

DRAFT TARA SKRYNE LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION AREA EXPLANATORY DOCUMENT



May 2010

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Section I

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The history of human activity on Tara and its surrounding landscape can be traced back over five thousand years. Its name is synonymous with the high-kings, as a sanctuary of prehistoric, pre-Christian and early medieval Ireland and with characters from the world of Irish legend. Successive generations have created this landscape we all enjoy today. The survival of ancient monuments, holy wells, settlements, burial grounds, field boundaries and farmed landscapes, placenames, history, myth and folklore all tell a story and are central to our sense of place. Tara has always been a powerful symbol of political sovereignty and freedom at the heart of Irish national identity.

Landscapes are dynamic and are continually evolving in response to natural processes and human influences. High quality landscapes are directly linked to a successful economy. They underpin our tourism industry and can deliver cultural, economic, social and environmental benefits such as employment, health, education and a high quality environment based upon local distinctiveness and a strong cultural identity. Generations of farming families have played an important cultural role in creating and maintaining this landscape.

Section 204 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 enables a Planning Authority to designate a Landscape Conservation Area within their functional area to preserve a landscape.

The Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013, adopted on 2nd March, 2007, is the primary instrument available to the Planning Authority, (ie Meath County Council) to ensure that future development in County Meath takes place in a planned, co-ordinated and sustainable manner over the coming years. The County Development Plan includes a strategic policy to:

- *Protect the historic and archaeological landscapes of the County (HER SP2 refers)*

The County Development Plan states that it is an objective to '*designate the historic Tara Skryne Area as a Landscape Conservation Area*' under Section 204 of the

Planning and Development Act, 2000 (HER POL 59/HER POL 65 and Section 8.4.4. Heritage Landscapes refers).

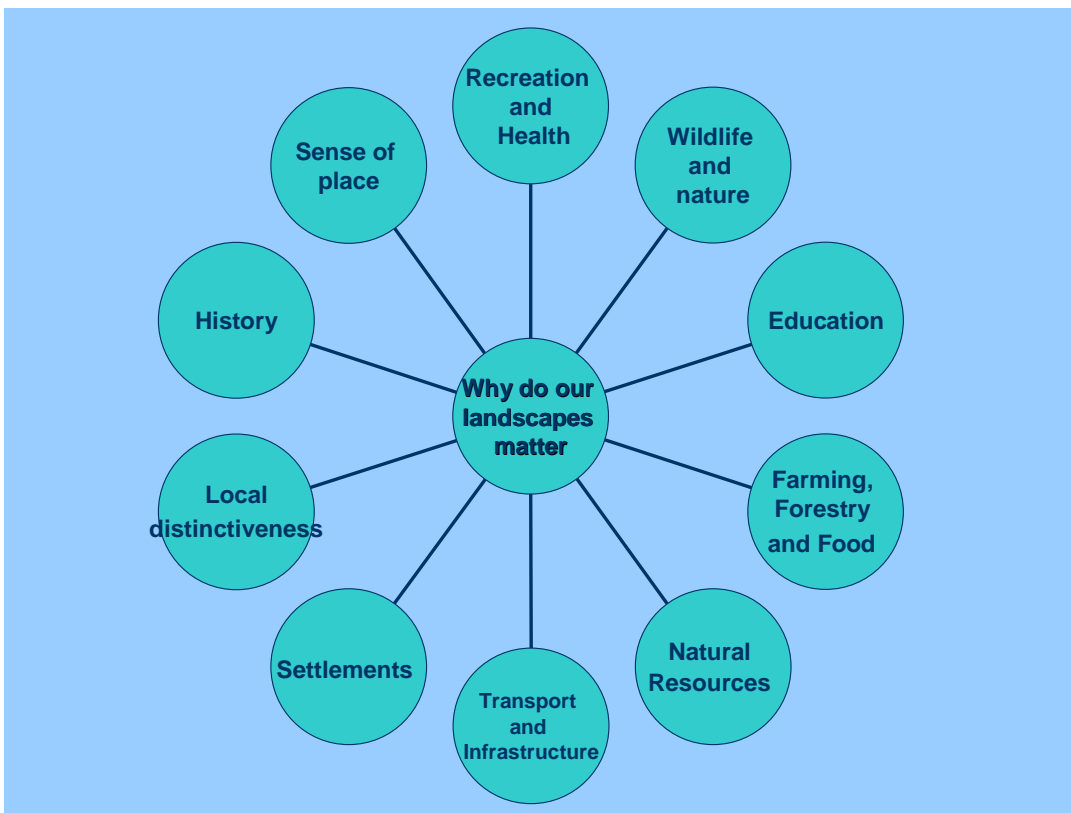


Figure 1 Multi-functionality of our landscapes

Landscape is about the relationship between people, place and nature. To inform and guide the process of establishing a Landscape Conservation Area, Meath County Council has actively engaged with the local community and stakeholders since March 2009. It is through these community and stakeholder partnerships that **An Action Plan for the Tara Skryne Landscape Conservation Area** will be developed and implemented to support the delivery of agreed economic, environmental, social and cultural heritage community initiatives.

An explicit commitment in this project is to make heritage and educational resources more accessible so that the landscape itself and its story, can be better understood and appreciated, and its mosaic of heritage values better managed. The continued

evidential value of this landscape is recognised and should be part of its future management.

1.2 Tara Skryne Landscape Conservation Area

The Tara Skryne Landscape Conservation Area comprises of a boundary map, (Draft Tara Skryne Landscape Conservation Area Map 1) and a list of de-exempted development which is detailed in Section III of this explanatory document.

The layout of this explanatory document is as follows:

- Section I introduces the project, summarises community inputs to date, provides information as to how to make a submission and outlines the next steps in the process.
- Section III outlines the legislative and policy framework within which the designation resides. In order to establish a context for the area proposed to be designated this section profiles the population, land uses, social and community activities. This section also describes the physical, cultural and visual character and building tradition of the landscape all of which informed the boundary of the draft Landscape Conservation Area. Finally the planning implications of the Landscape Conservation Area designation are discussed.
- Section III contains a list of de-exempted developments.

1.3 National Pilot

The Tara Skryne Landscape Conservation project is a partnership between Meath County Council, the Heritage Council and the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government. The project is the Landscape Conservation Area national pilot which will inform the emerging National Landscape Strategy. This project will also develop best practice models for use in the preparation of other landscape conservation area designations. The key focus has been on working with the local community and stakeholders in a collaborative and participative manner to implement the policies and objectives of the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013.

1.4 Objectives

The objectives of the project are to:

1. Examine, learn from and adapt suitable international best practice models for the sustainable management of historic landscapes and establish long-term partnerships with organisations/agencies responsible
2. Raise awareness and understanding of the significance of the Tara Skryne Landscape to maximise the socio-economic benefits and cultural tourism opportunities for the area
3. Develop a participative process to collaborate in an inclusive and open manner with stakeholders, the public and residents within the Tara Skryne Landscape
4. Implement the relevant policies and objectives of the Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013
5. Agree, after consultation, the criteria to define the character and values of the Tara Skryne Landscape and to designate a Landscape Conservation Area under Section 204 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000
6. Prepare a participatory Landscape Action Plan for the Tara Skryne Landscape Conservation Area
7. Review and monitor the effectiveness of the Landscape Conservation Area and to inform the development of a National Landscape Strategy using the European Landscape Convention as a guide
8. Develop protocols and training tools utilising Information Communication Technology for local authority staff and other key stakeholders to inform the management of the Tara Skryne Landscape

1.5 Process to date

In March 2009 a Steering Group comprising of representatives from Meath County Council, the Heritage Council and the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government was established to guide the development of the Landscape Conservation Area. The lead partner is Meath County Council and the project is being delivered through its Planning Department.

The work programme as agreed by the Steering Committee has three key phases:

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Phase I | Background research |
| Phase II | Public participation and education |
| Phase III | Framework for future landscape management |
| Stage 1: | Establish Tara Skryne Landscape Conservation Area (Complete by July 2010) |
| Stage II | Develop an implementation structure and action plan for the Tara Skryne Landscape Conservation Area (Commence in July 2010) |

Phase I is complete and Phase II and III are ongoing and interlinked.

Phase 1 Background research

The first stage of this national pilot project involved an extensive scoping exercise to define the work programme, set up the project structure, undertake background research and establish detailed baseline data for the study area. Meetings were held with organisations and individuals with data and knowledge of the Tara Skryne Landscape. Published material on the landscape was collated and reviewed and numerous site visits undertaken. Information in the Local Study Section of the Meath County Library and files pertaining to the development of the M3 motorway were consulted. A number of academics were contacted to discuss their research activities and findings on Tara and historic landscapes. Meetings were held with members of the County Meath Heritage Forum, facilitated through Meath County Council Heritage Office, which represents a partnership between all relevant heritage stakeholders and includes representatives from local government, government departments and state agencies, local heritage and community groups, NGOs, local businesses, local development, the farming sector, educational institutions and the heritage professions.



Figure 2 Selection of research publications on the Tara Landscape which demonstrates the richness of Tara's cultural heritage

To give an evidence base to inform the process, a dedicated Project Geographic Information System (GIS) was established to present, display and analyse spatial data. Datasets which have been incorporated into the GIS include:

- Aerial photography;
- LiDAR;
- Terrain Data (Digital Terrain Model, topography, slope and elevation);
- Landcover data;
- Topography;
- Digital Elevation Models;
- Soils and subsoils;
- Bedrock geology;
- Depth to bedrock;

- Rivers and drainage patterns;
- Ordnance Survey historical mapping;
- Archaeological data (RMP data and geophysics);
- Natural heritage data;
- Protected Structures;
- Planning History data.

The Discovery Programme, a public institution for advanced research in Irish archaeology who have been working at Tara since 1992, supplied High resolution LiDAR data (ground resolution of 12cm (60pts per m²) and accuracy (relative) horizontal \pm 5cm vertical \pm 3cm) and colour aerial ortho-photography (Scale: 1:7,500) flown in May 2008.



Figure 3: High Resolution LiDAR of the Hill of Tara (Courtesy of the Discovery Programme)

A review of existing local, regional, national and international land use policy and strategic documents was conducted to inform this pilot project including:

- Meath County Development Plan 2007-2013;
- County Meath Tourism Strategy;
- County Development Board Strategy;
- Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area;
- East Border Region River Basin Management Plans;
- (Draft) Landscape and Landscape Assessment Guidelines;
- Heritage Council Strategic Plan;
- Landscape Character Assessment Study;
- Heritage Council Policy Paper on Landscapes;
- Ireland landscape Conference 1999;
- National Spatial Strategy;
- Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines for Planning Authorities;
- European Landscape Convention; Conservation Principles: Policies and guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment;
- ICOMOS Burra Charter;
- Cultural Landscape Management;
- English Heritage Historic Landscape Characterisation: Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland.

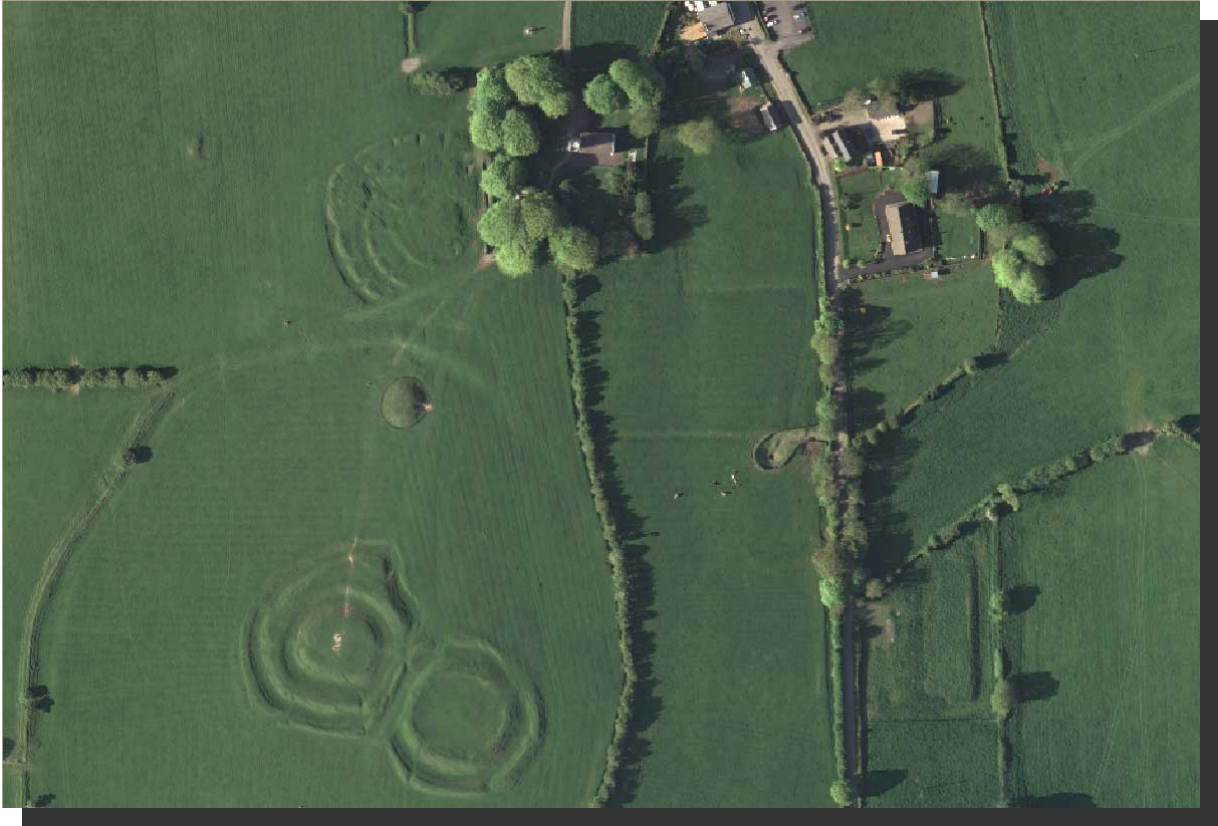


Figure 4 Colour Ortho-photography (1:7,500) (Courtesy of the Discovery Programme)

To establish baseline data on planning applications within the Tara Skryne Landscape a study was undertaken by the Heritage Council in consultation with Meath County Council. The scope of the study involved examining the planning history for the past 10 years to establish the forces of change and identify the types and current level of development within the area.

Approaches to managing cultural landscapes and the implementation of the European Landscape Convention in other countries were also examined.

A report on Phase I is available on the project website (www.taralandscape.ie).

Phase II Public participation and education

The Draft Tara Skryne Landscape Conservation Area was prepared by actively engaging with the local community and a wide range of stakeholders. Stakeholders can be defined as *'any person, group or organisation that is likely to be affected by, or have an interest in, the decisions being made'*.

The Project Steering Committee identified groups, organisations, and interested parties, detailed in Appendix I, as stakeholders and recognised that as a national pilot focusing on the Tara landscape there would be widespread public interest in the project.

Letter to local residents

A letter outlining the aims and objectives of the project, giving details of the project website and contact information and inviting people to join a project mailing list was hand delivered to over 400 homes/premises in the general Tara Skryne study area by Meath County Council staff. This established a good network of local contacts allowing for ease of communication between the local authority and the local community.

Community groups in the general Tara and Skryne area

Meath County Council, through its County Development Board, facilitates the Meath Community and Voluntary Forum to which over 1,000 community based groups and organisations are affiliated. A Steering Group made up of representatives from Navan Area Forum, Slane Area Forum, South Meath Area Forum, Meath Partnership Community Representatives, Meath County Development Board, Meath County Childcare Committee, North East Regional Drugs Task Force, Meath Local Sports Partnerships and Council Strategic Policy Committees represents the Forum and seeks to encourage greater participation in public decision-making and to enable and empower groups and individuals to work together within communities in an environmentally and socially sustainable way.

Twenty three community groups, active in the general Tara Skryne area, were contacted and given an opportunity to meet with Meath County Council on a one to one basis to discuss the proposed Landscape Conservation Area. These groups are listed in Table 1 below.

| |
|--|
| 1. 10 th Meath Skryne Scouts |
| 2. Bellinter Residents Association |
| 3. Dalgan Anglers |
| 4. Dunsany Gaelic Football Club |
| 5. Dunsany Ladies GFC |
| 6. Dunsany Pride of Place |
| 7. Dunsany Tennis Club |
| 8. Dunshaughlin/Skryne Table Tennis Club |
| 9. Friends of Tara |
| 10. Irish Countrywomen's Association – Lismullin |
| 11. Irish Countrywomen's Association – Tara |
| 12. Old Garlow Cross Committee |
| 13. Rathfeigh Historical Society |
| 14. Royal Tara Golf Club |
| 15. Skryne Gaelic Football Club |
| 16. Skryne Indoor Bowls Club |
| 17. Skryne Pitch and Putt Club |
| 18. Tara Athletic Club |
| 19. Tara Hill Riding Club |
| 20. Tara Walking and Social Club |
| 21. Columban Community Dalgan Park |
| 22. Meath Archaeological and Historical Society |
| 23. Tara Skryne Preservation Group |

Table 1 Community and Voluntary Groups registered on Meath County Council's Community database active in the general Tara Skryne area

Stakeholder dialogue and project meetings

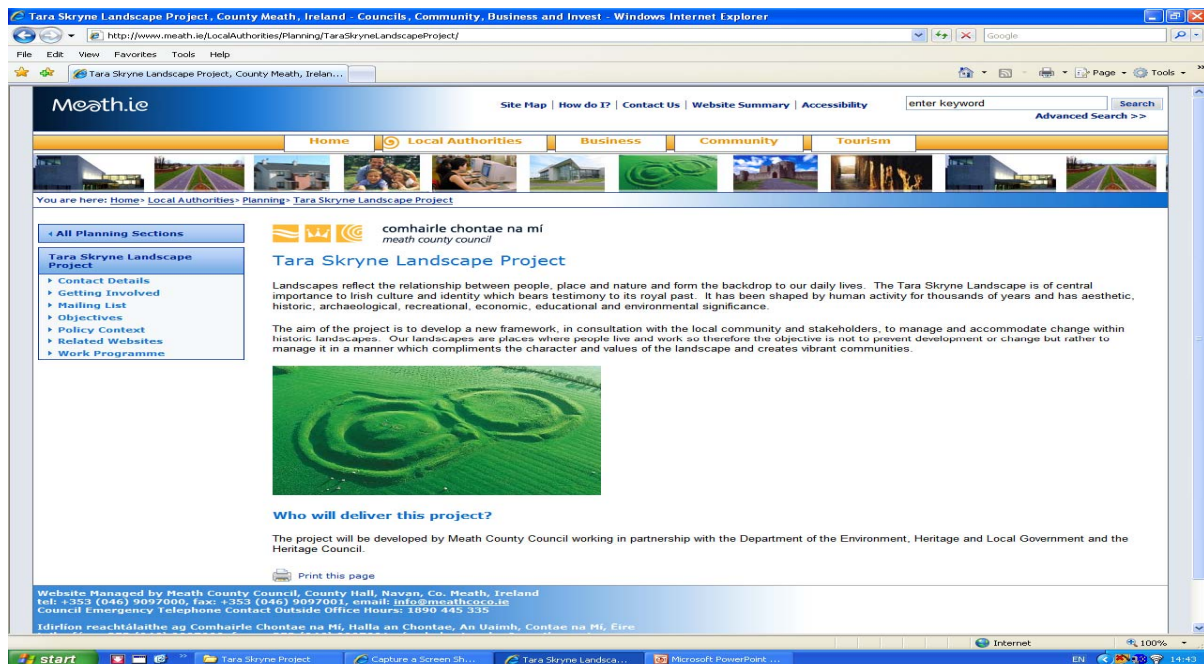
Over **sixty stakeholder consultation and project meetings** have been held with organisations and individuals representing a range of local and national stakeholders including local residents, businesses and community groups, farming organisations, OPW, State Agencies, archaeologists, Irish landscape Institute and academic and research institutions. The purpose was to meet with key individuals, groups and organisations and listen to their concerns and the issues relevant to them, open new lines of communication and involve stakeholders from the very beginning of the process. In addition it provided a forum for exchange of information between Meath County Council and those who live in, work in or have extensive knowledge of the landscape

Draft Tara Skryne Landscape Conservation Area 2010

and to seek information on relevant recent research or studies. Appendix II gives a record of stakeholder consultation and project meetings and further information is available on the project website (www.taralandscape.ie). All stakeholders identified were contacted as part of the pre-draft consultation process.

Project website

A project website (www.taralandscape.ie) to publicise the project, interface with the public and stakeholders and report on progress went live in July 2009.



Educational and awareness seminar: *Meath Landscape and People*

In July 2009, in partnership with Meath County Library, the inaugural **Meath Landscape and People Seminar** was held. Over 100 people attended this event which aimed to raise awareness and understanding of landscapes.

Pre-draft Public Consultation Events

To inform the preparation of the Draft Tara Skryne Landscape Conservation Area three pre draft public consultation events were held in March 2010:

| Date | Venue |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| March 9 th 2010 | Skryne National School |
| March 10 th 2010 | Meath Comhairle na nÓg, Navan |
| March 11 th 2010 | Maguire's Hill of Tara |

Meath County Council placed an advertisement in the Meath Chronicle on February 24th and March 3rd 2010 making known its intention to hold public events in Skryne and Tara on March 9th and 11th respectively to assist in the preparation of the Draft Landscape Conservation Area. Posters advertising the events were placed in shops, business premises and public buildings within the locality. In addition the following were notified in writing: Elected Representatives, Local Clergy, the Project Mailing List, Community and Voluntary groups active in the Tara Skryne general study area, Community and Voluntary Steering Committee and the County Meath Heritage Forum.

Display boards were erected at above venues which gave background information on landscape, outlined the project and process, explained what the Landscape Conservation Area is about, what it will mean for land use planning and invited people to make comments. A summary of the information boards was given as a handout and a *Guide on the Tara Landscape* was available to the public free of charge at the meetings. These events were staffed by members of the Forward Planning Section of Meath County Council who were available to answer questions.

Over 80 people attended both events and comments received were summarised in a report which was presented to the Project Steering Committee and is available on the project website (www.taralandscape.ie).



Participants at pre draft public event – Maguire’s Hill of Tara

Comments from public events at Tara and Skryne (March 2010):

What do you like and value about the Tara Skryne Landscape?

-history within the landscape***
-unspoilt natural beauty***
-outstanding quality and well farmed***
-openness free access, not fenced off***
-sacred ground***
-good sense of community***
-rich in culture and heritage – High Kings***

It’s 2025 and the Tara Skryne Landscape is/has

-a unique and clearly defined cultural zone that is both an ancient landscape and a vibrant living one***
-a great destination for cultural tourism***

...better parking and interpretation at Tara
...conserved holy wells
...an area for people to learn about the history of Ireland
....safe access to Skryne Tower

Meath Comhairle na nÓg

Comhairle na nÓg (Meath's Youth Council), set up under the National Children's Strategy (2000) through the County Development Board, is made up of a group of 24 young people aged between 12 and 18 elected by their peers from areas all over Meath. The Project Officer engaged in a participative manner with Meath Comhairle na nÓg on Wednesday 10th March 2010.

The overwhelming comment from Meath Comhairle na nÓg was that the knowledge that exists on the area needs to be more accessible particularly to a young audience. Many members felt very proud of the fact that Tara was in County Meath given its significance in Irish history and as a symbolism for Irish identity. Some members felt that interpretation should be more focused on telling the story of the people who lived at Tara down through the ages, eg. information about where people lived, what their daily lives were like, what food they ate etc. would help make the landscape come alive. Suggestions were made that some living history displays or historical re-enactments would be a good method to use and engage a young audience. In the future the members of Meath Comhairle na nÓg would like to see free access to the site remaining, an annual festival to celebrate the landscape, access to Skryne Tower as a viewing point, and the site more easily interpreted for young people and managed in an environmentally friendly way.

Participatory Boundary Workshop

To inform the draft boundary of the Tara Skryne Landscape Conservation Area Meath County Council held a participatory workshop in the Ardboyne Hotel, Navan on March 24th 2010.

The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Encourage networking and build relationships between residents, relevant key stakeholders and agencies involved in the Tara Skryne Landscape
- Present an overview of the Tara Skryne Landscape
- Identify the features that define the character of Tara Skryne Landscape to inform the draft boundary of the proposed Tara Skryne Landscape Conservation Area

An invitation was issued to 79 individuals representing a total of 62 different statutory agencies, local community groups and business, academics, professional bodies, schools and the community and voluntary sector and inviting them to attend or nominate a representative to attend the workshop. A full list of invitees and attendees is given in Appendix 2. Feedback from the public consultation events held in Skryne and Tara on March 9th and 11th was circulated at the workshop to assist the discussions.

Workshop Format

Forty people attended the workshop and the room was set up 'classroom style' to ensure full participation. The workshop began with a series of presentations on the Tara Skryne Landscape:

- **Tara Skryne Landscape Conservation Area Project** - (*Loreto Guinan, Meath County Council and Ian Doyle, Heritage Council*)
- **Physical Landscape** - (*Robbie Meehan, Geologist*)
- **Cultural Landscape** - (*Conor Newman, Archaeologist*)
- **Visual Character** - (*Deirdre Black, Landscape Architect*)
- **People and place** (*Contributions from Local community*)
 - *10th Meath Skryne Scouts represented by Bryan Leonard*
 - *Columbans Dalgan Park represented by Ger Clarke*
 - *Bellinter Residents Association represented by Claire Oakes*
 - *Tara Walking Club letter from Kay Carroll*
 - *Meath Archaeological and Historical Society represented by John Clancy*
 - *Community and Voluntary Forum represented by Eamonn Cassells*
- **Project GIS and mapping** - *Steven Kavanagh (Meath County Council)*



Presentation at boundary workshop

Participants were asked to discuss in groups the following themes/questions:

- ***What features/criteria help to define the character of the Tara Skryne Landscape?***
- ***Based on those criteria/features what area does the group feel is representative of the character of the Tara Skryne Landscape?***
- ***Why has the group chosen this boundary?***
- ***Are there other comments your group would like to record?***

A series of maps and datasets from the Project GIS were provided: colour Aerial Photograph, 2005 and 2008; District Electoral Division Map; Townland Map; Parish Map; William Larkin Map 1812; 1st Edition OS Map; 1:50,000 Discovery Series – Colour; Elevation Shaded DEM; Topography of Tara and Skryne Landscape; Depth to Bedrock; Subsoils Geology; Drainage Patterns; Record of Monuments and Places and Lidar Image of Hill of Tara.

Each group mapped what geographic area they felt represented the character of the Tara Skryne Landscape. The five boundaries were digitized in the project GIS and

overlain to determine the degree of overlap. With one exception there was a good correlation between groups in defining the northern, north-eastern, western and south western boundary. The principle divergence occurred in relation to defining the southern and eastern boundary based on the relative priority afforded by difference groups to the character features.



Participants at the boundary workshop

A comprehensive report on the boundary workshop has been published on the project website (www.taralandscape.ie).

Feedback from participants was positive and overall it was felt to be a successful workshop which brought together a range of groups, organisations and individuals in an environment which facilitated the exchange of information and ideas in an open and inclusive manner.

1.6 Making a submission

Meath County Council hereby invites any interested parties to make submissions or observations in respect of Draft Tara Skryne Landscape Conservation Area Order to the undersigned before 3.30pm on **Wednesday 16th June, 2010**.

Mr. Michael Griffin,
Senior Executive Officer,
Planning Department,
Meath County Council
Abbey Mall
Abbey Road,
Navan,
Co. Meath

Any submissions or observations so made will be taken into consideration by the Council before the making of the Landscape Conservation Area for Tara Skryne. Submissions or observations in electronic format can be e-mailed to planningsubmissions@meathcoco.ie before 3.30pm on Wednesday 16th June 2010.

Please make your submission by one medium only i.e. in hard copy or email. This will avoid the duplication of submission reference numbers and will streamline the process. Your assistance on this issue is appreciated. All submissions must be clearly marked submission to Draft Landscape Conservation Area for Tara Skryne.

The deadline for receipt of all submissions is Wednesday 16th June 2010.

1.7 Next steps

1.7.1 Adoption of Landscape Conservation Area Order

The adoption of the Tara Skryne Landscape Conservation Area Order is a Reserved Function. The Elected Members of Meath County Council having considered the proposed order and submissions or observations made, may, as they consider appropriate, by resolution, make the order, with or without modifications, or refuse to make the order.

When a Landscape Conservation Area Order is made, the Planning Authority must publish a notice in at least one newspaper circulating in its functional area and give details of any prescribed development which is specified in the order and notify An Bord Pleanála or any other prescribed body which in the opinion of the Planning Authority has an interest in the order.

The details of the Landscape Conservation Area Order shall be entered in the Planning Register. Before making the Landscape Conservation Area Order the Planning Authority shall consult with any State Authority where it considers that any order relate to the functions of that State Authority.

1.7.2 Preparation of Action Plan for the Tara Skryne Landscape Conservation Area

Meath County Council, in partnership with the Heritage Council and the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, will set up a partnership structure between state agencies, research institution and the local community to develop and implement an Action Plan for the Tara Skryne Landscape Area. The aim of the plan is to develop agreed integrated initiatives that focus on:

- Interpreting and communicating the significance and values of the landscape;
- The future management of the area in particular the state owned lands at the Hill of Tara;
- The socio-economic benefits and cultural tourism opportunities for this landscape and;

- Establishing links with academic and research institutions to outline a future research and education framework to disseminate knowledge.