



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Stonehenge, Avebury
and Associated sites
inscribed on the World
Heritage List in 1986

AVEBURY WORLD HERITAGE SITE STEERING COMMITTEE MINUTES OF MEETING

Date: Wednesday 16 May 2012 at 10.00 a.m.
Venue: Council Chambers, Browfort, Devizes (Wiltshire Council East Hub)

Present:

Andrew Vines (Chair) – English Heritage
Amanda Chadburn – English Heritage
Sarah Simmonds – World Heritage Site Officer
Gill Swanton – North Farm, West Overton
Colin Shell – AAHRG
Andrew Williamson – Avebury Parish Council
Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger – County Archaeologist, Wiltshire Council
Henry Oliver – Director, North Wessex Downs AONB
Bill Buxton – Winterbourne Monkton Parish Council
Michael Daley – Avebury Society
Sue Rogers – Fyfield & West Overton Parish Council
Mike Wilmott - Area Development Manager, Wiltshire Council
Robin Butler – Avebury Farmers Group
Jon Taylor - Wiltshire Council
David Andrews – Visit Wiltshire
Tommy Wilkes – Placement Student Bath Spa University
Matthew Maynard (minutes) - Wiltshire Council

1. Introduction & Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr. Stuart Wheeler, Christopher Young, Jan Tomlin, and Kate Fielden Tim Davis. A short written update on the traffic strategy replaces item 6. An update will be provided in person at the next meeting. Stephanie Payne has provided a written update to cover item 11. Any queries should be addressed directly to Natural England.

Michael Daley deputised Kate Fielden for the Avebury Society. Tommy Wilkes Placement student Masters in Heritage Management at Bath Spa University

2. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

No changes required. Actions 3, 4, 5, 6 complete. Further information on actions 3, the Management Plan Review and Update, and 4, the governance review, provided under agenda items below.

Action 9: The response to the Steering Committee letter was an invitation to attend a planned DEFRA, EH and NE national workshop in January to explore enhanced HLS funding in the WHS. The workshop looked at the issue of farmers converting to HLS where arable land has previously been reverted to grass under the Countryside Stewardship (CS) Special Project. At present land already reverted would receive a less attractive existing grassland payment.

SS gave a presentation emphasising the enormously positive impact of arable reversion on the condition of the WHS and the need to maintain adequate incentive to retain farmers'

commitment to stewardship schemes and arable reversion. She emphasised the on-going damage through cultivation and the need to retain already reverted areas in grassland and to attract new farmers to HLS schemes through adequately attractive payments.

The importance of attributes of OUV that are not scheduled monuments was also emphasised. These need to be targeted in addition to the current scheduled monument focus.

The workshop clarified that at present European law will not allow enhanced payments previously available under the CS special projects. A number of suggestions were explored for arriving at attractive HLS agreements even where land has already been reverted under CSS. This might be done through adopting a suite of other options that would provide viable payments. Clear figures can also be provided by an agronomist on the financial advantages of non-cultivation.

Future arrangements are unclear as the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform will take effect in 2013. The importance of targeting WHS and providing adequate incentives was emphasised. The WHSO will continue to act as an advocate for the need to target the WHS and incentivise arable reversion.

AW suggested the Steering Committee follow up the issue by writing to the relevant minister. AV advised that at present this would be premature until the outcome of CAP reform is known in 2013.

Action 13: EH are not an eligible research body.

3. Avebury WHS Management Plan Update

SS reported on progress since the previous Steering Committee meeting. As agreed at the meeting, a small representative Project Board was set up in January. The project initiation meeting agreed the role of the board and focus groups as well as stage two of the project plan.

SS has completed the evaluation of progress over the last 6 years, an important stage in the review and update. This was presented to the project board in March for comment. Following the evaluation of progress the review of issues and objectives will begin. As part of this review the wider stakeholder workshop will take place on 24th May in Marlborough Town Hall and smaller professional focus groups will be arranged over the course of the summer.

SS gave a presentation summarising progress on objectives in the 2005 Management Plan focussing on those short to medium term objectives in the action plan prioritised for the life of the Plan.

A significant number of objectives have been achieved and there have been significant changes in management context and evidence base. A greater focus on the Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS and how to protect the WHS and its setting in order to maintain this has evolved. 90% of objectives in the action plan have been progressed. 50% of these have been completed while progress is ongoing on around 40 % of objectives. The plan has proven a useful anchor in a changing policy and management context by providing partners with solid policies upon which to base decisions, coordinate objectives and justify investment of resources. SS's presentation will be circulated with the draft minutes.

BB raised the issue of whether Marlborough Mound is likely to be included in the Avebury WHS. SS stated that another boundary review would be extremely unlikely given the recent one in 2008.

4. Avebury WHS Draft Vision

SS presented a draft vision for the Avebury WHS for comment. The vision should provide an overarching aim sitting above the more detailed objectives of the Management Plan and a simple shorthand initial test for any proposed change. The draft vision reflects the significance set out in the statement of outstanding universal value and should emphasise the obligation to protect this. The draft is based largely on the Stonehenge vision which appears in the front of the Management Plan 2009. Avebury is part of the same WHS and shares a single SOUV and therefore the vision will be similar. This draft has been edited by the project board but there will be a number of opportunities to comment on its content throughout the review process. It will be presented at the wider stakeholder workshop next week.

AC raised the question of whether there should be a single Vision for both Avebury and Stonehenge. This would need to be considered by both steering groups. If agreed any revisions and recommendations recommended by the Avebury Steering Committee could be passed to the Stonehenge group for consideration.

AV emphasised the need to establish which values were relevant to the vision and which were more suited to inclusion in the Management Plan.

SS requested that all comments should be sent to her prior to the Stakeholder Workshop on the 24th May where the draft vision will be discussed in more detail.

ACTION: All to contact SS with any suggested changes to the draft vision by the end September

5. Governance Review

Currently the report is still in draft version. Factual changes can still be made to the document. The consultants Egeria will present their recommendations to members of both the Avebury and Stonehenge steering groups on 24th July at Atrobus House in Amesbury.

Any factual changes should be passed to Beth Thomas and any other changes or concerns should be passed to AC. The recommendations included in the report will be on the agenda of the next Steering Committee Meeting and organisations should prepare their responses for that meeting.

Some concerns were discussed such as how any conflicts would be resolved and whether unanimity would be needed for decision making. AC strongly advised that if anyone had queries they should attend the presentation in July.

ACTION: All to contact AC if they require more information or have any concerns regarding the Governance Review

6. WHS Traffic and Design Strategy Project

Written update provided as Tim Davis unable to attend.

7. WHS Officer Report

SS summarised the WHSO report circulated before the meeting.

8. English Heritage Update

The Monument Condition Survey has been completed and highlights key issues in the WHS namely ploughing and badger damage. There has been general trend towards improvement in the condition of the WHS but there are still major challenges to be addressed.

A number of projects are ongoing such as review of monument scheduling, the Woodland Strategy and the provision of DDA compliant pedestrian crossings in the henge. This project should be as soon as possible in advance of the WHS Traffic Strategy led by Wiltshire Council. Concern was raised regarding the progress of the WHS Traffic Strategy which is vital to addressing several significant objectives of the Management Plan. JT agreed to communicate this concern to the Council.

There has been a decision in principle to install visitor counters to establish baseline data.

Options for the repair of West Kennet Long Barrow to address damage from water ingress are being considered by EH. Currently evaluation and feasibility studies are underway to determine the most appropriate approach to repairs. Funding is available for this financial year. EH will keep the Steering Committee updated on progress.

A WHS Walkers Map is under development for both the Stonehenge and Avebury landscapes. It is aimed at walkers with an interest in archaeology and designed to inform existing users and not to promote the WHS and thereby increase visitor numbers.

Information will be required for the UNESCO Periodic Reporting process due to be completed and sent to DCMS by 31st December. SS and BT will be in touch to request necessary data.

ACTION: All to SS if you would like a copy of the WHS Condition Survey 2010.

ACTION: JT to report back to Wiltshire Council the need to progress the WHS Traffic Strategy

9. Wiltshire Council Update

The Wiltshire Core Strategy has been submitted to the Secretary of State for examination on the 10th July 2012 with the aim of adopting in early 2013.

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan is currently under review.

The Historic Landscape Characterisation project now has an officer appointed to undertake the project over the next three years. For more information on this project contact the County Archaeology team.

A large brown tourist sign has been put up for a B&B on the A4 opposite the turn to East Kennett. AW had a concern regarding consistent signage in the WHS and queried whether there was any specific policy on signage and if so what was it and who was responsible and who would be the appropriate team to contact.

ACTION: JT to investigate which team is responsible for brown signage in the Highways service and report back to the group.

10. National Trust Update

JT was unable to attend. A written update was provided.

BB, CS & AW all raised concern at the level of attendance the National Trust has at these meetings and believe it is not satisfactory.

The need for the NT to report on the increase in visitor numbers and approach to management was also underlined. RB pointed out that the NT Avebury Manor project does not seem to be adhering to the objectives agreed to in the Management Plan relating to

sustainable visitor numbers and a non-promotional approach. AW & AC raised concerns regarding the size and content of new NT visitor signage in the car park.

ACTION: The chair to contact the NT underlining the importance of the Steering Group as a forum where partner organisations can discuss and provide effective solutions to issues affecting the WHS. A deputy needs be available to represent key organisations if their normal representative is not available to attend the WHS Steering Committee.

11. Natural England Update

SP was unable to attend. A written update was provided.

12. Report from AAHRG

CS reported that the WHS Research Framework has as far as seen over 1000 hours of volunteer time contributed to it. The outstanding level of voluntary contributions generated by the existing governance and management arrangement t should be taken into account in the governance review process. CS also informed the group about Project Nightingale being run by Richard Osgood on the Salisbury Plain Defence Estates rehabilitating Riflemen through archaeology.

13. Report from the TVM

SS discussed the ongoing work for the WHS Traffic Strategy. Data has been collected by Wiltshire Council Highways to fill gaps in the evidence base. There is clear synergy with the work of the village transport group which should be incorporated.

Avebury Parish Council and the National Trust are looking at ways of tackling illegal parking on the Ridgeway. SR queried whether Fyfield and Overton Parish Council were involved in tackling this issue as well. SS replied that it would be welcomed. They will be invited to meeting of relevant stakeholders to discuss a solution to the issue in September.

Provision of more information on the WHS and the reasons for its inscription should be provided to visitors on arrival with a panel and leaflet similar to the one created for Stonehenge. It could be produced in conjunction with the updated Management Plan.

There is an issue with increased visitor numbers and the high number of cars visiting Avebury following the BBC Avebury Manor series. RB agreed with this point and pointed out that the Management Plan stated that the WHS had reached the maximum levels for visitors at 350,000.

14. Information Exchange

AV explained that English Heritage restructuring is going ahead and is scheduled to be complete by November 2012. The objective is to be more service led and output focused with the driver being to save £1m on payroll costs.

JT updated the group on current restructuring at Wiltshire Council. The Landscape & Design team will sit under Ariane Crampton and have a strong focus on partnership working and project management.

AW suggested that it would be useful to have a Stakeholders Report from the community as a regular agenda item. SS will add it to future agendas.

AW went on to update the group on a recent business group meeting to identify issues for traders. This highlighted the need to resolve issues with SatNav software as the location of postcodes directs trucks into the High Street. Relating to this AW also highlighted a desire in the village to address issues around crossing points and general traffic issues.

The consultants working on Great Stones Way is due to give a presentation to the Avebury Parish Council to address current concerns that are yet to be resolved. The general feeling is still one of concern.

HO updated the group on the Nature Improvement Areas. The Marlborough Downs area has become an NIA and is a landowner-led initiative to incorporate natural and native species and habitats into the area. The Big Chalk NIA was not successful in becoming an NIA. Natural England is updating its national character areas. This can be coordinated with other projects such as the Historic Landscape Characterisation work in Wiltshire.

Other projects included: Scottish and Southern Electric scoping parish views on undergrounding in the area. The Our Land project; more information can be found on <http://r-land.co.uk>. The Farmland Birds Initiative is still ongoing despite low levels of uptake.

The AONB has been asked to review the Great Stones Way project by convening and chairing stakeholder meetings that will be responsible for recommending to the LAG whether Stage 2 funding should be released.

SR reported to the group that Fyfield and Overton down Parish Council have recently published a document on the landscape of the area.

TW will review the acceptable change model over the next few months and will report findings to SS to feed into AWHSMP review and update focus groups.

Discussion followed around the phasing of Higher Level Stewardship schemes in the WHS area and the potential loss of supplementary payments that are currently in place in the area. RB & JS agreed that this was a significant problem. SS told the group that it would likely be dependent upon CAP reform and that everything is currently being done at a local, regional and national level but ultimately the decision may be at a European level. The group agreed to raise this issue within their own organisations and lobby for the continuation of supplementary payments.

ACTION: Add community update to agenda for the next Steering Committee meeting.

Members of the Steering Group to raise awareness of the HLS issue within their own organisations and lobby as necessary.

15. AOB

No other business.

16. Date of Next Meeting

21st November 2012. This meeting may need to be full day event due to the number of substantial items to cover.

ACTIONS

Item No.	Action and Person Responsible
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All to contact SS with any suggested changes to the draft vision by the end September
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All to contact AC if they require more information or have any concerns regarding the Governance Review
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All to contact SS if you would like a copy of the WHS Condition Survey 2010. JT to report back to Wiltshire Council the need to progress the WHS Traffic Strategy
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> JT to investigate which team is responsible for tourism signage in Highways service and report back to the group.
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The chair to contact the NT underlining the importance of the Steering Group as a forum where partner organisations can discuss and provide effective solutions to issues affecting the WHS. A deputy needs be available to represent key organisations if their normal representative is not available to attend the WHS Steering Committee.
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SS to add community update to agenda for the next Steering Committee meeting. Members of the Steering Group to raise awareness of the HLS issue within their own organisations and lobby as necessary.

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