

PRESS STATEMENT

For immediate release

30th March 2006

STONEHENGE WORLD HERITAGE SITE: Highways Agency A303 Stonehenge Improvement Scheme Review Consultation

Collective Response from Conservation Organisations

On 17th March 2006, leading independent conservation organisations met to agree a common view of the current Highways Agency A303 Stonehenge Improvement Scheme Review consultation.

These organisations together represent a large heritage and environmental constituency, and reflect local, national and international views, with a diverse range of professional and public opinions.

Emerging from this meeting was a strong consensus on the issues underlying the A303 consultation, on a vision for the Stonehenge World Heritage site, on strategies for the way forward to achieve this vision, and on the potential for huge public value that an unencumbered World Heritage site could deliver.

Vision for the Stonehenge World Heritage site:

'To regain the tranquillity and dignity of this unique cultural landscape, allowing present and future generations fully to enjoy and appreciate the World Heritage site as a whole.'

All of the conservation organisations agreed collectively:

- On the shared vision for Stonehenge, as set out above
 - To encourage delivery of this vision through strategies that take the long-term view for Stonehenge
- All support strongly an approach at Stonehenge that recognises and respects the World Heritage site as a cultural landscape and believe that it should be put forward for re-inscription as such in order to provide appropriate protection
- All challenge the Inspector's reasoning and recommendation in the A303 Public Inquiry Report, and consider that there could be grounds for judicial review should the preferred scheme be approved for implementation

- All oppose the current options in the Highways Agency Scheme Review as lacking a long-term vision that respects the international significance of Stonehenge as a World Heritage site
- All call on the Highways Agency to explore different options, which would be acceptable in terms of impact on the World Heritage landscape. These options should include above ground, or mainly above ground, routes, within northern and southern corridors, together with tunnel options that avoid impacting on the World Heritage site
- All believe that the government should, in the short term, focus on the benefits of possible small-scale, interim improvements, notably closure of the A344/A303 junction, in the absence of agreed large-scale development, but without prejudicing any future off-line solutions
- All recognise the considerable potential of the Stonehenge World Heritage site as a whole to deliver huge public value and consider that a formal assessment of that value should form part of any analysis for evaluating large-scale development in the World Heritage site
- All agree that the following principles should be heeded when assessing the appropriateness or otherwise of possible road and access schemes:
 - The significance of the World Heritage site extends beyond individual scheduled monuments and their immediate settings
 - The Stonehenge World Heritage site is a cultural landscape of interrelated complexes of monuments and buried remains, which together display an unique range of evidence for prehistoric society
 - To safeguard the World Heritage site for future generations, the long-term view must always be considered, even for interim or partial solutions

Signatories – in alphabetical order:

ASLaN - Ancient Sacred Landscape Network

CBA -Council for British Archaeology

CPRE -Campaign to Protect Rural England

FoE – Friends of the Earth

ICOMOS-UK –International Council for Monuments & Sites, UK

Prehistoric Society

RESCUE- the British Archaeological Trust

The National Trust

Transport 2000

WANHS -Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society