

# ICOMOS

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CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES  
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITIOS  
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ СОВЕТ ПО ВОПРОСАМ ПАМЯТНИКОВ И ДОСТОПРИМЕЧАТЕЛЬНЫХ МЕСТ

For the attention of:

Office of the Prime Minister of Norway  
postmottak@smk.dep.no

Stortinget (The Norwegian  
Parliament)  
postmottak@stortinget.no

Ministry of Local Government and  
Regional Development  
postmottak@kdd.dep.no

Ministry of Climate and Environment  
postmottak@kld.dep.no

Municipality of Bremanger,  
post@bremanger.kommune.no

Bontrup Aggregates BV,  
Att. Messrs. Bontrup  
Amerikahaven 36  
1045AG Amsterdam  
bbontrup@bontrup.com  
mpeters@bontrup.com

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Paris, 27 May 2024

## **Heritage Alert: 6000-Year-Old Vingen Rock Art Area (Norway) and Pristine Surrounding Landscape Face Threat of Damage**

Dear Prime Minister, Ministers, Deputies, Mayor, Messrs. Bontrup, Madam/Sir,

ICOMOS, the International Council on Monuments and Sites, is an NGO dedicated to the conservation and protection of cultural heritage world-wide since 1965. ICOMOS has over 11 000 expert members in 132 countries and territories, including Norway, and 31 International Scientific Committees, among which an expert Committee on Rock Art. ICOMOS also serves as an advisory body to the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention.

The Vingen rock art area in Bremanger, Western Norway, is one of the most extensive and best-preserved concentrations of rock art in Northern Europe. This unique site encompasses approximately 2 km<sup>2</sup>, and is situated within a larger landscape protection area totalling 5 km<sup>2</sup>. Thousands of petroglyphs from the Stone Age can be found on large rock panels, big boulders and smaller stones surrounding the impressive and unspoilt beauty of the Vingen fjord. These images may be understood as a pictorial language, providing a unique insight into past narratives.

This landscape has until now remained virtually unchanged since the rock art was made during the Stone Age, 6000 years ago. The Vingen area is only accessible by boat, and the surrounding region is one of the largest on the outer coast of Western Norway to have retained an uninterrupted slope from fjord to mountains, free of roads.

The rock art at Vingen is automatically protected under the Norwegian Cultural Heritage Act. From 1980 onwards, the site and its immediate surroundings have also been part of a strictly regulated landscape protection area. Since the 1990s, more than 100 million NOK have been invested in research and protection of the site through public funding by the Directorate for Cultural Heritage and others.

However, the Municipal Council of Bremanger recently approved the establishment of a stone quarry on the Dyrstad peninsula, close to Vingen, to extract 130 m<sup>3</sup> or 360 million tons of sandstone from the Aksla mountain. The facility will include stone crushing operations and a large shipping port west of Vingen. This development, particularly the new shipping port towards Frøysjøen, will significantly alter the landscape. In addition, dust and noise pollution will affect the site. Another stone quarry is already in operation on the adjacent Sætreffjellet mountain, with an established shipping port located on the southern side of the peninsula, not visible from Vingen.

The plans have been formally opposed by the Directorate for Cultural Heritage, the Norwegian Environment Agency, the County Governor of Vestland and the Ministry of Climate and Environment. These agencies all assert that the Vingen area and its surrounding landscape hold significant national and international heritage value. The landscape is currently still free of notable modern interventions, thereby preserving its unique qualities.

The agencies further state that:

- The planned new stone quarry is not in accordance with the approved overall area planning.
- The impact assessment analysis underestimates the negative effects it will have on the natural and cultural environment.
- The new shipping port will cause irreparable damage to nature and loss of red-listed species.
- Significant long-term economic benefit of the quarry to the local community is not demonstrated.
- A thorough evaluation of alternative quarry and shipping port areas has not been conducted.

In February 2024, the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, approved the new quarry development, despite these assessments of the significant negative impacts it will have on cultural heritage and the natural environment. The Ministry states that the positive economic effects for the local community outweigh the negative effects for the natural and cultural environment.

ICOMOS, its Norwegian National Committee and its International Scientific Committee on Rock Art, strongly oppose the approval of the development of the stone quarry at Aksla mountain and in particular the new shipping port at Inste Bårdvikneset. We are convinced that this will lead to irreparable damage to the rare pristine surrounding landscape and expose the Vingen rock art area to severe negative visual impact and pollutions from the massive planned industrial activity.

We urge that current approvals be withdrawn and that a thorough and independent evaluation of possible alternative quarry and shipping port locations be undertaken, and that those charged with this assessment be provided with full information on the environmental and cultural values of the area.

ICOMOS, through its Norwegian and Rock Art Committees, remain available to the concerned authorities to provide all necessary advice to avert what would be a disaster not only for Norwegian cultural and natural heritage.

Yours sincerely,



Teresa Patricio  
President of ICOMOS



Magnus Borgos  
President of ICOMOS Norway



Benjamin Smith  
President of the  
ICOMOS International Scientific  
Committee on Rock Art

**Attachments:**

- Heritage Alert Background Information

**Copy to:**

- The Directorate for Cultural Heritage, [postmottak@ra.no](mailto:postmottak@ra.no)
- The Norwegian Environment Agency, [post@miljodir.no](mailto:post@miljodir.no)
- The County Governor of Vestland, [sfvpost@statsforvalteren.no](mailto:sfvpost@statsforvalteren.no)
- ICOMOS Norway, [styret@icomos.no](mailto:styret@icomos.no)