

11 March, 2019

To whom it may concern,

**RE: Conservation/Restoration Project for Mon Repos Park, Vyborg, Russia**

Further to the visit of the ICOMOS Shared Built Heritage International Scientific Committee to Vyborg and Mon Repos Park between 11-12 June 2018, and to our brief article in our recent committee newsletter of January 2019 relating to our 2018 Nordic Tour to Vyborg, we confirm that we were very happy to see that a very significant project is underway to conserve and restore this very fine and sublime historic site including its wood constructed buildings and its English-style parkscape complete with a number of gardens and monuments of various types at a very beautiful lakeshore site at Vyborg Bay. After this significant cultural monument, whose origin and preservation people from many European countries were involved in, had been neglected in the Soviet era to almost complete destruction, the enormous current efforts to revive the park were noted with great joy by the members of the ISC and appreciated.

This said, during our visit, which was led by members of ICOMOS Russia (St Petersburg branch) and ICOMOS Finland, it was explained that some aspects of the restoration project were of concern including:

- Repair and reconstruction of the historic manor house and adjacent buildings employing non-original techniques;
- Restoration of a French style garden between the historic manor house and the lakeshore, which was proposed and included in a plan for the landscape dating to 1812, but which actually never was implemented;
- Repair of the Mausoleum of Ludwigstein/Island of the Dead
- Repair and reinstatement of various feature landscape and built elements of the parkscape

Our ICOMOS Russia and ICOMOS Finland colleagues recently contacted us to inform us that the article in our February 2019 issue of the ICOMOS Shared Built Heritage ISC newsletter has been viewed and understood to be an unqualified support for the conservation approach for the current restoration project at Mon Repos Park. As such, we write to correct this misunderstanding and to explain that while we were very pleased to see a significant conservation project taking place during our brief visit, that nonetheless it is important that the conservation approach employed is in accordance with the **Venice Charter** and related conservation charters adopted by ICOMOS including:

- the **Burra Charter** – Australia ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance (1981, subsequently updated 2013); <https://australia.icomos.org/wp-content/uploads/The-Burra-Charter-2013-Adopted-31.10.2013.pdf>
- the ICOMOS “**Principles for the Conservation of Wooden Built Heritage** (adopted 2017 at the 19<sup>th</sup> ICOMOS General Assembly in New Delhi); [https://www.icomos.org/images/DOCUMENTS/General\\_Assemblies/19th\\_Delhi\\_2017/Working\\_Documents-First\\_Batch-August\\_2017/GA2017\\_6-3-4\\_WoodPrinciples\\_EN\\_final20170730.pdf](https://www.icomos.org/images/DOCUMENTS/General_Assemblies/19th_Delhi_2017/Working_Documents-First_Batch-August_2017/GA2017_6-3-4_WoodPrinciples_EN_final20170730.pdf)
- the **ICOMOS Florence Charter on Historical Gardens** (adopted 1982 at the ICOMOS General Assembly); [https://www.icomos.org/images/DOCUMENTS/Charters/gardens\\_e.pdf](https://www.icomos.org/images/DOCUMENTS/Charters/gardens_e.pdf)

As such, the Shared Built Heritage ISC share the concern of all ICOMOS members and national committees that sound conservation principles are followed in the course of the restoration of Mon Repos Park by all involved as well as appropriate consultation and reviews of proposed work with the community including our ICOMOS colleagues from Russia and Finland who are very interested to contribute to the success of this project.

In fact we were very pleased to learn that the concerns of our ICOMOS Russia and ICOMOS Finland had resulted in a temporary halt to the project to allow time for a review and input by parties concerned about various key issues which we understand have been raised, such as whether to construct a French style park which had never been proposed though to our knowledge was not implemented, and to ensure appropriate repair scope of work for the manor house and related complex of buildings. We wish to commend this action of the project managers and authorities to ensure a considered approach for the restoration of Mon Repos Park to ensure that a high quality conservation project will result to the benefit of both the local and regional communities as well as visitors to Vyborg and the region.

We appreciate that repair work to historic structures, particularly those using organic materials such as wood, may involve some changes in material or construction to eliminate poor detailing that may result in premature deterioration. Also, it is well understood that some deteriorated materials used for the roof covering or cladding, or at substructural level may need replacing or reinforcing. However, the goal should be to undertake a conservation approach that understands, respects and retains to the greatest degree possible the heritage character and fabric (externally and internally) of the buildings and sites.

While we understand that there is a desire to complete the project quickly, in our view it is often best to undertake such large scale projects in a careful phased approach based where possible on research rather than conjecture, and on the principle of conserving the authenticity of the site, as we saw at many other historic sites during our visit in Vyborg and at St. Petersburg. Based on discussions during our site visit there was considerable interest by ICOMOS members both in Russia and Finland to participate in consultations and to contribute their thoughts. We very much encourage such consultations with the goal of achieving a highly successful conservation project that will return the Mon Repos Park back to its original splendid design, appearance and character

as implemented in the late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup>C together with later layers of history. We therefore wish everyone well with this project.

We also wish to commend everyone involved in the wonderful conservation project at Vyborg to conserve and restore the famous library designed by Alvar Aalto, another excellent and successful example of heritage experts with ICOMOS Finland working with heritage experts of ICOMOS Russia. We encourage and support this type of international collaboration to ensure high quality and sensitive conservation of historic sites of a Shared Built Heritage nature, of interest both to the people of Russia and Finland, as well as across the world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'S. Enders', written in a cursive style.

Prof. Dr. Siegfried Enders,  
President,  
Shared Built Heritage International Scientific Committee

Cc:

- Sue Stepowski, Vice President, SBH ISC
- John Ward, Secretary General, SBH ISC
- Sergey Gorbatenko, ICOMOS Russia (St Petersburg Branch)
- Nicholay Lavrentyev, ICOMOS Russia (St Petersburg Branch)
- Minna Silver, President, ICOMOS Finland
- Netta Book, ICOMOS Finland