

REPORT
of the Joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/Ramsar Secretariat
Advisory mission
to the World Heritage property 'Fertő/Neusiedlersee Cultural
Landscape' (Austria, Hungary)
2-5 October 2023



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The mission team would like to convey its special thanks to Mr Ernst-Peter Brezovszky from the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, Ms Ruth Pröckl from the Austrian Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport, and Mr Zorán Vukoszávlyev from the Hungarian Ministry of Construction and Transport, and their respective teams for their efforts in ensuring the success of the mission. The mission team was privileged to be accompanied throughout its visits and meetings by these teams.

Meetings with many representatives of the States Parties and other stakeholders, including civil society representatives, helped the mission team to receive comprehensive information on the issues to be assessed. Our thanks go to all stakeholders for their inputs and their engagement and determination to safeguard the property.

Executive Summary and List of Recommendations

This report presents the conclusions and recommendations of the joint Advisory mission carried out by the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and the Ramsar Secretariat in response to the joint invitation of the States Parties of Austria and Hungary to the transboundary World Heritage property 'Fertő/Neusiedlersee Cultural Landscape', which comprises parts of the 'Neusiedler See-Seewinkel – Fertő-Hanság' Transboundary Ramsar Site. The main objective of the mission, which took place from 2 to 5 October 2023, was to provide advice to the States Parties, as well as to the site managers and other stakeholders, on how to ensure the preservation of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property when considering tourism development, water management and wind farm construction as well as other development projects within the property, its buffer zone and its wider setting. In addition, the mission examined the overall protection system of the cultural landscape and its setting, including the new Management Plan for the property.

The findings of the mission indicate that the current management system is not adequately protecting the cultural landscape and the property is affected by a number of factors, including urban development and sprawl, major visitor accommodation and associated infrastructure, lack of protection of urban cores, changes in functions of buildings, renewable energy facilities (repowering of wind turbines in the component in Austria), in the context of climate change and severe weather events that led to episodes of lower water levels in the lake.

Cooperation between the two States Parties is strengthening, and the joint new Management Plan is a major achievement. Close collaboration and sustained dialogue have to be intensified to achieve the joint management of the property to collaboratively address the complex issues affecting the transboundary lacustrine cultural landscape. The mission formulates a number of concrete recommendations on how to strengthen the bilateral collaboration at different levels. The mission also concludes that the management of the property would benefit from increased human resource in management administrations in both States Parties.

With regard to tourism facilities along the lakeshore, the mission concludes that the scale and extent of the existing lakeside tourism infrastructure in the property has reached the maximum carrying capacity and no further extension of it should be allowed in the future. Rehabilitation of existing infrastructure should be supportive of the OUV of the property while negative impacts, including on the ecological status of the World Heritage property and the Ramsar Site, should be minimized. Tourism infrastructure renewal should be seen as an opportunity to correct past interventions that have compromised the property's OUV. While the redevelopment of the Lakeside Resort in Breitenbrunn (Austria) is a positive example in terms of scale, aesthetic and materialization, the proposed redevelopment of the Sopron-Fertő Lake Resort (Hungary) is of concern and should be taken forward through an iterative design process in which the impact of suggested design options on the OUV of the property is continuously and thoroughly assessed on the basis of the *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context*.

With regard to wind parks' repowering, the mission concludes that wind turbines within the visual setting of the property will continue to impact negatively on it, and that a framework for the evaluation of visual impacts of wind turbines needs to be developed based on an inventory of the spatial and landscape attributes of the property. Moreover, the protection of the visual setting of the property would benefit from the extension of its buffer zone, which is currently very limited.

Lastly, on the issue of water management, the mission advocates for a long-term, cooperative approach focusing on governance and science. Due to potential long-term and hard-to-reverse effects of interventions to increase water supply to the lake on its ecology and landscape, a

careful and sustained consultation process is required, including with the World Heritage Centre, the Advisory Bodies and the Ramsar Secretariat.

In conclusion, the Advisory mission stresses the importance of improving the joint management of the property and the imperative of taking into account all the attributes that support its OUV when considering tourism development, water management, renewable energy and other development projects, to ensure the long-term preservation of this unique cultural landscape and ecosystem.

Recommendations

Tourism development projects within the property

General

1. No further extension of extant lake side resorts within the transboundary property or increase in scale or capacity should be allowed in future, and the planning system, especially in Austria, should be adapted accordingly. Rehabilitation of existing infrastructure, where needed, should be seen as an opportunity to correct past interventions that compromise the property's OUV.
2. Great care must be taken to ensure that the resorts retain their spatial isolation from their associated towns, and permanent occupation of the reed belt should be avoided. The corridors connecting the resorts with their associated towns should not be further developed.

Sopron Fertő Lake Resort

3. The continued use of the Sopron Fertő Lake Resort is possible and welcome, but only within a strict framework of size, scale and materialisation. An essential prerequisite for the development going forward is establishing a clear and continuous communication with local stakeholders and interested parties and stakeholders, including the World Heritage Centre, the Advisory Bodies and the Ramsar Secretariat.
4. It is necessary to ensure that the Sopron Fertő Lake Resort project is evaluated cumulatively with the existing tourism infrastructure along the entire lakeshore before proceeding. The redesign process should be undertaken as an iterative design process in which the impact of suggested design options on the OUV of the property is continuously assessed, in line with both Paragraph 118bis of the Operational Guidelines and based on the 2022 *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context*.
5. A phased approach for the Sopron Fertő Lake Resort project is possible, but only with a framework that establishes the conditions and the maximum envelope for the entire development, which should be assessed through a parallel impact assessment. Such a development framework should be established before finalising the design of further infrastructure and buildings for the northern marina of the Sopron-Fertő Lake Resort, the potential impacts of which on the OUV of the property need to be assessed cumulatively with the existing tourism infrastructure along the entire lakeshore, as requested by the World Heritage Committee.
6. The development of the planned eco-centre as part of the Sopron Fertő Lake Resort is positive. The mission recommends the State Party of Hungary to invite the State Party of Austria to collaborate on the development and operation of the eco-centre as a vehicle to further bilateral collaboration between the two States Parties.

Water supply to Lake Fertő/Neusiedl

7. The mission advises that discussions regarding addressing hydrological issues be pursued within the framework of the Austro-Hungarian Water Commission (AHWC), to reach formal bilateral¹ agreements that would clearly specify all technical details of the water repartition arrangement, and under which conditions.
8. The mission recommends creating a single stakeholder consultation body that will invite stakeholders from the two countries² to discuss and express positions on the proposals from AHWC, prior to any decision.
9. As for scientific matters, the mission recommends addressing some of the knowledge gaps before conducting the environmental impact assessments that are legally required, in particular:
 - a. To launch a new joint project, further to the REBEN project, to better model the combined effects of water (evaporation, flow exchanges between lake and reed belt) and sediment processes (siltation, decomposition of organic matters, sediment dredging), and their spatial and temporal variability, on the water level fluctuations and salinity/chemical state (including pollutants and dangerous substances) in the lake.
 - b. To draw from the LIFE project 'Pannonic Salt' and other existing research activities to achieve a better understanding of the groundwater interactions with the lake in relation to precipitation events, and to implement a large-scale modelling and planning for future groundwater management. This would not only benefit the lake water level modelling, but also the ability to restore the Hanság and Seewinkel wetlands.

Wind turbines outside the property, but within visible range

10. The mission advises that the repowering of the Neusiedl-Weiden and Gols wind parks will prolong the negative impact of the wind energy projects on the OUV of the property.
11. The visual presence of individual turbines needs to be reduced as far as possible. The State Party of Austria should investigate the possibility of installing turbine blades without red stripes on the rotor blades as this would reduce the negative visual impact of the turbines on the landscape.
12. The existing processes for wind repowering need to be strengthened on a number of issues:
 - a. The visual setting of the property should be better protected due to the great contribution that the wider landscape setting makes to its OUV.
 - b. A framework for the evaluation of visual impacts of wind turbines, based on an inventory of the spatial and landscape attributes of the property, needs to be developed.

Other development projects

Gols Hospital proposal

¹ It is to be noted that international agreements under the Danube River Protection Convention would be required in the event that water supply modalities might be linked to the Danube River basin. The International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River would be the adequate transnational body in this regard.

² With adequate interpretation services.

13. The mission advises against the development of the Wiesäcker as a site for the planned hospital, as such development will negatively impact the OUV of the property.
14. It is imperative that any further development of plans for the hospital in the wider setting of the World Heritage property be subject to an impact assessment that evaluates the potential impact on the OUV of the property. Such an impact assessment should be submitted to the World Heritage Centre along with information on the proposed development in one of the working languages of the Convention before any decisions are taken on the further execution of the project. Any proposal that may have an impact on the OUV of the property, be this proposed for a location in the property, its buffer zone or the wider setting, should be assessed through an impact assessment, as prescribed in Paragraph 118bis of the Operational Guidelines.
15. The selection of an alternative site for the hospital should aim to further enforce the historic poly-nuclear nature of the settlements of the property and its setting. The hospital should ideally be located in a brownfield zone that forms part of an existing urban area.

Solar farms

16. Solar farm development is not appropriate within the boundaries of the property as this would have a negative impact on the cultural landscape. Small-scale solar installations should be carefully investigated before they are constructed.

Planning and management

Spatial planning

17. Limiting further expansion of villages, especially towards each other along transport routes, is essential to maintain the cultural landscape.
18. All settlements within the property and its buffer zone should be delimited with boundaries in the planning systems including within the framework of the already existing Regional Development Programme Neusiedler See-Parndorfer Platte which includes establishing settlement boundaries as a strategy.
19. Historic centres should receive protection as urban ensembles. The Federal State of Burgenland is advised to develop and adopt legislation to, at the very least, protect the townscapes, ensembles and most important buildings of the Burgenland villages within the World Heritage property.
20. The State Party of Austria is advised to undertake a thorough assessment of the buffer zone and consider the submission of an enlarged buffer zone boundary through the Minor Boundary Modification process.

Building culture/planning controls

21. The 'Criteria for Building in the World Heritage Site' need to be further developed, and be given legal weight in the planning system, to ensure the maintenance and transmission of the property's OUV.
22. The local building concepts for the villages located in the World Heritage property in Austria, legislated under the Burgenland Spatial Planning Act, should be developed with a view to:

- a. safeguard their historic character as contributing to the OUV of the property,
 - b. protect settlement morphologies, ensembles, building typologies and all buildings that contribute to that historic character,
 - c. provide guidance on new construction, in line with the updated 'Criteria for building in the World Heritage property', and
 - d. clearly delineate the outer boundaries of these settlements.
23. The Cultural Landscape Fertő-Neusiedler See World Heritage should be strategically used as case study in the development of and the implementation of the Building Culture Act for Burgenland to further the understanding of and define aesthetic and development guidelines that harmonise with the Pannonian building and urban traditions without imitating them.
24. The mission strongly supports the proposal contained in the Management Plan to establish a 'World Heritage Building School'.

Management system/Management Plan

25. The Management Plan is a thorough document that provides an adequate broad framework for the management of the property, but both States Parties need to develop a combined Stakeholder Engagement Plan to augment the draft Management Plan.
26. The Management Plan should be adopted as soon as possible and implemented.
27. The 'Consultative Council' should be formalised and operationalised and provided with adequate resources.
28. The analysis of the attributes of the OUV presented in the Management Plan needs to be further developed into location-specific mapping of the actual tangible and intangible (including spatial, morphological, typological, use, place specific associations, etc.) attributes.
29. The role of the World Heritage Planning Advisory Board (Austria) should be strengthened and its advice should be given effect through strengthened regulation by the Federal State of Burgenland, as proposed in the draft Management Plan.
30. Both Welterbe Neusiedler See Association in Austria and the Fertőtáj World Heritage Hungarian Council Association need adequate, permanent funding to be able to implement the Management Plan and its action plan.
31. For improved collaboration, communication and consultation within Burgenland, the mission advises that the Federal State of Burgenland, supported by the Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport of Austria, establish a body that brings together the mayors of all the towns within the component of the World Heritage property in Austria, chaired by the President of the Federal State of Burgenland, and with the Site Manager providing updates on the state of conservation and factors affecting the OUV of the property. Such a group could meet twice per year. An annual bilateral meeting at the level of the national authorities of the States Parties of Hungary and Austria is deemed by the mission to be an essential minimum for coordinating the management of the transboundary property.

The Property

Fertő/Neusiedlersee Cultural Landscape incorporates the westernmost steppe lake in Eurasia. This is an area of outstanding natural values and landscape diversity created and sustained by the encounter of different landscape types. It is situated in the cross-section of different geographical flora and fauna zones as well as wetlands, and is characterised by sub-Alpine mountains, sub-Mediterranean hills, alkaline lakes that dry out from time to time, saline soils, reeds, and shoreline plains. This area, a valuable biosphere reserve and gene bank, is home to a rich diversity of flora and fauna and has been shaped harmoniously for eight millennia by different human groups and ethnically diverse populations. The present character of the landscape is the result of millennia-old land-use forms based on stock raising and viticulture to an extent not found in other European lake areas. This interaction is also manifested in the several-century-long continuity of its urban and architectural traditions and the diverse traditional uses of the land and the lake. The Fertő/Neusiedlersee Lake is surrounded by an inner ring of sixteen settlements and an outer ring of twenty other settlements.

The transboundary property 'Fertő/Neusiedlersee Cultural Landscape' (Austria, Hungary) was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2001 on the basis of criterion (v): the Fertő/Neusiedlersee has been the meeting place of different cultures for eight millennia, and this is graphically demonstrated by its varied landscape, the result of an evolutionary and symbiotic process of human interaction with the physical environment. Although the property was originally nominated as a mixed site, the World Heritage Committee did not inscribe it under natural criteria.

The property's surface is 68,369 ha, and it has a small buffer zone of 6,347 ha, which has three components – to the north-east, to the east and to the south of the property.

A retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value of the property was adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 37th session in 2013 (Decision 37 COM 8E) and can be found in Annex VII.

The Neusiedler See-Seewinkel – Fertő-Hanság Transboundary Ramsar Site was designated in 2009. It comprises Lake Fertő Ramsar Site (No. 420, designated in 1989) and Nyirkai-Hany Ramsar Site (No. 1644, designated in 2006) in Hungary, and Neusiedlersee, Seewinkel and Hanság Ramsar Site (No. 271, designated in 1982) in Austria. Two of these Ramsar Sites (No. 420 and 271) are included in the World Heritage property.

The Lake Fertő is also a MAB Biosphere Reserve (as was Neusiedlersee until 2016).

The Mission

By their joint letter of 25 April 2023, the States Parties of Austria and Hungary invited the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar Secretariat) to undertake an Advisory mission to the transboundary World Heritage property 'Fertő/Neusiedlersee Cultural Landscape'.

The States Parties – referring to Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, in which the Committee invites the States Parties to inform it through the Secretariat of their intention to undertake or to authorise in an area protected under the Convention major restorations or new constructions with may affect the OUV of the property – sought advice on:

- (i) two tourism development projects within the property – Sopron-Fertő Lake Resort (Hungary) and Lakeside Resort in Breitenbrunn (Austria);
- (ii) repowering of wind turbines on Parndorfer Platte (Austria, outside the property but within visible range); and
- (iii) water supply to Lake Fertő/Neusiedl.

Consequently, the Terms of Reference of the mission (Annex I) focused on analysing the current situation of the tourism development, wind farm construction and water management and assessing whether and under what conditions the implementation of these projects might continue. The mission was also tasked with considering if current policies in both States Parties appropriately deal with the impacts of these projects on the OUV and attributes of the property, and with examining the overall protection system of the cultural landscape and its setting, including the newly received draft Management Plan for the property.

The mission team consisted of Irena Caquet (UNESCO World Heritage Centre), Nicholas Clarke (ICOMOS) and Flore Lafaye de Micheaux (Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands). The mission took place over four full days, from 2 to 5 October 2023 (programme attached in Annex IV), and combined presentations on the main topics with on-site visits of various locations within the property, its buffer zone and its wider setting. It included meetings with different stakeholders from both States Parties, including a meeting with several NGOs (full list in Annex VI).

The state of conservation of the property was examined at the extended 45th session of the World Heritage Committee. According to Decision 45 COM 7B.52 (Annex III), the States Parties are to submit an updated joint report on the state of conservation of the property by 1 February 2024, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 46th session.

Detailed Report on the Main Issues

Issue 1: Tourism development projects within the property

General observations

The mission was tasked with providing an analysis of the current situation of the tourism development at the property and assess whether and under what conditions the implementation of tourism development projects might continue. Two specific projects were presented to the mission: the Sopron-Fertő Lake Resort project (Hungary) and the Lakeside Resort in Breitenbrunn (Austria).

The tourism development projects reported by this mission are both lake-side resort areas focussed on water sports. There are numerous of these resorts, of which the mission visited three. The Sopron-Fertő Lake Resort (Hungary) and the Lakeside Resort in Breitenbrunn (Austria) are both currently under redevelopment. The resort at Weiden am See (Austria) has recently undergone some redevelopment, its hotel and restaurant have been demolished and replaced with new buildings. The mission also visited the villages of Podersdorf am See and Illmitz (Austria), which are located on the shore of the Neusiedler See/Lake Fertő, with the former having an extensive beach-front area.

Tourism, which developed on the lake sides from the 1960s onwards,³ is one of the most important economic activities in the area and a source of development pressure. The Statement of Integrity for the property refers to tourism as “both a change and a catalyst thereof, associated development and insertion of the intrusively modern construction will need to be controlled”. The 2003 Management Plan for the property notes that the expansion of existing holiday villages in the reed belt and development of new ones is a potential source of conflicts and threats to the maintenance of the OUV of the property.⁴

Most of the tourism resorts are isolated spatially from the towns they are associated with due to presence of reed beds along much of the lake shore. This spatial division is important to the maintenance of the urban characteristics of the towns and to ensure the resorts remain as ‘isolated exceptions’ in the landscape. Great care must be taken to ensure that the resorts retain their spatial isolation from their associated towns and permanent occupation of the reed belt should be avoided. The corridors connecting the resorts with their associated towns should not be further developed. The scale and extent of the lake-side tourism infrastructure in the property has reached the maximum carrying capacity. It is, therefore, essential that the redevelopment of the Sopron-Fertő Lake Resort project must be carefully planned within a strict framework of size, scale and materialisation. No further extension of extant lake side resorts in their area or increase in scale or capacity should be allowed in future and the planning system especially in Austria should be adapted accordingly. Redevelopment of existing infrastructure, where needed, should be seen as an opportunity to correct past mistakes.

Under these conditions, the impacts on the ecological status of the touristic projects on the Transboundary Ramsar Site should be minimized. In addition to safeguarding measures such as waste management and appropriate treatment of sewage and other effluents, accompanying measures to reduce dredging impacts on water quality should also be planned. Spaces for free flow exchanges between the lake and the reed beds and within the reed beds area should be planned when dredged sediments are deposited on the canal banks. Finally,

³ Republic of Austria & Republic of Hungary, 2003. *World Heritage Cultural Landscape Fertő/Neusiedlersee: Management Plan*, p. 111.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 81.

appropriate information to visitors on how to minimize their impacts on the natural habitats and avoid any disturbance in the reed beds should also be systematically provided on site.

Sopron-Fertő Lake Resort project (Hungary)

The lake-side resort at Fertőrákos existed at the time of inscription of the property on the World Heritage List. It was developed on the land that had been reclaimed from the 1960s onwards. The State Party of Hungary is now in the process of redeveloping the resort; a process initiated by the Municipality of Sopron in 2015 and currently spearheaded by the Hungarian Ministry of Construction and Transport.

The original development concept included:

- the yacht harbour to the north with clubhouse,
 - 100-room hotel,
 - holiday homes,
 - a campsite,
 - eco-park and eco-centre,
 - a boat station,
 - a landscaped lawn area with a central square, with a beach adjoining it,
 - a southern sailing club with clubhouse,
 - a sports centre,
 - parking areas,
- ... with aim to cater to more than 4,000 users a day in high season.

An ICOMOS Technical Review of this original project, conducted in May 2021, concluded that the project in its presented volumetry and form would constitute a significant impairment to the authenticity and the integrity of the property, and its OUV would be impacted significantly.

Following this Technical Review, Hungary's exchanges with the World Heritage Centre, the Advisory Bodies ICOMOS and IUCN, and the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands have led it to reassess its plans. In a letter to the World Heritage Centre of 3 March 2023, the State Party confirmed that it suspended the project for review on 4 June 2022 and that details of the review would be provided to the World Heritage Centre following the decisions of the ministers concerned.

The World Heritage Committee at its 45th session (September 2023) in Decision 45 COM 7B.52, expressed its utmost concern about the scale of the original Sopron Fertő Lake Resort, welcomed the decision to suspend the project but noted that any future project could be regarded solely as a rehabilitation project, and that its potential impacts on the OUV of the property would need to be assessed in cumulation with the existing tourism infrastructure along the entire lakeshore.

The mission notes that the volume and scale of the project are currently being revised following the above-mentioned exchanges with the World Heritage Centre, the Advisory Bodies and the Ramsar Secretariat. However much of the preliminary work for the development has already been implemented including the construction of the two yacht harbours, with much of the infrastructural work executed in reinforced concrete including a screen wall between the entrance road and the reed beds to its north, drainage systems (not completed) and a large amount of groundwork. The mission was informed that site works commenced in December 2018, civil engineering commenced on 15 December 2020 and the preliminary work terminated in December 2022 at 92% completion. At the time of the mission the environmental permit had been revoked.

The proposal presented to the mission is for a reduced project which aims to see a phased implementation and opening of the resort on the 77 ha site. A timeline of implementation of the

first two phases was communicated as: phase 0, to open the northern yacht harbour, and phase 1, the design and construction of the southern yacht harbour, beach area and eco-centre, amongst others. The 2.7 km road connecting Fertőrákos to the resort will also be upgraded in the near future as part of the project.

A final design for the project is not available for the mission to comment on – only a diagrammatic masterplan (site plan) only, which indicates the reduced project size.

The mission advises that the continued use of the Sopron Fertő Lake Resort is possible and welcome (it was also welcomed by ICOMOS in its May 2021 review of the project), but only within a strict framework of size, scale and materialisation. An essential prerequisite for the development continuing is the establishment of a clear and continuous communication with local stakeholders and interested parties and stakeholders, including the World Heritage Centre and the Ramsar Secretariat.

It is also necessary to ensure that the project is evaluated in cumulation with the existing tourism infrastructure along the entire lakeshore before proceeding, as requested by the World Heritage Committee in its most recent decision on the property. The redesign process should be undertaken as an iterative design process in which the impact of suggested design options on the OUV of the property is continuously and thoroughly assessed. This is in line with both Paragraph 118bis of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* and the *2022 Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context*.

Hungary wishes to implement a phased approach for this project. This is possible, but only with a framework that establishes the conditions and the maximum envelope for the entire development, and this should be assessed through a parallel impact assessment. Such a development framework should be established before finalising the design of further infrastructure and buildings for the northern marina at the Sopron-Fertő Lake Resort and based on the assessment of its potential impacts on the OUV of the property assessed in cumulation with the existing tourism infrastructure along the entire lakeshore as requested by the World Heritage Committee.

The new draft Management Plan provides an outline framework for the identification of attributes of the OUV of the property specific to the Sopron-Fertő Lake Resort area. To facilitate the process, the mission provides the following guidance regarding this project:

- Planning: the mission was only presented with a sketch plan, outline of an intended phase 0 and phase 1. Large areas of the development site remain to be determined, which means that at present an assessment of the impact of the entire project on the OUV of the property is not possible. It is important that the entire project be evaluated through an iterative impact assessment process which includes a public participation process in parallel.
- Regional impact: a regional approach in assessment should be taken to avoid knock on/ spill over development pressures on local towns, including Fertőrákos. The existing spatial planning, which already exists for Fertőrákos, should be strengthened to ensure that the redevelopment of the Sopron-Fertő Lake Resort does not stimulate development in this town which may affect its contribution to the OUV. This is especially important for the area around Strand utca (Strand Street) that connects Fertőrákos to the Sopron-Fertő Lake Resort and which is currently zoned as a 'transforming new development area'. The potential for development that may negatively affect the property's OUV in this area needs to be included in any impact assessment and further details on what kinds of development are possible in this area should be communicated

along with the development framework and impact assessment to the World Heritage Centre for review.

- Horizontality: the Fertő lake landscape is characterised by an extensive horizontality. It is important to maintain the horizontality of the landscape with all new design projects in the vicinity of the lake. Past interventions, such as the resort at Mörbish have already eroded that horizontality. (The extant infrastructure for the open-air theatre at Mörbish – constructed before the inscription of the property – has a negative impact on its OUV, especially when seen from the Sopron-Fertő Lake Resort project area.) Further erosion of this essential characteristic should not be allowed. It is therefore very important to control the height of the development at Fertőrákos, including building heights and vertical infrastructure, such as length, masks, cranes et cetera. As a guidance, the mission suggests the development be limited to a maximum height of two floors plus roof, preferably with the use of the roof space as the second floor to reduce building scale. Various roof design options should be tested through the required impact assessment process.
- Materialisation: the materialisation of the new development needs to be carefully controlled. Preference should be given to natural materials such as thatch, timber and reed while material such as concrete and brick should be avoided as far as possible. All attempts to remove and reduce the existing volume of newly installed concrete infrastructure on site should be explored. This is specifically the case for the concrete structure already installed at the beachfront and a large concrete wall adjacent to the entrance road.
- Lighting: the project should be developed with attention to lighting – it should aim to achieve low local night-time lighting and avoid floodlighting. Lighting studies should be undertaken, which include also colour temperature to ensure a low consequent impact at night.
- Operations: it would be important to provide visitors to the resort with clear guidance on appropriate and inappropriate behaviour when engaging in waters sport and recreational activities on the lake. This is especially important with regards ensuring that visitors do not enter the reed-bed areas.

The planned eco-centre is a positive development as it aims to present the natural uniqueness of the area. The mission recommends to the State Party of Hungary to invite the State Party of Austria to collaborate on the development and operation of the eco-centre as a vehicle of further bilateral collaboration between the two States Parties and as a tool to showcase the transboundary nature of the property and, more broadly, the idea that it is a shared heritage of humanity. This would moreover assist in achieving one of the ambitions of the new Management Plan – strengthening cross-border cooperation.

The mission therefore advises that:

1. An overview of all existing and planned tourism facilities along the lakeshore should be established to prepare the baseline for an assessment of the cumulative adverse impacts on the property's attributes;
2. A master plan, which includes a clear phasing, for the Sopron-Fertő Lake Resort should be prepared, which should include maximum visitor numbers at peak periods, and this assessed through a first phase impact assessment which also considers cumulative impacts, including potential spillover development within the existing urban framework of Fertőrákos;
3. The proposed master plan for the resort and urban development framework for Fertőrákos should be adapted in line with possible outcomes of the impact assessment to avoid negative impacts;

4. The proposed master plan and the associated impact assessment should subsequently be submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies;
5. A master plan, which supports the maintenance of the OUV of the property should, only following a review that confirms its alignment with the maintenance of the property's OUV, be adopted formally as framework for the various phases of the development;
6. The phase 1 proposed development be designed in further detail and assessed through an impact assessment which is iterative and allows for the design of the first phase to be modified, until such a design is achieved that will not negatively impact the OUV of the property;
7. Each subsequent phase of the proposed development be assisted through an impact assessment, following the same method as the impact assessment used for previous phases.

Bilateral collaboration will also be required to complete the assessment of the potential impacts of the project on the OUV of the property in cumulation with the existing tourism infrastructure along the entire lakeshore.

The continued use of the Sopron Fertő Lake Resort is possible and welcome, but only within a strict framework of size, scale and materialisation. An essential prerequisite for the development going forward is the establishment of a clear and continuous communication with local stakeholders and interested parties and stakeholders, including the World Heritage Centre, the Advisory Bodies and the Ramsar Secretariat.

It is necessary to ensure that the Sopron Fertő Lake Resort project is evaluated in cumulation with the existing tourism infrastructure along the entire lakeshore before proceeding. The redesign process should be undertaken as an iterative design process in which the impact of suggested design options on the OUV of the property is continuously assessed, in line with both Paragraph 118bis of the Operational Guidelines and the *2022 Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context*.

A phased approach for the Sopron Fertő Lake Resort project is possible, but only with a framework that establishes the conditions and the maximum envelope for the entire development, and this assessed through a parallel impact assessment. Such a development framework should be established before finalising the design of further infrastructure and buildings for the northern marina at the Sopron-Fertő Lake Resort and based on the assessment of its potential impacts on the OUV of the property assessed in cumulation with the existing tourism infrastructure along the entire lakeshore as requested by the World Heritage Committee.

The development of the planned eco-centre as part of the Sopron Fertő Lake Resort is positive. The mission recommends the State Party of Hungary to invite the State Party of Austria to collaborate on the development and operation of the eco-centre as a vehicle to further bilateral collaboration between the two States Parties.

Lakeside Resort in Breitenbrunn (Austria)

The Breitenbrunn resort is being redeveloped by the Esterhazy Foundation. The project was the subject of a design competition in 2016. The winning design has been substantially modified over time in consultation with the Austrian World Heritage Planning Advisory Board and ICOMOS-Austria. The resultant development proposal largely retains the scale and size of the former resort on the site. The mission visited the new main building under construction and the larger development site and was presented with the design proposals. The proposal sees a slight enlargement of the resort with new bungalows in the location that previously served as parking space. The scale is in general low with at maximum two stories for the main building and the materialisation is appropriate.

The mission concludes that the project proposal, resulting in part from the collaboration of the developer with ICOMOS Austria and the Austrian World Heritage Planning Advisory Board, is of an appropriate scale, aesthetic and materialisation. However, no formal impact assessment procedure was undertaken, as would be appropriate for a project of the size and the World Heritage Centre was not notified of the project in advance of decision making on its implementation in line with the provisions of the Operational Guidelines. This indicates weaknesses in the management of the property, and a consequent lack of required communication with the World Heritage Centre.

Redevelopment of the Weiden am See resort

Recent reconstruction and new construction projects have also been undertaken at the Weiden am See resort, which was not presented to the mission in detail but which the mission had an opportunity to visit briefly. This includes the construction of a new restaurant building, demolition and replacement of a hotel building and the construction of houses adjacent to the road connecting the resort to the town of Weiden am See.

The redevelopment of the hotel at the Weiden am See beach resort presents a missed opportunity to reduce the scale of a building that was out of scale with its environment. This project illustrates that three storeyed buildings are out of scale with the Neusiedler See/Lake Fertő landscape. On the other hand, the design of the restaurant building, with its thatched sides and two-storey scale, is appropriate in scale, materialisation and aesthetic.

The construction of houses along the Seestraße at Weiden am See has a negative impact on the OUV of the property as it has decreased the distance between Weiden am See and the beach resort, thereby reducing the legibility of the cultural landscape. Only a small section of reed bed remains between the town and the resort. **No further urban development along the corridors from towns to resorts should be allowed, either from the side of the town or from the sides of the resorts, especially, but not only, at Weiden am See.**

In conclusion, the mission advises, with regards lakeside developments that:

No further extension of extant lake side resorts within the transboundary property or increase in scale or capacity should be allowed in future, and the planning system, especially in Austria, should be adapted accordingly. Rehabilitation of existing infrastructure, where needed, should be seen as an opportunity to correct past interventions that compromise the property's OUV.

Great care must be taken to ensure that the resorts retain their spatial isolation from their associated towns, and permanent occupation of the reed belt should be avoided. The corridors connecting the resorts with their associated towns should not be further developed.

Issue 2: Repowering of wind turbines on Parndorfer Platte (Austria)

The Federal State of Burgenland currently produces 150% of its own annual energy needs with 430 wind turbines. It has the ambition to achieve full energy autarchy, in part by increasing its wind energy production through repowering its wind turbine stock and the installation of 70 additional turbines to achieve a total of 500 turbines. As a rule of thumb, repowering, which increases the height of turbines, can double the energy output per turbine. Burgenland also intends to stimulate the development of solar energy infrastructure.

The construction of wind turbines in the setting of the World Heritage property has been a cause of concern for more than a decade. The first regional master plan for wind parks in

northern Burgenland was adopted in 2002, a year after the property was inscribed on the World Heritage List. Subsequently, the Neusiedl-Weiden wind park was completed in 2003 with 44 turbines with a blade tip height of 121 m, a hub height of 86 m and a rotor diameter of 70 m.

The construction of three wind farms was brought to the attention of the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies in 2011: Wind Park Mönchhof North, Wind Park Mönchhof/Halbtorn/Nickelsdorf and Windpark Andau/Halbtorn.

Subsequently, in 2013 a joint ICOMOS/IUCN Advisory mission visited the Austrian component of the property, with the main aim of advising the State Party on wind energy development. That mission concluded that “the very elaborate and robust policies for strategic planning (i.e. Regional Master Plans) do not take into account the visual impact of the wind farms as a factor to be included in decision making nor the cumulative effect of their juxtaposition with the landscape of the WHS property. Current planning processes seem to not deal adequately with the visual impact of wind farms, nor their impact on OUV.”⁵

It also concluded that “the landscape around the Fertő/Neusiedlersee seems to have more than reached the limit of its carrying capacity for wind turbines and from adverse impact on OUV point of view.”⁶ Importantly, that mission also concluded that the buffer zone was inadequate for the property and its wider setting and it advised the States Parties to submit proposals for an enlarged buffer zone to the World Heritage Centre following the appropriate procedures as stipulated in the Operational Guidelines.⁷ By this point in time, the State Party of Austria had adopted a so-called visibility zone (also referred to as the sight zone following a series of expert workshops held in 2008) to extend the protection of the setting of the property. The 2013 joint ICOMOS/IUCN Advisory mission recommended that these ‘sight zones’ should be extended. It also advised the State Party of Austria to “create an exclusion zone (prohibiting built development) during the revision of the Burgenland Regional Master Plan and define it to support decisions to re-locate future wind farms away from the Fertő-Neusiedlersee.”⁸

The Federal State of Burgenland, in 2015, completed the revision of the Master Plan (*Windparks im Nordburgenland - Masterplan für Repowering*) for the repowering of existing wind turbines based on the property and buffer zone boundaries, and the 2008 visibility zone and visualisations, taking the then already extant wind parks as baseline. At the time the Neusiedl-Weiden wind farm, the wind farm closest to the property was deliberately excluded from the investigations for the repowering Master Plan. The repowering of the wind parks at Gols, Mönchhof, Neudorf, Pama, Parndorf and Potzneusiedl were included in the Master Plan. In 2019, the Federal State of Burgenland completed another revision of the Master Plan, including regulations for the repowering of the existing wind farms in Neusiedl-Weiden, Kittsee and Pöttelsdorf-Sigleß. The repowering at Parndorf has been implemented, reducing the number of turbines from 45 to 23. The repowering planned for Gols will reduce the number of turbines there.

The planning process for the repowering of the Neusiedl-Weiden wind park commenced in 2019, based on the buffer zone and ‘visibility zone’ boundaries as they existed at the time of the 2013 ICOMOS/IUCN Advisory mission, which remains the status quo. During the detailed planning process, an Environmental Impact Assessment was undertaken for the repowering of the wind park, but no Heritage Impact Assessment has been undertaken. Extensive visual modelling, based on 6 viewpoints at a distance of up to 22km, was presented to the mission, but no real framework against which the visual impact can be assessed has been developed.

⁵ ICOMOS & IUCN, 2013. *ICOMOS/IUCN Advisory Mission Report: Fertő/Neusiedlersee Cultural Landscape, Austria and Hungary, 12-15 May 2013*, p. 12.

⁶ Ibid, p. 24.

⁷ Ibid, p. 4 & p. 26.

⁸ Ibid, p. 4.

The repowering of the wind park proposes higher, but fewer turbines. The planning process has achieved a design in which:

- The first row of the existing turbines (when seen from the lake) is eliminated, effectively increasing the distance from the property to the wind park;
- The second row of 9 turbines is planned with a maximum blade tip height of 200m (140m rotor diameter);
- Beyond that 14 turbines are planned with a maximum blade tip height of 245m (150m rotor diameter);
- An increase in the distance between the Neusiedl-Weiden wind park and the Gols wind park. This open area is an important corridor for bird movement between the property and the Danube Valley.

The Neusiedl-Weiden wind park repowering project was presented to the mission as a *fait accompli*. The conclusion of the 2013 ICOMOS/IUCN Advisory mission that the landscape around the Fertő/Neusiedlersee seems to have reached the limit of its carrying capacity does not assist in the evaluation of repowering, which entails a reduction of the number of turbines while increasing the heights. It can be expected that the repowered individual turbines will become more prominent in the landscape due to an increase in their height even if reduced in number, as is also confirmed by the visual modelling presented to the mission. The visual field will change, and the impact will differ depending on the location of the viewer either inside the property or in its setting.

The mission considers that the repowering of the Neusiedl-Weiden and Gols wind parks will prolong the negative impact of the wind energy projects on the OUV of the property. Therefore, the visual presence impact of individual turbines needs to be reduced as far as possible. One measure that will lead to a reduction in the visual presence of the turbines would be to install turbine blades without red stripes.

The mission advises that the repowering of the Neusiedl-Weiden and Gols wind parks will prolong the negative impact of the wind energy projects on the OUV of the property.

The visual presence of individual turbines needs to be reduced as far as possible, including by installing turbine blades without red stripes on the rotor blades, and the Austrian aviation safety authorities should be engaged with the aim to achieve such outcome.

In general, the mission concludes that the strategic process undertaken towards the repowering of the Neusiedl-Weiden wind park has been thorough. The State Party has applied general impact assessment and visualisation tools as means to try to understand the potential impacts of repowering.

However, these processes need to be strengthened in a number of areas:

The visual setting of the property is not yet adequately protected. This mission reiterates the advice of the 2013 ICOMOS/IUCN Advisory mission that the buffer zone of the property should be extended, and the visual setting better protected. This is especially important for this property due to the great contribution that wider landscape setting makes to its OUV.

A framework for the evaluation of visual impacts of wind turbines based on an inventory of the spatial and landscape attributes of the property needs to be developed as a matter of priority.

Issue 3: Water supply to Lake Fertő/Neusiedl

Introduction

Lake Fertő/Neusiedl is an endorheic lake whose water balance mainly depends on precipitation and evaporation. In recent years, mean water levels showed decreasing trends, in relation to shortage of rain (see figure 1). In the summer of 2022, local populations and tourism players were concerned about low water levels that had not been seen since 1965.⁹ With the prediction of the worsening effects of climate change, such as steady increases in air temperature in summer that will raise evaporation, and the change in precipitation distribution over the year, the perspective of a drying-up lake may look like a plausible scenario for several stakeholders if no remedial action is to be taken.

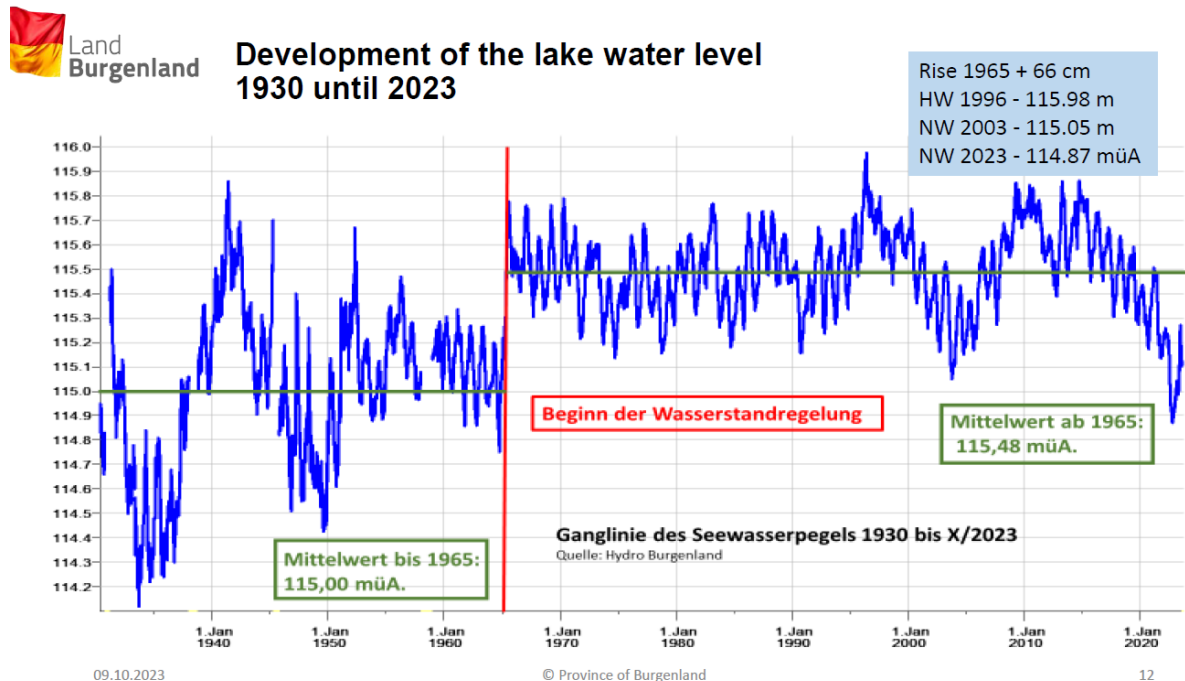


Figure 1: Development of the lake water level 1930 until 2023 (source: Water Department Burgenland).

The extreme changes in the water level of Fertő/Neusiedlersee are mentioned in the statement of the OUV of the property, adopted in 2013, as a challenge in mitigating the impact of climate change on the built and natural environment of the property.

Analysis

In this context, the mission was asked to advise on projects that consider bringing artificial water supply to Lake Fertő/Neusiedl to maintain a minimum water level in the lake. Some of these projects have been studied and debated within the Austro-Hungarian Water Commission (AHWC)¹⁰ for more than a decade; others have been only recently presented. AHWC endorsed in 2014 a 'Strategy Study Lake Neusiedl – Phase 1', which sets the preservation of the lake as a landscape element as a 'requirement' and assigns a corresponding water level of 115 müA in this regard.¹¹

⁹ A minimum of 114,87 meters *über Adria* (müA) has been observed (see figure 1).

¹⁰ AHWC was established in 1956 for dealing with transboundary water management.

¹¹ Austro-Hungarian Water Commission, Vienna and Szombathely, 2014.

However, as of now, there is no consensus on such interventions among stakeholders (municipalities, environmental NGOs, etc.) or among AHC members. According to the presentations heard during the mission, the following three main issues are subject to ongoing debates:

1. The source and modalities of water supply;
2. The environmental impacts of proposed interventions at short- and long-term horizons, in particular on the lake chemistry, its water quality and its ecology;
3. The cost-effectiveness of the measures.

1. The source and modalities of water supply

Three main options for water supply have been presented to the mission: option A, from Danube bank filtered water in Austria (northern direction); option B, from the Mosoni-Duna (Moson-Danube) River in Hungary through the Lébény-Hanyi irrigation canal into Austria¹² (eastern direction); option C, from Rába River in Hungary (southern direction). The most advanced investigations have been made on the option B by some studies (State of Burgenland) since 2021. The recent proposals explore the possibility to bring from 1 to 3.5 m³/s of piped water from the Mosoni-Duna River to the Seewinkel area and to the Hanság Canal, with the aim of:

- (i) increasing groundwater recharge that will benefit the Hanság wetlands and Seewinkel soda pans' hydrology, as well as support the good status of the groundwater body as per the Water Framework Directive requirements ('good' quantitative status);
- (ii) providing surface water to the currently groundwater-fed irrigated land; and
- (iii) potentially bringing direct water supply to Lake Fertő/Neusiedl.

The mission notes that the State Party of Hungary points to the fact that option B would restrict the potential long-term irrigation development of the North-Hanság area in Hungary. Any of these three options would indeed raise the issue of a fair sharing of water in a transboundary context.

Therefore, any such project development should be preceded by wide consultations and formal bilateral agreements.¹³ Moreover, should a concrete project of increasing water supply to the lake be pursued, detailed documentation, including a transboundary Heritage Impact Assessment, of the proposed project should be submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies before a final decision is taken, in line with paragraphs 118bis and 172 of the Operational Guidelines.

2. The environmental impacts of proposed interventions at short- and long-term horizons, in particular on the lake chemistry, its water quality and its ecology

The mission appreciates that this question has been carefully considered by all parties /stakeholders in their preliminary studies and/or comments. Their conclusions, however, do not converge: one study states for example, that Mosoni-Duna River water quality is suitable for groundwater recharge and for about 1 m³/s regular water supply to Lake Fertő/Neusiedl, with appropriate safeguarding measures such as operating regulations, regular monitoring, filter devices, etc.¹⁴. Other expert comments point to higher accidental pollution and invasive

¹² The plan for the extension of the canal to the country border has all the necessary permits in place, but the implementation of the project has been suspended (source: Terms of Reference of the mission, 2023).

¹³ It is to be noted that international agreements under the Danube River Protection Convention would be required in the event water supply modalities might be linked to the Danube River basin (option A). The International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River would be the adequate transnational body in this regard.

¹⁴ "Chemical and aquatic ecological effects of a dotation of the groundwater in the Burgenland Seewinkel and of Lake Neusiedl with water from the Moson-Danube", State of Burgenland, 2021.

species spread risks and to potential long-term changes in lake chemistry and sedimentation processes that would threaten a unique habitat (the largest alkaline soda water body in Europe) and induce uncontrolled changes in macroinvertebrate and microorganism populations, and in reed bed habitats. As no proper environmental impact assessment has yet been conducted for the above-mentioned projects, the mission cannot formulate a definitive position on the matter.

The mission, however, wishes to highlight two considerations: first, supplying 0.85 to 1 m³/s on a regular basis to the lake in order to bring about 26 million m³ a year (resulting in about 13 cm of water level elevation of the lake surface) represents the same order of magnitude of the average amount of freshwater that is supplied by all current surface waters (Wulka, Kroisbach and other canals are estimated to represent an average of 40 million m³ a year¹⁵) to the lake. In the mission's view, this means that the proposed intervention would represent a 'significant change' to the lake's current hydrology¹⁶ and potentially result in significant changes, positive or negative, in the related physical (chemistry) and ecological processes, including the ecological status of the Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites). **The legally required environmental impact assessments should therefore carefully consider the magnitude of potential changes, along spatial (eastern and western shores, reed beds, localized impacts, etc.) and temporal (notably seasonal) dimensions. This would require advanced modelling.**

Secondly, some remaining knowledge gaps that have been pointed to in existing studies,¹⁷ may impair and weaken any environmental impact assessment results that would be obtained in the current state of knowledge. The main problematic knowledge gaps in relation to water supply issue consist of:

- terrain model and sediment exchanges (for instance, insufficient information on the sediment levels in the reed beds);
- exchange with groundwater (uncertainty on the actual contribution of groundwater to the lake levels in relation to precipitation events);
- evaporation processes (uncertainty on current evaporation rate, thus on analysis of the water balance);
- benthic production and microbiology;
- trace substances (concentration, mobilization, storage at different water levels);
- water exchange between the different parts of the lake (at different water levels);
- invasive species' presence and their impacts.

3. The cost-effectiveness of the measures

The mission did not access to any cost estimation for the water supply options that are presented above. Nevertheless, the mission notes that the question of cost-effectiveness of the measures was raised by some stakeholders. For instance, the State Party of Hungary pointed to the mandatory requirement to thoroughly assess the 'no action' option, in comparison with the other potential interventions, as per the Natura 2000 assessment procedure.

¹⁵ Draft Management Plan, 2023, p. 153.

¹⁶ Surface waters already have some impacts on the lake processes in relation to inputs of sediments, nutrients, pollutants and other trace substances (source: REBEN project).

¹⁷ For instance, in the joint Austrian-Hungarian 2020 study: Wolfram, G., E. Boros, A. P. Blaschke, E. Csaplovics, R. Hainz, G. Kíraly, T. Krámer, R. Mayer, M. Pannonhalmi, P. Riedler, M. Zessner, I. Vass & O. Zoboli (2020). Austrian-Hungarian Synthesis. Applied hydrological and basic limnological investigations of the project REBEN – Reed Belt Neusiedler See/Fertő (Interreg-Projekt AT-HU 2014-20), as well as in the 2021 study "Chemical and aquatic ecological effects of a dotation of the groundwater in the Burgenland Seewinkel and of Lake Neusiedl with water from the Moson-Danube", State of Burgenland, 2021.

Conclusion

Having listened to governmental officials and stakeholders on site, the mission appreciates the quality and range of the preliminary investigations that have been conducted on this complex matter and the excellent spirit of welcoming and open exchanges of views among the different stakeholders.

The mission advises that governance and science should be given priority in the next steps of the investigations.

Regarding governance, the mission advises to pursue the discussions within the framework of the AHCW in order to reach formal bilateral agreements that would clearly specify all technical details of the water repartition arrangement, and under which conditions. In parallel, the mission recommends creating a stakeholder consultation body inviting stakeholders from the two countries¹⁸ to regularly discuss and express positions on the proposals from AHCW, prior to any decision. The mission considers that the political sensitivity and the potential long-term effects of such interventions to increase water supply to the lake on its ecology and on the landscape of the World Heritage property require a careful and sustained consultation process. Such a forum would also provide the opportunity for the governmental experts to clarify some facts, to prevent some excessive interpretations (for instance, concerns about natural water level fluctuations), to justify public fund spending, and to promote environmental awareness along the course of the studies and projects.

Regarding scientific matters, the mission recommends intensifying efforts to address the knowledge gaps mentioned in the previous section before conducting the environmental impact assessments that are legally required.

In particular, the mission advises:

- To launch a new joint project, further to the REBEN project, to better model the combined effects of water (evaporation, flow exchanges between the lake and reed belt) and sediment processes (siltation, decomposition of organic matters, sediment dredging), and their spatial and temporal variability, on the water level fluctuations and salinity/chemical state (including pollutants and dangerous substances) in the lake.
- To draw from the LIFE project 'Pannonic Salt' and other research activities to achieve a better understanding of the groundwater interactions with the lake in relation to precipitation events, and to undertake a large-scale modelling and planning for future groundwater management. This would not only benefit the lake water level modelling, but also the ability to restore the Hanság and Seewinkel wetlands.

Issue 4: Other development projects

Solar farms

The Federal State of Burgenland has identified photovoltaics as an important part of its renewable energy strategy. A process of strategic spatial investigations has been undertaken aiming specifically at the identification of areas that may be suitable for solar farms in open areas. It has resulted in a spatial resistivity map, which excludes any large-scale solar farm installation in the property or its visual setting. Appropriately, the property, its buffer zone and the so-called 'visibility zone' were excluded from the area investigated for large-scale solar power installations. **Solar farm development is not appropriate within the boundaries of the property.**

¹⁸ With adequate interpretation services.

Gols Hospital

The Federal State of Burgenland is planning to construct a new regional hospital on a greenfield vineyard (the Wiesäcker) located between the towns of Gols and Weiden am See. The project site is located in an area directly adjacent to the buffer zone of the property and in the so-called 'visibility zone' defined by the State Party of Austria. It is also located in the line of sight of one of the 'control' viewpoints identified in the Landscape Observatory – the Gols viewing platform located on the Ungerberg, which provides a last near-unspoilt view over the lake towards Oggau and Rust and the distant Alps. It is therefore a viewpoint of great significance.

It is incontestable that the selected site for the proposed hospital is located within the setting of the World Heritage property. Paragraph 112 of the Operational Guidelines provides guidance on the matter of setting: “Effective management involves a cycle of short, medium and long-term actions to protect, conserve and present the nominated property. An integrated approach to planning and management is essential to guide the evolution of properties over time and to ensure maintenance of all aspects of their Outstanding Universal Value. **This approach goes beyond the property to include any buffer zone(s), as well as the broader setting. The broader setting may relate to the property’s topography, natural and built environment, and other elements such as infrastructure, land use patterns, spatial organization, and visual relationships.** It may also include related social and cultural practices, economic processes and other intangible dimensions of heritage such as perceptions and associations. Management of the broader setting is related to its role in supporting the Outstanding Universal Value” [own emphasis].

The ‘Criteria for Building in the World Heritage Site’ (adopted by the designated management organisation of the Austrian part of the property), which includes provisions to manage the setting of the World Heritage property, indicates a height of 20 m as ‘trigger’ for projects located in the ‘visibility zone’ defined by the State Party of Austria for consideration by its World Heritage Planning Design Advisory Board. This equates to a project height of roughly 3 storeys. In the instance of the proposed hospital project, this criterion is not met, meaning the project does not automatically need to be tabled before the aforementioned Design Advisory Board, despite its size and impact being acknowledged in for instance the Strategic Environmental Audit undertaken for the proposal. The Audit advises that due to the potential negative impact of the project on the property, the project should be subjected to: “a further assessment with regard to the respective criteria in the course of downstream planning and implemented with due consideration for the objectives of the UNESCO World Heritage Site”¹⁹ [own translation].

The proposal to construct such a large infrastructure in the landscape setting of the property is concerning. The Cultural Landscape of Fertö/Neusiedlersee is typified by its poly-nuclear towns located in an expansive agricultural landscape.

The mission advises against the development of the Wiesäcker as site for the planned hospital as such a development will negatively impact the OUV of the property by resulting in:

- **changes to views to and from the property, including a negative impact on one of the most significant views over the property which contributes to its OUV;**
- **changes to landscape morphology/ land use pattern that consist of nuclear towns in an agricultural landscape.**

¹⁹ AIR Kommunal- und Regionalplanung & Raumbild, 2022. *Marktgemeinde Gols: 13. Änderung Digitaler Flächenwidmungsplan: Strategische Umweltprüfung (Sup): Umweltbericht*, p. 52 [provided to the mission team in German].

The mission notes that according to Paragraph 118bis of the Operational Guidelines, the States Parties are to ensure that: “Environmental Impact Assessments, Heritage Impact Assessments, and/or Strategic Environmental Assessments be carried out as a pre-requisite for development projects and activities that are planned for implementation within or around a World Heritage property”.

It is imperative that any further development of plans for the hospital in the setting of the World Heritage property be evaluated through an impact assessment that evaluates the potential impact of the project on the OUV of the property. Such an impact assessment should be submitted to the World Heritage Centre along with information on the proposed development in one of the working languages of the Convention as soon as possible and before making any decisions that would be difficult to reverse. Site selection for a hospital should aim to further enforce the poly-nuclear nature of the settlements of the property and its setting.

The proposal to locate the new hospital on the Wiesäcker – in the landscape of the setting of the property, directly adjacent to its buffer zone of the property, within a view of significance and with negative consequences for the landscape morphology – indicates that the management system of the property is not yet developed to the extent that key stakeholders, including administrative structures, place the maintenance of the OUV of the property central to their decision-making. It also illustrates that planning controls, for instance the above-mentioned “Criteria for Building in the World Heritage Site” need to be revised and the need for impact assessment be based on the potential of developments to adversely impact the OUV of the property and its supporting attributes rather than on the size of proposals, as requested by the World Heritage Committee in its latest decision on the property (Decision 45 COM 7B.52).

Issue 5: Overall protection system of the cultural landscape and its setting

The Fertő/Neusiedlersee World Cultural Landscape Heritage property/Lake Fertő Ramsar Site is a dynamic landscape where change needs to be very carefully guided to avoid a gradual erosion of the attributes that support its OUV and maintain the ecological character of this unique wetland system. The OUV of the property is under threat from, amongst others, buildings and development, tourism pressure and climate change impacts. The transboundary nature of the property calls for a close collaboration of the two States Parties to provide the best outcomes for the protection and management of the World Heritage property and the maintenance of the ecological character of the Ramsar Site.

Management system

The States Parties have completed an update of the Management Plan for the World Heritage property, which was presented to the mission in its final draft form. The revision of the Management Plan was recommended by the 2013 ICOMOS/IUCN Advisory mission to the property, which underscored in its recommendation that the updated Management Plan should also include provision of new sight protection zones. This last recommendation has not yet been addressed.

The updating of the Management Plan was spearheaded by the State Party of Austria, undertaken in close collaboration with the State Party of Hungary and funded through the European Union Interreg Austria-Hungary ‘Common Heritage’ programme.

The mission commends the authors of the Management Plan. It is a thorough document that provides an adequate broad framework for the management of the property. The Management Plan also includes five thematic ‘Fields of Action’, each with its own action plan. Actions are well-defined and prioritised.

The analysis of the attributes of OUV is presented as a broad thematic framework. This is useful, but needs to be further developed into location-specific mapping of the actual tangible and intangible, including spatial, morphological, typological, use, place-specific associations, etc.) attributes. This analysis and mapping should be done for each municipal area that contains areas of the property and its buffer zone.

A World Heritage Site Management Platform, referred to as the 'Consultative Council' was created during the drafting of the updated Management Plan to bring together the Welterbe Neusiedler See Association in Austria and the Fertőtáj World Heritage Hungarian Council Association in Hungary in a more formalised institutional coordination body. A 'Landscape Observatory' has also been established, which will periodically document 50 identified viewpoints to monitor changes in the World Heritage landscape. Both these actions are welcome and should be further strengthened and resourced.

The draft Management Plan has not yet been formally adopted by both States Parties. Implementing the Management Plan will require additional resourcing from both States Parties. At present the Site Manager on the Austrian side is a part-time appointment (combined with other tasks). The draft Management Plan indicates that its implementation in the Austrian component would require two full-time appointments. The site manager of the Hungarian component – the Eszterháza Cultural, Research and Festival Centre Public Benefit Non-profit Ltd – was not able to be present during the mission. Both Associations need adequate, permanent funding to be able to implement the Management Plan and its action plan.

Spatial planning: maintaining the unique cultural landscape

A main threat to the OUV of the property is the conversion of the cultural landscape. Several factors in the property, its buffer zone and its wider setting are of concern, particularly in Austria, including:

- urban development and sprawl,
- a lack of protection of urban cores, which leads to loss of historic built fabric,
- inappropriately designed constructions (including aesthetics and heights),
- changes in functions of buildings,
- negative impacts of numerous wind farms.

The mission did not have the opportunity to visit all the Hungarian villages located in the property, but the Management Plan indicates that here too urban expansion is taking place (and accommodated in the Manuals established under law XXIV of 2016).

The current management system is not adequately protecting the cultural landscape, which is consequently currently being eroded. The zoning regime for the villages does not provide a guarantee against future expansion. Village boundaries in the Burgenland component are not defined adequately, often only limiting growth towards the lake side. Limiting further expansion of villages, especially towards each other along transport routes, is essential to maintaining the cultural landscape. Therefore, all settlements within the property and its buffer zone should be delimited with boundaries in the planning systems including within the framework of the already existing Regional Development Programme Neusiedler See-Parndorfer Platte which includes establishing settlement boundaries as a strategy: "These settlement boundaries should be in the supra-local interest and are drawn up and defined in an intensive dialogue with the local community. They make it possible to coordinate settlement development regionally and to protect potentials such as sensitive natural areas, slopes that characterise the landscape, or agriculturally used, high-quality areas. Depending on local requirements, such as lake areas, slopes or sensitive natural areas, settlement boundaries should help to

preserve the respective characteristics of the region.”²⁰ The maintenance of the OUV of the property is a supra-national requirement that should be a main consideration in this process and mandates that this process be implemented urgently.

The Burgenland Building Act passed in 2019, states that building projects are only permissible on plots of land suitable for development if they will not have a significant impact on the local or landscape image and take into account registered World Heritage properties. The same Act had legislated the requirement for all municipalities in Burgenland to develop a local building concept by 2026. The Act also includes the ‘Building land mobilisation fee’, which aims to stimulate the use of vacant properties in towns and in so doing limit urban sprawl. This is a welcome amendment, but it also calls for a better toolkit to ensure new construction in villages is appropriately designed to support their historical characters. Densification should not lead to loss of urban morphology and the legibility of building and spatial types.

The Management Plan indicates that some villages in Burgenland had so-called village renewal models, but the historic urban cores of the villages in the Burgenland component of the property are not protected and their built fabric remains very vulnerable to conversions and demolition. The exception is the town centre of Rust, which is protected at federal level. The Federal State of Burgenland does not currently have state-level heritage legislation. It is advised that such legislation be developed to, at the very least, protect the townscapes, ensembles and most important buildings of the Burgenland villages within the World Heritage property.

The mission also observed instances of new construction in villages in Burgenland not supportive of the contribution that the villages make to the cultural landscape. These constructions are of a scale that falls below the thresholds for review by the World Heritage Planning Advisory Board in the ‘Criteria for Building in the World Heritage Site’. The local building concepts for the Austrian villages located in the World Heritage property, legislated under the Burgenland Spatial Planning Act, should be developed with a view to:

1. safeguard their historic character as contributing to the OUV of the property,
2. protect settlement morphologies, ensembles, building typologies and all buildings that contribute to that historic character,
3. provide guidance on new construction, in line with the updated ‘Criteria for building in the World Heritage property’, and
4. clearly delineate the outer boundaries of these settlements.

The role of the World Heritage Planning Advisory Board (Austria) should be strengthened, and its advice should be given consequence through strengthening of regulations by the Federal State of Burgenland. The mission supports the proposals to this end included in the draft Management Plan.²¹

Past reports on the property are unanimous regarding the inadequacy of the buffer zone of the property and protection for the wider setting. The 2013 ICOMOS/IUCN Advisory mission recommended: “In articulation with both countries enlarge the buffer zone, (which is currently inadequate to protect the lake) and submit the revised boundaries to the World Heritage Centre following the appropriate procedures as stipulated in the Operational Guidelines.”²²

²⁰ Federal State of Burgenland, 2022: *Das Regionale Entwicklungsprogramm: Region Neusiedler See – Parndorfer Platte: Leitbild*, p. 38.

²¹ Stadland, Allregio, Bundesministerium, Kunst, Kultur & Verein Welterbe, Neusiedler See, 2023. (Final Draft) *Management Plan of the UNESCO World Heritage Site Fertő/Neusiedlersee Cultural Landscape*, Section 10.2.1: *Revision of the "Criteria for building in the World Heritage Site" (Austria)*.

²² ICOMOS & IUCN, 2013. *ICOMOS-IUCN Advisory Mission Report: Fertő/Neusiedlersee Cultural Landscape, Austria and Hungary*, p. 4

This mission reiterates that the boundaries of the buffer zone are inadequate, even when considering the 'visibility zone' as an added layer of protection. The draft Management Plan suggests that the property could be extended to include: "the historic old towns of Eisenstadt and Sopron, nearby archaeological sites in Hungary, the municipalities/villages in the eastern Seewinkel, the Esterhazy Palace in Eisenstadt, Castles Halbturn and Kittsee, Basilika Frauenkirchen",²³ but does not indicate if any consideration has been given to a review of the buffer zone boundaries and no such a review is planned in its mentioned action plans. The State Party of Austria is advised to undertake a thorough assessment of the buffer zone and consider the submission of an enlarged buffer zone boundary through a Minor Boundary Modification process.

The mission advises that:

Limiting further expansion of villages, especially towards each other along transport routes, is essential to maintain the cultural landscape.

All settlements within the property and its buffer zone should be delimited with boundaries in the planning systems, including within the framework of the already existing Regional Development Programme Neusiedler See-Parndorfer Platte which includes establishing settlement boundaries as a strategy.

Historic centres should receive protection as urban ensembles. The Federal State of Burgenland is advised to develop and adopt legislation to, at the very least, protect the townscapes, ensembles and most important buildings of the Burgenland villages within the World Heritage property.

The State Party of Austria is advised to undertake a thorough assessment of the buffer zone and consider the submission of an enlarged buffer zone boundary through the Minor Boundary Modification process.

Forthcoming Burgenland legislation on Baukultur

The Federal State of Burgenland is currently preparing a 'Baukulturgesetz' (Building Culture Act) following on from the Davos Declaration 2018. Signatory parties to the Davos Declaration commit, amongst others, to: "implementing better policies that embrace the culture-centred concept of Baukultur, and integrate the vision of a high-quality Baukultur as a core policy objective."

The Baukultur of the Fertő-Neusiedler See Cultural Landscape World Heritage property is an important attribute of its OUV and contributes to its integrity and authenticity. The Statement of Integrity underlines that: "The characteristic human-made elements of the cultural landscape include the traditional, partly rural architectural character of the settlements around the lake, the settlements' structure, the unity of the homogeneously arranged buildings on squares and streets, and several 18th and 19th century palaces in their landscape settings."

The property's authenticity is supported by the following attributes: "settlement pattern and occupation of several present-day village sites date to Roman times and earlier. Buildings, walls and vistas have been preserved in many places as well as the ratio of built-in areas.

²³ Stadland, Allregio, *Bundesministerium für Kunst, Kultur, öffentlichen Dienst und Sport*, Neusiedler See, 2023. (Final Draft) *Management Plan of the UNESCO World Heritage Site Fertő/Neusiedlersee Cultural*, Section III.2: *Strengthen the cooperation between tourism organisation and World Heritage Site management*.

Authenticity is also supported by the continued use of local building materials (limestone, reed and wood).”

The Fertő-Neusiedler See Cultural Landscape World Heritage property could be strategically used as a case study in the development of and the implementation of the Building Culture Act to further the understanding of and define aesthetic and development guidelines that harmonise with the Pannonian building and urban traditions without imitating them. Such a pilot in best practice would be aligned with Action Plan II of the draft Management Plan which aims to: “promote material culture through” inter alia the “use of natural stone, clay, reed and wood as building material” and “teaching craftsmanship in vocational schools, technical colleges and HTL”. **The mission also strongly supports the proposal contained in the Management Plan to establish a ‘World Heritage Building School’.** These actions, aligned with the strategic positioning of the property as a pilot for the development of and implementation of the Building Culture Act could also be utilised to stimulate more sustainable building practices that favour local renewable resources.

Bilateral collaboration, communication and consultation

The development of the draft Management Plan has engendered some bilateral collaboration, but like the 2013 ICOMOS/IUCN Advisory mission, this mission advises that closer collaboration is required. The ‘Consultative Council’ should be strengthened, also to further enhance consultation on impact assessments. However, the mission cautions that more human and financial resources are required, including at the site management level, to achieve successful bilateral engagement.

For improved collaboration, communication and consultation within Burgenland, the mission advises that the Federal State of Burgenland, supported by the Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport of the State Party of Austria, consider establishing a body that brings together the mayors of all the towns within the Austrian component of the World Heritage property, chaired by the President of the Federal State of Burgenland, and with the Site Manager providing updates on the state of conservation and factors affecting the OUV of the property. Such a grouping could meet twice per year and should discuss development proposals before any commitments or formal approvals are given, explore possible synergies for further collaboration including on the development of the local building concepts for the villages in the property in Burgenland and coordinate activities of the action plan included in the new Management Plan.

An annual bilateral meeting on the national level between the States Parties of Hungary and Austria, including potentially a report by the ‘Consultative Council’, is deemed by the mission to be an essential minimum to be able to coordinate the management of the property.

The management plan process included a well-structured stakeholder engagement process, and the draft Management Plan makes provision for the potential inclusion of important stakeholders in the ‘Consultative Council’. Engagement processes should be formalised to facilitate better communication and consultation. However, the final draft plan currently does not contain mechanisms to ensure stakeholder engagement and the mission recommends both States Parties develop a combined Stakeholder engagement plan to augment the draft Management Plan, which could contain country-specific processes.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The 2023 joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/Ramsar Advisory mission to the transboundary World Heritage property 'Fertő/Neusiedler See Cultural Landscape' was able to fulfil its terms of reference due to the excellent organisation and keen engagement of all parties involved.

The OUV of the World Heritage property is under very large pressure due to a range of factors. It is a fragile cultural landscape, which depends, to a very large extent, on its unique natural environment which has a strong hydrological component. The mission concludes that the OUV of the property is under threat from, amongst others, buildings and development, tourism, changes in hydrology and climate change impacts.

The mission advises that urgent action is required to halt the erosion of the OUV of the property, specifically due to uncoordinated development within the property and its buffer zone as well as its setting. An important factor affecting the OUV is the limited coordination between the two States Parties of Austria and Hungary.

The current management system does not adequately protect this cultural landscape, which is consequently currently eroding, especially due to growing development noticeable in Burgenland. Concurrently, at present the management system does not support the implementation of the Operational Guidelines by the States Parties, including notification to the World Heritage Centre of projects that may affect the OUV of the property (Paragraph 172), and impact assessment of proposals that may affect the OUV of the property (Paragraph 118bis).

One of the ways in which the protection of the property can be strengthened is by enlarging its buffer zone, as well as extending the so-called visibility zone. More research is required into the hydrological system before any final decisions can be taken on the choice of options to address water shortages in the Fertő/Neusiedlersee.

However, recent actions have been undertaken to remedy the existing deficiencies, including the drafting of the updated management plan and steps towards improving the planning system, which offer opportunity to improve the protection and management system for the property. The mission advises that both States Parties engage urgently with implementation of new tools and strengthening of the institutional management system for the property. The cross-boundary nature of the property calls on the close collaboration of the two States Parties to provide the best outcomes for the protection and management of the World Heritage property and the maintenance of the ecological character of the Ramsar Site.

The mission's main conclusions on each of its terms of reference, and the corresponding recommendations, are as follows.

Tourism development projects within the property

The tourism development projects reviewed by the mission are all lake-side developments. The mission concludes that the scale and extent of the lake-side tourism infrastructure in the property has reached the maximum capacity that the property can carry.

No further extension of extant lake side resorts within the transboundary property or increase in their scale or capacity should be allowed in future, and the planning system, especially in Austria, should be adapted accordingly. Rehabilitation of existing infrastructure, where needed, should be seen as an opportunity to correct past interventions that compromise the property's OUV.

The spatial distance between lake-side developments and their associated towns is important to the maintenance of the urban characteristics of the towns as well as to ensure the resorts remain as 'isolated exceptions' in the landscape. Great care must therefore be taken to ensure that the resorts retain their spatial isolation from their associated towns, and permanent occupation of the reed belt should be avoided. The corridors connecting the resorts with their associated towns should not be further developed.

Sopron Fertő Lake Resort

The continued use of the Sopron Fertő Lake Resort is possible and welcome, but only within a strict framework of size, scale and a section of a limited pallet of materials, the latter preferably in reference to local historic building culture. An essential prerequisite for the development going forward is the establishment of a clear and continuous communication with local stakeholders and interested parties and stakeholders, including the World Heritage Centre, the Advisory Bodies and the Ramsar Secretariat.

It is necessary to ensure that the Sopron Fertő Lake Resort project is evaluated in cumulation with the existing tourism infrastructure along the entire lakeshore before proceeding. The redesign process should be undertaken as an iterative design process in which the impact of suggested design options on the OUV of the property is continuously assessed, in line with both Paragraph 118bis of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention and the 2022 *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context*.

A phased approach for the Sopron Fertő Lake Resort project is possible, but only with a framework that establishes the conditions and the maximum envelope for the entire development, and this should be assessed through a parallel impact assessment. Such a development framework should be established before finalising the design of further infrastructure and buildings for the northern marina at the Sopron-Fertő Lake Resort and based on the assessment of its potential impacts on the OUV of the property, should be assessed in cumulation with the existing tourism infrastructure along the entire lakeshore as requested by the World Heritage Committee.

The development of the planned eco-centre as part of the Sopron Fertő Lake Resort is positive. The mission recommends the State Party of Hungary to invite the State Party of Austria to collaborate on the development and operation of the eco-centre as a vehicle to further bilateral collaboration between the two States Parties.

Lakeside Resort in Breitenbrunn

The mission concludes that the redevelopment of the Resort in Breitenbrunn is acceptable in terms of scale. However, no formal impact assessment was undertaken, as would be appropriate for a project of the size, and the World Heritage Centre was not notified of the project in advance of decision making on its implementation, in line with the provisions of the Operational Guidelines. This indicates weaknesses in the management of the property and a consequent lack of required communication with the World Heritage Centre.

Lakeside Resort at Weiden am See

The construction of houses along the Seestraße at Weiden am See has a negative impact on the OUV of the property. No further urban development along the corridors from towns to resorts should be allowed, either from the side of the town or from the sides of the resorts, especially, but not only, at Weiden am See.

Water supply to Lake Fertő/Neusiedl

The mission advises that discussions regarding addressing hydrological issues be pursued within the framework of the AHC, to reach formal bilateral agreements that would clearly specify all technical details of the water repartition arrangement, and under which conditions.

The mission recommends creating a single stakeholder consultation body that will invite stakeholders from the two countries to discuss and express positions on the proposals from AHC, prior to any decision.

As for scientific matters, the mission recommends addressing some of the knowledge gaps before conducting the environmental impact assessments that are legally required.

Wind turbines outside the property, but within visible range

The mission advises that the repowering of the Neusiedl-Weiden and Gols wind parks will prolong the negative impact of the wind energy projects on the OUV of the property. The visual presence of individual turbines needs to be reduced as far as possible, including by installing turbine blades without red stripes on the rotor blades if possible.

The existing processes for wind repowering need to be strengthened on a number of issues, in particular: (i) the visual setting of the property should be better protected due to the great contribution that the wider landscape setting makes to its OUV; and (ii) a framework for the evaluation of visual impacts of wind turbines based on an inventory of the spatial and landscape attributes of the property needs to be developed.

Other development projects

Gols Hospital proposal

The selected site for the proposed hospital is located within the setting of the World Heritage property. The mission advises against the development of the Wiesäcker as a site for the planned hospital as such a development will negatively impact the OUV of the property. It is imperative that any further development of plans for the hospital in the setting of the World Heritage property be subject to an impact assessment that evaluates the potential impact on the OUV of the property. Such an impact assessment should be submitted to the World Heritage Centre along with information on the proposed development in one of the working languages of the Convention before any decisions are taken on the further execution of the project.

The selection of an alternative site for the hospital should aim to further enforce the poly-nuclear nature of the settlements of the property and its setting. The hospital should ideally be located in a brownfield zone that forms part of an existing urban area. The mission refers also in this regard to Paragraph 118bis of the Operational Guidelines, which mandates States Parties to the Convention to “ensure that Environmental Impact Assessments, Heritage Impact Assessments, and/or Strategic Environmental Assessments be carried out as a pre-requisite for development projects and activities that are planned for implementation within or around a World Heritage property”. This applies to any development within the property, its buffer zone or wider setting that may affect its OUV.

Solar farms

The process of strategic spatial investigations appropriately excluded large-scale solar farms from the property and its buffer zone. Solar farm development is not appropriate within the boundaries of the property as this would have a negative impact on the cultural landscape.

Planning and management

Spatial planning

The zoning regime for the villages does not provide a guarantee against future expansion. Village boundaries in the Burgenland component are not defined adequately, often only limiting growth towards the lake side.

Limiting further expansion of villages, especially towards each other along transport routes, is essential to maintaining the cultural landscape. Therefore, all settlements within the property and its buffer zone should be delimited with boundaries in the planning systems including within the framework of the already existing Regional Development Programme Neusiedler See-Parndorfer Platte which includes establishing settlement boundaries as a strategy.

Historic centres should receive protection as urban ensembles. The Federal State of Burgenland is advised to develop and adopt legislation to, at the very least, protect the townscapes, ensembles and most important buildings of the Burgenland villages within the World Heritage property.

The mission did not have the opportunity to assess the efficacy of the buffer zone of the property located within the territory of the State Party of Hungary. The buffer zone of the property located within the territory of the State Party of Austria is inadequate and should be enlarged.

The States Parties are advised to undertake a thorough assessment of the buffer zone of the property and consider the submission of an enlarged buffer zone boundary through the Minor Boundary Modification process.

Building culture/planning controls

The 'Criteria for Building in the World Heritage Site' need to be further developed, and be given legal weight in the planning system, to ensure the maintenance and transmission of the property's OUV.

The local building concepts for the Austrian villages located in the World Heritage property, legislated under the Burgenland Spatial Planning Act, should be developed with a view to:

- safeguard their historic character as contributing to the OUV of the property,
- protect settlement morphologies, ensembles, building typologies and all buildings that contribute to that historic character,
- provide guidance on new construction, in line with the updated 'Criteria for building in the World Heritage property', and
- clearly delineate the outer boundaries of these settlements.

The Cultural Landscape Fertő-Neusiedler See World Heritage property should be strategically used as case study in the development of and the implementation of the Austrian Building Culture Act to further the understanding of and define aesthetic and development guidelines that harmonise with the Pannonian building and urban traditions without imitating them.

The mission strongly supports the proposal contained in the Management Plan to establish a 'World Heritage Building School'.

Management system/Management Plan

The Management Plan is a thorough document that provides an adequate broad framework for the management of the property. **The Management Plan should be adopted as soon as possible and implemented.** The 'Consultative Council' should be formalised and operationalised, and provided with adequate resources.

The mission recommends that the Management Plan be augmented to address current weaknesses. These weaknesses do not preclude the plan from being adopted immediately as they do not require the plan to be revised. It should however be strengthened through aligned or appended documents.

- The States Parties should individually and together develop a Stakeholder Engagement Plan to augment the draft Management Plan.
- The analysis of the attributes of the OUV presented in the Management Plan needs to be further developed for the entire property in a collaborative project that includes participation of the Welterbe Neusiedler See Association, the Fertőtáj World Heritage Hungarian Council Association or its successor, when established, the two site management authorities, the Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport of Austria and the Ministry of Construction and Transport of Hungary. The result should be a location-specific mapping of the actual tangible and intangible (including spatial, morphological, typological, use, place specific associations, etc.) attributes of the OUV of the property.
- The role of the World Heritage Planning Advisory Board (Austria) should be strengthened, and its advice should be given consequence through strengthening of regulations by the Federal State of Burgenland as proposed in the draft Management Plan.
- Both Welterbe Neusiedler See Association on the Austrian side and the Fertőtáj World Heritage Hungarian Council Association need adequate, permanent funding to be able to implement the Management Plan and its action plan.

For improved collaboration, communication and consultation within Burgenland, the mission advises that the Federal State of Burgenland, supported by the Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport of Austria, establish a body that brings together the mayors of all the towns within the Austrian component of the World Heritage property, chaired by the President of the Federal State of Burgenland, and with the Site Manager providing updates on the state of conservation and factors affecting the OUV of the property. Such a grouping could meet twice per year and should discuss development proposals before any commitments or formal approvals are given, explore possible synergies for further collaboration including on the development the local building concepts for the villages in the property in Burgenland and coordinate activities of the action plan included in the new Management Plan.

An annual bilateral meeting at national level between the States Parties of Hungary and Austria is deemed by the mission to be an essential minimum to be able to coordinate the management of the transboundary property.

The mission hopes that the above recommendations will assist the States Parties of Austria and Hungary in fulfilling their obligations under the World Heritage Convention to maintain the OUV of the World Heritage property 'Fertő/Neusiedlersee Cultural Landscape' and preserve the ecological character of the Lake Fertő Ramsar Site.

Annexes

Annex I: Terms of Reference of the mission

Terms of Reference
Joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/Ramsar Secretariat Advisory mission
to the World Heritage property 'Fertő/Neusiedlersee Cultural Landscape'
(Austria/Hungary), 2 to 5 October 2023

Background

The World Heritage property "Fertő/ Neusiedlersee Cultural Landscape" was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2001 under criterion (v). The two States Parties have identified the following three main topics that should be covered by the Advisory mission:

I. Tourism development projects within the property

1. Sopron-Fertő Lake Resort

In the technical review of the 2021 state of conservation report for the Hungarian component of the property ICOMOS International concluded that the project in its presented size and form would harm the authenticity and integrity of the property and advised to halt its implementation immediately. In 2022 the Government of Hungary decided to suspend the planning and construction works of this state investment. Currently the redesign of the project phases, scale and elements is underway by the careful analysis of the potential alternatives.

2. Lakeside Resort in Breitenbrunn

Breitenbrunn Lakeside Resort was getting on in years and in need of renovation. Due to expiring lease contracts with the operators, the landowners (Esterházy companies) decided to manage the area themselves, approached the World Heritage management early on in the conception phase, and asked for an assessment of World Heritage suitability of the project. According to the "Criteria for Building in the World Heritage Site", issued by the Lake Neusiedl World Heritage Association as management organisation, projects of this dimension require the involvement of the World Heritage Advisory Planning Board. Hence, the board was involved in the project planning process. In the course of several planning and consultation meetings, the original design was adapted in dialogue and, after almost two years, the consultation process resulted in a mutually accepted and adequate concept. In the meantime, the first construction phase has begun.

II. Water supply to Lake Fertő/Neusiedl

Due to the successful operation of the Austro-Hungarian Water Commission since 1956, the two State Parties have a long tradition in the co-operation regarding transboundary water management. The issue of water supply to the region has been on the agenda of the Commission for a long time, including the consideration of the potential alternatives for providing supplementary water to Lake Fertő/Neusiedl. One of the options for such a supply considered by the Commission is the provision of water from the Mosoni-Duna from Hungary through the Lébény-Hanyi irrigation canal to Austria. The plan for the extension of the canal to the country border has all the necessary permits in place, but the implementation of the project has been suspended. The construction of the planned section of the canal alone does not have any influence on the water regime of the World Heritage property, but as part of a complex water management system it can improve the overall water balance of the region, as well as can have a positive effect on the sodic ponds of the Seewinkel area, which are seriously

threatened by the decreasing water table.

III. Wind turbines outside the property, but within visible range

The so called “Parndorfer Platte”, located north-east to the buffer zone of the World Heritage property, is one of the most draughty areas in Europe and thus certainly one of the most suitable areas for the implementation of wind energy production. Apart from the fact that the government of the Federal State of Burgenland defined the goal of being CO2 neutral by 2030, the importance of renewable energy from wind power and photovoltaics has increased due to the escalating climate crisis and the energy crisis resulting from the current geopolitical situation. The first generation of wind turbines on Parndorfer Platte was already subject of the 2013 ICOMOS/IUCN Advisory mission. These turbines shall now be “repowered”; that means more powerful and technologically up to date turbines shall replace the ones currently in operation. The new plant will comprise only half as many but higher turbines. To mitigate the visual impact on the property and in meeting the recommendations by the ICOMOS/IUCN Advisory mission in 2013, the distance between the boundary of the buffer zone and the new plant has been increased. The planning phase included comprehensive visual impact studies based on innovative and elaborate 3D visualizations. This process resulted in a rezoning of the areas suitable for the new generation of wind turbines. The development of wind power plants on Parndorfer Platte is included in the publication “World Heritage and wind energy planning” (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/wind-energy-planning/>).

Objectives of the Advisory mission

In order to seek appropriate solutions for the issues described above the States Parties have invited an Advisory mission to ensure the Outstanding Universal Value of the property is sustained. In consideration of this and taking into account the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, the mission shall fulfil the following tasks:

1. Analyse the current situation of the tourism development, water management and wind farm construction and any other development projects, and assess whether and under what conditions the implementation of these projects might continue.
2. Assess the impact of these projects on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property and its setting, including the assessment of the tourism and water supply projects on the ecological status of the Neusiedl- Fertő Ramsar Site.
3. Consider if current policies appropriately deal with the impacts of these projects on the OUV and attributes of the property, including the legal procedures of different impact assessments.
4. Discuss with relevant authorities and organisations the overall protection system of the cultural landscape and its setting, including the presentation of the new Management Plan for the property.
5. On the basis of the findings of the mission, prepare practical recommendations and identify measures to further improve the protection of the property and its setting, to be presented to the Governments of Austria and Hungary and to the World Heritage Committee.

The States Parties undertake to provide the mission team with all relevant documentation and information necessary for the fulfilment of their tasks, no later than ten days before the mission. Should additional information be required, as identified during the mission, it should be provided by the States Parties no later than seven days after the end of the mission.

Deliverable

The joint Advisory mission shall prepare a detailed report (in electronic format) reflecting the on-site assessment of the state of conservation the property according to the Terms of Reference for the mission. The mission report will be transmitted to the States Parties by 15 December 2023 for verification of possible factual errors.

In line with established UNESCO, ICOMOS and Ramsar Secretariat's practices, their experts will not engage with the media, nor discuss the mission findings and recommendations, which should only be presented in the final mission report.

Annex II: List of documents received from the States Parties to inform the mission

Management Plan for Fertő/Neusiedlersee Cultural Landscape (2023)

Presentations on the landscape observatory

- Part I: Land use mapping (November 2022)
- Part II: Landscape photography (September 2022)

General maps

- Maps of protected areas within the World Heritage Site
- Overview of the land use at the lake shore
- Map: Aussichtspunkte Touristisch frequentierte orte (November 2008)

Breitenbrunn

- Überarbeitung Welterbe – Entwurf (March 2020)
- UNESCO Welterbe Fertő-Neusiedler See Kriterien für das Bauen im Welterbe (2011)
- Bauen im Welterbe Ein kleiner Leitfaden (July 2019)
- Brochure about the Design Advisory Board process
- Masterplans – Seebad Breitenbrunn lodgepark wiedervorlage 2023
- Stellungnahme Verein Welterbe Neusiedler See zum aktuellen Planungsstand (September 2023)

Fertőrákos

- Complex World Heritage Impact Assessment Documentation Relating to the Development of the Sopron-Fertő Lake Resort (March 2019)
- Development of the Sopron-Fertő Lake Resort – Phase I
 - Environmental Impact Assessment documentation (September 2017)
 - NATURA 2000 Impact Assessment Documentation (2017)
 - Chapter on Nature Conservation (October 2017)
 - Chapter on Landscape Protection (October 2017)
- Development of the Sopron Fertő Lake Resort – Phase II
 - Environmental Impact Assessment documentation (May 2018)
 - NATURA 2000 Impact Assessment documentation (2018)
 - Chapter on Nature Conservation (June 2018)
 - Chapter on Landscape protection (June 2018)
- Fluid mechanical effects of the planned development of the port of Fertőrákos (May 2017)
- Building authorisation procedure
- Presentations
 - Status of the reeds in the Fertőrákos touristic investment area (October 2023)
 - Lake Fertő's eco- and leisure park development (October 2023)
 - Assessment of the impacts of the Fertőrákos resort development project on the natural values of Lake Fertő (October 2023)

Townscape Design Guides in Hungarian

Water management

- Presentations
 - Presentations by Austria regarding the Biological Station Lake Neusiedl, the Neusiedl See Seewinkel National Park, the water supply to the property and the Biological Station Lake Neusiedl's Aims and Targets (October 2023)
 - Presentations by Hungary regarding the lake's ecosystem and technical possibilities of the endowment (October 2023)

- Studies
 - Chemische und gewässerökologische Auswirkungen einer Dotation des Grundwassers im burgenländischen Seewinkel sowie des Neusiedler Sees mit Wasser aus der Moson-Donau (March 2021)
 - Machbarkeitsstudie zur Erstellung eines Wasserbewirtschaftungsplans für das Projektgebiet (December 2023)
 - LIFE Project 'Pannonic Salt' (September 2023)
 - Management Nationalpark Neusiedler See – Seewinkel (2021)
 - Online information links
 - WWF – Entwicklung nachhaltiger Schilferntetechniken und Monitoring Schilfgürtel Neusiedler See (April 2022)
 - LEADER-Projekt 'Sanierung von Sodalacken im Gemeindegebiet von Apetlon' (April 2022)

Wind parks

- Regionalentwicklungsprogramm Gemeinsam mehr Horizont – Burgenland (August 2022)
- Landesentwicklungsprogramm – Burgenland (2011)
- Report: Repowering of Windpark Neusiedl (August 2021)
- Report on Spatial Planning and Renewable Energy in Burgenland
- Stellungnahme ICOMOS Preventive Monitoring – Fertő-Neusiedler See Fertő-Neusiedler See (June 2022)
- Report on strategic planning and regional zoning for wind power in Burgenland

Documents submitted by NGOs

- WWF report warning about the plans for an artificial replenishment of Neusiedler See with Danube water and the possible alternatives (October 2023)
- WWF report with additional information on the replenishment plans for Neusiedler See (October 2023)
- WWF report regarding their position on the planned Hospital in Gols-Wiesäcker
- Statement of IWE
- BI report against the rezoning of the 'Wiesäcker'

Annex III: Last Decision of the World Heritage Committee

Decision: 45 COM 7B.52

Fertő/Neusiedlersee Cultural Landscape (Austria, Hungary)

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/23/45.COM/7B.Add,
2. Welcomes the States Parties' commitment to achieving the joint management of the property and encourages the States Parties to strengthen their dialogue to collaboratively address the complex issues affecting the transboundary lacustrine cultural landscape;
3. Expresses its utmost concern about the scale of the original Sopron Fertő Lake Resort, welcomes the decision to suspend the project but notes that any future project cannot be regarded solely as a rehabilitation project, and that its potential impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property will need to be assessed in cumulation with the existing tourism infrastructure along the entire lakeshore;
4. Invites the States Parties to consider suspending the planning and implementation of all tourism-related development projects along the lakeshore until an inventory of all existing and planned tourism facilities along the lakeshore has been jointly carried out and an assessment of cumulative adverse impacts on the property's attributes prepared;
5. Also welcomes the States Parties' invitation for a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Advisory mission to the property, extended to the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention, which will provide recommendations to the States Parties regarding tourism development projects, including the re-designed Sopron Fertő Lake Resort, water supply to the lake and wind turbines in the vicinity of the property;
6. Requests the States Parties to jointly develop a vision for the future of the property and lay down a shared strategy, including a strategy for tourism infrastructure and management, to ensure a sustainable and equitable use of the property compatible with its OUV;
7. Requests that the 'Criteria for Building in the World Heritage Site' developed by the Lake Neusiedl World Heritage Association be revised and the need for an impact assessment be based on the potential of developments to adversely impact the OUV of the property and its supporting attributes rather than on the size of proposals;
8. Equally welcomes the decision to suspend the implementation of the project of the Mosoni-Duna section of the Lébény-Hanyi Irrigation Canal thus giving the planned joint Advisory mission time to assess the proposal and make recommendations thereon;
9. Notes the progressive water shortage recorded at the lake, and requests the States Parties to submit detailed documentation, including a transboundary Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA), of the proposed project to divert waters from the Mosoni-Duna to feed the Seewinkel groundwater body and Fertő-Neusiedl Lake, to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies before a final decision is taken on this proposal;

10. Also notes the preparation of an HIA of the proposal to repower the wind farm site at Weiden am See, and urges the State Party of Austria to submit the outcomes of the HIA to the World Heritage Centre before any final decision is taken;
11. Recalls that, in a World Heritage context, HIAs should be carried out on the basis of the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context and that a more specialised tool, the Guidance for Wind Energy Projects in a World Heritage Context, is also available online;
12. Requests furthermore the States Parties to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2024**, an updated joint report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 46th session.

Annex IV: Programme of the mission as implemented

Monday, 2 October 2023

When	What
Location: Sopronbánfalvi Kolostor Hotel	
Participants: <i>international & national experts (see the attached table)</i>	
09.00	Welcome Tour de table - getting to know each other
	The Mission Aims, tasks and topics - overview <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Management plan (AT, HU)• Tourism development projects (HU, AT)• Water supply to the Property (HU, AT)• New wind farms outside the property (AT)
	Clarification discussion
11.00	New Management Plan of the WH-site Presentation on the new Management Plan
	Discussion
13.30	Plan Sopron-Fertő Lake Resort <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nature conservation aspects• Landscape protection aspects (redesign)
15.00	Transfer to Fertőrákos
Location: Fertőrákos Vízitelep	
15.30	Visit of the Sopron-Fertő Lake Resort area
17.00	Transfer to the Sopronbánfalva Kolostor Hotel
Location: Sopronbánfalva Kolostor Hotel	
17.30	Assessment: Discussion of the field visit; Identifying issues

Tuesday, 3 October 2023

When	What
Location: Sopronbánfalva Kolostor Hotel	
<u>Participants:</u> International experts, Core-team	
08.30	Come together – briefing for the day
08.45	Transfer to Winden am See (AT) Stopover at Donnerskirchen Church-Hill, important viewpoint on the wind turbines, Weiden am See Wind park
Location: Vereinshaus, Winden am See	
<u>Participants:</u> International experts, Core-team, NGO representatives	
10.00	NGO presentations
Location: Vereinshaus, Winden am See	
<u>Participants:</u> International experts, Core-team, representatives of wind farm operators, external experts on spacial planning and visualisation	
14.00	Wind turbines outside the property, but within visible range Presentation on the Visualisation study including VR visualizations
16.00	Discussion and assessment
17.00	Visit of the Wind Park Weiden am See – Neusiedl am See on the spot

Wednesday, 4 October 2023

When	What
Location: Sopronbánfalva Kolostor Hotel	
<u>Participants:</u> International experts, Core-team	
08:30	Come Together – Briefing of the day
	Presentation of the Breitenbrunn Lake Resort planning process and of the involvement of the WH Advisory Planning Board in Austria
09:30	Transfer to Rust (AT)
Location: Rust/Breitenbrunn	
<u>Participants:</u> International experts, Core-team, representatives of Esterházy Enterprises (Lake Resort Breitenbrunn)	
10:00	Visit to the Historic Town of Rust

11:00	Transfer to Breitenbrunn
11:30	Visit of the construction site Breitenbrunn Lakeside Resort/on site
Location: General Lake and Area Visit - Focus on visibility of Wind parks surrounding the lake	
<u>Participants:</u> International experts, Core-team	
14:30	<p>Starting Point Winden am See - bus ride around the Lake with focus on viewpoints on the wind turbines, Weiden am See Wind park</p> <p>Tour open for wishes of the international experts</p> <p>Visit proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lighthouse Podersdorf • National Park-Observation Tower in "Hölle" – View on Ponds of Seewinkel • Zicksee – as an example of the effects of water shortage • National Park Observation Tower "Sandeck"

Thursday, 5 October 2023

When	What
Location: Sopronbánfalva Kolostor Hotel	
<u>Participants:</u> International experts, Core-team	
08:00	Transfer to Illmitz (AT)
Location: Biological Station Burgenland, Illmitz	
<u>Participants:</u> International experts, Core-team, experts of the water management authorities, experts from the National Parks, experts from the Biological Station and RAMSAR experts	
09:00	<p>Water supply to the property</p> <p>Presentations about the problem and ideas for solution</p> <p>Presentation LIFE-project</p>
11:00	Discussion and assessment with inclusion of municipality representatives
12:00	Short visit of the National Park Centre and the World Heritage Room in Illmitz (5 min by car)
14:00	Closing debate on the water supply issue
17:00	Transfer to the Sopronbánfalva Kolostor Hotel

Annex V: Composition of the mission team

- Irena Caquet, Programme Specialist, Europe and North America Unit, World Heritage Centre, UNESCO
- Nicholas Clarke, ICOMOS Advisor
- Flore Lafaye de Micheaux, Senior Advisor for Europe, Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

Annex VI: List of people met

HUNGARY	
Mr VUKOSZÁVLYEV, Zorán	Ministry of Construction and Transport
Ms PUHA, Magdolna	Ministry of Construction and Transport
Mr SZILÁGYI, Gábor	Ministry of Construction and Transport
Ms TRESÓ, Bernadett	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Mr SCHMIDT, András	Ministry of Agriculture
Mr MAGYAR, Gábor	Ministry of Agriculture
Mr BOROS, Emil	Hungarian National Ramsar Committee
Ms KULCSÁRNÉ ROTH, Matthaëa	Fertő-Hanság National Park Directorate
Mr FERSCH, Attila	Fertő-Hanság National Park Directorate
Mr PELLINGER, Attila	Fertő-Hanság National Park Directorate
Ms KURALI, Anikó	North Transdanubian Water Directorate
Ms GAUL, Réka	Ministry of Interior, Head of Unit, River Basin Management and Water Protection Department
Mr SÜTHEŐ, László	Northern Hungarian Water Management Directorate, technical deputy director
Mr PANNONHALMI, Miklós	Northern Hungarian Water Management Directorate, senior expert
Mr VEÖREŐS, András	ICOMOS Hungary
AUSTRIA	
Mr BREZOVSKY, Ernst-Peter	Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs - Head of UNESCO Unit
Ms PRÖCKL, Ruth	Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport - National Coordinator for World Heritage
Mr GRUBMAYER, Alexander	Ambassador of the Republic of Austria to Hungary
Ms EISENKOPF, Astrid	Federal State of Burgenland - Deputy Governor of the Region of Burgenland
Ms MAYER, Irmengard	Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport – Expert, UNESCO Unit
Mr MEIXNER, Florian	Austrian UNESCO Commission
Mr PREINER, Erwin	Member of the Regional Parliament, Chairman of the WH Fertő-Neusiedlersee Association
Mr KLEIN, Hannes	Management UNESCO World Heritage, Federal State of Burgenland
Ms HERBIG, Ulrike	ICOMOS Austria
Ms GLUDOVATZ, Angela	Federal State of Burgenland - Assistant
Mr GRAF, Michael	Federal State of Burgenland - Environmental Ombud
Mr RANNER, Andreas	Federal State of Burgenland - Nature protection, RAMSAR

Mr WAGNER, Josef	Federal State of Burgenland - Head of Group 4
Mr SAILER, Christian	Federal State of Burgenland - Water Management
Mr MARACEK, Karl	Federal State of Burgenland - Water Management
Mr GRABENHOFER, Harald	National Park Neusiedler See-Seewinkel
Mr STANZER, Gregori	AllRegio - Management Plan Team
Ms LEITNER, Judith	StadtLand - Management Plan Team
Mr ZINGGL, Peter	Federal State of Burgenland - Spatial Planning
Mr KOSCHER, Raffael	ÖIR – Austrian Institute for Spatial Planning
Mr SCHAUPPENLEHNER, Thomas	University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU), Vienna
Mr PRACHAR, Thomas	Burgenland Energy
Mr JAHN, Hermann	Esterházy Betriebe (Esterházy Companies)
Ms EICHBERGER, Karin	Esterházy Betriebe (Esterházy Companies)
Ms NIKLOS, Kathrin	Federal State of Burgenland - Nature protection, RAMSAR
Ms JAUCK, Martina	Federal State of Burgenland - Nature protection, RAMSAR
Mr ZECHMEISTER, Thomas	Federal State of Burgenland - Biological Station
Ms WOHLFART, Michaela	Mayor, Podersdorf am See
Mr STROMMER, Rudolf	Vice-Chairman of the WH Fertő-Neusiedlersee Association
Mr HORVATH, Martin	Burgenland Energy
Mr SZÖKE, Matthias	Municipal Director of the Freistadt Rust
Representatives of NGOs	
Mr MAYOR, Gyula	Fertő-tó Barátai Egyesület - HU
Ms RODICS, Katalin	Greenpeace Magyarország Egyesület - HU
Mr MARTON, Janos; p.p. Mr GOLUBICH, Rudolf	Freunde des Neusiedler Sees - AT
Mr SPITZMÜLLER, Wolfgang	Paten der Nacht - AT
Ms MEIXNER, Martina	Bürgerinitiative "Nein zur Verbauung der Golser Wiesäcker" - AT
Ms WATZEK, Bibi	Initiative Welterbe - AT
Mr SCHUHBÖCK, Christian	Alliance for Nature - AT
Mr KOHLER, Bernhard	WWF Österreich - AT

Annex VII: Statement of Outstanding Universal Value of the property

Brief synthesis

Fertő/Neusiedlersee Cultural Landscape incorporates the westernmost steppe lake in Eurasia. This is an area of outstanding natural values and landscape diversity created and sustained by the encounter of different landscape types. It is situated in the cross-section of different geographical flora and fauna zones as well as wetlands, and is characterised by sub-Alpine mountains, sub-Mediterranean hills, alkaline lakes that dry out from time to time, saline soils, reeds, and shoreline plains. This area, a valuable biosphere reserve and gene bank, is home to a rich diversity of flora and fauna and has been shaped harmoniously for eight millennia by different human groups and ethnically diverse populations. The present character of the landscape is the result of millennia-old land-use forms based on stock raising and viticulture to an extent not found in other European lake areas. This interaction is also manifested in the several-century-long continuity of its urban and architectural traditions and the diverse traditional uses of the land and the lake. The Fertő/Neusiedlersee Lake is surrounded by an inner ring of sixteen settlements and an outer ring of twenty other settlements.

Two broad periods may be discerned: from around 6000 BC until the establishment of the Hungarian state in the 11th century AD, and from the 11th century until the present. From the 7th century BC the lake shore was densely populated, initially by people of the early Iron Age Hallstatt culture and by late prehistoric and Roman times' cultures. In the fields of almost every village around the lake there are remains of Roman villas. The basis of the current network of towns and villages was formed in the 12th and 13th centuries, their markets flourishing from 1277 onwards. The mid-13th century Tatar invasion left this area unharmed, and it enjoyed uninterrupted development throughout medieval times until the Turkish conquest in the late 16th century. The economic basis throughout was the export of animals and wine. The historic centre of the medieval free town of Rust in particular prospered from the wine trade. Rust constitutes an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement representative of the area. The town exhibits the special building mode of a society and culture within which the lifestyles of townspeople and farmers form an entity. Its refortification in the early 16th century marked the beginning of a phase of construction in the area, first with fortifications and then, during the 17th-19th centuries, with the erection and adaptation of domestic buildings. The remarkable rural architecture of the villages surrounding the lake and several 18th- and 19th-century palaces add to the area's considerable cultural interest. The palace of the township of Nagycenk, the Fertőd Palace, the Széchenyi Palace and the Fertőd Esterházy Palace are also exceptional cultural testimonies.

Despite the fact that it is a transboundary property, located on the territory of two states, Austria and Hungary, it has formed a socio-economic and cultural unit for centuries, which is outstanding in terms of its rich archaeological heritage created by consecutive civilisations, its rich stock of historical monuments reflecting ethnic diversity, and the elements of its rich ethnographic, geological and mining heritage.

Criterion (v): The Fertő/Neusiedlersee has been the meeting place of different cultures for eight millennia, and this is graphically demonstrated by its varied landscape, the result of an evolutionary and symbiotic process of human interaction with the physical environment.

Integrity

The inscribed property, located on the Austrian-Hungarian border, is not only characterised by diversity but it has also maintained, in terms of both natural and cultural aspects, its landscape, its socio-economic and cultural features, as well as its land-use forms, the several century-

long continuity of its viticulture and stock-raising, and the rich characteristics of settlement architecture and structure related to land-use. The integrity of the property is based on geological, hydrological, geo-morphological, climatic, ecological as well as regional and cultural historical characteristics.

The landscape of the Fertő/Neusiedlersee has advantageous natural and climatic conditions, which have made it suitable for agricultural cultivation and stock-raising for thousands of years. The water, the reed-beds, the saline fields, alkaline lakes and their remains, the row of hills enclosing the lake from the west with forests and vineyards on top, represent not only natural-geographical component features, but also hundreds of years of identical uses of the land and the lake, making the area a unique example of humans living in harmony with nature. Among the world's saline lakes, the Fertő/Neusiedlersee area is unique in terms of the organic, ancient, diverse and still living human-ecological relationship characterising the lake and society. The characteristic human-made elements of the cultural landscape include the traditional, partly rural architectural character of the settlements around the lake, the settlements' structure, the unity of the homogeneously arranged buildings on squares and streets, and several 18th and 19th century palaces in their landscape settings. The several-century-long viticulture, viniculture and reed management contribute to the continuity of land-use as well as to the continuous use of traditional building materials.

Much of the value of the area lies in its genuinely unchanging qualities of the way of life, the preservation of vernacular architecture and a landscape based upon a traditional and sustainable exploitation of a limited range of resources. Though tourism is both a change and a catalyst thereof, associated development and insertion of the intrusively modern construction will need to be controlled. Maintaining these characteristics and the conditions of integrity will entail the development and enforcement of guidelines and zoning regulations to ensure that new development does not occur on open land and that it respects the form and scale of traditional buildings.

Authenticity

The overall landscape and scale as well as the internal structure and rural architecture of the towns and villages bear witness to an agricultural land-use and way of life uninterrupted since medieval times. The settlement pattern and occupation of several present-day village sites date to Roman times and earlier. Buildings, walls and vistas have been preserved in many places as well as the ratio of built-in areas. Authenticity is also supported by the continued use of local building materials (limestone, reed and wood). A varied ownership pattern is exemplified by the remarkable rural architecture of the very small villages and by the Fertőd Esterhazy and Nagycenk Széchenyi Palaces, outstanding examples of the landed aristocracy's architecture of the 18th and 19th centuries. The Leitha limestone, found near the lake and quarried from Roman times until the mid-20th century, provided building stone to Sopron and Vienna as well as to local settlements.

Protection and management requirements

The property has been a nature and landscape protection area since 1977, and the protection area has been classified as a reserve under the Ramsar Convention since 1983. The Fertő/Neusiedlersee is also a MAB Biosphere Reserve. In Austria, Neusiedler See-Seewinkel National Park (1993) is within the Ramsar area. The southern (Hungarian) end of the property has been a landscape protection area since 1977 and it became the Fertő-Hanság National Park in 1991; furthermore, parts of the property also belong to the Natura 2000 network. Cultural property, including outstanding monuments and groups of buildings and objects, is protected in Austria by the Austrian Monument Protection Act 1923 (consequently amended

several times) and in Hungary by the Act of 2001/LXIV on the Protection of Cultural Heritage. The entire historic centre of the free town of Rust (Austria) and Fertőrákos (Hungary) are under historic area protection. Nature is protected by law on provincial level in Austria.

Land ownership is complex: in the Austrian part less than 1% lies with the State, the bulk belonging to private owners and communities. In the Hungarian part within the Fertő-Hanság National Park, the State owns 86% of the land, with other owners in the property being the local governments, the Church and private individuals.

A detailed zoning plan for the Austrian part of the property has already been approved. A management plan for the whole property has been developed and its implementation is supported by the joint Management Forum. The Plan has advisory status and plays a strategic guiding and influencing role but is not generally compulsory. Control and monitoring functions are also exerted through the democratic participation and decision-making processes of the public. For conserving the existing cultural properties on both sides of the frontier, responsibilities are shared by federal, provincial and local levels. On the Hungarian part, the review of the Management Plan, based on the Act on World Heritage, will provide detailed regulations that may include zoning arrangements. The Regional World Heritage Architectural Planning Jury assists in the realization of high-quality developments adapted to the values of the property. The Fertőtáj World Heritage Hungarian Council Association is the management body of the Hungarian part of the World Heritage property. In Austria the combined effects of the Monument Protection Act and village renewal regulation within a tourist context encourage sustainable tourism. One of the management challenges consists in the balanced and sustainable development of the transboundary property through harmonising management plans. Short-term tasks include the protection of important views, bearing in mind long-distance visibility due to flat-land characteristics of the wider setting, and in face of development pressures (high-rise buildings, wind turbines, etc.) in the broader setting of the property. Tools to achieve this are planning regulations and World Heritage Planning Juries. Mid-term tasks include maintaining traditional land-use forms and activities adapted to the requirements of contemporary context: safeguarding the structure, architectural character and extension of the settlements, as well as, increasing the local economy's population retaining capacity. One of the means to attain the latter objectives is sustainable tourism, which needs to be managed in subordination to the interests of the preservation of heritage values. Another challenge consists in mitigating the impact of climate change on the built and natural environment (e.g. the extreme changes in the water level of Fertő/Neusiedlersee).

Annex VIII: Photographs taken during the mission

The rural and village landscape



The L209 from Rust to Oggau am Neusiedler See



View from west eastwards over vineyards towards the lake in the Hungarian portion of the property



Fertőrákos



Donnerskirchen



View from Donnerskirchen Church



Donnerskirchen

The rural and village landscape



Purbach



Purbach, cellars



Donnerskirchen



Donnerskirchen



Shop constructed in vineyard landscape between Donnerskirche and Schützen am Gebirge



New housing at Rust, located in the property

The Sopron-Fertő Lake Resort project site



Canal dividing redevelopment site and reed bed separating Sopron-Fertő Lake Resort project site and Fertőrákos



New concrete wall at the entrance to the redevelopment site



Redevelopment site with view northwards towards Möbisch



View from the redevelopment site towards Fertőrákos



Northernmost harbour near completion



Northernmost harbour near completion

The Sopron-Fertő Lake Resort project site



Future beach with concrete infrastructure



Future beach with concrete infrastructure



Redevelopment site looking south



Redevelopment site looking south



Elements for sub-surface infrastructure on site



View of the road towards Fertőrákos seen from the redevelopment site

The Breitenbrunn Resort project site



The reed bed at Breitenbrunn Resort



New restaurant building at Breitenbrunn Resort under construction



Breitenbrunn Resort as seen from the new restaurant building



Existing buildings planned to be redeveloped



The old yacht harbour at Breitenbrunn Resort which will be rehabilitated as natural area



The old yacht harbour at Breitenbrunn Resort which will be rehabilitated as natural area

The Weiden am See Resort



New restaurant at the Weiden am See Resort



New hotel at the Weiden am See Resort which replaced a former hotel building



View over the Weiden am See Resort towards the Parndorfer Platte



View from the new restaurant at the Weiden am See Resort over the lake



New housing along the road from Weiden am See to the resort located in the reed belt zone

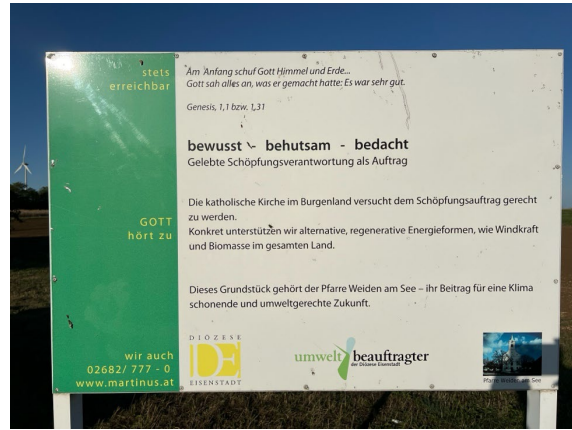


New housing along the road from Weiden am See to the resort located in the reed belt zone

Wind turbines: Parndorfer Platte



Information signage on the repowering project



Sign indicating that the land on which the turbines are located belongs to the parish of Weiden am See



Existing turbines



Wind turbines with, in the foreground, the bird flight path



Experimental wind and solar power combination

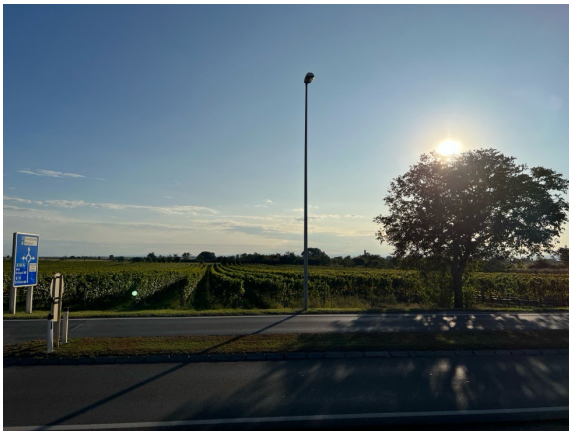


Public walking paths, including a so-called wind park route

Current proposed hospital development site in the Wiesäcker, Gols



View along Route 51, looking southeast, with the proposed development site on the right



View over Route 51 looking over proposed development site



View towards the lake from the Aussichtsplattform, Gols, with the middle ground – the proposed hospital development site

Rust



Mediaeval city wall and gate



Historical house with wine cellar



Market Square



Typical streetscape



Typical streetscape: view towards the church



Seehotel Rust

Meetings



Start meeting



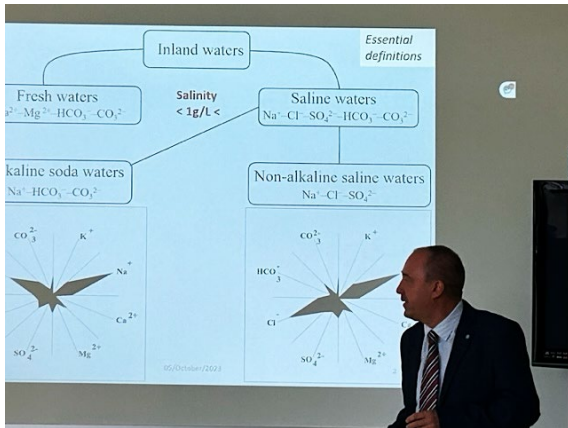
Stakeholder meeting



Virtual reality presentation



Mission team with both States Parties' representatives



Presentations on water management held at the Biological Station