



WEXFORD

**Wexford Town Walls
Conservation Plan**



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Wexford Town Walls - Conservation Plan

Introduction

Terms of Reference

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 (IWTN). The plan has been prepared by Alastair Coey Architects, which was appointed in September 2007. The Plan provides the background to a Management Plan which was commissioned at the same time and is drafted to take into account the policies outlined in this document.

The Steering Group

The Conservation Plan was evolved in consultation with a Steering Group consisting of the following people:

- **Pat Collins**, Town Clerk, Wexford Borough Council
- **George Lawlor**, Wexford Town Mayor
- **Keith O'Brien**, Wexford Borough Council
- **Diarmuid Houston**, Wexford Borough Council
- **Elizabeth Whyte**, Wexford Arts Centre
- **Billy Colfer**, The Heritage Council & Wexford Historical Society
- **Eddie Taaffe**, Wexford County Council, Senior Engineer
- **Betty McEvoy**, Resident
- **Peter Hussey**, Resident
- **Celestine Rafferty**, Wexford Library Service & Wexford Historical Society
- **Alastair Coey**, Alastair Coey Architects

The Consultancy Team

The team leader was Alastair Coey. Expert opinion was provided by the following people:

- **Archaeology** - Claire Walsh
- **Ecology** - Paul Murphy
- **Historical Context** - Katey Gregan

Legal Status

Wexford Town Walls, as a single entity, is a designated National Monument and as such is afforded statutory protection under the terms of the National Monuments Acts (1930-2004).

Most importantly, the Acts require that Ministerial Consent be obtained from the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government prior to any works to upstanding sections of the Walls which are in Local Authority ownership.

Privately owned sections of the Walls are also subject to this requirement, with an exception being made for minor upstanding remains which are deemed to be structurally unrelated to any part which is in Local Authority ownership. Such sections are subject to the normal planning process.

For those sections of the Monument in Local Authority ownership, Ministerial Consent must also be obtained for repairs and interventions which may normally be classed as exempted development.

Objectives of the Conservation Plan

The purpose of the Conservation Plan is to identify the significance of the Wexford Town Walls, the threats to significance, and to propose policies for the future protection and management of the Walls.

Methodology

The following methodology was adopted in the preparation of the plan:

Each expert was briefed as to the required input in the context of the conservation plan and visited Wexford prior to preparation of their focused reports.

A photographic record was prepared.

A public meeting was held on 09 October 2007 in the Talbot Hotel, Wexford. Members of the public were invited to attend this meeting, through a newspaper advertisement and other media publicity. Elected representatives and other key people were invited by letter.

Approximately thirty people attended the meeting, including representatives from the local community. A list of attendees was retained.

A Steering Group meeting was held on 07 November 2007 at which the team leader reported on progress and issues emerging from the research were debated and discussed in detail.

Acknowledgements

The lead consultant wishes to thank all who contributed to the preparation of this Conservation Plan. The members of the Steering Group gave freely of their time.

We are grateful to the expert members of our team who provided important and pertinent input to the study on a wide range of issues. In particular, we would like to thank Keith O'Brien and Billy Colfer for their written submissions.

We would also acknowledge the contribution of members of the public who attended the public meeting or contacted us to impart their memories of, and opinions about, the Town Walls and their views as to where their future might lie.

Wexford Town Walls - Conservation Plan

Historical and Social Development of the Town Walls of Wexford

It is not known for certain when the Vikings first established a permanent base in the Town of Wexford. Early reference is made in 888 when the Norse of Port Lairge (Waterford), Loch Garman and Teach Molling were defeated by the Irish. It is possible that the town was founded sometime between the ninth and tenth centuries. The Norse gave a descriptive name, Waesfiord, a broad shallow bay, to the estuary at the mouth of the Slaney and the settlement became known by the same name. (Colfer, 2002, p13).

Little is known about Viking Wexford, however, some form of defensive wall was in existence by the time of the Norman invasion in 1169. Giraldus Cambrensis' account of the siege of Viking Wexford (though written some twenty odd years after the actual event) refers to the town being defended by a wall and ditch: *"...the people of Wexford burnt suburbs and withdrew inside the walls, while the Anglo-Normans filled the town ditches with armed men... archers watched the ramparts.... A great rush was repulsed by the citizens who hurled down heavy pieces of wood and stone"* (Scott and Martin, 1978, 33-35). The walls referred to may have been some form of earthen embankment, as recent archaeological excavations at Dublin, Waterford and Limerick have each discovered town defences consisting of an earthen embankment with a revetment stone wall and, in the latter two towns, a bern or wall footing occurred (Wallace, 1992, p35-66). An archaeological excavation in Mary Street found evidence of a substantial ditch some 20 metres within the enclosure and this was interpreted as part of the Viking defences (Excavations, 1995, No. 287). It is therefore 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.



Figure 1: OS Map 1882. Town wall from John's Gate Street to St Patrick's Square

With the arrival of the Normans in 1169 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 but as to how far the Norse wall extended to the north is not known. The most likely northern extent of the wall was in the area of the Bull Ring where the ground slopes down to the waterfront; it is along Common Quay Street that the parishes of St. Iberius and Selskar meet, and a change of street pattern also occurs within this area (Thomas, 1992, 213; Colfer, 2002, 17). Furthermore, it was recorded around 1835 that the remains of the town wall could still be seen in the area of Common Quay Street and Main Street (Hore, vol. 5, 60). The Normans also constructed a stone castle to the south of the town (demolished in 1725 to make room for a Military Barracks).

In the early thirteenth century Wexford County began to emerge as a political unit with Wexford Castle as its administrative centre. At around this time it is assumed that the Normans extended the town to the north. (Colfer, 2002, 160) Quoting a letter from 1835, Hore relates that the walls were completed in 1300 by Sir Stephen Devereux who placed his Arms over the West Gate along with an inscription taken from the 127th Psalm, reading “*except the lord keep the city, the watchman waketh in vain*”. This plaque could still be seen in 1759 (Hore, Vol.5, 60).

Wexford received its first surviving charter in 1317. Unfortunately there are no early murage grants surviving for Wexford Town but there are references to murage and toll collections in 1331, 1381 and 1537 (Hore, Vol.5, 107,122,141). Later descriptions of the wall usually refer to repair and costs. A description of the town wall comes from a parliamentary inquiry held in Wexford in 1462-63 and it stated “*Wexford is spacious within the walls, which requires great repair and costs, and for several years there has been a division between the Commons on the south side and those on the north side...concerning revenue accruing called the common-share, which is more valuable on the south side... and each part of the town keep their own share to fortify its own part*” (Berry, 1914, 140-42). The recommendation was “that the whole be expended without reference to source”. (CCP 316; SR III 141, Thomas).

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...ill market because of bad entrance to harbour and prayed for remission of chief rent ... for reparation and defence of the town”* (Thomas, 1992, 211). The town was described in 1635 as *“...much impoverished and decaved”*. (Colfer 2002, 177).

During the Rebellion of 1641 Wexford was one of the chief ports of the Confederate forces. An account from 1642 states *“and the citizens attempt to strengthen town and proceeded to entrench town wall (all about the town without the walls), 8 feet deep and 24 feet broad, and cleared the whole wall on the inside for 8 feet from all the houses and pale”*. (Hore, vol. 5. 254).

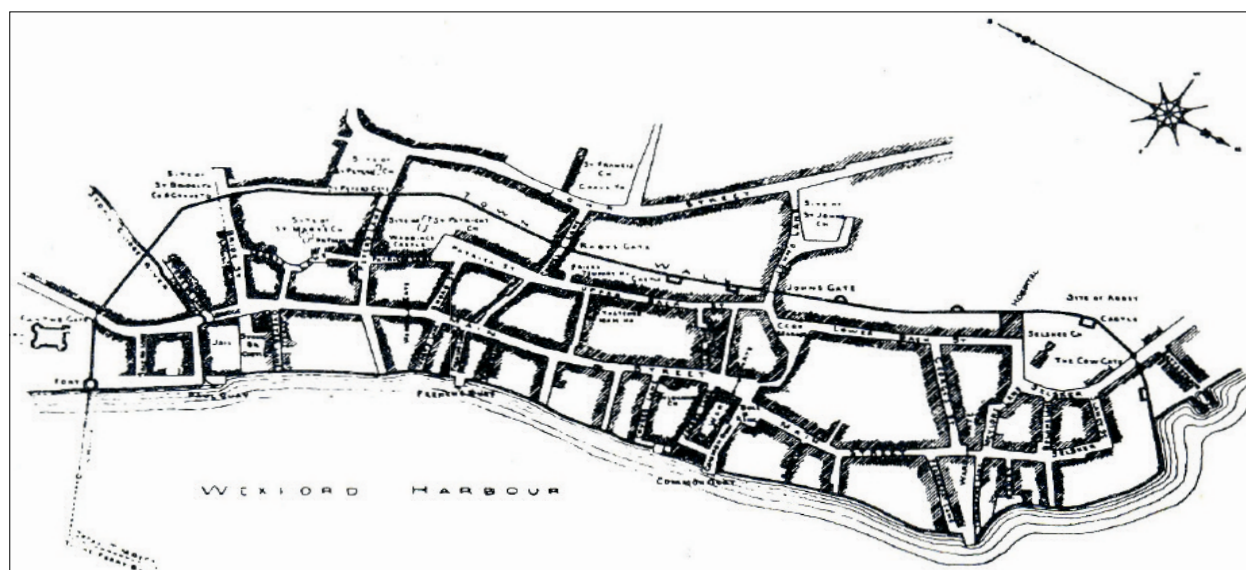


Figure 2: 1905 conjectural map showing Wexford at the time of Cromwell.

In 1649 Cromwell marched on Wexford and 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. The town wall suffered much damage during this period.

An account from 1682 mentions “a walled town, on all sides, except to the sea pool or harbour...five gates for entrance ... the castle just outside the town walls” (Hore, 1862, 53-84). There were in fact six gates West Gate, John’s Gate, Bride Gate, Peter’s Gate, Castle Gate and Friar Gate. There was an additional private gate at Selskar Abbey, the precinct of which was bisected by the wall.

In 1759 all the town gates were taken down and after the insurrection of 1798 the gates were all re-erected in a plainer manner. George Henry Bassett described the gates and their subsequent removal by the Corporation in 1835: “...West-gate, whose former name was Cow-gate; John’s gate, leading from Corn Market to John Street; St Peter’s gate, near the site of the old Pound; Bride Street gate and Castle gate, near the place now occupied by the Militia Barracks. In one of the old Corporation leases mention is made of a sixth gate, called Raby’s. All these gates were taken down in 1759, and were re-erected in a less substantial fashion after 1798, remaining till 1835, when they were removed on account of being an obstruction to traffic. They were built of wood, and were so light that children could close them.” (Bassett 1885).

From the seventeenth century onwards reference is found to building on the town walls. An unusual 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). In 1885 Bassett described the wall 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).

Bassett also describes the removal of a section of the town walls in 1852. “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).



Figure 3: OS Map 1939

Throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century the circuit of the town walls has survived remarkably intact. 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. 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.

Chapter 3

Wexford Town Walls - Conservation Plan

A Vision for the Town Walls

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.

The vision has been evolved by the Steering Group after consideration of the issues highlighted during the course of the consultation process.

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.



Wexford Town Walls - Conservation Plan

Significance of the Town Walls

The general approach to assessing the nature of the significance of Wexford's Town Walls is adapted from that set out in The Conservation Plan by James Semple Kerr. It relies on an understanding of the physical attributes, uses, relationships and associations of the place up to and including the present.

Statement of Significance

1. Wexford's Town Walls are 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.

Treats to Significance

The principal threats to the contextual significance of the Town Walls 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.

Wexford Town Walls - Conservation Plan

Gazetteer - Layout of the Walls

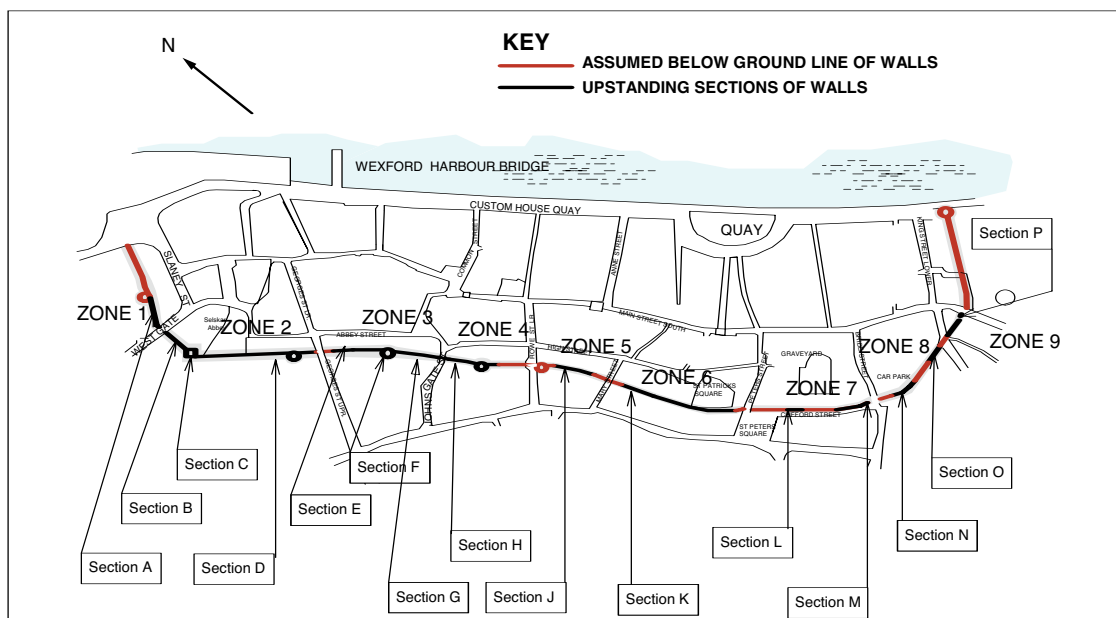


Figure 4: Schematic Map

The town wall circuit adopts a shallow 'C' shape enclosing an area of approximately 25 hectares with a perimeter of 1,250 metres. This forms the landward circuit while the seafront (which has now moved eastwards) originally formed the eastern boundary. Within the circuit, Selskar Street/Main Street and Temperance Row/Abbey Street/Mallin Street/High Street/Patrick's Square/Patrick's Lane/Mary's Lane run approximately parallel to the line of the walls from north to south. From north to south, West Gate, George's Street, John's Gate Street, Row Street, Mary Street, Peter Street, Bride Street, King Street and Barrack Street intersect the line of the wall at right-angles.

For clarity and ease of reference the line of the original walls has been sub-divided into nine discrete zones as follows:

- Zone One - Redmond Square to West Gate
- Zone Two - West Gate to George's Street
- Zone Three - George's Street to John's Gate Street
- Zone Four - John's Gate Street to Rowe Street
- Zone Five - Rowe Street to Mary Street
- Zone Six - Mary Street to Peter Street
- Zone Seven - Peter Street/St Peter's Square to Bride Street
- Zone Eight - Bride Street to King Street
- Zone Nine - King Street to Barrack Street

Within each zone, the upstanding remains of the town walls have been identified as Sections A-P on the location plan (see figure 4). The internal and external faces of each section are sub-divided into numbered sub-sections prefixed either 'I' or 'E' to indicate either 'internal' or 'external' face. This numbering system is applied consistently throughout the Management Plan and should be used in referencing all future work in connection with the Monument.



View south from Opera House roof.



View east at junction of Georges Street Upper and George Street Lower.

For the purposes of this Gazetteer, the circuit commences at Redmond Square in the north and is conducted in an counter-clockwise direction to Barrack Street in the south.

The Gazetteer describes the Monument as it existed in October 2007.

ZONE ONE

Zone One begins at Redmond Square on the site of a modern commercial retail development and runs south-west to the street named West Gate and the possible site of Cow Gate. All above-ground evidence of the wall has disappeared below the supermarket site until it reaches upstanding Section A which forms the boundary between the rear garden of Westgate House guest house and the supermarket storage shed. From here, the line of the wall continues westwards through West Gate Tavern which fronts onto West Gate. It is possible that masonry walls and cobbled surfaces evident in the basement of West Gate Tavern are associated with the town wall.



View west along Mary Street.

Upstanding Section A

Internal face - Section A-I01 can be seen from the rear garden of Westgate House.

External face - Sections A-E01 and 02 can be seen from within the supermarket store, the corrugated roof of which bears onto the wall head. A horizontal line, high on the external face, may mark the junction between parapet and wall walk.



West Gate Tavern.



Internal face of wall from Westgate House.



External face of wall in supermarket store.

ZONE TWO

Zone Two extends in a dog-leg, south-east from the possible site of Cow Gate on today's Westgate to Selskar Gate (confusingly also known as West Gate), then south, to the junction of George Street Upper and Lower. The wall is upstanding for the entire length of this zone. A passageway through the bottom stage of the tower (Section C) links the inner and outer sides of the wall at this point. A tarmac pedestrian path extends from the tower along the base of the outer face to George's Street. The line of the wall then continues across George's Street, distinguished from the macadamised surface by a strip of concrete block paving.

Upstanding Section B

Section B extends from a tall, slender, square crenellated turret at Westgate to Selskar Gate/West Gate (Section C) in the grounds of West Gate Heritage Centre.

Internal face - Section B-I01, the high internal south face of the wall is visible from the car park. The construction is of random angular rubble limestone. A variation in the bonding and unit size of the upper

portion, suggests that rebuilding has been carried out at some time in the past, possibly with the resultant loss of a wall walk and parapet. A raised gravelled platform, with a row of semi-mature trees, has been formed at the base of the wall, separating it from the Heritage Centre car park.

External face - An ashlar sandstone Victorian house, at 5 Westgate, is built against the external north face. A small amount of wall, Section B-E01, is visible from the front garden. Section B-E02 is mainly concealed by the gable of the house. The remainder, Section B-E03, faces into the rear garden and is well preserved.



Internal face of wall from carpark.



House on Westgate built against external face of wall.

Section C, Tower

Selskar Gate/West Gate adopts the form of a traditional Irish tower house, albeit with heavily restored upper reaches. The four-stage tower, sits within the town wall, is square on plan, and has a full-height square staircase turret projecting from its north-west corner. A central barrel-vaulted archway leads from the car park to the grassed amenity area at Abbey Court.



Selskar Gate from north-east.



View north to Selskar Gate on external face of wall.

Upstanding Section D

Section D extends in a southerly direction from Section C (Selskar Gate/West Gate) to the junction between George's Street Upper and George's Street Lower.

External face - The external, west, face overlooks the grassed amenity area at Abbey Court.

The uncoursed rubble stonework of Section D-E01 appears to have been raised at some in the past and is capped by a splayed rubble stone coping, behind which is set another rubble stone wall rising to two

courses of vertical slate-hanging marking the rear wall of the Heritage Centre which faces into the car park on the north side. A built-up segmental-headed archway is evident at the west end. A number of small rectangular apertures are also evident in the wall. A tarmac path, rising to the south, separates the foot of the wall from the grassed amenity area which banks up from the path, the resulting hollow possibly suggesting the existence of a fosse.

Section D-E02, which cranks eastwards from Section D-E01, is similar to Section D-E01 and also has a splayed coping. The path, at its base, continues to rise as it proceeds southwards.

Section D-E03 steps out from the line of Section D-E02, then splays inwards where it steps in again to meet Section D-E04. The wall head projects slightly but remains at the same height as previous sections, although portions of masonry project upwards, possibly suggesting a parapet wall. The path moves out away from the wall to pass around a previously excavated area bounded by a basic timber post-and-rail fence. The north-west corner is undercut at the lower level.

Section D-E04, which is set in from Sections D-E03 and E05 which flank it, does not appear to be part of the original town wall but forms the west elevation of a pitched roof two-storey rubble stone building which is accessed from Abbey Street Lower. Three out of four brick-arched segmental-headed openings have been built-up with matching stonework. At its base, the exposed archaeological excavation displays the original line of the wall.



External face of wall at Section D-E08.



Section D-E03.



Apertures in external face of wall at Section D-E08.



Extra-mural tower between Sections D-E06 and E08.



View south to George Street on external face of wall.

Section D-E05 continues south-wards at a lower height than previous sections. The wall has a splayed capping and the path returns to abut the base of the wall.

Section D-E06 continues at a higher level with a slightly projecting splayed capping and the path at its foot to a circular crenellated tower, Section D-E07, which projects from the external face and rises to approximately double the height of the wall. The path curves around the base of the tower. The upper reaches of the tower appear to have been conjecturally reconstructed. A number of slit openings are apparent in the walls.

Section D-E08 extends from the tower to abut the gable of 6 George's Street Lower. The wall head is somewhat uneven. The path continues at its base. A number of small square openings are evident in the wall. It is possible that the town wall has been rendered over and continues as the gable of 6 George's Street Lower. The tarmac path which follows the wall to this point terminates at a set of modern mild-steel gates opening onto the concrete block paved pavement of George's Street Upper. Here a rectangular bronze plaque is mounted on the gable of 6 George's Street Lower, bearing the inscription:

Built by Aymer de Valence, this wall has the round crusader flanking turrets of the 13th century. Selskar Priory is visible, the wall rounding it and on the corner stands Sir Stephen Devereux West Gate tower. The wall, unbacked by clay rampart, fell into disrepair in 1463. It was restored during the Confederate Wars of 1641.

Internal face - Section D-I01 is concealed by the lean-to building occupied by the Heritage Centre. A path, to the east of this building, tapers at its south end and a flight of steps rises to a gated opening into the graveyard of St. Selskar Abbey. A timber wall walk has, in the relatively recent past, been constructed against Section D-I02, as an interpretive aid and can be accessed from both its north and south ends. Section D-I03 forms the west wall of an L-shaped building, accessed from Temperance Row. The north side of Section D-I04 faces into a derelict and overgrown yard. The wall, which at some time in the past formed the rear of a single-storey pitched roof building, now demolished, has been plastered. Although heavily overgrown, it retains some evidence of a wall walk and parapet. A derelict two-storey rendered pitched roof building, with its rear gable obscuring the wall, occupies the south side of Section D-I04. Section D-I05 faces into the rear gardens of numbers 43, 45, 47, 48 and 49 Abbey Street Lower.



Timber wall walk.



Internal face of wall at Section D-E04.

ZONE THREE

Zone Three extends from the junction between George's Street Upper and Lower southwards to John's Gate Street. The north section of the wall (Section E), although arguably of the most interest, is largely hidden from view. The tower (Section F) and much of Section G, to its south, are clearly visible from an open green space which fronts onto Abbey Street. The final, southernmost, part of Section G is, at present, not visible behind the Wexford Arts Centre but potential exists here for opening up.

Upstanding Section E

Upstanding Section E is approximately 5 metres high and substantially intact although mainly hidden from view as it forms the boundary between private properties on the east and west sides of the wall. The north end forms the boundary between the rear gardens of a terrace of five mid-nineteenth-century residential properties, 30 to 38 Abbey Street Upper, on the east side of the wall, and the east gable and part of the rear garden to a single terraced property, 6 to 8 George's Street Upper, on the west side. The south end of Section E extends to meet a circular tower (Section F). It forms the boundary between an alleyway, behind the rear gardens of a terrace of five late-nineteenth-century residential properties, 20 to 28 Abbey Street



Internal face of wall at rear of gardens to houses facing onto Abbey Street Lower and George Street Lower.



External face of wall in rear garden to 6-8 George Street Lower.



Internal face of wall at Section E.

Upper (which is contiguous with but set back from the building line of 30 to 38 Abbey Street Upper) and the remainder of the garden to 6 to 8 George's Street Upper, on the west side.

Section F, Tower

The semi-circular extra-mural tower at Section F has lost its parapet and upper wall and, strangely, has lighter buff-coloured rubble stonework to its lower half and a darker grey stone to its upper half. The upper half has a number of loops and a small square-headed doorway on the south-east side opening onto the wall walkway. The foot of the tower on the west side is paved with concrete slabs and, on the east side, a recently constructed platform with an uncoursed rubble stone parapet rises from a grass area which extends to Abbey Street.



Extra mural tower at Section F from inside.



Tower from south.

Upstanding Section G

Section G extends from the tower southwards to John's Gate Street. The first short length appears to be original masonry with evidence of a wall walk and parapet. The second length is a thin new wall of uncoursed rubble stone construction built in the 1970s and, as such, is of no historic interest. An elliptical-headed archway in this length, approached by a path and steps from Abbey Street, leads to a residential development (Mount George) on the west side of the wall built at the same time as the wall. The southern-most length can be accessed at its south end through a carriage arch at 3 John's Gate Street, leading to a courtyard behind the Wexford Arts Centre, from which the full height of the upstanding remains can be seen.



Internal face of new section of walling.



Internal face of wall behind Arts Centre.

ZONE FOUR

Zone Four extends from John's Gate Street to the north, to Rowe Street Upper in the south. The northern portion (Section H) forms the boundary between the grounds of the Catholic Church of the Immaculate Conception, to the west side and a public car park, to the east side. A planning application for construction of a new Wexford County Library building on the public car park site was advertised on the site. A rectangular tower at mid-point of this section straddles the east and west sides of the wall. The southern line of the wall continues below-ground through the church car park with the church to its east, while another masonry wall of similar height turns through a right-angle eastwards to form the southern boundary to the public car park.



External face of wall at Catholic Church.



Square tower.



View south along external face of wall to south of tower.

Upstanding Section H

The northern length of Section H, from John's Gate Street to the tower, is constructed from uncoursed rubble stone. The junction with the tower is awkwardly formed and the masonry of the tower itself is uneven. The crenellated parapet of the tower projects slightly from the main wall. The tower has a number of loops. The southern length of Section H has been cement-rendered on its external, west, face and steps up slightly at its southern end.

ZONE FIVE

Zone Five extends from Rowe Street Upper to the north, to Mary Street to the south. Its northern end may be incorporated in the west gable of 5 Rowe Street Upper and its southern end in the gable of a house to the east of Browne's builders yard. Between these two properties the wall is upstanding for its entire length (Section J). The north leg of the west, external, face (Section J-E01) can be seen from an overgrown alleyway to the side of Channing House and the south leg (Section J-E02) is splendidly preserved beneath the shed roofs of Browne's builders yard. The east, internal, face which forms the rear boundary to gardens behind 4-34 High Street is not readily accessible at ground level but, the view from the scaffolding of the new

Wexford Opera House suggests that this section, while heavily overgrown, retains its ramparts and possibly many other interesting features worthy of further exploration.



Gates at north end onto Rowe Street.



Exposed external face of wall in builder's yard.



Internal face of wall from opera house roof.

ZONE SIX

Zone Six commences on the south side of Mary Street where the town wall forms the party wall between 6 and 7 Mary Street. From here it extends southwards (Section K) forming the rear boundary between terraced houses fronting onto High Street (numbers 48-58) and Patrick Square (numbers 3-6) to the east, internal, side and School Street (numbers 3-41) on the west, external side. The southernmost leg has the overgrown and neglected grounds of St Patrick's Church on the east side and a concrete surfaced car park on the west side. The wall is then absorbed between 16 and 17 Peter Street. Zone Six contains some of the most intact stretches of wall walk, best seen from the courtyard behind 48-56 High Street (shown on the 1883 Ordnance Survey as Clarence Buildings with a formal garden laid out between the buildings and the town wall and a formal set of steps leading up to the wall walk).



Internal face of wall from opera house roof.



External face of wall at carpark.



Internal face of wall with wall walk from garden at Clarence Buildings

ZONE SEVEN

Zone Seven descends downwards from the junction of Peter Street and St Peter's Square to Bride Street. With the exception of one fragmentary section (Section L) which forms an unusual street boundary between the garden to the north of 1 Clifford Street and a hall facing onto St Peter's Square, all upstanding evidence of the town wall is missing. It is possible that it has been incorporated into the front wall of a terrace at 1-13 Clifford Street (Section M) or be reflected in some way in the rubble stone retaining wall which supports the narrow access road in front of these houses. At the south end, at Bride Street, a short length of rubble stone wall splays eastwards to meet the gable of number 30 and this may also be related in some way to the town wall.



View south along Clifford Street.



Fragmented section of internal face of wall at 1 Clifford Street.

ZONE EIGHT

The line of the wall in Zone Eight is dog-legged commencing at Bride Street and descending steeply south-east before turning east to King Street. A, heavily restored upstanding section (Section N) forms the south-west boundary to Bride Street public car park. Here evidence of wall walk, parapet and loops must be treated with caution as there is little evidence of original masonry however, more original masonry can be seen on the external face from the, lower, King Street 'Ropewalk' car park. The unmarked line of the wall continues eastwards across the lower car park and may possibly be absorbed into the south wall of a former corn store (Section O) before terminating at King Street.



Internal face of wall at Bride Street car park.



External face of wall at King Street car park.



Wall absorbed into gable of former corn store fronting King Street.

ZONE NINE

The short line of the wall forming Zone Nine extends from King Street to the west to Barrack Street in the east. It cuts off a small triangle of terraced housing at 3-13 King Street, the rear elevations of which face onto the north face of the wall (Section P). It is not clear if the fragmentary rubble stone remains the south face of which is visible from a private yard accessed from 2 and 3 Barrack Street are in fact the original town wall. Here all surviving evidence of the town walls ceases.



Wall fragments between King Street and Barrack Street.

Wexford Town Walls - Conservation Plan

Conservation Policies

Explanation

The purpose of the conservation policies is to provide a guide for the future development and management of Wexford's Town Walls, both above and below ground, taking into account practical requirements for use as well as the retention of significance.

The policies are framed to:

- be flexible enough to facilitate the continued use of the Monument, with particular regard to public access.
- retain or complement the character and quality of the existing structures when planning repairs, adaptations or development.
- identify existing or future patterns of development which might adversely affect the Monument and which might be in need of modification.
- inform the future development outside the existing boundaries (both material and non-material) of the City Walls which could affect its continued significance.
- emphasise the need to include conservation advice within the decision-making process of future developments.

The recommended policies have been colour highlighted. They are preceded by the information on which the policies are based and, where thought appropriate, are followed by examples of treatment or options following from the policies. Policies should be read in conjunction with the accompanying text.

The first section covers policies with a general application. The sequence of following sections is not in a particular order of importance.

The following definitions are taken from the Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance (a copy of 'the Burra Charter' is included in the Management Plan):

Fabric means all physical material of the place.

Conservation means all the processes of looking after a place so as to retain its cultural significance. It includes maintenance and may, according to its circumstance, include preservation, restoration, reconstruction and adaptation and will be commonly a combination of more than one of these.

Maintenance means the continuous protective care of the fabric, contents and setting of a place, and is to be distinguished from repair. Repair involves restoration or reconstruction and it should be treated accordingly.

Restoration means returning the existing fabric of a site to a known earlier state by removing accretions or by reassembling existing components without the addition of new material.

Reconstruction means returning a place as nearly as possible to a known earlier state and is distinguished by the introduction of materials (new or old) into the fabric. This is not to be confused with either re-creation or conjectural reconstruction, which are outside the scope of the Charter.

Adaptation means modifying a place to suit proposed compatible uses.

Compatible use means a use which involves no change to the culturally significant fabric, changes which are substantially reversible, or changes which require a minimal impact.

The following definitions relate to the proposed management and implementation of the conservation plan.

Steering Group: The Steering Group consists of a representative group of stakeholders in the Town Walls of Wexford consulted during the drafting of the conservation plan.

Focus Group: On completion of the conservation plan a focus group comprising members of the Steering Group should meet to establish the appropriate Management Group and structure to implement the policies of the plan.

Management Group: The Management Group will be convened under the aegis of Wexford Borough Council and will implement the policies and recommendations of the conservation plan. The Group shall comprise members of Wexford Borough Council. The Department of Heritage and Local Government, the Office of Public Works and the local historical society.

Basis of Approach

The current legislative position underpins every policy contained in this Conservation Plan. In addition, the Burra Charter is a useful general guide to the conservation of places such as Wexford's Town Walls. It provides a philosophical framework that can be flexible and recognises the need for the continued development that is associated with continuing occupation of a site. Application of policies 01 to 04 will help achieve consistency and continuity of approach.

Policy

- 01 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.
- 02 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.
- 03 The policies recommended and options discussed throughout this document will be a guide to planning of future work on the Monument.
- 04 A copy of this Conservation Plan should be appended to the Wexford Town and Environs Development Plan 2008 and should form part of any future development plan.

Relationship Between Assessed Level of Significance and Policy

In general, the greater the level of significance of a part of the Monument, the more care is needed in planning its future treatment. Specific significance grading of each section is beyond the scope of this Conservation Plan. Significance may change with time as alterations are made, original fabric is lost, and new information is unearthed. However, it is important that the significance of the entire circuit of the walls as a single entity should also be appreciated. The intention should always be to retain and, where appropriate, reinforce significance - including character, quality and ability to reveal past history.

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 (which survives in the garden of the former Clarence House and St Patrick's Graveyard), and the Westgate tower are significant features within the townscape.

Policy

- 05 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.
- 06 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.

Management

Without pro-active monitoring, the Conservation Plan will be ineffective. A properly functioning Management Group will therefore be essential to the co-ordinated management of the Monument and to encouraging wider participation of stakeholders and owners in future developments. Implementation of the policies contained in the Conservation Plan can only be successfully achieved if progress is monitored on an ongoing basis by such a group of individuals familiar with the policies and committed to their implementation. Where relevant, the Group should also be responsible for setting out timescales for delivery of policies. The Group should be convened under the aegis of Wexford Borough Council. A formal structure and terms of reference for the Management Group would be determined by a focus group representing the key stakeholders.

In addition to Wexford Borough Council, the Management Group should include in its membership representatives of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, The Office of Public Works and the local historical society. The Management Group may appoint representatives of other groups and organisations as might seem appropriate. Needless to say, it is important that the Management Group be afforded sufficient authority, otherwise, its comments and reports will not be acted upon. As part of its remit, the Group should ensure periodic consultation with the wider group of stakeholders.

The impact of proposals which fall outside the development control framework, for example alterations to traffic routes, hard surfacing, open spaces and buildings within the immediate vicinity of the Monument should be subjected to scrutiny by the Management Group.

Policy

- 07 A Management Group shall be established and shall meet periodically to review and update the Conservation Plan and the Management Plan.

There is at present no written policy for holistic management and upkeep of the Monument. A management plan was commissioned concurrently with the Conservation Plan. Its purpose is to set out procedures which will ensure that policies contained in the Conservation Plan are implemented in an appropriate and consistent manner.

Policy

- 08 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.

Continuity of Conservation Advice

Irreparable damage can be caused to historic monuments by inexperienced or inadequate professional advice. Implementation of the recommendations contained within this Conservation Plan can only be successfully achieved if progress is monitored on an ongoing basis by a range of individuals familiar with the policies and committed to their implementation.

Policy

09 Appropriately qualified and experienced conservation advisers should be engaged in the consideration and execution of any proposals.

Review of Policies

The policies contained in this Conservation Plan will need adjustment to meet unforeseen circumstance and respond to developing needs.

Policy

10 This Plan, and the policies in it, should be reviewed subject to the time frame laid down in the Wexford Town and Environs 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.

Maintenance, Repair, Remedial Works and Associated Health and Safety Issues

Systematic, regular maintenance and prompt minor remedial works will ensure that the Monument will continue to stand for the foreseeable future. The Management Plan sets out clear guidance for maintenance and repair procedures.

Policy

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.

Archaeology

A detailed archaeological appraisal is included within the associated Management Plan.

Policy

12 Any ground work taking place within the immediate vicinity of the Monument must comply with all statutory requirements.

13 All extant archaeological records shall be collated and archived in a suitably located dedicated Monument archive.

Planning

The planning authority will undoubtedly fulfil a key role in ensuring the successful implementation of this Conservation Plan.

The following documents provide the relevant statutory framework within which all planning decisions which might have a bearing on the Monument, are made:

- Wexford Town & Environs Development Plan 2002
- Wexford Town & Environs Development Plan 2008
- National Monuments Acts 1930-2004
- The Planning and Development Acts and Regulations 2000-2006

Policy

14 The contents of this Conservation Plan should be taken into account in the preparation of a new Architectural Conservation Area guidance document.

The impact of development on the Monument is not restricted to the streets and spaces in its immediate vicinity. The fact that there are, in some locations, views from the walls to the surrounding streetscape and,

in others, views towards the Monument from locations such as the market square and St Patrick's Graveyard, means that these also need to be taken into account. Important views, aspects and vistas will need to be identified and then cherished and preserved.

Policy

15 Views to and from the town walls should be enhanced to reinforce the role of the town walls in the Wexford Town and Environs Development Plan 2002 and any future plans.

In certain areas buildings have been constructed on or adjacent to the town walls. Where these buildings have an intrinsic quality and are important in their own right they should be retained.

Policy

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.

At first acquaintance with Wexford the presence of substantial upstanding remains of the Town Walls is not obvious. This is because much of the remaining walls are concealed, either having been incorporated into later structures, such as at a residence on George Street and commercial premises on Mary Street, or because they are mainly visible from private property. While the academic interest of the walls is not diminished as a result, the intrinsic purpose and character cannot be readily appreciated by a more general audience. Preliminary investigation suggests that considerable reaches of the walls could be made more accessible by means of the following:

- providing improved access through areas already in public ownership
- where possible, and on agreement with owners, providing public rights of way through private property
- through acquisition and demolition of buildings built against or adjoining the walls.

Policy

17 A walking route which would provide as much access as is feasible shall be devised for inclusion in the Wexford Town and Environs Development Plan 2002 and any future plans for the area. The walking route should initially focus on areas of the walls within the public realm.

All of the original town gates have been removed and little documentary or physical evidence remains as to their appearance. The Westgate tower which was restored in the 1980s forms part of the curtilage of Selskar Abbey and was not one of the original town gates. The role of the town gates is however considered to be of such importance that some means of indicating their existence should be devised. This could either be through the use of signage, interpretation panels, or physical marking of the approximate locations.

Policy

18 Means shall be devised to indicate the original location of the town wall gates.

All future planning decisions should be taken in the context of affording maximum protection to all upstanding remains and interpretation of the below-ground line of the walls.

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.



Policy

- 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.
- 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.
- 21 Where the Management Group has agreed that conjectural restoration is necessary in order to improve clarity, the work should be carried out in such a way as to clearly indicate the difference between original fabric and new insertions.
- 22 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.
- 23 No further breaches in or taking down of town walls will be permitted under any circumstances.
- 24 An appropriately surfaced and lit pedestrian wall walk shall be devised and implemented as part of a rolling programme for restoration of the walls.

Access

Almost by definition, appreciation of the Monument is a three-dimensional experience - from without, within, and above. Each experience is entirely different and affords radically distinctive perspectives which should be available, in so far as is practicable, to all.

Policy

- 25 An inclusive approach to physical or intellectual access to the Monument shall be adopted.
- 26 A signage strategy providing clear directional guidance to the Monument from designated point in the town shall be implemented.
- 27 A warden system should be introduced for supervision of the Monument in daytime.

Interpretation

Interpretation is central to how the visitor experiences an attraction. Good interpretation will leave the visitor with a feeling of attachment, stimulation and inspiration. Therefore the Monument must be represented in a way that the visitor can relate to and enjoy for the attraction to be a success. Interpretation should be designed to be readily understood while being historically balanced and without bias. Physical interpretation is by no means the only method of interpreting the walls. The use of good quality printed material, audio devices and web based resources should also be developed. These have the added advantage of providing a facility to communicate effectively with non-English speaking and visually impaired visitors. Specially prepared material designed to appeal to children should also be available.

Policy

- 28 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.
- 29 A range of interpretation media should be designed to be relevant to a wide range of age and ability.
- 30 All written and audio interpretation should, where feasible, be in multiple language format.

Interpretation panels are subject to weathering, vandalism and inadvertent mechanical damage. Therefore they need to be of robust construction while being visually appealing, readily cleaned, easily read and appropriate to their setting. It should also be possible to replace damaged or out-dated panels with the

minimum of inconvenience. Generally, fixing of panels directly to the historic fabric of the Monument should be avoided. All fixings should be of corrosion-resistant materials.

None of the foregoing should overrule the basic requirement for high standards of design to be achieved in the design of interpretation materials and the need for design proposals to be subject to rigorous external assessment.

Policy

31 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.

Events

Events organised to take place around the Monument should be regarded as a positive and essential aspect in its development. Well-organised events will assist in enlivening the environment of the walls. An imaginative diary of new events, as diverse as fireworks displays and food festivals, could be developed and co-ordinated by the Borough Council.

The Management Plan will contain guidance, procedures and controls to allow events to be considered in a holistic manner. It will address issues such as impact on residents and businesses not directly involved, crowd control, traffic management, marshalling, capacity calculation, clean-up methodology, health and safety issues, minimising physical damage to the Monument and disaster planning.

It will also be necessary to provide adequate infrastructural services such as mains water and electrical supplies to facilitate the development of events.

Policy

32 The Monument should be positively promoted as the focus for a range of events organised by the Town Council.

33 Events should only be permitted when a fully developed Event Management Plan has been approved by the Management Group or its nominated representative.

Interventions and Enhancements

Incremental changes, often of an apparently minor nature and well-intentioned, inevitably accumulate and ultimately effectively result in the loss of original significance.

Policy

34 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.

35 All interventions should be designed to be fully reversible in accordance with best conservation practice.

36 All interventions should be designed to a high standard utilising good quality and durable materials.

37 A palette of natural paving materials should be selected for use, where appropriate, on and around the Monument.

38 A programme for installation of high quality street furniture should be prepared for use around the Monument.

Artificial lighting should be used to enhance the Monument and to improve security at night. As a general rule, new light fittings should be installed at a distance from the Monument either mounted on buildings or in appropriately-designed ground locations.

Policy

39 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.

Ecology

The biological interests associated with the Monument are currently limited. The masonry walls do however offer the potential to support a diverse but typical wall plant community which is of benefit for wildlife and attractive to visitors.

In a number of locations rampant weed growth is causing physical damage to the masonry walls.

A detailed ecological appraisal is included within the associated Management Plan.

Policy

40 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.

Work to the Walls

Historic fabric once lost cannot be replaced. Sadly, ill-informed restoration in the past has led to the loss of some significance in the Monument. It is important that, in its future management, a scrupulous approach is taken to all conservation work. This should include measures such as researching the composition of original mortar mixes. Likewise, sources for replacement stone should be carefully researched. Written justification for the approach to be adopted should be prepared for all future work to the Monument.

Recording of the relevant section of the Monument, prior to any work being carried out, should be conducted in line with accepted best practice and in accordance with the procedures for the recording of monuments set out by the DoEHLG and the Office of Public Works. Original records should be kept in a safe place.

Policy

41 Relevant sections of the Monument must be recorded before alteration or major intervention.

42 All work likely to affect the appearance of the Monument should be submitted to the Management Group for consideration and approval.

43 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.

44 Only appropriately qualified professionals and tradespersons should be permitted to work on the Monument.

45 All work to the Monument shall be carried out in accordance with best conservation practice.

46 All work to the Monument should be recorded in a suitable and consistent format and records should be deposited for safe keeping in an appropriate archive.

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