

Sense of Place

Medieval Museum | 4-5 June 2025



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



NBHS

An tSeirbhís Oidhreachta
Toghtha Náisiúna
National Built
Heritage Service



Comhairle Cathrach
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Waterford City
& County Council



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‘Sense of Place’ Symposium

National Built Heritage Service with Waterford
City and County Council
At the Medieval Museum, Waterford
4th - 5th June 2025

‘Sense of Place’ is a town symposium to support heritage-led regeneration presented by the National Built Heritage Service (NBHS) in association with Waterford City and County Council (WCCC). The venue of the Medieval Museum Waterford provides an opportunity for an immersion in the topic of the historic urban landscape, its understanding, conservation and management as the basis for revitalisation and renewal. Participants are invited to presentations of experts and practitioners working in this way and to experience first-hand the **Urban Landscape Character Assessment** approach, a new methodology devised with the School of Architecture, Planning and Environmental policy UCD.

Day One of the event provides an opportunity to engage with the Waterford City and County Council Architects and Architectural Conservation Officer, to visit completed and live urban regeneration projects in the city and to experience how Waterford City and County Council have pursued and built out a vision for the historic city fabric and character over time.

Day Two focuses on the revitalisation of historic urban centres of all scales, through case studies that include the assessment of landscape character and qualities of a historic urban place as the basis for the re-making and re-imagining, retrofitting and revitalising of urban fabric to benefit present and future communities.



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4th June 2025

3.30 Walking Tour of Waterford City

A walking tour invitation with Waterford City and County Council Architects and Architectural Conservation Officer to experience the historic urban landscape layered over time, to visit a number of strategic sites where WCCC Architects' vision of historic places in the city have been built-out incrementally for the benefit of all. WCCC Architects and Architectural Conservation Officer will describe how they have collaborated and worked with city stakeholders and developed practice and expertise to take a strategic approach to complex sites, in order to unlock the potential of the historic city core.

Please let us know if you will be able to join us by booking a ticket on:

<https://buytickets.at/departementofhousinglocalgovernmentandheritage/1681070>

This will help us plan the event.

5th June 2025

9.30 Registration

10.00 Welcome

- Sean McKeown, Chief Executive, Waterford City & County Council
- Daniel Sinnott, Principal Officer, NBHS

10.15 Key Note

The Irish Town – an approach to survival: Fifty year's on.

- Grainne Shaffrey, Shaffrey Architects



5th June 2025

11.00 Session 1

Working with the historic urban landscape

Chair – Mairead Hunt, National Co-ordinator, National Town Centre First Office

11.00 Heritage as a Tool for Urban Regeneration

- **Morris Conway, Senior City Architect Waterford City and County Council**
- **Rose Ryall, Architectural Conservation Officer, Waterford City and County Council**

11.30 Dun Laoghaire waterfront re-imagining, high quality intervention, conservation repair and reuse of historical landmarks and sites prompting urban renewal and incremental infill and bringing benefit to all.

- **Peter Carroll, A2 Architects**

11.50 Model Housing – ‘Urban Horticulture’. An Incremental Approach to Housing

- **Marcus Donaghy & Will Dimond, Donaghy and Dimond Architects**

12.10 ‘Building Biographies’

- **Sarah McCutcheon, Local Authority Archaeologist, Limerick City and County Council**

12.30 Episodes, elements and experience – re-defining Bishop Lucey Park

- **Alastair McKnight, Hall McKnight Architects**

*Light Lunch served in Mayor’s Exhibition
RIAI film ‘Old Town New Place’ will be on display during the lunch break*

14.00 Session 2

Urban landscape character assessment

Chair – Dr. Alan Mee, Assistant Professor in Urban Design, UCD School of Architecture Planning and Environmental Policy, UCD

Urban landscape character assessment is the key step to understanding and appreciating the character, form, and cultural significance of the built fabric of urban centres at all scales.

In particular, the identification of areas of special interest through townscape characterisation may prompt wider and more effective use of the Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) designation. The ACA offers a practical means of protecting historic fabric and character while providing for appropriate new development, and encourages sensitive, area-based approaches to urban renewal, repair and resilience, preserving amenity and supporting social and environmental aspects such as community well-being and the circular economy.

Irish towns have a wide range of historical origins: ecclesiastical, Norman, plantation, C18th Landlord estates, military establishment, etc. (see *Approximate Formality*, Valerie Mulvin (Dublin, 2020)). Each type creates a settlement of different scale and plan form requiring different responses to context.

This session will provide participants with an opportunity to consider and discuss a new methodology for Urban Landscape Character Assessment under development by UCD's School of Architecture, Planning, and Environmental Policy.



Programme timeline

14.00 Overview of RIAI publications and their work around the theme of 'Sense of Place'

- **Maire Henry, Director dhb Architects, Vice President Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland**

14.10 Listowel's Historic Urban Landscape: A method for defining its 'Sense of Place' and/or significance

- **Dr. Finola O'Kane, School of Architecture, Planning and Environmental policy UCD**

Discussion

15.00 Urban Landscape Character Assessment workshop led by Alan Mee with Finola O'Kane UCD, National Built Heritage Service and National Monument Service

'Sense of Place' Workshop designed to familiarise participants with the concepts and steps to undertake to understand a historic place and to establish through this process a statement of cultural significance of the place as the core outcome. Participants introduced to the landscape character assessment approach through the course of the afternoon session are invited to work with a number of town typologies selected from already published 'towns' in the Irish Historic Towns Atlas Series. Questions posed on Context and 'Sense of Place' extracted from the high quality criteria assessment tool - 'Towards a shared culture of architecture – investing in a high quality living environment for everyone', the EU architectural Policy, published 2021, will form part of the discussion.

Recorded outcomes from the workshop to inform the final version of the Urban Landscape Character Assessment methodology.

16.30 End



The Irish Town – an approach to survival: Fifty year's on.

A personal reflection on The Irish Town looking at its origins; messages; who was it written for; its language and style; what happened next...., and what might it say to us today.

Grainne Shaffrey, Shaffrey Architects

Heritage as a Tool for Urban Regeneration

Waterford's approach to urban regeneration is a continuous process. Understanding and respecting our history and built heritage is our starting point in mapping our future. We must first consider the current and existing space or place; what type of space or place we want and then create the right conditions to achieve that space or place. The successful street supports the adjoining buildings, and in turn the buildings and their uses animate the street. Good urban design considers the macro to the micro. How streets and spaces are connected is the essence of the urban form, and the quality of space created, is the essence of the urban experience.

Morris Conway, Senior City Architect Waterford City and County Council

Rose Ryall, Architectural Conservation Officer, Waterford City and County Council

Redevelopment of Dún Laoghaire Baths

Dún Laoghaire now has a new 'seascape space' - full of life - people eating ice cream, chatting, sitting around, walkers, skaters, swimmers. People gather here naturally - a piece of both public space, infrastructure and urban design. It is unique because of the sound, the light and the smell of the sea. Long bench seats, accessible ramps, steps, terraced gardens undulating ground and changes in level connect the public to the beach with a sense of theatre.

Peter Carroll, Director, A2 Architects

Model Housing - Urban Horticulture – An Incremental Approach to Housing

Donaghy and Dimond with colleagues in various strands of architecture document and discuss an ongoing design research study of the Liberties, in Dublin, including built and practice, as an example of how urban neighbourhoods, and by extension towns and villages may augment housing stock while ‘gardening’ the figure and ‘ground’ of each particular topography – housing integral to holistic urban design.

The study identifies niches in which new homes may take root; sites vary in scale from back yard to urban terrace to city block:- the incremental re-inhabitation of a house, garden and shop (project in progress)

- co-opting underused space above existing commercial units
- aggregate infill opportunities in neighbouring blocks - street, garden, back lane
- reclaiming street from abandoned road widening initiatives to make new housing
- darning in new homes on to gables of terrace and flat blocks – relining social housing to improve access and provide private balconies

As part of this grafting and stitching process the opportunity is taken to invigorate existing living environments to provide enhanced threshold zones, private and shared gardens, courtyards and terraces, communal facilities and public rooms, so that every dwelling has more than one aspect and enjoys access to covered external space.

Marcus Donaghy & Will Dimond, Donaghy and Dimond Architects

‘Building Biographies’

This paper describes a recent project carried out in Kilmallock, Co. Limerick, a well-preserved medieval town. The project, Kilmallock - Derry - Bradford: Twinning North-South Irish Walled Towns and UK Cities of Culture was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) UK, and was led by Professor Andrew Wilson, Chair of the School of Archaeological & Forensic Sciences, Bradford University & Dr. Katharina Becker, Department of Archaeology University College Cork with multiple partners including Limerick City & County Council. For the purposes of the project a researcher Dr. Caroline Wilhelmsson was employed to work with both communities. The project used cutting edge digital innovation to record the urban landscape and, in tandem, worked with the community to layer social & cultural significance on to the historical record to provide a multi-layered digital model of the historic walled town.

Sarah McCutcheon, Local Authority Archaeologist, Limerick City and County Council

Episodes, elements and experience – re-defining Bishop Lucey Park

Hall McKnight won the commission to redevelop Bishop Lucey Park through an RIAI Design Competition in 2020.

Reflecting the complexities of the historic city within which it is situated, the project recognises that the Park is neither a simple nor singular experience. Instead, it can be understood as a series of related environments or episodes – distinct in terms of atmosphere, character and the physical elements that contribute to the definition of each one.

Alastair McKnight, Hall McKnight Architects

Overview of RIAI publications and their work around the theme of 'Sense of Place'

Some opening remarks based on RIAI input into the conference theme.

Maire Henry, Director dhh Architects, Vice President Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland

Listowel's Historic Urban Landscape: A method for defining its 'Sense of Place' and/or significance

Ireland's landscape design has been acknowledged internationally to be of high significance. Many Irish towns are historic urban landscapes that bear a higher composite significance than their separate constituent spaces or individual protected structures. Taking Listowel as a case study, this paper will explore methods for identifying a medium Irish town's historic urban landscape and for defining its significance. It will explore how such methods can be used to encourage optimum and sustainable planning and development.

Dr. Finola O'Kane, School of Architecture, Planning and Environmental policy UCD



Biographies



Gráinne Shaffrey. Architect (FRIAI), urban designer (M.A. Urban Design and Regeneration) and RIAI Grade 1 conservation architect. Has had a long relationship with this book and the ideas, towns, and philosophy which drove it, and the others which followed. Continues to practice on towns and buildings, and remains open to new and old ideas, angles and questions about the environment we shape.



Morris Conway, MRIAI, Senior Architect, Economic Development, Waterford City & County Council.

A graduate of SETU and UCD, Schools of Architecture, he has previously worked in the roles of town engineer & town architect. Morris served as project architect for Waterford's Viking Triangle for a decade, and he is now leading the Council's projects team in the areas of urban and rural regeneration. He is currently collaborating on several town and village regeneration and development strategies involving historic building conservation, placemaking and public realm improvements.



Rose Ryall, BA (UCC), Master in Urban and Building Conservation (UCD) is the Architectural Conservation Officer for Waterford City and County Council. She has worked with Waterford Council since 2005. Her role includes Forward Planning, Development Management, administration of grants and the promotion of Waterford City and County's rich and diverse built heritage. She is also part of teams for inhouse Housing and Economic Development projects, where conservation and management of change are the basis for revitalisation and renewal. She is the Vice Chair of the Association of Architectural Conservation Officers and their representative on the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage's Thatch Steering Group.

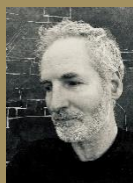


Marcus Donaghy and Will Dimond. Donaghy and Dimond Architects is a Dublin-based Architectural practice known for its carefully innovative and thoughtful design approach. The practice was founded in The Liberties in 2001 by Marcus Donaghy and Will Dimond, engaging with a shared interest in the material processes of making Architecture and the particularities of place. The work is grounded in careful consideration of place and ecologies through iterative processes of design practice and building that draw on an understanding of materials, skills and techniques in various environments. The practice has won and been premiated in international design competitions and has been recipient of awards across various aspects of practice from, domestic to school design to conservation and urban and landscape design. The work of the practice has been nominated for the BSI Swiss Architecture prize for Sustainable Practice and also shortlisted for the EU Mies Award. Donaghy and Dimond have been awarded both the AAI Downes Bronze medal and the RIAI Triennial Gold Medal. Will Dimond and Marcus Donaghy are both part time studio lecturers in UCD Architecture

Biographies



Sarah McCutcheon Worked from 1989-1994 on the City Centre Excavations in Waterford City incorporating excavation and post excavation for the full suite of sites 1986-1994, up to and including final publication. In 1998 became Local Authority Archaeologist for County Limerick and, since amalgamation in 2014, for the joint authority Limerick City and County Council. This role has a wide brief including input to Forward Planning, Local Area Plans, LA Strategies, Public Realm design as well as day-to-day Development Control. Since the creation of the Irish Walled Towns Network in 2005 has project managed the consolidation of the town walls of Kilmallock and many other projects within the town and since 2017 has taken on the same role in Limerick City. Also manages conservation projects on the pre 1700 masonry structures vested in the Local Authority.



Alastair McKnight .Hall McKnight is an award-winning architectural practice based that was founded in Belfast in 2003.

We believe in the ability of architecture to enrich lives. Our approach is contextually driven, combining analysis and intuition; recognising that successful work requires both understanding and interpretation. We seek to make buildings and spaces that can endure to become embedded in both their physical and cultural contexts. We believe that places are fulfilled through inhabitation, occupation and the experiences of people.

Hall McKnight is currently working across the UK and Ireland on projects at a wide range of scales and typologies. Alastair Hall is one of the founding partners. He was educated at Queens University Belfast and Cambridge University.



Máire Henry. UCD graduate of architecture; international experience mainly in France; led the development of the new school of architecture in SETU; director & founder of dhbArchitects; currently V.P. RIAI.



Finola O'Kane is a landscape historian, architect, and Professor at the School of Architecture, Planning and Environmental Policy, University College Dublin. Her books include *Landscape Design in Eighteenth-Century Ireland: Mixing Foreign Trees with the Natives* (Cork, 2004), *Ireland and the Picturesque: Design, Landscape Painting, and Tourism, 1700–1840* (PMC/Yale, 2013) and the recent *Landscape design and revolution in Ireland and the United States 1688-1815*, (PMC/Yale, June, 2023). She has also published widely on eighteenth-century Dublin, Irish urban and suburban history and plantation landscapes, with the co-edited volume *Ireland, slavery and the Caribbean: Interdisciplinary perspectives* published in 2023 by Manchester University Press. She co-directed the MUBC programme in UCD from 2008-2018.

Acknowledgements

This conference is presented by the National Built Heritage Service and Waterford City & County Council.

The event contributes to ongoing reflection and action under Chapter 3.4.2: Built Heritage Character Assessment of the Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlements: Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2024) by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

This chapter highlights the importance of evaluating the architectural and historical character of places to inform sustainable development that respects and integrates with our built heritage.

The programming of the conference and workshop was made possible by the support of many contributors, with expert input at all stages—both in shaping the conference concept and bringing it to life.

We extend particular thanks to our colleagues from the Waterford City & County Council, National Monuments Service, the Town Centre First National Office, the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland (RIAI), the Royal Irish Academy, and University College Dublin.

We are also especially grateful to our host of expert speakers and chairs, who have been so generous with their time, and for sharing their knowledge and experience.



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