

IRELAND

Archaeological Ensemble of the Bend of the Boyne

Brief description

The three main prehistoric sites of the Brú na Bóinne Complex, Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth, are situated on the north bank of the River Boyne 50 km north of Dublin. This is Europe's largest and most important concentration of prehistoric megalithic art. The monuments there had social, economic, religious and funerary functions.

1. Introduction

Year(s) of Inscription 1993

Agency responsible for site management

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2. Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria C (i) (iii) (iv)

Justification provided by the State Party

Brugh na Bóinne represents an area of "outstanding universal significance" on a number of different levels.

- The quality and quantity of the collective megalithic art of the area represents a "unique artistic" and aesthetic achievement which is unequalled in its counterparts throughout the rest of Europe.
- The monuments of the area display a longevity of settlement whose origins are found in Neolithic settlements which are of "great antiquity".

iii) The various monuments, particularly the great passage tombs, represent "important cultural, social, artistic [and] scientific" developments over a considerable length of time. Nowhere else in the world can one find the continuity of settlement and activity associated with a megalithic cemetery such as that which exists at Brugh na Bóinne.

iv) The passage tomb complex represents a spectacular survival of the embodiment of a set of ideas and beliefs which are of "outstanding historical significance".

As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

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.

Committee Decision

Bureau (June 1993): the Bureau proposed that the competent Irish authorities modify the name of the property as follows: "Archaeological ensemble of the Bend of the Boyne". Furthermore, the Bureau also recommended that in the event of further restoration work on the Megalithic monuments, consultation with international expertise should be sought to ensure that the best methods are employed for this work.

Session (1993): the Committee inscribed the site under criteria (i), (iii) and (iv) and invited the Irish authorities to control carefully future developments in and around the site and to involve ICOMOS in conservation and management planning.

- Statement of Significance adequately defines the outstanding universal value of the site
- No change required

Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: adequate
- Buffer zone: adequate
- No change required

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- World Heritage site values have been maintained
- State Party reports that the site is suffering from development pressures as the site is in the vicinity of Dublin city but this will not affect its outstanding universal value

3. Protection**Legislative and Administrative Arrangements**

- The Development Plan for County Meath, where the site is situated, provides protection for the site. It is also protected under Ireland's National Monuments legislation
- The protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

4. Management**Use of site/property**

- Visitor attraction (entrance fee)

Management/Administrative Body

- Steering group: a Management Committee was established in 2002. The function of the Committee is to drive the implementation of the management plan
- No site manager
- Management by the State Party; management under protective legislation; consensual management
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: national
- The current management system is sufficiently effective

5. Management Plan

- Management plan is being implemented/no management plan
- Implementation commenced: december 2002
- The Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site Management Plan was drawn up by an inter-departmental committee in the light of an extensive public consultation process. The objectives of the Plan are to protect the cultural and natural heritage, to monitor the impact of conservation works at the megalithic tombs, to prepare conservation strategies etc. while at the time providing a high standard of public access and interpretation of the site
- Very effective

- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the management plan and monitoring its effectiveness:

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6. Financial Resources**Financial situation**

- State funding
- No funding drawn in through World Heritage Fund
- Sufficient

7. Staffing Levels

- Number of staff: 32

Rate of access to adequate professional staff across the following disciplines:

- Very good: conservation, management, promotion; interpretation; education; visitor management
- Other: team of dedicated craftsmen in-house. Also consultants engaged as required. An Education Officer post is planned for Education Centre to be situated at Knowth House
- Staff resources are adequate

8. Sources of Expertise and Training in Conservation and Management Techniques

- No training available but all staff members have received the relevant level of training

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics: 225,581 visitors in 2004
- Visitor facilities: newly built visitor centre with car park, toilets, interpretation, restaurant and tourist office
- Visitor facilities are adequate
- Visitor needs: none

- There is a tourism/visitor management plan for the site (it is part of the overall Management Plan for the site)

10. Scientific Studies

- There is an agreed research framework/strategy for the site
- Monitoring exercises; condition surveys; archaeological surveys; visitor management
- Also: photographic record of carved stone
- Studies used for management of site: control of visitor numbers at Newgrange. Closing Knowth for winter months when the carved stones are wrapped

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- No signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem not used on publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: visitors, local communities, businesses, local authorities
- There is an education strategy for the site (the site is included in the Office of Public Works Free for Schools Scheme)
- All relevant event and exhibitions refer to the World Heritage Status of the site
- No website available but information about the site is available on www.opw.ie and www.environment.ie (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. Office of Public Works)
- No local participation

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- World Heritage Committee sessions: 27th (2003); 28th (2004)

Actions taken to implement the Committee's decisions

- The relevant regulatory agencies are conscious of and take account of the Committee's decisions. Various authorities are responsible for the implementation of this action, depending on regulatory responsibility, including:
 - An Bord Pleanála in relation to planning issues
 - The Environmental Protection Agency in respect of environmental issues

Conservation interventions

- The major excavation of Knowth has been completed. Publication of report in preparation. We now wrap all carved stones at Knowth from November to March to protect them from frost damage. Kerb stones at Newgrange covered every night. Planning permission for Knowth House
- Present state of conservation: very good

Threats and Risks to site

- Development pressure (due to vicinity to Dublin city and Greater Dublin area); environmental pressure; number of inhabitants; visitor/tourism pressure; agricultural/forestry regimes
- Also problems regarding financial and personnel resources
- Emergency measures taken: to control development in the Core Area, Buffer Zone and vicinity (Sections 7.1 and 7.2 of Management Plan). Authorities responsible: Meath County Council and An Bord Pleanála in the event of an appeal. Timeframe: ongoing

13. Monitoring

- Formal monitoring programme
- All staff on site must report any changes, issues etc.

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation, management
- Strengths of management: Knowth House planning permission. Knowth open to the public. Visitor centre opening and control of visitor numbers
- Weaknesses of management: proximity to city; development pressure; living landscape

Future actions:

- Co-ordination with planning bodies (authorities responsible: Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in conjunction with the Office of Public Works, Meath County Council). Timeframe: ongoing
- World Heritage funding is not sought