An Taisce
The National Trust for Ireland

Archaeological Management Solutions
Fahy's Road
Kilrush
Co. Clare

Sent by email to: TII.Consultation@ams-consultancy.com

28th January 2021

Re. Transport Infrastructure Ireland, Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment - Standards and Guidance

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for providing us with a copy of your proposed updating of the existing definition of Cultural Heritage. The definition, naturally, forms the basis for future guidelines governing the assessment of potential impacts on Cultural Heritage by Transport Infrastructure Ireland (T.I.I.) initiated, related, or sponsored development.

YOUR PROPOSED DEFINITION

"*Cultural heritage is a collective term which includes archaeological, architectural and other resources inherited from the past through to contemporary society. As an essential part of culture as a whole, cultural heritage consists of tangible and intangible traces of the interactions between people and places, people and nature, and people and objects through time. Cultural heritage is a broad concept encompassing landscapes, cultural and historic places and spaces, sites, monuments and built environments, as well as collections, past and continuing cultural practices, traditional customs, beliefs and skills, languages, formal and informal knowledge, and living experiences. It records processes of historic development thereby informing diverse national, regional and local identities and forms an integral component of our lived experience. The distinctive heritage and collective memory of each locality or community are unique and an important foundation for sustainable development, in the present and into the future".*

- This is a very comprehensive definition. Its recognition of the broad, diverse, and complex interrelationship of the many aspects, elements and subtle nuances of Cultural Heritage is welcomed by An Taisce.

- The inherent danger, of course, in accepting such an all-encompassing acknowledgement, and recognition, of the said diversity and complexity of Cultural Heritage, is that, a non-hierarchical definition and approach will in effect afford and

advance a lower level of protection to all individual constituent elements. In short, if every aspect of Cultural Heritage, as defined above, is to be allocated equal protection, then the level of protection is in grave danger of being extremely low. Furthermore, should an exceptional manifestation of our Cultural Heritage, a monument or site of clear importance and future National Monument status, be discovered in the course of a T.I.I. related project, how would this manifestation be afforded a heightened level of protection?

- An Taisce is most anxious to have it acknowledged that, in line with the stated intent contained in the existing and forthcoming Monuments and Heritage protection legislation, the professed preferred option of '*Preservation-in-situ'* will be actively pursued and implemented by T.I.I. when a monument of exceptional nature is discovered during either the planning or the construction phase of one of its projects.

- Specifically, in relation to the proposed definition, it would be valuable to include a direct and defined reference to battlefield sites. In the past, for example, An Taisce has had to engage in extensive efforts to have a motorway deflected from the battlefield at Aughrim. This site is generally and broadly recognised, academically, as the most important battlefield site of International importance in Ireland. And yet, the original proposed trajectory of the motorway had totally failed to afford this factor full and proper consideration. Ministerial intervention proved to be necessary.

- In the course of a development, to avoid the type of controversies, which on occasions in the past have led to prolonged court cases, it is very important to allow for, and subsequently facilitate the discovery of the unexpected. The importance of the Wooden Henge site discovered in the course of motorway construction in the Tara-Skreen valley, was recognised both Nationally and Internationally. Its destruction flew in the face of the proposed definition as quoted above. The valley had been archaeologically studied in advance, but the subtle presence of the Henge was simply missed. It is imperative that Cultural Heritage is fully respected even when, or if, its presence is obstructive to construction. The course of a road can be altered, the site of a monument cannot be moved. Transport Infrastructure Ireland could play a pivotal role in the establishment of a template for future Cultural Heritage protection across the Nation. It is uniquely positioned to do so, and could accordingly achieve so much. The proposed definition of Cultural Heritage, as quoted above, is admirable; future projects undertaken by T.I.I. should embrace its contents fully, and thus realising the inherent potential of said Cultural Heritage.

Please acknowledge our submission and inform us of any further consultation periods.

Yours sincerely,

Ian Lumley
Head of Advocacy
An Taisce – The National Trust for Ireland

Dr. Mark Clinton
Monuments & Antiquities
An Taisce – The National Trust for Ireland