



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Stonehenge, Avebury
and Associated Sites
inscribed on the World
Heritage List in 1986

**Extraordinary Meeting
Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site Committees
11 AM Friday, 7th February 2017
Antrobus House, Amesbury
Notes**

Present:

Roger Fisher (Stonehenge Steering Committee Chair/Amesbury Town Council)
Andrew Guest (Wiltshire Council)
Melanie Pomeroy Kellinger (Wiltshire Council)
Grant Lock (ICOMOS-UK)
Ian Barnes (National Trust)
Jan Tomlin (National Trust)
Nick Snashall (National Trust)
Andrew Shuttleworth (Winterbourne Stoke Parish Council)
Andrew Williamson (Avebury WHS Steering Committee, Chair)
Henry Oliver (North Wessex Downs AONB)
Gill Swanton (Avebury Environs Group)
Colin Shell (ASAHRG)
Richard Crook (NFU/Amesbury Town Council)
Philip Miles (CLA)
Sarah Nichols (Fyfield and West Overton Parish Council)
Kate Fielden (Avebury Society)
David Andrews (VisitWiltshire)
Andrew Croft (Arup-Atkins Joint Venture)
Andrew Alcorn (Highways England)
Phil Sheldrake (RSPB)
Sarah Simmonds (WHSCU notes)

Apologies:

Patrick Cashman (RSPB)
Phil McMahon (Historic England)
Rachel Sandy (Highways Agency)
Jennifer Davies (English Heritage)
Stephanie Payne (Natural England)
Robin Butler (Avebury Farmers)
Richard Osgood (MoD)
John Mills
David Dawson (WANHS)

1. A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down (Stonehenge): Project Update and Options for Consultation

Andrew Alcorn (Highways England) and Andrew Croft (AAJV) gave a presentation outlining the scheme options being consulted on and how these were arrived at. The process of appraisal resulting in the selection of the current options was outlined. It was clarified that the preferred route corridor will be announced in the summer. The Development Control Order (DCO) process was set out.

The following questions and concerns were raised by members of the World Heritage Committees during the presentation. The notes include answers and information provided by AA and AC.

- The next public consultation on the more detailed scheme will take place at the end of 2017. To be involved in the examination in public later in the DCO process you need to register as an interested party. Information on this is provided on the Planning Inspectorate website:
<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/application-process/participating-in-the-process/>
- Once final decisions on the corridor and design are approved construction will take around 4.5 years. The schedule for the other two A303 schemes is similar. There will however be 3 separate DCO processes. The Government has agreed funding for all projects which are identified as part of its Road Investment Strategy. The current identified priorities remain in place till 31st March 2020. Work needs to have begun by this date.
- AW asked about the process for identifying contractors within this timescale. AC clarified that tendering process does not need to be delayed as it will be based on the quality of the team rather than the exact design and associated costing as this is not yet known.
- AS asked about the dimensions of the tunnel bore and the resulting amount of spoil. AC thought it might be around 1.5 million tonnes but added that details would need to be provided by Highways England engineers. There would need to be a balance

between the level of mitigation providing by the nesting of the Winterbourne Stoke bypass within the landscape and the desire to minimise spoil.

- AC added that it might be possible to grade out the cuttings at the portals to return land to farmers or for planting. CS queried whether this would increase the width of the portals. AA clarified that a greener solution would require a flatter angle and therefore a wider area. A concrete portal entrance could be more vertical. The portal could be up to 50m wide.
- RC advised that the area chosen ran through an area with place names related to the water table including Spring Bottom and Lake. This should alert Highways England to the dangers of a scheme in this area. There are four known wells and shifting sands. It would be better to put to road along the top of the Downs. In addition the bigger picture needs to be considered including the roads necessary to meet rebasing related development and the proposed artillery museum.
- HO asked whether a detailed modeling of noise and CO₂ emissions was available. AA explained that detailed studies would be undertaken when the corridor and designs were decided.
- RF asked whether it would be an on/off in both directions at Countess Road. AA thought this would be a tight fit. He explained that further thought needs to be given to how this could be tied in with the slip roads at Solstice Park. AA asked for local feedback on this idea.
- KF queried whether necessary safety mechanisms in the tunnel would increase its width. HE is still studying whether emergency refuge areas will be required. There will probably be cross passages every hundred meters.
- MPK queried whether more land take would be necessary at Countess Roundabout HE will try and squeeze additional infrastructure into the existing corridor but this still needs to be examined.
- AW stated that the project documentation (TAR) indicates that there will be adverse impacts in the west of the WHS on up to 60 monuments. He added that the Management Plan set out to protect the WHS and its attributes of OUV; this was its primary aim. AA advised AW to feed this point into the consultation.

- AW wanted assurances that the Government would accept all the recommendations of the UNESCO/ICOMOS visit and their subsequent report. Any scheme should be amended to meet these recommendations. AA agreed that the obligations related to the WHS would need to be taken into account recognising the Government had signed up for this. He added that the conservation and enhancement of the WHS was an objective of the scheme.
- KF underlined that the vision in the WHS Management Plan set out clearly the need for protection. This protection should be of the WHS and its setting. This will enhance some of the Site but not all of it. AA responded that HE will need to look at justifying how the scheme will meet this policy.
- GL asked for clarification over whether in the current scheme ventilation would be required. AA confirmed his. GL asked if it could be longer without further ventilation. If they are needed how many would be required? AA said this had not been assessed fully but would need assessment. GL underlined that we need to understand the number and size of any ventilation shafts need to understand the impacts of a longer tunnel. It is difficult to comment comprehensively and balance the harm without the necessary information to understand the impact of various options or possibilities for mitigation.
- GL criticised the lack of fully assessed options put forward for consideration as part of the consultation. He queried why in effect there is only one option on offer. He understood that broadening the assessment would have cost more and have taken longer. AA responded that as part of the DCO HE would need to be able to justify why this approach had been taken.
- KF suggested that a longer tunnel that would protect the WHS could be achieved without the need for ventilation shafts. This might be expensive but there must be a design solution. Far longer tunnels in the Alps do not have ventilation shafts.
- CS queried why ventilation shafts need to be seen as an impediment. What would the structure be like? How can this be reason for not considering a longer tunnel if we don't know what they would look like? The western portal is in a harmful place as has been indicated by many partners present. Is the reason for not extending the tunnel only economic?

- HO commented that with a SAE all options are tested before choosing one. How was a longer tunnel rejected if all the impacts are not known? It appears as if the longer tunnel taking the road out of the WHS was not considered in detail.
- KF suggested HE look at the Parker Plan and at the proposal for a 4.5 km tunnel. AA explained that HE had looked at the Parker Plan as part of the options appraisal but it was now over 10 years old and out of date.
- AS commented that the documentation lacks technical detail. It is an appraisal rather than an assessment.
- AW queried why there was no detailed archaeological assessment included with the consultation documents. He was concerned that there was no assessment of the impacts on the midwinter solstitial alignment which was mentioned nowhere in the documentation. This is one of the seven attributes of OUV in the Management Plan and impacts on this alignment need to be assessed.
- CS queried why F10 that bypasses the WHS to the south and therefore avoids harm to it was not part of the consultation. It is far less expensive and offering a saving of c. £400,000. AW asked how much an extra kilometer would cost. A 4.5km tunnel might cost £2 billion. Costs harder to calculate exactly per kilometer as there are a number of upfront costs. The WebTAG appraisal states that F10 is largely beneficial to the WHS unlike the other scheme take forward to consultation.
- RC commented that locals are not listened to. The range of other problems in the area will not be solved by a simple tunnel. 34 years ago a solution was put forward for a dual carriageway out of sight of the stones which would have worked. What about the emerging additional traffic challenges related to rebasing at Larkhill and the proposed RAML. Will the current scheme take these into account? AA replied that these emerging needs related to development in the area will be taken into account. RC added that people should send in their thoughts on how the scheme will impact on the Nile Clumps.
- AS doubted the WebTAG figures regarding distant impacts. KF added that the DMRB methodology used was unsuitable for assessing impacts on a WHS and that

ICOMOS guidance does not allow for an approach based on balancing positive and negative impacts. AC will explore the ICOMOS HIA guidance to establish this.

- HO added that we should be avoiding negative change not trying to balance positive and negative aspects. He asked whether the LCA and HLC for the area had been taken into account. AC said there was more information in the consultation documents.
- CS stated that the WHS should have greater weighting. Currently it is only weighed equally with all other areas.
- AW questioned the costings which he suggested did not seem to add up.
- KF asked why it would not be possible for Highways England to put in place measures to prevent rat running rather if it were assessed as being an issue. If this could be mitigated the negative impacts counted for some routes such as F10 could be mitigated making them score more favourably. MPK expressed concern that the scoring was presented without mitigation for this route.
- GL suggested that if the route outside the WHS was chosen HE would put in mitigation to reduce rat running. The money saved on the cheaper F10 option could be used for such measures.
- HO asked if the benefits of altering movements had been taken into account. AA responded that this will have been taken into account in the modelling as well as the proposed housing/rebasing developments and associated demands.
- GL pointed out that many people have highlighted the fact that F10 would be considerably better for the WHS. AA said that it had not been progressed to consultation because it would not get through the planning process due to a number of other negative impacts.
- CS wanted to check if it was 1.4 billion that had been committed to the project. AA said there was possibly up to 1.8. SS asked that if there is this flexibility would there be flexibility with the design and length of the tunnel in response to the consultation. AA confirmed this was the case.

- PM asked if it was a lack of money that was preventing the F10 south. AA explained that although it was in fact cheaper but had lower traffic benefits and impacts on community. PM asked what outcome from the consultation might make HE change their mind about the current options. AA explained that it would be a convincing reason to do so. AA encouraged people to respond to the consultation.
- AW asked what the decommissioned A303 would look like in the landscape. AA responded they would aim to keep vehicles off it and would work with managers to achieve this. Vehicles would not need to use it for emergency access. He added that a challenge had been set to use no lighting on the junctions and approaches.
- AW added that there should be other access to the WHS than via the visitor centre alone. SS said access policies and actions from the WHS Management Plan would need to be progressed to ensure ease of access and the ability to explore the landscape. Thought should also be given to how the changes would affect the other half of the WHS; Avebury.
- CS raised some points from the presentation at ASAHRG. Concerns were raised in relation to the level of archaeological assessment. There was a feeling that too much focus had been given to major monuments rather than buried archaeology. There should have been less focus on the Stonehenge bowl in the project and more on visibility/intervisibility. The scheme should aim to avoid obscuring the way people used the landscape including how they moved across it in the prehistory. The SOUV emphasizes that it is the whole landscape without parallel that requires protection.
- CS noted that the western portal and emerging dual carriageway cuts through a dry valley system and a group of long barrows that form a cluster unique in southern England and in a WHS. There were eight with an additional ninth confirmed and an additional one found during the evaluation. The area is important in understanding the precursor period to Stonehenge and what came after it. The proposed scheme cuts through this area.
- Normanton Down would also be badly affected; a small clustered Bronze Age round barrow cemetery which is a component of OUV as is Winterbourne Stoke which would also be affected. The scheme also cuts through a Bronze Age field system

whose features can still be detected. Within this there is a Drove way through Normanton Down. This suggests a route for cattle from the Middle Bronze Age. This area could provide a great deal of information on the use of the landscape in the period.

- MPK recognized the very valuable nature of the area. She also assured the group that the archaeological assessment work undertaken as part of the project had been of the very highest specifications. It has been carefully monitored by the Archaeology Service.
- AS asked when the results of the work would be made available to the public. It will be problematic if it is not available before the 5th March when the consultation closes. AC responded that work is ongoing on the production of the reports which by their nature take some time to prepare. He is not sure when they will be available.
- RF asked when the design of the A303/A345 junction will be available. AA answered that this will be part of the detailed design phase and so will be part of the next consultation.
- AA said that all concerns raised as part of the consultation would need to be responded to by HE including any recommendations from UNESCO/ICOMOS.
- Patrick Cashman was unable to attend the meeting and sent in the following comment. In brief from the nature reserve perspective there are concerns about the impact of the proximity of the western portal of the tunnel to the nature reserve and the effect that may have on nesting stone-curlew, and if the proposal goes ahead the effect of removal of the current A303 and increased visitor access to NT open access grassland adjacent the reserve.
- SS will forward the notes of the meeting to AC and AA.

2. Date of next World Heritage Site Committee Meetings

Tuesday, 25th April 2017. Wiltshire Museum, Devizes