

Brief Report of the
State of Conservation of the World Heritage Property:

Qal'at al-Bahrain,
the ancient harbour and capital of Dilmun
(Bahrain) No. 1192bis

Following the latest decision by the World Heritage Committee at its 38th Session in Doha to accept the proposed Minor Boundary Modification presented, continuous efforts have been undertaken to ensure the protection, conservation and sustainable management of the site. Since the Management Plan submitted in late 2013 laid out most of the day-to-day as well as strategic management endeavours on site, this report will only focus on the latest developments since June 2014.

1a) Response of the State Party to the World Heritage Committee's Decision 37 COM 7B.47

The integrated management and conservation plan for the property has been submitted in print and electronic copy in 2014. It has been officially approved by the Minister of Culture at the time and is since been implemented.

1b) Response of the State Party to the World Heritage Committee's Decision 38 COM 8B.49

Revision of the Heritage Law

As indicated in the Minor Boundary Modification Request, it is intended to revise decree law 11 of 1995 to include the notions of cultural landscapes and historic urban centres and heritage categories. The review of the draft submitted in early 2014 was planned for promulgation in the second quarter of 2014. However, due to a number of delays, the Bahrain Parliament did not examine the draft before the summer break and the second half of the year 2014 was occupied by the new parliamentary elections on November 22nd and the subsequent restricting of the government. It is hoped that the proposed legislative changes will be examined shortly. A leaflet which was prepared to illustrate the nature of changes to decision-makers is submitted with this report.

Memoranda of Understanding with property owners

Several meetings with individual property owners were arranged in 2014 and further meetings are scheduled this year. In three cases, the terms of the memorandum to be signed have been agreed upon. In other cases negotiations on the exact contribution of the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities are being negotiated. Since the function of the memorandum is based on the ownership of a cultural landscape as designated by the revision of decree law 11 of 1995, the signing process has been paused until the revision is passed. Following the legislative amendment, an official signing ceremony will be arranged. The Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities will officially invite a representative of UNESCO to this event and forward the signed memoranda as they become available.

Revision of Land-use and Zoning Regulations

Following the above mentioned restructuring of the Bahrain Government, which also affected the Ministry responsible for the physical planning legislation, the promulgation of the revised land use and zoning regulations has equally been delayed. The Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities has submitted draft zoning codes which are currently under review.

2) Other current conservation issues identified by the State Party

Road access to Nurana Development

Following the decision to abandon N-Road, alternative access options to Nurana Development are currently being explored. Studies on the speed of reclamation development along the Northern Coast have shown that the bridge option approved by the Committee at its 37th Session can only be constructed once the reclamations providing the connection points to the East and West are underway. This will earliest be the case in about 10 years.

As Manara Developments intends to attract residents before this, the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities was contacted to identify a temporary access possibility. However, temporary solutions often have the tendency to become permanent, For this reason, the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities insisted, that any temporary or long-term solution must be free of adverse impact to the Outstanding Universal Value.

Two alternatives have been proposed at this stage, a tunnel option and an on-land corridor leading to a causeway/bridge. Manara Developments was requested to undertake a rapid Heritage Impact Assessment for both options to present them for consideration by the World Heritage Committee at its forthcoming meeting. At the time of compilation of this report, the findings of the rapid Heritage Impact Assessment indicate, that both options seem in principle acceptable. However, further studies, in particular of the aquifers through soil investigation, remain to be undertaken to conclusively assess the impacts of this project.

At this stage, it would be helpful, if the routing could be noted and approved on the condition that the recommended studies are undertaken and any potential negative impacts on the World Heritage property can be precluded.