
Appendix A20.2

Archaeological Designations

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20. APPENDIX A20.2: ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS

20.1 Archaeological Designations

20.1.1 Record of Monuments and Places (RMP)

Archaeological monuments are protected under the National Monuments Acts 1930–2004. Section 12(1) of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994 (“the 1994 Act”) provides that the Minister believes there are monuments, such record to be comprised of a list of monuments and relevant places and a map or maps showing each monument and relevant place in respect of each county in the State. This is referred to as the Record of Monuments and Places and monuments are entered into it are referred to as Recorded Monuments. Section 12(3) of the 1994 Act provides that where the owner or occupier (other than the Minister) of a monument or place included in the Record, or any other 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 or she shall give notice in writing to the Minister of the proposal to carry out work and shall not, except in the case of urgent necessity and with the consent of the Minister commence the work until two months after the giving of notice. This time will allow the National Monuments Service to consider the proposed works and how best to proceed to further the protection of the monument.

The primary source of information for archaeology is the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) maintained by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH). The RMP documents known upstanding archaeological monuments, their original location (in cases of destroyed monuments) and the position of possible sites in rural areas identified as cropmarks on vertical aerial photographs dating to before 1700 AD (with some later ones also being included). It is based on a comprehensive range of published and publicly available documentary and cartographic sources.

20.1.2 National Monument

The National Monuments Act, 1930 (“the Principal Act”), at Section 2) defines a ‘National Monument’ as

‘a monument or the remains of a monument the preservation of which is a matter of national importance by reason of the historical, architectural, traditional, artistic or archaeological interest attaching thereto’.

The National Monuments legislation legally protects access to and the visual amenity associated with National Monuments and requires consent from the Minister for invasive works in their vicinity.

The defences/town walls of medieval towns are a National Monument in accordance with national policy on town defences (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government 2008).

20.1.3 National Monuments in State Care: Ownership and Guardianship

Section 16 of the 1930 Act provides that where the Minister is the owner of a national monument then the Minister shall admit the public to enter on and view such monument upon payment of such (if any) admission charge and subject to such conditions and limitations as the minister shall prescribe. Section 11 of the 1994 Act provides that the Minister may acquire by agreement or compulsorily any monument that is in his or her opinion a national monument or any part of such monument.

The provisions of Section 14 of the Principal Act regarding prohibition of injury to national monuments which apply to national monuments subject to a Preservation Order apply similarly to national monuments of which the Minister is guardian. Section 12(1) of the the Principal Act provides that the Minister shall maintain a national monument of which he or she is the guardian.

According to the National Policy on Town Defences (2008), within the meaning of the National Monuments Acts, all town defences are considered national monuments by reason of the historical, architectural, and archaeological interest attaching to them. This status relates as much to their protection as to the nature of consent and management of works on, or close, to them.

20.1.4 National Monuments with a Preservation Order or Temporary Preservation Order

Where it appears to the Minister that a monument, considered to be a national monument, is in danger or is actually being destroyed or falling into decay the minister may by preservation order or temporary preservation order, undertake the preservation of the monument. A temporary preservation order will remain in force for six months and then expire.

20.1.5 National Monument in Local Authority Ownership/Guardianship

Monuments which may be defined as national monuments are also in the ownership or guardianship of Local Authorities which have similar responsibilities under the National Monuments Acts (1930-2004) to the DAHG.

These monuments are not included in any specific dataset. Each Local Authority will make a determination whether the preservation of a monument in its ownership/guardianship is a matter of national importance because of the archaeological, architectural, historical, traditional or artistic importance attaching to that monument. There are no definitive lists of these sites available; such determinations are generally made on a site by site basis as the need arises.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage Sites (including candidate UNESCO World Heritage Sites on Tentative List)

Ireland ratified the World Heritage Convention in 1991 and as such pledges to conserve not only the World Heritage sites situated on its territory, but also to protect its national heritage. Ireland has two World Heritage Sites that are considered to have outstanding universal value (OUV) namely Sceilg Mhichíl, an island monastery off the west coast of Kerry and Brú na Bóinne, or the Bend of the Boyne Ensemble in the Boyne Valley, County Meath.

World Heritage sites are sites that have an international value that has been clearly articulated. They are cultural properties considered to be of ‘Outstanding Universal Value’ that are part of the ‘world heritage of Mankind as a whole’ and ‘deserve protection and transmission to future generations’.

A Tentative List is an inventory of those properties which each State Party (i.e. those signed up to the convention) intends to consider for nomination on to the World Heritage List. States Parties submit a tentative list of their properties which they consider to be cultural and/or natural heritage of outstanding universal value and therefore suitable for inscription on the World Heritage List.

20.1.6 Zones of Archaeological Notification

Zones of archaeological notification (ZAN) can be defined as areas within the urban and rural landscape that possess the potential to contain archaeological remains due to the settlement history of a place and or to the presence of topographical features such as rivers, lakes and high, defensible ground.

20.1.7 Non Designated Sites

Newly identified archaeological sites that have been confirmed through archaeological investigation (monitoring, testing, excavation, geophysical survey) are considered to be of medium importance. Such sites are undesignated as they have yet to be added to the SMR.

Potential or undesignated archaeological sites identified through aerial photography, historic mapping, stray finds are considered to be of low sensitivity, as they have yet to be ground-truthed through archaeological investigation. Similarly, undisturbed greenfield areas and riverine environs, which have an inherent but as yet unproven archaeological potential are considered to be of low sensitivity.