



Avebury World Heritage Site Steering Committee

Meeting on Wednesday 6th November 2019

10.30 – 12.00 PM

Wiltshire Museum, Devizes

NOTES

1. Present:

Sarah Nichols	Kennet Valley Parish Council
Nick Snashall	National Trust
Donna Byatt	Avebury Parish Council
Andrew George-Perutz	Winterbourne Monkton Parish Council
Janet Tomlin	National Trust
Gill Swanton	ASAHRG/Avebury Environs
Henry Oliver (HO) (Chair)	North Wessex Downs AONB
Kate Fielden	Avebury Society
Robin Butler	Avebury Farmers' Representative
Rachel Foster	Wiltshire Council
Sarah Simmonds (SS) (Notes)	WHSCU

Guests/Observer:

Ray Bryant	Wiltshire Council, Spatial Planning
Stephen Thomas	Avebury Society

1. Introductions and apologies:

Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger	Wiltshire Council, County Archaeologist
David Dawson	Wiltshire Museum
David Andrews	VisitWiltshire
Colin Shell (CS)	ASAHRG
Stephanie Payne	Natural England
Ian Barnes	National Trust
Melanie Barge	Historic England

2. Agree minutes of last meeting & matters arising

2.1. Minutes – agreed

2.2. Matters arising

Item 6: Need for clarity over plans for closure of byways to vehicular traffic. JT was concerned that plans had changed following consultation with the parish prior to the closure at Solstice. The planned closure presented included the Ridgeway from the start and therefore Byway 5. In fact, the actual closure was in force after the entrance

to Byway 5. This could have resulted in vehicles being encouraged to drive along the byway causing damage to the surface and sensitive archaeology. RF reported that the reason for this is that the closure is an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order and can therefore only be in place over the areas where the experimental repairs are. This does not include the start of the Ridgeway. She will report issue over lack of clarity to the RoW team.

Action: RF to pass on request for clarity to Wiltshire Council RoW team over extent of intended closure to enable plans to be put in place to avoid possible damage

Item 9: Megalith will be produced in 2020 as HW was unable to finalise the newsletter in 2019 before moving on to her new job at the AHRC.

Item 11.2: Illuminated Sarsen Kennel sign has now been removed.

3. Wiltshire Core Strategy Review

Presentation given by Ray Bryant, Wiltshire Council Spatial Planning

RB attended the meeting to present on the developing WHS policies in the Wiltshire Core Strategy. He had previously attended the meetings in April and asked for feedback from the Committees.

Wiltshire Council is in the process of reviewing the adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy (2006-26) Core Policies including 'saved' policies (in this case from the Kennet Local Plan). Included in this process is an opportunity to review, update and revise, where appropriate, specific policies and references to the WHS. These should then be in place until 2036.

Currently there are a number of references to the WHS specifically:

Core Policy 6 Stonehenge

Core Policy 59 Stonehenge, Avebury & associated sites World Heritage Site

'Saved' Policies on the Avebury WHS (TR6-TR9)

The review offers an opportunity to consider whether these policies should be amalgamated into one policy or remain geographically separate. RB thanked members who had sent in comments. He presented two options that had taken these responses into account: a combined Stonehenge and Avebury policy and two separate ones. Generally, it was agreed that the main priority was a policy/ies that reflect the specific challenges in the two parts of the WHS. If it is to be a single policy reference should be made in each relevant Neighbourhood Area policies to Policy 59 and the WHS Management Plan. The most important requirement is that any changes need to maintain or enhance protection of the WHS and its OUV. RB will look into whether the NPPF update requirement for Statements of Heritage Significance is relevant. We already have a Statement of OUV clearly outlining the significance of the WHS so it is probably not relevant to the WHS.

HO added that the need to avoid light pollution should be included in the policy. He suggested including the word significant in place of the word substantial in Option 1, point 4. The final sentence of point 5 needs tightening up to clarify that climate change

mitigation and renewable energy schemes must also demonstrate that they will not harm the WHS.

SS will be working with the planning team to consider the comments received alongside the national policy framework and WHS Management Plan policies.

Opportunities to comment on the entire Core Strategy review will be available to the wider public through a formal public consultation process.

Action: Any further comments from the group to be received by 22nd November. Please forward to SS.

4. World Heritage Site Coordination Unit Update

An Update Report was circulated with papers for the meeting and is attached. SS reported that a key focus of work has been securing funding for WHS landscape-wide strategies drawing on Management Plan actions and recruiting consultants to deliver both the Exploring the WHS and Beyond project (sustainable transport, tourism and landscape access) and WHS Burrowing Animal Strategy. Arup who have been recruited to deliver the former will be holding a workshop with both Committees between the two meetings today to help shape the vision and principles for this project. Another key area of work has been the review of options for a more resilient funding model for the WHSCU which will provide a sustainable future and an increase in resources to allow it to expand the benefits it provides to the protection of the WHS, communities and partners organisations. The project is NHLF funded. The range of current work is summarised in the attached Partnership Manager report.

Helen Weedon left the Unit at the beginning of September to take up a new role with the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). Her hard work and enthusiasm during her time with us was very much appreciated and we wish her well with her new endeavours. The production of Megalith will be postponed till 2020 when a new officer will be in place.

5. Reports from Partners on implementation of WHS Management Plan and related projects

5.1. National Trust

Removed field gates on the Cursus outside the Scheduled Monument Area

Excavation with Josh Pollard and Mark Gillings at West Kennet Palisade Enclosures

Two new exhibitions *Still Digging Recent Excavations at Avebury* and *Alexander Keiller's Avebury Manor*

A new volunteer-led landscape tour in place

Worked in partnership with University of Leicester on [Places of Poetry](#) project

5.2. Wiltshire Council Archaeology Service

- WCAS are attending a number of World Heritage Site project meetings including the Ridgeway Project, Setting Study, Burrowing Animals Strategy, Condition Survey, Exploring the WHS and Beyond Project
- ETRO is in place on the Ridgeway and now need to assess results

- WCAS continue to provide advice on a number of planning applications and utilities consultations.
- WCAS attended A303 hearings in the summer
- WCAS were successful in gaining a grant for extending the WHS Partnership Officer post.

5.3 North Wessex Downs AONB

- It is the 70th Anniversary of protected landscapes in 2019. The Glover Review has put forward fairly radical proposals for amending their governance arrangements. Proposals include greater national representation and funding and an emphasis on access, public enjoyment, inclusion and other public goods including nature conservation. Implications for farmers and groups such as the Marlborough Downs Space for Nature.
- New Management Plan going to print imminently. Includes 5-year strategic objectives. Landscape priorities flagged and priorities for public funding for land management
- Producing colour guide/pallet for developments within the AONB

6. Parish/Town Council, Farmers' Group Updates

6.1. Avebury Parish Council

DB is attending her first meeting representing the APC. There is a meeting planned with Steve Hind from Wiltshire Council Highways to discuss progress on designs for implementing projects outlined in the Avebury WHS Transport Strategy at West Kennett and Beckhampton. The schemes are designed to reduce the impact of roads and traffic on the WHS, the community and visitors. WHS Design Principles should be followed. AG will be attending this meeting.

RF and SS raised the issue of on-going concern over damage and loss of archaeology due to traffic on the B4003. West Kennet Avenue is affected. This situation is exacerbated by wet weather. The long-term solution to remove traffic should be progressed as set out in the Avebury WHS Transport Strategy. A methodology for a short-term interim repair to contain impact has been discussed by curatorial representatives from WHS partners and Wiltshire Council Highways and agreed on. It is necessarily sensitive to protect the archaeological remains. Highways now needs to prioritise and deliver this repair as soon as possible to prevent further damage to the WHS. Funds need to be provided for this essential work.

Action: RF to contact Steve Hind from Highways to request update on action

6.2. Kennet Valley Parish Council (Formerly Fyfield and West Overton)

SN reported that a group of parishes including Fyfield and West Overton and Avebury have come together as the West of Marlborough Traffic Group to submit initiatives to the CatG aimed at reducing speed on the A4 and increasing safety. SS underlined the need to ensure these are in line with the Design Principles set out in the WHS Transport Strategy. The Principles provide a set of parameters for achieving these

aims without introducing urbanising elements into the WHS. It is important that Steering Committee members advocate for these measures. SS met with Jill Turner from the group in September on site to discuss what could help achieve the aims of the group while ensuring together protect the WHS landscape. A meeting of the Marlborough Area Board on 17th November will consider the submission.

SN requested that those camping on the Ridgway over Solstice and beyond be moved on by the police more swiftly. Their presence can cause people to feel intimidated and discouraged from walking in this area. Damage has also been reported to archaeology and the water supply in the area.

Fyfield and West Overton has now formally changed its name to Kennet Valley Parish Council.

6.3. WHS Farmers

RB reported that the recent WHS farmers' meetings held in October had been useful. The WHS Burrowing Animal Strategy should be a useful initiative as this is a significant issue for farmers in the WHS. SP from NE attended to update farmers on future environmental stewardship arrangements following Brexit. The main message however is that this is still under discussion by government so there is as yet no clarity.

An increase in traffic travelling via Avebury Trusloe would be likely to result from any potential closure of the B4003. RB appreciates the need to protect the West Kennet Avenue but requested that possible impacts on farmers should be considered.

7. **Report from the Stonehenge and Avebury WHS Partnership Panel**

At the last meeting on 9th May the WHSPP discussed the need to prioritise remaining actions from the WHS Management Plan 2015. Other partner meetings have been Trust Transition Project Board focussed. Finding a sustainable funding model for the WHS Coordination Unit is a key action for the WHSPP. There are differences over how this model should look but there is openness among partners to consider broadening the funding base.

Support was expressed for a potential WHS arts initiative with the University of Sunderland and Bath Spa University. The Panel awaits a further approach and will be happy to discuss and consider any proposals put forward.

8. **Report from Avebury & Stonehenge Archaeological and Historical Research Group**

ASAHRG received the following report at its last meeting:

8.1 Living with Monuments Project Fieldwork Easter and Summer 2019 – Josh Pollard (University of Southampton). A visit was organised to the excavation in the summer.

9. **Information exchange and AOB**

- 9.1. A new WHS Partnership Officer has been appointed. We are looking forward to Sarah Askham joining the team at the beginning of December. JT thanked SS for her high level of on-going commitment and hard work. She has once again covered the work of the WHSCU singlehanded and continues to offer WHS partners high levels of support including attending evening meetings during an extremely busy period.
- 9.2. Heather Sebire from English Heritage to be invited to join the next meeting of the Steering Committee
- 9.3. HO will be meeting a local resident interested in establishing a volunteer RoW warden groups similar to that created in the Cotswolds AONB later in the month. He will report back on the discussion to the Unit.
- 9.4. HO informed the group that the NWD AONB will be holding a Dark Skies Festival in 2020.
- 9.5. HO to check with Becky Davies the NWD AONB Planning Officer regarding SSE Gunsite Lane undergrounding project that appears to have been on hold for some years
Action: HO to check with Becky Davies regarding SSE undergrounding and let SS know any details

Dates of next meetings

- Thursday, 30th April 2020
- Thursday, 29th October 2020

Stonehenge and Avebury WHS Coordination Unit Update November 2019

Since the last meeting of the Stonehenge and Avebury WHS Committees in April 2019, the Coordination Unit has been involved in the following areas of work in line with the Management Plan aims, policies and actions:

- Continued to act as secretariat for:
 - Stonehenge WHS Committee
 - Avebury WHS Steering Committee
 - WHS Partnership Panel
 - Avebury and Stonehenge Archaeological and Historical Research Group
 - WHS Liaison Group
 - Stonehenge and Avebury Learning and Outreach Group (SALOG)

- Progressed development of the Taking the Past into the Future WHS trust project with Doug Stewart the Transition Project Manager with funding secured from NHLF, match and in-kind funding totalling £93,950. At the last Project Board meeting in October to review the options appraisal two preferred options were identified. Further details are being prepared to enable a choice of the final model to be made early in the new year. Wider consultation will take place on the details of the preferred model as its implementation proceeds.

- As a member of the Benefits Steering Group advising Highways England on A303 legacy projects to align with the aims and policies of the WHS Management Plan.

- Secured £120,000 from Highways England Designated Funds to deliver the project Exploring the WHS and Beyond which includes a WHS Sustainable Tourism, WHS Sustainable Access and WHS Sustainable Transport strategic strands. Arup has been appointed and an initiation meeting held in mid-October. Organised a workshop for both committees.

- Brief for the WHS Burrowing Animal Strategy finalised and let to Aecom. Gained agreement that this work will be funded and commissioned by Highways England. Designated funds of £45,000 secured to deliver this. Data collection and desk-based survey nearing completion. Work to be complete by end of financial year.

- Continued to advise on and discuss Countryside Stewardship schemes with landowners and farmers and options that would protect and enhance the WHS

- Provided advice on planning applications and pre-planning consultations affecting the WHS and its setting

- WHSPM attended DCO hearings in June and August and provided input in line with WHS Management Plan aims and policies

- Worked in partnership with Wiltshire Council to deliver improved road signage in Avebury in line with WHS Transport Strategy Design Principles. All signs refreshed, replaced and/or updated including improvements to main NT car park signage.

- Discussed options for medium term repair of damage on the B4003 with Wiltshire Council Highways, the National Trust and Avebury Parish Council. A method

statement using chalk sacks for building out grass verges agreed. Awaiting delivery by English Heritage.

- Met with West of Marlborough traffic group representative to review solutions for reducing speed on the A4 in the east of the Avebury part of the WHS in August. Discussed solutions that aligned with Design Principles in the WHS Transport Strategy.
- Worked with partners including Wiltshire Council, the NT and Parish Council on agreeing and approach to RoW signage in the Avebury half of WHS. Overarching principles agreed.
- Continued to work with VisitWiltshire on their Great West Way tourism initiative to explore development of a World Heritage itinerary from Kew
- Led Stonehenge WHS landscape walk south of the A303 as part of Festival of Archaeology.
- Progressed work to refresh the interpretation, West Kennet Long Barrow, the Sanctuary and the free sites at Avebury with English Heritage and the National Trust. Work well-advanced for delivery this financial year with English Heritage funding.
- Delivered a number of WHS-themed outreach activities at events including the Salisbury Festival of Archaeology and the WHS Cricket match in Avebury in July.
- Continue to play an active role in SALOG the Stonehenge and Avebury Learning and Outreach Group. Working on ideas for celebrating the 35th anniversary of World Heritage inscription in 2021.
- Continue to discuss with the National Trust opportunities for achieving WHS Management Plan actions through their use of the chapel in Avebury.

- Shared best practice on WHS management and explored opportunities for professional and community links as part of a delegation visiting the prehistoric Jomon Stone Circles in Japan with English Heritage, Wiltshire Museum and the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Culture, University of East Anglia in October. These sites will be nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List in 2021.
- Presented to Bath Spa University and Claremont Graduate University, California master's students on managing a rural WHS landscape.
- Presented at South Western Federation of Museums and Art Galleries in July.

- Built links with WH:UK and ICOMOS-UK by attending workshops and networking meetings to enhance sharing of knowledge and encourage best practise
- Presented to the World Heritage: UK AGM at the Tower of London on assessing impacts on the World Heritage Site
- Contributed to World Heritage: UK review of Sites now available at: <https://worldheritageuk.org/about/resources/whuk-downloads/>
- Liaised with and exchanged best practice with international heritage professionals to improve management, interpretation and resilience.
- Continued to attend and represent the WHS at parish council meetings and liaise with members of communities in the WHS on relevant issues. Attended meeting on car parking challenges in Avebury in September.
- Held annual WHS Farmers' meetings in October at both Stonehenge and Avebury
- Continued work on maintaining Stonehenge and Avebury WHS website and Twitter account @StoneAveWHS. Developing the Stonehenge and Avebury Facebook page
- Continue to respond to enquiries regarding the WHS from a local, national and international audience