



**POSITION STATEMENT
FROM HISTORIC ENGLAND, NATIONAL TRUST AND ENGLISH HERITAGE
ON HIGHWAYS ENGLAND'S PUBLIC CONSULTATION
ON ROUTE OPTIONS FOR THE A303 ROAD IMPROVEMENT SCHEME
IN THE STONEHENGE WORLD HERITAGE SITE**

Highways England has put forward initial route options for a road improvement within the Stonehenge World Heritage Site (WHS) which include a bored tunnel of at least 2.9km. These options for a potential scheme have been put to public consultation as one stage in an extensive process of pre-application engagement.

We believe that the proposals have the potential to deliver benefits for Stonehenge and its landscape, if sited and designed sensitively. Whilst the overall proposals are to be welcomed for the positive transformation which they could bring to the WHS, there are some aspects of what is currently presented in the consultation documents that will require significant improvement to ensure protection of the WHS.

We welcome the fact that the Government and Highways England invited the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and their heritage advisers ICOMOS back to the WHS for a second visit, to look at the detail of these initial proposals.

The three key points in Historic England, English Heritage and the National Trust's response to the A303 Stonehenge public consultation on route options relate to the principle of the bored tunnel and the two tunnel portals, as follows:

I. Centre Section – the Bored Tunnel

The options include a twin-bored tunnel of at least 2.9km, as committed to in the Government investment announcement of December 2014. This is a key aspect of any scheme which could unlock enormous benefits for Stonehenge and the wider WHS. It would allow the removal of much of the current, damaging surface A303 allowing the reunification of the large part of the WHS to the south of the existing road with the part to its north containing Stonehenge and the other currently accessible major ceremonial monuments. This would restore peace and tranquillity to Stonehenge whilst opening up safe public access to the many monuments and extensive landscape which lies to the south of the current A303.



2. Eastern Tunnel Portal

Highways England's proposals could deliver significant improvements for heritage in the eastern section of the route, where the proposals would allow the course of the Stonehenge Avenue – presently severed by the A303 - to be reunited. It is the first time that Government has recognised the importance of the Avenue in its proposals. It has responded to the advice given by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and their heritage advisers ICOMOS in their April 2016 report. The proposed scheme is a significant improvement on the previously approved scheme from 2004, which would have worsened the severance of the Avenue by the A303.

3. Western Section

The western tunnel portal location as shown in the consultation documents needs significant improvement, due to its proximity to and impact on the Normanton Down barrow group – one of the key groups of ceremonial and funerary monuments for which the WHS is designated. We are presently considering how the western portal proposals might be amended to ensure benefit to this internationally important ancient landscape. We will include constructive comment on this as part of our formal response to the public consultation and will seek Highways England's commitment to improving this aspect of the scheme.

Engagement with international World Heritage experts

We are pleased that Government and Highways England invited the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and their heritage advisers ICOMOS to make a second visit to the Stonehenge landscape to consider the proposed route options. The constructive advice which they provided to Highways England following their initial visit to consider a potential road scheme in 2015 has been valuable in informing the development of the route options to their current form, including moving the location of the eastern portal to reunite the Avenue. This second visit gives them the opportunity to further shape the emerging proposals.



Historic England, English Heritage and the National Trust will be submitting their full responses to this first round of consultation before it closes on 5 March.

A number of public information events are being held for people to give their feedback, and further information is available online at: www.highways.gov.uk/a303stonehenge/consultation

We understand there will be another round of consultation later in 2017 on Highways England's more detailed proposed solution before they submit a Development Consent Order application to the Planning Inspectorate in 2018.