Signing the petition from home or abroad

It’s not been obvious to many international objectors that they can also sign our petition from outside the UK. We have been running **two** linked petitions against the road-widening proposals that would severely damage Stonehenge World Heritage Site concurrently but it has been tricky to get the message across if you live abroad. We have made it easier to sign our petition with these neatly designed logo buttons which we hope will now make signing crystal clear!

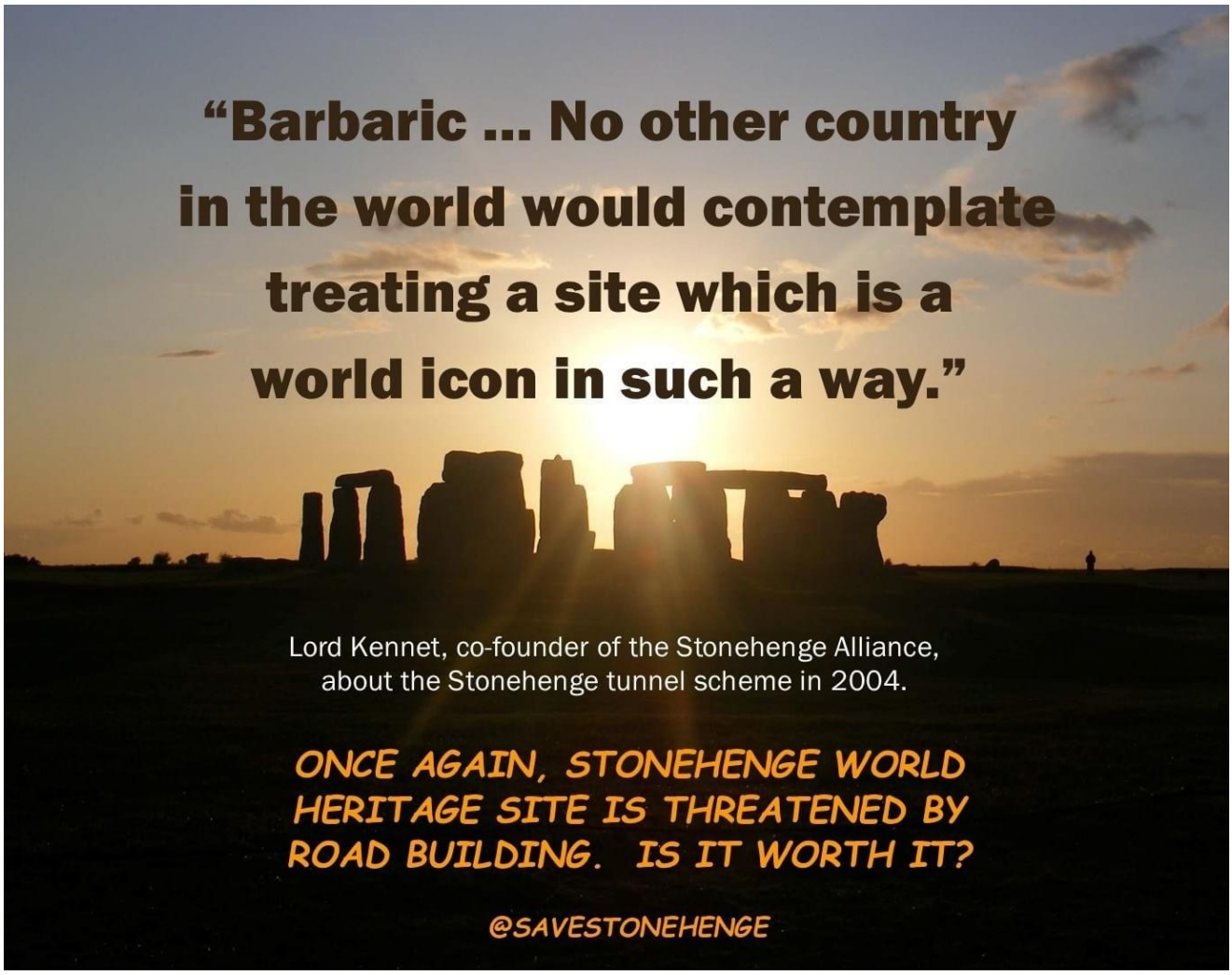




The petitions are linked and the total maintained on 38 degrees.

The Stonehenge Saga Continues

Link



Stonehenge: the Saga Continues is a chronological account by our founder members, the late Lord and Lady Kennet (Wayland and Elizabeth Young). The Kennets were some of the earliest campaigners to become embroiled in ambitions to ‘improve’ the archaeological landscape which they called *‘a smouldering dispute’,* a term that has characterised the A303 by Stonehenge since 1991. The institutions and players are broadly the same as today, as are the campaigners’ sentiments. However the detail is different, the sides have moved, and the budget for a 3.3km tunnel has grown unrecognisably, as has the opposition thanks to social media.

Stonehenge: the Saga Continues

ELIZABETH YOUNG AND WAYLAND KENNET
Journal of Architectural Conservation, No 3 November 2000, pp.70-85, reproduced here by kind permission of the authors’

family.

Abstract

Parts of the Stonehenge World Heritage Site have been described as a ‘national disgrace” [1] This paper gives an account of the many proposals over the last decade to improve the state of the site and, at the same time, to provide for the dualling of the A303, an important road into southwest England. Although there was an informed consensus in 1995 that only a ‘long bored tunnel’ could provide a satisfactory outcome, [2] since 1997 the Government has claimed such a tunnel would be ‘unaffordable and uneconomic’ [3]. It has declared in favour of twin tunnels, cut-and-covered, within a few tens of metres of the Henge, with their cuttings and portals at each end, extra ‘landscaping’, and some kilometres of new dual carriageway, all within the World Heritage Site landscape. Widespread and informed objection continues.

Introduction

Improvement of the surroundings to Stonehenge has been on the agenda throughout the twentieth century. In recent years, it has become the object of a smouldering dispute that might, without care, burst into acrimonious flames. Stonehenge is far more important to more people than were Twyford Down or the Newbury Bypass. There are three issues:

1. A management plan has to be agreed with ICOMOS for this World Heritage Site (WHS).
2. The existing visitor centre, with its grubby car park, tiny shop and loos, and the Stones fenced, is a ‘national disgrace’.
3. The only undualled stretch of the A303, a main road to the south. west of England, runs right by the stones and across miles of ritual landscape and latent archaeology. Danger and delay have arisen.

Further problems come from the large area of Ministry of

Defence land to the north, and from Larkhill village, which does not want the traffic of several hundred thousand visitors passing through. Another road, the A344, important to local people and running even closer to the stones, would have to be closed. The only possible sites for the visitor centre are at Countess Roundabout, to the east, where a busy north-south road crosses the A303 and a flyover is the only answer. Another village, Winterbourne Stoke, has been promised a bypass, even though it has nothing to do with the Stonehenge problems, and this stretch of road is regularly included in the costs of the Stonehenge improvements.

The main battlefront is between the Government (the Departments of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), and Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR), and the Treasury) – not completely unready to fund A303 'improvement', but for financial reasons backing a two-kilometre cut-and-cover tunnel on the line of the existing A303; and, facing them, a large swathe of informed people and organizations who back a longer bored tunnel, the better to preserve and restore the archaeology, the loneliness, the silence, and the mighty effect of the landscape. The cut-and-cover tunnel, they believe, would ruin precisely those qualities for which Stonehenge was nominated a World Heritage Site.

The three requirements – management plan, visitor centre and better road – intertwine and interact. A factual chronology with minimum comment may show how.

1986

The British Government's proposal that Stonehenge and its surrounding landscape and monuments become a World Heritage Site under the relevant international convention is accepted by UNESCO. A dual site, 'Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites' comprises Stonehenge and the complex of sites at Avebury, some 20 miles away (Figure 1). The 'unparalleled landscape' is mentioned as well as the neolithic monuments,

and Her Majesty's Government commits itself to their protection in this international context.

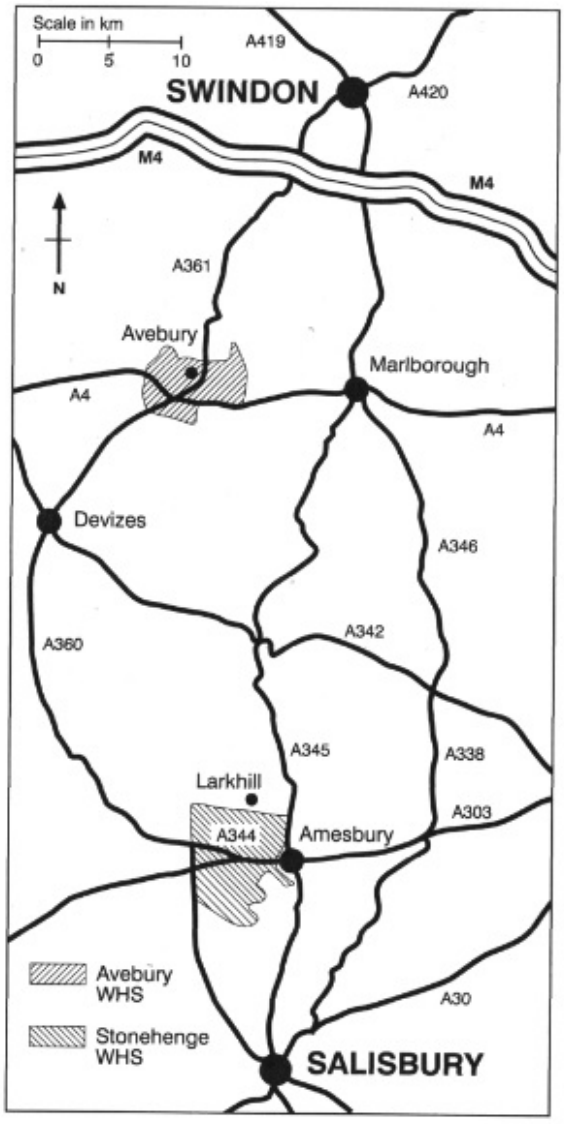


Figure 1: The World Heritage Site of Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites and the roads around them

1991

English Heritage (which manages the stones, given to the nation in 1918) and the National Trust (which owns adjacent land bought by public subscription in the 1920s) jointly seek outline planning permission for a new visitor centre at Larkhill; it would have a new access road from the A344

through Fargo Plantation from the west. Salisbury District Council rejects the application because of its impact on landscape and archaeology (particularly the prehistoric cursus). An appeal is lodged, then withdrawn.

1992

An architectural competition for a visitor centre at Larkhill is won by Edward Cullinan, designer of the visitor centre at Fountains Abbey World Heritage Site – prize winning, but fiercely criticized in the on-site visitor book. A second, detailed, application is made for the Larkhill site, objected to, and withdrawn. A re-examination of eight possible sites begins.

1993

April

As possible routes for a dualled A303 at Stonehenge, the Highways Agency advances a northern route, a southern route and two on-line options, one with and one without a short cut-and-cover tunnel. After public consultation, all are rejected.

In a public consultation on the proposed sites for a visitor centre, the general public prefers Larkhill. However, Countess East is chosen by English Heritage and the National Trust as least damaging to the landscape and archaeology, and as providing ample space for development. ('Countess' is Countess Farm, by the eponymous roundabout east of Stonehenge; sites on the east and west sides of it had been listed.)

The Public Accounts Committee of the House of Commons calls the 'presentation' of Stonehenge (i.e. the present car park and visitor centre) a 'national disgrace' [4].

1994

8 July

English Heritage mounts a major international conference on Stonehenge: The Great Debate. (Sir) Angus Stirling, Director General of the National Trust, ringingly commits both the Trust and English Heritage to 'a long bored tunnel'.[5] Here are his words:

> *The first principle underlying all our joint discussions in recent years has been a total commitment, on the part of the Trust and English Heritage, to find a solution to restore, and to maintain thereafter, the unity of Stonehenge and its natural, unsullied setting.*
>
> *We have concluded that the only feasible on-line route [for the A303 which meets the essential requirements of this World Heritage Site is a long bored tunnel starting east of New King Barrows and finishing to the west well past the monument … that is the restoration to its grand and natural setting that is the National Trust's and English Heritage's duty.*
>
> *There is no historic site in England where we shall uphold that duty with greater resolve and determination.*

1995

The long bored tunnel (LBT) is again endorsed by consensus at a Highways Agency A303 Planning Conference in November. The obvious funding problems are left for the next Government to face. Messrs Mott McDonald estimate the cost of a LBT at £300.2 million; Messrs Halcrow at £292.2 million. These estimates remain the foundation for all later statements that the LBT is 'unaffordable and uneconomic'. (But see June 2000, below.)

Planning Policy Guidance on Planning and the Historic Environment[6], published by the Departments of the Environment and National Heritage, requires planning authorities to give 'material consideration' to World Heritage Site status. This is the only specific reference to World

Heritage Site status in, or alongside, planning law. (PPGs are what they say: official guidance, not injunctions.)

1996

The new Director General of the National Trust, Martin Drury, confirms Sir Angus Stirling's commitment: 'the Trust will not budge over protecting Stonehenge'. [7]

1997

January

A 'POST report' [8] on tunnelling is published by the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, proposing an improved system of cost-benefit analysis when archaeological, scientific, landscape and transport interests are in conflict, as at an imaginary site called 'Twyburyhenge' – a combination of Twyford Down, Newbury and Stonehenge – where an imaginary conflict had erupted between the Department of Transport and concerned citizens.

April

The then Government spokesman, Baroness Trumpington, writes to Lord Kennet that World Heritage Site status is merely 'honorific'. At the time, despite the Government's commitment to the World Heritage Convention, the Department of Transport's advisory documents on roads still stated that World Heritage Site status had no standing in planning law.

May

A new Government is elected.

June

The English Heritage and Tussauds Group application to the Millennium Fund under the Private Finance Initiative for a visitor centre at Countess East and related car-parking

development is turned down.

27 September

The code of practice of the European Association of Archaeologists is approved at Ravenna. Articles 1.7 and 2.6. are relevant. [9] (Her Majesty's Government has not yet ratified the related 1992 European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage.)

October

English Heritage mounts a conference on World Heritage Sites at which British practice in regard to World Heritage Sites is politely castigated by Dr von Droste, then Director of UNESCO's World Heritage Centre. The Rt Hon Chris Smith, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, announces that a management plan for Stonehenge is to be developed, as required by the United Kingdom's commitments under the World Heritage Convention. (At this time, a major effort is being directed to the excellent management plan for Maritime Greenwich as a new United Kingdom World Heritage Site.) The Stonehenge Management Plan Working Party will not, however, start work until December 1998.

November

A ministerial meeting (according to Halcrow 1998) [10] decides the long bored tunnel is 'unaffordable and uneconomic', and instructs English Heritage to produce new proposals.

A full year before the Management Plan Working Party first meets, Chris Smith once again announces the visitor centre is to be at Larkhill, the Ministry of Defence having agreed to reconsider earlier objections. However, the same local and archaeological objections remain insuperable: the proposal is once again discarded.

At some point, both Messrs Halcrows, for the Highways Agency,

and the Centre for Social and Economic Research on the Global Environment (CSERGE), for English Heritage, are commissioned to produce reports. The first is an environmental assessment of four road options (including two earlier rejected, but excluding the English Heritage/National Trust and consensus-preferred LBT). CSERGE's report is on the 'heritage value' of Stonehenge.[11] Both report in 1998.

1998

The DETR publishes *Policy Appraisal and the Environment*,[12] with an environmental appraisal checklist of nine points, presumably to be observed by all Government departments and agencies, including the following:

- Item 1: What does the policy or programme aim to achieve?
- Item 3: What impacts will the various options have on the environment at home and abroad? Consider both direct and indirect costs and benefits.
- Item 4: How significant are the impacts?
- Item 6: What method will be used to value the costs and benefits?
- Item 7: What is the preferred option and why?
- Item 8: What arrangements are in place for effective monitoring and evaluation? What data will be needed and when?
- Item 9: How will the appraisal be publicized?

Coming from the DETR, this document, which addresses the problem of 'non-monetarisable' values, marks a significant change of priorities.

Spring

The CSERGE Report [13] is completed. It gives Stonehenge a £300 million 'heritage value', apparently for Britons alone. Its value as a World Heritage Site or to 'foreigners' is not mentioned. The Report surfaces briefly, but is apparently

shelved. Among its findings appeared to be a definite preference, among those it enquired of, for ‘no change’ rather than the cut-and-cover tunnel. This preference was not among the ‘options’, but can be deduced from the figures.

April

Chris Smith’s Larkhill proposals are withdrawn and he proposes Fargo North for the visitor centre.

June

The Halcrow Report is completed and presented [14] but it is not in the public domain, nor even available to all members of the Stonehenge Management Plan Working Party when it is finally appointed and meets. (It is understood that Salisbury District Council and Wiltshire County Council at some point had received copies.)

In September 1999, the Halcrow Report is placed in the Library of the House of Lords. The Report contains one-page resumes of findings on each option; that on the two-kilometre cut-and-cover twin tunnels does not reflect the findings reported in the full text, but it may be all that Ministers saw. What the Report found was:

> *Ten hectares of WHS land would be newly taken for the 3.5 km of new dualling of the A303 outside the cut-and-cover tunnels (but within the WHS). Eleven hectares in theory would be returned to grass, but there has to be a road of sorts for ‘non-A road traffic’ (horses, bicycles, and so forth) presumably on or near the existing line of the A303. There would be 400-500 metre approach cuttings at each end of the cut-and-cover tunnel or tunnels. The two or four portals would be large and disfiguring. Permanent lighting of the tunnels would be visible at either end day and night. There would still be noise and pollution. There would be a new, undisguisable, 200 x 150 metre hump of unstated height covering the tunnels in Stonehenge Bottom, in direct view of*

> *the stones. In dry weather, the two-kilometre tunnel scars could show. Only the landscape in the immediate 'amphitheatre' would be improved, not the landscape of the Stonehenge 'bowl', let alone that of the whole WHS.*

No estimate is provided for the costs of the several years of disruption during the proposed works.

24 July

A letter from Chris Smith to Wayland Kennet mentions 'the need for a degree of compromise if we are to find a way forward for Stonehenge' (without elaborating). [15] He continues:

> *I would not wish English Heritage to press ahead with proposals for new visitor facilities – nor would they wish to – before all the relevant issues have been fully considered and satisfactory solutions have been found. It is essential that arrangements for visiting the site must be environmentally and archaeologically sustainable.*

July

An A303 Improvement Scheme is announced by the DETR as an 'exceptional environmental scheme'. It includes a bypass for the village of Winterbourne Stoke, which Halcrow, and others earlier, had advised should be dealt with separately, not as part of the Stonehenge road plan. The scheme includes the on-line dualling scheme through the World Heritage Site that was rejected by consensus at the conferences in 1994 and 1995, two kilometres of it in cut-and-cover twin tunnels at the centre of the WHS (Figure 2). These intrusions can be 'sensitively treated' at the design stage.

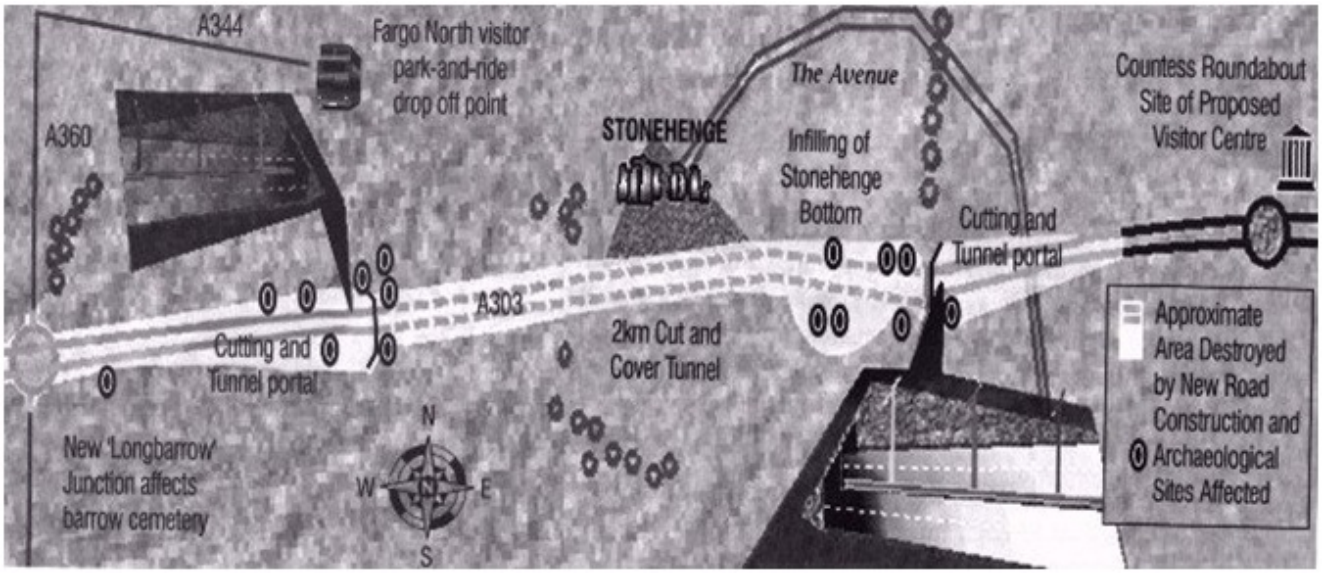


Figure 2: Proposed route of the dual two-kilometre cut-and-cover tunnel through the Stonehenge World Heritage Site, showing the position of the proposed visitor centre. (Paul Graves-Brown)

September

Chris Smith announces a Stonehenge Master Plan, even though the Stonehenge Management Plan Working Party has still not met. The Master Plan is endorsed by English Heritage and by National Trust officials. Public consultations are not known to have taken place, and the membership of the National Trust had not been informed, although National Trust land is involved.

23 November

A DCMS official writes to David Part, Chairman of the Wiltshire Archaeology and Natural History Society: 'The fact that the tunnel would result in the loss of five scheduled monuments is of course regrettable'. He appears unaware of the Halcrow list of permanent damage to the WHS (available from June 1998) and refers to 'sensitive' implementation.

December

First meeting of the Stonehenge Management Plan Working Group,

including representatives of local organizations, statutory bodies and landowners. Despite requests, including formal written ones, no critical discussion of the Master Plan is permitted in this group by Lady Gass, its English Heritage Chairman, while the Management Plan is being drawn up by the Working Party. Major issues are thus largely excluded from discussion because they are deemed to have been already dealt with by the Master Plan. This contradicts Lord Mclntosh's parliamentary answer to a House of Lords question: [16].

The Stonehenge World Heritage Management Plan provides the over- arching framework within which the Stonehenge Master Plan will be implemented.

1999

January

Highways Agency Consultation (mainly local) on the A303 improvement scheme, including the Winterbourne Stoke bypass. Unfortunately, the Consultation Document is so devised that indications of support for the bypass must simultaneously indicate support for the two-kilometre cut-and-cover tunnel. This Consultation has since been quoted as proving public support for the two-kilometre cut-and-cover tunnel.

Spring

English Heritage, seeking an operator for the intended new visitor centre, advertises it as a 'major international commercial opportunity' in the property pages of the International Herald Tribune. The Management Plan Working Group had not yet reported, but it is claimed that bidders have been 'informed' of the Management Plan. In its agents' (massive) documentation, English Heritage stated that the visitor centre 'will be the Gateway to the Stonehenge World Heritage Site': it was to be a 'grand project of the highest prestige' in the 'tradition of the Propylaea to the Parthenon and the Queen's House at Greenwich'. English Heritage also

appears both to guarantee the operator's commercial success, and to pledge itself to support the operator's planning applications, and so forth, for the proposed 70-acre site at Countess East. These pledges were apparently later withdrawn.

April

Lord Whitty, Minister for Roads, in a letter to Wayland Kennet, says that there will be an environmental assessment for the A303 Stonehenge scheme, as required by both European Union and national environmental legislation.[17]

July

A well-attended meeting, called at the Society of Antiquaries by Rescue – the Trust for British Archaeology – votes by a large majority (one against, a few abstentions) against the cut-and-cover tunnels. At the meeting, Geoff Wainwright, English Heritage's Chief Archaeologist, says that the shortlist of applicants for the visitor centre operation would be announced in September 1999. (No short list was ever announced.)

2 August

It is announced that bids to operate the visitor centre have been received. There is no mention in the press release that the winning bid would have to be compatible with and governed by the Management Plan, which then was not even in draft.

6 September

The Draft Management Plan is exhibited and sent out for consultation; replies are due in October. (The English Heritage press release distinguishes between 'Stonehenge' and its 'setting' and implies this distinction will be accepted in the Management Plan. It is not.)

October

The English Heritage brief for Supplementary Planning Guidance by Salisbury District Council (SDC) outlines its plans for a major commercial development at Countess East as a visitor centre including, among other things, a 'range of catering outlets including fast food restaurants and other beverage outlets' and 'a range of retail outlets'. Yet more 'outlets' would be 'decided on [their] merits'. The brief for the SDC Planning Committee stated that the Master Plan, not the Management Plan, is the governing policy; this contradicts earlier announcements.

Local residents form a group to express alarm at the traffic consequences; at the excessive scale of a commercial development outside the WHS (the Countess East site is larger than the Countess West site, within the WHS, which the residents would prefer); and at the uncertain economic and environmental viability of an explicitly commercial visitor centre. They notice that the visitor centre brief contains no safeguards on timing. If planning permission for a visitor centre were given before the roads are agreed, they would be faced with a fait accompli. The details of timing in the 13 October edition of English Heritage's Master Plan Newsletter [18] are confusing. Confusion also remains over an implied suggestion that the operator would contribute to the 'heritage' cost of the new road schemes, roundabouts and flyovers. The operator also appears to be promised a monopoly of car parking throughout the whole Stonehenge area, which would presumably have to be enforced by the Wiltshire police.

The scale and overall sustainability of a 'world class', 'international commercial opportunity'-type visitor centre, and its possible consequences for the World Heritage Site itself, were not discussed by the Management Plan Working Party. But the new English Heritage proposal was incompatible with Chris Smith's expectation that the visitor centre would be 'essentially educational'. [19]

Autumn

A ‘pledge’ is made to local residents in English Heritage’s Master Plan Newsletter (Autumn 1999) that the visitor centre at Countess East would not open before the road improvements (including a flyover at the Countess roundabout) were in place and the A344 beside Stonehenge was closed; this would only be when the Master Plan’s first cut-and-cover tunnel at Stonehenge Bottom was complete and in operation. Not an easy-to-work-out timescale. Nor was it clear what the chosen operator would do in the mean time with the present visitor centre and car park, which remain a ‘national disgrace’.

December

The ‘Heart of neolithic Orkney’ is accepted by UNESCO as a new United Kingdom World Heritage Site.

The final draft of the Management Plan is presented to Chris Smith. It is widely welcomed, because it recognizes, as the Master Plan did not, that ‘Stonehenge’ consists of the whole World Heritage Site. It is not simply a ‘core’ immediately round the henge situated in a less important ‘setting’ where dualling roads, altering the landscape and setting up permanently lit tunnel portals might, by ‘sensitive implementation’, somehow be converted from vandalism to the acceptable.

During 1999, ‘Seahenge’ was dismantled without proper advance explanation, and to public alarm; a ‘Stonehenge’ at Miami was saved; and the Leaning Tower of Pisa was described by Professor Tarabella of Pisa University, as ‘an Italian Stonehenge.’[20] Throughout 1998 and 1999, AT&T used Stonehenge in massive photographic advertisements on the back of the worldwide International Herald Tribune and in airports.

2000

January A new poster using Stonehenge appeared all over London and in the British press advertising another high-tech communications firm.

Six bodies, including leading archaeological and environmental organizations, write to *The Times* voicing their alarm and suggesting that Stonehenge be placed on UNESCO's List of World Heritage in Danger. The Chairmen of English Heritage and the National Trust, responding to this letter, admit that the current proposals for a cut-and-cover tunnel represent a 'compromise', but do not say who or what with, nor why they have gone back on their earlier public commitments.

Press stories claimed the visitor centre decision was imminent; silence continued. On 24 February, ICOMOS-UK – the British arm of ICOMOS, to which-the Government submitted its Stonehenge Management Plan for approval – issued a 'position statement on Stonehenge' [21].

ICOMOS-UK supports, in principle, the general approach, subject to further evaluation of the details, and to a full Environmental Impact Assessment, which we would expect to form part of the Planning Process. The altematives, including *the long bored tunnel, would need to be assessed in equal terms*. [Emphasis added.]

April

Finally, the Stonehenge World Heritage Site Management Plan was published [22] with none of the fanfare and celebration that had accompanied the many ill-fated announcements of earlier years.

The document has many merits: chiefly that it is in no doubt that Stonehenge is the whole World Heritage Site and that this is the area to 'the protection, conservation, presentation, and transmission to future generations' of which we are internationally committed by the World Heritage Convention. So it looks to be solving the first of the Stonehenge problems and highlights the faults of the Master Plan, elements of which would indeed cause irretrievable damage.

July

The second problem – the visitor centre – is put on ice. On 10 July, English Heritage's new Chairman, Sir Neil Cossons, announced that the search for a commercial operator for the visitor centre had failed: several hundred thousand pounds were spent on lawyers and consultants. It has not, fortunately, been recognized as a 'major international commercial opportunity'. Instead, English Heritage is to 'explore' opportunities for a more hands-on role in its 'operation', which will be put out for public consultation in 2002.

There remain the roads. The Highways Agency announced, also on 10 July, that the Countess Roundabout Flyover was accepted and planned for, as part of the Master Plan's £130 million A303 improvement – on-line two-kilometre cut-and-cover tunnels and all.

But now the local authorities are showing interest in a new 'Southern Route', proposed by a local resident, Colonel Parker, who is experienced in traffic management. The always unreasonable hope that ICOMOS might ignore the road issue if it liked the rest of the Management Plan has been scotched by ICOMOS-UK's position statement of 24 February: a re-examination of all the road options is now required, including the long bored tunnel.

While a figure of £100 million extra for the LBT has often been mentioned, a new figure has appeared from a Highways Agency spokesman: only £40 million more than cut-and-cover [23]

The way forward?

Now we have seen what sums the Government can find for a fleeting failure like the Greenwich Dome, the needs of Stonehenge can no longer be dismissed as 'unaffordable and uneconomic' [24]. With the ICOMOS requirement that the long bored tunnel needs to be assessed on equal terms with the

Highways Agency's plans for cut-and-cover, the old consensus of the middle 1990s may soon re-emerge.

Biography

Elizabeth Young MA
With her husband, Wayland Kennet, Elizabeth Young wrote *Old London Churches* (Faber & Faber, 1956), which pioneered an appreciation of London's baroque churches. Their *London Churches* was published by Grafton in 1986, and their prize-winning *Northem Lazio: An Unknown Italy* by John Murray in 1990. Most of her other writing has been on political subjects – maritime and security issues – though she published a volume of poems, *Time Is As Time Does*, in 1959.

Wayland Kennet MA, HonFRIBA
Wayland Kenner was an active member of the House of Lords until the recent legislation abolished the participation of hereditary peers. He was the Minister in charge of Heritage and Planning for four years under Harold Wilson, and was Parliamentary Vice President of the Local Authorities World Heritage Forum. He is an Honorary Fellow of the RIBA, and President of the Avebury Society – Avebury and Stonehenge share a single World Heritage Site.

Living in the Marlborough Downs, thought to be the source of the Stonehenge sarsens, Elizabeth Young and Wayland Kennet have been active in supporting the development of satisfactory solutions to the problems of the world's premier monument of the Neolithic.

Notes

1 Public Accounts Committee, Report to the House of Commons (April 1993).

2 Highways Agency, A303 Planning Conference (November 1995).

3 Ministerial meeting (November 1997), quoted in Halcrow,

Report to the Highways Department June 1998).

4 Public Accounts Committee, op. cit. (1993).

5 Sir Angus Stirling, Director General of the National Trust, speaking at *Stonehenge: The Great Debate* conference organised by English Heritage (8 July 1994).

6 Department of the Environment/Department of National Heritage, *Planning Policy Guidance: Planning and the Historic Environment,* PPG 15, HMSO, London (1994).

7 *The Guardian* (31 January 1996).

8 POSTreport, Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (January 1997).

9 European Association of Archaeologists, *Code of Practice*, Ravenna (1997).

10 Halcrow op. cit. (1998).

11 CSERGE (Centre for Social and Economic Research on the Global Environment), report for English Heritage (1998).

12 Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, *Policy Appraisal and the Environment*, London (1998).

13 CSERGE op. cit. (1998).

14 Halcrow op. cit. (1998).

15 Letter from Chris Smith to Wayland Kennet (C98/04816/10624, 24 July 1998).

16 House of Lords, HL 5404 (December 1998).

17 Letter from Lord Whitty to Wayland Kennet (W/10418/99, April 1999).

18 English Heritage, *Stonehenge Master Plan Newsletter* (13 October 1999).

19 Letter from Chris Smith to Wayland Kenner (3 November 1999).

20 The Times (6 December 1999).

21 ICOMOS UK, *Position Statement on Stonehenge* (24 February 1999).

22 English Heritage, *Stonehenge World Heritage Site Master Plan* (April 2000).

23 NCE Roads Review (22 June 2000).

Objection to permanent coach park at WHS



Stonehenge visitor centre complex from the West end of Cursus. August 2015. This development extends over formerly undeveloped open countryside within the WHS.

The Stonehenge Alliance has objected to an application by

English Heritage for permission at Stonehenge Visitors Centre Airman's Corner for:

- permanent use of the temporary coach park
- modification of existing coach park to create 53 coach spaces and 26 motorhome spaces
- construction of ancillary building for new coach visitor facilities
- change of use from agricultural land
- creation of extended visitor transit system turnaround area for shuttle bus use
- decommissioning of existing visitor transit system turnaround area
- associated ancillary and landscaping works

We are concerned for the impact on the World Heritage Site (WHS) and likely damage to its Outstanding Universal Value. Our objections are supported by

- Wiltshire Council's Core Policy 59 (The Stonehenge, Avebury and associated sites World Heritage Site)
- the World Heritage Convention (Articles 1, 3, 4 and 5)
- the WHS Management Plan
- Visitor Centre Planning Conditions for sustainability and visitor management
- various reports and questions about potable water, sewage and the natural environment

We understand that English Heritage is faced with a serious management problem at Stonehenge, partly owing to insufficient scrutiny of previous proposals and partly to ad hoc measures to deal with problems as they arise. A temporary solution is needed but not one that generates further mistakes. We therefore hope that the Council will refuse this application and that the following should be required before its determination:

- An explanation of why the current application has been

made despite not meeting planning consent Condition 5 and an account of what efforts are being made to meet that Condition by April 2017

- A fully explained and convincing visitor-transit system that builds in future increases in visitor numbers and safety measures for buses passing, and for pedestrians
- A full and up-to-date Green Travel Plan to include measures to ensure that visitor-arrivals are spread throughout the day rather than at peak times
- A comprehensive visitor management strategy
- Detailed explanation of the location and assurance of an uninterrupted potable water supply, including current and predicted usage, and evidence of having secured any necessary permits
- Detailed explanation of sewage and waste water disposal, including current and predicted measures, and evidence of having secured any necessary permits
- A fully detailed sustainability appraisal, to include discussion with ICOMOS-UK on archaeological and landscape issues

We also call on the applicant to undertake an Appropriate Assessment of the potential impacts of increased visitor numbers and run-off from the parking areas on the River Avon SAC (Special Area of Conservation) as part of the application.

We conclude our objection by drawing Wiltshire Council's attention to the need for stakeholders to work together bearing in mind possible changes to the A303 and the proposed re-siting of the Artillery Museum, a major development nearby.

The Stonehenge Alliance objection can be read in full here.

Consultation can be found here and closes on 2 June 2016.

UNESCO report welcomed



The Stonehenge Alliance has welcomed the findings of UNESCO's mission to Stonehenge which are contained in its recently published its report.

UNESCO concluded that:

- "The length of the tunnel and the siting of the portals are the two key issues of this project."
- while the "preliminary idea" of an A303 tunnel of at least 2.9km would bring benefits to the World Heritage Site (WHS), "the siting and design of the tunnel portals, approach cuttings/embankments, entry/exit ramps and the temporary construction works have the potential to impact adversely". They express particular concern over the Avenue, a major archaeological feature of the Stonehenge landscape, pointing out that any damage from further road construction here is "effectively irreversible".

UNESCO's report demands "rigorous investigation, evaluation,

iterative design and assessment to see *whether and how it might be possible*" [our italics] to construct a tunnel of the length proposed while protecting the essential qualities of the Stonehenge landscape. It questions the siting of the eastern portals, giving a strong steer that a longer tunnel (than 2.9km) would be of benefit. It also says that on the western side, the 1km approach road has the potential to impact on the integrity of the landscape.

UNESCO say they expect the Government to implement its commitments under the World Heritage Convention. But "to do this requires longer term thinking than typical infrastructure design in non-World Heritage Sites. The whole asset life design of the scheme within the World Heritage Site should not be limited by 25 year traffic predictions…".

UNESCO recommend a radical approach before any options are brought forward. They warn that the normal Development Consent Order process and its timescale may be inappropriate for the Stonehenge WHS.

The Stonehenge Alliance shares the concerns expressed by UNESCO and welcomes their steer towards a longer tunnel than currently proposed. UNESCO's proposals must be fully adopted and World Heritage made paramount. Only if this happens is there a chance that this wonderful site might be safeguarded in its entirety from the impact of any major new road scheme.

Link to our press release

Countdown to A303 Stonehenge

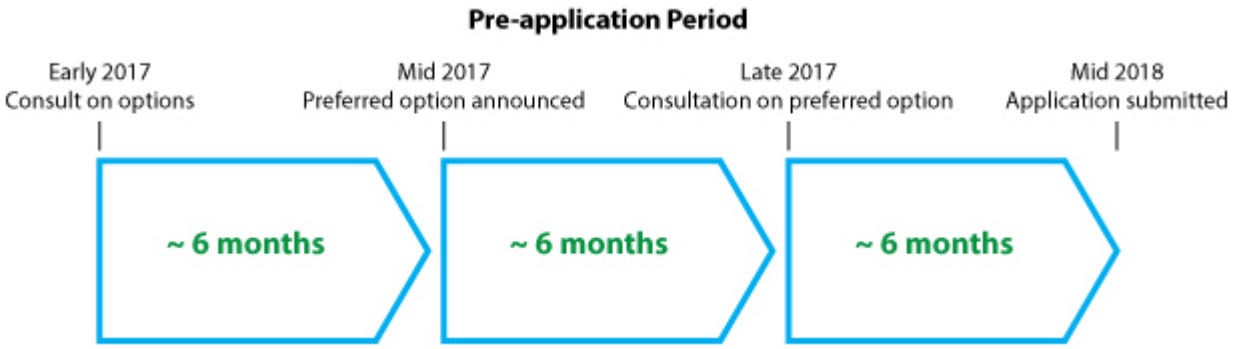
engineering works

Recently, it was International Day for Monuments and Sites, a good time to remind ourselves how lucky we are to have iconic monuments such as Stonehenge. Yet the World Heritage Site remains under threat from the Government's road building programme and its damaging short tunnel. While the tunnel would not damage the stones directly, it would cause massive destruction within the World Heritage landscape.

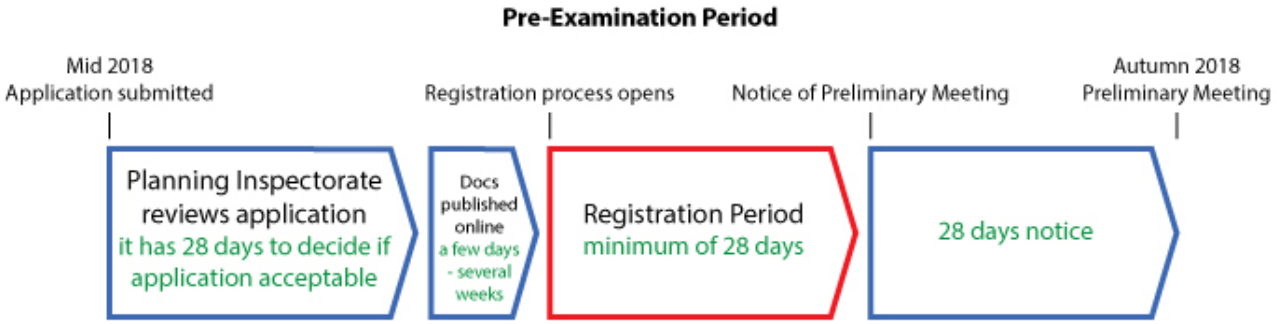
Highways England, the Government body charged with building the new road, held a so-called 'information event' last February. No scheme proposals were published, only its intention to widen the A303 at Stonehenge with building work starting in April 2020. Information on the project's website is scant but Highways England has told us that they are looking at options and a report is due later this month. Meanwhile we need to understand the project programme lying ahead.

What are the processes and time-scales?

The planning processes for major infrastructure schemes have radically changed in recent years. There is a reasonably long lead time prior to the submission of an application followed by a short public examination where it will be at the Examining Authority's (usually a panel of Inspectors) discretion to seek answers to objectors' questions. Currently we are at the '**Pre-application**' stage of the process.



Highways England says it will consult on the various options in early 2017. It then chooses its preferred option (a short tunnel according to ministerial assurances last month, unless we can convince people otherwise) working it up into more detail before holding a consultation specifically on this option. After all this it can then submit an application to the Planning Inspectorate. This initial process is likely to take around 18 months. It could take longer though, because of the complexity of the scheme.



Once the application is submitted, the Planning Inspectorate has 28 days to approve it. Once approved and when all the documents supporting the application are published, the public have a minimum of 28 days to register their comments. At the end of the registration period, four weeks' notice is given of the **Preliminary Meeting** where the Examination process and timetable is explained.



The day after the Preliminary Meeting marks the start of the **Examination in Public** which is limited to 6 months. The Examining Authority then has 3 months to produce its report and the Secretary of State has 3 months in which to make a **decision**. There is then a 6 week period during which objectors may ask, if appropriate, for the decision to be judicially reviewed.

Therefore, to meet its 2020 deadline Highways England will need to submit an application in mid 2018. The problem for objectors is that there won't be a detailed plan until then. But once the formal planning process starts, the public will have precious little time to prepare a case and limited or no resources to scrutinise what are often very large and complex documents.

If you do not want to see the Stonehenge World Heritage Site permanently damaged please take the following actions:

Sign our petition here

Write to the National Trust who are supporting the damaging short tunnel

Write to UNESCO urging them to stand firm in demanding protection of the whole of the World Heritage Site

NOTE

For more information on the planning process for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects or how to campaign in

general see guidance on Campaign for Better Transport's website.