

EUROPE / NORTH AMERICA

ILULISSAT ICEFJORD

DENMARK

WORLD HERITAGE MINOR BOUNDARY MODIFICATION PROPOSAL – IUCN TECHNICAL EVALUATION

ILULISSAT ICEFJORD (DENMARK) – ID No. 1149 Bis

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Ilulissat Icefjord was inscribed on the World Heritage List in at the 28th Session of the World Heritage Committee in 2004.

2. SUMMARY OF PROPOSED BOUNDARY MODIFICATION

The proposal submitted by the State Party has two different aspects:

- a) A correction to the area of the property, due to adoption of digital mapping technology, but not to change the boundaries. The previous measurement was 402,400 ha, whilst the corrected figure is 399,800 ha (a difference of less than 1%).
- b) The creation of a buffer zone surrounding the property, which comprises a “local buffer zone” around the settlement of Ilulissat (430 ha), and a “recreational buffer zone” around the remainder of the property (64,890 ha).

The proposal indicates in summary the different policies that will apply to the two buffer zones, and that the existing legislation for the property continues to apply.

3. IMPACT ON OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE

The correction of the area of the property has no impact on its OUV, and is not in fact a boundary modification of any kind. The World Heritage Centre can update the property’s records with the correct figure. There is no mention of the area of the property in the Statement of OUV, so no amendment to that document is required.

Regarding the buffer zone, IUCN notes that the Committee has agreed that the creation of buffer zones should be processed through the minor boundary modification process. IUCN further notes that the retrospective statement of OUV for the property refers to the proposal to create a buffer zone, so this is already anticipated. IUCN considers that the proposals represent an improvement in the overall protection and management system for the property, and thus are to be welcomed.

IUCN notes that the documentation is not fully clear regarding the intended operation of the buffer zones. In particular, it is unclear what activities/developments are permitted in the ‘local’ and the ‘recreational’ buffer zones. The text in the first paragraph of p.4 implies that a limited number of cabins and survival huts can be established in the local buffer zone, whereas the summary table beneath it states that no construction is permitted in this zone. The prescription for the

recreational buffer zone is also somewhat vague. It would be important that the State Party clarifies this matter both in terms of general management provisions, but also because there have recently been exchanges between the State Party and the World Heritage Centre, concerning a couple of proposed developments, one of which is the Aurora building that would appear to be located inside the proposed local buffer zone, and the other being a proposed visitor centre (Icefjord Centre) that would be located just outside of the proposed buffer zone. These are, however, matters that are independent of the adoption of the buffer zone *per se*. IUCN further notes that it will remain important that the State Party screen all developments with the potential to impact OUV, regardless of whether they are located within or outside the new buffer zones, including through appropriate environmental and social impact assessment prior to any approvals.

4. OTHER COMMENTS

None.

5. RECOMMENDATION

IUCN recommends that the World Heritage Committee adopts the following draft decision:

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Documents WHC/19/43.COM/8B.ADD and WHC/19/43.COM/INF.8B2.ADD;
2. Recalling Decision 28 COM 14B.8;
3. Approves the minor boundary modification request for Ilulissat Icefjord (Denmark);
4. Requests the World Heritage Centre to update the approved records of the area of the property;
5. Requests the State Party to provide further details to the World Heritage Centre by 1 February 2020, for review by IUCN, to clarify the policies that will apply to the local and recreational buffer zones, in particular regarding the scope of development that is anticipated to be permitted;
6. Also requests the State Party to continue to assess any development, whether inside or outside the property and its buffer zone, that has the potential to impact on its OUV in line with the IUCN World Heritage Advice Note on Environmental Impact Assessment, and to notify the World Heritage Centre of any such development plans in accordance with following the

procedures of Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines.

Map 1: World Heritage property and proposed minor boundary modification (creation of buffer zone)

Appendix A

