

By email to A303Stonehenge@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

27 September 2022

Dear Sirs,

A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down (Stonehenge) Development Consent Order

Thank you for your letter of 14th September 2022 inviting comments on the submission by National Highways in response to the Secretary of State's letter of 26th August 2022.

The Heart of the South-West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) remains strongly supportive of the principle of improving the A303 and A358 to dual carriageway standard throughout the complete length between the M3 motorway and the M5 at Taunton.

The LEP is of the view that the creation of a second strategic route to the South-West from London and the South-East is of great importance to the economic prosperity of the South-West, which currently lags behind the UK average.

Productivity of labour in the Heart of the South-West, in terms of Gross Value Added per hour, places the LEP in the bottom third of LEP areas. This reflects both the relative rurality of the South-West but also its peripherality. Improved strategic connectivity is therefore a key requisite of improving economic performance in the South-West peninsula.

We therefore wish to re-state our full support for the A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down improvement, and our view that the scheme needs to be completed at the earliest practicable date.

We have reviewed the Final Report on the Joint World Heritage Centre/ ICOMOS/ ICCROM Advisory Mission to Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites on 19-21 April 2022, and the recommendations therein. We have also reviewed the National Highways response of 9th September 2022 to the Secretary of State's invitation of 26th August, which addresses the recommendations in the Mission's report.

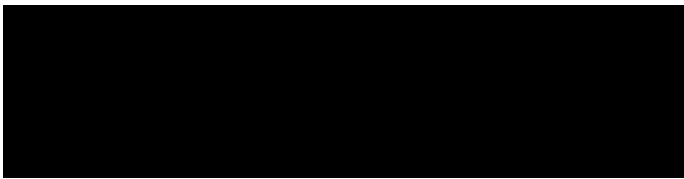
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We note the challenges posed by the topography of the World Heritage Site (WHS), and the need to maintain junctions between the A303 and the A360, just outside the western edge of the WHS and the A345 just beyond its eastern fringe. These challenges are addressed by the DCO scheme, and we would draw attention to the benefit to the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the WHS provided by the tunnel, which will remove the road from the majority of its path across the WHS and enable restoration of the historic landscape and setting.

In addition to the overwhelming heritage benefit which would be given by the DCO scheme, we would note that the provision of a longer tunnel would impose a significant cost increase and mean a further delay to the project. This could not, in our view, be justified.

We therefore confirm our wholehearted support for the A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down improvement as promoted through the DCO, both for the economic benefits which it will deliver, and also for its undoubted heritage benefits.

Yours sincerely,



David Ralph
Chief Executive



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