

MINUTES OF ASAHRG MEETING, 20 Jan 2023

10.00am-12.30pm, online only (thanks to Wiltshire Museum, Devizes).

1. Present:

Richard Osgood (Chair)

Colin Shell

Amanda Chadburn (Minutes)

David Dawson

Steve Marshall

Matt Leivers

Nick Baxter

Susan Greaney

Nick Snashall

Vince Gaffney

Jess Thompson

Wil Partridge

Brian Edwards

Gill Swanton

Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger

Kerry Donaldson

Ben Chan

* Josh Pollard

David Field

*Alistair Barclay

Lisa Brown

Phil Harding

**Claire Selman

**Emma Sayer

*present for some of the meeting

**observers

2. Apologies

David Roberts, Jonathan Last, Andrew David, Steph Piper, Briony Clifton, Martyn Barber, Tim Darvill, Dan Miles, Heather Sebire, Fritz Lueth, Ros Cleal, Mark Bowden, Kate Fielden, Mike Allen, Neil Adam, Roland Smith, Katy Whitaker, Clive Ruggles, David Sabin.

3. **Agree Minutes.** The draft minutes of the meeting of Oct 21st 2022 were agreed, no comments.

4. **There were no matters/ actions arising** from the Minutes not elsewhere on agenda.

5. Proposed new Terms of Reference

Amanda outlined some of the changes that had been made in the most recently circulated draft, including things like “ex officio status” and “workable size”. Richard thanked Amanda for her work.

Various suggestions were made with regard to the circulated Terms of Reference. Nick Snashall suggested that the word “strategic” was wrong in relation to how the Chairs operate. Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger agreed and said that the Chairs had an operational role. She also suggested that the Chair's role now seems to be onerous because it is responsible for ensuring there is an effective secretariat.

Colin Shell said that with regard to ASAHRG's “workable size”, let's not define it too closely at this stage, carry on as we are and deal with the issue if a problem arose. He also suggested that the World Heritage Coordination Unit may be in a position one day to take the Secretariat back. Amanda indicated she was happy to continue as Secretary as long as ASAHRG members wanted her to.

Nick Snashall indicated there was an omission with regard to National Trust roles and ex officio status. Amanda indicated this was an oversight and would be corrected.

Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger suggested that English Heritage was also an omission, and the World Heritage Coordination Unit also needs to be in there in an ex officio capacity.

Matt Leivers suggested that the words “and its environs” should be in the ToR rather than just the World Heritage Site, and that there was an inconsistency between points i and ix with regard to the research framework.

Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger suggested that the wording is not quite right in relation to the research framework. ASAHRG does have a responsibility for the research framework and the words “advise”/ “support” and “locus” were suggested by the meeting. Colin Shell suggested that ASAHRG had a responsibility, subject to resources being available.

Amanda Chadburn will send round the next working version (V5) taking on board the comments made at the meeting, and members are asked to comment on that.

ACTION: AMANDA, ALL.

Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger suggested that the final draft should be tight and concise, once the basic contents are agreed.

It was agreed that we should aim to finish this task as soon as possible and try & sign it off as a final version (Version 6 - or possibly a Version 7 if there are a lot more comments) at the next meeting.

6. Proposed new members; new updated membership list; possible elections.

6.1 Rachel Crellin was proposed by David Dawson and seconded by Lisa Brown. She is at the University of Leicester and specializes in Bronze Age burials and has written a recent Antiquity article on the Upton Lovell shaman. The meeting agreed that she should become a member. **ACTION: AMANDA TO WRITE TO RACHEL AND ADD HER TO THE MEMBERSHIP LIST**

6.2 Amanda circulated the final corrected membership list and suggested that an Update should be circulated once a year to members. This was agreed as a good idea and should be in the terms of reference as a responsibility of the Secretariat. There was also a discussion as to whether members should automatically drop off the membership list if there is no contact for two years. It was agreed to add this to the terms of reference. **ACTION: AMANDA**

6.3 Elections. Richard indicated he would like to step down, having served his term. It was agreed that two new chairs to replace Katy and Richard are needed as soon as possible and members are asked to send Expressions of Interest quickly to Amanda and the Chairs. Neil Adam's name has already been put forward as a possible Chair. It was agreed that if there were more than two names then they should be put to a vote (probably online, details to be worked out if needed). **ACTION: ALL (ASAP)**

7. WHS Steering Committees/ Partnership Panel representative's report

Colin Shell reported on the meetings he had attended as our Rep. The main issue being debated is a proposed change of governance for the management of the WHS. The two Steering Committees had both strongly rejected the new governance proposals. (The Trust Transition Board - set up by the Partnership Panel - reported on the proposed governance changes to the Steering Committees separately, and there were strong reactions to the proposal with a majority of both Steering Committees disagreeing with it). Therefore, the governance review proposal was not taken forward to formal votes at the two (separate Avebury and Stonehenge Steering Committee) meetings, because the reactions of the majority of Steering Group members at both meetings were already very clear in their views (there was no point).

Instead, given this, those wanting the change of governance suggested that the present structure and status quo should continue as an interim measure (the timescales of how long this continue were debated) and this was agreed. The important thing now, given this, is that the two Steering Committees get back into action for the benefit of the WHS management.

However, there is as yet no formal announcement of any of this – Colin will keep us informed when he knows more.

The next Partnership Panel meeting where this will be discussed is in mid-February; formal announcements may come after this.

There were no questions or comments for Colin.

8. Introduction to and Presentation by Claire Selman of the WHS Coordination Unit.

Claire introduced herself as the replacement for Sarah Askham and set out her current work on the WHS Periodic Report. UNESCO's Periodic Reporting takes place roughly every eight years. The last report for Stonehenge and Avebury was published in 2013. <https://whc.unesco.org/document/164448>

She has got very tight deadlines because this exercise started about six months ago, and she is new in post. She has to submit her first draft on the 28th of February; the final draft has to go to the DCMS on the 31st of March. She asked for a small group of ASAHRG members to help complete the pre-circulated questions relating to research and education. The following members kindly volunteered themselves.

Nick Snashall
Josh Pollard
Gill Swanton
Brian Edwards
Melanie Pomeroy-Kellinger

ACTION: CLAIRE TO TAKE THIS FORWARD

9. ASAHRG logo

After some debate, it was agreed that members should send their sketches for the logo to Amanda by the end of February. **ACTION: ALL**

There would be a poll for the best three, and then the final three would be voted on by the end of March, with an announcement of the winner at the next meeting. (We may need some help in producing a final version of the winner depending on the quality of the initial sketch; Claire Selman kindly volunteered to help).

10. Opportunities for outreach and dissemination of research - including 2023 to celebrate 30 years of ASAHRG.

Melanie said that there was an annual opportunity to highlight the work of ASAHRG during the Wiltshire Annual Archaeology Conference. However, the programme for this year has already been decided.

Members debated giving a free public lecture, one in Avebury and one in Amesbury (where the new logo could be featured) to celebrate 30 years of ASAHRG.

11. Members Updates

There were three pre-circulated Updates on:

- Research Frameworks
- Avebury Chapel
- The WHS Condition Survey

Richard Osgood said he was hoping to do some fieldwork at Boles Barrow in the future, but SMC was still needed.

Ben Chan talked about the Avebury Papers Project that he is involved in with Ros Cleal of the AK Museum – the project is now officially and legally underway. There was an official launch with the English Heritage Trust, Historic England and the National Trust before Christmas. Their website is open and there is a presence on Instagram.

Richard Osgood reminded members of the fact that the Waun Mawn bluestone papers had been circulated and that Volume 2 of Stonehenge for the Ancestors had come out.

Josh Pollard talked about test pitting at Cherhill in November. There is a growing realisation that a vast chalky alluvial material seals a buried soil here, which may be Pleistocene or Mesolithic in date - this is a very important preserved landscape. They (amazingly) found an auroch's skull in a test pit!

Steve Marshall referred to his new book on acoustics <https://woodenbooks.com/index.php#!ACO> which is available in the Henge Shop at Avebury - and indicated that there are springs at the Silbury ditch at the moment - the spring water is warm at 10 degrees centigrade, but everything else is much colder and freezing.

He also indicated that he wanted to do an article about springs around Silbury and members suggested some possible grants to be able to help fund this work.

12. Museum Updates

Lisa Brown of Wiltshire Museum talked about a new off-site store in Amesbury, where there has already been 5 depositions and there are 800 new records.

13. Research opportunities (i.e. from utilities, opportunities from development or conservation)

There were no significant planning applications and no resulting research opportunities. Melanie has spent a lot of her recent time supporting Claire as a new member of staff.

14. Review of monitoring

Condition survey - Gill had already given a pre-circulated written update. Landowners had received their letters just before Christmas and Melanie indicated that Wessex Archaeology were gearing up to do the fieldwork stage.

15. Any Other Information Exchange

- Melanie suggested that we haven't bottomed out the issue of elections. The term of office for the ASAHRG Representative is up - where are we? (NOTE – see also previous minutes and debate on this point). Colin Shell replied that he didn't want to continue with the role forever, but as there is currently a very complicated governance situation, it might be best that he continues until the governance review is sorted. There should be more clarity on this latter by mid-February, especially if it is agreed at that meeting that Governance Review is over for the time being. (Previously the Group had suggested that Colin should see the governance review through to its conclusion rather than changing Reps halfway through).
- Emma Sayer confirmed that the two steering committees had given a very strong opinion; they didn't want Sam Rose's (HLF consultant) governance proposal and had suggested pausing the governance review for at least a year. Henry Oliver and Hugh Morrison as the two Chairs of the Steering Committees (Avebury and Stonehenge respectively) now have to take things forward and decide what to do. The Committees also need a Terms of Reference update.
- It was agreed that the ASAHRG elections issue should be put on as an agenda item for the next meeting as we may have some further clarity by then. **ACTION: AMANDA**
- **Wealth and Knowledge Project - Research Frameworks.** Dan Miles would like some members to help on a working party for the Research Framework. Names should be sent to Dan and copied to Amanda please. **ACTION: ALL**
- Colin suggested that records should go on the Heritage Gateway.

16. Review on what to report from the meeting to WHS Steering Committee/ Partnership Panels.

It was agreed that Colin could report back to the Committees etc on

- our ToR update
- our new Membership List
- our Periodic Report work with Claire
- our Logo design
- our 30th Anniversary
- new books and articles.

ACTION: COLIN

17. AOB

It is so wet that there is water in the north ditch of Avebury Henge, Steve Marshall reported.

18. Agree Chair for next meeting/ Date of next meeting and venue.

It was agreed to hold the next meeting on Friday the 28th of April. Gill will Chair and she offered to explore a new venue for ASAHRG, the Avebury Club. It was agreed that the meeting should also be hybrid. Gill will investigate the hybrid possibilities as well as the date at this venue. **ACTION: GILL**