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BMF BUTRINT
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INTERNATIONAL DESIGN COMPETITION FOR BUTRINT NATIONAL PARK VISITOR CENTER LAUNCHES

Two-stage competition launches for new visitor center in World Heritage Site recognized as Albania's chief cultural attraction for its inspirational ancient monuments and spectacular natural setting



Image © Albanian-American Development Foundation

- **Competition welcomes emerging and seasoned teams**
- **Project encompasses world-class visitor center (with supporting entrance infrastructure and additional features such as wayfinding) that will welcome and orientate visitors to both the World Heritage Site and the wider National Park**
- **The jury features Elva Margariti, Albania's Minister of Culture, alongside other distinguished global thought-leaders from architecture, heritage and the client organisations**
- **No design required at first stage – architect-led multidisciplinary teams asked to submit details of team composition, experience, pre-qualification questionnaire, and approach**
- **Four finalist teams to receive USD \$10,000 honorarium for concept designs at stage two**
- **Deadline for first stage responses is Monday 24 October 2022**

The Ministry of Culture of Albania, the Butrint Management Foundation (BMF) and design competition organizers Malcolm Reading Consultants (MRC), today [21 September 2022] launch the global search for a dedicated and gifted architectural team to design a new visitor center for Butrint National Park, an exceptional UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS) on Albania's Ionian coastline.

Located in the south of the country, approximately 20 kilometers from the modern city of Sarandë and overlooking the Straits of Corfu, Butrint is the most significant archaeological site in Albania, and its chief cultural attraction.

Butrint has an exceptional sense of place, cultural resonance and visual appeal, which comes from its rare combination of monuments within an unspoilt and spectacular natural setting. The wider National Park is endowed with hills, lakes, wetlands, salt marshes, plains, reed beds and coastal islands.

Recognized for millennia as an inspirational place, Butrint was celebrated in Virgil's Aeneid and in Cicero's Letters to Atticus. The site's highlights include an ancient Epirot Theater, Roman Forum and an early Byzantine Baptistery with a well-preserved mosaic pavement, along with other monuments dating from the Hellenic, Roman, Byzantine, Angevin, Venetian and Ottoman periods. The area is triply inscribed as a WHS, a National Park, and a Ramsar site*.



Crucially, the new visitor center, expected to be carbon neutral, is intended to help the site better manage rising visitor numbers, projected to reach an annual 400,000 by 2030.

The new center, of up to 1,000 sqm, must receive, welcome and orient visitors, interpret the site, convey the Outstanding Universal Values of the WHS, and be a gateway to the wider National Park and a regional hub for other nearby natural and cultural visitor attractions.

The center will be located approximately 1.5 kilometers from the entrance to the ancient city, in a spectacular location with panoramic views overlooking the Vivari Channel and the Mediterranean Sea.

The project's initial funding of USD \$2.45m has been secured and the project has a fast-track timetable: the finished building is due to open in September 2025.

Full details of how to enter the competition are available on the dedicated competition website at competitions.malcolmreading.com/butrint.

Elva Margariti, Minister of Culture and Chair of the Butrint Management Foundation, said:

'We are ambitious for our new visitor center to be an architectural exemplar, a unique statement for the site and Albania, promoting a wider appreciation of Albania's many cultural and archaeological treasures.'

'Balancing the provision of public access with the preservation of both archaeological and natural resources is a significant challenge for all World Heritage Sites and, post-pandemic as visitor numbers multiply, visitor management is key to the sustainability of Butrint as an international tourism destination.'

'The center must convey the Outstanding Universal Values of this World Heritage Site, serving as an educational forum and community-gathering place and acting as a regional hub for tourists to promote other nearby natural and cultural attractions.'

'From the finalists who reach the competition's second, concept design stage, we'll be seeking charismatic yet practical architecture that perfectly relates to the extraordinary cultural and natural setting.'



Malcolm Reading, Competition Director, said:

‘This historic site presents a luminous history of the Mediterranean — it is known to have been occupied from around 50,000 BC up to the 19th century AD.

‘We will be looking for talented architects and other design specialists who identify with the project’s values and will take immense care to balance their intervention with respect for this jewel-like site, recognizing that they will need to satisfy the international heritage community.

‘A proactive and forward-thinking approach to sustainability will also be needed, to tackle the many challenges of the climate emergency, with rising sea levels being a particular threat to Butrint’s low-lying peninsula.’

An Integrated Management Plan to safeguard the site and promote sustainable community-based and environmentally-sensitive tourism was approved by the Government of Albania in July 2020. The Plan led to the creation of a new autonomous body to oversee the site, the Butrint Management Foundation, which is chaired by the Ministry of Culture.

Butrint National Park occupies a total area of 8,622 hectares and covers an area of outstanding natural beauty. Over 1,200 different animal and plant species have been recorded and traditional methods of agriculture still prevail, taking the observer back to a lifestyle long forgotten in most of Europe.

Competition format

The official language of the competition is English. No design is required at the first stage — rather designers will need to study the Search Statement (available to download from the competition website) and submit their team composition, approach to the project, relevant experience and pre-qualification questionnaire through a digital form on the website.

The competition requires integrated multidisciplinary design teams comprising as a minimum: **architect (and lead designer), landscape architect, masterplanner, exhibition and interpretation designer, archaeologist, engineering disciplines including sustainability, cost consultant and a wayfinding consultant.**

At the second stage four teams will be shortlisted, and these will receive an honorarium of USD \$10,000 for their design work when the competition concludes with the selection of the winner.



The competition jury includes **Elva Margariti**, Minister of Culture, Albania; **Martin Mata**, Co-CEO, Albanian-American Development Foundation; **Aleksandër Sarapuli**, Co-CEO, Albanian-American Development Foundation; **Róisín Heneghan**, Co-Founder and Director, Heneghan Peng Architects; **Mónica Luengo**, Founder, ATP Architecture, Territory and Landscape; **Suzanne Ogge**, Director of Heritage and international Projects, studioMilou; and **Emily Freeman-Attwood**, Chair of the Butrint Foundation. Further jury members are expected to be announced during the competition; these will be advertised on the competition website. The jury will be advised by the Competition Director, **Malcolm Reading**.

After the design is selected, the winning team, if not licensed in Albania, will be expected to partner with an Albanian team to help deliver the project.

The deadline for first stage responses is: 14:00 GMT +1 Monday 24 October 2022.

The competition's second stage will start in autumn 2022; the winner announcement is expected in spring 2023.

COMPETITION MEDIA ENQUIRIES

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IMAGES

Images can be downloaded here:

dropbox.com/sh/nvcldjotvgm2hpg/AAB5Pj1awZx5it6efqyrr1voa?dl=0



NOTES TO EDITORS

***Ramsar site** — wetlands of international importance designated under the Ramsar Convention.

Ministry of Culture

Albania's Ministry of Culture is responsible for the implementation of government art, culture and cultural heritage policies. A network of 28 national and regional institutions under the Ministry implements and supports projects, programs and activities related to preservation, restoration, management, valorization and promotion of culture and cultural heritage in Albania.

kultura.gov.al

Butrint Management Foundation

The Butrint Management Foundation (BMF) was established by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Albania and the Albanian American Development Foundation (AADF), for the purpose of administration, preservation, and protection of the Butrint cultural heritage areas. Its mission is to ensure public access and services and to promote study and research activities.

This mission will be accomplished by managing and developing the Cultural Property in the best possible way, ensuring the necessary financial means and specialized staff for its preservation and development for the entire duration of the indirect administration of BMF.

The Foundation's Board is composed of five members and is chaired by the Ministry of Culture.

Butrint National Park Integrated Management Plan (2020-2030)

On July 22, 2020, the Albanian Government approved the Butrint National Park Integrated Management Plan (2020-2030). The Plan was drafted in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Tourism and Environment (as co-proposers) and other line Ministries, alongside partner institutions such as the National Agency of Protected Areas (NAPA, or AdZM), National Institute of Cultural Heritage, Institute of Archaeology, University of Tirana, AdZM Vlorë, Sarandë Port, tourist agencies and guides, local self-government institutions and representatives of the local community.



Through the Integrated Management Plan, Butrint National Park will be recognized as a global leader in the sustainable management of mixed cultural and natural sites, becoming the hub of a regional tourism offering, providing a unique visitor experience, and involving local communities and national institutions to serve as a model for other national parks and cultural heritage sites in Albania.

The first of its kind, the Plan supports the cultural heritage and conservation development strategies of the Albanian Government. The plan is in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 and the recommendations of the World Heritage Committee Decisions and the advisory bodies of the World Heritage Center/UNESCO.

In the long term, this document aims to define a new approach to heritage sites in the country, addressing issues related to decision making between local and national government bodies, sustainable development, cultural tourism growth, management capacity building and a local community focused approach.

Malcolm Reading Consultants

Malcolm Reading Consultants (MRC) is a strategic consultancy that helps clients to imagine and define contemporary environments, both built and natural. MRC is the leading specialist in devising and managing design competitions internationally. MRC believes in the power of design to create new perceptions and act as an inspiration.

MRC has run over 150 design competitions in settings including Antarctica and Australia; London and Washington, D.C.; Oxford and Cambridge, and Houston and Riyadh, for extraordinary and emblematic projects representing over \$12 billion of construction value. Uniquely, our team provides a total service encompassing the project vision; search; organization; administration; and assessment.

Recent work includes competitive selection for the National Gallery (London); Illuminated River Foundation (London), Science Island (Lithuania), Houston Endowment (USA), New College (Oxford), St Catharine's College (Cambridge) and the Royal College of Art (London).

malcolmreading.com

This competition is generously financed by the Albanian-American Development Foundation (AADF). For more on AADF's projects, please visit: aadf.org.