

Stonehenge road scheme doesn't add up [1]

Media briefing on scheme's heritage valuation and value for money

For immediate release Friday 9 December 2022



"There's no bigger advocate of tunnelling than me, but this just doesn't add up"

Cartoon credit: *The mole report* © Steve Jones/Stonehenge Alliance [2]

As construction costs spiral at record rates and value for money is sought for the next round of funding for new road schemes, [3] a report by members of the Stonehenge Alliance released today questions how Highways England has arrived at its latest calculations to promote the Stonehenge road and tunnel scheme. [4]

"It is remarkable that National Highways claims that the £2.5bn project has suddenly become much better value for money," say the authors. "Stonehenge Alliance has long considered the figures to justify the scheme lacked credibility and should not be used as a basis to validate the scheme, but National Highways' new calculations can only be described as "pure fantasy."

The report *Stonehenge road scheme doesn't add up* shines a light on the way the scheme's value moved from a net loss to a net surplus by adding almost a £1bn arising from a survey conducted in 2016 to monetise the value of the 'heritage benefit' the road scheme might bring. However, the survey participants were given inadequate information including misleading images. For instance, respondents were not shown the before and after images below of the cutting at the Western end of the World Heritage Site, less than 1km away from the Stonehenge monument.



Cutting leading to western tunnel portal. Image by National Highways

Given that the scheme Examiners and UNESCO say the proposal will harm the WHS, and that even the former Transport Secretary agrees with them (despite wanting to approve the scheme), the results of the survey cannot be considered credible.

Professor Goodwin critic of the methodology at the time of the scheme examination, has suggested updating the survey by adding the question “How much would you pay in extra tax for a tunnel that Inspectors concluded would cause irreversible harm to the site?” [5]

John Adams OBE, Chairman of Stonehenge Alliance [6] said

“Despite the damage it will do to the WHS, National Highways is still claiming that its scheme will produce £955m worth of benefits as it desperately tries to keep it afloat. Its reappraisal of the scheme’s business case defies credulity. As things stand, we fear that Ministers and DfT officials could be misled into thinking that the scheme is viable. This report shines a spot light on the urgent need for a credible appraisal of the scheme.”

The Stonehenge Alliance is therefore calling for an open and independent appraisal of the scheme to be carried out before any decision is made for the Stonehenge road and tunnel scheme.

“Only with full disclosure and proper scrutiny at a public examination will the Secretary of State be able to come to a sensible decision on this scheme and the future of Stonehenge WHS. This is our heritage at stake and we owe it to future generations to take the greatest possible care of it,” said Mr Adams. “Any figures National Highway’s produces will need to be carefully scrutinised.”

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The full report with images can be downloaded [here](#).
A shortened version is [here](#).
2. Jonesy cartoon: Permission to use the cartoon above exclusively in association with reporting this briefing and credited.
3. “In September 2022, the Office for National Statistics reported a rise in the price of materials and fuel for manufacturing of 20.5% in the year to August 2022.” In a recent report, the National Audit Office recommended that National Highways needs to carry out a value for money review of its major schemes such as

Stonehenge to ensure they still provide value for money *National Audit Office, November 2022*. [Road enhancements: progress with the second road investment strategy \(2020 to 2025\)](#)

4. Following the DCO's quashing in the High Court, in part because of the failure to properly consider alternatives, the Transport Secretary has asked for more information to re-determine the scheme.
5. Professor Phil Goodwin: "[If you're in a hole... it must be time to rethink Stonehenge scheme](#)" Oct 2021, Local Transport Today.
6. The Stonehenge Alliance campaigns to protect the WHS and champion sustainable development within it. The Alliance is supported by: Ancient Sacred Landscape Network; Campaign to Protect Rural England; Friends of the Earth; Rescue, The British Archaeological Trust; Transport Action Network; and many individuals worldwide. <https://stonehengealliance.org.uk/> and <https://stonehengealliance.org.uk/mp-briefing/>