

ARCHAEOLOGY
and the
NATIONAL ROADS AUTHORITY

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Proceedings of two seminars in 2002 on the provisions for
archaeological work within the national roads programme

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and

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Cover illustrations

Main picture

Centreline testing for the M4 Kinnegad–Enfield–Kilcock scheme (Westmeath County Council National Roads Design Office)

Smaller pictures (from left to right)

Detailed recording of features on the N22 Ballincollig Bypass (Cork County Council National Roads Design Office)

Early modern building remains on the N18 Ennis Bypass, County Clare (Aegis Archaeology Ltd)

Early medieval souterrain at Whiterath, Co. Louth on the M1 Dundalk Bypass (Valerie J Keeley Ltd)

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Foreword

Over recent years, particularly with the scale of activity envisaged in the *National Development Plan 2000–2006*, archaeology has become an increasingly important consideration in the planning and construction of both small-scale and large-scale developments in Ireland. All infrastructural development, including water and waste management and urban/rural development, can have an impact on the archaeological landscape. The major road schemes undertaken by the National Roads Authority (NRA) are central to the Government's strategies for improved access and regional development and also have the potential to contribute significantly to a reduction in road accident fatalities. All development, especially large-scale infrastructural development, involves change. However, it is possible to put in place the necessary procedures that allow us to manage that change in a way that respects our objectives in relation to conservation while facilitating the timely implementation of necessary national infrastructure. We were pleased to organise the two seminars recorded by this publication to deal in some detail with such procedures.

As a national agency the NRA has a responsibility to uphold national heritage policy. In practice, this means avoiding archaeological sites and monuments where they can be identified and, where this is not possible, mitigating the impacts of road construction by commissioning comprehensive and strategic archaeological investigations. In this role the NRA has become the single biggest funder of archaeological investigations in Ireland. Furthermore, in tandem with ten local authorities, the NRA now employs a team of Project Archaeologists, based at National Roads Design Offices throughout the country. The work of the Project Archaeologists is conducted according to a *Code of Practice* that was agreed in 2000 with the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands.

The NRA is proud to fulfil its responsibility to Irish archaeology and hence to the Irish public. But Irish archaeologists have a reciprocal duty to conduct their work efficiently, purposefully and for the public good. In sponsoring archaeological excavations, our most important measure of value for money is the amount of new information about Ireland's past that results from this work. Unfortunately, to date the NRA's investment in archaeological investigations has not been rewarded by a corresponding number of publications, lectures or exhibitions for the public benefit. This is something we intend to put right now that our Project Archaeologists are in place. They will assist others in their profession to bring archaeological work on national road schemes to a successful conclusion and to bring the results of that work to a wider audience.

Michael Egan
Head of Corporate Affairs
National Roads Authority

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A note on government departments

Since the seminars were convened a new government has been formed — following the general election of May 2002 — and there has been a reorganisation of government departments. Arising from this the National Roads Authority is no longer an agency of the Department of the Environment and Local Government but now operates under the aegis of the Department of Transport. The Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands has been dissolved and its functions allocated to other departments. Dúchas the Heritage Service has been integrated into the Department of the Environment and Local Government. (The name Dúchas was non-statutory and has been discontinued.) While the Department of the Environment and Local Government is to retain overall control, the management of national monuments in State care is to become the responsibility of the Office of Public Works. Responsibility for the National Museum of Ireland and for portable heritage generally has been allocated to the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism. Note, however, that references to the original government departments and agencies have been preserved throughout this published record of the 2002 seminar proceedings.

