Stonehenge and the National Trust



PROTECTION OF STONEHENGE.

A National Appeal.

Letterhead to National Appeal sent to prospective donors, dated October 1927. The letter was signed by Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin; Lord Crawford and Balcarres, President of the Society of Antiquaries; Lord Grey of Fallodon, Vice-President of the National Trust; and Sir Lionel Earle, Permanent Secretary to the Office of Works responsible for the care of the monument given to the nation by Sir Cecil Chubb in 1918.

The National Trust's support for widening the A303 with a short tunnel near Stonehenge – avoiding its own land – is vital to the Government in advancing today's A303 Preferred Route in spite of the strong concerns of UNESCO's World Heritage Centre and World Heritage Committee, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), numerous other bodies, leading archaeologists and individuals.

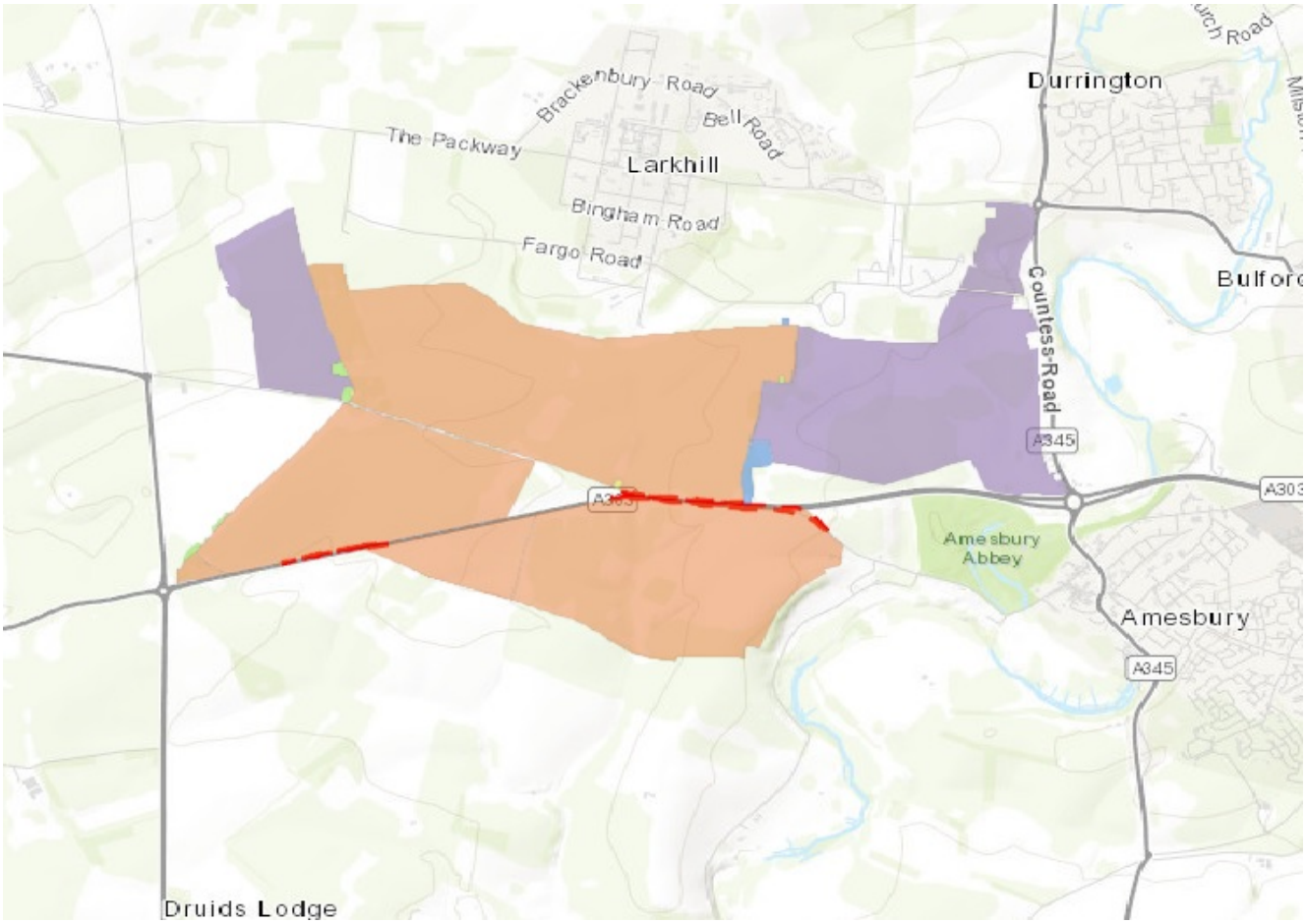
Stonehenge was given to the nation by Sir Cecil Chubb a

hundred years ago, on 26 October 1918. The Stones and the triangle of land around them are managed by English Heritage Trust.

In the late 1920s some 1,440 acres of the surrounding land were purchased by public appeal, headed by the Prime Minister, and vested in the National Trust so that inappropriate developments might be removed and 'valuable archaeological remains of the site be protected from the plough'. The wording of the appeal emphasised:

> ***'But we have not two Stonehenges, and our generation will be vilified by all posterity if we allow the surroundings of this monument, the frontispiece to English history, to be ruined beyond repair.'***

Since then, the Trust has purchased more land, almost doubling its initial holding at Stonehenge.



Land acquisitions made by the National Trust from its beginning up to 2013.
KEY: **Pink** land acquired 1915 to 1934. **Blue** land acquired 1975 to 1994. **Purple** land acquired 1995 to 2014. **Red dotted line** shows disposal for A303 realignment in 1966 (western end) and 1969 (eastern end). For further detail please visit the NT land map and search 'Stonehenge'.

In 1986, Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites was designated a World Heritage Site (WHS) by UNESCO. The Trust's stewardship of land gifted in 1927, marred by continued ploughing over many years, has now improved with grassland restoration and open access for visitors.

In a 2002 Stonehenge Briefing the National Trust called for a "more sustainable tunnel solution at Stonehenge" and more information on a long-bored tunnel of 4.5km to reduce the risk of negative impacts within the World Heritage Site at the eastern and western ends.

Following the 2004 Public Inquiry into an earlier A303 Stonehenge widening scheme with a 2.1km bored tunnel, the National Trust joined leading independent conservation organisations to agree a set of principles when assessing future road schemes at Stonehenge:

- The significance of the World Heritage site extends beyond individual scheduled monuments and their immediate settings
- The Stonehenge World Heritage site is a cultural landscape of interrelated complexes of monuments and buried remains, which together display an unique range of evidence for prehistoric society
- To safeguard the World Heritage site for future generations, the long-term view must always be considered, even for interim or partial solutions

By 2014, however, in an extraordinary about-turn the National

Trust was lending support to the Government's 2.9km tunnel proposal. Despite the repeated firm advice from international specialists to seek alternatives that would not damage the World Heritage Site, the Trust has continued to give its support to this damaging scheme and, together with Historic England and English Heritage, has fostered misunderstanding that the Expressway engineering would protect or help to protect the World Heritage Site when it very obviously would not.

The Trust has omitted to inform its members of international concern about the A303 scheme. Failure of the Trustees to consult members on the road project led to a members' motion at the Trust's 2017 AGM asking Trustees to reconsider their position. Despite some 22,000 postal votes in favour, the motion was lost after the Chairman's c.6,000 proxy votes were added to those *against* the motion, rather than for it.

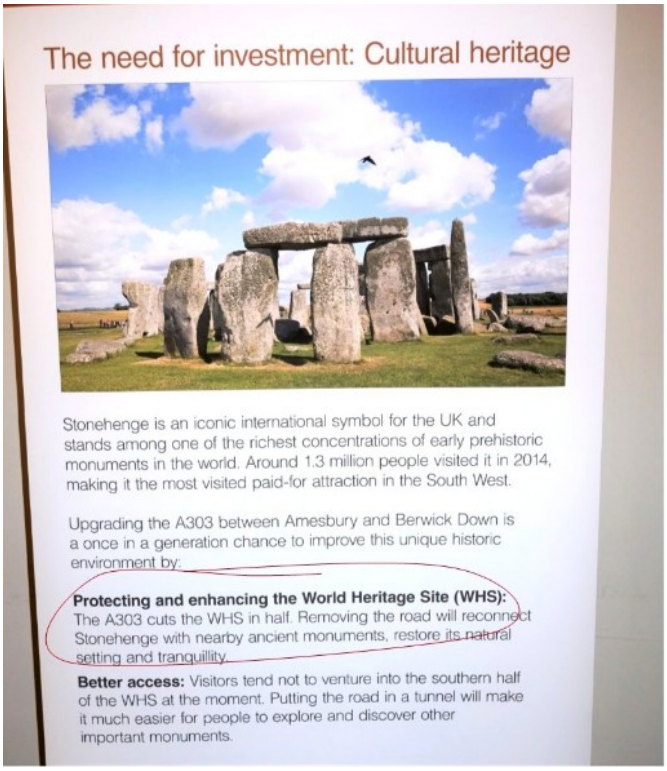
The proposers of the 2017 AGM motion have since corresponded with the National Trust's chairman. This correspondence, published here on the Stonehenge Alliance's website, speaks for itself.

The National Trust appears content to disregard its founding principles in respect of the WHS and declines to correct misleading published statements about the road scheme.

Meanwhile the large majority of those responding to Highways England's three consultations on the project have continued to object to the A303 scheme outright.

If you should feel minded to write to the National Trust about your concerns, please follow this link.

Stonehenge Alliance complains about fake news





Clearly the Stonehenge tunnel scheme will not protect the World Heritage Site.

Leaks from a Fake News report by a Select Committee of MPs have recently hit the media. Committee Chairman Damian Collins is quoted as saying:

> *"We are facing nothing less than a crisis in our democracy – based on the systematic manipulation of data to support the relentless targeting of citizens, without their consent, by campaigns of disinformation and messages of hate".*
>
> *The Irish Times*

Although the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee's investigations appear primarily to focus on fake news in the social media, the inquiry's scope includes the question:

> *"What is 'fake news'? Where does biased but legitimate commentary shade into propaganda and lies?"*

For some time the Stonehenge Alliance has been concerned about apparently propagandist misinformation surrounding the A303 tunnel project. Upbeat and reassuring press releases from Highways England and its scheme supporters Historic England, English Heritage and the National Trust include such statements as:

> *"We will continue to engage with international heritage advisors and others to help to ensure Highways England fully assesses the heritage impact and comes up with the right solution for the World Heritage Site."*

The bodies issuing such statements have no intention of ensuring "the right solution for the WHS" so long as Government is driving a project based on "affordability, deliverability and value for money." Joint UNESCO World Heritage Centre and International Council on Monuments and Sites advisory missions have given firm advice to the Government to seek less damaging alternatives for the major road scheme through Stonehenge World Heritage Site. Clearly, "engaging with international heritage advisors" doesn't extend to Government following their advice.

In March 2018, we submitted a written statement to the Select Committee with instances of fake news about the A303 scheme, most notably Highways England's claimed commitment to preserving the World Heritage Site.

Since then, misinformation continues widely to distort public perceptions about what the A303 scheme involves. Highways England's website information, under "Why we need this scheme", highlights the project as "protecting or enhancing the environment" and helping to "conserve and sustain the World Heritage Site".

Misleading the public about so-called benefits of the A303 Stonehenge scheme, particularly in association with official consultations on the project, is both outrageous and repugnant. How much longer will Government support the undemocratic targeting of citizens with misinformation about the A303 proposals?

We look forward to the Select Committee's final report expected later this year.

Supplementary consultation ends 14 August!

A supplementary consultation on the A303 Stonehenge scheme is currently under way, closing at midnight on 14 August. **To have your say please link here.**

Stonehenge, UNESCO and the Spanish Amendments



Final Report on the joint World Heritage Centre / ICOMOS Advisory mission to Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites (c.373bis)

For a third time, the UK Government has invited a joint UNESCO World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS mission to Stonehenge to give specialist advice on the A303 project. Based on the 2018 Advisory Mission's findings [1] a Report and Draft Decision [2] were prepared for discussion at the annual World Heritage Committee meeting in Bahrain on 28 June 2018.

Echoing the two previous mission reports, the 2018 mission has made the following crucial findings:

- *"the construction of four-lane highways in cuttings at either end of the tunnel would adversely and irreversibly impact on the integrity, authenticity and Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the WHS;*

- *"the [tunnel] length of 3.0km would not be adequate to protect the integrity and conserve the OUV of the WHS; and*

- *"additional weight should be afforded to avoiding impact on the WHS, in view of its OUV and the*

obligations of the State Party under the World Heritage Convention."

Among the Mission Report's recommendations are:

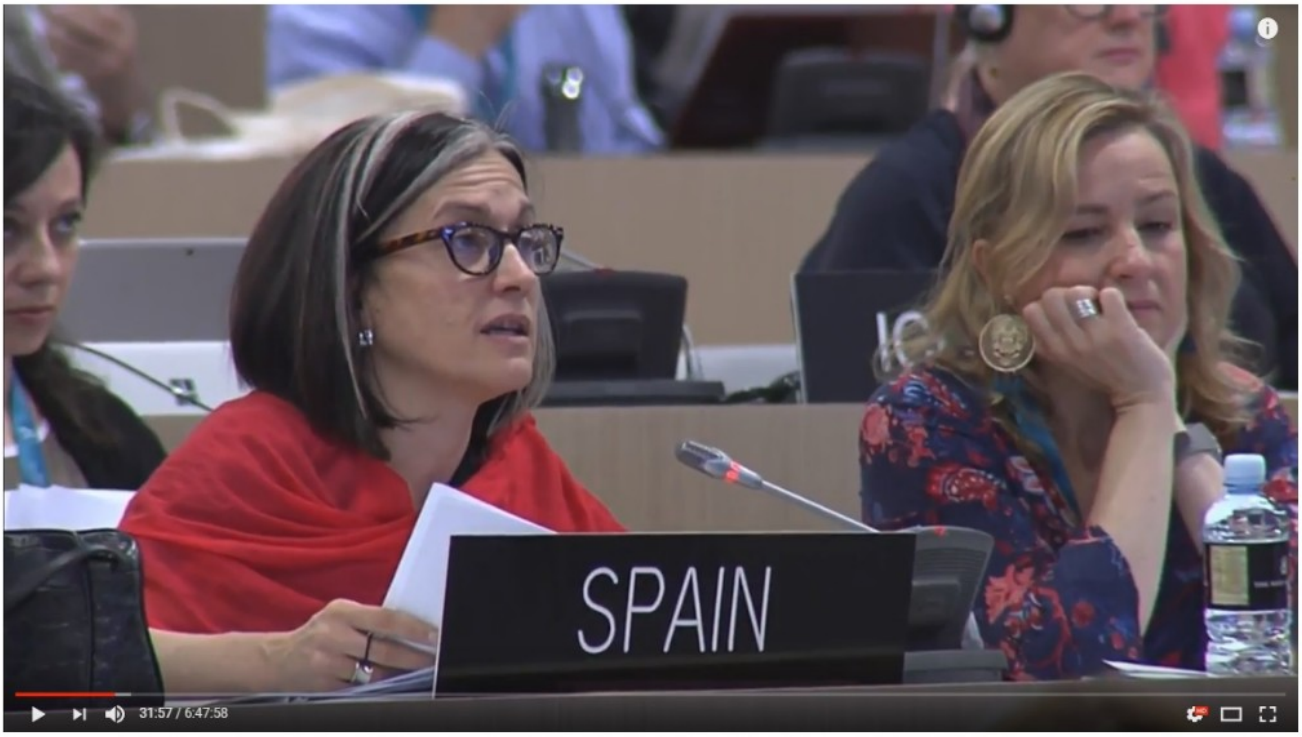
- *"the Proposed Scheme . . . should not proceed in its current form;*

- *"potential surface routes for the proposed dual carriageway sections of the A303 should be reconsidered outside the WHS; and*

- *"if a longer tunnel is further considered, the western portal should be relocated to the west of the western boundary of the WHS [and] the eastern portal . . . well to the east of the Countess roundabout."*

The Draft Decision published with the agenda papers for the World Heritage Committee's meeting, noted the mission's findings and urged the State Party to continue to explore by-pass and longer tunnel options that would not require dual carriageway cuttings within the property.

Two days before the discussion on Stonehenge, however, numerous amendments to the Draft Decision by Spain were circulated to all 21 Committee members [3].



42WHC English D5 28-06-2018

Making the case for the Spanish amendments. Please click on image for bookmarked link to watch Spain's explanation on YouTube.

These amendments would not only have substantially weakened the Decision, making it more acceptable to Highways England in terms of its A303 proposals, but also attempted to alter the Advisory Mission's actual advice.

The Stonehenge Alliance swiftly drafted a statement addressing our concerns about the amendments to be circulated to the Committee and read out on our behalf by Stephan Dömpke, Chairman of World Heritage Watch.



0:30 Friday, 29 June 2018 (UTC+3 Manama, Bahrain)

Stephan Dömpke reads a statement on behalf of the Stonehenge Alliance at the World Heritage Committee. Please click on image for bookmarked link to watch our statement on YouTube.

In the event, despite the UK's full endorsement of the Spanish amendments, most of them were omitted from the final Decision. A request that the State Party should implement the recommendations of the 2018 Advisory Mission was included in the Decision which will be published shortly.

The question remains: what prompted Spain to ask for these amendments?



42WHC English D5 28-06-2018

Keith Nichol, DDCMS, supports the Spanish amendments. Please click on image for bookmarked link to watch UK's statement on YouTube.

Sources and references

1. World Heritage/ICOMOS, March 2018, Third UNESCO World Heritage and ICOMOS Advisory Mission report
2. World Heritage Centre, June 2018, Report and Draft Decision for the World Heritage Committee (See item 32 in contents, hyperlinked to the correct page)
3. World Heritage Rapporteur, 26 June 2018 Amendment to Draft Decision proposed by Spain
4. The Stonehenge Alliance Statement with map was circulated to all 21 WH Committee members

MPs' debate raises alarm for Stonehenge heritage



Andy Rhind-Tutt, former Mayor of Amesbury, and Hannah Kidner, volunteer at Blick Mead, with Professor David Jacques after the Westminster Hall debate 5 June 2018

Yesterday's Westminster Hall debate, called by Alex Burghart, Conservative MP for Brentwood and Ongar, was both timely and critical in informing Members of Parliament about the unsurpassed heritage of the World Heritage Site (WHS) – and for flushing out some worrying misunderstandings of proponents of the A303 Stonehenge short tunnel scheme.

Despite the Government's hard line, endorsed by Transport Minister Jesse Norman, there were indications that MPs want a solution to A303 traffic problems that would preserve the archaeology of the WHS which it had hitherto been supposed the preferred route would achieve.

Alex Burghart focused on the archaeological interest of the WHS beyond the tunnel entrances, rightly leaving demands concerning traffic congestion to local constituency MPs. In raising the debate above local road transport issues and claims of economic benefit of the road scheme to the South West, he highlighted the views of key members of the archaeological community, as well as those of UNESCO and ICOMOS in opposing the road scheme – along with the consequences of ignoring them.

Jesse Norman declared that

". . . there will always be trade-offs of incommensurables of the kind that we have seen . . . The nature of politics is that we have to make such trade-offs, but only of course with the most careful expert advice and scrutiny, for the minimisation of the impacts . . .".

In contrast, it was encouraging to hear the views of the Opposition from Shadow Transport Minister Rachael Maskell: a modal change in transport is advocated, with greater use of public transport. While not opposing improvements to the traffic situation at Stonehenge, she stated

". . . we believe there are other alternatives, which would be far more significant in reaching the right balance . . . We certainly do not believe that the solution that is on the table at the moment is the only one that needs to be looked at. There are opportunities to get this right for everybody."

Alex Burghart is to be warmly congratulated for enabling cogent facts concerning the A303 Stonehenge project to be recorded in the public domain. An important wake-up call has

been sounded.



Watch Westminster Hall debate on Parliament TV

NOTES

[1] Read transcript here.

[2] News item in Salisbury Journal

[3] Spinal Tap: Alex Burghart quoted from spoof heavy metal band Spinal Tap's 1980s cult classic comedy Stonehenge. "Blick Mead will enable us to answer the important questions raised by Spinal Tap" he said. *Stonehenge! Tis a magic place… No one knows who they were or what they were doing.*

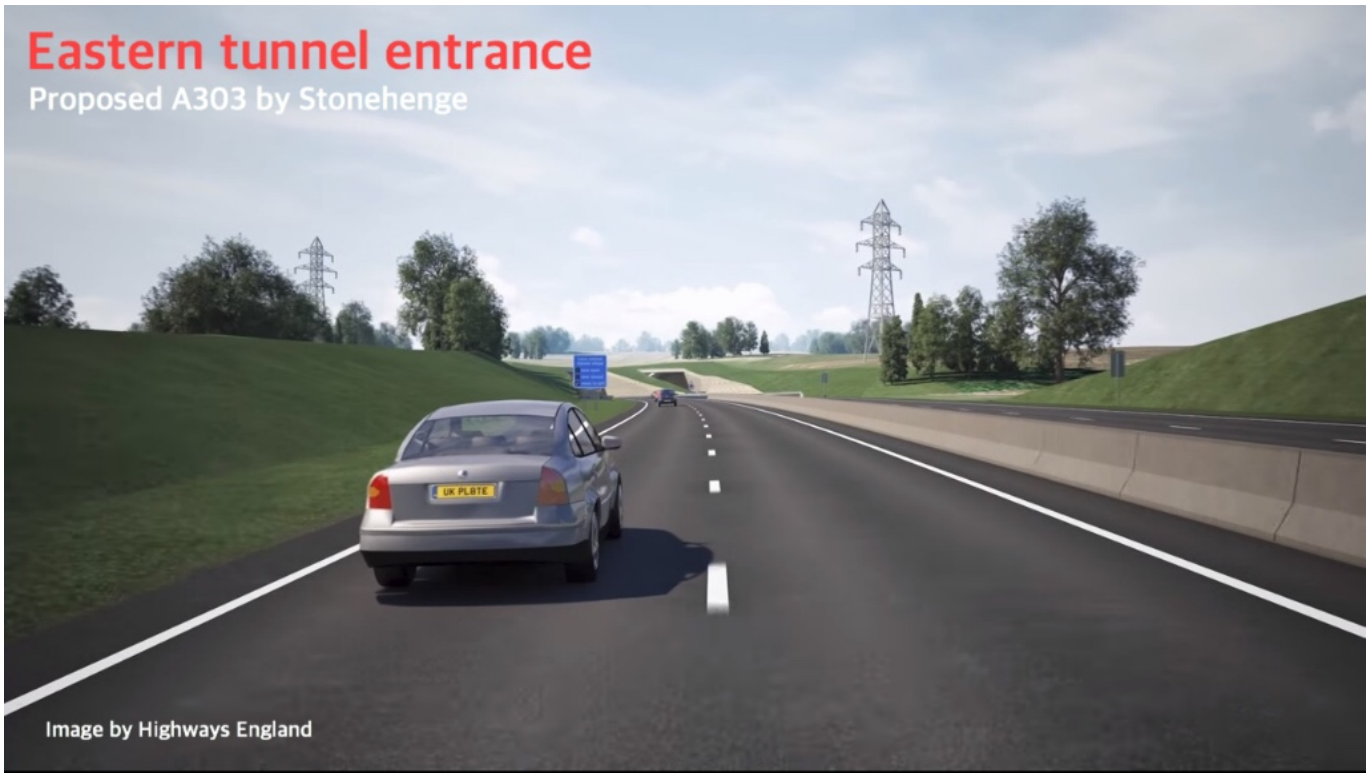
[4] Link to our MPs' Briefing

Receive more blogs like this. Follow our campaign **here**.

Confusing messages in the CBA's "Stonehenge Special"

The Council for British Archaeology (CBA) has commissioned a special edition of its members' magazine *British Archaeology* "designed to inform debate about the proposed road tunnel at Stonehenge". Unfortunately for the CBA, it sends some confusing messages. Although the writer states that the views expressed are his own and not about the tunnel, the narrative ends with his idiosyncratic views about the road scheme which includes a c.3km tunnel.

The author's account of new fieldwork and discoveries within the World Heritage Site and beyond its boundaries is helpful as far as it goes. But there is more than one side to a debate and significant information is missing since, in his dismissive approach towards those campaigning against the A303 widening scheme, he fails to explain their reasons.



Proposed approach to the east tunnel entrances below the

Stonehenge Avenue

In highlighting the obvious fact that significant archaeology continues beyond the boundary of the WHS, the author neglects to acknowledge that the Government is obliged, under the terms of the World Heritage Convention, notably at Article 4, to ensure "the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations" of its designated World Heritage properties. Also omitted from his account are references to Government planning guidance and policy designed to honour those commitments in relation to our WHSs and their settings. The boundaries of WHSs may be extended via a complicated process to include new finds but the existing boundaries must include all those attributes for which the WHS was designated. Stonehenge lacks a "buffer zone", now a UNESCO requirement for all WHSs: another cause for concern about the proposed A303 scheme.

Other designated assets, such as Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments, also enjoy protection under our planning system with democratically agreed policies for its implementation. The purpose of these measures is to ensure the continued existence and safeguarding of our most highly valued heritage assets. Sadly, as a result of inappropriate development, we are witnessing far too often nowadays the slow degradation and loss of many such elements of our heritage for which future generations will inevitably be the poorer.

The CBA is familiar with the planning system and has used it over many years in its monitoring and advice relating to development involving heritage assets. Indeed, its November 2016 Statement on Stonehenge is robust in upholding conservation principles embodied in the planning regime and the Management Plan for the WHS. It might be expected that the CBA's statement may be revised to take into account the Decision by UNESCO's World Heritage Committee in 2017, urging the UK Government to seek alternatives to a 2.9km tunnel that would avoid damaging the WHS and its outstanding universal

value.



Proposed interchange at western WHS boundary: dumb-bell roundabout, underpass and slip roads

The "Stonehenge Special" author's argument rests upon archaeological retrieval and research opportunities offered by development without examining what may be considered appropriate development within a WHS and its setting. What is internationally recognised as special at Stonehenge is not only its rich archaeology (a finite resource) but also what we already know of the WHS as a designed landscape. How that landscape may have been used by prehistoric people who lived within or visited it would be made less easy for future visitors to understand were it to be re-modelled with massive road engineering works that would deeply divide and scar significant parts of it for ever.



Possible approach to western tunnel entrance (image by Highways England)

Some buildings and places are recognised as globally special: Stonehenge and Avebury, the Taj Mahal and Petra among them. Major developments that would change their form and remove some or all of their intrinsic qualities would leave them diminished and of less significance to future generations. Should the road scheme go ahead at Stonehenge, WHS status might be removed.

Archaeological evidence would, of course, be obtained but not under ideal circumstances: investigation in advance of development along the line of a road is unlikely to produce such useful results as targeted research seeking answers to specific questions.

At the end of the CBA's "Stonehenge Special", the author asks "How do we decide what to save and what to lose?" Our Government answered that question in 1986 in requesting UNESCO's World Heritage designation for Stonehenge and Avebury and Associated Sites WHS and subsequently agreeing its Statement of Outstanding Universal Value. If government

ministers do not intend to honour their commitments at Stonehenge, then those who do care about the WHS should not hesitate to remind them of them.

Since the "Stonehenge Special" was commissioned and published by the CBA, it is not entirely clear to the reader that comments made in it about the A303 road scheme are not endorsed by that organisation. Immediate clarification on this matter, drawing more obvious attention to the CBA's November 2016 Statement on Stonehenge, would be helpful.

The 'Stonehenge Special' is available as a separate publication until 6 April when it will appear in the next issue of British Archaeology magazine.