

A statement addressed to the Government by scholars worldwide concerned about the construction of a motorway through the Tara/Skryne Valley

The following statement is an expression of the worldwide concern about the routing of the M3 through the Tara/Skryne Valley. It stresses the importance of the landscape and the negative impression of Ireland likely to ensue from a decision to build the motorway through this landscape:

'Over the past number of years the debate regarding the routing of part of the M3 motorway through the Tara/Skryne Valley has concentrated on archaeological, economic and traffic considerations. As teachers and researchers of various disciplines including Celtic Studies, Irish History, Irish Literature, Historical Geography, Theology, Linguistics and Anthropology we feel compelled at this stage to widen the discussion beyond archaeology. The weight of anthropological, historical and literary evidence proves that Tara is a site of special significance and of international importance from early history to the present. Indeed this was acknowledged by two Taoisigh, Eamon De Valera who visited the Hill of Tara when excavations were undertaken there in the 1950s and Charles Haughey when he initiated the Discovery Programme in the early 1990s. The flagship project of the state-funded Discovery Programme since then has been the Tara Project, undertaken by scholars such as Edel Bhreathnach and Conor Newman. The existence of a wider landscape beyond the Hill of Tara can be clearly deduced from Ireland's extensive medieval historical and literary sources. To deny this wider definition of, Tara amounts either to ignorance or wilful misinformation.

We ask the Government to pose the question: is it an enlightened decision to knowingly take this landscape - the premier landscape within Ireland since the Neolithic period - and cut a motorway through it? How can it be justified in what is now one of the richest countries in Europe that such a sensitive landscape is destroyed rather than subjected to proper landscape management that would change it into an economic asset - as has been done with the comparable landscape of the Boyne Valley? If the motorway is constructed as currently planned, what does that say to the world about the cultural sensitivity of the Government?

We appeal to the Government to take an enlightened step and reverse the decision to route the M3 through the Tara/Skryne Valley. In a cultural context, such a move would demonstrate to the world Ireland's mature approach towards balancing necessary infrastructural development with the preservation of its valuable heritage.'

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