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**Report on ICOMOS Mission to  
Tanum (Sweden)**

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**Dr Henry Cleere**

OBE PhD DLitt FSA FCMI HonMIFA  
Archaeological Heritage Consultant

## **1 Background**

The site designated “Rock Carvings in Tanum” in Bohuslän (Sweden) was inscribed on the World Heritage List at the 18th Session of the World Heritage Committee in Phuket (Thailand) in December 1994. The site inscribed comprised an area containing an exceptional assemblage of prehistoric rock carvings, but also a considerable area of the surrounding landscape which is rich in archaeological sites, for the most part unexcavated, and which form the background to the rock art and its role in the evolution of this landscape in prehistory.

At the time of the inscription the national road, at that time single-lane in each direction, which passed through the central–eastern section of the inscribed site, had been designated for upgrading as the European E-6 road travelling south from Oslo. It will become a dual carriageway and will assist in reducing the congestion on the existing road.

The UNESCO World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS were invited to discuss, at an early stage of the planning of the new E-6 road, its possible re-routing so as to reduce the impact of the stretch between Rabbalshede and Tanumshede, the northern section of which traverses the World Heritage site. Representatives of the Centre and ICOMOS visited Tanum on 24–25 September 1998 to meet representatives of the Swedish National Road Administration (*Vägverket*), the Swedish National Board of Antiquities (*Riksantikvarieämbetet*), and the County Authority (*Länsstyrelsen Västra Götaland*).

In its report, which was presented to the 22nd Session of the Committee in Kyoto (Japan) in December 1998, the joint mission urged the State Party to give further consideration to the Blue Route, which passes outside and to the west of the World Heritage site. In the event that this had to be precluded for engineering, social, and/or financial reasons, the preferred route was the Red 4b Route, which passes through a small portion of the eastern part of the site. This recommendation was approved by the Committee and transmitted to the State Party.

Since that time the National Road Administration have carried out extensive further investigations, which have led to the definitive abandonment of the Blue Route. The Administration has kept the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS fully informed of the progress of its investigations. Its preferred solution is now the Red 23 Route, which departs from the alignment of the existing road to the south of Lunden and traverses a section of the World Heritage site. The National Board of Antiquities requested UNESCO to send a further mission to study this Route and other alternatives, and the World Heritage Centre commissioned ICOMOS to undertake this mission, which took place on 2–3 September 2002.

## **2 Programme of the mission**

The ICOMOS mission visited three possible routes for the road: Red Route 23 (*Röd 23*), Red Route 4 (*Röd 4*), and the Central Red Route (*Röd Mitt*). The expert was accompanied by representatives of the National Board of Antiquities and the County Authority.

### **3      *The alternative routes***

The mission finds the *Red Route 23* to be unacceptable, for three reasons:

- It will have a severe visual impact on the site, cutting as it does across an area of open farmland which lies at the heart of the World Heritage site;
- It will represent a physical and perceptual barrier between two parts of the inscribed area, which as a whole is an integral cultural (prehistoric) landscape of outstanding quality;
- Non-systematic archaeological prospecting and chance finds in the area to be traversed by Red Route 23 indicate that it contains a significant and coherent amount of important archaeological material in the form of settlements, field boundaries, etc.

Its potential for the future interpretation and presentation of the World Heritage site is high, and this would be jeopardized by the existence of a substantial barrier in the form of a fast dual-carriageway road.

*Red Route 4b* (now known as *Red Route 4*) remains attractive, since its course within the World Heritage site is shorter than that of Red Route 23, and it departs from the existing alignment further north than Red Route 23. For most of its route it passes through a wooded area, and so the visual impact would be less severe. There is admittedly a number of known archaeological sites along its route, but the forest cover would make these more difficult to integrate into a coherent presentation programme for the prehistoric landscape.

The arguments against this route put forward by the Road Administration relate to the engineering problems involved, and also the fact that it impinges upon a nature reserve. It also involved the construction of an elevated section to cross the Fossum valley.

The *Central Red Route* passes a little to the south of Red Route 4, though leaving the existing alignment at the same point, and it is also slightly shorter. It also passes through a heavily wooded area with archaeological potential, but the same criteria apply as to Red Route 4. It also impinges upon the nature reserve, though to a lesser extent. The engineering problems will be less serious, and hence less expensive, involving the use of short tunnels rather than a bridge overpass.

### **4      *Recommendation***

In order to preserve the values for which this site was inscribed on the World Heritage List, while at the same time accepting the inevitability of some impact upon it from economic and social imperatives, the ICOMOS mission strongly recommends that the Central Red Route (*Röd Mitt*) should be adopted. This represents an acceptable compromise between the unacceptably invasive and disruptive nature of Red Route 23 and the engineering problems associated with Red Route 4.

There can be no doubt that the adoption of this route will make possible a broader and more informative interpretation and presentation of what is a prehistoric landscape of exceptional quality, to which the National Board of Antiquities and the County Authority are irrevocably committed.

**Professor Henry Cleere**

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