristics of areas by day and night, and exploring the role of illumination in supporting wayfinding and enhancing the town after dark. Lighting can be used to add character, differentiate different areas and enhance key historic landmarks.
❏ Ensure the town also acts as a gateway to the surrounding area, providing visitors with orientation that supports exploration of the natural landscape, attractions and villages within driving distance of the town.
❏ Ensure well-maintained, consistent and legible signposting to the town centre from all main entry routes, including junctions at main road networks, railway stations and coach/bus set-down points.
❏ Ensure a consistent and appropriate approach to signage around the town: not too many or too varied in type, but sufficient to ensure good support for exploration and wayfinding.
❏ Remove defunct signs and repair/replace essentials ones.
❏ Prioritise pedestrian or non-motorised traffic in key town centre areas, and reduce traffic congestion, in order to make it easy to move around on foot and to reduce reliance on cars.
❏ Ensure ample convenient parking - for coaches and cars. It must be well-indicated as suitable for access to the town centre, and with good orientation signage from parking to town centre and to key attractors. Consider the use of shuttle transport during peak season, if there is lack of parking space within walking distance of the town centre.
❏ Ensure good servicing of access points (clean, tidy, litter bins, toilets, signage)

Catholic Church of the Assumption (Bride Street Church), one of a pair of twin churches built in Wexford in 1850 - 1860 to designs by Richard Pierce

3.5 TOWN HEALTH CHECK

Community

The 2022 Preliminary Census results identified that Wexford County saw one of the highest levels of inward migration since 2016, with 9,487 people opting to move to the county. It was by far the highest in the south east, with Waterford gaining 7,564, Carlow 2,807 and Kilkenny 1,756. In fact, Wexford saw the fifth highest number for estimated net migration in Ireland. The 'non-national population' in the county continues to grow and is contributing to cultural diversity. Increasing levels in the young age cohorts is also a positive sign and suggests a new demographic vibrancy in the coming years.

Wexford has a lower proportion of professional workers (5.5% compared to 8.1%) and managerial and technical workers (25.4% compared to 28.1%) than seen nationally. Wexford has a higher proportion of persons looking after home / family (10%) compared to the national measure (8.1%). Wexford also has a higher than average dependence on the 'traditional' industrial sectors when compared to the State average. Industrial sectors such as; 'Agriculture Forestry Fishing' (7.5%), 'Building and Construction' (6.9%) and 'Manufacturing Industries' (12%) are all higher than the equivalent State averages.

Wexford has very high rates of early school leavers with 18.5% of those who have completed their education with no Formal/Primary education and 20.7% with a Lower Secondary education. These rates are well above the State averages of 15.2% and 16.6% respectively. Further to this, Wexford has the third lowest rate of third level education in the country with only 20.9% of those who have completed education with third level qualifications. This is well below the State average of 29.1%. As outlined in the Wexford Local Economic and Community Plan, this is a major concern and will have an impact on both the job prospects of Wexford residents and also the likelihood of attracting additional high skilled FDI to the county. However the establishment of SETU regional campuses will present an opportunity for upskilling and encourage entry into new industries. Evidence suggests that having an easy to access college of further education can foster participation in lifelong learning and provide pathways to employment.

It was evident throughout community engagement that there is a strong sense of civic pride and passion for celebrating and respecting the local heritage of Wexford town. The local voluntary group, Wexford Tidy Towns brings people together to enhance the public realm of the town through litter picks, mural painting and planting flowers and trees. The group provides an opportunity for people who have moved to the town to form relationships with others and achieve a sense of belonging in the community, with a large proportion of volunteers having moved to the town in recent years.

In 2022, 399 Wexford students made history as being among the first to graduate from the newly formed SETU

Wexford Tidy Towns Volunteers who won Gold at the 2021 & 2022 National Tidy Towns Competition

St Patrick's church, Patrick's Square, High Street

Wayfinding & interpretation needed to encourage people to explore the laneways, quay and historic sites

Connection to Wexford's maritime heritage needs to be celebrated

Compact, walkable town centre but cycle lanes desired and railway not optimised

The town is quieter from 5pm to 7pm when the shops and restaurants are closed

Strong sense of **community** and civic pride

The laneways and narrow winding streets add to the character of the town and symbolise the Viking and Norman heritage

The Main Street is unique and makes for a special shopping experience

Not enough for tourists to do in the town

Plenty of heritage assets that need to be utilised

Friendly Town with hidden surprises

Open the Graveyards

Lack of facilities for younger people

Overall the town feels safe but anti-social behaviour occurs in the laneways

Lack of accessible green spaces

Accommodation hosts are at capacity throughout the peak tourism season

Street signage lacks coordination and content is outdated

Main Street feels disconnected from the Quay & the water

Wexford has a rich heritage

3.7 OPPORTUNITY AREAS FOR INTERVENTION

Following the extensive research and consultation, the insights have been synthesised into key opportunity areas for intervention, that are focussed around the conservation and celebration of Wexford's built, cultural and natural heritage. These take into account the physical context, assets and constraints of Wexford town, as well as the wider global context and the policy and strategy landscape.

These opportunities are framed as questions, which were discussed at the co-design stakeholder workshop, and are taken forward into the vision and action plan in the following chapter.

How can we...

- Enhance Wexford's unique historic buildings and laneways?
- Improve connection of the town to the water and region?
- Celebrate Wexford's natural and maritime heritage?
- Revitalise the night-time economy?
- Help creative businesses to flourish in the town?
- Create new uses for vacant and underused properties?
- Bring nature into the town centre?
- Make the town more playful and accessible?
- Attract more international visitors to the town?
- Increase resilience of Wexford's historic assets to climate change?
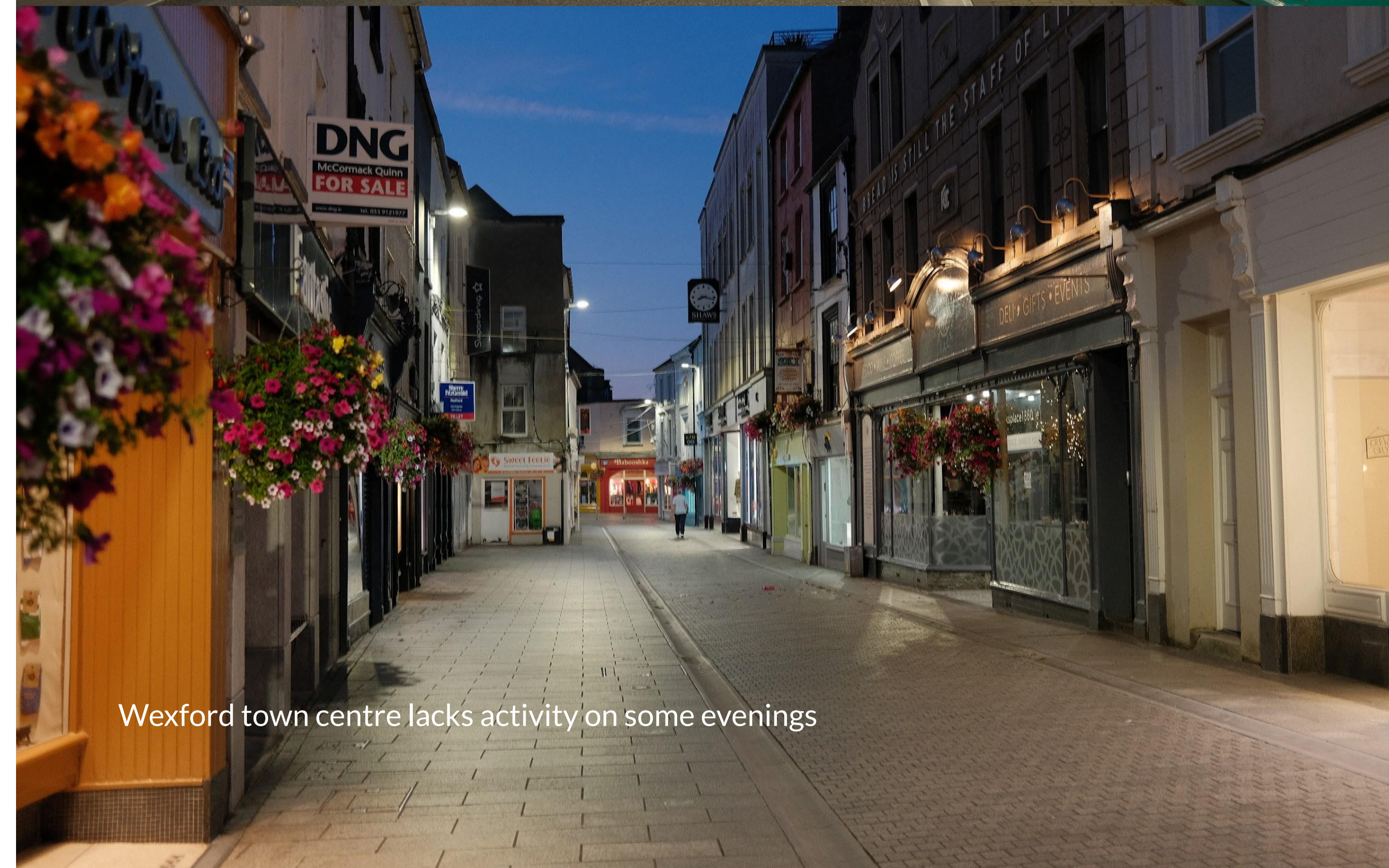
Wexford town centre lacks activity on some evenings

4. WHAT IF: WEXFORD TOWN REIMAGINED

A vision & action plan for the future of Wexford town

Wexford Gaol, corner of Hill Street and Spa Well Road

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Following from the opportunity areas identified in the previous chapter, this chapter sets out a shared vision for the future of Wexford town, key principles for heritage-led regeneration, and an action plan of short, medium and long-term projects that will help drive forward the heritage-led regeneration of the town.

Drawing on its unique character and wealth of heritage and cultural assets, these actions will help make Wexford an even better place to live, work and visit.

Some of the recommended actions are town-wide, while others specify a particular site that would benefit from improvement. Suggested lead organisations and partners are identified, though this list is not exhaustive. In order to support delivery and implementation of the actions, key next steps are recommended, together with resources required and timescales.

The vision and action plan are structured to reflect the 5 layers, or intervention typologies, that were mapped in Chapter 2 - Heritage & Cultural Assets, Nature & Public Spaces, Connections, Amenities, Stories & Events.

Finally, this chapter sets recommendations for successful implementation and suggests key performance indicators that could be used to track the progress and impact of this plan.

The 5 Intervention Typologies for the Wexford Heritage-led Regeneration Plan are:

Heritage & Cultural Assets

Nature & Public Spaces

Connections

Amenities

Stories & Events

4.2 VISION FOR HERITAGE-LED REGENERATION OF WEXFORD TOWN

Overall Vision: Wexford town is locally and internationally renowned for its rich, accessible built and natural heritage, and cultural vibrancy throughout the year - a place where locals are proud to call home and where visitors return to keep discovering more...

Heritage & Cultural Assets

Wexford's heritage and cultural sites will be conserved, with engaging signage and interpretation, for the enjoyment of citizens and visitors alike. These assets will be maintained to the highest possible conservation standards. Where possible, access will be promoted and new, compatible uses explored to support the local economy and creative industries, while enhancing appreciation of the value of these sites and encouraging their safeguarding.

Nature & Public Spaces

Wexford brings nature into the town and people into nature. Streets, laneways and public spaces are safe, active and reclaimed for people to enjoy throughout the seasons. Through sustainable drainage, pocket parks, and green roofs, the historic core is greener and more resilient to climate change.

Connections

Wexford has strong connections - connection to the water, both physically and through celebration of its natural and maritime heritage; connection with the region, particularly Dublin and Rosslare via scenic train journey and sense of arrival at the station; and connection with the international community, through a unique, memorable tourism offer.

Amenities

Wexford supports the needs of residents and visitors of all ages and abilities, and local businesses. It is a playful, accessible, liveable and sustainable town.

Stories & Events

Wexford knows how to celebrate its unique, multi-faceted identity on the international stage, and hosts an engaging cultural events programme throughout the year, that delivers lasting positive benefits for the town, its citizens and businesses.

Westgate Heritage Centre, Westgate Tower, and the Town Wall (left to right)

4.3 KEY PRINCIPLES FOR HERITAGE-LED REGENERATION

(Heritage-Led) Regeneration

Regeneration is the process of bringing social, cultural, economic and environmental life back into an area. A heritage-led regeneration strategy recognises that it is the cultural heritage of a town that gives it a unique identity and which is central to the creation of a high quality of life for its inhabitants. Capitalising on the potential of the town's heritage to create an attractive, sustainable living environment requires an integrated approach that recognises the evolving needs of the town and its people now and into the future.

Regeneration and heritage conservation are often inextricably linked. Whereas the objective or starting point of urban regeneration is economic and environmental development to improve physical and socio-economic conditions, and the move towards a more vibrant and active environment, heritage conservation is concerned with the conservation and rehabilitation of historic sites, structures, towns and wider areas, and remains more focused in the consideration of maintaining the historic fabric and character.

Conservation

Conservation is the sustainable management of change. The historic environment is not a static entity, but one that is continually changing and evolving so that relevant and meaningful to contemporary society. Conservation, in this light, has to be seen as more than simply protecting historic places and buildings, but as a process that enables them to be maintained and changed if necessary but always recognising the values that these heritage assets stand for. The conservation of each heritage, whether a structure, site or place, will be unique in response to the building/material type, particular situation and use. This will result in different approaches to the conservation of different heritages, yet all should be guided by the same underlying principles. Conservation, as defined by the Burra Charter, is "[A]all the processes of looking after a place so as to retain its cultural significance" (Burra Charter, 2014).

"The conservation of historic towns and urban areas is understood to mean those steps necessary for the protection, conservation and restoration of such town areas, as well as their development and harmonious adaptation to contemporary life."

International Charter for the Protection of Historic Towns, 1987

View of Selskar Abbey from Lower Abbey Street

4.3 KEY PRINCIPLES FOR HERITAGE-LED REGENERATION

This page sets out a number of conservation principles, the underlying theme of which is to preserve the authenticity of the heritage structure, site or place.

Understanding

Conservation must be based on an understanding of the historic development of a building or place, its cultural significance and a wide variety of values attributed to it. Where there is doubt, it is advisable to undertake the minimum to stabilise until further information becomes available.

Retention of Historical Significance

The aim of the conservation should be to retain, recover or reveal as much of the historical significance of a heritage as possible. The final use of the heritage building/structure is critical in this regard and must be appropriate to the conservation needs of the building.

Minimum Physical Intervention

When possible the basic principle of minimum intervention on the historic fabric should be applied.

Repair Rather than Replace

Respecting 'patina of age'. Replacement should only occur where elements are beyond repair. All replacement work should be accurate so that it adheres exactly to the original. Furthermore, material repairs should follow well-recognised principles and be based on a professional understanding of the material qualities and the causes of decay.

Reconstruction and Conjecture

All works of restoration and reconstruction should be grounded in authenticity and should stop at the point where conjecture begins. Such works should be substantiated by historical research findings on the building/structure.

Care and Maintenance

Historic buildings and structures need regular care and maintenance. There is a need for continuous upkeep, retrofitting and maintenance of buildings which are currently occupied and used in the historic town to encourage use and thus contribute to the regeneration of the town centre. Further to this, adaptation measures will be necessary to combat climate change, ensuring our cherished and distinct heritage assets will be resilient and protected, respecting our obligation to pass on our cultural inheritance to future generations.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Sustainability

The aim of heritage conservation is to ensure that the cultural significance and sustainability of heritage structures, sites and places is maintained over time. Therefore, the conservation of a heritage and/or wider site should include regular monitoring and evaluation of the effects of change and responses to it, and use the results to inform future decisions. For example, new problems may emerge and require new approaches.

Ethics

An ethical approach to conservation must be based on integrity and authenticity.

Realities of the Situation

The basic conservation principles remain a guide, and form the basis for conservation policy and legislation, but each situation must be judged on historic information and the realities of the situation.

4.3 KEY PRINCIPLES FOR HERITAGE-LED REGENERATION

New intervention in the historic fabric of a town or city

Historic towns and places are continuously changing and evolving to meet needs of contemporary society. Historic places are valuable assets and any new interventions in the historic fabric of a town or city must:

- Be based on an understanding of the historic town, its morphological, its economic growth and social developments;
- Respect the setting and landscape;
- Generally be appropriate in scale, height but acknowledging the need for change and growth in a planned process.
- In design, respect existing characteristics of the townscape and contribute to it rather than mimic or compete with the existing.

A values-based approach

Alongside the basic principles, conservation philosophy today advocates a values-based approach and is based on authenticity and integrity.

The significance of a heritage is its most defining value, yet in a values-based approach to conservation, a much wider range of values (the qualities and characteristics that different users and different societies place on a cultural heritage at different times) needs to be recognised, and not all of which relate to the physical fabric.

Values need to be balanced against each other and prioritised when making conservation decisions (ranging from age and rarity value, architectural value and artistic value to educational value, economic value, emotional value, social value and much else).

View of Wexford Harbour, the quayfront and the twin church steeples from Wexford Bridge

4.4 ACTION PLAN - HERITAGE & CULTURAL ASSETS

Ref	Site	Action	Heritage Conservation Focus / Impact	Suggested Lead & Partners	Next Steps	Resources Needed	Timescale (S=0-2 yrs M=2-4 yrs L=5+years)
H1	Town-wide	Senior level leadership and commitment to heritage-led regeneration of Wexford Town.	Management	Wexford County Council	Approval of this heritage-led regeneration plan, implementation of key recommendations and reflection in the Wexford Local Area Plan.	Time, support and part funding for next steps.	S
H2	Town-wide	Set up a management group to govern the implementation, monitoring and regular review of the County's Strategies.	Management	Wexford County Council, Planning SPC	Council to approach potential partners and set up governance structure.	Time and commitment from partners	S - M
H3	Town-wide	Expand online access to key heritage sites in Wexford Town for those unable to visit, or a taster for those looking to visit, via virtual tours.	Increased awareness & encouraged safeguarding	Wexford County Council, Visit Wexford	Develop a priority list for roll-out of the virtual tours across Wexford Town, starting with the Town Wall and Selskar Abbey / Westgate complex.	Funding for additional virtual tours	L

Wexford Gaol complex, corner of Hill Street and Spa Well Road (this building is currently vacant)

HERITAGE & CULTURAL ASSETS

What if... Wexford Gaol was a place for local creative businesses to flourish?

What's the idea?

A maker space that offers affordable shared workspace, studios, exhibition and retail space, and access to shared equipment like 3D printers and kilns, together with training and business support.

Where can we take inspiration from?

Manchester Craft and Design Centre

4.4 ACTION PLAN - HERITAGE & CULTURAL ASSETS

Ref	Site	Action	Heritage Conservation Focus / Impact	Suggested Lead & Partners	Next Steps	Resources Needed	Timescale (S=0-2 yrs M=2-4 yrs L=5+years)
H4	Town Wall	Undertake a phased programme of restoration works and ongoing maintenance, with the southern section around King Street as a priority. Views to and from the Town Wall should be enhanced and protected in the Wexford Local Area Plan. No further demolition of nineteenth-century, or earlier, property built against, overlooking, or opening onto the Monument should be permitted unless a compelling case is presented to demonstrate that the outcome will be to the ultimate benefit of the Monument.	Policy & Guidelines Material repair and restoration Maintenance	Wexford County Council, Irish Walled Towns Network, Heritage Council	Vegetation should cut back from relevant sections of the walls during winter months to enable detailed photogrammetric and measured surveys to be carried out. Structurally unstable sections of the walls, as identified in the Town Walls Management Plan, should be assessed and detailed proposals for stabilisation should be developed and implemented on a phased basis. A vegetation management plan should be drawn up for the use of the borough office.	Funding applications and management support from Heritage Officer. Vegetation management to be undertaken using borough resources.	S - M
H5	Wexford Gaol	Explore options for more intensive use of the site for activities to support the local creative economy and pathways to good employment for young people. For example, a maker space that offers affordable shared workspace, studios, exhibition and retail space, and access to shared equipment like 3D printers and kilns, together with training and business support for CV development, entrepreneurship, social enterprises and start-ups. These facilities should be designed to complement rather than duplicate existing provision at the Creative Hub, for example through larger spaces. Explore linking of goal to the Cultural Quarter at Westgate and extension of the Cultural Spine.	Adaptation/new use Economic viability Maintenance (through new and continued use)	Wexford County Council, Wexford Local Development, Wexford Arts Centre, Creative Hub, South East Technological University	Commission feasibility studies and concept proposals to establish design options and capital budget requirements. The team carrying out the feasibility study should include a suitably qualified conservation expert to develop proposals to restore and enhance the historic buildings. The plan will need to ensure proposals respect the sensitivity of the site and ensure their original and historic uses are celebrated and easily appreciated by users and visitors.	Funding applications, potential applications to Heritage Council, URDF, Leader.	M - L

The Wexford Bullring Market (currently open Fridays and Saturdays only)

HERITAGE & CULTURAL ASSETS

What if… Wexford Market was alive with food, drink and music throughout the week?

What's the idea?

A market with enhanced facilities and a weatherproof atrium that supports a varied market programme throughout more of the week and year, enabling new entrepreneurs and small businesses to trial ideas.

Where can we take inspiration from?

Canopy Market, King's Cross Central, London

4.4 ACTION PLAN - HERITAGE & CULTURAL ASSETS

Ref	Site	Action	Heritage Conservation Focus / Impact	Suggested Lead & Partners	Next Steps	Resources Needed	Timescale (S=0-2 yrs M=2-4 yrs L=5+years)
H6	Wexford Market	Explore options to open up the market throughout more of the week and year. Physical improvements could include a weatherproof atrium (designed to complement the historic buildings) and enhanced facilities to support a variety of traders and businesses, perhaps including an anchor cafe unit or oyster bar on the Bull Ring. A varied programme of market days could support new entrepreneurs and small businesses to trial ideas, for example a monthly weekday evening market for young traders, or designated days of the week for arts and crafts fairs and local produce.	Adaptation/new use Economic viability Maintenance (through continued use)	Wexford County Council, Wexford Local Development, Wexford Farmers Markets, Creative Hub	Develop a new market programme to run on a trial basis where traders are invited at no fee or a significant discount on days and times when the market is currently closed, and develop longer term proposals based on the response and demand. Commission a feasibility study and concept proposals for physical improvements, preferably together with the proposed public realm improvements at Bull Ring to ensure a unified design.	Time for market programming and administration. Funding for capital improvements.	S - M
H7	Selskar Abbey	Develop a plan to put Selskar Abbey at the heart of the Cultural Quarter experience, grounds fully open to public access during the day, so that the site can be better appreciated and act as a key point along the Wexford Heritage Trail. To ensure public safety and protect the historic ruins, structural stabilisation, a suitable pathway through the site, and wardens / tour guides (based at Westgate Heritage Centre) may be required. Restoration works should be carried out at the same time. Demolition of modern building along the abbey wall should be undertaken to open up the space.	Adaptation/new use Material repair and restoration Increased awareness & encouraged safeguarding	Wexford County Council, OPW, Fáilte Ireland, Visit Wexford	Commission a suitably qualified conservation design team to develop proposals for conservation works and access. The Abbey is in guardianship of OPW and the graveyard is in ownership of Wexford County Council.	Funding, potential application to Heritage Council or other suitable schemes.	M

Westgate Heritage Centre (right) and Selskar Abbey with adjacent modern building (left)

What if... Wexford Heritage Centre became a vibrant heritage museum, gallery, meeting place and focal point of the Cultural Quarter?

What's the idea?

A permanent Wexford heritage exhibition and archeological archive, to tell the story of Wexford Town in one space, and provide a starting point for town tours, with a cafe in the refurbished modern building. This facility along with Selskar Abbey and the green space behind it will form the new Cultural Quarter Experience, extending the cultural spine from here up to the Wexford Gaol.

Where can we take inspiration from?

Banana Block, Portview Trade Centre, Belfast

4.4 ACTION PLAN - HERITAGE & CULTURAL ASSETS

Ref	Site	Action	Heritage Conservation Focus / Impact	Suggested Lead & Partners	Next Steps	Resources Needed	Timescale (S=0-2 yrs M=2-4 yrs L=5+years)
H8	Westgate Heritage Centre	Along with Selskar Abbey, the former Westgate heritage centre should form the main part of the new Cultural Quarter. Set up a permanent Wexford heritage exhibition and archeological archive, to tell the story of Wexford Town in one space, and provide a starting point for town tours. The area to the front of the centre and adjacent to Selskar Abbey should be landscaped to enhance the ambience of the area. The green park to the west of the Westgate Centre with the large stretch of town wall should also become part of the Cultural Quarter experience. This green space is also included under Nature & Public Spaces.	Increased awareness & encouraged safeguarding Adaptation/new use Economic viability Material repair and restoration	Wexford County Council, Fáilte Ireland, Visit Wexford	This proposal will require consultation with local residents. Commission feasibility studies and concept proposals to establish design options and capital budget requirements. Begin discussions with potential partners and operators for the Heritage Centre. Engage stakeholders and the public to gather stories and anecdotes about Wexford's history, perhaps through a Wexford Story Wall that invites people to write / draw / map their stories and ideas.	Funding applications to large capital grants such as URDF and Leader.	M - L
H9	Buildings within the Historic Town	Identify buildings or groups of buildings within the historic core of the town that are suitable for enhancement or conservation works to improve their useability and attractiveness. Groups of buildings or individual buildings can be considered. A good example of where streetscape enhance works has been undertaken is Slaney Street in Enniscorthy which received grant funding in 2021 and the resultant works have significantly improved the street for both local building owners and visitors to the town.	Maintenance (through continued use) Adaptation/new use Economic viability Material repair and restoration	Wexford County Council, Wexford Chamber, Visit Wexford, the local community and building owners.	Select suitable buildings where streetscape enhancement proposals would benefit the historic core of the town and would fulfil criteria of selection under the Historic Towns Initiative. Apply for grants regularly.	Funding application to the Historic Towns Initiative and management assistance from Wexford County Council.	S - M - L

St Mary's graveyard (and the ruins of St Mary's parish church), Mary's Lane

NATURE & PUBLIC SPACES

What if... we opened up the historic graveyards as green oases within the town centre?

What's the idea?

Open up and improve the safety, accessibility, and landscaping of the historic graveyards to act as pocket parks and enhance appreciation of these sites.

Where can we take inspiration from?

Abney Park Cemetery, Stoke Newington, London

4.4 ACTION PLAN - NATURE & PUBLIC SPACES

Ref	Site	Action	Heritage Conservation Focus / Impact	Suggested Lead & Partners	Next Steps	Resources Needed	Timescale (S=0-2 yrs M=2-4 yrs L=5+years)
N1	Historic Graveyards	Open up and improve safety and accessibility of the graveyards to act as pocket parks - including wide steps, handrails, level pathways, seating, trees and landscaping, interpretation panels and ecologically appropriate lighting . St Mary's graveyard and the surrounding laneway and public realm should be a priority given its character and proximity to the town centre. St Patrick's should also be prioritised for improvements, including improved views, access and interpretation of the section of Town Wall contained within the graveyard. Other graveyards such as St. Michael's of Feagh and Maudlintown should be included in works.	Increased awareness & encouraged safeguarding Maintenance Material repair and restoration Cohesive wider townscape and environment	Wexford County Council, Wexford Historical Society	Commission feasibility studies and concept proposals for each graveyard to establish design options and capital budget requirements. Public consultation.	Funding (potential application to Heritage Council)	L
N2	South Main Street	Consider extending pedestrianisation to improve the character, accessibility, safety, air quality and amenity value to pedestrians, businesses, cafes and restaurants. Temporary trials or car-free days could help test the concept and demonstrate benefits.	Cohesive wider townscape and environment	Wexford County Council, Active Travel, TII	Improvements to pedestrian, cycle and public transport will form part of the Local Area Plan and the accompanying Area Transport Plan will include recommendations following assessment and public consultation.	Funding	M - L

View of Wexford quayfront from Wexford Bridge

NATURE & PUBLIC SPACES

What if... people were drawn to enjoy Wexford's quay-front in all seasons?

What's the idea?

All-weather light pods for dining, music, retail and events, designed to enhance the connection of the town to the water and to accommodate regular use throughout the year and large events when needed.

Where can we take inspiration from?

Project 24 Art Pods, Bangor seafront

4.4 ACTION PLAN - NATURE & PUBLIC SPACES

Ref	Site	Action	Heritage Conservation Focus / Impact	Suggested Lead & Partners	Next Steps	Resources Needed	Timescale (S=0-2 yrs M=2-4 yrs L=5+years)
N3	Quayfront	Explore suitable locations along the quayfront for the provision of temporary all-weather pods for dining, music, retail and events, ideally designed to be transparent or otherwise enhance the connection to the water and to be modular, moveable or flexible to accommodate regular use throughout the year and large events when needed, and light up at night.	Cohesive wider townscape and environment Economic viability	Wexford County Council	Proposals will form part of the detail of the Local Area Plan.	Funding	S - M
N4	Town-wide	Develop a town centre Green Infrastructure Strategy to provide policy support and design guidance for appropriate sustainable drainage systems, green roofs, tree planting, native and pollinator-friendly planting, to enable greater climate change resilience, biodiversity enhancement and protection of historic assets against flooding.	Policy & Guidelines Cohesive wider townscape and environment	Wexford County Council	Reflect in the Wexford Local Area Plan.	Funding	S
N5	Bull Ring	Improvements to seating, lighting, landscaping with public dining tables and chairs around the market and infrastructure to support musical and other performances.	Cohesive wider townscape and environment	Wexford County Council	Commission a feasibility study and concept proposals for the public realm, preferably together with the proposed market improvements to ensure a unified design.	Funding	S - M

Work has already begun to set out a walkway along some sections of the Town Wall

C2

What if... we created a linear urban park and walkway alongside the town wall circuit?

What's the idea?

A well-lit and clearly signposted walkway along the length of the Town Wall, with interpretation panels (part of the wider Wexford Heritage Trail) and original locations of the town wall gates clearly indicated.

Where can we take inspiration from?

Derry City Walls walkway

4.4 ACTION PLAN - CONNECTIONS

Ref	Site	Action	Heritage Conservation Focus / Impact	Suggested Lead & Partners	Next Steps	Resources Needed	Timescale (S=0-2 yrs M=2-4 yrs L=5+years)
C1	Town-wide	Promote the further development of mapped and signposted Wexford Heritage Trail linking to the Cultural Quarter covering the heritage & cultural assets mapped in this plan, with consistently branded, accessible signage and interpretation, starting from key arrival points such as the train station and Visitors Centre . QR codes could link to the County Council's website which, using the browse aloud button can translate and read material. All interpretation should strive to place historical events pertinent to the town in the wider context of Local and European history.	Cohesive wider townscape and environment Increased awareness & encouraged safeguarding	Wexford County Council, Wexford Trails, Fáilte Ireland	Signage audit of existing signage across the town, who the boards are owned by, and any updates required to design and content to ensure accuracy and accessibility. Any new panels or signage requires a coordinated approach to link in with existing suites of panels created by Wexford County Council such as the Norman Way and Ancient Wexford signage.	Funding for audit, new signage, partnership approach to ensure consistency	S - M
C2	Town Wall	Create a well-lit walkway along the accessible length of the Town Wall, with interpretation panels (part of the wider Wexford Heritage Trail), providing as much access as is feasible and initially focusing on areas of the walls within the public realm, for inclusion in the Wexford Local Area Plan. The original locations of the town wall gates should be clearly indicated by appropriate signage and paved markings where feasible. New signage should have a coordinated approach, consistent with existing Wexford County Council signage. Repair, restoration and maintenance of the historic structures and their surrounds should be implemented as required (e.g. conservation works and maintenance of vegetation).	Cohesive wider townscape and environment Increased awareness & encouraged safeguarding Maintenance Material repair and restoration	Wexford County Council, Wexford Historical Society, Visit Wexford, Fáilte Ireland, Heritage Council, Irish Heart Foundation (Sli na Slainte)	Inclusion of proposed Town Wall walkway route in the Wexford Local Area Plan. Develop a lighting strategy and concept proposals for improvements to paving and signage, and opportunities for pockets of planting.	Funding from HTI, Leader, community funding schemes.	S - M

View of the River Slaney from Wexford Bridge

What if… visitors could go from Wexford Harbour to the Irish National Heritage Park by kayak?

What's the idea?

Experience Wexford's natural beauty and rich history on a fun and memorable kayak tour. With a local guide, identify birds, learn about the first settlers and enjoy the journey from Wexford Harbour to the the River Slaney, Irish National Heritage Park, Killurin, Edermine and Enniscorthy.

Where can we take inspiration from?

Napa Valley River History Kayak Tours

4.4 ACTION PLAN - CONNECTIONS

Ref	Site	Action	Heritage Conservation Focus / Impact	Suggested Lead & Partners	Next Steps	Resources Needed	Timescale (S=0-2 yrs M=2-4 yrs L=5+years)
C3	Wexford Train Station	Improve the arrival experience into Wexford Town by train by improving the public realm outside the station, creating a clear map and starting point for the Wexford Town Heritage Trail. Promote the scenic train journeys from Dublin and Rosslare as part of the Wexford experience for local and international visitors.	Cohesive wider townscape and environment

Increased awareness & encouraged safeguarding | Wexford County Council, Visit Wexford, Fáilte Ireland, Iarnród Éireann | Convene partners to discuss promotion strategy for arrival by train. Commission feasibility studies and concept proposals to establish design options and capital budget requirements. | Time and support from partners. Funding. | S - M |
| C4 | River Slaney | Subject to appropriate assessment. Work with local business to develop a recreational and educational route connecting Wexford Harbour to the the River Slaney, Irish National Heritage Park, Killurin, Edermine and Enniscorthy, accompanied by information about the natural, built and cultural heritage along the scenic journey. | Cohesive wider townscape and environment

Increased awareness & encouraged safeguarding

Economic viability | Wexford Chamber of Commerce, Visit Wexford, Fáilte Ireland | Identify potential providers and work collaboratively to establish a viable business operation. | Time, support and potentially seed funding | M |

View of one of Wexford's historic laneways (left) and a recent mural near Selskar Abbey (right)
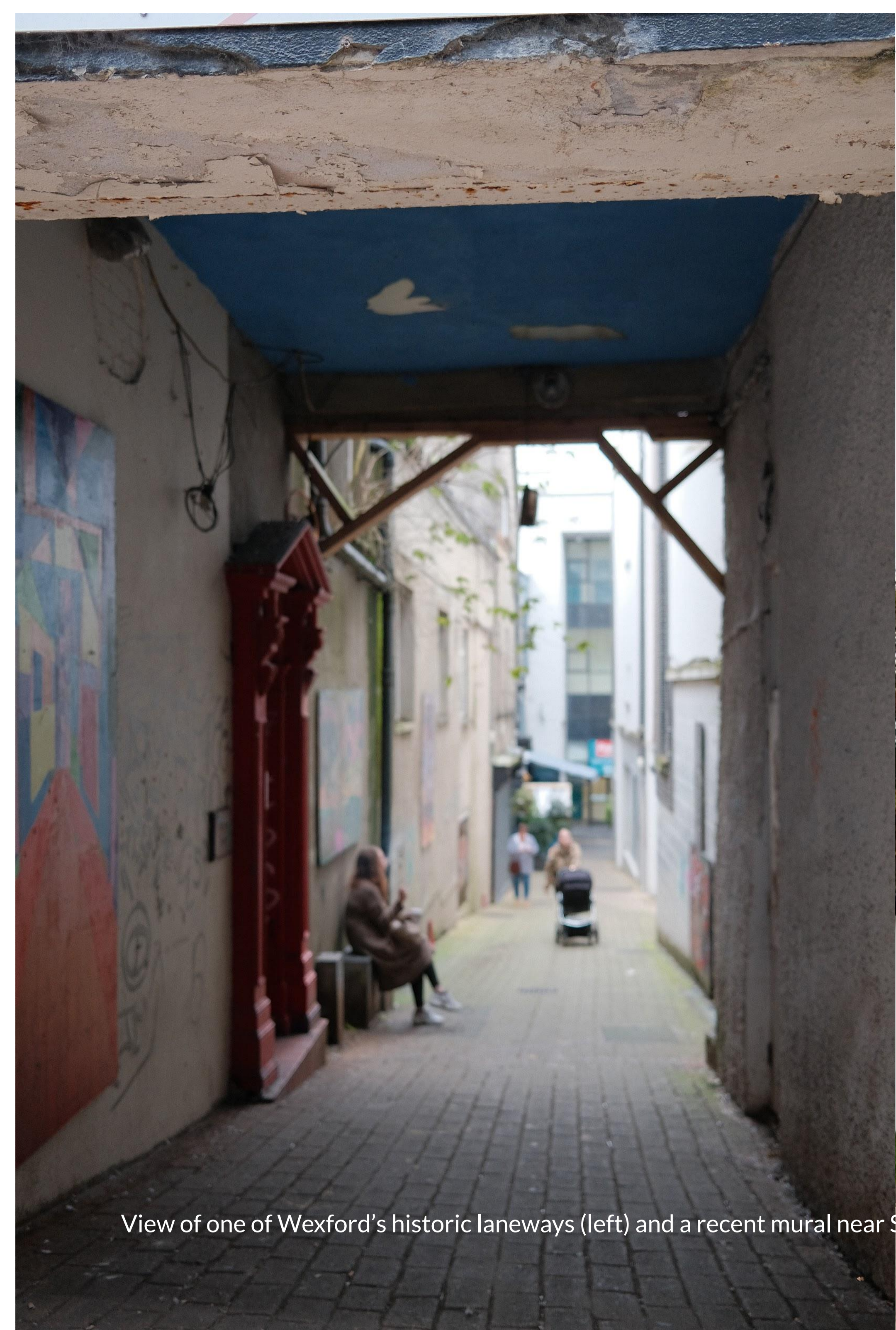
What if... Wexford's historic laneways were more fun and inviting?

What's the idea?

A programme of public realm improvements, including heritage-inspired public art, paving, planting (in planter boxes) and lighting, to improve the character, perception, activity levels and safety of the laneways.

Where can we take inspiration from?

9ft in Common, Belfast

4.4 ACTION PLAN - CONNECTIONS

Ref	Site	Action	Heritage Conservation Focus / Impact	Suggested Lead & Partners	Next Steps	Resources Needed	Timescale (S=0-2 yrs M=2-4 yrs L=5+years)
C5	Laneways	Develop a programme of public realm improvements, including public art, paving, planting (in planter boxes) and lighting, to improve the character, perception, activity levels and safety of the laneways. Include laneways clearly on signage and maps to indicate clear routes between the town centre and quayfront. Engage local artists to create public artwork inspired by Wexford's rich maritime and Viking history, to act as informal interpretation. This could be an extension of the existing Wexford Walls project.	Cohesive wider townscape and environment

Increased awareness & encouraged safeguarding

Economic viability | Wexford County Council, Wexford Arts Centre, Creative Hub, County Wexford Arts Office, local residents, maintenance by Wexford Borough. | Develop the brief collaboratively with partners and launch a call for proposals from local artists. Develop consistent concept proposals for paving, signage and lighting across the laneways, co-designed with local residents to improve the sense of community ownership. | Time and support from partners. Funding. | S - M |

View of Crescent Quay and the railway from the Quayfront near the Tourist Office

AMENITIES

A1

What if... Wexford had a Viking ship adventure playground?

What's the idea?

Explore the option of creating an inclusive, useable public space and adventure playground in the town centre, using a viking ship or other maritime heritage as inspiration for the design.

Where can we take inspiration from?

Nest accessible play forest, Efteling, Holland

4.4 ACTION PLAN - AMENITIES

Ref	Site	Action	Heritage Conservation Focus / Impact	Suggested Lead & Partners	Next Steps	Resources Needed	Timescale (S=0-2 yrs M=2-4 yrs L=5+years)
A1	Town Centre	Explore creating a useable public space in the town centre, using a viking ship or other maritime heritage as inspiration for the play features and landscaping. Retain the distinctive shape and include interpretation panels to appreciate its historic function.	Cohesive wider townscape and environment Increased awareness & encouraged safeguarding Adaptation/new use	Wexford County Council, Visit Wexford, Fáilte Ireland	Public consultation will be required. Commission a design team to lead technical feasibility studies and a co-design process for the playground with local schools and disability / accessibility groups.	Time and support from partners. Funding.	S - M
A2	Car Parks	Explore desired alternative uses for the many town centre car parks, such as mixed tenure housing, to improve character and safety for pedestrians, while retaining key views to the water and heritage assets. In line with the town centre first approach, this would provide increased population density to support activity at all times of day and a breadth of local retailers and businesses. The council could take an active role by purchasing sites or partnering with landowners for development, and/ or could produce planning policy and design guidance to support the desired form of development on these sites.	Cohesive wider townscape and environment Increased awareness & encouraged safeguarding Policy & Guidelines Adaptation/new use	Wexford County Council, landowners, potentially a housing association as development partner and operator	Council to look at sites in consultation with stakeholders and site owners. Consider inclusion of appropriate policies and design guidance within the Wexford Local Area Plan.	Level of resourcing highly dependent on approach taken.	L (S for Planning)

Car parking and council-owned buildings with vacancies on South Main Street (not pedestrianised)

AMENITIES

A3

What if... we removed cars and HGVs from the historic town centre?

What's the idea?

Explore options for removing cars and HGVs from the historic core, with parking, shared bicycles and e-cargo bikes provided at the periphery, within reasonable walking distance and connected by safe cycle lanes.

Where can we take inspiration from?

Cargo Bike Scotland

4.4 ACTION PLAN - AMENITIES

Ref	Site	Action	Heritage Conservation Focus / Impact	Suggested Lead & Partners	Next Steps	Resources Needed	Timescale (S=0-2 yrs M=2-4 yrs L=5+years)
A3	Town-wide	Investigate options for removing HGVs and cars from the historic core, with parking and shared bicycles and e-cargo bikes provided at the periphery, within reasonable walking distance and connected by safe cycle lanes to the proposed new Greenway on the Quayfront. This would improve urban character, pedestrian safety, air quality, provide more space and incentive for active travel and public transport, and more space for businesses and cultural events to spill out onto the streets.	Cohesive wider townscape and environment Adaptation/new use	Wexford County Council, Wexford Chamber of Commerce, local businesses	Local Transport Plan to consider options for pedestrianisation during certain days / hours and access for deliveries, servicing and emergency vehicles. Explore and trial innovative, low carbon options for last mile deliveries within the town centre, such as electric cargo bikes.	Level of resourcing highly dependent on approach taken.	L

What if... Wexford was internationally renowned for its annual Viking Fire Festival?

What's the idea?

An annual festival that celebrates the Viking heritage of Wexford Town and provides an immersive experience for local and international visitors - including boat tours, a parade, fireworks, and a Viking-inspired feast.

Where can we take inspiration from?

Up Helly Aa, Lerwick

View down Charlotte Street towards the quayfront at night

4.4 ACTION PLAN - STORIES & EVENTS

Ref	Site	Action	Heritage Conservation Focus / Impact	Suggested Lead & Partners	Next Steps	Resources Needed	Timescale (S=0-2 yrs M=2-4 yrs L=5+years)
S1	Laneways	Festival of Laneways! Building on the programme of public realm improvements and heritage-inspired public art in the historic laneways, mini laneway festivals could be held for each opening /completion with music, ale and oysters, to help improve the perception and appreciation of these spaces, and (if successful) create an ongoing legacy of regular laneways festivals, and perhaps a large annual 'Ale & Oysters' festival focused on the laneways.	Cohesive wider townscape and environment Increased awareness & encouraged safeguarding Economic viability	Wexford County Council, Wexford Historical Society, Wexford Arts Centre, Visit Wexford, local hotels, bars, restaurants	Develop the laneways public realm improvement programme first, then work with local residents and businesses to organise mini festivals for each opening / completion, and build on successes and lessons.	Time and support from partners. Funding.	S - M
S2	Town-wide	Viking Fire Festival! Hold an annual festival that celebrates the Viking heritage of Wexford Town and provides an immersive experience for local and international visitors - offering boat tours to the Irish National Heritage Park, join a Viking parade, gather around fire-pits on the Quayfront to enjoy fireworks and lighting displays, and feast on Viking-inspired food and drinks throughout the historic town. A Viking treasure hunt and heritage trail through relevant historic sites in the town would provide fun for children and all ages.	Cohesive wider townscape and environment Increased awareness & encouraged safeguarding Economic viability	Wexford County Council, Visit Wexford, Fáilte Ireland, local hotels, bars, restaurants	Create a partnership of stakeholders interested in bringing the idea to life, and run a pilot festival on a smaller scale to begin with.	Time and support from partners. Funding.	M - L

View of Selskar Abbey from Lower Abbey Street

What if... Wexford Town Wall and Selskar Abbey were illuminated?

What's the idea?

A one-off or recurring lighting installation or drone lighting display, illuminating Selskar Abbey and the Town Wall, creating a spectacle that draws wider audiences and enhances the experience of the Cultural Quarter.

Where can we take inspiration from?

Whitby Abbey, England

4.4 ACTION PLAN - STORIES & EVENTS

Ref	Site	Action	Heritage Conservation Focus / Impact	Suggested Lead & Partners	Next Steps	Resources Needed	Timescale (S=0-2 yrs M=2-4 yrs L=5+years)
S3	Quayfront	Maritime Festival meets Sustainability Lab. A challenge-led programme bringing residents, schools, colleges and other organisations together to consider the impacts of climate change on Wexford, the town's changing relationship with the water over time, and solutions to mitigate and adapt to climate change, all showcased at the annual Maritime Festival.	Increased awareness & encouraged safeguarding Climate resilience	Wexford County Council, Wexford Chamber of Commerce, Schools, RNLI, Wexford Environmental Network, South East Technological University	Create a partnership of stakeholders interested in bringing the idea to life, and run a pilot festival on a smaller scale to begin with.	Time and support from partners. Funding.	S - M
S4	Selskar Abbey and Town Walls	Develop a one-off or recurring lighting installation illuminating Selskar Abbey and the Town Wall, to enhance appreciation at night and create a spectacle that draws wider audiences, perhaps coinciding with National Heritage Week or the proposed Viking Fire Festival. Explore options to 'recreate' the outline of historic buildings and walls through drone lighting displays.	Increased awareness & encouraged safeguarding	Wexford County Council, Wexford Historical Society, Wexford Arts Centre, Visit Wexford, Heritage Council	Develop a business case, budget and secure funding.	Time and support from partners. Funding.	S - M

View of St Patrick's church ruins from St Patrick's graveyard

STORIES & EVENTS

S5

What if... Wexford history was brought to life through an augmented reality trail?

What's the idea?

An augmented reality (AR) experience to enhance the Wexford Heritage Trail, particularly for younger audiences, with historic streetscape images and additional historical information through a mobile app.

Where can we take inspiration from?

Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre

4.4 ACTION PLAN - STORIES & EVENTS

Ref	Site	Action	Heritage Conservation Focus / Impact	Suggested Lead & Partners	Next Steps	Resources Needed	Timescale (S=0-2 yrs M=2-4 yrs L=5+years)
S5	Town-wide	Create an augmented reality (AR) experience to enhance the Wexford Heritage Trail, particularly for younger audiences, with historic streetscape images and additional historical information through a mobile app. This could perhaps be an enhancement to the existing Visit Wexford app, to help promote the app to a younger and wider audience and make it more appealing.	Increased awareness & encouraged safeguarding	Wexford County Council, Visit Wexford, Fáilte Ireland	Investigate potential AR technology and app development providers, develop the brief with partners and understand budget requirements.	Time and support from partners. Funding.	L
S6	Graveyards	Candlelight tours, chasing the 'horrible histories' of Wexford. Bringing the history of Wexford to life and allowing visitors to connect with the local people.	Increased awareness & encouraged safeguarding	Wexford County Council, Local tourist guides, Fáilte Ireland, Wexford Historical Society	Investigate interest and viability as a tourism product. Once clarified, approach guides.	Time and support from partners. Funding.	S

Walled Towns Day and Heritage Week activities in Wexford Town.

S7

What if... Wexford Walled Town Day was a internationally recognised weekend-long festival?

What's the idea?

The successful Wexford Walled Towns Day has the potential to expand into a weekend long celebration with fun for all ages, combining street performances and discovery trails along the walls. Participants have the opportunity to explore the rich heritage of the walls and how they have played a role in the town for hundreds of years.

Where can we take inspiration from?

York Walls Festival

4.4 ACTION PLAN - STORIES & EVENTS

Ref	Site	Action	Heritage Conservation Focus / Impact	Suggested Lead & Partners	Next Steps	Resources Needed	Timescale (S=0-2 yrs M=2-4 yrs L=5+years)
S7	Town-wide	National Heritage Week and Walled Towns Day. Wexford has been hosting a successful Walled Towns Day during National Heritage Week for 7 years. This family-friendly event is popular with locals and tourists. There is an opportunity to grow this one day event into a weekend-long festival. Other events in support of National Heritage Week should also be considered.	Increased awareness & encouraged safeguarding	Wexford County Council, IWTN, Heritage Council	Seek funding from local partners.	Time and support from partners. Funding.	S
S8	Town-wide	Build on the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann Trad Festival: uplift and showcase the cultural heritage of the town by hosting more traditional music events in the lead up to the festival in August 2024.	Cohesive wider townscape and environment Increased awareness & encouraged safeguarding	Wexford County Council, Local Trad Groups	Engage with stakeholders who can support the running of the events.	Time and support from partners. Funding.	S

View of the River Slaney from Angel's Harbour garden, Ferrybank

4.5 IMPLEMENTATION & MONITORING

Action H1 recognises the crucial importance of senior level leadership and commitment to heritage-led regeneration, and reflection of key recommendations within policy, through the Wexford Local Area Plan that is currently being developed.

The principles and objectives for this plan will be incorporated, following further consultation and approval of the Members of the County Council, into the Local Area Plan for the Town. The monitoring of the objectives will form part of the monitoring of the Local Area Plan. Developments that require planning permission will be assessed under the policies and objectives of the Local Area Plan following a consultation process. Reports will be prepared for the Members of the Council consideration and review.

A collaborative approach to heritage-led regeneration is critical to success. Partners, stakeholders and the community must be kept informed, engaged and ideally involved in co-design of interventions to embed a sense of collective pride and ownership, and ensure Wexford's rich heritage is accessible and beneficial to all.

Key Performance Indicators:

- The numbers of buildings and structures conserved, restored, refurbished and brought back into active use
- Amount of floor area brought back into use
- Areas of public realm enhanced
- Changes in visitor numbers
- Satisfaction of visitors to the town and the likelihood of repeat visits
- Impact on tourism spend in the town
- Numbers of jobs created and the quality of those jobs
- Amount of investment from public or private sources
- The viability and competitiveness of businesses in the town
- The level of pride and ownership by the community of their local experience, history and culture
- The extent of engagement of the local community
- The strengthening of local economic and social structures
- The level of respect and appreciation for the heritage and authentic culture, traditions and distinctiveness of the community

View of Wexford Harbour and quayfront from Wexford Bridge

In Wexford I was born and grew
Her Churches bells I rang
I ran the lanes and quays I knew
With boys long gone I hurled and sang
This was my place the place I loved
In sight of Rowe Street steeple
A worthy town of narrow streets
Tall spires and proud people

Eamon Doyle, 2020

APPENDICES

Westgate Park and Wexford Town Wall

HERITAGE ASSET SUMMARY

Site Name

Wexford Town Walls

Brief Description

One of the longest surviving intact medieval town wall circuits in Ireland, at approximately 1,250 metres. Wexford's Town Walls are an important reminder of the long history of the town from its Norse origins in the 9th or 10th century, subsequent Norman colonisation in 1169 when towns were developed as defended mercantile centres, to the present day. The walls contain the medieval urban core of the town. The walled circuit and surviving towers are important features in the townscape of Wexford.

Intervention Ideas

- Action Plan Ref H4: Undertake a phased programme of restoration works, and ongoing maintenance, with the southern section around King Street as a priority.
- Action Plan Ref C2: Create a well-lit walkway along the length of the Town Wall, with interpretation panels (part of Heritage Trail)

Assessment Matrix

Listing	Protected Structure, National Monument
Condition	Generally poor due to weathering, vegetation growth, inappropriate maintenance and development. Section around King's Street is particularly poor. Over the past 10 years parts of the wall have been conserved with funding from the Irish Walled Towns Network.
Habitability	N/A
Accessibility	Parts of the town wall circuit have a strong visual presence within the town of Wexford, however, much of the remaining walls are concealed by adjacent structures or not visible from public property.
Current use	N/A
Potential use	N/A
Ownership	Various - parts owned by Local Authority, parts in private ownership. Under Guardianship of the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (consent required for most works).
Location	Forms the western boundary of Wexford's historic core, from Westgate (North) to Barracks (South)

Selskar Abbey

HERITAGE ASSET SUMMARY

Site Name

Selskar Abbey / Saint Selskar's Church

Brief Description

Selskar Abbey is a 12th century structure which replaced a temple dating back to pre-Christian times. Built on the ruins where the first Anglo-Irish peace treaty was signed by Diarmait Mac Murchada in 1169, the site remains one of the many popular tourist attractions in the county. 1649 saw the abbey being destroyed by Oliver Cromwell and almost two centuries later, built back as a Protesant church in 1826, of which the shell remains. The abbey, gate and tower form an important complex. NIAH Link

Intervention Ideas

- Action Plan Ref H7: Develop a plan to restore and safely open up Selskar Abbey grounds to public access during the day
- Action Plan Ref S4: Develop a one-off or recurring lighting installation illuminating Selskar Abbey and the Town Wall, to enhance appreciation at night

Assessment Matrix

Listing	Protected Structure, National Monument
Condition	The church is in ruins but the shell survives with walls and window openings intact. Selskar Gate was restored in the 1980s and is now called Westgate. The Abbey Street tower was restored in the 1990s.
Habitability	Not habitable
Accessibility	Gated with no public access
Current use	N/A
Potential use	N/A
Ownership	Under Guardianship of the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The OPW must be consulted prior to any plans being drawn up.
Location	Temperance Row

Wexford Arts Centre

HERITAGE ASSET SUMMARY

Site Name

Wexford Arts Centre

Brief Description

A market house built in 1775 and opened 1776 on a site obtained from John Grogan (1716-83) of Johnstown Castle. The detached five-bay two-storey market house, on an L-shaped plan, represents an important component of the later eighteenth-century built heritage of County Wexford. The ground floor would have opened up onto the historic Cornmarket. In alternative use as a town/county hall 1901 and 1911. Adapted to alternative use in 1974. NIAH Link

Intervention Ideas

- None. The historic building is already appropriately restored, improved and used, including public access to the museum/gallery and adjacent landscaping to Cornmarket Square. Though, this point on the Wexford Heritage Trail would benefit from improved interpretation for the Cornmarket area and nearby Town Wall.

Assessment Matrix

Listing	Protected Structure, National Significance
Condition	Good. Having been well maintained, the elementary form and massing survive intact together with substantial quantities of the original fabric, both to the exterior and to the interior. Contemporary joinery and decorative plasterwork enrichments highlight the artistic potential of a market house making a pleasing visual statement overlooking Cornmarket. Reroofed in 2007 with grant support from The Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism and The Heritage Council. Further renovations and a modern extension were completed in 2022.
Habitability	Yes
Accessibility	Yes, public access during opening hours.
Current use	Museum/gallery
Potential use	Museum/gallery
Ownership	Wexford County Council (leased to the Wexford Arts Centre)
Location	John's Gate Street / Cornmarket Square

Wexford Market, Bullring

HERITAGE ASSET SUMMARY

Site Name

Wexford Market, Bull Ring

Brief Description

Centre to the town, the Bull Ring was a place of a cruel sport in the 1600s. The sport at the time was known as bull baiting and became outlawed by the Cruelty to Animals Act of 1835. Wexford Market is a pair of single-bay (twelve-bay deep) single-storey gabled-fronted wings built in 1871 by Wexford Corporation in an attempt to centralise the trade in perishable goods. It represents an important component of the later nineteenth- century built heritage of Wexford. NIAH Link

Intervention Ideas

- Action Plan Refs H6 & N5: Explore options to open up the market throughout more of the week and year. Physical improvements could include a weatherproof atrium (designed to complement the historic buildings) and enhanced facilities to support a variety of traders and businesses, seating and lighting..

Assessment Matrix

Listing	Protected Structure, Regional Importance
Condition	Good. Having been reasonably well maintained, the elementary form and massing survive intact together with substantial quantities of the original fabric, thus upholding the character or integrity of a market place making a pleasing visual statement in Bull Ring. Extensive conservation and repair work to the Market House in the Bull Ring was carried out in 2008.
Habitability	Habitable and in use, though with vacancies
Accessibility	Gates closed and inaccessible except for market operating hours on Fridays and Saturdays
Current use	Marketplace, only open Fridays and Saturdays
Potential use	Marketplace and retail, food and beverage hub throughout the week
Ownership	Wexford County Council
Location	Bull Ring, Common Quay Street

Wexford Infantry Barracks

HERITAGE ASSET SUMMARY

Site Name

Wexford Infantry Barrack

Brief Description

Detached fifteen-bay two-storey soldiers' quarters blockhouse, opened 1725, on a U-shaped plan. It represents an important component of the early eighteenth-century built heritage of Wexford with the architectural value of the composition. It occupies the site of a castle traditionally thought to have been built by King John, in existence by 1221. It's deliberate alignment maximises panoramic vistas overlooking Wexford Harbour. NIAH Link

Intervention Ideas

- None, due to ownership being outside of Council control and the building being in operation. Being the site of Wexford Castle, however, this area would benefit from improved interpretation as part of the clearly mapped and signposted Wexford Heritage Trail, covering key heritage assets and historical events through the town.

Assessment Matrix

Listing	Protected Structure, Regional significance
Condition	Good. Having been well maintained, the form and massing survive intact together with substantial quantities of the original fabric, both to the exterior and to the utilitarian interior. However, the piecemeal introduction of replacement fittings to the openings has not had a beneficial impact on the character or integrity of a soldiers' quarters blockhouse. It makes a pleasing visual statement overlooking Barrack Street.
Habitability	Habitable and in use
Accessibility	Not publicly accessible
Current use	Barracks
Potential use	N/A
Ownership	Irish Defence Forces
Location	Barrack Street

Wexford Gaol

HERITAGE ASSET SUMMARY

Site Name

Wexford Gaol

Brief Description

County Gaol complex including detached gaol blocks built in 1807-9 and 1843-6, a gatehouse built 1843-6, and boundary walls set in shared grounds. The construction in a ruby-coloured "Old Red Sandstone" offset by silver-grey granite dressings produces a pleasing two-tone palette, and demonstrates good quality workmanship. An important component of the built heritage of County Wexford. Originally used as a prison/jail, historically used as a hospital/infirmary, and as a town/county hall. NIAH Link

Intervention Ideas

- Action Plan Ref H5: Explore options for more intensive and public use of the site for activities to support the local creative economy, while enhancing appreciation of its historic uses and value. For example, a makerspace, affordable shared workspace, studios, exhibition and retail space, with access to shared equipment.

Assessment Matrix

Listing	Protected Structures, National / Regional Significance
Condition	Good. Gaol blocks renovated in 1993 to accommodate continued alternative use. Having been well maintained, the form and massing survive intact together with substantial quantities of the original fabric, both to the exterior and to the interior. However, the introduction of replacement fittings to most of the openings has not had a beneficial impact on the character or integrity of the gaol blocks.
Habitability	Majority habitable, though this varies by block
Accessibility	Complex is accessible, but buildings are not open to the public
Current use	Partly in commercial use, partly vacant
Potential use	More intensive and public use, for example workspace, artist studios, exhibition and retail space
Ownership	Wexford County Council
Location	Hill Street, Spa Well Road

Catholic Church of the Immaculate Conception (St John's Parish), one of a pair of twin churches built in Wexford in 1850 - 1860

HERITAGE ASSET SUMMARY

Site Name

Historic churches

Brief Description

- St. Iberius' Church (1755 - 1770) NIAH link
- Catholic Church of the Assumption (Bride Street Church, one of a pair, 1850 - 1860) NIAH Link
- Catholic Church of the Immaculate Conception (Rowe Street Church, one of a pair, 1850 - 1860) NIAH Link

Assessment Matrix

Listing	Protected Structures, National/Regional Importance
Condition	Good
Habitability	Habitable and in use
Accessibility	Accessible
Current use	Church
Potential use	Church
Ownership	Various
Location	Various (see Wexford Heritage Map in Chapter 2)

Intervention Ideas

- Action Plan Ref C1: Create a clearly mapped and signposted Heritage Trail including these sites and other heritage & cultural assets, with consistently branded, accessible signage and interpretation, starting from key arrival points such as the train station and Visitors Centre .

St Patrick's church and graveyard, Patrick's Square, High Street

HERITAGE ASSET SUMMARY

Site Name

Historic graveyards

Brief Description

- St John (Gate) mausoleum (1825 - 1830): Graveyard, mausoleum and resting place of members of the Redmond political dynasty NIAH link
- St Mary's graveyard (1700 - 1858): Church ruins and graveyard of St Mary's parish, one of 5 parishes in Wexford Town's historic core NIAH link
- St Patrick's graveyard (1700-1900): Church ruins and graveyard housing the remains of many who died in the Rebellions of 1641 and 1798 NIAH link

Assessment Matrix

Listing	Vested Burial Grounds
Condition	St John's is relatively well maintained. St Patrick's is overgrown but accessible. St Mary's is in poor condition and not accessible.
Habitability	N/A
Accessibility	St Patrick's and St John open during certain hours of the day. St Mary's inaccessible.
Current use	Graveyards
Potential use	Graveyards and pocket parks
Ownership	Wexford County Council
Location	Various (see Wexford Heritage Map in Chapter 2)

Intervention Ideas

- Action Plan Ref N1: Open up and improve safety and accessibility of the graveyards to act as pocket parks - including wide steps, handrails, level pathways, seating, trees and landscaping, interpretation panels and ecologically appropriate lighting. St Mary's and St Patrick's should be prioritised for intervention.

WEXFORD TOWN WALLS CONSERVATION PLAN REVIEW

Policy Ref	Action	Take Forward
Condition/ Issues	"The existing condition of the walls as identified in the preliminary inspection carried out during the preparation of the Conservation Plan is poor. In particular, problems relating to vegetation growth and deterioration of mortar joints are leading to widespread deterioration of the structural fabric, which, if left unchecked, will lead to progressive disintegration and collapse of the walls. In a number of locations, sections of the walls are structurally unstable and if temporary or permanent intervention is not carried out within the foreseeable future, structural collapse will result. Of particular concern are the section running from Mary Street to St. Peter's Square, and the section running from King Street to Barrack Street."	Still true - the section from King Street to Barrack Street in particular was noted by the authors and a number of stakeholders.
Vision	Wexford's Town Walls will be preserved in perpetuity for the enjoyment of citizens and visitors alike. The walls will be maintained to the highest possible conservation standards and where possible access will be promoted. In order for this Conservation Plan to become an effective tool in the delivery of this vision a number of actions need to be prioritised. Most important is establishing a clear and strong executive management structure for the future care of the walls. Closely associated with this will be acceptance and implementation of the guidelines contained in the Management Plan which has been prepared in parallel with the Conservation Plan. Thirdly, the method of resourcing the implications of both documents will need to be resolved.	Yes
1	The future conservation and development of the Monument will be guided by relevant legislation and the principles of the Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance (the Burra Charter) as revised 1999.	Yes

WEXFORD TOWN WALLS CONSERVATION PLAN REVIEW

Policy Ref	Action	Take Forward?
2	The Statement of Significance and the assessments of individual items contained in more detail in this section will be accepted as the basis for future planning and work.	Yes
3	The policies recommended and options discussed throughout this document will be a guide to planning of future work on the Monument.	Yes
4	A copy of this Conservation Plan should be appended to the new local area plan and should form part of any future development plan.	Key policy recommendations taken forward into the Heritage-led Regeneration Plan, which should be incorporated into the new Wexford Town Local Area Plan
5	The more significant a fabric, relationship, space or vista, the more care should be taken in planning work which may affect it, so that the work will not reduce, and may reinforce, its significance.	Yes
6	Where some reduction of significance is necessary to achieve overall conservation objectives, alternatives should be tested using a risk impact assessment methodology to reveal the least damaging approach and mitigate adverse impacts. In general, the alternative involving least alteration of the fabric is preferable.	Yes

WEXFORD TOWN WALLS CONSERVATION PLAN REVIEW

Policy Ref	Action	Take Forward?
7	A Management Group shall be established and shall meet periodically to review and update the Conservation Plan and the Management Plan.	Recommend a management group is set up to govern the Heritage-led Regeneration Plan, consisting of the project Steering Group and key non-council stakeholders
8	A Management Plan shall be prepared to provide guidance for such matters as the ongoing maintenance, conservation, repair and possible 'restoration' of the Monument and for the organisation of events.	
9	Appropriately qualified and experienced conservation advisers should be engaged in the consideration and execution of any proposals. This should be done in consultation with the WCC Heritage Officer.	Yes
10	This Plan, and the policies in it, should be reviewed subject to the time frame laid down in the new local area plan, and not later than five years after their initial acceptance by the Steering Group. Procedures for review mechanisms should be established by the bodies responsible for the implementation of the Plan. Wexford Borough Council will reconvene a meeting of the Steering Group for this purpose.	Recommend the Heritage-led Regeneration Plan is reviewed not later than 5 years after initial acceptance by the Steering Group.
11	The value of preventive maintenance should be promoted and best practice in repair should be demonstrated in all work to the Monument through rigorous implementation of the Management Plan.	Yes

WEXFORD TOWN WALLS CONSERVATION PLAN REVIEW

Policy Ref	Action	Take Forward?
12	Any ground work taking place within the immediate vicinity of the Monument must comply with all statutory requirements.	Yes
13	All extant archaeological records shall be collated and archived in a suitably located dedicated Monument archive.	This is undertaken by the NMS.
14	The contents of this Conservation Plan should be taken into account in the preparation of a new Architectural Conservation Area guidance document.	Yes, refer to any proposed ACA document.
15	Views to and from the town walls should be enhanced to reinforce the role of the town walls in any future plans for the area.	Yes
16	No further demolition of nineteenth-century, or earlier, property built against, overlooking, or opening onto the Monument should be permitted unless a compelling case is presented to demonstrate that the outcome will be to the ultimate benefit of the Monument.	Yes
17	A walking route which would provide as much access as is feasible shall be devised for inclusion in the any future plans for the area. The walking route should initially focus on areas of the walls within the public realm.	Yes

WEXFORD TOWN WALLS CONSERVATION PLAN REVIEW

Policy Ref	Action	Take Forward?
18	Means shall be devised to indicate the original location of the town wall gates.	Yes - interpretation, and perhaps physical markings/ public art/lighting display opportunities.
19	Vegetation should cut back from relevant sections of the walls during winter months to enable detailed photogrammetric and measured surveys to be carried out. This is undertaken by the NMS.	Yes
20	Structurally unstable sections of the walls, as identified in the Management Plan, should be assessed and detailed proposals for stabilisation should be developed and implemented.	Yes
21	A programme of restoration as outlined in the Management Plan should be instigated, preferably on a phased basis, as this will allow lessons to be learned and applied in subsequent phases.	No restoration is envisaged.
22	No further breaches in or taking down of town walls will be permitted under any circumstances.	Any unauthorised breaches in the town wall will be reported to the relevant authorities.
23	An appropriately surfaced and lit pedestrian wall walk shall be devised and implemented as part of a rolling programme for restoration of the walls.	Yes
24	An inclusive approach to physical or intellectual access to the Monument shall be adopted.	Yes

WEXFORD TOWN WALLS CONSERVATION PLAN REVIEW

Policy Ref	Action	Take Forward?
25	A signage strategy providing clear directional guidance to the Monument from designated point in the town shall be implemented.	Yes (as part of a coherent heritage signage and interpretation strategy for Wexford Town)
26	A warden system should be introduced for supervision of the Monument in daytime.	No, not necessary.
27	The Monument should not be interpreted in isolation, rather, all interpretation should strive to place historical events pertinent to the town in the wider context of Irish, British and European history.	Yes (as part of a coherent heritage signage and interpretation strategy for Wexford Town)
28	A range of interpretation media should be designed to be relevant to a wide range of age and ability.	Yes
29	All written and audio interpretation should, where feasible, be in multiple language format.	Yes
30	Interpretation panels, and other displays, should be designed to high standards which should be subjected to appropriate expert assessment of design and content before approval is given to installation. All interpretation panels and displays should be freestanding unless otherwise approved by the Management Group.	Yes

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WEXFORD TOWN WALLS CONSERVATION PLAN REVIEW

Policy Ref	Action	Take Forward?
31	The Monument should be positively promoted as the focus for a range of events organised by the Borough Council.	Yes
32	All proposed enhancements and interventions to the Monument should be submitted to the Management Group before issuing approval unless conforming to a previously agreed format outlined in the Management Plan.	All proposals for enhancements are submitted to or made by the heritage officer.
33	All interventions should be designed to be fully reversible in accordance with best conservation practice.	Yes
34	All interventions should be designed to a high standard utilising good quality and durable materials.	Yes
35	A palette of natural paving materials should be selected for use, where appropriate, on and around the Monument.	Yes
36	A programme for installation of high quality street furniture should be prepared for use around the Monument.	Yes
37	A lighting strategy should be devised which will involve minimal physical impact on the Monument while providing levels of illumination throughout the walkways which will engender a sense of safety.	Yes

WEXFORD TOWN WALLS CONSERVATION PLAN REVIEW

Policy Ref	Action	Take Forward?
38	Guidance should be included in the Management Plan that will ensure existing botanical and wildlife interests are identified, managed and protected in an appropriate manner.	Yes
39	Relevant sections of the Monument must be recorded before alteration or major intervention.	Yes
40	All work likely to affect the appearance of the Monument should be submitted to the Management Group for consideration and approval.	All work likely to affect the appearance of the Monument should be submitted to the Heritage Officer.
41	All work likely to impinge upon the Monument should be subjected to full archaeological assessment and shall comply fully with current regulations and best practice.	Yes
42	Only appropriately qualified professionals and tradespersons should be permitted to work on the Monument.	Yes, opportunities for council-led training and apprenticeship programme.
43	All work to the Monument shall be carried out in accordance with best conservation practice.	Yes
44	All work to the Monument should be recorded in a suitable and consistent format and records should be deposited for safekeeping in an appropriate archive.	Yes, all work to the Monument should be recorded in a suitable and consistent format and records should be submitted in accordance with National Monument Service guidelines.

RELEVANT WEXFORD COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022-2028 OBJECTIVES

Objective Ref	Natural Heritage Objectives
HT01	On adoption of the National Heritage Plan "Heritage 2030" to commence the preparation of a County Heritage Plan to assist the management and promotion of our valuable heritage in a sustainable manner.
HT02	To ensure that the use of our heritage assets are managed, preserved and presented in a manner that does not adversely impact on the intrinsic value of these assets whilst supporting economic renewal and sustainable development.
HT03	To promote initiatives that provide better public access for all visitors to our historic built and natural environment whilst ensuring the full protection of these sites. Wexford County Council will ensure that decision making on projects/developments to improve access and facilities are informed by an appropriate level of environmental assessment.
NH02	To protect and enhance the rich qualities of our natural heritage in a manner that is appropriate to its significance Objective NH03 To promote biodiversity protection, restoration and habitat connectivity both within protected areas and in the landscape through promoting the integration of green infrastructure and ecosystem services, including landscape, heritage and biodiversity and management of invasive and alien species in the plan making and development management processes
NH11	To protect trees or groups of trees and woodlands of particular amenity and nature conservation value and make tree preservation orders where appropriate.
NH14	To work with local communities, groups, landowners, National Parks and Wildlife Service and other relevant parties to identify, protect, manage and, where appropriate, enhance and promote sites of local biodiversity value
NH20	To ensure the protection of natural heritage is integral to the Council's own developments, actions and methods of operation
NH28	To incorporate the actions of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015-2020 (and any subsequent Plan) when managing our parks, open spaces, roadside verges and all vegetation in a way that provides more opportunities for biodiversity while being cognisant of the threat of the spread of invasive species.

RELEVANT WEXFORD COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022-2028 OBJECTIVES

Objective Ref	Archaeological Objectives
AH01	To conserve and protect archaeological sites, monuments (including their settings), underwater archaeology and objects including those listed or scheduled for inclusion on the Record of Monuments and Places and/or the Register of Historic Monuments or newly discovered sub-surface archaeological remains.
AH02	To recognise the importance of monuments and sites and protect the character and integrity of these monuments and sites where appropriate. The Council will consult the National Monuments Service where a development is proposed that may impact on an archaeological monument and/or site.
AH04	To fully consider the protection of archaeological heritage when undertaking, approving or authorising development. In considering such protection the Council will have regard to the advice and recommendations of the National Monuments Service and the principles set out in Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands, 1999).
AH07	To protect historic and archaeological landscapes, including battlefields, and promote access to such sites provided that this does not threaten the feature.
AH09	To protect historic urban defences (both upstanding and buried) and associated features and safeguard them from inappropriate development in accordance with National Policy on Town Defences (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2008)
AH10	To identify appropriate archaeological sites in the county to which public access could be provided, and work to secure public access and the provision of signage and interpretation panels, where appropriate, in consultation with the landowner and the National Monument Service, subject to normal planning and environmental criteria and the development management standards contained in Volume 2
AH11	To retain existing street layouts, historic building lines and traditional plot widths which derive from medieval or earlier origin.
AH12	To protect historical burial grounds within County Wexford and encourage their maintenance in accordance with best practice conservation principles.

RELEVANT WEXFORD COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022-2028 OBJECTIVES

Objective Ref	Built Heritage Objectives
BH02	To support targeted investment in the built heritage of our region including the Built Heritage Investment Scheme and Historic Structures Fund to assist owners to maintain our built heritage assets.
BH03	To promote the development of heritage-led regeneration and engage in and promote initiatives to revitalise the historic cores of our towns and villages together with local communities, heritage property owners and other stakeholders.
BH08	To promote the retention of any original or early building fabric including for example timber sash windows, stonework, brickwork, joinery, ironmongery, traditional mortars, render and decorative or weather finishes and slate and vernacular architectural details (whether relating to a Protected Structure or not). Likewise, the Council will encourage the re-instatement of historically correct traditional features and retention of original ridge heights as appropriate.
BH09	To protect, maintain and enhance the established character and setting of vernacular buildings which are worthy of protection or have architectural heritage value, farmyards and settlements where they make a positive contribution to the built heritage and encourage the re-use and sensitive refurbishment of vernacular buildings using appropriate design and materials and having regard to best practice conservation guidelines.
BH12	To encourage the repair and retention of traditional timber, rendered and/or tiled shop fronts and pub fronts, including those which may not be Protected Structures. There will be a general presumption against the replacement of original shopfronts with emphasis on retention and reinstatement of traditional proportions and details.
BH14	To ensure that elements of the architectural heritage of the county, such as historic gardens and historic designed landscapes, stone or brick walls, ditches and street furniture that make a positive contribution to the built heritage, are retained.

RELEVANT WEXFORD COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022-2028 OBJECTIVES

Objective Ref	Architectural Conservation Areas & Graveyards Objectives
ACA01	To protect and enhance the character of the designated Architectural Conservation Areas in Wexford, Enniscorthy, New Ross, Gorey and Bunclody, including the views and prospects to and from these areas.
ACA04	To protect existing buildings, structures, groups of structures, burial grounds, sites, landscapes and features such as trees, street furniture and paving, (including sub-surface areas) which are considered to be intrinsic elements of the special character of the Architectural Conservation Area, from demolition or removal and non-sympathetic alterations.
ACA05	To ensure that all new advertising hoardings, signage, awnings, canopies, flagpoles, banners, satellite dishes, masts, pylons, lighting, cctv cameras and carparking provision within an Architectural Conservation Area are designed, constructed and located in a manner that is complementary to the character of the Architectural Conservation Area.
ACA06	To preserve historic street patterns and encourage pedestrianisation on keystreets.
ACA07	To promote public awareness of the character and special interest of the Architectural Conservation Areas and to provide assistance and guidance in preserving these.
G01	To preserve and enhance the county's graveyards through improved management, access and community stewardship, and to promote the unique character of each of the burial grounds.

RELEVANT WEXFORD COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022-2028 OBJECTIVES

Objective Ref	Cultural Heritage Objectives
CH01	To support the sustainable development and promotion of our cultural heritage and the associated infrastructure subject to normal planning and environmental criteria and the development management standards contained in Volume 2.
CH02	To safeguard the cultural heritage of the county and facilitate the expansion and development of appropriate facilities suitably located adjacent to points of interest subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria and the development management standards contained in Volume 2.
CH03	To help to ensure that our cultural heritage and associated facilities are accessible and inclusive subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria and the development management standards contained in Volume 2.
CH04	To co-operate with the Heritage Council, Arts Council, Fáilte Ireland and other relevant bodies such as the National Parks and Wildlife Service to promote and develop the arts, cultural and heritage attractions throughout the County.
CH05	To support the delivery of the Creative Ireland programme that will encourage cultural activity and celebration of our heritage as important factors in the wellbeing of the County's communities and core to the practice of place-making.

RELEVANT WEXFORD COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022-2028 OBJECTIVES

Objective Ref	Design & Place-making in Towns & Villages Objectives
TV09	To regenerate and revitalise our towns and villages, diversify and seek new roles and uses to stimulate economic and cultural development and provide necessary physical and social infrastructure.
TV10	To prepare Urban Regeneration Framework plans for the four main towns which provide a clear vision, context, rationale and goals for urban renewal and regeneration in each town. These frameworks, which will informed by consultations with the public, private and community sectors, will address the interrelationships between environmental, physical, economic and social dimensions and will be used to inform spatial planning policy and futureregeneration programmes and projects in those towns, subject to compliance with the Habitats and all other relevant EU Directives.
TV24	To encourage and participate in heritage led regeneration, including consideration of the potential to participate in the Heritage Council's Historic Towns Initiative, and to adopt a Town first approach to the revitalisation of historic urban centres which focuses on the repair and upgrade of existing historic buildings and their adaptation to new uses with regard to their architectural character and significance.
TV35	To promote the redevelopment and renewal of areas identified having regard to the Core Strategy, that are in need of regeneration, in order to prevent – adverse effects on existing amenities in such areas, in particular as a result of the ruinous or neglected condition of any land, urban blight and decay, anti-social behaviour, or a shortage of habitable houses or of land suitable for residential use or a mixture of residential and other uses.
TV38	To prioritise projects and proposals which will result in both social and economic rejuvenation and regeneration and the provision of amenities and services where these are deficient and in areas where legacy issues arise. The Council will leverage the variety of funds available including LIHAF, Urban and Rural Regeneration and Development Funds, Climate Activation Fund and Disruptive Technologies Fund to achieve compact growth in pursuance of this objective.

RELEVANT WEXFORD COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022-2028 OBJECTIVES

Objective Ref	Economic Development Objectives
E53	To promote the re-use and regeneration of vacant buildings and the regeneration of obsolete and/or under-utilised buildings and lands that could yield economic benefits with appropriate uses, subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
ED60	Maximise the tourism potential of the town through the development of the Wexford Town 'Maritime Town' brand, the planned greenways and the vibrant arts and cultural scene in the town. Focus on the regeneration of key sites in the town including the regeneration of the Commercial Quay and Monck Street area.
ED92	To leverage funding from sources such as the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund to help develop the rural economy in the county.

RELEVANT WEXFORD COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022-2028 OBJECTIVES

Objective Ref	Tourism Development Objectives
TM01	To protect and sustain the natural, built and cultural features that formthebasisof the county's tourism industry including landscapes, historic buildings and structures, habitats, species and areas of natural heritage value and water quality.
TM02	To facilitate, where appropriate, proposals to improve access for all at existing tourism sites and facilities, and to require all new tourism related developments to ensure the development is accessible to everyone, regardless of their age, size or ability.
TM10	To maximise the potential of the main towns in the county as tourism visitor hubs, and to implement guidelines such as the Fáilte Ireland Development Guidelines for Tourism Destination Towns to inform the development and operation of the towns as tourism destination towns, and to work with all stakeholders to leverage funding streams that will assist with maximising the tourism potential and offering of the towns.
TM11	To develop Wexford Town's profile as a unique and vibrant Maritime townwhichencompasses its natural environment, its history and heritage, water-based activities, festivals, innovation and food offering subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive and normal planning and environmental criteria.
TM41	To develop the Arts, culture and heritage attractions throughout the county in conjunction with Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, the Heritage Council, the OPW, the Arts Council, National Parks and Wildlife and other key stakeholders.
TM61	To facilitate improvements to tourism infrastructure including proposals to improve car, bus and bicycle parking, proposals to provide electric car and bicycle charging infrastructure, directional signage/information boards and service/rest facilities designed in accordance with principles of universal design subject to normal planning and environmental criteria and without detracting from the physical setting, character or visual quality of the tourism asset.
TM62	To facilitate the development of co-ordinated and branded orientation, signage and wayfinding infrastructure for tourist attractions and tourist facilities subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria.

RELEVANT WEXFORD COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022-2028 OBJECTIVES

Objective Ref	Green Infrastructure Objectives
GI01	To ensure the protection, enhancement and maintenance of the natural environment and recognise the economic, social, environmental, biodiversity and physical value of green spaces through the integration of Green Infrastructure planning and development in the planning process. Planning applications for development must demonstrate compliance with the following requirements: The integration of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and nature-based solutions into the overall site concept and layout; The retention and enhancement of landscape connections such as trees, hedgerow and water features that provide habitats for species and allow movement between areas as much as possible. This is particularly important for development in rural areas and one-off housing. Such connectivity both with in and to features outside the site should be demonstrated in the application. Inthe event that it is not possible to retain landscape connections, and in order to ensure that there is no net loss of biodiversity, proposals to mitigate and compensate/provide for new connectivity shall be detailed; To demonstrate, where applicable, the downstream impacts of significant landscape modifications and proposals to mitigate and compensate for same; To design the footprint of the development to avoid impacts on areas of high biodiversity value; a. Avoid building on flood plains. Incorporate these features into the design and use them as flood prevention and water management features; b. Ensure that adjacent designated sites are not impacted by the proposed development. This is particularly important for developments adjacent to wetlands; c. Landscaping plans shall use species appropriate to the physical and environmental conditions of the site including soil conditions, availability of space and aspect. These plans should use a high diversity of native trees, incorporating a variety of sizes and age classes to improve visual and structural diversity. New hedging and hedge reinforcement in rural areas must comprise native species. Landscaping plans must also incorporate the principles of the 'Pollinator Friendly Planting Code–Professional Planting Recommendations' of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015 – 2020 and any updated version of this code; d. Avoid culverting unless absolutely necessary and unavoidable; e. Creation of open drainage ditches instead of underground pipes where appropriate as these provide additional habitats and a water source for wetland species; Ensure that invasive species are not used in terrestrial or aquatic planting schemes; and Reduction of hard, impermeable surface to a minimum and to consider the use of green roofs.

RELEVANT WEXFORD COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022-2028 OBJECTIVES

Objective Ref	Green Infrastructure Objectives
G103	To support investment in the on-going maintenance and enhancement of existing green infrastructure and support the provision of newpublic parks, green space corridors and other public open spaces in tandem with projected population growth to create green healthy settlements throughout the county. Wexford County Council shall identify the locations of new public parks and open spaces and ensure that decision-making in relation to the development of new or enhanced Green Infrastructure and new public parks and facilities is informed by an appropriate level of environmental assessment.
Objective Ref	Coastal Zone Management & Marine Spatial Planning Objectives
CZM13	To support proposals that optimise the use of maritime space, including through consideration of opportunities for co-existence and co-operation with other activities and enhancing other activities where appropriate subject to compliance with h the Habitats Directive.
CZM42	To protect heritage assets in the coastal zone and maritime area including underwater heritage in accordance with Chapter 13 Heritage and Conservation and Volume 5 Record of Protected Structures and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
CZM59	To support proposals which improve access to marine and coastal resources for tourism activities and sport and recreation, where appropriate and subject to compliance with Objective CZM46, Chapter 7 Tourism Development and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
Objective Ref	Recreation and Open Space Objectives
ROS51	To facilitate the use of natural amenity areas in the county for recreational purposes while ensuring the protection of scenic and environmentally sensitive areas including, but not limited to, Natura 2000 sites.
ROS52	To facilitate the provision of access to amenity areas such as beaches, inland waterways, forests and heritage sites in co-operation with landowners and continue to maintain and improve existing accesses, subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive, the protection of natural heritage, the character of rural areas and the amenities of host communities and normal planning and environmental criteria.

FUNDING SOURCES

Fund Name	Fund Detail	Funder
Historic Towns Initiative	Funding for capital works and non-capital works in historic towns	Heritage Council & Dept of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Irish Walled Towns Network	Funding for capital works and non-capital works in walled towns in the network	Heritage Council
Built Heritage Investment Scheme	Grant scheme for repair & conservation of Protected Structures	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Historic Structures Fund	Capital funding for larger-scale works to historic structures	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Community Monuments Fund	Capital and non-capital funding for recorded archaeological monuments	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
National Biodiversity Action Fund	Funding for biodiversity initiatives	National Parks and Wildlife Service
Croí Conaithe (Towns Fund)	Grants for refurbishment of vacant properties	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
European Regional Development Fund	2021-2027 fund supports measures for urban areas	Regional Assemblies

FUNDING SOURCES

Fund Name	Fund Detail	Funder
Destination Towns Initiative	Develop tourism initiatives	Fáilte Ireland
Repair and Lease Scheme	Scheme to upgrade private property for social housing	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Buy and Renew Scheme	Purchase and renew of housing in need of repair by LAs and AHBs	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Circular Economy and Social Economy and Enterprise	Innovation for the circular economy	Environmental Protection Agency
Creative Communities Initiative	Support for community place-making initiatives	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media
Circular Economy Innovation Grant Scheme	Measures to support the circular economy	Department of Environment, Climate and Communications
Shared Island Fund	Measures to support joint north-south initiatives	Department of the Taoiseach

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An Roinn Tithíochta,
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage

Wexford
County Council

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council

URBAN
USI SCALE
INTERVENTIONS