Publication of World Heritage Watch Report 2023

WORLD HERITAGE WATCH

World Heritage Watch Report 2023



World Heritage Watch Report 2023 ©

World Heritage Watch (WHW) Report 2023, published in May, is dominated by the first heartbreaking reports, compiled by local NGOs and experts, of damage to the four World Heritage Sites (WHSs) in areas of Turkey and Syria devastated by the February earthquake,



Diyarbakır Castle, Turkey, structurally damaged by earthquake © sadikgulec

There are other examples of injury to WHSs through wanton neglect and state-sanctioned activities around the world, including in the UK. WHW reports provide wake-up calls, urging UNESCO and the world community to take timely action, and tirelessly insist that governments deliver on their commitments.



Jurassic Coast, UK, threatened by waste incinerator scheme © milangonda

Stonehenge is included in the Report

In prime position among causes for concern in the Monuments and Sites section is that of Stonehenge. The Stonehenge Alliance provides an update on the threatened WHS by Kate Fielden. While the UK Government's damaging plan for road widening and a tunnel across the World Heritage landscape awaits redetermination by the Secretary of State for Transport, National Highways would have it go ahead as originally proposed, with no changes made since the damning High Court ruling of July 2021.

Since the High Court Judgment

Kate chronicles the developments over the past two years – the renewed consultation on the scheme and the responses from National Highways and others on longer tunnel alternatives, updated environmental information and, in view of the Government's climate change commitments, the potential impacts of carbon emissions. Recent developments include the November 2022 National Audit Office report criticising National

Highways for exceeding its budget for road infrastructure expenditure by billions of pounds. Kate also rounds up Stonehenge Alliance's campaign activity, from demonstrations outside the British Museum, to a busy social media presence.



Alliance campaigners at the British Museum © The Stonehenge Alliance

Politicisation of UNESCO's World Heritage Committee

She concludes by endorsing a point WHW makes in the introduction to its report, that UNESCO itself is becoming increasingly open to political influence, with a growing number of decisions undermining and sacrificing World Heritage preservation.

"We, like others, are deeply concerned about the politicisation of the World Heritage Committee."

The Mole Report: Stonehenge road scheme doesn’t add up

Briefing on scheme’s value for money



"There's no bigger advocate of tunnelling than me, but this just doesn't add up"

Cartoon: The mole report © Steve Jones/Stonehenge Alliance [Note 1]

Headline findings:

* The original business case by the promoter, National Highways, was rated: 'low'. Without adding the heritage value of nearly £1bn, the business case would not have achieved this weak out turn.

* The basis for the heritage valuation was arrived at by means of a survey using a methodology questioned by both the NAO and the scheme Examiners in 2019.

* Survey participants had been asked to monetise the heritage benefit that might be brought by the scheme's promoters. But they were given inadequate information, including misleading images, no views of the portals, and no before and after images of the cutting. (See sample images below)

* The Alliance had always considered Highways England's figures lacked credibility, but their latest calculations of increased value for money can only be described as **pure fantasy.**

Summary

Download full report as pdf

> ***"In September 2022, the Office for National Statistics reported a rise in the price of materials and fuel for manufacturing of 20.5% in the year to August 2022."*** *Quoted by National Audit Office, November 2022.*

Incredibly, at a time of record inflation and spiralling costs in the construction industry, National Highways claims that the Stonehenge Tunnel has suddenly become much better value for money. Its previous calculations were already highly suspect but its new ones are pure fantasy.

It is well known that proposers of ambitious projects tend to

downplay their costs and exaggerate their benefits in order to make their schemes look good. Our report shines a spotlight on how ministers and officials at the Department for Transport (DfT) are being misled. [Note 2]

From no value to low value

In its 2018 application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) for the A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down (“Stonehenge Tunnel”) Scheme, National Highways applied a standard appraisal method of costs and benefits over a 60-year period. Costs included construction and maintenance, whilst benefits included expected time savings per vehicle, improved road safety and anticipated economic benefits.

The high cost of the scheme, due to the tunnel ostensibly for protecting the World Heritage Site (WHS), would have led to a net loss overall. So National Highways commissioned a survey to monetise the value of the heritage benefit the scheme would bring. The results arrived at a total monetised heritage benefit of £955m, in 2010 values. Added to the transport benefits this, remarkably, turned the tunnel scheme into a net profit. But survey respondents were given inadequate information about the scheme and, despite the injection of an extra £955m of benefits, the surplus only shows a small return of 8p for each pound invested, i.e., **a BCR of 1.08,** deemed **low value.**

Images shown to survey respondents by National Highways

Photo – view of the A303 from the stone circle: Status Quo



Photo – view of the A303 from the stone circle: A303 removed



Photo: View of Stonehenge from the A303: Status Quo



Photo: View of Stonehenge from the A303: A303 removed



The accompanying script explained that both tunnel portals would be within the World Heritage Site but the images and photomontages of the new dual carriageway within the WHS were not shown.

Images not shown to respondents



Status quo is busy but not always nose to tail. © Stonehenge Alliance



The before and after mages by National Highways above were produced for the Examination and were not shown to survey respondents.

Given that the scheme’s Examiners and UNESCO say the proposal will harm the WHS, and that even the former Transport Secretary agrees with them (despite wanting to approve the scheme), the results of the survey cannot be considered credible. Yet, in spite of the damage it would do to the WHS, National Highways is still claiming that its scheme will produce £955m worth of benefits as it desperately tries to keep the project afloat,

Following the DCO's quashing in the High Court, in part because of the failure to properly consider alternatives, the Transport Secretary has asked for more information to re-determine the scheme.

Reappraisal of the scheme defies credibility

As things stand, we fear that Ministers and DfT officials could be misled into thinking that the scheme is viable. National Highways has recently conjured up new figures claiming that **costs have fallen**, while **benefits have magically increased**, and that the scheme now has a **BCR of 1.55**. This is simply not credible.

The scheme's latest construction and maintenance costs are now in the order of £2.5bn in current prices and are only likely to soar with current inflation. In a recent report, the National Audit Office recommended that National Highways needs to carry out a value for money review of its major schemes such as Stonehenge to ensure they still provide value for money. Yet any figures National Highways produces will need to be carefully scrutinised.

That's why we are calling for an open and independent appraisal of the scheme to be carried out. Only with full disclosure and proper scrutiny at a public examination will the Secretary of State be able to come to a sensible decision on this scheme and the future of Stonehenge WHS. This is our heritage at stake and we owe it to future generations to take the greatest possible care of it.

NOTES

1: Permission to use the Jonesy cartoon is exclusive to comment and articles associated with this item.

2: **Download full report as pdf** [NB The full report was amended in January 2023 to include National Highways' 2022 Business Case]

3. Press release **here.**

Exchanges at the National Trust A303 Stonehenge debate

National Trust AGM, 5 November 2022



Please click here to watch the debate. This page takes you to the National Trust AGM page. Scroll down to the title 'Watch the 2022 AGM'. Click or swipe through until the above title appears. There is no direct link to that section.

Presentation for the resolution on A303 Stonehenge by Dr Kate Fielden



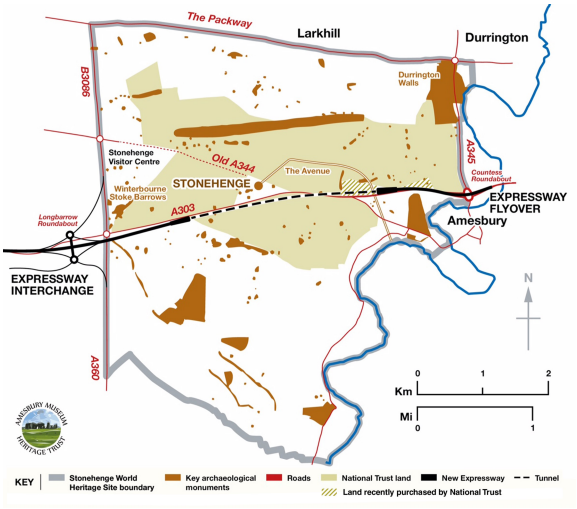
Dr Kate Fielden, National Trust member proposer, Hon Secretary to Stonehenge Alliance

Good afternoon everyone.

Our Chairman rightly questioned: what will future generations thank us or blame us for? Independent planning inspectors and the former Transport Secretary say the Stonehenge road scheme would permanently and irreversibly damage the World Heritage Site; and UNESCO threatens loss of its designation if the scheme isn't fundamentally changed.

Avoidance of archaeology is impossible. The High Court judged "This is not a case where no harm would be caused to heritage assets". It ruled alternatives must be examined. The Trust's own expert evidence finds a longer tunnel would give better protection, but any such change requested by the Trust now would require an entirely new scheme application.

The Trust's "high quality solution that protects the World Heritage Site" isn't on the table and without successful legal action, mechanical excavators would already be at work with the Trust's full support. Over 100 acres of Trust land would've been compulsory acquired, including inalienable land, bound by restrictive covenants.



[Click here to enlarge map showing Bow Tie Field, hatched green, by eastern tunnel portal and cuttings.]

[The Trust recently bought Bow Tie field – for those who took a leaflet at the door, it's hatched green on the map.] It cost £600,000 with a Heritage Memorial Fund grant for safeguarding archaeology and grassland restoration. But around half of the field is intended for a dual carriageway cutting and tunnel, with tunnel portals near the ancient Avenue. Like the sixty-yard-wide and forty-foot-deep western tunnel cutting, this massive eastern gash would be clearly visible in the landscape. [(See handout with images of scheme here).]

Why is the Trust so determined to see major road engineering at Stonehenge? Loss of archaeology? Loss of World Heritage status? Why support such damage to the historic environment while actively and rightly campaigning to protect the natural environment?

As members, we are concerned about the Trust's example and reputation.

As UNESCO advice says: there are better solutions for future generations at Stonehenge.

Have Trustees been told the full truth about the road scheme's

impacts? Good governance surely requires them to reconsider their position.

Please, vote FOR the motion.

Sandy Nairne, Deputy Chairman for the National Trust opposes the resolution



Sandy Nairne, Deputy Chairman of the National Trust

This is a very significant topic because the National Trust takes its responsibility for the Stonehenge landscape very seriously and shares your view that it’s a hugely important place. However, the status quo is unacceptable. We support UNESCO’s own ambition 36 years since creating the World Heritage Site that the road must go. But finding a solution is complicated and some 50 routes have been explored over the years.

The Trust has worked closely with Historic England and English Heritage to argue for the best scheme. Our engagement has been expert-led and has resulted in significant improvement to the tunnel proposal. While **there may be further to go,** the scheme offers the opportunity to reunite this extraordinary landscape, benefit archaeology, restore nature and provide better access, opening up far more of the land and allowing visitors to explore safely the southern half.

I returned to Stonehenge 12 days ago and looked at and

listened to the constant desecration caused by the non-stop heavy traffic on the A303. I saw where the tunnel entrances are proposed to east and west, well away from the Stones and other key archaeological features and tucked as far as possible into the folds of the landscape. I also saw how the new proposal removes a large and busy traffic roundabout away from the important Winterbourne Stoke burial mounds.

A most recent UNESCO report agrees that there is much to support but **design improvements should still be considered to the western end**. If permission is granted the National Trust will **continue to press to get appropriate improvements**. Most importantly, the National Trust will continue to hold Government and National Highways to account to make a scheme that benefits the World Heritage Site now and for future generations.

Please vote AGAINST the resolution.

Comments from members watching on line

Comments from the audience in the room and on line were read out by the Chairman, René Olivieri. No comment, question, nor discussion point from these or from the floor was responded to by the National Trust.



1. Is there a danger of flooding?

2. Are there alternatives? Are there research and briefing papers?

3. The tunnel could cause more damage to archaeology and aquifers. People have a right to see the monument without

payment.

4. National Trust must speak out and do the right thing for the Site. Does it know better than UNESCO and five planning inspectors?

5. The Trust is supporting a road through prehistoric landscape. The cuttings are so huge they could even contain the largest Stones. How can this be other than abrogation of its purpose?

6. The A303 is the main road from London to the South West. This stop/go is absurd. It would never be allowed in any other major western country.

Key points from the floor



Former Historic Properties Director, English Heritage, 2004 when last scheme considered.

1. Support Sandy Nairne's points. Echoes English Heritage's and Historic England's position.

2. Good to see the three organisations working together.

3. Plan on the table. It would be damaging to show lack of

agreement now.

4. Government might cut infrastructure.



Chris Gillham

1. NT said this morning “Traffic emissions beyond our control”.

2. This scheme will emit massive emissions just in construction and even more from induced traffic.

3. The car could become extinct in the next 50 years. This is a short period to wait compared to thousands of years of Stonehenge.



National Trust Member

1. There are plans for the tunnel which will blight the landscape but no plans for visitors to access or visit Stonehenge.

2. Is the Trust willing to support a breach of covenants?



Kate Freeman

1. Sandy Nairne committed Trust to continue to ‘improve’ the scheme. This is an admission of compromise.

2. Following the judgment, National Highways submitted an identical scheme as part of ‘redetermination’. Scheme is out of date. Might have been fine 20 years ago, but not now.

3. It is 30 years since the last Stonehenge debate when a long

tunnel right across the Site was proposed, agreed by the National Trust. But now have an expensive short tunnel.

4. A lot has changed and in era of climate change, we cannot bury the problem, time for a second debate. The Trust needs to work with us on a solution. Let’s widen the debate beyond members for a more acceptable solution than this one.



National Trust Member

1. I am voting against this resolution on two grounds: No alternative to improving the environment has been made.

2. The traffic congestion is horrendous. Again, the proposers are not coming up with solutions to deal with it.



John Adams,

Chair,
Stonehenge
Alliance

1. That’s not true about alternatives. Stonehenge Alliance have discussed alternatives. We would welcome working with the National trust to look at the alternatives in detail.

2. National Trust supported the original DCO (Development Control Order) that was ruled unlawful by the High Court.

3. The Trust needs to bring its influence to bear in terms of redesign.

4. Everyone needs to be clear: the Trust is supporting a flyover, deep kilometre long cuttings, and disruption to archaeology in a World Heritage Site.

Results are published and discussed in link below.

> *Campaign Update: National Trust remains deaf to concerns about A303 road scheme*

Campaign Update: National Trust remains deaf to concerns about A303 road scheme



Dr Kate Fielden presents the members' case for the resolution asking the National Trust to reconsider its support for the Stonehenge tunnel and road scheme which would devastate the archaeological landscape.

Neither our resolution nor any members' resolution presented to the National Trust AGM last Saturday was successful.

Despite our best efforts to inform, engage and spread the word, the voting results for our resolution took us aback:

For 30,670 | **Against** 81,746 | **Abstain** 15,409
We are naturally disappointed in the result but unsurprised. Nevertheless, we were heartened that more than 30,000 National Trust members supported our resolution, which should encourage the Trustees to think long and hard about their stance at Stonehenge.
There was evident support for our cause in the room and on line. So, **THANK YOU to everyone** who voted, shared posts, retweeted, spread the word or wrote to the National Trust. Who knows? The Trust might pause for thought after all.

The problem with current voting arrangements is that the

majority of members have to vote **before** they can hear the arguments in debate at the AGM. Thus, all resolutions, including ours, fell victim to the Trust's newly-introduced 'quick vote' box inviting members to support all NT's preferences for candidates and resolutions in advance of the meeting. It inevitably allowed easy defeat of all members' motions by a wide margin.

To understand the numbers who deliberately voted against, we have enquired about the number who opted for the 'quick vote'. We will report replies together with our AGM video and transcripts as soon as we can.



Above: Double sided A4 handout distributed to participants at the National Trust AGM. This was not available to those following proceedings on-line. We were not allowed to show an explanatory slide to help explain the complexity of the scheme.

- Presentations and key points made in full here.
- Our Press Release ahead of the AGM**: National Trust remains deaf to concerns about A303 road scheme**
- **Summary** of the National Trust AGM by staff reporter for the Press Association






Our heroes, aka 'reception committee', distributing handouts to AGM participants in soggy conditions together with campaigners lobbying the Trust to stop banking with Barclays, a major investor in carbon polluting fuels.

An amazing 3,277 of you wrote to René Olivieri, National Trust Chairman, and Hilary McGrady, Director General. If you wish to send them your views about the above or aspects of the road scheme you can still do so here via our website

WHAT NEXT?



We await the Chancellor's Autumn Statement on 17 November, which will reveal whether the inevitable cuts in public expenditure will drop the most expensive road schemes including the A303 at Stonehenge.

ABOUT THE STONEHENGE ALLIANCE



The Stonehenge Alliance is a group of non-governmental organisations and individuals that seeks enhancements to the Stonehenge World Heritage Site and opposes development that would cause it significant harm.

More about us

THE PETITION against the road has reached over 221,000 signatures. **You can sign and share it here.**

National Trust Member's resolution about the A303 at Stonehenge

>> READ MORE ABOUT HISTORY OF NATIONAL TRUST & STONEHENGE >>



Members' resolution about the A303 at Stonehenge

We ask members, please, to cast their own votes and ask the National Trust to reconsider its support for the Government's scheme for dualling the A303 across the Stonehenge World Heritage Site (WHS), including short twin-bore tunnels, in view of the Examining Authority's recommendation, the High Court Judgment, UNESCO's threat of WHS de-listing, and the urgent need to address the climate emergency; and to press instead for a sustainable solution to A303 traffic congestion that would cause no further damage to the WHS.

Proposers' supporting statement

The Trust's position on the road scheme appears irrational under growing national and international opprobrium. Some 220,000 signatories worldwide are petitioning against a project involving two major junction interchanges and, within the WHS, deep tunnel approach cuttings removing 7–10 hectares of a WHS designated for its prehistoric archaeology. The Trust

argues unrealistically that correct design and mitigation could minimise adverse impacts, saying the A303 severs and blights the WHS and the tunnel would make it easier to explore. But most of the WHS south of the A303 is privately-owned and inaccessible; and the 2020 **Examining Authority's report,** recommending scheme refusal, found (Section 5.7):

> ***'Whilst the present road intrusion would be removed, … the aesthetic and spiritual damage would be profound and irreversible.'***
>
> ***'… the effects of the Proposed Development on WHS OUV [Outstanding Universal Value] and the historic environment as a whole would be significantly adverse. Irreversible harm would occur, affecting the criteria for which the Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated [Sites] World Heritage Site was inscribed on the World Heritage List.'***
>
> ***'… the Proposed Development would …inhibit access to the spirit and feeling of the WHS.'***
>
> ***'… harm to the overall assembly of monuments, sites, and landscape through major excavations and civil engineering works, of a scale not seen before at Stonehenge. Whilst the existing roads could be removed at any time, should a satisfactory scheme be put forward, leaving little permanent effect on the cultural heritage of the Stonehenge landscape, the effects of the proposed [Longbarrow] junction would be irreversible.'***

A 2021 High Court judgment quashing the scheme ruled assessment of alternatives mandatory. Three UNESCO-backed specialist Advisory Missions to Stonehenge have urged less damaging options be sought; and UNESCO's 2021 World Heritage Committee advised the WHS designation could be jeopardized unless the scheme is fundamentally amended. The Transport Secretary nevertheless intends to redetermine the project. National Highways' application remains unchanged, still

claiming overall heritage benefit to the WHS and dismissing alternatives without adequate explanation, including cheaper or non-road engineering options respecting climate change.

NOW the scheme's impacts are better understood, shouldn't the Trust reconsider its position? Major damage to a WHS contradicts the Charity's founding purpose. The Trust's recent Stonehenge property purchase includes land where probable remains of a rare Early Neolithic settlement would be destroyed for the eastern tunnel approach cutting. On another owner's land, remains of a large Beaker-period settlement with burials would be destroyed for the western cutting. Some archaeological evidence would be recorded but most would be lost.

Instrumental to scheme implementation is the Trust's agreement to acquisition of 41.62 hectares of inalienable, mostly subsoil, land for the tunnel. This land, secured via public subscriptions in the 1920s, is subject to a covenant preventing future development near the henge. Covenants may be broken but we hope that the Trust will honour the trust of those whose century-old foresight intended safeguards, rather than enabling irreparable damage to the WHS and loss of its designation.

Five National Trust members proposed this resolution, supported by the required 45 members.

Link to National Trust's registration and voting information

CLARIFICATION: To register to attend the AGM you must fill in the voting form via the login link above, then proceed with your preferred options. More voting info.

Voting closes on Friday 28 October 2022 at 11:59pm

Or see AGM booklet pages 30-32 for information about how to vote

Resolutions	For	Against	Abstain
1. Adoption of the Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2021/22	☐	☐	☐
2. Reappointment of KPMG LLP as external auditor	☐	☐	☐
3. Members' resolution about participation in Pride events	☐	☐	☐
4. Members' resolution about re-wilding of National Trust land	☐	☐	☐
5. Members' resolution about the creation of a National Trust ombudsman	☐	☐	☐
6. Members' resolution about the National Trust's banking arrangements	☐	☐	☐
7. Members' resolution about the A303 at Stonehenge	X	☐	☐
8. Members' resolution about the AGM chair's discretionary proxy vote	☐	☐	☐

Board of Trustees' position

Stonehenge is one of the world's outstanding prehistoric monuments, situated within a rich archaeological landscape. The National Trust has been custodian of this landscape for nearly a century and takes its role extremely seriously.

The existing traffic-clogged A303 severely damages the World Heritage Site, impacting hundreds of ancient monuments. The road severs the landscape, is an obstacle to exploring the site and is dangerous to visitors. It severely harms the special qualities of the site. The current situation cannot continue. Many prominent voices, including UNESCO and its advisory bodies, have called for the removal of the current road, but for over 30 years these attempts have stalled.

Trustees therefore support the Government's plan to remove most of the harmful existing A303 and place it in a fully bored tunnel of at least 3.3 km.

The Trust’s position is expert-led and evidence-based. Together with Historic England, Trust specialists have carried out and published four detailed heritage impact assessments using international guidance to inform our position.

We will continue to work closely with our partners to help inform and challenge National Highways to produce a high-quality solution that protects the Stonehenge World Heritage Site and finally addresses the major harm done to this exceptional place by the existing A303.

The Trustees recommend members vote against the resolution.

National Trust’s context

Finding a solution to the existing, damaging, surface road is complex, as UNESCO has acknowledged in its reports. Trustees understand and share the strong emotions people feel for Stonehenge and recognise that any change must be carefully considered. However, the long-term benefits of the tunnel project to people, history and wildlife are very significant.

The Secretary of State granted planning permission for the current scheme in 2020, but permission was later revoked in 2021 following a judicial review. The judicial review did not comment on the merits of the scheme, only the process by which the Secretary of State came to his decision.

The Government proposes to put the road into a 3.3 km tunnel deep underground, carefully positioned to conceal the key components from the wider landscape. This will remove the damaging sight and sound of vehicles from the surface and re-unite a blighted landscape currently cut in two by a major road.

This project represents a significant investment in the protection of cultural heritage. Far from eradicating archaeology, the route of the scheme has been carefully chosen

to avoid it, and the bored tunnel is far underground to avoid all risk of damaging even deeply buried deposits. In areas outside the tunnel a comprehensive programme of archaeological fieldwork and research created with advice from leading independent experts, will be undertaken before works start on site. If archaeological remains are discovered they will be carefully excavated and analysed, with the records and finds deposited at the Salisbury Museum. National Highways has appointed a world-class archaeological contractor (Wessex Archaeology) for this work.

In place of the old road, a new Public Right of Way for walkers, cyclists and horse riders will be created. This will add to the existing 18km network of public paths, enabling people to enjoy the Stonehenge landscape in a more peaceful and historically accurate setting. Much of the land cared for by the National Trust is already permissive open access and following extensive chalk grassland habitat creation work, other areas will be opened up.

The difficult task of balancing planning issues and the overall benefit of the scheme is ultimately a job for Government. If planning permission is finally granted, we will work closely with the project to ensure the scheme is delivered to the highest standards possible and in line with all legal and planning requirements. We will continue to work closely with partners such as Historic England, English Heritage and Wiltshire Council to ensure that Government and National Highways deliver a scheme that benefits visitors and the World Heritage Site now and for future generations.

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