



State of Conservation of the World Heritage Property  
Qal'at al- Bahrain - Ancient Harbour and Capital of Dilmun  
(Bahrain) No.1192(bis)

Following the latest decision 39COM.7B.48 by the World Heritage Committee at its 39<sup>th</sup> Session in Bonn, addressing the issue of potential impact of development projects on the attributes of Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Property of Qal'at al-Bahrain - Ancient Harbour and Capital of Dilmun, additional efforts continue to be undertaken in order to ensure protection, conservation and sustainable management of the site in line with the Integrated Management Plan for Qal'at al Bahrain 2013-2018.

**1) Response of the State Party to the to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee No. 39COM 7B.48**

i) Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan

The management plan covers the period between 2013 and 2018. The actions identified are categorized under five strategies; namely legal and de facto protection, conservation management, administration and finance, research, and interpretation, presentation and promotion. Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities (hereinafter BACA) is the official body responsible for the management of the World Heritage Site. Integrated Management Plan for Qal'at al-Bahrain is being implemented by the Site Management Unit with the full support of the Directorate of Archaeology and National Heritage as well as other units and experts within BACA.

Site Management Unit follows the schedule of the action plans. To this day, major amount of works falling under the legal and de facto protection have been completed. The site boundaries have expanded to include the garden components within the world heritage property. Physical planning law, land-use and zoning regulations are under study as explained in paragraph iv below. Furthermore, BACA is in cooperation with the property owners and the tenants for the protection and continuation of the farming activities in the gardens.

Conservation status of the property is maintained in the highest standards and is monitored regularly by the site maintenance team coordinated by the site manager. The development projects within the area are followed up closely and heritage impact assessments are requested as the pre-requirement for them. In case of potential impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the site, the World Heritage Centre is immediately informed about the project. Smaller scale developments in the Buffer Zone are reviewed case by case by the permits unit of BACA from the point of view of archaeology and heritage impact.



As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the site management unit is in place and actively undertaking the needed actions for the protection of the site and effective implementation of the management plan. On a regular basis, the security and site personnel are trained to ensure appropriate care of the site. BACA's experts are in cooperation with other governmental bodies pursuing aligned strategies in the area. In paragraph iv, further information is provided explaining the ongoing intra-governmental activities.

Archaeological studies in the area continue as well. The Directorate of Archaeology and National Heritage is in direct contact with the French expedition who undertakes the archaeological excavations. Recently revised excavation licence regulates the immediate conservation and safeguarding of the discovered artifacts and ensures most up-to-date standards and practices for the archaeological excavations in Qal'at al-Bahrain Site, and overall in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Several activities are undertaken in the site aiming at the awareness raising and promotion. Cultural events and workshops targeting various age groups assist spreading the good practices and extended understanding of the World Heritage Site. New information boards have been added, informative brochures are available at the site and lectures are organized on a regular basis. Rearrangement of the access routes enables bigger amount of visitors into the site. Some of the gardens are now available for guided visits and special events, upon prior confirmation from the side of the owner. The visitors learn about the intricate traditional agricultural methods and can taste local fruits. Further actions of interpretation, presentation and promotion strategy are planned with the intention of increasing the accessibility of different components of the World Heritage property.

Since 2015, due to the economic restraints the state party is facing similarly to the rest of the region, BACA has been subjected to budgetary cuts. Therefore, the financially demanding actions, which mostly fall under the specific projects related to the interpretation, presentation and promotion strategy, have been postponed till the financial situation improves. At the current stage the implementation of the action plan falls approximately three to four months behind the schedule. The first review and assessment of the Management Plan will be conducted later this year and the final review is scheduled for 2019. However, since the heritage sector remains underfunded, it can already be assumed that not all of the suggested actions will be implemented. The state party assures to keep the World Heritage Centre and the Committee updated once the quality assessment reports are prepared.

#### ii) Revision of the Heritage Legislation

BACA regularly follows up with the Shura Council (Bahraini Parliament) the work on the revision of the Legislative Decree No.11 of 1995. The draft amendment of the law submitted by BACA is currently in the process of consultation with the individual Members of the Parliament. BACA remains hopeful that the draft will be introduced later this year. BACA ensures that any development in this matter will be brought to the attention of World Heritage Centre as soon as the progress is made.



The Memoranda of Understanding have not been signed yet, as they can only be concluded after the legislative amendments take place. In the meantime however, BACA implements the Integrated Management Plan, a part of which is to guarantee a close cooperation with the owners of the farmlands. Arrangement of the guided garden visits in cooperation with the garden owners, as expressed in paragraph i, exemplifies the positive results of this close collaboration.

In addition to all above, the Directorate of Urban Planning is undertaking a big scale urban study, encompassing all Bahrain. The expected outcome of the study is to propose a complete strategy overseeing all the components and contributors of the urban life. As a part of the process, the urban planning experts appointed for the project are undertaking meetings with all governmental entities concerned, including BACA. Several meetings have been conducted up to this day, and a particular interest in the preservation of cultural and natural heritage assets of the Kingdom has been expressed by the urbanists involved in the process.

#### iii) Additional Studies

The developer responsible for the road connectivity development for Nurana Island has been tasked with providing an updated Heritage Impact Assessment on the basis of additional in-depth studies to prove that there will be no detrimental impact on OUV of the World Heritage Property. Currently, BACA is awaiting the results of the soil investigation studies which were commissioned by the investor. Based on the soil investigation results, the detailed plans will be prepared by the developer which will constitute the baseline information for the new HIA. In the meantime, the government of Bahrain and the investors have reached to an agreement that out of the two connectivity options for the Nurana Island only the tunnel one is feasible. Thus the other option will not be taken into consideration anymore.

BACA assures that a complete heritage impact assessment will be submitted to the World Heritage Centre immediately after its completion.

#### iv) Land-use and Zoning Regulations

Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities conducted detailed studies for the zoning of the vicinity of Qal'at al-Bahrain site. The study area exceeded the boundaries of the buffer zone of the World Heritage Site on the western and eastern side.

Different stages of the study were presented to the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Works, Municipalities Affairs and Urban Planning (MoWMAUP). Representatives of particularly relevant departments within MoWMAUP, namely The Directorate of Urban Planning, the Central Planning Organization, and the Survey and Land Registration Bureau, were present in the meetings and their feedback has been gathered.



BACA's experts used the 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on Historic Urban Landscapes in the study process. BACA urged other governmental entities to consider cultural heritage as the added value and opportunity to enhance future development projects wherever possible.

As a result of one year long process that took place in the late 2015 and 2016, BACA prepared a proposal consisting of the following information:

1. BACA proposed a vision document for the World Heritage property and its buffer zone. The document was completely in line with the Integrated Management Plan under implementation.
2. A new zoning code that will recognize and respect the cultural and traditional values of the gardens surrounding the Fort was proposed. The importance of such designation has been clearly illustrated to the governmental departments that were involved in the process of the preparation of this proposal.
3. Specific requirements for each of the parcels within the study area were compiled. In total over eight hundred plots within the buffer zone of the World Heritage Site were identified and reviewed. For the most relevant plots, the requirement of heritage impact assessments in line with the ICOMOS guidelines was mentioned and the acceptable functions were listed. The study used the existing zoning codes together with one new code proposed, and specified the acceptable height limits, building percentages and other applicable limitations for all of the plots.
4. BACA also compiled a document for the area exceeding the buffer zone boundaries. The height limitations, acceptable functions and their relations with the World Heritage Site were explained. A general zoning strategy was brought to the attention of the Directorate of Urban Planning where a gradual height increase towards the further points of the study area was suggested. The need of heritage impact assessments for the big scale projects was as well mentioned.

The proposal was officially submitted in October 2016. At the current stage, BACA is awaiting the final comments of the Prime Minister's Office and MoWMAUP.

## 2) Other current conservation issues identified by the State Party

No issues.