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WORLD HERITAGE IN A CHANGING CLIMATE

This paper will present the author's ongoing post graduate doctoral research, part of which was undertaken on behalf of ICOMOS Ireland's Sub-Committee on Climate Change and the Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government. The paper will present research into the effects of climate change on World Heritage (and proposed World Heritage) in Ireland using the case study sites of Bru na Boinne and Clonmacnoise, both of which are cultural landscapes.

The paper will concentrate on how World Heritage sites in Ireland have been key to the formation of a cutting edge climate change monitoring project. The intended monitoring scheme will form a legacy for the future, producing quantifiable data over the coming century, which is vital in the assessment of climate change impacts on cultural heritage. In turn this will enable the development of appropriate and sustainable management practices in terms of climate change impact mitigation and adaptation at sites.

This project answers some of the concerns listed in WHC-09/33.COM/14A, namely that the focus of World Heritage has been on inscription rather than conservation (11d). It points to a future where World Heritage sites act as laboratories for research on the global issues of heritage conservation, such as climate change. The project also provides an opportunity to increase and improve public perception of the World Heritage brand by developing a best practice model which can be replicated at other heritage sites (11c).