
Causses and Cévennes (France) No 1153rev

Official name as proposed by the State Party

The Causses and the Cévennes, Mediterranean agro-pastoral Cultural Landscape

Location

Gard, Hérault and Lozère departments
Languedoc-Roussillon Region
Aveyron department, Midi-Pyrénées Region

Brief description

The shale and granite Cévennes mountain chain, interspersed by wide deep valleys, rises above the plains of Languedoc and the Mediterranean and is the southern end of the Massif Central. Its dispersed farms on the mountain slopes, oases of green set amidst deep terraces and thick woodlands of chestnut and pine, are linked by high level tracks across the undulating plateaux of the mountain summits. In distinct contrast are the limestone uplands of the Causses to the west and granite uplands of Mont Lozère to the north. Both are open almost treeless expanses of grazed grassland supporting scattered farms, the limestone areas dissected by deep gorges which carry the torrents of the western Cévennes down to the Mediterranean.

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* (January 2008) paragraph 47, it is also a *cultural landscape*.

1 Basic data

Included in the Tentative List

1st February 2002

International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund for preparing the Nomination

None

Date received by the World Heritage Centre

25 January 2005

27 January 2009

31 January 2011

Background

This is a referred back nomination (30 COM, Vilnius, 2006 and 33 COM, Seville, 2009).

The original nomination was submitted in 2005 and considered by the Committee at its 30th session in 2006. At that time ICOMOS recommended that “*the examination of The Causses and the Cévennes, France, be deferred to the World Heritage List to allow the State Party to consider further the qualities of the property.*”

The World Heritage Committee chose to refer the nomination back to the State Party without any recommendation and adopted the following decision:

Decision 30 COM 8B.44:

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined Documents WHC-06/30.COM/8B and WHC-06/30.COM/INF.8B.1,*
2. *Refers the nomination of The Causses and the Cévennes, France, back to the State Party.*

A supplementary nomination was submitted by the State Party on 27 January 2009. This related to the same boundaries as the original nomination, but set out a new justification based on a new comparative analysis.

ICOMOS recommended that the examination of the nomination of The Causses and the Cévennes, France, to the World Heritage List be **deferred** in order to allow the State Party to provide:

- A more detailed inventory of the attributes of the property that relate to agro-pastoralism, in order to:
 - Justify the boundary of the property;
 - Provide a basis for managing and sustaining the attributes, including processes and practices, that relate to agro-pastoralism.
- Provide an overall nomination dossier that reflects the revised focus on agro-pastoralism and its manifestations.

ICOMOS considered that any revised nomination would need to be considered by a mission to the site.

The World Heritage committee adopted the following decision:

Decision 33 COM 8B.32:

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined Documents WHC-09/33.COM/8B and WHC-09/33.COM/INF.8B1.Add,*

2. Refers the nomination of *The Causses and the Cévennes, France*, back to the State Party in order to allow it to:

a) Provide a more detailed inventory of the attributes of the property that relate to agro-pastoralism, in order to:

- i) Justify the boundary of the property;
- ii) Provide a basis for managing and sustaining the attributes, including processes and practices, that relate to agro-pastoralism;

b) Provide a nomination dossier that reflects the revised focus on agro-pastoralism and its manifestations;

Consultations

ICOMOS has consulted its International Scientific Committee on Cultural Landscapes.

Literature consulted (selection)

Extensive literature on many aspects of the landscape such as transhumance, archaeology, history, the Templars, vernacular buildings, silk production etc; Transhumance and Biodiversity in European Mountains. Report from the EU-FP5 project Transhumant. Edited by R.G.H.Bunce, M. Pérez Soba, R.H.G. Jongman, A. Gómez Sal, F. Herzog and I. Austad.

Technical Evaluation Mission

A joint ICOMOS/IUCN mission visited the property from 18 to 23 September 2005. As this is a referred back nomination, no further missions have been undertaken.

Additional information requested and received from the State Party

None

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

10 March 2011

2 The property

Background

In its evaluation of the 2005 nomination, ICOMOS noted that the nominated area was large and diverse and its three natural units have led to the development of quite different traditional practices, reflected in grasslands shaped by agro-pastoralism and wooded valleys shaped by chestnut and mulberry cultivation. It further noted that the area was an interesting example of where there is great local support for sustaining the landscape and trying to reverse the trend in movement of farmers away from the area.

ICOMOS considered that what had not emerged clearly from the nomination was the rationale for nominating the area as a whole and how the property might be perceived as an entity nor why it should be considered to have outstanding universal value.

In its evaluation of the 2009 nomination dossier, ICOMOS noted that the supplementary information provided had re-focused the justification for inscription on the persistence of agro-pastoralism and the way this has shaped the landscape. ICOMOS supported this new approach and considered that agro-pastoralism was the force that binds together the quite different faces of the overall mountain areas – the north-west facing shale and granite and the south-eastern limestone uplands. Moreover this system has been shown as an outstanding example of a regional variant of Mediterranean pastoralism, through the workshop organised by the State Party on agro-pastoralism in the Mediterranean area and in the revised comparative analysis.

ICOMOS did not consider that the manifestations of this agro-pastoral system on the landscape had been sufficiently clearly identified in terms of specific features and attributes in the large and diverse nominated area. Many other features besides those associated with agro-pastoralism – such as those associated with silk and chestnut production and semi-urban areas that have not been shown to have tight associations with agro-pastoralism - were evident in parts of the landscape.

ICOMOS considered that there was a need to define more clearly the attributes of agro-pastoralism and to relate these to the boundary and to management.

The original nomination dossier had been supplemented with new information on the agro-pastoralism aspects of the landscape but without withdrawing any of the initial information. ICOMOS considered that there was a need for an overall coherent nomination dossier that sets out in more detail the manifestations of agro-pastoralism and provided a clear focus on its history, development and attributes.

The State Party submitted a revised nomination dossier on 31st January 2011. This changes the name to: *The Causses and the Cévennes, Mediterranean agro-pastoral Cultural Landscape*, and defines a smaller area within new boundaries.

Description

The Causses and Cévennes, together form a large upland region in the southeast of the French Massif Central.

The area is made up of two opposites: the north-western granite and shale slopes that face towards the Atlantic to which their water drains, and the southeast limestone slopes of the same uplands that face towards Mediterranean.

Yet the development of these areas has been marked by ceaseless relations between these two slopes, based on a system of agro-pastoralism that slowly shaped the unity of the Causses and Cévennes landscape over the last millennium. The uplands with their farming culture are now quite distinctive from the surrounding comparatively

urbanised plains. Nevertheless the uplands and the lowlands still have a symbiotic relationship with cattle and sheep moving up into the grazed uplands in the summer months along *drailles* or drove roads that criss-cross the area.

The smaller nominated area has been defined to encompass that part of the Causses-Cévennes where landscapes are the most highly representative of the relationship between the various agro-pastoral systems and the local biophysical environment and where the attributes of the agro-pastoral system are most dense, including the *drailles* or drove roads. The new boundaries reflect detailed ground surveys.

The nominated area covers parts of the *Parc national des Cévennes* (PNC), the *Parc naturel régional des Grands Causses* (PNR), and the *Causses méridionaux* and *Centre permanent d'initiatives pour l'Environnement des Causses méridionaux* (CPIE), in all an area of 302, 319 hectares with a buffer zone of 312, 425 hectares.

The nature of the precipitation in the uplands – much in winter and a shortage in summer led to the need to collect and store water. A mastery of water management was a pre-condition of settled agriculture and this is reflected in a range of different solutions and complex solutions for channelling and storing water.

High level roads passing along the summits of the mountains mark out the drove roads that in many cases followed even more ancient track ways.

The shale and granite Cévennes mountain chain, interspersed by wide deep valleys, rises above the plains of Languedoc to the south and is clothed in dense woodlands of chestnut and pine. The villages and substantial stone farmhouses perched on deep terraces midway down the valleys reflect the organisation of the large abbeys of Languedoc and Ardèche from the 11th century, particularly in water irrigation, and the later prosperity brought by intensive chestnut and then silk cultivation, between the 16th and early 19th centuries. To the north around Mont Lozère the more open granite landscape supports cattle and sheep farming and is one of the last places where summer transhumance is still practiced.

In contrast the Causses to the west is a high altitude grazed grassland steppe of karst limestone, one of the largest expanses in Europe. The area is sharply dissected by steep often wooded valley with Gorges that channel the water from the western Cévennes to the Mediterranean Coast. On the grasslands, substantial stone-built farm complexes support sheep farming, their sitting and boundaries reflecting the development of large-scale agro-pastoralism by the Knights Templars and then the Hospitalers between the 12th and 14th centuries, made possible as in the Cévennes by the control of water. The Causses became the centre of trade between the Mediterranean and the flat lands to the north.

Both the Cévennes and the Causses landscapes reflect wars, pestilence, periods of high level prosperity followed by rapid decline and most markedly the migration of people away from the hills in the 19th and 20th centuries. Between 1846 and 1975 the area lost two thirds of its inhabitants.

Like many uplands areas of Europe, the Cévennes and Causses were discovered in the 19th century first by scientists, in this case geologists and geographers recording distinctive gorges, 'swallow-holes' and caves, and then by writers and tourists appreciating picturesque features. Robert Louis Stevenson's book of his travels with a donkey at the end of the 19th century brought the Cévennes landscape to wide attention.

In detail the nominated property consists of the following:

Structures related to water collection and management

The influence of Abbeys which controlled many valleys of the Cévennes in the 11th and 12th centuries transformed the landscape from small-scale, isolated, subsistence farmers into a well ordered and structured landscape of mixed farms with irrigated terraces growing grain, hay and chestnuts, and with chickens, goats, sheep and cattle grazed on the high pastures and pigs and bees kept in the forests.

The water flowing off the mountains was directed into conduits or underground mined channels, which when they reached the farm branched into feeder channels for steep stone walled terraces. Below the farmhouse these terraces were used for grain and hay; above for chestnut trees, pollarded to keep them to a manageable height. The summits of the mountains above the tree line were grazed by sheep and cattle.

In the Causses the Knights Templars provided the organisational impetus for the development of agro-pastoralism in the 12th century, systematically exploiting the resources of the areas over which they gained control. Huge quantities of grain were produced, in stone walled fields, and then stored in towers such as at Tour du Viala du Pas de Jaux. Water resources were organised for large farms – roof cisterns and ponds - and for the vast flocks of sheep which moved to into the Causses pastures in the summer months from the plains and traversed back again on the autumn along *drailles* or drove roads.

Drailles or Drove roads

The northern part of the Cévennes National Park encompasses the grazed granite uplands around Mont Lozère. Here year round cattle farming is supplemented on the good summer grazing by large flocks of sheep travelling north from farms to the south of the National Park in Languedoc near the coast, a system of transhumance that has persisted since the 12th century and is still worked by a few farmers today.

300 kilometres of drove roads criss-cross the area. These high level routes are said to be related to early high level Bronze Age tracks, which later were developed into an extensive network linked to monastic establishments in mediaeval times. There is now a somewhat simplified network based on three main drove roads: Aubrac, Margeride and Gévaudan, which link together subsidiary routes for 28 major mountain pastures and are used by 125 stockbreeders and their 25,000 ewes when they move to summer pastures.

Sheep housing

The vast flocks of sheep keep on the Causses were in the winter housed in long low stone buildings known as *les Jasses*. Often more than 10 metres in length and containing water tanks and hay stores, they have come to be seen as the emblematic buildings of the Causses. Milk from the sheep goes largely to the making of Roquefort cheese – outside the nominated area to the west.

Forest

The grazed areas have been created over millennia through the clearing of forests. In the east of the area, remnants of beech forest survive as well as considerable areas related to chestnuts and later mulberry cultivation. Some areas in the Cévennes landscape reflect the impact of recent small plantations of exotic species. In other areas indigenous species have been planted over larger areas, resulting in an incongruous monoculture. In recent years attempts have been made to introduce mixed-species planting in order to achieve landscapes that are closer to the natural forest cover in appearance and species diversity.

In the 20th century, there has been limited reforestation of the Causses. In the Causse Méjean, in particular, there are stark, rectilinear plantations of conifers.

Farmhouses

The traditional buildings of the southern Cévennes are characterised by dry rubble shale stone construction plastered on the inside and sometimes on the outside too. Roofs are of shell-shaped slates with rows of slates interlocking to protect the ridge. To the north around Mont Lozère the granite buildings are built of shaped square stones and are much squatter in character. Barley straw was widely used on roofs until the 17th century when it was replaced by slate.

The wide open Causses landscape has some remarkable examples of fine stone farmhouses such as the farm complexes of Les Monziols. Farmhouses and farm buildings were built of dry limestone blocks plastered both inside and outside. They are characterised by dressed stone lintels and door jambs and by the use of fine stone arches over doors and to support roofs in houses. The vaulted ground floors of houses often contained water storage cisterns.

Villages

Villages in the Cévennes reflect their founders: many names begin with Saint reflecting the various Abbeys that owned land in the 12th and 13th centuries. The houses cluster together along narrow streets.

The limestone of the Causses has resulted in the impressive medieval military architecture of the Templar and Hospitaler towns such as La Cavalerie, La Couvertorade, and Sainte-Eulalie de Cernon.

Chestnuts cultivation

In the 16th century a rapid expansion of chestnut farming led to the creation of many new terraces rising up the hillsides sometimes at considerable distances from their farms. Trade in chestnuts contributed to an increasing prosperity in the area, reflected in the re-building of more substantial farmhouses and two-storey buildings for drying the shelled nuts. For around 150 years, chestnuts were the main cash crop. The creation of new terraces, the improvements to farmhouses and the creation of buildings for processing the chestnuts all contributed to establishing the bones of the Cévennes landscape as they exist today.

Silk cultivation

After a particularly severe winter in 1709 which decimated many of the chestnut trees, many farmers change to growing silk worms and planted their terraces with mulberries, particularly in the warmer valleys that faced south to the Mediterranean Sea. Mulberries were the last addition to the landscape, together with the large multi storey buildings, *magnaneries*, with regular rows of windows and many chimneys constructed to grow and process the silk worms. These were often built as extensions to the existing farm complexes.

History and development

During the Bronze Age there appears to have been large-scale clearance of the forest to create pastures for sheep and cattle. Roman rule touched the areas comparatively lightly. The Romans did not impose social organisation on the small scale farmers. However the landscape was exploited for its resources, minerals and particularly timber and the breeding of cattle and sheep. During Roman rule much of the Causses was cleared of its pine trees. Pliny mentions cheeses from the area being marketed through Nîmes along trade routes across the summits of the hills, probably of much earlier origin and which have by and large persisted to the present day.

The end of Roman rule heralded hostile incursions from Visigoths and then the Franks in the 6th and 7th centuries which seem to have prompted the development of settlements in areas that could be defended readily.

The fundamental changes to the landscape that can still be perceived today took place between the 12th and 14th centuries when several monastic orders, including

Benedictines, Hospitalers and Knights Templars gained control of extensive lands and put in place strong social systems in order to harness water supplies and exploit more systematically the forests and particularly grazing lands.

In the Causses, the landscape structures put in place in the 12th and 13th centuries are still reflected in the commune boundaries of today. By the 16th century trade in sheep and cloth put the area at the centre of trade between the plains to the south and north.

The golden age of the Cévennes economy, was between the 16th and 18th centuries when prosperity first from chestnuts and sheep and then later also silk fostered the building of large farmhouses and established trade and permanent relations with the plains, the valley of the Rhone and the Mediterranean. In the 1840s the longest railway line of the time connected Grand Combe to Beaucaire. Silk production brought another boom era at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries. By 1810 the number of peoples living in the region reached its apogee. The re-distribution of land after the Revolution of 1789 to the farmers added to the economic impetus: new techniques were introduced and successful farms absorbed others, leading to the demise of many smallholdings.

Boom was quickly followed by decline: disease amongst the silk worms in the mid 19th century started migration away from the mountains to the towns. Between 1856 and 1914, Cévennes lost 40% of its population to the urban centres and the mines. The war of 1914-1918 accentuated the demographic loss and this continued after the armistice. 20% of the men and 25% of the women between 20 and 40 years old left the area to find work in the cities. Sericulture and silk production finally came to an end in the 1950s.

By 1975, at the end one hundred twenty-five years of decline, only around 11,500 inhabitants remained - a loss of two thirds, the losses being most strong on the Atlantic slopes. Ruins invaded the territory, and many hamlets died.

Gradually the trend is reversing: in the last thirty years people have slowly begun to move back to some areas and reclaim the lands.

The traditional transhumance of vast flocks of sheep seasonally from the plains of Languedoc to the uplands of the Causses and the Cévennes has now dwindled drastically. However there is now a determined move to support agro-pastoralism which is beginning to have a marked effect on its revival.

3 Outstanding Universal Value, integrity and authenticity

Comparative analysis

The property is compared with three inscribed properties: The Laponian Area, (Sweden, 1996) Pyrénées - Mont

Perdu, (France, Spain, 1999), and the Orkhon Valley Cultural Landscape (Mongolia, 2004). These properties are all considered to be examples of pastoralism, rather than agro-pastoralism and thus none compare with Causses and Cévennes.

The nominated property is then compared with sites representative of agro-pastoralism around the Mediterranean – none of which are inscribed. These are grouped into four areas: South-west Europe with sites in Spain, France, Andorra, and Italy; the Balkan Peninsula with sites in Croatia, Bosnia¹, Montenegro, Kosovo², Albania, Greece, and Turkey; the Eastern Mediterranean with sites in Turkey, Syria, and Libya; and fourthly the Maghreb with sites in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco.

The comparison covers climate, religion, aspects of agro-pastoralism and the vitality of the systems. In terms of agro-pastoralism, the Causses and Cévennes are seen to cover all the various types of agro-pastoralism present around the Mediterranean apart from nomadic pastoralism. Furthermore the property still has active transhumance and a landscape that reflects – visibly and through its organisational structures - both ancient agro-pastoralism (from relict aspects of the landscape) and what is called the traditional agro-pastoralism that has evolved over the past millennium.

Comparing this to what persists in the other areas and regions, it is suggested that in the Maghreb, the pastoralism was defined more by nomadic and semi-nomadic systems with more recently integration with agriculturalists. The area has been subject to intense population pressure since the 19th century and although the mobility of the pastoral system has survived, it is highly vulnerable.

In Albania, where livestock and pastoral practices date back to Roman times, there are similarities with the landscape and systems of the Causses and Cévennes. However in Albania the system was dislocated by the Soviet practice of collectivisation and although pastoralism has recovered, there is a loss of traditions and memory and the system is not supported by government policies.

By contrast, the Causses and Cévennes have not been subject to population pressure, they have resisted invasion, and agro-pastoralism is still flourishing. It is therefore considered that the property constitutes an exceptional reflection of Mediterranean agro-pastoralism.

¹ Bosnia and Herzegovina

² **Note:** The Secretariat was informed by the Legal Advisor that “The UNESCO Secretariat follows the practice of the United Nations, which considers that the Security Council Resolution 12.44 (1999) continues to be applicable to the territory of Kosovo until a final settlement is achieved”.

ICOMOS notes that these comparisons are based on the conclusion of expert meetings on agro-pastoralist cultural landscapes of the Mediterranean region held at the property in September 2007 and in Albania in 2009.

These meeting defined a Mediterranean agro-pastoralism as a discrete system of land management based on the Mediterranean climate, (dry summer with very dry, soft winter cold); soil of relatively low productivity, changes in altitude that allowed transhumance, proximity to the sea; system largely based on sheep but also associated with cattle and in place camels and other animals, and shaped by monotheistic religions and the common use of resources. The system has high immaterial values and delivers high environmental values. It also has considerable diversity within different areas.

The analysis suggested that Mediterranean agro-pastoralism is one of the great agro-pastoral systems of the world, the others being:

- the nomadism of the tundra, based on reindeer;
- the civilizations of Central Asia, which have domesticated the horse;
- transhumance in semi-arid context of the Mediterranean basin and the Middle-East;
- Bedouin civilization of the Saharan desert and Arabia based on the camel;
- the nomadism of sub-Saharan Africa;
- Short transhumance such as in the Alps, the Pyrenees, Tatras, Carpathians;
- Andean pastoralism;
- Ranching of the New World, e.g. US, Australia, New Zealand;
- Small scale distinctive pastoralism in discrete areas e.g. Scotland; Hungary or with distinctive animals such as the two-humped camel.

The Causses and the Cévennes is seen as part of the southwest of Europe which includes areas of Spain, North Africa, France and Italy. In comparison with other areas, the landscape of the Causses and the Cévennes, shows well the evolution of the system, there is a vitality to the agro-pastoral system in comparison to many other areas, local sheep breeds persists, the architectural legacy is well represented in drove roads, water management, buildings, etc. The landscape also has aesthetic qualities that are highly valued.

Currently there are no sites inscribed on the List that reflect large-scale agro-pastoralism of the Mediterranean region.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis sets out well the rationale for considering Mediterranean agro-pastoralism as a major type of pastoralism within which there are significant variations. It also shows that in many parts this agro-pastoralism is extremely vulnerable. The Causses and the Cévennes can be seen to represent one specific response. It is a response that is still viable and crucially is reflected in the landscape.

On the issue of other sites that might be nominated in the future, ICOMOS considers that there would be room on the List for other properties that might be exemplars of other variations of Mediterranean pastoralism - which reflect distinctive and outstanding cultural responses.

For these reasons, ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of this property for the World Heritage List.

Justification of Outstanding Universal Value

The nominated property is considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property for the following reasons:

- The upland landscapes of the Causses have been shaped by agro-pastoralism over three millennia. In the Middle Ages, the development of cities in the surrounding Mediterranean plains, and especially the growth of religious institutions, prompted the evolution of a land structure based on agro-pastoralism, the basis of which is still in place today.
- Too poor to host cities, too rich to be abandoned, the landscape of Causses and Cévennes are the result of the modification of the natural environment n by agro-pastoral systems over a millennium.
- The Causses and Cévennes demonstrate almost every type of pastoral organisation to be found around the Mediterranean (agro-pastoralism, silvi-pastoralism, transhumance and sedentary pastoralism). The area has by a remarkable vitality as a result of active renewal of the agro-pastoral systems.
- This area is a major and viable example of Mediterranean agro-pastoralism. Its preservation is necessary to deal with threats from environmental, economic and social issues that such cultural landscapes are facing globally.
- On a historical note, the Causses and the Cévennes retain numerous testimonies of the evolution over several centuries of its pastoral societies. Its important built heritage, landscape characteristics and intangible associations that reflect traditional pastoralism will be preserved by the contemporary revival of agro-pastoralism.

ICOMOS supports this justification of the cultural landscape forming an exceptional testimony to Mediterranean agro-pastoral systems within the structure of water management and building traditions put in place by the monasteries in the late Middle Ages.

Integrity and authenticity

The revised nomination dossier provides a single section for both Integrity and Authenticity and the concepts are not separated.

Integrity

In terms of how the boundaries encompass all the attributes necessary to demonstrate outstanding universal value, ICOMOS can only comment from the

point of view of studying the maps provided. As this is a referred nomination, no further mission has been possible and thus ICOMOS has not been able to study the new boundaries on the ground.

Since the previous nomination considerable effort has been made to identify the attributes of agro-pastoralism and to identify those areas where the system is most highly represented and the attributes most dense.

The boundaries have now been reduced with the towns around the edge being excluded and the area included being the heartland of the upland areas. This is still a comparatively large area, but more coherent than the previous territory that encompassed areas where agro-pastoralism was not the dominant activity.

The wholeness or intactness of the cultural landscape is related to the survival of the forces that shaped the landscape as well as to the symptoms that those forces produced. The aim is to maintain these through the perpetuation of traditional activities and the support of those activities through Park staff and external grants.

In many places the landscape is almost relict – particularly the terraces in the Cévennes, where only a fraction are actively managed. In some place, the systems of transhumance along drove roads barely survives – only a few flocks make the long journeys each year and many of the tracks are beginning to be covered with scrub. However there is now increasing attention being paid to supporting and reviving these processes. The water systems that once were the lifeblood of the fields and bergeries are now only maintained in places.

Where integrity has been compromised is in the peripheral areas of the PNC, where new building has impacted on the farmed landscape and it is these areas that have now been removed from the revised boundaries.

Authenticity

The key structures of the landscape: buildings, terraces, walls and watercourses retain a high degree of authenticity in terms of their built fabric, but many particularly the terraces need conservation. Less of these are now within the nominated area of the Cévennes.

As for the authenticity of the agro-pastoral processes that shaped the landscape, these are surviving, and although vulnerable, and in the hands of very few farmers (no more than 100) are the subject of a renaissance through the combined of local and national authorities and local communities.

ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity and authenticity have been met.

Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (iii) and (v).

Criterion (iii): bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the traditions of agro-pastoralism over thousands of years have generated a landscape in the Causses and Cévennes whose structure and attributes reflect a mastery of agronomic practices that have had a role in history and reflect a particular religious, scholarly and popular culture.

ICOMOS considers this the nominated areas of the Causses and the Cévennes, manifest, an outstanding example of one type of Mediterranean agro-pastoralism. This cultural tradition, based on distinctive social structures and local breeds of sheep, is reflected in the structure of the landscape, especially the patterns of farms, settlements, fields, water management, *drailles* and open grazed common land and what it reveals of the way this has evolved, in particular since the 12th century. The agro-pastoral tradition is still living and has been re-vitalised in recent decades.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been justified.

Criterion (v): be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that living cultural landscape of the Causses and Cévennes is an outstanding example of the "combined works of man and nature" that has endured for three millennia with its ability to adapt to its natural environment, and to political, economic and social development. The distinctive and still dynamic landscape is an exceptional response to contemporary changes recorded in south-west Europe. Encompassing in large part a biosphere reserve and a national park, Causses and Cévennes show that pastoral activity is a factor in maintaining biodiversity, and a fine example of sustainable development.

ICOMOS considers that the Causses and the Cévennes, can be seen as an exemplar of Mediterranean agro-pastoralism and specifically to represent a response common to the south-west of Europe. The nominated areas of the landscape manifest exceptional responses to the way the system has developed over time and particularly over the past millennia.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been justified.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property meets criteria (iii) and (v) and conditions of authenticity and integrity and that Outstanding Universal Value has been fully demonstrated.

4 Factors affecting the property

Development pressures

Construction

The area has recently come under greater pressure for development as a result of the greater access permitted by the construction of a “meridian” highway, the A75.

Farming regression

The farming community has declined over the past half century, particularly in the Cévennes area. Many properties are now only inhabited in summer months as holiday homes. Some farmers are moving back but the long-term stability of farms is in question. The income of many farmers has been supplemented by grants for landscape maintenance. The wide ‘morale’ support demonstrated currently by the different authorities might not be sufficient in the future to ensure the maintenance of activities which sustain the cultural landscape with its richness and diversity.

In the Causses farming depends on the existence of cheese making companies (Roquefort, Feta, etc) which collect the milk from more than 1,600 family farms. The dependence on a few big external (to the region) owned and commercially orientated companies constitutes also a risk; a slight change in the marketing condition could lead to a large scale abandonment of the traditional activities with severe consequences for the landscape and the rich biodiversity.

In the Causses, the sheep farmers still manage to survive largely through supplying ewes’ milk for Roquefort cheese production. There has however been a marked increase in the size of farms needed to create viable units and this means there are many less people per hectare to manage buildings and the landscape generally. In places in the Causses, some land is turning back to scrub and trees where transhumance paths are no longer used or the land has been acquired for hunting. As with the Cévennes, the economy of sheep farmers is fragile. The nomination of the property for World Heritage status is seen as a way to boost tourism particularly in the Causses. It is also seen as a way to strengthen the resolve to sustain the agro-pastoral traditions.

The transhumance system involves animals coming from outside the area into the Causses and Mont Lozère in the summer months and then heading back to the southern plains of Languedoc in the winter. This system is therefore to a degree outside the control of those working in the nominated area. There is also the movement of sheep within the nominated areas, particularly in the north, up to summer pastures.

Afforestation

In certain areas extensive planting of exotic species by private landowners has introduced a discordant note. In others indigenous species have been planted over large areas, resulting in an incongruous monoculture. In recent years attempts have been made to introduce mixed-species planting in order to achieve landscapes that are closer to the natural forest cover in appearance and species diversity. The more limited reforestation of the Causses, has followed a similar development. The Causse Méjean, in particular, with its stark, rectilinear plantations of conifers, is less pleasing aesthetically and equally unacceptable in terms of biodiversity.

Wind energy

Threats from large-scale windfarms have been identified in the supplementary information.

Tourism pressures

World Heritage recognition might lead to a significant increase of visitors in some parts of the sites which are already overcrowded in summer for instance St Guilhem, Gorges du Tarn, etc.). Measures might need to be taken to control car and visitor flows, which might prove to be quite unpopular. The public transportation system is almost non-existent within the site, and this has not been addressed in the nomination file.

Natural disasters

Forest fires are a threat to all parts of the nominated area, but particularly the coniferous plantations in the Cévennes. The large areas of chestnut trees that are no longer maintained and thus cleared at ground level are also vulnerable. Since 1995 a fire prevention plan has been put in place to minimise fires and contain those that do break out.

ICOMOS considers that the main threat to the property is farming regression, but there is a concerted effort to encourage and support farming activities through a structured approach.

5 Protection, conservation and management

Boundaries of the nominated property and buffer zone

The precise boundaries for the revised nomination have been defined as a result of detailed studies on the attributes of agro-pastoralism and with the benefit of site surveys of the landscape. It now follows clearly defined geographical features and is a logical reflection of the way the land is worked.

ICOMOS considers that the boundaries of the nominated area and buffer zone are satisfactory.

Ownership

Around three-quarters of the property is in private ownership. The rest is in the public domain.

Protection

Legal Protection

The whole of the nominated areas is protected either for natural or cultural heritage but only the core of the Cévennes National Park is protected for both. This is a weakness as outside the core area of the park there is less control over changes to buildings and new development.

The totality of the nominated area is protected in a variety of different forms, but only part is protected for cultural attributes. The *Parc national des Cévennes* (PNC), with its headquarters at Florac, is a public national administrative body (*établissement public national à caractère administratif*) created in September 1970 under the provisions of the Law of 22 July 1960. There are 117 *communes* within its 321,380ha. It has been a biosphere reserve as part of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere programme since 1985. In the core area of the park, cultural property is protected and no new building is allowed. In the peripheral area there is no protection for cultural property.

The *Parc naturel régional des Grands Causses* (PNR) was founded in 1995 under the provisions of the Law of 5 July 1972 which established the category of Regional Natural Parks. At 315,949ha and covering 94 *communes* it is almost as large as the PNC. Its status and powers are broadly comparable with those of a national park. Its policies are determined by a *Syndicat de collectivités*, a public body which brings together *communes* and other entities with the objective of carrying out works and providing services for the communities involved. The park exists to protect natural attributes.

The *Centre permanent d'initiatives pour l'Environnement des Causses méridionaux* (CPIE), set up in accordance with 1901 legislation and representing 28 *communes* in the *Départements* of Gard and Hérault, is a body which enables these collectivities to prepare and implement policies and activities of common interest.

These regulations do not extend to all private property, which represents some three-quarters of the area nominated for World Heritage inscription. Landowners in France have virtually absolute rights over the development and management of their own properties, unless these are covered by specific legal instruments such as the *classement* of historic monuments which override the rights of private landowners

The Gorges du Tarn and de la Jonte, which extend over some 29,000ha, were classified as protected sites on 29 March 2002, as a result of which any proposed changes in their condition or character must be approved by the relevant Minister or by the Prefect of Aveyron. At the

present time active consideration is being given to the designation of this site as one of the *Grands Sites de France*. This initiative has three objectives – the creation of a sustainable and autonomous management policy, restoration from the ecological and landscape point of view, and ensuring that any measures that are adopted will benefit local development. This designation would supplement existing ones.

In addition, a large number of historic buildings and architectural ensembles are protected under the provisions of the 1913 historic monuments legislation. (these are listed in the revised nomination dossier.) A number of architectural groups and small villages are designated as *Zones de protection du patrimoine architectural, urbain et paysager* (ZPPAUP).

There are also a considerable number of measures for the protection of areas of special natural interest.

The supplementary information acknowledges the need for tighter protection for the overall landscape in response to the shift in emphasis of the nomination and the identified threats and sets out a range of complementary measures to coordinate and strengthen existing protection. This will be put in place by 2015.

ICOMOS considers that the legal protection in place is weak in parts in terms of protecting the cultural attributes. This is acknowledged by the State Party who has initiated complementary protective measures for the property to be put in place over the next 6 years.

Conservation

Inventories, recording, research

The property is well researched from the point of view of stock-breeding. It is acknowledged that more research is needed on physical aspects of the landscape such as prehistoric remains in the Cévennes and also field structures in order to have more precise understanding of landscape history. The Strategic Plan (see *below*) sets out a programme to record the material and immaterial attributes of the agro-pastoral system.

The Cévennes National Park and Regional Park Causses have undertaken a program of inventorying the drailles or drove roads.

Present state of conservation

As ICOMOS has not undertaken a mission to the property since 2005 and as then it was considering a much larger area than is now nominated, it cannot comment on the present state of conservation of the property that is now nominated.

The following is what is presented in the revised nomination.

The Causses and the Cévennes constitutes the largest area of semi-natural grassland in France. This managed grassland – managed by grazing – is rich in biodiversity. Within the National Park, some 90% lie within 22.5% of the area – that is the grassland, rocks and wetlands. The state of conservation of the grassland is said to be good, although the areas of grazing has decreased by 2,000 ha between 1988 and 2000.

In its previous evaluation, ICOMOS commented that with the gradual disappearance of transhumance many of the ancient driveways (*drailles*) are now barely visible, but certain stretches that are still in seasonal use are well cared for. In the revised nomination, the main *draille* paths are said to be in good condition and also used by hikers.

For the Cévennes terraces, ICOMOS noted in its previous evaluation that the decline of population has led to the decline in traditional active management of terraces, watercourse and chestnut trees. Many of the terraces are now not maintained at all: walls are beginning to crumble, water course channels are little maintained and the chestnut trees suffering from lack of pruning. As a result of this, and the resulting natural processes of recolonization, terrace systems are difficult to discern, except where they have been brought back into active use for growing chestnut trees and in the few green areas around farmhouses where some are used for hay and grazing. Maintenance of the terraces presents a huge conservation problem. The active encouragement given to farmers to return to this area has helped with the maintenance of the landscape associated with the farms still farmed, but this is a very small proportion of the whole. Sustaining the traditional farming practices with so few people and with comparatively low prices being paid for farm products makes maintaining the landscape increasingly difficult to achieve.

In the revised nomination it is stated that although the terraces were largely abandoned in the 20th century, the chestnuts are beginning to be conserved as part of a habitat directive, while there are initiatives to encourage re-use and repair of the stone terraces – for instance 30 farmers are growing sweet onions.

No details are provided in the revised nomination for the state of conservation of buildings or structures associated with water management.

On the more open, flatter *Causses*, field boundaries dating back to the Middle Ages (and in some cases even earlier) are well maintained and still in use. Similarly, the ancient pools known as *lavognes* (some natural, some man-made) used for watering stock are for the most part kept in excellent condition by local communities working collectively or by individual landowners.

Many of the medieval and early modern buildings and settlements within the nominated site have been

maintained or conserved with care and respect for their historic values.

There have been some new recent interventions in this area and also notably along the Gorges du Tarn, where tourism over the past half-century has led to the appearance of hotels, restaurants, and the like along the roads linking the small towns and villages.

Steps are being taken in parts of the proposed site: for example, the *Conseil d'Architecture, d'Urbanisme et de l'Environnement du Gard* (CAUE 30) selected the Rieutord Valley in 2000 as a case-study for developing detailed practical recommendations regarding the conservation of the architecture and the landscape.

Active Conservation measures

The conservation of the landscape is encouraged through support for the farmers who are its custodians.

Maintenance

Maintenance of drove roads, water storage ponds, walls etc is largely the responsibility of farmers. In the case of protected buildings, grant aid is available for some aspects of their repair. More details on materials and methods of maintenance need to be collected – as envisaged in the Strategic Plan – see below.

Effectiveness of conservation measures

The effectiveness of the conservation measures is difficult to comment on without a mission. At the time of the first mission there was no detailed inventory of attitudes associated with pastoralism. More details are now available but ICOMOS has not been able to view the property to allow an understanding of their current conservation or how they are being conserved. It appears that several initiatives have flourished since the previous mission in 2005 but it has not been possible to assess their impact.

The nomination dossier states that the 30 000 hectares of land in the high Cévennes owned by the State is a major conservation challenge – but no details are provided as to how this will be addressed.

In its previous evaluation, ICOMOS commented that the overall conservation of the agro-pastoral landscape relies almost entirely on the farming community and that its effectiveness and targeted support need to be more clearly defined and monitored in more detail. This revised nomination provides this definition, and the basis for monitoring.

Management

Management structures and processes, including traditional management processes

With the objective of preparing the nomination to the World Heritage List, and following the successful

precedent established by the Val de Loire in 2001, an *ad hoc* structure was set up, known as the *Conférence Territoriale*, to oversee the preparation of the nomination. Under the chairmanship of the *Préfet* of La Lozère (the *Préfet coordonnateur*), its membership consisted of the presidents of the relevant *Conseils généraux* and *régionaux*, the presidents of the PNC and the PNR *des Grands Causses*, and representatives of the CPIE, the *Grands Sites*, the association of mayors, and the four *villes portes*. Specialist advice was provided by the *Comité d'Orientation*, made up of experts in a wide variety of fields, whilst the *Préfet coordonnateur* headed the mission responsible for setting up the partnerships and contracts between the different stakeholders.

The PNC is governed by a *Conseil d'Administration* of 52 people (civil servants, representatives of local administrations, and specialists). It employs some sixty staff, working either from its Florac headquarters or around the Park. The PNR is governed by a *Syndicat Mixte* made up of representatives of collectivities, the state, and private property owners. Its management team is divided into six sections, including heritage and landscape, maintenance of the rural environment, and socio-economic development. Analogous but smaller structures exist for the CPIE and the *Grands Sites*. All these bodies have structure plans of some kind governing their actions in the short and medium term.

While these three main authorities (PNC, PNR, CPIE) have a very good collaboration, they have a limited power on land use and even cultural heritage conservation, most of the land being private property. Even on nationally owned land, the Park has not been able to prevent re-forestation with exotic species for wood production. In some areas, particularly the outer zone of the national Park in the nominated area there is evidence of development with houses being constructed on former fields for tourism purposes.

Many of the key built features of the landscape such as buildings terraces, stone walls and the water distribution systems, based on numerous dams and lengthy underground channels (known as *béals*) need continuous maintenance and reconstruction, and this work is carried out not by a central authority but by the communities whose needs they serve. As the communities are now much reduced from their numbers a century ago, it is not possible to maintain more than part of what remains.

The same applies to many of the natural aspects of the landscape such as chestnut trees.

The management structure put in place is a collaborative one bringing together the key main players from all the main organisations to allow coordination and shared aims and objectives.

The management structure is as follows:

A **local conference**, a decision-making organ that defines the site's management guidelines based on a commitment charter. Its recommendations rely on the advice of a **steering committee**, a consultative body in which all the players-elected officials, professionals, technicians, scientists, grass-roots organisations and government agencies-can express themselves. A **technical mission** is in charge of leading the partnership created in the Causses and Cévennes by implementing the operational action plan developed by all the players.

This structuring of shared responsibilities in coordination with local governments and State services takes advantage of the presence of an active network of experienced players throughout the area: Cévennes National Park, the organisation that manages the national park and the biosphere reserve; Grands Causses Regional Natural Park (RNP); the Permanent Centre of Initiatives for the Environment of the Southern Causses (CPIE); the joint association for the Grand Site of the Tarn, Jonte and Causses Gorges; and the joint association for the Grand Site of Navacelles. French law gives these various structures an effective role as operator and manager. For example, Cévennes National Park implements local agro-environmental measures involving the European common agricultural policy within its boundaries.

Lastly, the *Association de Valorisation de l'espace Causses et Cévennes* (Association for the Improvement of the Causses and Cévennes Area, AVECC), by putting forth the nomination of the Causses and Cévennes for inclusion on the World Heritage List, is implementing the information and awareness-raising actions necessary for sharing the property's values with the various players.

Policy framework: management plans and arrangements, including visitor management and presentation

A management plan was drawn up for the original nomination with the support of the five principal stakeholders and with the agreement of the others. This has the following main objectives:

- Conservation, restoration, and management of the cultural and natural heritage;
- Making this heritage available for the benefit of the general public;
- Contributing to the social and economic development of the area;
- Coordination of the work of the various authorities involved in the management of the area;
- Creating a management structure for this purpose.

For the revised nomination this has been supplemented to identify the characteristics of the pastoral landscape. These are seen as:

- Valley and gorges
- Landscapes of the high plateau
- Landscapes of the peaks and summits

However these are only defined in very general, visual terms rather than in relation to how the agro-pastoral system, in a specific way, has shaped these areas and thus what needs to be managed in physical terms as well as through sustaining the agro-pastoral way of life.

Risk preparedness

The threats are said to be:

- pressure of construction and installation;
- demise of agricultural and pastoral life;
- development of new energy landscapes.

The response to these threats is through the structures listed above: no detailed action plan has been provided but an action plan for 2006-8 sets out the progress so far.

However a Strategy for 2007-2013 has been drawn up which encompasses key themes related to improving and sharing knowledge, promoting an understanding of the living landscape and encouraging the participation of all the key players. The Strategy includes completing an atlas of the landscape, drawing up an inventory of attributes of the landscape; developing knowledge of the landscape; acquiring a common language for the landscape; developing a decision-making tool for the restoration and the management of the landscapes; and identifying emblematic sites of the cultural landscape.

This Strategy should deliver, through the necessary research, the much needed detailed knowledge of the agro-pastoral landscape, its structures and intangible heritage, as a basis for defining the boundary, for restoration and protection, and for monitoring this large complex, and in some respects vulnerable, landscape to ensure its value is being sustained.

Involvement of the local communities

There is huge involvement and support of the local farming communities in sustaining the agro-pastoral landscape.

Resources, including staffing levels, expertise and training

The Strategy for 2007-2013 anticipates EU support funding of up to 7 million Euros over its five years duration.

Training and research take place within the nominated area or nearby. For example, Montpellier SupAgro (an agricultural grande école and research centre) manages

the Domaine de la Fichade, located in Florac, an experimental teaching farm growing crops and breeding livestock in the context of sustainable agriculture, experimentation and the hosting of trainees, students and researchers.

Effectiveness of current management

Implementation of the Strategy is urgently needed to underpin the whole rationale for identification, protection and management of the agro-pastoral landscape.

ICOMOS considers that currently the management system for the property lacks the level of knowledge necessary to define clearly what needs to be protected, managed and monitored. Such knowledge will emerge from the Strategy and this should form the basis for a more targeted management system.

6 Monitoring

Major projects that might impact on the project are monitored by a coordination service established under the local authority of Lozère. No detailed monitoring indicators are set out for the agro-pastoral attributes of the landscape and these needs to be put in place.

ICOMOS considers that more detailed monitoring needs to be developed based on inventories of the attributes.

7 Conclusions

The revised nomination addresses the concerns of the Committee at its 33rd session and has provided a more detailed inventory of the attributes of the property that relate to agro-pastoralism, as a basis for revising the boundary to encompass a smaller area where those attributes are at their strongest; and has revised the nomination dossier to reflect a focus on agro-pastoralism and its manifestations.

ICOMOS applauds the work that the State Party has undertaken to re-focus this nomination, on the basis of two international workshops convened to consider agro-pastoralism in the Mediterranean region, and to continue to support the revival of agro-pastoralism in the Causses and Cévennes.

As this is a referred nomination, ICOMOS has not had the opportunity to carry out a mission to allow it to consider the logic of the new boundaries or the state of conservation of the property. As it last visited the property in 2005, it does not consider that it has an up to date view on its conservation. It should also be pointed out that on its first mission, ICOMOS was considering a much larger area and one nominated for different value.

ICOMOS regrets that in the absence of a mission, it has not been possible to visit the property to consider the rationale of the reduced boundary. Even though it considers that the boundaries as outlined on the revised map look reasonable, it cannot give a firm statement on integrity.

Similarly, ICOMOS cannot comment on the current conservation of the property, or on its authenticity, or judge progress made in engendering support for the revitalisation of the traditional agro-pastoral processes and traditions.

ICOMOS considers that this property should in due course be inscribed on the World Heritage list for its particular reflection of Mediterranean agro-pastoralism. However, ICOMOS regrettably is not in a position to recommend a statement of outstanding universal value, as key parts of this statement cannot currently be drafted.

ICOMOS considers – that there would be room on the List for other properties that reflect distinctive and outstanding cultural responses related to different variations of Mediterranean pastoralism.

Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the nomination of The Causses and the Cévennes, Mediterranean agro-pastoral Cultural Landscape, France, be **referred back** to the State Party in order to allow a mission to visit the property to consider its revised boundaries and its state of conservation.



Village in the Cévennes



Roof in shell-shaped slates



Cros Roux – Causse Méjean



Cistern roof (Saint Jean de Balme)