
Pompeii and Herculaneum (Italy) No 829bis

1 Basic information

State Party

Italy

Name of property

Archaeological Areas of Pompeii, Herculaneum and Torre Annunziata

Location

Campania Region
Province of Naples

Inscription

1997

Brief description

When Vesuvius erupted on 24 August 79 AD, it engulfed the two flourishing Roman towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum, as well as the many wealthy villas in the area. These have been progressively excavated and made accessible to the public since the mid-18th century. The vast expanse of the commercial town of Pompeii contrasts with the smaller but better-preserved remains of the holiday resort of Herculaneum, while the superb wall paintings of the Villa Oplontis at Torre Annunziata give a vivid impression of the opulent lifestyle enjoyed by the wealthier citizens of the Early Roman Empire.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

9 March 2022

2 Issues raised

Background

The property was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1997 on the basis of criteria (iii), (iv) and (v). It comprises seven component parts.

In 2009, in response to the Retrospective Inventory, the State Party confirmed the extent of the property at 98.05 ha and of the buffer zone at 24.35 ha (Decision 33 COM 8D). The latter, fragmented and very limited in scope, was intended to ensure the protection of detected but buried archaeological remains. The buffer zone connects the archaeological site of Pompeii to the Villa of the Mysteries (west of the town), the property area of the Herculaneum component part to the Villa of the Papyri (west of Herculaneum), including the immediate surroundings of both, and Villa A to Villa B at Torre Annunziata.

The archaeological areas of Pompeii, Herculaneum and Torre Annunziata (Villa Oplontis) are protected as cultural assets through the provisions of Art. 10 Paragraph 1 of the Code of Cultural Heritage and Landscape (Legislative Decree 42/2004). The component parts of the property, together with the immediate surroundings, are managed by the Archaeological Park of Pompeii and the Archaeological Park of Herculaneum – two autonomous institutions established through Ministerial Decree 44/2016. A Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2020 between them established a coordinated management of the activities related to the property. The existing fragmented buffer zone lies within the jurisdiction of the two Parks, except for a small section northeast of the Herculaneum component part. Controls are in place over the excavations of the ancient towns as well as the development of the present-day Pompeii and Ercolano. The Territorial Landscape Plan of the Vesuvian Municipalities, introduced through Legislative Decree in 2002, stipulates further restrictions and regulates the use of land within the boundaries of the property and its buffer zones.

In 2011, the joint WHC-ICOMOS advisory mission visited the property and recommended the State Party to draw an extended buffer zone that would safeguard the visual link of the property with Mount Vesuvius.

In 2013, a joint WHC-ICOMOS reactive monitoring mission recommended that “*a minor boundary modification to the property [be proposed] at Herculaneum to include the area excavated in the 1990s between the main site and the Villa of Papyri and to ensure that the mapped property does actually include the known remains of the Villa and of the Theatre*”. The same year, the World Heritage Committee requested the State Party to submit a formal proposal for a new buffer zone (Decision 37 COM 7B.77).

In 2014, the State Party proposed a minor boundary modification of the property to include an area of still-unexcavated archaeological remains of the ancient town of Herculaneum and its immediate surroundings; three villas at Stabiae; and *Villa Regina* in Boscoreale. The proposed additions were said to bear unparalleled evidence to the daily life and the settlement pattern of the wider landscape surrounding Pompeii and Herculaneum in Roman times, enriching the representation of Roman ways of life conveyed by the inscribed property.

Simultaneously, a minor boundary modification of the buffer zone was proposed. A very large buffer zone of 7683.85 ha, which delimitations were based on the “sphere of influence” of the inscribed property from historical and contemporary perspectives, has been proposed. A Great Pompeii Unit, established in 2013 as a decision-making entity, was mandated to pursue socio-economic revitalisation and urban-environmental redevelopment of municipalities, the territories of which were to be affected by the proposed buffer zone.

The World Heritage Committee referred back the two proposed modifications (Decision 38 COM 8B.51). The first one was considered to go beyond the recommendation made by the joint WHC-ICOMOS mission; the Committee stated that the inclusion of the villas in Boscoreale and at Stabiae in the inscribed property would need to be regarded as a significant boundary modification, as it would modify substantially the scope of the original inscription. With regard to the minor modification to the boundary of the buffer zone, the State Party was requested to explain the rationale for the delineation of the perimeter, provide information on the practical side of the existing protection levels, and clarify the management arrangements.

In 2015, the World Heritage Committee requested the State Party to resubmit the proposal for the buffer zone modification taking into account Decision 38 COM 8B.51 (Decision 39 COM 7B.80).

In 2019, the State Party was invited to resubmit the proposal for the new buffer zone, following Decision 38 COM 8B.51, as a matter of urgency (Decision 43 COM 7B.85).

The same year, a retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value was adopted for the Archaeological Areas of Pompei, Herculaneum and Torre Annunziata (Decision 43 COM 8E).

In 2020, the State Party submitted a new proposal for a minor boundary modification of the buffer zone, based on a different approach. It proposed a smaller buffer zone, shifting its focus from the broader relationship between the inscribed property and the values associated with the Vesuvius landscape, to the historic urban landscape of the ancient towns of Pompei and Herculaneum. The proposed minor boundary modification replaced the existing fragmented buffer zone with two separate buffer zones – one for the inscribed zone of Pompei, Villa of the Mysteries, and Villa A and Villa B of Torre Annunziata (726.06 ha); and another for Herculaneum, Villa of the Papyri and the Theatre (221.3 ha). The Villa in Boscoreale was included within this new buffer zones. The villas at Stabiae were not.

The proposed buffer zones were to reinforce the protection of the Outstanding Universal Value of the inscribed property and foster sustainable development in the surrounding areas. The State Party proposed a historic urban landscape approach as a framework for defining the new buffer zones, in view of safeguarding the property within a broader historical and socio-economic context. In defining the perimeter, the State Party also considered the legal protection and the feasibility of effective use of control measures, as well as the management in the proposed buffer zones. In addition, the existing land use management tools and the vision for the development of the area, together with capacity for the participatory management of the proposed buffer zones were considered.

Five criteria were used to delimit the buffer zones: 1) the relationship to the historical urban landscape; 2) the archaeological continuity; 3) the visual relationships and the protection of the views across the Vesuvius and the sea; 4) the improvement of site accessibility; and 5) the integration between protection and the management plan.

The legal protection within the proposed buffer zones has been based mainly on the legislation relating to the protection of landscape assets, with additional decrees pertaining to cultural heritage. Landscape values have been recognised for the entire Vesuvian area and land use is regulated in this territory (including a prohibition on actions that impede the enjoyment of panoramic views) by the Territorial Landscape Plan of the Vesuvian Municipalities of 2002. Only part of the land in the proposed buffer zones is owned by the State Party. In the areas recognised as landscape assets, private owners, possessors, or holders in any capacity, of properties and areas of scenic interest shall not destroy them or introduce modifications detrimental to the value of the landscape subject to protection; work without authorisation is also prohibited.

The World Heritage Committee referred back the proposed minor boundary modification of the buffer zone (Decision 44 COM 8B.64), with the following recommendation:

1. *Refers the proposed buffer zones for **Archaeological Areas of Pompei, Herculaneum and Torre Annunziata, Italy**, back to the State Party in order to allow it to:*

a) *Explain the methodology used to delineate the boundaries of the proposed buffer zones, and clarify how the areas of cultural interest, historical spaces of significance, and other elements of the historic urban landscape included in the proposed buffer zones are functionally important as a support to the property and its protection, to be able to establish whether their inclusion/exclusion of the proposed buffer zones may affect the integrity of the historic urban landscape of the property,*

b) *Clarify the reasons why some of the fragments of the original buffer zone were left outside the proposed revised buffer zones,*

c) *Provide further information on legal protection in place within the areas of the buffer zones that neither are considered landscape assets nor are protected as cultural heritage, and the existing agreements between private owners of the land,*

d) *Describe in details the management arrangements with timelines for the proposed buffer zones, especially with regard to urban development and socio-economic revitalisation in the area, in relation to the existing agreements, and clarify how the management of the buffer zones as historic urban landscapes, and within the premise of sustainable development, will be aligned with and complement the existing management plan of the inscribed property,*

e) *Submit revised maps of an appropriate scale in line with the Operational Guidelines (Annex 5 and 11), showing the boundaries of the proposed buffer zones, and with clearly marked elements of the historic urban landscape of which the submitted proposal speaks, in order to demonstrate their relationship to the inscribed property and allow*

assessing potential impacts of future developments in the area of the proposed buffer zones on the inscribed archaeological areas.

Modification

Following Decision 44 COM 8B.64, the State Party proposed a revised boundary of the buffer zones, which is said to be better aligned to the criteria used to delimit the perimeter. As compared with the buffer zones presented in 2020, the area of the newly proposed buffer zone for Pompei, Villa of the Mysteries, and Villa A and Villa B of Torre Annunziata component parts was expanded to 1469.01 ha, and the buffer zone for Herculaneum, Villa of the Papyri and the Theatre to 257.08 ha; the two parts totalling 1726.09 ha. It is of note that the Villa in Boscoreale has now been excluded from the newly proposed buffer zones.

The revised buffer zones are under the jurisdiction of ten municipalities: Portici, Ercolano, Torre del Greco, Torre Annunziata, Trecase, Boscotrecase, Boscoreale, Pompei, Castellammare di Stabia and Scafati.

In response to World Heritage Committee's Decision 44 COM 8B.64, and to explain the delineation process of the buffer zones, the State Party provided a description of urban areas of different nature and purpose (including landscape protection areas, archaeological and architectural heritage zones, historical conservation areas, as well as zones dedicated for commercial development and residential fabric areas) that constitute the proposed buffer zones. An explanation of their relationship to the inscribed property through physical, functional or symbolic aspects has also been included. The main landscape features that have been considered when establishing the important views that need to be protected by the proposed expanded buffer zones include Mount Vesuvius, the Mediterranean Sea, the Sorrentine Coast and the Sarno River.

The State Party clarified the error that resulted in excluding parts of the original fragmented buffer zones from the buffer zones proposed in 2020. All elements have now been incorporated into the revised buffer zones currently proposed.

Assurance has been given that all of the areas within the proposed revised buffer zones are protected under Legislative Decree 42/2004 as Landscape Assets (landscape heritage) or cultural heritage. The historic urban fabric within the proposed buffer zones is additionally subject to safeguarding which prevents any non-conservation interventions. A general agreement with the local communities affected by the proposed buffer zones is in place since 2018 and constitutes the basis for participatory development in the area.

The Strategic Plan for the Area of Interest of Site 829, approved in 2018, stipulates a vision for the sustainable development of the area in relation to its landscape values. Its implementation is being coordinated by the Great Pompei Unit, through a Management Committee established by an agreement signed in 2018 between

the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport, the Ministry of Territorial Cohesion, the Campanian Regional authorities and the municipalities falling within the proposed buffer zones. The plan is divided into short, medium and long-term goals, spread over five, ten and twenty years, and includes investments in infrastructure, urban redevelopment and cultural engagements with local communities. A number of memoranda of understanding have been signed with local authorities, and partnerships created with public and private institutions, aimed at creating a participatory system of governance of the buffer zones geared towards socio-economic development of the areas falling within them. The Strategic Plan is already being implemented, while the management plan for the inscribed property is being updated. The timeframe for the finalisation and implementation of the management plan has not been provided.

The State Party submitted detailed maps with clear description of the perimeter of the buffer zones and information on the relationship between the cultural heritage monuments included within the proposed boundaries and the inscribed property.

ICOMOS considers that the information provided by the State Party responds to the requests made by the World Heritage Committee.

The proposed minor boundary modification will contribute to the protection of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property and strengthen its integrity and management.

3 Recommendations

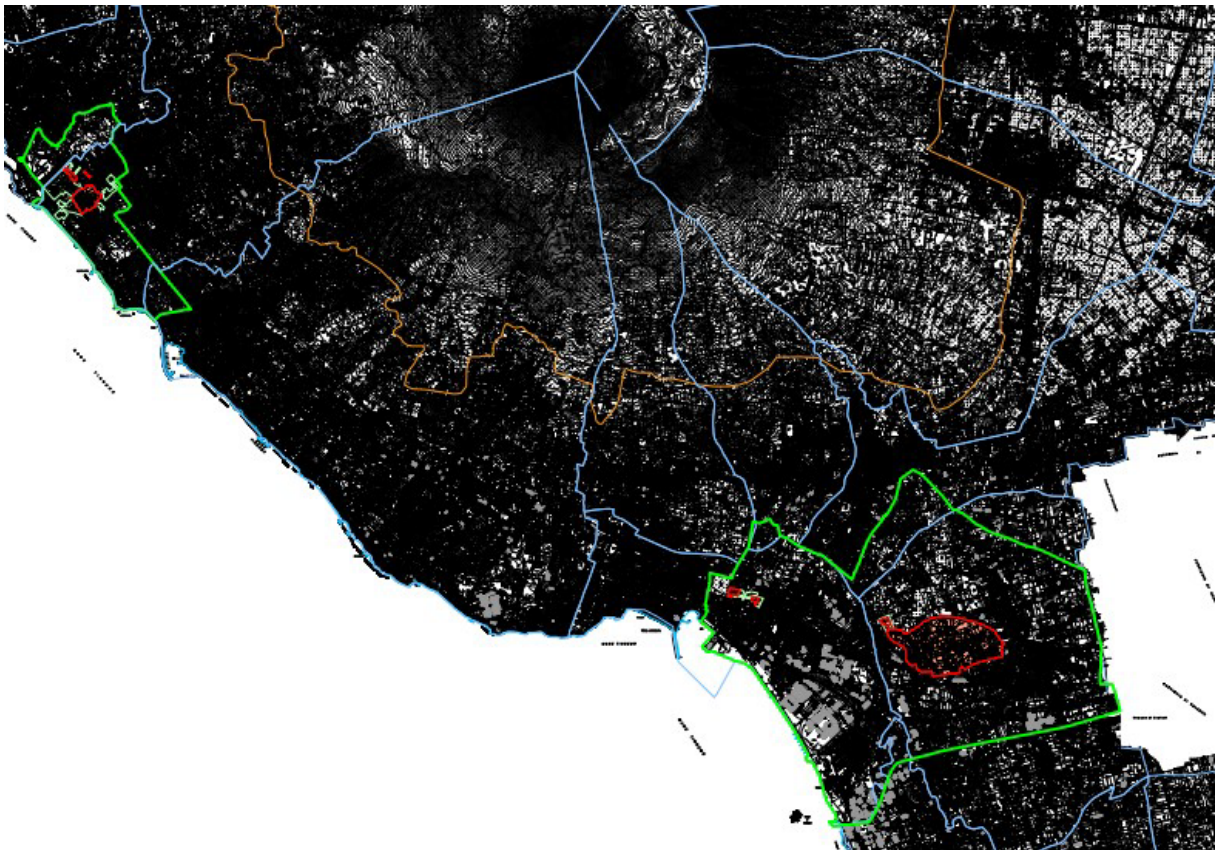
Recommendation with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the proposed buffer zones of the Archaeological Areas of Pompei, Herculaneum and Torre Annunziata, Italy, be **approved**.

Additional recommendations

ICOMOS also recommends that the State Party give consideration to the following:

- a) Considering submitting in the future a minor boundary modification with a view to extending the buffer zone to include the Villa in Boscoreale that was initially included in the 2020 proposal,
- b) Providing a timeframe for the finalisation and implementation of the management plan;



Map showing the revised boundaries of the buffer zone (February 2022)