

Galway County Council

N6 Galway City Ring Road

Archaeological Field Inspection,
Coolagh Townland, Galway

GCCR-4.03.03-32-26

Issue 1 | 14 October 2020

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1 Introduction

During the oral hearing for the N6 Galway City Ring Road, Mr McDonagh made a submission with respect to a number of potential sites within the townland of Coolagh that may be affected by the proposed N6 Galway City Ring Road (GCRR). During the response to this submission by Faith Bailey of IAC Archaeology, it was noted that it was difficult to comment on the sites as no detail was submitted regarding their locations. As such, and in consultation with the An Bord Pleanála (ABP) Inspector, it was agreed that Faith Bailey would meet with Mr McDonagh on site in Coolagh for him identify the areas that he was concerned about. Galway County Council also committed to this site visit taking place.

This report has been prepared to document the findings of this archaeological field inspection undertaken by Faith Bailey of IAC Archaeology and Martin Jones of TII on the 29 September 2020 within the townland of Coolagh, Co. Galway. Patrick McDonagh also attended this field inspection on behalf of the Menlo-Coolough-Ballinfoile-Ballindooley residents.

2 Field Inspection

Mr McDonagh identified five sites of potential cultural heritage significance during the field inspection. The sites are described and illustrated below and have been designated as Cultural Heritage (CH) sites A-E. During the field inspection, it was possible to confirm that none of the five sites fall within the footprint of the proposed development boundary for the proposed N6 Galway City Ring Road. Figure 1 below shows the locations of sites CH A to D and Figure 2 in Section 2.5, the location of site CH E.

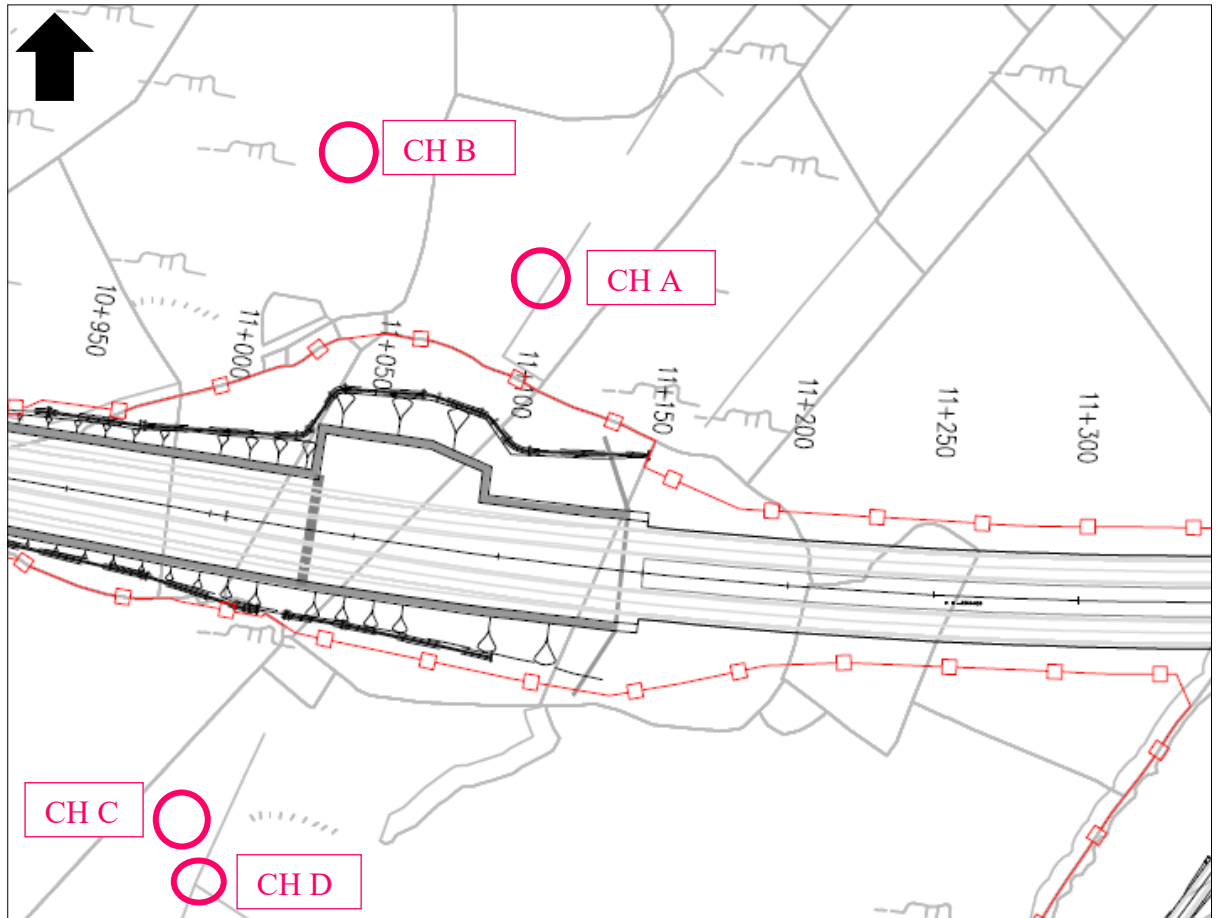


Figure 1: Location of CH A-D and the proposed N6 Galway City Ring Road

2.1 Site CH A

Site:	CH A
Townland:	Coolagh
ITM:	530053/728495
Classification:	Possible animal fold
Distance from proposed project:	35m northeast
Chainage:	11,100

2.1.1 Description:

The site consists of a sub-circular 'D-shaped' enclosure that has been constructed adjacent to a stone field boundary that is aligned northeast-southwest. It measures c. 8m east-west by c. 10m north-south (Plates 1 and 2). The enclosure is formed by a roughly constructed dry stone wall and is situated in dense overgrowth c. 40m east of an old track and c. 75m east-northeast of a similar feature marked within the 1895-1900 historic Ordnance Survey map, which is no longer extant today (Figure 1). The walls vary in height from 1m – 1.25m in height and there is no obvious entrance to the enclosure, although some sections of the wall have collapsed.

The field boundary that the site abuts is not present on the first edition OS map of 1841, but is marked by the time of the 1895-1900 map. This suggests the earliest date of the feature is mid-19th century, although it is not marked on any of the historic mapping. It is possible that the enclosure represents the remains of a pen or enclosure for livestock, which were a common feature of the post medieval landscape, especially in marginal terrain, such as the environs surrounding the site, where stock may range a wide area.



Plate 1: CH A, facing northeast



Plate 2: CH A, facing southwest

2.1.2 Impact Assessment

The site will not be directly impacted by the proposed N6 GCRR, being 35m away from the proposed development boundary. Given the level of dense vegetation in the area, indirect negative impacts are not predicted. The level of predicted impact is deemed to be neutral and no further mitigation is required.

2.2 Site CH B

Site:	CH B
Townland:	Coolagh
ITM:	530053/728495
Classification:	Cairns
Distance from proposed project:	65m northwest
Chainage:	11,025

2.2.1 Description

This site consists of two small cairns, both of which are approximately 1m high and c. 1.5-2m wide at the base (Figure 1, Plate 3). The features are located within an area of limestone pavement and, given the large amount of stone in the immediate surrounding landscape, they are unlikely to represent an effort to clear the landscape of stone. It is more probable that they represent a marker in the landscape, which may have been used to navigate across a marginal terrain characterised by areas of stone pavement and dense scrub, in order to forage or manage livestock. The features have been roughly constructed from dry stone and it is not possible to date them. Whilst the features are not marked within the historic OS maps, they are likely to be post medieval or more modern in origin.

2.2.2 Impact Assessment

The site will not be directly impacted by the proposed N6 GCRR, being 65m away from the proposed development boundary. Given the distance of the site from the proposed N6 GCRR and vegetation that lies in between, indirect negative impacts are not predicted. The level of predicted impact is deemed to be neutral and no further mitigation is required.



Plate 3: CH B, facing north

2.3 Site CH C

Site:	CH C
Townland:	Coolagh
ITM:	529967/728291
Classification:	Possible rock cut feature
Distance from proposed project:	72m southwest
Chainage:	11,015

2.3.1 Description

This feature may represent the remains of a rock cut feature, which is sub-rectangular in plan and c. 04-06m deep (Figure 1, Plate 4). The function is unclear as the feature is located within an area of limestone pavement and, due to the fractured nature of the rock, would not have held water or liquid without some form of liner. It is possible that the feature represents the remains of localised quarrying, although this seems unlikely given the amount of loose stone that lies on the ground in the area. It remains possible that this is a natural feature caused by weathering and water run-off.

2.3.2 Impact Assessment

The site will not be directly impacted by the proposed N6 GCRR, being 72m away from the proposed development boundary. Given the level of dense vegetation in the area between the feature and proposed N6 GCRR, indirect negative impacts are not predicted. The level of predicted impact is deemed to be neutral and no further mitigation is required.



Plate 4: CH C, facing southwest

2.4 Site CH D

Site:	CH D
Townland:	Coolagh
ITM:	529975/728267
Classification:	Built feature
Distance from proposed project:	92m southwest
Chainage:	11,020

2.4.1 Description

This small built feature is located c. 92m southwest of the proposed road scheme within an area of limestone pavement. The feature comprises two small rectangular areas defined by roughly constructed drystone walls (Figure 1, Plate 5). The upstanding walls stand to a height of c. 1m and the walls abut a stone field boundary wall, which is first marked on the 1928-29 OS map. This indicates that the feature was constructed between 1895 and 1929. The function of this feature is not clear, but it may have been used as a booley hut or similar small shelter, in use whilst animals were being tended in a marginal landscape.



Plate 5: CH D, facing northwest

2.4.2 Impact Assessment

The site will not be directly impacted by the proposed project, being 92m away from the edge of the lands required for the scheme. Given the level of dense vegetation in the area between the feature and proposed project, indirect negative impacts are not predicted. The level of predicted impact is deemed to be neutral and no further mitigation is required.

2.5 Site CH E

Site:	CH E
Townland:	Coolagh
ITM:	529927/728203
Classification:	Built feature
Distance from proposed project:	166m southwest
Chainage:	11,000

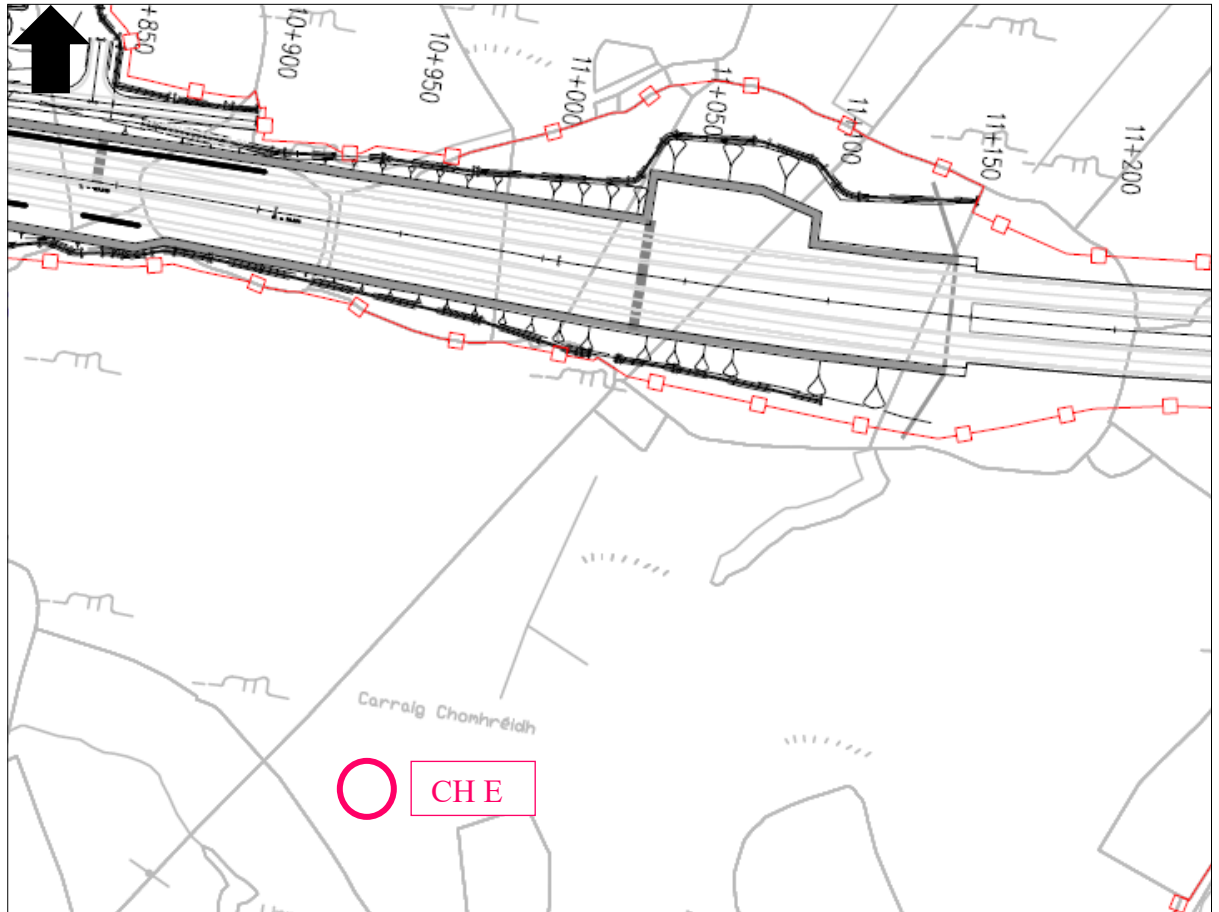


Figure 2: Location of CH E and the proposed N6 GCRR

2.5.1 Description

This small built feature is located c. 166m southwest of the proposed N6 GCRR within an area of limestone pavement. It is situated 77m southwest of CH D, which is similar in form. The feature comprises two small rectangular areas defined by roughly constructed drystone walls (Plate 6, Figure 2). The upstanding walls stand to a height of c. 0.5m and similar to CH D, the walls abut a stone field boundary wall, which is first marked on the 1895-1900 OS map. The function of this feature is not clear, but it may have been used as a booley hut or small shelter whilst animals were being tended in a marginal landscape, or may represent a feature for storage. It is probable that CH D and CH E are connected to one another, given their proximity in a marginal landscape.



Plate 6: CH E, facing southwest

2.5.2 Impact Assessment

The site will not be directly impacted by the proposed N6 GCRR, being 166m away from the proposed development boundary. Given the distance between the feature and proposed N6 GCRR, indirect negative impacts are not predicted. The level of predicted impact is deemed to be neutral and no further mitigation is required.

3 Conclusion

In conclusion, the five sites that were visited with Mr McDonagh during September 2020 are all located outside of the lands required for the N6 GCRR. None of the sites will be subject to direct or indirect negative impacts due to the construction or operation of the proposed N6 GCRR. None of the sites are visible as potential features within the historic mapping or aerial photographic coverage and none have been previously recorded as archaeological or architectural sites. The sites were not identified during the field inspection undertaken for the Environmental Impact Assessment Report for the N6 GCRR due to their location outside of the footprint of the proposed N6 GCRR.

It is probable that the features identified relate to animal husbandry and use of the landscape in marginal environs characterised by limestone pavements and dense scrub. The features appear to be post medieval or relatively modern in date and whilst their function is not overtly clear, their form appears to be closely related to the limestone pavement landscape that they occupy.