

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 ДОСТОПРИМЕЧАТЕЛЬНЫХ МЕСТ

Our Ref. GB/AA/1654/IR

Charenton-le-Pont, 17 December 2020

H. E. Mr Alexander Kouznetsov
Permanent Delegation of the Russian
Federation to UNESCO
8, rue de Prony
75017 Paris

World Heritage List 2021– Interim report and additional information request Petroglyphs of the Lake Onega and the White Sea (Russian Federation)

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 2021. We are therefore pleased to provide you with the relevant information outlining issues related to the evaluation process.

The ICOMOS technical evaluation mission to the “Petroglyphs of the Lake Onega and the White Sea” was carried out by Mr. Geoffroy Heimlich (France) from 17 to 25 October 2020. The mission expert highly appreciated the support, facilities and information provided by the experts in your country for the organization and implementation of the mission.

On 6 October 2020, a letter was sent by ICOMOS to request further information regarding the description of the nominated property, boundaries, integrity, comparative analysis, conservation, protection, management, tourism and management projects. Please convey our thanks to all the officials and experts for the additional information you provided on 16 November 2020 and for their continued cooperation in this process.

At the end of November 2020, the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel evaluated the cultural and mixed properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List in 2021. The additional information provided by the State Party, together with the mission and desk review reports were carefully examined by the Panel members. This process will conclude in March 2021.

We thank you for the availability of your Delegation for the meeting held on 25 November 2020 with some representatives of the ICOMOS Panel. The exchanges during this meeting were of great help for the third part of the ICOMOS Panel meeting. During this final part of its meeting, the Panel identified areas where it considers that further information is needed.

While the ICOMOS Panel considered that the “Petroglyphs of the Lake Onega and the White Sea” might have the potential to meet the requirements for Outstanding Universal Value, this has not yet been demonstrated.

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

Scope of the serial nominated property

The serial nominated property consists of two groups of rock art sites, 22 in the Lake Onega area and 11 in the White Sea area. Both the Nomination Dossier and the Management Plan present the two areas independently and link them together indicating that the petroglyphs of Lake Onega were first created before the emergence of the carving traditions at the White Sea. As this is one nomination, the component parts should complement each other to demonstrate the proposed Outstanding Universal Value of the property. Therefore ICOMOS would be pleased if the State Party could provide a clearer understanding of this relationship.

The ICOMOS Panel understands from the Nomination Dossier and the Management Plan that important scientific research has been undertaken on the two components. ICOMOS would be pleased to receive a synthesis of the research undertaken to date and its conclusions, especially on the links and interrelations of the petroglyphs at Lake Onega with those at the White Sea. Based on the current state of research, what are the elements that connect the two components together to form a coherent ensemble?

It would be much appreciated if the State Party could provide detailed illustrations of the engraved scenes and motifs of the petroglyphs including photographs, drawings or other visual support, to demonstrate how the petroglyphs of Lake Onega are interlinked with those of the White Sea. Furthermore, it would be useful to develop detailed descriptions in order to provide further evidence of the petroglyphs' outstanding significance while also establishing their chronological setting.

The ICOMOS Panel acknowledges that these petroglyph sites appear to be linked with some 500 archaeological sites – some located in the buffer zone - that require further contextualization. Could the State Party elaborate further on what are the relation between these different types of archaeological remains?

More details would also be helpful in order to gain a greater understanding of the relationship between the petroglyphs and the Neolithic communities who created them and how these cultural groups settled, evolved and migrated. More specifically ICOMOS would be pleased to better understand the cultural context of the petroglyphs and particularly how the rock art sites are connected with the Neolithic culture that created them?

ICOMOS notes that sites within the components selected by the State Party contain some archaeological settlements, but other archaeological elements, such as burial grounds, have not been included into the component parts of the series. Given their potential importance for the integrity of the property ICOMOS would be pleased if the State Party could further explain and illustrate the rationale whereby some archaeological elements have been included in the nominated areas, some in the buffer zones and others outside the buffer zones?

Documentation

The ICOMOS Panel notes that there is mention in the nomination dossier of a Database management system "Petroglyphs of Karelia", which is presented as one of the key outcomes of recent research work.

ICOMOS would be pleased to receive details of this documentation process and information regarding the overall recording system, including where the documents are held and what they cover in terms of information regarding descriptions and illustrations of the rock art panels and their state of conservation. To assist in assessing the integrity of the rock art sites it would be helpful if further details of this system could be provided with a sample entry for a site in each component.

It would also be helpful to have a copy of the recent monograph published in 2015, by N.V. Lobanova "Petroglyphs of the Lake Onega », which we note has an English summary and the "Rock Carvings of Lake Onega, I(1998) and II (2019)" by V. Poikalainen and E. Erits. If possible it would also be helpful to have a copy of the edited volume 'Rock Art of the White Sea" (2018).

Legal protection

ICOMOS notes that currently, 19 out of 25 parts of the Petroglyphs of the Lake Onega component have a designation of cultural heritage site of federal importance, whereas 7 of them have a status of identified cultural heritage sites.

The Petroglyphs of the Lake Onega and the White Sea are currently being considered for protection under the State Code of Especially Valuable Properties of Cultural Heritage of the Peoples of the Russian Federation that would offer the optimal level of protection at national level and secure funding. What is the timeframe for the establishment of this legal protection? Do the boundaries of the components have legal status?

It is understood that there are various levels of protection for the buffer zones since this concept is not reflected in the national legislation. As regards the delimitation of the buffer zones and their legal status, could the State Party confirm how archaeological sites in the buffer zone are protected. How does protection within the buffer zone assist in supporting the proposed Outstanding Universal Value of the property?

Management

ICOMOS understands that there is currently no centralized management system in place for the serial nominated property. It appears that the management structure for the nominated property will be housed in the Karelian Petroglyph Museum to be located on the western side of Lake Onega at Petrozavodsk and that the management of the two components will be co-ordinated through a co-ordinating council. It would be helpful to clarify how this council will work and effectively co-ordinate the range of agencies involved in the management of the nominated property. Could the State Party please elaborate on how the overarching management of the two components will operate? What is the timeframe for its establishment? Furthermore it would be helpful to know what are the processes in place for the conservation of the petroglyphs at the two components? How will the conservation of the petroglyphs be assessed and monitored on an ongoing basis?

Development pressures

In the Management Plan, there are some concerning trends, notably the focus on increasing visitor numbers as part of the overall tourism strategy of the Republic of Karelia and the provision of interpretation, visitor and related facilities as part of that process. It should also be noted that the main indicator of community engagement in the Management Plan appeared to be the involvement of tourist businesses. Major initiatives, such as the museum at Besovy Sledki have commenced without being linked to a Visitor Strategy for the nominated property.

While it is encouraging to hear of the interest of local businesses in setting up tourist activities, ICOMOS is concerned about the potential impact that increasing number of visitors and provision of facilities and services could have on the integrity and authenticity of the nominated property. The state of conservation of the property might change profoundly in the light of new tourism development projects. Apart from the Tourism Study for the whole of the Republic of Karelia, is there a detailed Visitor Strategy for the proposed property with the purpose of sustaining its proposed Outstanding Universal Value? If so, could this document be provided?

Has the potential impact of the projects at the two components that have been initiated, or are being planned, been measured by way of heritage impact assessments?

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 2021 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

Copy to Department of the Republic of Karelia for the protection of cultural heritage
UNESCO World Heritage Centre