

Minutes

Thursday 7 November 2024, 10am – 12.30pm

Hybrid: Wiltshire Museum and online

Minutes agreed: 20.02.25

Chair: Hugh Morrison **HM** (Co-Chair for Stonehenge / Stonehenge Farming).

Present in-person: Cllr Stephen Stacey **SS** (Co-Chair for Avebury / Avebury Parish Council), Mel Barge **MB** (Historic England), Lynn Trigwell **LT** (Wiltshire Council), Sarah Valdus **SV** (Wiltshire Council), Cllr Jane Davies **JD** (Wiltshire Council), Stephanie Payne **SP** (Natural England), Nick Snashall **NS** (National Trust), Andrew Williamson **AW** (Avebury Society), Claire Selman **CSe** (WHS Coordination Unit), Richard Crook **RC** (National Farmers' Union), Rachel Hosier **RH** (Stonehenge Farming), Colin Shell **CS** (Avebury & Stonehenge Archaeological & Historical Research Group), Gill Swanton **GS** (Avebury Environs Group), Richard Dewdney **RD** (English Heritage), Henry Oliver **HO** (North Wessex Downs National Landscape), David Dawson **DD** (Wiltshire Museum).

Present online: Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger **MPK** (Wiltshire Council), Heather Sebire **HS** (English Heritage), Neil Adam **NA** (Wiltshire Council), Cllr Alan Haggard **AH** (Amesbury Town Council).

Minutes: George Downs **GD** (WHS Coordination Unit).

Apologies: Phil Foxwood (Department of Culture, Media & Sport), Jan Tomlin (National Trust), Ron Lock (Shrewton Parish Council), Richard Osgood (Defence Infrastructure Organisation), Cllr Donna Byatt (Avebury Parish Council), Emma Sayer (Partnership Panel Independent Chair, Observer), Claire Glazebrook (Fundraising Consultant, Observer).

Abbreviations: Coordination Unit **CU**, World Heritage **WH**, World Heritage Site **WHS**, National Lottery Heritage Fund **NLHF**, Outstanding Universal Value **OUV**, Management Plan **MP**, Charitable Incorporated Organisation **CIO**, Joint Steering Committee **JSC**, Terms of Reference **ToR**, Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs **DEFRA**, Avebury & Stonehenge Archaeological & Historical Research Group **ASAHRG**, Sustainable Farming Initiative **SFI**, Department of Culture Media & Sport **DCMS**, Police & Crime Commissioner **PCC**.

Item	Proposed Decision	Agreed Decision
1.2	Minutes of Joint Steering Committee 10.07.24 are an accurate record of the meeting.	Agreed as accurate. Add to WHS website here .
2.3	Outline timescale to deliver Management Plan Review.	Agreed with timescale.
	CU to work with MP Review Steering Group to produce a Funding Proposal for January's Partnership Panel meeting.	Agreed that a Funding Proposal will be produced.
4.0	To agree a partnership governance structure and all supporting documentation by 31.03.25.	Agreed 31.03.25 as deadline for governance resolution.
	JSC to formally create a Partnership Governance Working Group and adopt draft Terms of Reference.	Agreed Working Group ToR and to meet in-person.
	For the review of JSC membership to be undertaken by the Partnership Governance Working Group as part of governance work, for agreement by 31.03.25.	Agreed JSC membership review as part of above governance resolution.

Item	Action log	Lead	Completion / notes
2.2	Raise with DEFRA regarding heritage actions in the SFIs in the context of dovetailing agri-environment schemes.	CU & HM	Underway
2.4	Raise with National Highways about timescales for the return of ecological data collected during the A303 Scheme.	CU	Completed
2.4	Invite Wiltshire Council representatives from Highways and the Community Safety Partnership to talk about byway issues at the next JSC	CU & SV	Completed

2.4	Raise with the Police & Crime Commissioner about improving communications between officers and residents regarding heritage crime and rural crime within the WHS.	CU	Completed
2.5	Collect feedback from members who commented on the Avebury Transport Strategy actions prioritisation.	CU (with SS & JD)	Underway
4.0	Amend the Partnership Governance Working Group ToR to clarify the purpose, tasks and deadlines, and invite Historic England.	CU	Completed
7.0	Investigate online adverts for camping on the Stonehenge byways.	CU	Completed
10.0	Book the Stonehenge Education Room for February JSC meeting.	CU	Completed

1.0	General Items
1.1	CSe and GD gave apologies received (see above) and HM welcomed members with introductions to the first formal meeting of the new Joint Steering Committee. HM noted that Roger Fisher and Tim Darvill had both sadly passed away in recent months. Members were invited to remember their very significant contributions to the WHS.
1.2 <i>Decision</i>	Minutes of previous meeting of 10.07.24 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting with no additional comments on actions or matters arising.
2.0	Annual Action Plan 2024-25
2.0	Written Updates within Annual Action Plan CSe presented the Annual Action Plan containing written updates on several projects within the Management Plan.
2.1	Annual Action Plan Focus 2: Setting Study MPK introduced the update on the Setting Study for the WHS, which Wiltshire Council are intending to adopt as a supplementary planning document in October 2025. CSe clarified that there will be a 4-week partnership consultation of the Setting Study from 18.11.24 to 13.12.24, including an online information session on 06.12.24 to which partners have already been invited. MPK noted that Wiltshire Council will hope to address any suggestions or concerns from partners during the partnership consultation, but that there will be another opportunity to raise further suggestions or concerns during the public consultation in 2025.
2.2	Annual Action Plan Focus 3: Condition Survey GD presented an interim update on the Condition Survey. The report from Wessex Archaeology is in draft form and we are awaiting a final version following feedback from the Condition Survey Project Board. It was noted that 995 monuments were identified for survey, many more than just those that are nationally designated (scheduled). The survey comprised of desk-based and fieldwork phases and sought to train a group of volunteers. Approximately 20% of WHS monuments were selected for field survey so comparison of results with previous and future surveys should be undertaken carefully. The methodology, data collection and emerging results were discussed, along with specific types of key impacts to monuments. Considerations for the future included targeting management recommendations, role of more frequent/seasonal observations, and the resourcing of volunteer training. LT asked if the impacts of climate change are being considered within the Condition Survey and other WHS conservation work, particularly following recent flooding in Avebury. NS agreed that some of the specific impact types identified are linked to climate change. CSe suggested that the impacts of climate change will certainly determine how the results of the Condition Survey are fed into the upcoming MP Review.

	<p>SS welcomed the project’s aim to train a group of volunteers in the skills and methods of survey. SS emphasised the importance of recruiting local volunteers in WHS management projects.</p> <p>HM and RH outlined several issues with how agri-environment schemes relate to the historic environment. It was noted that several farmers and landowners encounter administrative obstacles with SFIs, such as a difficulty in opting for schemes that can dovetail with other schemes and inflexibilities that may hinder monument conservation. GS suggested that there was a lack of historic environment options within existing SFIs. It was noted that there is a significant demand from farmers and landowners for further guidance on this matter. SP and MB noted that both Natural England and Historic England are aware of frustrations about agri-environment schemes and are in discussions with DEFRA. In the case of some monuments in ministerial guardianship, HS raised that more sustainable agricultural practices, such as grazing, have been hindered by vandalism to livestock enclosures.</p> <p>It was noted that it would be helpful for mapping, data, and specific results to be sensitively fed back to individual farmers and landowners to help future monument conservation practices. CS further noted that this would also be helpful for ASHRG to look at the classes of monuments that are being impacted.</p> <p>Action:</p> <p>Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CU & HM to raise with DEFRA regarding heritage actions in the SFIs in the context of dovetailing agri-environment schemes.
<p>2.3</p> <p>Decision</p> <p>Decision</p>	<p>Annual Action Plan Focus 4: Management Plan Review</p> <p>CSe introduced the proposed decisions for JSC agreement related to the review of the MP (2015). The proposed timescale included 6 months of partner and stakeholder consultation and drafting in 2025, followed by consultation with UNSECO and the public before final partnership agreement in summer 2026, in time for a launch at a 40th anniversary of inscription event in November 2026. It was proposed that the CU will work with the MP Review Steering Group to arrange the consultation logistics in good time to start on 01.04.25, including a funding proposal for three financial years to be agreed at January’s Partnership Panel meeting. The funding proposal may include partner cash and in-kind contributions and the fundraising activities of the new CIO.</p> <p>AW asked if the MP draft could be considered by the JSC before its launch. CS suggested that the current MP indicates agreement of the review by the JSC and noted that UNESCO requires local community agreement of a WHS MP. SS highlighted the importance of a towns and parishes forum in the MP Review consultation. CSe noted that all partners and JSC members will have an important role to play during the consultation and clarified that the nature of the final partnership agreement will be part of the upcoming governance structure resolution. CSe will continue to seek advice from DCMS to ensure compliance with UNESCO requirements for the MP Review.</p> <p>Decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agreed the outline timescale to deliver Management Plan Review. - Agreed that the CU will work with MP Review Steering Group to produce a Funding Proposal for January’s Partnership Panel meeting.

2.4

Annual Action Plan Focus 6: A303 Scheme Update & Reflection

CSe introduced an update on the A303 Scheme. Following the Chancellor's announcement, there was a partnership meeting with DCMS on 01.08.24. Since then, DCMS has no further information with which to update the partnership. **CSe** will be attending the A303 Community Forum organised by National Highways on 12.11.24. There was a written update from National Highways to the partnership regarding the closing down of the project, including lessons learned sessions and work carried out to return land back to its original condition.

SS asked if there was an update on the processing of archaeological finds. **MPK** noted that Wiltshire Council, along with National Trust, English Heritage, and Historic England have a continuous involvement to make sure that the evaluation results (e.g., excavations and geophysical surveys) are fully published, regardless of the project closure. It was confirmed that Wessex Archaeology will carry out full publication, which is underway and will take several months. **MPK** confirmed there has been a digital management plan throughout the 10 years of fieldwork, with the digital data to be made available through ADS (Archaeology Data Service). **DD** added that Wessex Archaeology are likely to be talking about their evaluation work at the Archaeology in Wiltshire Conference in March 2025. **RH** asked if the archaeological finds would come back to the relevant landowners first. **MPK** confirmed that Wessex Archaeology would contact landowners after the assessment and analysis of finds, potentially in a years' time.

HM noted that farmers and landowners are awaiting the return of data from ecological surveys from National Highways that would help with environmental management. **SP** confirmed that the ecological data would be returned to all the farmers and landowners as part of the project closure. **CSe** proposed that the CU could help with this. **RC** outlined the importance to residents and visitors of information boards removed from the A303, such as at the Nile Clumps.

HM raised that the byway issues in the Stonehenge area now warrant urgent attention, given that they will no longer be resolved by the A303 Scheme. **RH** noted that people are now staying for longer periods of time on the byways, without waste facilities, to both the north and the south of the A303, including keeping chicken and horses. Several reoccurring incidents of anti-social behaviour, criminal damage, and wildlife crime on and near the byways were discussed, including implications for vulnerable monuments, visitor experience, agricultural practices, and wider public safety and public health. **RH** proposed that these issues should be addressed in the MP Review. **RD** noted that in recent months there has been an incident of vehicular violence on the byway against an English Heritage staff member.

GS noted that there are similar problems with anti-social behaviour in the Avebury area, such as on the Ridgeway, including heritage crime. **GS** also noted that there is a new Ridgeway National Trail Officer, and that the partnership could work closely with them. **HO** added that there has been an increase in gang-related wildlife crime in the North Wessex Downs. **JD** raised that one of the priorities of the PCC is tackling hare coursing. **CS** noted that there was a report on the Ridgeway sent to Wiltshire Archaeology Service.

HM raised that Wiltshire Police officers had recently been advised against using WhatsApp and that this had hindered communication with residents regarding local incidents and public safety. **MB** raised the importance of rural crime forums and Operation Ragwort, cross-border police coordination to tackle rural crime. **MB** also outlined that Historic England have provided funded collaboration for the police in tackling heritage crime. **HM** suggested that until the management of motorised traffic on the byway was addressed, he believed that the other incidents could not be dealt with. **CS** suggested that a national decision on byway closures could be sought.

SV suggested that input from Wiltshire Council representatives in Highways and the Community

<p>Action</p> <p>Action</p> <p>Action</p>	<p>Safety Partnership for the next JSC may be beneficial. Members agreed that an in-person dialogue may help the flow of communication. NS noted that byway management is in the current MP but may also need to be brought to the fore during the MP Review.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CU to raise with National Highways about timescales for the return of ecological data collected during the A303 Scheme. - CU & SV to invite Wiltshire Council representatives in Highways and the Community Safety Partnership to talk about byway issues at the next JSC meeting. - CU to raise with the Police & Crime Commissioner about improving communications between officers and residents regarding heritage crime and rural crime within the WHS.
<p>2.5</p> <p>Action</p>	<p>Annual Action Plan Focus 6: Avebury Transport Strategy</p> <p>SS introduced the draft paper, noting that it drew upon actionable items from the Atkins 2015 Avebury Transport Strategy. SS suggested that implementing all of the arising projects from 2015 was increasingly unrealistic, so a prioritisation of actions is necessary.</p> <p>JD raised that within the Marlborough Area Board, there is a local highway and footway improvement group (LHFIG) with a small budget which can fund project work by local highways officers. The group also can apply to a more substantive fund, which has previously funded extensions of local speed limits. JD noted that while the processes are rarely quick, they do produce outcomes and will be important for visitor safety. It was suggested that this could be raised with Wiltshire Council representatives from Highways at the next JSC. It was noted that the Wiltshire Connect bus service now includes the Avebury area.</p> <p>HO noted that the 2015 strategy was also funded by North Wessex Downs and suggested that almost all the projects would likely receive public support, so the priorities could be expanded. NS emphasised that deliverability was key, particularly in assessing how transport strategy projects may have potentially negative impacts on monument setting. NS suggested that further discussions were needed on project prioritisation and potentially a brief review of the 2015 proposed actions. NS raised two incidents in recent years where vehicles have collided with stone monuments on the B4003. CS noted that ASAHRG was in favour of adapting the B4003 into a one-way system. JD suggested that working with Wiltshire Council Highways on smaller actions would be a good place to start. CS suggested it would be helpful to assess which pathways are currently used by visitors in and around the Avebury Henge, including verges. JD suggested that virtual footways may be part of the solution, as an option with low impact on monument setting. RC suggested that organising a visit to Avebury for all JSC members may be helpful in the future. CSe suggested a JSC visit would be possible next year when the weather improves.</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CU to collect feedback from members who commented on the Avebury Transport Strategy actions prioritisation and update SS and JD ahead of next JSC meeting.
<p>3.0</p>	<p>Coordination Unit Update</p>
	<p>Due to time restraints, a written CU update will be circulated to JSC members after the meeting.</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Partnership Governance</p>
	<p>CSe introduced the partnership governance paper. A preliminary co-authored paper was</p>

	<p>discussed at a partnership-wide meeting on 19.09.24 and a governance resolution is yet to be agreed. CSe proposed that a 31.03.25 deadline for agreeing a partnership governance structure is important to allow the MP Review to commence smoothly and to schedule.</p> <p>CSe noted that the Partnership Governance Working Group requires formalisation and ToR adoption to move forward in line with the above deadline. CS raised a concern about representation of local groups and suggested it was inappropriate that the CU was listed as members rather than as a secretariat. LT noted that it is important that the CU are named as members and that the working group will not be decision-making. CSe confirmed that the working group membership was still open for additions. RD asked if it was possible for the working group to meet in-person to ease conversations.</p> <p>MPK noted some comments from Wiltshire Council on the ToR. As a key funding partner, Historic England were invited to consider putting a representative forward. MPK suggested that the working group tasks could be summarised as following: proposing a new governance structure, reviewing membership, and proposing new ToR for the governance structure. It was suggested that sub-deadlines for the three tasks would allow for timely resolution. LT added that consistent terminology in the ToR was important to clarify that the new governance structure is best described as 'phase 1' rather than 'interim'. There were no further comments from members regarding the ToR.</p> <p>CSe noted that a review of JSC membership, as listed as an action in the current MP, should form part of the governance resolution by 31.03.25. SS added that membership review recommendations would come back to the JSC for full consideration with the governance proposals on or before 31.03.25 as agreed in the third decision below.</p> <p>Decision Decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agreed that a partnership governance structure and all supporting documentation will be resolved by 31.03.25. <p>Decision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agreed to formally create a Partnership Governance Working Group and to adopt draft Terms of Reference. <p>Decision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agreed for a review of JSC membership to be undertaken by the Partnership Governance Working Group as part of governance work, for agreement by 31.03.25. <p>Action Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CU to amend the Partnership Governance Working Group ToR to clarify the purpose, tasks and deadlines, and invite Historic England.
5.0	Trust Transition Project Update
	<p>CSe updated members on the creation of the CIO. A response from the Charity Commission on the second round of scrutiny is expected before the end of the year. Consultant Claire Glazebrook is working on a Strategic Plan and Fundraising Strategy for the new CIO and has consulted with several members. The design of a logo and website is currently ongoing. The expected end date of the project is 31.03.25.</p> <p>LT suggested that the remaining NLHF money could be assigned to the first few projects proposed to be undertaken by the new CIO. This would ensure the newly created CIO would not lose momentum and could smoothly establish itself. SS noted that JD had joined the proposed CIO board of trustees.</p>
6.0	Towns and Parishes Update

	There were no updates from members of the town and parish councils.
6.0	Farming and Landowner Update
Action	<p>RH presented her written update regarding the Stonehenge farming landscape. It was raised that there are reports of social media sites advertising the Stonehenge byways for camping. It was also noted that illicit snares were found in the area. RH suggested that more communication with residents during solstice was needed, particularly regarding the closure of residential/access roads.</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CU to investigate online adverts for camping on the Stonehenge byways.
7.0	AOB
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CS asked if the cancellation of the A303 Scheme had implications for the outcomes of the Exploring the WHS project. CSe noted that the project propositions will form part of the MP Review consultation, drawing upon the project's past extensive engagement. - HO noted that the North Wessex Downs Management Plan 2025-30 is currently being prepared in line with the strengthening of the statutory duty for relevant authorities to further the purpose of designation. There will be a public consultation on the draft for six weeks in February and March 2025. WHS partners were invited to contact HO directly beforehand with any specific comments or aspirations for the draft. - NS noted that there will be a Community Update for the Avebury Papers project on 28.11.24 at 2pm in Avebury Social Centre. Places can be booked here.
8.0	Summary of decisions and actions
	CSe and GD summarised the decisions and actions agreed at the meeting. These can be found on the first two pages of these minutes.
9.0	Date of next Joint Steering Committee meeting
Action	<p>CSe noted that the next JSC meeting will be scheduled for February, hopefully in the Stonehenge area.</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CU to book the Stonehenge Education Room for a JSC meeting in February.
	Joint Steering Committee Meeting close
	The Co-Chairs thanked all for attending.

Meeting ended: 12:30pm