



Stonehenge and Avebury WHS Partnership Panel Minutes Microsoft Teams 10.30 – 12.30 Friday, 16th July 2021

Present: Sarah Askham, WHSCU (minutes)
 Anne Carney, WHSCU
 Henry Oliver, NWDAONB & Avebury WHS Committee (chair)
 Jan Tomlin, National Trust
 Nichola Tasker, English Heritage
 Hugh Morrison, Stonehenge WHS Committee
 Ross Simmonds, Historic England
 Colin Shell, ASAHRG
 Nabil Najjar, Wiltshire Council
 Alexandra Warr, Historic England (present for item 5)

Item		Action
1.0	<p>Apologies/Introductions</p> <p>Apologies from Richard Clewer and Jess Gibbons.</p> <p>Introduction to Cllr. Nabil Najjar</p>	No actions.
2.0	<p>Minutes of last meeting/ Matters Arising</p> <p>Minutes agreed</p> <p>JT – Stressed concerns over illegal encampments on the Ridgeway. There were up to 1000 people present on the Ridgeway leading up to solstice causing disruption to farmers land and damage to monuments. Have reported the issue to Wiltshire Police.</p> <p>CS – Reported incident to the police. Told any trespass on private property was a civil case and therefore between the landowners and the invaders. Concerned over the disparity in police presence between the two parts of the WHS and a lack of understanding from the police who referred to the incident as ‘a perking problem’.</p> <p>JT – There were 300 live in vehicles along the Ridgeway with 1000 people present. In addition, there were 200-250 cars parked along the A4 and minor roads in the local villages. This was extremely dangerous and required a constant police presence. There were 2 issues happening simultaneously.</p>	RS to let partners know of any damage cases reported to Historic England regarding the incident along the Ridgeway.

	<p>SA – In response to this incident Stephen Stacey from Avebury Parish council has sent a draft Ridgeway Management Strategy which has been seen by Wiltshire Council. In response Wiltshire council have responded stating that this is something that current work on the Ridgeway is responding to. They stated that the situation is quite complex, but the broad message is that Wiltshire Council are looking at all options and actively looking for a solution, however there is a legal process to follow. Currently there is an ETRO until autumn and a season TRO will take effect with an option to put in another ETRO next Spring.</p> <p>RS – has emailed colleagues to see if there are any damage cases reported in relation to this incident and will brief partners when he hears more.</p> <p>CS – the circumstances at Avebury were exacerbated by the control of the events at Stonehenge because it just transferred the problem. The TRO does not apply to the length of the Ridgeway where all these vehicles were parked, it starts at Green Street. There is open access for vehicles during the summer and there is a problem of overnight parking at both sites. The only solution is to close the byway to motorised vehicles.</p> <p>JT – the TRO is not on byway 5 and it is along that byway that some of the most precious archaeology sits. This is where we have people causing damage – the TRO is not fixing this and has driven people down to some of the most vulnerable monuments.</p>	
3.0	<p>Recruitment of WHSPP Chair</p> <p>HO – there was no formal interest by the deadline of the 21st June and so the deadline was extended by 2 weeks. We have now received 2 applications which were circulated yesterday to the Partnership Panel. What is now needed is confirmation from the Partnership Panel that we can go back to the favoured candidate and invite them for interview. There is an issue to flag: the governance review is taking place and emerging thinking is that there might be a structure recommended that does not have an independent chair. There could be concern over the reputation of the Partnership Panel if someone new was taken on and then let go. HO welcomed partners thoughts on pursuing candidacy with a spirit of complete disclosure.</p> <p>RS – we have set a course and should pursue with the suggested caveat.</p> <p>CS – It will be important for new chair to implement any governance changes proposed and agreed.</p> <p>NT – Agree to pursuing candidacy but should try to not put them off. Transparency is key, but don't word it too strongly.</p>	<p>HO to communicate the position of the Partnership Panel to the candidate.</p> <p>HO to contact the Partnership Panel and find an interview date.</p>

	<p>JT – Agrees on all points.</p> <p>HM – Agree with all comments and think we should keep going on the course that was set, but don't be offputtingly frank.</p>	
4.0	<p>Judicial Review of the A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down improvement scheme</p> <p>RS – the review took place over 3 days last month. The judge took everyone through the claimant's case on the first day, the government's case on the second, and Highways England and Historic England's case on the third which picked through the seven or so points raised by the claimants. Nothing will be known until the final decision from the Judge is made, it is hoped that this will be before the end of July.</p> <p>HM – very surprised to have heard from Highways England that the enabling works for land at Beacon Hill will be moved forward to mid-august/ early October, given that the terms have not yet been agreed.</p> <p>AC – Heard at a recent meeting that if a positive outcome for the scheme and an appeal is lodged, there will be ministerial decisions on whether work can commence on site or not.</p> <p>RS – Currently there is a lot of speculation and rumour. Highways England are concerned about what happens if an appeal is made and the consequences this may have on their timetabling. They have an established position that no works will be undertaken until they have a fully consented scheme. However, they have posed a question of what works they might be able to undertake in the interim period.</p> <p>CS – There is the World Heritage Meeting in China this month and it will be interesting to hear what their view will be. They are considering taking Liverpool off the inscribed list and that there is a possibility there would be a reaction that might curtail the need for an independent chair for World Heritage Site that itself may be delisted if the scheme gets consent.</p>	No actions.
5.0	<p>World Heritage Committee meeting in July</p> <p>RS – Several meetings have taken place between Historic England, Highways England, the Department for Transport and some other. Whilst the statement is disappointing, it is nonetheless in an international language and should not be taken so literally. Conversations are needed to be had over how we, as government agents and partners, start to influence the decision between here and then. It certainly isn't final and there are things that we can do to mitigate the situation.</p> <p>AW – How the statement has been drafted and the conversations had between members shows that there is an opportunity for some degree</p>	If any partner has spotted any factual errors within the WHC report, please pass them to AW as soon as possible.

	<p>of negotiation. We have asked for partners to submit any factual inaccuracies that they may have spotted in the report. At present we have not received any responses and so it is unclear as to whether there are any factual errors.</p> <p>NT – Heather Sebire has seen one factual error.</p> <p>AW – The way the draft decision has been written means that it sounds very single track when translated into English. Having discussed this with World Heritage Centre, we can see that the intention behind it was not how it seems and there is scope for mitigation. Therefore, what is now important is the state of conservation report – we need to focus our efforts on making sure report states what we need it to.</p> <p>AC – The World Heritage Committee meeting starts today at 10.30am to 2.30pm. Sessions are live streamed.</p> <p>AW – The state of conservation report needs to be completed by partners from early December and it then will need to go to DCMS. Time will be needed for ministers to sign it off. Therefore the 1st draft needs to be complete by beginning of December. The World Heritage Site Partnership Panel will have a role for influence.</p>	
6.0	<p>WHSCU Work Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Please see the written report sent in advance of the meeting. 	No actions.
7.0	<p>Partner Updates</p> <p>Written report from English Heritage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Stonehenge site is now fully open. Visitor numbers are still very significantly lower than in normal years with almost all overseas visitors unable to attend and limited domestic visits as the UK tentatively emerges from the lockdown. We currently anticipate that the recovery of visitor numbers to the site will not reach pre-covid levels until 24/25 due to the long-term global impacts of the pandemic. - We are currently preparing for easing operational restrictions in response to Step 4 of the government roadmap on 19th July. As with many organisations we will take a cautious and phased approach to removing Covid related measures to ensure the safety and reassurance of our visitors and staff. - We have a children’s archaeology event happening on site from the end of July over the school holidays where children will be able to dig for (in troughs not the earth!) and discover ‘artefacts’ that help them learn more about Neolithic life. We hope that this inspires careers in conservation and archaeology for the future. - As we touched on earlier in the meeting, managed open access to Stonehenge for the summer solstice had to be cancelled again this year due to the deferral of Step 4 in the government road map. Whilst we were supported by the police and emergency services there was an incursion into the stones of approximately 120 people many of whom 	JT to follow up with CS regarding formal assessment of damage so that reports may be provided to HE.

expressed their motivation as a protest against the A303 road scheme – although other views about continued covid restrictions, general restrictions on liberty were also expressed. The group left after approximately 1.5hrs and there were no arrests. The behaviour of some, although not all, of the group was aggressive to staff and police and disregarded the significance and vulnerability of the stones, although there was no net damage to the stones in the end. Under the Stonehenge Regulations any un-permitted entry to the monument field is a criminal offence and we are assured by Wiltshire police that individuals who have been identified from the incursion will be pursued.

- We remain concerned that the potential for the coincidence of the result of the judicial review with a further key date in the pagan calendar around 1st August may ignite further protests at the monument. We are working with Wiltshire Police and partners who presently (in advance of the publication of the JR outcome) have not identified a specific threat for this date.

- We await confirmation of the dates for planned works by Highways England to the A360 although note that these are presently scheduled from early September to December 2021. Along with the effect on local communities, this will have a potential significant impact on our operation at Stonehenge with staff and visitors being inhibited from reaching the site. We continue to work with Highways England to explore any practical mitigations (although the potential for this seems slight) and to have a joint approach to communications to at least try and combat the negative perception of road travel in this area during the work.

Verbal reports from partners:

RS, Historic England – we have received no damage reports for Scheduled Monuments along the Ridgeway after solstice. Historic England do not go out onsite looking for damage, we rely on receiving reports.

CS – Has anyone formally assessed the damage so that reports may be provided?

JT – will follow this up with CS outside the meeting.

HM, chair of the Stonehenge WHS Steering Committee – The main issue raised was the continual occupation of byway 12 at Stonehenge. Vehicles seem to shift at solstice, but quickly moved back after the event. It is the illegal use of the land and not the legal use that is the problem. It prevents access for landowners, farmers, tourists, and locals.

JT, National Trust - From Monday 1st July Avebury will be recommencing full offer. Visitors will be able to walk around the stones

	<p>and the museum will be open. Clare Muir will be leaving the National Trust on Thursday 22nd July to spend more time with her family. The recruitment for Clare's post is now underway and we will share more information when we have an update. We are actively liaising with the local community at Avebury on how to take forward the Avebury Chapel. We are looking to work with local groups in partnership at the chapel to see how we can promote the wider landscape – the project is led by Stephen Stacey the chair of Avebury Parish Council.</p> <p>CS, ASARGH – There is no formal report to give, however it is recommended that Sarah Wright of the Ridgeway National Trial be contacted regarding incidents and work on the ridgeway.</p> <p>HO, NWDAONB and Chair of the Avebury WHS Steering Committee – the Ridgeway Habitat Survey is underway and has identified priorities for better management as well as for enhancement and restorations. We have a link to 3 farmer led groups in the North Wessex Downs AONB and we are working in partnership to put in a monument management scheme along the entire length of ridgeway. This scheme will involve volunteers monitoring the condition of monuments and historic landscape features. This will really help bring evidence forward for better management and conservation in the future.</p>	
8.0	<p>Date of next meetings</p> <p>- All agreed the 21st October 2021</p>	SA to send invitation to partners.
9.0	<p>AOB</p> <p>Partners thanked HO for chairing the meeting.</p>	No actions.