



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Sceilg Mhichíl

World Heritage Property

Management Plan 2020–30



Prepared by Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage
[gov.ie/housing](https://www.gov.ie/housing)



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



OPW

Oifig na
nOibreacha Poiblí
Office of Public Works

MISSION STATEMENT

To protect, conserve and promote an appreciation of the early monastic site of Sceilg Mhichíl and its island setting by having in place a management framework that will ensure that its Outstanding Universal Value is preserved for present and future generations.



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



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Forewords

It gives me great pleasure to deliver this new management plan for the UNESCO World Heritage Property of Sceilg Mhichíl. As expressed through the UNESCO criteria for Outstanding Universal Value, the island's World Heritage designation reflects a heritage significance described by the World Heritage Centre as being 'so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity'.

This second ten-year management plan is an important milestone in the remarkable story of Sceilg Mhichíl, which began when the monks first colonised the island, perhaps as early as the sixth century. The management plan, which has been informed by an extensive public consultation and environmental-assessment process, provides the framework for the sustainable management of the WHP over the next decade. This new plan affords even stronger protections to the biodiversity and natural heritage of the island, alongside its remarkable built heritage. The plan recognises the increasing threats posed by climate change and establishes actions to mitigate its impacts, alongside firm commitments to support research on the island's environment. It supports significantly enhanced stakeholder engagement and transparency in terms of the state's management structures and time-bound delivery of defined actions.

The level of response to the public consultation processes reflects the desire of individuals and organisations to ensure that the special qualities of this WHP are safeguarded for generations to come. We are very grateful to all who have engaged with us through these rigorous consultation processes and helped shape the scope and ambition of this plan. I am also extremely grateful to our colleagues in the OPW for the partnership we form in protecting the island's heritage and ensuring sustainable access. The commitments entered into through this plan will ensure that we meet our responsibility to protect this unique and wonderful island.

Minister of State with responsibility for Heritage and Electoral Reform
Malcolm Noonan TD

The WHP of Sceilg Mhichíl is perhaps the OPW's most challenging national monument in terms of maintenance and visitor access. The harsh island environment and the short working season present significant logistical and operational difficulties. Despite these challenges, or perhaps, indeed, because of them, it is also one of our most rewarding concerns. The dedicated OPW workforce of architects, masons and guides, working alongside colleagues from the department, carry out incredible work, year in, year out, to ensure safe access to the island for the many thousands whose dream it is to visit this spectacular place while also safeguarding its future.

As we look to the next ten years, we will focus on bringing back to life the two beautiful nineteenth-century lighthouse complexes, in order to shine a light on that fascinating maritime heritage and the lives of the keepers and their families that were interwoven with those of the monks from centuries before. We will continue to consolidate conservation of the monastic site against the impacts of extreme weather exacerbated by climate change. We will work with the department and other partners in ensuring that the story of Sceilg Mhichíl endures, facilitating safe access and delivering a visitor experience of the highest quality, as befits such an outstanding site.

Minister of State with responsibility for the OPW
Patrick O'Donovan TD

Executive Summary

The Sceilg Mhichíl Management Plan 2020–2030 has been prepared by DHLGH in conjunction with the OPW. DHLGH is the state body responsible for heritage-policy matters in Ireland under the World Heritage Convention.

The aim of this plan is to protect and preserve the WHP of Sceilg Mhichíl, also known as Great Skellig.

This is the second iteration of a management plan prepared for Sceilg Mhichíl. This new plan sets out again the key objectives and long-term vision for the management of Sceilg Mhichíl. It provides a brief history of the site and describes its key cultural and natural heritage features. It defines the Outstanding Universal Value of the site and the justification for its inclusion on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Properties. It outlines a policy framework for the continued effective management, preservation and protection of Sceilg Mhichíl for the future, while sustaining its intangible and cultural significance for the benefit of local communities and visitors.

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the plan and a summary of its purpose and preparation. A brief description of the Sceilg Mhichíl WHP, together with a historical background and key geological features is provided in Chapter 2. The significance, values, cultural heritage, natural heritage and intangible heritage of the site are set out in Chapter 3, in which those features that make the site an outstanding example of a perfectly preserved early medieval settlement are detailed. It is maintained that the presence of monks over such a lengthy period imbued the place with a sense of spirituality that is still palpable to anyone spending time on the island. It illustrates, unlike any other place, the extremes of a Christian monasticism characteristic of north Africa, western Asia and Europe.

The policy context of the management framework is outlined in Chapter 4, with detail of relevant national legislation, local mechanisms, international guidelines and statutory and non-statutory guidance. The management framework itself is detailed in Chapter 5. In Chapter 6 a range of priority management issues is detailed and the implementation strategy for this management plan is covered in Chapter 7. This plan is a tool for the effective implementation and coordination of all the various policies and objectives for the preservation of the island. A statement of intent is provided, setting out the key objectives of the plan and the actions necessary to achieve those objectives.

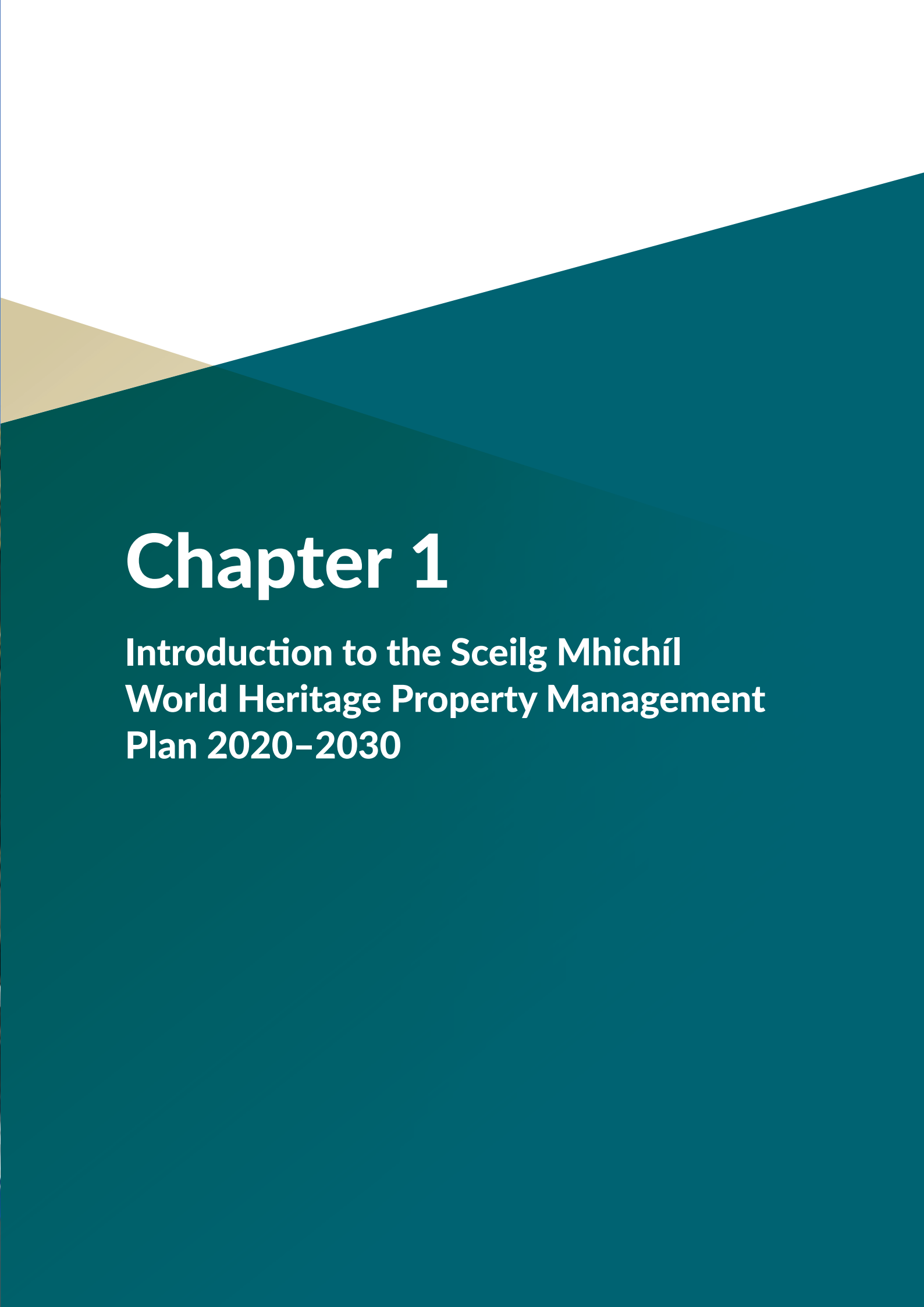




PART **1**



OPW National Monuments District Foreman,
Pat O'Shea, leaving Sceilg Mhichíl.
Photo: Valerie O'Sullivan/FREE PIC



Chapter 1

**Introduction to the Sceilg Mhichíl
World Heritage Property Management
Plan 2020–2030**

Introduction to the Sceilg Mhichíl World Heritage Property Management Plan 2020–2030

This management plan has been developed to protect and preserve the World Heritage Property of Sceilg Mhichíl, also known as Great Skellig. The plan aims to address cultural- and natural-heritage issues in an integrated manner. This plan has been developed in consultation with local groups, non-governmental organisations and other interested parties.

The area covered by the plan is the island of Sceilg Mhichíl. The island is owned by DHLGH on behalf of the state, with the exception of the Lower Lighthouse and its curtilage, the helipad area and its adjacent store, which are owned on behalf of the state by the Commissioners of Irish Lights (CIL).

It is a recommendation of the 2019 *Operational Guidelines* issued by the World Heritage Committee that all state parties have adequate management frameworks, documented management systems and appropriate legislation in place to protect the status of places inscribed as WHPs. This plan provides

such a framework for the management of Sceilg Mhichíl, which will help to ensure that its Outstanding Universal Value is sustained and preserved for future generations.

Purpose of the Management Plan

The Sceilg Mhichíl World Heritage Property Management Plan 2020–2030 sets out the key objectives and future vision for the management of Sceilg Mhichíl. Its mission is to ensure the long-term conservation, preservation and presentation of the WHP to international standards by putting in place a management framework that will protect the site's Outstanding Universal Value. The plan aims to ensure that Sceilg Mhichíl's unique qualities and global significance are well understood and that its cultural and historical features and significance can be conserved and safeguarded alongside its biodiversity and natural heritage.

This management plan includes:

- a brief history and description of the key features of cultural and natural heritage on Sceilg Mhichíl;

Pl. 1 Aerial view of the monastery from the south.



- a summary of the issues that affect the property's core values; and
- policies for effective management of the WHP in the future, which will sustain its spiritual and cultural significance and protect its natural heritage and biodiversity.

This plan will inform the day-to-day and long-term management of Sceilg Mhichíl. It is a working document that is open to periodic review, with additions or amendments being made as conditions change.

Preparation of the Management Plan

The Sceilg Mhichíl Implementation Group (SMIG) Review Committee was established in 2018 to oversee the preparation of a revised management plan in accordance with Ireland's obligations under the World Heritage Convention. The group was comprised of technical experts from the OPW and from the NPWS and the NMS of DHLGH. Responsibility for the implementation of the management plan lies jointly with DHLGH and the OPW.

The actions contained within the 2008 management plan were reviewed by the NMS, NPWS and OPW in formulating the 2020–2030 plan. This review also looked at recommendations in light of new legislation and improved best practice in relation to the conservation of heritage, both natural and built. Actions were also reviewed against the UNESCO Operational Guidelines, which are updated regularly. Where actions from the 2008 plan were unsuccessful or only partially successful, this was discussed among a working group, which informed the development of the revised 2020–2030 actions. An example of this is specific timelines for actions, to which it was felt the earlier plan did not adequately commit. New actions were developed to reflect the objectives of the plan and include, for instance, a greater focus on monitoring. It is recognised that the 2008 plan did not provide a mechanism by which implementation of plan actions could be overseen. The 2020–2030 plan is committed to effective action monitoring and a dedicated action (A1.1) has been included to make sure the implementation and effectiveness of the plan actions are properly monitored.

The recommendations of the 2007 UNESCO Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2008) have informed the development of this revised management plan. Many of the recommendations were already implemented and those remaining have been added to the new plan. The plan identifies with relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals.

In the course of preparing this management plan, the committee met regularly to develop a consensus on the key priorities. A draft plan was launched in October 2018 for public consultation. The consultation period ran from December 2018 to February 2019. The public consultation process involved placing advertisements in the national and regional newspapers, a press release, publication of the Sceilg Mhichíl Draft Management Plan on the department's website and the circulation of over 100 copies of the consultative document to interested parties and relevant organisations.

There were 24 submissions in response to the 2019 public consultation stage of the preparation of the Sceilg Mhichíl Draft Management Plan. The submissions received had a wide and varied scope, with significant input from community interest groups, professional and technical personnel, professional institutes, state-sponsored bodies such as the Heritage Council, non-governmental organisations, guides, academics and the wider public.

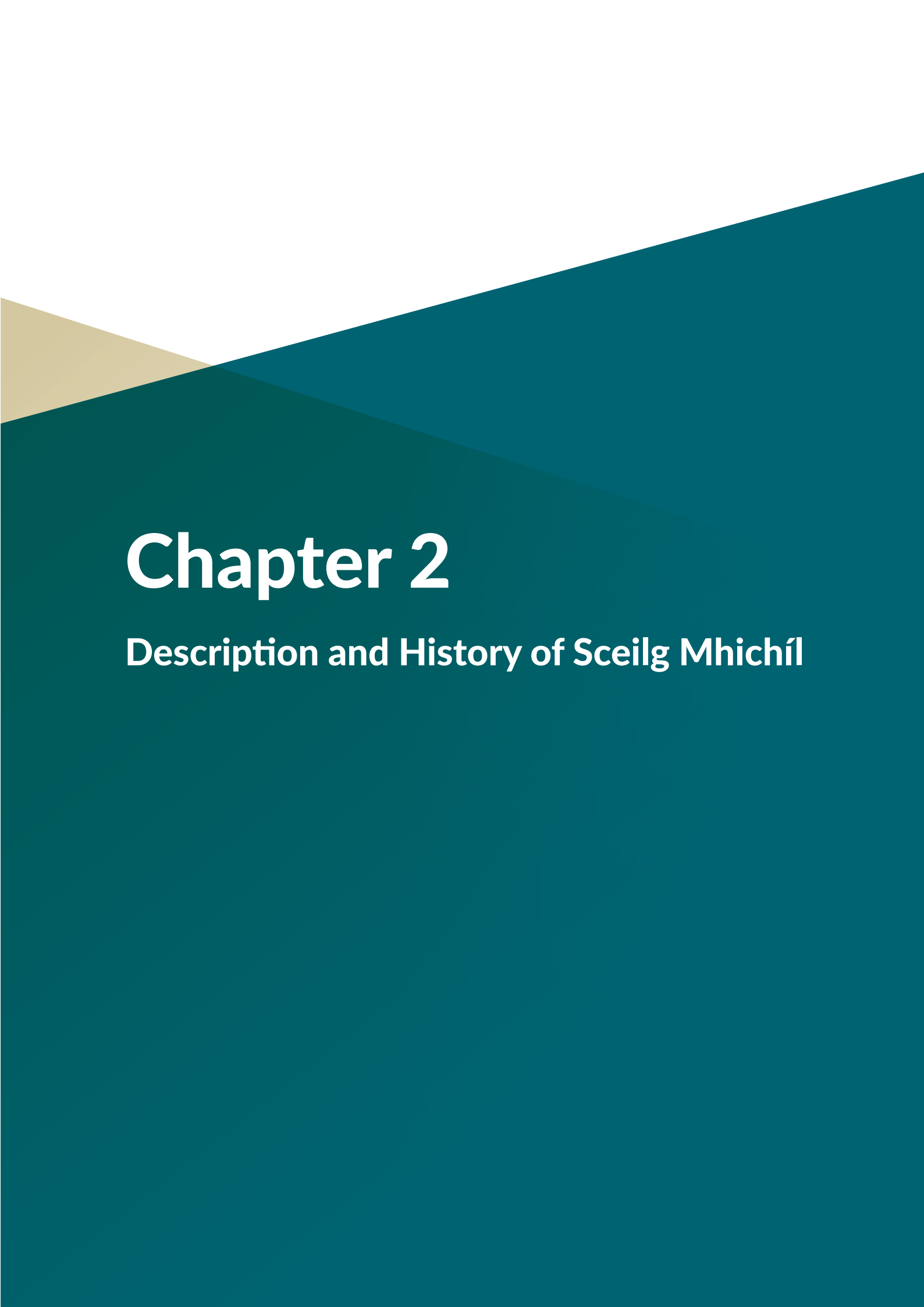
All comments received were considered and taken into account in the preparation of this plan. The group also consulted with agencies such as Fáilte Ireland regarding sustainable tourism comments received during the consultative phase.

As part of the SEA process, the draft plan, the Natura Impact Assessment (NIA) and the Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report (SEAER) underwent statutory and public consultation running for six weeks from 4 November to 16 December 2020, as detailed in Appendices 8 and 9.

Following the statutory and public consultation, the submissions and observations were taken into consideration and modifications and amendments to the draft plan were made to reflect issues raised by a wide range of stakeholders. All modifications to

the plan actions, targets and timelines as a result of the SEA and Appropriate Assessment (AA) processes were subject to screening for AA.

A summary of the observations received in the 2020 consultation from statutory consultees, key stakeholders and the public, and responses to the same, is provided in the consultation report available at <https://www.worldheritageireland.ie>. In its development and implementation of the management plan, the relevant recommendations, key issues and challenges described in the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) State of the Environment report *Ireland's Environment: An Integrated Assessment 2020* (EPA, 2020) have been and will be taken into account.



Chapter 2

Description and History of Sceilg Mhichíl

Description and History of Sceilg Mhichíl

Sceilg Mhichíl is the most spectacularly situated of all the early medieval island monastic sites in Ireland, with well-preserved access steps, a monastery, a remote hermitage and other monastic structures. The island's isolation has helped to preserve and protect these monastic remains. Their state of preservation and authenticity mean that Sceilg Mhichíl is of immeasurable historical importance. It represents a unique cultural achievement, illustrating a significant period of history and a civilisation that disappeared long ago.

In addition, the island embodies the establishment of lighthouses on Ireland's coast in the 1820s – a project that was particularly challenging along the Atlantic seaboard. This engineering achievement was quite remarkable for its time. Two lighthouses were established and linked by a remarkable road cut into the rock along the southern edge of the island. Beginning at the Upper Lighthouse, the road passes the Lower Lighthouse and leads to the pier at the eastern extremity of the island. This pier is the main landing place for modern-day visitors.

The topography of Sceilg Mhichíl has been changed by the intervention of both the monks and the

lighthouse-builders – the island is a cultural landscape. The close association of geological planes such as bedding, cleavage and joints meant that suitably sized stone could be quarried for construction. The sedimentary nature and reasonable softness of this stone allowed for shaping, even with the crudest of tools.

Both the monks and the lighthouse-builders used the topography of the island to their advantage but left a considerable imprint on it. While the monks' intervention was sympathetic to both the geology and the topography of the island, they altered the latter considerably in the vicinity of the monastery, the hermitage and the access steps. The lighthouse-builders, meanwhile, altered the lower levels on the south and west sides of the island, blasting away the rock to construct a pier and a long access road that leads to the Lower and Upper Lighthouses and their respective accommodation.

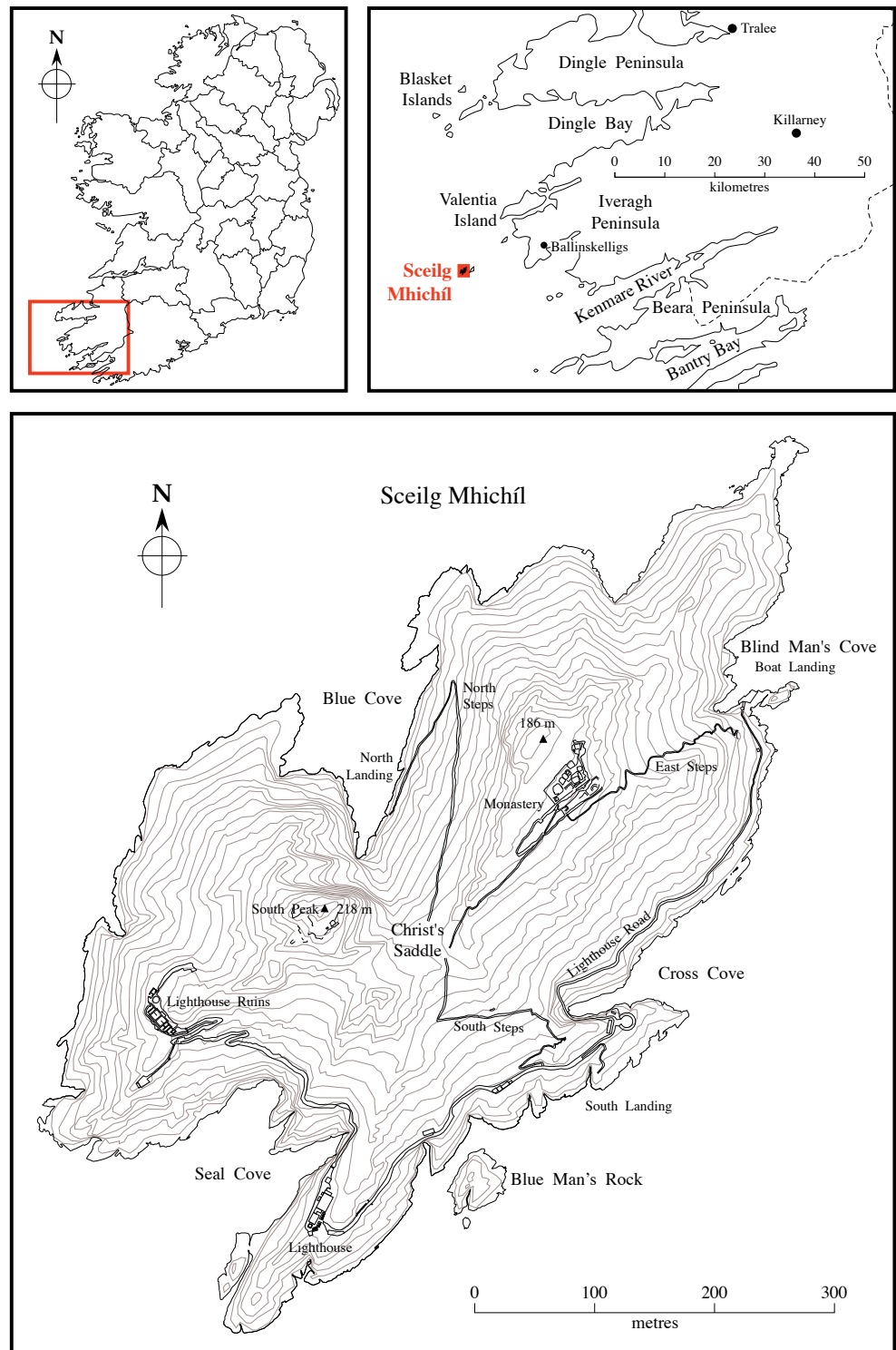
Sceilg Mhichíl is internationally renowned as one of the most important sites for breeding seabirds in Ireland. The steep rocky slopes and cliffs provide nesting places for species such as fulmar, kittiwake and guillemot, while storm petrel, Manx shearwater and puffin nest in burrows and other holes throughout the island.

Pl. 2 Sceilg Mhichíl from the south, showing the two peaks, Christ's Saddle and the Lighthouse Road.



Location

Fig. 1 Location.



Country:	Ireland	Year of Inscription:	1996
County:	Kerry	National Coordinates:	Longitude: 10° 32' 19.5" N Latitude: 51° 46' 19.5" W ITM 424857, 560813 (The Monastery)
Townland:	Sceilg Mhichíl (Great Skellig)		
World Heritage Name:	Sceilg Mhichíl		

The island of Sceilg Mhichíl lies 11.6 kilometres off Bolus Head, the westernmost tip of the Iveragh Peninsula, in Co. Kerry, Ireland.

Boundary of the WHP

The island of Sceilg Mhichíl is approximately 21.9 hectares in size. The WHP boundary is drawn tightly to the island, with a buffer zone formed naturally by the Atlantic Ocean. The boundary of the WHP does not include the smaller neighbouring island of An Sceilg Bheag (Little Skellig) or the surrounding sea area. Whilst these areas are deemed to be of great natural importance, they are not considered to be of Outstanding Universal Value nor of World Heritage significance.

Geology

The pinnacle of Sceilg Mhichíl rises 218 metres above the Atlantic Ocean. The old red sandstone from which the islands are shaped also forms the backbone of the mountainous regions of south Kerry and west Cork, including MacGillycuddy's Reeks and the Caha Mountains. These rocks began as sediments deposited by flooding rivers during the Devonian period, over 400 million years ago. The topography of the region that we see today, of elongated valleys separated by intervening ridges, is the result of a period of folding and mountain-building some 100 million years after the original sediments were laid down. Sea levels subsequently rose, forming the deep marine inlets of the south-west, such as Kenmare River and Bantry Bay, and isolating Na Scealga (The Skelligs) from the mainland.

The mountain-building movements compressed the sedimentary rock into hard, finely grained layers of sandstone and slate and created great lines of fracture, jointing and faulting. Erosion along major fault lines in the centre of Sceilg Mhichíl caused the rock to gradually break and fall away, leaving behind a U-shaped depression 130 metres above sea level, which is today named Christ's Saddle. Two peaks remain, one each side of the valley. The one to the north-east, 185 metres high, is the location of the monastery; the one to the south-west, 218 metres high, is the location of the hermitage. Erosion along fault and cleavage lines also created the three landing coves on the island.

In recent years a detailed review of the island geology was carried out and a report on this is due to be completed in 2022.

Discoveries on South Peak, North-East Steps, Lighthouse Constructions

There are two major early medieval sites on Sceilg Mhichíl: an extensive and well-preserved monastery constructed just below the top of a high sloping platform on the east side of the island, and a hermitage constructed on ledges high on the South Peak. A major project of archaeological excavation, consolidation and conservation took place between 1986 and 2010 on both the monastery and the South Peak. The excavations on the monastery provided evidence of its development and abandonment, while the excavations on the South Peak reflected two distinct construction phases – an eremitic phase and a reuse of the peak for organised pilgrimage.

The monastery consists of two oratories, a mortared church, seven cells (five of which are intact), the remains of a beehive toilet, water cisterns, a cemetery, *leachtanna*, crosses and cross-slabs. It also includes two large terraces referred to as the Upper and Lower Outer Enclosures.

Pl. 3 The upper section of the South Steps, leading up to the monastery.



High retaining walls support the terracing, upon which everything is constructed. On the western side of the island, rock-cut steps and ledges lead up to the hermitage. The hermitage comprises a series of platforms, traverses, enclosures and terraces daringly constructed on quarried ledges just below the peak. The Oratory Terrace still retains its original features: an oratory, an altar, a *leacht*, a bench and a possible shrine. Crosses and a cross-slab were also found at this site. Elsewhere on the island are additional monastic features associated with the climb. (Full descriptions of the monastic features of Sceilg Mhichíl are given in Appendix 3).

Three long flights of steps (the East Steps, South Steps and North Steps) lead up to the monastery from three different landing places. They initially comprised rock-cut steps, which were later largely replaced by drystone construction. The base of the East Steps and a lower section of the South Steps were destroyed during the construction of the pier and Lighthouse Road in the 1820s. This intervention blew away part of what is interpreted as having been a boathouse above the monastic east landing. This was excavated and conserved in 2003, adding

to our understanding of how the monks took precautions to protect their boats.

In 2007 the remains of a flight of steps were discovered on the north-east side of the island, below the monastery. These steps are very different in character from the other three flights, being cruder and narrower, with steep risers. The steps seem to lead down to the water, to a place just north of the current landing spot; this location would have been the most natural place to land on the rock.

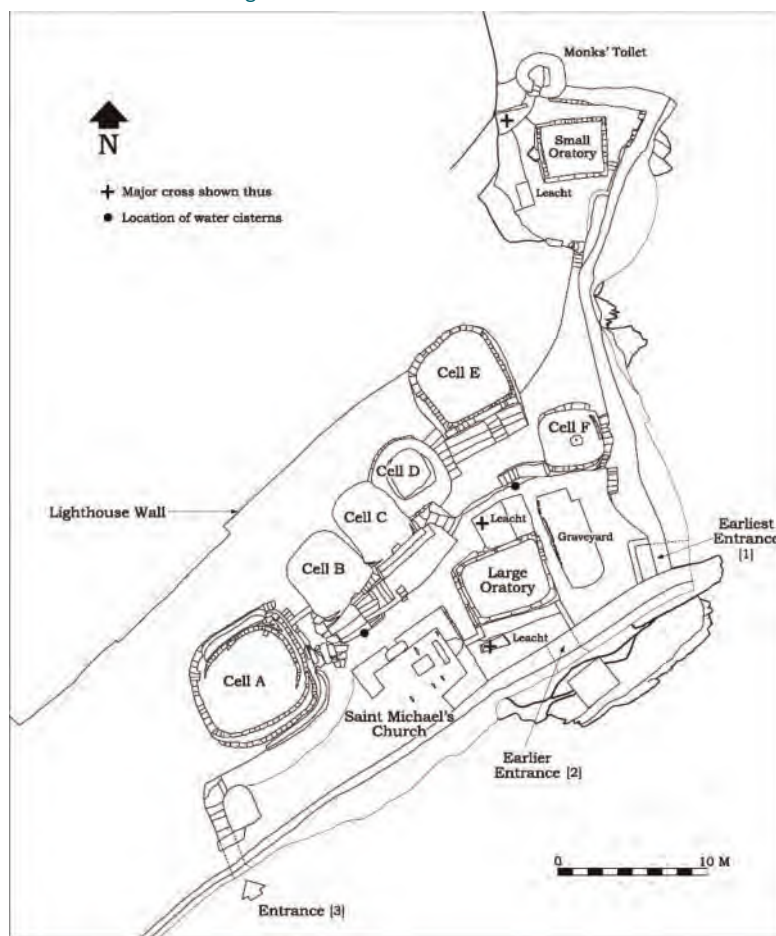
The lighthouse phase of construction in the 1820s is quite distinct. Its remains comprise a pier from which a major roadway, supported by retaining walls, leads to the Upper and the Lower Lighthouse, each with attendant accommodation. The Upper Lighthouse was abandoned in 1870 and from that time the upper part of the Lighthouse Road was only maintained intermittently.

There are many lesser structures on the island dating from the monastic and lighthouse occupations. The largest of these is a series of foundations just above the Lighthouse Road near the base of the South Steps.

Pl. 4 Aerial view of the monastery, showing the Inner Enclosure (illustrating the location of cells, oratories, church and *leachtanna* in the Lower Outer Enclosure). This view also shows the top of the East Steps and the original entrance to the monastery.



Fig. 2 Plan of the monastic enclosure of Sceilg Mhichíl.



Brief History of Sceilg Mhichíl

Earliest References

The word *sceilg* means a rock, particularly a steep rock. The first reference to Sceilg, as the place was then known, occurs in legend, where it is given as the burial place of Ir, son of Milesius, who was drowned during the landing of the Milesians.

Françoise Henry, a noted academic, mentions a text from the eighth or ninth century in which reference is made to an episode of strife between the kings of West Munster and the kings of Cashel. Duagh, king of West Munster, is said to have 'fled to Scellecc'. This event is assigned to the fifth century, but we have no means of knowing if a monastic settlement already existed on the island at this time. Charles Smith, writing in 1756, referred to the monastery being founded by St Fionán, who lived in the sixth century.

Early Documentary History

The earliest documentary evidence is *The Martyrology of Tallaght*, written towards the end of the eighth

century by Saint Máel Ruain, bishop of the monastery of Tallaght as well as founder of the Céili Dé (Culdee) eremitic movement. It commemorates the death of a monk called 'Suibni of Sceilg'. This reference to Sceilg in the festology of one of the most celebrated monasteries of Ireland suggests that a foundation was already well established there at this time. A monastery may have been founded here as early as the sixth century but, in the absence of evidence, precise dating is impossible.

Sceilg is referred to in the *Annals of Inisfallen* under the year AD 824 and in the *Annals of Ulster*, which give an account of the plunder of the monastery by the Vikings. Under AD 882 the *Annals of Inisfallen* refer to the death of 'Flann, son of Cellach, abbot of Scelc'.

The monastery was dedicated to St Michael, possibly at some time in the tenth century. This is suggested by two references to the monastery in the *Annals of the Four Masters*. The first reads, 'Age of Christ, 950, Blathmhac of Sgeillic died'; the second reads, 'Age of Christ, 1044, Aedh of Scelic-Mhichil died'. Thus it has

been assumed that the dedication to St Michael occurred between the years AD 950 and 1044. In monasteries it was customary to build a new church to celebrate a dedication, and the oldest part of the church, known as St Michael's Church, fits architecturally into this period. The fact that St Michael the Archangel was a favourite saint of the Céili Dé from earlier in the tenth century indicates that the dedication could have been as early as AD 900.

The Church of St Michael was mentioned in *The History and Topography of Ireland* by Giraldus Cambrensis, who was in Ireland in the late twelfth century. His account of the miraculous supply of communal wine for daily mass in a stone outside the door of St Michael's Church implies that the monastery was constantly occupied at the time.

Later Developments

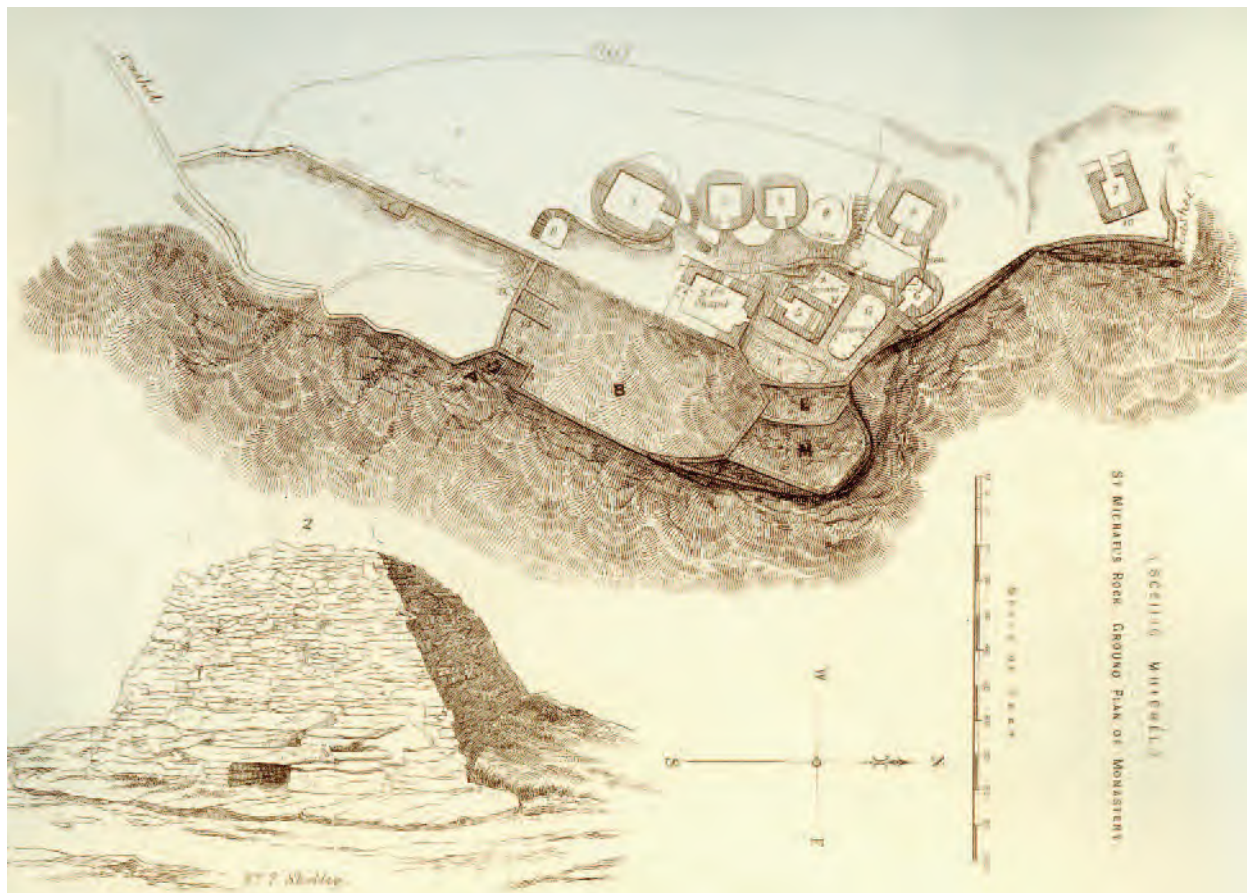
In the early thirteenth century a general climatic deterioration resulted in colder weather and increased storms on the seas around Sceilg Mhichíl. This, along with a shift in the Irish church from a monastic to a diocesan structure, signalled the end

of Irish eremitic island colonies, with the result that the community of Sceilg Mhichíl eventually moved back to the mainland at Ballinskelligs. This was probably not a single event, but a transition likely to have happened over a period of time.

The island probably continued to be used as a dependency of the Augustinian priory at Ballinskelligs, the island monastery being occupied by some monks during the summer months. The prior of Ballinskelligs was still addressed in papal letters as 'Augustinian prior of St Michael's, Roche (*de Rupe*)'. The Augustinians must also have been actively involved in promoting and managing pilgrimages to the island and in maintaining the structures there.

Sceilg Mhichíl remained in the hands of the Augustinian monks until 1578, when, as a result of the Desmond Rebellions, Elizabeth I dissolved certain monasteries that were under the protection of the earl of Desmond. Na Scealga thus fell into secular hands and were eventually passed to the Butler family.

Pl. 5 The first detailed plan of the monastery on Sceilg Mhichíl, published in Dunraven's *Notes on Irish Architecture*, vol. 1, in the 1870s.



Pl. 6 A nineteenth-century view of St Michael's Church, showing the collapsed retaining wall on the south side, published in Dunraven's *Notes on Irish Architecture*, vol. 1.



In the seventeenth century there was an account of Na Scealga in John Lynch's *De Praesulibus Hiberniae* (O'Doherty 1944, 151–2), which shows that the island was still a place of pilgrimage at that time.

In 1756 Charles Smith gave a description of the rock. He referred to difficult and dangerous pilgrimages there and said that 'many persons, about twenty years ago, came from the remotest parts of Ireland to perform these penances, but the zeal of such adventurous devotees has very much cooled of late'.

In the early 1820s the Corporation for Preserving and Improving the Port of Dublin (the predecessor of CIL) acquired the island from John Butler of Waterville under a compulsory purchase order for the purpose of erecting two lighthouses on the Atlantic side. These were made accessible by an improved landing on the east side and a road that was blasted out of the precipitous southern and western sides of the island (see Appendix 7 for more on the history of the lighthouses).

Pl. 7 A nineteenth-century view of the Guesthouse and cross situated outside the entrance to the monastery, published in Dunraven's *Notes on Irish Architecture*, vol. 1.



In 1880 the OPW took the monastic remains into guardianship and commenced a project for the repair of the collapsed structures. Since that time, the OPW has continued in its efforts to maintain and preserve the monastic remains. The state purchased the island in 1989 from CIL, with the exception of the (working) Lower Lighthouse and its curtilage and the helipad area with its adjacent store. CIL also retained a right-of-way over the road. The Lower Lighthouse has now been decommissioned and refurbishment works are ongoing to make it available for use as accommodation for conservation staff, guides and researchers.

The Natural Heritage of Sceilg Mhichíl

Na Scealga have been recognised as two of Ireland's most important sites for breeding seabirds for several hundred years. Both the size of the seabird colonies and the diversity of species present make these islands very significant, both on a national and an international scale. Sceilg Mhichíl, along with the Blasket group (of five islands) and Puffin Island, supports some of the largest breeding populations of Manx shearwater and storm petrel in the world. Other seabird species breeding on Sceilg Mhichíl include fulmar, kittiwake, guillemot and puffin. For more details on the seabirds, see Appendix 6.

Sceilg Mhichíl is known as a traditional nesting place for peregrine falcon. However, those birds do not breed there every year. One pair of chough is recorded as breeding there. Other birds recorded as breeding in small numbers on the island include raven, rock pipit and wheatear.

Pl. 8 *The Atlantic puffin (Fratercula arctica).*



Owing to its ornithological importance, Sceilg Mhichíl is designated as a Statutory Nature Reserve, a Special Protection Area (SPA) and a proposed Natural Heritage Area (NHA). Further information on these designations is contained in Chapter 4.

Mammals

Several species of mammal have been recorded on Sceilg Mhichíl over the years. Grey seal haul out on rocky ledges around the island and, while their numbers are not significant on a national scale, they add to the diversity of the island's fauna. This species is listed under Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive and the Irish population is monitored regularly. Other mammals recorded include the rabbit and the house mouse. The rabbit is a relatively recent introduction, having been brought to the island in the early nineteenth century. It is thought that the house mouse arrived on the island at around the same time.

Pl. 9 *The grey seal (Halichoerus grypus).*



Vegetation

Much of Sceilg Mhichíl is composed of poorly vegetated habitats such as sea cliffs and exposed rock. The vegetation that does occur is typical of highly exposed maritime conditions, limited by thin soil, steep ground, salt spray and high winds. Common plant species include thrift, sea campion and rock sea-spurrey, with patches of red fescue, dock and sea mayweed occurring frequently. Lavelle (1976) recorded 38 species of higher plant (see Appendix 6). The first phase of a vegetation survey was undertaken in 2018–19. It is expected that this survey will be completed in 2022.

A survey of lichen flora was undertaken in 2009 (Douglass and Whelan, 2009). The aims of this initial

Pl. 10 *Sea mayweed* (*Tripleurospermum maritimum*).



Pl. 12 *Rock sea-spurrey* (*Spergularia rupicola*).



Pl. 14 *Navelwort* (*Umbilicus rupestris*) growing in a rock crevice.



baseline survey were to record the lichen flora of Sceilg Mhichíl by exploring all available habitats, to set up monitoring stations to gain information on

Pl. 11 *English stonecrop* (*Sedum anglicum*) in full bloom.



Pl. 13 *Sea campion* (*Silene uniflora*) growing beside the steps.



growth rates and detect habitat change, to make management recommendations in order to maintain or enhance the current lichen interest of the island and to assess the lichen interest of the island in terms of its national significance. The survey recorded a rich diversity comprising 130 species. The survey found that the geographical location of Sceilg Mhichíl, combined with the intensely oceanic climatic regime, geological features and related flora and fauna, makes it an important site for lichens. Of particular note are the large colonies of breeding seabirds (particularly puffin), with which are associated the nutrient enrichment of rock and ground surfaces. This in turn provides habitat for a number of rare ornithocoprophilous species, many of which are abundant on the island. A number of rare and important lichens were recorded, including three new to Ireland and one new to Ireland and Great Britain. The survey concluded that Sceilg Mhichíl should be considered of national importance for its lichen flora.

Chapter 3

Significance of Sceilg Mhichíl

Significance of Sceilg Mhichíl

According to Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention and the category of properties set out in it, Sceilg Mhichíl is deemed to be a 'group of buildings'. As the entire island was inscribed as a WHP, Sceilg Mhichíl can also be considered to be a 'cultural landscape' of value, as per Paragraph 47 of the 2019 *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*. As such, it exhibits the 'combined works of nature and man ... which are of outstanding universal value from the historical [or] aesthetic ... point of view' (World Heritage Convention 1972, Article 1). It is this interaction between the monks of Sceilg Mhichíl and the island's topography in what was a physically harsh environment that affords the site its outstanding cultural value.

Justification for Inscription

UNESCO considers for inscription properties of natural and cultural heritage that are considered to be of Outstanding Universal Value – that is, having 'cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity and the permanent protection of its heritage is of the highest importance to the international community as a whole'.

The World Heritage Committee has developed precise criteria for the inscription of properties on the World Heritage List. In 1996 Sceilg Mhichíl was inscribed by UNESCO on the World Heritage List and is one of three World Heritage Properties on the island of Ireland. This listing recognises the outstanding universal significance of this cultural landscape and the importance of protecting it to the highest international standards.

In its recommendation, in 1996, for the inscription of Sceilg Mhichíl onto the UNESCO World Heritage List on the basis of **Criteria (iii) and (iv)**, ICOMOS (an advisory body to UNESCO) stated that 'Sceilg Mhichíl is an outstanding, and in many ways, unique, example of early religious settlement deliberately sited on a pyramidal rock in the ocean, preserved because of a remarkable environment. It illustrates

as no other property can, the extremes of a Christian monasticism characterising much of North Africa, the Near East, and Europe'.

Criterion (iii): ... to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilisation which is living or which has disappeared.

Criterion (iv): ... to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history.

Statement of Outstanding Universal Value: Sceilg Mhichíl, Ireland (C757)

In 2014 a revised Statement of Outstanding Universal Value was approved by UNESCO. The following is the text of that statement.

Brief synthesis

Sceilg Mhichíl, also known as Skellig Michael, was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1996. The island of Sceilg Mhichíl lies at the extreme north-western edge of Europe, rising from the Atlantic Ocean almost 12 kilometres west of the Iveragh Peninsula in County Kerry. It is the most spectacularly situated of all early medieval island monastic sites, particularly the isolated hermitage perched on narrow, man-made terraces just below the South Peak.

Faulting of Devonian sandstone has created a U-shaped depression known today as Christ's Valley or Christ's Saddle, 130 metres above sea level in the centre of the island, and this is flanked by two peaks – that to the north-east, rising to 185 metres, and that to the west-south-west, at 218 metres. The rock is deeply eroded and weathered owing to its exposed position, but it is almost frost free.

The three island landing points communicate by flights of steps with the principal monastic remains, which are situated on a sloping shelf on the ridge running north–south on the north-eastern side of the island; the hermitage is on the steeper South Peak.

The monastery, its cells and chapels and the even more precipitous structures of the South Peak

Pl. 15 View of Sceilg Mhichíl and An Sceilg Bheag from the mainland.



hermitage symbolise both the arrival and spread of Christianity and the emerging literacy of lands so remote that they were beyond the frontiers of the Roman Empire and the ultimate reach of organised monasticism, which spread from Egypt by land and sea through Italy and Gaul to Britain and Ireland in a mere two centuries (the fifth and sixth). The date of the foundation of the monastery on this island is not known. It was dedicated to St Michael somewhere between AD 900 and 1050.

All the physical components of the ideal small monastery exist on Sceilg Mhichíl: isolation, difficult access, living spaces, buildings for worship and plots for food production. Here, in dramatic and unique settings, the indigenous stone architecture of a past millennium is intact and in a relatively stable condition. A clear evolution of drystone masonry techniques is evident offering a unique record of the development of this type of architecture and construction.

Sceilg Mhichíl is also one of Ireland's most important sites for breeding seabirds, both for the diversity of the species and the size of the colonies it supports.

Criteria

Criterion (iii): Sceilg Mhichíl illustrates, as no other property can, the extremes of a Christian monasticism characterising much of North Africa, the Near East and Europe.

Criterion (iv): Sceilg Mhichíl is an outstanding and in many respects unique example of an early religious settlement deliberately sited on a pyramidal rock in the ocean, preserved because of a remarkable environment.

Natural Value

The very nature of Na Scealga provides a safe haven for immensely important populations of seabirds, where they can nest and rear their young. The surrounding Atlantic Ocean provides rich feeding grounds, while making access difficult for humans and keeping the islands free from predators. Vascular plants on the island, though not of national importance, contribute to the beauty and ecology of Sceilg Mhichíl.

Cultural Value

Sceilg Mhichíl is the most spectacularly situated of all the early medieval island monastic sites. The extreme remoteness of Sceilg Mhichíl has allowed for an exceptional state of preservation, which is what makes it unique.

As stated at the time of nomination as a WHP, the monastery and hermitage on Sceilg Mhichíl represent a unique artistic achievement and offer exceptional testimony to a civilisation that has disappeared. They are an outstanding example of a perfectly preserved early medieval monastic settlement and the architectural ensemble is unique because of its level of preservation. It illustrates a significant stage in building history. During the course of conservation and repair works it has been possible to examine the structures in detail and also to work out a relative chronology for the cells. A clear development in drystone masonry techniques can be seen. The site offers a unique record of the evolution of this type of building and design.

After its abandonment by the monks, the island became the location for two lighthouses, which operated from 1826, augmenting the island's important position in Ireland's maritime history. While not part of the revised Statement of Outstanding Universal Value, the lighthouses and associated structures on the island are being conserved as part of the WHP. Works to the Lighthouse Road, the Lower Lighthouse and to the derelict Upper Lighthouse are being carried out, as these form an important part of the history of the island.

Intangible Value

The dramatic topography of the island and the integration of the various monastic elements in this landscape reinforce its uniqueness. The monks, by their presence on the island for such a long period of time, left more than just physical remains. They imbued the place with a strong sense of spirituality, which can be felt by anyone who has had the opportunity to spend time there. The physical remains bear witness to the remarkable achievements of the monks, which cannot fail to invoke a sense of wonder and awe. The sense of remoteness and removal from everyday life is further reinforced by the island's distance from the mainland and its frequent inaccessibility due to the unpredictability of the weather and Atlantic Ocean.

Even after the monks' departure from the island and the establishment of the monastic settlement at Ballinskelligs, Sceilg Mhichíl continued to play an important role in their religious life. Throughout the medieval period, veneration of the site continued and developed. In time it became renowned throughout Europe as a place of special pilgrimage. It appears that large-scale pilgrimage had died out by the mid-nineteenth century though there is some documentary evidence that, at a local level, pilgrimage to the island persisted into the twentieth century (Gibbons, 2020).

Socio-economic Value

As well as being an icon of the region and a source of local pride, Sceilg Mhichíl forms an important part of the wider local economy. The island plays a role in aiding the economy of the Iveragh Peninsula and surrounding regions. Revenue is generated through the provision of amenities and services to visitors in this area. The enhancement of the visitor experience as outlined in this management plan will further help to support the local community and region and its economy.

Pl. 16 Early morning inside the monastery, showing the Monks' Graveyard and cells.



Authenticity and Integrity of Sceilg Mhichíl

The island's isolation has helped preserve and protect it from agents of destruction that have affected most other sites of the period. Alterations were made during the lighthouse-builders' occupation in the 1820s, but it has been possible to document these through investigation. Because of the vicissitudes of time, the extreme environment and increased visitor pressure, a programme of preservation works has been in train since the late 1970s for structural consolidation and repair. The philosophy underpinning this work is that all original features are retained and conserved *in situ*. This approach to the work has been recognised by UNESCO, during the inscription process, as guaranteeing the authenticity of the WHP.

Even though it was not mentioned at the time of inscription, integrity is an important issue to be taken into account. Integrity is a measure of the wholeness and intactness of the natural and/or

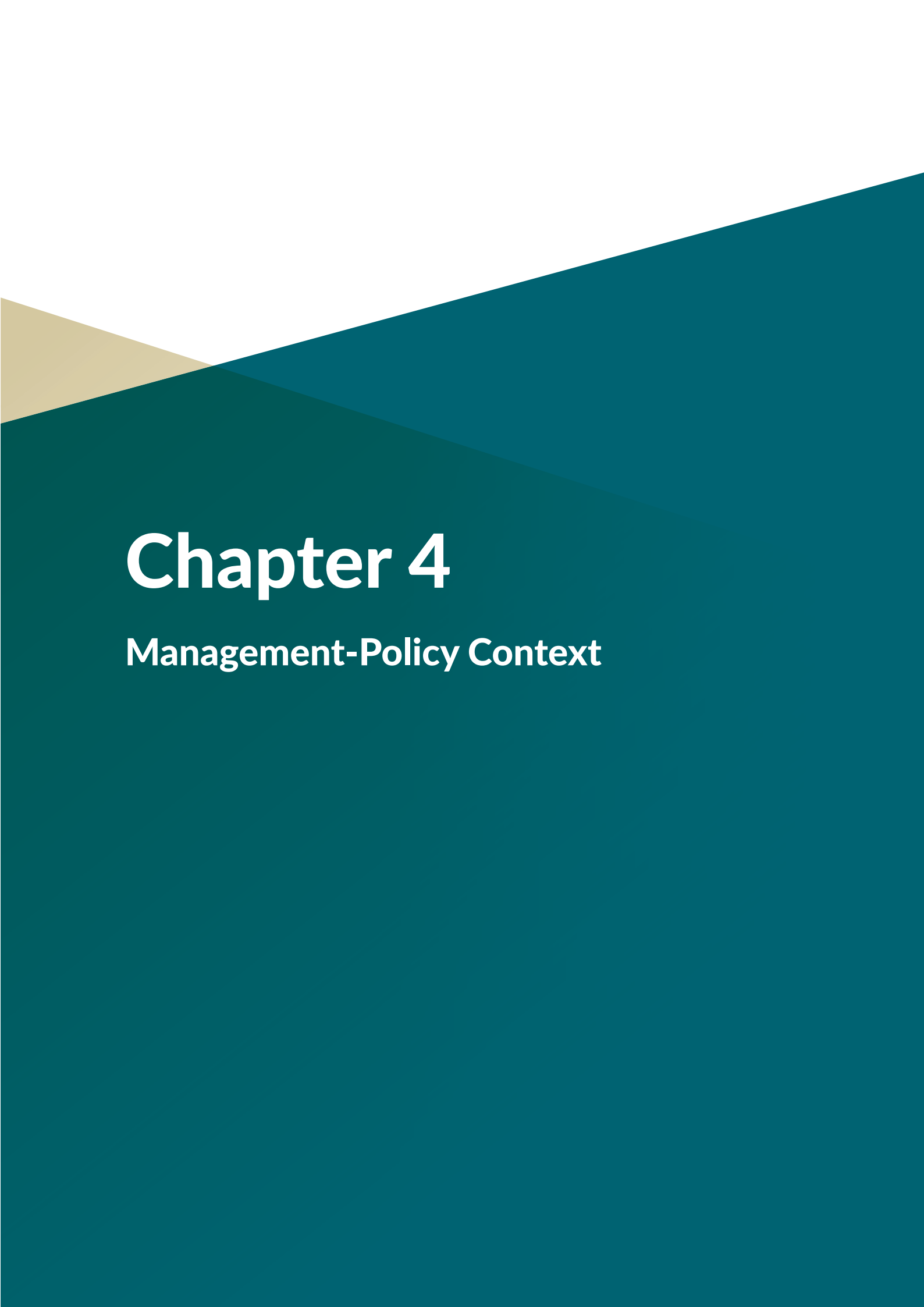
cultural heritage and its attributes. In the case of Sceilg Mhichíl, there are two types of integrity: structural-historical integrity – the way the structures have evolved over time; and visual-aesthetic integrity – the iconic image that has been retained.





PART 2





Chapter 4

Management-Policy Context

Management-Policy Context

Ownership

Sceilg Mhichíl WHP is owned by the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage on behalf of the Irish people. The lighthouse is owned by CIL and operated by them as an aid to navigation. DHLGH is the state body responsible under the World Heritage Convention for policy relating to the built and natural heritage of the WHP, the management of which is the responsibility of the OPW.

Statutory Protections

The protection and conservation of Sceilg Mhichíl is controlled by a range of national legislation, local mechanisms and international statutory and non-statutory guidance. These legislative provisions include, amongst others, the National Monuments Acts 1930–2014, the Wildlife Acts 1976 and 2000, Planning and Development Acts, various EU directives and various international charters.

National Legislation

National Monuments Acts 1930 to 2014

Sceilg Mhichíl is a National Monument, as defined in the National Monuments Act 1930 (as amended) – that is, a monument whose preservation is a matter of national importance by reason of its historical, architectural, traditional, artistic or archaeological interest. The National Monuments Acts 1930–2014 provide for the protection and preservation of National Monuments and a range of other monuments and for the preservation of archaeological objects in the state. As such, those acts provide statutory protection for archaeological elements of the nation's built heritage.

Sceilg Mhichíl is afforded the highest level of statutory protection under the National Monuments Acts. It is a National Monument in the ownership of the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Under the provisions of Section 14 of the National Monuments Acts 1930–2014 the prior written

Pl. 17 'The Great Skellig – Co. Kerry by Admiral R. B. Beechey R.H.A. presented by Sir Edw. H. Hudson Kinahan Bart. (Commissioner of Irish Lights), January 1892' (Copyright CIL).



consent of the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage is required for a range of specified activities carried out in respect of a National Monument of which the minister or a local authority are the owners or the guardians or in respect of which a preservation order is in force. The specified activities are:

- to demolish, remove, disfigure, deface, alter or in any manner injure or interfere with the National Monument;
- to excavate, dig, plough or otherwise disturb the ground within, around or in proximity to the National Monument;
- to renovate or restore the National Monument; or
- to sell the National Monument or any part of it for exportation or export it or any part of it.

To ensure that the widest possible range of archaeological concerns is taken into account, the minister is required to consult with the director of the National Museum of Ireland before granting such consent.

In considering whether or not to grant such consent, the minister may have regard to a number of issues, including but not limited to:

- the preservation, protection or maintenance of the archaeological, architectural, historical or other cultural heritage or amenities of, or associated with, the National Monument;
- any environmental, cultural, social, recreational or economic benefit that would accrue to the state or area in which the National Monument is situated; and
- the need to collect or disseminate information on National Monuments or in respect of heritage generally.

Based on the above, all physical interventions on Sceilg Mhichíl are subject to a requirement for ministerial consent.

Wildlife Acts 1976 and 2000

Under the provisions of the above acts, Sceilg Mhichíl is covered by two nature conservation designations:

Nature Reserve

Nature reserves on lands owned by the minister or by the state are designated by Establishment Order under Section 15 of the Wildlife Act 1976, as amended by the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000. Sceilg Mhichíl was designated a Statutory Nature Reserve in 1988 (S.I. No. 235/1988).

Under the Wildlife Acts there is an obligation to manage land designated as a Statutory Nature Reserve in accordance with the objectives for which it is designated. The Establishment Order for the Great Skellig Nature Reserve states that the island is: the breeding habitat of certain species of seabirds and that the said habitat is likely to benefit if measures are taken for its protection and that it is desirable to establish the said land as a nature reserve and that the proper management of the said land as a nature reserve would not be precluded by any interest or any other person in or over the said land, for the purpose of conserving the said habitat.

Natural Heritage Area (Proposed)

Sceilg Mhichíl is a proposed NHA (Site Code 1954). NHAs are the basic designation for the protection of wildlife sites in Ireland. They are defined in Section 2 of the Wildlife Act 1976, as amended by Section 6 of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000, as:

an area which is worthy of conservation for one or more species, communities, habitats, landforms or geological or geomorphological features, or for its diversity of natural attributes.

Protection is afforded to NHAs under several sections of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000, including restrictions and prohibitions on carrying out certain works. NHAs are normally also listed in a county development plan.

Planning and Development Act 2000

Ireland has a modern and effective planning legislative code that offers comprehensive environmental and conservation protection. This is established under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the regulations made under that act (the Planning and Development Regulations 2001–19). Core elements of this are the mandatory setting of objectives in county development plans for the protection of the archaeological and natural heritage and the system of referral to expert statutory consultees (including the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage) of applications for planning permission that may have heritage implications.

The county development plan, revised at regular intervals by Kerry County Council in accordance with the legislation, is central to the planning system and provides the framework for consideration of development proposals that require planning permission. The process of revising and adopting a development plan is democratic and consultative. It invites participation by the general public and concerned bodies (both state and civil) through a combination of specific consultation and invitation to comment on a draft plan as put on public display for a specified period of time. The local authority considers the comments received in this open and transparent process.

Furthermore, the process of applying for planning permission is also transparent and consultative, with applications available for consideration and comment by the public generally and also referred to expert consultees as specified under the Planning and Development Regulations.

The *Kerry County Development Plan 2015–2021* provides the current strategic policies for the county. The plan sets out a number of objectives under its 'Built Heritage' and 'Natural Environment' sections. The underpinnings to this can be categorised as follows:

- the preservation of archaeological monuments and sites included in the Record of Monuments and Places;
- the identification of archaeological sites;
- the protection of settings of archaeological interest; and
- the enhancement of public awareness and the provision of guidance.

The archaeological heritage in the county is unique and the local authority is keenly aware of the need to protect it through implementation of the following objectives, among others:

- H-25: Protect and preserve the underwater archaeological heritage of the county. In assessing proposals for development, the council will take account of the rivers, lakes, intertidal and sub-tidal environments.
- H-26: Secure the preservation of all sites, features and objects of archaeological interest within the county. In securing such preservation the council will have regard to the advice and recommendations of the NMS, DCHG (now

DHLGH), the National Museum of Ireland and the county archaeologist.

- H-27: Ensure that proposed development (due to location, size or nature) which may have implications for the archaeological heritage of the county is subject to an archaeological assessment, which may lead to further subsequent archaeological mitigation – buffer zones/exclusion zones, monitoring, pre-development archaeological testing, archaeological excavation and/or refusal of planning. This includes areas close to archaeological monuments, extensive in area (0.5 hectares or more) or length (1 kilometre or more) and any development that requires an environmental-impact statement.
- H-31: Protect archaeological/historical graveyards within the county and encourage and promote their maintenance in accordance with legislation, conservation principles and best practice.
- H-32: Protect and preserve the industrial archaeological heritage of the county as reflected in such sites as mills, lighthouses, harbours, Valentia cable station, etc. Proposals for refurbishment works or redevelopment of these sites should be subject to a full architectural and archaeological assessment.
- H-33: Promote public awareness and facilitate appropriate advisory guidance in relation to the protection of the archaeological heritage of the county.

These wide-ranging planning objectives incorporate arrangements for taking into account the advice and recommendations of the NMS, the National Museum of Ireland and other statutory agencies with regard to the identification and preservation of archaeological monuments and sites in the county.

The *Kerry County Development Plan 2015–2021* includes several policies in relation to the architectural heritage which have to be taken into account, particularly in relation to the lighthouse structures on the island. These include:

- H-34: Protect the architectural heritage and promote conservation-led regeneration and reuse of buildings, where appropriate.
- H-37: Encourage the retention of original building fabric such as cut stone, thatch, timber sash windows, timber doors, lime mortar, natural slate, render and joinery detailing.
- H-38: Ensure that any development, modification,

alteration, or extension affecting a protected structure and/or its setting:

- is appropriate in terms of proposed materials, scale, density and layout;
 - addresses the issue of reversibility;
 - respects the original design plan and form;
 - demonstrates an understanding of the historical importance of the building and its setting and does not detract from the special character/interest of the protected structure;
 - deals sensitively with historically important features and fittings; and
 - takes account of any protected species that may utilise the structure and accordingly mitigate any impacts on the species.
- H-40: Ensure that measures to upgrade the energy efficiency of protected structures and historic buildings do not damage the historic fabric.

The archaeological structures, natural features, diverse habitat and vegetation on Sceilg Mhichíl combine to produce some of the most spectacular scenery in Ireland. The council recognises the importance to the overall landscape of these features and strives to protect and enhance the landscape and physical beauty of the area by including the following objectives under the 'Natural Environment' section of the county development plan:

- To ensure that development likely to have serious adverse effects on the areas listed will not normally be permitted. The designation of sites does not imply a total restriction on all development. However, there will be a presumption against certain damaging types of development.
- To ensure that any development proposal in the vicinity of or affecting in any way a designated Special Area of Conservation (SAC), SPA or NHA provides sufficient information, showing how its proposals will impact on the habitat and indicating appropriate amelioration.
- To maintain the conservation value of those sites selected as SPAs, as well as any other sites that may be so identified during the lifetime of the plan.
- To maintain the conservation value of all NHAs proposed for designation during the lifetime of the plan.

EU Birds Directive

Sceilg Mhichíl, along with An Sceilg Bheag and the surrounding sea, has been designated an SPA (S.I. No. 74/2010 – European Communities (Conservation of Wild Birds (Skelligs Special Protection Area 004007)) Regulations 2010) under the EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC). An SPA is an area deemed to be of international significance for birds. SPA designation criteria include sites that regularly hold 10,000 pairs of seabirds and sites that hold 1 per cent or more of the all-Ireland population of a species listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive.

The Skelligs SPA is designated for its assemblage of 20,000 seabirds, as well as for Manx shearwater, storm petrel, gannet and puffin. (See Appendix 6 for bird data.) SPAs, along with SACs, which are designated under the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), collectively form Natura 2000, a network of protected areas throughout the European Union.

Article 4.1 of the Birds Directive provides for member states to classify their most suitable territories as SPAs. This article was implemented in Ireland in the first instance by S.I. No. 291/1985 – European Communities (Conservation of Wild Birds) Regulations 1985. The enforcement provisions for SPAs were changed by the Habitats Directive. The two Nature Directives are now implemented in Ireland by S.I. No. 477/2011 – European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011.

Article 6 of the Habitats Directive requires AA for any works, plans or projects. In order to protect ecologically important sites, certain activities may be restricted within designated areas. These activities (known as 'Activities Requiring Consent') have been identified as having the potential to destroy or significantly alter, damage or interfere with the ecology of a site. The list of such activities varies depending on the habitats and species present. (See Appendix 6 for a list of Activities Requiring Consent.)

International Conventions

International conventions are treaties creating obligations in international law for states which have ratified them.

Ireland ratified the 1972 World Heritage Convention in 1991. This convention, of course, provides the basis for the inscription of Sceilg Mhichíl on the World Heritage List and its resulting status as a WHP. Ireland's international legal obligations under the World Heritage Convention (including appropriate adherence to guidance on WHPs developed within the framework of the convention) are implemented within Ireland through the National Monuments Acts, the Wildlife Acts and EU-derived natural-heritage legislation, and the Planning and Development Act.

Ireland is also party to a range of other international conventions, such as the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Revised) (Valletta, 1992), the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada, 1985), the Council of Europe European Landscape Convention (Florence, 2000) and the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, 1992 (among several other international conventions on biodiversity and natural heritage), which again are implemented in Ireland through the national and EU-derived legislation set out above.

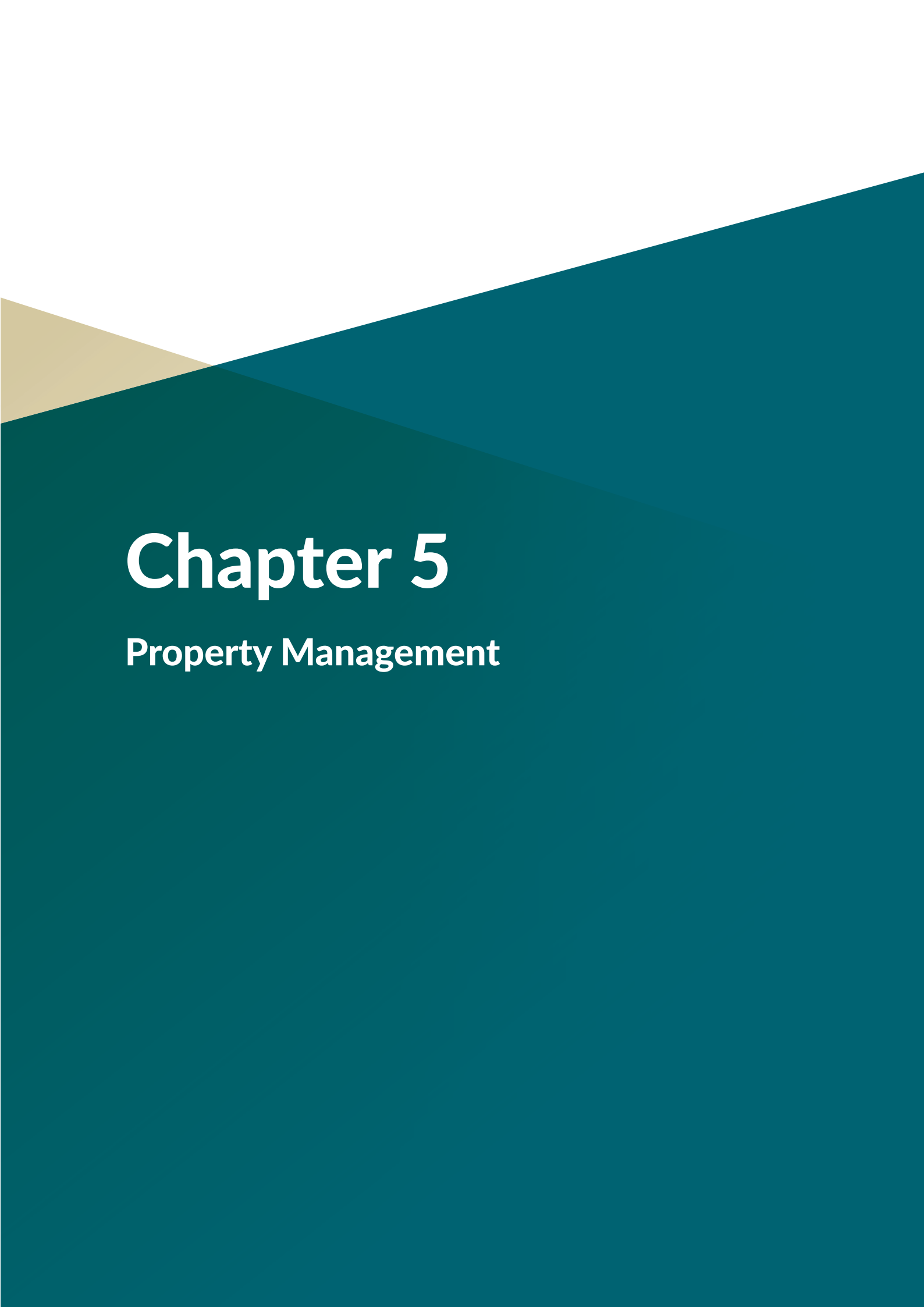
There are a number of international (or regional) biodiversity-related conventions to which Ireland is party, which contain provisions relevant to the conservation of the island's biodiversity.

ICOMOS Charters on Cultural Heritage

The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), an association of professionals throughout the world, set out general principles for the preservation of historic monuments and heritage in 1964. This document is known as the *International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (the Venice Charter 1964)*. Since then many additional charters have been formulated and ratified to cover other aspects of cultural heritage, such as authenticity, preservation, protection and management.

Although these charters are not instruments of international law, they are widely accepted as setting out recognised standards for the built-heritage community, working towards the conservation and protection of cultural-heritage sites.

ICOMOS Ireland, the national body, promotes ICOMOS's international charters, supports the implementation of the World Heritage Convention and promotes responsible custodianship of WHPs. It is available for consultation by government departments on matters relating to cultural heritage, international charters and conventions. Relevant charters (listed in Appendix 8) have provided guidance in the approach to the preservation of the WHP and in the management policies as set out in this plan.



Chapter 5

Property Management

Property Management Framework

Responsibility for the management of operational matters and works on Sceilg Mhichíl rests with OPW. DHLGH has responsibility for the legislative and policy framework for the built and natural heritage. The two organisations liaise with one another to provide an integrated approach to the management of the WHP; representatives meet on a regular basis to ensure that cross-cutting issues are addressed in an effective and coordinated manner.

Management of the WHP strives to achieve a balance between conservation of the built and natural heritage, visitor management and increased public awareness.

Cultural-Heritage Management Structure

The management of the cultural heritage on the island of Sceilg Mhichíl is in the remit of OPW. Archaeological input to the conservation and presentation of the WHP is provided by the NMS by means of a service-level agreement with OPW. District works meetings are held every few months to

review projects of all works in the district in which Sceilg Mhichíl lies. Regular meetings are held between OPW, DHLGH and the project team to discuss each year's programme of works and technical requirements.

Project Team for Conservation Works

The onsite project team for the conservation works comprises a conservation architect, who also acts as manager for the WHP, an archaeologist, a structural engineer and an ornithologist, all of whom have considerable expertise in their specific fields. Additional advice is drawn from expertise within DHLGH and OPW. When required, experts are commissioned to undertake specialist work both onsite and offsite. The core team is interdisciplinary and a close working relationship prevails at all times. Supervision of works is a shared responsibility and is subject to the nature of the works being undertaken. A small team led by experienced personnel, including stonemasons, who are qualified in the construction and repair of drystone masonry, carries out the works on the structures on Sceilg Mhichíl. There is also input from a full-time safety expert.

Pl. 18 Relaying Valentia slate capstones on the sea wall north-east of the Lower Lighthouse complex.



Pl. 19 An OPW mason laying the base for new capstones on the sea wall, Upper Lighthouse Road.



Conservation Framework

All conservation works are undertaken with due regard to the various international charters and documents that provide a framework for the preservation of historic monuments and WHPs. These charters and documents act as guidelines and inform all work. In undertaking any work, cognisance is also taken of actual site conditions and constraints.

Legislation governing National Monuments and natural heritage must be complied with when undertaking conservation works. All works are subject to consent from the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage and are reviewed on a regular basis. In relation to wildlife legislation and relevant directives, the works team meets with the NPWS to review works carried out, to assess and mitigate any impact on the natural heritage of the island and to plan for future seasons.

The strategy behind the continued conservation management of the WHP is rigorous in adhering to

an acceptable international framework. The approach taken to conservation management was discussed in detail with the UNESCO representative at the time of the World Heritage assessment. UNESCO was fully satisfied that the proposed interventions did not compromise the authenticity of the property. That same approach has informed all subsequent works.

Philosophy Underpinning the Works Programme

Owing to the harsh weather conditions on Sceilg Mhichíl and other natural factors, parts of the monastic remains, notably the retaining walls, have collapsed and been rebuilt many times in the past. At the outset of the current works programme, a detailed structural and engineering survey was carried out on the retaining walls of the monastery. This provided the team with baseline information from which to work. Based on this survey, a list of necessary structural interventions was compiled and prioritised, which in turn provided a template for structural consolidation.

One of the most fundamental issues is structural stability. Until structural stability is achieved, no other conservation works can be undertaken, except for temporary remedial or holding works. Only when stabilisation has been achieved can final consideration be given to detailed conservation and presentation.

Before the start of each season the project team meets to discuss the programme and to plan all aspects of the works. Intervention is kept to a minimum, always bearing in mind the essential requirement of structural stability.

All structures are preserved, except in exceptional circumstances when conservation requires the partial removal of a structure. Such circumstances may relate to archaeological excavation or structural stabilisation. In such rare cases the structure and its associated stratigraphy is archaeologically recorded and the necessary section is taken down and reconstructed using the original stone in the same pattern.

Where structural support is required for the preservation of the monument and excavation reveals original wall structures, these are conserved and raised,

where necessary, to a level at which they can safely support all the features of the original construction. Where walls are being conserved, a sacrificial layer of drystone masonry will normally be added to the top, if appropriate. This intervention protects what remains of the original masonry from damage.

Works Safety

Responsibility for overall safety on Sceilg Mhichíl lies with OPW. All staff working on the island operate in accordance with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 (as amended) and the relevant ancillary health and safety legislation. At a local level, a specially trained safety operative has day-to-day onsite responsibility for the implementation of general safety procedures as outlined in the Sceilg Mhichíl Safety Statement and operates in conjunction with the works chargehand. Safety procedures are contained in a variety of documents and these procedures are adhered to with the guidance of an external specialist contractor, with assistance from the Health and Safety Unit of the OPW.

Specialist activities, such as rope access and the use of safety harnesses, are the responsibility of the

aforementioned safety operative. All personnel working on Sceilg Mhichíl are suitably trained and equipped to complete their work in a safe manner. At the start of each season all works employees on Sceilg Mhichíl have their safety skills updated. In relation to working at height, all works employees are assessed and trained annually to undertake these tasks. Additional training also takes place onsite as required during the season.

At the beginning of each season safety equipment is logged, marked and inspected. Records are kept on file in the site office. The specialist safety contractor ensures the maintenance of all safety equipment in conformity with relevant health and safety legislation.

A detailed rescue plan, formulated in agreement with the relevant agencies and authorities, is in place for Sceilg Mhichíl. This is regularly reviewed. At the beginning of each season a training exercise for all OPW staff takes place.

Conservation Works

A summary of all works undertaken since the nineteenth century is outlined in Appendix 5.

Pl. 20 A rescue exercise on Sceilg Mhichíl: a stretcher being carried down the lower East Steps.



Pl. 21 A rescue exercise on Sceilg Mhichíl: Valentia lifeboat by the pier.



Survey and Recording

Measured surveys and photographic surveys are carried out before any works commence. Plans, sectional profiles and elevations are recorded at differing scales during archaeological excavation; instrument surveys are used to record features after excavation.

A LiDAR survey has been an accurate baseline survey for all areas of the island. The level of coverage of the main monastery and the South Peak has been 100 points per square metre, which has provided high-definition records of all structures in these areas. Monitoring included annual laser scanning of the walls (carried out by the Discovery Programme) to detect any movement or other changes.

A professional photographic record is also made, both from the ground and from the air, of all works which form an integral part of the official archive of Sceilg Mhichíl.

Pl. 22 Survey work on the South Peak



Pl. 23 Excavation in the Large Oratory in the monastery (1987).



Archaeological Investigations

The scope of archaeological work to date on the island has been determined, by and large, by its preservation needs. This strategy has been deemed most appropriate given the limited area available for excavation on this precipitous island and the intact nature of the structures – in the monastery in particular – that must be left undisturbed. This approach is in line with one of the fundamental principles of DHLGH's strategy to protect archaeological heritage: 'The gathering of archaeological information should never in any circumstances destroy any more of the archaeological heritage than is necessary' (Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands 1999, 23). Within these parameters, then, the aim has been to exploit fully the opportunities provided by the interventions required to conserve elements of the WHP in order to obtain new insights into the monastic settlement.

Over the years archaeological input has ranged from monitoring and supervising works to full archaeological excavation. A summary of archaeological investigations from 1986 to 2020 is provided in Appendix 4. After the completion of major programmes of work in the monastery and on the South Peak, work focused on the Lighthouse Road, which is due for completion in 2022, and on the lighthouse complexes.

Pl. 24 Architects, an archaeologist and a mason discussing conservation work on the Upper Lighthouse Road.



Pl. 25 The interior of the oratory on the South Peak after excavation and before conservation.



Portable Objects

It is policy to retain heritage objects on the island as far as possible. There have been some instances of damage to objects – for example, to the large cross by the Small Oratory, which had been initially repaired in situ. Subsequently it was necessary to remove it to a conservation laboratory for repair. Since its return it has been necessary to limit access to this area and to date there have been no further issues. Ongoing monitoring of the condition of such items is carried out and, if heritage objects are deemed to be at further risk, they will be removed from the island for safe keeping.

There are cases of portable and damaged objects which are too vulnerable to leave exposed on the island. These comprise small crosses, worked-stone fragments and damaged crosses. All such objects are fully recorded, conserved where relevant and stored in a suitable environment to provide for their long-term preservation. These stone objects have been catalogued and will be kept in custom-built storage units at the OPW National Monuments Depot in Killarney, where they will be accessible during working hours, by prior appointment.

Numerous artefacts have been recovered during

excavations on Sceilg Mhichíl over the years, all from the monastery. The archaeological artefacts and samples recovered during excavation are stored in the premises of the NMS during the post-excavation reporting period. Following recording, conservation and publication, the artefacts will be transferred to the National Museum of Ireland for long-term storage and curation.

Engineering

Structural consolidation has been necessary in a number of places where the collapse of retaining walls could endanger the stability of the structures above them or could create a risk to visitors to the island. There was also some poor-quality, and in some places dangerous, nineteenth-century walling that needed to be replaced.

A difficulty in carrying out the work has been the unavailability of suitable stone on the island. In many cases collapses have led to considerable quantities of stone from the original walls being distributed over the steep slopes below and falling into the sea. Even where walls were complete but in a precarious state, some stones were badly cracked

Pl. 26 Rockfall close to staff accommodation.



and not reusable. In particular, there has been a shortage of larger stones. Quarrying has not been an option, given the importance of maintaining the historic cultural landscape, so it has been necessary to make do with what stone was available. The engineering methods used on the property have had to compensate for this shortage of suitable stone.

When reconstructing retaining walls up to a height of approximately 1.5 metres, the form adopted has been a traditional, double-faced, drystone wall infilled with selected ties and smaller stone. For higher retaining walls it has generally been considered essential in critical areas to use a backing of reinforced concrete, especially where the foundation was poor or the pressure of retained material was very great. The advantage of this backing was that it required less stone than a double-faced drystone wall and more of the smaller stones could therefore be used. The use of reinforced concrete for retaining wall structures has been kept well below ground level and has been used only in limited circumstances, where absolutely necessary.

Since the construction of the original Lighthouse Road there has been continual damage to the capstones from landslides. During the lighthouse

occupation these were often replaced with shuttered concrete, which itself caused further problems, and it has been necessary to remove this concrete. In addition, a considerable number of capstones have been lost from the Upper Lighthouse Road retaining walls. It has been necessary to import stone from Valentia to Sceilg Mhichíl to enable OPW repair works. This stone is similar in composition to the local island stone.

Maintenance

Day-to-day maintenance has been an integral part of the annual works programme since 1978. As works have been completed on most of the monastic buildings, a structured maintenance programme has been drawn up for all the conserved structures.

At the start of the season the annual maintenance programme is undertaken with the help of the safety operative on the island. This maintenance programme covers the East, South and North Steps, the monastery and all the structures on the South Peak. Lighthouse-era structures include the pier, the Lower Lighthouse Road and the lighthouse platform above. Regular maintenance is also required to the protective canopy at Cross Cove, which was put in

place to address regular rockfalls at this location. Given the large areas of the island structures conserved to date, the timeframe required for this maintenance work has lengthened, with the works now requiring a period of six weeks.

(Further details of the maintenance programme are contained in Appendix 5.)

Monitoring

Regular monitoring takes place in relation to the access steps and area available to visitors. This also forms part of the maintenance programme. In addition, a programme of close monitoring of retaining walls, both in the monastery and on the South Peak, has been developed with the Discovery Programme and there is an annual onsite instrument check towards the end of each season. More frequent checks are undertaken in any area that might give cause for concern.

Outstanding Works to Monastic Structures

All outstanding works to the monastic area are now complete. There is still one monastic structure, halfway up the South Steps on the way to the Saddle, which is being currently monitored. This may have been a prayer station. Some repair will probably be required here in the future but it is not regarded as urgent at this time.

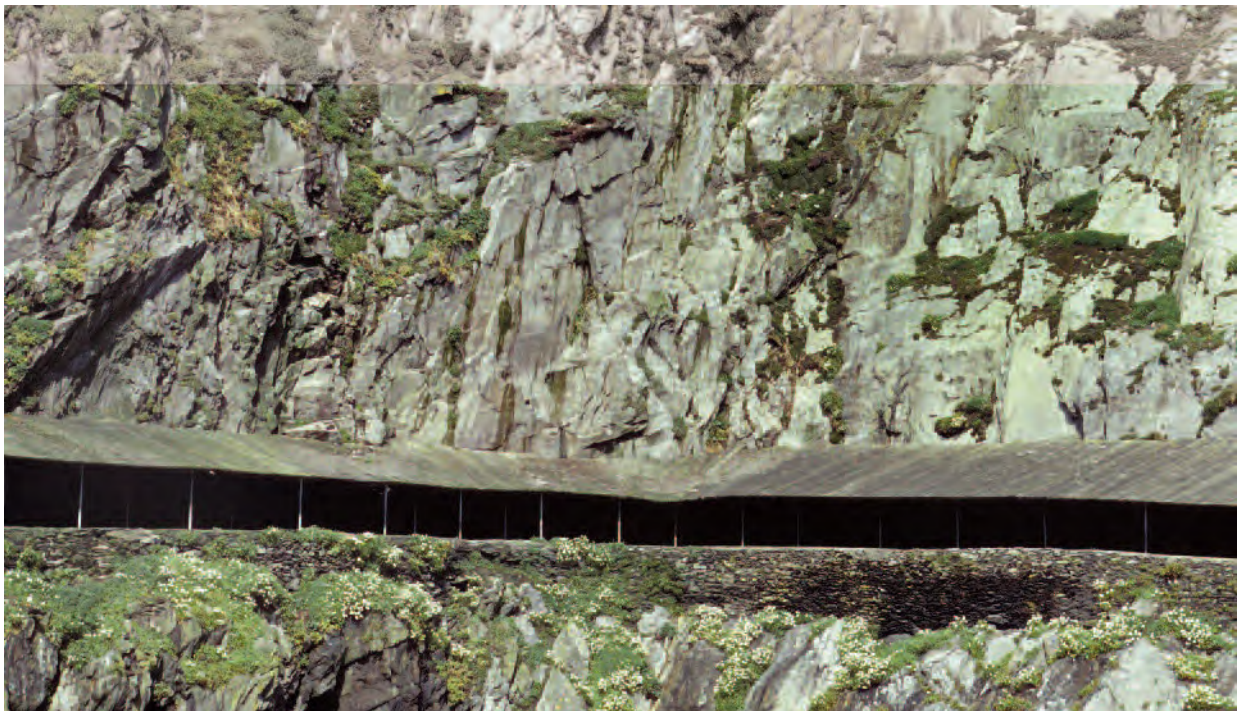
Works Programme to Lighthouse Structures

The two lighthouses on Sceilg Mhichíl are the focus of a long-term conservation project. The programme of works includes the archaeological and architectural appraisal and investigation of these important structures, which are important sources of insight into the industrial heritage of their time.

Preliminary work has been carried out on the Lower Lighthouse, involving the removal of 1970s refurbishments and the removal of asbestos and some plasterwork to examine the current state of this largely nineteenth-century structure. Design work is ongoing to repurpose this structure as accommodation for workers and visiting consultants and workspace for academic researchers. The works have been based on a detailed plan prepared in 2019 to upgrade and renew the fabric of this building complex. This may ultimately allow removal of some temporary structures situated along the Lower Lighthouse Road. A detailed survey of the Upper Lighthouse complex commenced in 2020. Archaeological excavation is being undertaken to inform the conservation works.

Once works have been completed it will be possible to open the Upper Lighthouse and the road to the public, adding to the visitor experience of the island.

Pl. 27 The protective canopy at Cross Cove.



Pl. 28 The Upper and Lower Lighthouses from the north-east.



The Lighthouse Road: from the Landing Pier to the Lower Lighthouse

This early nineteenth-century roadway, which was maintained by CIL, is still in use. Maintenance is now undertaken by the OPW. The roadway itself is in good condition, though the roadway parapet and retaining walls had deteriorated in places. These walls rise to considerable heights in places and provide prime nesting sites for storm petrel and puffin. Over time the sea has eroded all the external render and removed much of the mortar from the joints, thus reducing the strength of this structural wall, which runs from just above the pier to the Lower Lighthouse complex.

A detailed structural study of the full length of this road and parapet wall has informed the nature and scale of the required intervention. Some holes have been secured with drystone construction and the wall has been generally strengthened to improve its essential function.

Works on the Lower Lighthouse Road commenced in 2011 and were completed in 2016. The wall was fully surveyed for nesting birds before any work was undertaken. Ornithologists offered advice throughout and a survey of this entire wall was undertaken after the completion of the works. No quantified effects on the seabirds breeding in the wall were found.

Regular repairs to and cleaning of the gullies and drains along this roadway form part of the annual maintenance programme.

The Lighthouse Road: the Upper Lighthouse Road

This roadway was not used very much after the decommissioning of the Upper Lighthouse in May 1870, and over the decades landslides caused large amounts of material to lodge on the road, with some retaining-wall collapse. Much of the capping was lost. The original surface of the roadway was

Pl. 29 A view of the Upper Lighthouse and the Upper Lighthouse Road before archaeological excavation and conservation works to the road.



Pl. 30 The Upper Lighthouse Road covered with material deposited from above (excavations ongoing in background).



covered with soil and stones and the gullies and drains were no longer operating. In places the original surface was rutted, with cascading water causing serious problems.

A detailed assessment of this length of roadway, involving a full structural analysis and ornithological documentation, was carried out and a programme of works began in 2017, starting from the Lower Lighthouse complex. The works required here have been undertaken with full archaeological and ornithological input. In one location it was necessary to construct a permanent canopy similar to that at Cross Cove to protect from rockfalls. This work is scheduled to be completed by 2022.

Pl. 31 The Upper Lighthouse Road, after excavation, showing the original road surface, drains and an electrical conduit inserted in the early twentieth century.



Natural-Heritage Management and Monitoring

Accounts of breeding seabirds on the island go back as far as the 1700s, but more systematic surveys and ringing programmes only came into effect from the late 1950s onwards. Annual surveys were carried out between 1990 and 2002 by NPWS, who carried out a census of the cliff-nesting seabirds (e.g., guillemot, fulmar, kittiwake). As part of Seabird 2000, population estimates of puffin, Manx shearwater and storm petrel were derived (see Merne and Walsh 2005; Mitchell et al. 2004). NPWS have counted cliff-nesting seabirds and three gull-species populations annually since 2006 and have incorporated them into the latest assessment of breeding seabirds at the national scale (see Cummins et al. 2019 and Appendix 6 for results of seabird monitoring). Annually, a census is carried out of all cliff-nesting seabird species and the breeding productivity of Sceilg Mhichíl's kittiwake population is estimated.

National censuses provide population estimates of each species of seabird breeding in Ireland, against which the national and international importance of each individual colony can be assessed. Under this management plan it is intended to develop the seabird-monitoring programme, with particular attention to burrow-nesting seabirds in order to derive, among other things, robust population estimates, population trends and the identification of pressures acting on the populations. Such data will inform the management of both public access and the works programme in monitoring potential effects of human activities. These data contribute to the evidence base informing the appropriate conservation management of the SPA network.

Surveys have also been conducted of the lichen on the island. A vegetation survey is due for completion in 2022 and research of impacts of mice and rabbits on the biodiversity and archaeological heritage of the islands is being undertaken. A biosecurity action plan has been developed to deal with accidental or deliberate introductions of predator species.

Sustainable Tourism and Visitor Management

Sustainable Tourism

In line with the ICOMOS International Cultural Tourism Charter 1999, one of the primary objectives for managing Sceilg Mhichíl in a sustainable way is to 'communicate its significance and [the] need for its conservation to its host community and to visitors'. Since the mid-1980s the state has sought to create a viable and sustainable approach to facilitating and managing visitor activity at Sceilg Mhichíl which is in line with UNESCO policy.

Sceilg Mhichíl, by virtue of its WHP status and the iconic image it presents, is a significant emblem for Irish tourism activity in the south-west and the Iveragh Peninsula in particular. Though it does not have the capacity to accept large numbers of visitors, as some other OPW-run heritage sites do, it nevertheless holds great importance in terms of its tourism brand value and attracts extensive visitor interest to the Iveragh Peninsula. The development of

Pl. 32 Tourists descending the South Steps.



a balanced tourism industry has been identified as a key government priority and assets such as Sceilg Mhichíl have a significant role internationally in positively showcasing the best of the nation's cultural and heritage offerings, particularly where they exist in areas of economic decline. Success in the tourism sector is proven to bring many socioeconomic and employment benefits to the region in question. In the Irish context, it is understood that these opportunities, particularly where they exist in regional areas, have the potential not just to attract visitors in the first place but also to persuade those visitors to experience other tourist offerings and to dwell longer in the area – with consequent spending and benefits to the local economy.

Understanding this broad principle, the OPW and the Sceilg Mhichíl management team engaged with Fáilte Ireland and other local stakeholders in the development of the *Skellig Coast Visitor Experience Development Plan* (VEDP) throughout 2016.¹ The broad purpose of the VEDP process is to engage collaboratively with relevant parties to identify relevant tourism strengths and assets, to strategise regarding how they can usefully contribute to the positive development of tourism and provide value while identifying key constraints that need to be managed. The process recognises the need for a sustainable approach and places the protection of sensitive and unique assets such as Sceilg Mhichíl at the heart of the process. The Skellig Coast VEDP, therefore, conscious of the vulnerability of the island to overuse, envisages a scenario where its conservation value is protected as a core principle, while still harvesting its value as a symbol of the Wild Atlantic Way brand that Fáilte Ireland has developed.

The Sceilg Mhichíl management team is aware that greater integration of tourism initiatives is required and fully supports and encourages the promotion and management of sustainable tourism in the area. During the lifespan of this plan, up to 2030, the Sceilg Mhichíl management team intends to maintain strict control over the means of access and the number of visitors allowed in order to uphold, as a key priority,

the Outstanding Universal Value at the heart of the WHP designation. In parallel, the OPW and DHLGH will seek to engage positively with Fáilte Ireland and other relevant partners to ensure that the cultural and heritage assets in state care throughout the Kerry region in particular will be positively addressed, so that these outstanding cultural and natural locations can be brought more into prominence. This, if managed successfully, will allow them to play a greater role in relation to local tourism enterprises in the Kerry area in line with the VEDP ambition and strategy. Over time, it will serve to ease the pressure on Sceilg Mhichíl as a visitor destination priority in its own right.

A trip to Sceilg Mhichíl and its environs is an enjoyable, educational and unforgettable experience for visitors. However, it is clear that a significant proportion – perhaps a majority – of tourists in the Kerry area do not make the journey. This may be for a variety of reasons, including limited availability, cost, personal mobility restrictions or age, the difficulties presented by adverse weather and the sea or simply a dislike of boat journeys. The majority of visitors to the region tend to remain on the mainland, from where many prominent features of Sceilg Mhichíl are visible; they may, as an alternative, avail of the more widely available and cheaper sightseeing trips (not regulated by the OPW or DHLGH) that circumnavigate but do not land on the island. Notwithstanding this, the Sceilg Mhichíl management team recognise that there is a strong appetite for a vibrant and engaging visitor experience related to Sceilg Mhichíl that should be addressed, and that doing this efficiently may assist the conservation-value ambition. Understanding that, in view of the number of visitors who cannot (or prefer not to) engage with the island directly, a shore-based exhibition providing an excellent visitor experience and delivering the desired elements of the Sceilg Mhichíl story to tourists is required. In the view of the management team, as well as satisfying a majority of visitors, this will have the added benefit of mitigating visitor demand for a trip to the island and serving as a base to interpret other nearby and more easily accessible sites.

¹ Published January 2017 : see <http://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/files/3d/3d865a5b-cd60-4f72-972f-cb9634ba3ffb.pdf>.

Pl. 33 Boats landing visitors at the pier on Sceilg Mhichíl.



Visitor Management

Access to Sceilg Mhichíl

As stated above, it is government policy to provide the greatest possible level of visitor access to all built-heritage sites in the care of the OPW, commensurate with their proper protection and preservation. At Sceilg Mhichíl, however, the location of the island, some 11.6 kilometres off Bolus Head, and its precipitous topography mean uncontrolled universal access is neither desirable nor feasible. Owing to weather and sea conditions it is only possible for boats to reach the island on a regular basis from early/mid-May through to late September.

Currently, the sole means of visitor access is a boat service to the island, which leaves daily from Portmagee, Ballinskelligs and Derrynane. Access to the island is strictly controlled by a permit system operated by the OPW and involving experienced local boat operators. Following new procedures introduced in 2016, the list of permitted boat operators is renewed on a three-yearly basis by way of a public competition.

Access to the island by private craft is not authorised and, in 2012, the practice of allowing occasional

access by cruise ships was discontinued. Allowing these vessels access, even though it took place on a sporadic basis in the past, is inconsistent with the management team's strategic objective to directly control both the means of access and the numbers of visitors landing daily. Clearly, in a scenario where casual landings of an undefined number of visitors are allowed, it is not feasible to impose these controls.

Landing on the island can be difficult, particularly when weather and sea conditions are inclement, as can often be the case. After landing, access to the monastery itself is via more than 600 steps leading to the main peak of the island. These steps, although maintained regularly, are irregular and of drystone construction and by their nature cannot be made to comply with modern standards. Readyng the steps for visitors prior to the start of each season so they are safe to traverse, and maintaining them in good condition throughout the visitor period, is a particular focus for the onsite maintenance team.

Visitor access to the hermitage structure on the South Peak is feasible, though it is controlled separately by the OPW. Relatively few people attempt this difficult ascent, however, and the

procedures currently put in place require that those who apply to make the climb have some climbing experience and can demonstrate a level of preparedness for the challenge. The management team envisage that, during the lifetime of this plan, the relative minority of visitors who may wish to visit the South Peak area will continue to be facilitated on a controlled basis, reflecting the dangers and the relative unsuitability of the location for general visitors wishing to access it casually.

Duration of the Visitor Season

The length of the visitor season depends primarily both on weather conditions and the need to perform critical pre-season maintenance tasks to prepare for visitors. Additionally, certain preparatory logistical arrangements in respect of guides, including safety training, must also be made before the island can be declared open to visitors. Since 2007 the management team has set out on an annual basis the period during which, weather permitting, the island has been accessible to visitors and a guide service has been available (this period is also the 'season' referred to in the permits issued to those boat operators

allowed to land visitors on the island). Mirroring the practice of several years, in the interest of the continued protection of the island, to prevent damage to the monuments and particularly for reasons of visitor health and safety, access to the island outside of the defined period is strictly prohibited. This issue is addressed in more detail below in the section entitled 'Season Duration'.

Visitor Numbers

Since 1994 the management team has limited the maximum daily number of visitors to 180. Following arrangements entered into with local boat operators in the mid-1990s, the maximum number of permits to land visitors issued annually is set at 15 and is subject to the renewal/competition process described above.

The current limit of 180 visitors per day was endorsed by UNESCO in 1995, when the nomination for WHP status was under consideration. It is the intention of the management team to continue to enforce this arrangement for the foreseeable future, on the continuing basis of a maximum of 15 boats

Pl. 34 A guide giving a talk to visitors in the monastery.



each being permitted to land visitors once each per day during any given season.

The average number of visitors per season in the period between 1995 and 2008 was measured at approximately 11,100. This figure was at the time

deemed sustainable in terms of protection of the National Monument.

The visitor admissions to the WHP from 2008 to 2019 are recorded as follows:

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Admissions	10,324	10,642	12,343	9,750	11,577	13,221
Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Admissions	15,315	12,560	14,648	16,755	15,472	15,616

The following trends are observable:

- The average number of visitors across the ten-year period since the start of the 2009 season was 13,228, which, though higher than when the previous management plan was created, is regarded as having been generally sustainable and not damaging to the island in the long term.
- In the first half of the 2008–18 management plan period, though there was a relatively small increase in average annual admissions, total numbers across the period remained generally consistent with the pre-2008 experience, with an annual average across the 2009–13 five-year period of 11,507.
- The pattern of landings in more recent years, and particularly since 2013, has shown a tendency to increase visitor numbers at a somewhat higher rate and this is reflected in the average annual visitor numbers of 14,950 across the five-year period 2014–18.

Reference Period		Visitor Admissions Total	Average Annual Visitor Admissions across the Reference Period
10 Years	2009 to 2018	132,283	13,228
5 Years	2009 to 2013	57,533	11,507
6 Years	2014 to 2019	90,366	15,061

Having assessed the position on a continuing basis, the management team is satisfied that there was no measurable permanent material damage to the island environment or degradation of the built heritage over the lifetime of the previous management plan (2008–18) arising from visitor pressures and they have concluded that the limit of 180 persons per day remains sustainable. However, the management team will continue to have regard to the pattern of visitor traffic and will seek during the season to ensure that heavy concentrations are avoided and that the visitor load is spread across the day to minimise the risk of overcrowding at sensitive points. These actions will be consistent with the conclusions of the carrying-capacity study carried out in 2013.

The management team will have due regard also to the ongoing effects on Sceilg Mhichíl of natural phenomena such as weather and seas, understanding that there are forces at play that are beyond human control and that will have their own effect on the island environment. These impacts will be clearly identified, separately from any short-term human impacts. Any assessment of future control measures or changes to daily visitor limits will have regard to the specific sources of these risks, the seriousness of their potential impact, whether the impacts arising are of a short- or longer-term nature and the feasibility of the control measures most appropriate to their mitigation or elimination.

Pl. 35 Aerial view of the monastery, showing the Inner Enclosure and the Upper and Lower Outer Enclosures.



Season Duration

The official visitor season at Sceilg Mhichíl normally starts in mid-May and ends in September. The length of the season has, during the lifetime of the previous management plan, been determined largely by reference to a number of factors. These include:

- the feasibility of consistent access as dictated by prevailing weather and sea conditions;
- the need to carry out pre-season maintenance and safety preparation works in the early part of the year to counteract the effects of winter storms and check fabric for any damage; and
- the need to contract the guide team, carry out necessary training and schedule emergency-response training in conjunction with emergency services such as coastguard, hospitals, etc.

The OPW has significant obligations to prepare the island in advance of the season and carry out

maintenance works to make it as safe as possible for visitors. Typically, this work involves cleaning winter debris from the pier, the access roadway and the steps, ensuring all visitor-accessible areas are clean and hazard free, ensuring the more than 600 steps are not loose or unstable, addressing any fabric-restitution issues at the monastery site, clearing any rockfalls and assessing likely unstable areas on the slopes above areas of visitor traffic.

The winter season on Sceilg Mhichíl can be extremely harsh, with severe storms and adverse weather and sea conditions the norm. These conditions can persist well into the spring and regular access to the island for the work team can therefore be highly problematic during this period. Before any regular visitor access can be permitted, the island must first be assessed by the OPW maintenance team and the WHP prepared for visitor activity.

Guide staff, although they are rostered on the island from the official commencement of the visitor season, are usually contracted approximately ten days earlier to allow for pre-season health and safety training and other preparations. This is a highly intensive process, organised in conjunction with the OPW Health and Safety Unit and involving key local emergency services. It is carried out in order to ensure that all staff maintain their safety training, receive refresher training in relation to first aid, defibrillator use, emergency procedures, etc., and can absorb any new requirements that have arisen.

The management team is committed to ensuring that high levels of health and safety for visitors and staff are maintained on the island and that close links have been established with the area air and sea rescue organisations and the local coastguard. In advance of the season, and in cooperation with such organisations, the management team ensures that a full-scale safety-evacuation drill to complement and inform the current emergency plan is regularly carried out. The guides, who are the on-island first responders, are a key part of that process.

The typical pre-season activity schedule is set out in Appendix 5.

Based on experience over many years, the management team have in the past judged that, bearing in mind the range of tasks that have to be performed, it is challenging to open the island safely any earlier than mid-May. Given weather and sea conditions, regular access to the island is deeply uncertain and sometimes highly problematic before mid-April each year and there is therefore a relatively narrow time window within which to perform required tasks before the scheduled season opening. It is therefore not always guaranteed, having regard to the weather and other logistical constraints, that all the necessary pre-season tasks to facilitate an earlier beginning to the season can be completed in time. The management team therefore may maintain the season opening date at mid-May but will also keep the matter under review if circumstances suggest a different approach.

Likewise, experience over many years has shown that the weather and sea conditions in October effectively dictate an end-of-September close. It is

proposed therefore to maintain this date unchanged.

Visitor safety

There are physical dangers inherent in visiting Sceilg Mhichíl. Owing to the nature of the site and the potentially extremely serious consequences of even the most simple accident, as evidenced by the two visitor fatalities in 2009, visitors must exercise a high degree of care at all times.

In this context the management team have, since the 2009 deaths, introduced a series of interlocking measures designed to advise visitors in advance of the potential hazards so that they can be forewarned about the challenges of travelling to Sceilg Mhichíl and can prepare accordingly. Currently, these measures, which are deployed progressively as visitors draw nearer to the island, are as set out in Appendix 1.

Already-established processes to enhance visitor safety, which will continue to be deployed once visitors have arrived at the island, include the following:

- The management team will continue to engage with boat operators to ensure that outward and inbound trips are scheduled in such a way as to ensure that visitors have a minimum of 2.5 hours on the island, which is judged to be sufficient time for them to ascend the steps to the monastery, absorb a guided tour and return to sea level. This is necessary to avoid visitors hurrying on the steps or other location where care is required.
- The management team will continue to engage with boat operators during the season to implement phased arrivals to the island each morning. This is done:
 - takes account of any protected species that to ensure that visitor-accessible areas do not become crowded to a point where safety in certain congested choke-points becomes a concern;
 - takes account of any protected species that to ensure that heavy concentrations of visitors in particular areas do not cause avoidable wear and tear on structures and flora or stress to birdlife; and
 - takes account of any protected species that to ensure that the limited capacity of the

guide team to engage properly with visitors is used to best effect and that the quality of the visitor experience is not compromised by the presence of too many tourists congregating at any one particular point.

- Particular care will be taken to manage the transfer of people from boats to the island pier safely. The management team will continue to engage with boat operators to ensure that the procedures for this transfer are managed properly with, in particular, enough experienced staff available on vessels to assist passengers ashore.

Guide Service

A regular guide service was introduced at Sceilg Mhichíl in 1987 and has operated each season since. The guide service is currently managed by the OPW. The main functions of the guides are:

- to protect the WHP from physical harm, whether unintended or wilful;
- during the season, to engage with boat operators appropriately in relation to advising of the prevailing weather and sea conditions at the island and to issue 'site closed' instructions when conditions at the landing pier are deemed dangerous;
- to interpret the history, archaeology and significance of the monastic settlement and to guide visitors appropriately on these topics;
- to regulate the numbers of visitors within the monastic enclosure and to deny access to restricted areas to ensure that safety and conservation values are maintained;²
- to monitor and record visitor numbers, including the number of boats successfully landing and prevailing weather conditions on each day of the season;
- to engage with the onsite maintenance team in relation to any physical-fabric issues or small repairs that need to be addressed – e.g., loose stones or fencing;
- to act as first responders in the event of any accident or any visitor becoming unwell and to communicate with and engage emergency

services and landside medical or hospital resources;

- to respond to any request for relevant assistance from NPWS, who are responsible for flora and birdlife protection;
- to contribute to the implementation of the biosecurity plan and measures for the island;
- to assist with research projects by the OPW, DHLGH, NPWS or any other relevant and approved third party, including recording observations, providing assistance with onsite data collection, etc.; and
- to manage any sanctioned filming or photography projects, including assisting with selection of locations, general setup, monitoring crew activity and ensuring that the terms of any permissions are adhered to.

Given the isolated nature of the WHP, it is necessary for the guides to live on the island full time during the visitor season. Five guides are currently employed, as well as a supervisor guide based on the mainland. Guides generally spend a period of two weeks on the island, with one week off. Three guides are rostered to work on the island at any one time. Having regard to the significance of the WHP and the duties needing to be undertaken, the number of guides at Sceilg Mhichíl is being increased to six, four of whom are to be rostered at any one time. This change will be effected as soon as physical accommodation and other logistical issues have been addressed.

Negotiations are under way to transfer the Lower Lighthouse and its complex to the state. A detailed project was prepared in 2019 to upgrade and renew the fabric of this building complex for use as accommodation and storage to be managed by the OPW. This will reduce considerably the temporary structures now situated along the Lower Lighthouse Road.

Awareness and Promotion

The limited availability of information on Sceilg Mhichíl and its environs is an issue that the

² The guides continually monitor the number of visitors within the Inner Enclosure of the monastery. If these numbers are deemed to be too high, access is regulated. Within the monastery, visitors can fully access the Upper Monks' Garden. However, for safety reasons, visitors are not permitted to access the Lower Monks' Garden, although the full extent of this garden can be viewed from above. The Inner Enclosure is fully accessible to visitors, with the exception of a small area to the south of the Large Oratory. The Small Oratory Terrace is cordoned off for its protection, but it is possible for visitors to view it.

management team is anxious to address and has made steps to remedy. Currently, visitor information is available on the Heritage Ireland website, maintained by the OPW (<http://www.heritageireland.ie>) and in the OPW heritage sites information booklet. Further information on Ireland's WHPs is also available on the World Heritage Ireland (<http://www.worldheritageireland.ie>) website. Information is also available through Fáilte Ireland's website (<http://www.discoverireland.ie>).

The development of an integrated tourism plan for the area will enhance the availability of information for visitors on the WHP.

Waste Management

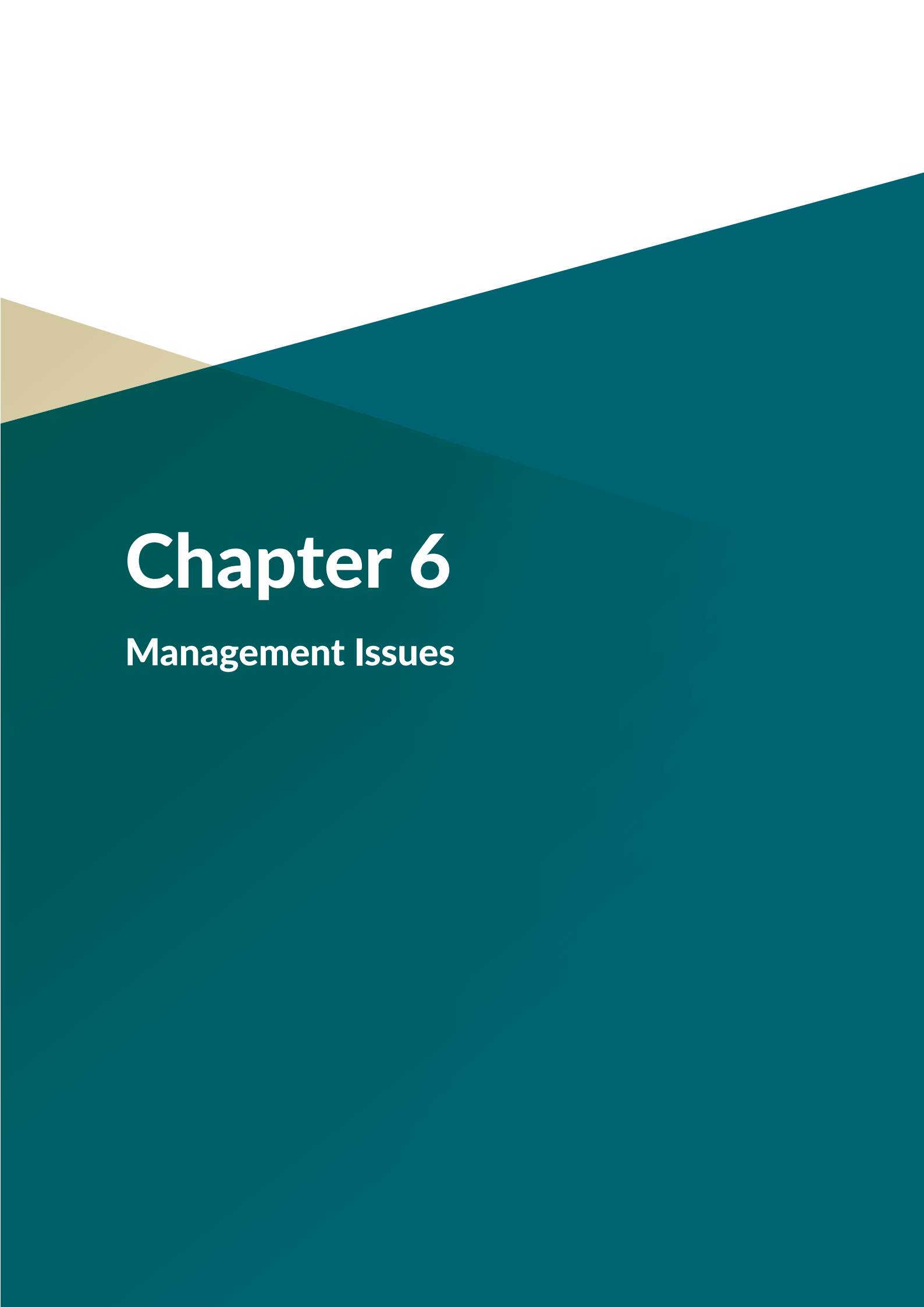
The OPW liaises, as appropriate, with the local authority regarding the management of waste on Sceilg Mhichíl. All waste is segregated before it is removed from the island on a weekly basis and disposed of and/or recycled as appropriate and as agreed with the Environmental Officer of Kerry County Council. This is reviewed with the Environmental Officer in advance of each season.





PART 3





Chapter 6

Management Issues

Built-Heritage Issues

The management of spoil is an issue that has been addressed during work on the roadway between the two lighthouses. This spoil has been washed down onto the roadway over time. The initial storage of spoil has not been an issue: some of it is used in areas where original material has been washed away. At the close of works any remaining spoil will be disposed of in an appropriate manner, in consultation with the OPW, DHLGH and the local authority.

Natural-Heritage Issues

The introduction of new species to the island, particularly mammalian predators, would pose a great threat to the biodiversity of the island. Consequences for breeding seabirds would be profound. The threat of negative impacts on nesting birds and habitats or biodiversity is also posed from two other principal sources, namely visitors and conservation works. Uncontrolled, large numbers of people have the potential to cause disturbance to nesting birds and habitat damage through trampling. During the main visitor season, up to 180 visitors are allowed on the island each day.

The movement of visitors on the island is largely controlled by the nature of the terrain. Areas that are not accessible by existing steps or roadways are difficult to reach owing to the steep and often unstable slopes. For safety reasons, guides request that visitors keep to recognised visitor routes at all times. This helps to minimise disturbance and damage to habitats.

Works also have the potential to cause habitat damage as well as direct disturbance to nesting birds, including displacement and entombment (although there are some scenarios under which they might benefit some breeding seabirds). The works team meets NPWS personnel on a regular basis to review works carried out and their possible impacts on natural heritage and to plan for future works. All works are subject to specific ecological assessment (including assessments required in line with legislation). Works are only permitted when the scientific assessment shows that they are not likely to have a significant impact on breeding seabirds or

biodiversity. From 2021, an environmental clerk of works is being employed to monitor all works.

The most profound impacts on the island's biodiversity could result from the introduction of plants or animals not currently found on Sceilg Mhichíl. Mammals such as rats, mink, hedgehogs and cats could do significant and irreparable damage to breeding bird colonies. The recommendations of the Skelligs Biosecurity Review are implemented to prevent possible introductions and to react to any arrival of any non-native fauna on the island. The implementation of these measures will be reviewed in 2021/2 and again in Year 5 of this plan.

Visual Impacts on Landscape Setting

The landscape setting of Sceilg Mhichíl is visually stunning. There is a need to balance the provision of facilities for visitors, guides and project teams with the possible impact on the setting of the island of temporary structures, signage and toilets. The ongoing refurbishment and planned reuse of the lighthouse as staff accommodation will facilitate the removal of many of these temporary structures, thereby improving the visual amenity of the island.

Climate Change

The impact of climate change on world heritage is an area of increasing concern amongst the heritage community and is recognised as one of the greatest threats to the conservation of heritage sites. Climate change can have physical effects on cultural heritage, such as rising sea levels, temperature changes and increased wind and storms, which may compromise soils and vegetation as well as archaeological structures. Climate change can also have an impact socially and culturally. The natural heritage can be particularly affected by climate change, with intense rainfall, changes in phenology (timing of events, such as flowering) and changes in the ecosystem configuration leading to, amongst other things, disturbance in the breeding patterns of species, availability of marine prey for breeding seabirds and the growing seasons of plants.

The location of Sceilg Mhichíl makes it particularly vulnerable to the damaging effects of amplified storm

and winds. The increase in sea levels, sea swells and the increasing severity of storms have been affecting access to the landing pier.

In recent years, increased rainfall has also resulted in increased rockfall that is potentially damaging to the fabric of the site and threatening to the safety of staff and visitors to the island. In 2017, a rockfall occurred near the guides' accommodation, causing a major safety risk for staff and damage to the Lighthouse Road. Another serious rockfall occurred in July 2020 near the OPW workers' huts.

One section of the monastery retaining wall at Sceilg Mhichíl has become structurally unstable because of the increase in rainfall and rainwater draining through it. The Discovery Programme monitors the movement of the wall on a yearly basis, which is informing the future conservation strategy.

A Climate Vulnerability Assessment of Sceilg Mhichíl has been commissioned, which will assess the impacts and risks caused by climate change on the property and provide recommendations on measures best deployed to tackle the impacts of climate change on the heritage of the island.

Research Strategy

Various strands of research have been ongoing since the commencement of works on the island, covering different elements of the island's heritage and environment. To date, only a limited number of taxa have been surveyed. A research strategy to be developed under this new management plan will seek to expand taxonomic surveys on the islands and facilitate greater coordinated access to the island for research needs. Once the lighthouse has been refurbished, there will be an area set aside for academic researchers, which will enable greater logistical access to the island for research needs.

A lichen survey was completed in 2009. A vegetation survey (botanical and historical) will be completed by 2022.

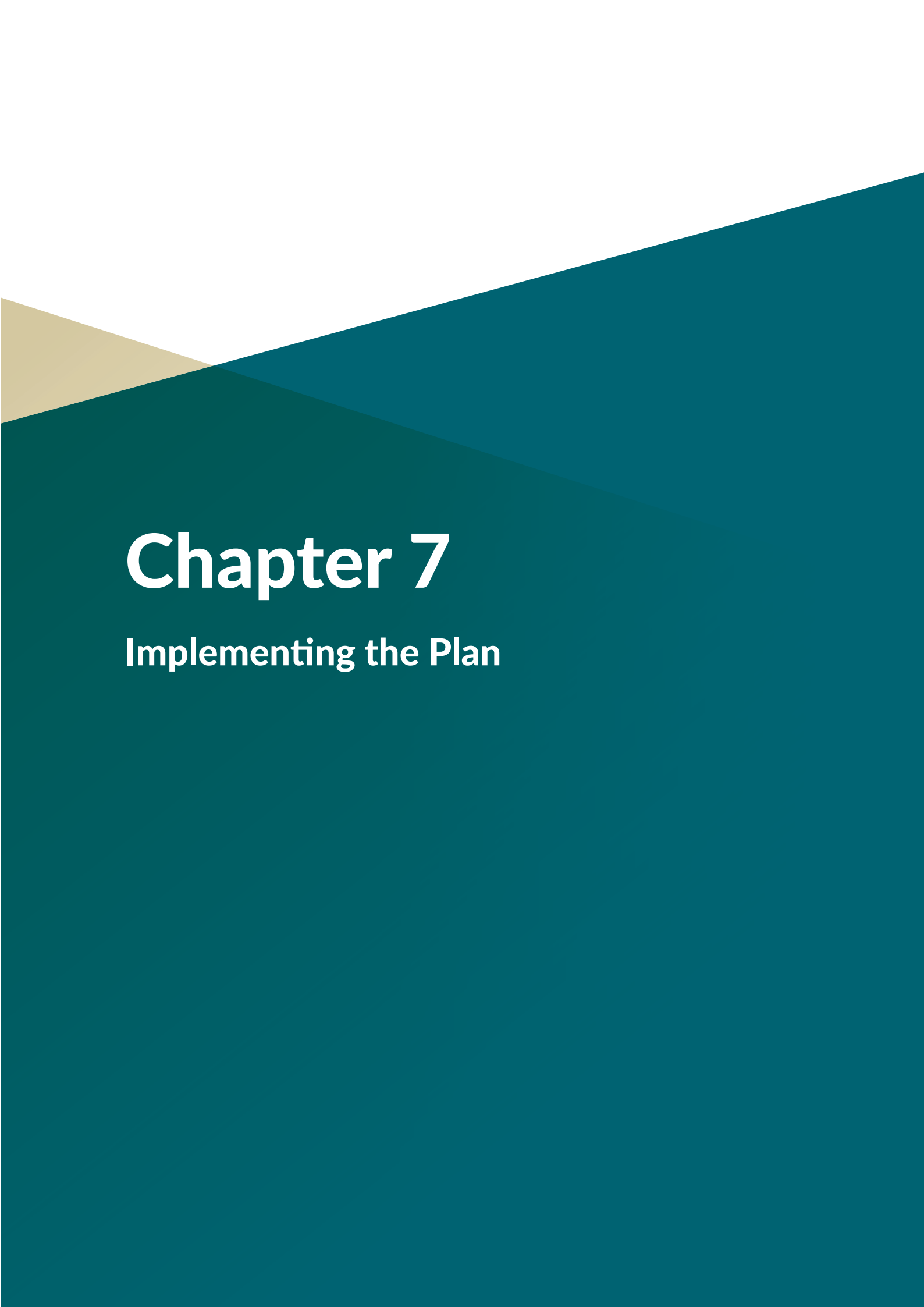
Annual breeding surveys of cliff-nesting seabirds and less-regular censuses of burrow-nesting seabirds are carried out. Such research and monitoring efforts are being strengthened to include the collection of

breeding-productivity data for a subset of the breeding seabirds (e.g., kittiwake) and also to improve understanding of the breeding phenology of Sceilg Mhichíl's burrow-nesting seabirds (e.g., storm petrel, Manx shearwater). As a preliminary trial, a small section of modern wall was recently constructed off the Upper Lighthouse Road with inbuilt spaces for nesting storm petrel, with a view to facilitating study into breeding petrel and to deriving estimates of breeding productivity.

The EAC comprises relevant experts from various fields, such as architectural conservation, industrial archaeology, ecology and natural heritage. The term of the EAC runs for three to five years and the committee meets regularly with the WHP manager and the project team.

The EAC will continue to advise on the publication programme, on best practice for all works and natural-heritage issues and on various research strands. Under commitments in this new management plan, a research framework will be established with direction from the appointed EAC.





Chapter 7

Implementing the Plan

Implementing the Plan

This management plan will be used as a tool for the effective implementation of various policies and objectives. It will be subject to regular review over its lifetime, including in consultation with stakeholders, and amendments will be made as required.

Statement of Intent

The following outcomes are sought during the lifetime of the plan:

- the effective implementation of the actions set out in the plan;
- the allocation of the necessary resources, human and financial, to meet the needs identified in the plan;
- effective monitoring and periodic reporting of the state of conservation of Sceilg Mhichíl;
- greater dissemination of information and enhanced enjoyment of the island for all;
- the provision of safe and efficient access to Sceilg Mhichíl;
- improved liaison with community and local-interest groups;
- maintenance and improvement of the conservation and management of both the cultural and natural heritage of the property;
- improved public awareness and appreciation of Sceilg Mhichíl WHP through the establishment of an informative website dedicated to the property;
- assurances that the objectives of the Birds and Habitats Directives will be met as they relate to the designations associated with Sceilg Mhichíl;
- the establishment of a research framework strategy for both the cultural and natural heritage; and
- formal review of the management plan after five years.

In order to achieve the outcomes in the Statement of Intent over the next ten years, the various objectives and actions – outlined below – will need to be implemented.

Objectives and Actions to Achieve the Outcomes in the Statement of Intent

The main objectives and key actions proposed in this plan for the Sceilg Mhichíl WHP reflect the vision and priorities of the SMIG, taking into account comments and views expressed in the extensive consultation process. A programme of action for the implementation of these objectives is set out in Appendix 1.

Long-Term Objective

To protect, conserve and promote an appreciation of the Sceilg Mhichíl WHP

Rationale

The principal focus of the plan is the physical conservation of the WHP to ensure that it remains an iconic symbol of early monasticism. Its secondary aim is to promote an appreciation of the property's uniqueness (Outstanding Universal Value) to a local, national and world audience.

Ireland will ensure the long-term conservation and preservation, to international best-practice standards, of the Sceilg Mhichíl WHP, with the appropriate guidance from the World Heritage Committee, the World Heritage Centre and advisory bodies such as ICOMOS and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Management Objectives

Objective 1: To have in place and implement an effective management framework to protect the Outstanding Universal Value of Sceilg Mhichíl

Rationale

To ensure compliance with the obligations of WHP national and international designations, it is essential

that an effective management framework is put in place. In this context the management team have appointed the OPW to the role of WHP manager, with responsibility for ensuring the efficient and effective day-to-day management of Sceilg Mhichíl, liaising with relevant local interests, acting as a focal point for issues that may arise during the lifetime of the management plan and engaging in meetings with boat operators, the EAC, tourism agencies and any other relevant parties.

Actions

- A1.1 Monitor implementation and effectiveness of the plan actions.
- A1.2 Continue supporting the activities of the WHP management team and agencies responsible for the management and care of Sceilg Mhichíl and its visitors.
- A1.3 Continue the oversight role of the SMIG throughout the lifetime of this plan.
- A1.4 Ensure compliance with World Heritage Convention requirements.

Objective 2: To improve engagement with local-interest groups and other relevant parties

Rationale

It is accepted that regular communication between local communities and interests is an essential aspect of the management of Sceilg Mhichíl. The SMIG and the OPW in their role as WHP manager will liaise with public agencies, local authorities, non-governmental organisations and interest groups, as required.

Actions

- A2.1 Engage with CIL to secure the Lower Lighthouse complex for use by staff and visitors.
- A2.2 Engage with outside groups and stakeholders to facilitate the effective implementation of the management plan.
- A2.3 Create a Sceilg Mhichíl stakeholder forum to address issues of mutual interest and inform decision-making processes.
- A2.4 Meet with local boat operators to discuss issues of mutual interest, including health and safety and the operational framework.

- A2.5 Make publicly available existing and future reports on Sceilg Mhichíl via a dedicated website page for Sceilg Mhichíl.

Conservation Objectives

Objective 3: To preserve the cultural heritage of the island and sustain its Outstanding Universal Value

Rationale

Owing to the harsh environment of Sceilg Mhichíl, an ongoing programme of conservation works and monitoring is necessary. The works programme under the lifetime of this plan will concentrate on the lighthouse structures. A detailed specification for each phase of the works will be drafted in the context of the conservation programme, in consultation with the EAC.

Archaeological investigations began in the early 1980s at the monastic settlement and South Peak hermitage on Sceilg Mhichíl and concluded in 2010. Work on the Lighthouse Road is nearing completion and archaeological and conservation work in the Upper Lighthouse complex has just begun. Future programmes of work will focus on completion of the Lighthouse Road and the two lighthouses and other post-medieval structures on the island. The information gleaned from all archaeological investigations relating to the monastery will be integrated, with the results of building analysis and detailed topographic and other surveys to provide an in-depth analysis of the cultural evolution of the monastic settlement. A detailed stratigraphic report of the archaeological excavations was produced and lodged in the Archive Section, DHLGH. Work on a final publication will commence in 2021. An account of the work on the Upper Lighthouse and along the Lighthouse Road will similarly be published on completion.

The publication of all works undertaken and an evaluation of this work within a national and international context will be progressed during the lifetime of the plan.

Actions:

- A3.1 Carry out a full pre-works survey and detailed specification for each annual phase of works in advance of any work commencing on the WHP.
- A3.2 Prepare a formal, structured maintenance programme for all conserved structures.
- A3.3(a) Report on archaeological works undertaken each year.
- A3.3(b) Publish a full monograph of archaeological works undertaken on the island.
- A3.4(a) Report on conservation works undertaken each year.
- A3.4(b) Publish a full monograph of conservation works undertaken on the island.
- A3.5 Ensure that heritage objects for Sceilg Mhichíl are archived and cared for appropriately.
- A3.6 Ensure that the Expert Advisory Committee continues to advise on future research and publication.

Natural Heritage Objectives

Objective 4: To identify and conserve the natural heritage of the island

Rationale

Sceilg Mhichíl has a rich natural heritage. In particular, it is a seabird breeding area of international significance, a fact recognised by its designation as a SPA and as a nature reserve. The introduction of alien species could have significant detrimental effects on the island's biodiversity, so it is critical to prevent such arrivals. It is also important to monitor seabird numbers, to survey other biodiversity and to prevent disturbance or damage occasioned by human activity.

Actions

- A4.1 Prepare site-specific conservation objectives for the bird species for which the Skelligs SPA has been designated. Include quantitative conservation objectives attributes and targets.
- A4.2 Maintain close cooperation between the SMIG, the property management team, the

NPWS and the Guide team.

- A4.3 Secure ministerial consent, underpinned by relevant scientific data and analyses, for relevant interventions as required.
- A4.4 Ensure an ecological assessment is undertaken for any project or activity which might significantly impact on the biodiversity of the island (including screening for Appropriate Assessment if necessary, for any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on the species and their habitats for which the SPA has been designated) so that nature conservation issues are considered alongside built heritage.
- A4.5 Continue to develop the seabird-monitoring programme, with particular attention to burrow-nesting seabirds, in order to derive, among other things, robust population estimates, population trends and the identification of pressures acting on the populations. Such data will inform the management of both public access and the works programme in monitoring potential effects of human activities.
- A4.6 On an annual basis, carry out a census of all cliff-nesting seabird species and estimate the breeding productivity of Sceilg Mhichíl's kittiwake population.
- A4.7 Ensure that the value of the seabird data collected at Sceilg Mhichíl is optimised by contributing to national and international seabird survey and monitoring initiatives.
- A4.8 Participate in national and international seabird survey and monitoring initiatives.
- A4.9 Implement, and if necessary update, the biosecurity action plan to deal with accidental or deliberate introductions of predator species.
- A4.10 Exclude recreational and other non-essential helicopter flights from an exclusion zone of 1 kilometre surrounding Skelligs SPA.
- A4.11 Finalise and publish a vegetation survey, including an investigation of species that may have been cultivated by the monks.
- A4.12 Promote and undertake survey, research and, where needed, conservation work of other biodiversity taxa on the island.
- A4.13 Research the impacts of mice and rabbits on the biodiversity and archaeological heritage of the islands. Consider whether eradication is necessary.

- A4.14 Develop guidance for boat operators to follow to reduce potential impacts on wildlife on Sceilg Mhichíl and in the surrounding waters.
- A4.15 Within one year of installation of lighting arrangements for the operation of the Lower Lighthouse complex, review those lighting arrangements and, if necessary and where practicable, within a further one year implement lighting measures, such as use of blinds, downward lighting, to reduce the risk of bird strikes.
- A4.16 Continued supervision of wall maintenance by an ornithologist to ensure that burrow entrances remain accessible to breeding birds (in particular storm petrel), with the objective of maintaining/increasing the net amount of potential breeding chambers in the walls overall, which are subjected to maintenance works.
- A4.17 Works/research programmes will be subject to site-specific mitigation measures. This may include, for example, conducting pre-works surveys to establish the location of any burrows utilised for nesting in the works area, the marking of such burrows so they may be avoided, and avoiding certain time-periods where birds may be more susceptible to disturbance.
- A4.18 Assess the impacts of visitors and related activities in Year 5 of the plan period, informed by the monitoring data collected in the first four years, and take any necessary action on foot of such an assessment.

Statutory and Policy Objectives

Objective 5: To further promote the importance of the WHP to ensure continued coordination by government departments, agencies and other statutory bodies with responsibilities for making and implementing national policies and undertaking activities that may impact on Sceilg Mhichíl and its environs

Rationale

The designation of Sceilg Mhichíl as a WHP brings with it certain obligations in terms of planning controls and environmental policies. Local development plans can ensure that development and other relevant policies are compatible with WHP status. It is vital that there is continued recognition of the importance of this status. There must be a unified approach by government departments, agencies and statutory bodies.

Actions

- A5.1 Adopt and implement this management plan as a framework for the policies, future plans and decisions regarding Sceilg Mhichíl.
- A5.2 Ensure compliance with all relevant statutory provisions for the protection of the WHP.
- A5.3 Work with the local authority to ensure recognition of this management plan in its county development plans.
- A5.4 Heighten awareness by Kerry County Council and other relevant agencies and stakeholders of the obligations arising from a WHP designation.

Sustainable Tourism and Visitor-Management Objectives

Objective 6: To manage visitors to Sceilg Mhichíl effectively

Rationale

It is essential that a balance is maintained between tourism strategies for the region and the preservation of Sceilg Mhichíl. It is important to recognise and support cultural tourism insofar as it is compatible with the primary obligation of the conservation, maintenance and protection in perpetuity of this WHP. An aim will be to provide an overall visitor experience of world-class standard, as expected from a WHP.

Actions

- A6.1 Continue to manage the National Monument, nature reserve and SPA at Sceilg Mhichíl, while allowing a system of managed public access that ensures that the conservation of the WHP is maintained as a first priority.
- A6.2 Maintain a strictly defined annual season within which the island will, weather and sea conditions permitting, be open to visitors and publicise this appropriately with details of the permitted transit services.
- A6.3 Maintain a quality guide service to directly invigilate the island during the season, offer appropriate information to visitors and manage safety systems.
- A6.4 Collect visitor statistics for each season and analyse trends in order to provide quality management information. Publish annual statistics and analytical report online.
- A6.5 Liaise with Fáilte Ireland and local tourism networks in the implementation of the tourism strategy for the greater south Kerry area outlined in the Skellig Coast VEDP.
- A6.6 Continue to regularly review both the patterns of movement across the property and whether the 180 visitor-per-day limit is sustainable, with regard to the cultural and natural heritage features of the property and to visitor safety.
- A6.7 Continue to maintain safety systems and procedures on Sceilg Mhichíl to ensure that visitor and staff safety are not compromised and there is an effective and trained emergency response in place in the event of accident.
- A6.8 Engage with aircraft regulatory authorities to mitigate conservation risks arising from inappropriate deployment of airborne devices and aircraft above and around Sceilg Mhichíl in order to manage risks to the property.
- A6.9 Disseminate information to inform the seagoing community of the necessary controls on access to the island, including biosecurity requirements.
- A6.10 Continue the practice of excluding private vessels from landing visitors on the island.
- A6.11 Continue to balance the need to preserve the National Monument with the need to facilitate public access by operating a boat-permit scheme for landing visitors on the island during the visitor season.
- A6.12 Work on the provision of toilet facilities on the island, based in the compound around the Lower Lighthouse.
- A6.13 Disseminate wildlife guidance information to inform the public of the exceptionalism of the natural heritage of Sceilg Mhichíl and to raise awareness of its fragility, the need to remain on the designated pathways and mitigate any impacts.
- A6.14 Carry out daily spot checks on points along the access pathways to ensure visitor compliance with adhering to the designated pathways on the property.
- A6.15 Put in place measures to prevent unauthorised drone flying. These shall include the continued dissemination of information (e.g., at booking, at the piers, on the boats) to explain why unauthorised drones are banned on the property, along with the creation of a process for the authorisation of legitimate drone usage onsite.
- A6.16 Put in place further signage and physical measures at the property entrance to further dissuade unauthorised access outside of the visitor season and/or use CCTV cameras to monitor the pier area.

Objective 7: To maintain an appropriate standard of safe, regulated visitor access that supports conservation aims

Rationale

The creation, maintenance and regulation of a safe means of access to Sceilg Mhichíl is a key part of the system of ensuring that visitors are able to travel safely to the island. It also enables the property manager to ensure that excessive numbers do not impact negatively on the island.

Actions

- A7.1 Continue to address, in cooperation with boat operators and the Marine Survey Office of the Department of Transport, safety issues relevant to the sea crossing.
- A7.2 Continue the ongoing review of the criteria for the granting of permits for boats to land visitors on the island to ensure that the

- system adapts to any changing circumstances.
- A7.3 Collect visitor-traffic data and analyse trends with a view to providing quality data for informed decision-making.
 - A7.4 Maintain the current minimum time limit of 2.5 hours for visits to the island on days when normal weather conditions prevail to improve the visitor experience.
 - A7.5 Continue to work with emergency-response agencies to prepare and train for a variety of serious accident and rescue scenarios.
 - A7.6 Train guide staff appropriately and maintain regular personal-competency certifications.
 - A7.7 Entrust the OPW, as property manager, with the maintenance of an up-to-date safety statement for the island, in accordance with health and safety legislation, and continue to use appropriate risk-assessment modelling on the island to plan for visitor and staff safety.
 - A7.8 Continue to ensure safe access to the island during the season by regular maintenance of the pier and steps during the official visitor season and ensure that appropriate signage is in place at the pier and at the steps to the South Peak and continue to maintain and improve up to date safety information available online.
 - A7.9 Maintain an appropriate access arrangement for the South Peak in particular that recognises its particularly challenging nature; ensure that casual visitor access is controlled.
 - A7.10 Implement a conditions-advisory system during the visitor season to support boat operators with advice on sea and weather conditions on the island.
 - A7.11 Establish a staggered regime for the arrival times of boats over the course of the day to reduce overcrowding on the property and reduce the potential for visitors to venture from the designated pathways. Use monitoring data collected for A4.5 to assess positive/negative impacts of staggering on Special Conservation Interests (SCIs).
 - A7.12 Disseminate guidance to all boat operators landing visitors on Sceilg Mhichíl or taking visitors on tours around the island, to ensure they are informed of potential adverse effects from visual and physical disturbance on wildlife (e.g., rafting seabirds and seals), and are requested to avoid disturbance.

Promotion and Appreciation Objectives

Objective 8: To increase understanding of and appreciation for Sceilg Mhichíl and its environs

Rationale

A prerequisite to protecting our heritage is a knowledge of its extent and its importance. Our heritage affirms our historic, cultural and natural identity.

Actions

- A8.1 Continue to publish, for public distribution, the multilingual visitor-guide pamphlet interpreting the monastic and natural history of Sceilg Mhichíl.
- A8.2 Maintain a website for Sceilg Mhichíl (<https://www.worldheritageireland.ie/>) and continue to provide relevant information on the significance of the property; provide periodic updates on the implementation of the management plan and to advise visitors how to prepare for a safe visit to the island.
- A8.3 Enhance the dissemination of information on Sceilg Mhichíl by providing materials in diverse media and meeting any reasonable requests for information insofar as possible.
- A8.4 Create an education outreach programme within the context of the landside facilities being contemplated at the Skellig Experience Visitor Centre in Portmagee, linking to schools and other educational institutions.
- A8.5 Continue to support and give natural-history public lectures and/or case-study seminars on the conservation works and the history of the island.
- A8.6 Promote public awareness of other heritage sites of importance in the area in order to broaden visitor experience; provide resources to support this in the Skellig Experience Visitor Centre in Portmagee in particular.
- A8.7 Support and incentivise local initiatives, such as organised walks and tours of historical and biodiversity sites of interest, in the Iveragh Peninsula.
- A8.8 Liaise with Fáilte Ireland and any other appropriate third parties to ensure high-quality information and offsite interpretation for visitors is provided where appropriate, including in the Skellig Experience Visitor Centre.

Landscape and Setting Objectives

Objective 9: To maintain and enhance the landscape setting of Sceilg Mhichíl

Rationale

Best practice in conservation should be ensured, so that the property is not damaged in a manner that would threaten its integrity, mindful of the importance of the evolved cultural landscape.

Actions

- A9.1(a) Design alternative onsite accommodation based in the Lower Lighthouse.
- A9.1(b) Ensure the design of temporary work huts is in keeping with the landscape of the island.
- A9.2 Maintain the current waste-management strategy, agreed with Kerry County Council, for the recycling and removal of waste.
- A9.3 Continue regular liaison with the local-authority Environmental Officer.
- A9.4 Design and build visitor toilet facilities in the Lower Lighthouse compound.

Monitoring Objectives

Objective 10: To monitor those factors with the potential to impact on the built and natural environment of Sceilg Mhichíl

Rationale

The development of strategies of adaptability to world climate change will be key to the preservation and conservation of the WHP into the future. Such strategies can only be developed on the basis of a programme of monitoring and observation.

Actions

- A10.1 Develop a framework for monitoring climate change on the island.
- A10.2 Ensure that any possible impact of climate change on Sceilg Mhichíl is monitored.

A10.3 Monitor the change of structures, using technical assistance as required.

A10.4 Monitor, on an annual basis, other factors that may impinge on the built and natural environment.

Research Objectives

Objective 11: To establish a research framework for Sceilg Mhichíl

Rationale

The establishment of a research agenda and framework for Sceilg Mhichíl, which will identify and prioritise research themes for the future, is a primary objective of the plan. Over the past 20 years extensive research has been carried out in conjunction with archaeological investigations and conservation works. This has included research on the early monastic history of the island, folklore, geology, quarrying, water management, building history, the development of drystone technology, the chronology of the island, analysis of human and faunal remains and palaeoenvironmental analysis. Future research will also include the history of the lighthouses and their story on the island. The results of this research will inform the proposed research framework. DHLGH and the OPW will jointly commission its development.

Actions

- A11.1 Support any relevant national research programmes.
- A11.2 Establish a research framework that would encourage involvement from third-level institutions and other interested parties.
- A11.3 Complete the research programme on geology and historic quarrying.
- A11.4 Complete research on water collection and management.
- A11.5 Complete the programme of vegetation surveys and investigation of plant species that may have been cultivated by the monks.
- A11.6 Complete research into the development of drystone construction based on the work being carried out on the monastic structures.

- A11.7 Enhance visitors' experience of the island by supporting research and ensuring that the results are disseminated.
- A11.8 Research programmes will be staggered to prevent programmes from occurring simultaneously within the same location on Sceilg Mhichíl.

Monitoring and Reviewing the Effectiveness of the Management Plan

The management plan is a dynamic document that will change as the management priorities shift, as conditions onsite change and as other factors come into play. It is essential that there is regular monitoring to provide the most up-to-date information. A dedicated action (A1.1) has been included to monitor implementation and effectiveness of the other plan actions.

The SMIG, consisting of representatives from DHLGH and the OPW, together with the objectives and actions identified in the plan and the annual reports on the plan, will ensure the sustainability of the Sceilg Mhichíl WHP for present and future generations. The monitoring required by the plan will focus on indicators linked to the property's Outstanding Universal Value, authenticity and integrity.

DHLGH, as a focal point, together with the OPW, will be responsible for periodic reporting on the implementation of the World Heritage Convention. Their reports will be submitted to UNESCO and will provide an assessment of the legislative and administrative provisions adopted by Ireland and actions undertaken for the application of the convention regarding Sceilg Mhichíl. The next cycle of UNESCO periodic reporting of Ireland's WHPs will take place in 2022.

State-of-conservation or reactive monitoring is put in place to inform the World Heritage Committee when the state of conservation of a WHP is affected by projects, works, disasters or exceptional circumstances. DHLGH invited the World Heritage Committee to undertake a reactive monitoring mission to Sceilg Mhichíl in November 2007. During the mission a UNESCO expert met with officials

from the department and from the OPW and with interested parties who had expressed concerns regarding works on the island. UNESCO carried out an onsite inspection of the conservation works carried out on the monastic structures on the island. The mission concluded, in its preliminary findings, that 'whilst the works have transformed the appearance of these remains, they are justifiable and that the Outstanding Universal Value of the property remains intact'. The mission report's findings and recommendations were made subject to the agreement of the World Heritage Committee in Quebec, Canada, which met in July 2008.

A dedicated action (A4.18) has been included in the plan to assess the impacts of visitors and related activities in Year 5 of the plan period, based on the monitoring data collected in the first four years, and make sure that any necessary action arising from such an assessment is taken.

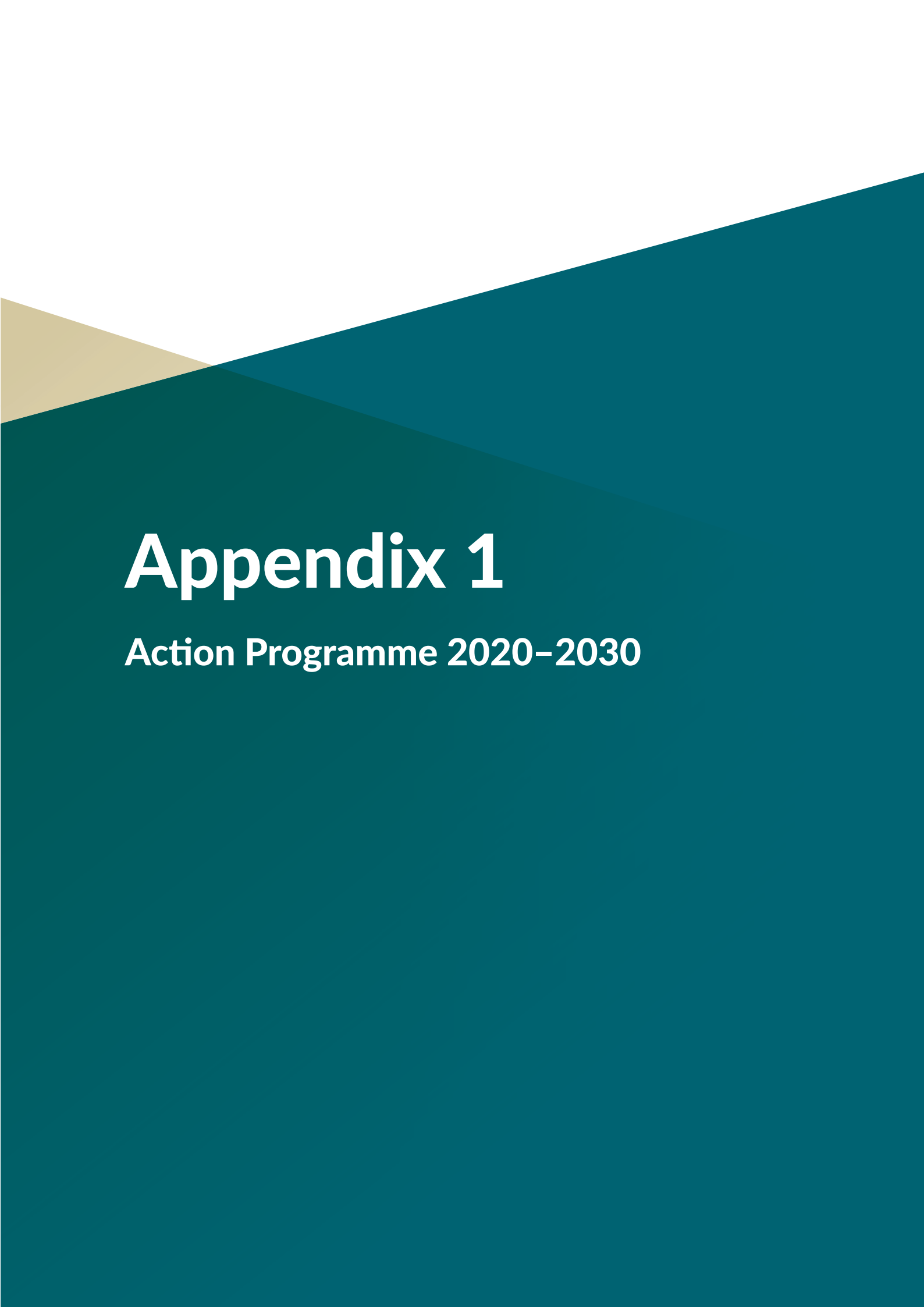
It is recognised that, with varying management priorities and other factors stemming from the complexity of the property, the relevance of the management plan may change over time. As such, the effectiveness of the implementation of the plan will need to be reviewed by:

- extensive reassessment of the plan after five years;
- production of annual Sceilg Mhichíl reports;
- periodic reporting;
- monitoring the progress of actions in Action Programme 2020–2030;
- assessment of the effectiveness of each action in achieving its objectives; and

As these steps are taken, relevant sections of the plan may need to be updated accordingly and reissued. Public consultation may be undertaken to inform relevant stakeholders of new issues if they arise.

Through continued monitoring by the SMIG and participation by local-interest groups, public agencies, non-governmental organisations and other relevant parties, the deterioration of the cultural and natural heritage of Sceilg Mhichíl can be prevented and a sense of pride can be instilled, thus ensuring the preservation of the unique qualities of this precious island.



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Appendix 1

Action Programme 2020–2030

Table 1: Summary of Action Programme 2020-2030

OBJECTIVE 1:	To have in place and implement an effective management framework to protect the Outstanding Universal Value of Sceilg Mhichíl
OBJECTIVE 2:	To improve engagement with local-interest groups and other relevant parties
OBJECTIVE 3:	To preserve the cultural heritage of the island and sustain its Outstanding Universal Value
OBJECTIVE 4:	To identify and conserve the natural heritage of the island
OBJECTIVE 5:	To further promote the importance of the WHP to ensure continued coordination by government departments, agencies and other statutory bodies with responsibilities for making and implementing national policies and undertaking activities that may impact on Sceilg Mhichíl and its environs
OBJECTIVE 6:	To manage visitors to Sceilg Mhichíl effectively
OBJECTIVE 7:	To maintain an appropriate standard of safe, regulated visitor access that supports conservation aims
OBJECTIVE 8:	To increase understanding of and appreciation for Sceilg Mhichíl and its environs
OBJECTIVE 9:	To maintain and enhance the landscape setting of Sceilg Mhichíl
OBJECTIVE 10:	To monitor those factors with the potential to impact on the built and natural environment of Sceilg Mhichíl
OBJECTIVE 11:	To establish a research framework for Sceilg Mhichíl

OBJECTIVE 1: To have in place and implement an effective management framework to protect the Outstanding Universal Value of Sceilg Mhichíl

	Action	Lead Agency	Target Date	Indicators
A1.1	Monitor implementation and effectiveness of the plan actions.	DHLGH, OPW	1. In Year 5 of the plan's lifespan 2. In the following January reporting cycle 3. Ongoing, as required	1. Review of implementation and effectiveness of the plan actions. 2. Review findings publicly released. 3. Plan actions amended to increase effectiveness, if necessary, and subject to AA and SEA.
A1.2	Continue supporting the activities of the WHP management team and agencies responsible for the management and care of Sceilg Mhichíl and its visitors.	DHLGH, OPW	All ongoing	1. Funding and resources provided. 2. Logistical support provided. 3. Built and natural heritage managed and protected. 4. Visitor service supported.
A1.3	Continue the oversight role of the SMIG throughout the lifetime of this plan.	DHLGH, OPW	1. Twice a year from adoption of the plan	1. SMIG meetings held twice a year.
A1.4	Ensure compliance with World Heritage Convention requirements.	DHLGH, OPW	1. Annually, in January 2. Annually in January 3. Annually 4. Annually and as required	1. Annual report submitted to UNESCO. 2. Report published on World Heritage Ireland website (http://www.worldheritageireland.ie). 3. Management plan amended annually to reflect any changes to the 2019 UNESCO Operational Guidelines. 4. Regular liaison with UNESCO, including attendance at meetings of the World Heritage Committee as necessary.

OBJECTIVE 2: To improve engagement with local-interest groups and other relevant parties				
	Action	Lead Agency	Target Date	Indicators
A2.1	Engage with CIL to secure the Lower Lighthouse complex for use by staff and visitors.	OPW	1. Within 1 year of adoption of the plan 2. Within the lifetime of the plan	1. Lease agreement for former lighthouse buildings concluded. 2. Former lighthouse buildings adapted for use as management hub and visitor facility.
A2.2	Engage with outside groups and stakeholders to facilitate the effective implementation of the management plan.	Relevant agencies, stakeholders, DHLGH, OPW	1. Ongoing	1. Regular meetings held with community, local-interest groups, the local authority, other government departments and other public bodies as required to discuss specific areas or issues of interest.
A2.3	Create a Sceilg Mhichíl stakeholder forum to address issues of mutual interest and inform decision-making processes.	DHLGH, OPW	1. Within 6 months of the plan's adoption 2. Annually from the date of the forum's creation	1. Creation of the stakeholder forum. 2. Subject to the views of the forum, report produced on issues and decisions addressed through the forum.
A2.4	Meet with local boat operators to discuss issues of mutual interest, including health and safety and the operational framework.	OPW, boat operators	1. Annually and as required	1. Meeting held annually and minutes circulated.
A2.5	Make publicly available existing and future reports on Sceilg Mhichíl via a dedicated website page for Sceilg Mhichíl.	DHLGH, OPW	1. Ongoing, as required	1. Release report findings online.

OBJECTIVE 3: To preserve the cultural heritage of the island and sustain its Outstanding Universal Value

	Action	Lead Agency	Target Date	Indicators
A3.1	Carry out a full pre-works survey and detailed specification for each annual phase of works in advance of any work commencing on the WHP.	DHLGH, OPW	1. Annually	1. Detailed specification and pre-works survey completed annually.
A3.2	Prepare a formal, structured maintenance programme for all conserved structures.	OPW	1. Annually	1. Maintenance programme prepared and implemented.
A3.3(a)	Report on archaeological works undertaken each year.	DHLGH	1. Annually, in January	1. Archaeological report submitted annually in accordance with ministerial-consent conditions and made publicly available.
A3.3(b)	Publish a full monograph of archaeological works undertaken on the island.	DHLGH	1. Within 3 years of the plan's adoption	1. Publication of the monograph of archaeological works
A3.4(a)	Report on conservation works undertaken each year.	DHLGH, OPW	1. Annually, in January	1. Report submitted annually in accordance with ministerial-consent conditions and released publicly.
A3.4(b)	Publish a full monograph of conservation works undertaken on the island.	DHLGH, OPW	1. Within the lifetime of the plan	1. Full monograph published.
A3.5	Ensure that heritage objects for Sceilg Mhichíl are archived and cared for appropriately.	DHLGH, OPW, National Museum of Ireland	All ongoing	1. All artefacts and objects lodged with National Museum of Ireland. 2. Some hand crosses and other artefacts lodged in the Killarney OPW depot. 3. Inventory made available in NMS archives.
A3.6	Ensure that the EAC continues to advise on future research and publication.	DHLGH, OPW, EAC	All ongoing	1. Regular meetings held. 2. Advice implemented.

OBJECTIVE 4: To identify and conserve the natural heritage of the island				
	Action	Lead Agency	Target Date	Indicators
A4.1	Prepare site-specific conservation objectives for the bird species for which the Skelligs SPA has been designated. Include quantitative conservation objectives, attributes and targets.	DHLGH	1. Ongoing 2. Within 1 year of the plan's adoption 3. Within 5 years of the plan's adoption	1. Continue the monitoring of the SCIs of Skelligs SPA to determine species specific issues and population levels (as per A4.5 and A4.6). 2. Available information on the ecological requirements of each of the SCIs of the Skelligs SPA used to select suitable attributes for conservation objective-setting. Available monitoring data used to set targets for each attribute, which will be quantitative where possible. 3. Conservation objective attributes and targets reviewed and refined as necessary.
A4.2	Maintain close cooperation between the SMIG, the property management team, the NPWS and the guide team.	DHLGH, OPW	1. Ongoing from the plan's adoption 2. 1 week after each meeting is held	1. Quarterly meetings held twice yearly in respect of the guide team. 2. Summary of meetings disseminated across the team and to interested parties.
A4.3	Secure ministerial consent, underpinned by relevant scientific data and analyses where required, for relevant interventions as required.	DHLGH, OPW	1. Ongoing	1. Consents granted.
A4.4	Ensure that an ecological assessment is undertaken for any project or activity that which might significantly impact on the biodiversity of the island (including screening for AA and AA if necessary, for any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on the species and their habitats for which the SPA has been designated) so that nature-conservation issues are considered alongside built heritage.	DHLGH, OPW	1. Ongoing as required 2. Ongoing as required 3. Annually, in January	1. OPW to conduct initial ecological assessment and consult with NPWS/ecological experts as required. 2. Screening for AA undertaken as required for any project where significant effects on the Skelligs SPA are possible. 3. Summary of assessments conducted each year released.
A4.5	Continue to develop the seabird-monitoring programme, with particular attention to burrow-nesting seabirds, in order to derive, among other things, robust population estimates, population trends and the identification of pressures acting on the populations. Such data will inform the management of both public access and the works programme in monitoring potential effects of human activities.	DHLGH, OPW	1. Within 1 year of the plan's adoption 2. Annually	1. Plots including artificial nest boxes/sites established in order to undertake monitoring of species throughout breeding cycle. 2. Monitoring study of the burrowing/ nesting species carried out: • to monitor breeding success by following a subset of nests checked at the beginning and towards the end of the breeding season to determine the number of chicks fledged per apparently occupied burrow (AOB); and

OBJECTIVE 4: To identify and conserve the natural heritage of the island cont'd

	Action	Lead Agency	Target Date	Indicators
			3. In Year 5 of study, every 2 years thereafter 4. Within 1 year of the study's completion	to monitor areas of high visitor footfall and areas where there are no visitors to help assess trends in breeding success in relation to visual and physical disturbance from visitors 3. Data from the above collated and analysed to inform management of the property. 4. Study findings publicly released.
A4.6	On an annual basis, carry out a census of all cliff-nesting seabird species and estimate the breeding productivity of Sceilg Mhichil's kittiwake population.	DHLGH	1. Annually 2. Annually, in January	1. Carry out census count and kittiwake productivity work. 2. Report publicly released.
A4.7	Ensure that the value of the seabird data collected at Sceilg Mhichil is optimised by contributing to national and international seabird survey and monitoring initiatives.	DHLGH	1. Ongoing	1. Relevant census data submitted to Seabirds Count steering group and other bodies where appropriate.
A4.8	Participate in national and international seabird survey and monitoring initiatives.	DHLGH	1. When requested	1. Census data released as sought.
A4.9	Implement, and if necessary update, the biosecurity action plan to deal with accidental or deliberate introductions of predator species.	DHLGH, OPW	1. Within 1 year of the plan's adoption 2. Annually, in January	1. Recommendations of the biosecurity plan implemented. 2. Annual report on outcomes of implementing the plan released online.
A4.10	Exclude recreational and other non-essential helicopter flights from an exclusion zone of 1 kilometre surrounding Skelligs SPA.	DHLGH, OPW	1. Ongoing 2. Within 1 year of the plan's adoption	1. Flights monitored on a regular basis. 2. Flight policy developed and implemented.
A4.11	Finalise and publish a vegetation survey, including an investigation of species that may have been cultivated by the monks.	OPW	1. Within 3 years of the plan's adoption	1. Vegetation survey finalised and published online.
A4.12	Promote and undertake survey, research and, where needed, conservation work of other biodiversity taxa on the island.	DHLGH	1. Ongoing 2. Ongoing	1. New research strategy in place and surveys carried out. 2. Dedicated grant funding made available.

OBJECTIVE 4: To identify and conserve the natural heritage of the island cont'd

	Action	Lead Agency	Target Date	Indicators
A4.13	Research the impacts of mice and rabbits on the biodiversity and archaeological heritage of the islands. Consider whether eradication is necessary.	DHLGH, OPW	1. Within 1 year of the plan's adoption and ongoing	1. Research carried out and subsequent reports made publicly available.
A4.14	Develop guidance for boat operators to follow to reduce potential impacts on wildlife on Sceilg Mhichíl and in the surrounding waters	OPW	1. Within 1 year of the plan's adoption	1. Guidance developed.
A4.15	Within one year of installation of lighting arrangements for the operation of the Lower Lighthouse complex, review those lighting arrangements and, if necessary and where practicable, within a further one year implement lighting measures, such as use of blinds, downward lighting, to reduce the risk of bird strikes.	OPW	1. Within 1 year of installation of lighting arrangements 2. Within 1 year of review completion	1. Review of lighting impact on birds conducted. 2. As required, implement measures (e.g., blinds, downward lighting) if required.
A4.16	Continued supervision of wall maintenance by an ornithologist to ensure that burrow entrances remain accessible to breeding birds (in particular storm petrel), with the objective of maintaining/increasing the net amount of potential breeding chambers in the walls overall, which are subjected to maintenance works.	OPW	1. Annually, in January	1. Record of ornithologist presence and notes released.
A4.17	Works/research programmes will be subject to site-specific mitigation measures. This may include, for example, conducting pre-works surveys to establish the location of any burrows utilised for nesting in the works area, the marking of such burrows so they may be avoided, and avoiding certain time-periods where birds may be more susceptible to disturbance.	OPW, DHLGH,	1. Ongoing as required	1. Appropriate mitigation for each works/research project determined.
A4.18	Assess the impacts of visitors and related activities in Year 5 of the plan period, informed by the monitoring data collected in the first four years, and take any necessary action on foot of such an assessment.	OPW, DHLGH	1. In Year 5 of the plan's lifespan 2. In the following January reporting cycle 3. Within 1 year of assessment results	1. Desk-based assessment of visitor impacts, to include: • assessment of population distribution across the site, to determine the proportion of population which interacts with human activities; and • quantification of impacts of visitors by comparing breeding success of birds under/adjacent to paths with those away from immediate visitor traffic. 2. Assessment findings publicly released. 3. Necessary action taken on foot of assessment results.

OBJECTIVE 5: To further promote the importance of the WHP to ensure continued coordination by government departments, agencies and other statutory bodies with responsibilities for making and implementing national policies and undertaking activities that may impact on Sceilg Mhichíl and its environs

	Action	Lead Agency	Target Date	Indicators
A5.1	Adopt and implement this management plan as a framework for the policies, future plans and decisions regarding Sceilg Mhichíl.	DHLGH, OPW	1. Ongoing	1. Management plan published and used as a framework.
A5.2	Ensure compliance with all relevant statutory provisions for the protection of the WHP.	DHLGH, OPW	1. Ongoing	1. Compliance with all regulatory statutes and legislation.
A5.3	Work with the local authority to ensure recognition of the status of this management plan in its county development plans.	DHLGH, OPW, Kerry County Council	1. Ongoing	1. Management plan referenced in county development plans.
A5.4	Heighten awareness by Kerry County Council and other relevant agencies and stakeholders of the obligations arising from a WHP designation.	DHLGH, OPW, relevant bodies	All ongoing	1. Increased awareness among all bodies. 2. Regular meetings with relevant agencies and stakeholders.

OBJECTIVE 6: To manage visitors to Sceilg Mhichíl effectively

	Action	Lead Agency	Target Date	Indicators
A6.1	Continue to manage the National Monument, nature reserve and SPA at Sceilg Mhichíl, while allowing a system of managed public access that ensures that the conservation of the WHP is maintained as a first priority.	DHLGH, OPW	1. Ongoing	1. Sustainable visitor access managed (see below).
A6.2	Maintain a strictly defined annual season within which the island will, weather and sea conditions permitting, be open to visitors and publicise this appropriately with details of the permitted transit services.	DHLGH, OPW	1. Ongoing 2. Annually 3. Ongoing	1. Appropriate annual season maintained (at present mid-May to end of September). 2. Details of permitted transit services publicised. 3. CCTV/other measures introduced on the island to deter and/or detect unauthorised or out-of-season landings on the island.
A6.3	Maintain a quality guide service to directly invigilate the island during the season, offer appropriate information to visitors and manage safety systems.	OPW	1. Ongoing	1. Adequately resourced and trained guide team in place during the visitor season.
A6.4	Collect visitor statistics for each season and analyse trends in order to provide quality management information. Publish annual statistics and analytical report online.	OPW	1. Annually, from the end of the visitor season 2. Annually, in January	1. Collate and analyse collected data. 2. Release report publicly online.
A6.5	Liaise with Fáilte Ireland and local tourism networks in the implementation of the tourism strategy for the greater south Kerry area outlined in the Skellig Coast VEDP.	DHLGH, OPW	1. All ongoing	1. Resource support for Skellig Coast VEDP provided. 2. Skellig Experience Visitor Centre secured to deliver excellent customer service, which directly supports tourism. 3. Skellig Experience Visitor Centre used to provide a virtual and interpretative experience to those who cannot access the property directly and encourage visits to other monuments and natural heritage sites in the area.
A6.6	Continue to regularly review both the patterns of movement across the property and whether the 180-visitor-per-day limit is sustainable, with regard to the cultural and natural heritage features of the property and to visitor safety.	DHLGH, OPW	1. Ongoing 2. Annually, from end of visitor season 3. Ongoing	1. Annual review of visitor volumes and patterns carried out and any attendant risks identified and reported to SMIG. 2. Report released publicly online. 3. Sustainable pattern of visitor use maintained.

OBJECTIVE 6: To manage visitors to Sceilg Mhichil effectively cont'd

	Action	Lead Agency	Target Date	Indicators
A6.7	Continue to maintain safety systems and procedures on Sceilg Mhichil to ensure that visitor and staff safety are not compromised and there is an effective and trained emergency response in place in the event of accident.	OPW	All annually	1. Annual safety courses for staff carried out. 2. Other emergency services engaged with to enable coordinated responses to be tested. 3. Systems reviewed and updated annually as required.
A6.8	Engage with aircraft regulatory authorities to mitigate conservation risks arising from inappropriate deployment of airborne devices and aircraft above and around Sceilg Mhichil in order to manage risks to the property.	OPW	Within Year 1 of the plan's adoption	1. Regulatory authority engagement on the development and implementation of appropriate protocols. 2. Assessment of any unilaterally enabled actions that can be undertaken through SMIG.
A6.9	Disseminate information to inform the seagoing community of the necessary controls on access to the island, including biosecurity requirements.	DHLGH, OPW	1. Ongoing	1. Engagement with seagoing community and information supplied through public announcements, websites and social media.
A6.10	Continue the practice of excluding private vessels from landing visitors on the island.	OPW	1. Ongoing	1. Existing situation monitored.
A6.11	Continue to balance the need to preserve the National Monument with the need to facilitate public access by operating a boat-permit scheme for landing visitors on the island during the visitor season.	OPW	All ongoing	1. Current permit system continued in operation. 2. Liaison with boat operators in relation to permits.
A6.12	Work on the provision of toilet facilities on the island, based in the compound around the Lower Lighthouse.	OPW	1. Within 1 year of the plan's adoption 2. By 2022	1. Toilet facilities designed. 2. Facilities in place by 2022.
A6.13	Disseminate wildlife guidance information to inform the public of the exceptionalism of the natural heritage of Sceilg Mhichil and to raise awareness of its fragility, the need to remain on the designated pathways and mitigate any impacts.	OPW, DHLGH	1. Within 1 year of the plan's adoption. 2. Within 1 month of publishing finalised information leaflet, and thereafter ongoing 3. Daily for each group of visitors	1. OPW and NPWS to develop information leaflet on 'do's/don'ts' for visiting Sceilg Mhichil and make available online. 2. OPW to agree distribution methods (e.g., signage at boarding locations, signage on vessels or physical copies of leaflet) with appropriate stakeholders (e.g., vessel operators and Skellig Michael Visitor Centre). 3. Inform visitors after disembarking on the island through talks from accredited guides.

OBJECTIVE 6: To manage visitors to Sceilg Mhichíl effectively cont'd

	Action	Lead Agency	Target Date	Indicators
A6.14	Carry out daily spot checks on points along the access pathways to ensure visitor compliance with adhering to the designated pathways on the property.	OPW	1. Daily 2. Annually, in January. 3. Annually, in January.	1. Spot checks conducted. 2. Collect and analyse data. 3. Release findings in annual report.
A6.15	Put in place measures to prevent unauthorised drone flying. These shall include the continued dissemination of information (e.g., at booking, at the piers, on the boats) to explain why unauthorised drones are banned on the property, along with the creation of a process for the authorisation of legitimate drone usage onsite.	OPW	1. Within 1 year of the plan's adoption 2. Within 1 year of the plan's adoption 3. Annually, in January.	1. Develop prevention methods. 2. Create authorisation process for drone usage. 3. Report on instances of unauthorised drone usage.
A6.16	Put in place further signage and physical measures at the property entrance to further dissuade unauthorised access outside of the visitor season and/or use CCTV cameras to monitor the pier area.	OPW	1. Within 1 year of the plan's adoption	1. Installation of chain barrier and/or CCTV cameras to monitor the pier area.

OBJECTIVE 7: To maintain an appropriate standard of safe, regulated visitor access that supports conservation aims

	Action	Lead Agency	Target Date	Indicators
A7.1	Continue to address, in cooperation with boat operators and the Marine Survey Office of the Department of Transport, safety issues relevant to the sea crossing.	OPW	All annually and ongoing	1. Yearly review carried out, with a focus on visitor safety of transit services, taking into account any new marine-safety statutory requirements. 2. Permit conditions under which the boat operators work enforced in respect of safety issues.
A7.2	Continue the ongoing review of the criteria for the granting of permits for boats to land visitors on the island to ensure that the system adapts to any changing circumstances.	OPW	1. Biennially from adoption of the plan 2. As required	1. Periodic reviews of requirements undertaken to ensure that selection criteria remain relevant and up to date. 2. Any changes to be informed to stakeholders at earliest opportunity and imported into existing arrangements.
A7.3	Collect visitor-traffic data and analyse trends with a view to providing quality data for informed decision-making.	OPW	1. Annually, from the end of the visitor season 2. Annually, in January	1. Patterns of boat services monitored and visitor-traffic trends analysed. 2. Report issued annually to SMIG and made publicly available.
A7.4	Maintain the current minimum time limit of 2.5 hours for visits to the island on days when normal weather conditions prevail to improve the visitor experience.	OPW	All ongoing	1. Current minimum time limit for visitors maintained. 2. Controls maintained on numbers of people on the island at any one time.
A7.5	Continue to work with emergency-response agencies to prepare and train for a variety of serious accident and rescue scenarios.	OPW	All annually and ongoing	1. Trained emergency response maintained (see below). 2. Appropriate safety-drill exercises involving external rescue-services partners carried out periodically as needed.
A7.6	Train guide staff appropriately and maintain regular personal-competency certifications.	OPW	All annually and ongoing	1. Annual training delivered to OPW teams to maintain necessary certifications, e.g., first aid, defibrillator use. 2. Certifications in relevant safety training updated as required. 3. Accident-/incident-recording system maintained onsite and all issues recorded on National Incident Management System.
A7.7	Entrust OPW, as property manager, with the maintenance of an up-to-date safety statement for the island, in accordance with health and safety legislation, and continue to use appropriate risk-assessment modelling on the island to plan for visitor and staff safety.	OPW	All annually and ongoing	1. Safety statement reviewed and updated regularly. 2. Appropriate risk-assessment model in place. 3. Visitor- and staff-/contractor-safety policy in place. 4. Necessary legislative requirements observed to support appropriate management of safety issues.

OBJECTIVE 7: To maintain an appropriate standard of safe, regulated, visitor access that supports conservation aims cont'd

	Action	Lead Agency	Target Date	Indicators
A7.8	Continue to ensure safe access to the island during the season by regular maintenance of the pier and steps during the official visitor season and ensure that appropriate signage is in place at the pier and at the steps to the South Peak and continue to maintain and improve up to date safety information available online.	OPW	1. Annually, before the site opens to visitors 2. Within 1 year of plan's adoption	1. Maintenance of pier and steps. 2. Implement appropriate signage onsite and online: • visitor-safety film made available online and reviewed periodically; • visitor-safety guide made available in multiple languages for distribution by boat operators and online; and • advisory safety signage in place where appropriate throughout island.
A7.9	Maintain an appropriate access arrangement for the South Peak in particular that recognises its particularly challenging nature; ensure that casual visitor access is controlled.	OPW	All annually and ongoing	1. Existing South Peak access permission system maintained. 2. Unauthorised and casual visitor access monitored. 3. South Peak safety access system maintained.
A7.10	Implement a conditions-advisory system during the visitor season to support boat operators with advice on sea and weather conditions on the island.	OPW	All annually and ongoing	1. Conditions-advisory system for boat operators maintained. 2. Closure of island to landings or variations to phased landing pattern advised to boat operators.
A7.11	Establish a staggered regime for the arrival times of boats over the course of the day to reduce overcrowding on the property and reduce the potential for visitors to venture from the designated pathways. Use monitoring data collected for A4.5 to assess positive/negative impacts of staggering on SCIs.	OPW	1. Ongoing 2. After 5 years of plan's adoption	1. Stagger boat arrival times between 10am and 2pm. 2. Examine monitoring data to determine if practice should be continued.
A7.12	Disseminate guidance to all boat operators landing visitors on Sceilg Mhichíl or taking visitors on tours around the island, to ensure they are informed of potential adverse effects from visual and physical disturbance on wildlife (e.g., rafting seabirds and seals), and are requested to avoid disturbance.	OPW	1. Within 1 year of plan's adoption 2. Ongoing every 5 years	1. NPWS (in collaboration with OPW) to develop guidance for boat operators for vessel speeds and separation distances from wildlife. 2. Review provided guidance to ensure it remains current.

OBJECTIVE 8: To increase understanding of and appreciation for Sceilg Mhichíl and its environs

	Action	Lead Agency	Target Date	Indicators
A8.1	Continue to publish, for public distribution, the multilingual visitor-guide pamphlet interpreting the monastic and natural history of Sceilg Mhichíl.	OPW	1. As required	1. Multilingual visitor-guide pamphlet made available to visitors and online.
A8.2	Maintain the website for Sceilg Mhichíl (https://worldheritageireland.ie/) and continue to provide relevant information on the significance of the property; provide periodic updates on the implementation of the management plan and advise visitors on how to prepare for a safe visit to the island.	DHLGH, OPW	1. Annually 2. Annually	1. Website updated with relevant information on adoption of the plan. 2. Status report on adoption of the plan released.
A8.3	Enhance the dissemination of information on Sceilg Mhichíl by providing materials in diverse media and meeting any reasonable requests for information insofar as possible.	DHLGH, OPW	All ongoing	1. Number of information leaflets in different languages expanded further. 2. DHLGH and OPW websites expanded further and improved. 3. Effective response to requests for information maintained.
A8.4	Create an education outreach programme within the context of the landside facilities being contemplated at the Skellig Experience Visitor Centre in Portmagee, linking to schools and other educational institutions.	DHLGH, OPW	1. Within 1 year of the plan's adoption 2. Within 2 years of the plan's adoption 3. Within 2 years of the plan's adoption	1. Consultation with relevant stakeholders entered into. 2. Outreach element to planned visitor centre set up. 3. Plans for school visit schemes developed.
A8.5	Continue to support and give natural-history public lectures and/or case-study seminars on the conservation works and the history of the island.	DHLGH, OPW	All ongoing	1. Public lectures, seminars and conference presence continued. 2. Broader use of planned visitor-centre facility to specifically target opportunities for engagement with academic and other interest groups, particularly in shoulder and off seasons. 3. Literature provided or incorporated into existing signage – i.e., information on the biodiversity of Na Scealga, including their global importance for seabirds.
A8.6	Promote public awareness of other heritage sites of importance in the area in order to broaden visitor experience; provide resources to support this in the Skellig Experience Visitor Centre in Portmagee in particular.	OPW	Within 2 years of the plan's adoption	1. Awareness of local land-based monuments developed in the planned visitor centre, in line with the objectives of the Skellig Coast VEDP. 2. Visitor awareness of broader built and natural heritage of wider south-Kerry area developed.

OBJECTIVE 8: To increase understanding of and appreciation for Sceilg Mhichíl and its environs cont'd

	Action	Lead Agency	Target Date	Indicators
A8.7	Support and incentivise local initiatives, such as organised walks and tours of historical and biodiversity sites of interest, in the Iveragh Peninsula.	DHLGH, OPW	All ongoing	1. Interested stakeholders, including tourist authorities, consulted on how best to achieve aim. 2. NPWS and relevant non-governmental organisations consulted on biodiversity sites in the south Kerry area. 3. Local initiatives supported during the early stages of their development. 4. Initiatives from the planned visitor centre proactively supported.
A8.8	Liaise with Fáilte Ireland and any other appropriate third parties to ensure high-quality information and offsite interpretation for visitors is provided where appropriate, including in the Skellig Experience Visitor Centre.	DHLGH, OPW	All ongoing	1. Appropriate information provided at the Skellig Experience Visitor Centre and other locations. 2. Options for improvements to information/interpretation delivery, including online, multi-language, etc., assessed periodically.
A8.9	Maintain an outreach programme by the management team.	DHLGH, OPW	All ongoing	1. Further lectures given on different aspects of the property. 2. Advice on tourism initiatives continued.

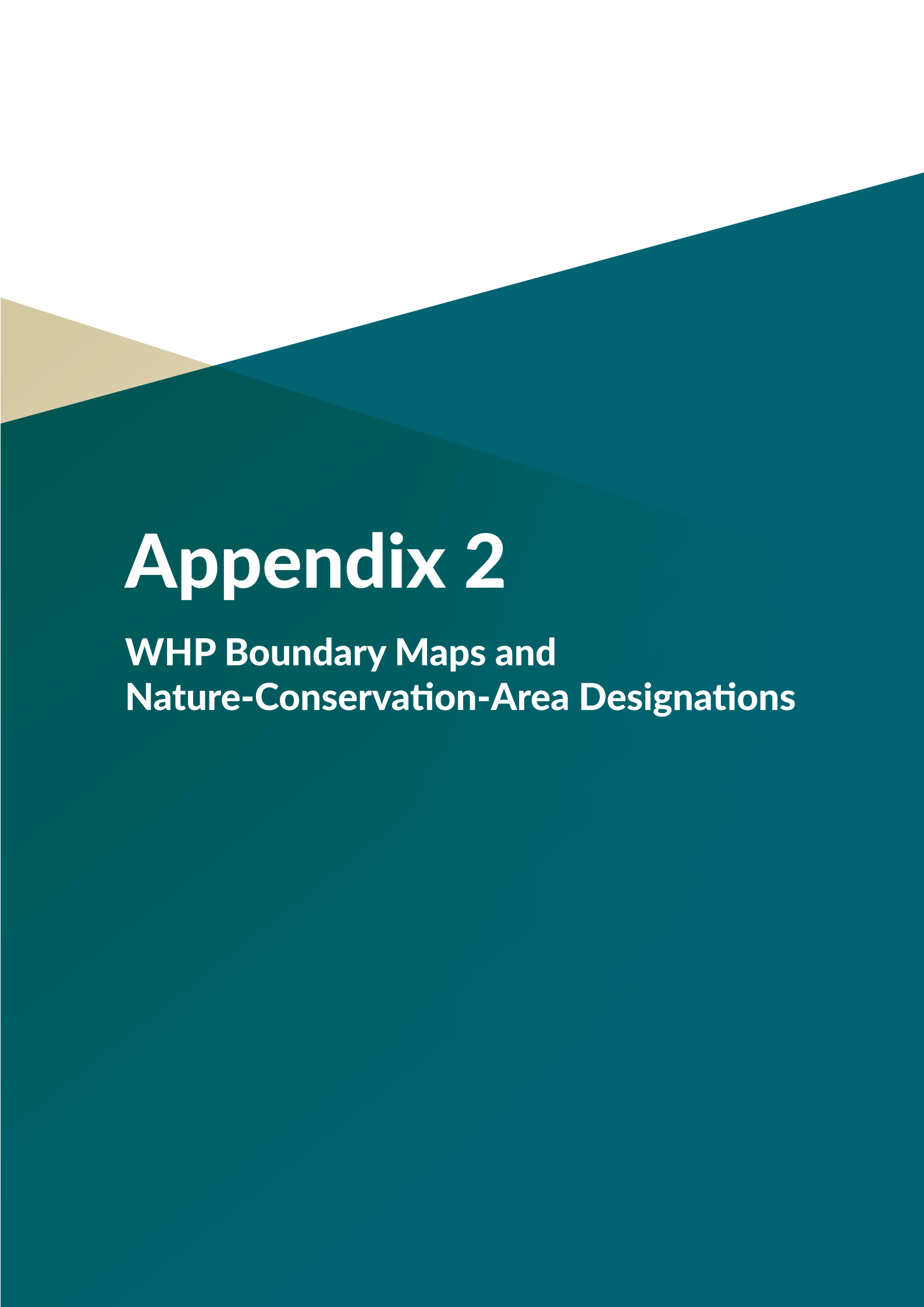
OBJECTIVE 9: To maintain and enhance the landscape setting of Sceilg Mhichíl

	Action	Lead Agency	Target Date	Indicators
A9.1(a)	Design alternative onsite accommodation based in the Lower Lighthouse.	OPW	1. Commencing within 2 years of the plan's adoption	1. Alternative accommodation designed and built in Lower Lighthouse.
A9.1(b)	Ensure the design of temporary work huts is in keeping with the landscape of the island.	OPW	1. Within 2 years of the plan's adoption	1. Temporary accommodation reviewed for landscape impact.
A9.2	Maintain the current waste-management strategy, agreed with Kerry County Council, for the recycling and removal of waste.	OPW, Kerry County Council	All ongoing	1. Regular meetings held. 2. Protocols regularly reviewed and enforced.
A9.3	Continue regular liaison with the local-authority Environmental Officer.	OPW, Kerry County Council	1. Ongoing	1. Regular meetings held.
A9.4	Design and build visitor toilet facilities in Lower Lighthouse compound.	OPW	1. Within 2 years of the plan's adoption 2. Ongoing	1. Toilet facilities in place by 2022. 2. Toilet facilities maintained after 2022.

OBJECTIVE 10: To monitor those factors with the potential to impact on the built and natural environment of Sceilg Mhichíl

	Action	Lead Agency	Target Date	Indicators
A10.1	Develop a framework for monitoring climate change on the island.	OPW, DHLGH	1. Within 3 months of the plan's adoption 2. Within 2 years of the plan's adoption	1. Development of framework commenced. 2. Finalised framework published online.
A10.2	Ensure that any possible impact of climate change on Sceilg Mhichíl is monitored.	DHLGH, OPW	1. Ongoing	1. Continued monitoring of climate change impacts, e.g., erosion events, flora and fauna surveys.
A10.3	Monitor the change of structures, using technical assistance as required.	OPW, technical assistance	1. Annually	1. Seasonal surveys carried out and reports made available.
A10.4	Monitor, on an annual basis, other factors that may impinge on the built and natural environment.	Property management team, SMIG	1. Ongoing	1. Off-season damage reports compiled and analysed.

OBJECTIVE 11: To establish a research framework for Sceilg Mhichíl				
	Action	Lead Agency	Target Date	Indicators
A11.1	Support any relevant national research programmes.	DHLGH, OPW	1. Ongoing	1. Programmes supported.
A11.2	Establish a research framework that would encourage involvement from third-level institutions and other interested parties.	DHLGH, OPW, EAC	1. Within 5 years of the plan's adoption 2. Minimum 1 each year	1. Research framework developed and published. 2. EAC meetings held regularly to coordinate.
A11.3	Complete the research programme on geology and historic quarrying.	OPW	1. Within 5 years of the plan's adoption	1. Research completed and published.
A11.4	Complete research on water collection and management.	DHLGH	1. Within 5 years of the plan's adoption	1. Research completed and published.
A11.5	Complete the programme of vegetation surveys and investigation of plant species that may have been cultivated by the monks.	OPW	1. Within 2 years of the plan's adoption	1. Research completed and published.
A11.6	Complete research into the development of drystone construction based on the work being carried out on the monastic structures.	OPW	1. Within 2 years of the plan's adoption	1. Research completed and published.
A11.7	Enhance visitors' experience of the island by supporting research and ensuring that the results are disseminated.	DHLGH, OPW	1. Within 5 years of the plan's adoption	1. Specific programme developed under research framework.
A11.8	Research programmes will be staggered to prevent programmes from occurring simultaneously within the same location on Sceilg Mhichíl.	OPW, DHLGH	1. Ongoing	1. NPWS/OPW to continue to assess appropriate timings of any research to avoid disturbance to the SCI species.

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Appendix 2

**WHP Boundary Maps and
Nature-Conservation-Area Designations**

Fig. 3 Sceilg Mhichíl World Heritage Property boundary map.

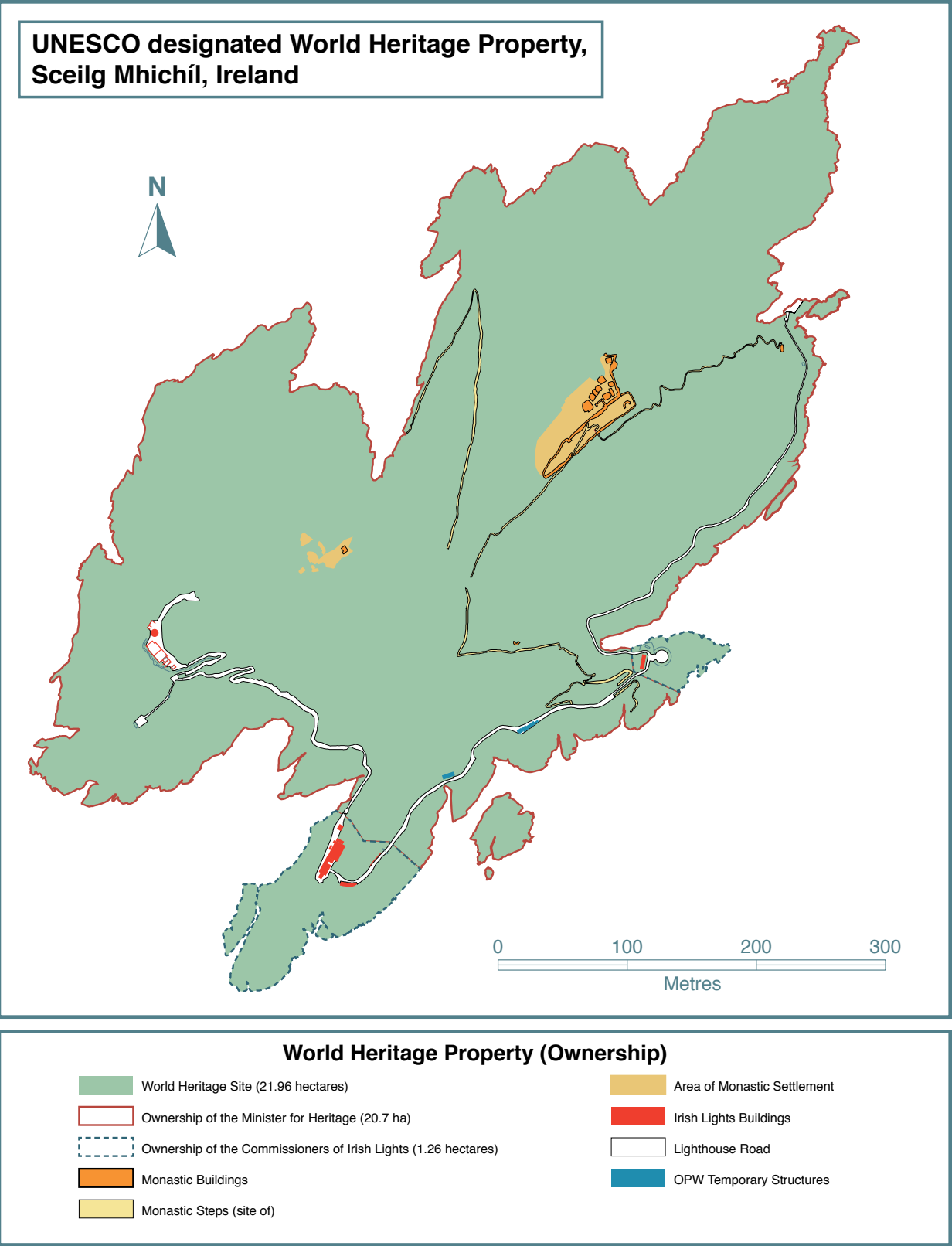


Fig. 4 Sceilg Mhichíl.

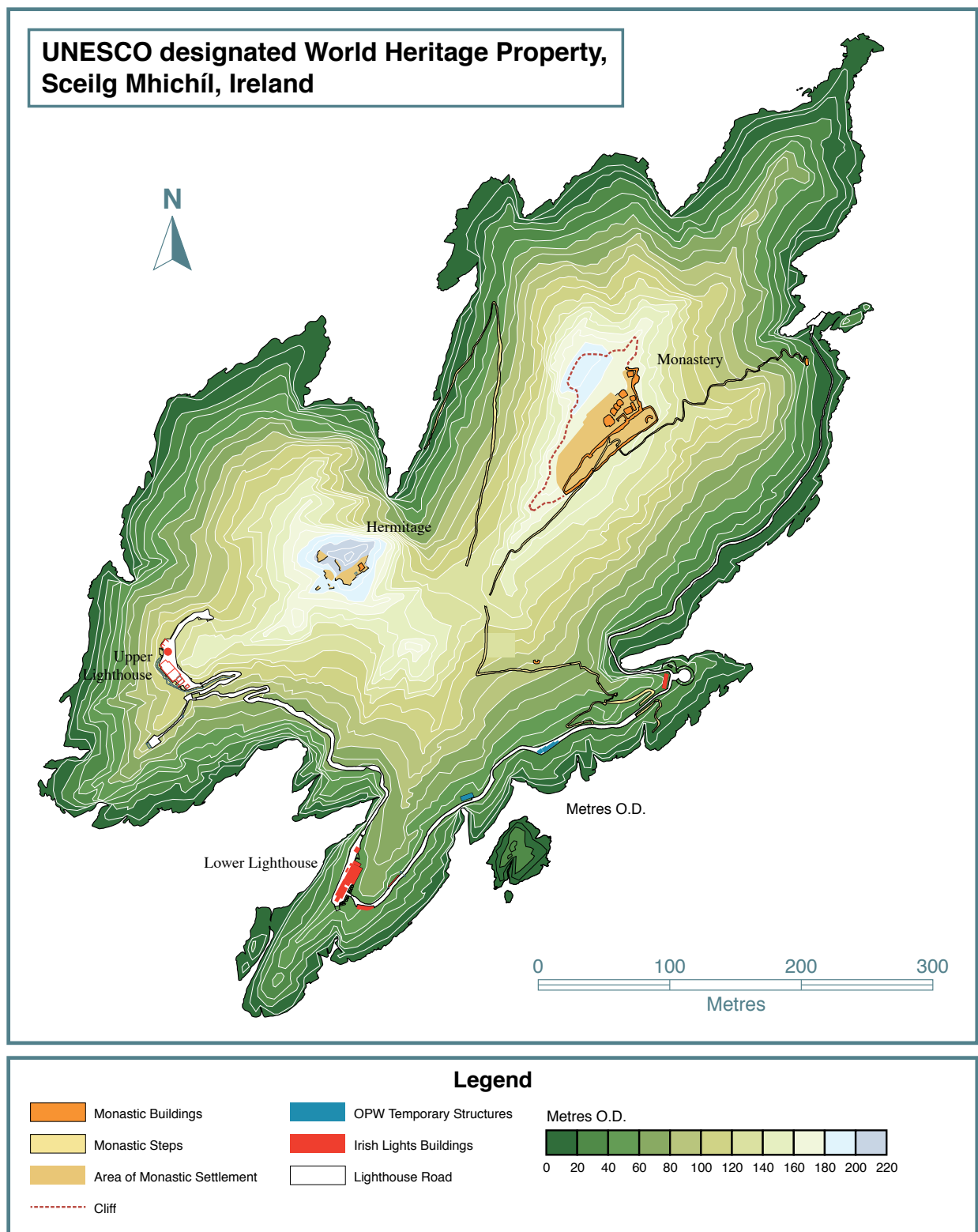
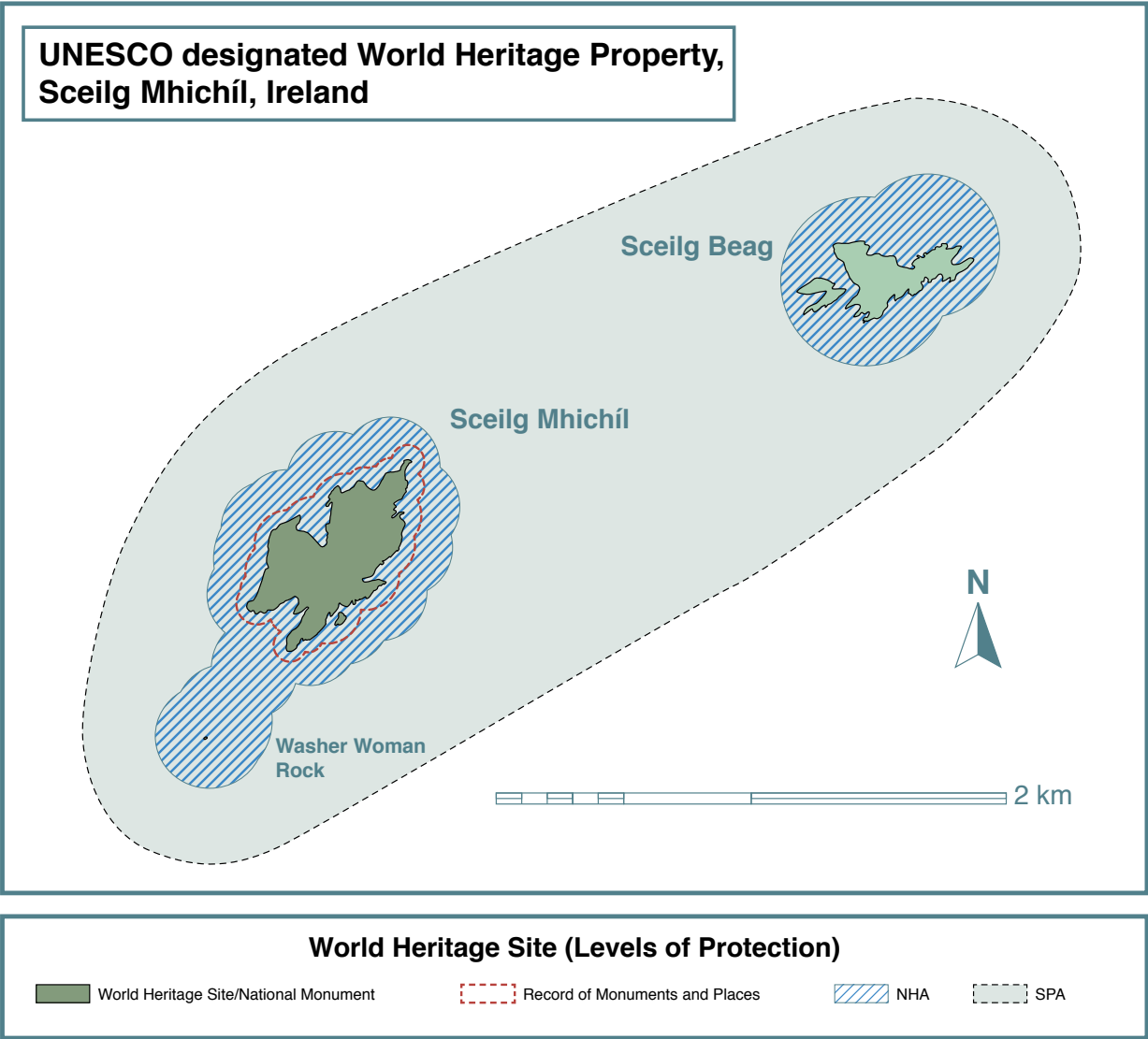
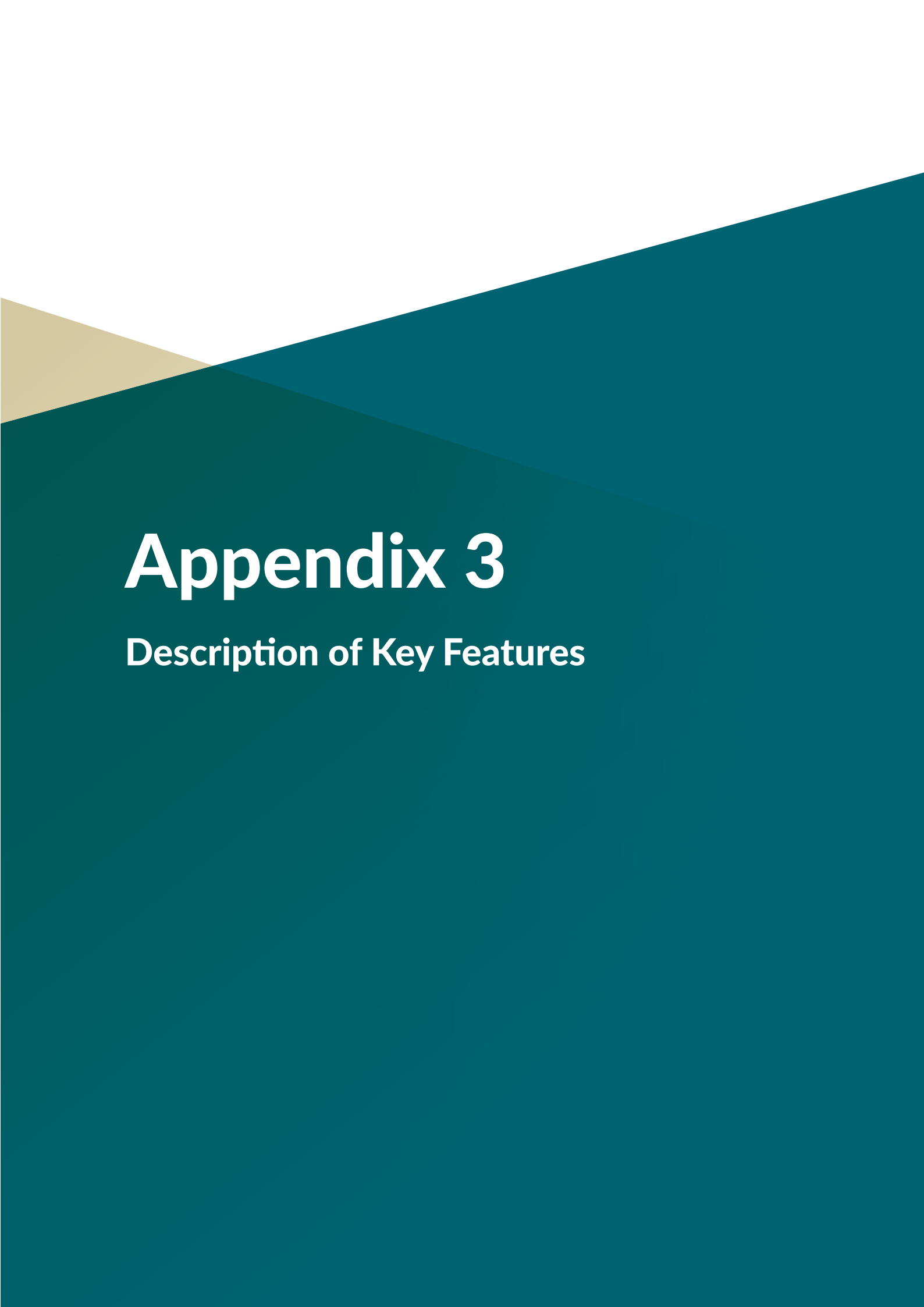


Fig. 5 Designations.



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Appendix 3

Description of Key Features

The Monastery

The monastery comprises two oratories, a mortared church, six cells (one of which is in a ruinous state), the remains of a beehive toilet, cisterns, a cemetery, *leachtanna*, crosses and cross-slabs. It also includes two large terraces referred to as the Upper and Lower Outer Enclosures. The Lower Outer Enclosure houses the remains of two very early structures.

Access to the Monastery

There are three long flights of steps that lead to the monastery. It was necessary to have three landing points so that the monks could land safely; the state of the seas and winds would dictate which landing place they would use. The base sections of these flights were cut into the rock, with the steps constructed of drystone once they had reached a level where stormy seas could no longer damage them.

The base of the East Steps was blasted away by the lighthouse-builders when they constructed the pier and the Lighthouse Road. Above this level the steps have been conserved and are in very good condition. The remains of a structure that may have sheltered a boat or housed provisions are located here.

The North Steps were used extensively by the lighthouse-builders. The lower, stone-cut section has been greatly worn by the action of the sea. A parapet was added at the lowest section of the drystone steps, which are in one long, continuous flight. The steps have been repaired, but owing to collapse on the very steep ground it has not been possible to recover all of them and some sections have been ramped over. Neither the East nor the North Steps are accessible to the public.

The South Steps are used by visitors today and are accessed from the Lighthouse Road. The South Steps join the North Steps at Christ's Saddle and continue as one flight up to the monastery. There are other structures associated with these steps – the remains of walling, for example, which was probably used to create level terraces. These terraces may have been used to cultivate foodstuffs. Alongside the steps are the remains of a substantial prayer or pilgrimage station. There are also the remains of a lighthouse platform and a lighthouse toilet. At Christ's Saddle there is a constructed 'cave' or shelter.

Pl. 36 The monastic Inner Enclosure.



Pl. 37 Aerial view of the East Steps.



Pl. 38 The North Steps.



Pl. 39 The South Steps, leading to Christ's Saddle.



Pl. 40 A view of the South Steps from the South Peak.



Pl. 41 The Upper Outer Enclosure.



The Gardens

The monastery is accessed via the Upper and Lower Outer Enclosures. The present entrance into the Upper Outer Enclosure is not original and was possibly constructed in the early nineteenth century. This garden would have provided a suitable area for growing vegetables: it faces south and is well shielded from the elements. Archaeological excavation of the Lower Outer Enclosure has uncovered the remains of a very early circular, drystone cell surrounded by paving. This cell is very similar to the cell on nearby Oileán Lócháin. This discovery indicates that this garden was never used solely for cultivation. The remainder of the garden is very steep, but it is possible that small cultivation terraces were located here.

The Walls

One of the critical elements of the monastery is its retaining walls. The monks used these massive walls to create terraces upon which to build and to provide shelter from the prevailing winds. There is a long history of the collapse of these walls, some of which occurred during the monastic occupation.

The east retaining wall has three phases of construction, representing repeated collapse and rebuilding. The retaining wall to the Small Oratory

Pl. 42 The west end of the monastery, showing the retaining walls.



Terrace is substantially original. It had moved significantly over the centuries, with the top section falling inwards; a revetment was added in antiquity to prevent it falling onto the terrace. This wall has now been stabilised *in situ*.

The long, upper, south-facing retaining wall reveals at least two phases of monastic construction: repair during the lighthouse occupation in the early nineteenth century (including the construction of a dry toilet for the construction workers) and a late-nineteenth-century repair. Further, minor conservation work was undertaken in the late 1970s.

The long, lower, south-facing retaining wall has also suffered from repeated collapse. Most of the retaining wall holding the Upper Outer Enclosure had broken down and been substantially rebuilt in the early nineteenth century. Close to collapse again, it was rebuilt again during the current works programme. The retaining wall to the Lower Outer Enclosure is almost fully original at its west end, but the eastern section had collapsed and it was necessary to reconstruct it during the current works programme to preserve the site.

The Entrances

There are two entrances into the Outer Enclosures. The earlier one (the Lower Entrance), at the top of the East Steps and leading into the Lower Monk's Garden, has been repaired but is no longer in use. The later one, leading into the Upper Outer Enclosure, probably dates from the early nineteenth century and is the entrance currently used by visitors. There are three entrances (the Upper Entrances) into the Inner Enclosure. The earliest (through the east retaining wall) is a short distance from the East Steps. This was abandoned after serious collapse at an early stage in the history of the monastery. The monks then constructed an entrance on the south side, from the Lower Monk's Garden, built into an unusually jagged wall. This entrance, which is no longer in use, predates the construction of the Large Oratory – the earliest extant church on the island. The last entrance to have been constructed by the monks, also built on the south side, is accessed from the Upper Outer Enclosure and is still in use today.

The Oratories

The Large Oratory

This oratory is of the usual inverted-boat shape, with the door in the west wall. It is built of stones of a moderate size laid in horizontal courses. Internally, it is rectangular up to about 2.3 metres in height and then develops into an elongated dome. The internal walls show signs of later limewashing. There is a small rectangular window in the east wall. On either side of the door, which has inclined jambs, the wall is lined inside with two large vertical slabs. The walls of the oratory are about 1.2 metres thick. Externally, there is a cross of white quartz inserted in the stones of the wall some distance above the door, but this is not an original feature.

The Small Oratory

This oratory is built on a small, artificial terrace to the east of the Inner Enclosure. The interior of the building is constructed very carefully, more so than the Large Oratory. The oratory is 2.4 metres by 1.8 metres inside and 2.4 metres high. There is a small rectangular east window. The door has inclined jambs. The corners are articulated throughout, both inside and out. This structure is of later date than

the Large Oratory. Nearby are the remains of a beehive toilet cell, which is a unique structure in a monastery dating from this period.

The Dwelling Cells

Cell A

This is the largest cell and it clearly had a communal function. It is particularly imposing and has very thick walls, with several offsets to facilitate construction. The walls, 1.8 metres thick at the base, are built of small, flat stones and there are a number of projecting stones on the outside at the upper level, another construction feature. The door has a double lintel, inside and out, and the floor retains most of its original paving.

The space inside measures 4.6 metres by 3.8 metres and the cell is 5 metres high. It is sub-rectangular at floor level, but this evolves into an ovoid shape about 1 metre above ground level. For storage purposes there are two cupboards and projecting stone pegs. Uniquely, there are window openings, one of which focuses on the South Peak and another on An Sceilg Bheag.

Pl. 43 Cells A, B and C inside the Inner Enclosure.



Pl. 44 Cells E and F inside the Inner Enclosure.

**Cell B**

This cell lies to the east of Cell A. It is built of very carefully worked large stones, but there are no projecting stones, inside or outside. The interior is square in plan and measures 2.75 metres by 2.75 metres and is 3.0 metres high. The corners are well defined and lead to a large, square capstone. The cell is paved, but much of the paving dates from the nineteenth century. There are two cupboards in the walls.

Cell C

This cell lies to the east of Cell B and is very similar to it. It is probably the last to have been constructed. It is also built of large stones but is not quite as refined. It is almost square on plan, measuring 2.75 metres by 2.6 metres. The corners are squared and lead to a rectangular capstone. There are no cupboards or special features. It retains most of its original paving and there is a drain running down the centre of the cell, under the pavement.

Cell D

This cell lies to the east of Cell C and is no longer fully intact. It is probably the earliest surviving cell within the Inner Enclosure and was already ruined when Cell C was constructed. It is D-shaped in plan and its shape is defined by orthostats. There is still some original paving visible at the entrance.

Cell E

This cell lies to the north-east of Cell D and is situated at a higher level than the other cells. It is built of relatively small stones and has stepped plinths and projecting stones at the upper level. It is quite spacious inside, measuring 3.65 metres by 3.58 metres, and is almost 4 metres high. Though almost square in plan, it becomes circular in shape as it reaches the roof. Most of the interior paving dates from the nineteenth century. There are some projecting stone pegs and there are holes in the walls to take two wooden beams for a loft.

Pl. 45 The inner dome of Cell F, showing corbelling and projecting stones.



Pl. 46 St Michael's Church before the late-nineteenth-century repairs.



Cell F

This cell lies to the south-east of Cell E and is built of moderately sized stones. The cell measures 2.98 metres by 2.75 metres, with the corners defined up to about 0.6 metres above the lintel, after which it becomes circular. There is a stone with a circular opening that completes the dome; it is unclear whether this is an original feature. There are three cupboards in the walls and projecting stone pegs. The floor is irregularly paved and includes some upright slabs that define a raised section on three sides, where the monks would have slept.

St Michael's Church

St Michael's Church lies to the west of the Large Oratory, on the same level. Part of this mortared church collapsed in the late nineteenth century when the retaining wall on the south side failed. The church is rectangular in plan, unlike the inverted-boat-shaped oratories, with straight walls and sharp rectangular corners. It would have had a timber roof structure. There is an east window and a doorway on the north side. There is evidence of two distinct stages of construction: an earlier, smaller, mortared

Pl. 47 View across to An Sceilg Bheag from the east window of St Michael's Church.



church was at some later date expanded, incorporating the smaller church. This earlier church was constructed using large blocks of stone, whereas the masonry of the later church is primarily of oblong stones laid horizontally with definite coursing. Sandstone for the door and window of this church was brought from Valentia Island. There is evidence that this church was rendered externally.

The *Leachtanna*

There are three *leachtanna* in the monastery. The *leacht* on the north side of the Large Oratory was constructed in two phases: the earlier phase predates the oratory, while the later postdates it. There is also a freestanding *leacht* on the south side. The two most highly decorated stone crosses are associated with both these structures. There is another freestanding *leacht* near the entrance to the Small Oratory.

The Monks' Graveyard

This is located to the east of the Large Oratory. It is defined by large, long orthostats along its base,

against which a row of crosses and cross-slabs are placed vertically on the west side. The graveyard was bigger originally, but the east side fell away when part of the east retaining wall collapsed.

Paving

The area enclosed by the cells and oratories is fully paved throughout. Large white quartz flags are used to define a symbolic area in front of the Large Oratory. The paving dates from the monastic period and gives the monastery an almost urban quality. The paved area to the east of the Monks' Graveyard is a nineteenth-century repair.

Crosses and Cross-Slabs

There are two large decorated crosses near the Large Oratory, one on either side, each of which is accompanied by a smaller cross-slab. There are many crosses and cross-slabs behind the Large Oratory in the Monks' Graveyard. On the island there are over 90 crosses and cross-slabs, most of them roughly shaped. These have been recorded and are being catalogued.

Pl. 48 The Monks' Graveyard inside the Inner Enclosure.



Pl. 49 A water cistern located just below Cell B in the Inner Enclosure.



Quarrying and Water Collection

The sloping rock above the monastery provided the major source of building stone for the monks. The area beneath was also quarried. Once the sloping bedrock was exposed, the monks used it to collect rainwater, cutting channels into it to direct the water into the cisterns below.

The Cisterns

There are two cisterns located in the Inner Enclosure. They were constructed on the exposed sloping bedrock and the sides are made up of orthostats and drystone walling. Together these cisterns can hold about 450 litres of water. There is an additional cistern to the west of Cell A, which was identified incorrectly as a souterrain prior to its excavation. There is an additional cistern outside the monastery, below the Lower Outer Enclosure, by the East Steps. This is probably associated with the Guesthouse.

The Guesthouse

At the top of the East Steps, just before the entrance into the Lower Monk's Garden, is a drystone structure on the left-hand side. It is elongated in shape, with a door on the east side, directly opposite the steps. It has one cupboard. This was most probably a guesthouse, where visitors could be accommodated outside of the monastery.

Pl. 50 Excavation of the boathouse structure above the landing and adjacent to the East Steps.



Associated with this place is a large, undecorated stone cross known as Dunraven's Cross.

The Hermitage on the South Peak

The first mention of the possible existence of structures on the South Peak was made by the Ordnance Survey of 1841, but it was not until a visit to the island by the antiquarian Lord Dunraven in the 1850s that reference was first made to a probable oratory:

Near the highest point of the island, which is called the Spit, I found the remains of a little building which appears to have been quadrangular, probably an oratory.

Liam de Paor, who studied the monastic remains in the early 1950s, made a vague reference to structures on the South Peak. Subsequently, noted academic Françoise Henry, although unable to ascend the peak herself, received a plan of the ruins of the structure from one of the lighthouse-keepers, which confirmed Lord Dunraven's observations.

The lack of information about the South Peak structures prompted the OPW to conduct its own detailed study, which began in the mid-1980s. This investigation discovered what appeared to be a hermitage on the steep slopes of the peak. The hermitage consisted of three separate terraces, labelled Garden/Dwelling Terrace, Oratory Terrace and Outer Terrace. The Garden/Dwelling and Oratory Terraces were located near each other, on the two best natural ledges of the peak. Their spatial proximity was reinforced by the construction of two routes between them, suggesting that they had an important functional relationship. The Outer Terrace, in contrast, was set very much apart from the other terraces and was also the most difficult to reach.

Access to the Hermitage

The climb to the Hermitage starts at Christ's Saddle and follows rock-cut steps and handholds to the Lower Traverse, below the Needle's Eye. Above this is a contemplation or prayer station. A further steep climb leads up to the first of three terraces. At a point halfway up this climb is a separate, more basic route, which leads right up to the summit. The rock-cut steps near the top of this route run under the

Upper Traverse, which proves that this was the original route used by the monks to get to the summit prior to the construction of the Hermitage.

The Garden/Dwelling Terrace

This kidney-shaped terrace is 13 metres long and varies in width from 2 metres to 4 metres. The long axis of the terrace runs roughly from north-west to south-east. The retaining wall, 1.5 metres high at the north-western end of the platform, is built on firm bedrock and is in impeccable condition. Much of the remaining terrace has collapsed, the current ground level now being below the original level. It is possible that a small dwelling cell may have existed here.

The Oratory Terrace

The second and most important of the three eremitic stations of the South Peak, the Oratory Terrace, lies at right angles to the Garden/Dwelling Terrace and 4 metres above it. The main structure is a corbelled oratory with a narrow entry midway along the east wall. Internally it measures approximately 2.3 metres by 2 metres. Against the east wall are the remains of an altar. Two small, interconnected basins are located beside the church. These hold water – a vital resource for a hermit in this inhospitable place. The monks had cut channels into the near-vertical, exposed rock faces above this terrace to channel the rainwater down into the basins below.

At the western end of the terrace, approximately 1 metre east of the rock face, are the remains of a rectangular leacht measuring 1.1 metres by 1.6 metres. This is most likely to have been an external altar. A low drystone bench runs along the rock face, looking towards the oratory. This terrace appears originally to have been fully paved. The terrace is constructed in quite a complex way to allow for circumnavigation of the oratory itself. A similar arrangement can be seen on the Small Oratory Terrace inside the monastery, indicating that this must have been an important liturgical requirement. To the east of the Oratory Terrace is a long, narrow, tapering terrace upon which are the possible remains of a shrine.

The Upper Traverse

This is located above the Oratory Terrace and leads across to the final rock-cut climb to the summit and

the Outer Terrace. It was originally paved and had a parapet wall.

The Outer Terrace

The Outer Terrace is the most isolated of the three terraces on the South Peak. This terrace is structurally dissimilar to the others on the peak, as the masonry remains consist of a 17-metre-long perimeter wall enclosing a series of stepped ledges. The function of this terrace is unclear, as the siting of a dwelling cell here would have been impossible. It may have been used as a shelter or a place of contemplation. Indeed, it may never have been completed.

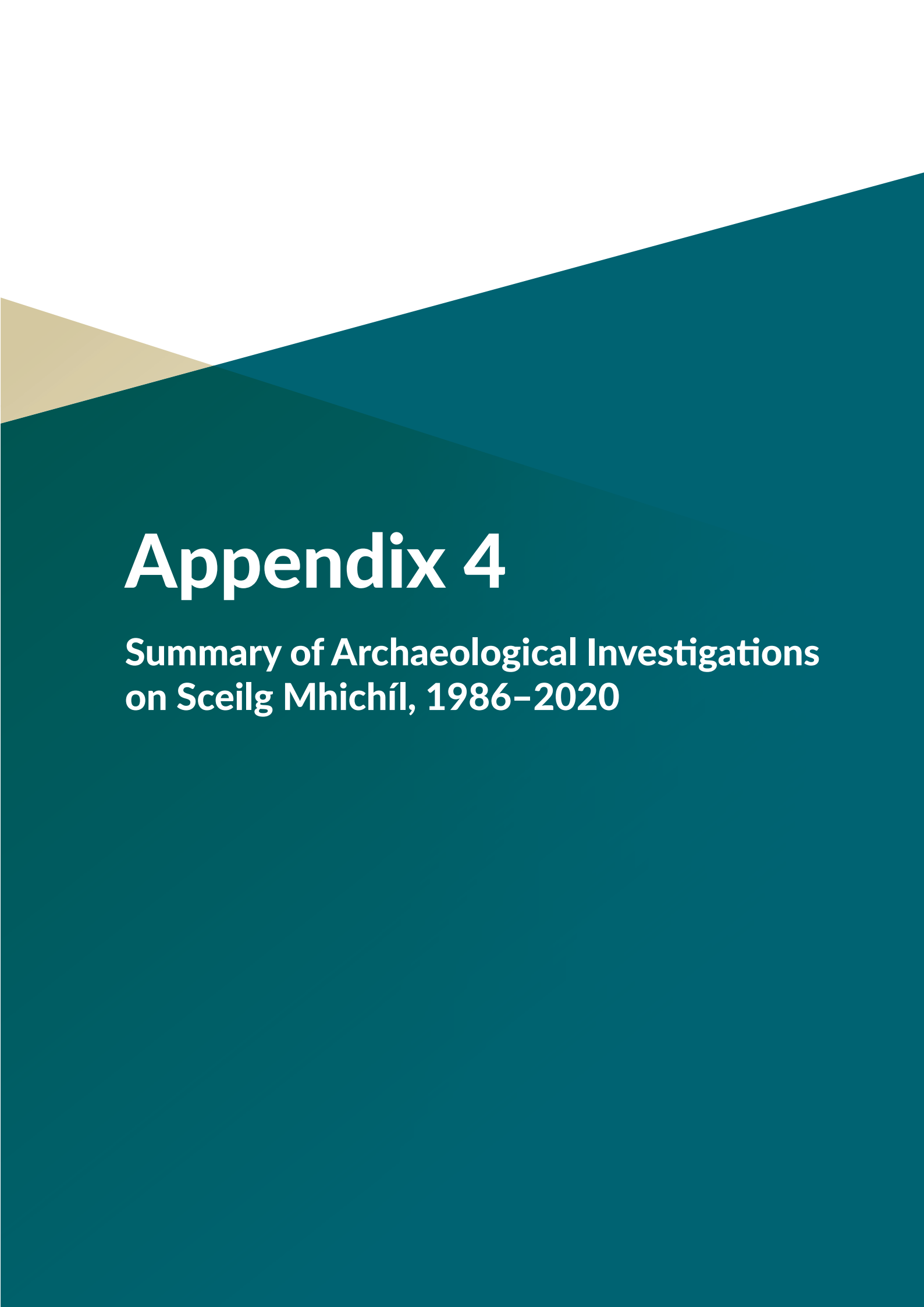
Quarrying on the South Peak

There is clear evidence of quarrying below the South Peak and on the peak itself. Major stone extraction took place in the area between the Needle's Eye and the Garden/Dwelling Terrace. Below the south retaining wall of the Oratory Terrace there is evidence of further quarrying, with platforms constructed to store the stone prior to bringing it up. At the base of this retaining wall is a small raised platform that would appear to have been the place from where the monks winched up the quarried stone from below. Quarrying on the South Peak is currently the subject of investigation and research.

The Lighthouse Constructions

A history of the lighthouses is contained in Appendix 7. The main elements of the lighthouse constructions are:

- the East Pier;
- the Lower Lighthouse Road, which leads from the pier to the modern lighthouse and has a parapet along its entire length;
- the Upper Lighthouse Road, which runs from the modern lighthouse and zigzags up the west side of the island to the Upper Lighthouse (it, too, had a parapet, but this has fallen away in places);
- the Upper Lighthouse, with its house, light tower and outbuildings;
- the twentieth-century Fog Station, which is located on a spur below the Upper Lighthouse;
- the working platform just above the road where the South Steps begin; and
- the construction workers' toilet above the working platform, off the South Steps.



Appendix 4

**Summary of Archaeological Investigations
on Sceilg Mhichíl, 1986–2020**

The Monastery

The main areas excavated in the monastery were the Small Oratory Terrace, the Lower Outer Enclosure, the southern end of the Upper Outer Enclosure, the south-east corner of the Inner Enclosure, the Large Oratory and the current entrance to the Inner Enclosure (see Fig. 6).

The Small Oratory Terrace, which projects northwards from the main cell complex, was shown to be a highly ordered space centred on the oratory itself. In the narrow confines between the oratory and the rock face to the west and the enclosure wall to the north and east, excavation revealed paving, steps (including rock-cut steps), small terraces built against the rock face and a *leacht* constructed on the sloping bedrock just over 1 metre from the entrance to the oratory. The remains of a small cell, interpreted as a toilet or latrine, were fully exposed and a stone-lined drain was found to partly underlie the north wall of the oratory and discharge through the enclosure/retaining wall to the east.

Much of the excavation on this terrace consisted of removal of the moist, peaty sod that supported a heavy growth of sea campion (*Silene uniflora*), thereby revealing the structural features, which were left *in situ*. The depth of this peat layer varied from approximately 0.12 metres on the south side of the oratory to approximately 0.3 metres against the rock face to the west. Sherds of transfer-printed pearlwares found at the interface between this peat and underlying layers indicate that most of the peat growth had taken place since the early nineteenth century. The full depth of stratigraphy was investigated in a limited area to the south of the oratory, where a few fragments of human bone were found in close proximity to a small stone cross with a broken shaft.

The extensive excavations undertaken in the Lower Outer Enclosure and in the south-east corner of the Inner Enclosure have indicated how the layout of the Inner Enclosure changed and developed between the foundation of the monastery in the seventh century and its abandonment in the twelfth century (Bourke 2005). In this area, highly complex engineering and conservation works were required to consolidate, repair and in places restore the inner and outer retaining/enclosure walls. Archaeological

excavation was an integral part of these works and, in addition to gaining an insight into the chronology of the building, collapse and rebuilding of retaining walls, two early entrances into the Inner Enclosure were examined, one in the south wall and one in the east retaining wall. At the eastern end of the garden, underlying up to 4 metres of nineteenth-century debris, the remains of a monastic cell were revealed. Its southern side had collapsed outwards when the outer wall of the enclosure collapsed in antiquity, but rudimentary paving survived within and immediately outside what remained of the cell. A structure, once thought to be a souterrain, was also excavated and shown in fact to be a cistern that was part of an elaborate system of water collection and management. The retaining walls, which form the eastern and northern boundaries of the current entrance to the Inner Enclosure, were shown to be nineteenth century in date.

A single cutting was excavated inside the terrace retaining wall in the Upper Outer Enclosure. This revealed that the upper part of the wall was nineteenth century in date and overlay the remains of the original wall of the monastery. The monastic wall, which was 1.2 metres to 1.3 metres in width, rested on large boulders that overlay bedrock in this area. The make-up of the terrace comprised sterile, silty clay with stone chippings.

Limited excavation was carried out inside the Large Oratory, which threw some light on its method of construction. Large sandstone slabs were set on edge on the line of the oratory walls and boulder clay was deposited behind them, in the space that would form the interior of the structure. The drystone walls were then constructed against the outer face of the sandstone slabs. Over the centuries, clay deposits accumulated to depths of up to 0.3 metres inside the oratory, and there was evidence of burning *in situ* in the oratory at different levels.

The South Peak

Excavation on the South Peak focused on the Prayer Station, the Garden Terrace, the Oratory Terrace, the Traverse and the Outer Terrace. There was also archaeological supervision of work to the steps, the Lower Traverse and the platform above the Needle's Eye (see Fig. 6).

The excavation of the Prayer Station uncovered the full extent of the enclosing walls and the area within was fully excavated. This latter consisted of deposits approximately 0.35 metres in depth, comprising sea campion with an extensive root system and stones from the surrounding walls. The quarried surface of the interior, which would have been exposed while the structure was in use, was a dramatic layer of white quartz.

The retaining wall of the Garden Terrace survived in varying states of preservation, depending on its relationship with the fracture lines of the underlying sandstone bedrock. As a result, it was necessary to excavate to bedrock where the terrace wall had largely collapsed at the south end of the terrace, but elsewhere excavation took place to an average depth of less than 0.5 metres. The construction sequence of the south end of the terrace was revealed by excavation. After quarrying out of the terrace, the underlying bedrock was left stepped, following natural shelves and joints in the bedrock. These steps provided flat bases for the construction of the wall. The outer face of the terrace wall was built first to a height of two or three rough courses. The interior of the terrace was then infilled with dumps of large and small stone fragments in a matrix of smaller stone chips and clay. The terrace wall was then raised further, but in a wider form, with an inner face resting on the infilled material. Further dumps of quarry waste were subsequently deposited behind the wall as it was built, raising the level of the terrace to its full height. Over time, the upper part of the terrace wall began to collapse inwards; to counteract this, a reinforcing wall was built inside it. The presence of this reinforcing wall and its foundation trench meant that the usable width of the terrace varied from just 0.65 metres at its narrowest to 2.15 metres at its widest. It seems unlikely that any cell or structure could have stood on this terrace once the reinforcing wall was built.

The Oratory Terrace is the structure most obviously influenced in location, size, shape and layout by the underlying geology. Similar to the Small Oratory Terrace in the main monastery, this is a highly ordered space with many of the same features, albeit on a smaller scale. The retaining walls of the terrace survived to varying degrees, again depending on their relationship with the underlying bedrock, but considerable effort had been expended

in ensuring that circumnavigation of the oratory was possible. Quarry waste had been used to build up the terrace and a narrow ledge of bedrock had been left along the northern side of the terrace, at the base of the rock face, into which two water cisterns had been cut. Excavation revealed that the oratory itself was originally almost square in plan, measuring 2.32 metres in length and 2.28 metres in width. The full length of its north wall, most of its west wall and the internal face of the south wall were exposed. Only the inner face of its east wall survived because stones had slipped into a void caused by the collapse of material bridging an underlying fissure. The remnants of a small altar were revealed, built against the surviving inner face of the east wall. This altar survived to a maximum of three courses in height and had rotated clockwise as it was partly sucked down into the underlying void. It originally appears to have measured approximately 0.9 metres east–west and 0.96 metres north–south. A small area of paving was revealed in front of the altar, including a large flat slab interpreted as a kneeling stone.

The terrace to the west of the oratory was originally paved and a *leacht* measuring 1.56 metres east–west and 1.14 metres north–south was sited 2.95 metres from the entrance to the oratory. The interior of the *leacht* was excavated but was found to have been disturbed by two rabbit burrows. A deposit of oxidised and charcoal-flecked soil was uncovered on the bedrock beneath the *leacht*. A curving drystone wall was exposed at the west end of the terrace, at the base of the cliff, and the possible socket for the standing cross-slab was revealed east of the *leacht*. A small sub-triangular terrace was excavated just east of the Oratory Terrace, where three flat slabs set upright within a rectangular walled area may be the remnants of a small slab shrine.

Excavation was also carried out on a series of narrow ledges on the steeply sloping cliff face below the Oratory Terrace. This area had clearly been quarried. Two drystone platforms constructed by bridging gullies on the cliff face are interpreted as staging platforms, aiding the movement of quarried material to the terrace above.

The Traverse, which leads naturally from the Garden and Oratory Terraces to the South Peak, appeared

as a flat ledge before excavation. Clearing the sea campion revealed the line of the inner face of the terrace wall, and subsequent excavation of the collapsed stonework exposed the original retaining wall, which had been at least partially rebuilt along its inner face. The original, highly distorted paving of the terrace was also revealed. The south end of the terrace broadens into a sub-rectangular space, which may have served as a type of prayer station, similar to that just above the Needle's Eye. A steep gully extending from above the Needle's Eye directly to the South Peak contained a number of rock-cut steps and three later, tiny terraces. This route clearly predates the construction of the Traverse, indicating that access to the South Peak was important at an earlier period.

The Outer Terrace is the most remote, exposed and difficult to access. Its retaining wall curves sinuously around the south-western end of the steep rock cliff, with its base rising almost 7 metres from the north to the east side of the terrace. The terrace wall was best preserved at its south-west corner, but it was largely collapsed on its other sides. The nature and extent of the surviving walls was determined and remnants of paving were recorded in the south-west corner. The remains of a possible small *leacht* were recorded on the highest bedrock ledge on the south side of the terrace.

The Lighthouse Road

A small emergency excavation was carried out in 2011 and 2012 above the base of the East Steps. This involved the excavation of the footings of some lighthouse buildings beside the 'Wailing Woman' rock, which were being eroded from below. Another emergency excavation took place after a rockfall on the Lower Lighthouse Road in 2016 removed part of the sea wall.

In 2018 conservation work started on the Upper Lighthouse Road. This necessitated the removal of material that had fallen from above the road and also the repair of the sea wall where it had been breached by falling material. This work was carried out under archaeological supervision and revealed that the majority of the original road surface, including drains, had survived intact (see Pls 17 and 18). The road had not been fully maintained since the 1870s, but some mid-twentieth-century interventions to install cabling were revealed.

Human Remains

The remains of three articulated burials and the disarticulated remains of at least five other individuals have been retrieved from the main monastery. Analysis of this small sample by Linda Lynch suggests a bias towards adult males and children between the ages of nine and eleven. Two of the articulated burials were recovered from south of the *leacht*, close to the Large Oratory; the third was recovered nearby, interred against the outer face of the east wall of St Michael's Church. These burials have been dated to the period between the tenth and thirteenth centuries. The average stature of the males was 1.706 metres (5 feet 6 inches); they had reasonably good teeth and some degenerative joint disease. At least one of the children displayed evidence of iron deficiency.

Artefacts

In addition to a number of small, crudely made stone crosses and water-rolled pebbles that must have been brought onto the island, approximately 110 artefacts were recovered during the excavations. All the artefacts were recovered from the main monastery.

The few finds that may be attributed to the early medieval period include part of a lignite ring/amulet and a perforated lignite disc, both of which were

Pl. 51 A lignite perforated disc and a fragment of a ring or amulet, both of which were found in the Large Oratory.



Pl. 52 A bronze ring-pin (eleventh century) found in a drystone wall at the eastern entrance.



found in the Large Oratory. A small iron knife with wooden handle was also recovered from the Large Oratory and a hone stone was found in the lower levels of deposits on the ledge below the Small Oratory. Part of a decorated-bone comb-plate with iron rivets was found on the surface of the interior of St Michael's Church and dates from the ninth or tenth century. A bronze ring-pin (AD 1000–1075) was found in the retaining wall to the left of the eastern entrance, while a spatulate-headed stick pin (AD 1150–1250) was found in the rubble of a collapsed wall in the upper level of the Lower Outer Enclosure. A small number of medieval pottery sherds, including Saintonge and Bristol wares, a bone pin, a bone gaming piece, a hone stone, some copper wire, lead and slag were also recovered from the Lower Outer Enclosure.

Pl. 53 A carved bone object (possibly a gaming piece) found in the Lower Outer Enclosure.



Pl. 54 Water-rolled pebbles found in association with a leacht in the monastery.



The majority of artefacts belong to the post-medieval period and, in particular, to the nineteenth-century occupation of the island by lighthouse personnel. Ceramics include transferwares, pearlwares and creamwares dating to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Clay pipes are well represented and a man's leather shoe dating to the late nineteenth or early twentieth century was recovered from the make-up of the retaining wall at the main entrance to the Inner Enclosure. Glass, iron, iron slag and brick were recovered from the Lower Outer Enclosure. Fragments of a crudely carved wooden crucifix were found in the altar of the Large Oratory and a twentieth-century bronze-and-wood crucifix was found on the surface in the Lower Outer Enclosure, directly below the Large Oratory.

Pl. 55 A decorated-bone comb-plate (ninth/tenth century) found on the surface inside St Michael's Church.



Pl. 56 Sherds of medieval pottery from the Lower Outer Enclosure.



Fig. 6 The monastery: outline of excavations, 1986–2001.

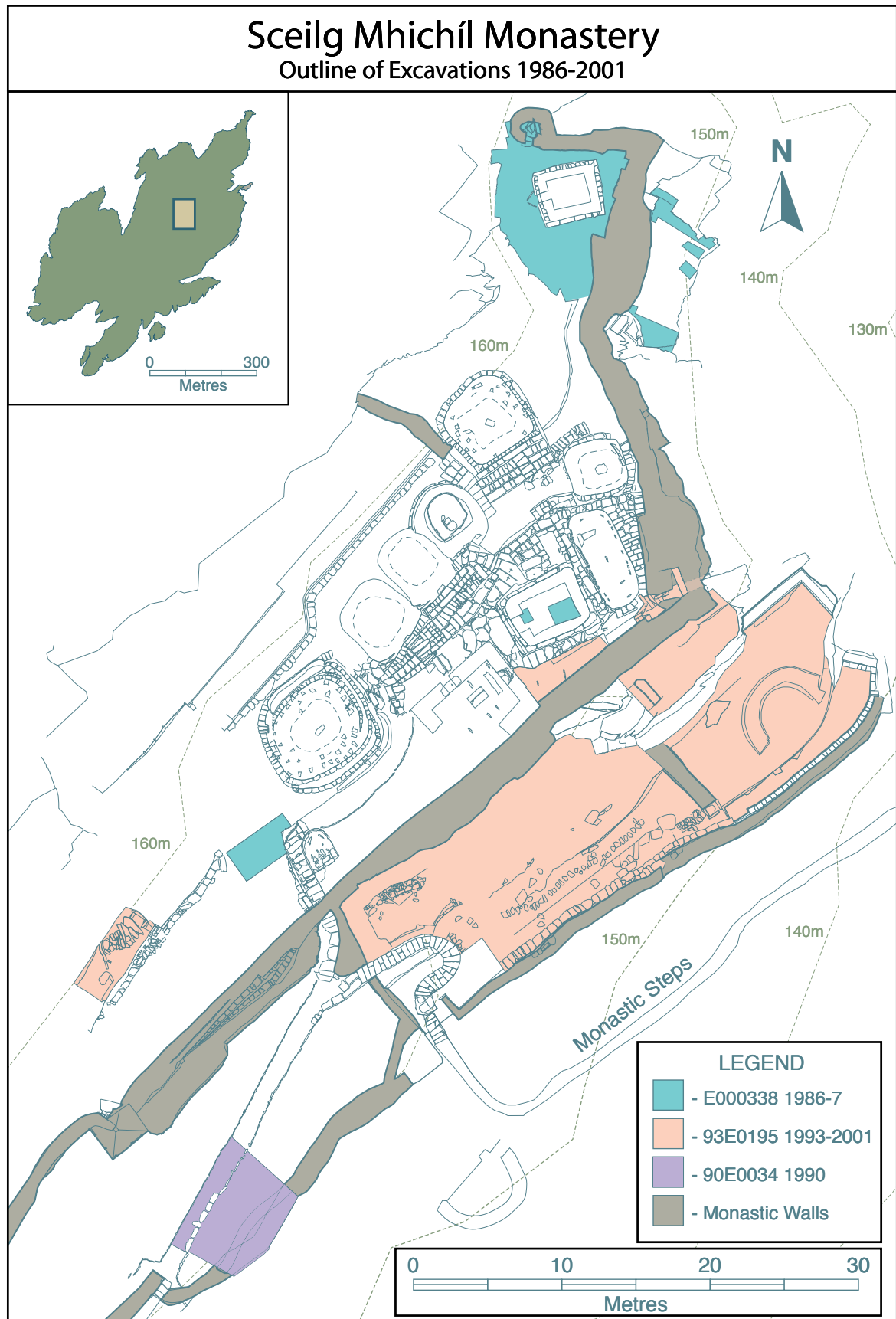


Fig. 7 The South Peak: outline of excavations, 2003–2010.

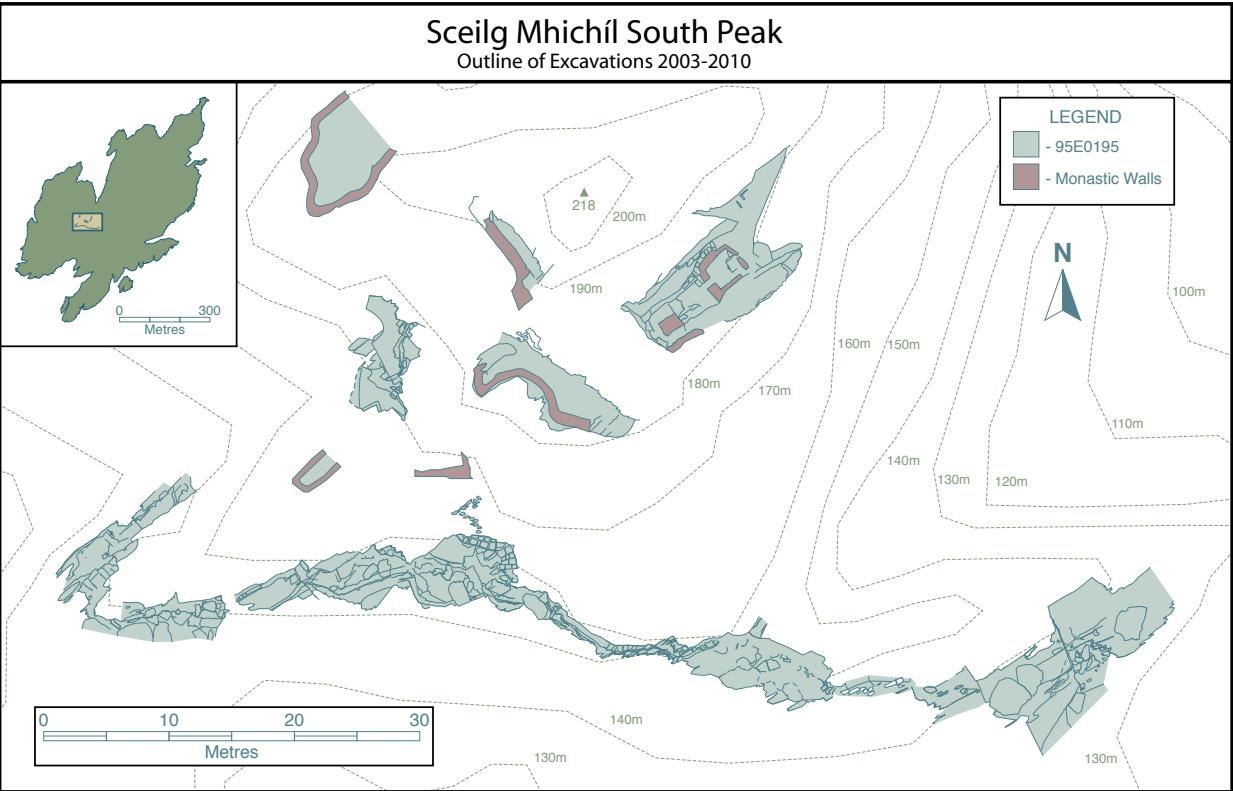


Fig. 8 The Cross Cove: outline of excavations 2016.

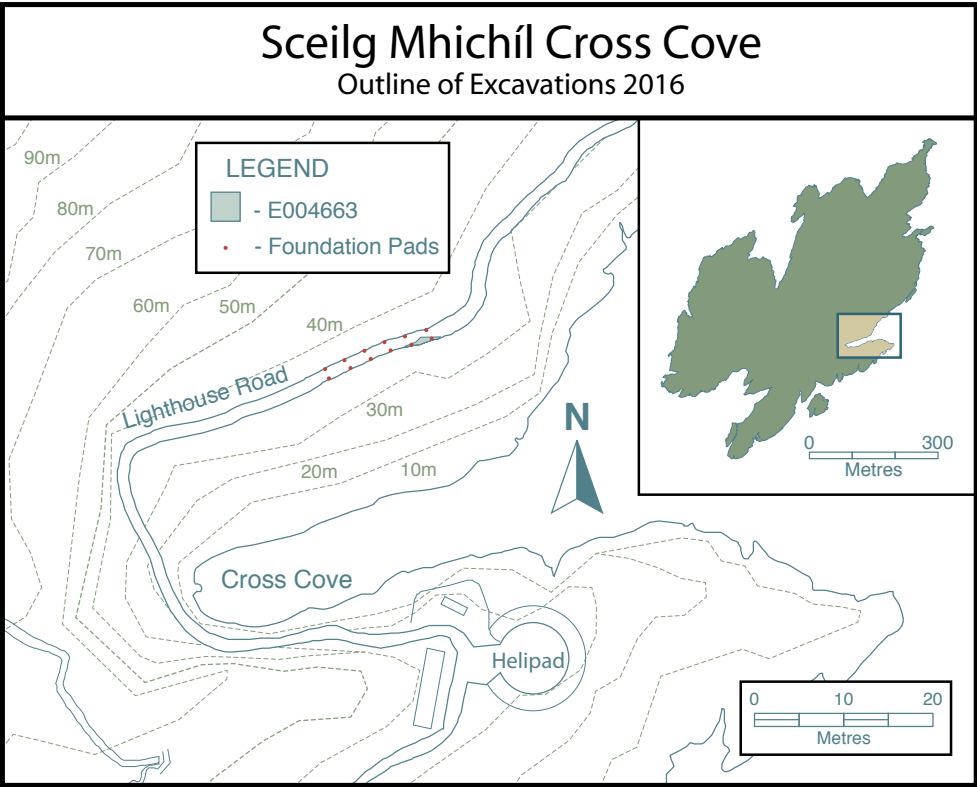


Fig. 9 The Lighthouse Road: outline of excavations, 2019–2020.

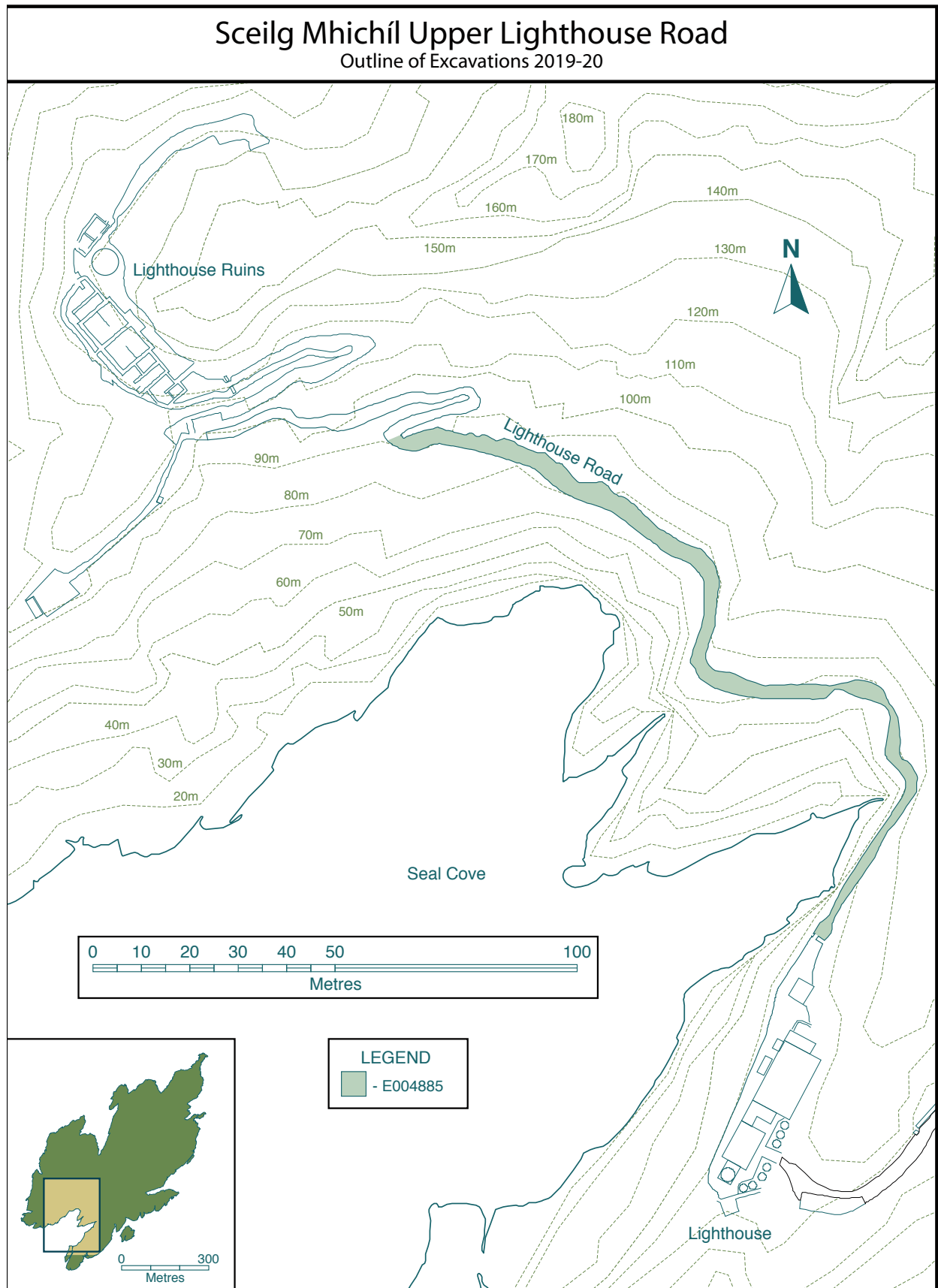
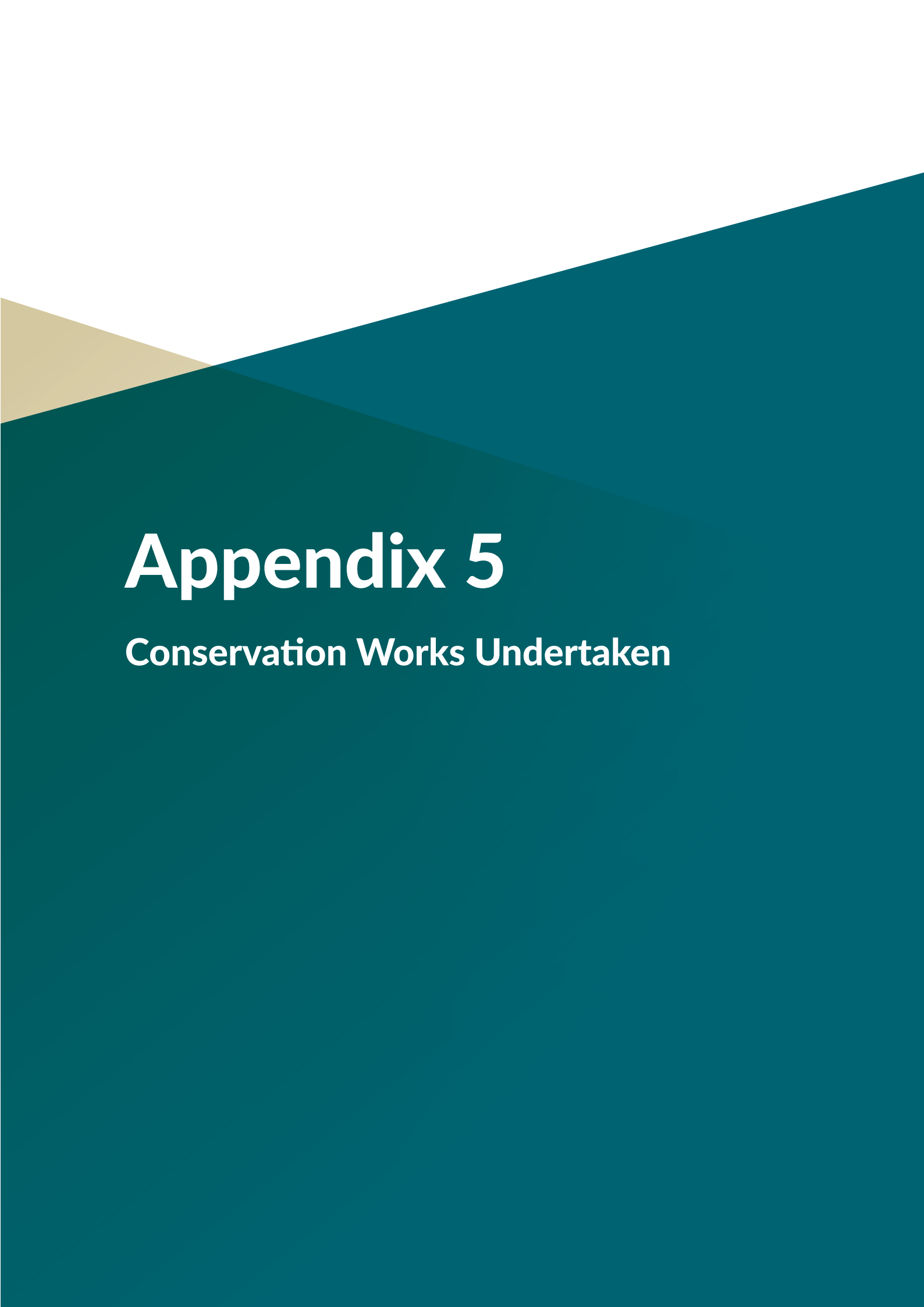


Table 2 Excavations on Sceilg Mhichíl, 1986–2020.

Year	Licence Number	Excavator	Details
1986–7	E338	Ann Lynch	Excavation of Small Oratory Terrace and south entrance into the Inner Enclosure
1986–7	E338	Ann Lynch	Excavation of Large Oratory, Inner Enclosure
1988		Paddy O’Leary	Supervision of works to south entrance to the Lower Outer Enclosure
1990	90E0034	Claire Cotter	Excavation of western end of Upper Outer Enclosure
1993–6	93E0195	Edward Bourke	Excavation of Lower Outer Enclosure
1996–7	93E0195	Edward Bourke	Excavation of cistern, west end of Inner Enclosure
1998–9	93E0195	Edward Bourke	Excavation of second south entrance into Inner Enclosure, burials and leacht next to Large Oratory
2000	93E0195	Edward Bourke	Excavation of east entrance into Inner Enclosure, supervision of conservation works to Monks’ Graveyard
2001–2	93E0195	Edward Bourke	Supervision of conservation works to East and North Steps
2003	93E0195	Edward Bourke	Excavation of early structure found at base of East Steps
2004	93E0195	Edward Bourke	Excavation of traverse beneath Needle’s Eye and Prayer Station, initial testing of Garden Terrace and other features on South Peak
2005–6	93E0195	Alan Hayden	Excavation of Garden Terrace, Oratory Terrace, Traverse and other features on South Peak
2007–10	93E0195	Alan Hayden	Excavation of Outer Terrace, terrace below Outer Terrace and North-West Traverse
2011–12	E004337	Martin Reid	Excavation of lighthouse-era structures at the ‘Wailing Woman’ at the bottom of South Steps
2017–20	E004885	Alan Hayden	Excavations of Lighthouse Road between Lower and Upper Lighthouses; initial excavations of Upper Lighthouse

The background of the page features abstract geometric shapes. A large teal shape covers the bottom and right portions, while a smaller gold shape is visible in the top left corner.

Appendix 5

Conservation Works Undertaken

Works Undertaken Prior to the Property Being Taken into State Care

Lighthouse construction commenced in the mid-1820s, when a pier, roadway and two lighthouses were constructed.

The monastery became the base for the construction crews and during this time many alterations were made, particularly to the plinths, steps and terraces between the monastic structures. New, level terraces were constructed above the original features to create wider, safer terraces and many of the interiors of the dwelling cells were repaved. The Large Oratory became the workers' church. A latrine tower was constructed in the Upper Outer Enclosure, accessed from above, to provide toilet facilities. Repairs were also made to those retaining walls that had collapsed.

In order to construct the pier and the new roadway, the lower section of the East Steps was blasted away and, from this time on, the South Steps became the main access to the monastery and hermitage. It was necessary for the lighthouse-builders to construct a new flight of steps from the Lighthouse Road to link in with the original South Steps. When the construction works were completed, and before the workers departed, they made good the monastery. This involved building revetments between some of the cells, behind which they concealed their building rubble. The original entrance to the monastery at the top of the East Steps was in dangerous condition and this was blocked up. The full extent of these interventions only became apparent during the current conservation-works programme.

Early Works Undertaken by the State

The monuments on Sceilg Mhichíl came into state care in late 1880 and a few years later repair works were carried out to the drystone retaining walls. Major rebuilding had to be undertaken where the south wall of the mortared St Michael's Church had collapsed. It was necessary to construct a reinforced-concrete retaining wall within the church to prevent further collapse in this area. Some maintenance of a minor nature was also undertaken during the 1930s.

Recent Works Programme

Initial Works

The current works programme began in the summer of 1978 and has continued every season since. The first season's work was in response to the collapse of a section of the retaining wall to the west of St Michael's Church. Once this was completed, work focused on repairing the South Steps. Some initial survey work was undertaken at this time, but as the original 1840s Ordnance Survey had never been updated and was not particularly accurate, an overall photogrammetric survey of the island was commissioned. The new mapping provided detailed contours and made it possible to position the various monastic features in their correct locations on the island.

Works to Individual Structures

A detailed ground survey was then begun, recording the dwelling cells, churches, other structures and retaining walls, together with all the pavements, steps and terracing. The crosses and cross-slabs were also fully recorded. By this time many of the structures added by the lighthouse-builders were in poor condition. Two nineteenth-century revetments in particular were in a state of collapse. These were removed during the following seasons and much of the original construction was uncovered beneath. Surprisingly, there was a substantial portion of the original plinths and terraces still remaining and these were conserved. The original paving lay just beneath a waterlogged peaty soil, which was removed, revealing that the entire Inner Enclosure was fully paved.

Crude repairs to the top of the outer layer of the cells and the Large Oratory were removed because the buildings were taking in water. The structures were substantially intact, particularly in the interior.

Works to the Small Oratory Terrace

In the mid-1980s attention turned to the deteriorating state of the drystone retaining walls. There has clearly been a history of collapse of these walls, going back to the time of the monks' occupation. A study was undertaken to examine the construction patterns of the different walling and to try and establish a relative chronology. There had been much reconstruction throughout the nineteenth century. A plan was then devised to

prioritise the works to the retaining walls. Among the original walls, the one supporting the Small Oratory Terrace was in a particularly dangerous state. The work to preserve this supporting wall was the first major structural intervention to be undertaken. This involved a strictly regulated programme over an entire season.

This work was located in a vulnerable position, about 160 metres above the landing pier. Given the safety implications, the island had to be closed to the public for the duration of these works. Once the retaining wall was consolidated, the terrace itself was fully excavated to reveal paving and a *leacht*. All the structures on this terrace were then conserved.

Pl. 57 The Small Oratory prior to excavation and conservation works.



Pl. 58 The Small Oratory Terrace after excavation, consolidation and conservation works.



Pl. 59 The Small Oratory Terrace after excavation, consolidation and conservation works.



Works to the Lower Entrance

The next work undertaken was to the original entrance to the monastery, at the top of the East Steps. This was the collapsed entrance that had been blocked up by the lighthouse-builders. A diagonal wall had been built in the garden above, probably in the nineteenth century, to protect visitors. This structure had become seriously undermined and was in a very dangerous condition. When this area was opened up and excavated, most of the original features of the entrance gate were still intact, although somewhat damaged and out of plumb. One of the lintels was still in place, which meant that the original dimensions of the opening could be ascertained. Excavation on the upper side of the entrance revealed the cause of the collapse: the wall had been built on a huge boulder, which sloped outwards. Over time the material behind the wall had forced it to slide, causing a spectacular collapse. This entrance was repaired and the wall above anchored and reconstructed on the line of the original wall.

Works to the Upper Outer Enclosure

The Upper Outer Enclosure was the next focus of the continuing programme of works relating to the structural stability of the retaining walls. The east end of this retaining wall had collapsed in antiquity, although the base remained. A thin, curving wall had been constructed in the nineteenth century to make this vulnerable area safe. However, by the late 1980s this was beginning to fail, posing a danger to visitors. The wall was removed, revealing much disturbance in the ground beneath. The inner face of the original wall was discovered well below the garden level, indicating the scale of the collapse.

This wall was 2 metres wide at its base and had been constructed on large boulders, which were still in place. In order to retain the large amount of garden soil, it was necessary to position a small, reinforced-concrete wall behind the drystone wall repair. The original wall base had become distorted before collapsing, so it was not possible to reconstruct a straight wall here in conformity with the original. As elsewhere, all original construction was retained.

Works to the Lower Outer Enclosure

The next works project, the retaining wall in the Lower Outer Enclosure, was a very considerable undertaking. This work took a number of seasons to complete and was challenging from an archaeological,

structural and conservation point of view. Again, there had been a history of collapse dating from the monks' occupation and a series of retaining walls had been built through the nineteenth century in an attempt to stem further loss. There was a significant difference in ground levels across the length of this terrace. This garden was divided into three sections for the purposes of the project and works began on the lowest, most easterly section, which was the most vulnerable part. Excavation revealed the presence of an early circular cell and part of another, unidentified structure. The external area was paved, indicating that this part at least could not have been used as a garden. It was necessary to build a new retaining wall to secure this part of the terrace. It was built along the base of the original wall, which was still intact. All original features on this part of the terrace were then conserved.

The middle section of the Lower Outer Enclosure was very difficult to work on because of the difference in ground levels running north–south across the site. As work proceeded it became necessary to support the base of the retaining wall in order to excavate. However, for reasons of stability and safety it was not feasible to excavate down to the original level of the garden. Nonetheless, it was possible to reveal some of the middle section of the lower retaining wall and to consolidate and present it. Excavation revealed large-scale collapse of the upper retaining wall. Enormous boulders had fallen onto the garden below, causing considerable devastation.

The upper section of this terrace was left intact and linked to the middle section, allowing the retention of later curved steps leading from the original Lower Entrance to the present-day Upper Entrance into the Inner Enclosure. For safety reasons the public do not have access to the Lower Outer Enclosure, but it can be fully viewed from both the end of the Upper Outer Enclosure and the Inner Enclosure.

Works to the Upper Entrance 2

This earlier entrance lies to the east of the present-day entrance and is just south of the Large Oratory. The drystone walling between it and St Michael's Church is very unusual, having a very uneven, rough surface that is clearly intentionally so. The remains of this entrance were already known and had been recorded. This investigation revealed the width of the entrance and one of the internal lintels. It also

revealed the partially collapsed east jamb, which was subsequently manoeuvred back into position using a jack. Excavation on the interior revealed features of interest and three burials. This entrance predates the construction of the Large Oratory. This area has now been presented to allow visitors view all the conserved features.

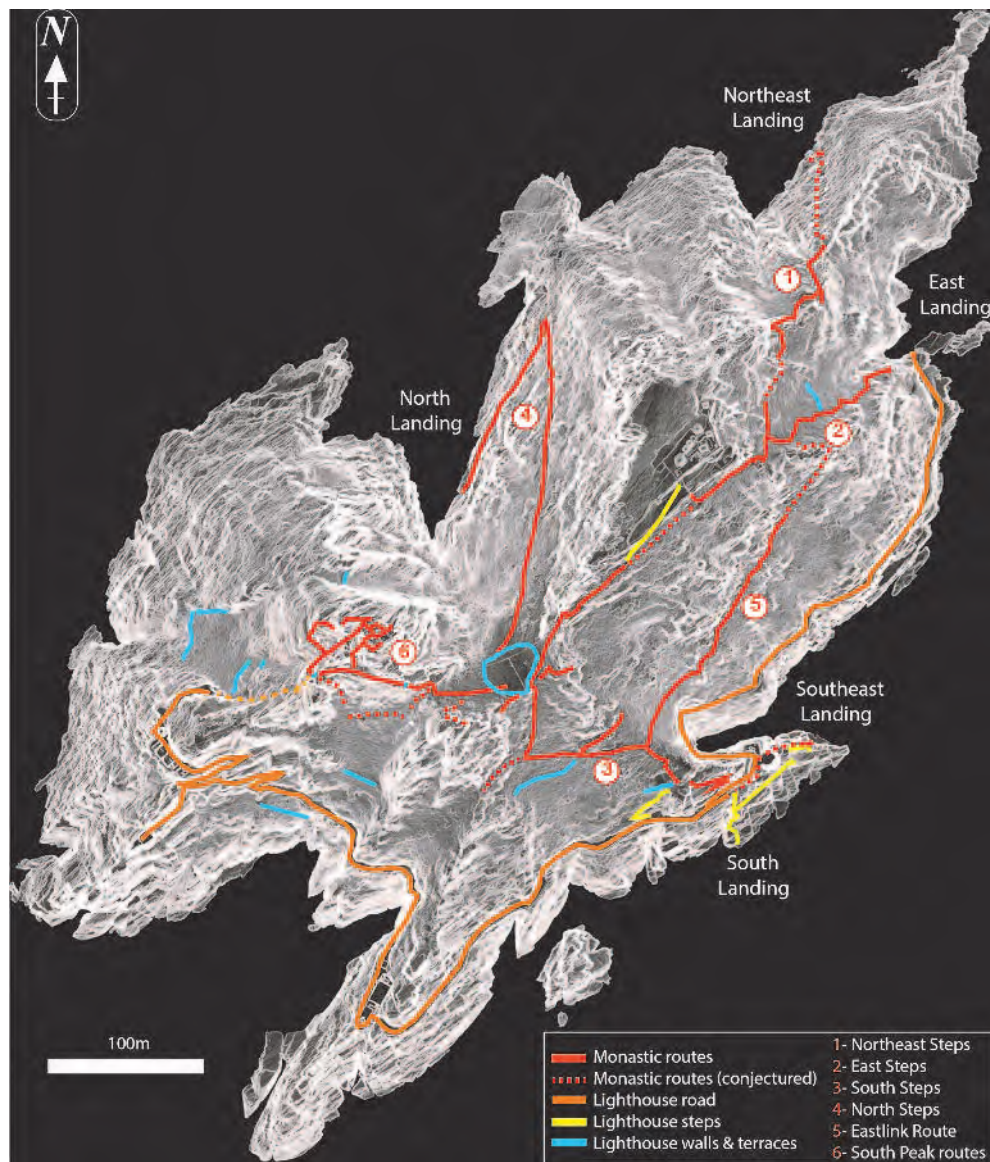
Works to the East Retaining Wall and Upper Entrance 1

The east wall was the last retaining wall to be repaired. There had been two major collapses here, with subsequent rebuilding – one during the monks' occupation and one in the nineteenth century. These successive repairs were set further back so that the enclosed area above had become considerably

reduced.

The latter repair was so poorly executed and in such a state of collapse that, for safety reasons, it was necessary to take it down during the current works programme. Investigation below ground level inside the monastery was very difficult, requiring constant safety support. It was, however, possible to open up critical areas, albeit with limited access. The investigation revealed yet another entrance into the Inner Enclosure, adding further to our knowledge of how the site developed. It is clear from these investigations that very serious collapse had taken place, necessitating the early abandonment of this entrance. It has now been consolidated and presented in such a manner as to allow visitors to view it from above.

Fig. 10 LiDAR image showing routes and landings.



Works to the East and North Steps

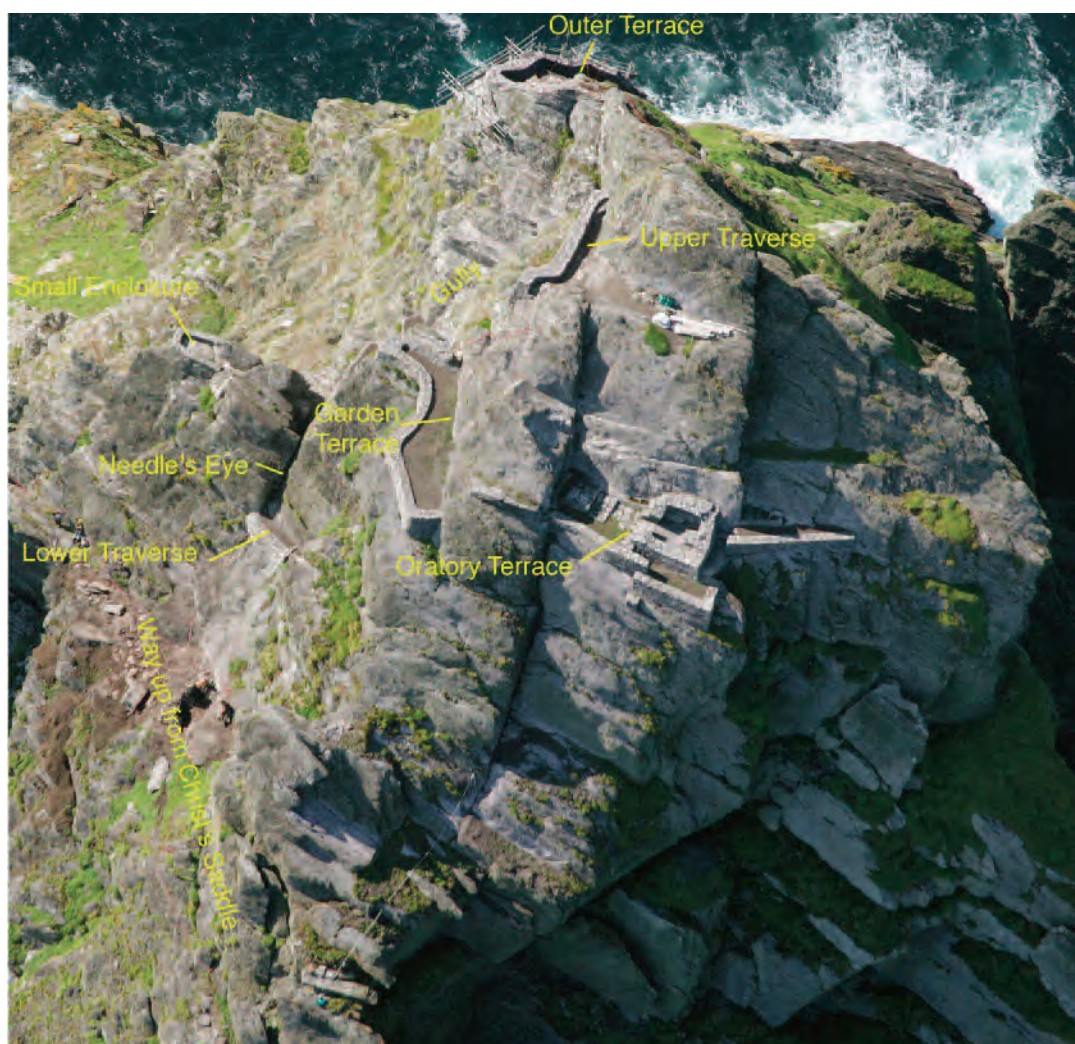
Once the major works to the retaining walls had been completed, the next project dealt with the consolidation and repair of the remaining two staircases. The East Steps, which had not been used since the lighthouse-builders had occupied the monastery, were covered with vegetation. The upper section was fully revealed and this is where the consolidation works began. Below this area a removal of the soil and a thick carpet of matted sea campion revealed that a surprising number of the steps were still present, although many had slipped somewhat on the steep slope. They were repaired, section by section, right down to a point where they had been dynamited away by the lighthouse-builders. At this level the remains of an elongated structure were discovered, which may have been either a staging shelter for supplies or a boathouse.

The North Steps were then repaired. These had been modified and used by the lighthouse-builders and, at a lower level, a parapet wall had been added. This staircase was in a considerably worse condition than the East Steps. The ground on which the steps had been built had been seriously eroded, causing many of the large stone flags to slip off and lodge further down the slope. These stones had to be retrieved and reinstated. However, there was considerable loss and in places reinstatement was not possible; in these cases the ground was ramped.

Works to the South Peak Hermitage

The structures on the South Peak were fully recorded in the mid-1980s and since that time have been monitored continually. Owing to the very exposed nature of the site, erosion of original material and structural destabilisation, it was necessary to undertake works to preserve the extensive remains. This works project commenced in 2004.

Pl. 60 Aerial photograph of the South Peak indicating its principal features.



Initial work to the structures on the South Peak focused on the access platform (Lower Traverse) just below the Needle's Eye. Excess soil from a gully above had built up at one end and this was removed to reveal a short flight of original monks' steps in very good condition. Some repairs were undertaken to the retaining wall supporting the platform, where it had become unstable. Above the Needle's Eye a small contemplation or prayer station was excavated and conserved.

The steep access climb from this point to the Garden/Dwelling Terrace was cleared of soil and vegetation to reveal rock-cut steps and areas of extensive quarrying. On the terrace itself, considerable collapse had taken place at the south end. This terrace was excavated and the retaining wall was raised here to support the remaining material and prevent further erosion. No structures were discovered, possibly because of extensive loss of material over a long period. From here, two routes lead to the main terrace of the hermitage, the Oratory Terrace.

Pl. 61 The small enclosure, possible prayer station, just above the Needle's Eye on the South Peak.



The Oratory Terrace was fully excavated to reveal the full extent of the small church, remains of an altar, a *leacht*, a bench, some paving and the remains of retaining walls. A possible shrine was also excavated on a narrow extended terrace at the east end.

Far below the Oratory Terrace, on the south side, extensive quarrying was identified over a considerable area and platforms that had been created by the monks to store quarried stone were uncovered. The remains of a small raised platform were also uncovered at the base of the retaining wall. This platform was probably constructed by the monks to allow stone for the terrace and its structures to be winched up from below.

The last construction, before the final ascent to the summit, is called the Upper Traverse. This was fully excavated, which revealed a parapet wall enclosing a paved access route. The paving was in poor condition and had collapsed where the supporting soil below had been washed out. The traverse was consolidated and the paving was repaired.

From the Upper Traverse a steep climb up rock-cut steps leads to the summit. From there it is an awkward climb down a series of ridges on the north-west side to the Outer Terrace. This terrace comprises a retaining wall that curves down the stepped rock, enclosing an area that is on more than one level. This wall had suffered structurally over time, particularly at the lower level, where much of it had either fallen in or fallen away. A considerable body of collapsed stone had fallen onto a ledge some distance below; this stone was retrieved and used in the structural repair and conservation works. The upper level was excavated to reveal a flagged pavement. The remains of a *leacht* were also uncovered and conserved. The lower section of retaining wall was stabilised and repaired. It is not known whether the monks actually ever fully completed the construction of this terrace.

The final work undertaken at the hermitage relates to a previously unknown feature. This is a passage that runs from the start of the vertical climb below the Needle's Eye and leads over to the north-west, giving access to that side of the island. This may have been constructed by the monks to facilitate access to birds and their eggs. However, as it is of

Pl. 62 The Oratory Terrace on the South Peak, with An Sceilg Beag and the Kerry coastline in the background.



unusually large scale, it may have had another purpose. The passage would appear to have been paved. The existing walling was structurally repaired. Associated with this passage, near the start of the climb, is a small retaining wall and a platform. This area had been severely damaged during a fall of stone from above. It was excavated and repaired.

Works to the Lighthouse Road

The Landing to the Lower Lighthouse

Works to the sea wall in this area were limited to tightening up stones on the seaward side and some mortar repair to the inner face of the wall. The site was surveyed first and a survey of storm petrel nesting within the walls was undertaken. The exterior face was scaffolded and, following completion of the works, repeat bird surveys were undertaken to establish that no long-term interference had taken place to the resident bird population. In certain areas where the capstones had been replaced with cementitious concrete, this was removed and replaced with capstones of Valentia slate.

The Lower Lighthouse to the Upper Lighthouse

In this area the same methodology was used as in relation to the previous works, although the state of

Pl. 63 The Upper Lighthouse from the south-west.



Pl. 64 The Upper Lighthouse.



conservation of this stretch of roadway was much poorer, as it had not been regularly maintained since the early twentieth century and was hardly

maintained at all after 1976. The walls were in much poorer condition and a good deal of spoil had fallen from above onto the road. Some excavations were carried out, which showed that the original road surface survived over most of the roadway. The wall was surveyed, conserved and resurveyed as described above. More of the parapet stones were missing in this area and these were replaced by capstones of Valentia slate.

The Lower Lighthouse and Its Platform

Work started on this area in 2019. The 1970s refurbishment was examined and surveyed and a process of asbestos removal and inspection was begun. It is intended that this building will be used as staff accommodation and that toilets will be provided for visitors to the island. Design work is under way for the refurbishment of this building and for the conservation of the platform upon which the lighthouse stands and the sea wall that retains it.

The Upper Lighthouse

A digital survey of the Upper Lighthouse was carried out in 2019 and a conservation plan for the lighthouse will be developed in 2022. Clearance works at the Upper Lighthouse under archaeological licence will be carried out in 2021. It is intended

Pl. 65 The Upper Lighthouse and Upper Lighthouse Road.



Pl. 66 The Upper and Lower Lighthouses and Upper Lighthouse Road.



that this lighthouse, abandoned in 1870, will be a focus for tourists interested in that aspect of the island's story and for those visitors who may find the ascent to the monastery too taxing.

Maintenance Programme

At the start of the season:

- the accommodation quarters, including solar-energy system, electrics, etc., will be checked for damage over the winter and brought up to the standard required to allow personnel stay on the island;
- the monastic structures will be checked for any damage, which must be repaired before visitors arrive on the island;
- the steep ground above the road will be checked for any large stones that may have become dislodged or loosened over the winter and might pose a safety threat to people on the Lower Lighthouse Road below; remedial action will be taken as appropriate;
- the protective canopy at Cross Cove will be inspected and any damage to the canopy will be repaired immediately; and
- all new growth of sea campion, which poses a considerable problem in relation to the steps, will

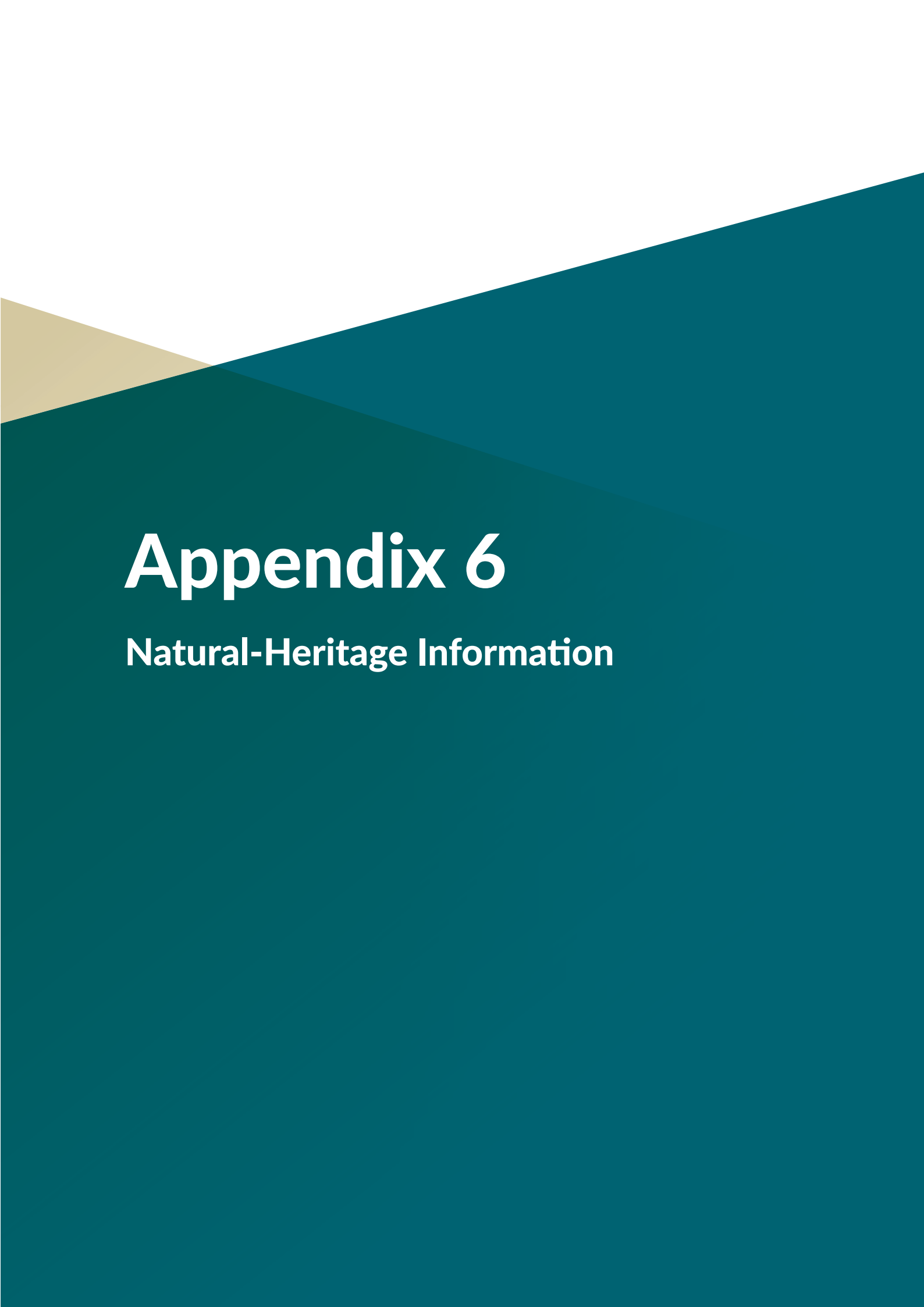
be cut back off the East, North and South Steps at the start of each season.

On a regular basis (weekly/fortnightly):

- the drystone access steps (South Steps) frequently become loose given the amount of visitor usage; they will therefore be inspected throughout the season and repair work will be carried out as required;
- the drystone structures will be inspected for loose stones or minor collapses, which can occur as the result of attrition or damage by visitors; repairs will be undertaken as necessary; and
- all pavements and vulnerable surfaces will be monitored for damage and excessive wear and repair work will be carried out as necessary.

Annually:

- the stability of all structures will be monitored, particularly those that have had no previous intervention.



Appendix 6

Natural-Heritage Information

Introduction

Sceilg Mhichíl, An Sceilg Bheag and their adjacent waters form part of Skelligs SPA (Site Code 004007) as per S.I. No. 74 of 2010 as designated under the EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC). The bird species specifically listed under this S.I. are: fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*), Manx shearwater (*Puffinus puffinus*), storm petrel (*Hydrobates pelagicus*), gannet (*Morus bassanus*), kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*), guillemot (*Uria aalge*) and puffin (*Fratercula arctica*).

With the exception of gannet, the majority, if not all, of the aforementioned species' breeding populations in the SPA are centred on Sceilg Mhichíl. Based on aerial images taken in 2014, it was estimated that 35,294 pairs of gannet breed on An Sceilg Bheag. In 2015 a boat-based survey of this island estimated that 122 pairs of fulmar and 173 pairs of kittiwake were breeding here, and 2,069 individual guillemot and 169 individual razorbill on suitable breeding ledges and slopes were recorded.

Regular (near-annual) surveys of the majority of Sceilg Mhichíl breeding-seabird populations have taken place using standard methods since 1990. For a subset of the island's breeding-seabird species, namely storm petrel, Manx shearwater and puffin, bespoke methods have had to be employed to estimate their population sizes and islandwide estimates have not been produced since the early 2000s. The majority of the historical data (2002 and earlier) referred to here are sourced from Merne and Walsh 2005 and Mitchell et al. 2004. The more recent data referred to here are as yet unpublished.

The following table lists the bird species for which the Skelligs SPA has been designated and the count data for each. The all-Ireland populations allows the populations on Na Scealga to be put into context. SPA designation criteria include sites that regularly hold 10,000 pairs of breeding seabirds and sites that hold 1 per cent or more of the all-Ireland population of a species listed in Annex I of the EU Birds Directive. The table is followed by accounts of each breeding-seabird species.

Table 3 SPA bird-species count data.

Species	Na Scealga Count ^a	All-Ireland Population	Source of Data
Fulmar	806 AOS	39,000	Seabird 2000 survey
Manx shearwater	738 AOS	44,000	Seabird 2000 survey
Storm petrel ^b	9,994 AOS	100,000	Seabird 2000 survey
Northern gannet ^c	29,683 AON	36,000	NPWS 2004 survey
Kittiwake	944 AON	49,000	Seabird 2000 survey
Guillemot	1,709 P	160,000	Seabird 2000 survey
Puffin	4,000 I	21,000	Seabird 2000 survey

^a The methodology used to carry out a census of bird colonies depends on factors such as site accessibility and bird behaviour (e.g., some species are nocturnal and nest in burrows). This leads to different count units as follows:

AOS = Apparently Occupied Sites

AON = Apparently Occupied Nests

P = Pairs

I = Individuals

^b Storm petrel is listed on Annex I of the Birds Directive.

^c All gannets nest on An Sceilg Bheag.

Fulmar

Typically fulmar select nest sites on vegetated cliffs, from where they disperse after the breeding season. They return early the following year and are present on Sceilg Mhichíl from January until September. Fulmar feed at sea on a wide variety of food and are particularly vulnerable to the ingestion of plastic particles. Annual census counts between 2016 and 2018 range between 552 and 787 AOS, the mean of which is approximately 1 per cent lower than the long-term average (1990–2015).

Manx Shearwater

Manx shearwater are migratory birds, returning to their breeding colonies in Ireland and Britain in spring. The islands off the Kerry coast support the bulk of the Irish population. As Manx shearwater nest in burrows and are mainly active in their colonies during the night, the population was estimated using a tape-playback method to elicit responses from incubating adults. Using this method, a breeding population of 902 AOS has been estimated based on data collected on Sceilg Mhichíl in 2001. Plans for further survey and monitoring work for this species are under way.

Cory's Shearwater (*Calonectris borealis*)

A male Cory's shearwater was first recorded calling on Sceilg Mhichíl in 2003. A single male has been repeatedly recorded here each summer to 2018. It is considered that the same individual returns to Sceilg Mhichíl every year. In 2008 the bird was caught to confirm its species and ringed before release. The bird was ascribed to the *borealis* species based on call, biometrics and underwing pattern. No female Cory's shearwater or young have been recorded calling here.

Storm Petrel

The storm petrel, a species listed in Annex I of the EU Birds Directive, is the smallest seabird found on Sceilg Mhichíl. This species spends most of its life at sea, only coming to land to breed, usually on remote offshore islands, where it can be found between April and October. It is a migratory species and not all individuals present at a site will necessarily be breeding. Like shearwater, storm petrel tend to be nocturnal when on land. They nest in burrows or among rocks. On Sceilg Mhichíl they use crevices in the stonework of the monastery buildings and the steps, as well as the walls leading to the lighthouses. The Seabird 2000 survey estimated 9,994 AOS for

the entire island. A 2018 survey of just the monastery buildings and the associated steps estimated over 700 AOS. Plans for further survey and monitoring work for this species are under way.

Leach's Storm Petrel (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*)

This species is also listed in Annex I of the EU Birds Directive. There is no evidence of breeding on Sceilg Mhichíl, but a number of birds have been caught and ringed on the island, suggesting the possibility that a few pairs may be breeding. Only one breeding colony of this species is known and one more suspected in Ireland (both in County Mayo).

Shag (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*)

In the 1990s and early 2000s only single individuals were recorded on Sceilg Mhichíl, leading to the suspicion that there may be small numbers breeding on the island. More recent surveys (up to and including 2018 survey data) now indicate that upwards of two to three pairs of shag regularly nest here.

Lesser Black-Backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*)

This gull species nests in relatively small numbers on the cliffs of Sceilg Mhichíl. Between 1990 and 2002, counts of adults at or near nests ranged from 30 to 78. More recent surveys (up to and including 2018 survey data) estimate 32–58 apparently occupied territories (AOT) of this breeding gull.

Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*)

As with the lesser black-backed gull, herring gull breed in small numbers on the island. Between 1990 and 2002 counts of adults were between 4 and 43. More recent surveys (up to and including 2018 survey data) estimate that there are 28–42 herring gull AOT on Sceilg Mhichíl during the breeding season.

Great Black-Backed Gull (*Larus marinus*)

This species tends to breed singly or in small colonies. During the period 1990–2002, between four and twelve individuals were recorded on Sceilg Mhichíl. Data from three recent seabird surveys now indicate that between three and ten great-black-backed-gull breeding territories are apparent during the breeding season.

Kittiwake

Kittiwake nest in colonies on sheer, rocky cliffs. During the breeding season they feed on small pelagic fish species such as sand eel and young herring. Outside the breeding season kittiwake are considered to be oceanic birds. The mean annual census counts from 2016–18 equate to 785 AON on Sceilg Mhichíl. This is estimated to be almost 10 per cent higher than the long-term average (1990–2015). However, these summary statistics mask an underlying trend of steady decline in numbers, from over 1,000 AON in the early 1990s to just 365 AON in 2010. Since then a near-consistent recovery has taken place, with 1,014 AON recorded in 2017. However, the estimated breeding population crashed to just 404 AON in 2018 – a decrease of some 60 per cent from the 2017 values.

Guillemot

Guillemot tend to lay eggs on inaccessible, bare and narrow ledges on sea cliffs. Guillemot generally feed just offshore on pelagic shoaling species such as sand eel and sprat. Young leave the breeding ledges for the sea still unable to fly; they are tended to by adult males. Annual census counts between 2016 and 2018 range between 1,908 and 2,664 individuals, the mean of which is over 100 per cent higher than the long-term average (1990–2015).

Razorbill (*Alca torda*)

Razorbill tend to breed on ledges or in cracks on rocky cliffs and are often associated with colonies of other seabirds. They can be found on Sceilg Mhichíl between March and August. The razorbill that breed in Ireland and Britain are known to winter along the Atlantic coast of Europe, north Africa and the western Mediterranean. Annual census counts between 2016 and 2018 range between 254 and 396 individuals, the mean of which is approximately 18 per cent higher than the long-term average (1990–2015).

Puffin

On Sceilg Mhichíl puffin can nest in a variety of situations but generally nest in rabbit burrows or other similar holes. They arrive on the island in April and usually depart en masse in mid-August. Counts of breeding birds are difficult; therefore, insights into the size of the breeding population have been derived from counts made of adult birds present on the ground in the evening, flying around the island

or rafting on the sea close by. Between 1990 and 2002 six counts using these methods estimated between 3,055 and more than 6,000 individuals. Plans for further survey and monitoring work for this species are under way.

EU Birds Directive: Activities Requiring Consent

Any landowner/land user contemplating any activities listed for a particular site is required to seek the consent of the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Works can only commence after the granting of the minister's consent.

Site-specific operation or activities requiring consent listed in S.I. No. 74/2010 – European Communities (Conservation of Wild Birds (Skelligs Special Protection Area 004007)) Regulations 2010 are:

- construction or alteration of tracks, paths, roads, embankments, car parks or access routes;
- introduction (or reintroduction) into the wild of plants or animals of species not currently found in the area;
- land reclamation or habitat destruction, except for routine maintenance;
- planting of trees;
- reclamation or infilling;
- removal of soil, mud, sand, gravel, rock or minerals;
- removing or altering walls or ruined buildings;
- fishing by any type of nets; and
- any other activity of which notice may be given by the minister from time to time.

Flora

The following vascular plants have been recorded on Sceilg Mhichíl (after Lavelle 1976).

Ferns	
Broad buckler-fern	<i>Dryopteris dilatata</i>
Polypody	<i>Polypodium vulgare</i>
Sea spleenwort	<i>Asplenium marinum</i>

Grasses and Rushes	
Annual meadow grass	<i>Poa annua</i>
Common bent	<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>
Creeping bent	<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>
Early hair-grass	<i>Aira praecox</i>
Red fescue	<i>Festuca rubra</i>
Rough meadow-grass	<i>Poa trivialis</i>
Toad rush	<i>Juncus bufonius</i>
Yorkshire fog	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>

Herbs cont'd	
Sea plantain	<i>Plantago maritima</i>
Sheep's-bit	<i>Jasione montana</i>
Smooth sow thistle	<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>
Spear thistle	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>
Spear-leaved orache	<i>Atriplex prostrata</i>
Thrift	<i>Armeria maritima</i>
White clover	<i>Trifolium repens</i>

Herbs	
Autumn hawkbit	<i>Leontodon autumnalis</i>
Babington's orache	<i>Atriplex glabriuscula</i>
Buck's-horn plantain	<i>Plantago coronopus</i>
Common chickweed	<i>Stellaria media</i>
Common mouse-ear	<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>
Common ragwort	<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>
Common scurvygrass	<i>Cochlearia officinalis</i>
Common sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosa</i>
Curled dock	<i>Rumex crispus</i>
English stonecrop	<i>Sedum anglicum</i>
Navelwort	<i>Umbilicus rupestris</i>
Prickly sow-thistle	<i>Sonchus asper</i>
Procumbent pearlwort	<i>Sagina procumbens</i>
Rock sea-spurrey	<i>Spergularia rupicola</i>
Scarlet pimpernel	<i>Anagallis arvensis</i>
Sea beet	<i>Beta vulgaris</i>
Sea campion	<i>Silene uniflora</i>
Sea mayweed	<i>Tripleurospermum maritimum</i>
Sea mouse-ear	<i>Cerastium diffusum</i>
Sea pearlwort	<i>Sagina maritima</i>

Fauna

Mammals

The following mammal species have been recorded on Sceilg Mhichíl.

Mammals	
Grey seal	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>
House mouse	<i>Mus musculus domesticus</i>
Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>

Sceilg Mhichíl Bird Species

Bird Species	
Alpine swift	<i>Apus melba</i>
Arctic skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>
Arctic tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>
Balearic shearwater	<i>Puffinus mauretanicus</i>
Black guillemot	<i>Cepphus grylle</i>
Black redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>
Black-browed albatross	<i>Diomedea melanophris</i>
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
Black-headed gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>
Black-tailed godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>
Blue fulmar	<i>Fulmaris glacialis</i>
Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>
Collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
Common chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
Common guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>
Common gull	<i>Larus canus</i>
Common redpoll	<i>Carduelis flammea</i>
Common redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>
Common rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>

Bird Species cont'd	
Common sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
Common scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>
Common snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
Common swift	<i>Apus apus</i>
Common tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
Common whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>
Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Corn crake	<i>Crex crex</i>
Cory's shearwater	<i>Calonectris borealis</i>
Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>
Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>
Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>
European storm petrel	<i>Hydrobates pelagicus</i>
Fea's petrel	<i>Pterodroma (mollis) feae</i>
Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>
Fulmar	<i>Fulmaris glacialis</i>
Garden warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>
Glaucous gull	<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>
Golden oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
Great black-backed gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>
Great northern diver	<i>Gavia immer</i>
Great shearwater	<i>Puffinus gravis</i>
Great skua	<i>Stercorarius skua</i>
Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Gyr Falcon	<i>Falco rusticolus</i>
Herring gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>
Hooded crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>
House martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>

Bird Species cont'd	
Iceland gull	<i>Larus glaucooides</i>
Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>
Lapland bunting	<i>Calcarius lapponicus</i>
Leach's storm petrel	<i>Oceanodroma leucorhoa</i>
Lesser black-backed gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>
Little gull	<i>Larus minutus</i>
Long-tailed skua	<i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i>
Manx shearwater	<i>Puffinus puffinus</i>
Marsh harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
Meadow pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>
Mediterranean gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>
Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>
Northern gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>
Northern wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>
Peregrine falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
Pied flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>
Pied wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarellii</i>
Pomarine skua	<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>
Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>
Purple sandpiper	<i>Calidris maritima</i>
Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>
Razorbill	<i>Alca torda</i>
Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>
Reed warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>
Ring ouzel	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>
Ringed plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
Rock pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus</i>

Bird Species cont'd	
Rock/feral pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>
Sabine's gull	<i>Larus sabini</i>
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>
Sandwich tern	<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>
Scandinavian rock pipit	<i>Anthus petrosus littoralis</i>
Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>
Snow bunting	<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>
Song thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>
Sooty shearwater	<i>Puffinus griseus</i>
Spotted flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>
Spotted sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularia</i>
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Swinhoe's storm petrel	<i>Oceanodroma monorhis</i>
Tree pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>
Tree sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>
Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
Turtle dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>
Water rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>
White wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba alba</i>
White-tailed eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>
Willow warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
Wilson's storm petrel	<i>Oceanites oceanicus</i>
Wood pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>



Appendix 7

The Twin Lighthouses

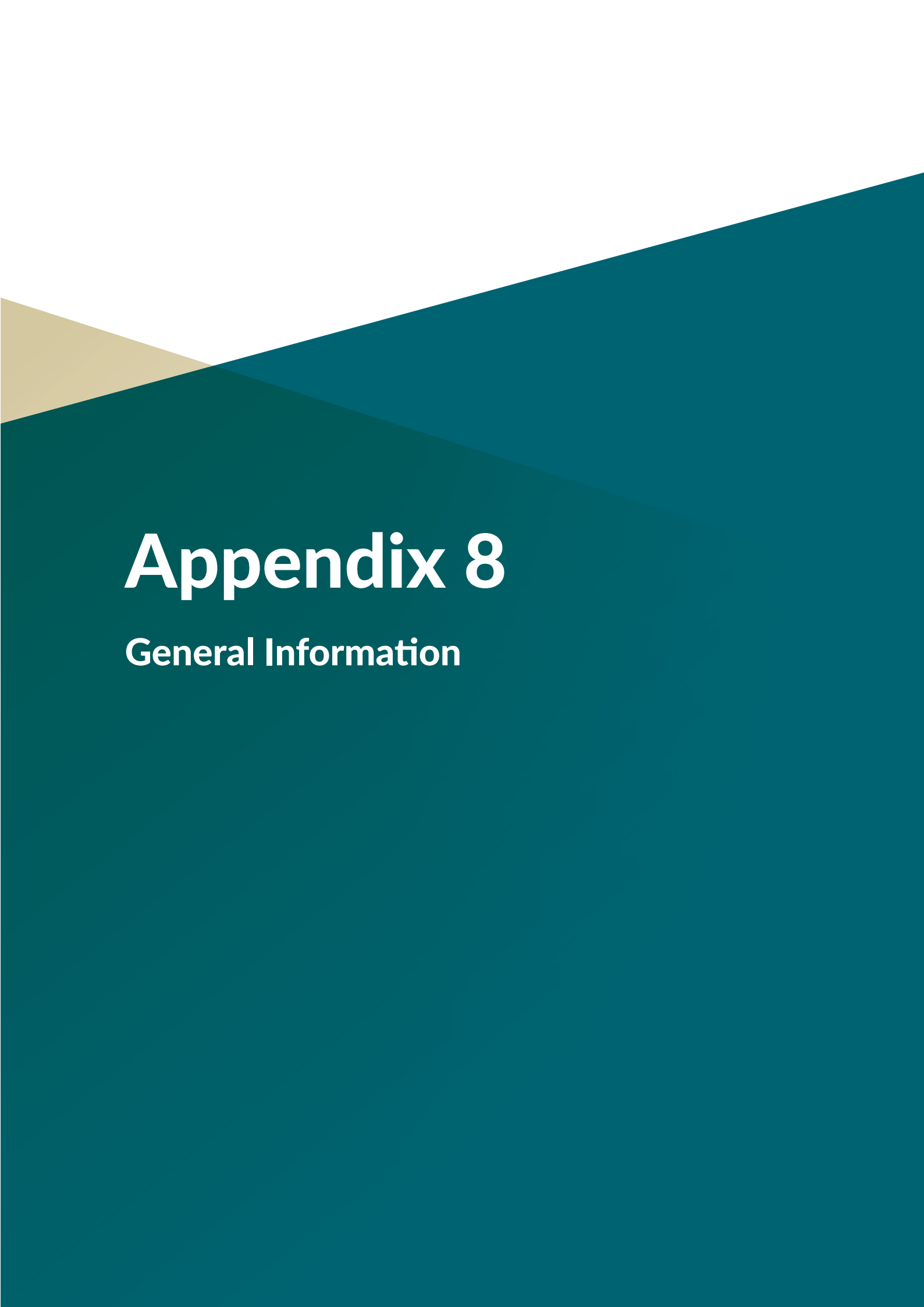
In 1816, Inspector of Lighthouses George Halpin suggested to the Corporation for Preserving and Improving the Port and Harbour of Dublin (the Ballast Board) that two lighthouses should be built on the Skelligs. Two were necessary to avoid confusion with the single light then on Cape Clear to the south-east. The board agreed and the erection of the two lighthouses was approved in November of that year.

In 1817 the board bought Sceilg Mhichíl from a local resident, Mr J. Butler of Waterville, County Kerry, and the construction of the lighthouses began in 1821 (Nicolas 2018). Natural rock was dynamited from the pier at Blind Man's Cove to the locations of the two lighthouses, creating the Lighthouse Road, which began in earnest in 1823 and is the same road from the main landing point on the island used today. The works for the road construction destroyed certain elements of the monastic structure that were located at the pier area, including the lower part of the East Steps and a drystone building overlooking the landing stage (Bourke et al. 2011). The road leads first to the Lower Lighthouse and then continues to the Upper Lighthouse on the South Peak. The buildings comprise two towers, lighthouse-keeper dwellings and associated structures that housed external privies, storage facilities, etc. In 1826 both lighthouses went into use, with their fixed lights lit for the first time. The upper light could be seen from 25 nautical miles away, while the lower light had a range of 18 nautical miles.

The two lighthouses were built of rubble masonry with slate cladding on the outside walls. Granite was imported in block form and used for the floors and stairs, window sills and certain wall copings in both structures including two gate piers external to the Upper Lighthouse. Both structures were the focus of modifications over the years, with the Upper Lighthouse the least modified. The Upper Lighthouse went out of use in 1870, when a new lighthouse was built on Inishtearaght, 22 miles to the north of the Skelligs. The Lower Lighthouse is a two-storey building comprising two houses, while the Upper Lighthouse was also two conjoined dwellings of one storey with attic rooms. Originally, the Lower Lighthouse had a pitch roof but this was removed in 1910 and replaced by a flat concrete roof. This, in turn, was asphalted in the 1960s

renovations to address water ingress. These works followed a visit by the CIL inspection committee in 1962, who requested repair works, including the installation of electric light, central heating, an internal bathroom and toilets. They also proposed an office for the principal keeper, more storage space and modernisation of the tower and engine room, all of which was overseen by Chief Engineer H. Martin. Options for increasing the Lower Lighthouse arc had been considered in 1909, which resulted in the construction of a new 120,000-candle light with a rotating machine, along with a corridor linking the tower to the lighthouse keeper's two dwellings. The 1960s works led to a new tower and light coming into operation in 1967. In 1981, the lighthouse was automated (CIL; Nicolas 2018). In 1919 a fog signal was built between the two lighthouses, but shortly thereafter it was discontinued because of management difficulties, though certain attempts to use it continued. It was finally decommissioned in 1948 and permanently ceased in 1960.

The OPW began conservation works at the two lighthouses and the Lighthouse Road in 2018. Archaeological excavation has been undertaken in advance of any works, particularly along the road and at the Upper Lighthouse, and has revealed significant features which attest to the quality of craftsmanship involved in the building of these structures. The conservation work will add to the Outstanding Universal Value of the island as a whole, while informing the industrial archaeology of Sceilg Mhichíl and its place within a wider maritime context.

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Appendix 8

General Information

International Charters and Conventions

Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage (Lausanne, 1990)

Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (Granada, 1985)

European Charter of the Architectural Heritage (1975)

European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Revised) (Valetta, 1992)

International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (The Venice Charter 1964)

International Cultural Tourism Charter (1999)

Nara Document on Authenticity (Nara Conference on Authenticity in Relation to the World Heritage Convention, Nara, Japan, 1994)

Safety References

Sceilg Mhichíl Safety Statement

Sceilg Mhichíl Standard Operating Procedures

Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005

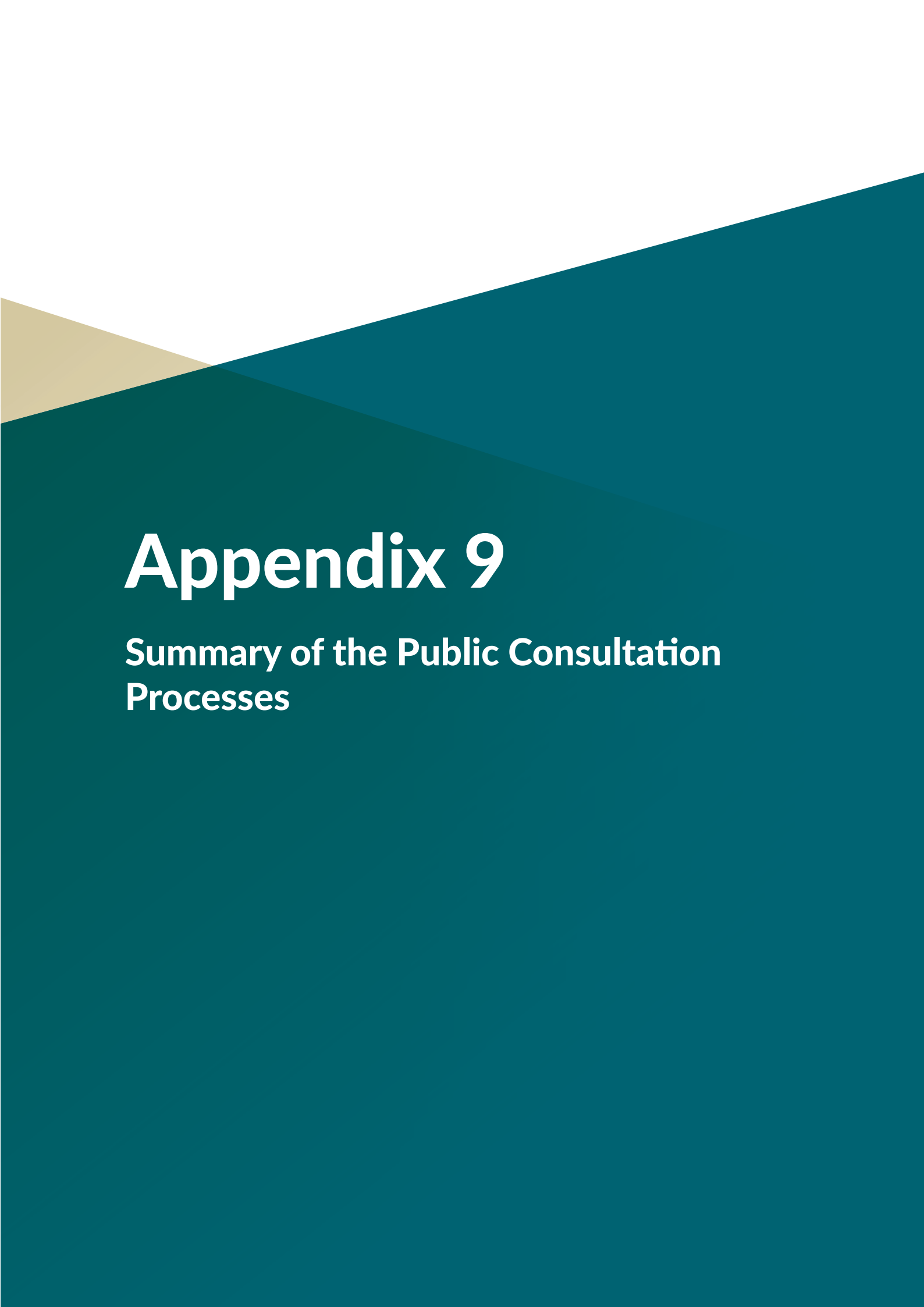
Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 1993

Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Construction) Regulations 2006

Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Work at Height) Regulations 2006

Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Control of Noise at Work) Regulations 2006

Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Control of Vibration at Work) Regulations 2006

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Appendix 9

Summary of the Public Consultation Processes

A four-week public consultation period took place from 11 January to 8 February 2019 on the development of the Sceilg Mhichíl WHP Draft Management Plan 2020–30. In total, 25 submissions were received as part of this consultation. There was a wide and varied scope to the submissions received, which comprised significant input from community-interest groups, professional and technical personnel, professional institutes, state-sponsored bodies, a councillor from the local authority, non-governmental organisations, academics and the wider public.

Classification of Submissions Received

Classification	Number of Submissions
Boat operators	1 (representing 15 boat operators)
General public	5
Professional bodies	1
Non-governmental organisations	3
Archaeologists	2
Guide	1
Wildlife filmmaker	1
Local councillor	1
Local community and tourist groups	8
State-sponsored bodies	2
Total	25

Categorisation of Submissions Received during Public Consultation

The submissions can be categorised in the following areas:

1. Built-heritage conservation
2. Policy and management
3. Visitor services and management
4. Natural-heritage and wildlife conservation

1. Built-Heritage Conservation

The issues contained in the submissions broadly related to:

- information on archaeological excavations;
- future and current archaeological research;
- conservation policy and practice;
- the need for an expert consultative group;
- the spiritual aspect of the island;
- the impact of works on natural heritage;
- spoil management; and
- interdisciplinary research strategy.

2. Policy and Management

The issues contained in the submissions broadly related to:

- the management-plan process – e.g., consultation with local stakeholders;
- lack of review of the 2008–18 plan;
- risk assessment;
- climate change;
- interpretation of UNESCO/ICOMOS charters;
- education and knowledge exchange;
- support for local tourism;
- monitoring of the effects of visitors on the property;
- access to the island for yachts; and
- a call for an independent appraisal of the plan.

3. Visitor Services and Management

The issues contained in the submissions broadly related to:

- site-management policies;
- lack of visitor facilities – in particular, lack of toilet facilities and advance information;
- permits for local boat operators;
- visitor numbers;
- the provision of handrails;
- a definition of the length of the season (eight were in favour of extending the season, one was against)
- access to the island (including access by divers);
- the high cost of the boat passage;
- waste management;
- the role of guides;
- filming on the island;
- the commissioning of a new carrying-capacity study; and
- consultation with CIL.

4. Natural-Heritage and Wildlife Conservation

The issues contained in the submissions broadly related to:

- wildlife/NHA designation and conservation – e.g., An Sceilg Bheag gannet colony, shearwater nest protection, geoparks;
- the ornithological importance of Sceilg Mhichíl;
- the role of the natural environment in the management plan;
- the impact of visitors on wildlife on the island;
- a focus on ecological significance in the plan;
- insufficient wildlife monitoring;
- the role of relevant NGOs in the plan;
- biosecurity;
- the lack of a conservation plan from NPWS for the property;
- security cameras to check for unauthorised landing outside the season;
- the requirement for a full-time seabird warden;
- screening for AA and SEA;
- extension of the number of criteria for Outstanding Universal Value, extension of the property to include An Sceilg Bheag, reapplication for Sceilg Mhichíl as a mixed property to the World Heritage List; and
- banning aircraft from near the island during nesting season.

The draft plan, the NIA and the SEAER underwent statutory and public consultation which ran for six weeks from 4 November to 16 December 2020 as part of the SEA process. Intertek, on behalf of the NMS, submitted the draft plan, the SEAER and NIA to the following statutory consultees:

- EPA;
- DHLGH (formerly Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government);
- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine;
- Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (formerly Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment); and
- Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (formerly Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht).

Following the statutory and public consultations, the submissions and observations were taken into consideration and modifications and amendments to the draft plan were made to reflect issues raised by a wide range of stakeholders. All modifications to the plan actions, targets and timelines as a result of the SEA and AA processes were subject to screening for AA as detailed in Appendix A, Table A-1 of the NIA. The final NIA (dated June 2021) concluded that the plan would not, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, adversely affect the integrity of Skelligs SPA.

During the six-week consultation period, 13 observations were received. Seven observations were received from statutory consultees and other key stakeholders, namely: DHLGH, the EPA, An Taisce, Birdwatch Ireland, Fáilte Ireland, the Irish Cruising Club and the Irish Wildlife Trust. A further six observations were received from members of the public. Two observations (Irish Wildlife Trust and one public) did not require a response.

A summary of the observations received from statutory consultees, key stakeholders, the public and DHLGH responses to same is provided in the consultation report available at <https://www.worldheritageireland.ie>.



Appendix 10

**Integration of Environmental
Considerations into the Plan**

Introduction

This appendix to the Sceilg Mhichíl World Heritage Property Management Plan 2020–2030 (hereafter referred to as ‘the plan’) presents the key findings of the SEAER and the NIA of the plan.

The purpose of this appendix is to ensure all findings of the SEA and NIA have been integrated into the plan. Most of the findings, which are presented in this appendix, have been integrated directly into the plan through edits to plan actions and addition of new plan actions in Chapter 7: Implementing the Plan and Appendix 1: Table 1 Summary of Action Programme 2020–2030, of the plan. Additional recommendations of the NIA are presented in this appendix to ensure they are also captured and implemented following adoption of the plan.

NIA Key Findings

The screening for AA initially identified 17 relevant Natura 2000 sites, of which eight were SPAs and nine were SACs. Screening for AA of these relevant sites concluded that one site, the Skelligs SPA, required AA and therefore the preparation of a NIA. The NIA proposed 16 mitigation measures to ensure adoption of the plan does not adversely affect the integrity of the Skelligs SPA.

The NIA concluded:

The Actions and Objectives that the Proposed Plan has outlined will not have an adverse effect on Skelligs SPA, with these Actions either actively benefitting the site, having no clear pathway for effect, causing a negligible effect or the significance of their effects being reduced through effective mitigation measures. While potential negative effects on the Special Conservation Interest (SCIs) of the Skelligs SPA were identified in the assessment of the Proposed Plan, the integrity of Skelligs SPA will be maintained, with the full and effective implementation of the mitigation measures proposed.

The NIA also made recommendations. The first was to ‘Prioritise SCI species monitoring efforts to ensure data can be used to develop quantitative conservation objectives, recognising that this is

required in the long-term to inform future decision making.’ Monitoring methods were recommended to supplement the ongoing monitoring campaign for the burrowing nesting bird species and were implemented through changes to Actions 4.5 and 4.18.

The following additional recommendations were made.

- Subject any future amendments made to the plan to AA.
- Continue investigations into the type and number of birds rafting in the waters of Skelligs SPA, to determine if species are affected by passenger vessels circumnavigating the island.
- Begin the climate change monitoring programme at the earliest opportunity to identify areas on the island that could be affected by adverse weather events in the future, allowing for proactive works to be conducted to reduce the severity of their effects on the site.
- Guides to continue to assist NPWS on Sceilg Mhichíl with ensuring visitors understand the ecological sensitivities of the island and the importance of keeping to designated routes.

All the mitigation measures proposed in the NIA have been translated into plan actions to ensure they are fully embedded in the plan.

SEAER Key Findings

The SEA involved the assessment of each plan action under the 11 management objectives against 13 identified SEA objectives to determine whether the action will support, have a neutral contribution to or detract from, the SEA objectives. The results of the assessment indicated a small number of plan actions had the potential to detract from the SEA objectives for three topics (Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna; Soils; and Population and Human Health). However, most of the plan actions either substantially support, support or have a neutral effect on the SEA objectives across all the topics.

Where potential negative effects were identified, measures to mitigate such effects were proposed. The assessment also identified areas where the plan could be improved by: removing any identified ambiguity in the meaning of actions; increasing

communications in relation to collected data on Sceilg Mhichíl and increasing transparency in decision making; or strengthening the action for greater environmental protection. These proposed changes included:

- rewording eight existing plan actions; and
- adding two new plan actions.

These changes were made to the plan to address stakeholder feedback on communications, transparency of decision making and availability of data in the public domain.

Conclusion

Following consultation on the draft plan, SEAER and NIA, a further 12 new actions were added to the plan and a further four existing plan actions were edited. Most of the new actions resulted from the translation of NIA mitigation measures into plan actions as referenced Section 1.2 above. All the actions and their associated targets and timelines which were edited or added to the plan as a result of the SEA and NIA assessments have been listed in a SEA Monitoring Framework table presented in the SEAER. In addition to the new/updated actions derived from the environmental-assessment process, the SEA Monitoring Framework table also includes existing plan actions that require monitoring. To integrate the SEA Monitoring Framework into the plan, all changes to the plan actions, targets and timelines have been reflected in Appendix 1 of the plan to ensure their implementation upon adoption of the plan. Table 4 below presents the SEA Monitoring Framework table.

Table 4 SEA Monitoring Framework.

Management Objective	Applicable Actions	Targets/Indicators	Timescales
Objective 1: To have in place and implement an effective management framework to protect the Outstanding Universal Value of Sceilg Mhichil.	A1.1: Monitor implementation and effectiveness of the Plan Actions.	1. Review of implementation and effectiveness of the Plan Actions. 2. Review findings publicly released. 3. Plan Actions amended to increase effectiveness, if necessary and subject to AA and SEA.	1. In year 5 of the Plans lifespan. 2. In the following January reporting cycle. 3. Ongoing, as required.
	A2.3: Create a Sceilg Mhichil stakeholder forum to address issues of mutual interest and inform decision-making processes.	1. Creation of the Stakeholder Forum. 2. Subject to the views of the Stakeholder Forum, report produced on issues and decisions addressed through the Forum.	1. Within 6 months of the Plan's adoption. 2. Annually from the date of the forum's creation.
Objective 2: To improve engagement with local-interest groups and other relevant parties.	A2.5: Make publicly available existing and future reports on Sceilg Mhichil via a dedicated website page for Sceilg Mhichil.	1. Release report findings online.	1. Ongoing, as required.
	A3.2: Prepare a formal, structured maintenance programme for all conserved structures.	1. Preparation and delivery of the programme.	1. Annually, ongoing.
	A3.3(a): Report on archaeological works undertaken each year.	1. Annual report on archaeological works released publicly.	1. Annually each January.
	A3.3(b): Publish full monograph publication of archaeological works undertaken on the island.	1. Publication of the monograph of archaeological works.	1. Within 3 years of the Plans adoption.
Objective 3: To preserve the cultural heritage of the island and sustain its Outstanding Universal Value.	A3.4(a): Report on conservation works undertaken each year.	1. Annual report on conservation works released publicly.	1. Annually each January.
	A4.1: Prepare site-specific conservation objectives for the bird species for which the Skelligs SPA has been designated. Include quantitative conservation objectives attributes and targets.	1. Continue the monitoring of the SCI's of Skelligs SPA to determine species specific issues and population levels (As per Actions 4.5 and 4.6 in the management plan). 2. Available information on the ecological requirements of each of the SCIs of the Skelligs SPA used to select suitable attributes with targets for conservation objective-setting. Available monitoring data used to set targets for each attribute, which will be quantitative where possible. 3. Where necessary, refine quantitative attributes and targets as further monitoring data becomes available.	1. Ongoing. 2. Within 1 year of Plans adoption. 3. Within 5 years of Plans adoption.
	Objective 4: To identify and preserve the natural heritage of the island		

Management Objective	Applicable Actions	Targets/Indicators	Timescales
	A4.2: Maintain close cooperation between the SMIG, the Property Management Team, the NPWS and the Guide team.	1. Schedule regular meetings between the interested parties. 2. Summary of meetings disseminated within the team and to the interested parties.	1. Ongoing, quarterly from the Plans adoption, twice yearly in respect of Guide team. 2. 1 week after meeting is held.
	A4.4: Ensure an ecological assessment is undertaken for any project or activity which might significantly impact on the biodiversity of the island (including Screening for Appropriate Assessment and Appropriate Assessment if necessary, for any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on the species and their habitats for which the SPA has been designated) so that nature conservation issues are considered alongside built heritage.	1. OPW to conduct initial ecological assessment and consult with NPWS/ecological experts as required. 2. Screening for AA and AA undertaken as required for any project where significant effects on the Skelligs SPA are possible. 3. Summary of assessments conducted each year released.	1. Ongoing as required. 2. Ongoing as required. 3. Annually each January.
	A4.5: Continue to develop the seabird monitoring programme, with particular attention to burrow-nesting seabirds in order derive, among other things, robust population estimates, population trends and the identification of pressures acting on the populations. Such data will inform the management of both public access and the works programme in monitoring potential effects of human activities.	1. Plots including artificial nest boxes/sites established in order to undertake monitoring of species throughout breeding cycle. 2. Monitoring study of the burrowing nesting species carried out: • To monitor breeding success by following a subset of nests checked at the beginning and towards the end of the breeding season to determine the number of chicks fledged per apparently occupied burrow (AOB) • To monitor areas of high visitor footfall and areas where there are no visitors to help assess trends in breeding success in relation to visual and physical disturbance from visitors 3. Data from the above collated and analysed to inform management of the site. 4. Study findings publicly released.	1. Within Year 1 of Plan adoption 2. Annually. 3. In Year 5 of study, biennial (every 2 years) thereafter. 4. Within 12 months of the study's completion.
	A4.6: On an annual basis, carry out a census count of all cliff nesting seabird species and estimate the breeding productivity of Sceilg Mhichil's Kittiwake population.	1. Carry out census count and kittiwake productivity work. 2. Report publicly released.	1. Annually. 2. Annually each January.

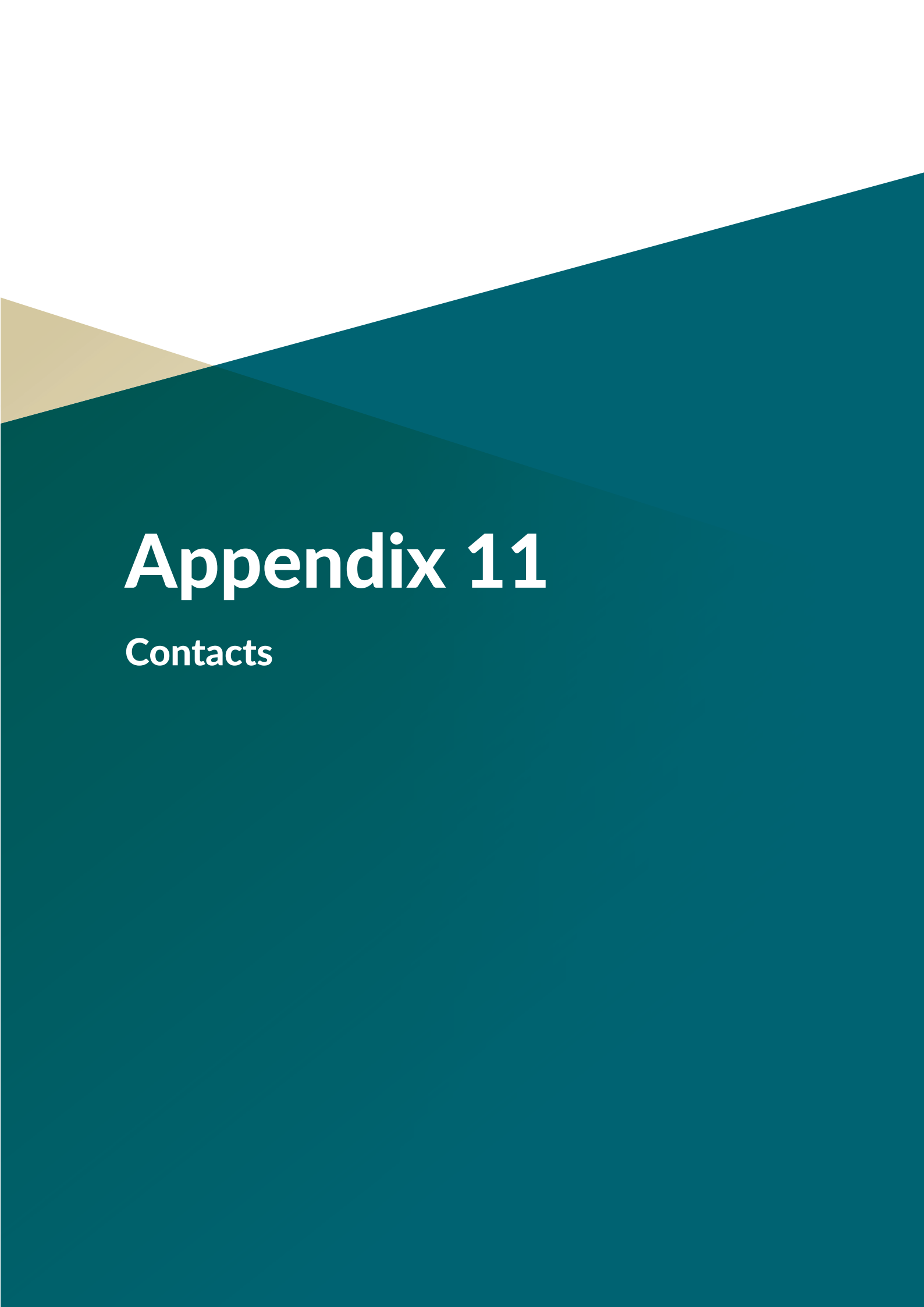
Management Objective	Applicable Actions	Targets/Indicators	Timescales
	A4.8: Participate in national and international seabird survey and monitoring initiatives.	1. Census data released as sought.	1. When requested.
	A4.9: Implement, and if necessary update, the biosecurity action plan to deal with accidental or deliberate introductions of predator species.	1. Recommendations of the Biosecurity Plan implemented. 2. Annual report on outcomes of implementing the plan released online.	1. Within 1 year of the Plan's adoption. 2. Annually each January.
	A4.10: Exclude recreational and other non-essential helicopter flights from an exclusion zone of 1km surrounding Skelligs SPA.	1. Flights monitored on a regular basis 2. Flight policy developed and implemented.	1. Ongoing 2. Within 1 year of the Plans adoption.
	A4.11: Finalise and publish the vegetation survey, including an investigation of species that may have been cultivated by the monks.	1. Vegetation survey finalised and published online.	1. Within 1 year of the Plan's adoption.
	A4.13: Research the impacts of mice and rabbits on the biodiversity and archaeological heritage of the islands. Consider whether eradication is necessary.	1. Research carried out and subsequent reports made publicly available	1. Within 1 year of the Plans adoption
	A4.14: Develop guidance for boat operators to follow to reduce potential impacts on wildlife on Sceilig Mhichíl and in the surrounding waters.	1. Guidance developed.	1. Within 1 year of the Plans adoption.
	A4.15: Within one year of installation of lighting arrangements for the operation of the Lower Lighthouse complex, review those lighting arrangements and if necessary, and where practicable, within a further one year implement lighting measures, such as use of blinds, downwards lighting, to reduce the risk of bird strikes.	1. Review of lighting impact on birds conducted. 2. As required, implement measures (e.g. blinds, downward lighting) if required.	1. Within 1 year of installation of lighting arrangements. 2. Within 1 year of review completion.
	A4.16: Continued supervision of wall maintenance by an ornithologist to ensure that burrow entrances remain accessible to breeding birds, (in particular storm petrel), with the objective of maintaining/increasing the net amount of potential breeding chambers in the walls overall, which are subjected to maintenance works.	1. Record of ornithologist presence and notes released.	1. Annually each January.

Management Objective	Applicable Actions	Targets/Indicators	Timescales
	A4.17: Works/research programmes will be subject to site-specific mitigation measures. (e.g. conducting pre-works surveys to establish the location of any burrows utilised for nesting in the works area, the marking of such burrows so they may be avoided, and avoiding certain time-periods where birds may be more susceptible to disturbance). A4.18: Assess the impacts of visitors and related activities in Year 5 of the Plan period, informed by the monitoring data collected in the first 4 years and take any necessary action afoot of such an assessment.	1. Appropriate mitigation for each works/research project determined. 1. Desk based assessment of visitor impacts; to include: • Assessment of population distribution across the site, to determine the proportion of population which interacts with human activities; and • Quantification of impacts of visitors by comparing breeding success of birds under/adjacent to paths with those away from immediate visitor traffic. 2. Assessment findings publicly released. 3. Necessary actions taken on foot of assessment results.	1. Ongoing as required 1. In year 5 of the Plan's lifespan. 2. In the following January reporting cycle. 3. Within 1 year of assessment results
	A6.1: Continue to manage the National Monument, nature reserve and SPA at Sceilg Mhichil, while allowing a system of managed public access that ensures that the conservation of the WHP is maintained as a first priority. A6.4: Collect Visitor Statistics for each season and analyse trends in order to provide quality management information. Publish annual statistics and analytical report online. A6.6: Continue to regularly review both the patterns of movement across the property and whether the 180 visitors per-day limit is sustainable, with regards to the cultural and natural heritage features of the property and to visitor safety.	1. Sustainable visitor access managed. 1. Collate and analyse collected data. 2. Release report publicly online. 1. Collate and analyse collected data. 2. Release report publicly online. 3. Alter the permitted visitor numbers should the limit be proven to be unsustainable.	1. Ongoing. 1. Annually, from the end of the visitor season. 2. Annually each January. 1. Annually, from the end of the visitor season. 2. Annually each January. 3. As required.
Objective 6: To manage visitors to Sceilg Mhichil effectively.			

Management Objective	Applicable Actions	Targets/Indicators	Timescales
	A6.8: Engage with aircraft regulatory authorities to mitigate conservation risks arising from inappropriate deployment of airborne devices and aircraft above and around Scelig Mhichil in order to manage risks to the property.	1. Regulatory authority engagement on the development and implementation of appropriate protocols. 2. Assessment of any unilaterally enabled actions that can be undertaken through SMIG.	1. Within 1 year of Plans adoption. 2. Within 1 year of Plans adoption.
	A6.10: Continue the practice of excluding private vessels from landing visitors on the island.	1. Existing situation monitored	1. Ongoing.
	A6.11: Continue to balance the need to preserve the National Monument with the need to facilitate public access by operating a boat-permit scheme for landing visitors on the island during the visitor season.	1. Current permit system continued in operation. 2. Liaison with boat operators in relation to permits	1. Ongoing 2. Ongoing
	A6.13: Disseminate wildlife guidance information to inform the public of the exceptionalism of the natural heritage of Scelig Mhichil to raise awareness of its fragility, the need to remain on the designated pathways and mitigate any impacts.	1. OPW and NPWS to develop information leaflet on 'do's/don'ts' for visiting Scelig Mhichil and make available online. 2. OPW to agree distribution methods (e.g. signage at boarding locations, signage on vessels, or physical copies of leaflet) with appropriate stakeholders (e.g. vessel operators and Skellig Michael Visitor Centre) 3. Inform visitors after disembarking on the island through talks from accredited guides.	1. Within 1 year of Plans adoption. 2. Within 1 month of publishing finalised information leaflet, and thereafter ongoing 3. Daily for each group of visitors
	A6.14: Carry out daily spot checks on points along the access pathways to ensure visitor compliance with adhering to the designated pathways on the property.	1. Spot checks conducted. 2. Collect and analyse data. 3. Release findings in annual report.	1. Daily 2. Annually each January. 3. Annually each January
	A6.15: Put in place measures to prevent unauthorised drone flying. These shall include the continued dissemination of information (e.g. at booking, at the piers, on the boats) to explain why unauthorised drones are banned on the site, along with the creation of a process for the authorisation of legitimate drone usage on-site.	1. Develop prevention methods. 2. Create authorisation process for drone usage. 3. Report on instances of unauthorised drone usage.	1. Within 1 year of Plan's adoption. 2. Within 1 year of Plan's adoption. 3. Annually each January.

Management Objective	Applicable Actions	Targets/Indicators	Timescales
Objective 7: To maintain an appropriate standard of safe, regulated visitor access system that supports conservation aims.	A6.16: Put in place further signage and physical measures at the property entrance to further dissuade unauthorised access outside of the visitor season and/or use of CCTV cameras to monitor the pier area.	1. Installation of chain barrier and/or CCTV cameras to monitor the pier area.	1. Within 1 year of Plan's adoption.
	A7.2: Continue the ongoing review of the criteria for the granting of permits for boats to land visitors on the island to ensure that the system adapts to any changing circumstances.	1. Undertake biennial reviews of criteria. 2. If any changes made, inform stakeholders at earliest opportunity and import into existing arrangements.	1. Biennially from adoption of the Plan. 2. Ongoing.
	A7.3: Collect visitor-traffic data and analyse trends with a view to providing quality data for informed decision-making.	1. Collate and analyse collected data. 2. Release report publicly online.	1. Annually, from the end of the visitor season. 2. Annually each January.
	A7.8: Continue to ensure safe access to the island during the season by regular maintenance of the pier and steps during the official visitor season and ensure that appropriate signage is in place at the pier and at the steps to the South Peak and continue to maintain and improve up to date safety information available on-line	1. Maintenance of pier and steps 2. Implement appropriate signage on site and online • Visitor-safety film made available online and reviewed periodically • Visitor-safety guide made available in multiple languages for distribution by boat operators and online • Advisory safety signage in place where appropriate throughout island	1. Annually before the site opens to visitors 2. Within 1 year of Plan adoption
	A7.11: Establish a staggered regime for the arrival times of boats over the course of the day to reduce overcrowding on the site and reduce the potential for visitors to venture from the designated pathways. Use monitoring data collected for A4.5 to assess positive/negative impacts of staggering on SCIs.	1. Stagger boat arrival times between 10am and 2pm. 2. Examine monitoring data to determine if practice should be continued.	1. Ongoing 2. After 5 years of Plan's adoption
	A7.12: Disseminate guidance to all boat operators landing visitors on Sceilg Mhichil or taking visitors on tours around the island, to ensure they are informed of potential adverse effects from visual and physical disturbance on wildlife (e.g. rafting seabirds and seals), and are requested to avoid disturbance.	1. NPWS (in collaboration with OPW) to develop guidance for boat operators for vessel speeds and separation distances from wildlife. 2. Review provided guidance to ensure it remains current.	1. Within 1 year of Plan's adoption. 2. Ongoing every 5 years.

Management Objective	Applicable Actions	Targets/Indicators	Timescales
Objective 8: To increase understanding of and appreciation for Sceilg Mhichíl and its environs.	A8.2: Maintain the website for Sceilg Mhichíl [worldheritageireland.ie] and continue to provide relevant information on the significance of the property, provide periodic updates on the implementation of the management plan and to advise visitors how to prepare for a safe visit to the island.	1. Review the status of the Plan's Actions and if they have been achieved. 2. Release status report on adoption of the Plan.	1. Annually. 2. Annually.
	A10.1: Develop a framework for monitoring climate change.	1. Begin development of framework. 2. Publish finalised framework publicly online.	1. Within 3 months of adoption of the Plan. 2. Within 2 years of adoption of the Plan.
	A10.2: Ensure that any possible impact of climate change on Sceilg Mhichíl is monitored.	1. Monitoring of climate change impacts e.g. erosion events, flora and fauna surveys.	1. Ongoing.
	A10.3: Monitor the change of structures using technical assistance as required.	1. Carry out the seasonal survey.	1. Annually each Spring.
Objective 10: To monitor those factors with the potential to impact on the built and natural environment of Sceilg Mhichíl.	A10.4: Monitor, on an annual basis, other factors that may impinge on the built and natural environment.	1. Off-season damage reports compiled and analysed	1. Ongoing.
	A11.8: Research programmes will be staggered to prevent programmes from occurring simultaneously within the same location on Sceilg Mhichíl.	1. NPWS/OPW to continue to assess appropriate timings of any research to avoid disturbance to the SCI species.	1. Ongoing
Objective 11: To establish a research framework for Sceilg Mhichíl.			

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Appendix 11

Contacts

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Useful Websites

ICOMOS Ireland
<http://www.icomos.ie>

ICOMOS International
<http://www.icomos.org>

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
<http://www.iucn.org>

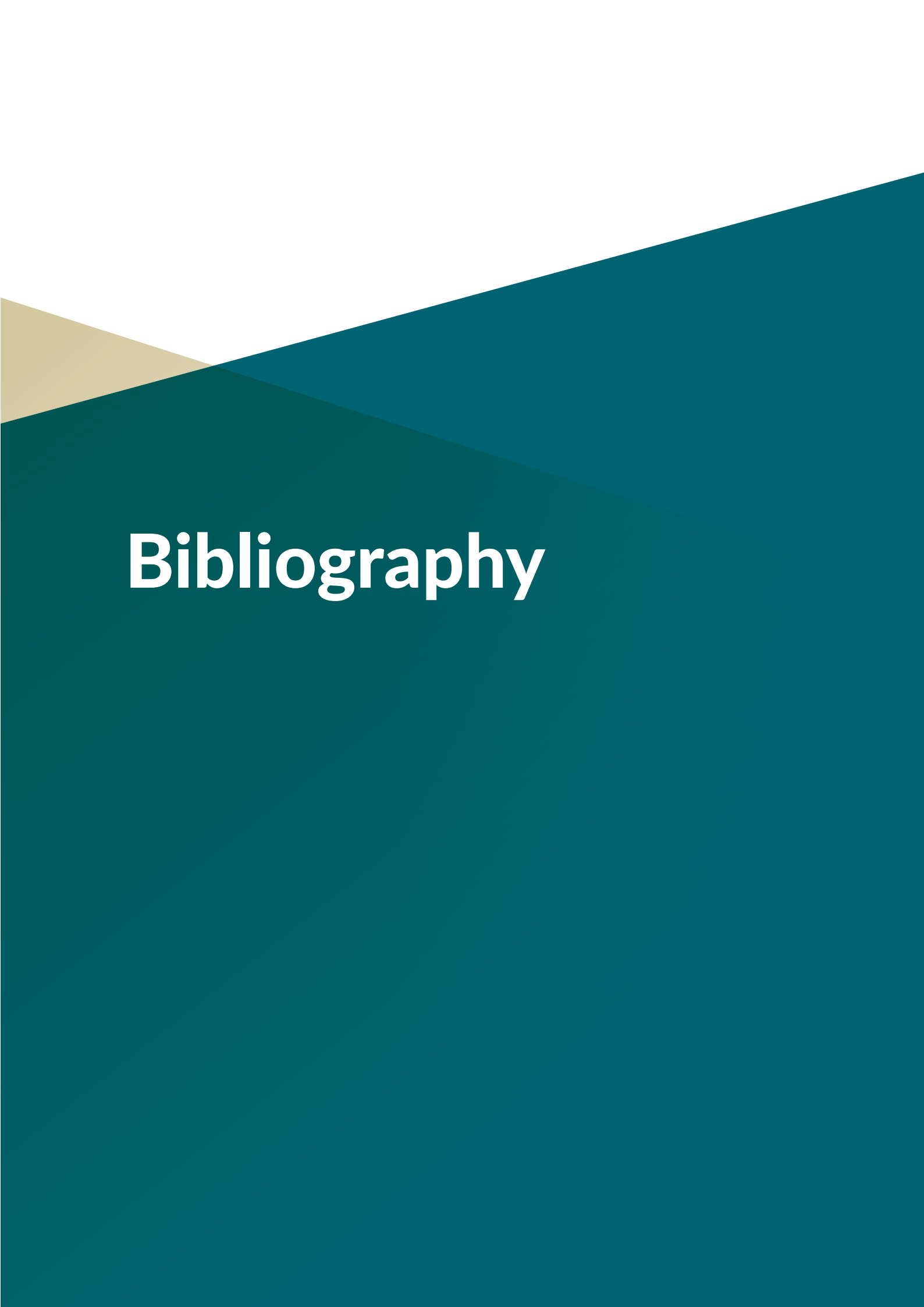
Heritage Ireland (OPW)
<http://www.heritageireland.ie>

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
[https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/departments-of-housing-local-government-and-heritage/](https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/departments/departments-of-housing-local-government-and-heritage/)

Office of Public Works
<http://www.opw.ie>

World Heritage Centre
<https://whc.unesco.org/en/>

UNESCO
<http://www.unesco.org>



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Notes

Notes

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