

**Archaeological Institute of America**

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Madam,

On behalf of the Archaeological Institute of America, of which I am President, I am writing to express my concern about the proposed construction of the M3, a major four-lane motorway with intersections, through the landscape surrounding the site of Tara. The Archaeological Institute of American (AIA) is the oldest and largest archaeological organization in North America and includes more than 8,000 members in the U.S. and Canada, including professional archaeologists, students, and people of all walks of life who are interested in archaeology and concerned about the preservation of archaeological heritage world-wide. As a site of international significance, Tara deserves protection, and any proposed changes in the environs of the site should be handled with the utmost sensitivity and with a view towards minimizing their impact on the site.

It is a common misconception that the site of Tara consists of just the antiquities on the Hill. But this is not the case. Recent research by the Discovery Programme has shown that the site extends into the Tara/Skreen valley, and that the hill was ringed by settlements, religious monuments, ceremonial entrance and route-ways, as well as strategically placed fortifications. Large ritual and settlement sites are a well-known international phenomenon and Tara is famous in archaeological and historical circles all over the world as a particularly important and well-preserved example. One would expect the highest measure of protection for this unique site.

The necessity of viewing the site within its archaeological and environmental context was recognised in the first archaeological report submitted to the contractors by Margaret Gowan and Co who wrote:

The monuments around Tara cannot be viewed in isolation, or as individual sites, but must be seen in the context of an intact archaeological landscape, which should not under any circumstances be disturbed.

In view of this advice we are shocked that planning permission has been granted, and are particularly alarmed at the news that trial trenching is already beginning on an unusual scale, and is likely to do irreparable damage to the site. We appeal to the Irish authorities as a matter of urgency to move this section of the M3 away from the Tara/Skreen valley and to save this precious legacy from our shared past for posterity.

Sincerely,

Jane C. Waldbaum  
President  
Archaeological Institute of America

