

SITES OF MERIT IN ICELAND - VARDÁ

Mission for Ministry of Industries and Innovation, Department of Tourism

Volume I

Mission Final Report

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In cooperation with



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Ministry of Industries and Innovation for the trust they have placed in us throughout the mission.

*We would like to thank all the participants in the workshop that took us to Jokulsarlon, Gullfoss, Geysir and Thingvellir,
for their welcome, their availability and the enthusiasm they showed.*

The exchanges between us were passionate and exciting and particularly warm on a human level.

There are missions that are remembered for a long time. This mission in Iceland is certainly one of them.

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Note 1: In Volume 1, numbers in brackets refer to Volume 2 slides.

Note 2: In this document, "Sites of Merit" and "Varda" are used interchangeably.

Note 3: All drawings, maps and LIS are by Alain Freytet.

CONTEXT, OBJECTIVES AND PROGRAM OF THE MISSION

Background

The purpose of the mission was to contribute to the Sites of Merit Project launched by the Ministry of Industries and Innovation, as part of the tourism vision for Iceland to 2030.

This vision aims to put the rapidly growing tourism sector on a sustainable development path:

"Profitable and competitive tourism industry in harmony with the country and its people, with tourism that enhances quality of life and increases prosperity in Iceland, and tourism that is known for sustainable development, quality and a unique visitor experience".

(Source: Icelandic Tourism 2030 "Leading in sustainable development").

The Sites of Merit Project is to define a new approach to the development, management, enhancement and marketing of sites in Iceland.

The aim is to test this new approach on a few sites, before rolling it out to other sites. The idea is to create a Network of "Sites of Merit in Iceland" that meets common criteria and demonstrates Icelandic excellence in sustainable development, integration of global climate issues, responsible resource management, and the ability to provide visitors with a memorable experience in unspoiled nature and landscapes that is unparalleled in the world.

Reminder of the objectives of the mission

This mission aimed to assist the Icelandic authorities in the development of this new approach to sites and in the prefiguration of the future network of "Sites of Merit in Iceland".

The Icelandic authorities wished to draw on the experience of the Grands Sites de France Network (RGSF).

The RGSF brings together sites with a remarkable landscape, a powerful attraction, and which experience strong tourist pressure. These sites have been working for 30 years to provide a concrete response to the challenges posed by the development of sustainable and responsible tourism (Slow Tourism) in fragile and protected areas in France. Today, they are a reference in this field. The RGSF has developed proven and recognised principles of action, tools and working methods.

The mission consisted of :

- to share the French experience and all the achievements of this approach: provision of the Icelandic authorities with an English version of the key documents, presentation and exchanges during multiple video meetings.
- to transmit the approach and the particular working method of the Grands Sites de France, by organising a field workshop on test sites in Iceland
- to assist the Ministry of Industries and Innovation in setting up the Sites of Merit approach.

Course of the mission

The Covid health crisis has largely disrupted the mission's agenda, which was originally planned to take place from May to November 2020, in three successive phases:

- phase 1: exchange on the RGSF experience, provision of documents, preparation of a field mission
- (see annex 2) - phase 2: field mission to 3 sites (eventually increased to 4 sites): Jokulsarlon, Gullfoss, Geysir and Thingvellir
- phase 3: synthesis of the mission and recommendations for the launch of the Sites of Merit project.

The mission actually started in spring 2020, but the field workshop could only take place in September 2021, thus at the end of the mission, after a long phase of maturation and multiple meetings (nearly 20 video meetings during the period).

The rational sequence of the three phases did not therefore follow this logical pattern. Some stages that should have taken place on the basis of the field workshop were anticipated. These include:

- the setting up of the joint working group involving the MII and the Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources, following our recommendations
- the revision of the general document drawn up by the MII, presenting the Sites of Merit policy, which was informed by our many exchanges
- the choices made in terms of communication: Sites of Merit concept and graphic creation for the brand (Varda), which drew on the experience of the RGSF
- the production of a video presenting the example of the Grand Site de France Caps d'Erquy-Fréhel, presented as an introduction to all the participants of the September 2021 workshop in Iceland.

PROPOSAL FOR AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH

Natural & Cultural Sites and Sustainable Development

- Iceland's Sites of Merit label, like that of the GSF, refers to the principles of sustainable development. How do we address this issue in exceptional sites?
- There are many environmental and sustainability standards for tourism services recognised around the world (defined by UNWTO, UNEP...). These criteria may be useful for hotels, restaurants, tourist information centres, transport, but they are not suitable for exceptional, unique places with high natural and cultural value. Staying with these environmental engineering criteria, and adding up the scores to see if the required label scores have been achieved, does not put the thinking at the right level. There is a risk of adding up developments and services that weigh heavily on the preservation of these rare sites.
- Recommendation:
 - That the Sites of Merit label is not based on a ready-made grid of objective criteria, such as good environmental practices (waste sorting, electrical outlets for cars, etc.) or tourism (high-level services, first-class visitor centres, local participation, etc.).
 - That a holistic approach be adopted, putting at the heart of the label the long-term preservation of their tangible and intangible values with reference to the notion of "spirit of place", the basis of a unique experience for visitors.

The commitments of the Sites of Merit Policy: High degree in nature protection & visitors' experience

- What makes Iceland different is the power of nature, its grandeur and beauty, the basis of the unique tourism experience. The challenge is to offer this experience in a world where tourism is growing strongly and risks trivialising places. The issues of sustainability and climate change can help to find appropriate responses. This double requirement, preservation of sites and sustainable tourism, must be the basis of the Sites of Merit of Iceland label.
- The priority given to the values of places, to the beauty of sites, to the notion of "spirit of place" requires another approach to intervention, allowing these concepts to be translated concretely into the way sites are developed, managed and distinguished by a label.
- This vision has been taken up in the updated version of the document *Sites of Merit Policy Document, reviewed in 2021*:
 - *"to continue on high level of nature conservation ..." to also create a platform for a new comprehensive approach, which focuses more on the value of the visitor's experience, the spirit of the sites and connections between destinations".*
 - *"an integral approach to destination management (...). The visitor's experience is mostly based on the natural and cultural values of the destination. It is therefore very important to work in a coordinated manner to enhance environmental and cultural qualities, on one hand, and the reception of guests, on the other.*
 - *"an integral approach (...) requires close co-operation and consultation between the various tourism and environmental authorities, as well as other relevant bodies."*
 - *"their main attraction is their natural phenomena and/or cultural heritage monuments that form a unique landscape".*
 - *"the environment of the site shall be exemplary. (...) The preservation and interpretation of the site's natural and cultural heritage shall be outstanding and visitors' experience of these elements shall live up to or exceed their expectations".*
 - *"the location and design of infrastructure can be part of the experience, such as access to the site and the path from the car park to the attraction". The location and design of the car park shall not detract from the experience of the site (...)*
 - *"education and the provision of information shall be exemplary"*
 - *"site developments promote a richer experience, longer stays"*

TESTING THE "GRANDS SITES DE FRANCE" APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY IN ICELAND: LEARNINGS FROM THE WORKSHOP ON 4 TEST-SITES

A method based on the recognition and experience of the values of the site

The GSF method starting from the values of the place (natural, landscape, cultural, symbolic):

- as recognised: the OUV for Unesco Sites, or the outstanding values that justified the protection of the sites at a national level.
- and as experienced by the visitor who discovers the site, by putting oneself in his/her place: How does the visitor arrive to the site and move around? How can the qualities of the site and the spirit of place be put back at the centre of presentation and development projects? What proposals can be made to make the visitor's experience of the site exceptional, etc.? (58-61, 66-67, 77-78, 82, 84-86, 89-91)

The key points of the method

Always start from collective field visits which associate persons/institutions in charge of environmental preservation AND persons/institutions in charge of sustainable tourism. (48-49)

Walk around the site, asking participants to put themselves in the shoes of a visitor discovering the site with the prior idea that it is a precious site, so unique that they sometimes come from far away to visit it.

These reconnaissance sessions lasted one day at Jokulsarlon, half a day for the other three sites, which is far too little. On the GSF, these workshops last at least 3 days on each site.

Take the time to express on paper (in text, poetry, or drawing) the experience made on the site. Two questions were asked to the group: *What, for you, makes the power and beauty of the site of Jokulsarlon? How do you dream Jokulsarlon to be in the future?*

The participant chooses whether or not to sign his or her text, this is not an obligation. Then these texts are pooled, each participant reading not his or her own text, but someone else's text. (50-52)

The interest of the exercise

The reading of the texts allowed us here (as it does every time we do these workshops in France!) to become aware of the great convergence of points of view. Before being people on a mission, with responsibilities or particular interests, who are asked to solve problems, to find technical solutions (car parks in good condition, a large number of clean toilets, a well-maintained site...), we are sensitive beings.

What moves us in a site, what we value, is what we want to share with visitors.

This collective work gives weight to the vision, reinforces the partners in the project they are going to undertake on a site.

Note the value of the manual drawing technique, carried out in the field. It has a special power of expression (explanation, consensus building, bringing solutions) (See the whole Volume 2 & 135)

Translating these elements into action - The Landscape Intention Scheme (LIS)

These sensitive elements, the strength of a site that we have highlighted together, is what must and can become the basis of the project. For example, after the collective work we were able to identify 5 strong points which will guide the project at Jokulsarlon (94), and 4 in Gullfoss. (148)

These strong points are translated into an essential tool for the project on a remarkable site: the Landscape Intention Scheme (LIS). (99-105, 149-150,, 174-176)

The LIS graphically translates the major options for a site. It is composed of:

- a plan of the spatial organisation of the site (access, location of parking lots and equipment, site house, modes of transport and paths, etc.), with an appropriate legend
- indications on the major intentions to be respected
- drawings of particular elements of the project.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRANSLATING THE SITES OF MERIT COMMITMENTS TO EACH SITE

The vision, the principles for action on the sites (1)

- What makes a visit to a site a unique and memorable experience is the uniqueness of the site itself, much more than an accumulation of services and furnishings, no matter how good and efficient they may be, that the visitor can find there.
- Any project for a site must first of all aim to reveal the exceptional values of the site and its own identity, its strength and its extraordinary beauty. Any project for design, work or day-to-day management must serve the site and its natural and cultural values.
- Revealing the exceptional values of a site means giving the public the keys:
 - to know and understand the site in its different components (historical, geomorphological, ecological, cultural, etc.)
 - but also, and above all, to experience it with all their senses, which involves physical and sensory immersion, through an encounter with the natural elements. Discovery by foot, through the rhythm of walking, direct contact with the natural ground and confrontation with the elements, is the best vector for this.

The vision, the principles for action on the sites (2)

- The development of a site must give priority to sobriety and discretion. The facilities must be discreet so as not to blur the perception of the site. A good design is one that is least noticeable once it has been built and that provides a solution to the needs of site protection and public safety and amenity with the minimum of impact. LESS IS MORE. LESS standardisation and banalization is MORE experience. (113-117)
- You can't adapt a site to demand ad infinitum, because you lose the soul of the place. Even private actors, as at Gullfoss for example, express the idea that the growth in visitor numbers cannot be indefinite. We have to resist the urge to create more and more infrastructure, parking lots for example. And even when all the cars are electric! (54-55)
- The solution is certainly not simple, and also depends on measures to be taken at national level, for example:
 - thinking about reservations for access to the most popular and sometimes saturated sites
 - work on coordination between complementary sites, allowing visitors to be sent to other less busy sites
 - rethink the notion of a "green pass", which would make it possible to finance the preservation and management of the sites, as well as to avoid the development in each site of systems for paying for services/access to the sites, with the facilities that this entails and the impact that it has on the image of the sites.

The Sites of Merit policy could be an opportunity to resume the debate on these delicate subjects and to experiment with new approaches.

The working method at each Site of Merit (1)

- Establish a Landscape Intention Scheme (LIS) for each site, as the workshop outlined for Jokulsarlon (100-108) and Gullfoss (148-150).
- To establish a LIS, give priority to fieldwork on the site, or rather with the site. Knowing how to listen to what the site has to tell us and having confidence in the power of what the site can express and give us to experience. This work takes time, you have to go to the site several times, at different seasons, at different times
- This work must be done by several people, with the site's partners: first and foremost, those responsible for its preservation and management (EA, National Park, etc.), the elected representatives, i.e. those who are responsible for preserving these sites (which also have national parks, nature reserves, UNESCO properties, etc.), experts. And, depending on the situation, private owners and economic actors present on the site.
- These approaches can be inspired by the example of the workshop at Jokulsarlon: go through the site together, express what you feel, what you dream of for the site and then share the experience that each person has had of the site.

The working method at each Site of Merit (2)

- This collective work by the stakeholders must lead to the expression of a vision for the site, the basis of the Landscape Intention Scheme. This vision must be summarised in a few key points (86,89) which make it understandable to all the players who will be involved: the decision-makers, those who will give the authorisations, the management team, the designers and companies who will be involved in the work, and those who will be responsible for communication and promotion of the site. Each time a decision is taken, over the years, the stakeholders can ask themselves: is what we are going to do in line with what we have decided together? (see Jokulsarlon, Gullfoss)
- On this basis, the stakeholders can guide the work of the designers and companies who will work on the development of the site. It is up to them to convey to the companies the spirit in which they want them to work.

Site development (1)

- The spirit of modesty in the way of planning must be transmitted to the landscape designers and contractors with whom the managers work on the sites. And to stand firm in the face of the sometimes overly impactful proposals that they propose and may seek to impose. Do not look for "star architects" who want to leave their creative mark on the sites.
- It is now accepted in many countries, including Iceland, that parking lots and reception facilities should be set back from the main views of the site and that co-visibility between the facilities and the site should be avoided.
- When you want to give priority to discovering a remarkable site on foot, you have to think carefully about the distances and times of travel within the site. The distance between the parking area and the interesting viewpoints must be reasonable. As an indication, a beautiful and interesting route of 800 metres is feasible for all visitors (except for disabled people, of course, for whom a shuttle bus drop-off can be proposed, if the topography of the site allows it). If the setback is too great, it will be necessary to provide shuttles for the majority of the public, and secondary facilities on the visit circuits (shuttle stops, refuges, toilets, etc.). This is contrary to the original intention and, moreover, it ruins the intention to reduce the landscape impact of the facilities.
- It is always interesting to propose different alternatives (short loops, longer loops of e.g. 2, 4 or 5 hours).

Site development (2)

- Not over-developing a site is often cheaper than trying to "do too much". Not designing is also a project. Using materials or furniture from a catalogue is often very commonplace. Ordering specific furniture for a site from designers is often costly and poses major replacement problems in the event of wear and tear.
- Use the materials present on the site (stone in particular), rely on local know-how and the work of craftsmen. Less investment in concrete or wood coming from afar means a reduced carbon footprint and an improvement in the ecological balance of the site.
- But this requires daily attention to the site, to its maintenance and management, to the reception of visitors. And it is necessary to ensure that the management teams at the sites, parks or reserves are sufficient in number. This requires investment in qualified human resources.
- Interpretation aids: the balance between knowledge and sensory experience is delicate to find. The elements of knowledge should not be an obstacle to direct physical and psychological experience. It is better to group the elements of interpretation together rather than scatter them around the site.
- The question of adapting sites to disability is a delicate one. There is a social demand for accessibility for all. But how far should sites be adapted? More than the physical development of sites, which is often very impactful, we need to provide answers in terms of service (the provision of all-terrain chairs and escorts).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATIONAL POLICY STEERING

Steering and governance at national level

Since the approach must closely associate the preservation of natural sites and the reception of tourists, the partnership between the two ministries, that of tourism and that of the environment, is imperative.

A very important step has been taken with the creation of the Sites of Merit working group at national level, which associates the two ministries (and their agencies or sub-structures), thus following our recommendations.

This partnership must be maintained and consolidated in the future, and become a Steering Committee, responsible for technically steering the process and supporting the sites.

When the foundations of the approach have matured, it would be good to envisage that, in support of the administrative body, not only ministries, but also personalities expressing these different sensitivities should be associated with the reflection (for example, writers, personalities from the human and social sciences, artists, etc.), who would make up the National Labelling Body, which would give an opinion to the Minister who labels.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATIONAL POLICY STEERING

Position of the 4 test sites in relation to the Sites of Merit commitments

One of the difficulties of launching a new label is often how much time it takes to achieve the first labels. When is a site worthy of being labelled?

It is clear that restoring a site takes time (consultation, studies, search for funding, implementation, etc.), especially for the most popular sites that have been damaged by over-tourism, or sites that have been developed for a long time, at a time that was less concerned with sustainable development issues.

The four test sites that have been chosen are at different stages in this respect.

At the end of the September workshop, it seems to us that a site like Thingvellir is the closest to the Sites of Merit spirit and could be labelled. But Thingvellir is a very particular site in Iceland, it has the means that its status confers and has undertaken very important work. One should not give the impression that to be a Site of Merit site one must necessarily have such infrastructures, however successful they may be! Being a Site of Merit does not mean being a site with lots of facilities and spectacular things.

The Gullfoss site has the advantage of being located in an area with a very high quality landscape and which has been well protected up to now. The current developments are qualitative and if they are continued in the spirit and following the recommendations of the workshop, the site will approach the notion of Site of Merit; the resumption of parking, the entrance to the site around the shops and the restaurant, nevertheless remain important issues which directly involve the owner (see below).

The Geysir site, at the end of the current project, revised according to the recommendations of the workshop, can approach the notion. The road that runs alongside the site is still very impactful, and its removal will not be planned in the short term.

As for the Jokulsarlon site, there is still a long way to go before the requalification project it deserves is implemented.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATIONAL POLICY STEERING

The labelling process

The Sites of Merit labelling process must be motivating for project leaders so as not to discourage initiatives with too distant a perspective. However, it must also be consistent with the stated ambition, at the risk of being considered as greenwashing, which would very quickly devalue it.

A balance must therefore be sought between requirements and realism, both in the interest of the sites and the label itself.

This is why we recommend adopting a progressive and pragmatic approach. The Varda label should not promise perfection for the sites it distinguishes. This would be both critical and unrealistic, as perfection does not exist. The label should not be over-promised, promising more than it can deliver.

The Varda label should not so much judge the state of a site at a given moment, but rather a process based on the commitments made by all those who have had the power to act on the site: a commitment to values and objectives and a commitment to carry out the concrete actions that will be carried out, step by step. And being able to follow up and validate the proper implementation of the actions.

This process requires a great deal of education, both for the public and for the project leaders. It assumes that the vision for the future of a site committing to the process is clear and consensual, translated into a Landscape Intention Scheme, associated with a concrete roadmap and an agenda.

It is crucial to be able to explain to the general public what Sites of Merit means, the commitment

At the level of each site, to have a declaration of commitment of the partners and the graphic document: this is where we want to go, this is what we want them to become, this is our philosophy, this is the effort we are all making. And set milestones.

At a global (national) level: write down the story for the general public what Varda is, beyond an administrative policy note.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATIONAL POLICY STEERING

What types of sites should be involved in the Site of Merit Policy ?

The Policy document stipulates that the commitment to the Sites of Merit approach must be voluntary on the part of the stakeholders of a site.

The first four test sites are highly visible and very popular sites. They have been developed for a long time for the three Golden Circle sites, Jokulsarlon being much less developed.

We know that it is always more difficult to develop sites that are already very well developed for mass tourism, than to approach sites that are not yet very or moderately developed, where much remains to be done.

However, our stops at Seljalandsfoss and Skogafoss showed us that projects to relocate parking and tourist facilities are also being prepared here.

These "second-tier" sites in terms of their popularity or number of visitors would also like to be supported in their projects, so that they do not reproduce unsustainable patterns or carry out highly impactful developments.

They would benefit from being inspired by the Varda vision and method, in order to have a relevant Landscape Intention Scheme that respects the values worked on during the workshop.

These sites, which are more modest in terms of their reputation and number of visitors, could become part of the Site of Merit dynamic. It would be of great benefit to them and would undoubtedly make a real difference to be labelled Varda.

Given the lesser difficulty of redeveloping these less frequented sites, a label could be envisaged within 2 or 3 years. In return, they would be good concrete examples of what it means to be a "Site of Merit" site and would bring visibility to the label.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATIONAL POLICY STEERING

Involvement of private partners and private owners of the sites

In most of the Icelandic sites, private economic actors play an important role: they own all or part of the land, they operate car parks, amenities, souvenir shops, snack bars or restaurants and sometimes even hotels.

The test sites were chosen, amongst other things, because they are largely publicly owned, sometimes for a short time (as in Gullfoss) and the state therefore has more capacity to intervene than in fully private sites.

It is important that private actors are involved in the labelling process. It is important to ensure that they know, understand and share the meaning of the label, and that they are involved in the process, alongside the public players (local authorities, the State, etc.). They must also share the vision for their site, contribute to the efforts made on the site and commit themselves to the actions that are within their competence.

In Gullfoss, the owner owns the car park and the full reception area, the upgrading of which is an important issue for the project. A system of technical and even financial support for private actors who commit to carrying out work in accordance with the LIS should be studied. Similarly, they should commit to environmental improvements in their activities: choice of eco-responsible products in the shops, use of ecological crockery, short supply chains, etc.

The question remains for entirely private sites, where the public authorities have less leverage. Support for the Site of Merit project should nevertheless be sought on these sites. This will perhaps happen at a later stage when the added value of being a Varda site has had time to prove itself.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATIONAL POLICY STEERING

Local governance of projects

We noted that each test site has its own status and organisation, and that there is no general rule for the management of a site.

Jokulsarlon, where the local authority is well involved in a local management committee alongside representatives of the Environment Agency and the National Park, seems to be a good example of cooperation and support for the Sites of Merit project. The involvement of elected representatives is a guarantee of success.

It is possible that other partners should be included, such as the DMO, which could also be included in the local committee. And the NGOs could be involved in the consultation on the projects.

Involve architects, landscapers and contractors

Architects and landscape architects have a crucial role to play in the development of sites.

We have already emphasised the major role that those commissioning the studies and works must play in asserting the Varda will and vision for the site in the face of creators who may be tempted to impose their personal brand.

The national Varda programme should include specific work to inform and raise awareness of Varda's principles, which should be done with professionals, by involving them in workshops or field visits, in Iceland or abroad. There is a "common culture" to be shared by all.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATIONAL POLICY STEERING

Create a Site Managers Network

Managing a renowned site under heavy tourist pressure in a more ecological and sustainable way is a difficult task. Often managers find themselves alone in facing doubts and difficulties.

The creation of a network of actors involved in the Sites of Merit policy will be of great help to the managers. Networking is essential. It encourages the exchange of experience, learning from the successes and failures of others, and sticking together.

It will also be a real added value for sites' managers at national level, who will always have the opinion of people in the field.

This network can be formed on a variable geometry basis, depending on the activities:

- the site managers and the small team around them who manage the site on the ground
- the elected representatives on the local committees
- the DMO
- private actors in the sites.

At the very least, it should be equipped with digital exchange tools (mailing list, intranet within the Varda website, etc.), be able to meet regularly, organise training sessions, bring up concerns from the field, be the interlocutor of national bodies, and support Sites of Merit policy.

This is an important key to the success of the Sites of Merit policy.

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this mission was, for the MII, to benefit from the experience of the Grands Sites de France Network and the view of French experts on the Icelandic reality.

The field workshop was a unique moment to see how close the visions of each other (Icelandic and French participants, but also participants from the world of tourism and those from the environment) were.

Each country has its own history and culture, its own organisation and its own way of approaching things. Of course these recommendations based on the French experience are not absolute truths, but they are based on convictions and the observation of the trials, successes and failures that the GSF have encountered over the last 20 years.

It would be inappropriate, however, to copy solutions that would be inappropriate, and the Icelandic authorities will find their own way, which will have points in common with the Grands Sites de France approach, but also differences.

A good way to deepen the reflection would be to carry out a study trip to France, in order to see in the field how the GSF label is concretely implemented and to exchange with those who, at local and national level, are involved in the deployment of the GSF label.

In conclusion, we just want to say how much we do believe in the Varda project.

Varda sites can be a "place" where the so special and intimate relationship that Icelanders have with nature, this Icelandic way of LIVING WITH nature, or LIVING IN is expressed.

Respecting nature, caring for the sites by not over-developing them: a lesson for all site managers in the world and for each visitor coming to you.

So, another way to be "inspired by Iceland", to quote the famous promotional slogan of tourism in Iceland.

ANNEXES

LIST OF DOCUMENTS TRANSMITTED TO MII

- Grand Site de France Network, ppt presentation for the Icelandic Ministry of Industries and Innovation, 2020
- Anne Vourc'h, Note to the Icelandic Ministry of Industries and Innovation - Answers to the questions asked by the Direction of Tourism, 22 April 2020
- Anne Vourc'h, Remarks on the note (draft) "Model Sites - definition" & General recommendations on the "Model Sites" programme, October 2020

Documents translated (unofficial translation) and transmitted to the Icelandic Ministry of Industry and Innovation :

- Shared values for Grands Sites de France, 2014
- Grands Sites de France and Tourism, 2014
- The Grands Sites de France Tourism Experience, Our Commitment, 2014
- Reference Document for the Grands Sites de France Policy, 2011 (extracts)
- Trademark Regulation for the Label Grands Sites de France, 2013, reviewed 2010 (extracts)
- Alain Freytet, Set of Principles for Intervention in the Protected Sites – "The Landscape, a project of common sense". Text done on the request of Conservatoire du littoral, 2013, Unofficial Translation and adaptation by Anne Vourc'h, August 2020, with the consent of Alain Freytet

Workshop for Varða/Sites of Merit 3rd – 11th September 2021

Date	Place/activities
03. Sept. Friday	Arrival in Reykjavík
	Dinner with Sites of Merit team in Reykjavík
04. Sept. Saturday	Visit to the volcano & blue lagoon
05. Sept. Sunday	Departure from Reykjavík to <u>Jökulsárlón</u> by private coach. S
	Opening message from MII & Consultants
	Stop in <u>Seljalandsfoss</u> and in <u>Skogafoss</u>
	<u>Gamla fiósið</u> restaurant/lunch & short stop at <u>Kirkjubæjarklaustur</u>
	<u>Jökulsárlón</u> /explore/ presentation on site by VPN
	Opening session in <u>FossHotel Jökulsárlón</u> / presentation – video about Grand Sites de France
06. Sept. Monday	<u>Jökulsárlón</u> /workshop outside
	<u>Fjallsárlón</u> - Frost Restaurant/lunch
	Workshop cont. outside
	Workshop in meeting room – sharing values and experience of the site
07. Sept. Tuesday	<u>Jökulsárlón</u> /workshop - outside/inside
	Boat tour on lagoon
	Departure to <u>Gullfoss</u> , short visit of <u>Halldórskaffi</u> in Vik, Stop at <u>Friðheimar</u> (tomato farm & restaurant)
	First short visit to <u>Geysir</u>
08. Sept. Wednesday	<u>Gullfoss</u> /workshop outside & Private stakeholders talk
	<u>Geysir</u> /workshop outside & Private stakeholders talk
09. Sept. Thursday	Departure for <u>Þingvellir</u>
	Workshop outside
	<u>Þingvellir</u> meeting room - workshop for all Golden circle sites
10. Sept. Friday	Preparation for closing session in <u>Harpa</u> , Reykjavík
	Closing session of the workshop – Presentation of the recommendations to the Minister of Industry & Innovation, and of Environment
	Discussion with DMOs
11. Sept. Saturday	Departure to Paris

Participants - workshop- Varða - 5-10. September |

Jökulsárlón, 5. September	<p>Anne Vourch - Consultant Alain Freytet - Consultant Yoann Bit - Consultant María Reynisdóttir - MII Specialist Hildur Kristjánsdóttir - MII Specialist Hafsteinn Hafsteinsson - MEN Lawyer Valdimar Kristjánsson - EA Specialist Magnús Guðmundsson - VNP Manager Inga Dóra Hrólfsdóttir - EA Division Manager Steinunn Hödd Harðardóttir - VNP PM Sigurður Óskar Jónsson - VNP assistant PM Dagný Jóhannsdóttir - DMO Manager Ragnhildur Sveinbjarnardóttir - DMO PM Hugrún Harpa Reynisdóttir - Nýheimar Knowledge Centre Director Matthildur Ásmundardóttir - Höfn Mayor/Regional council Kristín Hermannsdóttir - VNP regional council/Nature Centre</p>
Jökulsárlón, 6. September	<p>Anne Vourch - Consultant Alain Freytet - Consultant Yoann Bit - Consultant María Reynisdóttir - MII Specialist Hildur Kristjánsdóttir - MII Specialist Hafsteinn Hafsteinsson - MEN Lawyer Valdimar Kristjánsson - EA Specialist Magnús Guðmundsson - VNP Manager Einar Sæmundssen - PNP Manager Inga Dóra Hrólfsdóttir - EA Division Manager Steinunn Hödd Harðardóttir - VNP PM Sigurður Óskar Jónsson - VNP assistant PM Dagný Jóhannsdóttir - DMO Manager Ragnhildur Sveinbjarnardóttir - DMO PM Hugrún Harpa Reynisdóttir - Nýheimar Knowledge Centre Director Matthildur Ásmundardóttir - Höfn Mayor/Regional council Snævarr Guðmundsson - VNP regional council/Nature Centre</p>

Jökulsárlón, Gullfoss/Geysir 7. September	<p>Anne Vourch - Consultant Alain Freytet - Consultant Yoann Bit - Consultant María Reynisdóttir - MII Specialist Hildur Kristjánsdóttir - MII Specialist Sigrún Brynja Einarsdóttir - MII DG Dagný Arnarsdóttir - MEN Specialist Hafsteinn Hafsteinsson - MEN Lawyer Magnús Guðmundsson - VNP Manager Inga Dóra Hrólfsdóttir - EA Division Manager Steinunn Hödd Harðardóttir - VNP PM Sigurður Óskar Jónsson - VNP assistant PM Dagný Jóhannsdóttir - DMO Manager Ragnhildur Sveinbjarnardóttir - DMO PM Hugrún Harpa Reynisdóttir - Nýheimar Knowledge Centre Director Matthildur Ásmundardóttir - Höfn Mayor/Regional council Kristín Hermannsdóttir - VNP regional council/Nature Centre Valdimar Kristjánsson - EA Specialist Einar Sæmundssen - PNP Manager</p>
Gullfoss/Geysir, 8. September	<p>Anne Vourch - Consultant Alain Freytet - Consultant Yoann Bit - Consultant María Reynisdóttir - MII Specialist Hildur Kristjánsdóttir - MII Specialist Sigrún Brynja Einarsdóttir - MII DG Dagný Arnarsdóttir - MEN Specialist Hafsteinn Hafsteinsson - MEN Lawyer Magnús Guðmundsson - VNP Manager Inga Dóra Hrólfsdóttir - EA Division Manager Dagný Jóhannsdóttir - DMO Manager Ragnhildur Sveinbjarnardóttir - DMO PM Einar Sæmundssen - PNP Manager Valdimar Kristjánsson - EA Specialist</p>

Þingvellir, 9. September	<p>Anne Vourch - Consultant Alain Freytet - Consultant Yoann Bit - Consultant María Reynisdóttir - MII Specialist Hildur Kristjánsdóttir - MII Specialist Sigrún Brynja Einarsdóttir - MII DG Dagný Arnarsdóttir- MEN Specialist Hafsteinn Hafsteinsson - MEN Lawyer Valdimar Kristjánsson - EA Specialist Magnús Guðmundsson - VNP Manager Einar Sæmundssen - PNP Manager Inga Dóra Hrólfsdóttir - EA Division Manager Dagný Jóhannsdóttir - DMO Manager Ragnhildur Sveinbjarnardóttir - DMO PM Torfi Stefán Jónsson - PNP PM Jóna Kolbrún Sigurjónsdóttir - PNP PM Ásborg Arnþórsdóttir - Tourism representative Bláskógabyggð</p>
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Reykjavík, 10. September	<p>Anne Vourch - Consultant Alain Freytet - Consultant Yoann Bit - Consultant María Reynisdóttir - MII Specialist Hildur Kristjánsdóttir - MII Specialist Sigrún Brynja Einarsdóttir - MII DG Dagný Arnarsdóttir- MEN Specialist Hafsteinn Hafsteinsson - MEN Lawyer Björn Barkarsson - MEN DG Magnús Guðmundsson - VNP Manager Einar Sæmundssen - PNP Manager Valdimar Kristjánsson - EA Specialist Inga Dóra Hrólfsdóttir - EA Division Manager Dagný Jóhannsdóttir - DMO Manager Ragnhildur Sveinbjarnardóttir - DMO PM Torfi Stefán Jónsson - PNP PM Jóna Kolbrún Sigurjónsdóttir - PNP PM Ásborg Arnþórsdóttir - Tourism representative Bláskógabyggð Ásta Stefánsdóttir - Bláskógabyggð Mayor / Regional council</p>
DMOs	<p>Margrét Björk Björnsdóttir - West Arnheiður Jóhannsdóttir - North Díana Jóhannsdóttir - Westfjords Jónína Brynjólfsdóttir - East Þuríður Aradóttir Braun - Reykjanes Inga Hlín Pálsdóttir - Reykjavík Capital Area Páll Snævar Brynjarsson - West (SSV)</p>