Thingvellir (Iceland)

No 1152

1. BASIC DATA

State Party:	Iceland
Name of property:	Thingvellir National Park
Location:	Bláskógabyggð municipality district of Arnessysla
Date received:	29 January 2003

Category of property:

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *site.* In terms of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, paragraph 39, this is a *cultural landscape*.

Brief description:

The nominated property is the open-air site of the Althing, or general assembly representing the whole of Iceland, which was held from around 930, when it was established by the Vikings, until 1798, and its hinterland, the Thingvellir National Park.

2. THE PROPERTY

Description

The core of the nominated area is the Althing or site of the general Assembly of Iceland. This site, which was used continuously from its inception around 930 until 1798, has come to have both deep historical and symbolic associations for the people of Iceland. The assembly site is against the northwestern boundary of the Thingvellir National Park, which thus provides the setting for the site to the south and east.

The property is located 49km from Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland. The national park was founded in 1930 as Iceland's first national park, one of the earliest parks in Europe. It was greatly enlarged in the 1950s and further extended in 1998. It now covers an area of 93sq km.

The landscape of the park is located in an active volcanic area. Its most well defined feature is a major rift, which has produced dramatic fissures and cliffs demonstrating inter-continental rifting in a spectacular and understandable way. These cliffs and rifts bound the site to the southeast and northwest. To the north, volcanic mountains rise towards the permanent icecap of Langjokull. On three sides the park is therefore enclosed by a belt of mountains and grass covered lava fields, while the remaining side to the southwest borders Lake Thingvallavatn, the north end of which lies inside the park.

A formal buffer zone is proposed against the north and west boundaries of the national park and southwest over Lake Thingvallavatn. Although there is no proposed formal Buffer Zone proposed outside the national park on the south and east sides, the nomination states that the land to the east and southeast of the Park boundaries has been designated as nature protection areas and thus is 'considered to act as a buffer zone'. The remaining area to the south of the park boundaries has designated land-use in line with the aims of the national park and thus also can be considered as a buffer zone.

The nominated property presents tangible and intangible cultural qualities and natural qualities as follows:

Tangible qualities:

i. *The remains of the site of the Althing or Icelandic General Assembly*

ii. *Remains of agricultural use of the park landscape from 18th and 19th centuries*

iii. *Thingvellir Church and adjacent farm*

iv. *The population of arctic char in Lake Thingvallavatn*

Intangible qualities:

i. *The Althing site reflects wider Medieval Germanic notions of law and authority*

ii. *The association of the Althing site and its nearby wider landscape with the notions of Icelandic identity, liberty and 'natural philosophy' which have made it a national shrine*

The remains of the site of the Althing or Icelandic General Assembly

Thingvellir means Assembly Field. It was in 930 that the Icelanders created a general Assembly or parliament, known as Althing, a two-week open-air gathering. It lasted right through until 1798. The assembly had several institutions: the Law Council, five courts and the Lawspeaker. The principle task of the Council was to 'frame the law'. The 12th century chronicles, the *Book of Icelanders* (*Islendlingabok*) describes the search for a suitable assembly site, convenient for the routes across the island. The site chosen, although towards the south of the island formed a suitable focus for the greatest concentration of the farming population.

Remains at Thingvellir include fragments of around 50 attendees' booths. Booths, built of turf and stone with a canvas roof provided temporary accommodation for those attending the assembly. They were frequently repaired or re-built on the same site. Those remaining seem to date from the 17th and 18th centuries – the final flourishing of the Assembly – and seem to have been built on top of earlier remains.

Although six excavations have been carried out at Thingvellir (see below), the site has not been thoroughly excavated. However initial research and recent (2002) trial trenches, suggests that the belowground deposits could be substantial and provide evidence dating back to the 10th century.

Although the Norse settlers colonised many countries, only in two are there remains of open-air assembly sites: in Iceland at Thingvellir, and in Britain at the Tynwald in the Isle of Man and at the Thingmount in the Lake District, Cumbria. Thingvellir is the most extensive and complete.

Remains of agricultural use of the park landscape from 18th and 19th centuries

The hinterland of the Althing was agricultural land on which the prosperity of the island depended. No one now lives in what is now the National Park; three farms in the area when the park was established were bought out and the houses and buildings gradually abandoned. The last residents left in the 1960s.

The park landscape contains abundant remains of structures associated with earlier agricultural use of the land, such as houses, outhouses and sheep pens, surrounded by their small subsistence homefields for arable crops and perhaps hay, and a network of tracks linking the farms to each other and to the Assembly site on which they converged. The vast open expanses of land around the enclosed fields was grazing land – for the sheep and cattle of the farms but also to be used by the horses of those attending the Assemblies.

There are the remains of six farms, a summer farm or *sheiling*, a chapel and a brew-house. It is surmised that most of the remains date from the 18th and 19th centuries, although documentary evidence for specific settlements such as the Grimsstadir farm goes back to the 10th century. It seems quite likely that the farms were rebuilt many times on the same site, so that what survives reflects a much earlier land-use pattern probably dating back to the great Age of Settlement 870-930, and thus linking the landscape to the prolonged use of the Assembly site.

The park landscape is therefore a relict cultural landscape, providing ample evidence for the way the landscape was husbanded over the past 1000 years, and for the close relationship between the Assembly site and the farmed landscape, which supported the inhabitants of the island.

Thingvellir Church and adjacent farm

The present Thingvellir Church, a protected building, dates from the 1850s, but it is on the site of a much larger church dating from the early 11th century. The neighbouring Thingvellir Farm is a relatively modern building in classic Icelandic form, which now serves as a country residence for the President of Iceland.

The population of arctic char in Lake Thingvallavatn

The nominated property displays a very strong interaction between natural and cultural factors. One of the key natural features put forward in the nomination is the population of four types of Arctic char found in Lake Thingvallavatn.

Reflection by the Althing site of wider Medieval Germanic notions of law and authority

The Norse settlers who colonised Iceland in the 9th and 10th centuries from Scandinavia, Britain and Ireland brought with them a system of governance that prevailed at the time amongst Germanic peoples in northern Europe – an assembly of free and armed men who passed and controlled laws, a leader referred to as a king who took the lead in times of war, and the ability of farmers to choose which chieftain they followed. In Iceland as the settlers found an empty land they were able to develop a society that persisted in essence for centuries. The Assembly site is now a tangible reminder of this Germanic system that survived in Iceland while elsewhere it changed and adapted as the settlers intermingled with existing populations.

Thingvellir's pivotal association with mediaeval Germanic law and governance thus has a far-wider significance than within Iceland.

The 'new' society that evolved in Iceland is also seen by some to be the first European State in the 'New World' and a precursor to those later established on the west of the Atlantic.

The association of the wider landscape near the Althing site with notions of Icelandic identity, liberty and 'natural philosophy'

The interplay between Thingvellir's landscape, with its dramatic contrasts between cliffs, fissures, lava fields and grassy plains, and its history, has given the area a pivotal role in the national consciousness. It has come to be seen as the kernel of Iceland and an icon for the nation. Thingvellir's role in the governance of the island for 800 years has developed into a wider association with ideals of liberty and natural philosophy, so much so that the area is now seen as possessing a sacred quality – the home of the national spirit.

History

Iceland appears to have been unpopulated when Nordic peoples arrived in the 9th century – part of a mass westward migration from Scandinavia, Britain and Ireland. Settlement begun around 870 and Iceland is considered to have been fully settled by around 930, the time between those two dates being known as the Age of Settlement.

At around the same time, the Nordic migration reached the Faroe Islands and Greenland. In all three places national assemblies of free and armed mean were established in line with Germanic traditions, but unlike other settlements in already populated countries, national leaders or kings who could lead in times of war, were not established – largely because it seems the islands offered strategic protection.

In Iceland, the Althing or main Assembly lasted initially for two weeks a year and was held, as in all Germanic Societies outdoors. Its role was to set and maintain the laws and resolve disputes in the laws themselves. The laws were seen as a covenant between free men, a sort of social contract. These laws were written down in 1117-8 and have been preserved in 12th century manuscripts.

The Commonwealth, as this early society was known, was a loose association of the country's principal chieftains. No centralised authority existed – the governing institutions defined people's rights, it did not enforce them. Its ideals of laws and power, that power was by nature restricted and laws defining that power had emerged over generations by mutual agreement, were heralded in the Icelandic sagas written between the 12th and 13th centuries.

By the early 13th century the administrative structure was beginning to disintegrate in the face of clashes between the country's most powerful leaders.

At the time of the exodus from Norway and other parts of Europe, royal power in those countries was still quite weak. Over the following three hundred years, royal power grew to be much more effective to the extent that by the

13th century a country's strength was seen to lie in being within the control of a strong monarch. Iceland choose to align itself with the Norwegian monarchy in 1262-4, but with the chieftains largely retaining their independence.

Between 1262 and 1319 the administrative structure was amended to give the king and his officials the right to enforce laws and to allow the king to appoint the Law Council. It still however retained it right to legislate.

In 1662 'Absolutism' (i.e. absolute control by the king) was introduced in Iceland, which meant that the role of the Law Council was substantially reduced. It did still adopt laws in limited areas up until 1700. However within fifty years after this the legislative powers of the Althing had finally disappeared and by the end of the 18th century meetings of the Assembly were a mere shadow of what they had once been. After an earthquake damaged the assembly site in 1789, the Althing was moved to Reykjavik where it met until it was finally abolished in 1800.

The ideals of the early Commonwealth, as written down in the sagas, greatly influenced those who in the 19th century begun to campaign for a free and sovereign Iceland. Poets and authors who took up the theme saw Thingvellir as a place where the 'soul' and 'spirit' of the Icelandic nation resided. Similarly artists were inspired to paint not just the place but evocations of the 'noble' systems of justice associated with it.

This nationalistic awakening coincided with similar feelings across Europe and a growing awareness of landscape as spiritual asset. Icelandic sagas were translated and gained popularity elsewhere in Europe. Iceland came to be seen as the repository of Nordic culture and more and more tourists started to make pilgrimages to Thingvellir.

In 1930, to coincide with the millennial celebrations of the establishment of the Althing, the Icelandic government formally recognised the significance of Thingvellir by establishing it as a national park, one of the first in Europe.

Management regime

Legal provision:

The nominated property is protected by the 1928 *Law on the Thingvellir National Park* (No.59/1928), which came into force when the National Park opened in 1930. This established the Thingvellir National Park Commission, which has overall responsibility for the management of the Park.

All archaeological remains in Iceland are protected under the 2001 *National Heritage Act* (No. 107/2001). The Archaeological Preservation Agency has been set up to administer this law.

The *National Planning and Building Act* (No. 73/1997, as revised by No 135/1997 and No. 58/1999) establishes a comprehensive land-use planning system analogous to those in force in the Nordic countries and the United Kingdom. Protection of the nominated property and its buffer zone is included in the Regional Plan for the Central Highlands, as well as the plans of the Municipalities of Bláskógabyggð and Grimsnes & Grafningur.

Historic buildings are covered by the *National Architectural Heritage Act* (No. 104/2001) and are administered by the National Architectural Heritage Board. Thingvellir Church is the only building within the National Park protected under this law.

Nature conservation is covered by the *Nature Conservation Act* (No. 44/1999 and amendments).

All of these statutes contain provisions for prosecutions and penalties for transgressions that adversely impact archaeological sites and ruins, historic buildings, specific landscape types, etc and for unauthorized development projects or changes of use.

Management structure:

Overall management of the existing Park is the responsibility of the three-man Thingvellir National Park Commission. Traditionally, its members are selected from the three main political parties; the current chairman is a former Minister of Education, Culture, and Science and now Minister of Justice.

There is a full-time staff of three, headed by the Director, who has considerable experience in the field of national park management. During the tourist season (1 May to 1 September) between ten and twelve temporary wardens are employed.

Resources:

Thingvellir National Park receives funds for maintenance and management from the Treasury budget. The funding is based on an annual plan that covers both running costs and projects. Income generated on the site is retained in the park.

In addition the Thingvellir Commission funds archaeological excavation. This started in 2002 and is planned to continue until l2006.

Interpretative work in the park is sponsored by Landsbanki.

Justification by the State Party (summary)

The State Party suggests that the outstanding universal value of the property stems from a combinations of the following cultural assets:

- The site of the general assembly or Althing for the whole of Iceland, established in 930
- The association of the assembly with its exposition of Germanic Law and the 12th record of Icelandic Law – the *Grágás*
- The uninterrupted history of the Althing
- Unique reflection of mediaeval notions of law and authority
- Large area of physical remains of the Althin
- Outstanding cultural landscape of the National Park
- Peaceful change of religion in year 1000
- Inspirational landscape of Thingvellir

3. ICOMOS EVALUATION

Actions by ICOMOS

The site was visited by a joint ICOMOS/IUCN mission in August 2003.

ICOMOS has also consulted its International Scientific Committee on Historic Gardens / Cultural Landscapes.

Conservation

Conservation history:

Archaeological research in the form of excavations and survey has taken place at Thingvellir on a relatively small scale in 1880, 1920, 1957, 1986–92, 1998, and 2002. Excavation is currently in progress at the Biskupabuðir site near the church, carried out by the Institute of Archaeology, a private company.

There is an urgent need for an archaeological research programme for the Innermost Assembly Site as part of the Conservation Management Plan. This should concentrate on the recording of all visible remains and of sub-surface remains, using modern geophysical techniques such as magnetometry, resistivity surveying, ground radar, and infrared remote sensing. The most important objective should be established the how far the structures associated with the Althing extend into the landscape. Thereafter excavation should be kept to a minimum and orientated to problem solving, rather than the exposure of large areas of remains.

State of conservation:

There are virtually no significant visible remains on the ancient assembly site. There are however significant visible remains of structures, such as the large Snorrabuð and the extensive buildings around the Biskupabuðir site, along with some of the 17th and 18th century booths. There is, however, a great deal of buried evidence of the booths and other structures that provided for those who attended the annual meetings. The conservation of these elements above ground is acceptable, although the slow process of decay below ground will continue.

Care must be taken to ensure that these do not deteriorate further as a result of uncontrolled visitor access.

Thingvellir Church, and the neighbouring Thingvellir Farm, are both conserved and maintained impeccably.

Management:

The Commission published its planning strategy *Thingvellir – National Park and Environment* in 1988. This resulted in a number of interventions from 1990 onwards on the Innermost Assembly Site, designed to improve visitor access and ease pressure on the major elements of the historic site by means of the construction of footpaths, stairways, and viewing platforms.

At the present time a Conservation Management Plan is nearing completion. This is being drafted by a commercial consultancy group working closely with the Director and Interpretation Manager of the Park. This was presented in detail to the mission on 6 August 2003. In the opinion of the mission it conforms fully to the requirements of the World Heritage Committee in respect of management mechanisms and reflects current thinking on management planning. A number of modifications proposed by the mission (e.g. preparation of annual action plans; revision of main plan on a six-year cycle; need for archaeological research plan) were accepted and will be incorporated into the final plan. This was to be submitted to the Commission by the end of 2003 and the approved text sent to the Advisory Bodies and the UNESCO World Heritage Centre by 1 March 2004.

Risk analysis:

Threats identified in the nomination are:

- Development pressures:

The main development threat is the plan to 'rebuild' State Road no 365, which runs through the southern part of the park from Gjábakki in the west and continues through the buffer zone to Laugarvatn in the east. This is being put forward for traffic safety and traffic management reasons. The nomination dossier suggested that this would be done in a way tot 'minimise environmental impacts' and to 'take into account the importance of the natural and cultural heritage'.

The mission was concerned about this scheme. Subsequent to the mission it was learned that the speed limit of 50 km/h that applies to other roads within the Park (see dossier, page 64) will be increased to 90 km/h for the No. 365 Road, which will be rebuilt on a route further south so as provide a more "scenic" view of Lake Thingvallavatn.

The State Party was asked to consider proposing an alternative route outside the nominated area – see below.

- Holiday chalets:

Private chalets within the park let by the Thingvellir Commission for a ten-year period are mentioned as a possible threat but it is said that there are no plans to remove them. However it is stated that no new chalets will be allowed.

Outside the Park, chalets are visually obtrusive particularly around Lake Thingvellir – *see authenticity, threats and recommendations below.*

- Forestry:

Conifers were planted at various places the park from 1899 onwards as pioneering experiments in Icelandic forestry. Most prominent is Pine Grove around 1,000 metres north of the assembly site. The dossier mentions allowing the oldest trees to continue to prosper 'as much and as long as possible'.

The intrusiveness of these trees near to the heart of the proposed World Heritage Site would seem to call for a shorter timescale for their removal – *see authenticity and recommendations below*.

- Environmental pressures:

Subsidence of the land below the assembly site, some 3-4 metres over the past 1,000 year, creates problems with flooding from the River Öxará. Earthquakes in the area have added to this problem. Mitigation measures are being considered.

- Water quality:

One issue not addressed in detail in the dossier is the threat to the water quality of Lake Þingvallavatn. This ecosystem of the lake is very sensitive to the impact of any artificial inputs, especially nitrogen and this could be exacerbated by discharge from summer houses. Summer houses within the park have leases, which stipulate appropriate controls over use, and waste discharge. However, in addition, there are several hundred summer houses around the shores outside the Park. As the lake is a shared system with part of the nominated site, controls over pollution are needed for all the summerhouses, not just those in the Park. *See recommendations below.*

- Visitor pressure:

The annual visitor numbers are believed to be in the neighbourhood of 300,000, 5000–6000 of them making use of the camp-site within the Park.

Tourism is seen as a major contributor to the national economy of Iceland, and there is a national campaign to increase visitor numbers. This, coupled with possible inscription on the World Heritage List, is predicted to increase visitor numbers to Thingvellir to as many as one million per year in the coming decade.

Ways of mitigating impact is addressed in the dossier. However the mission stressed the importance of provision being made for substantially increased visitor numbers in the Conservation Management Plan, a point that was accepted.

Two detailed issues need to be addressed:

- The central parking place, immediately east of the historic core, is intrusive
- A heavy concrete bridge over the River Öxará on the route in the gorge is inappropriate in such a beautiful setting. *See recommendations*

Authenticity and Integrity

Authenticity is not overall an issue at this property. The overall cultural landscape has changed little since the 10th century, and more recent buildings such as the Thingvellir Church and Farm respect traditional styles. However there are two specific aspects of the property that lack authenticity.

Contemporary "summer houses" are particularly intrusive along the western shores of Lake Thingvallavatn south-west of the Innermost Assembly Site, and there is also a scatter of them in the wider landscape to the east of the Assembly Site. In terms of design these are unexceptionable, but their presence is incompatible with the objectives of the Park.

It is understood that the plots on which these were built were made available on ten-year leases at a time when management of the Park was less rigorous than it is today. Those alongside Lake Thingvallavatn also constitute an extra cause for concern because of the possibility of pollution from sewage discharges into the Lake.
Another non-authentic element is conifer plantation within the Innermost Assembly Site, planted from 1899. The objection to these is the fact that these are non-indigenous trees: it is now established that there were no conifers on the island when the first settlers arrived in the 9th century. There is a somewhat cautious policy of the progressive felling of these conifers and their replacement with indigenous species.

Overall the nominated site can be said to have integrity – with the boundary encompassing all the necessary attributes of the Althing and its surrounding landscape.

Comparative evaluation

Although a number of medieval assembly sites are known in other European countries, particularly Norway, Thingvellir is both historically, archaeologically and symbolically the most significant.

In some other countries, the assembly sites are those of local or regional assemblies that performed a different role. The Althing as a national assembly represented the whole country and was in effect the capital of Iceland for two weeks each year when key legal and administrative decisions were made.

At Thingvellir the site has more visible remains that at other comparable sites and also it appears potentially to have very rich archaeological layers yet to be explored. No other sites show visible ruins, although mounds are extant at the Tynwald in the Isle of Man, Gulating, and Frostating in Norway, and at the Thingmount in UK.

As well as physical remains and national status, the Althing site in Iceland has come to have extra values connected with its long use, with knowledge of its governance role transmitted down the centuries in the Icelandic sagas, and through its dramatic natural setting that has changed little since the 9th century. It has thus acquired symbolic associations with Icelandic identify and with Norse culture and is perceived as a place of aesthetic appeal.

The Tynwald on the other hand, although arguably older than the Althing is heavily restored and landscaped and sits in an urban setting: it has not come to associated with feelings of identity, nor is it perceived as capturing the essence of Germanic law in a way that the Althing does. The Thingmount is largely unknown and, although in a beautiful setting, is not associated with any communal memory of its function or significance. And most of the five Norwegian *tings* are marked with later 19th and 20th century monuments.

The Althing is thus unique for its extensive built remains, its unspoilt setting and for its strong known associations with Germanic Law and Norse culture.

Outstanding universal value

General statement:

The Thingvellir National Park is of outstanding universal value for:

- The large area of physical remains of the site of the national assembly or Althing established for Iceland in 930, and which persisted in use until the 18th century.

- The association of the Althing and Thingvellir with Germanic Law and governance, an association long known and appreciated through the Icelandic sagas and the written codification of the *Grágás* Laws, and one that was strengthened in the 19th century through the independence movement and through growing awareness of landscape appreciation and its perceived association with 'natural' and 'noble' laws
- The association between the Althing and its hinterland, (now the landscape of the National Park) agricultural land which traditionally provided grazing grounds for those attending the Althing and across which tracks led to the Assembly grounds.
- The fossilised cultural landscape of the park which reflects the farmed landscape over the past thousand years through abandoned farms, fields, tracks and through association with people and events recorded in place names and archival evidence, thus documenting the settlement of Iceland, and the high natural values of this landscape
- The inspirational qualities of the Thingvellir landscape, derived from its unchanging dramatic beauty, its association with national events and ancient systems of law and governance, have given the area iconic status and turned it into the spiritual centre of Iceland

Evaluation of criteria:

The site has been nominated on the basis of *criteria iii and vi*:

Criterion iii: The Althing and its hinterland, the Thingvellir National Park, represent, through the remains of the assembly ground, the booths for those who attended, and through landscape evidence of settlement extending back possibly to the time the assembly was established, a unique reflection of mediaeval Norse/Germanic culture and one that persisted in essence from its foundation in 980 AD until the 18th century.

Criterion vi: Pride in the strong association of the Althing to mediaeval Germanic/ Norse governance, known through the 12th century Icelandic sagas, and reinforced during the fight for independence in the 19th century, have, together with the powerful natural setting of the assembly grounds, given the site iconic status as a shrine for the national.

4. ICOMOS RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation for the future

The site has a unique cultural significance to the Icelandic people as in effect a national shrine, linked to ancient traditions. This spiritual significance is closely connected to the perceived 'natural' and unchanging nature of the site and its remoteness from modern living.

In order to sustain this significance on a wide largely open site, it will be necessary to give attention to even comparatively small details of the site.

The following issues need addressing in this connection:

Plan to 'rebuild' State Road no 365:

The existing Road 365 through the eastern part of the National Park is planned to be 'improved' into a fast highway, constructed for 90 km/h traffic. Two alternative routes were being considered at the time of the mission, both of which involved about 3–5km of new or upgraded road (roughly half of this in the Park itself, and half in land to the east).

An environmental impact assessment (available only in Icelandic) had been prepared. The benefits of a new road in terms of improved access are clear, but good practice these days would favour alternatives that avoid such a sensitive area altogether.

Subsequent to the mission the State Party was asked to suggest alternative routes outside the nominated site. An alternative was put forward which cut through a small triangle at the southeast of the nominated site, but with the rest of the road being outside the nominated site.

ICOMOS would recommend acceptance of this route provided that the triangle of land is taken out of the nominated site, thus leaving the road either outside the nominated site or along its boundary, and that the new road does not lead to upgrading of the existing routes within the nominated area. The State Party's response to ICOMOS's view is still awaited.

The Mission also commented on the need to exercise control over the whole of Lake Thingvallavatn as a single ecosystem. The State Party was asked to extend the Buffer Zone to cover the whole of the Lake and this they have now agreed to do.

Summerhouses

The summerhouse within the park are visually intrusive and also potentially environmentally damaging, although with its seems adequate controls in place through their leases. Those around the edge of the Lake Thingvallavatn are also potential damaging to the sensitive ecology of the lake and appear to have less control in place.

It would be desirable if leases were not renewed in the park when they expire (even though this has financial implications). Furthermore stronger controls are needed for those summerhouses outside the park, which could impact on the waters of the lake within the park. In order to further control the wasters of the lake it would be desirable if the whole lake could be made part of the buffer zone.

Forestry

The impact of conifer plantations on the aesthetic qualities of the site is in place quite negative. It would be desirable for particularly areas close to the assembly site to be the subject of an eradication programme.

Recommendation with respect to inscription

That the site be inscribed on the World Heritage list as a *cultural landscape* on the basis of ***criteria iii and vi,*** subject to the following recommendations:

- A comprehensive programme of archaeological research, with emphasis on non-destructive recording which be included in the Management Plan.
- Plans should be developed for the progressive acquisition of holiday houses within the Park as and when their leases some to an end. Stricter controls should be put in place for effluent from holiday houses bordering Lake Thingvallavatn.
- A programme to remove non-indigenous conifers from the entire Park and replace them, where appropriate, by native species should be part of the Management Plan.
- The revised road scheme should be accepted subject to the conditions outlined above.
- It is recommended that the central car park at Flosagjá, on the eastern side of the Öxará, should be closed.
- The steel and concrete bridge over the Öxará river should be replaced by a lighter construction more in harmony with the landscape.

ICOMOS, March 2004