



Chairman
Janette Ward

Please reply to:-
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CPRE South West

Via email to: A303Stonehenge@highwaysengland.co.uk

17th April 2018

Dear Sir/Madam

A303 STONEHENGE PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE A303 PREFERRED ROUTE PROPOSALS

CPRE South West represents the seven county branches in the South West of England and thousands of individual CPRE members. Our letter should be read in conjunction with the detailed response submitted by CPRE Wiltshire and also that from Stonehenge Alliance, which CPRE supports.

We would like to **reiterate our concerns** which we stated in our letter of 28th February 2017 in response to the previous consultation:

We feel that this consultation is fundamentally flawed. All along, we have been presented only with options that will cause damage to a globally important site, and will not, as intended, improve its overall tranquillity and setting. In addition to this, we consider that the preferred route for this expressway will fail to provide benefit to local communities and business.

The approach to consultation on the A303 preferred route and the information supplied on its potential impacts are highly inadequate. Furthermore, we have been given far too little information about the impacts of the scheme. It is evident that much information relevant to our understanding of the project and the problems arising from it has yet to be obtained by Highways England. Statements about impacts on archaeology, heritage, landscape, tranquillity, noise and the natural environment are not supported by detailed evidence. Where evidence is presented, it is often simplistic and not substantiated. For example, the increased traffic flows anticipated by Highways England are not mentioned in the consultation documents at all. Thus, we reassert our point that this consultation is both inadequate and premature.

CPRE South West **strongly disagrees** with the 2.9km tunnel proposal across the World Heritage Site (WHS). In our view this will cause irreparable damage to this globally important cultural site and, more generally, to the surrounding cultural and natural landscapes. We

value not only the currently known heritage, but equally, the considerable amount of heritage still to be discovered, which is an invaluable part of our nation's cultural capital. Recent finds of Mesolithic date highlight the hidden wealth of the site yet to be fully understood and which is put at risk by this proposal.

The iconic stones and the wider WHS at Stonehenge sit within a largely open, downland landscape which supports important wildlife and biodiversity. CPRE SW is concerned that all infrastructure developments in the sub region should comply with the commitment made by the UK government in their recently published 25 Year Environment Plan. The main premise of this Plan states "*Our environment plan sets out our goals for improving the environment within a generation and leaving it in a better state than we found it*". We believe the A303 proposal runs contrary to that stated commitment and should not be allowed to progress.

We would also like to make the following, specific points:

- If a tunnel is the best solution to the conflict arising from a commitment by Highways England to build this expressway, then the proposed 2.9km length is far too short. The WHS is 5.4km wide, so the tunnel and the accompanying new road, tunnel portals and major junctions would result in irreparable damage to archaeology and landscape - in direct contravention of UK planning policy and the Government's commitments under the terms of the World Heritage and Valetta Conventions and the WHS Management Plan.
- The proposal would increase traffic, noise and light pollution through the WHS, and the lighting and signage required for a high speed route will alter the dark skies at present to be found around the WHS and in this part of rural Wiltshire.
- Recent archaeological work within the WHS shows the emerging significance of Stonehenge and its surrounding area. The site has to date been largely protected from incursion by modern development. However the designation of the A303 as an Expressway, with the associated above surface structures (gantries, lighting, split level access) and two major twin portals within the WHS itself will dramatically change this. The proposed scheme disregards UNESCO's advice to explore options that would not damage the WHS, risking loss of World Heritage status. CPRE SW is appalled that Highways England is continuing to push this flawed consultation in the light of this advice.

In addition we are concerned at the impact of the expressway on this rural area of south Wiltshire. Here "soft" tourism in the form of appreciation of landscape, tranquillity, heritage and culture is an important part of the local economy and is not fully quantified in any of the supporting documents behind the road proposal. The historic, cultural and natural environment plays a key role in the local and wider economy, bringing in valuable business from the UK and abroad, supporting local small enterprises in this rural area as well as the adjacent urban areas such as Salisbury.

- In our view the evaluation made of the economic advantages of turning the A303 into an expressway (A303/358/30 Corridor Improvement Programme Economic impact study Feb 2013) is not sufficiently rigorous or inclusive. This study is light on local information and is in considerable disagreement in its final analysis with the more thorough "London to South West and South Wales Multi Modal Study" report carried out by Halcrow Group Ltd for the Government Office for the South West in 2001.

Fundamentally, we believe that connectivity for the South West could be achieved in a far less damaging and intrusive manner. There remains the desire for a robust railway link

from Waterloo to Exeter and beyond via Basingstoke. Improved internet services would dramatically improve the business viability of the rural areas of the South West.

We find it hard to believe that this Government wishes to develop a road scheme that will damage 'forever' what is one of the most important, iconic, special and loved places within the UK and worldwide. We believe the current proposal is significantly flawed and that if there is anywhere for taking a more enlightened, strategic and long term investment approach to transport development, surely it must be here at Stonehenge.

We hope you will take our views into account

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light green rectangular background. The signature appears to read "Becky Collier".

Becky Collier
Admin Support - CPRE South West