

**SUBMISSION FROM AVEBURY PARISH COUNCIL
AS A REQUESTED RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTANT’S REPORT FOR
SAASWHS TRUST TRANSITION BOARD MEETING 19/01/22 SAM ROSE,
12/01/22 FEEDBACK AND GOVERNANCE SECTIONS**

We agree that Option 1 is the better of the two. We share, with modest qualification, the author’s view that it represents “a small, well-balanced decision-making body supported by a larger expert body working at the same level in the hierarchy.” Turning to the detail of the Option 1, we make the following observations:

1. There is a celestial body above the Executive Board. It is composed of representatives from “DCMS and HE, International.” A double-headed arrow connects this body with the Executive Board. It is not clear what actual relationship is proposed between them. Does the lower report to the higher? Does the higher guide the lower? It would be helpful to clarify this point.
2. We agree with the author that “the World Heritage Site is the UK Government’s responsibility [and so] it must be accountable itself” but are not clear to whom or to what it is accountable.
3. Clearly the lead department for the government must be DCMS. “International” is desirable - after all, the WHS is an international appellation - and governance can only benefit from drawing on the interest and expertise of outward-looking parts of the government. But what is “International” in this context? Is it FCDO? Is it ICOMOS? Could there not also be space, in an advisory capacity, for a representative from an independent but authoritative learned society such as the British Academy?
4. Focusing on the Advisory and Executive Boards, we note that the latter benefits from “2 x Community representatives, one from each of Avebury and Stonehenge parishes” and the former from four community representatives, two from Avebury and two from Stonehenge. An explanatory note adds:

“Community (Parish Council / Community group / Business) representatives
Each of the two areas will need a small informal group of ‘Champions’ who are expected to work together to represent that community’s interests on the EB and AP. They will agree who will do each role, limited to the numbers set out above, and will liaise before and after each meeting.”
5. Whilst we share and strongly endorse the principle of local representation in WHS governance, this proposal needs careful unpicking and further consideration.
6. The Executive Board is to have two “community representatives from each of Avebury and Stonehenge parishes.” Who are these “community representatives”? Ought they not to be parish councillors? After all, they are the only parishioners with a mandate to represent the community. If not, what is proposed and what legitimacy would that representation have?

7. There is the suggestion that these community representatives could be drawn from a community group and/or from business. There are indeed community groups in Avebury (the Friends of the Ridgeway is one such and the community orchard group is another). There is no chamber of commerce or equivalent. The parish council convened a meeting of shop owners during the recent lockdown; meetings no longer take place. Are these groups or gatherings really fertile ground for the kind of community representation that is envisaged? How would those in them work together? What legitimacy would any consensus reached actually have? (Stonehenge is not a parish, of course, and there may be a question from the southern part of the WHS as to which parish or parishes should take the lead.)
8. The proposition that there should be “a small informal group of ‘Champions’ who are expected to work together to represent that community’s interests” is an interesting one but not without challenge. No such group exists at present. Whilst there might be merit in setting one up, surely we should use existing structures such as the parish councils; they have a democratic mandate. Form may follow function but this is one instance in which it may make better sense to fit function to form.
9. We note that “there are no changes proposed to ... the Coordination Unit,” which is disappointing. As we have said before, it needs to be strengthened. It does what it can but this is less than the WHS needs. Given the current adverse political and economic context, it is tempting to maintain the status quo. The temptation should be avoided.
10. To summarise: we would like to see two Avebury parish councillors on both the Advisory Board and on the Executive Board. They alone are empowered to represent the community.

21 February 2022