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**Harkin Calls for Development of Major Tourism Project in Roscommon**

The death of Professor Michael Herrity, former Professor of Archaeology at University College Dublin, focussed attention once more on the great work he had done to explore the unique archaeological heritage of Co. Roscommon.

This was stated by Independent MEP Marian Harkin when she suggested that the Rathcroghan royal site should be regarded as at least on a par with Tara.

“Perhaps it was the fact that for so long road access to Rathcroghan by the N25 prevented the logical development of Rathcroghan while the M3 facilitated the development of Royal Tara in Co. Meath”, she said. Now the much improved M3 through Co. Meath had made Tara even more accessible to the huge population of greater Dublin and the millions of tourists who landed at Dublin Airport, she said. The funding for excavation sought by Professor Herrity for many years had never been provided and there was little possibility of a change in this situation in the future, the Independent MEP said.

“Roscommon County Council should take up the challenge of having Rathcroghan, and the vast surrounding archaeological resource, developed into a major tourism and educational project”, she said. The necessary excavation work would never happen if the State was depended upon, she said, but an opportunity existed in upgrading the N5 to incorporate an extensive programme of excavation which could conclusively establish Rathcroghan’s primacy as a royal inauguration site, Marian Harkin said.

Professor Michael Herrity supported by private funding, had done the major studies which revealed the importance of Rathcroghan and Carnfree, she said. “Roscommon County Council should now take on the challenge of leading the development of what could be a major tourism centre for the county focussing on Kingship and on the famous Tain epic which links the Rathcroghan complex to Cooley in Co. Louth”, Independent MEP Marian Harkin concluded.

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