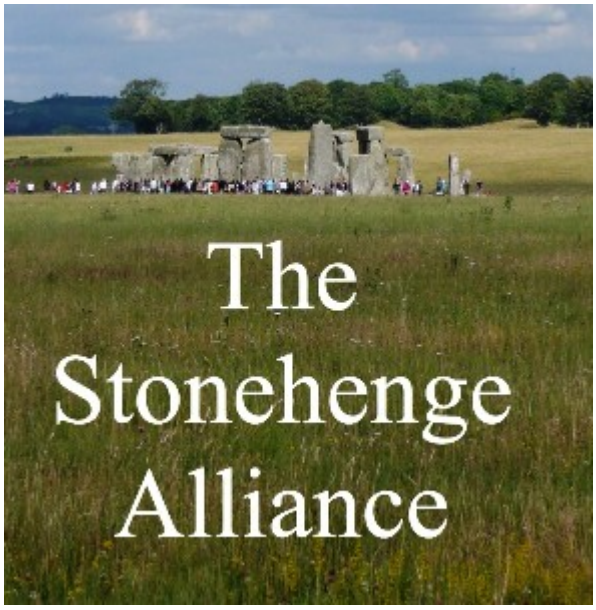
Examination of the Stonehenge tunnel project now underway



Our Alliance has submitted ten documents stating our objections. Altogether that's 220 pages of detailed evidence with the input of eight authors and expert advisers. You can view our submissions (with summaries) on our DCO Examination page. [See notes 1 and 2 below]

Huge thanks are due to our authors and advisers who have given their time for free or at well below commercial rates. Kate Fielden for the Alliance has personally authored or co-authored some of our submissions as well as co-ordinated everyone else's, so special thanks are due to Kate.

We're also very grateful indeed for the generous donations we've received from supporters that have got us to this point.

But of course it's not over yet! The examination still has over four more months to run and there will be many more rounds of reading and rebutting, as well as hearings into specific issues which we'll be involved in. We're hoping to bring some of our experts to appear in person and to obtain legal advice during the Examination process, so we will need to raise more funds to make the best of these opportunities.

The first hearings are this week, on Wednesday and Thursday 22 and 23 May, in Salisbury City Hall. These are **"Open Floor Hearings"** which are not confined to invited experts. Anyone who has registered as an "interested party" has a right to

attend and speak. If you want to you'd be well advised to contact the Inspectorate first for a scheduled slot. The hearings are in the evening as well as daytime on both days. [See note 3 below.]

Alliance supporters are speaking on both days and we'll keep you informed about progress through our website and social media.

NOTES

[1] Topics we have focused on are: Alternative options; Biodiversity, Biological Environment and Ecology; Flood Risk, geology and groundwater protection; Heritage and the Historic Environment; Landscape and Visual Aspects; Noise and Vibration (Tranquillity); Vibration from tunnel boring; Transport Planning and Economics Issues; Cultural Heritage Value Report; and Concerns about consultation on the Scheme. Archaeology is covered by other specialists including the Council for British Archaeology.

[2] For ease of reference our correspondence with the Planning Inspectorate together with our written representations are individually linked on our A303 Stonehenge DCO web page. They are also published under "Documents" on the Planning inspectorate's Examination Library pages: referenced as REP2-128 to REP2-138.

[3] Open Floor Hearings are detailed in Annex E in a Examining Authority letter to Interested parties. Although the deadline for notification to speak is past, we are aware that few have asked to do so. If you are interested please contact the Inspectorate straight away. The hearings will be held at City Hall, Malthouse Lane, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP2 7TU.

Stonehenge Tunnel: Starting gun fired at Salisbury Racecourse



Examination Authority with Interested Parties at the Preliminary Meeting at Salisbury Racecourse, 2 April 2019

The much anticipated Preliminary Meeting for Examination of the A303 Stonehenge Development Consent Order (DCO) application was held at the invitation of the Examining Authority on 2 April. It was a crowded bureaucratic affair coloured by some unexpectedly challenging questions from participants about restrictive covenants, invisible references and administrative blunders such as sending numerous local residents the wrong date [reported by the BBC] causing our followers to enquire about the timetable two days too late. Was it the theatre of the absurd?

For those who do not follow us on Facebook we recommend reading our day's illustrated commentary based on our four posts below.

1/4. We set off to Salisbury Racecourse this morning, not for

its primary purpose of horse racing but for an entirely different race that we must win, starting with the Preliminary Meeting by the Examining Authority of the A303 Stonehenge Expressway. The reception committee arrived early enough to greet fellow objectors, participants and various authorities.



Stonehenge Alliance reception committee



Printed version of Development Consent Order application, made up of over 300 documents, was available for inspection.

The main room was laid out like a banquet with seats for onlookers (pictured above, top). Proceedings were relayed to an almost empty overflow room with a nearby display of hard copies of all 302 application documents. We were relieved to pick up a version on a one-inch USB pen instead.



The overflow room

2/
4.
Th
e
pr
oc
ee
di
ng
s
ki
ck
ed
of
f
wi
th
in
tr
od
uc
ti

ons. First, the 5 members of the Examining Authority. Then came the ‘suits’. To th

e
le
ft
of
th
e
Ex
am
in
in
g
Au
th
or
it
y
wa
s
a
pl
at
oo
n
of
Hi
gh
wa
ys
En
gl
an
d
re
pr
es
en
ta

ti
ve
s
he
ad
ed
up
by
Mr
Ta
yl
or
QC
.
On
th
ei
r
ri
gh
t
we
re
mo
re
pr
of
es
si
on
al
s
re
pr
es
en
ti

ng
Wi
lt
sh
ir
e
Co
un
ci
l
le
d
by
a
ge
ni
al
Pa
ul
Br
ow
n
QC
,
th
en
ca
me
le
ga
l
an
d
ot
he
r
re

presentatives for Historic England, English Heritage, National Trust and the

En
vi
ro
nm
en
t
Ag
en
cy
.



Some representatives of organisations joined a top table. The legal and team of professionals from Highways England are along the left. Proceedings were filmed for an independent documentary.

At the table facing the Examining Authority were representatives of the Druids, Amesbury Museum and Heritage Trust, Avebury Society, Stonehenge Alliance (behind our own label!), Blick Mead/Consortium of Archaeologists, Trail Riders' Fellowship, landowners subject to compulsory purchase, NFU, etc. Ranged behind them sat other interested individuals and representatives of such organisations as the RSPB, the CBA and the Great Bustard Group, and a number of concerned

archaeologists. Picture above.



Proprietor of Amesbury Abbey asks a question about water monitoring at Blick Mead. Professor David Jacques, director of the Blick Mead research is seated next to him.

3/4. We were advised by Wendy McKay, Lead Member of the Panel of five Inspectors (the Examining Authority) that the meeting was being held simply to discuss procedural matters for the Examination which will be largely held in writing. Highways England was challenged over missing documentation: Avebury Society wanted sight of the visitor survey quoted by Highways England: having been sent on a wild goose chase, eventually discovering that the authors were the National Trust who had not shared it when requested. The Trail Riders' Fellowship were concerned about extinguished byways but their requests for information from Highways England had been met with silence.

Images below left to right: Highways England team in front of the screen; Friends of the Earth ask a question; Col Parker enquires about his plan developed by Balfour Beatty.







The Stonehenge Alliance couldn’t find a slot in the principal Issues to raise further concerns about the inadequacy of the Public Consultations. The Examining Authority had been told by the Department for Transport that all procedures had been complied with, hence the acceptance of the scheme to this stage.

Much confusion reigned about installation of groundwater monitoring equipment at Blick Mead expected to begin on 17 April. Later in the meeting it appeared that some data on

water had already been passed to the Environment Agency but more reports were expected.

Historic England pointed out that the timetable for these hearings needed to align with UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee decisions in early July,

Dr Gillham said the scheme only paid lip service to climate change and highlighted the failure to understand the urgency of sorting out the problem in the next 11 years.

Colonel Parker wanted his alternative plan included since it was so much cheaper than the tunnel. Although the Highways Agency had been given the plans by Balfour Beatty, they had not been presented as part of this DCO application.

Amesbury Museum and Heritage Trust asked whether the ExA had seen the deeds to the Stonehenge property and whether there were any covenants.



The Examining Authority requested information from various parties in time to meet their timetable and for the first tranche of hearings. They would consider the all points raised and make their decisions known in their Rule 8 letter which would be published as soon as practicable on the website [link]. Future hearings would take place at the Civic Hall, Salisbury.

4/4.



Seated, centre Dr Chris Gillham with Simon Temple, transport consultant for the Stonehenge Alliance posing a question at the Preliminary Meeting.

Cynicism, optimism and realism. We cannot ignore the background of the panel chair, an experienced inspector whose CV includes decision-making on a fracking scheme and nuclear plant. Towards the end of the proceedings veteran campaigner from Twyford Down, Chris Gillham, representing the A36 and A350 Corridor Alliance, struck a weary note of realism: this process has been designed as a rubber stamping exercise. He asked whether the panel would follow in Donald Rumsfeld's surprisingly wise footsteps and provide for the known unknowns if precious things were discovered or unexpected water problems came about in the course of construction. The reply from one of the panel members who had refuted the charge of "rubber stamping" struck a note of empathy and genuine respect: We must consider applying conditions that "safeguard one of the most valuable sites in the world".

In the room were people who have devoted many years to defending precious places, more especially fighting for this threatened and misunderstood prehistoric World Heritage Site where people worship, wonder and find solace. There were also those present working on behalf of those who viewed the site as an opportunity to impose a ruthless ambition. The appalling insertion of a dual carriageway into this venerated landscape stands as a symbol of so many of our modern ailments and

weaknesses. We now have a significant opportunity to question our values. To win this battle will be a magnificent victory.

What next?

The A303 Stonehenge Examination lasts 6 months starting from 2 April it closes on 2 October 2019. The Examining Authority has its timetable and revised principal Issues in its recently published Rule 8 letter

In the interests of inclusion and world wide interests the Stonehenge Alliance and others requested that hearings were live streamed. The answer to that request is due on 18 April.

Preliminary Meeting in the media

The Guardian report by Steven Morris

Question of restrictive covenants is picked up by the BBC

The event gets good coverage in Australia



Stonehenge: a snapshot of the meeting so far – 8 April 2019 Courtesy Heritage Journal

Register to object to A303 Stonehenge Expressway by 11 January 2019



The registration period for this highly damaging scheme has now opened.

We urge everyone concerned about the impact of the A303 Expressway on the Stonehenge World Heritage Site to REGISTER TODAY!

Registration does not commit you to doing anything more, although you can if you want to. However, it is important that the panel of planning Inspectors understands the strength of public concern at home and abroad.

1. The form is very simple – fill in your details *
2. Give the reasons why you are objecting without going into great detail. Examples could include (**but please**

use your own words):

- Irreparable damage to the WHS, its archaeology and setting, described by UNESCO as a 'landscape without parallel'
- UNESCO's international advisers say the scheme should not go ahead in its present form
- Concerns about damage to Blick Mead Mesolithic site and its setting
- Lack of alternative options in consultation that would not damage the World Heritage Site
- Loss of the view from the road and need to pay to see the Stones in future
- Disturbance of rare bird species (Stone Curlew and Great Bustard)
- Increased noise from faster traffic

After **11 January** a panel of planning Inspectors will be appointed, known as the **"Examining Authority"**. They will review the representations and outline their proposals for the Examination which is likely to start sometime in **February 2019.**

The Examination, which is mostly carried out in writing and not by cross-examination, will only last for 6 months which is an incredibly short period to address some pretty major issues. This will put a lot of pressure on bodies such as the Stonehenge Alliance, which do not have the benefit of huge resources, unlike Highways England which will throw vast sums of public money at this examination and employ numerous consultants.

So please don't forget to **register your objection** to this sacrilege. If you are able to **help us financially** to hire the specialist advice needed and for other campaign activities, please consider doing so.

Thanks for your support!

[wpedon id=3625]

*** Copied from the Planning Inspectorate's website: "If you are unable to complete a registration form online and would like to register your interest, please call the helpline on: 0303 444 5000 to request a paper form. For further advice please see Advice Note 8.2: How to register to participate in an Examination."**

A303 Stonehenge Expressway – A monumental disaster!



A303 Amesbury Bypass under construction 1968, showing the World Heritage Site landscape (designated 1986) deeply scoured

for a new roundabout and dual carriageway beside Amesbury Abbey and Park. Far more extensive destruction of this famous landscape is proposed. Source: unknown

16 November 2018 – Highways England's application for the Stonehenge Expressway and short (around 3km) tunnel was accepted today by the UK Infrastructure Planning Inspectorate.

The planned engineering works would scar the Stonehenge landscape for ever. There would be extensive tunnel cuttings into the chalk for four lanes of tarmac, and massive highway interchanges through sensitive archaeological areas. Over Countess Roundabout, shown under construction in the 1968 image above, there would be a colossal flyover into the World Heritage Site, looming close by the Mesolithic site of Blick Mead. The deep cutting through the hillside below Vespasian's Camp, under woodland at the top of the image, would be further widened for the eastern tunnel approach over what was once the parkland of Amesbury Abbey and, long before that, a prehistoric cemetery, parts of which are still visible on the ground.



Artist’s impression of proposed flyover relative to Amesbury Abbey, Grade I listed building, Grade II* listed park and garden near Countess roundabout, Amesbury within the Stonehenge World Heritage Site. Highways England hope not to have street lights, but vehicle headlights would be highly visible. Source: Amesbury Museum Heritage Trust

Loss of World Heritage Status?

Some five years of construction and traffic chaos would leave the Stonehenge landscape so altered that loss of its World Heritage status is already feared. The advice of international experts and leading archaeologists, and the outright objections of the clear majority of those who responded to Highways England’s consultations have been ignored.

The estimated cost of the project has now risen to £1.7bn. Quite apart from the damage it would cause to our ancient heritage, the scheme is assessed in Highways England’s documents as low value for money. Without incorporating

Highways England's valuation estimate of the inappropriately described 'heritage benefit' of the short tunnel, the scheme would be poor value for money.

We can't build our way out of congestion

Surely, there must be better ways of spending £1.7bn than on a damaging scheme that is predicated on Government demands for "affordability, deliverability and value for money"? This road-widening project revives a discredited transport policy scrapped in the 1990s, based on the misunderstanding that building more and wider roads will relieve congestion.

Take action and get involved

The Stonehenge road scheme will be judged by a panel of planning Inspectors early in 2019. Would you like to express your opinion as an individual or on behalf of an organisation? Please **sign up for email updates** from the Infrastructure Planning Inspectorate. The Inspectorate will keep you informed of the progress of the **Development Consent Order process** and how you can register as an Interested Party in order to make your views known.

Further information:

- Please see link here for an A303 Stonehenge Briefing
- Watch Professor Mike Parker Pearson, leading expert in British Neolithic archaeology, express his views about the damage the scheme would do to the World Heritage Site and its legacy to future generations.

Sacrilege! An archaeologist speaks out on centenary of Stonehenge gift



Lady Chubb with her husband Sir Cecil Chubb, donors of Stonehenge to the nation in 1918. Image source here

Expressway legacy threat mars centenary of Stonehenge donation

Today is the centenary of the gift of Stonehenge to the nation by Sir Cecil and Lady Chubb. This weekend, English Heritage is marking the occasion with a specially commissioned tea party designed by Jeremy Deller and an installation of his work, "*Sacrilege*", an almost life-sized inflatable Stonehenge.

A joyous public celebration for some, but for many others it could mark impending sacrilege for the nation's most famous World Heritage Site.

Highways England applied only a week ago to the Planning Inspectorate for a Development Consent Order to build the A303 tunnel and Expressway, disregarding all pleas to afford the

World Heritage Site the respect it deserves. Many specialists and thousands of people from around the world loudly condemn the scheme.

A distinguished archaeologist condemns the Stonehenge tunnel

Professor Mike Parker Pearson, leading expert in British Neolithic archaeology, speaks out about the Stonehenge tunnel in a newly released video ***"Stonehenge tunnel sets a bad precedent"*** to share his profound concerns. At barely 3km long the tunnel would be too short within a World Heritage Site that is more than 5km across, full of prehistoric monuments. Mike reminds us that the UNESCO World Heritage Site is

> *"a designation of an entire landscape. It's one of the few places, not just in Britain but in the World, where you can see a special, sacred landscape developed over thousands of years."*

Will the UK Government finally come to its senses and re-consider the A303 road-widening scheme and the damage it would do to our World Heritage Site? **It isn't too late to call a halt and heed the advice of UNESCO and other internationally acknowledged experts.**

A less damaging solution would properly and rightly protect the remarkable surroundings of Stonehenge about which we now know so much more than we did a hundred years ago.

For more information, please see our comprehensive briefing about the A303 Stonehenge scheme.