



TENTATIVE LIST SUBMISSION FORMAT



STATE PARTY: Ireland

DATE OF
SUBMISSION:

Submission prepared

by: Name:

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NAME OF PROPERTY: The Royal Sites of Ireland: Cashel, Dún Ailinne, Hill of Uisneach, Rathcroghan Complex, and Tara Complex.

State, Province or Region: Counties Tipperary, Kildare, Westmeath, Roscommon, and Meath.

DESCRIPTION:

The Royal sites grouped here were all sites of major royal inauguration, ceremony and assembly, representing each of the four Irish provinces: Ulster, Leinster, Munster and Connaught, as well as the region of Meath. Navan Fort* is portrayed as the royal site for the kings of Ulster; Dún Ailinne for the kings of Leinster; Cashel for the kings of Munster and Rathcroghan for the kings of Connaught. Tara was the seat of the kings of Meath and the seat of the Irish high kings. In addition the Hill of Uisneach is traditionally the epicenter (navel) of Ireland, where the five provinces met. The sites are strongly linked to myth and legend and are associated with the transformation of Ireland from paganism to Christianity and Saint Patrick.

* Navan Fort (Eamain Macha, County Armagh is located in Ulster within the jurisdiction of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland).

Justification of Outstanding Universal Value:

(Preliminary identification of the values of the property which merit inscription on the World Heritage List)

The ensembles of monuments of the Royal Sites are universally unique through their well-preserved cultural continuity and large-scale Iron Age complexes. The Royal Sites were sacred sites and places of royal inauguration and bear exceptional testimony to Iron Age civilisation. Historically, their roots go back to the Neolithic period and they illustrate significant stages in human history through the large array of monuments ranging from Bronze Age tumuli to Iron Age ring forts and to early Christian architecture. All of the Royal Sites form part of larger archaeological landscapes characterised by a large concentration of ritual monuments. Situated on strategic and elevated locations, the Royal Sites are organically evolved relict cultural landscapes where the pre-Christian kingship in Ireland evolved and ended.

Criteria met [see Paragraph 77 of the *Operational Guidelines*]:

(Please tick the box corresponding to the proposed criteria and justify the use of each below)

Criterion) (iii): *The site should bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;*

The Royal Sites as a group bear exceptional testimony to Irish Iron Age civilisation (7th/6th century B.C. to 5th century A.D.). They reached their peak of activity at a time when most of Britain and Europe were under Roman domination. As pre-historic sacred centres the sites also became the focus for the introduction of Christianity in Ireland. Ireland was the last Western civilisation to still be living in a tribal community when Christianity arrived.

Criterion (iv.): *The site should be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;*

The Royal Sites illustrate significant stages in human history, with monuments stretching from the Neolithic Period and Iron Age to the Early Christian Period and later medieval centuries.

Criterion (vi): *The site should be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs with artistic and literary works or outstanding universal significance;*

The Royal Sites are directly associated with ancient traditions and belief systems. This can be traced in the wealth of literature describing folklore, myths and legends surrounding the sites. The great early Irish sagas *Táin Bó Cúailgne* and *Táin Bó Fraích* were set at Rathcroghan and Navan Fort, while the stories of St Patrick's visits to the Royal Sites are chronicled in the *Tírechán* from 700 A.D. Also, the sites are still used and celebrated as sacred sites by spiritual groups from across the world.

Statements of authenticity and/or integrity [see Paragraphs 78-95 of the *Operational Guidelines*]:

Authenticity:

In terms of intangible aspects of the sites, there is a wealth of historical sources, medieval manuscripts (e.g. 'The Martyrology of Oengus', c. 830 AD; Book of Leinster, c. 1160 AD) and academic literature testifying to the mythological and legendary values of the royal sites and their role in Irish history and culture (e.g. Hicks, 2007; Bhreathnach, 2005; Rees & Rees, 1961).

Integrity:

Based on preliminary observation the sites appear to be largely intact and to have retained their original attributes. Overall the sites are well preserved and retain high visual landscape qualities. The archaeological sites have been excavated to varying degrees (e.g. Uisneach, excavated from 1925-30; the Rathcroghan complex, remains largely unexcavated with some ongoing works; the Tara complex, major excavations under the Discovery Programme and the National Roads Authority; Dún Ailinne, excavations from 1968-75). In the case of Cashel there have been recent restoration works on the buildings and the frescoes in Cormac's Chapel. Nevertheless, it would appear that the form, design, materials and substance of the archaeological complexes and monuments are reasonably intact. Ritual uses of the sites still occur on a small scale today, including celebrations of the Winter and Summer Solstices as well as Bealtaine and Samhain, and the tradition of agricultural use of the landscapes continues. The sites are located in largely pastoral landscapes and include hilltop locations with dramatic panoramic views, which contribute to a unique sense of character, spirit and feeling.

Comparison with other similar properties:

(The comparison should outline similarities with other properties on the World Heritage List or not, and the reasons that make the property stand out)

The World Heritage List contains a number of sites linked to early kingship and transformation from Paganism to Christianity in Northern Europe, including:

Jelling Mounds, Runic Stones and Church, Denmark (1994); Þingvellir National Park, Iceland (2004); Birka and Hovgården, Sweden (1993) and the Orkesta and Markim area, Sweden (Tentative List).

There are no similar such inscriptions in countries like Norway, Finland, Germany, UK, and France. Although there are ritual and assembly sites of European Iron Age elsewhere, e.g. in Germany, UK/Northern Ireland and France, none of these are inscribed on the WH List.

Differences with Irish Royal Sites:

- In general, sites illustrating the early evolution of man during the Iron Age are under-represented on the WH List.
- With regard to the Early Christian Church, the Rock of Cashel demonstrates a unique Irish interpretation of Romanesque architecture and an outstanding ensemble of monuments reflecting religious architectural styles from the 12th to 15th Centuries.

The Tentative List submission format is available from the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and at the following Web address: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists>

- Further guidance on the preparation of Tentative Lists can be found in Paragraphs 62-67 of the *Operational Guidelines*.
- An example of a completed Tentative List submission format can be found at the following Web address: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists>
- All Tentative Lists submitted by States Parties are available at the following Web address: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists>
- The original signed version of the completed Tentative List submission format should be sent in English or French to: UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 7 place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France
- States Parties are encouraged to also submit this information in electronic format (diskette or CD-Rom) or by e-mail to wh-tentativelists@unesco.org