

THE STONEHENGE ALLIANCE¹

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Report issued 27 April by UNESCO/ICOMOS mission to Stonehenge in October 2015²

The Stonehenge Alliance has welcomed the findings of UNESCO's mission to Stonehenge.

UNESCO concluded that:

- “The length of the tunnel and the siting of the portals are the two key issues of this project.”
- while the “preliminary idea” of an A303 tunnel of at least 2.9km would bring benefits to the World Heritage Site (WHS), “the siting and design of the tunnel portals, approach cuttings/embankments, entry/exit ramps and the temporary construction works have the potential to impact adversely”. They express particular concern over the Avenue, a major archaeological feature of the Stonehenge landscape, pointing out that any damage from further road construction here is “effectively irreversible”.

UNESCO's report demands “rigorous investigation, evaluation, iterative design and assessment to see *whether and how it might be possible*” [our italics] to construct a tunnel of the length proposed while protecting the essential qualities of the Stonehenge landscape. It questions the siting of the eastern portals, giving a strong steer that a longer tunnel (than 2.9km) would be of benefit. It also says that on the western side, the 1km approach road has the potential to impact on the integrity of the landscape.

UNESCO say they expect the Government to implement its commitments under the World Heritage Convention. But “to do this requires longer term thinking than typical infrastructure design in non-World Heritage Sites. The whole asset life design of the

¹ 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. The Alliance's petition asking for a tunnel long enough to do no further damage to the WHS now has over 21,000 signatures worldwide. www.stonehengealliance.org.uk.

² At the request of the UK Government and following mounting concern about the announcement of a 2.9km tunnel for the A303, UNESCO's World Heritage Centre sent an advisory mission, including representatives of the International Council on Monuments and Sites, to see the WHS and talk with official representatives and stakeholders (including ourselves) in October 2015.

scheme within the World Heritage Site should not be limited by 25 year traffic predictions...”.

UNESCO recommend a radical approach before any options are brought forward. They warn that the normal Development Consent Order process and its timescale³ may be inappropriate for the Stonehenge WHS.

Mike Birkin of the Stonehenge Alliance said:

“The Stonehenge Alliance shares the concerns expressed by UNESCO and welcomes their steer towards a longer tunnel than currently proposed. UNESCO’s proposals must be fully adopted and World Heritage made paramount. Only if this happens is there a chance that this wonderful site might be safeguarded in its entirety from the impact of any major new road scheme”.

³ Under the 2008 Planning Act planning examinations must proceed according to a tight schedule and take no more than six months from start to finish.