

**Avebury World Heritage Site  
Archaeological and Historical Research Group  
DRAFT Notes of meeting 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2009**

**Present:** Melanie Pomeroy Kellinger (Chair), Mike Allen, Bruce Eagles, , Colin Shell, Brian Edwards, Paul Cripps, Sarah Simmonds, Nick Snashall, , David Dawson, Jim Gunter, Heather Sabire, Kate Fielden, Josh Pollard, Jonathan Last, Ros Cleal, Sian Williams, Susan Westlake, Rachel Foster, Lisa Webb, Matilda Webb

**1. Apologies and Introductions**

Vanessa Clarke, Jude Currivan, Amanda Chadburn, Andrew Fitzpatrick, David Field, Gill Swanton, Martyn Barber, Nick Baxter

**2. Minutes and matters arising**

**2.1 Minutes**

Draft notes from last meeting agreed.

**2.2 Matters Arising**

**Stonehenge Visitor Centre**

The application has been submitted to Wiltshire Council and the deadline for comments in 12<sup>th</sup> November. MA questioned whether strong objections to the design might derail the project. BE underlined support for removal of the road and suggested that despite some concerns with the design it is important that the project go ahead. KF expressed concern about the very short time for comment and certain omissions in some documents. She hopes it will be further examined through call in. Detail is missing in areas such as the lighting for long barrow roundabout. MPK recommended that members put forward their own views independently via the planning process.

**Ridgeway Report**

CS reported that the conversion of the report to a database ready format is underway. Drawings are being vectorised to create a GIS layer for Wiltshire Council GIS. Results will be within 2m and control points remain in place for future use. SS added that as soon as this work is complete a meeting of the Ridgeway Surface Protection Group needs to be set up to discuss the appropriate protocol for maintenance. JG requested that Friends of the Ridgeway be kept informed. They may be able to assist in the process.

SS reported that she had informed National Trails of how to engage with the Solstice Operational Planning process if they are concerned about potential damage to the Ridgeway. They reported that there had been no recorded damage this year and they would assess whether it was a priority to engage with this process.

BE raised concerns about a collection of stones that have appeared at the start of the Ridgeway. He requested that the NT check this as it may encourage further such developments if left. NS will investigate whether archaeological damage has been done by this and the parking which takes place. Fly-tipping is also a problem at the site. SW added that small fires and shrines on the barrows further along the Ridgeway have been an issue for the last 4-5 years.

**Action: NS to report on any damage at the next meeting of AAHRG**

#### **Alexander Keiller Museum**

The situation remains the same. The current management environment is evolving at Avebury with appointment of a new general manager in the spring.

#### **Flint Core Exhibit**

RC reported that the museum would support the display. Discussions are underway with Wessex. The existing space in the Alexander Keiller Museum could be used.

#### **Rough Leaze**

MA reported that he was considering options for furthering investigations.

#### **HER**

MPK reported that a new SMR officer, Sarah MacLean, has joined the Archaeology Team at Wiltshire Council from Bath and North East Somerset. Her first task is to audit the SMR and identify its weaknesses. An action plan will be produced to allow the HER to meet national standards over the next few years. The post is funded by Wiltshire for the first year. An application is going to EH for a further 3 year funding for the post. The draft PPS15 should strengthen the case for support in building the HER.

### **3. Monitoring of the Resource Agenda - update**

SS reported that after talking to EH it was clear that funding would not be available for writing the chapters which are already included in the Resource Assessment. This work would provide the in-kind funding element for the project. For the Resource Assessment stage funding for coordination of only the two new chapters was being considered as well as rectifying other identified gaps in the first Research Framework. MA recognised this was expected but that it would mean that it would be difficult to get resource assessment updates in on time: the excellent SW Framework was 3 years late and the Thames Solent is currently 1 year overdue.

SS indicated that it would be sensible to undertake the work and set tight parameters for submission of the Resource Assessment stage to avoid losing any available funding. Work on the resource assessment will need to be completed before progress can be made on the agenda and strategy. As potential funding as been earmarked it is unwise to risk delaying moving the

project forward. It was decided that a date should be identified for the submission of updated chapters and passed on to writers when they agree to contribute. July was suggested as a realistic date although BE was concerned this might be too limited for the new chapters. If written contributions are received by July, it was suggested a public seminar could be held in early autumn to showcase the results and encourage timely submission. The Resource Assessment could be published 3 months later by Christmas 2010.

CS added that where research was contributing to the public good universities should recognise that this work is part of the salaried role of academics. He underlined the need for an up to date resource base to form the basis of the Resource Assessment. The NMP, NMR and SMR need attention in order to provide this.

MPK suggested that the Community Area Board might be approached to fund a coordinator for the update if EH were only considering coordination and editing of the 2 new chapters. A coordinator is important to keep the Resource Assessment update moving forward and achieve consistency across all chapters.

An editorial group/project board was nominated who will report to the main AAHRG group and provide front line advice and editorial input. Those nominated were JP, NS, JL, MA, BE and RC. All accepted. This will meet to discuss further details of the project.

**Action: SS to set a date for the first meeting of the Editorial Group/Project Board.**

#### **4. Current archaeological & historical research**

##### **4.1 Mapping Priorities for Arable Reversion**

SS gave an overview of the rationale for the mapping project. The project aimed to highlight areas which are a high priority for removing from the plough in the World Heritage Site. This targeting exercise aims to both inform farmers of the important archaeological features on their land and encourage them to consider entering higher level stewardship (HLS) schemes to include these areas and thereby protect them from damage. The map will also serve to persuade NE of the importance of funding these schemes. HLS is a competitive process and the mapping of priorities will help to support applications made by farmers. Current NE priority mapping for the historic environment relies mostly on scheduled monuments but this exercise was far more detailed and comprehensive including a range of other important features and producing a landscape scale tool.

Field parcels were scored individually against 6 criteria developed by the project team consisting of CS, GS, NS, RC, VC, and SW. CS was instrumental in drawing together a wide range of data sets in one place for the first time to

enable a detailed and accurate assessment by a team of experts very familiar with the WHS on the ground. After the equivalent of 8 full day meetings a detailed assessment of the entire WHS was reached. A further meeting was held in September to review the finished mapped priority layer and the overall scoring. Fields currently in stewardship schemes, both CSS special project schemes and HLS and ELS.

NS summarised the scoring system ranged from 1-5 and was based on 6 criteria:

- Vulnerability to the plough
- Potential for archaeological discovery
- OUV (based on the presence -5, potential-3, or absence -0 of Neolithic or Bronze Age features)
- Site survival
- Contextual integrity
- Significance/rarity

Each land parcel was scored on its most important feature and notes made in the database to this effect.

CS presented the data sets and the graphic presentation of the scoring. The data sets compiled for the project included: SMR; transcription of aerial photography; Lidar; geology and soil maps from NE. The latter material allowed for a Cosmic type assessment of the vulnerability to erosion. Centre points for each land parcel allowed positioning of scoring either in digits or as a pie or bar chart representing the criteria. The overall size of the pie/bar chart represents the overall score and therefore level of priority for reversion. It may be possible to colour whole fields based on their score if certain currently unavailable data sets are provided by NE. This could make landscape scale analysis more visually apparent.

MPK congratulated the group on this very useful work. KF was concerned that the OUV score be linked to the attributes of OUV yet to be formally defined for Avebury. It was underlined that the tool was only for prioritising areas for arable reversion rather than identifying the attributes. MA was impressed by the fantastic outcome of the project. CS commented on the usefulness of the process for all involved of carefully analysing the WHS with joined up data sets to hand. SS added that the partnership working approach had allowed the group to gain access to the wide range of data. It might be possible to involve DD and the Wiltshire Heritage Museum to add pictures of finds to the relevant fields. JL added that the tool will allow for large landscape interpretation. The swathes of colluvium shown represent research potential.

**Action: SS to arrange a meeting with NE next month to discuss the most accessible form for presentation of the data for both their own and farmers' use as well as ongoing maintenance and updating issues.**

**Project Group to write up report collaboratively.**

#### **4.2 Commemorating Sir John Lubbock (1834 - 1913)**

BE suggested that to mark the centenary of Lord Lubbock, the first Lord Avebury's death that a plaque might be considered. The tenant of the Lodge has approached Lord Avebury to suggest this. He might be considered to merit a higher profile for his contributions to monument protection and the preservation of Avebury. There was some concern that one plaque might set a precedent and that a large number might need to be put up to mark the range of eminent inhabitants.

RC has little room in the museum but was hoping to put a panel in the restaurant where a large number of people would see it. She is also considering panels on women at Avebury and the clergy at Avebury. HS added that work on Lubbock was being undertaken by Janet Owen and also Mark Pattern. BE felt the panel in the restaurant was good idea beside the new reconstructions. Susan Westlake added that there will be temporary exhibition space available in Stonehenge Visitor Centre once built. An article in WAM was also suggested.

#### **4.3 Edward Drax and Silbury**

BE gave presented some ground breaking new research on Edward Drax and his relationship to Silbury that will be published in the next edition of WAM.

### **5. Review of current opportunities for dissemination of research**

#### **Stonehenge and Avebury Seminar**

The seminar will present recent work that has taken place in the WHS including the Stonehenge Riverside Project and the Silbury Project at Avebury. DD reported that discussions are underway with Emma Carver (EC) regarding how to incorporate the outcome of the seminar in the new visitor centre at Stonehenge.

The meeting will take place in Devizes. The exact line up and date are under discussion. It needs to fit in with other projects under development. BE underlined that EH is committed to doing something that will bring the two halves of the WHS closer together. Although it is being organized by the Prehistoric Society and WAHNS this aim should be made paramount. DD added that EC was considering bringing people together to provide a wider public event. He queried whether multiple events to appeal to different audiences would be more appropriate or a large public event. Susan

Westlake (SuW) asked that events should not overlap and suggested AC and EC liaise on this.

JL suggested it should be pitched at academics as well as the wider range of the Prehistoric Society membership.

BE queried whether it should take place in the Corn Exchange or the Town Hall. DD expects around 70 from the Prehistoric Society. CS suggested the Corn Exchange which can hold 33. DD and JL will check if May 22 is available.

#### **6. Review of Content of Report to WHS Steering Committee**

The report will include the arable reversion prioritisation mapping, the research framework update and the planned seminar. The unauthorised tarmacing on the 'lay-by' on the West Kennet Avenue will be reported. NS mentioned that this had been reported to AC. An SMC application is in but the final outcome is awaited. Peter Hanson at Wiltshire Council still needs to provide a methodology statement for its repair.

**Action: AC to meet with Peter Hanson if methodology not forthcoming.**

#### **7. Other research opportunities (i.e. utilities, development control issues)**

SS reported that an application for a 50 m tower from the National Environmental Research Council (NERC) to monitor carbon dioxide emissions above the canopy of West Woods has been withdrawn. The application met with wide opposition including from the WHS officer as it would have a major impact on the setting of the WHS. The Council were minded to turn it down in principal however it may be resubmitted with required landscape impact studies next year.

#### **8. Review of Monitoring**

**Action: Add review of the WHS Condition Survey to the agenda for next meeting to be delivered by AC. Report on the brief.**

#### **9. Final Review of the Report to WHS Steering Committee**

Include NERC 50m tower in report to WHS SC.

#### **10. AOB**

##### **National Trust Management Structure**

RC reported that the property manager position at both Stonehenge and Avebury is to be lost to a single general manager post. Chris Gingell will be countryside manager for both halves but the new GM is about to be advertised. It will probably not be filled until spring 2010. Area Manager posts have been replaced by fewer assistant director of operations posts. The

new one, Nicola Andrews, covering the WHS will be in place on 1<sup>st</sup> November. RC suggested inviting Brendan McCarthy to the Steering Committee.

**11. Date of next meeting**

Friday, 26<sup>th</sup> February at 10.00 AM in Devizes Museum