

Avebury & Stonehenge Archaeological & Historical Research Group

Terms of Reference (ToR) and Procedures

Adopted by ASAHRG on 16th May 2023

Preamble

The Avebury and Stonehenge Archaeological and Historical Research Group (ASAHRG) is a self-governing group of archaeologists and historians who work on and research aspects of the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site and their environs. The Group supports the delivery of the WHS Management Plan's Aims and Policies and the Stonehenge and Avebury Research Framework (SARF). The Group provides guidance on archaeological and historical research in and around the Stonehenge and Avebury WHS, its facilitation and dissemination. It currently reports to the WHS Steering Committees and Partnership Panel¹ on matters relating to archaeology and history to support them in making informed decisions. The Group provides a forum for discussing research topics related to the WHS, the refinement and development of research proposals, and an arena for information exchange. It also encourages best practice, including the timely reporting and dissemination of research and the identification of opportunities for outreach and education. Its aims come under the over-arching aims of UNESCO in relation to World Heritage Sites. Further information about the formation and history of ASAHRG can be found in Annex B.

TERMS OF REFERENCE AND PROCEDURES

These supersede all previous Terms of Reference and Procedures.

The Avebury and Stonehenge Archaeological & Historical Research Group (ASAHRG) exists to:

- i. further the aims and objectives of the Stonehenge and Avebury WHS Management Plan through oversight of and support for the regular revision of the Stonehenge and Avebury Research Framework.*
- ii. report regularly to the WHS Steering Committee and WHS Partnership Panel on matters relating to the understanding of the archaeology and history of the WHS to support the Committees and Panel in making informed management decisions¹.*
- iii. provide a forum in which research topics and interests may be discussed by archaeologists and historians concerned with furthering the understanding of the past of Avebury, Stonehenge and their environs.*
- iv. enable archaeologists and historians pursuing research into the past of Avebury, Stonehenge and their environs to refine and develop research proposals through discussion.*

¹ These arrangements may change with future WHS governance and management reviews and decisions.

- v. enhance research into the Stonehenge and Avebury WHS and their environs by acting as an information exchange, and facilitating contact and collaboration between researchers in different subject, technical and chronological specialisms.*
- vi. support the Alexander Keiller Museum in maximising the use of collections for research for public benefit, so utilising a resource which is unique to the Avebury part of the Stonehenge & Avebury WHS.*
- vii. support museums outside the WHS, and in particular the Wiltshire Museum in Devizes and The Salisbury Museum, in facilitating research and making publicly available their collections and archives which are derived from and relate to the WHS and its context, and research related to these collections and archives.*
- viii. encourage the timely deposition of reports, archives and publications in the Wiltshire HER, OASIS and with relevant museums as Open Access documents.*
- ix. facilitate wider public dissemination of research through all means available, including publication (e.g. in journals, monographs and under the auspices of ASAHRG where practicable), lectures, improved interpretation, online information or any others identified.*
- x. facilitate contact between individuals and organisations planning and implementing research in both parts of the Stonehenge and Avebury WHS.*
- xi. Have oversight of and input into the Stonehenge and Avebury WHS Research Framework and undertake appropriate actions within it.*
- xii. where appropriate, review and advise on project designs for archaeological and historical research to assist in setting and maintaining standards for research within the WHS.*
- xiii. encourage the development of education and outreach opportunities related to archaeological and historical research about the WHS.*
- xiv. support the sharing of knowledge and data between institutions, organisations and individuals relating to research, outreach, publications, and museums.*
- xv. where appropriate, monitor and review the public impact/benefit of research.*

Procedures

(See also outline Agenda, below)

a) Chairs

ASAHRG has three rotating Convenors or Meeting Chairs. This allows for a “pool” of Chairs should one individual not be able to chair the next meeting.

The Chairs will jointly take any operational decisions needed in between meetings (any strategic decisions will be debated with the membership). The Chairs will chair the meetings

in rotation, subject to availability. It is the responsibility of the joint Chairs to ensure there is an effective Secretary or Secretariat, and to agree these arrangements with the Group.

The Chair of a specific meeting will agree the Agenda, the Draft Minutes of that meeting, and sign off any other documentation relating to that meeting before circulation to the membership. They can invite observers to the ASAHRG meeting which they are chairing. Chairs should try and secure short presentations of interest to ASAHRG for the meeting they are chairing.

The position of each Chair should be reviewed every three years. It is recommended that (unless there are exceptional circumstances) no Chair should serve for more than two consecutive three-year terms without a three-year break. It is recommended (unless there are exceptional circumstances) that only one Chair should step down per calendar year to ensure continuity via the other two Chairs.

Meeting Chairs will be members of ASAHRG, and will be nominated and seconded by ASAHRG members, with the names of the proposer and seconder and agreement of the nominee sent to the Secretariat in advance. The name of a proposed new Chair will then be sent in writing or via email to the entire membership of ASAHRG for election at their next meeting. Election may be by a show of hands or secret ballot as agreed by members present at the meeting (if the voting is “online”, this can be done in a number of ways, including voting via email. If the voting is done in person at a hybrid meeting, then the quorum should be those ‘in the room’ rather than online, in case the connection is lost. The Meeting Chair should be present in person to oversee the vote).

If there are more candidates than vacancies for a Chair, then all ASAHRG members (including Chairs) will vote in writing/ digitally for their preferred candidate in an anonymous ballot. Candidates may ask for their candidate statement (300 words max) to be sent to the membership when the nominations are sent out. The votes will be counted by the Secretariat, and the results announced at the next meeting of ASAHRG, with the member who has received the most votes being elected.

It is the responsibility of the Chairs to ensure that they do not over-run their tenures (advised by the Secretariat) and that Chairs are replaced in a timely fashion.

If a Chair fails to attend 3 or more consecutive meetings, then they cease to be a Chair. The Chairs will ensure that the Group does not get beyond a workable size.

b) Membership

Membership is open to anyone with an active involvement or interest in archaeological or historical research within the World Heritage Site and its near environs, mindful of the fact that the Group supports the delivery of the WHS Management Plan’s Aims and Policies and the Stonehenge and Avebury Research Framework (SARF). The process for accepting new members is particularly important to maintain the Group at a workable size.

New members must be nominated by two existing members who will act as their sponsors. Nominations should be made to the Secretariat of ASAHRG, who will inform the Chair in advance of the next meeting at which the nominations will be considered. The Secretariat will inform successful candidates after they have been elected.

Guests/ observers may be invited to individual meetings by existing members following agreement with the Chair. The opportunity for wider engagement is offered through the planned biennial public seminars.

Members have a duty to inform the Secretariat if they have any changes in their contact details. If there is no correspondence between the Secretariat and a member for two years, their membership is deemed to have lapsed, and this will be announced at the following meeting.

From 2023 onwards, some organisations may wish to have representatives on ASAHRG because of the nature of the posts within their organisations (“*ex officio*” members). For example (but not necessarily limited to these roles or organisations) and in order to best achieve our aims, it is suggested that if they are not already members in their own right:

- the County Archaeologist of Wiltshire Council;
- the Assistant County Archaeologist of Wiltshire Council;
- the Wiltshire Inspector of Ancient Monuments of Historic England;
- the Wiltshire Heritage at Risk Project Officer of Historic England;
- the Stonehenge and Avebury Property Curator of English Heritage;
- the Archaeologist (Stonehenge & Avebury WHS) of the National Trust;
- the Assistant Archaeologist (Stonehenge & Avebury WHS) of the National Trust;
- the Manager and Officer of the World Heritage Coordination Unit;
- and the Archaeological Curators of the Alexander Keiller Museum, Wiltshire Museum and Salisbury Museum

will be invited to be *ex officio* members of ASAHRG. They can send named deputies to a meeting if they cannot attend. If people leave these positions, they will be replaced by their successors as *ex officio* members and will be removed from the ASAHRG membership unless they are already ordinary members or are nominated to join in their own right as an ordinary member.

c) Support for the group (minutes, circulation of papers, agendas etc)

The Secretary or Secretariat will:

- take minutes at the meetings, agree them with the Chair within two weeks of the meeting having been held, and circulate draft minutes electronically to the membership shortly afterwards and well in advance of the next meeting.
- coordinate with Members who are writing reports for the minutes/ agenda.
- agree the agenda with the Chair and circulate it electronically to the membership in a timely fashion in advance of the next meeting.
- be responsible for appropriate Data Protection Act and UK GDPR requirements relating to their role particularly with regard to the membership list and consents.
- confirm meeting arrangements with the host organisation (whether this is virtual, hybrid or in person) prior to meetings.

- maintain the ASAHRG membership list and alert the Chairs if it is getting beyond a workable size.
- maintain records relating to tenure of 1.Chairs and 2.WHS Steering Committees/ Partnership Panel Representative and be responsible for bringing them to the attention of the Chairs/ Representative for them to action.
- circulate an up-to-date Membership List to all ASAHRG members once a year. This List can include research interests, contact details etc if permission has been given to circulate this extra information to the membership.

d) Representation on the World Heritage Steering Committees and Partnership Panel²

- The Group will be represented on the WHS Steering Committees and Partnership Panel by one elected member. A Deputy should also be elected to attend in their absence. These posts are to be held for a three-year term, although a post holder can be elected again for a second three-year term, after which they must step down and cannot be re-elected for at least three years. The duties of members of the Steering Committees and Partnership Panel are set out in the respective Terms of Reference for those bodies.
- The Representative and Deputy will be chosen by members of ASAHRG. They shall be independent. (This is in accordance with the policy regarding representation of Avebury and Stonehenge Steering Committees on the WHS Partnership Panel under the governance arrangements agreed in 2013). Thus, employees or representatives of English Heritage, the National Trust, Historic England and Wiltshire Council are ineligible for these positions. Any members of ASAHRG who already sit on these Committees or Panel in another capacity/ representing another organisation are also ineligible for these positions.
- New Representatives and Deputies will be nominated and seconded by ASAHRG members. The names of the proposers and seconders along with the nominee's agreement to stand will be sent to the Secretariat who will inform the Chairs. The candidates and supporters' names will then be sent in writing to the entire membership of ASAHRG for consideration and/or agreement at their next meeting. If there are more candidates than vacancies, then all ASAHRG members will be asked to vote in writing for their preferred candidate(s) in a secret ballot prior to the next meeting. In such circumstances, candidates may ask for their candidate statement (300 words max) to be sent to the membership when the nominations are sent out. The votes will be counted by the Secretariat and the results announced at that meeting of ASAHRG, when the candidate who has received the most votes will be elected.
- Each Representative and Deputy post will be reviewed every three years. It is recommended that (unless there are exceptional circumstances) no Representative or Deputy will serve for more than two consecutive three-year terms, and they will not be eligible again until a three-year break has been served.

² This may change if there is a governance change at the WHS.

e) Honorary Status

The Group may decide to confer an Honorary Status on any Member to recognise exceptional services to the Group.

f) Co-opted Positions

The Chairs may jointly decide to make co-options to fill any vacant positions where there is no candidate for election, or co-options for other reasons that will assist the work of the Group. Such co-options should be done with the agreement of the Group.

g) Agenda and frequency of meetings

A model agenda has been adopted (see Annex A below) by the Group and should be adhered to for Ordinary Meetings (i.e. excluding special purpose meetings such as workshops or seminars) unless there are exceptional circumstances. Extra-ordinary Meetings may be called by the Chairs at any time.

Each Ordinary Meeting should aim for a balanced focus between Avebury and Stonehenge.

The Group will meet no fewer than three times a year. Meetings will usually aim to be around Jan/Feb (winter), May (spring), and Oct (autumn). They will be half-day meetings; venues will rotate to reflect the joint Avebury and Stonehenge focus. It is suggested that two meetings should be hybrid (i.e. in-person and on-line), and the Jan/Feb winter meeting should be on-line only.

Additionally, in-person fieldwork visits may be arranged to see current excavations or projects. This will usually be in the summer and can be preceded by a Meeting if needed.

The group should aim to hold biennial WHS archaeological and historical research seminars.

h) Suspension/ Removal

If any Member brings the Group into serious disrepute, then they may be suspended or excluded. Should this highly unusual event occur, then the Chairs will decide how to approach and facilitate suspension or exclusion.

Annex A: Model Agenda for half day meeting. (Suitable breaks should be inserted too, particularly important for those on-line).

- **Apologies/ Review of membership – Secretariat** (i.e. report on who has left, who has been admitted; filling posts would be done here as necessary)
- **Minutes - Secretariat**
- **Matters arising from the Minutes – All**
- **Review of membership and elections to vacant posts**
- **WHS Steering Committee representative’s report** (i.e. report on the previous WHS Steering Committee /Partnership Panel meetings) (Ideally provided in advance, in writing).
- **Monitoring of the Research Framework – updates as required. (All)** This should include advance notice of any proposed fieldwork by members, updates of any other proposed research and notice of any publications. Ideally, these updates should be sent **in advance** in writing to the Secretariat who should include them as an Annex to the Agenda, in order to save time in the meeting.
- **Current archaeological & historical research (All)** - may be more than one item, or none – would depend on offers of reports on fieldwork and other research etc. Slides for presentations should be circulated **in advance** of the meeting to the membership and written reports sent to the Secretariat for the minutes. The Chairs will decide how many reports can be given presentation space at any meeting, but written reports can always be accommodated.
- **Opportunities for outreach and dissemination of research (All)** (if the proposed Research Fascicules become a reality, this would include discussion of proposals for volumes, agreement over whether a member or members are needed to help edit a volume etc. All other outreach/ dissemination possibilities can be discussed here)
- **Other research opportunities (County Archaeologist, IAM etc, All)** (i.e. utilities, development management issues)
- **Review of monitoring (Cultural Heritage Managers to lead – EH, HE, NT, WC)**
- **Any Museum Updates (Museum Curators** - ideally to be circulated in writing in advance).
- **Any other Information Exchange not already covered (All – ideally to be circulated in writing in advance).**
- **Review of content of report to WHS Steering Committee (Chair, All)** (In order to facilitate this, at the end of every Agenda item the Chair will gain from the meeting an understanding of the agreed view which could go forward to the WHS Steering

Committees, or an understanding that there is no agreed view to report – and that these actions/decisions should be minuted to assist the ASAHRG representative in passing the Group's views to the Steering Committees and Partnership Panel.

- **AOB (All)**
- **Agree Chair for next meeting (Chairs).**
- **Date of next meeting and venue (including on-line, hybrid, in-person) (All)**

Annex B. The history of AAHRG and ASHRG.

The Avebury and Stonehenge Archaeological and Historical Research Group (ASHRG) is an extension of the Avebury Archaeological and Historical Research Group (AAHRG, 1993-2014) and covers the whole World Heritage Site (WHS) and its near environs.

AAHRG

The creation of AAHRG was recommended by the first WHS Management Statement for Avebury (English Heritage, 23rd Sept 1992), which referred to it as a co-ordination group for archaeologists and historians, to be built on the existing Avebury Environs Forum (AEF). English Heritage implemented the recommendation in the Statement and facilitated the creation of the Group.

The first meeting of AAHRG was jointly held with the AEF on 18th March 1993. Thereafter, AAHRG ran with two Co-Chairs/ Convenors (one from AEF, one from EH) chairing alternate meetings with the other taking minutes. Later on, at the request of the Co-Chairs for capacity reasons, the WHS Co-ordinator took over the Secretariat role.

AAHRG was recognised in the Avebury WHS Management Plan (2005) as one of two sub-groups reporting to the Avebury WHS Steering Committee (Avebury WHS Management Plan 2005, 4.7.2). The AEF remains in existence as a separate body. It meets irregularly, mainly to respond to particular issues relating to the archaeology of the WHS.

AAHRG played an important role in the management of the Avebury WHS. Major contributions include the Group's production of the Avebury Archaeological Research Agenda (2001, the first Archaeological WHS Research Agenda globally), and its expert advice in drafting both editions of the Avebury Management Plan (1998, 2005). Its members were also key contributors to the first joint Stonehenge and Avebury Research Framework published in 2016.

ASHRG

A joint research group was established following recommendations set out in a governance review report for the Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites World Heritage Site of 2012, and ASHRG held its first meeting in February 2014.

The 2012 report recommended the formation of a joint self-regulating Stonehenge and Avebury Standing Conference to promote and disseminate historical and archaeological research on the WHS as whole. This related to the move to greater coordination between Avebury and Stonehenge reflected in the new governance structure agreed by both Steering Committees in April 2013, and also reflected the establishment of a new Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site Partnership Panel

A small working group of AAHRG members was formed to review the 2012 governance review recommendations. It was agreed that a joint group would be both beneficial and workable. It was proposed that AAHRG should be extended to include researchers working in the Stonehenge part of the WHS, and that the existing AAHRG ToR should be retained with a limited number of appropriate amendments. The working group's recommendations

were accepted by AAHRG in July 2013. The name of the new group, ASAHRG, was adopted to reflect its origins as an extension of AAHRG.

The benefit of increased coordination across the WHS, in particular in the area of research, is referred to in a number of publications. Objective S1 of the Avebury WHS Management Plan (2005) recommended forging closer links between Avebury and Stonehenge. It highlighted the advantages of looking strategically at the whole WHS in a number of areas including research. The Stonehenge WHS Management Plan (2009) referred to proposals first included in the previous Plan (2000) to set up a new research group focussed on Stonehenge. At 11.6.4 it suggested that the Stonehenge and Avebury groups might run consecutively on the same day. The Stonehenge Research Framework (Darvill, 2005) proposed a research network for Stonehenge and Avebury. Objective 18 proposed the establishment of a Stonehenge network - the Stonehenge Archaeological Research, Study and Education Network (SARSEN) and objective 19, setting up formal links with AAHRG.

ASAHRG is building on the foundations and substantial achievements of AAHRG to deliver similar benefits across the whole WHS, and to support the Stonehenge and Avebury Research Framework (SARF, 2016) and the WHS Management Plan (2015). It will support future iterations of both of these documents.

ⁱ The Governance structure is under review in 2023 and ASAHRG may report to new bodies in future.