

## APPENDIX D - UNESCO World Heritage Site

### UNESCO World Heritage Site – Planning guidance and supporting information

#### UNESCO World Heritage List

In December 1993 the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) inscribed Brú na Bóinne as a World Heritage Site because of its universal significance for all the peoples of the world.

#### Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

The World Heritage Committee of UNESCO decides whether a property should be inscribed on the World Heritage List, guided by the Advisory bodies. When deciding on the inscription of a property on the World Heritage List, the Committee adopts a Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) which is a summary of the assessment and acts as the key reference for future protection and management of the property.

Statements of Outstanding Universal Value are made up of several elements - brief description, Statement of Significance, Statement of Authenticity, Statement of Integrity and a section describing how the World Heritage Site (WHS) is protected and managed.

Statements of Outstanding Universal Value are key references for the effective protection and management of World Heritage Sites and the main objective should be the protection of each WHS through conservation and preservation of its OUV.

In July 2013 UNESCO adopted the retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value and approved the name change to the **Archaeological Ensemble of the Bend of the Boyne** as proposed by the Irish authorities for the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site.

#### Retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value for the Archaeological Ensemble of the Bend of the Boyne (Brú na Bóinne) (2013)

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| Property    | Archaeological Ensemble of the Bend of the Boyne |
| Id. No.     | 659  |
| State Party | Ireland  |

### ***Brief synthesis***

Bounded on the south by a bend in the River Boyne, the prehistoric site of Brú na Bóinne is dominated by the three great burial mounds of Knowth, Newgrange and Dowth. Surrounded by about forty satellite passage graves, they constitute a funerary landscape recognised as having great ritual significance, subsequently attracting later monuments of the Iron Age, early Christian and medieval periods.

Located about 40 km upriver from Dublin on a ridge between the rivers Boyne and Mattock, within several kilometres of other prehistoric mounds, the site is part of an area rich in stories of Ireland's ancient past. Predominantly agricultural at the present time the area has been extensively explored for more than a hundred years by archaeologists and historians, with excavation revealing many features.

The Knowth group, where the earliest features date from the Neolithic period and the latest from the Anglo-Norman period, has produced thirty monuments and sites that figure on the official inventory; these include passage graves adorned with petroglyphs, enclosures, occupation sites and field systems. The Newgrange group is purely prehistoric, with a ringfort, cursus, passage graves and a henge. The Dowth group is similar to that at Newgrange but there is medieval evidence in the form of a church and a castle.

#### **Criterion (i)**

The Bend of the Boyne monuments represent the largest and most important expression of prehistoric megalithic plastic art in Europe.

#### **Criterion (iii)**

The concentration of social, economic and funerary monuments at this important ritual centre and the long continuity from prehistory to the late medieval period make this one of the most significant archaeological sites in Europe.

#### **Criterion (iv)**

The passage grave, here brought to its finest expression, was a feature of outstanding importance in prehistoric Europe and beyond.

### ***Integrity***

The 780 ha area of the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage property encapsulates the attributes for which the property was inscribed on the World Heritage List. In addition to the large passage tombs of Knowth, Newgrange and Dowth, 90 recorded monuments – as well as an unknown quantity of as yet unrecorded sites – remain scattered across the ridge above the Boyne and over the low-lying areas and floodplain closer to (the present course of) the rivers.

The buffer zone is comprised of 2,500 hectares, the boundary lines respecting carefully mapped views into and out of the property. Since inscription in 1993, views out of the property have been impacted by the M1 bridge crossing the River Boyne to the east of the property; the addition of a third chimney and other structures to the cement factory on the skyline to the east south-east near Duleek; the addition of an incinerator stack to the skyline at Carranstown and a housing

development. The ambiance of the ritual centre is vulnerable to such disturbances which could potentially threaten the integrity of the property. The local authority (Meath County Council) has in place planning policies and procedures to deal with applications for developments which may either incrementally or individually have potential impact on the integrity of the World Heritage property.

### ***Authenticity***

The archaeological remains on the site, both above and below ground are wholly authentic.

Major excavations have been carried out at Newgrange and Knowth and have been fully published. Many small excavations and surveys have been carried out in the area. The main conservation works have concentrated on the two main passage tombs at Newgrange and Knowth subsequent to the excavations undertaken at these sites. All conservation and restoration work has been carried out by skilled professional staff.

At Newgrange, there has been comprehensive anastylosis of the kerbstones and the revetment wall, though the latter has been curtailed to allow access by visitors. The passage roof was completely dismantled to allow the orthostats to be returned to the vertical, with the introduction of reinforcement, and a cowl has been constructed over the chamber area. The cairn itself has been stabilised by means of thin revetments of cairn stones.

At Knowth, structures from all periods are being conserved. In some passage tombs outer support walls have been built for the burial chambers, involving the use of modern materials such as cement and plastic. Where such new additions are visible they are clearly distinguished in appearance from original materials, but in other cases they are completely concealed.

The restoration work on these monuments, the result of close collaboration between archaeologists and conservation architects, conforms with the principles enunciated in Article 7 of the International Charter for Archaeological Heritage Management 1990.

### ***Protection and management requirements***

The protection and conservation of Brú na Bóinne is provided by a range of national legislation, international guidelines, statutory and non-statutory guidance. These provisions include the National Monuments Acts 1930-2004, the Wildlife Acts 1976 and 2000, the Planning and Development Acts, various EU Directives and international charters. The national monuments legislative code makes provision for the protection and preservation of national monuments and for the preservation of archaeological objects in the State. The Planning and Development Acts provide a framework to protect against undesirable development.

Most of the 780 hectare site is in private ownership. At the time of inscription only 32 hectares, largely around Knowth and Newgrange, were in State ownership (in 2011 42.75 hectares were in State ownership). The State-owned part of the property has been under the direct management of the Office of Public Works. This State Office uses its professional staff of conservation architects, engineers, land managers and craftsmen in the day to day management activities. Archaeological input to the conservation and presentation of the property is provided by the National Monuments Service of the Department of Arts, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht. The State Exchequer provides the funding needed for maintenance, management and conservation.

The local authority development plan (Meath County Development Plan 2013 – 2019) for the area in which Brú na Bóinne is situated seeks to protect the archaeological and cultural landscape and to enhance views within and adjacent to the World Heritage property. The protection of views within and out of the property is a major factor contributing to retention of the property's integrity.

The Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre opened to the public in June 1997. Its primary purpose is to manage the flow of visitors to the megalithic tombs of Newgrange and Knowth. Education, public awareness and an emphasis on local engagement are also central to the role of the Centre. The number of visitors to these monuments each day is limited to the maximum that can be accommodated with due regard to the protection of the monuments. Access to the monuments is by guided tour only.

### **The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage - The World Heritage Convention 1972**

Sites are inscribed onto the World Heritage List by UNESCO following their successful nomination by a state party under the auspices of the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage 1972 (World Heritage Convention), which was ratified by Ireland in 1991. Each State Party to the Convention recognizes that the duty of ensuring the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage which is situated on its territory belongs primarily to that State.

The Convention requires state parties who have ratified the Convention to protect World Heritage Sites inscribed on the World Heritage List because of their Outstanding Universal Value and to transmit them on to future generations.

The protection, conservation, and presentation of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne is provided by a range of international guidelines, national legislation, statutory and non statutory guidance:

- i) EU Directives, UNESCO Operational Guidelines, and International Charters, in particular – Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (The World Heritage Convention 1972), and the European Landscape Convention 2000;
- ii) The National Monuments Acts 1930 – 2004 which protect the recorded monuments, and areas of archaeological potential;
- iii) EU Habitats and Birds Directive and The Wildlife Acts 1976 – 2000;
- iv) The Planning and Development Acts 2000-2012 and Regulations, National and Regional Planning guidelines, and the provisions of this Development Plan;
- v) Architectural Heritage Protection – Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2011;
- vi) ICOMOS charters and guidelines, in particular - *Guidance on Heritage Impact Assessments for Cultural World Heritage Properties*. 2011.

Though no additional statutory controls result from World Heritage Site designation, Planning Authorities are required to protect each WHS and its setting from inappropriate development by including relevant policies in the Development Plan for the area. These policies must ensure that the immediate setting of a WHS, important views, and other areas which are important to the site and its protection, be protected from inappropriate development.

**Guidance on Heritage Impact Assessments for Cultural World Heritage Properties. 2011.**

This ICOMOS Guidance document sets out a methodology for evaluating the potential impact of development on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of a World Heritage Site. This is intended to be used both by those proposing development and by those assessing its impact as part of the existing overall EIA process.

### **The UNESCO Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention**

Sets out the procedure for the inscription of properties on the World Heritage List and the List of World Heritage in Danger, and contain guidance on ensuring the protection of World Heritage Sites and their surroundings, including:

#### **Section 77 –**

The Committee considers a property as having Outstanding Universal Value if the property meets one or more of the following criteria. Nominated properties shall therefore:

- (i) represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;
- (ii) exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;
- (iii) bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;
- (iv) be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;
- (v) be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;
- (vi) be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria);
- (vii) contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;
- (viii) be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;
- (ix) be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals;
- (x) contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of science or conservation.

**Section 78.**

To be deemed of Outstanding Universal Value, a property must also meet the conditions of integrity and/or authenticity and must have an adequate protection and management system to ensure its safeguarding.

**Section 96.**

Protection and management of World Heritage properties should ensure that their Outstanding Universal Value, including the conditions of integrity and/or authenticity at the time of inscription, are sustained or enhanced over time. A regular review of the general state of conservation of properties, and thus also their Outstanding Universal Value, shall be done within a framework of monitoring processes for World Heritage properties, as specified within the Operational Guidelines.

**Section 98.**

Legislative and regulatory measures at national and local levels should assure the survival of the property and its protection against development and change that might negatively impact the Outstanding Universal Value, or the integrity and/or authenticity of the property. States Parties should also assure the full and effective implementation of such measures.

## Planning Guidance

The core area of the World Heritage Site comprises approximately 780 hectares contained within the bend of the River Boyne and contains the three major monuments of Knowth, Dowth and Newgrange, and numerous other archaeological sites on the low-lying areas and floodplain closer to the river. The buffer zone, comprising approximately 2,500 hectares, extends to the River Mattock in the north and includes the River Boyne itself to the south and extends to the ridgeline of an escarpment that overlooks the core area.

The World Heritage Site is very sensitive to all categories of new development, particularly housing, large agricultural structures, extractive industries, coniferous afforestation, and masts or other tall or bulky structures which would impinge on the visual envelope along the valley. There are a large number of views and prospects that are sensitive to inappropriate forms of development, and the protection of views both within and from the World Heritage Site is a major factor contributing to the retention of its integrity. These protected views are listed in Appendix 10 and shown on Map no 8.6.

Those considering development proposals within the Brú na Bóinne WHS should look carefully at their site to determine whether the development proposed is likely to have an impact on the Outstanding Universal Values of the site.

Applicants will be expected, as early as possible, to engage with the Planning Authority in pre-application discussions. The Council will facilitate consultation with applicants in conjunction with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Early engagement will allow unacceptable proposals to be identified before significant costs are incurred and allow other projects to move forward more efficiently.

### Preliminary Site Assessment:

|                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Location                         | <p>Is the site in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core Area</li> <li>• Buffer Zone</li> <li>• Vicinity of a Recorded Monument / Protected Structure / ACA</li> <li>• Within a protected view</li> </ul>  |
| Site characteristics and setting | <p>Is the site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greenfield</li> <li>• Previously developed</li> </ul> <p>What are the key landscape characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Topography</li> <li>• Tree / hedgerow screening</li> </ul> <p>What is the landscape character of the site and its setting?</p> <p>How will the proposal impact on views to/from the WHS ?</p> |
| Development Characteristics      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Size/footprint</li> <li>• Proposed Use</li> <li>• Building design/scale/height/form/massing</li> <li>• Landscaping proposals</li> </ul>   |
| Development Plan Policies        | <p>What other planning policies and designations apply to the site?</p>  |

It is emphasised that the general principle of new development at any specific location may be deemed unacceptable because of other policies in the development plan.

Examples of what could be considered adverse include development that:

- could negatively affect any of the qualities or significance for which the WHS was inscribed.
- destroys or would lead to the damage of archaeological remains;
- interrupts key views to, from, or within the WHS;
- changes the character of the landscape in and around the WHS;
- reduces people's appreciation or understanding of the WHS in its landscape setting;

Impacts may be **physical**: upon the fabric of the monuments; on the **setting** of the site: development that harms the character of the landscape around the WHS; or **cumulative**: development that has the potential to add to the existing negative effects of past or current developments thereby creating further and possibly greater adverse effects.

## Physical Impacts

Because of the extent of archaeology with the WHS new development of any scale is likely to have a physical effect and could result in loss of or damage to significant archaeological remains. Such impacts intrinsically affect the integrity of the site – one of the reasons for which it was inscribed as a WHS. Therefore, any physical impact on known or previously unrecognised archaeological remains will be considered to be adverse.

## Impacts on Setting

The monuments at Brú na Bóinne were carefully positioned with reference to the surrounding topography, and landscape of the Boyne. The large passage tombs are sited on high ground overlooking the valley, while there are numerous other archaeological sites on the low lying terraces and the floodplain along the river. The site has been an important ritual, social and economic centre for thousands of years.

One of the best known features of Brú na Bóinne is the mid winter solstice phenomenon, when the rising sun breaks the horizon of Red Mountain and shines through the roof box to illuminate the chamber at the end of the passage. This relationship and other key alignments are of particular importance to the understanding of the site.

The 'setting' of the WHS is for the most part well preserved and readily perceptible and it is this relationship with the landscape that is a fundamental part of what makes the WHS so significant and contributes to how it is experienced, understood and appreciated: its outstanding universal value which must be protected.

## Development in the Buffer Zone

Buffer zones are an essential component in the conservation of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List.

In the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, a buffer zone is defined as "an area surrounding the nominated property which has complementary legal and/or customary restrictions placed on its use and development to give an added layer of protection to the property. This should include the immediate setting of the nominated property, important views and other areas or attributes that are functionally important as a support to the property and its protection. "

The Buffer Zone has been defined to protect the immediate setting of the WHS; the adjacent environment that is part of, and contributes to the character, significance and understanding of the site. The boundaries of the buffer zone were set having taken into account views into and out of the core area.

It is considered essential that any new development is effectively accommodated within the landscape and is designed and located to conserve and enhance the setting of the WHS. This also applies to developments outside the Buffer Zone that may have an impact by virtue of their scale or visual relationship with the monuments.

There is a presumption against development within the buffer zone which would have an adverse impact on the WHS and its setting, unless mitigating action to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority can be taken to redress the adverse impact.

Adverse impacts will be defined as those which could affect the following criteria:

The **authenticity and integrity** of the setting, e.g.:

- Changes to the prominence/dominance of the WHS in the landscape;
- Obstruction of views to and from the WHS;
- Changes in the overall preservation of the landscape setting.



The **significance** of the setting, e.g.:

- How the function and meaning of the WHS relates to the landscape;
- How the WHS is understood and can be appreciated in the landscape;
- Relationships between components of the WHS and related sites.

The **character** of the landscape in which the WHS sits, including the contribution the WHS makes to wider landscape character.

The **quality** of the wider landscape.

## Development affecting the wider setting of the World Heritage Site

In addition to the defined Buffer Zone it may be necessary to consider potential impacts of new development outside the Buffer Zone on longer distance views to and from significant features. Most development beyond the Buffer Zone will not have an adverse effect on the WHS or its setting, however, major development in particular has the potential to detract from or damage longer distance views to and from the Site. The criteria for judging whether impacts on wider setting can be considered 'adverse' are broadly the same as those outlined above.

## Cumulative Impacts

New development will be assessed on its own merits. However, there are potential instances where development impacts, acceptable in isolation, combine to create adverse cumulative impacts on the WHS. These may be physical – where a series of developments have resulted in significant losses of archaeological material, or affect the setting of the WHS – where a sequence of new developments erodes visual connections with the landscape. The Planning Authority will therefore consider the potential for new development to create, add to or set a precedent for adverse cumulative impacts. Such consideration will include:-

- What developments or types of development, in the vicinity of the proposed site have adversely affected the integrity of the WHS in the past?
- What ongoing activities, developments or natural processes are affecting its physical condition and survival, and the integrity of its setting?
- What other developments are proposed in the short- to medium-term that are likely to contribute to adverse effects on the WHS?
- Whether the impact of the proposed development is likely to contribute to cumulative effects generated by the above?

## Development Assessment Criteria

The primary policy which operates in the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site seeks to protect the outstanding universal value of its cultural landscape and to protect and enhance views within and adjacent to the World Heritage Site. There will be a presumption against development which would have an adverse impact on the World Heritage Site and its setting.

Within the World Heritage Site and in particular the Core Area, this policy will limit new development to carefully designed and sited agricultural buildings, sensitively designed extensions to existing buildings for the provisions of essential services, the restoration of the Boyne Towpath and extension of the Boyne Greenway, replacement buildings comparable in

scale to those being removed, and minor works such as small extensions to existing domestic dwellings.

The appropriate reuse and rehabilitation of redundant or derelict buildings will be encouraged.

Consideration will be given to a new house on a green field site, if no other options are available, based on the essential need for a full time farmer to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside, and subject to meeting site and design criteria.

Within the World Heritage Site, the assessment of development proposals must also adhere to other policies contained in the Development Plan relating to the protection of the World Heritage Site, including the protection of the views, prospects, monuments, protected structures and their setting, protection of European sites (SAC and SPA) and other Natural Heritage Areas.

## **Design Criteria:**

### **Careful site selection:**

- Site selection should seek to avoid the most sensitive parts of the WHS and Buffer Zone, preserving archaeological remains in situ;
- Development must not negatively affect the amenity, views, and landscape setting of the National Monuments;
- Prioritise previously developed sites to avoid new impacts on the landscape or archaeology;
- Development that would give rise to or exacerbate inappropriate clustering or ribbon development will not be permitted;
- Perfected views shall be retained;
- There should be no indivisibility between the development site and the National Monuments of Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth, up to and including apex of roof level, and minimisation of inter-visibility between the development site and the other National monuments within the site.
- Extensive screen planting, or earth moving which would alter the landscape setting of the National Monuments will not in itself be considered as adequate mitigation;

### **Well considered development layout:**

Proposed development should seek to maximise the benefit of existing site features, especially topography and vegetation, to eliminate adverse visual impacts.

Appropriate services and infrastructure must be capable of being provided without compromising the quality of the landscape or impacting on archaeological remains.

### **Appropriate building design:**

The characteristics of the site, landscape and local building styles should inform the form, massing, height and materials of new buildings, generating coherent, high quality solutions.

All new development, including extensions to existing buildings, activities, and uses of land within the World Heritage Site must demonstrate high quality sustainable design and construction, which protects and enhances local character and distinctiveness. This includes but is not restricted to ensuring that:

- An extension should not dominate the existing building and should normally be of an overall size, shape, and materials to harmonise with the existing and adjoining buildings. The suitability of the design of an extension will be considered on a case by case basis,

but in general, the extension should play a ‘supporting role’ and be no larger or higher than the existing.

- The original floor area and the number and size of any previous extensions will be taken into account. Meath County Council wish to maintain a variety of dwelling sizes with the WHS;
- The cumulative impact of the development will be considered.

#### **High quality landscape design:**

Landscaping – both hard and soft – should be as much part of the development process as the architecture and be designed to reflect and strengthen local landscape character. Mitigation measures should not in themselves potentially generate adverse impacts. Extensive screen planting, or earth moving which would alter the landscape setting of the Monuments will not be considered appropriate mitigation.

Impacts on the WHS and its setting should primarily be avoided through positive siting and design decisions in preference to the use of other mitigation measures.

### **Exempted Development**

The Planning and Development Regulations set out types of work which do not need planning permission, such as domestic extensions of less than 40sq meters, some agricultural buildings, the erection of solar panels or small wind turbines, however, it is important to note that development is not exempt from the need for planning permission if it would, inter alia, - interfere with the character of a landscape, or a view or prospect of special amenity value or special interest, the preservation of which is an objective of the development plan, or consist of the excavation, alteration or demolition of places, caves, sites, features or other objects of archaeological, geological, or historical, scientific or ecological interest, the preservation of which is an objective of the plan.

Given the extent of such constraints in Bru na Boinne, it is evident that there is limited opportunity for exempted development within the area, and it is advisable to consult the Planning Department before embarking on works of any kind.

See the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended, Part 2 ‘Exempted Development’ in particular Article 9(1)(a) parts (i), (vi), (vii), and (xii).

### **Enforcement**

The recognition of the WHS’s Outstanding Universal Value means that Brú na Bóinne requires the highest level of statutory protection. Loss or damage to archaeological remains upstanding and those buried beneath the ground will be treated as a particularly serious breach of regulatory controls.

Reported unauthorized developments will be investigated and if appropriate, enforced by the Council. In all cases it will be requested that ongoing work cease with immediate effect, to allow a proper assessment of the impacts and prevent damage or loss once it is established that there is or has been a breach. Remedying the breach will take account of particular circumstances, but can include full site reinstatement. Non-compliance with enforcement notices can also be prosecuted through the Courts.

## Summary of Key Points

- The UNESCO Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site is of international significance. As a World Heritage Site (WHS) its outstanding universal value, authenticity and integrity must be protected.
- There is a presumption against development which would have an adverse impact on the WHS and its setting.
- Developers are expected to engage with the Planning Authority as early as possible.
- Any physical impact on the surviving fabric of the WHS – whether upstanding or below ground, known or previously unrecognised – will not be permitted;
- All development within the WHS and Buffer Zone will be expected to be of good design, demonstrating: careful site selection; well considered development layout; appropriate building design; and high quality landscape design.
- The Planning Authority will seek to protect the Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS through a robust approach to unauthorised development.

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