



# Stonehenge and Avebury WHS Partnership Panel Meeting

## Minutes

### Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, Chippenham

### 19<sup>th</sup> February 2020

**Present:**

Alistair Sommerlad, Chair  
 Jan Tomlin, National Trust  
 Claire Muir, National Trust  
 Jessica Gibbons, Wiltshire Council  
 Rebecca Barrett, Historic England  
 Kate Logan, English Heritage  
 Nichola Tasker, English Heritage  
 Roger Fisher, Stonehenge WHS Steering Committee  
 Henry Oliver, Avebury WHS Steering Committee  
 Colin Shell, ASAHRG  
 Sarah Simmonds, WHSCU  
 Sarah Askham, WHSCU (Notes)

**Apologies:**

Cllr. Richard Clewer, Wiltshire Council  
 Cllr. Atiqul Hoque, Wiltshire Council

1.	<b>Welcome and apologies</b>
2.	<p><b>Minutes of last meeting</b></p> <p>Agreed with one change: <b>HO</b> stated the notes relating to the AONB MP should read “ready for adoption by partners”.</p> <p><b>Action: SA</b> to amend May 2019 minutes regarding the AONB MP and upload to the WHSCU website.</p>
3.	<p><b>WHSPP Chair – end of current tenure</b> (Roger Fisher chair)</p> <p>Proposal to extend the current chairmanship for the period of one year with the view to recruit during the first six months. A governance review of the Partnership Panel should also follow.</p> <p>A report on the progress of recruitment and the governance review should be given at May’s meeting.</p>

4.	<p><b>Strategic Projects update</b></p> <p>4.1. <b><u>A303 Road Scheme</u></b> – update on current situation.</p> <p>The release of a joint statement from the Partnership Panel was discussed. However, there was concern over the ability to reach a common view with/ without the support of the Steering Committees.</p> <p><b>AS</b> stated that it was best to have a position and that a statement should be drafted to show that we are a partnership with differing positions, but we are working together for the most optimal outcome.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> two statements to be drafted (one proactive and one defensive) and to be circulated around the group.</p>
5.	<p><b>A303 Legacy – Designated Funds</b></p> <p>5.1. <b><u>Exploring the World Heritage Site and Beyond</u></b></p> <p><b>SS</b> stated that feedback is still underway with only 5 weeks of the project left. ARUP are undertaking a project at Giants Causeway, so the expertise should be in place for the next phase. It is important to get something from the project as it will help frame what we do next given the Management Plan review. Therefore, it may be helpful to reduce the scope of the project to focus on useful recommendations.</p> <p><b>Key message:</b> The final document produced will not produce actions that are part of the Management Plan but should create useful recommendations that guide future actions.</p> <p><b>AS</b> stated that the tight deadline is due to the fact designated funds must be spent by the end of March, however WC has some flexibility. There could be a possibility to gain some extra time by reducing the scope of the project and arranging for HE to send payment for a polished draft. Arup could then continue the project after the 31<sup>st</sup> of march to produce a final version.</p> <p><b>KL</b> was keen that the project scope was not reduce, but instead the gaps identified as this would be important in informing recommendations on what still needs to be done.</p> <p><b>SS</b> stated that a gap analysis was part of the project brief, however more time will be needed.</p> <p><b>JG</b> stated that this is a good opportunity to evaluate how resource is used in the future for projects using consultants.</p> <p><b>All</b> agreed they were happy to follow <b>AS's</b> proposal to see if the project could gain more time, but this needs to be double checked as it has been told that the project needs to finish in March.</p>

## 5.2. WHS Burrowing Animal Strategy

This has been delivered with designated funds and is challenging due to the short time scale - delivery is the end of March for project board review. Aecom are delivering the project for the client (Highways England) and they are looking at the current condition of the WHS in relation to burrowing animals.

**SS** stated that there was the hope to achieve an innovative strategy that deals with burrowing animals on a landscape wide scale, as the aim in the Management Plan is to be aspirational and cutting-edge. However, a full landscape approach has been difficult to achieve due to other biodiverse considerations and so Aecom are using localised responses in a joined-up fashion. This outcome will still be valuable, and impact will be reflected through the condition survey every ten years (a priority projects to be delivered for next year).

## 6. **World Heritage Site Management Plan**

### 6.1. Update on delivery of the action plan

Almost all the actions are now being progressed and there should be a push to complete those currently in progress.

### 6.2. Proposed priority actions

The following have been chosen by **SS** due to their main role: the protection of the WHS.

- **Completion of the condition survey.** This is important as it shows if our actions are meeting the needs of site protection. The estimated cost of the project is around £60,000 to £70,000 and It is best to not use volunteers, but professionals with expertise and experience.
- **The setting study.** This is key in future protection of the WHS as it will streamline a lot of work when commenting on planning applications. It should demonstrate what the setting of the site is and how we require evidence to show impacts and opportunities for developers. This should be a supplementary planning document with an agreed brief. Funding needs to be prioritised.
- **Examination of the byways.** This has been brought up at the steering committees and **SS** questioned if a plea can be issued to WC to push up the agenda for the sake of the Management Plan.
- **Continual damage of the West Kennet Avenue.** Actions are being held up and influence at the right levels is needed to pursue road closure in line with the Avebury Transport Strategy.

All agreed that there were not alternative priority actions, but **RB** asked for time to consult with colleagues at HE.

7.	<p><b>Report from the WHS Committees and Research Groups</b></p> <p><b>7.1. <u>Stonehenge WHS Steering Committee (RF)</u></b></p> <p>The management of byways needs addressing. Even though they are closed for solstices traffic is being pushed to the local area, particularly with the closure at Woodhenge.</p> <p><b>SS</b> stated that there is a new development at Solstice Park, however photomontages have been produced and work is continuing to minimise lighting and signage.</p> <p><b>7.2. <u>Avebury WHS Steering Committee (HO)</u></b></p> <p>The B4003/ West Kennet Avenue needs to be emphasised as a priority action. There is no serious political commitment from WC, which is the key thing to take this forward. The repair work has been agreed, but it will only prevent damage for a limited period. A wider strategy and longer-term solution is needed so that WC and Highways can engage with a less standardised approach in the WHS.</p> <p><b>7.3. <u>ASARGH (CS)</u></b></p> <p>There is the same concern over the West Kennet Avenue and <b>CS</b> will write to Richard Broadhead. At the last ASARGH meeting Josh Pollard presented his latest work and findings of the palisade enclosure and Mike Allen described the paleo environmental history of Avebury from his coring in the landscape. This is significant as it has an impact on OUV as it shows Avebury as an open landscape like Stonehenge.</p>
8.	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>CS stated that the National Environmental Research Council Core advertised for fellowships to help advise the government on landscape management. It was concerning that Historic Environment and WHS status was low on the list and not mentioned in the remit for the fellowships.</p>
9.	<p><b>Dates of next meetings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10.30 am Wednesday, 13<sup>th</sup> May 2020</li> <li>• 10.30 am Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> November 2020</li> </ul>