The N25 Waterford City Bypass scheme is located in east County Waterford and south County Kilkenny. The total length of the scheme is 20 km and it runs through agricultural land suitable for tillage and grazing. The topography is dominated by the River Suir, which forms the provincial boundary between Munster and Leinster. Almost unique to road projects, a considerable part of the scheme runs along the bank of a river. Archaeologically, the area is dominated by the Waterford City itself, founded by Vikings in the 10th century. A programme of archaeological test excavation was carried out along the entire length of the scheme. A total of 110 previously unknown sites of archaeological potential were identified as a result of this work. The excavation of these sites took place in 2003 - 2005 and analysis of the excavation results is ongoing. The archaeological works were carried out by Archaeological Consultancy Services Ltd (ACS Ltd), Archaeological Development Services Ltd (ADS Ltd), and Headland Archaeology Ltd on behalf of the National Roads Authority, Waterford County Council and Kilkenny County Council.

Some of the findings in on the N25 Waterford City Bypass:

1. Sword hilt
   Hilt of sword found in Viking warrior grave at Woodstown, the remains of the wooden grip can be seen. (Photo StudioLab)

2. Lead weight
   Lead weight decorated with an enamel face found during excavations at Woodstown. (Photo StudioLab)

3. Silver ingot
   Silver ingot found during excavations at Woodstown. (Photo StudioLab)

4. Neolithic axe and arrowhead
   Neolithic stone axehead and arrowhead found during excavations at Newrath.

5. Standing stones
   View of standing stone and post-holes at Kilmurry after excavation. (Photo ADS Ltd)

6. Coin
   Ummayed Dirham minted about AD 742 in the town of Wasit in the southern part of modern Iraq found in excavations at Woodstown. (Photo StudioLab).

7. Watermill
   Aerial view of the vertical watermill uncovered at Killoteran. (Photo ACS Ltd)

Mesolithic activity and later prehistoric/medieval trackways, Newrath townland, County Kilkenny

This site was located on the eastern edge of a wetland area; the archaeological deposits were located on a probable existing terrace now covered by marshy estuarine deposits. At the base of organic deposits in two areas, Mesolithic activity was encountered on the underlying boulder clay. Flint blades ('Bann Flakes') of Later Mesolithic date were found on the original dry land surface under 2-3 m of peat. This area was subject to periodic inundation throughout prehistory; it is likely simple hurdles and brushwood trackways that were discovered here, were constructed to access dryer land in the marsh for hunting, fishing and gathering. Radiocarbon dating has shown that construction of these trackways took place in the Bronze Age, the Iron Age and the medieval era.

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Uncovered at the multi-period site known as Newrath, just outside the town of Waterford, an early medieval Viking Age millrace was uncovered — the earliest vertical watermill in Ireland. Radiocarbon dates of AD 410 – 650 and AD 764 – 920 were recorded for charcoal and carbonised organic remains from one trench of one of the buildings.

The millrace measured 3 m in average width but widened into a semi-circular millpond 7 m in diameter, with a sluice at the centre of each dam. A small chute cut longitudinally into a slotted oak base plate. The water-flow was controlled through a plate was set into clay marl and held in place by two large posts. The water-flow was controlled through a plate that had been artificially dug along the centre of the small trough of a fulacht fiadh. The millrace and seems to have been located to one side of the site. Finds included copper-alloy stud mounts with gold foil inlay, a fragment of a silver Dirham lead, and a copper-alloy book-clasp, which may have been used in the bookbinding of the manuscript. Evidence of Viking metalworking in silver and lead was found, and the site has produced the earliest vertical watermill in Ireland.

The millrace was located beyond the second dam in the centre of the Viking Age settlement, which was the fifth archaeological site to be excavated on this section of the River Suir. Sub-surface archaeological remains extend c. 3 km along the milkead, and the site lies within a wider context of the foundation and development of Viking Dublin.

Waterford City was an important Viking Age town of Hiberno-Scandinavian settlement, and the watermill at Newrath provides a glimpse of Viking life in south-east Ireland.