

## THE STONEHENGE ALLIANCE

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

Jesse Norman, MP,  
Under secretary of State for Transport  
Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
London SW1P 4DR

Sent by email on 31 October 2017

Dear Jesse Norman,

### **Stonehenge and the A303 preferred route**

Thank you for your (undated) letter, received by me on 29 September.

I and four other representatives of the Stonehenge Alliance have now met with Chris Taylor and Derek Parody of Highways England.

I attach a copy of my letter to Chris Taylor, for your information. I trust that you will note our serious concerns about the approach of Highways England to the A303 scheme apparently in close partnership with and informed by the National Trust, Historic England, English Heritage and Wiltshire Council.

I would like to draw your attention to two particular issues fundamentally at odds with the Government's commitments under the World Heritage Convention and its own planning safeguards for World Heritage Sites (WHS) which demand protection of the *entire WHS and its setting*.

1. Highways England said the Government would not wish to lose the World Heritage status of Stonehenge and Avebury. Nevertheless, Highways England and presumably also the Government have disregarded the 6 July 2017 Decision of UNESCO's World Heritage Committee urging the UK Government to seek options for the A303 that do not involve dual carriageway cuttings within the WHS. The announced 'preferred route' ignores that advice.
2. Highways England implied to us that the UNESCO World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Advisory Mission, invited to Stonehenge by the UK Government, gave wrong advice and did not understand UNESCO's guidelines on the implementation of the WH Convention or ICOMOS' guidance on heritage impact assessment for cultural WH properties. This is an extraordinary stance and one wonders why an immediate approach to these bodies was not made in order to rectify any apparent misunderstandings.

It is our view that Highways England and its partner-organisations in the A303 Stonehenge preferred route scheme are seriously mistaken in their advice to the Government on these matters. They themselves have misunderstood the obligations of the World Heritage Convention and of UK planning policy in respect of its WHSs.

I trust you will look into this matter with some urgency, since breach of an international agreement and the cavalier treatment of such a WHS as Stonehenge and Avebury, already giving rise to international censure, would undoubtedly result in international disgrace should the designation be withdrawn.

We would, of course, be glad to meet with you to discuss the situation, should you feel that would be helpful; and I look forward to your response to our concerns.

Yours sincerely,

George McDonic  
Chairman, the Stonehenge Alliance

cc. The Rt. Hon. Theresa May, MP, Prime Minister  
The Rt. Hon. Philip Hammond, MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer  
The Rt. Hon. Karen Bradley, MP, Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport  
The Rt. Hon. Chris Grayling, MP, Secretary of State for Transport  
The Rt. Hon. Jeremy Corbyn, MP, Leader of the Opposition  
The Rt. Hon. Sir Vince Cable, MP, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Party  
The Rt. Hon. John Hayes, MP, Minister of State for Transport  
Tom Watson, MP, Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport  
John Glen, MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Arts, Heritage and Tourism  
Andy McDonald, MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Transport  
Kevin Brennan, MP, Shadow Minister for the Arts and Heritage  
Lilian Greenwood, MP, Chair, Transport Committee  
Caroline Lucas, MP  
Molly Scott Cato, MEP, Green Party MEP for the South West  
Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb  
Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury, Liberal Democrat Lords Spokesperson for Culture, Media and Sport  
Dr Isabelle Anatole-Gabrielle, Head of Europe and North America Unit, UNESCO World Heritage Centre  
Susan Denyer, Secretary, ICOMOS-UK

**THE STONEHENGE 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