



BLUE SHIELD International

Protecting Heritage in Crisis

Newsletter #9

23 June 2020

Welcome to the ninth newsletter from Blue Shield International!

This newsletter is sent out after each Blue Shield International Board meeting. It contains updates on what your International Board is doing, important information for National Committees, and if you send it to us, news about what other Blue Shield National Committees are doing. If there's something else you'd like to see, though, just let us know!

We hope you're all staying safe.

Please be aware that during the current crisis we may take a little longer to up-date the website and carry out our normal activities. We will continue to monitor messages but our responses may also take a little longer than normal. If you need to contact the Blue Shield as a matter of urgency please email peter.stone@ncl.ac.uk. For all normal, non-urgent queries, please [contact the Secretariat](#) as usual.

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Important Updates for National Committees

General Assembly 2020

Virtual-only meeting on Friday 28 August 2020

As you know, we had planned to hold the next General Assembly (GA) in Prague in late November 2020. Given Covid-19, the Board, in conjunction with the national committee in the Czech Republic, sponsors, and venues, had agreed to postpone this meeting to 2021. However, having discussed this proposed course of action in detail with our Dutch lawyers we now understand (despite Covid-19) that under Dutch Law we must hold a GA in 2020; we cannot

simply postpone the meeting as we had intended.

The 2020 GA can have, however, a restricted agenda and, under current emergency law in the Netherlands relating to Covid-19, can be an entirely virtual meeting. Currently, this emergency legislation lasts until 1 September 2020 and the very strong advice from the lawyers is to act quickly under this legislation, primarily as the option for a virtual-only GA may disappear after 1 September 2020. (If the option to hold a virtual GA is not extended, delaying the GA until after 1 September would put us in the legally correct, but realistically probably impossible situation, of having to hold a physical GA - which many, if not most, national committees might not be able to send a representative to).

The Board decided, at its meeting on Tuesday 16 June, to hold the 2020 GA as a **virtual-only meeting on Friday 28 August, 2020**. The restricted agenda for this will comprise only:

- o Approval of the annual reports and annual accounts
- o Approval of the strategic plan and the budget
- o The election of Board members

The documents for approval will be circulated as soon as possible. The GA can vote to postpone all other business and the Board will be recommending this course of action. As far as the Board can see at the moment, the primary business to be postponed will be the discussion of the proposed revision to the articles of association.

We realise that, as we cannot change the articles of association this year as intended, some of you will be unable to vote or stand for positions at the General Assembly, and for this we offer our wholehearted apology. National committees under construction are considered prospective members of the Blue Shield Association and are allowed to take part in meetings of the Association, however, without the right to vote.

We are still planning to hold an **Extraordinary GA** in Prague, **1-3 September 2021 with a three day training programme over 28-30 August 2021**. The Board is convinced that the ability for us all to meet over a number of days is crucial to the development of the Blue Shield.

Elections to the Board

Given the above, and on the advice of our lawyers, we must arrange elections to take place at the GA in August. Elections will be necessary for the President (Karl Habsburg has indicated that he will not stand again) and four directly elected members of the Board.

The President “Individuals wishing to be considered for election as President should be a Board member of a National Committee or a representative of one (1) of the Founding Organisations and should be proposed by at least two (2) National Committees (one (1) of which would normally be their own National Committee) or representatives of the Founding Organisations” (Articles of Association Paragraph 6.8).

“Proposals, for individuals standing for President, should be received in writing by the Secretary at least two (2) weeks before the start of a General Assembly meeting that is due to vote for a new President” (Articles of Association Paragraph 6.9).

Four directly elected members of the Board “Four (4) additional individuals who are normally members of a Board of a National Committee of the Association, or who are appointed in writing by the Board of a National Committee as its representative. Only one (1) representative of a National Committee can be a member of the Board unless the second is representing one (1) of the Founding Organisations” (Articles of Association, Paragraph 6.3). “Individuals wishing to be considered for election to the Board should be proposed by at least two (2) different National Committees (one [1] of which would normally be their own National Committee) or representatives of the Founding Organisations. Proposals should be received by the Secretary at

least two (2) weeks before the start of a General Assembly meeting” (Articles of Association Paragraph 6.6).

We will send out details concerning the process for elections as soon as possible. The Board asks for nominations to be submitted as soon as possible to enable national committees as much time as possible to scrutinise candidates’ statements, but will, of course and following the Articles of Association, allow for nominations up to two weeks before the General Assembly.

Reaccreditation of national committees

As you know, we asked all national committees to undergo a reaccreditation process this year, in advance of the General Assembly . Recognising the extraordinary circumstances many of you are operating under, and that the General Assembly is now much earlier than planned, this process will be postponed until next year’s Extraordinary General Assembly.

We will be contacting all national committees shortly to indicate whether we believe you are eligible to vote. In order to ensure all our committees are acting in accordance with the new articles of association, voted in by the association, and in line with decisions made since by the Board and by Blue Shield Members, it remains vital that the reaccreditation process is completed next year.

National Committee coffee morning

The Secretariat hosted the first informal national committee coffee morning last month on Zoom for national committees to get together, chat, and ask the Secretariat any questions. The meeting was attended by Ireland, Austria,

Korea, Georgia, Australia and Germany. Those present felt it was really positive to be able to put faces to names, and said it made them feel more like a community.

We're hoping to make this a regular event. Given time zones, the current plan is to alternate the time each month. Last month was timed for UK to Australia. This month will be timed towards America to Europe, although everyone is, of course, welcome.

The next Blue Shield coffee morning will be:

Thursday 2nd July 2020

At **4.30 pm British Summer Time.**

The zoom link will be sent later today to all committee Presidents to share amongst their committees. All Blue Shield members are welcome.

COVID-19 and Museum Reports

- ICOM have released their report into how COVID-19 has affected the museum sector:
[Museums, museum professionals and COVID-19](#)
- UNESCO have released their report into how COVID-19 has affected the museum sector:
[Museums around the world in the face of COVID-19](#)
- NEMO (Network of European Museum Organisations) have released their report:
[Survey on the impact of the COVID-19 situation on museums in Europe: Final Report](#)

All three websites have resources dedicated to supporting museums through COVID-19.

- We also highlight the ICCROM online seminar series, *Global Voices: Heritage and Pandemics*: these webinars offer an opportunity for

ICCROM's network of professional institutions and change agents to come together and share knowledge, experience and tools to help overcome this crisis. *"Together, we will reflect on how to support affected communities and ensure resilience of both tangible and intangible heritage while we return to a new "normal".* [See the list of events on their website.](#)

New CPP Manual Available

The NATO CIMIC Centre of Excellence, based in the Netherlands has released the second edition of *Cultural Property Protection makes sense. A way to improve your mission*, available [on their website.](#)

Before he retired from the BSI Secretariat, Dr Paul Fox supported CCOE in commenting on an early draft of the second edition.

Blue Shield International Activities



LETTER OF INTENT

BETWEEN SUPREME HEADQUARTERS ALLIED POWERS EUROPE AND THE BLUE SHIELD

Work of the Board

- The Board is delighted to announce that we have established and signed a Letter of Intent to foster further cooperation in Cultural Property Protection (CPP) with Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), of NATO.

Both parties will encourage cooperation activities to promote cooperation through:

- Regular dialogue and exchange of information;
- Education Training Exercises and Evaluation;
- Exchange of materials in education, research, and publications;
- Participation in public events and international conferences.

The Letter was formally signed on 15 June 2020. We look forward to holding a formal celebration of the event in person as soon as circumstances allow! Read more about SHAPE and our work with them [on our website](#).

- The Board has approved a process for requesting patronage / support from Blue Shield International, [available on our website](#).
- The Vice-President attended the UNESCO Blue Shield Platform, organised by the UNESCO 1954 Secretariat. The preliminary meeting objectives were (i) to exchange information on the impact of the COVID-

19 on the protection of cultural property in conflict areas and how it affects the current and planned programmes and projects related to the protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict, and (ii) to explore and discuss the need for and possibilities of upscaling international coordination efforts for the protection of cultural heritage in conflict zones during and after the ongoing global health crisis.

As well as UNESCO and BSI, the Platform was attended by the International Committee of the Red Cross, ICOM, ICOMOS, IFLA, ICA, International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property, and others.

- In light of the upcoming elections in August, the Board has postponed the Strategic Plan review, as this will become a matter for the new appointed Board.

Reports of Sub-committees

- **Accreditation of national committees**: We are working to support the accreditation of our new proposed national committees. Expressions of Interest about founding a committee have been received from 6 countries; Nominated Representatives have been appointed in a further 6, and we are supporting them in completing the full paperwork.
- **Communications, Website, and Social Media**: We have received funding to set up a moderated email discussion list for our national committees - watch this space! The Secretariat is currently testing the list and developing the policies for use.
- **Governance**: The Board would like to thank all those who responded to the review of the Articles of Association. As it is unlikely to be possible to change them this year, this work has been postponed for the newly-appointed Board to lead.

We expect that the Governance committee will review all the comments received, and draft new proposed Articles. These will be taken to the Board for approval in the first instance, and then recirculated to all member committees for comment. A final draft of the revisions will be prepared ready for approval by Members at the Extraordinary General Assembly next year.

- **Accreditation of training courses**: A standard for the Accreditation of Training Courses is in development.
- **Looting and Illicit Trafficking**: [Professor Patty Gerstenblith](#), of USCBS, has been elected coordinator of the Illicit Trafficking Working Group. The members are: Neil Brodie (UKBS); Joanne Farchakh-Bajjal (Blue Shield Lebanon, committee in formation); Fionnuala Rogers (UKBS); and Maria Luisa Russo (Netherlands [tentative affiliation]).

The purpose of the BSI Working Group on Trafficking of Cultural Property (WGTCP) is to

[a] form and maintain a network of experts in the international market in the illegal trafficking of cultural property and in international and national laws that would work to counter the illegal market in cultural property prior to, during, and following armed conflict; and

[b] provide text and information for a section on the BSI website that would explain the Blue Shield's interest and remit in relation to the illegal trade in cultural property and act as a pointer to other organizations' work in the field with links to websites etc.; and

[c] to respond to requests for information concerning trafficking and to comment on proposed government and other actions.

Professor Gerstenblith presented the first report of the WG to the Board, showing the mission statement and work undertaken to date.

Due to the need to hold the GA this year, the next Board meeting is mid-July, followed by another Board meeting in August. It is unknown at this point if a newsletter will be circulated following this, or following the General Assembly.

BSI Staff Activities

The Secretariat:

- has been working on supporting research into the safeguarding measures in the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property and its two Protocols.
 - is supporting NATO in preparation for possible exercises later this year.
 - is supporting preparations for the 2020 General Assembly.
 - is updating the website.
-

BSI on social media

Follow BSI on Facebook and Twitter!



News from National Committees



Conservation training at the Gori Sergi Makalatia Historical and Ethnographic Museum. (© Georgian National Committee of the Blue Shield, 2020)

- **Georgian National Committee of the Blue Shield (GNCBS)** and its invited conservation consultant volunteered to train the staff of Gori Sergi Makalatia Historical and Ethnographic Museum. Training covered proper handling, wrapping and moving techniques for their collections. Renovation works on the museum building, commissioned by the municipality, are about to start, making it urgent for the museum to secure their collections.

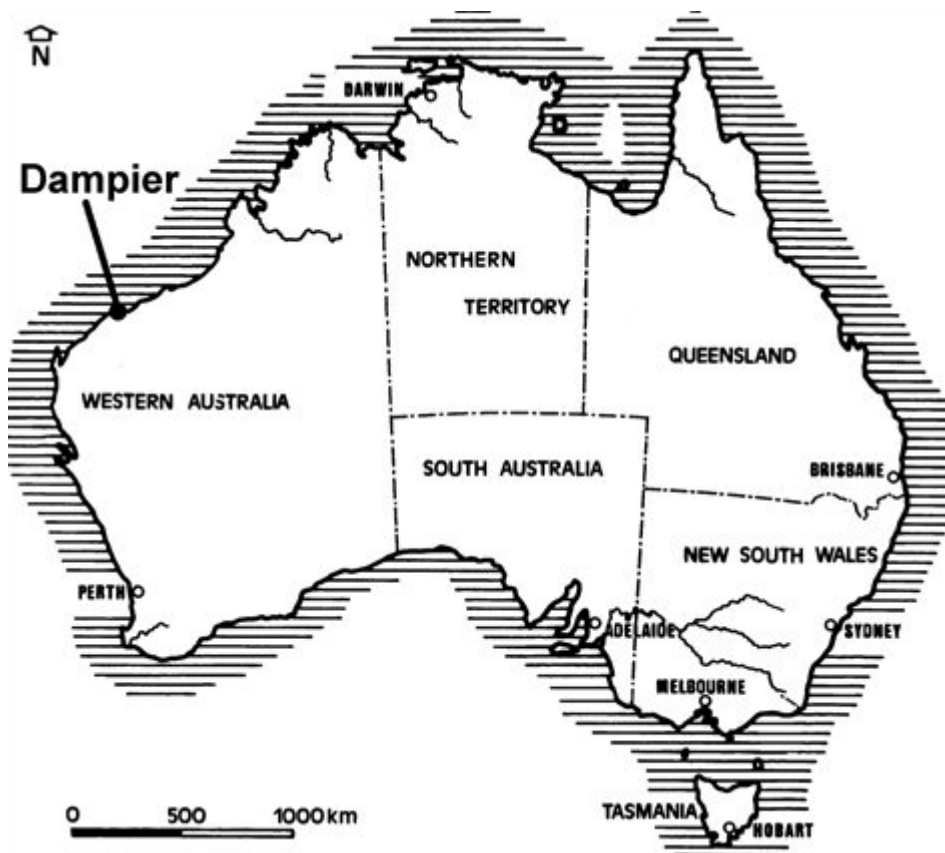
This activity was carried out in addition to the project that GNCBS is implementing in Gori Museum with the funds from [ALIPH foundation](#). Additional training is scheduled to take place within the project for staff of the 14 museums of the Shida Kartli region on June 29-1 July .

- **Blue Shield Australia** are campaigning for legal change, after a mining company, Rio Tinto, were able to legally destroy 46,000 year old sites of cultural significance, which had previously yielded multiple finds, including DNA associated with the contemporary PKKP people. The destruction provoked widespread outrage from the Puutu Kuntj Kurrama and Pinikura people, as well as from heritage professionals. There are

few archaeological Aboriginal sites known to be this old: this is one of the earliest occupied locations on the western Hamersley Plateau, but also in the Australia. Read the Blue Shield Australia Press Release [on their website](#).

The VP of BSI, Professor Stone, commented in his capacity as the UNESCO Chair of Cultural Property Protection and Peace, Newcastle University, was interviewed on [ABC News](#) about the destruction.

He called the destruction “A real tragedy” and said he was “Desperately sorry for the community”. He also commented that “Rio Tinto has an appalling track-record of damage to and destruction of indigenous sites and places globally, that they had been trying to address this (albeit in a limited way), but this event took us back to square one”.



The Dampier Archipelego. (© Robert G.Bednarik, via Blue Shield Australia)

- **Blue Shield Netherlands** are proud to have contributed to research of the National UNESCO Committee into the use of the blue shield in the Netherlands in the actual protection of cultural heritage in their country. This has resulted in an advisory report, *A weapon in peacetime: implementation of the Hague Convention and use of the blue and white shield [in Dutch]*, by the Netherlands National Commission for UNESCO, presented on Monday 22 June at the Peace Palace in The Hague. Watch the event and download the report on the [Netherlands National Commission for UNESCO website](#).
- **Blue Shield United Kingdom** have responded to two UK government consultations. The first considered the role of CPP in UK Foreign Policy, highlighting the importance of the 1954 Hague Convention. The second, supported by the BSI Illicit Trafficking Working Group, responded to a government consultation proposing to open freeports in the UK. The response highlighted key reports from international experience of countering illicit trafficking of antiquities in freeports, and the importance of stringent measures. Both submissions will become publicly available when the consultations close.

Are you interested in joining a BSI Board sub-committee?

For more information please see the [policy on our website](#). We look forward to working with you!

Disclaimer: This is an internal document for national committees - Committee Presidents are welcome to share it amongst their members, and we encourage them to subscribe themselves, but we are unable to add non-Blue Shield members to the mailing list.

GDPR Policy: Your privacy and security are of the utmost importance to us. For this reason, BSI complies with the principles of the EU General Data Protection regulation. To know more, read our [GDPR policy](#).