

Standard response from Hilary McGrady, Director General of the National Trust about its A303 Stonehenge stance September/October 2018:

Thank you for your email explaining your concerns relating to the National Trust's position on potential improvements to the A303 as the road passes Stonehenge.

Stonehenge is one of the world's best known prehistoric monuments, situated within a rich archaeological landscape. It is among the most precious in the National Trust's care, and we take our role as its champion and guardian extremely seriously.

The existing A303 trunk road currently runs through the landscape within two hundred metres of the Stonehenge Monument, dividing the Stonehenge part of the World Heritage Site (WHS) in two and severely impacting over 50 monuments including the Stone Circle itself. Our position reflects the very real damage that the existing surface road already has on the Outstanding Universal Value, integrity and tranquillity of the World Heritage Site. We want to see a solution that protects and enhances the WHS, incorporates exemplary standards of mitigation and is deliverable – finally solving the long running problems caused by the road for both the WHS and local communities.

For over 90 years we have been calling for the road's and, along with our partners at Historic England, English Heritage Trust, and Wiltshire Council, we are very clear that the current situation cannot continue. Throughout the development of the Highways England proposals we have worked with UNESCO and their advisors ICOMOS International to ensure the World Heritage Site is protected and cared for, and we are committed to continuing to do this. We have used ICOMOS' own guidance to assess the impact of the road proposals on the World Heritage Site. Our evidence based approach demonstrates that the current Highways England proposals could protect and enhance the World Heritage Site and provide a lasting legacy if carefully designed and delivered.

We will only support a final scheme design if we are convinced it is designed well enough to protect and have an overall benefit for the WHS. As the road scheme progresses towards its submission to the Planning Inspectorate we will continue to work with our heritage partners and others to find a solution worthy of this world-class site.

At the Trust's AGM last year there was a member's resolution calling for the trustees to reconsider our position on the road scheme. After counting the votes there were a total of 21,903 votes for the resolution and 30,013 against; these included discretionary proxy votes. We find that most members give their discretionary proxy vote to the Chairman, but they can choose to give it to someone else. This year's AGM takes place on 20 October, when members will have an opportunity to raise any further questions or concerns they may have about the Trust's position, should they so wish.

I hope this clarifies our position and our commitment to ensure that any road improvement scheme at Stonehenge will allow future generations to experience and explore this inspiring prehistoric landscape.

Best regards
Hilary McGrady