
Madara Rider (Bulgaria) No 43bis

1 Basic information

State Party

Bulgaria

Name of property

Madara Rider

Location

Village of Madara
Province of Shumen
Bulgaria

Inscription

1979

Brief description

The Madara Rider, representing the figure of a knight triumphing over a lion, is carved into a 100m high cliff near the village of Madara in north-east Bulgaria. Madara was the principal sacred place of the First Bulgarian Empire before Bulgaria's conversion to Christianity in the 9th century. The inscriptions beside the sculpture tell of events that occurred between AD 705 and 801.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

12 March 2025

2 Issues raised

Background

The property was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1979 on the basis of criteria (i) and (iii). The relief is acknowledged as an exceptional work of art dating from the early years of the formation of the Bulgarian state. The figurative relief is surrounded by inscribed texts concerning the reign of three famous Khans.

The 1979 nomination dossier did not include the boundaries of the property or the buffer zone.

In 2009, clarifications to the property boundaries and sizes in response to the Retrospective Inventory were made by the State Party (Decision 33COM 8D) and the area of the property was confirmed to be 1.2 hectares and 501.7 hectares for the buffer zone.

In 2010, a retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value was adopted (Decision 34COM 8E).

The locality of "Madara Rock Wreaths" in the village of Madara, municipality of Shumen, district of Shumen, village of Kalugeritsa, village of Kaspichan and village of Kyulevcha, municipality of Kaspichan, district of Shumen, was declared a protected area, with a total of 3191,336 hectares, on the basis of Article 39, and in conjunction with Article 33, paragraph 1 of the Protected Areas Act.

In 2024, clarifications to the property boundaries and buffer zone were made by the State Party (Decision 46COM 8D) and the map of the property was updated.

Modification

The proposed minor boundary modification request suggests to modify the delineation of the boundaries of the World Heritage property in order to better protect the rock formation on which the carved relief is located. The limits of the property used to cover the rock relief itself as well as the stairs leading to it. Following the minor boundary modification, the stairs would become part of the buffer zone. However, despite this proposed modification of the delineation, the area of the property would remain the same, i.e. 1.2 hectares.

The proposed minor boundary modification request also suggests a modification to the buffer zone, with an increase of 32.64 hectares, or 6.51 percent, from 501.7 hectares to 534.34 hectares.

Since the inscription of the property, there have been changes in national legislation. In 2009, the Law on Cultural Heritage (promulgated in State Gazette 19) entered into force and requires that boundaries and conservation regimes are to be defined by cadastral boundaries.

The proposed modification will not have implications for the current management measures and protection mechanisms applicable to the land area of the World Heritage property. The proposed changes to the boundaries of the buffer zone have been approved by the Minister of Culture of Bulgaria under the Cultural Heritage Act.

A Specialized Expert Council for the Conservation of Immovable Cultural Property was held in August 2024 and was in charge of the preparation of the minor boundary modification request.

Archaeological research has been undertaken and has revealed the presence of archaeological sites beyond the current limits of the "Madara" Archaeological Reserve, which coincide with the current boundaries of the buffer zone. The proposed revision to the buffer zone will ensure that the twenty-two identified and georeferenced archaeological immovable cultural properties of national importance are included within the new limits of the buffer zone.

It is a matter of urgency that the Conservation and Management Plan for the property, in accordance with the new boundaries of the buffer zone, is developed in

accordance with Ordinance on the Scope, Structure, Content and Methodology for the Preparation of Conservation and Management Plans for Single or Grouped Immovable Cultural Properties (SG 19/08.03.2011). All eligible and required activities, such as construction of infrastructure, landscaping, access and provision of visitor services and the development and maintenance of existing infrastructures shall be in accordance with Articles 80, 83 and 84 of the Cultural Heritage Act, on the basis of Article 14, paragraph 1, item 13 of the same Act. Project documentation for any interventions on the World Heritage property and its environment shall be prepared in accordance to the requirements regulated by Ordinance No. 4/21.12.2016 (promulgated in State Gazette No. 105/30.12.2016). Activities disturbing the integrity of the earth layer shall be governed by the requirements of Article 161, paragraph 1 of the Cultural Heritage Act.

Archaeological monitoring shall be conducted in accordance with Article 161, paragraph 2 of the Cultural Heritage Act, with all activities in the territory of the Madara Rider being carried out in accordance with provisions of the Cultural Heritage Act, Ordinance No. 22 of the Committee of Culture and the Committee of Architecture and Public Works for the Protection of the Historical and Archaeological Reserves "Pilska", "Preslav", and "Madara" and the Protocol of the Inter-Institutional Commission of 07.09.2010 in application of Order No. RD9K-0171/01.09.2010 of the Ministry of Culture.

ICOMOS considers that the proposed minor boundary modification of the World Heritage property will provide protection of the rock formation on which the relief is located. In addition, ICOMOS considers that, in accordance with paragraph 104 of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, the proposal to modify the boundaries of the buffer zone will include important features that are functionally important as a support to the understanding of the World Heritage property and its protection.

ICOMOS considers that the proposed changes are well-founded, and will enhance the protection of the World Heritage property.

3 Recommendations

Recommendations with respect to inscription

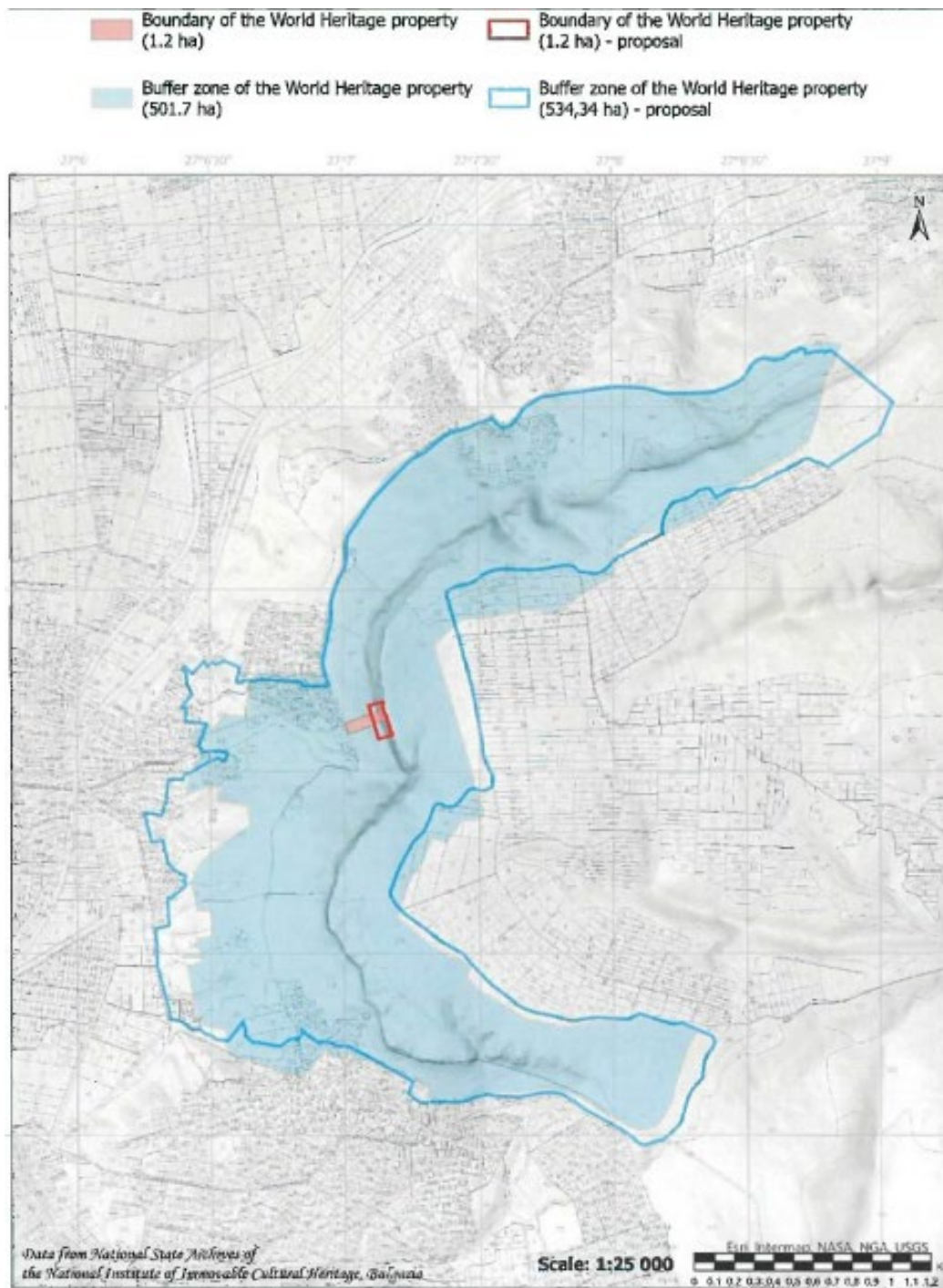
ICOMOS recommends that the proposed minor modification to the boundary of the Madara Rider, Bulgaria, be **approved**.

ICOMOS also recommends that the proposed minor modification to the boundaries of the buffer zone of the Madara Rider, Bulgaria, be **approved**.

Additional recommendation

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

- a) Completing the proposed Conservation and Management Plan for the property for submission to the World Heritage Centre.



Map showing the revised boundaries of the property and of the buffer zone (February 2025)