



# Stonehenge and Avebury WHS Partnership Panel Meeting

## Minutes

### Microsoft Teams

### 18<sup>th</sup> November 2020, 10am – 12pm

**Present:**

Alistair Sommerlad, Chair  
 Jan Tomlin, National Trust  
 Clare Muir, National Trust  
 Alison Bucknell, Wiltshire Council  
 David Redfern, Wiltshire Council  
 Rebecca Barrett, Historic England  
 Nichola Tasker, English Heritage  
 Henry Oliver, Avebury WHS Steering Committee  
 Colin Shell, ASAHRG  
 Sarah Askham, WHSCU (Notes)

**Additional invitees:** Terry Bracher, Wiltshire Council  
 Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger, Wiltshire Council  
 Anne carney, WHSCU Partnership Manager (in post December 2020)

**Apologies:** Hugh Morrison, Stonehenge Steering Committee

1.	<p><b>Introductions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Formally welcomed Anne Carney, the new Partnership Manager for the Coordination Unit. Anne will be starting on 01/12/2020.</li> </ul>
2.	<p><b>Minutes of last meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Minutes of the February 2020 meeting agreed.</li> <li>- All comments regarding draft minutes to be sent to SA.</li> </ul>
3.	<p><b>Future Meetings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- AS proposed to have a more frequent rhythm of meeting. This would allow more time to report on WHS projects, the A303 scheme and the imminent need to address the Management Plan.</li> <li>- CS requested that these meeting coincide with Committee meetings.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- HO stated that it made sense to coordinate Panel meetings with those of the Committees, however holding them on the same day would leave little time to make amendments to papers. Holding the meetings within the same week should suffice. HO also hoped for more communication between Panel and Committees when under the new governance.</li> <li>- MPK stated that the governance review is part of the Transition Project and this may look at different options for patterns of meetings. It should be stated that what is agreed today is temporary until the governance review finished in 2022.</li> <li>- It was agreed that 4 meetings per calendar year should happen every 3 months. These meetings would happen on the third Thursday of the month starting in January 2021.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action:</b> SA to send out placeholders for 2021 meetings starting in January.</p>
4.	<p><b>Strategic Projects update</b></p> <p>4.1. <b><u>A303 Road Scheme</u> – update on current situation.</b></p> <p>RB – Historic England released a public statement on their website which welcomes the decision. The decision on the 12<sup>th</sup> November, however, was only the next step in the process and how we advise Highways England on the delivery of the scheme going forward is crucial.</p> <p>CM – the National Trust echo the comments made by HE. The NT have a longstanding ambition to remove the sight and sound of the A303 from the Stonehenge landscape. This is the first step in the process, and we continue to work alongside partners throughout. The NT have released a public statement on their website.</p> <p>JT – from an operational point of view, the National Trust at Avebury hope that a reunited landscape will offer visitors the opportunity to understand the landscape as a whole. The focus of the NT at Avebury will be to help visitors understand that it is one extended landscape with a common story. It is one World Heritage Site to be enjoyed and celebrated.</p> <p>HO – from a landscape point of view this is disappointing for the Avebury Committee as the scheme allows for considerable damage to the WHS and the wider landscape. This presents a threat to the status of the WHS, as well as a threat of road schemes within Avebury and the AONB in the future. Posterity will deplore it.</p> <p>NT – English Heritage echo both HE and the NT, but also respect Henry’s opinion. EHT welcome the A303 scheme and look forward to working with everyone to make the scheme the best it can be.</p> <p>CS – An application for a judicial review is expected. The basis for this is reinforced by the Planning Inspectorate not recommending the scheme, which is in accordance with</p>

views expressed by UNESCO and the World Heritage Centre given their view that the damage to the OUV cannot be balanced with the benefit. It is certain that there will be pressure on the World heritage Centre to put the site on the Heritage at Danger List with a proposal that if the scheme goes ahead, it will be removed from the World Heritage List. CS was surprised that principal partners have not taken this view into account. CS also stated that this could create a potential problem regarding planning in the WHS. A supported scheme, which has a major impact on the WHS, could mean that arguing against significant planning applications could be more difficult in the future.

AB – from a political point of view Wiltshire Council know it has been very difficult. Wider transport issues also need addressing, not just those of the WHS. Wiltshire Council welcome the ability to go onto the next stage of the scheme. DR echoed this sentiment.

The Stonehenge Steering Committees representative sent apologies; The Stonehenge WHS Committee’s view has not been noted.

AS stated that the views expressed are divergent and there is evidence to support all. There is a huge complexity behind the situation of the proposed scheme and the international, national and local implications. The variance in opinion is reassuring as it means many different issues will be represented and therefore more informed discussions can happen. We must remember that, whatever our role, on the Partnership Panel we are responsible for protection of the WHS and its OUV, including its relationship with UNESCO.

MPK wished to acknowledge the huge amount of hard work occurring behind the scenes to make sure the scheme is the best it can be in terms of the archaeological mitigation.

5. **A303 Legacy – Designated Funds**

5.1. **Exploring the World Heritage Site and Beyond**

Arup delivered this project which looks at sustainable tourism, transport and access within the World Heritage Site. This project has resulted in a final report, which has been circulated, that comprises of a series of suggestions that covers a wide range of ideas, gathered from a wide range of consultees. The report has rested over the last 6 months with no specific actions, but essentially what we have is a package of proposals from Arup, with a series of ideas lying behind them. The next steps for the project will be to build upon this first attempt by Arup and look at what proposals are desirable, feasible and practical.

AS proposed that the WHSCU take an action to set a working group which will source funding for joint projects that can be delivered in 2021.

	<p>RB expressed support for this proposal but questioned how the working group would sit alongside the project board. We should not have two groups doing similar things – joined up thinking is a must.</p> <p>AS stated that the Project Board was designed to deliver the project and, as this stage has now been completed, the board should be closed and the working group should respond directly to the Partnership Panel.</p> <p>NT welcomed a way forward with this project and thought it was beneficial to have something positive to deliver together going forward. NT expressed that the section of the report that spoke about an umbrella WHS brand which combines all partners seems a unifying and positive aspect of the project.</p> <p>HO echoed the support for the proposal. HO stated careful consideration is needed regarding the reporting process and how much capacity this will take of the WHSCU. Setting milestones may be beneficial.</p> <p>AB stated her support for the proposal.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> the WHSCU to set up a working group to review funding and highlight priority projects.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> The Unit to work with AS to draft initial deadlines for the group and circulate these to the Panel.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> the WHSCU to report back to the Partnership Panel in April to recommend joint projects that funding should be sought for.</p>
6.	<p><b>World Heritage Site Management Plan</b></p> <p>6.1. <b><u>Update on delivery of Priority Actions agreed at February’s meeting (SA).</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Completion of the condition survey.</b></li> </ul> <p>A Working group is in existence to discuss this project, but due to covid-19 this group has not convened since the start of lockdown. There is an intention to get this group up and running in the coming months. Nick Croxson from Historic England is taking the lead in this project and is in discussion regarding funding. The estimated cost stated by the previous Partnership Manager was around 60-70k. The previous Partnership Manager advised that it would be best not to use volunteers for this project, but professionals with expertise and experience. It is hoped that this project will complete in 2021.</p> <p>RB stated that the brief is nearing completion and is ready for tendering. HE hopes for tender returns before Christmas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>The setting study.</b></li> </ul>

This project is key in future protection of the WHS and will importantly streamline a lot of work when commenting on planning applications. The Brief has been written, circulated and agreed. The priority now is for funding to be secured. Now that the A303 has been given consent, the possibility of legacy and benefits funding has been discussed. This project is something the unit is hoping to make real progress with in 2021 now that the new Partnership Manager has been recruited.

- **Examination of the byways,**

Discussions about status of the Ridgeway have been ongoing since the last Partnership Panel meeting. An archaeological report has been completed and is being taken to the Avebury Committee next week. TB has been in discussion with Councillor Clewer regarding this situation.

TB stated that there is a temporary TRO in place to examine damage and repairs. There have been talks to extend this in order to continue the monitoring and repairs. This should be in place until May 2022 but has yet to be decided. The general feeling is that we should collate as much evidence as possible to present to cabinet and pursue closing the ridgeway to off-road traffic. TB stated that this will likely get a legal challenge, but the general thrust is to look to maintain the temporary TRO until May 2022.

HO expressed strong support from the Avebury Committee for any extension/permanence to the TRO. HO understood the legal requirements and issues but thought it would not be too difficult as legislation is clear that the benefit of protecting the landscape is good enough to pursue closure to motorised traffic.

- **Continual damage of the West Kennet Avenue.**

Some actions are being held up and influence at the right levels is needed to pursue road closure in line with the Avebury Transport Strategy.

### 6.2. Trust Transition Project Update (AS).

There is a Project Board meeting today, which will look at the amended project spend, what needs to be delivered and how to do this. The National Heritage Lottery Fund have been flexible with extensions to the timetable and very understanding of the current situation. The funding is still there as is the willingness of partners to find a resilient way forward for the WHSCU.

## 7. **Report from the WHS Committees and Research Groups**

### 7.1. Stonehenge WHS Steering Committee

Not present

### 7.2. Avebury WHS Steering Committee (HO)

The Avebury Committee meeting in spring was postponed, however we are happy to circulate the updates and notes of the meeting next week. There are a couple of things to flag up. Firstly, within the priority projects there should be a priority to prevent damage to the WHS. Secondly, the working group for exploring the WHS needs to bear in mind the examples of other incomplete working groups from past WHS projects. Regarding the Burrowing Animals Strategy there is a need to work together across the landscape to make this effective. This should be reviewed as there is a lot of interest around this in Avebury. On top of this the new environmental land management support can take a WHS approach in investment for public money for public goods.

JT had no more to add. The NT are working closely with local parish councils, but very much focused on Avebury, visitors and navigating through the pandemic.

CS stated that it is on the cards for there to be a one-way system to prevent further damage to the West Kennet Avenue.

### 7.3. **ASAHRG (CS)**

ASAHRG met informally through Zoom. There was a hope that meetings could now happen virtually until the end of the pandemic. This meeting took reports on major investigations happening in the WHS. The most important issue raised was the concern over the NT proposal that the curatorship and staffing at the Alexander Keiller Museum would be reduced to the point that access to collections will be removed. CS expressed that he would appreciate an update from the NT regarding this.

JT stated that the NT were thinking about how they should be using the resource offered by the curator. Previously the Manor part of the role took up 50% of the resource, so the curator has now been reduced to a 0.6 FTE with a sole focus on the museum. Although there has been a reduction in FTE, more expertise can now be focused on the museum.

CS welcome this news.

**Action:** JT to prepare an update to be sent out by CS/SA to ASAHRG members.

## 8. **WHSP Chair – end of current tenure (HO chair)**

**AS left the meeting.**

Wiltshire Council presented three options:

- Option 1 – recruit a new chair early in 2021 for the full 3-year term
- Option 2 – To extend the tenure of the current chair until 2022 when the Transition Project is complete. Recruitment for a new chair would start in 2022 when a clear idea of governance has been obtained.
- Option 3 – the current chair to serve for another 3-year term (this will include the 1 year extension from march 2020 to 2021).

AB asked if AS was no longer chair, then does he retain a position on the Panel?

MPK expressed if that is the case, there will be no continuity and AS will have no part of the governance going forward. MPK stated that this would be a loss as AS has been crucial in securing funding for current legacy and benefits projects and thus would be helpful securing future funding. MPK further stated that the role of Partnership Panel chair has a contract and is formally employed through Wiltshire Council. However, this role is voluntary and not a paid position – only reasonable expenses are reimbursed

NT asked that if option 3 was chosen, would the ToR for the panel be changed to allow for a third term?

TB stated the ToR would need adjusting but the Panel has the ability to do this.

CS stated that changing ToR's required Committee approval. CS saw no reason why AS could not continue his good work chairing the Trust Transition board if he was no longer chair of the Partnership Panel.

TB stated that he could not guarantee that AS would stay on in any form if the Panel decided not to extend his chairmanship. He further stated that if the panel were to decide upon option 1, Wiltshire Council will have no resources to go towards recruitment and so another partner must lead on this occasion.

HO asked if the Wiltshire Council would have resources in place for option 2.

TB stated that by 2022 the new Partnership Manager would be in place and the burden from COVID should be less, and so would be able to get resources lined up.

MPK added that, due to the governance review, in a year we all will be in a much better position to ascertain what we need to ask a new chair to do. This would mean that option 1 may need to change, as a chair can only be appointed for 1 year because the role may change after the governance review. MPK also expressed concern over a loss of momentum in WHS projects. There were only 2 candidates in the previous recruitment process, and it took some time to get things up and running.

CS asked if funds could be used from the Partnership Manager Salary, given there has not been anyone in post for 6 months.

DR stated that a lack of resources was not about money but rather staff capacity. He expressed that WC are feeling extremely stretched and have no capacity to drive recruitment forward. DR felt as though staff were at tipping point and did not want to push anyone over the edge.

**HO thanked MPK and TB for their proposals. MPK and TB stepped out at the request of CS to allow members of the Partnership Panel to discuss.**

CS - the role of the chair can be found at the bottom of the ToR that was circulated ahead of the meeting. It states that the circumstances of AS's chairmanship should be

measured against that role. CS stated the panel has never had a report from AS detailing how he has succeeded against this description. CS also raised concerns over independence, particularly in reference to the submission of a response done with TB on the A303 scheme on behalf of the WHSCU. CS felt the content of this response indicated a particular view towards the scheme. CS stated he would vote for option 1.

NT - concur with CS's concerns with regard to the submission to the Planning Inspectorate on the A303 scheme on behalf of the WHSCU. There is a need to observe governance and the existing ToR. As a WHS we are under scrutiny and should conduct ourselves properly in terms of the governance we have set up for ourselves. There is an opportunity here for fresh thinking and new ideas to be brought into the partnership and as such can offer help with recruitment. Recruitment could be tied to the end of the governance review to give some breathing space. As such, NT would vote for option 1, but with an amended timescale.

RB – acknowledged AS's considerable contribution as Chair but felt option 3 should be ruled out to observe governance. Option 2 is slightly difficult as it is tied to the end of the Transition project, which is something that needs to be done right and the timescales are moveable. There is an opportunity for a new chair to shape final thinking at the end of that project. Regarding resourcing for option 1, HE will do all they can in offering support for recruitment. RB agreed with NT over timescales for option 1 and 2 and felt more clarity was needed. The end of the governance review doesn't give a clear date and therefore would position herself between options 1 and 2.

JT – believed that the way the recruitment process was done this last time did not target the right pools of potential candidates. Between all organisations and their contacts, we could push out an advert that would engage with the right groups of people. The NT could commit resources to help with the process in the new year. JT also expressed discomfort over being out of governance, particularly at a time when the WHS is being scrutinised. She agreed that fresh thinking would be a positive and therefore believes option 1, with a slightly adjusted timeframe, would be the best solution.

AB – has little history with the Panel and therefore still trying to get to grips with the situation. The comments made by CS has strengthened in her mind that recruitment this time should not be headed by WC. She stated that the recruitment process is not just a case of advertising for a role, but it is the management of the entire process that Wiltshire Council have no capacity to do and another partner must take this on. AB respected governance concerns and a desire to bring recruitment forward but would prefer option 2.

HO – understood CS's view, but thought it was fair to say that the Partnership Panel also had responsibility for making sure that the ToR was adhered to regarding the role of the chair. HO felt option 2 was the most pragmatic but believed that there are issues around the clarity of the role of the Partnership Panel and the chair after the governance review. We cannot recruit to a position that we do not know will exist, therefore if we recruit someone new now it must be for a temporary position. HO can see a dismissal of option 3 and a strong preference for option 1, but there are issues of recruitment and time frames.



	<p>HO asked for views on continuity and asking AS to still chair the Trust Transition board. NT stated that it is difficult to ascertain what would be reasonable for AS, however we could ask that AS overlap with a new chair for a handover period.</p> <p>RB felt NT's view was sensible and believed continuity was an important point. RB expressed that there is work to be done to understand what a realistic timescale may be, but the governance review should be completed as soon as possible so that we have a better idea over what we are appointing a chair to.</p> <p>AB wished to reiterate her previous point that Wiltshire Council is not able to recruit for the role with, or without help. Another partner must run the recruitment process.</p> <p>HO asked if anyone was willing to volunteer to take the lead on the recruitment process?</p> <p>RB stated that she could not commit at this moment in time but agreed to check with Henry Owen John and colleagues at HE. RB also added that she will be going on maternity leave soon and therefore HE representation on board will change.</p> <p>HO summarised the final decision: The Partnership Panel would like to press ahead with the recruitment of a new chair as soon as possible. The panel felt option 2 was too open ended because of the governance review and the uncertainty over the state of the Partnership Panel in the future. The Panel have essentially chosen option 1 with a slightly extended timeframe, therefore the next step is to find out what is practical in terms of time and capacity. However, it must be noted that Wiltshire Council would prefer option 2 and cannot lead the recruitment process. It must be emphasised that the Partnership Panel are extremely grateful for all of AS's time, effort and support throughout his time as chair. The Panel would be keen to ask AS if he is prepared to do a couple of months handover with a new chair to enable a degree of continuity.</p> <p>All partners wished to thank AS for all the hard work he has done over the last 7 years.</p>
9.	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>RB is going on maternity leave at the end of January 2021. The HE representative for the various boards and panels will be confirmed in due course.</p> <p>The Panel congratulated RB.</p> <p>The Panel thanked AS for all the hard work he has done over the last 6 years.</p>
10.	<p><b>Dates of next meetings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021 – time TBC</li> </ul>

