



Department
for Transport

George McDonic MBE
Chairman of the Stonehenge Alliance

From the Minister of State
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Dear George

Thank you for your letter of 21 October to the Prime Minister, enclosing further correspondence about Stonehenge and the A303. Your letter has been passed to this Department and I am replying as the Minister responsible for the development of the A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down scheme.

Turning firstly to your concerns over the World Heritage Site I can assure you that I am fully aware of the significance and need to protect this site.

Highways England are to reconcile the Government's obligations under Article 4 of the World Heritage Convention by completing an assessment of the impacts in line with ICOMOS Guidance on Heritage Impact Assessment for assessing impacts on Outstanding Universal Value. It is worth noting the views of the Joint World Heritage Centre / ICOMOS within their Advisory Mission Report of their 27-30 October 2015 visit where they state that "The upgrade of the A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down through the Stonehenge World Heritage property by relocating the existing road underground into a "tunnel of at least 2.9km" could readily adopt appropriate, well-established construction methods. Hence, with good design and construction controls, the tunnelled length of road would be expected to have a beneficial impact on the attributes of Outstanding Universal Value."

The latest Advisory Mission Report from the Joint World Heritage Centre / ICOMOS is from their 27-30 October 2015 visit and is available via their website, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/373/documents/>. In presenting their proposals for public consultation in the New Year Highways England will also be seeking the views of ICOMOS/UNESCO.

Highways England welcomed the engagement with ICOMOS and UNESCO and also welcomed the recommendation they made in their Advisory Mission Report referred to above. They are carefully considering these recommendations in the development of proposals for public consultation in the New Year.

With regards to the justification for widening the A303 at Stonehenge, this is a scheme that has been sought for a long time. Along with the A358 and A30, the A303 is a key strategic route to the South West. This area exhibits lower levels of economic performance than the wider region and the rest of the UK. Local authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships are planning for growth of 120,000 new jobs and 100,000 new homes by 2021.

The A303/A30/A358 Corridor Feasibility Study identified the section past Stonehenge as being the worst performing on the corridor. The poor performance on this section of the A303 disrupt local east-west and north-south traffic flows and lead to New Year, Highways England has considered compliance with National Networks National Policy Statement (NNNPS) by undertaking an options assessment traffic diverting onto unsuitable roads and through the local communities. The Tunnel Route would reduce traffic flows in Shrewton, Larkhill and Durrington, by up to a third in the summer months when local congestion is worst.

In developing the proposals for the A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down scheme to take to public consultation in the. Their methodology for assessing these options will be included in the information presented at the public consultation.

I hope this reassures you that I take the need to protect this World Heritage Site as a matter of great importance for this and future generations to be able to enjoy.

Yours sincerely

THE RT. HON. JOHN HAYES CBE MP