



Archaeological Research for World Heritage Sites

Recipient name:	Mr Pádraig Meehan
Discipline and subject area:	Archaeological Research for World Heritage Sites scheme
Year awarded:	2023
Title of project:	Laying the foundations; towards UNESCO WHS status for The Passage Tomb Landscape of Co. Sligo

Summary of findings:

To develop aspects of the existing WHS application for The Passage Tomb Landscape of Co. Sligo, and thereby actively inform future work with the application for full WHS status, a two-day workshop was held in Sligo on 13th and 14th October 2023.

On the first day, nine invited speakers, representing a wide range of expertise in relation to the WHS process, presented papers addressing issues linked to The Passage Tomb Landscape of Co. Sligo application (for full list of speakers, see Project Details below). In attendance during the workshop were representatives for a variety of sectors in Co. Sligo and beyond. On the second day field visits to selected sites within the property allowed for continued, and more detailed, discussions.



Please outline the objectives of the project.

The main objectives of the project are:

- To identify research trends and issues linked to the site, thereby creating a base for a Research Framework.
- To develop a conversation relating to the definition of the archaeological resource that constitutes the site.
- To create a path towards the management of the complex, relict cultural landscape defined by The Passage Tomb Landscape of Co. Sligo.
- To collect insights into preservation issues related to the site.
- To develop the definition of the site's Outstanding Universal Value.
- To inform the development of the existing comparative analysis with other WH properties and comparable sites.



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Please describe the methodology used in conducting the research.

A two-day workshop was held in Sligo on 13th and 14th October 2023. The venue was the Sligo Park Hotel. To actively inform the work towards full WHS status of The Passage Tomb Landscape of Co. Sligo, a series of speakers – all with extensive and varied international experience in the WHS nomination process, were invited to present papers focused on how the current application could best be progressed. Prior to the event, they were furnished with research on the site and the documents related to the Tentative status application.

Following a welcome address by Cllr. Gerard Mullaney, Cathaoirleach, Sligo County Council, opening remarks were made by Martin Lydon, Chief Executive, Sligo County Council. Pádraig Meehan, Chairperson, Sligo Neolithic Landscapes Group, made an introduction.

The main programme for 'Laying the Foundations – A research workshop to inform the World Heritage nomination process for The Passage Tomb Landscape of County Sligo', was divided into three themes as per below.



SESSION 1 - Site specific research trends - definition of the archaeological resources

Chair: Dr Stefan Bergh, University of Galway

Speakers:

1. Dr Jessica Smyth, UCD School of Archaeology - 'The role of a WHS research framework: a Brú na Bóinne retrospective'
2. Dr Gabriel Cooney, UCD School of Archaeology - 'The Passage Tomb landscapes of Co. Sligo: The Research Landscape'

SESSION 2 - Comparative WHS properties and other relevant sites.

Chair: Dr Robert Hensey, University of Galway

Speakers:

1. Dr Leonardo García Sanjuán, University of Seville - 'The Comparative Study of the Sligo WHS Bid. Some Comments Based on the Antequera Experience'
2. Dr Susan Greaney, University of Exeter - 'Lessons from the Stonehenge and Avebury WHS: good intentions vs challenges and change'

SESSION 3 - Towards a nomination dossier - management, conservation, procedures/practicalities

Chair: Michael MacDonagh, National Monuments Service

Speakers:

1. Chris Blandford, World Heritage UK - 'The Passage Tomb Landscapes of County Sligo – Towards a Nomination Dossier'



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2. Dr Luisa de Marco, ICOMOS member - 'Aspects of archaeological cultural landscapes and serial properties in the World Heritage context'
3. Stefan Wessman, Finnish Heritage Agency - 'In the spotlight for eternity - some thoughts on nominating in the 2020's'
4. Patrizia La Piscopia, World Heritage Unit, National Monuments Service - 'The Journey to Nomination; Guidance Tools and Capacity Building'

Discussant: Dr Alison Sheridan, National Museum Scotland

The pursuit of full WHS status of 'The Passage Tomb Landscape of Sligo' presents significant benefits, opportunities and challenges for the long-term sustainable management of heritage in County Sligo. Representatives from a variety of sectors in Co. Sligo and beyond were invited to attend the workshop. In attendance were people representing landowners, the farming community, hospitality industry, art and heritage groups, business community etc. An audience of c. 70 attended.

On October 14 a select group consisting of Sligo Neolithic Landscapes Group, speakers and representatives for Sligo County Council and The National Monuments Service visited a selection of sites within the property, allowing additional opportunities for discussions of issues raised during the presentations.

Please outline the findings of your research and/or milestones achieved.

The input of people with experience of the pitfalls of the journey towards inscription, and even issues that may arise post inscription, was invaluable. It was an exercise that brought together stakeholders in a key moment before the appointment of a project manager for the nomination team. It helped set out the road ahead and frame the process which will be led by the County Council and the Department, but into which the investment of the local community and local groups - many of whom attended - will be vital. Talks and discussions were recorded on video, which will make for a valuable archive into the future. The response of the international visitors to the site was overwhelmingly positive. The County Council pledged their commitment to the project, and the final part of the day was at 4.00 pm, as Blue Raincoat Theatre group performed Purgatory on Knocknarea Mountain.

Please provide details of the dissemination of the outcomes from this project.

The event was publicised on our own sligoneolithic.org website. It was also placed on the website of Blue Raincoat Theatre Company. The event was mentioned on the Six One News by Pádraig Meehan in an interview with Eileen Magnier, as well as on Ocean FM Radio.

c) No. of Lectures given/outreach events: 8

d) Media Coverage (article in local newspaper, feature on University website etc.):

<https://www.universityofgalway.ie/colleges-and-schools/arts-social-sciences-and-celticstudies/geography-archaeology-irishstudies/disciplines/archaeology/thepassagetomblandscapeofcosligo-atentativeworldheritagesite/>



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How will you continue to communicate the results of your project and what are your publication plans?

We recorded the conference/workshop (audio and video). We will produce an edited version for general dissemination on our website, etc. The archive will also be a valuable resource for future work on preparing the bid.

How did the award enhance your professional development?

The professional development of the group? To us, this process was about building capacity in our community and in our own group. It was about listening to the experience of others who have been through the journey of framing a

bid, refining OUV, applying and the long journey, before, during and even after obtaining full inscription. This process benefited all the stakeholders - who attended, such as Sligo County Council and Department officials, and the local groups represented there, as well as ourselves. It will also feed into the work of the future Nomination Team which will shortly be assembled.

What plans (if any) do you have to further your proposal/project?

Well; the main players in the bid going forward will be Sligo County Council and the Department. We will continue to monitor, encourage and actively participate in the bid, and stand ready to participate.