

THE STONEHENGE ALLIANCE

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World Heritage Day Challenge

On World Heritage Day this Saturday [1], the Stonehenge Alliance [2] calls on political leaders to pledge their support for safeguarding the Stonehenge World Heritage Site (WHS).

Current proposals to widen the A303 [3] with a short tunnel are causing widespread concern – with over 17 thousand signatures on the Alliance petition opposing this option [4]. With only a few weeks before the General Election, the Alliance is asking politicians for a commitment to protecting the whole of the WHS, in line with the UK’s obligation under the UNESCO World Heritage Convention [5].

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) [6], the body set up to promote the protection, conservation, and enhancement of monuments and sites. It comes at a time when globally a number of World Heritage Sites are under significant threat. ICOMOS has already written to the UK Government expressing its concern about the A303 proposals for Stonehenge [7].

Kate Fielden, archaeologist and Hon Secretary to the Stonehenge Alliance, said:

“At a time when we are condemning the wanton destruction of World Heritage Sites in the Middle East it is hypocritical to propose damage to one of our own. What’s worse is that destroying our archaeological past at Stonehenge is both avoidable and unnecessary.

“People all over the world are signing our petition. They are shocked at what the Government is proposing. Just as we are starting to understand the wider landscape and to discover more of its ancient past, road construction works could lead to huge damage and permanent loss of archaeological evidence as well as tranquillity.

“We hope the General Election will focus politicians’ minds on this enduring icon of our past and elicit pledges from all parties to safeguard the future of this unparalleled landscape. Far more than a major tourist attraction, Stonehenge and its surroundings should provide to the world an exemplar of how we regard and intend to care for our own World Heritage Sites both now and in the future.

Chris Todd from Campaign for Better Transport said:

“Any future Government must uphold its international duty to safeguard the future of the Stonehenge World Heritage Site which is threatened by the current plans for bigger roads to the South West.”

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Notes to editors

1. For more information, see <http://globaldimension.org.uk/calendar/event/4260>
2. 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.
3. Announcement by Secretary of State for Transport, 1 December 2014: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2014/december/statement-on-roads-investment-strategy-1-december-2014/>
4. 38 Degrees (UK)petition ‘Save Stonehenge World Heritage Site’: <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/save-stonehenge-world-heritage-site;> change.org (global) petition: <http://chn.ge/1wRr0lp>
5. World Heritage Convention, 1972: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/>
6. ICOMOS: International Council on Monuments and Sites: <http://www.international.icomos.org/en/about-icomos/mission-and-vision/mission-and-vision>
7. Reference to letter of concern from ICOMOS-UK to Secretary of State for Transport, November 2014: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-wiltshire-30248826>