

## **A LOCAL COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE IN HELPING UNESCO/ICOMOS/WHS TO UNDERSTAND THE PROGRESS OF THE A303 PROPOSED ROAD SCHEME**

Categories of information and response:-

- A) Overview of the A303 today
- B) Highway's England response in 2017
- C) Community position
- D) Support for the present proposed scheme with summary
- E) An alternative F010 option; community feedback to UNESCO

### **A) Overview of the A303 today**

1. Accidents on A303 >250 in past five years on this stretch. 8 fatalities.
2. Previous schemes have failed, so failing the people over nearly 30 years.
3. Traffic congestion is inevitable on a weekly basis.
4. Traffic issues investment west of Amesbury and onto South West England.
5. Local rat-running is disrupting the lives of those in villages all around Stonehenge, North, East, South and West of the site.
6. Local and National context - Do nothing option is no longer reasonable for the population of the area and for the South West of England.
7. Do nothing option for Stonehenge; the surface road is an embarrassment and a detraction for the site. Proposed route only improves the OUV from its present state (surface road).
8. Community desperately needs a solution but not one that has a net negative impact on the communities and landscapes around WHS.
9. We are at long last, subject to the attention and investment by the state and have allocated a budget to achieve a solution. But limited time to achieve the project approval.
10. The traffic congestion in this area is getting worse by the year. Vehicles regularly get delayed up to 60 minutes along this stretch of road.
11. Congestion adversely impacts the experience of visiting Stonehenge. Just 165m separates visitors from the traffic queues in the peak season.

**B) Highways England's (HE) response in 2017**

1. HE had assessed over sixty potential routes and reduced these to two for January 2017 public consultation.
2. HE consulted with communities closely as we worked to identify an acceptable solution.
3. HE adjusted their proposed route of the tunnel further to significant work on the WHS surveying and listening to local and archaeological experts.
4. HE have designed a route, which does not compromise barrow groups, it avoids them.
5. HE have taken into account the Solstice lines and moved the western portal.
6. HE have mitigated water management issues by specification of a tunnel-boring machine. Avoiding water table impacts as previously identified.
7. HE have taken into account landowners and their interests as far as the solution allows.
8. HE have identified ways to bring ecological benefits to other areas of the scheme, notably Parsonage Down (National Nature Reserve).
9. HE have added green bridges so increasing potential benefits to ecology.
10. HE construction plans have been thought through for road use during the project.
11. HE achieves UNESCO goals of tunnel being out of sight from Stonehenge.
12. HE Rejected option F010 for reasons given in TAR.

**C) Community position**

1. The community openly acknowledge the unique constraints created by the road passing so close to Stonehenge. The archaeological importance of the site is acknowledged but we must also acknowledge the people who live and work in the area. We have one life and for that our communities are a legitimate and equal component in relation to balancing decisions concerning the future of Stonehenge.
2. The community live here because of Wiltshire's ecology, landscapes and history.
3. The community is founded on our parishes, schools and Norman churches.
4. The community was effectively engaged with the public consultation last year. We wish to support a solution and worked closely with Highways England, National Trust, landowners and others to bring consensus to the questions facing us. (Rash, Guinness, Hosier, Turner, etc.).
5. The community strongly believe the net outcome of a route outside the WHS is substantially greater negative impacts than that of the proposed scheme. See table score below.

Table score for routes

	<b>Villages impacted</b>	<b>No. of River impacts</b>	<b>Rat running impact</b>	<b>Ecological impact</b>	<b>Journey time impact</b>	<b>Summary</b>
Bored tunnels and southern bypass of Winterbourne Stoke	2	1	0	1	0	4 <b>Negative</b> impact points
Bored tunnels and northern bypass of Winterbourne Stoke	0	0.5	0	1	0	1.5 <b>Negative</b> impact points The UK Government's proposed scheme
Bypass entire WHS	5	2	1	2	1	11 <b>Negative</b> impact points Route F010

#### **D) Support of the present proposed scheme. Benefits of the road scheme**

1. The existing A303 route was chosen by our ancestors; there is less archaeology along the A303 route than elsewhere on the site, so it is logical to follow this.
2. Avoids and distances new road from barrow groups and locations of significance.
3. Enhances the W-S Barrow Group/Longbarrow. Enhances archaeological interest.
4. Dramatically improves village life for residents of Winterbourne Stoke; creating a single village, from a divided one. A significant positive impact.
5. Will boost business for both Winterbourne Stoke and Berwick St James, including events at Turner's.
6. Prevailing southwesterly winds will take potential pollution and noise away from Winterbourne Stoke (the only option to achieve this).
7. Protects flora and fauna species that are of such interest in the Till Valley, a Site of Special Scientific interest.
8. Boosts potential for Parsonage Down NNR ecology.

#### **SUMMARY**

Overall the current proposed scheme of a twin bored tunnel and northern bypass of Winterbourne Stoke, is the **path of least archaeological, ecological and community damage**, of greatest benefit and provides an exemplar in complex infrastructure within a difficult heritage context. It is a legacy for the living. The community fully support it.

**E) An alternative F010 option - our feedback to UNESCO**

1. F010 will cut through archaeological sites outside the WHS that would be as valid as that discovered inside the WHS boundary today. WHS boundary is arbitrary.
2. F010 will adversely impact six village communities of Idmiston, Wilsford Cum Lake, Upper Woodford, Berwick St James, Stapleford, Winterbourne Stoke permanently and all for the worse. No villages are impacted by the present scheme, one is significantly improved.
3. F010 is a severance of two Norman communities from one another Winterbourne Stoke and Berwick St James.
4. F010 threatens a Roman Settlement identified by HE.
5. F010 cuts through two Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) areas of an SSSI that is wet throughout the year, (unlike north of Winterbourne Stoke).
6. F010 is 13-mile detour through undisturbed open countryside.
7. F010 endangers already at-risk flora & fauna in ancient woodland Carr (old as Stonehenge)
8. F010 increases air and noise pollution for at least three village communities, possibly five.
9. F010 is a circumnavigation south around WHS and will result in a reduction in visitors to the WHS. Visitors are needed.
10. F010 will increase rat-running (for access to Shrewton, Larkhill and north Wiltshire) so not achieving a major objective of the road scheme.
11. F010 will severely impact unknown archaeological finds through a known historical route to Stonehenge south of the WHS.
12. F010 requires two viaducts. The viaduct over Woodford valley would need to be 35m above the valley floor, a severe blight on the SAC valley. Present scheme needs one.
13. F010 crosses two rivers (Avon and Till), not one so even more potential harm to the water system in two valleys, not one.
14. F010 will generate a significant negative reaction from a far larger community group than already active, so slowing down the process of assessment.
15. F010 route will generate rat-running because a shorter route that the F010 exists through Amesbury, Larkhill and Shrewton.

**SUMMARY:** Communities are seeking to minimise permanent disruption to human population, wildlife, landscapes and archaeology in the area. F010 causes the maximum negative impact relative to other options we have worked on.

**Additional points for UNESCO**

1. Why was a tunnel supported by UNESCO previously?
2. Could we suggest that UNESCO strike a pragmatic balance on this project; this will encourage positive inter-relationships for the duration and beyond.
3. If we collectively stretch this debate further, it will undermine and threaten it; funding will disappear if a new Government is formed. Nothing will happen.
4. The community and HE have reached an acceptable proposal for the site after huge efforts by the community and Highways England. Does UNESCO recognise this?

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