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Statement on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2007

The World Monuments Fund is concerned that the excavation at Lismullin has reached a critical point, and is now entering a destructive phase.

"Tara Hill, which is the centerpiece of a large archaeological landscape with hundreds of significant sites, is the ceremonial and mythical capital of Ireland," said Bonnie Burnham, president of the World Monuments Fund. "It would be a huge loss to the world if Tara's surrounding landscape, about which we have much to learn, is destroyed for a highway development that will only encourage more rapid and inappropriate development. We are horrified at the prospect of a radical alteration of such an important site and call upon the authorities to reconsider their decision."

Dr Jonathan Foyle, Chief Executive of WMF Britain, said: "The Tara Valley is the ancient homeland of those who forged Irish culture. As the personalities of these remarkable people are muted by a lack of recorded literature, archaeology becomes the sole resource for understanding them. Therefore, the destruction in 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 sound 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 is writing to the European Commission and the Irish authorities and asking them to seek interim measures at the European Court of Justice, to halt the works at Lismullin national monument resulting from the proposed M3 motorway route. WMF Britain also adopts the statement from this summer's XIII Celtic Conference, hosted by Permanent Bureau for the International Congress of Celtic Studies, which recognised the significance of the site.

WMF placed the 2,000 year-old archaeological complex of Tara Hill in Ireland on its 2008 WORLD MONUMENTS WATCH LIST OF 100 MOST ENDANGERED SITES, in recognition of its international significance. The panel who voted to include Tara Hill included heritage experts from Europe, Iraq, Kenya and Guatemala and was chaired by Tim Whalen, the Director of the Getty Conservation Institute in Los Angeles, California. This decision was taken before the discovery of an amphitheatre at Lismullin, whose significance was confirmed in a report by Dr Ronald Hicks, Department of Anthropology, Ball State University, USA.

The World Monuments Fund calls on the European Commission and Irish authorities to urgently reassess the legal and ethical basis for this irreversible action before it is too late.

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