

# ICOMOS

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES  
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES  
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITIOS  
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ СОВЕТ ПО ВОПРОСАМ ПАМЯТНИКОВ И ДОСТОПРИЧАТЕЛЬНОСТИ

Our Ref. GB/AS/759bis/IR

Charenton-le-Pont, 20 December 2019

H. E. Mr Hans Carel Wesseling  
Permanent Delegation of the Kingdom  
of the Netherlands to UNESCO  
7, rue Eblé  
75007 Paris

## **World Heritage List 2020 Dutch Water Defence Lines (Netherlands) – Interim report and additional information request**

Dear Ambassador,

As prescribed by the revised *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* and its Annex 6, the Advisory Bodies have been requested to submit a short interim report for each nomination by 31 January 2020. We are therefore pleased to provide you with the relevant information outlining issues related to the evaluation process.

The ICOMOS technical evaluation mission to “Dutch Defence Lines” was carried out by Roberto Bobbio (Italy) and Robert Treufeldt (Estonia) in September 2019. The mission expert highly appreciated the availabilities and support provided by the experts in your country for the organization and implementation of the mission.

On 24 September 2019, a letter was sent by ICOMOS to request further information regarding delineation of the boundaries and the rationale for the buffer zone, the methodology for the analysis of highly dynamic areas vis à vis potential development. Please convey our thanks to all the officials and experts for the additional information you provided on 21 October 2019 and for their continued cooperation in this process.

In mid-November 2019, the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel evaluated the cultural and mixed properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List in 2020. The additional information provided by the State Party, together with mission and desk review reports were carefully examined by the Panel members. This process will conclude in March 2020.

We thank you for the availability of your Delegation to the meeting held on Thursday 21 November 2019 with representatives of the ICOMOS Panel. The exchange during this meeting was of great help for the third part of the ICOMOS evaluation meeting in which the Panel identified areas where it considers that further information is needed.

Therefore, we would be pleased if the State Party could consider the following points:

### **Protection and management mechanisms for areas proposed for exclusion**

Besides the large extension, the nomination proposes additions to the currently inscribed Defence line of Amsterdam as well as the removal of seven portions of the inscribed property. This was attributed to the impact of development which had already occurred, or was scheduled and thus not stoppable. These developments are deemed by the State Party to have spoiled irredeemably these areas, which now are seen as detractors, or will do.

ICOMOS extensively discussed on these removals. Even though these sections were not extensive in their size compared to the whole of inscribed property and nominated extension, there are many. The concern is that this may set a precedent for further proposals of this type – both within this property and with reference to other ones.

ICOMOS has noted that the nomination dossier does not explain how these portions proposed for exclusion will be treated, and what measures will be put in place to avoid further depletion of their residual heritage significance. The Panel wondered how these impacts will be mitigated to lessen the negative effects of these developments, in the medium / long run. ICOMOS considers that it does not seem appropriate simply to remove them from the property, without giving considerations to the above, as these areas contributed to the overall Outstanding Universal Value of the inscribed property.

ICOMOS also noted that some portions proposed for removal demonstrate higher sensitivity than other ones. For example, this appears to be the case for the reductions proposed in the vicinity of Schipol airport, and in other plans to reduce significantly the width of the Defence line of Amsterdam.

In this regard it would be important if the State Party could clarify what mechanisms will be put in place to avoid further detracting from the residual significance / heritage legibility of these areas; or to recover part of it in the long run.

The proposal for a buffer zone is very much appreciated, however the proposed buffer zone raises some questions with regard to the rationale for its delineation, its overall size and the mechanisms in place for ensuring the necessary added layer of protection.

#### **Buffer zone**

ICOMOS noted that the buffer zone is formed by a homogenous strip of land 10km – wide, covering essentially the outer side of the fortified system and not the inner, more development – prone, side of the Defence lines. Here, the buffer zone is limited to a thin 50m-wide strip of land, not sufficient to cover the portions that are proposed for removal from the inscribed property.

ICOMOS has considered that it may be too mechanical to adopt a standard distance as the single parameter for delineating the buffer zone. This allows no consideration for the effect of different functional contexts where integrity and authenticity of the extant property and the proposed extensions may need different buffer treatments in different zones. In fact, the existing pressures suggest that a buffer zone might be also needed on the inner side of the property, i.e. to include the areas that are proposed for removal from the property and to orient development.

Furthermore, ICOMOS would like to better understand what mechanisms will be put in place, and whether they are expected to be effective, for wider areas (some 10km wide) prone to different pressures. In these cases, it is important to ensure that the area is managed in a way in which the property and its extension with their attributes are not negatively affected by activities within this zone or outside.

In this regard, ICOMOS is aware of the consultation done by the State Party with the local authorities during the process of the major boundary modification and establishment of a buffer zone. However, ICOMOS would still like to understand what latitude exists for a more detailed definition of the buffer zone, in the inner side of the 'protected zone' by the Defence Line. It is believed this would be highly beneficial for the protection of the inscribed property and the proposed extension.

#### **Area analysis**

The State Party has identified three critical areas – identified as highly dynamic areas – for which analyses are being carried out to have a more detailed understanding of the values, sensitivities, vulnerabilities as a basis for decision making.

In this regard, ICOMOS would find it very useful to receive a sample of one of these studies, e.g., the highly dynamic area near Utrecht, to understand both the methodology adopted and the assessment made, and how these analyses would help avoid future issues for the property. This is particularly important given the development pressures that many stretches of the property are, and will continue to face, in the future.

We look forward to your responses to these points, which will be of great help in our evaluation process.

We would be grateful if you could provide **ICOMOS** and the **World Heritage Centre** with the above information **by 28 February 2020 at the latest**, the deadline set out in paragraph 148 of the *Operational Guidelines* for supplementary information on nominations to be received. Please note that any information submitted after this date will not be considered by ICOMOS in its evaluation for the World Heritage Committee. It should be noted, however, that while ICOMOS will carefully consider any supplementary information submitted, it cannot properly

evaluate a completely revised nomination or large amounts of new information submitted at the last minute. So we would be grateful if the State Party could keep its response concise and respond only to the above requests.

We thank you for your support of the World Heritage Convention and the evaluation process.

Yours faithfully,



Gwenaëlle Bourdin  
Director  
ICOMOS Evaluation Unit

Copy to            National New Dutch Waterline Project  
                         Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands  
                         UNESCO World Heritage Centre