



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, 24th April 2013 at 10.00 a.m.
Venue: Wiltshire Heritage Museum, Devizes

Present:

Andrew Vines (Chair) – English Heritage
Christopher Young – English Heritage
Phil McMahon – English Heritage
Sarah Simmonds – World Heritage Site Officer
Gill Swanton – North Farm, West Overton
Colin Shell – AAHRG
Andrew Williamson – Avebury Parish Council
Rachel Foster – Assistant County Archaeologist, Wiltshire Council
Henry Oliver – Director, North Wessex Downs AONB
Bill Buxton – Winterbourne Monkton Parish Council
Cllr Jemima Milton – Wiltshire Council
Martin Northmore-Ball – Fyfield & West Overton Parish Council
Beth Thomas – Stonehenge WHS Officer
Ariane Crampton - Wiltshire Council
Kate Fielden – Avebury Society
Jan Tomlin – National Trust
Stephanie Payne – Natural England
David Dawson – Devizes Museum
Robin Butler – Avebury Farmers Group
Emma Glover (minutes) - Wiltshire Council

1. Introduction & Apologies

Apologies were received from Nick Snashall, Councillor Wheeler, Mike Wilmott and Melanie Pomeroy Kellinger

Welcome to Phil McMahon from English Heritage the Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Wiltshire who was attending his first steering committee meeting.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes were agreed following minor amendments. No matters arising for addition to the agenda.

All actions were complete, except: Action 6 part 2 – BT to organise, and Action 7 – AC to follow up.

3. Revised Draft Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

CY updated the Committee on progress on the Statement of OUV (SOUV) which provides the definition of why the Site is on the World Heritage List. A Statement of Significance was completed in 2009 and a draft SOUV submitted in January 2011. The SOUV covers

significance, criteria, integrity, authenticity and management and protection. Over the past two years, UNESCO has been evaluating the SOUV along with many others that were completed at the same time. In December 2012, we received minor comments back from UNESCO following evaluation by ICOMOS UK. These included minor changes such as using the word 'property' instead of 'site'. We responded at the end of January 2013. If accepted they will be formally adopted at the next World Heritage Committee in June 2013.

Necessary changes were made by the WHS coordinators and returned to ICOMOS. Nothing has been returned since, CY will check its status and if a final decision will be made in the early summer when expected.

ACTION: CY to check on the progress of the draft SOUV towards a final decision by UNESCO at this summer's World Heritage Committee

4. UNESCO Periodic Review 2013

SS circulated the draft report prior to the meeting. The Periodic Report is sent to UNESCO every six years. It has completed by the WHSO and the Stonehenge Coordinator. The report corrects and expands upon information based on the last report which was provided by UNESCO in a pre-loaded digital format that provides limited space for comments. The report covers both Stonehenge and Avebury together so the contents are therefore an amalgam of the condition in both parts of the serial site.

The submission deadline has been extended to allow for inclusion of any additional thoughts from the committee. Any comments need to reach SS by the 30th April. After this date the report will be submitted to the UK Focal Point, reviewed by ICOMOS and then forwarded to UNESCO by 31 July 2013.

JM drew attention to section 3.16, 'Assessment of current negative factors', specifically 3.8.6 'Impacts of tourism/visitor/recreation', suggesting that the trend should perhaps reflect that it is increasing rather than static. AW added that some people consider that there has been an increase in damage to the monuments in the last six years. SS will report on the latest condition survey highlights at the next steering committee meeting, for everyone to be aware of the trends in monument condition. NT annual monitoring can also provide information on this. SS will amend the report as suggested after checking the survey and wording of the questionnaire.

KF wondered if this report was an appropriate mechanism to change the name of the WHS from Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites World Heritage Site, as she considers it needs clarifying for the layman. The current name detracts from the understanding of the whole WHS as significant. CY said that English Heritage had found the name generated some confusion in the past. A name change needs to be submitted formally as a separate request. AV agreed that changing the name of the WHS would be explored at the next committee meeting.

KF raised concerns over the wording of the Core Strategy policy and suggested using the terminology that now appears in the emerging Wiltshire Council Core Strategy.

CS suggested that the following points in the report are re-visited: 3.1.1 (Housing) and that at 1.7 the web address of the new Stonehenge and Avebury WHS is added.

BB raised concern over point 4.1.3 (buffer zone around WHS); Winterbourne Monkton would fall into a 'buffer zone'; would it protect the setting of the WHS from inappropriate housing development. SS stated that setting is already considered by English Heritage and the WHSO when reviewing planning applications. HO said that he has experience that Natural

England and DEFRA are not keen on buffers. CY added that buffers have limitations and local plans should have strong policies to protect OUV and its setting from potential impacts. SS added that a setting study is proposed in the Core Strategy to assist in assessing impacts.

KF suggested that in addition to the improvements offered by the road closure and removal of existing visitor facilities the negative impacts of the new Stonehenge visitor centre should be acknowledged.

ACTION: All to contact SS with comments or suggestions for inclusion in the Periodic Report by 30th April

SS and BT to amend the Period Report as discussed

SS to update the group on visitor impacts on monuments from the last condition survey and recent monitoring at the next steering committee meeting.

SS to add the WHS name change to the agenda for the next Steering Committee

5. Governance Review

5.1 Short introductory presentation on the outcomes of the working group

The recommendations of the working group and the proposed terms of reference were circulated to members of the Committee before the meeting.

SS gave a presentation including a summary of the work completed by the Governance Review working group and an indicative diagram showing the proposed structure and the roles and relationships between the groups. The working group has met three times to go through the recommendations of the Egeria report and to answer the queries from both WHS Committees. The recommended structure has been adapted from the Egeria model and the draft terms of reference revised. SS thanked the working group for their hard work on the process.

Comments and suggestions were welcomed at the meeting. Additional comments following the meeting should reach SS by 8th May.

AW reiterated that the steering committee would remain and possibly have greater local input to the management of the Site. It would also have a role to play in identifying resources, a point stressed by AC.

HO suggested that more differentiation is needed in relation to the task of 'identifying resources' which appears to be an implied task for both the steering committee and the partnership panel. SS suggested that the terms of reference provided greater clarification. CS suggested changing the wording on the diagram for the local WHS steering committees from "Seek resources from Partnership Panel..." to "Seek resources through Partnership Panel..." .

SS clarified that the dotted line joining the two steering committees on the diagram indicates an informal relationship, with an occasional joint meeting or site visit and informal information exchange.

There is still work to be done on reviewing the membership of the two committees, the role of the steering committee chair and how an "annual forum" might best be arranged. Key funding members of the partnership panel also need to discuss and agree future funding of the coordinators and hosting arrangements.

A working group made up of members of the Avebury Archaeological and Historical Group (AAHRG) is discussing the proposal to expand their group to include Stonehenge at a meeting in May. It is likely that the group would be called 'Avebury and Stonehenge Archaeological and Historical Research Group' to reflect the genesis and development of the group. If this proposal is accepted then new terms of reference will be produced by the working group. This will meet the Egeria recommendation to have a joint "standing conference".

5.2

a) Do you agree in principle with the recommendations of the working group?

JM suggested that it may be difficult to find an unpaid independent chair due to the number of meetings the chair would have to attend. SS agreed that the partnership panel should review the work load when considering the recruitment of the independent chair. The chairs of the local steering committees will be members of the partnership panel so the attendance of the independent chair at all steering committee meetings may be unnecessary.

JM raised the point that the steering committees are very large. BT and AW explained that it was important to keep strong local buy-in at the steering committee level to maintain involvement in the decision-making. The membership should therefore not be too small.

HO commended the excellent choice of the name 'partnership panel'.

AV confirmed with all that the structure was agreed in principle.

b) Do you agree with the proposed next steps?

AC asked the committee if an additional meeting is required to discuss the issues around the appointment of the independent Chair. It was agreed that the partnership panel should take forward the work of appointing the chair.

AV confirmed with all agreement to proceed as proposed.

c) Do you have any other comments?

HO asked if there is any intention of taking the proposal to wider governing bodies of existing partners. SS confirmed that once the changes are agreed, the coordinators can present them to wider bodies for information if requested to do so.

In response to a question from RB, the working group confirmed that the steering committees will be responsible for decisions around the review and update of the management. The partnership panel will not be able to make unilateral changes.

CS raised the point that there could be issues around conflict of interests with the appointment of the three chairs; BT said that details had not yet been resolved but this would be considered.

KF was concerned that some bodies on the partnership panel could divert actions away from delivery of the management plan; BT and SS stressed that the independent chair will be required to keep the partnership panel's action appropriate to its role.

AV confirmed that all are agreed to move forward as recommended.

6. WHS Management Plan: Avebury and Stonehenge

SS previously circulated a report and proposed timeline for production of a joint management plan. SS gave a short presentation explaining the proposal to combine the Stonehenge and Avebury plans. She outlined the benefits of producing a combined plan including: delivering

a more coordinated approach to management for a serial WHS with a single SOUV as advised by UNESCO; strengthening the identity of the WHS to assist in raising awareness, understanding and support from partners, other organisations and the wider public; providing a succinct and coherent point of reference for organisations dealing with both Stonehenge and Avebury such as Wiltshire Council and the National Trust; aligning policies where appropriate and removing repetition; reflecting recently produced effective joint WHS documents: WHS Condition Survey; WHS Research Framework and WHS Woodland Strategy; providing a single document with an overarching element that would assist the WHS Partnership Panel and single coordination unit working across the WHS as proposed in the Governance Review; making the best use of limited plan making resources.

Combining the plans will mean a slowing down of the process at Avebury and accelerating the Stonehenge update. The proposed contents table should allow for local issues to be articulated while reflecting the issues and objectives common to both parts of the WHS.

SS thanked members of the WHS Management Plan Update and Review Project Board for their hard work and assistance.

All were in agreement with the proposal and it was confirmed that the Stonehenge steering committee were also happy to proceed as recommended by SS.

AV thanked SS for her hard work on the proposal and outline structure.

7. Avebury WHS Traffic Strategy: Roads, Traffic and Parking Management Issues and Objectives

SS circulated the Roads, Traffic and Parking issues and objectives prior to the meeting for discussion. Agreement of the issues and objectives will enable work to progress on the development of the WHS Traffic Strategy.

The issues and objectives are the outcome of the extensive consultation process carried out during the first stage of the Management Plan review and update process last year. At our last Steering Committee in November we reviewed these outcomes during our afternoon workshop. The comments generated from that session and the WHS Management Plan Review and Update Project Board in January have been incorporated into the issues, objectives and strategies below. Final comments were welcomed before they are agreed and used as a basis for drawing up a brief for the consultants who will be working on the WHS Traffic Strategy.

KF suggested that an objective relating to a remote visitor centre and parking might be considered. Having this as a specific aim may help improve chances of successfully applying for funding such a scheme. SS responded that this might be relevant to the visitor management section rather than the traffic and parking section. Remote parking might be considered as part of addressing parking congestion and the dominance of roads and traffic which are included as objectives in this section. She underlined that at this stage these objectives had been developed a part of the review of the Avebury WHS Management Plan and did not at present encompass Stonehenge.

HO stressed that the WHS Traffic Strategy should be a model of good practice with the potential to positively influence the response of many landscape bodies to traffic issues. SS, and AW thanked Wiltshire Council for their support and creative approach to this project. JM acknowledged the excellent work done by AW and Avebury Parish Council on an initial Community Traffic Plan. Its ideas will help to inform the Traffic Strategy.

AV and SS confirmed that the strategy can now be moved forward in the first instance through work on developing the brief as all are in agreement with the objectives.

8. WHS Officer Update

SS circulated her report prior to the meeting. Brief additional points included:

- The Stonehenge and Avebury WHS Website is nearly ready for launch. Comments and suggestions will be welcome from the Committee once the site goes live. The site will include a partnership page and with relevant links. AW asked if there was potential on the site to include a GPS linked virtual signage application to help reduce clutter. SS stated that possibilities and opportunities offered by digital for interpretation of the WHS are very great and they will be explored as part of any future interpretation plan. The possibility of such a feature may be affected by mobile phone reception. Downloading prior to arrival at the site is an option.
- The Megalith WHS Newsletter will now be rolled out to include Avebury in the second edition this summer. BT produced the first very well received newsletter for Stonehenge last year. Although news on Avebury was included the next edition will officially cover the whole WHS. SS is currently looking for contributions. If anyone would like to be included, please send an article of around 200 words to SS by the end of May. Please also provide photographs to accompany the article. SS noted that the newsletter is English Heritage funded.
- Potentially more undergrounding of cables will be undertaken at Gunsite Lane in the setting of the West Kennet Palisade Enclosures and Silbury Hill. Thank you to the NWDAONB for working with SS to identify priority areas within the WHS for undergrounding by Scottish and Southern Electricity. A meeting of SSE WHSO, EH and the Archaeology Service will take place in early May to review the feasibility of the project.
- English Heritage is producing a WHS Walkers Map which covers the entire landscape and archaeological features. Stonehenge and Avebury are on either side of the map. If anyone would like to submit feedback on this before it is produced, please do so by the end of April. The map was available at the back of the meeting.

CS suggested that the Committee should see the final draft of the WHS Woodland Strategy which is in effect produced for the WHS Steering Committees. SS confirmed that the consultant is responding to the final comments by the project board led by the NT. SS will check with the NT when the document will be finalised and discuss its presentation to the Steering Committees. The Strategy provides a wide-ranging analysis of woodland from ecological and historical perspectives as well as an analysis of its impacts on OUV. Works suggested to protect and enhance OUV will form a basis for discussion with land owners, framers and managers.

ACTION: All to send articles of around 200 words plus photographs to SS by the end of May for inclusion in Megalith

9. English Heritage update

A report was circulated prior to the meeting. The only additional note was regarding Action D3. The final burrowing animal report from Natural England has now been received by SS and BT.

KF asked if it would be possible to revisit the wooden steps constructed to reduce erosion on the henge. A different protective measure that could replace the steps should be considered. PM will take the suggestion regarding the drapes back to English Heritage.

HO confirmed that the Silbury Hill car park is managed by English Heritage.

PM updated the group on steps that EH are taking to reduce the likelihood of people climbing Silbury Hill. These included the strategic placement of scrub, new signage explaining why climbing the Hill is not allowed and contacting travel companies whose customers climb the Hill. AW offered to find a contact at the tour companies to pass on to PM.

ACTION: AW to pass Silbury Hill tour company contact details to PM

10. National Trust update

JT circulated a newsletter and report prior to the meeting. JT underlined how effective the recent partnership working with English Heritage has been.

MNB expressed an opinion that the National Trust signage in Avebury village is inappropriate and 'dumbed down' the WHS. He requested that the signage be improved or removed. JT said that the sign had been used as a model by other properties but that she would take the comments back to the National Trust.

11. Wiltshire Council update

A report was circulated. RF summarised the points from the Archaeology Service and AC the remaining points from the report. These included:

- The Core Strategy 'Examination in Public' (EiP) which begins on 7th May.
- Wiltshire Council is jointly funding the WHS Traffic Strategy with the NWDAONB with contributions from other WHS partners.

12. Natural England update

A report and appendices were tabled by SP who summarised the main points. An additional point was raised about the National Character Areas (NCAs). HO said Sarah Wright from NE could be contacted about the options group for the NCAs, and that she should be commended for her hard work on the NCA for this area.

CS expressed concern about the potential increase in thistles on Fyfield Down.

AW asked if the new agri-environment schemes under development are likely to encourage or discourage farmers from participating. SP was unsure as options are still under discussion; it is a voluntary scheme so up to the individual farmers and landowners whether they enter the schemes. However the majority of Avebury farmers are part of the current scheme having converted from the Countryside Stewardship Special Project to HLS. RB suggested that the incentives to farmers need to be increased to encourage further participation.

ACTION: SS to circulate Natural England report to Committee via email. It includes electronic link to appendices.

13. Parish Council updates

AW (Avebury Parish Council) gave the only parish update:

- There has been a significant incidence of flooding/sewage this year, lasting about 12 weeks. Other villages have also been badly affected. Discussion with Thames Water has included proposed underground modifications.
- The parish council has been very focused on the Community Traffic Plan, holding 'walk and talks' and meetings and they are going to prioritise points of importance. This will feed into the WHS Traffic Strategy

- There is a new pavement in Avebury Trusloe to improve safety on crossing between bus stops, planters on the High Street have been installed to discourage parking and there is a suggestion that the 30mph sign is extended northward on the A2361.
- A recent Department of Transport consultation did not result in a decision to allow for 40mph limits in all World Heritage Sites.
- The very large B&B sign on the A4 cannot be reduced in size as it is in a 60mph zone, which determines its size.
- A geophysical survey of the sports field is imminent.

14. Report from AAHRG

CS gave the following summary:

- The Research Framework is progressing. The Resource Assessment if complete and the agenda and strategy are under development.
- Tim Darvill's extensive geophysical survey has not revealed significant additional prehistoric evidence, but did indicate a roman villa above Silbury Hill. Further survey work will take place this year.
- The Between the Monuments project will continue this summer with excavation on the West Kennet Avenue occupation site.
- AAHRG may consider putting forward a list monuments for scheduling to EH

15. Information Exchange and AOB

DD informed the Committee of the following points:

- The museum has been awarded funding from the Wessex Museums Partnership which has helped set up the new leaflet and shop.
- The White Horses project has received a £25,000 in funding
- The Prehistoric Galleries are due to open in September this year. Tours will be given following the meeting.

HO gave the following updates regarding the AONB:

- Oliver Cripps is chairing the group which coordinates projects within the Marlborough Downs NIA including Stepping Stones and Winning Ways for Wildlife.
- The NWDAONB will be attending the Core Strategy EiP
- The Our Land scheme has received a big increase in business sign up and support
- The management plan review is continuing and HO welcomes any comments next month
- The historic landscape character assessment is complete.
- HO made everyone aware that a planning application will soon be made, for a large solar panel farm at the Science Museum airfield in Wroughton.

KF stated that she would be attending the Core Strategy EiP.

16. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on 30 October 2013, venue to be confirmed.

ACTIONS

Item No.	Action and Person Responsible
3	CY to check on the progress of the draft SOUV towards a final decision by UNESCO at this summer's World Heritage Committee.
4	All to contact SS with comments or suggestions for inclusion in the Periodic Report by 30 th April SS and BT to amend the Period Report as discussed SS to update the group on visitor impacts on monuments from the last condition survey and recent monitoring at the next steering committee meeting. SS to add the WHS name change to the agenda for the next Steering Committee
8	All to send and articles of around 200 words plus photographs to SS by the end of May for inclusion in Megalith.
9	AW to pass Silbury Hill tour company contact details to PM.
12	SS to circulate Natural England report to committee via email, to include electronic link to appendices