

# **Sacrilege! An archaeologist speaks out on centenary of Stonehenge gift**



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

## **Expressway legacy threat mars centenary of Stonehenge donation**

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

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

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

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

## **A distinguished archaeologist condemns the Stonehenge tunnel**

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

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

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

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

**For more information,** please see our comprehensive [briefing about the A303 Stonehenge scheme](#).

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# Busting the Mythbusters!

UNESCO said that "...the benefits of a 2.9km tunnel to the centre of the Stonehenge World Heritage Site cannot be offset against the damage it would cause to other parts of the Site."



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.**