

CLIMATE CHANGE RISK & ADAPTATION ASSESSMENT OF SIX LOCAL AUTHORITY GRAVEYARDS IN IRELAND

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Introduction

Coastal heritage in Ireland is at risk due to climate change. For historic coastal graveyards this is a particular challenge as these places often encompass protected monuments, archaeological remains and an ongoing tradition of family burial plots.

The Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) of 6 graveyard sites in Co. Kerry, Ireland, undertook primary & secondary research to prioritise the near future (2050) risks and identify a menu of adaptation actions for each site, to reduce the worst impacts and ensure best use of limited resources.



Methodology

The CCRA for the Kerry graveyards was undertaken using a mixed methods approach.

It followed the first 4 of 8 steps proposed by the Adapt Northern Heritage Risk Management Process, as well as combining elements of the Climate Vulnerability Index.

It introduced an additional step of community consultation via a public survey (n=91).

Describe Historic Places

- Assess condition & identify aspects of value
- Site visits
- Interviews with custodians to embed first-hand knowledge and experience into assessment

Identify relevant hazards

- Existing & future hazards based on climate change projections (RCP8.5)
- Desktop & community-based
- Public survey

Define & prioritise risks

- Collate all info
- Assess likelihood & severity of impacts of climate change hazards
- High exposure & sensitivity & low adaptive capacity = high priority

Identify adaptation solutions

- Research adaptation responses
- Include traditional conservation alongside nature-based solutions

The sites

1 Abbey Island



4 Old Kenmare



2 Kilmore



5 Templenoe



3 Kilshannig



6 Ventry/ Ceann Trá



Key values in these sites

Evidentiary



"...it has a huge historical significance and dates back hundreds of years. The type of tombs used in the past are now rare and need to be preserved..."

Functional



"All my deceased family are buried at Ahamore Graveyard and eventually I will go there too..."

Sensory



"...it is a beautiful resting place and is very peaceful. When I visit it allows reflection and has a very calming influence..."

Associative



"There is something very comforting about... its proximity to the sea. Our loved ones still have the connection with the sea as they would have done when they were alive..."

Key risks to these sites

Increased rainfall intensity & longer dry periods



Increased temperature



Increased winter storm intensity



Sea level rise



Destabilisation and collapse



Coastal erosion



Increased vegetation growth



Lessons Learned

- The CCRA process can help stakeholders understand climate change impacts and the need to make difficult decisions.
- Values-based CCRA that includes community perspectives provides a holistic approach to adaptation planning with potential beyond Cultural Heritage.
- Where community value is high, managed loss is likely to create conflict and structured mediation to negotiate options will be necessary.
- Long standing resourcing problems for cultural heritage has created systemic vulnerabilities that climate change is now exacerbating. Building and sharing capacity at a local level is an urgent issue.

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