

## THE STONEHENGE ALLIANCE

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

Keith Nichol, Esq.,  
Head of Cultural Diplomacy,  
Department for Culture, Media and Sport,  
100 Parliament Street,  
London, SW1A 2BQ.

Sent by email on 25 June 2016

Dear Mr Nichol,

On behalf of the Stonehenge Alliance, I would like to thank you and your colleague Hannah Jones for our meeting at 100 Parliament Street on 23 June.

You asked about the composition of the Stonehenge Alliance. We are supported by five NGOs whose interests and expertise are wide-ranging: sacred sites and landscapes, the countryside and environment, transport and archaeology. Individuals, volunteers and sometimes officers of our supporter-organisations attend our meetings. We also have many individual campaign supporters, as evidenced by the 21,000+ signatures to our online petitions. There is more information about us on our website at <http://stonehengealliance.org.uk/our-campaign/about-us/>

Our members' long-term involvement in Government solutions for the A303 at Stonehenge includes attendance at many meetings and conferences and presenting our case at a number of Public Inquiries during the last two decades. CPRE and FoE have also taken part in the production of successive Management Plans for the WHS.

We are campaigning for no further damage to the Site resulting from road engineering. If road widening is considered necessary, we argue for a bored tunnel of at least 4.5km, which would start within the previously dualled stretch of the A303 in the eastern part of the WHS and emerge beyond the western boundary. As we explained at our meeting, however, a longer tunnel, possibly of 6km+, would avoid the WHS altogether and result in no damage to the Site and its setting. Longer tunnels are commonplace in Europe and exist or are under construction in the UK. A trans-Pennine road tunnel of around 20 miles is under serious consideration. An estimated 'likely cost' of c.£300m more than the estimated cost of the 2.9km tunnel was given for a 4.5km tunnel in 2014.

We hope that the Government will wish to satisfy itself that road widening across the WHS is really necessary, in view of the reduction in average traffic flow figures in 2014 since 2003/4, the limited periods during which traffic congestion occurs and the potential benefits from applying smart traffic management methods. In case it may be of interest, a short article published with the minutes of the 11 February 2016 Westminster Energy, Transport and Environment

seminar can be found on this link <http://stonehengealliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Westminster-EETransport-Forum-1Feb-2016-article-final-Mk-2.pdf>.

We are grateful for your explanation of the DCMS' role – and your own – in the Government's proposals for widening the A303 across the Stonehenge World Heritage Site. We are hopeful that by raising our concerns at this relatively early stage in the process of generating options, they may be factored in to the decision-making and that we will not simply be presented with a number of road widening options at the options consultation stage, none of which would fully meet with World Heritage Convention obligations and UK or international planning guidance and policies.

There have been changes of opinion over the years amongst archaeological and conservation organisations and other relevant bodies, as shown in the joint press release issued by 10 bodies in response to consultation on the A303 in 2006 and in the outcome in favour of a long bored tunnel at 'The Great Debate' on Stonehenge in July 1994. Despite these variations in opinion, planning policy and guidance on the protection of WHSs and their settings has become very much stronger since 2004. Our own approach has remained unchanged from the start: the WHS is a special place which should be protected in line with the demands of the Convention and the protective planning framework. We were heartened to hear that this is the view of the Government in its intention to honour its World Heritage Convention obligations and to treat the WHS in an exemplary manner.

We are agreed that there is a conflict between what the Treasury can afford and what would best suit the WHS but we do hope that the internationally renowned archaeological landscape of Stonehenge will not be irreparably damaged for ever in an effort to deal with what is seen as a relatively short-term transport problem and possibly one that could be more sensibly and less expensively dealt with, now and over time, in other ways.

There was no time for us to discuss the steps the Government is taking to address all of the issues we highlighted in the UNESCO WH Centre/ICOMOS Advisory Mission's report but we would be interested to hear what these are, should you be able to let us know.

Finally, we appreciated your straightforward approach to our discussion and very much hope that it might be possible for us to be included in consultation during these early stages of the A303 proposals. We look forward to meeting you again, perhaps in Wiltshire.

Yours sincerely,



George McDonic  
Chairman, the Stonehenge Alliance

**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