Summary and resulting actions from facilitated Round Table Group workshop April 2018

The afternoon workshop held in Amesbury on Tuesday 17th April 2018 created a space where participants could listen to each other, understand each other and agree a way forward with regards to the future ethos, purpose and structure of communications around Managed Open Access at Stonehenge. This report presents a summary of the feedback received from participants in attendance, and proposes actions in response to the collaborative workshop outcomes.

Lead up to the workshop

The workshop followed a period of difficulty in communications at Round Table Group meetings that had extended over time.

In December 2017 the Round Table Group were invited to meet in Amesbury so that the current Solstice Coordinator could meet members personally, learn more about the spiritual and religious importance and significance of Stonehenge for the druid orders and organisations represented at the Round Table Group, as well as exchange ideas around future collaborative projects and approaches to the seasonal celebrations. During this December meeting attendees were asked for their thoughts and comments on the Round Table Group. The feedback received highlighted the importance of working together to improve future communications, as is demonstrated below:

> *'We want to move forward to provide a more constructive representation of the Pagan perspective.'*

> *'There are extensive health and safety aspects of the round table group meetings regarding abusive and bullying behaviour.'*

> *'Tensions run high when facing the same problems over and over again with no resolution in sight.'*

> *'Our Druid Order has not attended the Round Table Group meetings for some time because we experience regular hostility from other stakeholders.'*

> *'It is a 'given' that there are many things I disagree with EH over, in the marketing and management of Stonehenge but prior to the body becoming a charity and the virtual erection of the 'under new management' sign, there was always enough 'common ground' and where there was not, the spirit of compromise prevailed which enabled progress.'*

> *'Many are put off from being involved for fear of being associated with or lambasted by certain divisive figures in the Pagan community.'*

Discussions at a subsequent meeting held in January 2018 highlighted that recent meetings lacked purpose and this was both exemplified and exacerbated by the lack of attendance of many of the key partners and pagan group representatives. It was proposed that an externally facilitated meeting would be scheduled, and all partners invited to attend, with an aim to reach consensus on the future ethos, purpose and structure of the Round Table Group communications. This workshop took place in Amesbury on Tuesday 17th April.

Round Table Group Workshop Overview

Workshop aims:

1. To create a space where participants can listen to each other, understand each other and work together.
2. To gain consensus on what needs to happen to ensure there is good communication between the different parties concerned with managed open access to Stonehenge.

The workshop was led by a facilitator from Jewell Facilitation and was attended by 31 representatives of the Round Table and Solstice Operational Planning meetings, as well as other interested parties.

A step-by-step approach was adopted to reach consensus on the key issues to be addressed moving forward.

Group descriptions of the purpose of Round Table Group communications

- Participants were divided onto tables with a mix of representatives from different parties at each table. The workshop commenced with introductions and an agreement of the guiding principles and aims of the workshop.
- The group were asked to share their thoughts on current Round Table Group communications.
- Groups at each table were asked to work together to create a shared purpose to describe what they saw the purpose of the communications as being, and then shared this back to the whole group.
- The group then used dot voting to decide what they collectively saw as the most important aspects.

Once each participant had been given the opportunity to vote on the key purposes of future communications, the overarching *purpose of future Round Table group meetings* may be identified as:

> ***'To give a voice to those with a spiritual desire to attend Stonehenge as a temple, thus promoting an understanding of the spiritual importance of Stonehenge to inform the practical decisions'***

Of the many descriptions, the next most important aspects collectively chosen by the group as the key purposes of future communications were:

> *'To work out how to gain freedom to enter Stonehenge on other days such as cross quarter days, as well as solar celebrations'*
>
> *'To regain trust'*
>
> *'To ensure commitment from English Heritage (including ring-fenced budget) to adequately run MOA'*
>
> *'To improve the experience for young people 'and everybody''*
>
> *'To hold safe and respectful meetings'*

The focussed conversations also highlighted issues important to the Round Table Group participants, *but not specifically related to the purpose of future communications*. Of these the accessibility of MOA was high on the agenda and as such, this will be included at the next Round Table Group meeting held ahead of Summer Solstice 2018.

Emerging themes and next steps

- Participants were asked: "What do future communications between the different parties concerned with 'Managed Open Access to Stonehenge' need to look like?"
- Each table went through a process of think- pair- share – working out their own ideas, sharing with a partner, then the whole table and eventually the whole group.
- The groups were asked to consider the purpose, ethos and structure of the meetings.
- Themes were created as the ideas emerged and discussed in relation to the original question after all the ideas had been shared, with any extra information added as necessary.
- A different theme was assigned (as generated in the above activity) to each of the tables and the groups were asked to consider the next steps that they can do to move this particular theme forward.
- The next steps were displayed with the original themes, and discussed as a whole group.

From the workshop 7 key themes arose regarding the future ethos, purpose and structure of communications around Managed Open Access at Stonehenge. The themes (A-G) and proposed next steps are discussed below. Proposed actions have been suggested in response to the themes and ideas raised by the group, however, *participants are also encouraged to continue to suggest alternative actions and solutions as part of the on-going collaborative process.*

A. Behaviour

Groups highlighted the need for participants to behave respectfully when communicating. The following actions were proposed to help promote respectful behaviour:

> 'Round Table Group meetings to be guided by a code of conduct, and for this to be read out by the Chair at the beginning of meetings'

> 'Formal dedication at the beginning and end of meeting'

> 'Be welcoming and inclusive, especially to new people'

> 'More formal meeting structures that stick to an agreed agenda'

PROPOSED ACTION: In response to the call for respectful communications, English Heritage will share the existing Code of Conduct with the group along with a request for suggestions for amendments to be made. A Code of Conduct that addresses the need for participants to behave respectfully will then be amended and agreed at the next Round Table Group meeting.

B. Better use of digital technology

The use of digital technology to improve future communications was supported in a variety of ways by participants. Discussions focussed on the format of digital communications between meetings

and the introduction of electronic access to meetings via live streaming. The following actions were suggested to help the group move forward with better use of digital communications:

'Revitalise the Stonehenge Peace Group for email communications'

'English Heritage to participate in the email forum;

'A Dropbox or GDrive for archives of shared documentation'

'A decision to be made about live streaming the meetings so that they are more accessible for participants'

PROPOSED ACTION: Information on how to join the Stonehenge Peace Groups emails has been provided by George Miles and is to be shared with the circulation of this report. As was highlighted at the meeting, time constraints and resources do not enable English Heritage to participate effectively in the management of the forum at this time. George Miles, Helen Hatt and Lois Lloyd will pursue an external plan of action around the email communications and submit a summary of progress to the Round Table group ahead of the next meeting.

PROPOSED ACTION: The Solstice Coordinator invites comments via email on the advantages of a portal within which information and documentation can be shared. English Heritage can create a Google Drive folder or Dropbox and upload meeting agendas and notes; however, the purpose of this, in addition to these items being circulated via email, must first be established. Actions moving forward will be determined by the support received.

PROPOSED ACTION: The suggestion to make the meetings more accessible for people by live streaming or dialling in was considered a possibility by participants. More research needs to be conducted to determine: a) which technology or platform would be best suited to this option b) how this might be conducted without incurring unreasonable costs for audio equipment c) how many people would like to access meetings in this way. The Solstice Coordinator invites suggestions via email with regards to points a) and b), and will ask for an RSVP from those interested in attending each meeting electronically. It is anticipated that some experimentation may be required to implement this successfully.

C. Choice of venue for future meetings

One of the key themes that emerged from the group was the need for more consideration to be given to the choice of venue in terms of accessibility. These considerations must include:

'Choosing an equitable location that is serviced well by public transport'

'The needs of disabled people to be considered'

PROPOSED ACTION: Future meetings will take place in Salisbury which is well serviced by public transport. Venues will accommodate for the needs of those with disabilities and will have parking facilities close by.

D. Frequency of meetings

The majority of opinions regarding the frequency of meetings indicated that there should be fewer face to face meetings, in part to reduce the carbon footprint of communications and to make more of digital communication opportunities. Next steps that were recorded included:

> 'Frequency of meetings to be determined by the size of events'

> 'One meeting per annum for brainstorming'

PROPOSED ACTION: The feedback regarding the precise scheduling of meetings was inconclusive so will require further discussion as a group. As was confirmed at the workshop, and given the capacity of Managed Open Access at Summer Solstice, the Round Table Group will meet in advance of Summer Solstice.

PROPOSED ACTION: As a group we will endeavour to address as many issues as possible electronically to reduce the frequency of meetings but also to improve the efficiency of them. As this is a new approach, the frequency of meetings will be largely determined by the success of digital communications.

E. Structure of meetings

Agreement was reached that the following considerations are given to the meeting structure:

> 'Items for the agenda to be requested at least 3 weeks in advance of the meeting'

> 'Attendance confirmed 3 weeks ahead (will inform agenda)'

> 'Digital communications to facilitate the proposal and agreement of agenda items in advance of the meetings and the agenda to be distributed 2 weeks in advance of the meeting'

> 'Time slots allocated for each agenda item'

> 'Solstice Coordinator to coordinate the agenda'

> 'Meeting notes to be distributed within 2 weeks of the meeting taking place'

> 'Meeting dates to be confirmed 1 year in advance'

PROPOSED ACTION: The Solstice Coordinator will coordinate agenda requests in advance of Round Table Group meetings, agenda confirmation and circulation 1 to 2 weeks in advance, time slots allocated for each agenda item and meeting notes distributed within 2 weeks of the meeting taking place.

PROPOSED ACTION: The confirmation of meeting attendees 3 weeks in advance of the meeting and ahead of the agenda distribution may prove difficult as the choice for people to attend may depend largely on the agenda items. The Solstice Coordinator invites comments via email on this topic and will add to the next meeting agenda if participants wish for this to be pursued.

F. Chairing the meetings

The importance of ensuring effective chairing of meetings emerged as a theme from discussions. Next steps included:

'Independent facilitator to chair meetings – but who pays?'

'A talking stick to be used to promote effective listening by those present'

'Rotate the meeting host'

PROPOSED ACTION: The Chair of the Round Table Group meetings will be supported by everyone present to ensure Codes of Conduct are upheld. It is proposed that this is the responsibility of everyone present and not solely the Chair. Groups and individuals will be invited to host and chair subsequent meetings and a decision will be made regarding who/which organisation this is at each preceding meeting.

G. Content of meetings

Consensus was reached that the main agenda for Round Table Group meetings was to focus on issues related to MOA. An importance was attached to allocating time to discuss broader issues, not related to MOA but relevant to Stonehenge and holding significance to those attending the Round Table Group meetings. However, the need to provide a separate platform for these broader discussions was highlighted. Ideas shared included:

'AOB to be used for minor issues or planning for next meeting and large items to be deferred'

'Groups to continue to discuss items externally'

'Agenda split to clarify practical items from ideological and put issues into groupings'

'Emergency issues to be handed to chair at start'

PROPOSED ACTION: Only MOA-related agenda items will be included in MOA-focussed meetings and agenda items will be clear and in a logical order or grouping.

PROPOSED ACTION: English Heritage will consider alternative opportunities to discuss broader issues (not related to MOA).

PROPOSED ACTION: Emergency issues or AOB to be handed to the Chair at the start of the meeting, however, if the definition of 'emergency' is controversial then a vote will be undertaken to inform the decision as to whether the item is to be added to the agenda. The Chair has the final decision on the outcome where opinion is equally divided. Allocated time slots will be given to AOB in the agenda.

PROPOSED ACTION: Where particular agenda items are proving difficult to resolve within the timeframe of the meetings, additional communication solutions (preferably electronic) will be agreed to provide adequate time for further discussion to take place.

The use of Commitment

The workshop closed with an activity to elicit a commitment from each person on something they will agree to doing, to take forward the actions that had been agreed. Participants have been asked to bring these commitments with them to the next meeting and to be given the opportunity to share them with the group.

Summary

By creating a space where participants could listen to each other, understand each other and agree a way forward with regards to the future ethos, purpose and structure of communications around Managed Open Access at Stonehenge, the workshop has proved hugely beneficial.

Devising solutions that can be effectively implemented, as well as supported by key stakeholders is not always an easy process and can prove difficult. By coming together this participatory process is the first stage in creating an environment that will allow our problem-solving to evolve in stages within a collaborative environment.

Thanks are extended to all who took part in embarking on a shared framework on understanding that will provide us all with the opportunity to reach sustainable agreements and find inclusive solutions for the future.