



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 23rd April 2014 at 10.30 AM

Venue: Town Hall, Marlborough

Present:

Andrew Williamson (Chair) – Avebury Parish Council
Gill Swanton – North Farm, West Overton
Colin Shell – ASHRG
Stephanie Payne – Natural England
Nick Snashall – National Trust
Jan Tomlin – National Trust
Phil McMahon – English Heritage
Martin Northmore-Ball – Fyfield & West Overton Parish Council
Kate Fielden – Avebury Society
Cllr Jemima Milton – Wiltshire Council
Rachel Foster – Wiltshire Council
David Andrews - VisitWiltshire
Alistair Sommerlad – WHS Partnership Panel Chair
Robin Butler – Avebury WHS Farmers
Bill Buxton – Winterbourne Monkton Parish Council
Sarah Simmonds – World Heritage Site Officer
Matt Maynard (minutes) - Wiltshire Council

1. Introductions & Apologies

Apologies were received from Ariane Crampton, Laura Gosling, Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger, Ian Barnes and Henry Oliver.

Andrew Williamson (AW) introduced himself to the group in his new role as the Chair of the Avebury Steering Committee. He highlighted his background in town planning, affordable housing and community engagement.

2. Minutes of last meeting & matters arising

Subject to one typographical error the minutes were an accurate record of what had happened at the previous meeting and were approved: Under Item 11 the sentence does not reference what is 'existing' – it was suggested that the word guidance be added for clarity.

Action 9: Sarah Simmonds (SS) has forwarded the article to one member of the Steering Committee. She explained to the group that she had could only circulate the article on Marlborough Mound on request within the group as it is from a subscription journal.

ACTION: All to contact SS if they would like to receive an electronic copy of the Jim Leary article

3. Governance Review

SS summarised the paper circulated to the group prior to the meeting. The review of membership is the final stage in the governance review process.

- The Avebury Steering Committee already meets the recommendations for membership set out the review and agreed by the Steering Committee at a previous meeting. The paper recommends that there is no requirement to invite any further members at this point.
- It further recommends that each group identify a key representative, at the appropriate level, who attends meetings regularly. Larger organisations should send relevant key officers when agenda items require more extensive or more specialised representation.
- Smaller groups should have named deputies who should be able to attend in the case of the key representative is unable to do.

Jemima Milton (JM) suggested that rather than a named contact for the larger organisations, a job title might be more appropriate to ensure that the right level of engagement is achieved and that representation is future-proofed in the case of individuals moving on.

Gill Swanton (GS) suggested that other farmers and landowners beyond the Avebury Parish boundary might value more direct engagement with the management of the WHS. At present the farmer's representative Robin Butler (RB) is from Avebury. GS was not suggesting expanding membership of the Steering Committee but providing information perhaps via an annual event/meeting or in tandem with the launch of relevant documents such as the WHS Woodland Strategy. SS mentioned an action in the evolving Management Plan to address this need and ascertain the most appropriate engagement method for the farming community with its members. This might be combined with Nature Improvement Area events where suitable such as Open Farm Sundays.

Colin Shell (CS) emphasised the need to make sure that where farms are run by agents that they also be included in any outreach process.

ACTION: All to provide names of main representative and named deputy to SS

SS to ensure that exploring outreach to the wider farming community is included in the evolving WHS Management Plan

4. Avebury WHS Transport Strategy

SS reported on behalf of Laura Gosling (LG) the project manager who was unable to attend the meeting as planned and sent her apologies. SS detailed the good progress that has been made so far. There have been three meetings of the task and finish group (TFG) with Atkins who have been contracted to produce the strategy. The strategy will set out the plan for managing traffic in line with the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (SOUV) in order to diminish the impact of roads and traffic on the WHS. Draft design principles have been developed by Atkins for use by the Highways department of Wiltshire Council and other relevant teams involved in determining development and designing traffic management solutions. The final draft strategy will be presented to the Steering Committee for comment before sign off. The TFG have represented the Steering Committee during the earlier stages of its development. A final meeting of the TFG will be held in late May to review draft schemes. The strategy document will inform the evolving WHS Management Plan.

Kate Fielden (KF) asked if time would be allowed to enable each representative to take the strategy back to their organisation for comments. SS replied that this could be built into the process but it might need to be done via email as the strategy needs to be completed by the summer to inform Management Plan actions. SS emphasised that the TFG should have highlighted any major comments on the document during its preparation. In addition any major changes to the Highways network would require public consultation prior to implementation.

AW commented that most of the elements of the Avebury Community Traffic Plan have addressed and included in the strategy which is much appreciated.

5. Stonehenge and Avebury WHS Management Plan

SS provided a summary of progress on the WHS Management Plan. The last project board meeting took place on 15th April. The group looked at aims, policies and actions. This has been informed by the evidence, input and outcomes from the detailed review process that undertake in both halves of the WHS which has involved most members of the Steering Committee. The aims, policies and actions have also been shaped by international and national policy and best practice from across all WHSs. The wider stakeholder workshop will be held in Amesbury on 20th May and all members of the Steering Committee have been invited. Following this an amended draft of the aims, policies and actions will go to the WHS Partnership Panel in June for comment. The Steering Committee will have a further opportunity to comment on these and those draft sections of the Plan that have been completed in July at an extraordinary meeting of the group.

SS reported that the evolving Management Plan retained many of the elements of the Avebury (2005) and Stonehenge (2009) Plans but there was a greater emphasis on certain elements including: sustainable tourism and appropriate sustainable economic regeneration opportunities and community engagement and volunteering as well as the setting of upstanding and buried archaeology. This reflects the changing management and policy context

6. World Heritage Site Officer Update

SS updated the group on progress on the Management Plan at item 5. This will continue to be the key piece of work until it is put out to public consultation in the autumn. Progress on other projects is summarised in the WHSO report circulated in advance of the meeting.

SS reported that the WHs Coordination Unit was now in place in line with the recommendations of the governance review process. Both World Heritage Coordinators are now working from the same office in the History Centre in Chippenham embedded within the Archaeology Service. This arrangement is designed to allow resources to be more efficiently managed deployed across both parts of the Site. The next edition of Megalith is currently being drafted and if anyone in the group would like to submit articles it would be greatly appreciated. The publication date is summer 2014. Articles should be around 150 words and be accompanied by pictures if possible.

ACTION: All to contact SS with any articles they wish published.

SS showed the group a draft of an information panel she has been working on that will be installed on RB's land as part of a Higher Level Stewardship scheme. It shows the Beckhampton Avenue and Beckhampton Cove as well as their relationship to the wider WHS landscape. Input on the panel has been provided by the National Trust, English Heritage, Natural England and the Chair of Avebury Parish Council. The group's thanks were extended to these organisations and also to RB for installing the panel on his land.

David Andrews (DA) suggested that the contents of the panel to be passed to VisitWiltshire team so that they could highlight it on their website for information for anyone who wanted to explore the area.

ACTION: SS to provide DA with an electronic copy of the panel

KF was concerned about the potential impact the panel might have on the setting of the site as previously such panels have had a glossy, white backing which makes them visible from great distances.

SS agreed to discuss this with the designer to explore ways to minimise intrusion. The panel has very little white space is predominantly green so this should assist in ensuring its impact is not negative.

7. Report from WHS Partnership Panel

Alistair Sommerlad (AS) introduced himself to the group and provided a succinct recap of the process that had brought about the establishment of the WHS Partnership Panel which he chairs. The first meeting of this group focused on how the Panel and the Steering Committees operate. It explored what would be appropriate areas for the Partnership Panel to support the Steering Committee on. The next meeting will be in June and will look at actions for the group to pursue. The current objectives for the Partnership Panel focus on 3 main themes:

- Protection – there are two potential threats to Stonehenge; work on the A303 and the Army Rebasing project. AS has been in contact with the Highways Agency regarding proposals for the A303 and will continue to keep in contact with them as plans progress. Similarly for the Army Rebasing Project contact has been made with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO); the operational arm of the Ministry of Defence with responsibility for their estates.
- Advocacy – members of the Panel promote the WHS within their own organisations. AS works for the Foreign Office and has the opportunity to travel frequently to Geneva and New York as well as other UNESCO WHSs.
- Funding – the Panel will look at a number of funding opportunities and how these could be tied into the various issues facing the WHS. AS is currently looking at a number of opportunities including: state funding, local authority funding, commercial sponsorship and private foundations. The implications of each of these will need to be considered by the Panel.

The Panel will meet on a biannual cycle to discuss progress and issues relating to these three themes.

The Steering Committee discussed the need to raise the profile of WHS in the UK. They are a key stamp of preeminent international quality recognised by foreign visitors but the English and British tourism organisations have not yet fully acknowledged their importance.

The challenge of promoting the importance of the WHS while protecting its OUV and the quality of life of the local community was discussed. It was emphasised that promotion of the WHS should focus on improving awareness of the international importance of the Site and the need to invest in its protections and presentation. Attracting tourists at peak times should continue to be avoided. Sustainable visitor management is required.

Exploration of the wider WHS landscape should be as a key focus to disperse visitors and encourage longer stays in the area and thereby greater spend. This should be the focus rather than an increase in visitor numbers.

8. ASHRG Report

Colin Shell (CS) reported on the first meeting of the ASHRG and how the group had found the new joint Avebury and Stonehenge arrangement. The meeting was successful and very well-attended. It was followed by a much-enjoyed social.

There were two interesting presentations from the group. One project focussed on assessing an advanced scanning technique: airborne SAR (Synthetic Aperture Radar) for archaeological prospection and preservation in Avebury WHS. CS invited anyone who would like further information to contact him.

Drafts of the Research Agenda and Strategy should be circulated for final comments to ASHRG in the summer. The timeline for the publication of the completed Stonehenge and Avebury WHS Research Framework is early 2015 which will coincide with the Management Plan.

ACTION: All to contact Colin Shell for further information if desired.

9. English Heritage Update

Phil McMahon (PM) circulated an update prior to the meeting. He reported that maintenance of signage and fences had been carried out at Silbury Hill. Progress continues with the putting in place the renewed local management agreement (LMA) between English Heritage (EH) and the National Trust (NT). Due the seriousness of the impacts of burrowing animals on the WHS Nick Croxson (NC) is looking at developing a burrowing animal management plan.

SS will contact NC to ensure that partners work together on a landscape scale strategy for burrowing animals that builds on the extensive work already undertaken by partners.

KF asked if it would be possible for EH and the NT to release a copy of the LMA for information purposes.

ACTION: SS to contact NC to ensure a partnership approach is taken to producing a landscape scale burrowing animal strategy

Jan Tomlin (JT) to look into the possibility of providing some of the information in the LMA agreement

10. National Trust Update

The NT circulated an update prior to the meeting. JT reported progress on the WHS Woodland Strategy. It should be completed by the end of May.

Regarding the dropped curbs at the crossing points within the henge there has been some correspondence with Wiltshire Council and their contractors. A response is expected in the immediate future.

The NT is currently planning for the Summer Solstice.

The NT has a key role in promoting educational visits to the WHS.

The NT as a partner in the Between the Monuments project is hoping to excavate a section alongside the West Kennet Avenue once more in late July / August. Permission is still being sought from EH and Wiltshire Council. The Steering Committee and the local community will be invited to visit the dig.

ACTION: NS to pass an invite to visit the Between the Monuments excavation to SS to circulate to the Steering Committee.

11. Wiltshire Council Update

A report was circulated prior to the meeting. RF summarised progress on the Wiltshire Core Strategy and its implications for the WHS. No more major modifications have been made to the relevant policies within the document which is currently undergoing another round of public consultation that will end on the 27th May.

KF informed the group of an issue around some of the agreed changes that had not been correctly transcribed between the various schedules of modifications. SS asked her to please forward this information so that it can be addressed by the relevant officers.

ACTION: KF to send SS a list of the incorrectly transcribed agreed modifications to the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

12. Natural England Update

A report was circulated in advance of the meeting.

Stephanie Payne (SP) highlighted the recent progress that had been made regarding geophysical survey work around East Kennet long barrow and how that information will inform the decision of whether the area would benefit from reversion to grassland. Further dialogue is taking place regarding tree management on the long barrow in order to reduce possible storm damage. Badgers and burrowing animals are also a consideration and work is ongoing to find a solution that successfully excludes them from sensitive areas while also ensuring they are protected.

More information is becoming available on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reforms and what this means for farmers and the historic environment.

ACTION: All to contact SP for further information on the CAP Reforms if desired.

13. Other Partner Updates

13.1 AW gave the update for Avebury Parish Council: resurfacing had been carried out in the High Street and stone sets built-in at pertinent points with the support of the NT; the impacts of the planters on parking has been subject to informal monitoring and anecdotal reports appear positive at the moment and there have been no complaints; free WiFi is now working from 7 hubs in the High Street thanks to funding from the Marlborough Area Board and local businesses. Following recent flooding a group has been set up to help tackle these issues. The Parish Council is pushing to extend the 30mph limit so that some signage can be removed from the village and the setting of the henge; comments have been submitted on several planning applications. The Parish Council would like to extend its gratitude to RB for his cooperation in helping to ensure the new grain store does not have a negative impact on the WHS

RB commented on his experience of the application process for the grain store and dryer. He outlined the very frustrating and expensive process to finally achieve permission for the development. SS referred to the extreme sensitivity of the site and need for careful assessment and mitigation from a national and international perspective but also recognised the needs of modern farming and the pivotal role of farmers in supporting the protection of the WHS. SS hoped to identify how the process could be made more straightforward. This might include setting out best practice within the planned supplementary planning guidance.

ACTION: SS to meet RB to discuss his experience in more detail and see how the process could be made more streamlined.

13.2 Bill Buxton (BB) gave the update for Winterbourne Monkton Parish Council: the Parish Council has received an application to demolish derelict buildings at Manor Farm and then erect 10 dwellings at the site – the dwellings are an improvement on the derelict buildings.

13.3 Martin Northmore-Ball (MNB) gave the update for Fyfield and West Overton Parish Council: the Parish Council lodged an objection on an application for 14 houses that was later refused on Highways grounds.

13.4 DA gave the update for VisitWiltshire: the past few years have been very good for Wiltshire tourism with some strong growth after a dip in market share in preceding years. Overnight stays have increased 10% and off-season visits have also increased markedly and continuing to encourage this trend is a key objective for VisitWiltshire. There has been a 40% increase in unique visitors to the WHS web pages against the same period last year and over 130 tour operators / group organisers have made trips. Challenges that face tourism in Wiltshire include a lack of accommodation for overnight stays; outside of Swindon there is only one large hotel in the county and very little green accommodation. Another of the aims of VisitWiltshire is to encourage camping and glamping as this will increase overnight stays. VisitWiltshire is keen to promote the WHS and is happy to be involved in the group so that tourism can be developed sustainably.

14. Avebury WHS Annual Objectives

AW discussed establishing an annual action Plan once the Management Plan is complete.

15. Funding Opportunities

The issue of funding is a constant challenge. AW is planning to establish a group to actively pursue funding opportunities and look for mechanisms which could be used to ensure the good work the Coordinators and Steering Committee can continue.

The group decided that funding opportunities should be discussed in depth at the next session.

ACTION: SS to add Funding Opportunities to the next agenda for further discussion.

16. Information Exchange and AOB

KF told the group about a talk on Anglo Saxon Avebury on the 8th May.

GS told the group about the Open Farm Sunday event on 8th June at her farm in West Overton.

CS reported that the NWD AONB is publishing its new Management Plan. HO is now the Chair of the Ridgway National Trail Management Group.

17. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting is 23rd, July 2014 at 10.30 AM in Marlborough Town Hall. This will be an extraordinary meeting to discuss sections of the draft Management Plan

ACTIONS

Item No.	Action and Person Responsible
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All to contact SS if they would like to receive an electronic copy of the Jim Leary article
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All to provide names of main representative and named deputy to SS SS to ensure that exploring outreach to the wider farming community is included in the evolving WHS Management Plan
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All to contact SS with any articles they wish published SS to provide DA with an electronic copy of the panel the VisitWiltshire website
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All to contact Colin Shell for further information if desired
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SS to contact NC to ensure a partnership approach is taken to producing a landscape scale burrowing animal strategy Jan Tomlin (JT) to look into the possibility of providing some of the information in the LMA agreement
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NS to pass an invite to visit the Between the Monuments excavation to SS to circulate to the Steering Committee
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KF to send SS a list of the incorrectly transcribed agreed modifications to the Wiltshire Core Strategy
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All to contact Stephanie Payne for further information on the CAP Reforms if desired
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SS to meet RB to discuss his experience in more detail and see how the process could be made more streamlined
15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SS to add Funding Opportunities to the next agenda for further discussion