

## THE STONEHENGE ALLIANCE

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

The Rt. Hon. Karen Bradley, MP,  
Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport,  
Department for Culture, Media and Sport,  
100 Parliament Street,  
London SW1A 2BQ.

Sent by email on 7 December 2016

Dear Secretary of State,

### **Stonehenge and the A303**

Thank you for asking Tom Pointon, of your Ministerial Support Team, to respond to Dr Fielden's email sending you copy correspondence between the Stonehenge Alliance and the Prime Ministers and Highways England.

I feel that it is important to inform you of an apparent misunderstanding that appears to have arisen concerning the views of the World Heritage Centre's Advisory Mission.

Mr Pointon assures us that none of the mission's report recommendations suggest that the WHS status is at risk and this is, of course, not surprising. Investigations relating to the Government's A303 widening plan, including a 2.9km bored tunnel at Stonehenge announced in Parliament in December 2014 and hitherto not withdrawn, were understood by the mission to be no more than 'preliminary suggestions'. The mission underlined that its report was of a 'preliminary nature'. Thus, it would have been assumed that further research, involving relevant experts, would deal satisfactorily with the report's reservations about tunnel length and location, along with its reference to the duty of the State Party under the terms of the World Heritage Convention.

It is clear to us and many others, particularly those familiar with the obligations of the World Heritage Convention, that international, national and local planning policy and guidance unequivocally demand protection of the whole World Heritage Site (WHS) property *and* its setting. Such guidance includes that provided by your own Department as well as the widely agreed vision and priorities of the 2015 WHS Management Plan. Thus, any proposal to damage irreversibly the WHS with major engineering works of the kind currently being pursued as Highways England's 'working assumption' would be contrary to the Convention and all the relevant planning safeguards. It would render those safeguards for UK WHSs ineffective and bring disgrace to our nation in the eyes of the world.

Any suggestion that the public benefit of the current and enormously expensive A303 plan might outweigh obvious conservation considerations cannot be taken seriously at a time when public

funds are already stretched. For your convenience, I attach a copy of my letter to the Prime Minister of 21 October 2016 which mentions issues of traffic flow and congestion at Stonehenge.

I also enclose copies of a recent email on the subject of Stonehenge and the A303 from Highways England's Project Manager Andrew Alcorn and my reply to it today.

I would be most grateful if you should, please, let me have answers to my following two questions.

1. Can you assure me that, if it should it be found necessary on incontrovertible evidence to widen the A303 at Stonehenge, that only a proposal that ensures no further damage to the WHS will be sanctioned by your Department?
2. Is it indeed the case that the World Heritage Centre's Advisory Mission will be asked to consider options for the A303 at Stonehenge next January, some weeks in advance of public consultation 'in the spring'?

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

George McDonic  
Chairman, the Stonehenge Alliance

cc. to The Rt. Hon. Theresa May, MP, Prime Minister  
The Rt. Hon. Philip Hammond, MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer  
The Rt. Hon. Chris Grayling, MP, Secretary of State for Transport  
The Rt. Hon. Jeremy Corbyn, MP, Leader of the Opposition  
Tom Watson, MP, Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Minister for Culture, Media and Sport  
Tracey Crouch, MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport  
Andrew Jones, MP, Under-Secretary of State for Transport  
Andy McDonald, MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Transport  
Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb  
John Glen, MP for Salisbury  
Dr. Isabelle Anatole-Gabriel, UNESCO World Heritage Centre  
Susan Denyer, Secretary, ICOMOS-UK

The Stonehenge Alliance is supported by: Ancient Sacred Landscape Network;  
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