

THE STONEHENGE ALLIANCE

From the Chairman, George McDonic, MBE, BL, DIPLTP, FRTPI, DPA, FFB
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The Rt Hon Patrick McLoughlin MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Sent by email on 3 October, 2014

Dear Secretary of State,

Proposals for the A303 at Stonehenge

The Stonehenge Alliance* is a group of non-Government organisations and individuals originally formed in 2001 which maintains a watch over any major new development that would adversely impact on the World Heritage Site (WHS). We are writing to request your intervention in the current process concerning proposed road improvements affecting the site.

The A303 is currently one of six identified road corridors subject to feasibility studies to examine possible improvements. It is most regrettable that this process has focused on road improvements rather than on considering more sustainable transport alternatives. We have grave concerns about the impacts that the proposed road options might have on the WHS.

Stonehenge is an iconic symbol of Britain's past people and culture. It is a significant draw both nationally and internationally and important culturally and economically. Yet as important as the Stones are, it is their context, the surrounding landscape, which helps make them so special. This is recognised in the designation of the Stonehenge WHS which covers nearly 27 square kilometres. The importance of the surrounding landscape was highlighted in the recent BBC TV *Operation Stonehenge* series which identified numerous new sites in the wider WHS area.

At the last Corridor Feasibility Study Reference Group, a bored tunnel between 2.5 and 2.9km long as well as a northern trunk road diversion, were proposed for the A303 at Stonehenge for further investigation, while a request for a long bored tunnel of at least 4.5km to be costed was dismissed outright. All of the options now under consideration for the A303 at Stonehenge could inflict severe and irreversible damage upon the WHS and its setting and might well lead to the WHS being considered for the World Heritage in Danger List. A longer tunnel would avoid this.

The current approach appears to be pursuing options contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework and at odds with advice from UNESCO and, notably, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in its *Guidance on Heritage Impact Assessments for Cultural World Heritage Properties* (2011).

We urge you to intervene in the study to ensure that a long bored tunnel of at least 4.5km (for which Highways Agency drawings were done c.2001) be examined and costed alongside the shorter tunnel option already put forward by the Corridor Feasibility Study Reference Group. There is real concern about the haste in which the study is being progressed and we request that greater time for consultation and engagement is taken in order to safeguard this iconic cultural asset.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

George McDonic
Chairman, the Stonehenge Alliance

Copies to: Baroness Kramer, Minister of State for Transport
Rt. Hon. John Hayes MP, Minister for Roads
Julian Glover, Special Adviser
Mary Creagh MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Transport
Richard Burden MP, Shadow Minister for Roads
John Glen, MP for Salisbury
Claire Perry, MP for Devizes
Sir Simon Jenkins, Chairman, The National Trust
Dame Helen Ghosh, Director General, The National Trust
Simon Thurley, Chief Executive, English Heritage
Susan Denyer, Secretary, ICOMOS-UK
Petya Totcharova, Head of Europe and North America Unit, UNESCO World
Heritage Centre
Dr Mike Heyworth, Director, Council for British Archaeology
Alistair Sommerlad, Chairman, Stonehenge and Avebury WHS Partnership Panel