



Historic England

From the Chief Executive
Duncan Wilson OBE

George McDonic MBE, BL, DIPLTP, DPA, FFB
Chairman, The Stonehenge Alliance

14 December 2017

Dear Mr. McDonic

Thank you for your emailed letter of 1st December 2017.

You are correct that Historic England provides advice to Highways England on the potential heritage impacts of the emerging proposals for the A303. Our goal is to secure the best possible viable outcome for the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site in relation to the improvement of the A303 road within the Stonehenge WHS. Highways England will then consider any advice provided by Historic England on the proposed A303 scheme together with its own expert historic environment consultants. Our advice is drawn up with reference to the published UNESCO guidance, including the current Operational Guidelines and the 2011 ICOMOS Guidance on Heritage Impact Assessments (HIAs).

We have undertaken outline OUV assessment closely following this guidance which indicates that a scheme based around a bored tunnel of at least 2.9km in length, if sensitively designed and located, could unlock substantial benefits for the WHS without harming its OUV. This evidence-based approach, using the published ICOMOS guidance and clearly articulating the assessment conclusions, has underpinned our engagement with Highways England since the scheme was first announced in December 2014.

Highways England produced evidence in the Technical Appraisal Report (TAR) supporting the January 2017 public consultation on route options which demonstrated that neither a southern bypass nor a longer tunnel beyond the WHS boundary was viable, for various reasons. Highways England intends to articulate the rationale for this conclusion more clearly as part of the UK's response to the World Heritage Committee decision, which asked the UK State Party to explore these options further.

Cont/d



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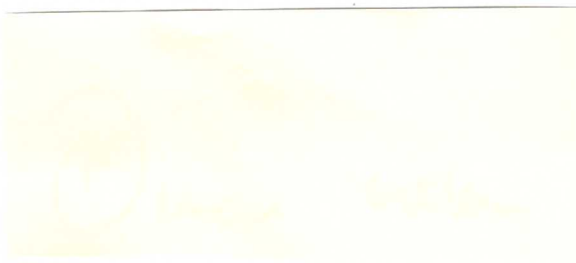
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In the light of the TAR it is in our view necessary to take account of section 2.1.5 of the ICOMOS HIA guidance which says that “every reasonable effort should be made to eliminate or minimise adverse impacts on significant places. Ultimately, however, it may be necessary to balance the public benefit of the proposed change against the harm to the place.” I should add that Historic England is providing advice to Highways England and DCMS on appropriate responses to all aspects of the Committee decision. Once the design details of the Preferred Route have been developed for public consultation early next year we will offer further advice on the scheme and any potential impacts on the OUV of the property and its setting.

We will continue to engage constructively with Highways England to secure a road improvement scheme which both protects the OUV of the WHS and reunites the Stonehenge WHS through the removal of much of the present surface A303, which will unlock significant landscape benefits and improve public access across the WHS.

Yours sincerely,



Duncan Wilson OBE
Chief Executive of Historic England