

Proposed Davagh Forest Archaeology Trail

February 2019



1.0 Introduction

Mid Ulster District Council has recognised the potential for enhanced countryside access to the regions built and natural heritage as a key driver for delivering a range of outcomes for residents and visitors including improved health and wellbeing, economic growth and increased interest in and appreciation of the value of its rich local heritage. Under its new Community Plan the Council seeks to bring about the conditions that will enable citizens to live in a “welcoming place where people are content, healthy and safe; educated and skilled; where the economy is thriving; the environment and heritage are sustained; and where public services excel”. Under Theme 1 “Economic Growth” of the plan Mid Ulster District Council aims to enhance the attractiveness of the area as a tourism destination, capitalising on the tourist assets of activity and heritage. An extension of this is reflected in the plans associated supporting document, the Mid Ulster Tourism Strategy, which has a core objective of getting more people to visit and stay overnight and maximising tourism investment and employment under the thematic areas of Activity and Heritage by increasing access to and development of the natural heritage assets of the region.

To meet these objectives Council has recently submitted an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund as part of the “Heart of Ancient Ulster” Landscape Partnership scheme. This aims to undertake a series of projects that will connect people and communities with the unique natural and archaeological heritage of the area. The Heart of Ancient Ulster Landscape Partnership Board has recognised that access to natural and built heritage is key opportunity within their scheme and has recently completed an “Access and Signage” report for the programme which has detailed a wide range of projects that will allow the public to gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the heritage assets in the target area.

Mid Ulster District Council has now commissioned Dr William Burke to complete an access report that will provide detail on a newly proposed archaeology trail for Davagh Forest which is being developed as a strategic heritage, recreational and educational hub. The report aims to provide greater detail on the structural requirements of the route and confirm cost estimates for project implementation.

2.0 Current Situation

Access to both the natural and built environment for recreation, interpretation and heritage tourism has been recognised by Council as a key objective in both their community and tourism plans. Davagh Forest has been identified by Mid Ulster District Council as one of its core projects which links strategically to two of the three themes identified with the Council's tourism strategy, Heritage and Outdoor Hubs. The project in its current state will be a visitor Centre/ observatory that will present visitors to the Davagh Forest Centre and Observatory with a unique indoor, immersive visitor experience based around and telling the stories of the richness of both the astronomy and the archaeological heritage of the area. By adding enhanced access opportunities to the archaeological heritage of the wider Davagh area this project will continue the experience outdoors, further enhancing the visitor experience by using and utilising the local environment around the Centre as a backdrop. MUDC have a Memorandum of Understanding with Forest Service which will facilitate access development and improvement in their forests. Further, as part of the wider consultation for the LPS Access and Signage Plan an opportunity was identified to establish a new public access trail that would connect both the natural heritage of Davagh with the archaeological heritage creating a significant asset for the wider engagement of the public with landscape in the area

The Sperrin Mountains are rich in monumental remains of the second millennium B.C. Within Davagh Forest Park (Figure 1) are three sites belonging to this phase of the Bronze Age. On a terrace overlooking Davagh Water at Grid Ref. H7062086720 are remains of a stone circle, one of a large group in Mid Ulster and comparable to the Beaghmore Complex circa. 2 miles to the southwest of the site. Adjacent to the stone circle is a well-preserved ring-cairn, a rarely recognised monument in Ireland,

with two stone alignments. Approximately 1 Km northwest of the ring cairn is an excellent example of a Wedge Tomb (H7014787081), of which 350 are known in Ireland, and thought to belong to the earliest years of the Bronze Age circa 2000 B.C. Known locally as “The Big Man’s Grave”, the tomb consists of a mound of earth & stones, orientated north-south. It is very overgrown with vegetation and heather but where visible, the stones form a roughly oval/ sub-rectangular shape, approximately 8.4m N-S x 6.2m E-W. The tomb is described in PSAMNI as a long narrow cairn with "at least two chambers covered with a line of capstones and two portals 12 ft apart".

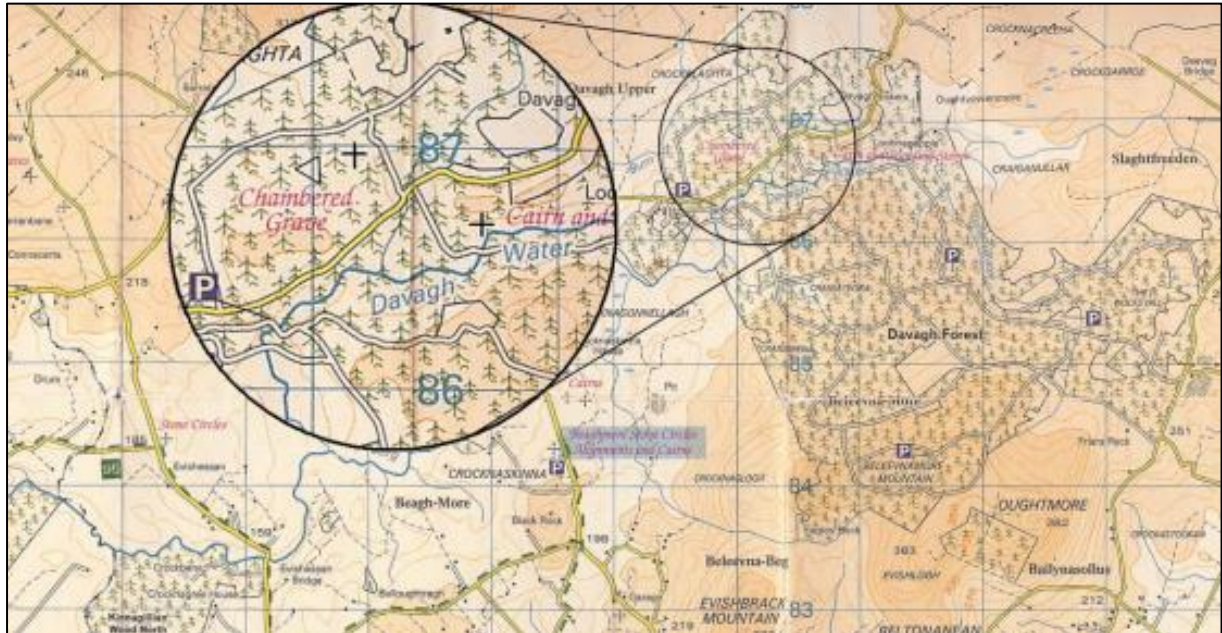


Figure 1: Map showing location of Davagh Forest and the “Cairn and Standing Stones” and Chambered Grave (Ordnance Survey 1:50 000 Sheet 13)

3.0 Proposed Route

Starting at the carpark in Davagh Forest, follow an existing forest path (currently denoted as the Mountain Bike Green Trail) eastward for c. 350m to the secondary carpark (Figure 2). Some minor surface repairs are required on this section. From here, cross the carpark onto the stoned forest trail and continue parallel to the Davagh Water for c. 840m (Figure 3). The path is used by both walkers and cyclists and needs to be widened to a minimum of 1.6m to safely accommodate both activities. Cross the forest road and follow a green path (possible fire break) for c.135m to the stone circle and alignment complex (Figures 4 and 5). It will be necessary to construct a new path here. Return by the same route to the Forest Road and follow that northwards for 270m to the Davagh Road. Continue west for c. 60m to the Ballynnoo Bridge and turn north onto the Forest Road, following it uphill for c.390m and turn west passing the wedge tomb. Follow the road for a further c.860m and turn south for 540m back to the Davagh Road. From here return to the start point at Davagh Forest carpark. The route is detailed in Figures 6a, 6b and 6c.



Figure 2: Forest Road linking both carparks



Figure 3: Existing multiuse trail



Figures 4: Path to stone circle complex

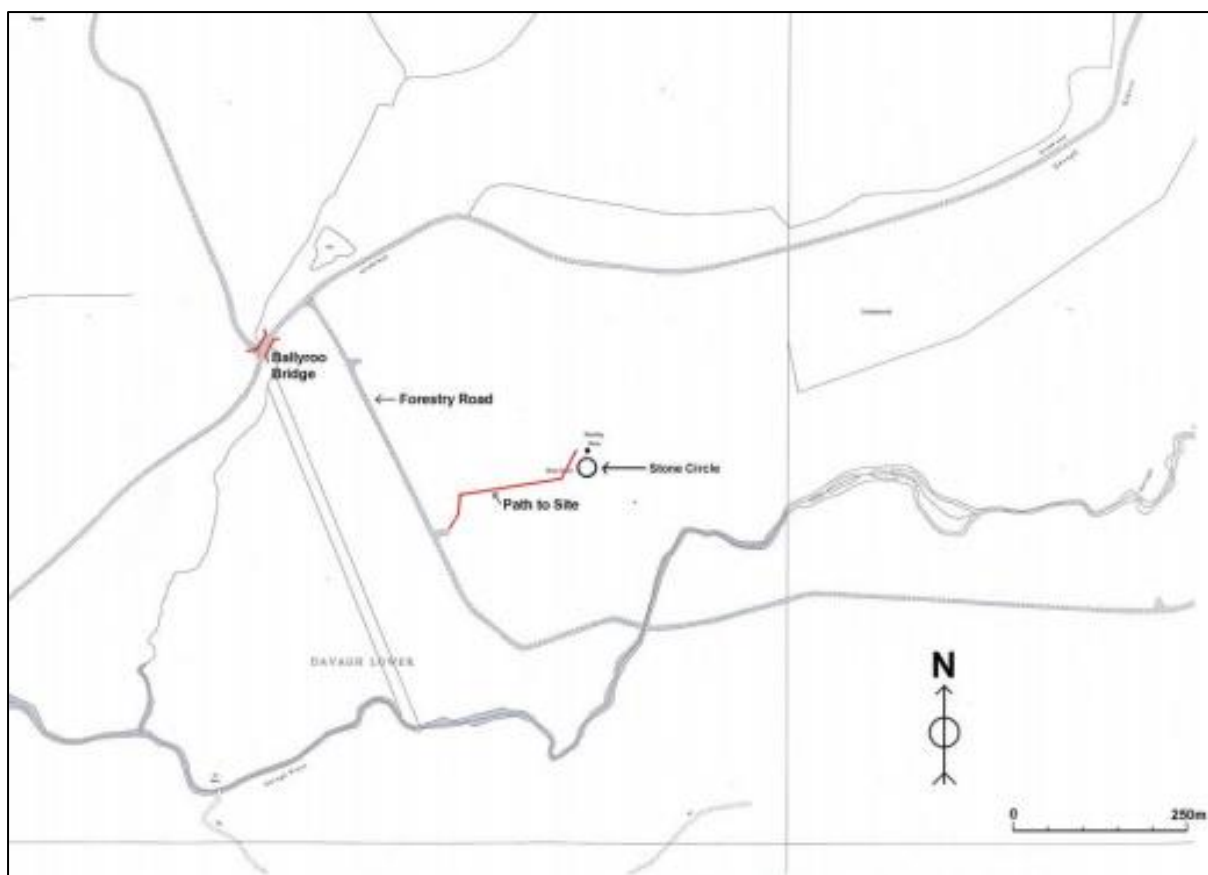


Figure 5: Location of path to Stone circle complex

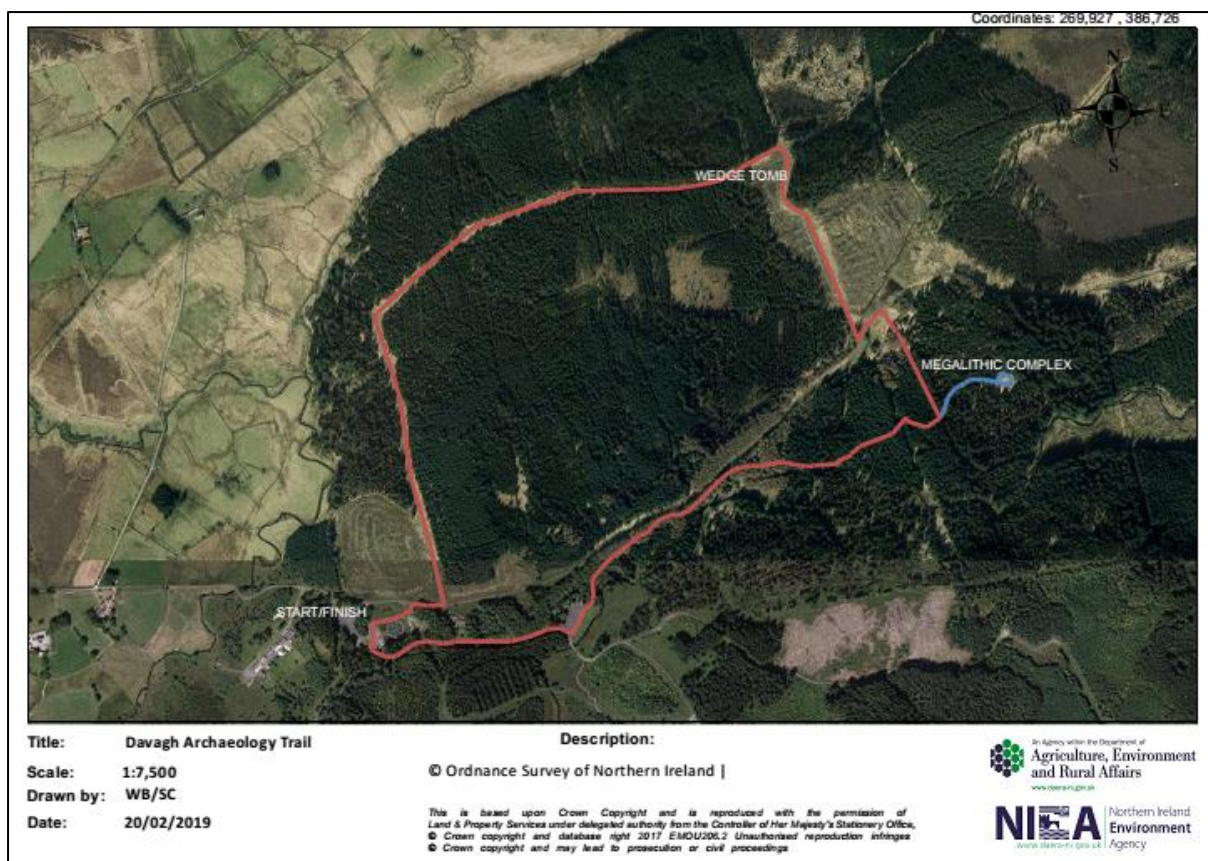


Figure 6a: Trail Map for proposed new archaeology trail

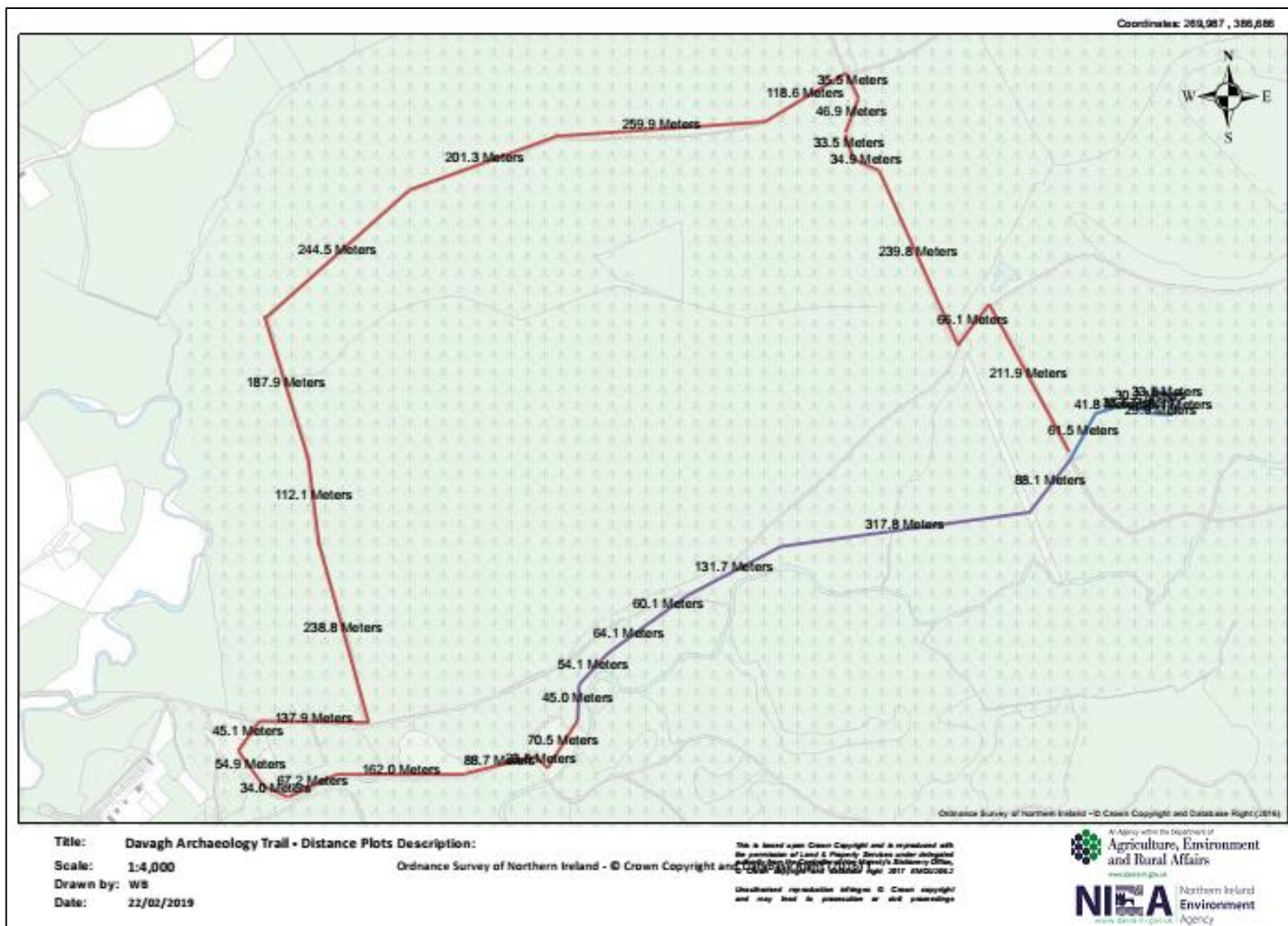


Figure 6b: Map showing distance plots along the route of the proposed Archaeology Trail at Davagh Forest

4.0 Interpretation

Directional signage and interpretation at Davagh should welcome visitors and ensure that the likes of education groups, excluded groups and communities are encouraged to visit, and feel engaged when they are there, with barriers to access overcome as far as is possible. It has been recognised that the use of digital technology should be adopted on the trail to reflect that proposed for the Dark Skies programme. 3D digital models exponentially increase the quality of the interpretation through the creation of a visual language capable to bring together experts and specialists with different backgrounds. This effort also opens new ways to approach the analysis of ancient life. The possibility of making scientifically based reconstructions in 3D of ancient monuments entail a new way to relate to ancient life, focusing human experience and sensitivity rather than stop investigation after the basic discussion on building practice and chronology. The 3D model would be a perfect complement to the dark skies initiative and would allow the user to obtain any desired measure within the modelled space.

Virtual Reality is the perfect tool to reconstruct these ancient places and spaces, allowing people to explore them in a 3D environment when they are on site. Reconstructions would stem from academic publications and research to ensure experiences are as accurate, realistic and enthralling and engaging as possible. An example of this for Stonehenge can be found at <http://www.voyagervr.com/home#info> (Figure 7).



Figure 7: The use of VR for archaeological interpretation at Stonehenge

5.0 Cost Estimate

Cost Estimate	
Davagh Forest Archaeology Trail	
Item	Cost
Preliminaries (7.5%)	£ 10,973.26
Section 1: Car Park to Woodland Trail	
None	£ -
Section 2: Upgrade to Woodland Trail	
Site Clearance, excavation and disposal at £12.45 per m	£ 9,474.45
Geogrid, Type 3, and blinding to refurbish 761m x 1.6m path way at £17.50 per m2	£ 21,308.00
Timber kerbing to path	£ 12,678.26
Drainage - gravel soakaways	£ 4,756.25
Section 3: New Access to Circle Complex	
Site Clearance, excavation and disposal at £16.45 per m	£ 4,030.25
Geogrid, Type 3, and blinding to construct 245m x 1.6m path way at £22.50 per m2	£ 8,820.00
Timber kerbing to path	£ 4,081.70
Drainage - gravel soakaways	£ 1,531.25
Onsite Archaeologist during construction at £300 per day x 5 days	£ 1,500.00
Section 4: Upgrade works to Forest Road	
Type 3 blinding to make good 1600m2 at £9.50 per m2	£ 15,200.00
Trail Furniture	
13 No. Waymarker Posts and discs @ £110.00 ea.	£ 1,430.00
2 No. Trail Head Maps @ £2,100.00 ea.	£ 4,200.00
Biodiversity, Geodiversity & Archaeology Interpretation Points	£ 4,800.00
VR Interpretation	
Research, digitisation and interactive VR platform - http://www.voyagervr.com/contact	£ 52,500.00
Subtotal	£ 157,283.42
Fees (10%)	£ 15,728.34
Contingency (10%)	£ 15,728.34
Habitat Regulations Assessment	£ 2,500.00
Total	£ 191,240.10

