



THE
PREHISTORIC
SOCIETY
SINCE 1935

The leading organisation for people interested in prehistory

Mr C Taylor
Director for Complex Infrastructure
Highways England

27th February 2017

A303 Stonehenge: Amesbury to Berwick Down January 2017 Public Consultation

Response of the Prehistoric Society

The Prehistoric Society (hereafter 'The Society') promotes the preservation of and research into all aspects of human prehistory. The Society applauds Highways England's intention to improve the visitors' visual experience at Stonehenge by removing the A303 either to the south of the World Heritage Site or via a new tunnel running under the WHS. We also appreciate the infrastructure and congestion issues that the scheme is intended to address. We also respect the aspirations of the National Trust and English Heritage as landowners and custodians of the area. Our response addresses archaeological issues and in particular how the proposals affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS of which Stonehenge and other nationally important Scheduled Ancient Monuments are parts.

The Stonehenge landscape is internationally iconic and must be considered one of, if not the most significant archaeological landscape in Britain. Its designations, significance and value could not be greater, therefore whilst the attempt to remove the A303 from within the landscape is greatly welcomed, the potential harm to the landscape posed by the new proposals must be carefully weighed against the public benefits that would accrue from the removal of the road.

1 Options Presented at the Consultation

Three route options were presented at the public consultation

- Option 1N – tunnel with the road exiting west and running to the north of Winterbourne Stoke
- Option 1S – tunnel with the road exiting west and running to the south of Winterbourne Stoke.
- Option 2 – (F10) road running to the south of Amesbury and to the south of the WHS joining Option 1S to the south of Winterbourne Stoke.

2 The Society's Preferred Routes

Option 2 (F10)

Archaeologically, The Society supports Option 2 (F10) as the preferred solution as it completely avoids the WHS. Nevertheless it has not been comprehensively evaluated and the route may cause significant harm to other archaeological deposits or sites. We would urge that this route is more fully evaluated from an archaeological perspective.

Options 1N & S

The Society's preference is for minimal impact within the WHS and therefore Options 1N and 1S are unacceptable in their current form due to the siting of the portals. Nevertheless, The Society regards Option 1S as the next preferred route. There appear to be fewer archaeological implications on this route (though we have concerns – see below) and Option 1S is only acceptable to the Prehistoric Society if changes to the siting and positioning of the western portal are addressed including any archaeological effects that may result from any road or tunnel re-design and re-routing.

Option 1N is not acceptable to The Society. This route has the same western portal position as Option 1S but then passes close to and with adverse visual and aural impact on known nationally important Scheduled Ancient Monuments that constitute the Winterbourne Stoke barrow cemetery, the barrows on Winterbourne Stoke Down and the Coniger tumuli. Although not within the WHS, these monuments nevertheless form part of the wider Stonehenge landscape and may be argued to constitute its true western edge. Therefore the potential negative archaeological impact appears greater than for the southern route.

3 Option 1S Concerns

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- a. The eastern portal as presently proposed would not be visible from Stonehenge itself and utilises the existing route of the current A303 dual carriageway, but it still lies within the area of the WHS. We welcome the commitment to site the eastern portal to the east of The Avenue but it is close to and will have a negative visual and aural impact on the line of the Avenue, Vespasian's Camp and the Mesolithic site at Blick Mead. The Society reserves judgement on the position of this portal until more detailed plans are available and a full understanding of its likely impact has been assessed.
- b. The western portal lies to the south-west of Stonehenge and lies directly on the midwinter solstitial alignment as seen from the circle. Although the portal itself does not appear to be visible from the circle, the light pollution from approaching vehicle headlights and any proposed portal streetlighting will negatively impact on the visual experience of the midwinter solstice (the most important alignment at Stonehenge) and it will cause harm to the significance of the Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS. The Society feels that this is unacceptable.
- c. The position of the western portal also involves new-build road construction over virgin ground within the WHS and in particular the dry valley to the south of the Winterbourne Stoke barrow cemetery and to the west of the Normanton Down barrow group. This dry valley is of the highest value: the rich burials concentrated almost exclusively along its sides declare the valley to have been the focus of high status interest during the Early Bronze Age. Furthermore, road construction at this point will have a considerable negative visual impact on the Winterbourne Stoke and Normanton Down barrow groups which both share horizon positions from this valley.

4 Recommendations

At the ICOMOS/UNESCO consultation in October 2015, it was recommended by The Society that no part of the tunnel should be visible from or lie within the WHS (NB NOT just Stonehenge) and the Society still maintains this view therefore a longer tunnel is essential to protect the significance and integrity of the WHS.

The western portal must be moved outside the WHS to avoid new-build within an untouched and important area of the WHS. Failure to do so would create a dangerous international precedent in diminishing the importance of the status of World Heritage Sites.

Jet fans (as used on some lengthy Alpine tunnels). should be installed in the elongated tunnel to avoid the need for visually impacting ventilation shafts.

Should Option1 be the only route that will be considered by Government, we wish to be involved in advising on final locations and designs of the portals, and suitable archaeological mitigation of the harm that will accrue to the significance of the WHS, both through archaeological fieldwork and publication, and the wider public benefits of increasing interpretation and understanding through improved public access.

Yours faithfully

Dr Alex Gibson BA PhD FSA FSA(Scot) MCIfA
Hon President
On behalf of the Prehistoric Society