

# The Heritage Opportunity: Creating Prosperity through Partnership

Conference 28 October 2013, Skainos Project, Belfast



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## Summary and Action Points

This conference followed a Ministerial Summit in May and fostered discussion around how a more strategic approach to the built heritage sector can bring economic benefits to Northern Ireland. The conference was held at Skainos, an urban regeneration project in inner East Belfast providing shared space for community transformation and renewal.

- **The conference delegates were convinced of the value of heritage to the economy. Our job is to convince others.**
- **Partnership is crucial** – it can't simply be about public money or private money or charitable giving. Just as money should come from various sources, buildings should not have just one use – mixed use buildings make the most successful buildings. So, **plurality of income and use are very important.**
- **Government itself may not be the best vehicle for taking this agenda forward.**
- There must be a change in mind-set whereby **government needs to be more outward looking to support and engage with groups, communities, organisations**, to achieve progress.
- **Government must work to increase the capacity of communities to act.** Community Asset Transfer – heritage buildings that can be more effectively managed by communities should be handed over to communities. We must **increase the role of communities in the management of heritage buildings and state care monuments and sites.** There is, already existing, a huge appetite for heritage in communities. However, what they struggle with is whether they have the capacity to change things. Communities can feel isolated from decision makers.
- Rebalancing the NI economy is essential. How can we grow commercial activity and rely less on public money? **'Meanwhile use'** of buildings is a way of testing what is commercially possible. Presentations and discussion at the conference pointed to the fact that **innovation is key to re-use of buildings. Value is by use, not by certificate** – creativity is needed, properties need to be used.
- How do we **better sell heritage and the heritage message?** Universities don't tend to have many public outreach courses. We need to encourage this – flexible learning, distance learning. **Action point for government and universities to move forward on.**
- How do we **encourage internal visitors**, more visitors from NI to go to and connect with heritage sites? Dunluce Castle, for example, can make significant progress if government follows through on investment. Capitalise on that through an enhanced visitor experience.
- **Striving to achieve heritage value is a better avenue for success than merely concentrating on profit.** The aim of the Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust is to preserve the heritage and promote its importance. It has become a great example of the restoration and re-use of buildings, but it is driven by that overarching goal, which we must not lose sight of. **Crucial ingredients to success of the Chatham Historic Dockyard: great governance; good management; focus and clarity; control over all aspects; wider role recognition; realistic; managed communications; entrepreneurial; appropriate uses respecting heritage significance – when land or buildings are used, their significance is always a factor in the use; risk; reputation; education; commercial (rental for offices, university etc.); residential.**

Concluding the conference, Ronnie Spence (HLF NI Chairman) stressed the need to **lead by example** – those outside government must demonstrate to government the success/prosperity that ‘the heritage opportunity’ can bring. We need to **understand better what matters to communities**. We need to **understand what makes financial sense to developers**. NIEA and HLF will take forward the discussion - more talking is needed, **but more importantly, action is required**.

Going forward from this conference, it is important that we aim to embed **heritage as a mainstream economic driver in the next Programme for Government** for Northern Ireland.

# Notes of Proceedings

## **Minister Mark H. Durkan – *Northern Ireland's Heritage Asset***

- Coming from the City of Derry, the Minister appreciates that we are surrounded by a fascinating heritage in every part of Northern Ireland. Our heritage assets should give us a sense of who we are and provide a sense of place.
- Following on the predecessor in his desire to see Northern Ireland's rich heritage asset more widely recognised, and contributing to the economy.
- The two main sectors to gain from this growth will be construction and tourism. Construction will gain with projects that refurbish historic buildings and build new associated facilities while tourism will grow with improved visitor experiences.
- By developing key heritage sites such as Dunluce Castle and Carrickfergus Castle we can involve the private sector in their management to ensure maximum use is made of their economic potential.
- Partnership approach must be taken right across society with other government departments, local authorities, the private sector, tourism organisations, universities and communities. It is together that we can really make this work.
- Wished conference delegates a fruitful day, and looked forward to seeing results.

## **Perspective from Local Authorities**

### **Peter McNaney, Belfast City Council**

- Common ambition drives progress. In the past, that was simpler – but now society is more complex, fragmented. Getting people to agree to invest in something is not easy.
- There is the potential to transform our city through Heritage.
- Link between quality of life and economic growth – one drives the other.
- Role of local government will be important in promoting the heritage opportunity. Local people working with local authorities will shape place.
- Importance of heritage attraction to Belfast. What has local government done and what difference has it made – a good example is St George's Market. HLF investment of £3.1M, completely changing that area and the community – now open 3 days a week and used by everyone. Cities are/should be a place for exchange that leads to commercial success and economic growth. St George's Market has been pivotal in the regeneration of that area of Belfast.
- Ulster Hall is an example of heritage in action, from high to popular culture, it is a place for everyone. The restoration has allowed that to happen.
- Gas Works Business Park – Heritage buildings were retained and restored, and now the site hosts approximately 5,500 jobs.
- Success has to do with making spaces safe and shared, for all to use.

- “The city of the future is a city of social and functional integration, cultural diversity, accessible education, resource conservation and regional dialogue” Freiburg Charter for sustainable urbanism.
- Heritage is an important part of the new Belfast City Masterplan. Old and new working together for the economy – not rocket science.
- So what is needed?
  - Cities need People
  - Cities need Jobs
  - Cities need Quality Environments
  - Cities need to be different
  - Cities need a Rate Base
  - Cities need to accommodate the new with the old
  - But buildings need to have a defined end use and end users to make them successful
- How do we do it?
  - Ambition, will and leadership
  - Common understanding and good relationships
  - Shared responsibility and contribution
  - Energy and enthusiasm - more optimism than pessimism
  - Adaptive Capacity - ‘Can Do attitude’
  - Confidence in own ability
  - Creative vision and innovation
  - Luck!

## Open Discussion

- Importance of living in the city centre – density is important for city economies. Spaces in the city centre need to be brought back into successful use, and living there has an important role to play in that. The challenge is to put together the right incentivisation packages to encourage private sector investment.
- Philanthropy has been a successful source of investment in other parts of the UK, but not sure whether Belfast/NI has the people/resources. But this is certainly needed because of the lack of public money.
- The work of Hearth is not based on profit, but driven by purpose and objectives that are important to the organisation (heritage values).
- Partnership is crucial – it can’t simply be about public money or private money or charitable giving. And just as money should come from various sources, buildings should not have just one use – mixed use buildings make the most successful buildings. So, plurality of income and use are very important.
- Buildings are one part of a broader conversation around heritage potential.
- There is possibly a cultural issue in NI around a top-down approach.
- There is a heritage crisis in the centre of Belfast (and other centres), and only a cross departmental approach / task force can tackle the problem.

- Rebalancing the NI economy. How can we grow commercial activity? ‘Meanwhile use’ of buildings is a way of testing what is commercially possible. See HLF publication, *New Ideas Need Old Buildings* – certain types of buildings match certain types of uses.
- The HLF Heritage Enterprise scheme is specifically designed to engage developers. It allows developers to work with and through HLF (who can make sure the heritage is properly protected). Developers want to make profit, and that is why they will get involved.
- How can we influence people who own heritage privately?
- NIEA are encouraging councils to adopt local heritage (where statutory criteria are not met), protecting buildings where we know the community is concerned.
- Vitality and passion in the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector is hugely important.
- Communities have the will and passion, but lack information – need to more widely distribute publications that will inform.
- Local Government Reform should represent an opportunity to move heritage up the agenda. Today is perhaps the start of that conversation.
- Change of attitude needed in local government. Daytime culture predominates – a culture of steel shutters down at night. Rather, we should have shop fronts lit at night with sustainable lighting. Change of attitude, community policing, people feeling more secure. Change in culture needed, rather than cash?

### **Summary - Stephen Aston, NIEA**

- Action is needed – we must learn how to better use resources to get things done, common ambition.
- Recognition that buildings are one dimension of the heritage opportunity.
- Everything points to the fact that innovation is key to re-use of buildings.
- Value is by use, not by certificate – creativity is needed, properties need to be used, partnerships need to be viable.

### **Perspective from Universities**

#### **Colin Breen, University of Ulster**

- We need to get beyond the talking stage and start positioning ourselves to drive the process forward.
- Visibility of heritage is important for selling heritage. We need to find a better way to sell the heritage message. How do we get beyond the converted?
- Universities are going through a period of profound change, driven by the needs of society. What universities do must now be relevant to society (driven by the government’s Research Excellence Framework). As a result, a lot of research is becoming more industry-guided. Universities need to keep up with society – especially because they are training our future professionals and leaders.
- Heritage can be framed within a sustainable development context (in which economy is a facet). Tourism – how do we encourage internal visitors, more visitors from NI to go to and connect with heritage sites?

- Building future sustainability. Effective knowledge transfer between universities and society (in both directions) is crucial to sustainability.
- Dunluce Castle can make significant progress if government follows through on investment. Capitalise on that through an enhanced visitor experience.
- Universities can provide networks for joint and collaborative research, connecting communities that have been disjointed (through knowledge, skills, cohesion, social capital, culture, identity).
- Through research, universities can tackle problems like understanding the impact of climate change on built and cultural heritage – universities have a responsibility to spread that kind of knowledge and build capacity within society.
- Should there be a change in mind-set whereby government needs to be more outward looking to support and engage with groups, communities, organisations, to achieve progress. Government itself may not necessarily be the best vehicle for taking this forward.

## Discussion

- There is real value in the independence of universities, where government can be cumbersome and slow to move.
- Model for a reactive group? NGOs tend to be better at driving forward with these issues.
- How do we better sell heritage and the heritage message? Universities don't tend to have many public outreach courses. We need to encourage more of this – flexible learning, distance learning. This an action point for government and universities to move forward on.
- Communities find it hard to access the knowledge that resides in the university sector.
- Opportunities being missed by UU, to regenerate the centre of Belfast – should be re-using existing buildings.
- Heritage and conservation is not high on the agenda for architectural education – this is problem.
- We need to be careful that we always recognise that there is an intrinsic value to buildings, and an intrinsic value to academic research. We would be an impoverished society without these. Universities should not always be driven by industry.
- Good example of synergistic knowledge transfer – QUB Heritage Science MSc students and National Trust. Benefited both organisations.
- There is, already existing, a huge appetite for heritage in communities. However, what they struggle with is whether they have the capacity to change things. Communities can feel isolated from decision makers. Increasing the capacity of communities to act is essential.

## Perspective from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

### Alan Clarke, NITB

- We are striving to develop a world class tourism industry in NI. Signature projects have levered in a lot of other funds, public and private, partnership in its widest sense, with the objective of promoting NI.
- NI2012 – tipping point for tourism in NI?
- Moving now from hard to soft investment – more focus on supporting, running events, promotion.
- Excellent new example is the Guild Hall in Derry – has had a dramatic impact on the area and the city.
- The scene has been set, the capital investment has gone in, but this is only the beginning. Where now?
- 5 key themes for NITB to focus on:
  - Coasts and lakes
  - Unique outdoors
  - Living legends
  - Creative vibe
  - Naturally NI
- In each of these themes, there are sites that are demand generators (bring people to NI in the first place), demand supports (sites that encourage people to stay longer or come back), and hidden gems (small things that become special to people). This is a framework in which everyone can contribute; an inclusive approach.
- Appealing to key segments in GB, ROI and NI, linking signature projects to new tourism experiences.
- It is important to generate confidence and optimism within the private sector.
- There is a continued need for investment. We are living with the legacy of the past 30 years of under investment; our competitors are still investing.
- The best is yet to come? Successful branding of a place – a place is an experience, not a brand. Who are we? How do we want others to see us?
- Stories are very powerful in a heritage context – they attract people.
- “If you build a place people want to visit, you build a place where people want to live. If you build a place where people want to live, you’ll build a place where people want to work. If you build a place where people want to work, you’ll build a place where where business has to be. And if you build a place where business has to be, you’ll build a place where people have to visit.” Maura Gast, Destination Marketing Association International

## Perspective from the Private Sector

### Bill Ferris, Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust

- A long road from the closure of Chatham, 1981 – 1984. This was devastating, taking away the purpose of a city, identity and pride.
- Government thought the private sector would sort out the problem. However, due to unforeseen contamination problems, £110M of remediation was needed.
- The historic dockyard represented a relatively complete picture of Georgian shipping in one place – a prime heritage opportunity.
- Private sector wanted to do their own thing with it (perhaps demolish and rebuild), so the Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust was set up. The aim of the trust is to preserve the heritage and promote its importance. The historic dockyard has subsequently become a great example of the restoration and re-use of buildings.
- Price of going into tourism too soon – at the beginning there was little to see and very few repeat visitors.
- In 1984 the challenge was the need for £22M to make everything weather tight. Government only provided £11M.
- The aim was to make the site a ‘living museum’, an historic environment where people actually live and work.
- Crucial ingredients:
  - Great governance.
  - Good management.
  - Focus and clarity.
  - Control over all aspects.
  - Wider role recognition.
  - Realistic.
  - Managed communications.
  - Entrepreneurial.
  - Appropriate uses respecting heritage significance – when land or buildings are used, their significance is always a factor in the use.
  - Risk.
  - Reputation.
  - Education.
  - Commercial (rental for offices, university etc.)
  - Residential.
- Stakeholder engagement – importance of branding. Partnership in terms of engagement with stakeholders.
- Strategy
  - Managing expectation.
  - Time
  - Multiple bottom lines / outcomes – a variety of outcomes and measures of success.
  - Money – sustainable income is king (ship repair, joiners shop, film locations).

- Demonstrable contribution to the economy – real growth (entrepreneurial, efficient, resourceful, risk minimising).

## **Perspective from the Department of Social Development**

### **Carol Ramsey, Belfast City Centre Regeneration**

- DSD aims to tackling disadvantage and build sustainable communities.
- Executive priority is economic growth, getting people into work.
- Pooling resources, sharing cost. Not about money, but about taking responsibility for the wellbeing of the community.
- Looking for innovative ways of partnerships to fund built environments. Community finance infrastructures being put in place.
- Just because money is tight, we can't compromise on quality. One of the guiding principles of urban regeneration should be good design.
- DSD are working toward regenerating town centres, buildings, streets, encouraging recreation and social interaction.
- Belfast City Masterplan creates a route map for investors and developers – how we would like the city centre to develop. Heritage is a part of this.
- “Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success” Henry Ford.

## **Perspective from Community**

### **Paul Mullan, Head of HLF NI**

- We need to unlock the value of heritage – including non-economic aspects.
- £175M invested in NI from HLF. Role of communities has been crucial – the best projects are about communities.
- Success is achieved by making heritage matter to people – people shouldn't just consume heritage, they should be active participants in it.
- People/communities can highlight, understand and articulate different forms of value – often an emotional engagement that comes with determination/persistence to see a project through.
- We need to ‘fine-tune our antenna’ to be able to listen to communities on the ground.
- Example of Diamond War Memorial in Derry – once neglected and graffiti-covered, after investment/restoration this has new respect across communities, and is now a genuine shared space.
- Social capital is not a vague idea, it is a genuine measure of value – buildings are valued by how they are used by communities.
- How do we better engage communities to unleash their passion?

- Community Asset Transfer – buildings handed over to be more effectively managed by communities. DSD involved.
- Is there a greater role for communities in the management of state care monuments and sites? For example, Dunluce. Not taking away from the responsibility of NIEA, but capturing community passion.
- Sometimes knowledge and expertise can obscure the voices on the ground. Stories surrounding heritage are important – they give a sense of shared heritage.

## Perspective from Landscape Partnerships

### Jim Bradley, Belfast Hills Partnership

- BHP stretches over 4 councils, a lot of land is privately owned.
- Distinctive landscape, but not designated in any way.
- In 1998 there was a proposal for a regional park, stiff opposition from the farming community.
- Very broad range of stakeholders.
- Programme themes:
  - Conservation of built and natural features
  - Community Participation
  - Access and Learning
  - Skills and Training
- Large range of projects delivering heritage and community outcomes.
- How can Landscape Partnerships maximise economic opportunities through better management of natural and built heritage?
  - Contracts and match funding - RDP
  - Training and skills
  - Tourism – Branding, tackling fly-tipping and run-down unwelcoming entrance roads into the Hills
  - Alternative Energy
  - Innovative projects with industry
  - Recreation
  - We need external partners/expertise
- How can landscapes capture imagination and attract tourism?
  - Re-connect with local people – “The Belfast Story”
  - Whole range of events, festivals, school engagement, digs – then volunteering
  - Landscape always very high up in tourists’ list of reasons for coming and what they enjoyed
  - Become part of the Belfast and Northern Ireland product
- Recognition of natural heritage capital as a tool for decision making in government
  - Big ask for a local organisation
  - Has to be both local and regional partners working together on this

- More than just natural heritage of course!
- Success of Landscape Partnership Schemes
  - Ability to come from different angles and encouraging others to get involved
  - Local knowledge – local outreach and involvement
  - Emphasis on true partnership
  - How do we sustain this?
- Inform positive action that can be incorporated into DoE programmes
  - Integrate into rather than add on to plans and strategies
  - Consider regional projects with local partners, mix both sets of strengths
  - Lead by example

## Discussion

- Sustainability in heritage projects is an important issue – what happens when project funding runs out? Important to get commitment from councils.
- Extent to which people in NI rely too much on funding. Funding supersaturation? So reliant on funding that it affects how we think about new ideas (or don't) – possible chilling effect on growth/progress. We need to address the idea of sustainability beyond funding.
- There are certain communities that don't have the capacity to do/achieve much.
- We are all (the delegates) convinced of the value of heritage. Our job is to convince others. NITB have been actively campaigning to get the 'unreached' to visit and value heritage.
- What does the tourist value? The heritage and the stories that go with it.
- How do we reach developers / private sector? How do we get bureaucrats to understand both the intrinsic value of heritage and the community initiatives that can support it?
- 190 state care monuments – but what about the 'hidden gems'? Can we facilitate communities to take responsibility for lower-profile buildings? Red-tape can mean that it is hard to get even simple things done.
- For Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust, having the heritage aims in place to guide development was essential.
- We need to lead by example – show government that way forward and the success/prosperity it brings.
- The public sector is weighted against risk – but a change of culture is required. Introducing an entrepreneurial spirit to the public sector.
- Often opportunities to restore are missed, and the costs escalate as time in neglect increases. This is a big problem – knowing when to act, getting the timing right.
- Note of optimism – there are challenges, but we can overcome them. We have achieved, but we can achieve more through partnership.

## **Closing Remarks**

### **Ronnie Spence, HLF NI Chairman**

- Important to pause and realise that there are aspects of heritage value that will not benefit us economically, and these things are priceless.
- There are excellent things going on, we are moving in the right direction.
- However, there is still a challenge ahead, requiring clearer and stronger leadership, joined-up approaches (we tend to have chopped-up rather than joined-up government).
- We need to understand better what matters to communities.
- We need to understand what makes financial sense to developers.
- NIEA and HLF will take forward the discussion from today. More talking needed, but more importantly, action.