Review of the 2002 Management Plan

Summary
This document sets out a review of the 2002 Management Plan and the issues arising. The objectives of the plan and its implementation are highlighted and reviewed. This section is an important connection between the 2002 Management Plan and the 2015 plan. By reviewing progress on the implementation of actions under the 2002 Plan, it helps to identify actions that should be taken forward in the 2015 Plan.

The first Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site Management Plan was published in 2002 following a full public consultation process. The 2002 Plan was envisaged as a five-year plan for the management of the World Heritage property dealing with issues surrounding the protection, conservation, research, presentation and general management of the property. However, due to a number of factors the new plan is, regrettably, only now being published (2015).

The review indicates that significant progress has been made in many areas during the period since the implementation of the 2002 Management Plan and that, overall, that Plan has been effective. Some of the aims of the 2002 Plan were not achieved but, where appropriate, these actions were incorporated into the 2015 Plan.

Practical Use of the 2002 Management Plan
The Management Plan has been used as an important reference document in a number of areas including planning and development, interpretation and education. The plan has influenced the production of a research framework document for the site, The Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site Research Framework 2009.

Objectives
The Plan provided comprehensive information on the management history of the World Heritage Site together with an outline of the legal and protective measures in place for the area. Public access and visitor management were also addressed in the Management Plan.

The key objectives of the 2002 Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site Management Plan were identified as follows:
• To ensure protection of the site’s cultural and natural heritage by implementing legislation, cooperating with landowners and liaising effectively with planning and development authorities and other interested bodies.

• To undertake a monitoring programme of the impact of the conservation works at the megalithic tombs at Newgrange and Knowth and to prepare conservation strategies for the archaeological sites, the Special Areas of Conservation and the Natural Heritage Areas in Brú na Bóinne.

• To provide a high standard of public access and interpretation of the site.

• To establish key priorities for research in order provide a greater understanding of the site’s broad range of archaeological monuments.

• To maintain close co-operation with the local community and government departments and agencies to ensure the effective implementation of the management plan.

Protection Objectives of the 2002 Management Plan

The National Monuments Acts 1930-2004 provide a strong legislative base for the protection of the archaeological monuments at Brú na Bóinne.

Monitoring of individual monuments is carried out from time to time and new discoveries have been made. The National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) interim survey of County Meath was published in 2004 and the interim survey for County Louth in 2005, with Ministerial recommendations issued to the relevant planning authority in relation to the inclusion of properties on the Record of Protected Structures.

With regard to planning and development issues in relation to the protection of the landscape within the core and buffer areas of the World Heritage Site, officials from the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG) regularly liaise with the local authorities and local property owners at pre-planning and planning application stages.

The Boyne River Islands and the River Boyne have been included in the Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), with ongoing monitoring carried out by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) of the DAHG.

Conservation Objectives of the 2002 Management Plan
The Office of Public Works (OPW) monitors the conservation works on an ongoing basis measuring the effects of pollution, weathering and human impact on the decorated stones at Dowth, Knowth and Newgrange. The kerbstones at Knowth are protected from the weather for the winter months and the entrance stone in front of Newgrange is protected at night during the winter months. In relation to archaeological investigation at Dowth only non-invasive techniques are used. No management plan has yet been drafted for the conservation of the natural heritage areas in Brú na Bóinne.

**Presentation, Interpretation and Access Objectives of the 2002 Management Plan**

The management of the presentation, interpretation and access to the World Heritage Site has progressed successfully during the period since the publishing of the 2002 Plan. Public consultation, organised by Fáilte Ireland in association with Louth and Meath County Councils, was held in 2010 on matters surrounding directional signage for the Boyne Valley area.

A feasibility study on the development of a cycleway along the route of the Boyne Valley has been carried out with a view to providing safe, accessible and attractive routes suitable for a variety of users, such as pedestrians, young children, and cyclists, and to connect the various landscape, cultural, heritage and social assets of the region. The Boyne Valley Destination Programme has been established to fully optimise the tourism potential in the area. The exhibitions in the Visitor Centre are monitored for effectiveness with a possible review following the completion of publications on the monument at Knowth. Visitor numbers are recorded and certain information is collected through student survey projects. Detailed surveys on visitors are not carried out on a regular basis and these would ensure a continued high standard of presentation.

**Research Objectives of the 2002 Management Plan**

In 2009, the then Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) and the Heritage Council published the *Brú na Bóinne Research Framework* which summarises the current state of knowledge of more than 6,000 years of activity at Brú na Bóinne. The framework highlights gaps in our knowledge in relation to the site and presents a series of 38 research questions.

Several other publications on archaeological excavation are available, in particular on the Royal Irish Academy website. There has been no recent aerial photography carried out in the Brú na Bóinne area. However, a full LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) survey of the World Heritage Site area was carried out as an action of the Meath Heritage Plan in 2007.
General Management Objectives of the 2002 Management Plan


Implementation of the 2002 Management Plan

A consultative committee was established to assist the implementation of the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site Management Plan while at the same time providing a channel for communication between Government agencies and the local community. Regular meetings of this committee took place until 2006.

The absence of an active Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site Management Plan Implementation Group has resulted in the lack of a coordinated approach to the monitoring of the implementation of the actions outlined in the Plan. It is proposed to set up such a group in advance of the adoption of the new Brú na Bóinne management plan (2015).

Lessons learned during the 2002 Management Plan period

- There are and will continue to be particular challenges to conserving the WHS, arising from some types of land use, development and the impact of increasing visitor numbers.
- The range and complexity of interests within the WHS make its effective management inherently challenging.
- Although it has improved significantly, the understanding of the importance and values of the WHS need continual investment and resources.
- Signage continues to be an issue which must be addressed as a priority in the current Management Plan.
- The interests of conservation and local socioeconomic regeneration need to continue to be balanced in such a way that the needs of each can be met where possible, without compromising the OUV of the site.
- The effective management of the WHS depends on adequate and sustained resourcing.
- The vision for co-operation with local landowners and maintaining close co-operation with local communities as set out in the objectives of the 2002 Plan has not been achieved to the
standard aspired to. Whereas sections of the local community has availed of the use of the visitor centre facilities to hold local events and local schools have conducted education programmes there, insufficient consultation has taken place during the period of the Plan on the implementation of the actions outlined within it.