



Department
for Transport

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From the Secretary of State
The Rt Hon Patrick McLoughlin MP

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Dear Mr McDonic,

Thank you for your letter of 3 October about the A303 and Stonehenge.

I note the concerns you have raised about the feasibility study process and your calls for a tunnel of at least 4.5km to be examined and costed as part of the study work. I very much recognise the international importance of the World Heritage Site and therefore of finding solutions to the problems that exist as the A303 passes through the area.

Striking a balance between the significant economic role of the A303 and the valued, and internationally recognised environment and landscape of the World Heritage Site is far from straightforward, but I am keen to see if we can find a way forward that reconciles these competing factors and delivers real improvements in conditions for motorists, local communities and the World Heritage Site.

As you are aware, my Department has been working with key organisations in the area, including English Heritage and the National Trust, to assess the impacts of a range of improvement options on the Stonehenge World Heritage Site. Both organisations consider that a twin-bored tunnel of somewhere between 2.5km and 2.9km, if designed well, would have a transformational impact on the landscape of the Stonehenge World Heritage Site, removing the surface road and minimising the harmful impacts of any tunnel scheme which lies within the boundaries of the World Heritage Site. I welcome this joined-up stance from English Heritage and the National Trust and it very much represents an important milestone in reaching a successful outcome from the study work.

My officials are now working to develop business cases for a range of proposals along the corridor, including for a tunnel option at Stonehenge within the parameters supported by English Heritage and the National Trust, and any proposal for investment will of course need to demonstrate a strong and robust economic case, demonstrate value for money, and be deliverable.

We have committed to report back at Autumn Statement 2014 with solutions to the problems on this route, and through this feasibility study we will identify potential future investment proposals as part of our process for longer term investment planning.

I hope this has clarified the current position and reassures you that my Department is committed to finding an environmentally beneficial solution to the problems that exist at this location.

y - sincerely
Patrick McLaughlin

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