



Department
for Transport

George McDonic
Chairman, The Stonehenge Alliance
c/o Kate Fielden, Hon Secretary

From the Minister of State
The Rt. Hon. John Hayes CBE MP

Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Tel: 0300 330 3000
E-Mail: john.hayes@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Web site: www.gov.uk/dft

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Dear George

Thank you for your letter of 9 January, about Stonehenge World Heritage Site (WHS) and the A303.

Please may I reassure you that both Highways England and the Department for Transport take the issues you have raised seriously. As you may be aware Highways England have launched a consultation on their current proposals. In view of this the department cannot comment in detail as the proposal may change after the consultation.

However, I have been informed by Highways England that:

- (i) Data on the lower levels of economic performance in the South West can be sourced through reports such as:
 - 'A303/A358/A30: Corridor Improvement Programme - Economic Impact Study' (February 2013) commissioned by Somerset County Council in partnership with an alliance of South West Councils and the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership; and
 - 'A303/A30/A358 Corridor Feasibility Study' (February 2015) commissioned by the Government to look at the problems and to identify potential solutions along the corridor.

These reports informed the Government's proposals to create an expressway along the A303 route, which alongside the A303 Stonehenge Improvement plan, form part of our Road Investment Strategy. The reports can be found online via the Somerset County Council website.

As part of its public consultation on the scheme, Highways England has published a Technical Appraisal Report (TAR) which is available on the consultation website (www.highways.gov.uk/a303stonehenge/consultation). The TAR contains the references to the above reports and how they form part of the background to the scheme proposals being consulted on.

(ii) Highways England's consultations with the UNESCO/ICOMOS Advisory Mission and the general public are seeking views on a single (tunnel) option under the World Heritage Site together with a bypass to the north or south of the village of Winterbourne Stoke.

(iii) The scheme proposals are based on an assessment of current problems along the A303 and forecasts of future traffic levels, not on past historic levels. As such, Highways England are not presenting detailed traffic flow data over the past 20 years as part of its public consultation, or detailing impacts of north-south traffic over the same period.

In terms of the potential for traffic to be induced on to the A303, there is the potential for some traffic to re-assign from other routes to the A303 when it is upgraded. The impacts of such reassignment will form part of the detailed assessment presented when the scheme enters the planning process seeking development consent. For now the public consultation is simply seeking views that will be taken into consideration in the choice of preferred route and that will inform the continued development of the scheme.

(iv) Our Road Investment Strategy sets out our strategy for creating an expressway along the A303 route. We do not believe there are cheaper and simpler solutions to addressing the problems of congestion on the A303 past Stonehenge and improving connectivity to the South West, which satisfy all of the scheme objectives. Accordingly, we have charged Highways England with developing this scheme and the other schemes that make up the programme of improvements needed to create the expressway.

Separately, they will also keep under consideration any interim smaller-scale measures that can be undertaken to help traffic flows in the meantime, such as yellow-hatch markings that have been and are being pursued at the Countess Roundabout junction between the A303 and A345.

I hope this explains the current position.

Yours sincerely

THE RT. HON. JOHN HAYES CBE MP