



## Avebury WHS Steering Committee

Minutes Agreed: 12.03.24

Thursday 9 November 2023, 11am – 1pm  
Wiltshire Museum, Devizes / Zoom

**Present:** Cllr Stephen Stacey **SS** (SC Meeting Chair, Avebury Parish Council), Claire Selman **CSe** (WHS Coordination Unit), Henry Oliver **HO** (North Wessex Downs AONB), Mel Barge **MB** (Historic England), Cllr Donna Byatt **DB** (Avebury Parish Council), David Dawson **DD** (Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society), Andrew Williamson **AW** (Avebury Society), Phil Foxwood **PF** (DCMS), Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger **MPK** (Wiltshire Council), Neil Adam **NA** (Wiltshire Council), Heather Sebire **HS** (English Heritage), Nick Snashall **NS** (National Trust), Jan Tomlin **JT** (National Trust), David Andrews **DA** (Visit Wiltshire / Great West Way), Colin Shell **CS** (ASAHRG), Gill Swanton **GS** (Avebury Environs Forum), Lynn Trigwell **LT** (Wiltshire Council), Sarah Valdus **SV** (Wiltshire Council), Becky Banbury **BB** (minutes/WHS Coordination Unit)

**Observer by invitation of the Chair:** Emma Sayer **ES** (Independent Chair, Partnership Panel)

**Apologies:** Cllr Jayne Drew (Kennet Valley Parish Council), Cllr Jane Davies (WC, Marlborough West), Stephen Thomas (Avebury Society), Andrew Guest (Wiltshire Council), Laura Corbett (WHS farmers), Stephanie Payne (Natural England), Helen Woodhouse (Historic England), Susan Denyer (ICOMOS UK), Alison Robinson (Wiltshire Council), Helen Garside (Wiltshire Council)

**Abbreviations:** Steering Committee **SC**, Coordination Unit **CU**, Partnership Panel **PP**, World Heritage Site **WHS**, English Heritage Trust **EHT**, National Trust **NT**, Historic England **HE**, Department for Culture, Media and Sport **DCMS**, Wiltshire Council **WC**, Trust Transition Project Board **TTB**, Avebury & Stonehenge Archaeological & Historical Research Group **ASAHRG**, Working Group **WG**, National Lottery Heritage Fund **NLHF**, Terms of Reference **ToR**

<b>Meeting Summary</b>	<p>The committee discussed the outcome of the TTB Meeting and next steps in the Trust Transition Project to deliver an initial Small supporting CIO within next year. Meeting endorsed the aim to move to full CIO once small supporting CIO can evidence that it can operate effectively and generate funding.</p> <p>The future Governance project was also discussed, which will run concurrently alongside the development of the CIO. Meeting agreed that whole partnership should be fully involved in shaping of governance and that project that project plan should include additional meetings and consultation.</p> <p>Meeting acknowledged the ambitious timescale to deliver these projects and the need to support the CU, ensuring it is adequately funded and resourced.</p>
------------------------	--

Date	Item	Action	Lead	Complete
09.11.23	1.2	Issue future draft SC minutes to members within two weeks of meeting.	<b>Cse / BB</b>	23.11.23
09.11.23	1.3	Committee Members to contact <b>Cse</b> if they would like to join Management Plan Review Group.	<b>Committee members</b>	
09.11.23	1.3	Add SC Meeting minutes to website as part of ongoing programme of work.	<b>Cse / BB</b>	

09.11.23	2.0	Circulate Draft Partnership Panel meeting minutes to SC.	<b>Cse / BB</b>	
09.11.23	3.0	Provide SC with information on CIO models with example from Wessex Museums including governance transition (provided by DD).	<b>CSe</b>	23.11.23
09.11.23	3.0	Add 2017 Trust Visioning Workshop Summary to partnership shared drive.	<b>Cse / BB</b>	
09.11.23	3.0/4.0	Send updated 3.0 Trust Transition and 4.0 Partnership Governance Timelines and Governance Core Principles to SC members for comment.	<b>CSe</b>	23.11.23
09.11.23	4.0	Amend Core Principle 1 and share with Stonehenge SC for agreement.	<b>Cse</b>	16.11.23
09.11.23	4.0	Discuss 'joint meeting' proposal with Stonehenge SC including suggested date and location. Date to be shared with Avebury SC in due course.	<b>CSe</b>	16.11.23
09.11.23	4.0	Add skills audit activity to development of governance.	<b>CSe</b>	
09.11.23	5.0	Request partner update from DCMS including 'state party' update on A303.	<b>CSe</b>	16.11.23
09.11.23	8.0	Send outstanding / additional Partner Updates to <b>BB</b> by 21 November for inclusion in minutes.	<b>Committee members</b>	21.11.23

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Apologies, agree minutes of last meeting 13.07.23, Review actions and matters arising</b>
1.1	Apologies given above.
1.2	Minutes of <b>13.07.23</b> agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting with the following comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting reflected on the passing of SC colleague Dr Kate Fielden and gave thanks for her considerable work supporting Stonehenge &amp; Avebury WHS.</li> <li>• <b>SS</b> also gave thanks to Robin Butler for his contribution as farming representative and welcomed in absentia his replacement Laura Corbett.</li> <li>• <b>DB</b> requested that minutes are shared with meeting participants sooner. <b>SS</b> confirmed CU ambition to issue draft minutes for SC review within 2 weeks.</li> </ul>
<b>Action</b>	<b>Issue future draft SC minutes to members within two weeks.</b>
1.3	Matters arising (update provided by <b>CSe</b> ): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members were updated on development of website and partnership shared drive ("Sharepoint") to be launched at end of year. <b>CS</b> requested that SC minutes are put on website for public access. <b>SS</b> agreed they should be added by CU as part of ongoing programme of work.</li> <li>• Invitation for membership to the Management Plan Review Steering Group is still open. Interested parties to contact <b>CSe</b>. Management Plan meeting ToR were circulated on 29.09.23 and updated. Information will be available on shared drive in due course.</li> <li>• Work on revision of processes is being continued alongside Governance changes.</li> <li>• Members were thanked for their contribution to Partnership Survey. Summary of survey is available in meeting paper '3.0 Appendix A Minutes TTB 15.09.23 (draft)'.</li> </ul>

<b>Actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation with working group on Draft Objects to be discussed in Item 3.</li> <li>• A cross-partnership update on TTB Project was issued on 12 October after board meeting took place.</li> </ul> <p><b>Committee Members to contact CSe if they would like to join Management Plan Review Group.</b></p> <p><b>SC Meeting minutes to be added to website as part of ongoing programme of work.</b></p>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Report from Partnership Panel</b>
<b>Action</b>	<p><b>SS</b> provided a summary of the Panel meeting prior to forthcoming circulation of draft meeting minutes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership Panel members received updates on number of projects and events including report from the World Heritage Committee and process to input into a State of Conservation report and Setting Study.</li> <li>• Recommendations were agreed for the addition of standing agenda items: The Annual Action Plan and Chair’s Review.</li> <li>• Members from TTB invited alongside CIO Working Group to support preparation of governance proposal to inform consultation at the November Steering Committee meetings, taking into consideration consultation of survey and workshop.</li> </ul> <p><b>Draft Partnership Panel meeting minutes to be circulated when approved.</b></p>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Update Trust Transition Project: TTB Meeting 15.09.23 outcome and next steps in lottery funded project</b>
	<p><b>CSe</b> introduced Item 3.0 Trust Transition Project Paper, which follows the update sent on 12 October, to show decisions made at TTB meeting, the direction of travel and future plans for project.</p> <p><b>Funding update:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Still have an amount of money remaining from NLHF Grant with extension granted until July 2024 to deliver project (with possible future extension if required).</li> <li>• Positive indications from funding partners for future core funding of Coordination Unit for 2024-25 (confirmation expected March 2024).</li> <li>• From an external entity, an offer to consider a commitment to contribute funds to the new CIO once established.</li> </ul> <p><b>CIO update:</b></p> <p><b>CSe</b> provided SC with definitions of CIO models:</p> <p><b>Small CIO:</b> a CIO by Foundation where Trustees have decision making function. The CIO would sit alongside the partnership in a fundraising and project delivery capacity. Partners could apply for funds from the CIO to support the delivery of projects in the Management Plan with the CIO leading on the delivery of projects.</p> <p><b>Large CIO:</b> a CIO by Association where Trustees and Members have decision making function. The CIO would host the Coordination Unit and exercise a management function for the Partnership.</p> <p>The Partnership Survey summary (TTB Minutes 3.0 Appendix A) indicated a strong and broad-based support for a full CIO whilst highlighting some areas of concern. In acknowledgement, the TTB recommended that it will be necessary to demonstrate the fundraising capability of a charity as small CIO before moving to full CIO. This will ensure the sustainability of a Co-ordination Unit as well as the governance function of the World Heritage Site.</p>

	<p>The TTB would therefore like to establish pathways to create the supporting/small CIO, including a decision point with a number of criteria to determine when to transition to a full CIO in approximately 2 years' time. The CIO Working Group will continue to support the CU and Trust Transition Project Board to provide context, research and outcomes.</p> <p><b>CSe</b> shared a timeline with SC to illustrate CIO Project Plan and key actions to achieve a small CIO by July 2024. Meeting acknowledged speed of project and multiple 'moving parts' involved to achieve an operational CIO within anticipated timeframe but observed that CIO has been under consideration since 2017.</p>
<b>Action</b>	<p><b>CSe</b> to provide 3.0 Trust Transition timeline to SC members for review and comment.</p> <p><b>HO</b> and <b>SV</b> thanked <b>CSe</b> for presentation of timeline.</p> <p><b>SS</b> stressed importance of consultation, discussion, and decision and suggested that, if additional meetings were necessary to ensure that the project is kept on track, they should be scheduled. He added that it is important that CU is adequately funded and resourced to deliver project.</p>
<b>Action</b>	<p><b>CS</b> asked if there was commitment to develop plan further to achieve large CIO status, given will of partnership. <b>CS</b> raised original summary findings produced from 2017 Trust Visioning Workshop which he suggested should be considered in terms of future decision points. <b>SS</b> agreed it was a helpful document, said that he believed that we were keeping faith with its aspiration, and asked CU to add document to shared drive.</p> <p><b>SS</b> expressed view that Stonehenge &amp; Avebury WHS would not be best served by a small CIO and that it should be seen as a staging post to something bigger and more ambitious. However, the project needs to be very precise about metrics to assess the performance of the small CIO in order to confidently move to a full CIO.</p> <p><b>LT</b> said that a small CIO provides opportunity to prove it can operate effectively and generate funding before move to full CIO. Check points need to be in place to ensure that it can successfully transition without failure and time is required to develop the necessary knowledge, expertise and learning to determine when it is right and appropriate to proceed to full CIO.</p> <p><b>DD</b> said that, without clear sight of guaranteed funding source/s for large CIO, we would be well advised to start as small CIO. Furthermore, it's vital to show concrete progress has been made to major funding partners prior to transition.</p> <p><b>SS</b> acknowledged transition project to full CIO may not be met within 2-year timescale but that it must remain the objective, albeit a stretch target.</p> <p><b>SV</b> requested confirmation of continued funding support from NLHF should timescale need to be extended. <b>CSe</b> confirmed NLHF's commitment to supporting project and possible future extension of grant if required.</p>
<b>Action</b>	<p><b>DD</b> provided insight on development of Wessex Museum's CIO and agreed to share example with <b>CSe</b> as part of an explainer on CIO models for SC.</p> <p><b>CS</b> requested further information about governance change and how this work will run in parallel with development of CIO. <b>DD</b> to share information with <b>CSe</b> for dissemination to SC.</p>
<b>Actions</b>	<p><b>CSe to provide 3.0 Trust Transition timeline to SC members for review and comment.</b></p>

	<p><b>CU to add 2017 Trust Visioning Workshop Summary to partnership shared drive. CSe to provide SC with information on CIO models with example from Wessex Museums including governance transition (provided by DD).</b></p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Partnership Governance – a future governance model</b>
<b>Action</b>	<p><b>ES</b> provided update on TTB recommendation that whole partnership should be fully involved in shaping of governance.</p> <p><b>CSe</b> shared 4.0 Partnership Governance Project Plan, illustrating a project timeline which runs in parallel with development of CIO.</p> <p><b>SS</b> thanked <b>CSe</b> for presenting a timeline and recommended, given TTB update, that project plan should include additional meetings and consultation with other groups such as parish councils.</p> <p><b>ES</b> also suggested a cross-partnership meeting with steering committees and partnership panel in Spring (TBC) dependent on work being completed prior to that, to review, discuss and consense.</p> <p><b>HO</b> agreed and suggested that in order for the structure, membership and ToR to be formed in such a way that SCs are happy, there is a need for a joint workshop / specific session to develop ideas and proposals which the whole partnership can then endorse.</p> <p><b>CSe</b> to update plan and share with SC.</p> <p><b>LT</b> asked for clarification on role of TTB in relation to its set up and purpose. <b>ES</b> confirmed <b>TTB</b> was set up as lottery project board and decision making around governance is not part of ToR.</p> <p>Meeting discussed whether CIO and Governance projects should run consecutively not concurrently in light of project requirements and fact there may need to be another governance change if CIO transitions from supporting to full model.</p> <p><b>CSe</b> explained that the driver for governance change is UNESCO’s directive for greater synchronisation between the sites, the management plan review which requires governance to be fully operational and the availability of lottery funding to do the work.</p> <p><b>LT</b> suggested that, even if this is an interim governance arrangement, it’s critical that UNESCO criteria are met, and decisions are made efficiently and effectively. Securing a future governance model will provide stability around funding with existing and future funding bodies and enable SCs to get to a point where they are comfortable that the new governance structure provides the input and relationship, they need to have with decision making.</p> <p><b>CSe</b> shared the following 4 key principles with SC which will be amended and shared with members by email for review and comment.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Process to agree new structure</li> <li>2. Overall governance structure</li> <li>3. Decision making within structure</li> <li>4. What expertise and responsibility do we need on each Board?</li> </ol> <p><b>HO</b> recommended that sharing of information / decision making is imperative.</p>

	<p><b>LT</b> agreed that process, timing, and communication is critical to success and that expert views should be taken into consideration to provide clarity and trust in decision making.</p> <p><b>CSe</b> invited further comment from SC on what expertise and responsibility is required on each board (support specialists/ advisory board/ partnership board) in response to indicative list.</p> <p><b>AW</b> made point that, to date, PP has not been successful in securing sufficient funding. Therefore, new governance structure needs to recruit senior people with fundraising skill-set and political clout to attract significant financial support. <b>AW</b> suggests it would be advantageous for them to be involved from outset small CIO development to transition of full CIO. We should aim to raise a six-figure budget as quickly as possible.</p> <p><b>ES</b> mentioned the Association of Voluntary Organisations recommendation that a skills audit is undertaken with the partnership board to ensure people with requisite skills are put at the right decision-making level to ensure effective decisions are made.</p> <p><b>Actions</b> <i>CSe to update 4.0 Partnership Governance timeline (to include consultation &amp; meetings with Parish Councils) and share with SC members for review and comment. Cse to propose 'joint meeting' with Stonehenge SC. Date and location to be shared with Avebury SC in due course. CSe to share Core Principles with SCs by email for review and comment.</i></p>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>DCMS Update: WH Committee, A303 status and next steps</b>
<b>Action</b>	<p><b>PF</b> had dropped out of meeting and was unable to provide update in person.</p> <p><b>MPK</b> confirmed date for appeal is w/c 12 December 2023.</p> <p><b>ES</b> understanding is that 'state party' has engaged with World Heritage Committee at UNESCO.</p> <p><b>CU</b> has begun discussions with Historic England about timings and delivery of State of Conservation report, to be submitted on request of UNESCO.</p> <p><i>CSe to ask for update from PF to be shared and circulated to meeting members (now available, see appendix A)</i></p>
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Update on key projects – paper will be circulated after meeting</b>
6.1	<p><b>Management Plan Review:</b> <b>CSe</b> provided summary of points from the Management Plan Review Steering Group 26.10.23, with a worked-up proposal to be shared in March cycle of meetings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members agreed that a realistic completion date is end of financial year March 2026, given other significant activities being undertaken by coordination unit and WHS partners over course of next two years (CIO and governance).</li> <li>• First steps: activity between now and next Steering Committee in March: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Evaluation of status of actions in Management Plan which will go hand in hand with creation of annual action plan.</li> <li>○ Costing of review agreed and funding sourced.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Reduction of actions from 178 (Bath have 47, Edinburgh 39).</li> <li>• Refining management plan - signposting information rather than including them in document, including links which can be updated during lifespan to research and policies.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Move away from print to digital formats including a PDF of the whole plan and more specific accessible sections (areas of work) to meet needs of different stake holders /audiences (including residents and planners).</li> </ul>
6.2	<p><b>CSe provided update on Condition Survey:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Condition Survey is currently taking place with the support of a group of trained volunteers. All monuments have been reviewed and a number prioritised for fieldwork survey based on factors such as their previous condition and other aspects such as proximity to PRow.</li> <li>• Avebury Survey - nearing completion.</li> <li>• Stonehenge - contacting landowners regarding access, survey to begin in December.</li> <li>• CSe thanked members for helping Avebury Survey take place.</li> </ul>
6.3	<p><b>CSe provided update on exploring the WHS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List of 12 prioritised actions complete.</li> <li>• CU made progress last year in identifying smaller group to take forward and is now making contact with Esther Gordon-Smith, National Highways, to confirm any key dates to be aware of and when best to hold project board meeting.</li> </ul>
6.4	<p><b>LT provided update on Setting Study:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Still moving forward and will be able to provide more detailed timeline in due course.</li> <li>• The Design Guide will be going to Cabinet in January 2023 and Full Council in February 2023 and then hopefully signed off.</li> <li>• ES flagged detailed timeline for submission points for sharing of Setting Study to other bodies.</li> <li>• LT clarified that the Setting Study is a Wiltshire Council supplementary planning document to inform planning decisions and ultimately a WC document which is signed off by WC. It will take into consideration expert comments and UNESCO and WHS steering committees will get a chance to see it and comment during public consultation period. WC will be canvassing over 3000 consultees to ensure that stakeholders views are considered.</li> <li>• MPK believes WH Centre will get early sight of draft and will probably get two opportunities to look at it.</li> <li>• ES suggests Historic England and state party can provide advice.</li> <li>• LT confirmed that Setting Study can be used by WHS to guide information and endorse it but ultimately its position and weight sits as an SPD owned by Wiltshire Council.</li> </ul>
6.5	<p><b>CSe provided update on B4003 works:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting took place on 11.10.23 with representatives from Wiltshire Council (Highways), Avebury Parish Council, Wiltshire Council (Marlborough West), National Trust, Historic England, Wiltshire Council (Archaeology) and WHS Coordination Unit.</li> <li>• Purpose of the meeting: to discuss the works to the B4003 to date, consider options for reactive /interim measures and explore longer-term strategy to manage parking in layby and (in addition) North Avenue.</li> <li>• Next steps: Further work needs to be done soon. Wiltshire Council site visit and discussion of options, costs and budget.</li> <li>• Review of parking enforcement activity.</li> <li>• Investigation into solutions discussed. CU to prepare temporary signage to discourage parking outside of layby.</li> <li>• Next meeting to be arranged in December.</li> </ul>
<b>7.0</b>	<b>WHS Coordination Unit (CU) Updates</b>
7.1	<b>Staffing update</b> – BB now in role as support to secretariat.
7.2 – 7.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>CU Work Update:</b></li> <li>• CSe has sent review of activities since last meeting and has discussed file sharing</li> </ul>

	<p>system and annual action plan for 2024.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CU welcomes updates from Partners for inclusion in newsletters and comments on future evolution of partner communications.</li> <li>• <b>SS</b> thanked CU for work undertaken.</li> </ul>
<b>8.0</b>	<b>Partner Updates</b>
<b>Action</b>	<p><b>Email updates from ASHRG, Avebury Papers Project, DCMS, English Heritage, Natural England, National Trust and Wiltshire Council can be found in Appendix A.</b></p> <p>LT reminded meeting about <b>Local Plan Review</b>. This is currently going through its public consultation phase. Members of the committee are welcome to comment especially in relation to the policies for the protection of the historic environment and the WHS. The deadline for comments is 22<sup>nd</sup> November via the online portal.  <a href="#">Current consultation (Reg 19) autumn 2023 - Wiltshire Council</a></p> <p><b>Members are invited to send additional Partner Updates to BB by 21 November for inclusion in minutes.</b></p>
<b>9.0</b>	<b>Confirmation of feed back to Partnership Panel</b>
	See actions summary on page 1.
<b>10.0</b>	<b>AOB</b>
	<p><b>HO</b> to put <b>CSe</b> in touch with Dan Bashford regards Friends of the Ridgeway project.</p> <p><b>GS</b> - For information, The Forestry Commission is planning work to recreate / restore the medieval royal forest at Savernake forest. <b>HO</b> thinks there is work to be done with Forestry Commission regarding understanding of ancient landscape and biodiversity. <b>CSe</b> would like make sure FO within WHS accords with Woodland Strategy.</p>
<b>11.0</b>	<b>Future meeting dates</b>
	<p>12 March 2024, 11am – 1pm  9 July 2024, 11am – 1pm  7 November 2024, 11am – 1pm</p> <p>All to be held at Wiltshire Museum</p>

Meeting ended: 1.07pm



## **Appendix A**

### **Partner Updates supplied via email**

#### **ASAHRG Report, Colin Shell, 08.11.23**

Report to the Avebury and Stonehenge Steering Committees, November 2023

##### 1. Management Plan Actions

Since the last report, with the continuing absence of dedicated funding, there has been no change in the ability of ASAHRG to progress Management Plan actions for which it is a key partner.

##### 2. ASAHRG meeting

The recent ASAHRG autumn meeting, 13 October, was held online with the kind assistance of David Dawson, Wiltshire Museum.

The sudden sad passing of Kate Fielden since our last meeting, caused members to pause and consider her unmitigated and expert endeavour on behalf the conservation of the rich Wiltshire cultural and natural landscape. Several members were able to attend her Memorial Service in St John's, Devizes. It was agreed appropriate that members should bring together contributions towards an appreciation of Kate's life that could be compiled for publication in the next Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine. This will be coordinated by Brian Edwards and the ASAHRG Secretary.

The main presentation at the meeting was by Heather Sebire on the English Heritage projected Education Centre at the Stonehenge Visitor Centre, with the aim of using Archaeology as the basis of enhancing teaching and interest for young school children in the STEM sphere. Members were very much in support of the initiative, to which they could consider how to contribute either individually or collectively.

As follow-up to the summer visit to excavations in Avebury, Ben Chan gave a brief update on the outcome of the Avebury Manor Parkland investigations.

With Evora, Portugal, being European Capital of Culture in 2027, the World Heritage Site partners had been approached to consider participation in potential initiatives, with ASAHRG being particularly in mind. Gill Swanton attended a meeting and will continue to explore for the Group where members input could be useful. The next meeting is in January 2024.

Since the meeting, the results of the poll on the preferred design for the ASAHRG logo were available and the chosen version heads this report. It is hoped it may be soon incorporated in a suitable form with the other WHS partners' logos on the first page of the WHS web site.

### **Avebury Papers Project**

The Avebury Papers project led by Prof. Mark Gillings of Bournemouth University and Dr. Colleen Morgan of the University of York in partnership with the National Trust and the Alexander Keiller Museum is digitising the entirety of the archives of the 20<sup>th</sup> century excavations of Avebury. At the heart of the digitisation process is the creation of a permanent online archive and catalogue that will act as a comprehensive source of information accessible to anyone interested in Avebury, including both members of the public and heritage professionals. In order to help guide the design of the online archive the Avebury Papers Project will be holding a series of focus groups with stakeholders from a wide range of potential user groups. If anyone is interested in volunteering for one of the focus groups, please contact Ben Chan at [Bchan@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:Bchan@bournemouth.ac.uk) by the end of the year.

### **DCMS Update (provided by Phil Foxwood, Stonehenge SC, 16.11.23)**

The World Heritage Committee has requested a modifications package alongside State of Conservation Report. DCMS is leading on drafting of document (due by 1 February 2024) with input from National Highways, DfT and others.

Following a redetermination of the Development Consent Order [DCO] in July for the planning of the scheme, there was a subsequent claim requesting a judicial review. The courts are currently considering the grounds of that request. Expectation is that it will be granted with a decision by the courts to be made in March / April 2024.

There is the possibility of a subsequent appeal, but the current view is that it's unlikely it would be granted, given previous redeterminations and challenges etc.

### **English Heritage**

Nichola Tasker who was Director of Stonehenge has now left EH and is being temporarily replaced by Rebecca (Becky) Eade until a permanent replacement is recruited.

### **Silbury Hill**

Vandalism is still an issue with continual reports of people climbing the hill and people using bolt cutters to remove chains and gain access. We have also had problems with fences being damaged which is why we haven't had grazing on the hill recently. The site is inspected at least every three months.

Depressing that this is a similar report to a year ago!

### **Sanctuary**

The interpretation markers have been repainted which has improved the presentation of the site.

### **West Kennet Long Barrow**

We are aware of the flooding problems over the stream and that is being monitored by the National Trust who manage the site for EH.

The recent BBQ incident was dealt with very quickly by the police and there does not appear to have been any serious damage.

## **Festival of Neolithic Ideas**

English Heritage and University of Cambridge were delighted with the positive response to the inaugural Festival of Neolithic Ideas held at Stonehenge on 11-12 November 2023. All talks and walks were fully booked throughout the weekend and the activities, including a planetarium, handheld laser scanning of artefacts and a pop-up prehistoric supermarket, provided great entertainment as well as an opportunity to explore the science of archaeology, helping visitors to better understand the World Heritage Site.

## **National Trust**

As part of our conservation work, we are constantly reviewing and adjusting the way we look after monuments in a changing climate. After the festive season, we will rest the henge banks in all four sectors of the Avebury Monument by closing these areas from 2 to 31 January. The Stone Circle will remain accessible as usual.

Also at Avebury, the protective Drapes at the eastern entrance have been renewed as part of a wider programme to improve access and safety in the South East Sector.

## **Natural England**

- Fyfield Downs SSSI / SM-have worked on 4 interpretation boards which describe the historic and environmental importance of the site with Nick Croxson, Historic England. The boards are now complete and 2 have been installed. Another 2 are to be installed when the ground dries out. They were funded through the CS [Countryside Stewardship] agreement. We are also discussing an integrated scrub plan to manage scrub to protect the archaeology and WHS setting, with the landowners.
- Working up new CS application which includes continued positive management of the Avebury stone circle and other key WHS monuments and wildlife habitat.
- Large scale reversions agreed as part of a previous agreement has been put in place around the East Kennet long barrow.
- Working with Nick Croxson to prioritise the use of new standalone grants for protecting SM which are available under Countryside Stewardship. There are several potential sites within the WHS. It would be helpful to hear of any monuments which it would be useful to consider. The grant can fund for example: erosion repairs, tree/ scrub management, protection of barrows from burrowing animals.
- Pewsey Farmer group and Wiltshire chalk partnership -we have been supporting and are helping to implement a species recovery project for rare butterflies, and wart biter cricket which includes several farms within the WHS. The group, with support from NE, have also applied for a landscape recovery grant. If successful there would be opportunities to benefit WHS archaeology and deliver WHS jointly agreed management plan objectives. It will be very much a partnership project. I can provide more details about the grant to circulate if needed.
- NE historic environment specialists have produced a really useful document on Historic Environment and Nature Recovery which will be useful when discussing landscape and nature recovery projects and strategies. I can circulate this if that would be helpful.

## **Wiltshire Council**

- **Local Plan Review**

This is currently going through its public consultation phase. Members of the committee are welcome to comment especially in relation to the policies for the protection of the historic environment and the WHS. The deadline for comments is 22<sup>nd</sup> November via the online portal.

[Current consultation \(Reg 19\) autumn 2023 - Wiltshire Council](#)

- **Wiltshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document**

This document went through its public consultation process in the Autumn and the Council is in the process of assessing the feedback and making amendments. The final version will go to Cabinet and then full council in the early part of next year prior to its adoption as SPD.