

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Meeting of Interdepartmental Committee

on the Development of the Battle of the Boyne Site,

Boyne Valley Hotel, Drogheda, 25 November, 1999

Present: Dermot Gallagher (D.F.A. - Chair)

Ray Bassett, Peadar Carpenter (D.F.A.)
Paul McGarry (Dept. of the Taoiseach)
Ms June Thompson (OPW)
Mr Eugene Keane (Dúchas)
Ms Róisín Byrne (Bord Fáilte)

Minutes

1. The Minutes of the meeting of 8 July, 1998 were circulated and agreed.

Memorandum to Government

2. Gallagher advised that a Memorandum for Government, recommending both a series of interim measures, and, most importantly, that work begin immediately on drawing up comprehensive long-term proposals for the development of the Battle site, was on the agenda for the next Government meeting on 30 November. Ms Thompson said that Government approval for the Memorandum would be required before the OPW could enter into serious negotiations with the owners of the relevant property in the area.

Interim Measures

3. On the envisaged interim measures, Keane said that they were designed to improve public access, facilities, and informational material in order to give visitors a clear sense of the Government's concern that the site should be both a welcoming and a significant visiting experience and, of course, to bridge the gap, in as satisfactory a manner as possible, pending the comprehensive development of the site.

4. It was agreed that D.F.A. and Dúchas would each contribute £75,000 towards the cost of the interim works.

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Comprehensive Development of Site

5. Turning to the proposed comprehensive development of the site, Gallagher said that the Minister of State at the Department of Finance has advised that an amount of approximately £12.5m [land purchase £7.5 m and visitor facilities £5m] would be required to provide for appropriate land purchase and the provision of visitor and interpretative facilities. The Commissioners of Public Works have had discussions with the representative of the owner of an ideally located property in the battle site area. This comprises a large house - 13,000 sq. ft. (requiring extensive refurbishment), and 502 acres, with a walled garden, a gate house, a ruined dower house and 2 blocks of old farm buildings. The owners are agreeable in principle to sell the property directly to the State, subject to agreement on the terms. They are seeking full market value for it.

6. The Commissioners of Public Works had also advised that all of the property may not be required for the development of the historic site. The issue of authenticity and the extent of the historic site would need to be examined before completing any purchase. Any part of the property which might be surplus to requirements, following development of the proposed project, would be disposed of by public competition. The development and operation of the site would be the responsibility of the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands in line with development proposals to be drawn up by the special Interdepartmental Committee. Project Management and Architectural Services could be provided by the Office of Public Works.

7. Gallagher said that work on drawing up the comprehensive proposals should begin immediately once the Government had approved the Memorandum. In this regard, Keane gave an overview presentation of what was envisaged, and produced an outline brief (attached). The Committee expressed great appreciation for the quality and depth of the presentation.

Sub-Committee

8. It was agreed to establish a sub-committee to advance the interim measures as quickly as possible. Messrs. Bassett, Keane and Carpenter and Ms. Thompson agreed to serve on the committee. All members of the parent Committee would be kept fully informed of developments.

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Next Meeting

9. It was agreed the next meeting might conclude with a lunch to which a wider group of interested people (e.g. Séan Collins, the Mayor of Drogheda, who has considerable knowledge of the site and its history, and representatives of the Orange Order) might be invited.

Subsequent Developments

10. Following approval by the Government of the recommendations contained in the Memorandum, the Taoiseach issued a statement on 5 September (attached) announcing that the Government had "agreed in principle to purchase the site of the Battle of the Boyne and to develop it in a way which fully reflects its huge historical importance and its significance for all of the people of the island, and in particular of course for the unionist tradition."

Peadar Carpenter
15 December 1999

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Taoiseach Announces Major Initiative on Battle of the Boyne Site

The Taoiseach, Mr. Bertie Ahern, T.D., announced today that the Government has agreed in principle to purchase the site of the Battle of the Boyne and to develop it in a way which fully reflects its huge historical importance and its significance for all of the people of the island, and in particular of course for the unionist tradition. The Taoiseach said:

"The Battle of the Boyne was one of the most important events in our island's history, and indeed had a wider European significance. It should be remembered and understood by all of us.

In this historic week when the institutions of the Good Friday Agreement have been established, we must dedicate ourselves to promoting mutual respect and reconciliation. In particular, the Agreement commits the Government to 'continue to take further active steps to demonstrate its respect for the different traditions on the island of Ireland'.

I am glad, therefore, to announce that the Government have agreed in principle to purchase the site of the Battle of the Boyne. A special inter-Departmental committee, established by my colleague the Minister for Foreign Affairs, David Andrews, T.D., has been tasked with bringing forward comprehensive long-term proposals for the development of the site. We are spending £150,000 on immediate interim measures to improve public access, visitor facilities and information material."

The Taoiseach added: "In opening up this hugely important part of our shared heritage to the people of the island and to overseas visitors, the Government will continue to consult closely with representatives of the unionist tradition, with the relevant local authorities and with community groups."

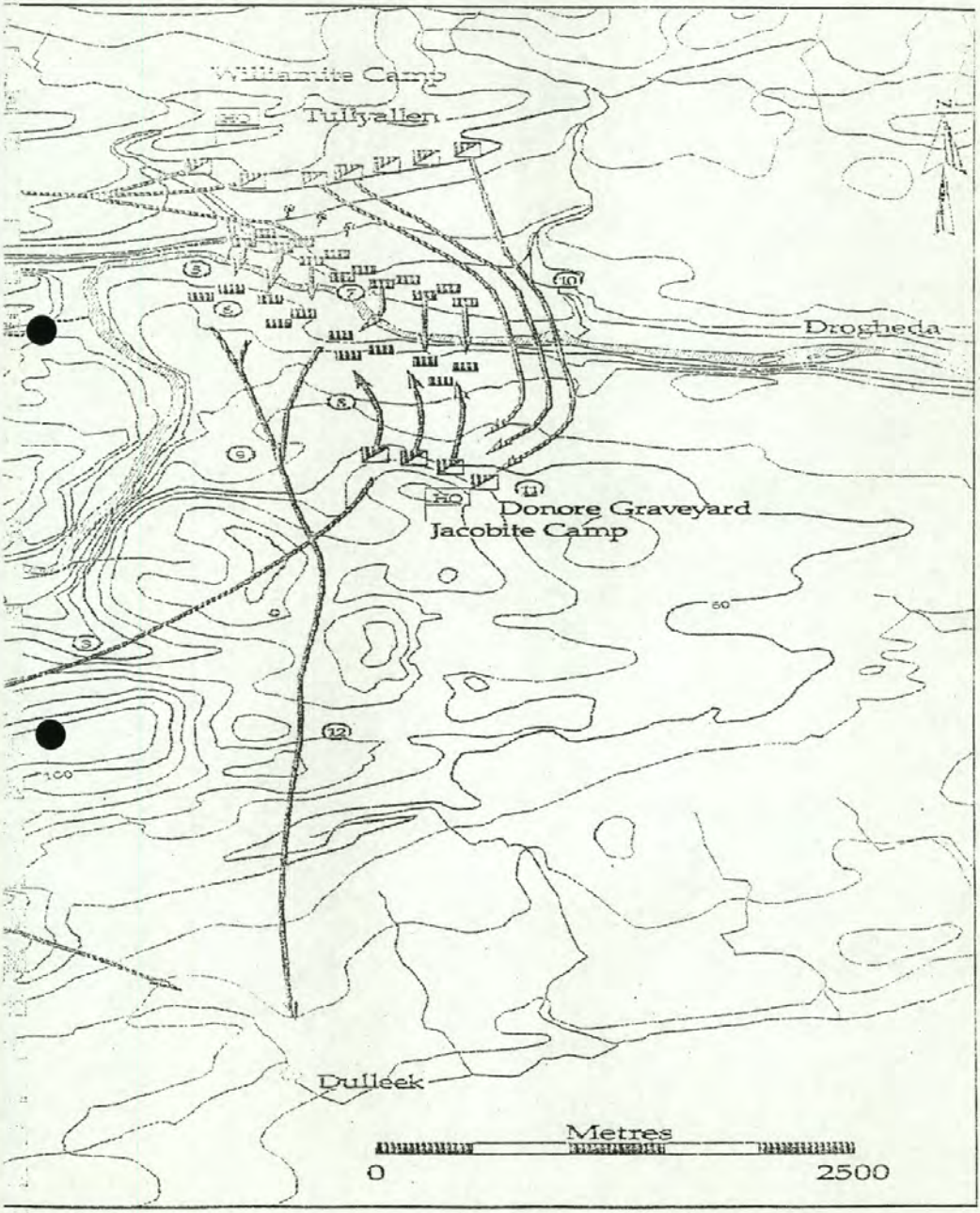
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BATTLE OF THE BOYNE SITE
Brief for Planning Study



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BATTLE OF THE BOYNE SITE:

BRIEF FOR PLANNING STUDY (1st Draft)

1. *Background:*

In January 1998 the Minister for Foreign Affairs announced an initiative to:

"..(enhance the battlesite)..*by making it more accessible to the public and by the provision of information on the Battle's military, political and cultural significance, in its own time and since.*"

An inter-Departmental Committee was formed to progress the project, comprising representatives of: the Department of Foreign Affairs; Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands (National Monuments and Historic Properties Division of Dúchas - the Heritage Service); Department of the Taoiseach; Department of the Environment; Office of Public Works; Department of Tourism (represented by the Midlands-East Regional Tourism Authority).

2. *Battlesite-Historic:*

The battlesite extends from Rosnaree in the West (2 miles from Donore) to Drybridge in the East (on the outskirts of Drogheda). [- See attached map]. However the main core of the battlesite is the area between Oldbridge and Drybridge (W-E), the head of King William's Glen/Tullyallen (N), and the hill of Donore (S).

The Williamite army took up positions on the North side of the river at the ravine known as King William's Glen with its main encampment near Tullyallen. Artillery was deployed on the high ground overlooking the river.

The Jacobites set up camp on the hill of Donore on the South side of the river. Artillery and troop positions were established on the lower slopes near the river at what is now known as Oldbridge Estate.

The main action involved four crossings of the river at the islands, engagements at the crossing points and flanking assaults to the East.

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A major feint manoeuvre took place about 3 miles west with a further Williamite river crossing at Rosnaree which caused significant defensive redeployment of Jacobite troops, ultimately proving decisive.

3. *The Modern Landscape:*

Farming is the predominant land-use, mainly pasture/dry-stock. The gorge of Tullyallen (King William's Glen) and a larger wood to the West (Townley Hall) is planted by Coillte. Game-fishing is privately owned on both banks of the river and highly prized.

The Eastern part of the Core Area shows development characteristics typical of the outskirts of a large town (Drogheda); housing clusters and 'once-offs', industrial (Oldbridge concrete works, electricity sub-station, etc.).

The main road through the area is the N51, Drogheda to Slane. This is intersected at Oldbridge by King William's Glen road, and the CR316, forming a significant crossroad at the heart of the battlesite. The river is crossed at this point by a wrought iron, lattice-structured bridge. (The capacity of the bridge is a major issue.) Roads on the South side of the river are poorer in quality with narrow carriage-widths, sharp bends, poor sightlines.

A large built-canal section of the derelict Boyne Navigation (Drogheda-Navan) runs E-W through the centre of the battlesite. This structure is still largely intact with attractive features such as lock chambers, quays, sluices and bank-planting. The canal tow-path survives for long sections and proposals for the re-creation of a long-distance riverside walk, the Boyne Way, are currently being implemented.

The river, which has undergone a major arterial drainage scheme, is liable to flooding at this point.

4. *Property Tenure:*

Property is divided into many ownership-holdings. [Land-ownership map and details, attached.] The largest single land-holding is the Oldbridge Estate (c. 500 acres) on the South bank of the river. This also includes a large 18th century house and outbuildings, and also the river islands.... important battle crossing-sites. On the North side of the river a narrow strip

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of land between the road and river, stretching from the bridge Eastwards for about 600m., is owned by a private out-of-State owner.... this is another significant site of the battle.

5. *Presentation of the Battlesite to-date:*

About 12 years ago (?) the owner of the North bank property erected a large double-sided sign, on girders, at the roadside and indicated that the site would be developed as a visitor attraction. No such development took place in the meantime and the land is currently leased in lots for grazing.

In 1988 (?) Louth County Council developed a steep, stepped-walkway to a look-out point over the battlesite at the head of King William's Glen [see panoramic photograph on following page]. Parking for about 8 cars was provided. The development fell into disrepair but was refurbished in 1997 by a local group, the West-Ferrard/Boyne Development Committee under a FÁS scheme. The group provided a portacabin at the car-park and staffed it as a visitor information point during the tourist season. The group obtained outline planning permission for a modest permanent building in 1997.

Meath/Louth County Council provided a number of finger-post road signs marking points of the Battle.

6. *Northern Motorway:*

The construction of a four-lane section of the Motorway, by-passing Drogheda, has been approved. The route passes through the Eastern edge of the battlesite, at the downstream end of Yellow Island. The river Boyne is crossed at this point by a high-level suspension bridge.
NB The location of the connections to the local road network has important implications for access traffic to the battlesite, and views. For example, encouragement of traffic from the northern interchange East of Tullyallen has major implications for the location of visitor facilities viz-a-viz the restricted bridge at Oldbridge, while on the other hand, directing visitors from the southern interchange to Donore raises issues of the limited capacity of local roads on the south.
The EIS and other studies for the Motorway are of relevance to the Planning Study.

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7. *Boyne Valley Integrated Development Plan (BVIDP):*

This Plan was produced by a Steering Committee representing public and private interests with the assistance of Planning Consultants, Brady, Shipman, Martin in 1996. It addresses all matters relating to tourism, heritage and amenity management in the Valley of the River Boyne, from its upper reaches to the sea (65miles) and facilitates an integrated approach to development. A Management Committee oversees its implementation (Chair: Meath County Council; Co-Ordinator: Dúchas - the Heritage Service. - Members: MERTA, Louth County Council/Drogheda Corporation, Central Fisheries Board, Meath County Enterprise Board, Meath Leader II, Drogheda Chamber of Commerce, Upper Boyne Tourism, Slane Community). The Committee has welcomed, in principle, the initiative for the battlesite.

Development of the battlesite should accord with the BVIDP strategy.

8. ***Established Tourist Pattern:***

Newgrange has been one of the largest tourist attractions in the region for over 30 years. Traditionally, traffic approached along the Slane-Drogheda road on the North side of the river with a large proportion passing through the battlesite. Since the opening of the radical new Brú na Bóinne scheme in June 1997, traffic now approaches from the Drogheda-Donore-N2 route on the South side of the river. (Annual visitor numbers, c. 230,000).

9. ***Archaeological Implications:***

There are a number of known archaeological sites in the area, as shown on the attached map. These sites are protected under the National Monuments Acts as 'Recorded Monuments' (some also have 'Registration' status). The presence of archaeological artefacts is likely throughout the battlesite. [See also 'Research Programme Proposal (April 1998)].

10. ***Previous Development Proposals:***

(i) ***Oldbridge Estate - hotel, golf and leisure development:*** A business consortium prepared detailed proposals for this development and planning permission was granted in 1993. Associated reports (engineering, road-access, bridge, architectural,

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landscape and Environmental Impact Statement) are of particular interest in the context of the Planning Study - [Ref. Burke, Kennedy, Doyle et al (1992) proposals].

(ii) ***Restoration of Boyne Navigation, from Drogheda to Staleen (Brú na Bóinne):***

[Ref. Kirk, M^{c}Clure, Morton (1995)] Feasibility study to restore boat-traffic from quay in Drogheda (at Bridge of Peace) to the Visitor Centre serving Newgrange etc., using the Boyne river-channel (tidal) and built sections of canal.

(iii) ***Boyne Way Riverside Walk:***

Section between Slane and Oldbridge currently being restored (Meath County Council and Dúchas - the Heritage Service).

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11. *PLANNING and MANAGEMENT STUDY:*

In the context of the Government's proposals to provide public access and information on the battlesite, make recommendations for:

- the development of the battlesite in the context of the Planning and Development objectives of County Meath and County Louth (including Drogheda Corporation area).
- protection of the site in terms of topography, historical integrity, views, archaeology, important natural features,
- public road access, (distant)
- public road circulation within the battlesite,
- infrastructural requirements,
- facilities for visitors (a more detailed estimate of numbers and profile is required),
- signage: external and internal,
- on-site presentation: pedestrian circulation routes/trails, viewing points,
- safety issues (river)
- site management.
- role of local community groups.
- preliminary identification of historical sources and data,
- any other issues affecting the protection, management and development of the battlesite.

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12. Public Consultation:

Local groups and individuals should be given an opportunity to have their views considered. To facilitate this, the Consultants will invite submissions and conduct a series of meetings locally, advertised in the newspapers.

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APPENDIX I

Planning material already available:

1. Mapping of historic battlefield, troop movements and engagements.
2. Land ownership details (mapped on 25" OS sheets). (May 1998)
3. Photographic survey of core area (June 1998).
4. Aerial photography.
5. BVIDP (tourism, heritage, amenity and socio-economic context).
6. Historical bibliography.
7. Motorway and bridge proposals (incl. EIS).
8. Visitor flow data re: Brú na Bóinne (also, regional context of Environmental Impact Assessment).
9. Boyne Way long-distance riverside walk (Slane-Oldbridge-Drogheda).
10. Boyne Canal Study (Drogheda-Staleen).
11. Hydrometric data.
12. SMR/Archaeological Survey data.
13. Studies re: 1992 hotel, leisure, golf course, fishing development:
    (i) Burke, Kennedy, Doyle, Architects (1991) - overall design concept.
    (ii) Fenton-Simons, Planning & Development Consultants (1992)
    – roadways etc
    (iii) DBFL Consulting Engineers (1992) - bridge.
    (iv) Environmental Impact Services Ltd (1992) - EIS

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