



Department for
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Andrew Williamson
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Dear Mr Williamson,

Thank you for your correspondence of 10 December to the former Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, the Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP, about the A303 and Stonehenge. I am replying as a member of the Ministerial Support Team.

I wish to stress that the UK government views the stewardship and protection of our World Heritage sites as a priority. I would like to reassure you that no approval will be given for any scheme until a full impact assessment has been carried out. The proposed scheme will be subjected to extensive public consultation and rigorous examination within the planning system. This will include assessment against the relevant ICOMOS guidance on heritage impact assessment to ensure that the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site is taken into full consideration.

One of the main objectives of the A303 Stonehenge scheme is to protect and enhance the features of Outstanding Universal Value that make up the World Heritage Site (WHS). Highways England is committed to developing a solution that recognises the significance of this special location. The proposed route has been modified from the proposals that were consulted on earlier this year, so as to avoid impacting the winter solstice sunset alignment and newly-discovered Neolithic long barrows and a small ceremonial burial site.

Although archaeological considerations were not contained within one single chapter of the scheme's Technical Appraisal Report, they did feature in various chapters. Further details can be found in the Scheme Assessment Report (Annex E/Volume 7), published in September on the Highways England consultation hub website. This document includes the Historic Environment Assessment of archaeological impacts of the route options under consideration prior to the preferred route announcement.

With regard to your concern about alternative routes, surface routes outside the WHS were discounted because the extensive work Highways England carried out before consultation showed that these routes would have greater environmental impacts and would provide a less effective traffic solution than the proposed option.

Additionally, Highways England is committed to future proofing the strategic road network and will ensure that new investment in the strategic road network accommodates advances in vehicle and navigation technology. Moving forward Highways England will invest £150 million into innovation, technology and research including connected and autonomous vehicle technologies as part of their Innovation, Technology and Research Strategy.

A longer tunnel extending close to or beyond the width of the WHS would not be affordable within the budget for the scheme and would represent poor value for money. The additional



benefits would not justify the additional cost and a longer tunnel would be impractical in terms of accommodating new junction connections between the A303 and both the A345 and A360.

Please be assured that the project team will continue to take all views into consideration including those of UNESCO and their advisers ICOMOS. We are liaising closely with the World Heritage Centre to arrange a further advisory mission for UNESCO/ICOMOS so that they may continue to provide valuable insight as the scheme develops. Highways England will also continue to work closely with heritage groups to ensure that the route enhances and protects the unique environment surrounding Stonehenge.

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Tom Pointon
Ministerial Support Team