

THE STONEHENGE ALLIANCE

From the Chairman, George McDonic, MBE, BL, DIPLTP, DPA, FFB

The Rt. Hon. John Whittingdale, OBE, MP,
Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport,
100 Parliament Street,
London, SW1A 2BQ

Sent by email on 21 May 2015

Dear Secretary of State,

Stonehenge

I write to you on behalf of the Stonehenge Alliance, a group of non-governmental organisations* and individuals that seeks enhancements to the Stonehenge World Heritage Site (WHS) and opposes development that would cause it significant harm. Further information about the Alliance may be found on our website at www.stonehengealliance.org.uk/about-us/.

We wish to congratulate you on your new appointment and to let you know that we are pleased that you have an interest in and concern about our heritage and the lack of resources available to protect it properly.

You will, I am sure, understand that our organisation and its supporters are particularly concerned about the Government's December 2014 announcement of proposed improvements to the A303, to include a short, 2.9km bored tunnel passing south of the henge. The twin-bored tunnel would leave some 1.6km of surface dual carriageway and deep tunnel cuttings within the WHS and grade separated junctions at its boundaries. The above-ground works would lead to destruction of archaeology, tranquillity and setting – despite the strong protective planning framework that exists for the WHS and our Government's commitments under the 1972 [World Heritage Convention](#), notably Article 4, which reads:

“Each State Party to this Convention recognizes that the duty of ensuring the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage referred to in Articles 1 and 2 and situated on its territory, belongs primarily to that State. It will do all it can to this end, to the utmost of its own resources and, where appropriate, with any international assistance and co-operation, in particular, financial, artistic, scientific and technical, which it may be able to obtain.”

***THE STONEHENGE ALLIANCE IS SUPPORTED BY:**
Ancient Sacred Landscape Network; Campaign for Better Transport;
Campaign to Protect Rural England; Friends of the Earth; and
RESCUE: The British Archaeological Trust

Following Government's baseline demands for 'affordability' and 'deliverability', a 2.9km tunnel is supported by English Heritage (now Historic England) and the National Trust. However, ICOMOS-UK, advisers to UNESCO's World Heritage Committee on UK World Heritage Sites, informed your predecessor and the Secretary of State for Transport that although the tunnel

“... could have beneficial impacts on parts of the World Heritage property . . . associated portals and dual carriageways could have a highly adverse effect on other parts of the World Heritage landscape that cannot be set aside however great the benefits of a tunnel”. (Copy of letter attached)

We have since been assured by Patrick McLoughlin that ICOMOS-UK and the World Heritage Committee will be taking part in discussions as the project progresses, which gives us some encouragement. We are further encouraged by [a response](#) on 19 May from UNESCO to the many letters of concern it has received about the proposed Stonehenge tunnel.

Our on-line petitions ask the Transport Secretary to ensure that, should A303 widening be found necessary, no further damage is done to the WHS. There are now over 17 thousand signatories world-wide; who, in giving their reasons for signing, demonstrate a multiplicity of interests in the WHS and, above all, strong concern that it should be protected for its exceptional, internationally recognized qualities.

We hope that you will be able to assure us that the Government, in planning for the A303, will be re-considering its approach to protection of the Stonehenge WHS in the light of its World Heritage Convention commitments and the demands of the NPPF (notably paragraph 132). Should such a WHS as Stonehenge and Avebury be placed on the List of World Heritage in Danger, it would be seen as a significant disgrace for the UK Government and, indeed, our nation.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

George McDonic

Chairman, the Stonehenge Alliance

Attached: Letter from David Thackray, President of ICOMOS-UK to the Secretaries of State for Transport and Culture, Media and Sport, 5 November 2014