Research Agenda and Strategy. Part 1: Research Agenda

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Introduction

The Research Agenda poses questions about our current understanding and what we want to know. In order to advance our understanding of the World Heritage Site (WHS), a systematic approach is required for reviewing the gaps in our knowledge, for articulating the questions

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those gaps raise, and for outlining agreed future enquiries in the form of a workable research agenda and a strategy. The questions we ask concern not only the monuments themselves, individually and in combination, but also the wider spatial and temporal influences that they may have had.

Each area of the WHS contains a group of sites that together have played a central role in shaping our understanding of prehistoric society. The monument complexes, comparable in scale and diversity but distinctive in character, have made the wider landscape they occupy of exceptional significance, and both are regarded by UNESCO as being of *Outstanding Universal Value* (OUV). This is reflected in the scope and range of questions that they generate.

Outstanding Universal Value

It was on account of the complexes of Neolithic and Early Bronze Age monuments surrounding Stonehenge and Avebury that the areas were considered to be of *Outstanding Universal Value* (OUV) and given World Heritage Site status. A full explanation of the WHS designation can be found in the statement of OUV in the Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites World Heritage Site Management Plan 2015 (Simmonds and Thomas 2015, 26–37). The Avebury area was extended in 2008 to include the surviving field systems on Fyfield Down, as well as to encompass additional Neolithic and Early Bronze Age monuments, a decision made in part on the basis of a stated link between the field system earthworks and the earlier monuments at Avebury (UNESCO 2008, Stonehenge (United Kingdom) No 373).

While there is an inevitable emphasis within this Agenda on those sites and archaeological resources designated as of OUV, it is fully recognised that the Stonehenge and Avebury landscapes are, like any other, multi-temporal in nature. Incorporating diverse elements of different periods that have intersected or coexisted in myriad ways, to ignore what came before or came after the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age would be to deny much of the context that constitutes the significance of these landscapes. As such, there are certain themes, for example the way that later communities responded to the physical legacy of the WHS's great monuments that naturally reoccur within different period sections. Other multi-period themes echo the broad temporal scale of landscape history, and reflect both commonalities and differences in the human story of the Stonehenge and Avebury areas, as well as the subtle but important distinctions that exist in the physical fabric of the two halves of the WHS. Within various period-based question sets there arises consideration of:

  the way that these landscapes, their topography and resources, helped shape human settlement at various points in their history;

  the ebbs and flows in the significance of these landscapes (they were not always special places);

  changing scales and networks of connectedness to other regions and places;

  points of comparison and contrast in the story of human activity in the two parts of the WHS. One virtue of the 'split personality' of the WHS is that it highlights the importance of developing understanding at various spatial scales, including the micro-regional;

  changing patterns in the origins, diversity, movements, demography, health, diet and conflicts of the populations that inhabited the WHS; and

  of how developing understanding of the archaeology of the WHS can contribute to broader disciplinary agendas on a national and international scale.

Research Themes

In order to develop a coherent agenda for research specifically relevant to the WHS, six broad themes have been identified, reflecting different aspects of the unique character of these landscapes.

The six themes, and their overarching aims, are as follows:

Connected Landscapes: to gain a better understanding of the complex monumental and mortuary landscapes of the two areas of the WHS – how and why they developed and changed; which elements of the landscapes were connected and how they were connected; how far those connections extended, and for how long they persisted.

Ceremonial Monuments: to gain a better understanding of the social, symbolic and (in some cases) technological contexts of the communal and ceremonial monuments, individually and in groups – why they were built and altered; why they took the forms they did, and what they meant; what they were for, and what activities took place at them; why they were abandoned.

Burials and Barrows: to gain a better understanding of how the Early Bronze Age mortuary landscape, dominated by round barrows, developed from the Neolithic monumental landscape – the factors that determined the locations of barrows, and how cemeteries developed; their chronology and dating; the significance of their variations in form, scale, elaboration, contents and burial practices; their secondary burials.

Landscape History and Memory: to gain a better understanding of the changing, long-term histories of the two areas of the WHS, and particular locations within them – how places came to be seen as significant; how their meanings changed over time, and how they came to be viewed and treated after their periods of primary use had ended.

Human Generations: to gain a better understanding, from the analysis of human remains, of the generations of people who have populated the WHS – their origins, diversity, movements, demography, health, diet, and conflicts.

Daily Life: to gain a better understanding of the changing, day-to-day lives of those living within, or passing through, the WHS landscapes, both as they related to the construction and use of its prehistoric monuments and separate from any involvement with them.

A: Connected Landscapes

A common feature of the two areas of the WHS is the various forms of connectedness associated with many of their monuments, which give a degree of coherence to their 'ritual landscapes'. Some monuments, such the Stonehenge Avenue and the West Kennet and Beckhampton Avenues, deliberately and obviously link different parts of the monument complexes, or link parts of the built environment with elements of the natural landscape. Other types, such as cursuses, may make similar connections (although these can be of less obviously comprehensible form). There are also other possible connections, such as by river and other topographical and natural features, or by pathways or lines of sight. Connections are also evident in the construction of barrow and other cemeteries. There are questions about the connection between The Stonehenge and Avebury areas, and between them and monuments further afield in the region. Finally, the archaeo-astronomical evidence points to concerns with heavenly bodies.

B: Ceremonial Monuments

The individual monuments forming the component parts of the Neolithic landscapes of the WHS vary widely in their form, scale, location and association.

Each has its own sequence of construction, modification and abandonment. Many of these monuments have been subject of intense and long- term investigation, but numerous questions remain about their changing appearance; their precise chronologies and sequence; about how and in what manner they were built. There are also unanswered questions about what these different monuments were actually for; what they meant to those who initiated their construction, built them, visited them and used them; the range of activities that took place within and around them; about when and how they declined, and what happened to them when they were abandoned.

C: Burials and Barrows

Long barrows were an important component of the Neolithic monumental landscape, some having a clear burial function but others appearing to have contained no mortuary deposits. They are few in number in comparison with the numerous Early Bronze Age round barrows, which in parts of both areas of the WHS are the dominant visible features of the landscape (although again not all appear to have contained burials). Furthermore, similarly visible concentrations of round barrows are found both just outside the WHS, and at greater distances from it. Despite this, 'very little is known about [the barrow cemeteries]. None remains intact, and yet none has been excavated to modern standards… Nationally, very few barrow cemeteries have been looked at in their entirety' (Darvill 2005, 129). While this applies to both areas of the WHS, it is particularly the case in the Avebury area.

D: Human Generations

Despite the unambiguous evidence for mass, co- ordinated human activity in the form of the large Neolithic enclosures, henges, mounds and megalithic constructions, the people who made and used these monuments are largely invisible and unaccounted for. There is a mass of burial evidence in the form of round barrows and other graves (both individual and in cemeteries) dating to the Early Bronze Age, but little is known about the occupants' lives. However, the application of modern analytical techniques to human remains that have been recovered from the WHS have the potential to reveal much about the generations who have lived, died and been buried in these landscapes – about their origins, diversity, movements, demography, health and diet. These remains derive from centuries of antiquarian and archaeological investigation, both in the contexts of the monuments and from later periods.

E: Landscape History and Memory

Both areas of the WHS developed into centres of communal monument construction and ceremonial activity. Each, therefore, developed its own evolving history, by which these unique places would have been understood and given meaning. They would also have had wider significance, including understandings of each other, as well as of similar places in the wider landscape. Before the first Neolithic monuments were built, however, these might well have been landscapes imbued with meaning on account of their natural features and the patterns of activity undertaken within them; there are suggestions at Stonehenge that among those meanings was a sense of place stretching back into the Mesolithic.

Those histories of place continued to evolve during the centuries and millennia which followed the monuments' falling out of their original use, as new functions were found for them, and new meanings given.

F: Daily Life

While there has been an understandable focus of research in the WHS on those monuments which primarily define it, and the periods in which they were built, these monuments can only be understood in the contexts of the every-day lives of the population, and much remains to be learnt about the patterns of daily life. Such an understanding is essential not only for the periods of monument construction and use, but also for subsequent periods, from prehistory to the present, when different concerns came to dominate society, as reflected not only in the later treatment of the monuments, but also in new forms of communal construction and new forms of settlement.

Period-based Questions

Lower and Middle Palaeolithic

Research questions should wherever possible address issues set out in the *Research and Conservation Framework for the British Palaeolithic* (Prehistoric Society and English Heritage 2008), which built on the *Research Frameworks for the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic of Britain and Ireland* (English Heritage 1999). Given the difficulty of framing questions that address gaps in current knowledge when that knowledge is based on such scant data, the most germane of these for the WHS would be *Collections and Records Enhancement* (Strategic Research and Conservation Theme 8). Three priorities for Palaeolithic and/or Pleistocene research then would be:

> A1. The creation of an improved dataset;
>
> A2. Establishing the nature of the palaeo- environment; and
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> A3. Determining the effects of climate on the formation of the landscape, geological deposits and periglacial features, including those which may have influenced later activity, such as solution hollows (a focus of activity at MOD Durrington (Thompson and Powell 2016)), and periglacial striations (argued to have been significant in the laying out of the Stonehenge Avenue (Allen *et al.* in press)).

Late Glacial and Mesolithic

The lack of data from the Late Glacial is perhaps surprising, at least in the Avebury area, given its location at the headwaters of the Kennet. For the Mesolithic, however, the case is different. The large postholes in the car park at Stonehenge (and the single similar feature just beyond the WHS boundary on Amesbury Down) raise the possibility of the place having been a significant one for many millennia, while the evidence of long-term riverside occupation at Vespasian's Camp/Blick Mead shows the potential for Mesolithic activity across different parts of the landscape.

Research issues for the Late Upper Palaeolithic (Late Glacial) have been set out in the *Research and Conservation Framework for the British Palaeolithic* (Prehistoric Society and English Heritage 2008), and those for the Mesolithic in the *Mesolithic Research and Conservation Framework* (Blinkhorn and Milner 2014); both build on the *Research Frameworks for the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic of Britain and Ireland* (English Heritage 1999). 'Primary research themes' in the Mesolithic framework to which the evidence from the WHS could contribute include the following topics.

> B1. Living in a changing world: what was the impact of the human presence upon the environment, vegetation, and animal population? To what extent did environmental change impact upon Mesolithic technology and tool kits?

B2. Mesolithic lifeways: settlement and mobility: what is the range and nature of structural remains, how were they built and what did they represent?

B3. Investigating change and diversity: understanding the transition from the later Mesolithic to the earlier Neolithic: how can we investigate the character of final Mesolithic archaeology?

In the Resource Assessment for Avebury, A. George notes 'a lack of existing information… limited understanding of where archaeological deposits may remain, and a paucity of absolute dating evidence' amounting to 'a very fragmented data set'. While it is clear that people were present in the WHS during the Mesolithic at least, the scale and nature of that presence remains unclear. Thus, priorities for research include the following:

B4. A clear understanding of the climate, environment,vegetation and animal populations in and around the WHS, and in particular the hydrology of the Rivers Kennet and Avon: this will be a crucial tool to understanding of the landscapes of the Late Glacial and Early Post-Glacial periods.

B5. A better understanding of the nature of Late Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic activity.

B6. Further refining the chronology of sites, lithic industries and change.

Neolithic

For the sake of clarity, the suggestions for future research follow the themes and order used by Cleal and Pollard in their Resource Assessment for Avebury. No particular hierarchy or precedence should be inferred.

Settlement and Landscape

One consequence of the understandable focus of attention on the ceremonial earthworks and other structures has been the neglect of smaller or less conspicuous elements of the contemporary landscape. As a result, there are a number of important questions to be addressed.

C1. Can we better characterise an earliest Neolithic (ie, pre-3650 cal BC) presence within the WHS? Does it pre-date the creation of monuments as current evidence would suggest? Does the earliest Neolithic owe a legacy to Late Mesolithic inhabitation of these landscapes, or does it represent a process of infill following a hiatus in occupation at the very end of the Mesolithic?

C2. While flint scatters offer our best evidence for where people were living and engaging in various productive activities during the period, their value has not been fully realised. Using scatter and, where present, cut feature settlement signatures (eg, pits and rare structural traces), can we develop a better understanding of the scale, tempo, duration and composition of Neolithic settlement areas in the WHS? Can we identify changes in the location and character of settlement areas over the course of the Neolithic? What form does domestic architecture take?

C3. What was the relationship between settlement and monuments? Did the location of earlier settlement and   other quotidian   activity influence   the   siting and form of later monuments? Could settlement traces become meaningful in the same way as monuments, as markers of place and memory? To what extent did   settlement   architecture   influence   or provide the prototype for monumental structures (as argued for Durrington   Walls, Woodhenge and Stonehenge)?

C4. While knowledge of subsistence practices is relatively good for the established Early Neolithic (*c.* 3650–3400 cal BC) and latest Neolithic (*c.* 2600–2400 cal BC), thanks to

substantial material, faunal and plant assemblages from key sites of these dates (eg, Windmill Hill, Durrington Walls), it remains relatively poor for other phases. Can better evidence for subsistence practices be obtained for   the earliest (pre-3650 cal BC), Middle (3400–2900 cal BC) and earlier part of the Late (2900–2600 cal BC) Neolithic? Was mixed farming (use of domesticates and cereal cultivation) a feature of the Middle and Late Neolithic, or did   the importance of cereal cultivation diminish, as postulated nationally?

C5. How do subsistence practices relate to monument construction? Did the demands of major monument building require an up- scaling in food production, or could they be sustained under normal productive conditions? Data from Durrington Walls supports a model whereby resources were drawn in from outside the region, but was this common practice? Are there special kinds of 'monumental economy' that differ in scale and kind from routine production?

Things

Many of the key excavated assemblages from iconic sites within the WHS derive from excavations that are in some cases three-quarters of a century old. While some of these formed the keystones of chronologies and type series, they are themselves now somewhat in need of re-analysis (as was undertaken with Alexander Keiller's archive from Windmill Hill: Whittle *et al.* 1999).

C6. A key aim is to better understand the chronologies of key artefact types and technological processes, especially those of the middle and earlier part of the Late Neolithic (*c.* 3400–2600 cal BC). Specifically, what is the currency of chisel and oblique arrowheads; of Peterborough Ware and its sub-styles; of polished flint and stone axes; and when does the shift from narrow flake to flake production occur? While these questions are of broader relevance (ie, applicable to southern Britain as a whole), the potential to addressing them using the archaeological record of the WHS is considerable.

C7. Can we better source lithic materials being used within the region, and so enhance knowledge of exchange and mobility networks? Are there significant flint extraction pits within these landscapes? Were more exotic/non-local materials being used in monumental contexts, and if so, why?

Monumentality 1. Earlier Neolithic

The later Neolithic ceremonial complexes at Stonehenge and Avebury were not built in virgin territory but continued a legacy of monument construction that went back to the second quarter of the 4th millennium BC at least. Research into earlier Neolithic monumentality has been of variable intensity, with more sustained and larger scale investigation in the Avebury than Stonehenge landscape. This has resulted in certain of the Avebury monuments, notably Windmill Hill and the West Kennet long barrow, taking on an iconic, 'type site', identity, in a way that none of the earlier Neolithic constructions of the Stonehenge landscape have. There also exist differences in the kinds of 4th millennium BC monuments encountered within each of these areas: cursus monuments seemingly being absent for the Avebury region and megalithic long barrows from the Stonehenge landscape, for example. Issues for research relate to setting, chronology, associated activity and legacy.

C8. Chronology still remains an issue. There is a need to obtain more and better dates for long barrows, especially those in the Stonehenge landscape, and for the enclosure at Robin Hood's Ball. In some cases this can be achieved using existing collections material, in other instances it will require targeted fieldwork. What can be established of the duration of primary use of the regions early monuments?

C9. Through re-analysis of existing bone collections (from both antiquarian and more modern exploration), and targeted fieldwork, what can we say of the pattern and diversity of mortuary rites associated with the WHS long barrows?

C10. What do we know of the locations of monument construction? Were long barrows within the WHS always constructed within existing clearings, or using locations previously occupied or utilised? Were they maintained clear of vegetation after their primary use or subject to vegetational recolonization (as hinted at with some monuments in the Avebury region: eg, Easton Down)? What can be inferred of late 4th and early 3rd millennium BC mortuary practices and their monumental settings? Do some of the WHS long barrows belong in this horizon? Is there a shift to individual burial?

Monumentality 2: Late Neolithic

This period represents the *floruit* of the activity that produced the unique character of the Stonehenge and Avebury landscapes of the WHS. It is during the first six centuries of the 3rd millennium BC that some of the greatest monumental constructions in prehistoric Europe were created, foremost among which are Stonehenge, Avebury and Silbury Hill. By this stage we can infer that these areas had taken on a major extra-regional significance, and probably attracted groups and individuals from across the British Isles to participate in construction, ceremony or pilgrimage. Understanding what was happening in the WHS during the later Neolithic is central to the development of knowledge of the period for Britain as a whole.

C11. Did monument building take place continuously during the period 2900–2400 cal BC, or were there significant hiatuses and other times of great constructional intensity?

C12. The chronology of megalithic settings remains poor despite the scale of excavation at many sites. Can a better chronology be established for all of the stone settings at Avebury, for those of its Avenues, and for the Sanctuary? Can the chronology and sequence of the Stonehenge megaliths be better defined, and the date of the introduction of the bluestones be firmly established? Can the uncertainty attached to the current phasing of both Avebury and Stonehenge be refined? Can the source(s) of the Stonehenge sarsens be identified? Critically, we need to know whether all of these are of local origin (ie, from Salisbury Plain), or whether the largest derive from deposits on the Marlborough Downs and what this might tell of relations between communities within the two areas.

C13. Linked to the above, it would be desirable to map the former extent of natural sarsen trails and develop methodologies or characterisation techniques to allow the location of stone sources used during the Neolithic to be identified.

C14. The West Kennet palisade enclosures comprise a critically important complex, and one that might   be intimately linked to gatherings structured around the building of monuments such as Avebury, its Avenues and Silbury Hill. However, their chronology and sequence of construction are in need of refinement. Is it possible to identify the range of activities that took place within the large spaces defined by Enclosures 1 and 2? Were those activities comparable to the gatherings and   feasting events seen with the pre-henge activity at Durrington Walls?

C15. What forms of social organisation might be inferred from Late Neolithic monuments? Is there convincing evidence of social inequality? Do social distinctions emerge from, rather than provide the pretext for, the building of major monuments?

C16. While clearly differing in the detail of architectural form, do the sequences of monument building in the Avebury and Stonehenge landscapes run in parallel, and indeed with other major complexes on the Wessex chalk (Knowlton, Dorchester)?

C17. Are there sufficient differences in practices, material culture and evidence of networks to infer that the development of the Stonehenge and Avebury complexes was competitive (a process of rolling emulation and up- staging) rather than integrated and mutually coordinated?

C18. Through material provenancing and the application of oxygen and strontium isotope analysis on animal and human remains, can we delineate the networks that under- pinned the creation of these monuments? Was participation always extra-regional? How extensive and far-reaching were these networks?

C19. Was the apparent up-scaling in monument construction in the decades around 2500 cal BC a response in part to the appearance in southern England of new technologies, lifestyles and   ideologies originating from continental Europe?

C20. What impact did monument construction have on the physical landscape: the removal of materials for   monument   construction (soils, stones, timber); erosion and the long-term impact on soils; and the creation of areas of land perceived as off limits/taboo?

People

Further questions relate to human lives and the potential that exists to enrich knowledge through the systematic application of scientific analyses to skeletal material.

C21. Does the advent of the Neolithic mark the beginning of a major demographic transition? Is it possible to measure resident populations, and do those populations fluctuate, remain stable or steadily grow?

C22. What potential exists to better understand diet, health and mortality among Neolithic populations within the WHS? Can we detect differences across time and between specific populations (eg, tomb groups)? How do those patterns mirror or differ from the picture from other regions of the British Isles?

C23. What potential exists to document human lifetime mobility through the application of oxygen and strontium isotope analysis?

Beaker and Early Bronze Age

Although there is evidence in the landscape for non- mortuary activity during the Beaker/Early Bronze Age period, including within the context of the Neolithic monuments (and, as at Stonehenge, of their continued modification), the archaeology of the period is dominated by the burial record. While this includes, for example, the Beaker burial in the Stonehenge ditch, the record consists primarily of the burials in the surrounding landscape, as reflected in the widespread distribution of round barrows, many of them in barrow cemeteries.

While a number of recent projects have begun to address some of the outstanding issues relating to barrows and barrow cemeteries (see Stonehenge Resource Assessment update), research is still most notable for its absence. Needham *et al.* (2010a, 1) note that the 'limited amount of more recent archaeological work on this key block of landscape [the Normanton Down barrows] is surprising and constrains comprehension of the broader development of the Stonehenge Environs'. In the Avebury part of the WHS there has been even less systematic study.

Much has been gained, however, from analytical survey in terms of phasing between adjacent barrows, and even within individual barrow structures (for example, in the case of the First Monuments Project geophysical surveys of the Cursus Group: Darvill *et al.* 2013). The distribution of barrows around Avebury is very different, but a similar set of field projects and a re-assessment of archives of 19th- and early 20th-century excavations would be likely to yield valuable results.

Chronology

Although the chronologies of individual barrows and barrow cemeteries remain key to their understanding, there are only four dated examples in the Avebury area. In 2005, Darvill listed 11 for the Stonehenge area, since when new dates have been obtained from Wilsford G1 (Leivers and Moore 2008), and from Overton G1, the first secure date for a Wessex 1 burial (Needham *et al.* 2010b). There is a need, therefore, to:

> J1. Establish the chronology of individual barrows, and the phasing of their structures; and

> J2. Establish the dates and development of barrow cemeteries.

Relationships

Answers to the questions of chronology will aid in an understanding of the issues concerning relationships such as the proximity of individual barrows and cemeteries to the earlier ceremonial complexes, including viewsheds and intervisibility. These issues also require a consideration of the natural and cultural landscapes within which the barrows were constructed. They include the following questions:

> J3. What patterns are evident in the spatial relationships between the locations of barrows and the existing monuments in the Stonehenge and Avebury landscapes, and how did these change over time?

> J4. What was the nature of the local environment, contemporary land-uses and other activity in the landscape?

Another relationship to consider is that between the Stonehenge and Avebury areas of the WHS. Cleal noted that 'in comparison to the area around Stonehenge, the Avebury and Marlborough Downs appear relatively poor in grave goods' (2005, 124). This raises the question:

> J5. Are the barrows of Avebury really 'poorer' than their Stonehenge counterparts, or is this an effect of different histories of preservation and investigation?

Other issues

Darvill's Objective 7, 'Mapping the surfaces of the Stonehenge stones' (2005, 128) has now been explored by a programme of laser scanning (Abbott and Anderson-Whymark 2012), which increased the known number of prehistoric carvings on the stones from 47 to 118. Dating (based on the apparent typology of the axes and daggers represented) places these in the period 1750–1500 cal BC. The issues still to be answered are:

> J6. Why these carvings were made, what did they mean, and what significance did Stonehenge have for the people who made them?

There is a need to improve the chronology of the burial record of the later 2nd millennium cal BC, given the number of Bronze Age burials that have been excavated in the area (Cleal 2005, 125–32). There is scope for further dating of:

> J7. Cremation burials now that cremated bone is directly datable (and from very small samples); and

> J8. Individuals buried with Beakers against the stones of the West Kennet Avenue, the Longstones Cove and the Sanctuary: this would clarify the history of the settings and of the interaction of different traditions.

Middle and Late Bronze Age

Although some field systems may have had their origins in the Early Bronze Age, and round barrow construction continued into the Middle Bronze Age, in general terms the Middle and Late Bronze Age saw a major change in the focus of activity in the WHS (and beyond), with the end of major ceremonial and mortuary monument construction, and widespread establishment of permanent settlements within a clearly agricultural landscape. Evidence from the Stonehenge area includes much of the infilling of the Wilsford Shaft, dated by radiocarbon to the entirety of the period, as well as at least four settlements, two metalwork hoards, large areas occupied by field systems and crossed by linear ditches, and burials in flat cemeteries and inserted into earlier or contemporary round barrows. Virtually all of the evidence from Avebury lies at a distance from the core monuments. However, the 2008 extension of the WHS took in the extensive field systems on Fyfield Down, at least parts of which are likely to originate in the Middle and Late Bronze Age.

The predominance of evidence for both Middle and Late Bronze Age activity at Stonehenge and Avebury lying at a distance from the Neolithic ceremonial complexes raises a number of questions:

K1. What was happening within, and immediately around the Neolithic monuments at Stonehenge and Avebury during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages?

K2. Does the present dearth of evidence for activity mean that these places were actually being avoided, possibly physically; or is it simply a question of lack of archaeological visibility?

K3. What does this say about the changing significance of these sites during the later 2nd millennium and beyond?

The spatial relationships between the Early Bronze Age mortuary landscape and later Bronze Age activities, particularly agricultural, also largely remains to be explored. One question is:

K4. What is the significance of the later Bronze Age field boundaries being either deliberately sighted on pre-existing barrows, or actively avoiding them?

Questions relating to Middle and Late Bronze Age land use are many. They include the following:

K5. What is the chronology of various elements of the field systems? When did they originate? Over what time-scale were they laid out?

K6. How are settlements, whether open or enclosed, distributed in relation to field systems, and what was their chronological relationship?

K7. To what extent were the patterns of land tenure indicated by field systems new – or can earlier origins be identified?

K8. Can episodes of colluviation and alluviation be dated, and if so can they be linked to changes in land use?

K9. What was the nature of the 'natural' landscape during the later Bronze Age and what effect did cultivation have on it, especially in terms of soil fertility and erosion?

Aspects of the later Bronze Age finds assemblages also merit further research:

K10. Further work on the landscape location of hoards and single finds needs to be carried out, especially in the light of recent work in south-east England (Yates and Bradley 2010a and b).

K11. The Owen Meyrick collection in Wiltshire Museum demonstrates the usefulness of large-scale fieldwalking survey and, although a catalogue of this material has been published (Swanton 1987), very little work has been carried out on pottery fabrics or the depositional context of vessels.

K12. The significant assemblage of Deverel- Rimbury ceramics from West Overton G19 also remains unpublished.

The transition into the earliest Iron Age is also an area which requires further investigation:

K13. What was the level of continuity between the Late Bronze Age and the earliest Iron Age, and what was the pace of change?

K14. How was the landscape reorganised over this transition, and how did society change?

Iron Age

In both areas of the WHS there is comparatively little evidence for Early and Middle Iron Age activity, especially in comparison with the Vale of Pewsey and the fringes of the high Chalk; and it remains the case, as stated in 2001, that the Iron Age of the WHS is 'poorly understood' (Chadburn and Corney 2001, 9). For Avebury, Fitzpatrick (2016) is able to list two enclosed settlements within the WHS and another seven in the surroundings, as well as a number of unenclosed settlements represented by pits and artefact scatters. None has been excavated recently or subjected to dating programmes. In the Stonehenge part of the WHS, works in advance of the A303 Preferred Scheme in 2004 revealed an enclosed Iron Age settlement at Scotland Lodge, just to the west of Winterbourne Stoke (Leivers and Moore 2008).

At present the range of settlements within the WHS and their date are poorly understood and knowledge of the agricultural basis is limited. Only a small assemblage of animal bone was found at Overton Down X/XI and the work was done before the recovery of charred plant remains had begun. Important issues, therefore, include:

L1. Establishing the types of Iron Age sites present in and close to the WHS, and their dates (Chadburn and Corney 2001, 67);

L2. Examining the relationship between downland settlements and those in the wider landscape, including the Vale of Pewsey which became important in the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age. The regular identification of Iron Age 'A' pottery in and close to the Avebury WHS also merits further investigation;

L3. Gaining a better understanding of the material culture, including its chronology (Research Aims 11, 14 and 16f, South West Archaeological Research Framework (Webster 2008)); and

L4. What were the relationships (if any) between Iron Age activity and the earlier ceremonial centres?

Romano-British

The Romano-British settlement at the foot of Silbury Hill is the largest known settlement of this period in the WHS, but much remains to be learnt about its function, status and character. As Darvill has noted (2005, 77) the density of Romano-British sites in the landscape around Stonehenge suggests that this area too may have been intensively exploited during this period.

By the Roman period, it may not only have been the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age monuments in the landscape that were considered 'ancient', but also later prehistoric features, including hillforts, with Vespasian's Camp close to Stonehenge within the WHS, and Oldbury

just outside it but overlooking the Avebury area from the west. This raises a number of questions:

M1. How can we decide whether the later activity around these exceptional monuments was a particular response to them?

M2. Are there recognisable patterns of activity, including ritual/religious activity, at the existing 'ancient' monuments within the landscape, including Neolithic monuments, Bronze Age barrows and Iron Age hillforts?

M3. Are there indications that the finds, particularly of metalwork, from such sites were votive?

Given that ritual is so prevalent on all types of Romano-British settlements it is important to consider what criteria could be used to separate practice at those sites close to Avebury, Stonehenge and Silbury Hill from the background level of religion and ritual found on rural and roadside settlements generally (Crosby *et al.* 2013, 281–2). If there is evidence for a particular response to the monuments here, does it differ from that seen on or around other, less spectacular, prehistoric monuments (*ibid*., 283–4; Williams 1998)?

M4. How does the activity at earlier monuments compare with that found more widely in Britain (and in continental Europe)?

M5. Is there any relationship between the earlier monuments and the locations of Romano- British settlement patterns and land use, including burials and cemeteries? Does the proximity of the Roman barrows at West Overton relate to the Neolithic monuments and Bronze Age round barrows? Is there evidence that prehistoric monuments were seen as a useful source of stone for the construction of Roman villas (or other buildings)? If so, did this affect settlement location?

The Silbury Hill Romano-British settlement is of considerable importance to the WHS, relating not only to an understanding of the pattern of settlement types within the wider landscape, but also providing clues as to contemporary perceptions of the earlier monuments. Questions arising from it include the following:

M6. To what extent was the location of the settlement next to Silbury Hill determined by the   presence of that monument, and the proximity of Avebury? The evidence from the settlement would need to be compared with other roadside settlements before an exceptional response to its location could be inferred.

M7. Was there a Late Iron Age and Romano-British religious/ritual focus east of the hill?

M8. Where was the Swallowhead Spring in this period, and are there any structures or finds deposits associated with it?

M9. Does any evidence for the road frontage of the settlement survive?

M10. What farming, craft and economic activities were present, and where is the evidence located within the settlement?

M11. Are the higher status buildings further from the road?

M12. Were villas and higher status burials usually situated well outside the nucleated settlements?

The presence of the Roman road passing centrally through the Avebury area highlights the likely influence of communication routes on settlement and other activities:

M13. Were the buildings to the north of the Roman road at Silbury positioned along a north – south route at a crossroads of the Roman road and a minor or local road?

M14. Where was the river crossing in the Romano- British period? Was there a bridge? When did these routes and river crossing originate?

M15. What is the evidence for communication routes across the Stonehenge landscape, and to what extent were they influenced by the presence or locations of the monuments?

Post-Roman and Early Saxon

Although there is limited evidence for activity in the WHS during this period, it has been argued that the Avebury area may have lain just east of the post- Roman frontier between the Anglo-Saxons and the Britons, with Oldbury Iron Age hillfort, just to the west, possibly playing an important role on that border. The changing relationship, in the decades after the Roman withdrawal in AD 410, between the native Britons and the Saxon immigrants, possibly employed initially as mercenaries by British landowners, is an issue of general interest for this period, but of particular significance given the suggested presence of this political and cultural frontier. There are a range of research questions relating to post-Roman political developments:

N1. What evidence is there for the Avebury area lying close to a political and cultural frontier between the Britons and Saxons; what roles might the Avebury monuments, Oldbury hillfort, and the Roman road have had in the defining of political boundaries in the Saxon period?

N2. Although well outside the Avebury area of the WHS the construction of the Wansdyke would clearly have been a significant event in the lives of the local population, and much remains to be understood about its origins, purpose and development.

N3. What role did the Avon Valley have as a communication route for Saxon migrants moving into Wiltshire from the south coast, and how did this impact on the existing communities?

While such developments are likely to be reflected in the settlement and land use patterns, this was a period of both continuity and change:

N4. Is there evidence that the patterns of Saxon settlement and land use were affected by the presence within the landscape of the 'ancient' monuments?

N5. What determined the locations of the early Saxon settlements, and any subsequent shifts? What evidence is there for continuity in settlement and land use from the Romano-British period?

N6. Is there any pattern in the relationship between the locations of Saxon settlement and the valley-sited monuments, such as Silbury Hill, Avebury henge and Durrington Walls?

N7. What range of activities was undertaken at or close to earlier, upstanding monuments?

N8. To what extent were prehistoric monuments, Roman settlements and other landscape features used in defining Saxon estates and other boundaries, and are they referred to in late Saxon charters?

N9. What is the character and extent of the Glebe Field occupation site excavated by the Vatchers?

Although the landscape was crossed by both prehistoric and Roman communication routes, some significant routes, such as the Herepath and the Ridgeway, may date to this period:

N10. How important was the Roman road between *Cunetio* and *Verlucio* in the Saxon period? What was its condition, particularly on the valley floor? What relationship might

have had with the Wansdyke to the south?

N.11 Can new communication routes dating to this period be identified? What was their function and what role did they play?

N.12. Is there any evidence that communication routes across the landscape were influenced by the presence or locations of monuments?

This was a period of changing religious tradition and burial practices, including the possibility of a continuing Christian tradition:

N13. Are there variations in the re-use of prehistoric barrows for intrusive Saxon burial, for example in different locations within the landscape, proximity to earlier monuments etc?

N.14. A small number of burial sites discovered around Avebury belong to a particular tradition, but where was the rest of the population buried?

N.15. The 7th century decapitated inhumation at Stonehenge in Y-Hole 9 suggests that the monument may have been a Saxon execution site: is there supporting evidence from this or other monuments, and how might this reflect the marginal locations of the monuments?

N.16. Is there evidence that rivers or other features of the natural landscape had particular significance, as suggested by the burial of a young woman, covered in planks, in a bog at Lake (Pl. 13), in the Avon Valley (McKinley 2003)?

N.17. What evidence is there, in the relationships between modern, medieval, early post-Roman and Roman settlement and churches, for the survival or otherwise of Christianity?

N.18. What role did prehistoric monuments play in the lives of Anglo-Saxon communities and to what extent were they 'Christianised' in the later 1st millennium AD, replacing earlier, and potentially very deep-rooted beliefs?

Mid–Late Saxon and Medieval

It is unclear what influence the prehistoric monuments had on patterns of mid–late Saxon and medieval activity. The settlement at Avebury, possibly developing from a 9th-century defensible *burh*, was focused closely on the henge, eventually extending (at an unknown time) into its interior, and its study has the potential to reveal long-term trends in its development from the post-Roman period through to the end of the middle ages. In the Avon Valley, the village of Durrington, based around two manors (East and West), developed some distance to the north of the Durrington Walls henge, but Amesbury, just outside the WHS, was an important meeting place, royal manor and ecclesiastical site in the late Saxon period. It lies adjacent to an Iron Age hillfort, and royal itineraries would have approached it through a landscape dominated by prehistoric monuments. Such monuments may have had a variety of uses in these periods, therefore, reflecting the changing views of their origins and significance – as meeting places, markets, or even as places of execution or military conflict. Questions include the following:

O.1. Is any pattern discernible in the locations of settlement and siting of burials, shrines and churches in relation to the prehistoric monuments, from which general conclusions can be drawn about how the monuments were perceived and treated in this period, by the Church and the general population? Is there evidence that the standing stones at Avebury and Stonehenge were treated differently? This could include investigation of the Waden Hill burial(s) and their date, and the possible cemetery near the Sanctuary.

O.2. Where, when and how did mid–late Saxon and medieval settlements develop? How were they internally organised, eg, with tenement boundaries? Is there evidence for settlement shift?

O.3. Specifically, what were Avebury's origins and how did it develop – possibly as an earlier elliptical mid-Saxon settlement replaced by a late Saxon *burh*, or as a 'failed town', or as a planned village etc? Was there an Anglo-Saxon manorial centre on the site of the present manor house?

O.4. What is the character, date and duration of the medieval activity indicated by the earthworks in Avebury Manor Parkland? What does this tell us about the development of settlement during the medieval period at Avebury? How do the dynamics of medieval settlement in Avebury and Avebury Trusloe relate to one another (if at all)? How did the existence of a church alongside a priory cell affect the relationship between the two groups of monks, the community and the landscape?

O.5. What role (if any) did prehistoric monuments have in the delineating of land boundaries and communication routes, and to what extent were they impacted upon by them?

O.6. What was the precise date, status or location of Avebury's first church? Was there a timber phase pre-dating the late Saxon structural elements in Avebury church?

O.7. What was the nature of the late Saxon structure on Silbury Hill and the double-ditched possibly Saxon shrine in Avebury henge?

O.8. What was the nature of medieval agriculture and animal husbandry in the locale, and how did it impact on earlier monuments and their visibility? Was there an extension of arable agriculture at the expense of downland grazing?

Post-medieval and Modern

With a few exceptions, there has been little research in the WHS into the post-medieval and modern periods. While the development of the settled and agricultural landscape and its built heritage is, to a large extent, typical of the wider region, recent centuries witnessed the growing recognition of, and interest in, the prehistoric monuments themselves, with the stones in particular increasingly regarded and presented – by antiquarians, archaeologists, artists, writers etc – as the defining features of these landscapes, giving them their distinct character. Increasingly, concerns over their conservation and preservation have exerted considerable influence over broader developments within these landscapes. There is considerable scope for the multi-disciplinary analysis of social, cultural, military and political aspects of recent history, using not only documentary and photographic archives and oral histories, but also archaeological techniques such as excavation and remote sensing.

The development of the WHS as an inhabited landscape over the last four or five hundred years shows many features in common with other parts of the county, and, indeed, with large areas of southern England. The difference, however, is that these developments took place cheek by jowl with monuments which even in the relatively uninformed past must have seemed strange, unexplained and perhaps intriguing to the landowners, tenants and labourers who shared this landscape. While much of the Stonehenge landscape was only sparsely inhabited, much of the later development of Avebury is more complex and still little-understood.

P1: how did travellers passing through the landscape view the stones at different times in history?

▶ More information on this question

P2: what are the planting dates for the prominent tree clumps in the landscape?

▶ More information on this question

P3: what is the history and development of the farms within the WHS?

▶ More information on this question

P4: what is the connection between the destruction of monuments and the construction of buildings and other features?

▶ More information on this question

P5: what is the history of construction and use of watermeadows in the WHS?

▶ More information on this question

P6: what os the background and hostory to the the development of the settlement of largely 20th-century social housing at Avebury Trusloe?

▶ More information on this question

P7: how can the small details of landscape and streetscape within the WHS be recorded and preserved?

▶ More information on this question

P8: How has the military presence in both parts of the WHS developed?

▶ More information on this question

P9: What physical and social impacts has the military had on the monuments, landscape, airscape and audio/auralscapes of the WHS?

▶ More information on this question

For many decades both parts of the WHS have been the focus of attention and gatherings, often counter-culture and anti-establishment, frequently for reasons indirectly related to orthodox archaeological opinion as to the origins, meaning and significance of the monuments themselves.

P10: Why have these two landscapes, and particular sites within them, become the focus for such attention, and what do they represent to people to enable them to express such varied visions and perspectives of modern needs and of past histories?

▶ More information on this question

P11: To what extent is orthodox archaeological knowledge reflected in the wider beliefs of these groups?

▶ More information on this question

P12: As such groups do not exist in a vacuum, to what extent do their ideas, beliefs and practices reflect wider socio-cultural concerns and developments?

▶ More information on this question

P13: What permanent markings, and material culture, have such gatherings left on the landscape and on the

monuments?

The landscapes of both parts of the WHS have been repeatedly transformed in recent centuries, reflecting the change in vision of what is considered an appropriate setting, and leading both to what we see today and plans for managing future developments.

P14: What archaeological remains survive from the removal of buildings (such as the First World War aerodrome and the late 1920s café at Stonehenge) and other features in order to create the modern interpretation of prehistoric landscapes; and what were the underlying theoretical, cultural and social influences that led to the creation of the resulting (and other) earthworks?

P15: What drove the changing understandings and interpretations of these landscapes?

P16: What was the impact on local communities at both Stonehenge and Avebury of people being moved, and having their homes demolished, in order to help create settings for the stones?

P17: What was the theoretical basis, and the broader context, for the considerable amount of restoration work that has taken place alongside the excavations within the WHS in the 20th century, in particular at Stonehenge and Avebury themselves?

Despite the volume of work undertaken focused on the records of and finds from past excavations, as well as historic and recent survey work, there has been limited research into the history of antiquarian and archaeological endeavour within the WHS (Pl. 15).

P18: What can we tell, by reappraising the practices of early antiquaries through analysis of re-excavated trenches and sondages, about how they encountered and investigated the monuments?

P19: What have been the dynamics of the relationships between antiquaries and the occupants of the Stonehenge and Avebury landscapes; between native residents and settlers (eg, military and associated personnel and trades); and between residents and visitors, especially those visiting the monuments?

A programme to record and preserve an oral personal and social history of 20th-century archaeological research in the WHS would be of value. In addition, research should be undertaken into the impact of World Heritage Designation on local communities and land use; and on perceptions among local communities of that impact.

P20: What effect has WHS status had on archaeological research and the preservation and conservation of archaeological and historic sites, on development carried out in the context of the planning process, and on the military use of the landscapes?

P21: What has been the impact on people and communities, and on the conservation and protection of sites and structures of later date, bearing in mind that the World Heritage Site's OUV is acknowledged because of the importance of its Neolithic and Early Bronze Age monuments?

▶ More information on this question

P22: What has been the impact of the WHS on research in the rest of the county?

▶ More information on this question

P23: What is the circulation and hierarchy of interpretations of Stonehenge and Avebury throughout history, and how have individuals and groups reacted to these interpretations? What do we know of the relationship between artists and writers and the landscape, and between architects and designers and the monuments? What does the poetry and music associated with Stonehenge and Avebury tell us of the times in which authors and composers visited? Why are Avebury and Silbury adopted as titles for places, products, services and businesses that have no apparent relationship with the WHS?

▶ More information on this question

Conclusion

The research themes outlined above are not intended to be an exhaustive list of unanswered questions or suggested research proposals. What they are intended to provide is an indication of the wide range of possibilities which the rich archaeological resource of the WHS has to answer important questions about the past (and hence the present), not only within the landscapes of the WHS itself, but also within wider national and international contexts.

Which avenues of research will be followed will depend on many factors, including individual interests, available technologies and adequate funding, and it has not been the purpose of the Agenda to prioritise some research questions above others. Nonetheless, the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site enhances the value and significance of all the archaeological remains within it and requires that any research undertaken here is subject to the highest standards. The Research Strategy which follows provides a framework for that research, with respect to its formulation, planning and conduct, and in the dissemination of its results.

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Research Agenda and Strategy. Part 2: Strategy

Matt Leivers and Andrew B. Powell with contributions by Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger and Sarah Simmonds.

Introduction

The first two parts of this Research Framework for the Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites World Heritage Site have provided an overview of the current state of knowledge about the cultural heritage of the whole of the WHS: the Resource Assessment has summarised its unique archaeological and historical resource; and the Research Agenda has articulated some of the wide range of questions that remain to be answered. These questions relate both to those characteristics which imbue the WHS with its Outstanding Universal Value, and to its wider archaeological and historical contexts.

This third section, the Research Strategy, provides a structure for advancing the Research Agenda for the next five to ten years. It does so first by outlining a set of core principles under which future research within the WHS should be conducted; and secondly by offering

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set of strategies which underpin these principles and provide direction and guidance to those co- ordinating, undertaking, monitoring and funding the research, and to other stakeholders.

The Research Strategy, therefore, has as its key aims:

> to promote and facilitate innovative research of the highest quality in the WHS which will both protect and enhance the site and its attributes of OUV, and contribute to its management;

> to set out the core principles (incorporating best practice, innovation, sustainability, and communication and engagement), which will guide the conduct of research projects;

> to promote collaboration and co-ordination within the research community of the WHS, by agreeing a process that will guide the planning, funding, conduct and dissemination of research projects; and

> to establish a process by which the Research Framework, and its component parts, can be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

Research Principles

There are four principles which should underpin the conduct of all research undertaken within the WHS. While these are, in general terms, of wider relevance to archaeological research, the OUV of the WHS gives them particular weight and significance.

1. Best Practice

All research undertaken within the WHS should follow best practice.

The unique resource of the WHS demands that any research, whether using intrusive or non-intrusive methods, should be of the highest quality and undertaken in accordance with the principle of best practice. Where appropriate this should aim to exceed industry-accepted minimum standards, as established by national bodies and set out in professional codes and guidance (see Appendix 1), or standards as enshrined in local and national legislation.

2. Sustainability

All research undertaken within the WHS must be sustainable in the long term.

Intrusive methods of archaeological investigation, whether in the field or on materials in museum archives, have varying levels of impact on the archaeological resource of the WHS. However, unlike other impacts, such as agriculture, development and other processes, which continually reduce and degrade the resource, archaeological research can and should enhance it.

In one sense, the archaeological resource is finite. In another, it is growing, as new surveys and excavations reveal previously-unknown sites or increase knowledge of known sites. Sustainable research can enhance its value by advancing our understanding of it; both established methods and the development of new research techniques can substantially increase its potential to provide knowledge, by refining methods and opening up new avenues of enquiry.

It is essential however to carefully balance the potential furthering of understanding against any adverse or destructive effects of the work undertaken (Strategic Objective 2.7).

The planning of research projects which propose to impact directly on the archaeological resource (either by excavation or other non-repeatable methods of investigation) need to have sound research objectives consistent with these principles of research, and to justify their methods as being the most appropriate for the task at hand.

3.   Innovation

Research undertaken within the WHS should seek to inspire and refine new methods of investigation, analysis and dissemination.

The WHS offers a particularly important resource for researchers, as reflected in its OUV, a fact recognised since the earliest antiquaries started studying the monuments now within it. Its potential has been a significant catalyst for the development of archaeological practice, not only as a test-bed for new methods of fieldwork (both intrusive and non- intrusive), but also for new techniques of scientific investigation and analysis, the refining of chronologies, and the development of new theoretical approaches to understanding the past.

Research in the WHS should continue to inspire innovation in the investigation of archaeology and cultural heritage, wherever appropriate and sustainable.

4.   Communication and Engagement

All research undertaken within the WHS should be disseminated in order to facilitate future research and promote public engagement.

The results of all research projects need to be easily accessible and available to the widest possible audience. Research that does not lead to publication or the deposition of datasets in accessible repositories does not meet the requirements of best practice. Consequently it should be a requirement that the results of all research undertaken in the WHS be made available without undue delay. All reports for fieldwork – whether interim or final – must be lodged with the HER at the earliest possible time.

The OUV of the WHS implies that the understanding and appreciation of the archaeological remains is of interest and significance to different audiences. The investment of the WHS with a range of aesthetic values and diverse significance to a variety of communities predates its inscription.

Clear communication and public engagement should be central to any research project. Public engagement (where this would be of some benefit) should be at all stages of a project, and should be followed by prompt and appropriate dissemination of the results of the research through publications and other media.

The public's appreciation of the WHS may also be promoted (where appropriate and with suitable guidance) through its participation in the research process itself. This will provide a better understanding of how the evidence is gathered and upon which an informed understanding about the past is based, given that there are widely variable public perceptions about the origins, purposes and current significance of the WHS, its landscape and the monuments within it.

Strategies

In order to progress research in accordance with the core principles outlined above, it is necessary to establish a number of strategies which provide researchers and other stakeholders with a practical framework for the planning, conduct and dissemination of research.

1. The Development of Research Projects

Research projects undertaken within the WHS should conform to agreed procedures in their planning and conduct.

In order to ensure that research projects in the WHS embody the principles outlined above it is important that researchers take all necessary steps to consult with and, where required, obtain permission from the appropriate bodies. There is a set of basic steps which researchers should follow in the development and conduct of their projects, although the precise steps necessary will vary from project to project.

A wide range of stakeholders have interests in the conduct of research projects in the WHS. Even where no formal permissions are required, researchers should take those interests into account when planning, developing, implementing and disseminating their projects.

The policy regarding the use of metal detectors laid out in the 2001 *Archaeological Research Agenda for the Avebury World Heritage Site* should be maintained across the WHS as a whole (AAHRG 2001, 90–1). In summary, this policy recommends that:

> metal detectors are only used in a controlled fashion and within the terms of a project design;
>
> metal detectors should not be used on known archaeological sites other than as part of an archaeological project; and
>
> metal detectors should not be used on archaeologically 'blank' areas other than as part of an archaeological survey.
>
> Landowners and detectorists should seek further advice from the appropriate bodies (see below).

Also, research within the WHS is diverse in its scope and practice, being undertaken by a wide range of individuals and organisations within the contexts of academic enquiry, commercial development, and site management and protection. As such, different forms of research may require different levels of permissions as they fall under different regimes of statutory and non-statutory control.

The main stakeholder organisations and their roles are:

> *Wiltshire Council Archaeology Service (WCAS)* which has a duty of identifying, recording and protecting Wiltshire´s archaeology; of advising planning departments; negotiating with landowners and developers; and maintaining the Wiltshire and Swindon Historic Environment Record (WSHER).

WCAS should be the main point of contact when undertaking investigations within the WHS, as it offers advice at all stages of investigation, including the planning of projects, consultation of the WSHER as part of background research, the production of project designs, the determination of appropriate methodologies, and the dissemination of results.

> *Avebury and Stonehenge Archaeological and Historical Research Group (ASAHRG)* has an advisory role in promoting, guiding and disseminating information about historical and archaeological research in the WHS, as well as one of coordinating and maintaining the Research Framework.

Early contact should be made with ASAHRG whose diverse membership, which includes professional curators, academics and freelance researchers, many with past experience of investigation, provides an unparalleled knowledge- base about the WHS along with a platform

for discussion and feedback.

ASAHRG would also provide prospective researchers with contact information for the relevant statutory and other organisations, including English Heritage, National Trust, museums etc., and any other landowners whose permission would be needed.

> *The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission* is responsible for the management of Stonehenge and the Guardianship sites at Avebury on behalf of the Secretary of State; and the English Heritage Trust is licensed to carry out this responsibility (at Avebury the National Trust assist with these responsibilities under a Local Management Agreement). Consent must be obtained from the Commission via Historic England for any works affecting a Scheduled Monument.

> *The National Trust* owns and cares for just over one third of the WHS at both Stonehenge and Avebury (3700 acres) including many of the major monuments. Their permission is required for any fieldwork on their land and will only be granted under a National Trust Archaeological Research Agreement. Metal detecting is not permitted on National Trust land unless it forms part of such an Agreement.

> *Salisbury Museum, Wiltshire Museum* (Devizes) and the *Alexander Keiller Museum* (Avebury), as well as   other museums, hold material and archives resulting from past research within the WHS. Salisbury Museum is the repository for material from Stonehenge and south Wiltshire; the Alexander Keiller Museum the repository for material from the Avebury part of the WHS; while the Wiltshire Museum is the repository for material from other parts of the county.

Strategic objectives

In order to ensure the development of high-quality research projects consistent with the research principles outlined above and the appropriateness and sustainability of results, eight strategic objectives are identified:

1.1 There should be provision for sufficient and appropriate long-term storage space for finds and archives resulting from research projects.

1.2 Research undertaken within the WHS should be preceded by consultation with WCAS and ASAHRG, and any other relevant parties; and appropriate permissions, both statutory and non-statutory, should be acquired at an early stage from the relevant body and landowners.

1.3 Research projects should be preceded where appropriate by a written Project Design that is consistent with the Principles of Research outlined above. This should be seen and discussed by all relevant stakeholders. It should contain clear and well-defined research objectives and a methodology that reflects how these objectives will be obtained.

1.4 Project designs should specify where any project archive will be deposited, following consultation with the receiving institution, and should include a commitment to submit an OASIS (Online AccesS to the Index of archaeological investigationsS) entry and digital data and final reports to the WSHER.

1.5 Project Designs should refer to this Research Framework, as well as to other regional and national research frameworks. These frameworks are not prescriptive; well-reasoned research projects that are beyond their current scope can contribute to their updating and revision.

1.6 All research should have adequate funding in advance of the start of the project, including that needed to cover post-excavation analyses, publication and archiving.

1.7 All personnel undertaking research in the WHS should be suitably qualified and have the necessary skills to undertake the project set out in the Project Design or have sought qualified guidance from people with those skills.

1.8 Collections-based research projects should deposit their results, including analyses, with the museums to ensure that future researchers have full access to them, so reducing the risk of repetition of destructive analyses.

2.   Implementation

Appropriate research methods should be employed, consistent with the principles of best practice and sustainability.

A wide range of techniques, archaeological and non- archaeological, has been employed in the investigation of the monuments and landscape of the WHS, as well as their aesthetic, artistic and communal values. Recent years have seen rapid advances in the areas of remote sensing and survey, and different forms of scientific analysis. It is recognised that the most appropriate methods of investigation will be determined by the specific questions being asked, and that some of the research themes outlined in the Agenda may require the further refinement of the strategic objectives listed below, or the development of new ones.

Strategic objectives

The Resource Assessment has described the wealth of data, in many different forms (including finds assemblages and excavation archives), which have been collected over decades, indeed centuries of investigation. Much of this data would benefit from re-analysis in the light of more recent research and new theoretical perspectives, using appropriate techniques of investigation and dating, and applying new standards of research. It is recognised that intrusive and non-intrusive methods provide very different types and levels of knowledge, and that certain questions may only be answered by employing invasive techniques, whether fieldwork methods, such as excavation, or various forms of artefact analysis.

2.1 A concerted effort should be made to compile a full inventory of all unpublished archives from past fieldwork events within the WHS, and to establish their location and contents. This process would be facilitated by the establishment of a single digital repository and the provision of adequate facilities for the storage of archives and finds.

2.2 Research making use of existing data should be encouraged, and their potential to help answer new research questions should always be considered during the formulation of research programmes before interventions to acquire new material are planned.

2.3 Opportunities should be taken to re-examine the results of past investigations, such as geophysical surveys, documentary research, aerial photographs, landscape surveys etc.

2.4 Consideration should be given to the re- examination and re-opening of antiquarian and other previous excavation trenches, which still may yield valuable new information with limited additional impact.

2.5 The re-opening of earlier trenches can help to mitigate their past negative impacts, by allowing fuller recording and the recovery of material previously not considered significant; by accurately recording the extent of the earlier intervention; and, potentially, by enhancing the visual character of the monuments.

2.6 Where research projects requiring intrusive techniques are of a general nature, ie, not specific to the WHS, and could equally be undertaken outside the WHS, the WHS resource should be preserved.

2.7 Any new excavation needs to be clearly targeted and should be the minimum necessary to answer the research questions.

2.8 Different areas of the WHS vary considerably in their vulnerability to archaeological impacts owing, for instance, to the scale or quality of previous works, or other human and natural impacts. Monuments that are at risk of degradation or are actively being damaged may, where suitable, provide an appropriate resource for a particular area of research. A list should be maintained of sites most at risk, as a GIS layer in the WSHER. Enquiries to relevant bodies for research opportunities should be directed to this list wherever appropriate.

3.   Information Management

The effective management of information – its acquisition, organisation, curation, presentation and dissemination – should be at the core of all research undertaken in the WHS.

A huge body of data – archaeological, geological, environmental, and historical – has been accumulated by past and current research, and it is being continually added to. Much of that information is held and is accessible to everyone in the WSHER, maintained the Wiltshire County Archaeology Service (WCAS), which contains records of sites and monuments (designated and non-designated) and is maintained using a digital mapping system (GIS) underpinned by a comprehensive curated dataset.

The coherent and integrated management of information relating to the WHS requires the designation of a single, definitive digital repository (Strategic Objective 3.3), ideally web-based and accessible, which will also provide links to research data at other locations on the web. Such a repository will:

identify areas of potential research, by registering the locations of finds and other archival materials that may be suitable for analysis;

keep a record of areas of the landscape that have been subject to both intrusive and non-intrusive techniques, allowing the identification of those areas where fieldwork can be most fruitfully employed in the future; maximise the potential of any research project, including developer-led excavation, by facilitating a thorough review of existing site and monument data, grey literature and physical and digital archives;

aid the modelling of environmental change by enabling the mapping and synthesis of the wide range of topographical, geological and palaeo-environmental evidence;

provide an accessible forum for the dissemination of the results of research to the wide range of interested parties, including the public;

improve the accurate assessment of the archaeological resource and its management by being easily interrogated and continually updated with new information;

provide a basis for data-driven updates of this Research Framework (rather than the current periodic snapshot, paper-based approach), including the formulation of future research agendas, and facilitate the research-led underpinning for revisions to the WHS Management Plan.

Strategic objectives

In order to achieve the effective management of information, five strategic objectives have been identified.

3.1 The Wiltshire and Swindon Historic Environment Record (WSHER) should be the central system for managing information and data within the WHS.

3.2 The WHS GIS dataset should be held in the WSHER.

3.3 A plan should be formulated to identify the scope of existing digital data; what a suitable repository for it might be; who should be responsible for its maintenance; and how it should be funded.

3.4 The WHS GIS layer should be enhanced by including backlog projects, by pulling   in all relevant spatial data, and by creating links to   digital and physical archives (eg, archaeological, documentary, museum collections) and grey literature etc.

3.5 The prompt submission to the WSHER of summary or interim reports of all interventions and research should be a condition for any statutory permissions that are required to undertake work within the WHS, and best practice should include completion of an OASIS form. The same standards should apply to all research projects even when statutory conditions and consents are not required.

4.   Developing the Research Framework

This Research Framework will remain current for a period of no more than 10 years, in parallel with the WHS Management Plan, after which it will be revised and updated.

While the establishment and maintenance of a central repository within the WSHER, which is continually updated for information about the WHS, will facilitate the planning, conduct and dissemination of research, it is intended that the Research Framework will be revised and updated after a period of between five and ten years. This will involve:

the re-assessment of the known resource of the WHS, which in the next revision will comprise the first combined resource assessment for the whole of the WHS;

an evaluation of the progress of the Research Agenda contained within this Research Frame- work, and its amendment in the light of the contemporary state of knowledge, and new avenues of research; and

an evaluation of the current Research Strategy, and its amendment as necessary.

Strategic objectives

The form which these revisions will take remains to be decided upon, but the provision of more complete digital datasets called for in this document may provide the most effective method.

4.1 The development of a system is required to keep the Research Framework current, and to highlight research addressing the Research Agenda. This is currently intended to be in the form of an annual review of work undertaken within the WHS, to be carried out by a sub-committee of ASAHRG.

4.2 The development of effective means for the future presentation and synthesis of the resource is also required, alongside regular updates through ASAHRG in the form of reviews, workshops, meetings and annual updates. The next version of the Research Framework is

currently intended to be a web- based resource, probably in the form of a wiki with limited-write access.

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