

Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland Meet Minister

Representatives of the Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland (IAI) held their first meeting with the Minister for Arts, Heritage and The Gaeltacht, Jimmy Deenihan and senior officials at his offices on Kildare Street on Thursday 23 June. The purpose of the meeting was to personally introduce the IAI to the Minister, to discuss the archaeological heritage as part of the Minister's broad portfolio and to highlight how the IAI might assist the Minister. The meeting focussed on the key areas of archaeological identity, legislation and archaeology's potential contributions to national recovery.



**Finola O'Carroll, Jimmy Deenihan, Tracy Collins, Christine Baker
(James Eogan not pictured)**

Discussions included the archaeological heritage's crucial role in the formation of Irish national identity and culture, how archaeology is currently valued and how it can significantly contribute to the renewal of national pride and the projection of a positive image of Ireland on a global scale.

The Minister was acutely aware of the role of the State in the regulation, legislation and protection of the nation's archaeological heritage and is eager to update the National Monuments (amendment) Acts 1930-2004. The Institute is particularly pleased in this regard, as most of the groundwork leading to a draft Bill has already been undertaken. The IAI re-iterated the importance of the maintenance of archaeological staffing levels in the public sector in order to maintain protection of the national archaeological heritage.

The Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland voiced its satisfaction at the re-grouping of the National Monuments Service and The National Museum of Ireland in his Department. The IAI suggested that other bodies, in particular the heritage services

unit of the Office of Public Works, dealing with the archaeological heritage in the state might also be included under his remit, in order to avoid duplication of roles and to facilitate effectiveness. The possibilities of working in partnership with other departments such as Education and Tourism and Sport in the area of archaeological heritage were explored. The opportunities presented by the possibility of World Heritage status for seven additional sites in Ireland was discussed, however, the IAI urged the Minister to ensure that proper management structures were in place for the existing World Heritage Sites at Brú na Bóinne and Skellig Michael.

The economic value of archaeology as part of cultural heritage and heritage tourism was discussed at length. The IAI's members have much to offer in this regard. Many shared ideas emerged including heritage trails, travelling exhibitions and the application of modern technologies at archaeological heritage sites. Chairperson of the IAI Finola O' Carroll commented, 'While the discipline of archaeology in the past has been primarily identified with development, our members now find themselves in the challenging but also exciting position of re-alignment with the heritage sector, where we feel the archaeological profession can make several important contributions'.

The IAI made a presentation to the Mr Deenihan to congratulate him on his Ministerial appointment. The IAI looks forward to working with the Minister and his Department on an on-going basis in order to promote the role Ireland's archaeological heritage has to play in making Ireland an alternative destination for sustainable tourism and inward investment in the immediate future.

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