



ICOMOS - CAR  
International Scientific  
Committee on Rock Art

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International Council on  
Monuments and Sites

8<sup>th</sup> February 2024

Dear Minister Sande,

I write on behalf of the International Scientific Committee on Rock Art to call upon you to instigate an immediate review of your Ministry's decision to allow a rock quarry and a shipping quay to be built, in the immediate vicinity of one of the most significant rock art sites in Europe: Vingen.

As you are aware, the Aksla quarry and Inste Bårdvikneset quay developments have been opposed by the National Antiquities Office of Norway. We too, strongly oppose these developments. The approval of these developments by your Ministry is an extraordinarily bad decision. It creates unacceptable direct risks to one of the world's greatest rock art sites and it will forever damage the viewshed and natural environs of this site. I write to express, in the strongest possible terms, the sadness of the international scientific community at this decision and implore you to reconsider.

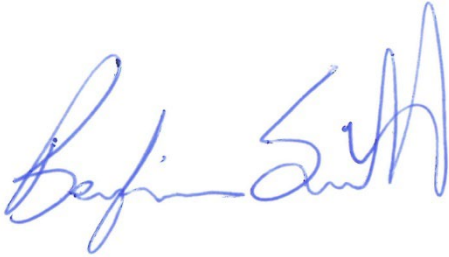
I'm sure that you will recall the important precedent of the rock art site of Foz Côa, in Portugal. There, a site of comparable significance to Vingen was also threatened by development, in that case a dam. The international outcry was similar to that which you will face for this decision at Vingen. In Portugal, the sitting government lost the national election because of the Foz Côa issue. After the election, the new government reversed the development decision and Foz Côa is now, thankfully, a treasured and protected UNESCO World Heritage Site, as Vingen should be.

Vigen is one of the largest and best-preserved rock art sites in Northern Europe. Its cultural significance is global, and there is no doubt that it merits inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage List. What sets Vingen apart from almost all other European rock art sites is that it sits in a pristine natural setting almost unchanged since the art was made many thousands of years ago. It is this setting that is directly threatened by your decision. The noise contamination, the light contamination, the dust contamination, the visual scarring of the landscape, will all change Vingen forever.

There are many more suitable locations for a quarry of this kind. This is not an either/or between priceless ancient heritage and a quarry. You can have both, just not in the same area.

Please reconsider this development approval. Vingen, and its surroundings should be protected in perpetuity for the benefit of all humanity.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Benjamin Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Benjamin" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Smith".

Professor Benjamin Smith

President, ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Rock Art