

"Old Town New Place" Symposium in The Butler Gallery, Kilkenny, March 2024

The "Old Town New Place" symposium organised by the National Built Heritage Service was held on the 4th March 2024 and focused on urban heritage as a key resource to enhancing the liveability of Irish towns within the framework of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) THRIVE funding scheme.



The venue for the symposium was the nineteenth-century almshouse, Evan's Asylum, which has recently been beautifully adapted and repurposed as The Butler Gallery by McCullough Mulvin Architects. The Butler Gallery is situated in close proximity to Saint John's Friary and its varied history illustrated a key point of the opening session of the symposium: the understanding of place and the cultural layering of Irish towns over time.

Valerie Mulvin of McCullough Mulvin Architects opened the proceedings with a presentation on the development, morphology and quality of Irish towns. The symposium showcased heritage-led approaches to regeneration informed by urban archaeology, its recording and understanding, using the resources of the Irish Historic Towns Atlas and international practices of understanding historic urban landscapes.

The methodologies of the New European Bauhaus were brought to life through the dissemination of several integrated urban plans including the medieval laneways of Kilkenny; working with historic buildings in the cultural landscape of Killarney National Park; and the heritage-led co-designed visions for Clonakilty, Cobh, Lisdoonvarna and Rathmullan.

The audience was made up of conservation professionals and local authority officials. The excellent material presented at the symposium will support local authorities develop applications for heritage-led urban regeneration projects under the THRIVE funding scheme within the framework and objectives of the Government of Ireland's Town Centre First Heritage Revival Scheme.