UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne – A Local Authority Perspective

Dr Loreto Guinan
Heritage Officer
Planning and Community Department
Meath County Council

National Monuments Service – World Heritage Seminar
September 12th 2013
Dublin Castle
Presentation Outline

• UNESCO Brú na Bóinne - Archaeological Ensemble of the Bend of the Boyne World Heritage Site

• Role of Local Authority

• World Heritage Site – Opportunity or constraint?
UNESCO Brú na Bóinne - Archaeological Ensemble of the Bend of the Boyne World Heritage Site – A place of Outstanding Universal Value

Criterion [i]
The Bend of the Boyne monuments represents the largest and most important expression of prehistoric megalithic plastic art in Europe.
UNESCO Brú na Bóinne - Archaeological Ensemble of the Bend of the Boyne
World Heritage Site – A place of Outstanding Universal Value

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.
Outstanding Universal Value

• ‘…means 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. As such, the permanent protection of this heritage is of the highest importance to the international community as a whole. The Committee defines the criteria for the inscription of properties on the World Heritage List’ (Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention – WHC- July, 2012)
Here is IrishCentral.com’s pick of the top ten historical sites in Ireland:

1. Newgrange, County Meath

Dating back to 3200 B.C the passage tomb at Newgrange is older than the pyramids in Egypt and is officially a World Heritage site.

A large mound, spread over an acre is surrounded by 97, uniquely carved kerbstones. The cremated remains of the dead were buried a large stone basins under the mound in a chamber assessable by a narrow passage.

At dawn on the December 21, the shortest day of the year, every year, sunlight shines directly into the central chamber of the tomb. It is believed that this was an ancient way of measuring the passage of time, like a calendar for the ancient farmers, or that the light has some religious significance for those in the afterlife.

Newgrange is part of the Bru na Boinne complex which includes similar tombs at Knowth and Dowth.

2. Hill of Tara, County Meath

The Hill of Tara is also located near the River Boyne in Meath. It is an archaeological complex that runs between Navan and Dunshaughlin and contains a number of ancient monuments. According to tradition it was the seat of the High King of Ireland (Ard Rí na hEireann).

The oldest archaeological site at Tara is the Mound of Hostages, which dates back to 2500 B.C.

The hill itself is 500 feet high and has some of the most panoramic views of the plains in Meath.
The role of the Local Authority
Extract from Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 (Chapter 9 – Cultural and Natural Assets)

- **CH OBJ 1**  To protect and enhance the Outstanding Universal Value of the cultural landscape in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne in accordance with the relevant guidelines and national legislation, so that its integrity, authenticity and significance is not adversely affected by cumulative inappropriate change and development, and to enhance views within and adjacent to the site.

- **CH OBJ 2**  To protect the ridgelines which frame views within and from the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne from inappropriate or visually intrusive development.

- **CH OBJ 3**  To encourage and facilitate pre-planning consultation with applicants regarding the siting and design of developments affecting the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne, and the scope of any necessary impact assessments.

- **CH OBJ 4**  To encourage the retention, conservation, and appropriate re-use of vernacular and traditional buildings within the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne in preference to either their replacement, or the construction of new buildings on green field sites.
• CH OBJ 5  To utilise available LiDAR[^1] imagery data and viewshed analysis derived from it as a tool to guide and inform development management of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne.

• CH OBJ 6  To develop a World Heritage Site page in the meath.ie website to disseminate information and provide initial planning guidance for those living and working in and around the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne

Partnership between Meath County Council, the Heritage Council and Discovery Programme

Brú na Bónne

Applying new technologies – LiDAR of World Heritage Site
Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site

Research Framework
Engaging with local communities
An integrated, comprehensive GIS model of landscape evolution and land use history in the River Boyne valley
Phase II Report 2009

Helen Lewis, Colman Gallagher, Stephen Davis, Jonathan Turner, Gerald Foster, Lisa Courtney, Kieran Gouche, Robert Scally, Catherine Langton, Naomi Holmes, Garth Mulvany, Michael J. Allen, Conor Brady, Linda Gilkes, Anthony Browne, Thomas Cummins and Robert Meehan

With contributions by Kevin Barton, Donal Lennon and Beta Analytic Inc.

The Making of Meath
THE COUNTY'S NATURAL LANDSCAPE HISTORY

ROBERT MEEHAN

Megalithic Art in County Meath

Professor George Eogan
My Landscape: People and place (2010/2011) - stained glass project – Meath County Council, Skryne NS, Glashaus Studios and the Heritage Council
My Tara (2013) – Is a project which considers the various relationships people have with the Hill of Tara.

Tara, The Hill of Tara, once an Irish word, implies a place that people revered. My Tara is a project which considers the various relationships people have with the Hill of Tara in County Meath. Between May and September 2013 the artist is inviting people to become involved in this project by sharing their stories and photographs to create a broad range of personal experiences of Tara. These accounts will be published on the website, a Facebook page and a limited edition, photographic-based publication which will be launched later in the year.

Stories and photos can be about something which happened 5 minutes, 5 years or 50 years ago, a family pet taken when a relation was born or adopted, an account of a walk you regularly take there, an early morning sunrise, you witnessed from the site etc. Contributions are welcome from anyone, local residents, visitors, international tourists, natives and strangers alike.

To be part of this project, please send Michael your photos and stories by email michael Fortune@eircom.net or the Facebook page (My Tara Project). If these methods don’t suit, feel free to contact him by phone and he can arrange to meet Michael on phone or email.

The project has been supported by the arts and heritage offices of Meath county council and is a part of their ongoing creative exploration of Tara.
Thank you