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**Issue of Directions re Dunshaughlin to Navan section of
M3 approved road development.**

I have considered the various papers on this file including the submission dated 28 January, 2005 and related documentation (incl. report of the Chief Archaeologist (CA), National Monuments Section (NMS) and draft directions). The statutory role of the Minister under section 14A(2) of the National Monuments Act 1930 (as amended) relates to the regulation of archaeological works by way of such directions. In this context I have considered in detail the letter from the Director of the National Museum dated 16 March 2005 arising from the statutory consultation process and the site by site comments as set out therein; and the response of the CA in that regard. On that response is indicated by me in manuscript various queries and I have noted the subsequent report of the CA dated 9th May 2005, with revised directions at Tag Y.

I have also read the transcripts of the meetings of the Joint Committee on Environment, Heritage and Local Government as supplied by the Secretary to that Committee by letter dated 8 March, 2005 and the presentations contained therein as given to that committee by a range of persons. As indicated on file I also met and received a submission from Dr. Muireann Ni Bhrolchain of the Save Tara Skryne Group on 29 April, 2005. Dr. Edel Bhreathnach called twice to my house and I had a lengthy discussion with her on her concerns. In addition I discussed the issue at great length with Professor George Eoghan. I have twice visited the Hill of Tara and the surrounding areas in the vicinity of the approved Dunshaughlin to Navan route of the M3.

In light of the foregoing I have decided that the directions, as revised in light of consultation with the Director NMI and as set out at tag Y, should now be issued to the road authority under section 14A(2) of the National Monuments Act 1930 (as amended); and that a copy issue to the Director at the same time by letter as in file

pocket. In addition a meeting should be arranged by NMS with the NMI to clarify any aspects of the directions.

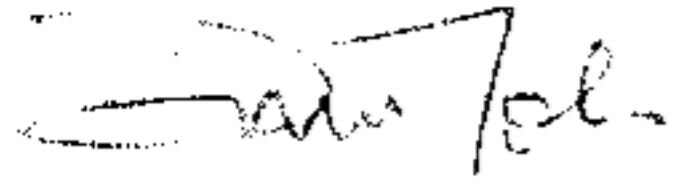
Also the Dept. should formally write to Meath County Council to stress the need for the new development plan to contain objectives to protect the archaeology, amenities and setting of the hill and surrounding areas bearing in mind the development pressures which can arise in the vicinity of new motorway development. This matter should be kept under review as the statutory process leading to the adoption of the new plan proceeds to ensure appropriate objectives are included in the plan and where ultimately the question of direction under the Planning Acts could arise.

I consider this approach to be effective and preferable to that proposed by the Heritage Council (designation of landscape conservation area) by letter dated 3 May 2005. In addition to this approach being stronger than that proposed by the Heritage Council, I consider that a landscape conservation area could well prove a less than effective means to achieve a primary objective sought by the Heritage Council- to prevent inappropriate commercial and other development- with which I am in agreement. The defect as I see it with the proposal of the Heritage Council is that it is impractical. If their approach were adopted, it would mean that additional and unnecessary requirements would be placed on normal agricultural practices.

Others, including Dr Wallace, have also asked for a wider designation for archaeological and cultural purposes in the wider Tara area. There is no readily available mechanism to me to deal with the general management of the area in the way they suggest. I believe the use of the development plan and planning system will best prevent inappropriate development in the area and it has largely been successful so far in protecting the rural quality of the area surrounding the hill of Tara.

I also note that the NRA have now indicated that an alternative lighting design will apply at Blundelstown interchange and that the proposed lighting columns will be omitted. Furthermore I note that in accordance with the Act should a national monument be discovered subsequent to the issue of these directions, works affecting the monument must cease pending consideration of the matter by the Minister for the Environment Heritage and Local Government and the exercise of discretion and the

issue of directions in relation to that national monument in accordance with section 14A(4)(d) of the 1930 Act (as amended).



Dick Roche T.D.

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government

// May, 2005