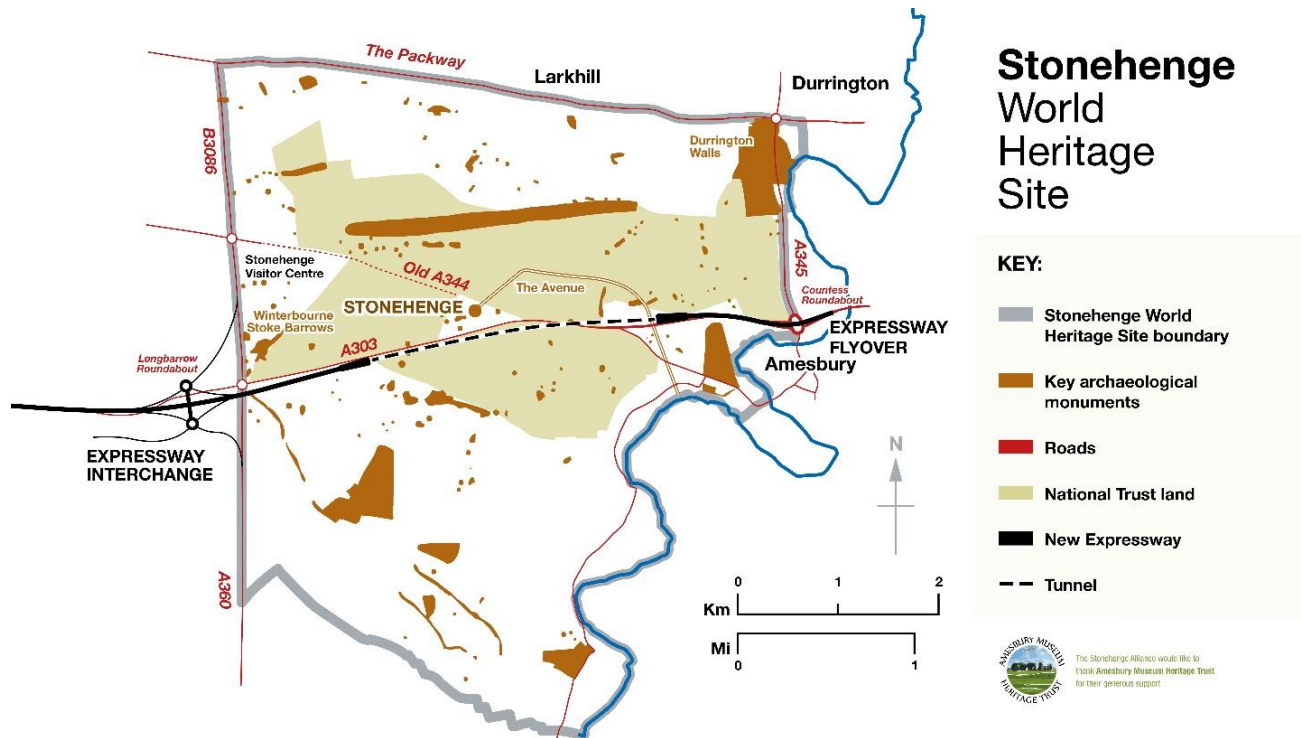


A303 STONEHENGE MP BRIEFING PAPER
 prepared by the Stonehenge Alliance, [1] September 2018



Map of Stonehenge World Heritage Site showing proposed A303 Preferred Route

1. HMG is a signatory to the 1972 [World Heritage Convention](#) [2] and thus committed to protecting the whole World Heritage Site (WHS) Article 4 of the Convention reads:

“Each State Party to this Convention recognizes that the duty of ensuring the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage referred to in Articles 1 and 2 and situated on its territory [i.e., its designated World Heritage Sites], belongs primarily to that State. It will do all it can to this end, to the utmost of its own resources and, where appropriate, with any international assistance and co-operation, in particular, financial, artistic, scientific and technical, which it may be able to obtain.”

- A World Heritage Site is designated for its outstanding universal value to mankind.
- The World Heritage Convention applies to the whole WHS.
- Protecting a WHS also protects its outstanding universal value: the two are inseparable.
- Government planning policy demands protection of a WHS *and its setting*.

2. UNESCO’s position

HMG has invited three joint UNESCO WH Centre/International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) specialist missions (2015, 2017 and 2018) to see and advise on the A303 Stonehenge proposals. The [2018 Advisory Mission’s report](#) [3] recommends exploration of bypass and longer tunnel options, saying the road scheme “should not proceed in its present form”. [UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee Decision in 2018](#) [4] reiterates that advice.

- Ignoring UNESCO’s advice could lead to loss of WH status: international disgrace.

3. Archaeological damage that would arise from the A303 scheme

- Around 26 sq. km (10 sq. miles) at Stonehenge, together with a similar area at Avebury, were designated a WHS in 1986 for their remarkable Neolithic and Bronze Age remains. These *designed* landscapes, with interrelated monuments and sites, include avenues and other features linked to the topography and water. Deep dual-carriageway cuttings and tunnel entrances would destroy archaeology and the integrity of the WHS.
- The A303 Preferred Route is strongly [objected to by 22 archaeologists](#), [5] leading specialists in the archaeology of the WHS.
- The integrity of the famous Blick Mead Mesolithic site, beside and possibly under the present A303, would be severely compromised by a massive flyover.

4. Consultation

The non-statutory consultation (2017) on route options was deeply flawed in offering a short (2.9km) tunnel under only part of the WHS, with bypass options to the west for Winterbourne Stoke village, i.e., a single option for the WHS, damaging to both the Site and its setting.

- Lack of information on options discarded by Highways England (including a WHS bypass), precluded informed judgement and comparison with the option chosen.
- The scheme was mainly advertised and exhibited locally by Highways England. Only one exhibition was held outside Wiltshire, at the Society of Antiquaries in London.
- Seventy-seven per cent of c.9,000 respondees to this consultation objected to the short tunnel within the WHS, irrespective of the Winterbourne Stoke bypass options.

The 2018 Statutory (February–April) and supplementary (July–August) consultations on the Preferred Route were similarly highly unsatisfactory.

- Exhibitions and publicity were largely restricted to local media and venues, with a single afternoon exhibition outside Wiltshire at the Society of Antiquaries in London.
- Information was (and still is) lacking in key areas, such as archaeology, the natural environment and hydrogeology, making fully informed judgements impossible.
- Misinformation in scheme documentation and media statements by scheme promoters continued and gave the impression that the WHS and its OUV would be protected.
- Outright objections to the scheme, including those made via Stonehenge Alliance and Friends of the Earth websites (reaching a wider group, including people from abroad) have substantially increased since the first consultation.

5. Cost and value for money

- Capital cost was set by HMG in September 2017 at an upper limit of £1.6bn. (Estimated cost was £1.3bn in December 2014). Annual tunnel maintenance costs would be c.£7m.
- PF2 is sought. A [June 2018 Public Accounts Committee report](#) [6] has cast doubt on PF2 providing value for money.

- Economic assessment conclusions in the September 2017 [Scheme Assessment Report](#) [7] include:
 - “10.5.12. Based on those impacts that can be quantified, the Scheme is likely to lie within the low-medium value for money category of schemes.”
 - “10.7.1. A conventional approach to appraisal, which focusses on the traffic related benefits delivered to users of the road network, would suggest that the scheme has low value for money. However, this fails to capture the full range of benefits of the scheme and doesn’t include the value of removing the current road from Stonehenge WHS which is a key benefit of the new scheme.” [*Important note: the scheme would not remove the road from the WHS.*]
- The [Whitehall Monitor 2018](#) [8] (Fig. 6.5 et seq.) gives a red delivery confidence rating for the A303 Stonehenge scheme in 2017: i.e., successful delivery appears to be unachievable.

6. Who stands to gain? (supporters of the Government’s scheme)

- **Historic England** answers to the DDCMS and is governed by the Historic England Commission which has overall responsibility for English Heritage Trust’s collections. Historic England Commissioners are among the Trustees of English Heritage Trust of which Historic England is the sole member.
- **English Heritage Trust**, manager of Stonehenge visitor-centre, is likely to follow HMG’s lead. The Trust would benefit from an enhanced setting to the henge and an increase in paying visitors, since motorists’ view of the Stones from the A303 would be lost.
- **The National Trust** owns land around Stonehenge from which the A303 would be removed into a tunnel. The Trust might also gain financially if it were to develop its own visitor-centre and charge to see the view of the Stones from the road lost to motorists in future. **The support of the NT for the scheme is instrumental.**
- **Local people** hope to be rid of traffic congestion and rat-running. Any traffic flow improvement would be temporary, since road widening is known to induce more traffic: see, e.g., a [2017 CPRE publication](#) [9] which also demonstrates that widened roads rarely bring hoped-for economic benefits and increased housing to a region.

7. Who stands to lose from the scheme?

- **Present and future generations**, who, under the terms of the WH Convention, are promised permanent protection of the WHS
- **The many millions of A303 travellers**, who value the view of the Stones from the road
- **Those who would like to see the henge in future** and would (mostly) be obliged to pay
- **Our nation**, whose pride in and understanding of an iconic and fundamental part of its heritage would be irretrievably lost. *Note:* October 2018 is the centenary of the gift of Stonehenge to the nation by Sir Cecil Chubb.
- **Those concerned about the wildlife of the WHS**, including the Great Bustard Group, and the RSPB whose WHS bird sanctuary hosts protected Stone Curlews
- **Our Government**, whose Convention promise would be broken and, being responsible for an incalculable loss to the world, would be subject to international censure

8. What should be done?

- Place the A303 Stonehenge scheme on hold. Seek alternative options not damaging to the WHS, as advised by UNESCO and the large majority of consultation respondees.
- Given the substantial changes predicted in car journeys and use over the next 10–20 years, consider implementing interim traffic management measures at Stonehenge. Road widening might not be necessary within 50 years – a small fraction of the period of human use of the WHS.
- Find better ways of spending £1.6bn. In terms of transport alone, the South West would benefit from improved railways and bus provision: this is an area where connectivity, especially for rural communities, is lacking. Urgent road repairs are also needed.
- HMG should introduce statutory protection for UK WH Sites, so that these highly-regarded places receive the safeguarding they need if they are to survive intact. This would not mean that no development should be allowed but that new development should not damage a WHS's intrinsic qualities and integrity.

References

1. The Stonehenge Alliance is supported by: Ancient Sacred Landscape Network, Campaign for Better Transport, Campaign to Protect Rural England, Friends of the Earth, RESCUE: The British Archaeological Trust and many individuals in the UK and abroad. <http://stonehengealliance.org.uk/>
2. *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, UNESCO, 1972. <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/convention-en.pdf>
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4. Decision: 42 COM 7B.32: Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2018. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/7261/>
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9. Campaign to Protect Rural England, *The end of the road? Challenging the road-building consensus*, March 2017. <https://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/transport/roads/item/4543-the-end-of-the-road-challenging-the-road-building-consensus>