



The Boyne Valley Research Project

Overarching Research Strategy for an archaeological research project at Staleen and Oldbridge, Donore, Co. Meath

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project at Staleen and Oldbridge, Donore, Co. Meath

Prepared for:

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Purpose of document

This document has been prepared as an overarching Research Strategy to outline an iterative methodology underpinning The Boyne Valley Research Project (BVRP) – a partnership led by DigVentures in collaboration with Dr Steve Davies, UCD School of Archaeology. The project has been conceived as a seven year research project, encompassing five years of fieldwork and two years analysis and publication. The first year of BVRP's proposed multiyear fieldwork was undertaken in 2023 at Donore, County Meath under excavation licence 23E0005. The project builds on the results of a collaborative research project investigating the Brú na Bóinne landscape, commenced in 2014, between the Romano-Germanic Commission, Frankfurt and UCD School of Archaeology. The purpose of this document is to outline the overarching methods, research and social context, project management controls and business case justification for the project. It should be read in conjunction with the project method statement and Application for a Licence Extension under section 26 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1930 (as amended). This overarching document has been produced to function alongside the usual licence application documents, and will be updated as a 'living' document as each iterative step of the project design is completed.

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Executive summary

This overarching Research Strategy outlines the iterative research methodology underpinning archaeological survey and excavation at lands associated with Staleen House, Donore, Co. Meath, in the townlands of Staleen and Oldbridge, within the Brú na Bóinne valley. Fieldwork will be undertaken as part of The Boyne Valley Research Project – a partnership led by DigVentures in collaboration with Dr Steve Davies, UCD School of Archaeology. The project builds on an earlier collaborative large-scale geophysical research project between the Romano-Germanic Commission (RGK), Frankfurt and UCD School of Archaeology. The Boyne Valley Research Project (BVRP) expands on this earlier initiative, and has been conceived as a seven year, multi-staged project, encompassing five field seasons followed by two years of analysis and publication.

The first year of BVRP's proposed multiyear fieldwork was undertaken in 2023 at Donore, County Meath under excavation licence 23E0005. Donore Hill sits within the southern buffer zone of the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site, northeast of the present visitor centre. It is situated in an elevated, prominent location with clear lines of sight northward across Brú na Bóinne, especially over the Dowth estate and towards Newgrange. The results from the 2023 excavations demonstrated the significance and importance of the monuments present at Donore and validity of the adopted methodology (landscape-level remote sensing to inform targeted intervention and participatory programming). Highlights included: the rediscovery the site of the 'Oldbridge Cist' – a 19th century antiquarian excavation of a Bronze Age Cist, and the ex-situ survival, location and condition of the excavated artefacts; identification of a monumental post alignment aligned with Dowth Henge, dating to 2573-2350 cal. BC, similar to a site recently excavated by Geraldine Stout south west of Newgrange; and discovery of a Causewayed Enclosure, dating to 3751-3533 cal. BC, predating the Brú na Bóinne passage tombs.

This overarching Research Strategy should be read in conjunction with the BVRP annual licence applications and detailed method statements, produced in advance of each fieldwork stage in the multiyear project, in legal compliance with section 26 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1930 (as amended). The BVRP project model is defined by an annual programme of small-scale, targeted field excavation, characterisation, and community engagement, with the aim of building a rich, nuanced understanding of one of Europe's most significant prehistoric ceremonial landscapes. The precise methodology and justification for each field seasons planned intervention will be detailed in each annual licence application and detailed method statement. Complied as a MoRPHE/PRINCE2 compliant, the purpose of this overarching Research Strategy is to function alongside the usual licence application documents. It will outline the overarching methods, research and social context, project management controls and business case justification for the project, roles, procedures, stages and outputs. It will be updated annually as a 'living' document as each iterative step of the Research Strategy is completed.



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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 This document outlines the overarching methodology for a multi-staged archaeological research project focussing on Donore Hill, Co. Meath, within the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site buffer zone. The proposed fieldwork is part of The Boyne Valley Research Project (BVRP), a seven-year initiative led by DigVentures in collaboration with Dr Steve Davies of UCD School of Archaeology. BVRP builds upon previous geophysical research by the Romano-Germanic Commission (RGK), Frankfurt and UCD, and INSTAR-funded work exploring the lidar data, satellite data and palaeoenvironments of Brú na Bóinne (e.g., Davis et al. 2013; 2017; Davis et al. 2019; Rassmann et al. 2019, Davis and Rassman, 2021). BVRP expands upon these earlier initiatives, with five proposed field seasons of survey and excavation followed by two years of analysis and publication.
- 1.1.2 The BVRP project model is defined by an annual programme of small-scale, targeted field excavation, characterisation, and community engagement, with the aim of building a rich, nuanced understanding of one of Europe's most significant prehistoric ceremonial landscapes. The first year of BVRP's multi-year fieldwork took place in 2023 at Donore, Co. Meath under licence 23E0005. The project has adopted a landscape level frame of analysis, focussing on the World Heritage Site buffer zone south of the river Boyne, characterising remote sensing anomalies through targeted interventions to determine the overall significance of features and their potential relationship to activity north of the river Boyne.
- 1.1.3 The 2023 field season focussed on Donore Hill, an area within the southern buffer zone of the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site, northeast of the present visitor centre. It is situated in an elevated, prominent location with clear lines of sight northward across Brú na Bóinne, especially over the Dowth estate and towards Newgrange. This initial field season provided intriguing early evidence of Donore Hill's archaeological significance, as well as the wider research potential in adopting a landscape-level remote sensing to inform targeted intervention and participatory programming. Key findings so far include: relocating the 19th century 'Oldbridge Cist' excavation and artefacts; identifying a monumental post alignment (2573-2350 cal. BC) aligned with Dowth Henge; and discovering a Causewayed Enclosure (3751-3533 cal. BC) predating the Brú na Bóinne passage tombs.
- 1.1.4 This overarching Research Strategy document should be read in conjunction with annual BVRP preliminary reports, detailed project method statements and associated applications for licence/extensions under section 26 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1930 (as amended). Pursuant to these and wider specialist consultations, this document will define how the Project Team intends to deliver the project, and outlines how research aims and objectives will be met. The overarching Research Strategy follows the MoRPHE (Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment) model. Designed for iterative, multistage project models, the document is divided into two parts: Part 1 provides project context, proposed methodology, key sources, and required activities. Part 2 outlines staff responsibilities, task deadlines, and risk register. Detailed method statements (including field school curriculum) and team CVs are provided in Appendix 1 and 2. Compiled as a 'living' document, this overarching Research Strategy will be updated at each iterative step of project delivery as successive stages and outputs are completed.



Part 1: Description of the project

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Site location

2.1.1 The project expands upon an extensive programme of remote sensing in the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site region, including large-scale geomagnetic surveying over an area exceeding 4 square kilometres, supplemented by targeted ground-penetrating radar (GPR) surveys (Figure 1). The survey areas encompassed the environs between the prominent archaeological monuments of Knowth and Newgrange, as well as along the northern margins of the River Boyne extending to Dowth. Additionally, targeted exploratory geophysical surveys were undertaken at the sites of Monknewtown, Balfeddock, Glebe, Staleen, and Oldbridge. Proposed fieldwork by the BVRP team, builds upon this substantial earlier work, focussing on Donore Hill, Co. Meath, within the Brú Na Bóinne World Heritage Site buffer zone.

2.1.2 The proposed excavation areas (collectively described here as ‘the site’) are located within the townlands of Staleen and Oldbridge, County Meath in the Republic of Ireland, at the summit of Donore Hill, south of the river Boyne at approximately 94 m OD (Figures 2). Donore village is the closest settlement to the site, less than 1 km away, with Drogheda 3 km to the NW and Slane 8 km to the west of Donore Hill. Donore Hill sits within the southern buffer zone of the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site, northeast of the present visitor centre. It is situated in an elevated, prominent location with clear lines of sight northward across Brú na Bóinne, especially over the Dowth estate and towards Newgrange. The underlying geology consists mainly of shales, sandstones, and limestones of the Donore Formation, with a smaller area designated as being of the Balrickard Formation to the west. Quaternary sediments are listed as rock outcrop, with the consequent depth of topsoil and subsoil variable to shallow.

2.2 Research context

2.2.1 The archaeological potential of the Donore Hill landscape has long been recognised, both within the Brú na Bóinne Research Framework (focused on later archaeology and the Battle of the Boyne) and through the work of the late Mandy Stephens (Stephens 2022), who drew attention to the area and the potential for more archaeological discovery’s upslope (Smythe 2009). Elevated areas in Meath, a lowland county, tend to attract prehistoric activity, so it would be no surprise to find significant prehistoric structures on the hilltop. However, despite the widely acknowledged potential, no archaeological interventions have been undertaken within the main area at the summit of the hill beyond ad hoc lithic collection. Lithic collection has taken place piecemeal and appears to incorporate a significant number of non-diagnostic flints.

2.2.2 Although it sits outside of the core area of the World Heritage Site, Donore Hill clearly encompasses a microcosm of much of the archaeological diversity seen north of the river Boyne. While it did not see the development of late Neolithic monumentality to the same extent that the Newgrange floodplain did, it does include monuments of early Neolithic date, probable Bronze Age structures, early and later medieval monuments including some quite novel features (e.g. curvilinear field systems; post alignment). Exploring some of these features



can act as a mirror on the core area of Brú na Bóinne and provide new information regarding the development of the landscape north of the river, especially in early prehistory.

- 2.2.3 The Boyne Valley Research Project aims to build on prior work through targeted excavation, analysis, and community engagement aimed at enriching our understanding of this significant prehistoric ceremonial landscape. The project adopts a landscape-level approach, focusing on the World Heritage Site's southern buffer zone to characterize anomalies through excavation and determine their potential relationship to activity north of the River Boyne. Fieldwork has been guided by the Heritage Council's Brú na Bóinne Research Framework (Smyth 2009), which has provided the rationale for surveys on the River Boyne itself, continued GIS and remote sensing work and crucially for attempting to place this information within its national and international archaeological context.

3 HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Landscape context

- 3.1.1 Donore Hill has been a long-term focus for human activity since the first farmers arrived at Brú na Bóinne, and continued as a focus for settlement at least into the medieval period. It represents one of the most elevated locations within the wider Brú na Bóinne region, commanding extensive views across to the Dowth demesne and, in the middle distance, to Newgrange passage tomb. Dowth passage tomb is obscured by modern tree cover, as are the tombs currently under excavation at Dowth Hall; however, it is likely that in the Neolithic these would have been clearly visible.
- 3.1.2 The recorded archaeology of Donore Hill was, until recently, relatively sparse. The northern excavation area included a redundant record (ME020-078) hypothesised to belong to a well or similar structure. A scatter of lithics was reported by Claidhbh Gibney in the southern excavation area (ME020-077), including numerous undiagnostic struck flints (report currently in prep). The 2010 Boyne Valley INSTAR project identified a potential enclosure on the NW scarp of the hill (ME020-070 – Enclosure) while further south and west a series of features associated with medieval activity have been recorded, including a ringfort (ME020-067004), gatehouse (ME020- 067001) and corn drying kiln (ME020-067004) (cf. Stephens 2009).
- 3.1.3 Recent geophysical surveys by RGK/UCD have identified a wealth of potential archaeological features on Donore Hill and wider vicinity. These include two early Neolithic rectangular houses; a post/pit alignment similar to one excavated by Moloney (2013) at Ballingowan, Co. Kerry (Figure 3); adjacent to this is a small, unrecorded greywacke standing stone; this forms part of a complex archaeological landscape including a partial enclosure, a small ring-ditch, and some linear elements most likely belonging to a prehistoric field system. A range of field systems of unusual curvilinear design are present to the north. To the south is a large, causewayed enclosure encompassing the lithic scatter site (Figure 4); at least one early medieval enclosure and a rectilinear enclosed area, possibly part of the grange farm excavated by Stephens (Stephens 2009; Stout and Stout 2022).
- 3.1.4 Geophysical survey at Donore Hill has identified early Neolithic activity (early houses) and a post alignment interpreted in advance of excavation as late Neolithic or early Bronze Age in date. While the monumental complex north of the Boyne is well-defined and appears to incorporate a significant ritual element (Davis and Rassmann 2021), south of the river, for the



most part, there are few clear ritual monuments. Conor Brady (2018) has demonstrated that there is significant activity south of the river, highlighted by scatters of lithic artefacts; however, at least from the middle Neolithic onwards the monumental complex seems very different north and south of the Boyne. Other likely prehistoric features identified south of the river suggests that, while not so intensively exploited as the landscape within the core area of the 'Bend', Donore Hill had its own trajectory as a ritual centre. The possibility that the large enclosure (ME020-077) represents an early prehistoric feature is particularly significant. If this proves to be the case, then Donore Hill would be a key locus in the early development of the Brú na Bóinne complex.

3.1.5 The Brú na Bóinne Research Framework highlights the possible role of Donore Hill in the Battle of the Boyne (Smyth 2009: 73), although this remains poorly understood. While fighting clearly took place around Donore (e.g., Murtagh 2006: 55; Brady et al. 2008) and the Hill itself has been highlighted as a potentially significant location, it remains unclear what role, if any, it played in the Battle of the Boyne.

3.2 Results of 2023 Excavations

3.2.1 The first season of excavations at Donore took place between 3rd July and 17th July 2023, investigating various geophysical anomalies seen through previous survey (Wilkins et al. 2023; Davis et al. 2019; Rassmann et al. 2019). Three hand-dug trenches were excavated to explore and characterise geophysical survey results to address a combination of archaeological research and heritage management questions – Trench 1 and 2 in the northern area, and Trench 3 in the south (Wilkins et al. 2024; Figure 2 & 3).

3.2.2 The purpose of Trench 1 (10 x 4 m) was to investigate geophysical anomalies denoting a small enclosure and potential demolished megalithic structure immediately adjacent to extant standing stone feature. The resulting excavation was a highly unusual mix of modern and prehistoric archaeology leading to a potentially unique artefactual discovery – an embossed brass plaque bearing what was essentially an excavation report from 1889, describing the discovery of a cist burial.

3.2.3 This artefact – archaeology of the archaeologists – has helped to shape a narrative sequence making sense of the disturbed mix of prehistoric and modern features. A decorated stone slab, potentially originating from a Neolithic chambered tomb, was reused as a capstone for a Bronze Age cist burial. The cist contained a single adult, interpreted as male in 1889, yet unverified, along with a decorated urn. Following repeated plough strikes, the farmer attempted removal of the stone – and once the archaeological nature of the site became evident, the cist was then excavated as a 'controlled' investigation under the patronage of Lt Col Coddington. Once the contents of the cist were removed, a stone, roofed structure was erected above to protect and display the site – remaining in place till at least 1909 when it was included on Ordnance Survey Meath Sheet 20 map. At some point between 1889 and the present, information relating to the site was lost or misplaced and no RMP entry was accurately created for the site. Ongoing post-excavation research has established the ex-situ survival, location and condition of the 19th century excavated artefacts, and the potential to undertake further analytical investigation of this archive is currently being evaluated (Wilkins et al. 2024: 38-46)



- 3.2.4 Trench 2 (3 x 5 m) investigated anomalies pertaining to a possible post/pit alignment, appearing to align towards Dowth Henge, sited 1 km away to the west-northwest. Trench 2 was located to intersect one of 35 similar likely pits identified in geophysical survey within a double row. Two substantial features were identified in Trench 2 with an observable physical and stratigraphic relationship, and an alignment in keeping with the geophysical results. The earlier pit comprised a large, round, u-shaped cut into natural bedrock measuring 1.95 m by 1.2 m with a depth of 0.93 m. This had been truncated by a later, partially undercut posthole, measuring 0.92 by 1.02 m and 0.95 m deep, containing several charcoal rich deposits, and burnt bone.
- 3.2.5 This feature has been dated to 2573-2350 cal. BC based on hazel charcoal, or broadly contemporary with the Great Rectangular Palisade, identified by geophysical survey to the south west of Newgrange in 2015 (Leigh 2018). The survey results of this comparable site identified a c. 70m long rectangular structure – now seen to be significantly longer – comprising pits and slot trenches, aligned east-west. Geraldine Stout undertook a trial excavation at the site, exploring a sample of pits in the interior of the monument, with carbonised remains in a basal ditch-fill returned dates of 2632–2472 cal. BC (Leigh 2018). Several features in Trench 2 extended beyond the limit of excavation, and further work is required to address this and examine the comparators with the Great Rectangular Palisade (such as the potential for a secondary smaller alignment or palisade indicated by remote sensing results; See section 4.2.5 and Figure 2).
- 3.2.6 Trench 3 (12 x 5 m) investigated a large, ditched enclosure with significantly elevated magnetic properties indicative of burnt material incorporated into a large enclosure feature. Geophysical, topographic, and photogrammetric survey revealed the line of a potential Causewayed Enclosure following a visible break of slope around the top of Donore Hill – a natural feature likely to have been intentionally enhanced by the original monument-builders. The earliest feature in Trench 3 was the terminus of a substantial ditch [3002] cut into the natural bedrock, matched by a corresponding ditch terminus identified on the opposing side of the trench. These results were consistent with the geophysical survey and the character of a causewayed enclosure supported by a date of 3751-3533 cal. BC, predating the Brú Na Bóinne passage tombs. Although no artefactual evidence was recovered from the feature (other than residual material), form and stratigraphy were consistent with the causewayed enclosure interpretation – although further field work is required to confirm this.

4 RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

4.1 Project model

- 4.1.1 The overarching aim of the project is to build on the results of earlier geophysical survey work by defining and characterising key features through a programme of survey and excavation, obtaining data that will enable improved understanding of the site. This project model is framed as overarching aims and key questions/objectives, providing a framework for the methods, stages, products and tasks set out in Part 2 below. This is an iterative research model conducted over a seven year, multistage research cycle. The following overarching aims and objectives underpin each annual detailed method statement, and will be refined in line with the results of each successive season's fieldwork:



- 4.2 Aim 1 - Identify physical extent and character with a programme of remote sensing, topographic survey, and photogrammetry.
- 4.2.1 This aim will build on previous, large scale remote sensing results, with supplementary targeted geomagnetic survey, ground-based field survey, metal detection survey and high resolution photogrammetry survey using low-level aerial photography. These low-impact tools will add further to our understanding of the monument by addressing the following questions:
- Q1: Can the layout of the archaeological remains at Donore Hill be established by geophysical survey and aerial survey?
 - Q2: Can we identify any phasing in remote sensing anomalies indicative of an extended period of use?
 - Q3: Do the anomalies reflect the wider development of the Brú na Bóinne WHS, especially in prehistory?
- 4.3 Aim 2 – Characterise the development history, chronology, and phasing of the sites through archaeological excavation.
- 4.3.1 Informed by the results of work conducted under Aim 1, this aim will be achieved through small-scale, targeted interventions. The purpose of these interventions will be to identify and investigate any strata containing archaeological materials, and obtain appropriate samples for archaeological, artefactual and palaeoenvironmental assessment.
- Q4: Can we corroborate chronological phasing for the Site, including the presence of earlier and later features and structures, as defined in Aim 1?
 - Q5: What are the typical and atypical features of the Site, and did this influence the functions and activities that took place?
 - Q6: Can we establish the landscape setting, use and character of the remains, and how these shaped its location, design, and development?
- 4.4 Aim 3 – Understand the paleoenvironmental and archaeological conditions at the site.
- 4.4.1 This aim will be achieved with an assessment of the samples as defined and recovered in Aim 2, using appropriate palaeoenvironmental and archaeological techniques to establish the significance of the Site and nature of the burial environment.
- Q7: What is the current state of preservation of the archaeological and palaeoenvironmental material across the site?
 - Q8: How well do artefacts and palaeoenvironmental remains survive, and what is their significance?
 - Q9: What is the range and spatial patterning of artefacts recovered from the archaeological trenches and test pits, also taking into consideration any results from pre-excavation metal-detection survey?
 - Q10: Can we establish a scientifically dated sequence for the site, including both cultural activities and landscape development?
- 4.5 Aim 4 – Making recommendations, analysis, and publication.
- 4.5.1 This aim will require all data from Aims 1-3 to be collated, with an integrated synthesis of the archaeological and palaeoenvironmental resource at the Site. Recommendations will be made



to conserve, enhance and interpret the heritage significance of the Site, proposing either further fieldwork stages, and/or analysis, publication and final archiving.

- Q11: What can an integrated synthesis of the results of this work with previous studies of contemporary regional sites tell us about the site and its setting?
- Q12: What recommendations can be made to protect, conserve and enhance the Site, in the light of the issues and opportunities identified under Aims 1 - 3?
- Q13: Can the research results feedback into the management of the wider Brú na Bóinne landscape?

4.6 Aim 5 – Creating training and learning opportunities for people and communities

- 4.6.1 This aim is integral to the success of the project and sits with equal importance alongside our research aims. The project will offer a range of opportunities for community members and visitors to the area to get involved and learn more about the archaeology of Donore Hill. The excavation will be delivered as a structured field school, with participants trained and mentored in the techniques of archaeological survey and excavation. Our site team will deliver an in-person programme at a ratio of no more than 1:6 throughout the dig, with a broader communications plan to inform the public about the research, extending through each fieldwork season and into post-excavation analysis.

5 OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 World Heritage status is a designation awarded by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to places of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) to humanity. OUV refers to cultural and/or natural significance that is so exceptional that it transcends national boundaries and holds common importance for present and future generations of all humanity. As such, the permanent protection of this heritage is of the highest importance to the international community. The Brú na Bóinne World heritage Property (WHP), comprising the three main prehistoric sites of Newgrange, Knowth, and Dowth, represents Europe's largest and most important concentration of prehistoric megalithic art, with an OUV amplified by the profound social, economic, religious, and funerary functions they served in antiquity. This section describes how the proposed research articulates and augments with the Brú na Bóinne OUV, aligning with the ethical principle that we leave the WHP in a better state than we found it.

5.2 Brú na Bóinne Research Framework

- 5.2.1 The Heritage Council's Brú na Bóinne Research Framework articulates the wider public benefit and archaeological research value of the WHP, and has been drawn upon to align the BVRP research strategy (Smyth 2009). The Discovery Programme is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of this document to develop a revised and updated research framework. Although the results of this review are not yet published, the BVRP team is actively consulting with the Discovery Programme to ensure that the fieldwork aligns with the OUV of the WHP and aligns with the forthcoming research framework.



5.2.2 Though the existing framework is now 15 years old, it continues to provide a clear rationale for research, with two particular issues remaining highly relevant. Firstly, there is a recognised need for a more proactive management presence on the ground that facilitates liaison with the local community, academic institutions, and local authorities, while effectively communicating new research initiatives and management strategies. Secondly, the framework supports a shift in research focus away from individual sites and towards a broader examination of the surrounding landscapes that sustained and were closely associated with the Brú na Bóinne monuments (Smyth 2009: vii).

5.2.3 The BVRP research will similarly adopt a landscape-oriented approach, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of the context in which the Brú na Bóinne monuments existed and functioned within their wider environment. The remainder of this section details relevant aspects of the existing framework that interface with the project, detailed here with the caveat that the BVRP overarching strategy will both inform and be informed by the forthcoming research framework.

5.3 Southern Buffer Zone and Donore Hill

5.3.1 The current boundaries of the WHS were established in the Boyne Archaeological Park report (O'Neill 1989). The core area is defined by the location of the three main passage tombs and the prominent bend in the River Boyne, while the northern and southern buffer zones were created to protect views into and out of the core area, particularly along the ridgeline from which the midwinter sun rises. O'Neill recommended adding a southern buffer zone extending to the ridgeline of an escarpment overlooking the core area. This escarpment was an important visual landform when viewed from the core area, and the sun's alignment with Newgrange came over this ridgeline. Additionally, O'Neill considered the River Boyne an integral part of Brú na Bóinne and suggested it should lie within a zone of development control, not at the edge of the park boundary.

5.3.2 The Boyne Valley Research Project (BVRP) research strategy focuses on the buffer zone south of the River Boyne. The aim is to characterise remote sensing anomalies through targeted interventions to determine the overall significance of features and their potential relationship to activity north of the River Boyne, within the core area of the World Heritage Site (WHS). In this context, the archaeological potential of the Donore Hill landscape has long been supposed, both within the Research Framework (focused on later archaeology and the Battle of the Boyne) and through the work of the late Mandy Stephens (Stephens 2022), who drew attention to the area and its potential for further archaeological discoveries upslope.

5.3.3 Though outside the core area of the World Heritage Site, Donore Hill encompasses a microcosm of much of the archaeological diversity found north of the River Boyne. Although it did not witness the development of late Neolithic monumentality to the same extent as the Newgrange floodplain, Donore Hill includes monuments from the early Neolithic period, probable Bronze Age structures, and early and later medieval monuments, including some novel features (e.g., curvilinear field systems, post alignment). Exploring these features can provide insights into the core area of Brú na Bóinne and offer new information regarding the development of the landscape north of the river, especially in early prehistory.



5.4 Battle of the Boyne

- 5.4.1 While the Brú na Bóinne Research Framework highlights the possible role of Donore Hill during the Battle of the Boyne (Smyth 2009, 73), this remains poorly understood. Although fighting clearly occurred around Donore (e.g., Murtagh 2006, 55; Brady et al. 2008), more research is needed to understand the battle itself, its participants, and how the events unfolded across the Boyne landscape. The focus will be on investigating the specific role, if any, that Donore Hill played, as well as examining the area's archaeological potential. This research has the potential to identify burial places of battle casualties, pinpoint the exact locations of engagements, and determine the positioning and extent of each encampment through systematic metal detecting surveys.

5.5 Public Benefit and Social Impact

- 5.5.1 With visitor numbers to Newgrange, Knowth, and the Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre exceeding a quarter of a million, the research framework's focus on public engagement, systematic evaluation of visitor profiles and experiences, and respect for the needs and expectations of the local community continues to be a pressing concern. These challenges are now accentuated by contemporary concerns with issues such as sustainable tourism management, participatory planning, and the impacts of climate change.
- 5.5.2 Evaluation data from BVRP research will contribute to these efforts, providing quantitative and qualitative data on fieldschool participation, and a better understanding of how conservation efforts can be balanced with access and interpretation (Appendix 2). This framework is underpinned by a Theory of Change, articulating the linkages between activities and outcomes, and Standards of Evidence, determining the level of certainty that project benefits are a direct consequence of the activities and interventions undertaken (Wilkins 2019; 2021). This outcome framework is measurable against seven United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being; SDG 4: Quality Education; SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth; SDG 13: Climate Action; SDG 15: Life on Land; SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities; SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals).
- 5.5.3 This comprehensive evaluation process, facilitated by live data dashboard monitoring, will enable the BVRP team to understand and optimise the real-time impact of research during and beyond the project's lifespan. By synthesising the latest public benefit research and aligning with best practices in heritage management, the ambition is to create a forward-looking blueprint for future research investigations, conservation strategies, and public outreach initiatives within this and other internationally significant archaeological landscape.

6 INTERFACES

- 6.1.1 This project will interface with a series of other projects, stakeholders, and initiatives, who have either been consulted during project design stages or have attended site during fieldwork. These projects are summarised in the table below:



Interfaces	Description
Brú na Bóinne Research Framework – Discovery Programme	The project aims to undertake a comprehensive review and update of the Brú na Bóinne Research Framework, building upon the foundational work carried out in 2009.
Dowth Estate, excavations. Clíodhna Ní Lionáin, UCD	The project encompasses post-excavation analysis of the Dowth Hall excavations, along with RIA-funded ongoing pollen research as part of the Directed Research program for the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site.
Geraldine Stout	Excavations at Newgrange and Bective Abbey, as well as ongoing research interests and activities that explore the broader Boyne Valley landscape.
Digital Dowth Hall project, Emear Meaghan, Discovery Programme	The Digital Dowth Hall project aims to evaluate the efficiency and quality of various digital modeling techniques for recording megalithic monuments, with a specific focus on the Dowth Hall site within the Brú na Bóinne complex.
Let Sleeping Dogs Lie - Dr Neil Carlin	A Royal Irish Academy funded research project focuses on dating and interpreting animal bones recovered from Newgrange passage tomb, with the aim of assessing how these remains entered the monument.
SHARE I.T. – Discovery Programme, Anthony Corns	A project investigating spatial archaeological landscape data in Ireland and develop a pilot WebGIS tool for exploring and utilizing this data in further research efforts.
Crafting the Knowth Macehead – Joe Fenwick	Exploration of the methods of construction of the Knowth macehead, attempting to determine and recreate the processes and technologies used to craft the artefact.
Megalithic Art at Newgrange – Elizabeth Shee Twohig, Ken Williams	On-going research into the artwork of Brú na Bóinne, with a focus on Newgrange, placing Ireland within a wider European context, between Orkney, Spain, the UK and general North Atlantic Coast.
Boyne Catchment GIS, Dr Helen Lewis, UCD	Project developing an integrated and comprehensive landscape archaeological model of the evolution of the Boyne catchment & hence develop an environmentally contextualised understanding of a key element of Ireland's archaeological heritage

Table 1: Project interfaces

7 PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS

7.1 Fieldwork team – roles and responsibilities

- 7.1.1 The following section details specific staff responsibilities, drawing on terminology within the MoRPHE project management framework. The BVRP is a collaboration between DigVentures and UCD, managed by Brendon Wilkins – the licenced director responsible for all works. Brendon will be assisted on site by Nat Jackson, Steve Davis, Lisa Westcott Wilkins, Maiya Pina-Dacier, Jonathan Millar, and Anna van Nostrand. The Project Team have all worked



closely together over several trans Ireland and UK research projects, including CHERRISH (2019-2023) and Ancient Connections (2019-2023). The wider specialist team are all well known to each through combined research on shared publications, project work and academic conference panels. A summary CV, setting out the skills and expertise of DigVentures core team members is set out in Appendix 3, with CVs for the wider specialist team available on request.

Name / Organisation	Project role / area of responsibility
Dr Brendon Wilkins MIAI MCIfA FRSA FSA. Founder and Co-CEO, DigVentures	Licensed Director of Excavations, detailed method statement, fieldwork strategy and management, site interpretation, post-excavation reporting and field school training
Dr Steve Davis, MIAI University College Dublin (UCD)	Academic Lead, Senior Supervisor, field school training
Lisa Westcott Wilkins, MA, MIfA	Supervisor, Stakeholder Liaison, field school training
Jonathan Millar, BA MCIfA Chief Digital Officer, DigVentures	Project Manager, Supervisor, Surveyor, Landowner Liaison, field school training
Dr Manda Forster, MCIfA FSAs Chief Operating Officer, DigVentures	Operations and budget responsibility, project assurance and post excavation management, field school training
Nat Jackson, MA, Project Officer, DigVentures	Fieldwork Site Supervisor, Safety Officer, field school training
Maiya Pina-Dacier, MA, Director of Engagement, DigVentures	Supervisor, Community engagement and Site Osteologist, field school training
Anna van Nostrand, Community Archaeologist, DigVentures	Supervisor, Community engagement, field school training

Table 2: Fieldwork Team – roles and responsibilities

- 7.1.2 The site excavation team will be led by Dr Brendon Wilkins as Licence Holder and Site Director/Senior Archaeologist. Dr Wilkins will be assisted on site by Dr Steve Davis who will fulfil the roles of Academic Lead and Senior Supervisor. Nat Jackson will be Senior Site Supervisor, assisted by four supervisors, including Maiya Pina-Dacier (also Site Osteologist), Jonathan Millar (also Site Surveyor and Landowner Liaison), Lisa Westcott Wilkins (also Stakeholder Liaison), and Anna van Nostrand. Dr Brendon Wilkins will bear ultimately responsibility for the excavation, supported on site by Dr Steve Davis (Senior Supervisor and academic lead). Qualified and experienced Supervisors on site will be Nat Jackson, Jonathan Millar, Lisa Westcott Wilkins, Maiya Pina-Dacier, and Anna van Nostrand. The excavation team (of approximately 15) will be drawn from UCD students and Field School participants, all of whom will have completed a Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) accredited 6-week field skills training course in advance of attending site.
- 7.1.3 Each field season will be underpinned by a budget allocation of no less than €45,000, funded directly by DigVentures, with supplemental benefit-in-kind support from University College Dublin. An appropriate allocation of 40% of project funding has been ring-fenced for post-



excavation analysis and reporting, and post-excavation management will be overseen by Dr Manda Forster.

7.2 Specialist team and stakeholders

- 7.2.1 The project team will be working with our existing specialist network for the provision of material specific analysis. We intend to enlist support of several key specialists within the island of Ireland (Table 3). All archaeological material recovered will be transported to UCD; No archaeological finds will be removed from Ireland.

Name / Organisation	Project role / area of responsibility
Dr Stephen Davis UCD School of Archaeology	Environmental archaeology; remote sensing
Dr Lorna O'Donnell	Archaeological wood and charcoal, worked wood
Dr David Stone	Plant macrofossil analysis
Ms Helen Roche	Prehistoric pottery
Ms Martha Revell	Lithics analysis
Dr Claire Cave, UCD School of Archaeology	World Heritage policy and practice
Ms Alison Kyle Freelance consultant	Small finds specialist
Ms Carmelita Troy Rubicon Heritage	Osteoarchaeologist
Ms Susannah Kelly UCD School of Archaeology	Conservator
Ms Clare McCutcheon Freelance specialist	Medieval and post medieval pottery
Dr Ellen O'Carroll Freelance specialist	Environmental material (pollen analysis)
Dr Emily Murry Freelance consultant	Animal bone specialist, including bird, fish, and mollusc

Table 3: Specialist team

- 7.2.2 In addition to the specialist team, the project has also gathered Academic Stakeholders to function as a Project Advisory Board. Alison Sheridan and Claire Cave are both members of the NMS World Heritage advisory board and their active participation will ensure that all undertakings associated with the project are acting in accordance with best practice.

Name / Organisation	Project role / area of responsibility
Dr Alison Sheridan, NMS	Project Advisory Board, member NMS World Heritage advisory board



Name / Organisation	Project role / area of responsibility
Dr Claire Cave, UCD	Project Advisory Board, member NMS World Heritage advisory board

Table 4: Academic Stakeholders

- 7.2.3 In addition to the direct support of the landowner Mrs Bridie Simunovic and the land manager Reggie Patterson at Donore, the project also has support from a wider group of stakeholders within the Brú na Bóinne landscape. Relationships have been developed between Dr Steve Davis and various landowners within the WHS area. This group is considered Landowner Stakeholders who support the project.

Name	Landowner location
Ms Bridie Simunovic	Staleen, Oldbridge (Donore)
Mr Reggie Patterson (land manager)	Staleen, Oldbridge (Donore)
Mr Austin Downey	Newgrange
Mr Owen Brennan	Dowth
Ms Maura Hand	Dowth

Table 5: Landowner Stakeholders

7.3 Project management

- 7.3.1 The Licensed Director of Excavations Dr Brendon Wilkins will be responsible for project management, with support from Dr Stephen Davis and Dr Manda Forster. The Licensed Director will also be responsible for ensuring that the project runs to schedule, keeping track of key resources and milestones described. Provision will be made for the project in Basecamp, which is a web-based project communication package used by DigVentures, enabling project participants to generate and record notes, tasks, milestones, and other project-related communication. All work is monitored and checked whilst in progress on a regular basis, and the Licensed Director and Project Executive checks all reports and other documents before being issued. A series of guideline documents and manuals form the basis for all work.
- 7.3.2 Brendon Wilkins is a Licensed Director under Section 26 of the National Monuments Act 1930 (as amended). The DigVentures management team are all full members of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (MCIfA). DigVentures is a ClfA Registered Organisation (No. 102), and fully endorses the ClfA International Code of Conduct and supporting Standards and Guidance documents. All DigVentures staff are employed in line with the Institute's Codes and will usually be members of the Institute. Dr Stephen Davis will provide oversight of all environmental sampling and analysis, remote sensing/GIS and metal detection. He will provide access to the existing UCD/RGK research and GIS relating to the site.

7.4 Monitoring and progress

- 7.4.1 The Project Team will provide project updates in line with advice or requirements made by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Regular on site meetings between the Project Team and the National Monuments Service will be held during fieldwork, providing an opportunity to discuss any significant finds or updates to the delivery programme. Key



milestones presented in Table 6 offer a breakdown of expected project delivery, which will prompt continuing communications between the Project Team beyond the fieldwork dates.

8 COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTING

8.1 Dissemination and Reporting

8.1.1 Rapid dissemination of the results to, and involvement of, stakeholders of the project is vital throughout. This will take place through multiple channels, addressing a multitude of established and new audiences. Dissemination outlined below will all be undertaken during the fieldwork and post excavation stages of the project, and will include, but not be limited to:

- Dedicated digital archive of the excavation data.
- Wide circulation of the project assessment and the final report, and links to the Excavations Bulletin record.
- Site publication in an appropriate local/national journal commensurate with the final results (analysis stage).
- Wide circulation of Assessment and Final Reports, Updated Project Design and links to the DV website record, deposited with the Archive Unit of the National Monuments Service. Photographs will be deposited with the Photographic Unit.
- The protection of and access to the artefactual resource requires that it should be publicly owned. The artefacts will be passed onto and/or transfer their ownership to a museum.
- Wide circulation of the project assessment and the final report, including a Heritage Week event and presentation at the Brú centre.

8.1.2 As a multiyear research project, it is vital that research results inform each successive fieldwork stage. A Preliminary Report, or interim report will therefore be completed for each field season, setting out the results from each field seasons interventions, and submitted to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage for approval. The report will be prepared in accordance with the Guidelines for Authors of Reports on Archaeological Excavations (2006) issued by the National Monuments Service, except where superseded by statements below. On approval, a final version of the report will be submitted to the archive unit of the National Monuments Service. A Concise Report for inclusion in the Excavations bulletin will be submitted, following guidance provided by the National Monuments Service (2006).

8.1.3 The Preliminary Report will include the following information:

- a site location plan with a 12 figure National Grid reference and elevation OD
- copy of relevant OS map, including sheet number, at 1:5000 or 1:10560
- description of the excavation, with plan showing all cuttings
- summary of archaeological phases and stratigraphic character
- reference to key archaeological features and significant finds
- post excavation proposals and updated timeframe for completion and submission of final report
- location of project archive
- a discussion, including a preliminary interpretation and discussion of excavation results
- a specialist assessment of artefactual and palaeoenvironmental materials



- references

8.1.4 The Final Analytical Report will comprise:

- cover page, including relevant licence and site references
- abstract and acknowledgements
- a non-technical summary
- a site location plan with a 12 figure National Grid reference and elevation OD
- copy of relevant OS map, including sheet number, at 1:5000 or 1:10560
- description of the excavation, with plan showing all cuttings and including methodologies and condition of site following excavation
- summary of archaeological phases and stratigraphic character
- full illustrated, narrative description of archaeological features, phasing, and significant finds
- illustrated catalogue of finds and samples, including detailed description and specialist reports
- location of project archive and intended final repository
- a discussion, including interpretation and discussion of excavation results, significance, and comparison with similar sites
- specialist appendices / reports should be included, with each including a non-technical summary and statement of significance
- description of excavation records and location
- references

8.1.5 The preparation of the final analytical report may involve the following elements:

- the conservation of appropriate material, including the x-raying of ironwork
- the spot dating of all pottery from excavated contexts. Spot dating will be corroborated by scanning of other categories of material.
- the preparation of a preliminary phased site matrix with supporting lists of contexts by type (ditch fill, pit fill etc.), by spot-dated phase (early bronze age, middle iron age, roman etc.), by structural grouping (e.g., contexts by pit, by building etc.), supported by preliminary phase plans.
- a statement on each category of material, including reference to quantity, provenance, range and variety, condition, and existence of other primary sources.
- the selection and prioritisation of bulk and terrestrial soil samples taken for environmental and artefactual data in the light of preliminary phasing. Sieving, processing, and scanning of selected soil samples will be undertaken and an assessment statement on charred food and plant remains, including references as for the categories of material.
- a statement of potential for each material category and for the data collection as a whole will be prepared, including specific questions that can be answered and the potential value of the data to local, regional, and national investigation priorities.

8.2 Engagement and Public Communication

- ### 8.2.1
- A collaborative approach will be taken for all public communication regarding the project results, to include DigVentures, UCD and NMS. A Memorandum of Understanding outlining the terms of public communication will be developed following approval of this document,



and agreed prior to fieldwork commencing. An equal share of voice for all parties will be preserved, and appropriate recognition for financial and value-in-kind support will be included.

8.2.2 Key messages, milestones and press materials will be jointly developed as per the signatories of the above-mentioned MOU. This will include protocols for sign off, a press release announcing the findings of the dig, any undesirable press during the dig, and a process for dealing with outstanding findings that are deemed to warrant immediate release. In this instance, once it's been decided what finds and discoveries will be announced and through what medium, coverage targets will be agreed and all comms representatives will contribute to final draft announcement with approval required from all parties before it goes public.

8.2.3 Information sharing and approval process. As we don't know what will be found during the excavation, regular and timely updates from the dig team will be provided to all partners' communications representatives. An open channel of communication will be maintained between the site team and NMS to ensure all parties are aware of developments and have sufficient time to respond.

8.3 Project Archive

8.3.1 The project archive will be prepared in accordance with DigVentures guidelines for Archive Preparation, fulfilling the Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long term storage (UKIC 1990). All reports produced by the project will be openly and freely disseminated. Copyright on all reports submitted will reside with DigVentures, although a third party in-perpetuity licence will automatically be given for reproduction of the works by the originator, subject to agreement in writing with DigVentures. NMS will be granted a third party licence in perpetuity for the 'Donore Hill' project materials.

- Dedicated digital archive of the excavation data.
- Georeferenced geophysical data with greyscale tiffs.
- The digital output will be a GIS (ArcGIS) database (compatible with the Irish National Monuments Service Database).
- Site publication in an appropriate local/national journal commensurate with the results (analysis stage).
- A copy of the final report and survey files will be deposited with the Archive Unit of the National Monuments Service. Photographs will be deposited with the Photographic Unit.
- The protection of and access to the artefactual resource requires that it should be publicly owned. The artefacts will be passed onto and/or transfer their ownership to a museum.

9 PROJECT REVIEW

9.1.1 The fieldwork strategy is linked to the archaeological aims and objectives (Section 3) and presented below under the heading of the relevant project stage (Table 1). Detailed method statements relating the specific techniques or approaches highlighted below can be found in Appendix 1.

9.1.2 The project will be continually reviewed by the Project Executive and Project Manager, with a formal review undertaken at the end of each Stage as follows:



Stage	Description	Review Point	Completion Date
Initiation	Consideration of Project Proposal	RV1 – Assemble Project Team and liaise with stakeholders	Completed – August 2022
Stage 1	Project Start-up, finalising Project Design and definition of scope	RV2 – Sign-off on MoRPHE Project Design, and liaison with stakeholders and landowners	Completed – October 2022
Stage 2	Archaeological Fieldwork – First Season	RV3 – assemble site archive and distribute pertinent data to specialists	Completed – June 2023
Stage 3	Preliminary report	RV4 – Collate preliminary report on the Stage 2 excavations, summarising the fieldwork undertaken, key phases and character of sediments and archaeological features, with outline for post-excavation research, and submit to stakeholders	Completed – August 2023
Stage 4	Updated Project Design	RV5 - Sign-off on Project Design, and liaison with stakeholders and landowners, application for fieldwork license	Proposed – April 2024
Stage 5	Archaeological Fieldwork – Second Season	RV6 – assemble site archive and distribute pertinent data to specialist	Proposed – July 2024
Stage 6	Preliminary report	RV7 - Collate preliminary report on the Stage 5 excavations, summarising the fieldwork undertaken, key phases and character of sediments and archaeological features, with outline for post-excavation research, and submit to stakeholders	Proposed – August 2024
Stage 7	Updated Project Design	RV8 - Sign-off on Project Design, and liaison with stakeholders and landowners, application for fieldwork license	Proposed – April 2025
Stage 8	Archaeological Fieldwork – Third Season	RV9 – assemble site archive and distribute pertinent data to specialist	Proposed – July 2025
Stage 9	Preliminary report	RV10 - Collate preliminary report on the Stage 8 excavations, summarising the fieldwork undertaken, key phases and character of sediments and archaeological features, with outline for post-excavation research, and submit to stakeholders	Proposed – August 2025
Stage 10	Updated Project Design	RV11 - Sign-off on Project Design, and liaison with stakeholders and landowners, application for fieldwork license	Proposed – April 2026



Stage	Description	Review Point	Completion Date
Stage 11	Archaeological Fieldwork – Fourth Season	RV12 – assemble site archive and distribute pertinent data to specialist	Proposed – July 2026
Stage 12	Preliminary report	RV13 - Collate preliminary report on the Stage 11 excavations, summarising the fieldwork undertaken, key phases and character of sediments and archaeological features, with outline for post-excavation research, and submit to stakeholders	Proposed – August 2026
Stage 13	Updated Project Design	RV14 - Sign-off on Project Design, and liaison with stakeholders and landowners, application for fieldwork license	Proposed – April 2027
Stage 14	Archaeological Fieldwork – Fifth Season (Final)	RV15 – assemble site archive and distribute pertinent data to specialist	Proposed – July 2027
Stage 15	Preliminary report	RV16 - Collate preliminary report on the Stage 14 excavations, summarising the fieldwork undertaken, key phases and character of sediments and archaeological features, with outline for post-excavation research, and submit to stakeholders	Proposed – August 2027
Stage 16	Final report	RV17 – final report sign-off, and prepare archive for accession	Proposed - May 2029
Closure			May 2029

Table 6: Project review stages

10 HEALTH AND SAFETY AND CONSTRAINTS

10.1 Health and safety

- 10.1.1 DigVentures will undertake the works in accordance with Health and Safety requirements and a Health and Safety Plan. This document will take account of any design information pertaining to above and below ground hazards. DigVentures will ensure that all work is carried out in accordance with its company Health and Safety Policy, to standards defined in The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, and The Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1992, and in accordance with the SCAUM (Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers) health and safety manual Health and Safety in Field Archaeology (1996).

10.2 Constraints

- 10.2.1 The geophysical technique and scope will be defined by existent ground cover conditions. No constraints are currently anticipated regarding the excavation. Targeted terrestrial soil sampling team will not work in unsafe or unhealthy conditions, even where not to do so will result in the lack of sampling or under-recording of the sample areas.



Part Two: Resources and Programming

11 PROJECT TEAM STRUCTURE

11.1 Team and responsibilities

- 11.1.1 DigVentures' Project Team is outlined below in Table 7. A summary CV, setting out the skills and expertise of DigVentures core team members is set out in Appendix 2, with CVs for the wider specialist team available on request.

Name	Initials	Project Role	Key Responsibility
Brendon Wilkins	BW	Licensed Director	Overall responsibility for the direction of the project
Steve Davis	SD	Academic Lead	Overall responsibility for research
Lisa Westcott Wilkins	LWW	Stakeholder Liaison	Overall responsibility for external communications
Manda Forster	MF	Post Excavation Manager	Operations and budget responsibility, project assurance and post excavation management
Jonathan Millar	JM	Project Manager	Management of programme (on and off-site), liaison with project team, partners and Stakeholders
Maiya Pina-Dacier	MPD	Supervisor, Community Engagement	Management of public programme (on and off site), liaison with project team, partners and Stakeholders, on-site volunteer management.
Nat Jackson	NJ	Senior Supervisor	Site Director, on-site fieldwork, fieldwork strategy advice and volunteer management/training
Anna van Nostrand	AvN	Supervisor, Community Engagement	On-site fieldwork and volunteer training

Table 7: Team and responsibilities

- 11.1.2 In addition to the core team, it is expected that throughout the project additional volunteer staff will be present on-site engaging with excavation.



12 METHODOLOGY

12.1 Introduction

12.1.1 The methods reflect the Project Stages set out in Section 9 above, and have been refined on the basis of results of the 2023 fieldwork. Detailed method statements relating the specific techniques or approaches detailed below to their constituent research questions can be found in Appendix 1 at the end of this document.

12.2 Stage 5 – Archaeological fieldwork – Second season

12.2.1 Stage 5 (scheduled for July 2024) will comprise the second fieldwork season required to meet Aims 1 and 2 and will entail a combination of remote sensing and targeted trenching. It will aim to answer the following research questions which helped to guide fieldwork during the first stages of the project:

- Q1: Can the layout of the archaeological remains at Donore Hill be established by geophysical survey and aerial survey?
- Q2: Can we identify any phasing in remote sensing anomalies indicative of an extended period of use?
- Q3: Do the anomalies reflect the wider development of the Brú na Bóinne WHS, especially in prehistory?
- Q4: Can we corroborate chronological phasing for the Site, including the presence of earlier and later features and structures, as defined in Aim 1?
- Q5: What are the typical and atypical features of the Site, and did this influence the functions and activities that took place?
- Q6: Can we establish the landscape setting, use and character of the remains, and how these shaped its location, design, and development?

12.2.2 Specific archaeological interventions will include four hand-dug trenches to explore and characterise the results of existing geophysical survey within the study area. Trench 2 will be reopened and extended by two meters to the north west (5m x 5m) and will investigate a post-hole avenue adjacent to the standing stone/possible enclosure. Trenches 3 and 4 (each 12 x 5m) will continue to investigate an Early Neolithic Causewayed Enclosure identified by geophysical survey and confirmed through excavation in 2023. Trench 5 (3m x 5m) will investigate a possible cist-burial or barrow identified through geophysical survey 30m south east of the post alignment.

12.3 Stage 6 and 7 – Preliminary report and Updated Project Design

12.3.1 This Stage will address Aim 3, culminating in Review Point 16, and focusing on answering the following research questions:

- Q7: What is the current state of preservation of the archaeological and palaeoenvironmental material across the site?
- Q8: How well do artefacts and palaeoenvironmental remains survive, and what is their significance?
- Q9: What is the range and spatial patterning of artefacts recovered from the archaeological trenches and test pits, also taking into consideration any results from pre-excavation metal-detection survey?



- Q10: Can we establish a scientifically dated sequence for the site, including both cultural activities and landscape development?

12.4 Stage 16 – Further work, analysis and publication

12.4.1 Addressing Aim 4, this is the main reporting and recommendation Stage of the project, culminating in Review Point 5 and focusing on the following research questions.

- Q11: What can an integrated synthesis of the results of this work with previous studies of contemporary regional sites tell us about the site and its setting?
- Q12: What recommendations can be made to protect, conserve and enhance the Site, in the light of the issues and opportunities identified under Aims 1 - 3?
- Q13: Can the research results feedback into the management of the wider Brú na Bóinne landscape?

12.5 Methodological linkages

12.5.1 It is anticipated that the 2024 work will be undertaken in four stages (see Table 2). These are expanded in the table below showing linkages with the project aims and questions that will be met at each stage, the products that will be produced and the tasks undertaken.

Stage	Description	Project Aims/ Questions	Products	Task & ID Number
Stage 5	Archaeological Fieldwork	Aim 1-5 Q1-8	Field Archive Survey Archive 3D Survey Archive	5.1. Site Preparation 5.2. Fieldwork (excavation) 5.3 RV3-4 assemble site archive and distribute to specialists
Stage 6	Preliminary Report	Aim 3 Q9-13	Stratigraphic & Assessment Report	6.1. Specialist finds and palaeoenvironmental assessments 6.2 RV7 - Integrated assessment report
Stage 7	Updated Project Design	Aims 1-3 Q1-13	Project design for the next season of fieldwork	7.1. RV8 – recommendations for further work

Table 8: Project stages, products and tasks

13 OWNERSHIP

13.1.1 The Copyright on all reports submitted will reside with DigVentures, although a third party in-perpetuity licence will automatically be given for reproduction of all products, subject to agreement with DigVentures. The original copyright holder will retain copyright in pre-existing data



14 RISK LOG

Risk number	1	2	3	4
Description	Inclement weather - prolonged periods of rain	Exceptional weather (drying exposed archaeology)	Absence of core team member	Absence of specialist team member
Probability	Medium	Medium-low	Low	Low
Impact	Delay programme of work	Slow progress	Delay programme of work	Delay programme of work
Countermeasures	Provision of site hut, and planned indoor archiving tasks with flexible programme	Provision of water bowser + spray	Reallocate responsibilities or appointment of alternative	Reallocate responsibilities or appointment of alternative
Estimated time/cost	3 Days	None	Minimal if done by adjustment	Minimal if done by adjustment
Owner	BW/SD/JM/NJ	BW/SD/JM/NJ	BW/SD/JM/NJ	BW/SD/JM/NJ
Risk number	5	6		
Description	Equipment theft/breakages	Serious site injury		
Probability	Medium	Medium		
Impact	Delay programme of work	Delay programme of work		
Countermeasures	Removal of finds material and digital equipment from site	Detailed H&S Risk Assessment + daily safety briefing		
Estimated time/cost	3 days	3 days		
Owner	BW/SD/JM/NJ	BW/SD/JM/NJ		

Table 9: Risk Log



15 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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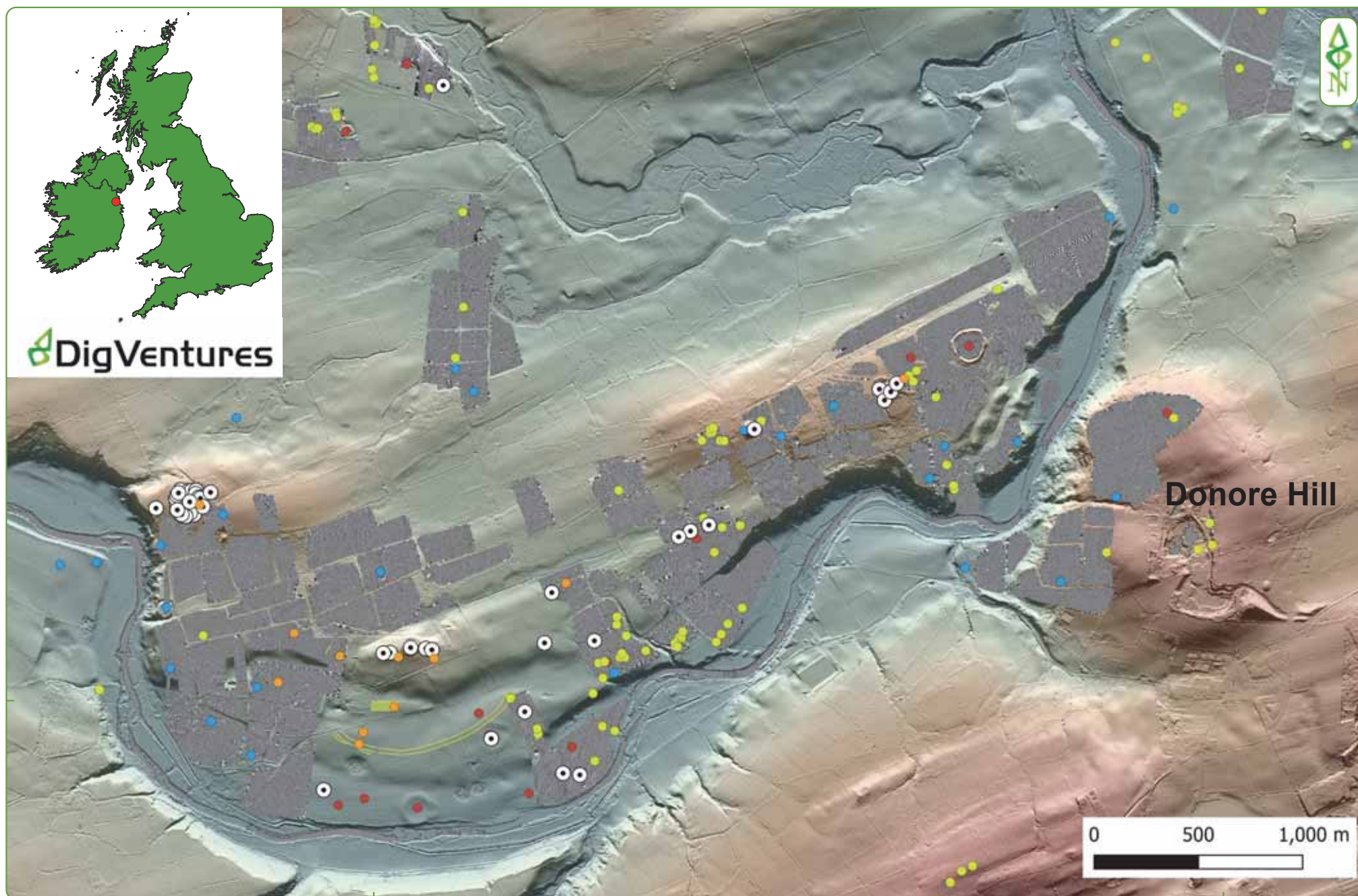


Figure 1. Extent of geophysical survey undertaken across Brú na Bóinne WHS to 2022 (RGK and UCD).

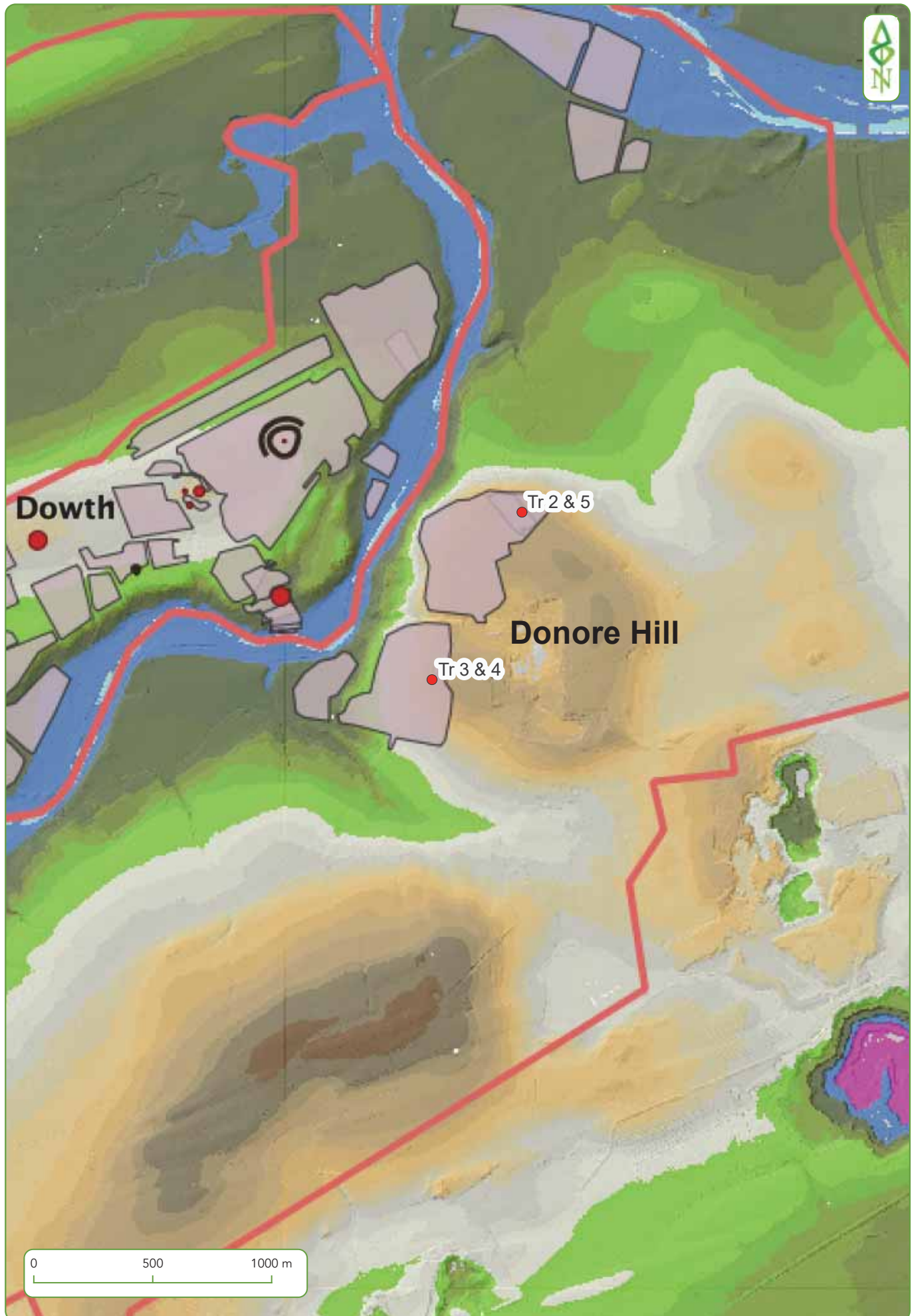


Figure 2. Donore Hill, with extent of geophysical survey highlighted.

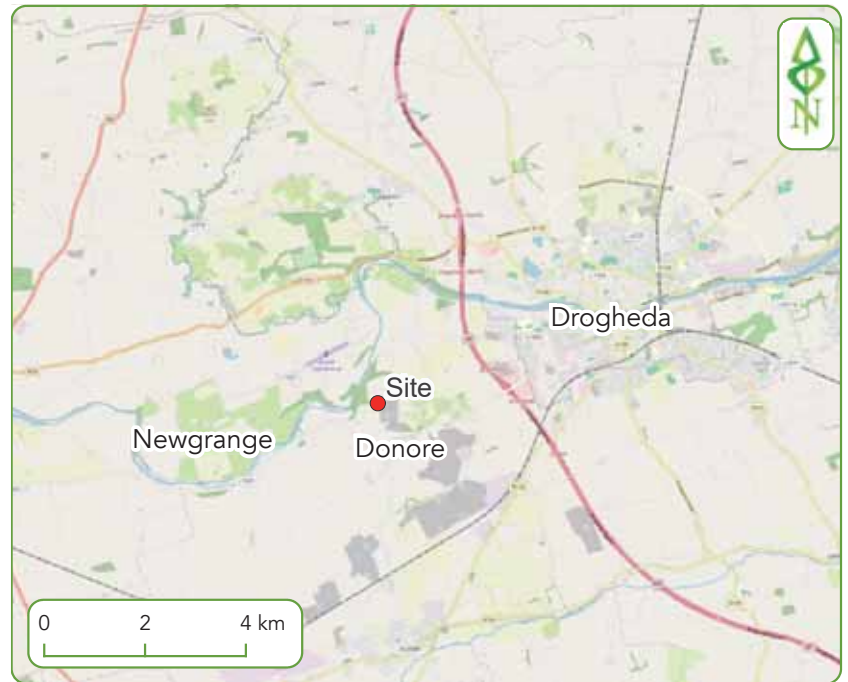


Figure 3. Site location

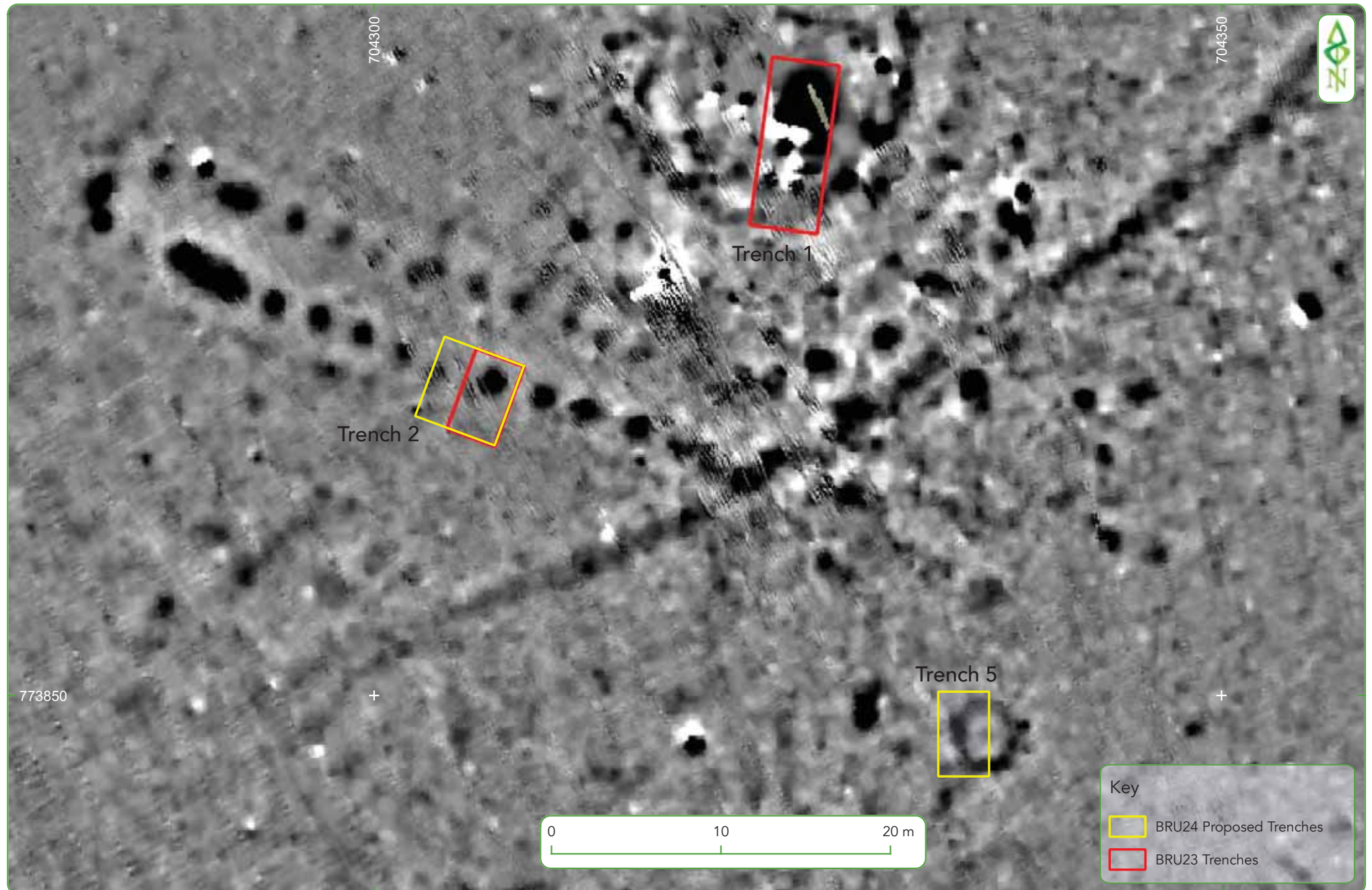


Figure 2. Proposed locations of Trenches 2 and 5

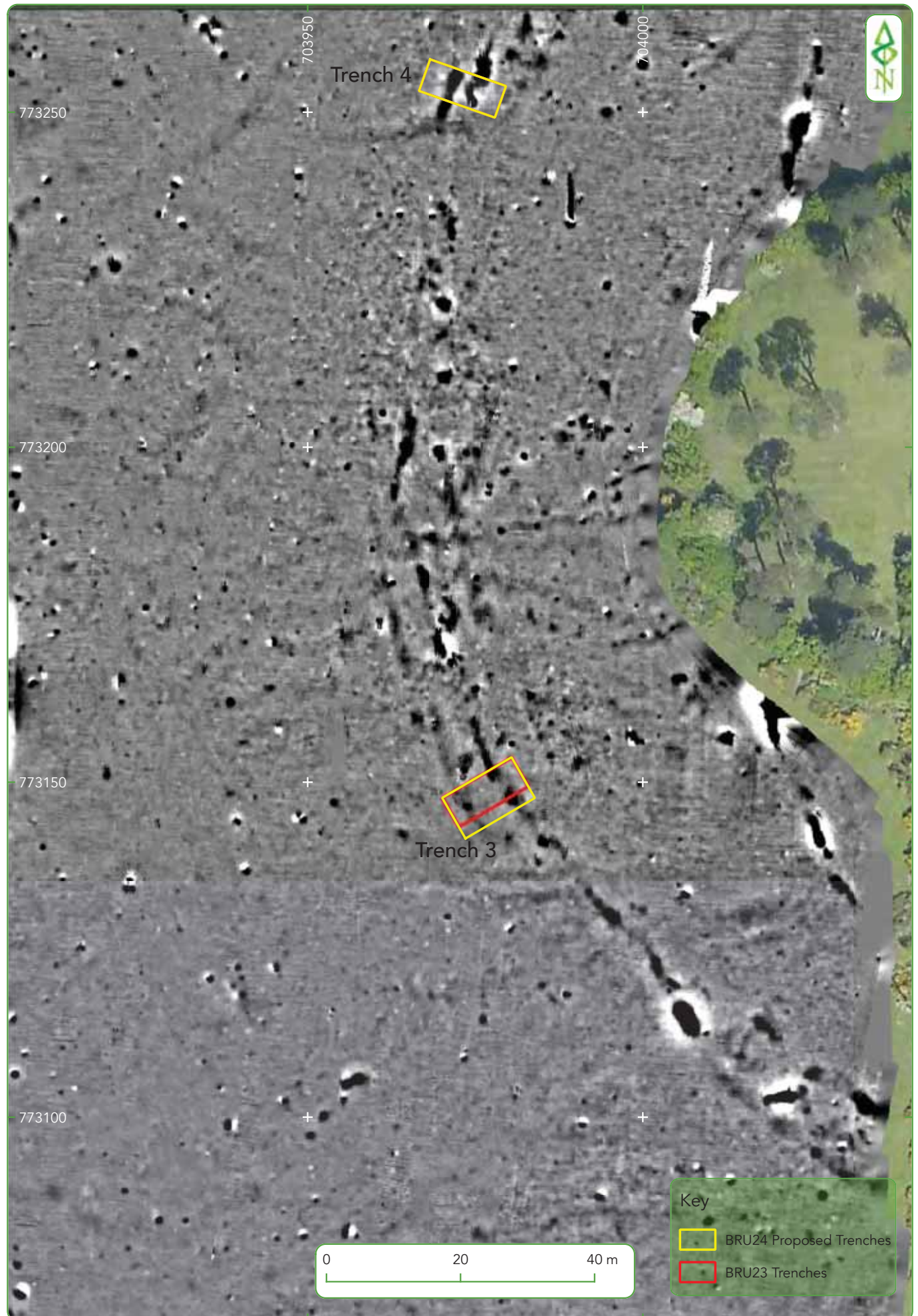


Figure 3. Proposed locations of Trenches 3 and 4

Appendices

16 APPENDIX 1 METHOD STATEMENTS

The methods for the proposed project will involve a combination of geophysical survey, GIS modelling, archaeological excavation, sampling, palaeoenvironmental sampling and assessment. The methods are linked directly to the project aims and objectives (see Table 5) and detailed below.

Key Questions and Objectives	Photogrammetry and Digital Terrain Modelling	Geophysical Survey	Earthwork Survey and GIS Modelling	Archaeological Excavation	Terrestrial Soil Sampling	Environmental Assessment	Finds Assessment	Synthesis and Data integration
Q.1	✓	✓	✓					
Q.2	✓	✓	✓					
Q.3	✓	✓	✓					
Q.4			✓				✓	
Q.5				✓	✓			
Q.6				✓	✓			
Q.7					✓			
Q.8					✓			
Q.9				✓	✓	✓	✓	
Q.10				✓	✓	✓	✓	
Q.11				✓	✓	✓	✓	
Q.12					✓			
Q.13					✓			
Q.14					✓			
Q.15					✓			
Q.16								✓

Table 10: Linking methods with objectives



Topographic and photogrammetry survey

Topographic and photogrammetry survey will be undertaken of sites at Donore Hill, Staleen to record the extent of the site and visible archaeological features associated with the possible monument complex and causewayed enclosure.

A detailed topographic survey of the sites will be carried out on which the survey grid (using the ITM coordinate referencing system) can be related to a high degree of accuracy. The topographic and photogrammetry survey will utilise Agisoft PhotoScan 3D Modelling software to detect the feature points of the structure, and match these in different images to create a point cloud. The camera positions will be calculated automatically by the software and a dense reconstruction or geometric model will be built to create a DSM and orthomosaic plans.

Images will be captured perpendicular to the structure using telescopic mounted cameras, to deliver optimum results requiring little or no rectification. All images are taken with at least a 16 mega pixel Nikon D7000 / Canon 750D digital camera (unless other cameras are specified) with a variety of standard and other lenses and are captured in RAW format for later processing into high resolution JPG and TIF files and downloaded directly on to the hard disk of the laptop. The resulting DSM can be manipulated for viewing from any angle using a variety of artificial light and shading techniques to highlight certain features or overlaid or draped with the original photographs for true colour representation. All models will be georeferenced using a minimum of eight coded targets for each model, surveyed into the National Grid using a robotic total station.

UAV survey will be used to record the larger areas of interest using perpendicular positioning, as well as going to a greater height to provide general overview and context aerial perspectives. Where access is restricted the Pole-Cam operated in the space of a single person, can be used for perpendicular positioning and for close detailed images of stone structures etc.

Archaeological excavation

In 2024, four hand-excavated trenches will be opened to explore and characterise the results of existing geophysical survey within the study area. The land is currently subject to a rewilding management regime so the excavations will supply valuable information for the ongoing management of this landscape while it undergoes change, in addition to the intrinsic value of the research investigation. The excavations will focus on the monumental complex on Donore Hill and the Neolithic causewayed enclosure: (see Figures 2 and 3)

- Trench 2 (5m x 5m) will reopen an earlier trench, focussing on a post/pit alignment, aligned with Dowth Henge (Figure 2), extending by 2m to the north west. It will investigate features observed to extend beyond the limit of the 2023 excavation, assessing the potential that the large post alignment had a secondary smaller alignment or palisade around it.
- Trench 3 (12 x 7m) will reopen an earlier trench, extending by 2m to the south. It will continue the investigation of a large, ditch terminus that extended beyond the previous limit of excavation and was not previously fully excavated (see Figure 3). It will assess the



differences and similarities between the inner and outer ditches, including stratigraphic and/or artefactual relationships between the ditches.

- Trench 4 (12 x 5m) will open a previously permitted trench that was unexcavated in 2023, designed to provide a second intervention across the enclosure. This will focus on characterising the enclosure, providing artefactual, stratigraphic, and dating evidence from an indicative series of anomalies unrelated to earlier interventions (see Figure 3).
- Trench 5 (3m x 5m) will explore a possible cist-burial or barrow identified through geophysical survey on Donore Hill (see Figure 2). This will establish the presence or otherwise of features associated with the Oldbridge Cist, and provide broader context understanding of the phasing of activities to enable proactive management of the complex of monuments in the northern area of the site.

The areas to be excavated will be located on the ground by our surveyor using RTK GPS survey equipment to ensure accuracy and will be tied into the ITM coordinate referencing system. The area to be excavated will then be hand cleaned under the close supervision of the licence holder or supervisor. The cleaned areas will be photographed, and pre-excavation plans drawn at a scale suitable to the area (1:10, 1:20 or 1:50). The excavation (by hand) and recording will be overseen by our experienced licence holder and supervisor who will also take detailed notes daily.

Full written, drawn, and photographic records will be made of each trench and test pit, even where no archaeological remains are identified. A plan at an appropriate scale (1:50 or 1:100) will be prepared, showing the areas investigated and their relation to more permanent topographical features, and the location of contexts observed and recorded during the investigation. Plans, sections and elevations of archaeological features and deposits will be drawn as necessary at an appropriate scale (normally 1:20, or 1:10 for complex features). Drawings will be made in pencil on permanent drafting film.

Written records will be made using pro forma record sheets for each trench or test pit, following the DigVentures single context recording system (see 'Recording' below). Digital photography will be used for all photography of significant features, finds, deposits and general site working. The photographic record will illustrate both the detail and the general context of the principal features and finds excavated, and the Site as a whole.

If complex stratigraphy and/ or significant remains (e.g. structural remains, artefact scatters, remains clearly of a funerary nature etc.) are encountered, following consultation with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, these may be left in situ or only be excavated to the minimum requirement in order to satisfy the project objective, to avoid compromising the integrity of remains that may be either (a) preserved in situ, or (b) excavated in detail during any next phase of research excavation. Interventions will focus on feature intersections to establish relative chronologies, and 'clean' sections to maximise retrieval of stratigraphically secure dating evidence and environmental samples.

Excavation mitigation strategy



The investigation will comply in full with the *Policy and Guidelines on Archaeological Excavation* (Dúchas 1999), National Monuments Legislation (National Monuments (Amendment) Act 2004) and the Code of Practice and will adhere to all professional standards and best practices including those of the Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland (<https://www.iai.ie/codes-of-conduct/>).

Recording

DigVentures has developed a web-accessible digital recording system, ensuring that the Project and Expert Team will have continuous, real-time access to project data as it is created. Specialists will be encouraged to comment and add to records during fieldwork, removing the usual logistical barriers that separate field from lab work.

All recording will be undertaken using DigVentures single context pro forma recording system, supported by a photographic record. All features will be fully investigated and recorded. All contexts (soil layers), small finds and environmental samples would be given unique numbers. Detailed site drawings would be undertaken at the normal archaeological recording scales (1:20 plan and 1:10 section).

Drawings will be made in pencil on permanent drafting film. Digital photography will be used for all photography of significant features, finds, deposits and general site working. The photographic record will illustrate both the detail and the general context of the principal features and finds excavated, and the sites as a whole.

Backfilling and reinstatement

Where turf is removed it will be stacked away from the trench edge, maintaining their integrity by ensuring that the turves are placed in a correct position (turf side up) and are watered frequently and monitored daily. Topsoil and subsoil will be removed and retained separately for reinstatement. Scientific dating

Where uncontaminated deposits are recorded which can inform understanding of the research aims (in particular, relating to the deposition of the midden), appropriate samples will be taken. Radiocarbon dating could be appropriate for clarifying and linking aspects of archaeological and environmental chronologies, and a strategy for this will be agreed following discussion with the relevant geoarchaeological specialists.

Zooarchaeology

Appropriate geoarchaeological, palaeoenvironmental and archaeological techniques will be used to evaluate the nature and quality of the survival of the artefacts, faunal and palaeoenvironmental remains within the excavations. If articulated groups of bones are encountered, they will be surveyed, recorded in situ, (including digital photography and planning), and then excavated to retain the group's integrity. Bones from each articulated limb



will be bagged separately. If inhumations or cremation burials are encountered and excavated the surrounding soil will be sampled to retrieve any loose teeth or bone fragments.

All hand collected animal bones and bones from processed samples will be assessed, following Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland guidelines (2007). If warranted by the size of the recovered assemblage, it will be assessed using two different quantification methods to determine the most suitable for full analysis, considering methods used in comparative assemblages. The assessment will not distinguish between certain taxonomic groups, for example equids (horse and donkey); full speciation should be carried out as part of any recommended analysis, using a vertebrate comparative collection. In addition to quantification of domestic species and occurrence of wild species, the assessment will consider the number of articulated bone groups, and the prevalence of aging, sexing and osteometric data available for full analysis, following standard published conventions. The assessment report will comment on the potential of the assemblage, particularly in the context of the excavation's research questions and current understanding of comparative assemblages. It will also provide recommendations for any necessary future analysis.

Human osteoarchaeology

In the event of the discovery of human remains (inhumations, cremations, and disarticulated fragments) it is intended that they will be left in situ, covered, and protected. Should human remains be excavated, all excavation and post- excavation will be in accordance with the standards set out in ClifA Technical Paper 13 *Excavation and post-excavation treatment of cremated and inhumed remains* (1993) and Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland (2004) *The Treatment of Human Remains: Technical Paper for Archaeologists. Human Osteoarchaeology*. The final placing of human remains following analysis will be subject to the requirements of the National Monuments Service.

Palaeoenvironmental sampling from archaeological excavation

All deposits with good palaeoenvironmental potential will be sampled; bulk samples shall be taken from the section as appropriate, under advisement from the project specialists. Context specific samples will be taken by the most appropriate means (kubiena tins, contiguous columns, incremental block, bulk etc.) for multi-disciplinary analysis. All aspects of the collection, selection, processing, assessment and reporting on the environmental archaeology component of the evaluation shall be undertaken in accordance with the principles set out in *Environmental Sampling: Guidelines for Archaeologists* (Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland 2007) and *NRA Palaeo-environmental Sampling Guidelines Retrieval, analysis and reporting of plant macro-remains, wood, charcoal, insects and pollen from archaeological excavations* (McClatchie et al 2015).

Bulk samples will usually be 40 litres in size, depending on the likely density of macrofossils. Ten-litre samples will only be used for the recovery of plant macrofossils from waterlogged contexts. Samples will be stored in ten-litre plastic buckets with lids and handles. A waterproof



label will be fixed to the bucket and will record site code, context number and sample number and number of buckets in comprising the sample. A duplicate label will be retained inside the bucket. Samples will be protected from temperatures below 5° and above 25° Celsius and will be prevented from either wetting or drying out.

- Bulk samples selected for processing shall be wet-sieved/flot-ed and washed over a mesh size of 250 microns for the recovery of palaeobotanical and other organic remains, and reflat-ed to maximise recovery;
- Non-organic residues shall be washed through a nest of sieves of 10mm, 5mm, 2mm, 1mm and 250-micron mesh to maximise finds recovery;
- Both organic and non-organic residues shall be dried under controlled conditions;
- The dried inorganic fractions shall be sorted for small finds or any non- buoyant palaeoenvironmental remains, and scanned with a magnet to pick up ferrous debris such as hammer scale;
- The dried organic fractions shall be sorted under a light microscope to identify the range of species or other material on a presence/absence basis, the degree of preservation of the bio-archaeological material and the rough proportions of different categories of material present;
- If waterlogged deposits are identified and sampled, further processing shall be undertaken as appropriate and agreed, including paraffin flotation to recover insect remains. Any such remains shall be scanned to identify and assess their potential;
- Selection of other types of sample for processing and the methods to be used for processing and assessment shall be undertaken on the advice of the relevant specialist.

Contexts that are well stratified and potentially datable are all of value, so a systematic approach to selecting samples for processing and assessment will be taken. These will be divided into three categories:

- Category A (always sampled): contexts where the composition of the sediments are likely to inform us of the use of a particular structure or feature or if the deposits are waterlogged. These will include: *in situ* occupation deposits and fills/layers associated with particular activities; hearths; destruction deposits; basal pit/slot trench fills; waterlogged deposits, cesspits, or latrines.
- Category B (always sampled, though discretion should be exercised): deposits identified as containing material that could yield information regarding their origin or the process that produced them. These will include: dumps, middens, upper pit fills with evidence for charred material, shell, bone, and industrial waste.
- Category C: deposits containing material which is not necessarily related to the function of the feature to which they are related, but which can characterise deposits from different areas of the site. These will include: secondary and tertiary fills, postholes, levelling deposits, spreads etc.

Category A and B deposits should always be sampled, and Category C deposits sampled on a random basis (such as 1 in 5). These samples can help to characterise the background noise of a site, to highlight spatial or temporal trends and provide material that can be directly compared with those from Category A and B. All samples will be taken in large white 10 litre tubs, with labels placed inside with the deposit and attached to the bucket.



Conservation

Artefacts will be recovered as a matter of routine during the excavation. When retrieved from the ground finds will be kept in a finds tray or appropriate bags in accordance with National Museum of Ireland “Standards for the care and treatment of archaeological objects from excavations” 2022. Where necessary, a conservator may be required to recover fragile finds from the ground depending upon circumstances – this will be undertaken by Susannah Kelly, UCD.

After the completion of the fieldwork stage, a conservation assessment will be undertaken which will include the X-radiography of all the ironwork (after initial screening to separate obviously modern debris), and a selection of the non-ferrous finds (including all coins). A sample of slag may also be X-rayed to assist with identification and interpretation. Wet-packed material, including glass, bone and leather will be stabilised and consolidated to ensure their long-term preservation. All finds will be stored in optimum conditions in accordance with National Museum of Ireland “Standards for the care and treatment of archaeological objects from excavations” 2022.

Scientific dating

Radiocarbon dating will be appropriate for clarifying and linking aspects of archaeological and environmental chronologies, and a strategy for this will be agreed following discussion with the relevant specialists following assessment.

Synthesis and data integration

Radiocarbon results from the project will be integrated and synthesised with future investigations, and other relevant work within the region and further afield. This will include a literature review of other pertinent sites.



21 APPENDIX 2 FIELD SCHOOL CURRICULUM

DigVentures' field school curriculum for archaeology forms the basis of all our on-site vocational training opportunities. Due to the unique nature of each of the archaeological sites we work at, the content of the field schools may vary from project to project. However, our core learning curriculum will remain consistent across all our projects and provides an outline of the minimum our participants should expect to achieve during their time with us on site.

Our archaeology field school is endorsed by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists and designed to support the Archaeology Skills Passport.

About the projects

Each of our archaeological sites has a specific Project Design attached to it. This document will provide the research background to the excavation, outlining some very important details about the period, the location and what we hope to find. This is the place to find out what the aims and objectives are, where we will be putting our archaeological trenches and what the overarching strategy is for recovering all that vital archaeological information. You can also find the general methods statements here, and learn about the particular approaches we might be taking.

Each archaeological project is supported by a project microsite – and this should be your first point of call for your site preparations. Once you have had a look through the archaeological project design, you can have a look over the 'Plan Your Visit' section which includes the project set up and all the information you need to know to make your archaeological experience run as smoothly as possible. As the archaeological project continues, this is the place where the technical data recovered will be stored and where you can look up the archaeological information you have helped to excavate and record!

About the field school

Archaeology is a profession, as well as an academic field of study. Many years of experience, skills development and education are necessary in order to develop the expertise, and attain the necessary qualifications, to run archaeological excavations. Archaeology is also an activity which inspires enthusiasts all around the world, from active volunteers through to armchair archaeologists who devour every book, programme and magazine they can get their hands on. We are consistently amazed at the passion and level of knowledge of the people we meet through our work at DigVentures, and everyone has one thing in common: they want to learn more about how to do archaeology.

We have designed our field schools to help support anyone who is keen to roll up their sleeves, jump in the trenches and learn how archaeology is done. Whether you can join us for one day, a weekend or a full week (or two), we can teach you what you need to know to get the most out of your archaeological experience.

Our core learning curriculum

Our field schools provide a step-by-step guide through the core skills needed to contribute to an archaeological excavation. What do you need to know about the archaeology before you begin to dig? How do you recognise and excavate archaeological layers? What's the point of drawing in the age of digital? What's with all the string, and funny red and white sticks in the trenches? If you are with us for a single day, we will make sure you get to grips with the fundamental skills, such as using a trowel. The longer you can stay, the more you will learn.



You can use the look-up table below to see which of the core archaeological skills you will learn on a DigVentures field school depending on the length of your experience.

Skill	Learning outcome	One Day	Two Days	Week +
<i>Professional ethics</i>	Can anyone just turn up and dig an archaeological site? Or is there more to it than that?	✓	✓	✓
<i>Site Safety</i>	Be aware of the particular Health & Safety issues on the archaeological project	✓	✓	✓
<i>Small hand tools</i>	Understand the correct use of the trowel and other smaller hand tools including their safe use and maintenance.	✓	✓	✓
<i>Large hand tools</i>	Understand the correct and safe use of larger tools as well as appropriate loading for buckets and wheelbarrows.	✓	✓	✓
<i>Site formation processes</i>	Understand the process of site formation, including fills, layers, structures or natural deposits. Everything is in the ground for a reason and sites come to look the way they do now for a number of different reasons. By the time you leave site you will have a basic understanding of why the site looks the way it does.	✓	✓	✓
<i>Stratigraphic excavation</i>	Understand the concept of physical and chronological stratigraphy as well as the methods of recording the sequences and be able to remove layers and fills in the correct order for structured excavation.		✓	✓
<i>Artefact recording</i>	Understand how to recover artefacts safely from archaeological deposits, how to store finds on-site and how to complete the Small Finds record.		✓	✓
<i>Context recording</i>	Understand the procedure for the completion of a standard context record sheet using Digital Dig Team.		✓	✓
<i>Survey</i>	Appreciate the concept of site/national grid systems and placement of trenches within this. It is important we know exactly			✓



Skill	Learning outcome	One Day	Two Days	Week +
	where archaeological remains were found and you will be familiarised with the use of traditional hand tape measurements and in the application of GPS and total station readings.			
<i>Measured drawing (planning and section drawing)</i>	Understand the various elements that must be present on a plan and section drawing, including the use of conventions and how the drawing is located.			✓
<i>Photography</i>	Have a basic grasp of the fundamental requirements for camera use and the sequenced methodology of photographic recording.			✓
<i>Sampling</i>	Understand the procedure for the collecting archaeological samples for artefacts and ecofacts, including why we take them, how they are recorded and what happens next.			✓

National Occupational Standards

All our training programmes are built upon the framework of National Occupational Standards (NOS) developed by the Chartered Institute of Archaeologists. The NOS for archaeological practice defines the range of skills that archaeologists may need to perfect in order to do their job. They provide the perfect framework for training programmes as they break down a complicated job into a collection of individual skills and tasks. This is great for both practising and avocational archaeologists as it provides a clear roadmap for skills development.

To help that skills development, you can find the individual NOS standards which this course supports below. If you would like to record your own skills development, we recommend you use the Archaeology Skills Passport. This has been developed in line with NOS, and provides a simple record book of your learning achievements.

The learning outcomes from this course are defined using National Occupational Standards (NOS). This course *supports* and *contributes* to the Knowledge Requirements for particular units within the NOS for Archaeological Practice. These are:

AC5 Contribute to intrusive investigations

<https://www.ukstandards.org.uk/PublishedNos/CCSAPAC5.pdf>



This includes:

- Preparing for operations, including understanding the methods used, the safety arrangements, identifying suitable equipment and applying technical standards
- Undertaking intrusive investigation, including identifying, investigating and recording archaeology and using appropriate tools competently
- Preparing records and schedules, including making accurate records and verifying data

Recording your archaeology skills

For those participants who are keen to develop their archaeological skills-set, we recommend using the Archaeology Skills Passport to record the skills you learn as you progress. Depending on whether you are joining us for a couple of days or a full week, you will have the opportunity to learn or add to the skills you already have. The course contributes to a number of Core Skills as identified in the Skills Passport, and the table above provides an outline of which should be expected to be achieved during your experience.

Providing feedback

Once you have completed your fieldwork with us, we will ask a couple of additional questions about your experience. This helps us see how much you have learnt while you have been part of our excavations and also makes sure we are doing a great job! If there is anything you would like to know or would like to tell us while you are still digging, just speak to a member of the team.



22 APPENDIX 2 EVALUATION FRAMEWORK





OUR THEORY of CHANGE

Measuring impact for both intrinsic outcomes for archaeology and instrumental benefits for people and communities

INPUTS

internally or externally deployed staff and resources

ACTIVITIES

the processes and tasks undertaken by the organisation

OUTPUTS

a quantifiable unit of 'product' or 'service' measurable once completed

OUTCOMES

Observable change for heritage, individuals or communities

MISSION AND VISION

The organisation's guiding mission and long term aspirations

For Archaeology and Heritage

Excavation team
Wider specialist team
Venturers (public participants)

- 1 Desk-based assessments
- 2 Remote Sensing
- 3 3D landscape and building survey
- 4 Excavation
- 5 Post-ex assessment and analysis
- 6 Accessible digital archive

- Project Designs
- Survey reports
- Assessment and Final Reports
- Management Plans
- Archaeological Publications
- Site Interpretations

- Through our work, heritage will be:
- identified, interpreted and better explained
 - better managed and in an improved condition

By collaborating with citizens, businesses, organisations and government, we aim to create a firm evidence-base for the past through accessible, peer-reviewed research, ultimately enabling places to thrive, prosper and sustain distinct local identities

For Individuals

Community management, educational and editorial teams
DigVentures' collaborative platform:

- collaborative resources
DigVentures.com
- collaborative finance
Crowdfunding app
- collaborative labour
Digital Dig Team web app
- collaborative knowledge
MOOC learning management system

- 1 Crowdfunding campaigns and matched crowd/grant funded applications
- 2 Accessible training programme comprising Dig for a Day/ Dirty Weekend/ Field Venturer
- 3 Digital learning resources including site-specific and skills-based learning available in person or online
- 4 DigCamp and CyberDig family sessions

- Funded/Match-funded Project
- Number and diversity of Dig participants
 - Number and diversity of Digital participants
 - Number and diversity of DigCamp participants
 - Co-created digital archives and interactive, open-access, online resource measurable through digital analytics

- By taking part in our work:
- a wider range of people will be involved in archaeology and heritage
 - people will have learnt about heritage, leading to changes in ideas and actions
 - people will have greater wellbeing

By creating a spectrum of digital and physical opportunities to participate together, we aim to equip citizens with the skills needed to use, produce, manage and co-commission heritage resources, fostering civic awareness and a deeper sense of place and belonging

For Communities / Society

Community management educational and editorial teams
Site Hut
Dig Timeline
Social Channels

- 1 School visits
- 2 Site open days
- 3 Pop-up and virtual museums
- 4 Published web content and native social posts
- 5 Recorded video and live
- 6 Traditional broadcast and print media

- Number of web/social engagements, and community growth
- Number and diversity of site and pop-up visitors
- Site and museum visitors increased and lasting audience for sites

- As a consequence of our work:
- The local area will be a better place to live, work or visit
 - Partner organisations will be more resilient

By challenging the perceived barriers to archaeological participation, we will create an accessible 'broad tent' incorporating multi-cultural and diverse perspectives; we aim to increasing the awareness and amenity of sites and visitor attractions, stimulate leisure and tourism, and help to make distinctive heritage the unique selling point of a place



STANDARDS OF EVIDENCE

EXPECTATION

Providing an academically rigorous framework, whilst ensuring that impact measurement is appropriate to the stage of development of a variety of different products, services and programmes.

SUGGESTED METHOD

Steps needed to ensure correct evidence is collected to determine whether or not a venture is making a positive difference

OUTCOMES FOR HERITAGE

Intrinsic benefits relating to the research dividend and evidence baseline required for successful management of archaeological sites and landscapes

OUTCOMES FOR PEOPLE

Instrumental benefits for participants and platform users, enabling the voluntary sector to scale in a sustainable and ethically responsible fashion

OUTCOMES FOR COMMUNITIES

Wider social impacts received by those who may not be direct participants, but benefit through increased amenity value, tourism and local distinctiveness.

Level One

A low threshold, appropriate to very early stage innovations, which may still be at the idea stage. Involving little more than a clear articulation of why the intervention is needed, what it will aim to achieve why this is better than what currently happens. Project owners will be able to give an account of impact, providing a logical reason why their intervention could have an impact and why that would be an improvement on the current situation.

A clear rationale to show why the product/service could have an impact, and why that would be an improvement on the current situation.

Articulated as a theory of change and logic model, linking activities, outputs, outcomes to hypothesized impact.

A fully illustrated Project Design, signed off by statutory stakeholder, outlining key archaeological research questions, roles, procedures, stages and outputs.

A training or activity plan, linking activities to outputs, outcomes and impact, and an explanation of how the outcome could be measured.

A training, activity, audience development and/or heritage resource management plan, linking activities to outputs, outcomes and impact, and an explanation of how the outcome could be measured.

Level Two

At Level 2 projects will be gathering data that shows some change amongst those receiving or using the intervention. At this stage, data can begin to show that there is a change in the measure of the outcome among the recipients of the product or service, but this may not be sufficient to provide evidence of direct causality.

Pre and post-survey evaluation; cohort/panel study; and regular interval surveying.

Assessment Report; Management Report, base-lined against previous investigations

Evaluation survey for participants to quantify demographics, socio-economic characteristics and spatial data, followed up with a pre and post-survey qualitative evaluation using a separate questionnaire methodology to determine any changes as a consequence of taking part

Evaluation survey for site visitors to quantify audience demographics, socio-economic characteristics and spatial data, followed up with a qualitative study using a separate questionnaire methodology to determine any changes that took place as a consequence of the visit

Level Three

At Level 3 projects will be able to demonstrate that they are causing the hypothesized impact, by showing less impact amongst those who don't receive the product/service.

Robust methods using a control group, or evaluating a random selection of participants, begin to isolate the impact of the product/service.

All products/services at Level 3 will be well documented, with necessary skills, training (and other delivery requirements) outlined clearly, to enable effective replication in alternative places, situation, contexts etc.

Analytical report, synthesizing specialist reports with previous work locally, regionally and nationally, to determine significance, importance and potential of the site.

Meta-analysis of evaluation results with those derived from projects delivering similar community-based activities, including archaeological/heritage and other unrelated arts/citizen science projects.

Meta-analysis of evaluation results with those derived from projects delivering similar community-based activities - including both archaeological/heritage and other unrelated arts/citizen science projects.

Level Four

At Level 4 projects can explain why and how the intervention is having the impact observed and evidenced so far, supported by an independent evaluation to validate the findings. This will also assess the extent to which the intervention can deliver impact at a reasonable cost, and whether it can be replicated and purchased in multiple locations.

Robust independent evaluation that investigates and validates the nature of the impact; this might include endorsement via commercial standards or industry kitemarks, underpinned by a documented standardisation of delivery and processes, data on costs of production and acceptable price point for customers.

Quality assured by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) under the Registered Organisation scheme, and involving independent site inspections and documentary audit.

External audit of quality of training programmes and activities by CIfA, The Archaeological Training Forum, Register of Professional Archaeologists, Skills Passport and National Occupational Standards.

External audit of community programming and impact by specialist consultancy, undertaken independently of project team.

Level Five

At Level 5, projects will be able to demonstrate that the intervention could be operated up by someone else, somewhere else and scaled up, whilst continuing to have positive and direct impact on the outcome, and whilst remaining a financially viable proposition. For a service, this will establish whether it can be delivered by different staff in different locations.

Evidence will be derived from multiple evaluations of the product/service in different settings (at least two evaluations; one of which will be independent) to demonstrate that the product/service can be used in different settings (which could be in different settings geographically and/or with different types of product/service users). Appropriate methods at this level will include multiple replication evaluations; future scenario analysis; or fidelity evaluation.

An excavation manual, underpinned by a broader operations manual and 'culture deck', detailing how the DigVentures project model should be applied in differing contexts.

A syllabus and training manual, underpinned by a broader operations manual and outline spectrum of engagement, detailing the participant's journey from digital supporter to experienced field digger.

An audience engagement and communications plan, underpinned by a broader operations manual and tailored 'culture deck', detailing how the intervention should be applied with clear and measurable benchmarks.