



Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

World Heritage Sites

Himā Cultural Area
The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
(Reference Number 1619)

Proposal for minor boundary modification of the property's buffer zone

January 2024



This proposal for minor boundary modification concerns the buffer zone of the serial property Ḥimā Cultural Area. In its 2020 evaluation prior to inscription to the World Heritage List, ICOMOS considered that “the buffer zone should be extended to include Jabal al-Kawbab and part of Jabal al-Qāra, which are adjacent to the proposed buffer zone, thereby adding a hill area that contains many important sites.” The State Party accepted this suggestion and in its State of Conservation report (2023) introduced a draft proposal for the expansion of the limits of the buffer zone. In its decision 45 COM 7B.147, the World Heritage Committee took note of this intention (para. 8 of the decision), also recommending to consider the expansion of the property itself “in case information comes to light from the inventory and archaeological research, that would reinforce the integrity and understanding of the property”.

The present proposal only concerns the expansion of the buffer zone of the property. The State Party considers that it is premature to consider the expansion of the property itself, as archaeological surveys and related studies are still being carried out. The expansion of the buffer zone recognizes the importance of cultural vestiges present in the area and the need to protect them, but their contribution to the OUV of the property cannot be properly evaluated in the absence of a full survey and final publications.

1. Area of the buffer zone

The property was inscribed as six components:

Component 1: Ḥimā wells (1.22 ha)

Component 2: Saidah Archaeological Site (1.70 ha)

Component 3: ‘An Jamal Archaeological Site (3.66 ha)

Component 4: Jabal Dhibāh Archaeological Site (4.59 ha)

Component 5: Minshaf Archaeological Site (119 ha)

Component 6: Najd Khayran Archaeological Site (112 ha)

Total area of the property as inscribed: 242.17 ha

The site was inscribed with a buffer zone of 31,757.83 ha

The proposed new buffer zone covers an area of 77,255.34 ha

Map 1 shows both the original and proposed revision of the buffer zone, and Map 2 shows the proposed revision only.

2. Description of the modification

The proposed buffer zone is expanded to the northeast, to include Jabal al-Kawkab, where more than 30 archaeological sites or rock-art clusters are found. On the northwestern and western sides of the previous buffer zone, the new boundary includes Jabal al-Qāra, and instead of following a straight line, as in the original delimitation, it follows topographic features so that the effective limits of the buffer zone can be better recognised on the ground and eventually marked.



It is to be noted that the western limits of the property of component 1, Ḥimā wells, had only a 20 meters buffer zone in the original inscribed configuration, an issue that raised a question from ICOMOS in an interim report dated 20/12/2019. With this revision the buffer zone of this component is enlarged to 3,8 km to the west of the property. Finally, further more minor expansions, are proposed to the south and southeast of the previous limits.

3. Justification for the modification

As explained in the introduction, the presence of archaeological sites in the area of Jabal al-Kawkab was a reason for ICOMOS to invite the State Party to consider the expansion of the buffer zone to include the area, as well as parts of Jabal al-Qāra to the west of the previous buffer zone limits. Archaeological surveys are continuing in the region, allowing for possibly more discoveries, and a more complete inventory of the known sites and features. As these sites are being investigated and evaluated, also in terms of their eventual contribution to the OUV of the property, it is essential to ensure an appropriate level of protection. Expanding the buffer zone to include these sites is at this point the most effective way to provide for their protection. For the time being, and until study and publication of these sites has been achieved, the preference is not to expand the property itself, either as an enlargement of existing components, or by the creation of new components.

4. Contribution to the maintenance of the Outstanding Universal Value

The protection of archaeological and rock art sites within the buffer zone of Ḥimā Cultural Area seeks to enhance the OUV of the property by ensuring that the context in which these sites are found remains in the present conditions, free from development activities which may affect the landscape qualities of the site and affect the existing components, separating them from features that, although may not carry OUV, are nonetheless part of a cultural ensemble of great archaeological and historic value. Further to that, the expansion of the buffer zone allows a number of sites to have increased protection. Some of these may eventually be proposed, once their study is completed, for inclusion in the property itself.

5. Implications for legal protection

The expansion of the buffer zone is substantial but in terms of legal protection there are no modifications to the present status quo. The area is within the governorate of the Najran region and all of it is government property. Archaeological and historic sites in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are managed by the Heritage Commission.

The entire area, including this new extension, is a Registered Archaeological Site and enjoys protection afforded to such sites in the Saudi Law of Antiquities, Museums and Urban Heritage Royal Decree No. 9/M (dated, 09/01/1436 AH corresponding to 01/11/2014).



6. Implications for management arrangements

The Management Plan for Hima Cultural Area was prepared in 2018 as part of the World Heritage nomination. It covers the buffer zone of the property and as such the extension to the buffer zone will therefore fall under the jurisdiction of the Management Plan and site management operations, which are operational, legally binding and being implemented.

The proposed extension of the buffer zone is aligned with and supports the recommendations made in the Management Plan.

The following management regulations will become applicable to the extended buffer zone:

Policy P2: *The buffer zone including Jabal Kawbab will be designated and protected as Hima Cultural Area*

The intention is to declare the entire area covered by the buffer zone as an archaeological park, thus establishing very strict regulations concerning any type of activities in the area.

Policy P6: *The buffer zone/Archaeological Park will be zoned to ensure the most sensitive areas around the nominated sites can be protected.*

The zoning of the archaeological park will allow the establishment of various degrees of protection, from the strictest, basically forbidding any access to sensitive areas, to places where some infrastructures can be developed. Having said so, further limitations apply:

P6.1 *Prepare a detailed masterplan for the buffer zone/Archaeological Park and its immediate periphery that establishes protection and activity zones with limits on activities and structures permitted in each zone*

P6.2 *Ensure that any developments within the 'core' area of the buffer zone adhere to the Design Guidelines and obtain SCTH¹ permission before construction*

P6.3 *Only any intervention in the buffer zone 'undeveloped' area is undertaken with the permission of the SCTH and adheres to the Design Guidelines.*

P6.4 *All tourism facilities to be located outside of the buffer zone boundaries and adhere to eco-tourism standards.*

These points drastically limit any kind of development activities, including those related to tourism facilities.

Policy P11: *Based on further research, surveys and in the event of new findings, re-evaluate the nominated property and the boundaries of the buffer zone.*

This minor boundary modification request already responds in part to this point. P11.3 in particular considers the possibility that new discoveries may provide information to expand the property itself.

Policy T2: *Infrastructure works and developments will be discouraged in the buffer zone*

¹ SCTH is now the Heritage Commission



T2.1 *Coordinate with local planning and national infrastructure agencies to ensure permits are issued for planned developments within the buffer zones.*

T2.2 *Any intervention or development that is unavoidable within the buffer zone will be preceded by archaeological investigations.*

T2.3 *Ensure all archaeological investigations prior to essential infrastructure works are undertaken by suitably qualified teams and approved by the SETH.*

Given the absence of major settlements in the area, major infrastructural works are not predicted, but these regulations are introduced in the site management plan to avoid future issues. The policy further stipulates that all archaeological investigations are undertaken by suitably qualified teams. This is also supported by the Saudi Law of Antiquities, Museums and Urban Heritage that only permits agencies with authorisation from the Heritage Commission to conduct excavations at archaeological sites (Article 43).

Policy T3: *All new structures within the buffer zone will conform to strict guidelines in terms of design, materials and impact*

T3.1 *Agree design guidelines for such areas that stipulate low rise small imprint structures that are ecologically sound using locally available materials and follow traditional norms of building.*

T3.2 *Introduce sustainable construction for all new buildings in the Himā Township.*

T3.3 *Develop incentives to promote sustainable building practices to locals*

These regulations intend to establish agreed guidelines to avoid developments outside of the buffer zone that may affect the visual quality of the landscape.



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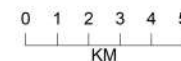
هيئة التراث
Heritage Commission

Himā Cultural Area

MINOR BOUNDARY MODIFICATION FOR
HIMA CULTURAL AREA



Coordinates Buffer Zone After Expansion		
East	North	Point
44.503204	18.266508	1
44.483333	18.194444	2
44.401229	18.292023	3
44.377312	18.357706	4
44.333068	18.477982	5
44.375494	18.517960	6
44.438453	18.514849	7
44.584815	18.597832	8
44.639332	18.508489	9
44.619898	18.455830	10
44.588411	18.303193	11



1 cm = 1 km





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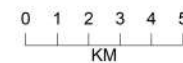
Himā Cultural Area

MINOR BOUNDARY MODIFICATION FOR
HIMA CULTURAL AREA

●	Coordinates
—	Governorate Boundaries
—	Road
□	Property
□	Old Buffer Zone
□	New Buffer Zone

Coordinates Current Buffer Zone

East	North	Point
44.450000	18.502778	1
44.516667	18.516667	2
44.583333	18.373889	3
44.550000	18.291667	4
44.483333	18.194444	5
44.450000	18.250000	6



1 cm = 1 km





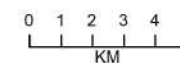
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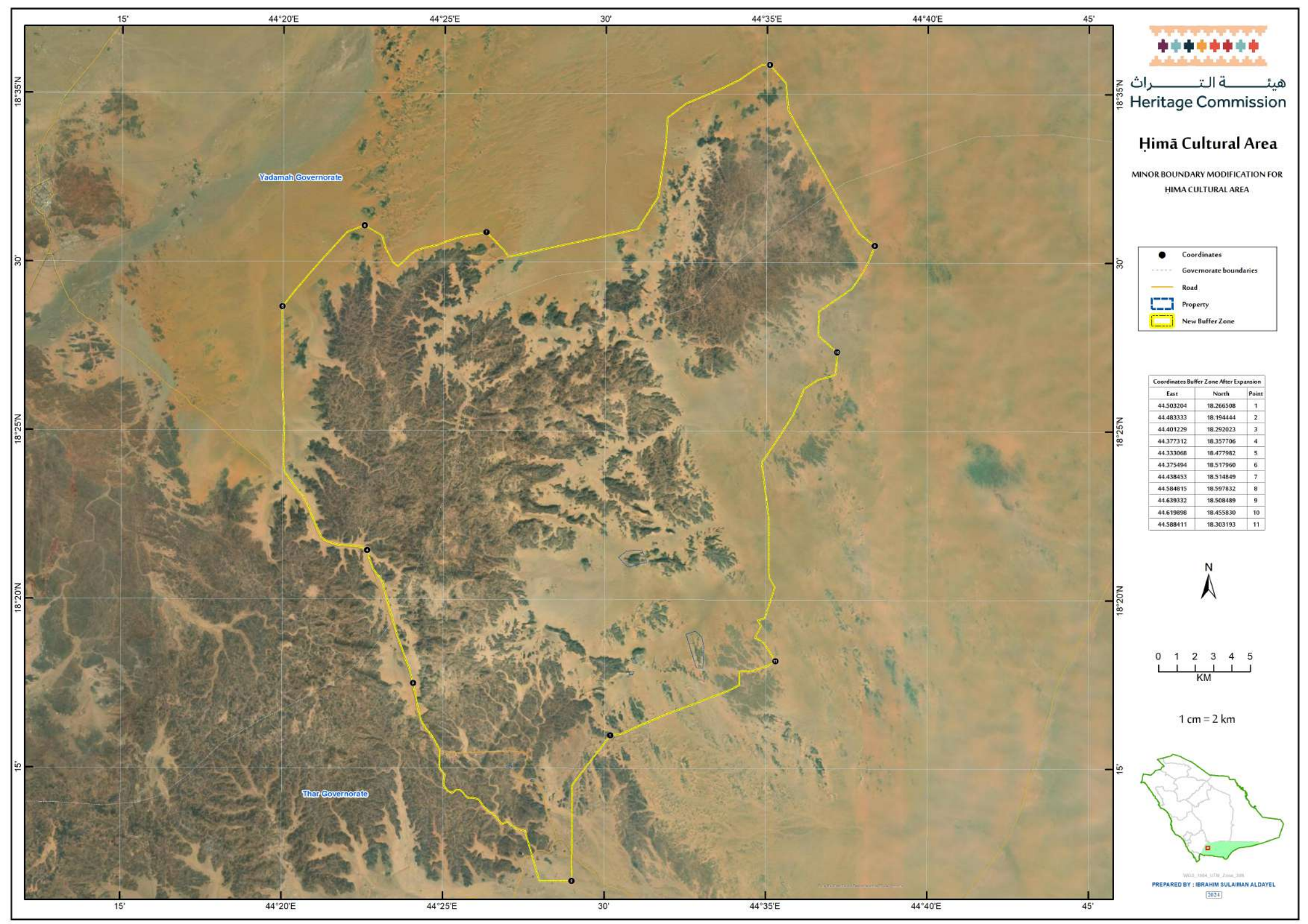
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1 cm = 2 km



SAUDI ARABIA
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2021





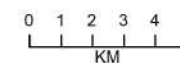
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MINOR BOUNDARY MODIFICATION FOR
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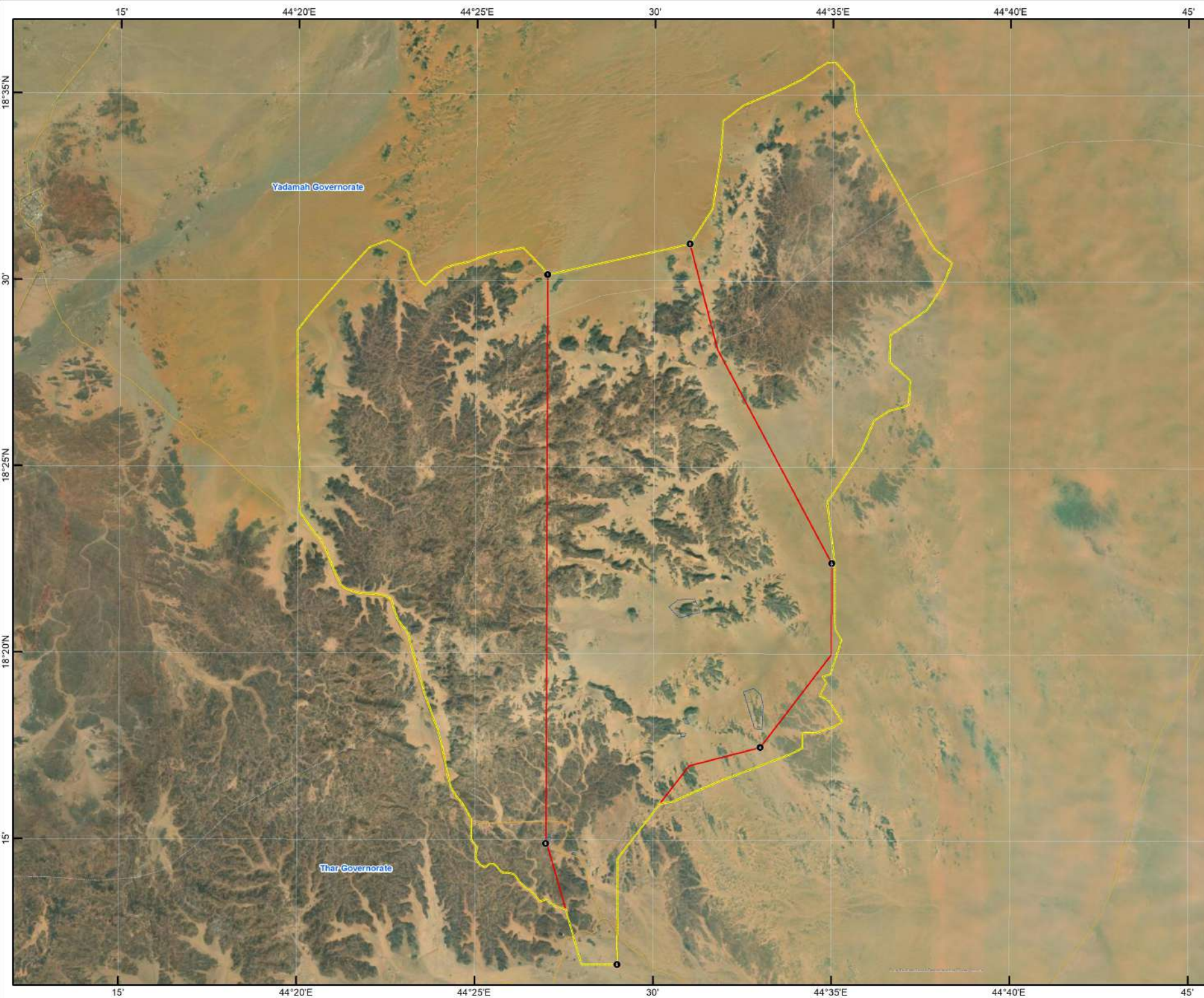
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2021





Informal Translation

- Decision to define the protection zone for an archaeological site -

The Chief Executive Officer of the Heritage Commission

Based on the powers granted to him by law,

Having reviewed Article Forty-Six of the Antiquities, Museums and Urban Heritage Law issued by Royal Decree No. (M/3) dated 9/1/1436 AH, which includes in its first paragraph that “The radius of the protection zone of the classified urban heritage or archaeological site or building shall be two hundred meters from such building or site, particularly the side on which the façade of the building or the site is located. Controls and conditions related to the protection zone shall be determined in coordination with the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs - Housing currently -. Said zone may be extended or reduced pursuant to a decision by the President, in coordination with the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and relevant agencies”, and after reviewing the matrix of powers in the Ministerial Resolution No. (907/Q) dated 22/10/1443 AH, which includes authorizing the Chief Executive Officer of the Commission to approve amendments to the protection zones that concern archaeological sites.

The following is decided:

First: The expansion of the protection zone for the archaeological site of Hīmā Cultural Area site in the Najran region is approved according to the data mentioned in the list shown below and the attached map:

Measured area	(km ²) (كم ²)	المساحة المقاسة
Property area	2.42	حدود الموقع
Present buffer zone	317.578	حرم الحماية الحالي
Buffer zone after expansion	772.55	حرم الحماية المطلوب توسيعه
Size of the expansion	454.97	مقدار التوسعة

Second: This decision shall be communicated to those who are required to enforce it and act in accordance with it.

God bless.

Chief Executive Officer of the Heritage Commission

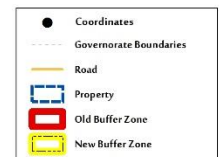
Doctor Jasir bin Sulaiman Alherbish



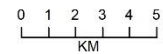
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Himā Cultural Area

MINOR BOUNDARY MODIFICATION FOR
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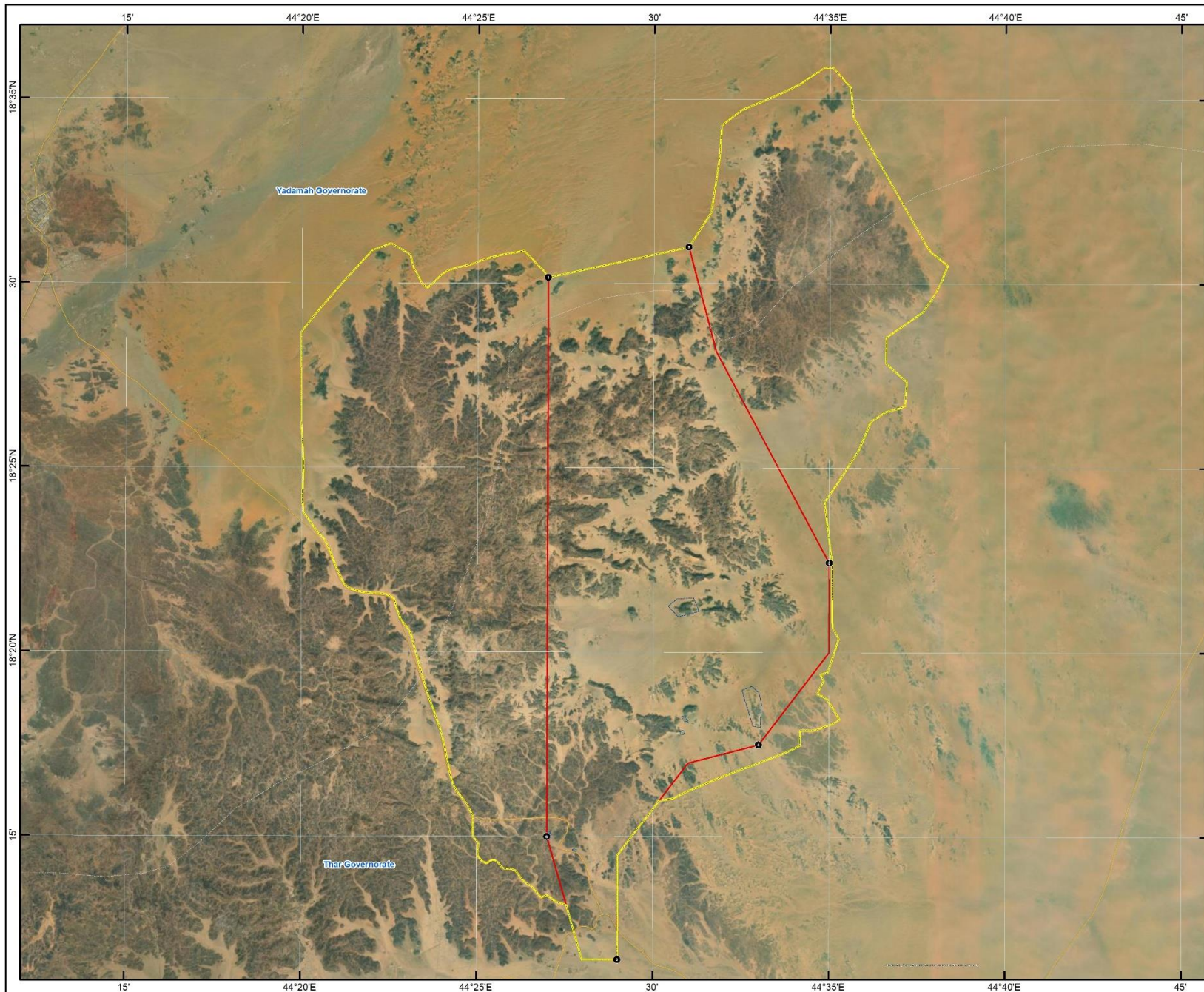
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[2024]





Jabal al Kawkab _Photograph 1



Jabal al Kawkab _Photograph 2



Jabal al Kawkab _Photograph 3



Jabal al-Qara _Photograph 1



Jabal al-Qara _Photograph 2



Jabal al-Qara _Photograph 3

