

Stonehenge (United Kingdom)

No 373

1. BASIC DATA

<i>State Party:</i>	United Kingdom
<i>Name of property:</i>	Stonehenge, Avebury and associated sites
<i>Location:</i>	County of Wiltshire
<i>Inscription:</i>	1986
<i>Brief description:</i>	

Stonehenge and Avebury, in Wiltshire, are among the most famous groups of megaliths in the world. The two sanctuaries consist of circles of menhirs arranged in a pattern whose astronomical significance is still being explored. These holy places and the nearby Neolithic sites are an incomparable testimony to prehistoric times.

2. ISSUES RAISED

Background

The property consists of the two megalithic sites of Stonehenge and Avebury, which are some 30 km apart. The first has a surface area of 2608.2 ha and the second of 2270.2 ha.

There is no buffer zone.

When the property was inscribed (1986), the two zones forming the property were considered highly satisfactory for their future protection. The questions then faced related to the roads close to the central site of Stonehenge and the reception of the public in satisfactory conditions from the viewpoint of interpreting the sites. The various decisions of the World Heritage Centre have up to now mainly concerned the management of the site and the related problems, those already mentioned in 1986 and others which followed on from them (26 COM 21B.70, 27 COM 7B.82, 28 COM 15B.102, 29 COM 7B.88, 31COM 7B.104). The issues relate in particular to the road (A 303), the visitor centre, measures linked to the large number of visitors to the sites, the consolidation of the Avebury mound, and the major environmental efforts to ensure that the land around the sites is used as grassland.

Since the inscription and following several major scientific projects, it has become clear however that the boundaries of the Avebury site were not appropriate in view of the existing prehistoric remains and their significance. There have also been important advances in the understanding of the Avebury site as a cultural landscape, leading to a somewhat different understanding

of the definition of the site, related to the expression of its outstanding universal value.

These elements of the Avebury site boundaries which had become inappropriate were reflected in the updated version of the management plan (2005), then in the periodical report of the World Heritage Centre (November 2006), and finally in the proposal of a statement of significance by the United Kingdom (1st February 2008).

Modification

In all, the territorial modifications proposed for the Avebury site concern a total of 107 ha, representing an extension of about 5% of the surface area already inscribed for this site.

The modification request proposes including the whole of the Fyfield Down site, situated at the current eastern limit of the main site. Scientific work (2000) has led to the conclusion that the importance of Fyfield Down is far greater than initially thought, particularly its remains of earth construction, associated with the late prehistoric period, linked with the Avebury mound.

The modification request also proposes a series of minor rectifications whose objective is to include all the archaeological complexes linked to the tumuli, whose most visible elements were used to define the initial limits of the site.

To the south: The aim is to include the whole of the West Kennet Palisaded Enclosure complex and the East Kennet Long Barrow (a Neolithic funereal chamber) in the site. The proposal is to extend the boundary down to the south of the River Kennet.

To the south-west: The proposal is to include the whole of the complex formed by two tumuli (group SM21755) by two slight changes to the property boundary.

To the west: The proposal is to include the whole of the Fox Covert tumulus (SM21752) and to follow the existing land divisions more appropriately.

3. ICOMOS RECOMMENDATIONS

ICOMOS recommends that the minor modification to the boundaries of Stonehenge, Avebury and associated sites, United-Kingdom, be **approved**.



Map showing the revised boundaries of Avebury site