

Our ref: TO 185269

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George McDonic

18 January 2017

Dear George,

Thank you for your letter dated 7 December 2016 in which you asked a number of follow-up questions following my email of 1 December 2016. I apologise for the delay in replying.

I have also received copies of your emails sent to Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP, Secretary of State for Transport, and Andrew Jones MP, Under Secretary of State for Transport, on 12 December 2016. Ministers receive many thousands of items of correspondence each year and I am sure you will appreciate that it is not possible for them to reply individually to each one. Your emails were therefore passed to Highways England, as we have responsibility for the strategic road network, and I have been asked to reply on their behalf also.

Question 1. We understand that Highways England must comply with the NNNPS requirements in relation to work on an options assessment. Please would you explain to me how consultation on options can be seen by the public to be valid when the Government has already announced its intention and set aside funding for what Highways England terms its 'working assumption', i.e., road widening to include a bored tunnel of 2.9km in length?

Answer 1 – As part of the public consultation Highways England has explained its approach to the sifting of options and how it has met the requirements of the National Policy Statement for National Networks in the consideration of options. This information is available at the various public exhibitions and from the web at <http://roads.highways.gov.uk/projects/a303-stonehenge-amesbury-and-berwick-down/>

Question 2. Is Highways England undertaking examination on equal terms of options for public consultation other than a 2.9km tunnel, including a long bored tunnel and possibly other option(s) that would not damage the WHS?

Answer 2 – Yes, as part of the options identification process, Highways England considered a significant number of options that have been promoted in the past or are being advocated by others. This includes options of longer bored tunnel and routes that avoid the World Heritage Site. This information has been provided as part of the proposed public consultation on options.

Question 3. Will Highways England present a ‘do nothing’ option which will include measures to deal with rat-running and traffic calming to reduce congestion?

Answer 3 – We will present viable options that address the client scheme requirements. I presented the client scheme requirement during the public information exercise held in February last year and they are also listed in the public consultation booklet in chapter 5.

Question 4. Will Highways England be presenting comparative traffic data on congestion and flow over the past twenty years to make a case for road widening on road transport grounds?

Answer 4 – Highways England has presented the problems that are faced today and a forecast of future traffic levels, not past historic levels.

Question 5. In view of these incompatibilities, are you able to tell me how Highways England will ‘reconcile the Government’s obligations under Article 4 of the World Heritage Convention’ with any road scheme that would severely damage the WHS property?

Answer 5 – Highways England has presented its proposed options and how it will enhance the World Heritage Site that surrounds Stonehenge.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew

Andrew Alcorn
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Highways England