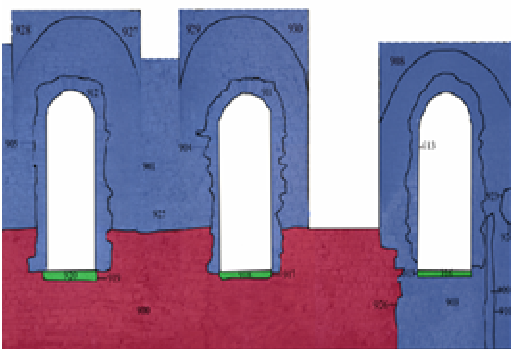


1. Museum and Renovation of the Castle interior space.

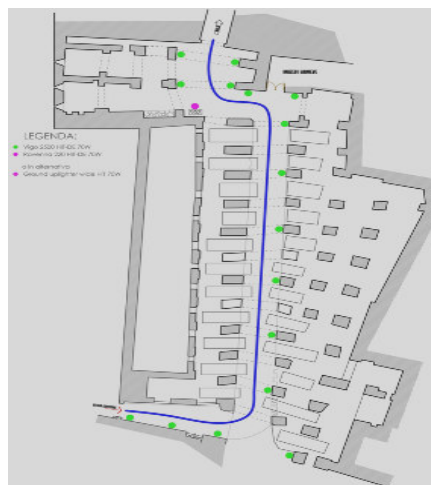


The GCDO is making good progress with the development of a design for a new museum to the history of Gjirokastra and the Drino valley in Gjirokastra Castle. The proposal has been informed by a comprehensive study undertaken by the University of Siena in the summer months on the complex building phases of the castle. The GCDO in conjunction with an Albanian

team is now working on the structural and thematic design of the new museum. It is anticipated that the proposal will be ready in February, 2008, when fund-raising for the new venture will begin. The GCDO believes that a modern museum in the castle which helps the visitor to understand the fascinating and complex history of the area will significantly advance Gjirokastra's status as a UNESCO world heritage site.

2. Renewable Energy Lighting Project

GEF Small Grants Programme has agreed to co-fund with the GCDO a project to illuminate the vaulted entrance gallery of the Gjirokastra Castle with solar photo-voltaic panels. The project is in its final design stages, with the work going out to tender. It is anticipated that the installation work will begin in February/March. This is a land-mark project and it is expected to generate interest in the solar energy generating potential of the country.



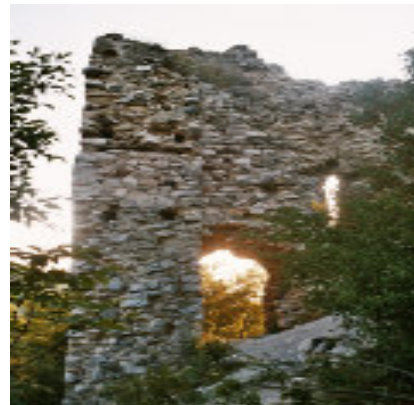
3. The implementation of hydro-insulation project of the Gjirokastra Castle Roof.



The Albanian Government has agreed to provide vital funds to refurbish and make water-tight the extensive roof area of Gjirokastra Castle: after a study undertaken by the GCDO, approved by the Scientific Council of the Institute of Monuments and by the National Council of Restoration in the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports, the Albanian Government has approved a special fund to implement the hydro-insulation project; this will be a great boost to efforts to revitalize the castle.

4. Gjirokastra's and Butrint's experience in heritage management supports heritage projects in Gjilan, Kosova.

The Executive Manager of GCDO and the Butrint National Park (BNP) Conservation Specialist, were invited by the Regional Center for Cultural Heritage of Gjilan to support a pioneering project for the conservation and revitalization of the Pogragja Castle in Gjilan. The Castle is the only one in the Region of Gjilan to still have up-standing walls. Like Gjirokastra, Gjilan is trying to have the Castle as the Center of efforts to boost cultural tourism. Thanks to the Center, there were contacts established between GCDO and BNP and the Kosova's Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports as well as Institute for Protection of Monuments of Culture in Prishtina. Joint initiatives are expected to be undertaken during 2008.



5. A new fold-out Gjirokastra map and information brochure.



The GCDO in conjunction with Raiffeissen Bank has produced a colourful new fold-out map and guide to the city which will be available to all tourists visiting in 2008. The map is crucial to the efforts of the GCDO to better interpret Gjirokastra's historic monuments and buildings.

6. Gjirokastra at the World Travel Market, London and the Paestum Archaeological Tourism Fair, Italy.



The Paestum fair held between 15 to 19 November, is a big activity in which Mediterranean countries present their heritage while trying to boost tourism (www.borsaturismo.com). It is the first time Albania participated and Gjirokastra was well represented by the GCDO. This was a collaboration between the Institute of Monuments of Culture, Albania, Net Vision Studio and GCDO.

Meanwhile thanks to the support of USAID/EDM project Gjirokastra was well represented at the World Travel Market in London in November. It is due to this type of promotion, that tourist numbers increased significantly in 2007, to nearly 10,000 visitors.



7. Tourist Information Center.



The TIC, a project developed by the GCDO, welcomed in November a five person delegation from local government and local tourist agencies in Fier. The delegation visited the TIC in the old Bazaar on a two-day fact-finding mission, with the purpose of studying the TIC model to see if it could be replicated in Fier. The delegation was impressed by the Gjirokastra office: *"This is a good model for Fier. It gives*

us practical suggestions about what visitors need. The location of Fier as a

transportation hub for visitors to Albania can play a key role in the future development of tourism in our country."

8. A seminar for Gjirokastra craftsmen and artisans.



The purpose of the seminar, held in December, which attracted twenty local craftsmen, was to explore how traditional crafts in Gjirokastra can be revitalized and improved to boost sales. Two guest speakers attended the seminar, the Vice-Director of Macedonian Artisan Trade Association, Vesna Amarovska and a craft consultant from London, Kimberly Reczek. The agenda included a round-table discussion of trends in

handicraft design, presentations and evaluations of products by individual artists and a slide show of the most successful selling craft items from Macedonia. Topics of discussion included recommendations on how to simplify complicated designs, innovative ways of using color and traditional symbols and patterns in textiles. The two consultants will provide a detailed report on how to improve craft designs and marketing in Gjirokastra.

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter.

** If you would like more information about the GCDO and our efforts to help Gjirokastra, please contact the Director, Sadi Petrela on petrelas@yahoo.com or telephone 00355 6920 78767.*