



## TENTATIVE LIST SUBMISSION FORMAT



**STATE PARTY: Ireland**

**Submission prepared by:**

**DATE OF SUBMISSION: 31 March 2010**

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**NAME OF PROPERTY:** The Céide Fields and North West Mayo Boglands

**State, Province or Region:** County Mayo on West Coast of Ireland

Latitude and Longitude:- 54° 16' 48.3594" North; 9° 22' 14.8794" West (Céide Fields) 54° 14' 12.48" North; 9° 43' 10.9194" West (Glenamoy)

**DESCRIPTION:**

The Céide Fields comprises a Neolithic landscape consisting of megalithic burial monuments, dwelling houses and enclosures within an integrated system of stone walls defining fields, which are spread over 12 km<sup>2</sup> of north Mayo. Many of the features are preserved intact beneath blanket peat that is over 4m deep in places. The significance of the site lies in the fact that it is the most extensive Stone Age monument in the world and the oldest enclosed landscape in Europe. The blanket bog landscape is of immense importance for its natural habitat value as well as for its illustration of environmental and climate history.

The Céide Fields were constructed around 5,700 years ago by Neolithic farmers. This post-glacial landscape was dominated by woodlands, grasslands and heaths in a climate that was relatively warm and dry. Archaeological evidence from survey and excavations has been supplemented and confirmed by a programme of radiocarbon dating pine stumps preserved in the peat throughout North Mayo (Caulfield et al. 1988) and also by extensive palaeoecological research by Molloy and O'Connell (1995, O'Connell and Molloy 2001). This research has revealed that the farmers cleared woodlands dominated by pine and birch to make pasture for grazing livestock.

The Céide Fields show a countryside that was systematically divided into regular coaxial field systems bounded by dry stone walls. On the Céide hill a series of parallel walls over 1.5km long divide the land into long strips, varying from 90m to 150m wide. To the west of the Céide Fields Visitor Centre these walls seem initially to follow the contour of the Behy valley and then continue over the spur of the hill onto the eastern Glenulra side merging with a second similar parallel system following the alignment of the Glenulra valley. This continues further eastwards onto the next hillside. The width of each strip remains remarkably consistent, despite "meanders" in the walls. Each strip of land was subdivided by "cross walls" into rectangular fields, up to several hectares in size (Caulfield 1988, Caulfield et al 1998). Further to the north East of Glenulra in Doonfeeny and Ballyknock and to the east the layout of the fields is not as regular.

Within the area of the actual fields there are five court tombs. Behy is a fine example of a transeptal chambered tomb with drystone court that was excavated in the 1960s. Two tombs are located at Glenulra and one apiece at Sralagagh and Aghoo. Immediately outside the fields area, located in modern farmland are a further six tombs. There are two unclassified but possible court tombs in Glenulra, two portal tombs in Ballyknock and two court tombs in Ballyglass (both excavated and one is a fine example of a central court tomb which had evidence of a substantial rectangular dwelling house beneath it). It is likely these were also originally surrounded by fields but the lack of blanket peat means that they have not survived.

There are several dwelling sites associated with the fields also. When excavated, an oval shaped stonewalled enclosure in Glenulra (adjacent to the Visitor Centre) was revealed to have surrounded a round house of wood, (Caulfield 1978, 1983). At least 11 other similar enclosures throughout the field systems are presumed also to have been dwelling areas, indicating a pattern of dispersed settlement. Nearby a small egg-shaped structure attached to a field wall may have been used as an animal pen (Byrne and Dunne 1990), and other excavations have revealed various features and artefacts (Byrne 1989, 1991, 1992). There is also a high probability that many other individual structures remain undiscovered beneath the deeper peat.

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### **Justification of Outstanding Universal Value:**

(Preliminary identification of the values of the property which merit inscription on the World Heritage List)

The significance of the Céide Fields lies in the fact that along with their associated megalithic monuments and dwelling structures they provide a unique farmed landscape from Neolithic times. Not only are they “an outstanding example” but they are *the* outstanding example of human settlement, land-use and interaction with environment in Neolithic times. The first adoption of farming occurred at different times throughout the world. Nowhere else is there such extensive physical remains of a Neolithic farmed landscape surviving from this significant period in prehistory.

The Céide Fields are certainly of ‘universal’ value in the definition first used by UNESCO in 1976 ‘represent or symbolize a set of ideas or values which are universally recognized as important, or as having influenced the evolution of mankind as a whole at one time or another’ (1976 CC-76-WS-25E).

In 1998 it was stated “*The requirement of outstanding universal value characterizing cultural and natural heritage should be interpreted as an outstanding response to issues of universal nature common to or addressed by all human cultures.*” (WHC-98/CON F.201/INF.9).

In 2006 Barker stated that the “transition from foraging to farming was the most profound revolution in human history”, (Barker, G. 2006. *The Agricultural Revolution in Prehistory: Why did Foragers become Farmers?* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 414).

**Criteria met** [see Paragraph 77 of the *Operational Guidelines*]:

(Please tick the box corresponding to the proposed criteria and justify the use of each below)

**Criterion (iv.):** *The Site should be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;*

- Agriculture and food production
- Crop and flock farming

The Céide Fields site is significant in that it can fill a gap in the existing list as it represents both rural

settlement and vernacular architecture which are recognised as under-represented. In the Outcome of the Analysis of the Typological Framework, (*“The World Heritage List. Filling the Gaps – an Action Plan for the Future”* Monuments and Sites XII, ICOMOS, 46-47), it is stated: “Traditional agricultural landscapes that illustrate earlier stages in farming practice or land tenure or adaptations to specific topographical and/or climatic constraints ...are lacking.”

**Criterion (v.):** *The Site should 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;*

The Céide Fields were constructed around 5,700 years ago by Neolithic farmers. This post-glacial landscape was dominated by woodlands, grasslands and heaths in a climate that was relatively warm and dry. Archaeological evidence from survey and excavations has been supplemented and confirmed by a programme of radiocarbon dating pine stumps preserved in the peat throughout North Mayo (Caulfield et al. 1988) and also by extensive palaeoecological research by Molloy and O’Connell (1995, O’Connell and Molloy 2001). This research has revealed that the farmers cleared woodlands dominated by pine and birch to make pasture for grazing livestock.

The main development of blanket bog occurred c. 4000 years ago, possibly due to a combination of climate change (to cooler and wetter conditions) and land management, which prevented tree and shrub regeneration and encouraged waterlogging. This eventually led to the fields being abandoned, possibly about 500 years after they were originally constructed.

**Statements of authenticity and/or integrity** [see Paragraphs 78-95 of the *Operational Guidelines*]:

*Authenticity:*

The Céide Fields are totally authentic in that the stone field walls have quite simply not been disturbed in over 5,000 years. The vast majority are still completely hidden untouched beneath up to 4 metres of blanket peat. The growth of this blanket bog is not only part of the unique environmental history of the site but has served as a very real physical protection of the remains as well as providing unequivocal proof of the antiquity of the site.

*Integrity:*

Where archaeological excavations have been undertaken in the vicinity of the Visitor Centre, the physical structure of the remains have not been disturbed. A deliberate decision was taken not to “reconstruct” in any way, even though most of the walls had already collapsed prior to the growth of the bog. The abandonment of the fields and the collapse of the walls are seen as an integral part of the history of the site.

**Comparison with other similar properties:**

(The comparison should outline similarities with other properties on the World Heritage List or not, and the reasons that make the property stand out)

There are three other inscribed World Heritage Sites in Western Europe which are all or partly Neolithic in date;

*Archaeological Ensemble of the Bend of the Boyne;*

*Heart of Neolithic Orkney; and Stonehenge,*

*Avebury and Associated Sites.*

*Principal differences with Céide Fields:*

The remains for the sites above represent an entirely different cultural indicator and none of them have visible remains of the economic activity of farming that underpinned the society or indeed the vernacular architecture of the time.

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The Tentative List submission format is available from the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and at the following Web address: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists>

- Further guidance on the preparation of Tentative Lists can be found in Paragraphs 62-67 of the *Operational Guidelines*.
- An example of a completed Tentative List submission format can be found at the following Web address: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists>
- All Tentative Lists submitted by States Parties are available at the following Web address: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists>
- The original signed version of the completed Tentative List submission format should be sent in English or French to: UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 7 place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France
- States Parties are encouraged to also submit this information in electronic format (diskette or CD-Rom) or by e-mail to [wh-tentativelists@unesco.org](mailto:wh-tentativelists@unesco.org)