



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

Date: Wednesday 6th November 2013 at 10.30 AM
Venue: Wessex Room, Corn Exchange, Devizes

Present:

Andrew Vines (Chair) – English Heritage
Sarah Simmonds – World Heritage Site Officer
Gill Swanton – North Farm, West Overton
Colin Shell – AAHRG
Jan Tomlin – National Trust
Phil McMahon – English Heritage
Andrew Williamson – Avebury Parish Council
Kate Fielden – Avebury Society
Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger - Wiltshire Council
Beth Thomas – Stonehenge WHS Officer
Bill Buxton – Winterbourne Monkton Parish Council
Henry Oliver – Director, NWD AONB
Martin Northmore-Ball – Fyfield & West Overton Parish Council
David Andrews - Visit Wiltshire
Laura Gosling – Transport Planner, Wiltshire Council
Emma Glover (minutes) - Wiltshire Council

1. Introduction & Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr. Stuart Wheeler, Stephanie Payne, Robin Butler, Ariane Crampton, Christopher Young, Mike Wilmott, Georgina Clampitt-Dix, Ian Barnes and Cllr Jemima Milton.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the April Steering Committee meeting were agreed. SS referred members to Action 4 regarding visitor impact on monuments; the Wessex Archaeology WHS Condition Survey (2012) can be provided by SS on request. Cultivation remains the greatest threat to monument condition. There has been a reduction in visitor impacts

The draft minutes of the short general meeting of the Committee in July were agreed.

3. Governance Review

SS confirmed that recruitment for the independent Chair of the WHS Partnership Panel is progressing and interviews will be held on 28th November. The members of the Partnership Panel will be notified once the interview process is finalised.

The formation of ASAHRG is nearly complete. The first meeting will take place in February 2014. The terms of reference for AAHRG have been amended to incorporate the new wider group that covers research in both halves of the WHS. Membership of the ASAHRG will be by nomination only in order to maintain a workable group size.

AV updated the group on the two WHS coordinator positions; BT is to be seconded into Wiltshire Council, under English Heritage, hopefully to start from early 2014. The seconded post is likely to remain for two years.

4. Potential Name Change: Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites World Heritage Site

SS circulated a report prior to the meeting giving the background and context to the possible name change, then opened the question up to the floor.

AV suggested that the pertinent question is whether to keep the phrase “and associated sites” in the name.

MPK and JT agreed that the current name works, keeps the relevance of the wider landscape and should be kept. KF considered that a name change to Stonehenge and Avebury WHS might make people more aware that the whole area was part of the WHS and not simply the monuments and sites. HO commented that a name change could result in a reduction in the planning authority’s regard for the *entire* site and setting rather and focus it only on the main stone circles. MNB said that the current name works and so does not need to be changed. KF agreed people are becoming better informed of the extent of the whole WHS. BT confirmed that the question of changing the name of the WHS has not arisen with the Stonehenge Steering Committee.

AV concluded that no vote on a name change was necessary as the general consensus of the group was that a name change was not necessary or a priority. No formal suggestion should be put forward to the Stonehenge group.

5. Stonehenge and Avebury WHS Management Plan

SS gave a brief update to say that work is ongoing and progressing. The next meeting of the project board will be in January. The main work of drafting will take place in 2014 and the Steering Committee will be required to comment on the draft as it emerges. SS reported that BT was currently undertaking a review of the Stonehenge Management Plan following the process already completed at Avebury.

BT reported that the recent stakeholder workshop had helped to engage new stakeholders and re-enthused interest in the Plan amongst existing ones. Drop in sessions have been held with local communities. An online questionnaire is open until the end of November for any comments. Six professional focus groups will be held over the coming weeks. So far this work has identified similar challenges and aims for the next six years, many of which will overlap with the ones produced by the Avebury work; a key challenge will be to achieve the right balance between these overarching issues and local ones.

6. Avebury WHS Transport Strategy

LG circulated her report on the work on the Strategy so far. The resulting study will come to the Steering Committee for final approval. It will set the framework for any future Highways/Transport works requested in the WHS, and make bidding for funding for these works easier. Coach transport will be included in the study and taken into account.

AW stated that Avebury Parish Council has agreed to provide an additional £2000 for the Strategy to purchase additional consultancy work if required.

LG confirmed that the design and location of WHS gateway signage and also West Kennett fall within the remit of the Strategy which covers the WHS landscape and transport to it.

MPK asked if Atkins would look at removing the 15 year old boundary signs in the interim period until new signs are decided on. SS was concerned that such a hard-fought for and

valuable resource should be kept, but replaced as soon as the Strategy indicates best to replace them with.

In response to a query from GS about certain specific traffic speeds, LG confirmed that establishing appropriate speed is definitely part of the study.

7. AAHRG Report

The transition from AAHRG into ASAHRG has begun, despite some concerns within the existing group about retaining the required balance between Stonehenge and Avebury and a group of a workable size. The success of the extended group will be reviewed after 2 years. It was confirmed by CS that 'invitation only' is the best approach to the new group's membership.

Unauthorised access to Silbury Hill is still a concern although WHS partners are looking at how to address this. Engagement and education are part of the approach. The Police could also consider applying ASBOs to trespassers, an approach they use with hare coursing in the area.

A visit to the Between the Monuments excavation beside West Kennet Avenue showed some interesting discoveries. CS and GS have also undertaken an initial geomagnetic survey of ring ditches/barrows in Snail Creep field, North Farm, West Overton as part of on-going research in the Upper Kennet valley.

8. World Heritage Site Officer Update

SS circulated her report prior to the meeting. Comments and questions were invited from the group.

MPK commended the new WHS website. BT will check with the web designer for total 'number of hits' to gauge how popular the site is; it is currently advancing up the popularity ranking in search engines. SS welcomed future suggestions and feedback on the website.

1.2 HO highlighted the fact that the WHS Woodland Strategy has likely overlap with a forthcoming North Wessex Downs AONB document and questioned how the Strategy would be disseminated. SS stated that once it is finished, a decision will be made as to how best to promote engagement with the Strategy. SS and HO agreed to discuss the opportunities for pursuing promotion of both documents together.

CS raised concerns over inappropriate new planting and how the Strategy would address this. SS stated that both the Forestry Commission and Natural England are on the project board and signed up to the Strategy, and committed to helping avoid inappropriate planting in the future.

1.3.1 AW asked if the undergrounding would affect the palisade enclosures. SS reassured the group that the most appropriate methodology for the works will be discussed to ensure that there will be no adverse impact on archaeology. EH and the County Archaeologist are members of the project board overseeing the project methodology.

1.3.3 BB queried whether planning applications from outside Wiltshire not being fully considered by Wiltshire Council, in regards impact on the WHS and its setting. SS and MPK assured him that there was communication with relevant authorities. MPK works with Swindon Borough Council.

9. English Heritage update

A report was circulated with updates since April highlighted in red type.

PM pointed out that R1 is still outstanding still awaiting action from Wiltshire Council Highways department.

Further group discussion about the potential damage caused by walkers climbing Silbury Hill and possible means of preventing it; GS recommended getting Natural England involved to promote the consequences of damaging a SSSI. AW will spread the need for vigilance within the Parish and recommended that PM provide a point of contact for people to pass on any information they discover.

BT announced that the WHS Walkers Map is on sale from 2nd December and that a special discount price will be available to those attending the opening of new galleries on 25th November at the Wiltshire Museum, Devizes. All members of the Steering Committee and AAHRG are invited.

AV advised the group that Christopher Young is retiring in March 2014. DCMS is looking at how best to provide international advice to WHSs at present in part through a questionnaire sent out to partners.

ACTION: JT to send details to LG. LG to follow up Action R1 with Wiltshire Council Highways

ACTION: PM to provide contact details for information about trespass on Silbury Hill.

ACTION: SS to find out if there Jim Leary's recent publication on Marlborough Mound in the Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society may be available to the group.

10. National Trust update

The report was circulated prior to the meeting. JT observed how the partnership work appears to be very strong and working very well at the moment, as demonstrated by the overlapping reports provided at this meeting.

11. Wiltshire Council update

MPK discussed highlights from the circulated report in AC's absence.

KF commented that she was very pleased with the active uptake of CPRE feedback given during the Examination in Public of the Core Strategy. It is helped produce a strong WHS policy.

HO suggested that clarification of the extent of protection offered by existing guidance needs to be undertaken, to ensure protection of the WHS.

12. Natural England update

In SP's absence, SS brought a DEFRA consultation to the group's attention. The implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy Reform consultation has started. There will be public workshops. SS stressed how it is important for people to engage with ensuring a beneficial design for the new schemes and their implementation which remain a key means of protection within the WHS.

ACTION: SS to circulate link to the online CAP reform consultation.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/common-agricultural-policy-how-will-it-affect-you>

13. Other partner updates

Avebury Parish Council: AW brought the following issues to the group:

- The council continues to comment on relevant planning applications
- Some tree felling applications have been supported
- Red Lion signage is looking to increase the prominence of its signage. The PC has objected.
- Work on the Community Traffic Plan is ongoing, including looking at the road design at eight key points and the signage
- The PC has been involved with successful road sign de-cluttering
- The High Street is going through highways improvements. Many thanks to the National Trust for their sarsen stone contributions
- Advertising on the Beckhampton roundabout has been advised against
- The first free community wifi hub has been installed
- The Summer Solstice went very well this year
- A 'flood' group is being formed.

Fyfield & West Overton Parish Council: MNB provided update:

- A planning application has been submitted for new dwellings in the village which would equate to a 10% increase in the size of the village. This could impact on the setting of the WHS.
- SS reinforced that each application is looked at on its own merits and stakeholders should make their case to the planning officer.

Winterbourne Monkton Parish Council: BB provided update:

- A future planning application may be submitted for approximately 8 new houses at Winterbourne Monkton. It's unclear at the moment if these are within the village boundary.
- SS pointed out that a planning application has been submitted for a grain store on Robin Butler's land.

North Wessex Downs AONB: HO provided update:

- The consultation for the draft AONB Management Plan has now closed. Thanks to those who contributed including SS. They hope for endorsement in March 2014 and publication in autumn 2014.
- Aims for creating a Heritage Forum have not yet come together, but it is still planned for the future.
- HO informed the group that he is now the chair of the Ridgeway & Thames Path National Trails. Please let HO know if you are interested in being involved in the Ridgeway partnership.

14. Avebury Steering Committee Chair

AV confirmed that this will be his last meeting as chair, as prompted by the governance review. AW will take over, but AV will still be involved via the WHS Partnership Panel.

AW instigated an enormous vote of thanks (and a round of applause) for AV's hard work since starting as chair in 2007, and for his involvement prior to becoming chair.

AV thanked the group, and stated that he has found the role has given him a great insight to the grass roots running of a WHS and that great work is being done by the group. It has become much more united and successful in recent years.

15. Information exchange and AOB

SS reiterated the invitation to the gallery opening at Devizes Museum on 25th November.

JT mentioned that the partial re-thatch to the barn in the farmyard is nearly complete. It is looking very good.

CS suggested a great vote of thanks should be registered for Christopher Young's extremely positive and invaluable work with the WHS, and that the group wishes him well in his retirement.

GS highlighted possible issues related to flood alleviation works at the entrance to West Kennet Avenue. She questioned whether anyone was notified of the works to ensure that they will be conducted appropriately. SS will investigate this.

AW questioned what is involved with the visitor count mentioned in the English Heritage report at Action D2: JT explained that several counter beams around the wider WHS are being installed to provide a very general overall trend of visitor numbers across the wider landscape.

LG informed the group about a new 'Connecting Wiltshire' website launched by Wiltshire Council, to encourage easier access to sustainable transport. There are specific pages for Avebury and Stonehenge. Feedback on the site is welcomed.

ACTION: SS to draft a letter of thanks to CY.

16. Date of next meeting

23rd April 2014.

ACTIONS

Item No.	Action and Person Responsible
9	JT to send details to LG. LG to follow up Action R1 with Wiltshire Council Highways PM to provide contact details for information about trespass on Silbury Hill. SS to find out if there Jim Leary's recent publication on Marlborough Mound in the Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society may be available to the group.
12	SS to circulate link to the online CAP reform consultation.
15	SS to draft a letter of thanks to CY.