

THE STONEHENGE ALLIANCE

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

Mr Andrew Alcorn
Project Manager,
A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down,
Highways England
Temple Quay House
2 The Square, Temple Quay
Bristol BS1 6HA

sent by email on 20 September 2016

Dear Mr Alcorn,

Stonehenge World Heritage Site (WHS) and the A303

I am writing to you in response to a letter to me from Lewis Somerville, dated 14 July 2016 which was sent in response to my letter to the Prime Minister of 17 March 2016. I attach a copy of Mr Somerville's letter. I seek reassurance on certain matters raised in this correspondence.

Mr Somerville's statement that a 1.8mile (2.9km) tunnel is Highways England's 'working assumption, in line with Government's Road Investment Strategy position', indicates that this is, as announced in December 2014, the Government's decision on the tunnel length, in line with the budget for the scheme announced at the same time.

We naturally remain concerned that the process of unbiased decision-making, based on a proper and meaningful evaluation of options in the light of the UK Government's commitment to Article 4 of the World Heritage Convention, thus appears flawed from the outset.

Article 4 of the Convention, as you will know, commits the Government to protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the WHS property in its entirety. Article 5 of the Convention, to which the Government is also committed, demands rehabilitation of the WHS property as a whole. Government and UNESCO policy and advice also require protection of the setting of the WHS. It is difficult to reconcile these commitments and safeguards with proposals to damage permanently substantial parts of the WHS with a short tunnel and associated road engineering.

Mr Somerville indicates that Highways England will be seeking advice from ICOMOS/UNESCO on its 'developing proposal'.

I would therefore be grateful if you should, please, answer my following questions.

1. What is meant by ‘appropriately evaluating’ all options, given the obvious constraints of cost and a pre-emptive decision?
2. How will Highways England ‘reconcile the Government’s obligations under Article 4 of the World Heritage Convention’, with any road scheme that would damage the WHS property?
3. Does Highways England, as seems to be the case, already have a ‘developing proposal’ and, if so, has consultation with ICOMOS/UNESCO on it begun and on what basis and regularity is it being conducted?
4. What specific measures is Highways England undertaking in order to meet the several recommendations of the Advisory Mission of UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee and ICOMOS International?

I look forward to receiving your answers to my questions shortly.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "George McDonic", is written on a light-colored rectangular background.

George McDonic
Chairman, the Stonehenge Alliance

Note. The Stonehenge Alliance, of non-governmental organizations and individuals, maintains a watch over any major development proposals that would impact adversely on the Stonehenge World Heritage Site. The 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.