Sleep walking into a national scandal

An excellent video by Matt Sibson of Ancient Architects that comprehensively demolishes any thoughts that the A303 Stonehenge road scheme is about conservation. At the heart of Sibson's objection is the commodification of Stonehenge, tidying up the landscape and making it look "pretty" for tourists whilst risking the destruction of our "ancient wonders", known and unknown, contained within the World Heritage Site. Below we quote liberally from Sibson's compelling argument by kind permission.

"This video is not about the standing stones of Stonehenge, it's about the bigger picture. The whole landscape is truly awe inspiring with dozens of known structures and countless others unexcavated."

"The underlying geology will be tampered with and the water table will certainly be affected [by the 1.8 mile tunnel, 8 metre high flyover and 1.6 miles of Expressway]." "This colossal work will be devastating."

"We potentially as a nation are allowing damage to a site of extreme historical importance. [This project] is about removing the road from the landscape for as little money as possible to open up the site for tourism […] It's about making the site look more pretty. It's a nice idea but not if archaeologists say this will harm the landscape and put many important sites at risk."

"It's all about money and tourism […] The whole project is really a national scandal."

Sibson wants to raise awareness of the devastation whilst we have the chance. "We the people can change these scandalous

plans. Please share this video to educate more people, and follow Stonehenge Alliance to say no."

@MattSibson

Busting the Mythbusters!



A 'mythbusting' item has been published by English Heritage as part of a joint press release on behalf of English Heritage, National Trust and Historic England. We reproduce these 'mythbusters' with our responses beneath.

***PLEASE NOTE 6 August 2020**: Since publishing the link to English Heritage's page above their mythbusters item has been removed. We have pasted the original copy below.*

- **English Heritage says: The proposed tunnel won't run**

under Stonehenge. The current proposals are for a 2.9km tunnel to run about 600m to the south of the current A303 surface road. The stability of the stones will not be affected at all.

The Alliance says: *The Stones stand within c.10 sq.mls of a c.5.4km-wide UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS). UNESCO has advised the Government to seek alternative road solutions to avoid damaging the WHS. Geotechnical survey work is incomplete: ground stability may be an issue.*

- **English Heritage says: A tunnel won't remove the stones from sight.** Removing the busy and noisy road means that there will be more opportunities for people to get out of their cars and explore the world heritage landscape that has for years been severed by the road.

The Alliance says: *Several generations of motorists and passengers value the view of the Stone monument from the A303: this would be lost. Most visitors would have to pay to see the Stones. Footpaths and byways would be fenced. Much of the WHS is private land.*

- **English Heritage says: There is no evidence that the proposed tunnel will damage the Mesolithic site of Blick Mead.** The proposed tunnel and any infrastructure needed to improve the Countess roundabout are well away from the site (Blick Mead is 700m away from the roundabout). Highways England is aware of the water table issues and will be assessing any potential impact on the site.

The Alliance Says: *The extent of Blick Mead is unknown and needs further investigation. A massive flyover would pass alongside and possibly over part of the site; it would also impact on a Grade I Listed house, its Registered park, and a Conservation Area. Water table issues are still uncertain.*

- **English Heritage says: It's not a 'done deal'.** There's still work to be done on the tunnel proposals, and the scheme is likely to change, on the basis of feedback from the current consultation process. Later this year, Highways England will make their application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) – a special type of planning permission for nationally significant infrastructure projects.

The Alliance says: *The Government is committed to a short tunnel in the WHS. The consultation process assumes that the scheme is a 'done deal' since objections to it will apparently not be considered. Consultation is being undertaken without full information available. [In the event the Examining Authority recommended against the scheme].*

- **English Heritage says: Doing nothing isn't an option.** The A303 past Stonehenge regularly carries 24,000 vehicles, nearly twice as much traffic as it was designed for, and on a summer weekend that figure leaps to 29,000. The result is severe congestion which compromises the WHS. It also causes delays, affecting local communities, commuters and visitors to Wiltshire. With around 120,000 new jobs and 100,000 new homes expected across the South West by 2021, and even greater growth after that, the A303 will get busier still.

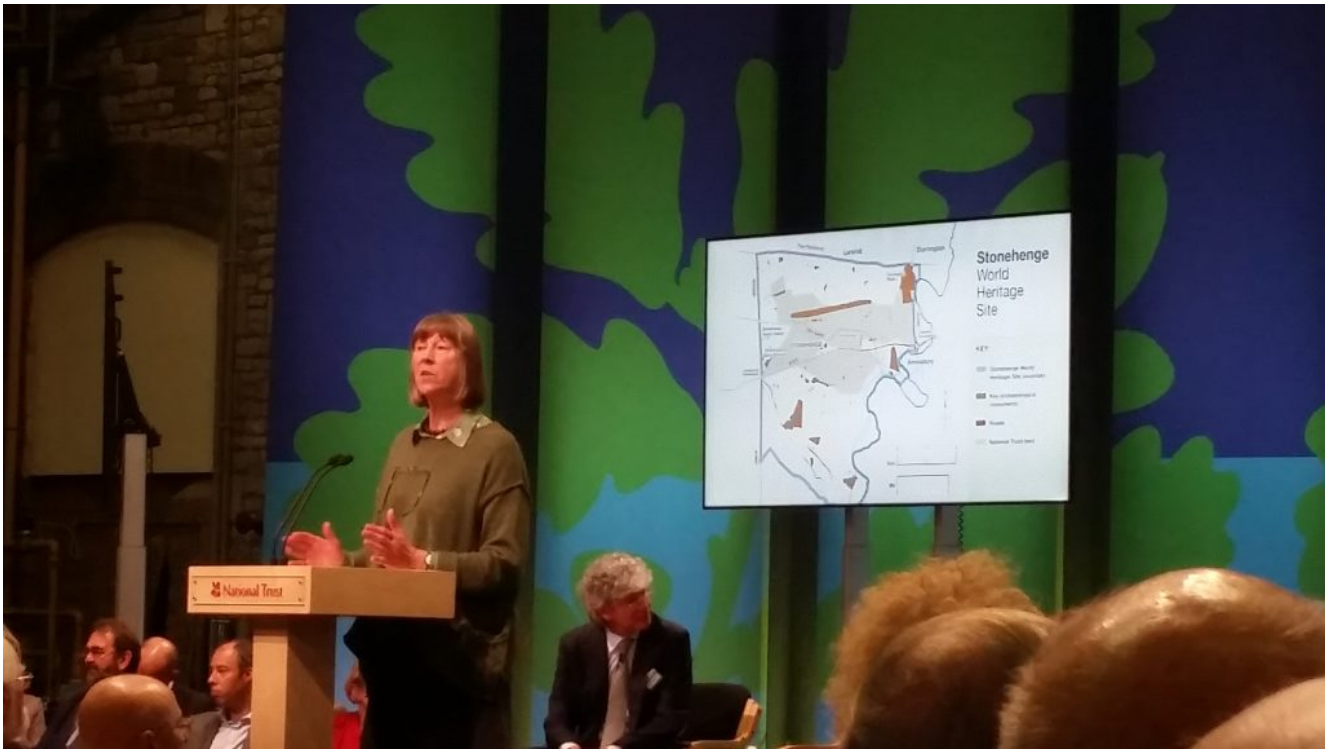
The Alliance says: *Doing nothing would be better than trashing a WHS. But measures could be taken now to stop rat running and reduce congestion. There is far worse regular congestion in towns and cities in the South West. Road widening induces more traffic, placing strain on adjoining roads. New technology may revolutionise transport over the next 20–30 years, making road widening unnecessary.*

Highways England's consultation runs until 6th April. Details of the scheme can be seen here. The consultation booklet

here and the official consultation response form here.

Check out our website, Facebook and Twitter for more about the scheme. We have made some initial non technical suggestions here for responding to the consultation. We will publish a fuller response after we have had time to study the documentation.

National Trust votes against its founding principles

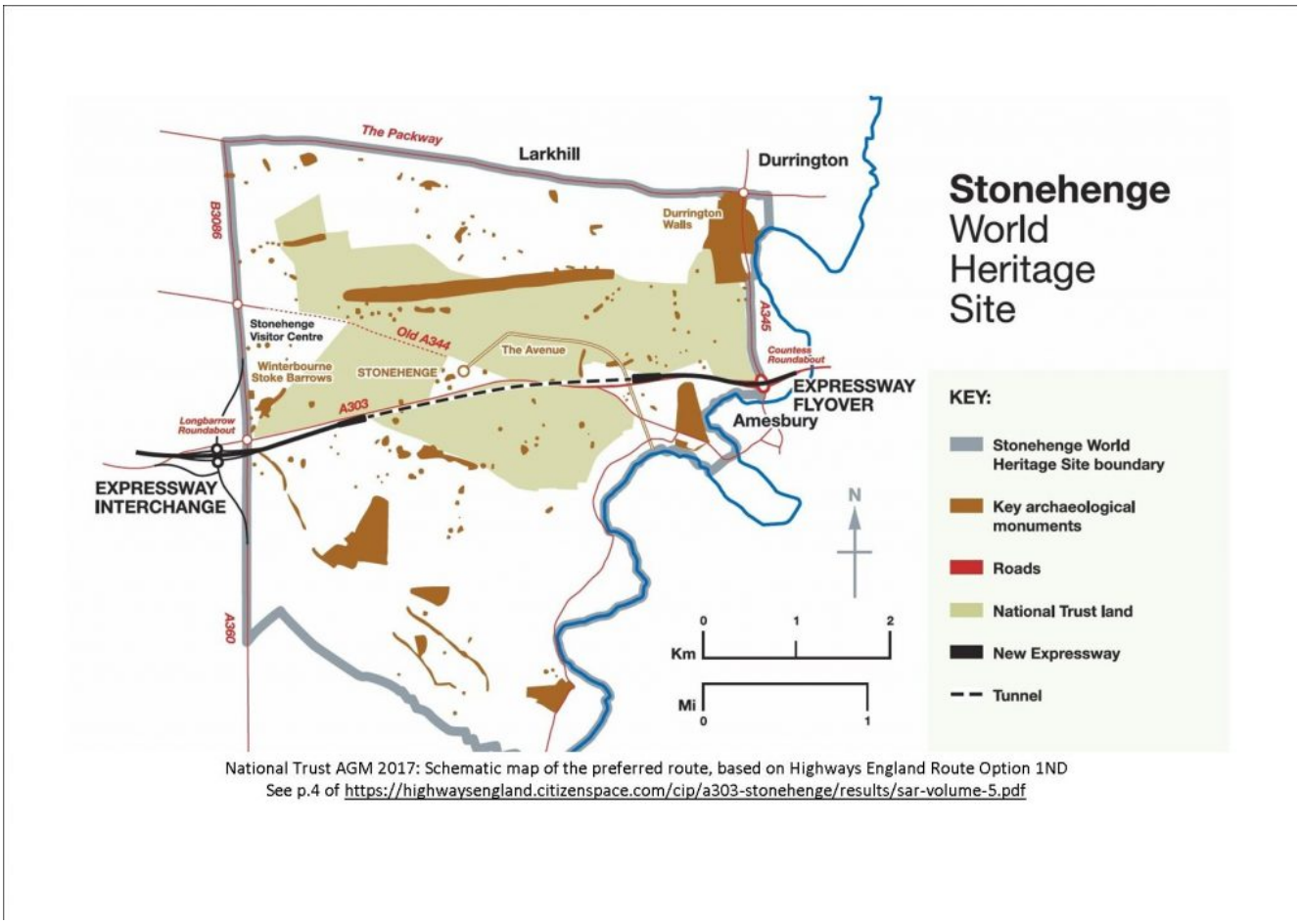


Proposer, Dr Kate Fielden, asks the Trust to stick to its founding principles and think very carefully before lending its name to a road scheme that will irrevocably damage a World Heritage Site.

Last Saturday, the National Trust AGM debated a motion about the National Trust's involvement In the design and construction of the Stonehenge tunnel and above ground sections of the A303 Expressway.

The members' motion asked the Trustees to reaffirm its founding purposes to protect special places; to respect World Heritage Convention obligations and to acknowledge that any scheme that involves surface engineering across any part of the WHS will damage the WHS, in the Trust's own phrase "For Ever".

Members voted by a fairly narrow margin to maintain the Trust's support for Highways England's preferred route: a short tunnel past the Stones with about a mile of new dual carriageway through the World Heritage Site.



National Trust AGM 2017: Schematic map of the preferred route, based on Highways England Route Option 1ND
See p.4 of https://highwaysengland.citizenspace.com/cip/a303-stonehenge/results/sar-volume-5.pdf

Map showing Government's preferred route for the new A303 Expressway through the World Heritage Site (WHS), including a

2.9km tunnel. Land owned by the National Trust within the WHS is coloured green. Many monuments (shown in brown) are on land south of the A303 managed by farmers and a nature reserve for statutorily protected birds.

While the Trust won the vote, it wasn't by a convincing margin. Over 42% of those who voted (excluding abstentions) wanted the Trust to review its position. If the 11,089 abstentions were included, fewer than 50% were against the Resolution. This must give the Trust pause for thought.

You can view the results of the voting papers submitted by 1.3% of the Trust's five million members that participated here.

The votes cast against the motion by the Chairman as proxy ensured the motion was lost. Members had not been made aware in the Trust's written response to the motion that UNESCO's World Heritage Committee had urged the Government to look at further options for widening the A303 "with a view to avoiding impacts on the OUV [outstanding universal value] of the property", including a bypass and "longer tunnel options to remove dual carriageway cuttings from the property".

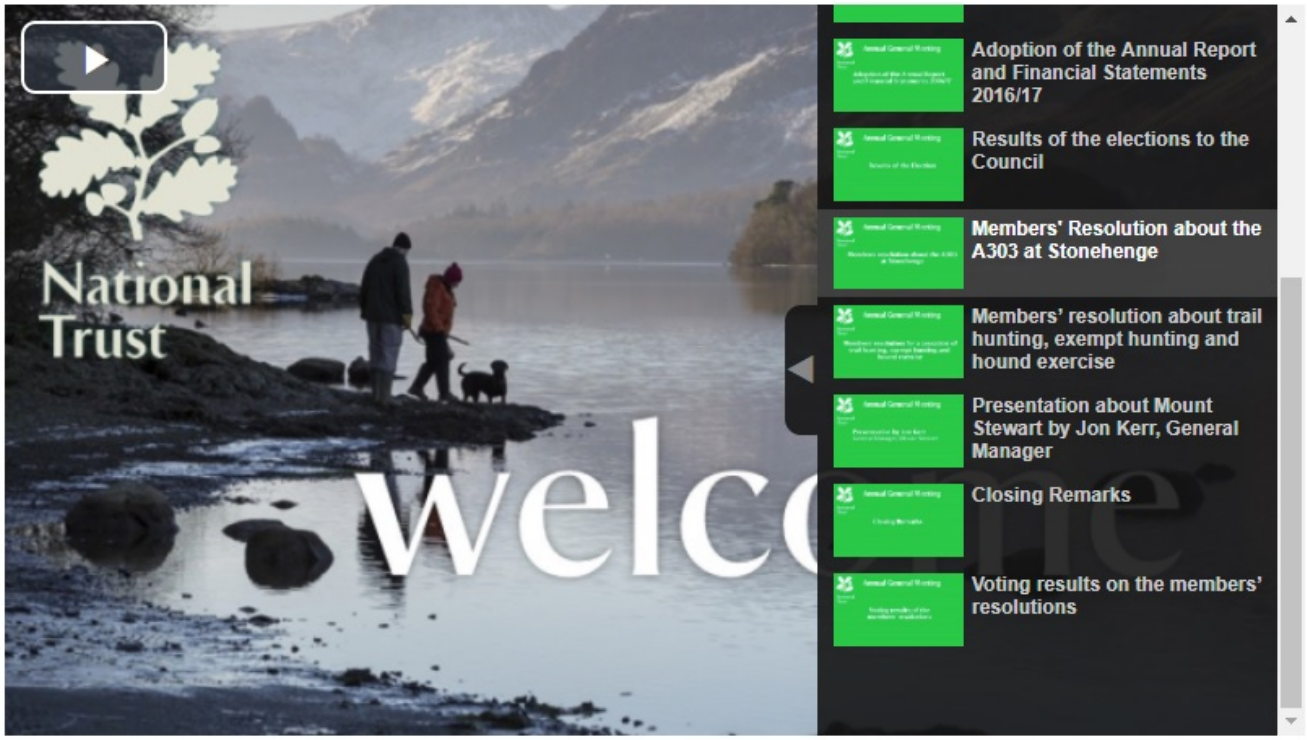
Worryingly, Highways England is ploughing on regardless, ignoring the advice of UNESCO

Watch this space!

WATCH THE DEBATE

Click on image to view the 46 minute debate. 11 clips and highlights posted below.

National Trust



AGM 2017

Kate Fielden proposes the motion

Tom Holland seconds the motion

Carys Swanwick opposes the motion

Tom Oliver quotes from the National Trust's own guidance

A young resident speaks up for the next generation

Kate Freeman asks whether independent advice about the longevity of the scheme had been sought

Ian Wilson, Assistant Director responsible for the A303 Stonehenge scheme, replies on behalf of the National Trust

David Wilson suggests strengthening the National Trust's negotiating hand

Cate LeGrice Mack points out strategic shortcomings

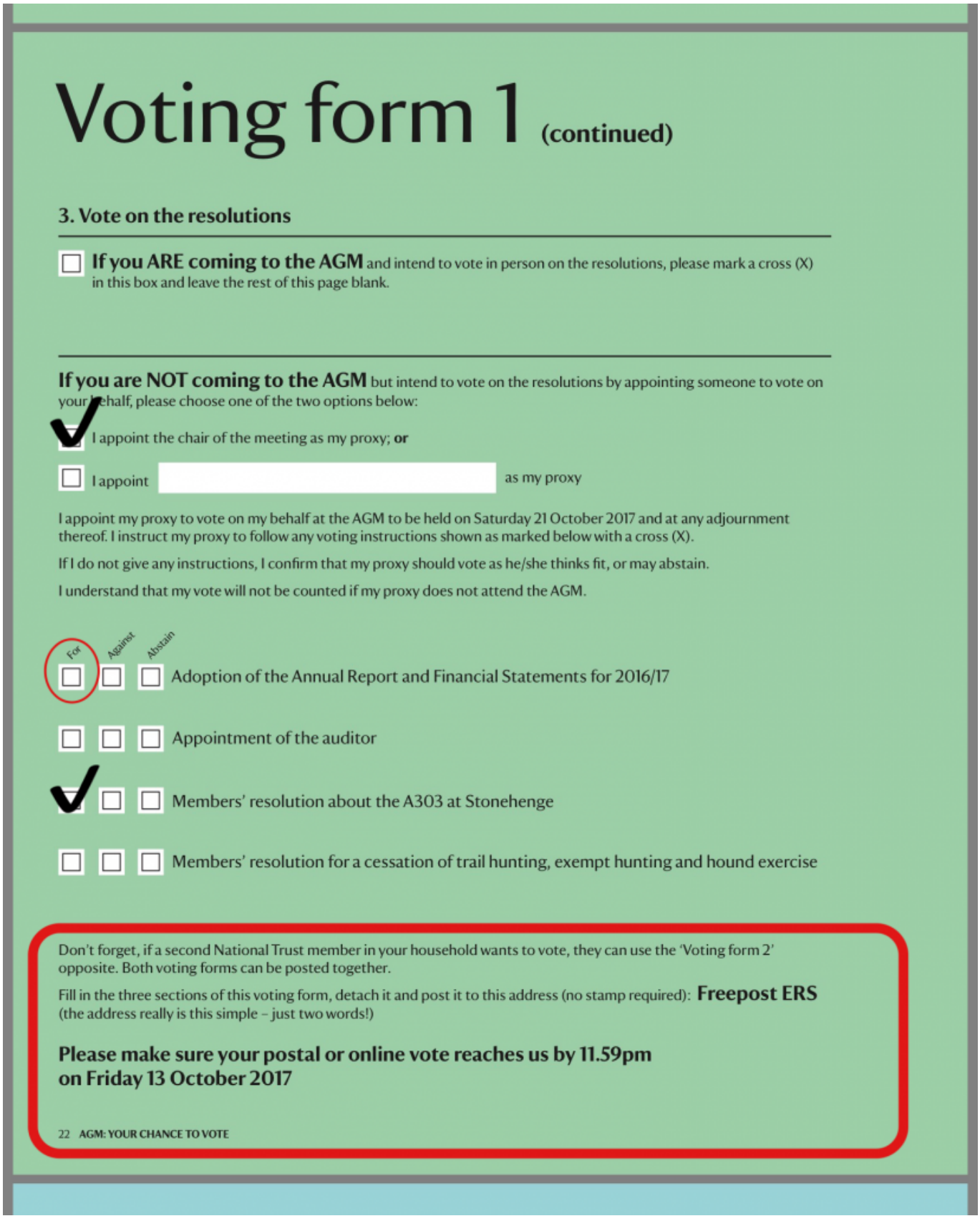
Professor Carys Swanwick concludes the case against on behalf of the Board of Trustees

Kate Fielden makes final comments and appeals to members to vote for the motion

Follow Save Stonehenge campaign and sign up to our blogs in the right hand column.

Are you a National Trust member?

Members of the National Trust have proposed a 'Resolution' to this year's AGM to ask the National Trust to reconsider their stance (see pages 6 and 7 of the AGM papers here). If you are not sure of coming to the AGM on Saturday 21 October please post your votes or vote FOR the Resolution online by 13 October here.



Voting form 1 (continued)

3. Vote on the resolutions

☐ **If you ARE coming to the AGM** and intend to vote in person on the resolutions, please mark a cross (X) in this box and leave the rest of this page blank.

If you are NOT coming to the AGM but intend to vote on the resolutions by appointing someone to vote on your behalf, please choose one of the two options below:

☑ I appoint the chair of the meeting as my proxy; **or**

☐ I appoint _____ as my proxy

I appoint my proxy to vote on my behalf at the AGM to be held on Saturday 21 October 2017 and at any adjournment thereof. I instruct my proxy to follow any voting instructions shown as marked below with a cross (X).

If I do not give any instructions, I confirm that my proxy should vote as he/she thinks fit, or may abstain.

I understand that my vote will not be counted if my proxy does not attend the AGM.

For	Against	Abstain	
☐	☐	☐	Adoption of the Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2016/17
☐	☐	☐	Appointment of the auditor
☑	☐	☐	Members' resolution about the A303 at Stonehenge
☐	☐	☐	Members' resolution for a cessation of trail hunting, exempt hunting and hound exercise

Don't forget, if a second National Trust member in your household wants to vote, they can use the 'Voting form 2' opposite. Both voting forms can be posted together.

Fill in the three sections of this voting form, detach it and post it to this address (no stamp required): **Freepost ERS** (the address really is this simple – just two words!)

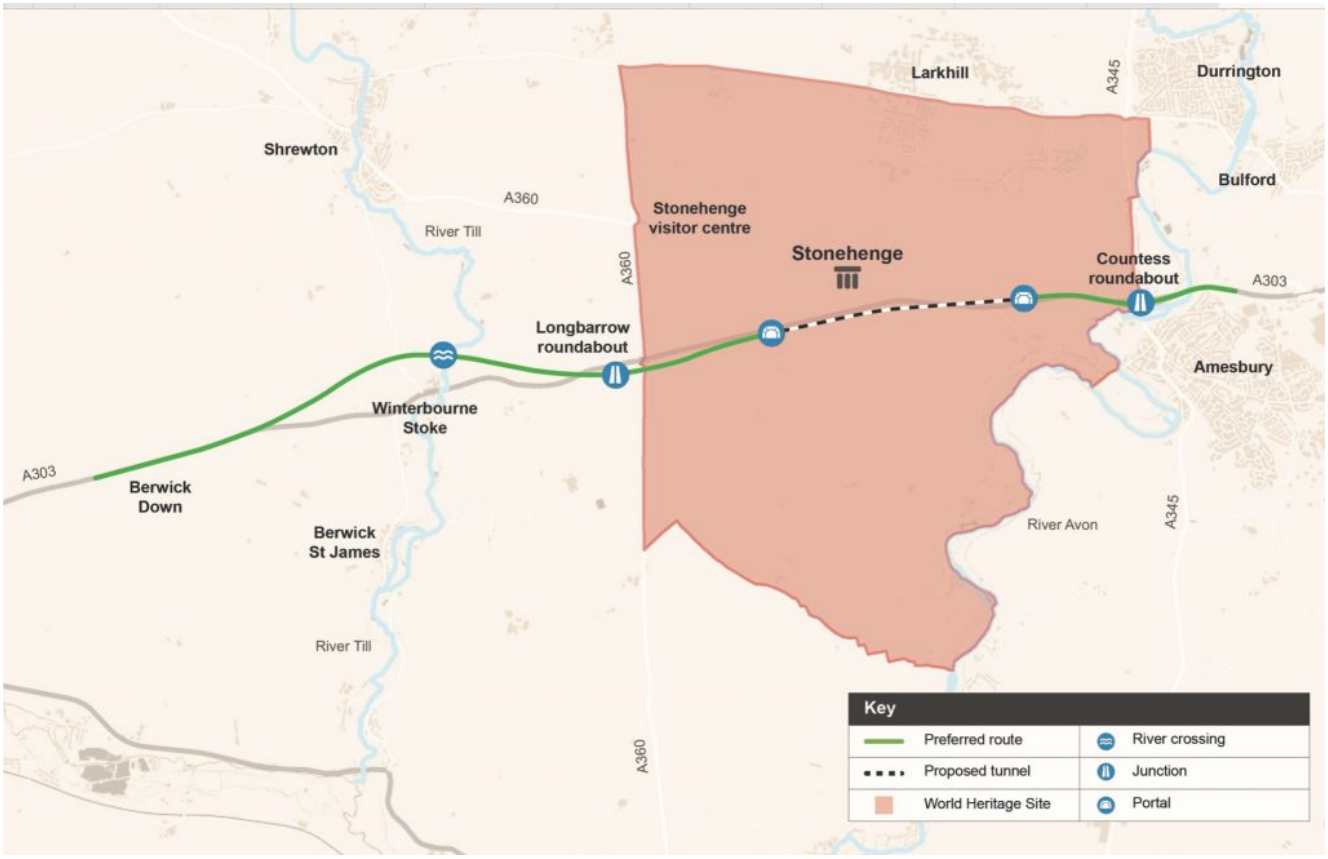
Please make sure your postal or online vote reaches us by 11.59pm on Friday 13 October 2017

A co-proposer, Dr Chris Gilham, invites members to support the Resolution below.



Tim Parker, Chair of National Trust

Highways England has published what it calls the final scheme for the A303 across the World Heritage Site of Stonehenge. As expected the Government has completely ignored the UNESCO condemnation of the proposed scheme [Note 1] and all the concerns about the destructive effects of the road on a whole swathe of hugely important archaeology. The scale of the destruction may be less but the reckless assault on one of the world's iconic prehistoric landscapes must come into the same category of brutal Philistinism as the destruction of Palmyra by ISIS or the Bamiyan site by the Taliban. Highways England's Chief Executive Jim O'Sullivan [Note 2] declared himself satisfied that UNESCO's criticism doesn't prompt a rethink: *"I don't think so; I mean we have the support of the major stakeholders."*



Department for Transport propose a tunnel of c2.9km across the 5.4km Stonehenge World Heritage Site. Map by Highways England, published 12 September 2017

This would be something for which the UK Government should be hugely ashamed. All the more astonishing is the involvement of the National Trust in this disgraceful enterprise. This institution to which many of us belong and which was founded on the principle of saving national heritage, has so bedded itself down with Highways England, one of the most persistently aggressive forces against landscape, built and natural heritage that it seems no longer to be capable of rational or principled independent thought.

USE YOUR NATIONAL TRUST VOTES

Obviously the campaign against this madness (as irrational in transport and economic terms as it is philistine in its concept) must go on. [Note 3] Trust members have the opportunity to say what they think about this. There is a members' motion for the AGM in October asking the National

Trust to reaffirm its founding purposes to protect special places; to respect World Heritage Convention obligations and to acknowledge that any scheme that involves surface engineering across any part of the WHS will damage the WHS, in the Trust's own favourite phrase **"For Ever".**

A similar motion was put before the Trust two decades ago for an earlier version of the scheme. It was won on the floor of the AGM meeting, but defeated by the 'discretionary' postal votes given by non-attending members to the Chairman. We need to influence that vote this time round by getting **as many people as possible to send clear votes of disapproval to the Trust.**

You will have received your AGM papers in the last few days. Please use them to vote for the members' motion on Stonehenge (if there is more than one member in a household then each has a vote). Since the voting is via the Electoral Reform Services I think it perfectly safe to appoint the chair of the meeting as proxy, but if you do not trust the system then designate me, Christopher Gillham (membership no. 43184437) [Note 4] as your proxy.You can of course attend the AGM in Swindon (Saturday 21st October at the GWR Museum). The more support on the floor of the meeting the better. But if you are not sure of coming please send in your votes **by 13 October.** You can also vote online by 13 October here.

The resolution and the Trust's response to it are printed in your AGM notice and online.

NOTES

[1] UNESCO's 2017 Decision is at http://stonehengealliance.org.uk/alliance-shocked-by-highways-englands-indifference-to-unescos-advice/

[2] Interview with Jim O'Sullivan http://stonehengealliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/LTT-18-August-2017.pdf

[3] Keep campaigning against this monstrous scheme: http://stonehengealliance.org.uk/our-campaign/petition/

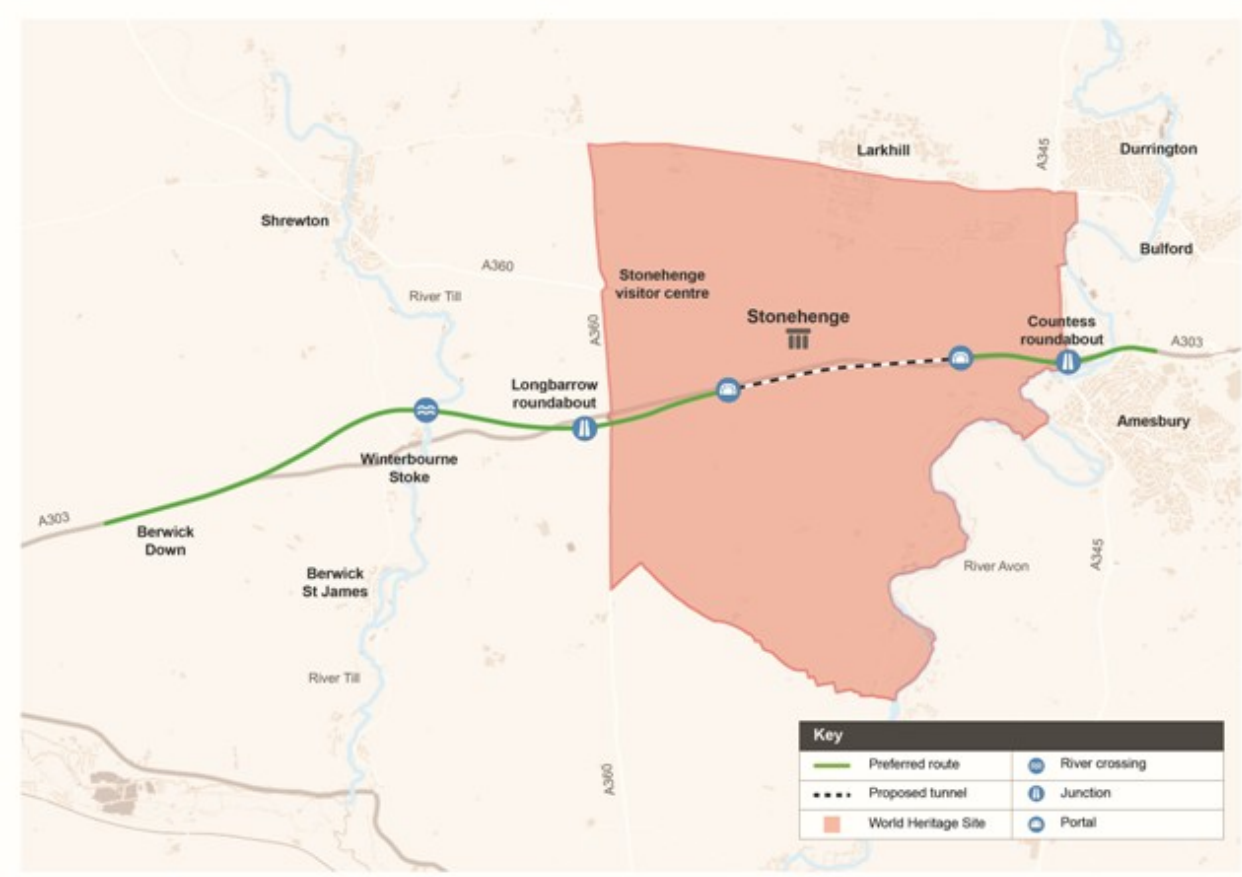
[4] gillham220(at)btinternet.com

Alliance shocked by Highways England's indifference to UNESCO's advice

The Stonehenge Alliance [1] Press statement

22:30 11 September 2017

UNESCO ignored as damaging Stonehenge scheme announced



Government's preferred route approximately follows the existing A303 then bypasses Winterbourne Stoke to the north. Tunnel portals and cuttings well within the World Heritage Site.

The Stonehenge Alliance is shocked by Highways England's A303 Stonehenge "preferred route" announcement today.

The proposed scheme, at huge expense (£1.6bn), an increase of a further £200m, would cause severe and permanent damage to the archaeological landscape of the World Heritage Site (WHS) in direct conflict with international advice to the UK Government earlier this year. [2]



UK delegation to World Heritage Committee meeting in Kraków in July 2017, includes representatives from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Copyright: Pawel Suder, Narodowy Instytut Dziedzictwa

UNESCO made it clear in reporting to the World Heritage Committee that

> *"It is not considered satisfactory to suggest that the benefits from a 2.9km tunnel to the centre of the property can offset significant damage from lengths of four lane approach roads in cuttings elsewhere in the property."*

The proposed c.2.9km (1.8 miles) tunnel would leave some c.2.5km (c 1.6 miles) of four-lane expressway, substantially in cuttings, well within the WHS. There are very serious implications for the Mesolithic site of Blick Mead, as well as a number of sites of the Neolithic and Bronze Ages for which the WHS designation was given.

Kate Fielden of CPRE and RESCUE, speaking for the Alliance,

said:

> *"We are shocked at Highways England's indifference to UNESCO's advice. The project needs a complete re-think, not a minor tweak which still threatens major harm to this iconic landscape. The potential risk of loss, along with Avebury, of Stonehenge's World Heritage Status casts shame upon our country and those responsible for caring for our heritage."*

Petition

Please read our petition, sign and share whether you live in the UK our abroad. http://stonehengealliance.org.uk/our-campaign/petition/

Contact

Email: stand.up.for.stonehenge@gmail.com

Details of the preferred route are available on Highways England's webpage

Notes:

(1). 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.

(2) Stonehenge Report and Decision, 41st Session of UNESCO's World Heritage Committee, 6 July 2017. See page 139 for text of decision. Also screen shot of pdf below:

56. Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) (C 373bis)

Decision: 41 COM 7B.56

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/17/41.COM/7B.Add,
2. Recalling Decision **35 COM.7B.116**, adopted at its 35th session (UNESCO, 2011),
3. Takes note with satisfaction of the management achievements, and progress with implementation of previous Committee Decisions, to address protection and management issues identified in the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) for the property;
4. Commends the State Party for having invited two Advisory missions to advise on the process for determining and evaluating options for the proposed upgrading of the main A303 road across the property, as part of a wide major infrastructure project;
5. Expresses concern that the 2.9km Stonehenge tunnel options and their associated 2.2km of dual carriageway approach roads within the property that are under consideration, would impact adversely the OUV of the property;
6. Urges the State Party to explore further options with a view to avoiding impacts on the OUV of the property, including:
   a) The F10 non-tunnel by-pass option to the south of the property,
   b) Longer tunnel options to remove dual carriageway cuttings from the property and further detailed investigations regarding tunnel alignment and both east and west portal locations;
7. Encourages the State Party to address the findings and implement the recommendations of both Advisory missions and to invite further World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Advisory missions to the property, to be financed by the State Party, in order to continue to facilitate progress towards an optimal solution for the widening of the A303 to ensure no adverse impact on the OUV of the property;
8. Requests the State Party to manage the timing of the consent and other statutory processes for the A303 trunk road project to ensure that the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and the World Heritage Committee can continue to contribute to the evaluation and decision-making processes at appropriate stages;
9. Also requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2018**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 42nd session in 2018.

World Heritage Committee decision, 6 July 2017

[subscribe2]