

# PRESS RELEASE

## Recently discovered amphitheatre at Lismullin, part of the Tara Hill complex and the traditional seat of the Irish Kings, to be destroyed for a motorway

In June 2007, The World Monuments Fund placed the 2,000 year-old archaeological complex of Tara Valley in Ireland on its list of *The World's 100 Most Endangered Sites*, due to the threat of its destruction by planned road building. On 21 August, a decision by the *An Bord Pleanála* [Irish National Planning Authority] gave the go-ahead for the proposed M3 to proceed along its intended route from Dublin to the north-west of Ireland.

This decision disregards the findings of a recent report by an internationally respected archaeologist. Dr Ronald Hicks, Chairman of the Anthropology Department at Ball State University Indiana, claims that the natural amphitheatre at Lismullin, a mile north-east of Tara Hill, is unique, much larger than similar sites and that it remains mostly intact. His report also suggests it is an integral part of a ceremonial complex at Tara Hill, which is still not considered by authorities to constitute a single national monument.

As a result of Dr Hicks' report, submitted to WMF Britain, *An Bord Pleanála* admits that the site is a "newly discovered National Monument". WMF Britain is adamant that this reassessment should bring a halt to all destructive works until the site is fully understood, interpreted and the possibility of its preservation *in situ* is explored.

Dr Jonathan Foyle, Chief Executive of WMF Britain, said: "Ancient archaeology frequently reveals evidence for the thought, practices and technologies of our distant ancestors. In the Bronze and Iron Ages, mankind developed the skills of farming and metalworking which formed the basis of organised industry. As the personalities of these remarkable people are muted by a lack of recorded literature, archaeology becomes the sole resource for their understanding. Therefore, the destruction in the Tara Valley of what is a two thousand-year old time casket is an injury to the people of Ireland, and a last resort. WMF Britain deeply regrets that academic advice on the unique importance of Lismullin, which recommends its preservation, is regarded as an inconvenience to be rejected in favour of this destructive and culturally insignificant road building scheme."

WMF Britain shares a growing disquiet on the effect the proposed motorway will have on one of the most significant cultural sites in Ireland. The significance of Tara dates back millennia as the *Ard Ri* or High Kings of Ireland were reputedly crowned here for centuries.

Although the engorged commuter belt around Dublin is creating pressure for a new road, conservationists argue that an alternative route must be found.

WMF Britain understands that the European Commission have sent a Reasoned Opinion to the Irish authorities, stating that the National Monuments Act 2004 is contrary to EU law, and that the demolition of a 'national monument' may be a material change to the scheme as originally approved.

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