
Appendix A20.1

National Monuments Legislation



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20.1 National Monuments Legislation

The Historic and Archaeological Heritage and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023 was enacted in October 2023 and while this Act is now law, most of its provisions will not enter into force until the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage has made one or more Commencement Orders. This means that the National Monuments Acts have therefore not yet been repealed and remain in force.

All archaeological sites have the full protection of the national monuments legislation (Principal Act 1930; Amendments 1954, 1987, 1994 and 2004).

In the 1987 Amendment of Section 2 of the Principal Act (1930), the definition of a national monument is specified as:

any artificial or partly artificial building, structure or erection or group of such buildings, structures or erections,

any artificial cave, stone or natural product, whether forming part of the ground, that has been artificially carved, sculptured or worked upon or which (where it does not form part of the place where it is) appears to have been purposely put or arranged in position, any, or any part of any, prehistoric or ancient(i) tomb, grave or burial deposit, or(ii) ritual, industrial or habitation site, and

any place comprising the remains or traces of any such building, structure or erection, any cave, stone or natural product or any such tomb, grave, burial deposit or ritual, industrial or habitation site...Under Section 14 of the Principal Act (1930):It shall be unlawful...to demolish or remove wholly or in part or to disfigure, deface, alter, or in any manner injure or interfere with any such national monument without or otherwise than in accordance with the consent hereinafter mentioned (a licence issued by the Office of Public Works National Monuments Branch), or

to excavate, dig, plough or otherwise disturb the ground within, around, or in the proximity to any such national monument without or otherwise than in accordance...Under Amendment to Section 23 of the Principal Act (1930),A person who finds an archaeological object shall, within four days after the finding, make a report of it to a member of the Garda Síochána...or the Director of the National Museum...The latter is of relevance to any finds made during a watching brief.

In the 1994 Amendment of Section 12 of the Principal Act (1930), all of the sites and 'places' recorded by the Sites and Monuments Record of the Office of Public Works are provided with a new status in law. This new status provides a level of protection to the listed sites that is equivalent to that accorded to 'registered' sites [Section 8(1), National Monuments Amendment Act 1954] as follows:

The Commissioners shall establish and maintain a record of monuments and places where they believe there are monuments and the record shall be comprised of a list of monuments and such places and a map or maps showing each monument and such place in respect of each county in the State.

The Commissioners shall cause to be exhibited in a prescribed manner in each county the list and map or maps of the county drawn up and publish in a prescribed manner information about when and where the lists and maps may be consulted.

In addition, when the owner or occupier (not being the Commissioners) of a monument or place which has been recorded, or any person proposes to carry out, or to cause or permit the carrying out of, any work at or in relation to such monument or place, he shall give notice in writing of his proposal to carry out the work to the Commissioners and shall not, except in the case of urgent necessity and with the consent of the Commissioners, commence the work for a period of two months after having given the notice.

20.1.1 The National Monuments Amendment Act 2004

The National Monuments Amendment Act enacted in 2004 provides clarification in relation to the division of responsibilities between the Minister of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Finance and Arts, Sports and Tourism together with the Commissioners of Public Works. The Minister of Environment, Heritage and Local Government will issue directions relating to archaeological works and will be advised by the National Monuments Section and the National Museum of Ireland. The Act gives discretion to the Minister of Environment, Heritage and Local Government to grant consent or issue directions in relation to road developments (Section 49 and 51) approved by An Bord Pleanála and/or in relation to the discovery of National Monuments.

14A. (1) The consent of the Minister under section 14 of this Act and any further consent or licence under any other provision of the National Monuments Acts 1930 to 2004 shall not be required where the works involved are connected with an approved road development.

(2) Any works of an archaeological nature that are carried out in respect of an approved road development shall be carried out in accordance with the directions of the Minister, which directions shall be issued following consultation by the minister with the Director of the National Museum of Ireland.

Subsection

14A (4) Where a national monument has been discovered to which subsection (3) of this section relates, then

(a) the road authority carrying out the road development shall report the discovery to the Minister

(b) subject to subsection (7) of this section, and pending any directions by the minister under paragraph (d) of this subsection, no works which would interfere with the monument shall be carried out, except works urgently required to secure its preservation carried out in accordance with such measures as may be specified by the Minister. The Minister will consult with the Director of the National Museum of Ireland for a period not longer than 14 days before issuing further directions in relation to the national monument.

The Minister will not be restricted to archaeological considerations alone but will also consider the wider public interest.