

To: Highways England, A303Stonehenge@highwaysengland.co.uk

A303 Stonehenge - Amesbury to Berwick Down - Public Consultation

I approve in principle the dualling of the A303 by means of a tunnel below Stonehenge because of the current severe severance in this area for all non-motorised users (NUMs) created by the existing A303 and its traffic, and the substantial amenity and environmental improvements to Stonehenge.

However, although the published scheme has the potential to return full access for vulnerable road and rights of way users, both to and through the World Heritage Site (WHS), as yet it lacks sufficient detail to give full support. In particular the existing and proposed new routes:

- along the existing A303 alignment from Stonehenge Road to Longbarrow,
- along the A360 alignment at Longbarrow and linking towards Winterborne Stoke, and
- the new link from Solstice Park, Amesbury to the Allington Road,

must all be of sufficient quality to enable full 24/7/365 safe easy use by any form of cycle.

Furthermore, suitable facilities for all NUMs must be provided at all junctions and crossing points to enable safe and easy use because of the pressures that the (undoubtable) growing traffic will create on, and adjacent to, the dual A303, and the surrounding road network.

As one of the representatives of local cyclists, and regular user of the routes through the WHS, meaningful and constructive dialogue is sought at an early stage in the design to discuss the particular needs of cyclists and agree specifications to meet the above objectives.

We ask that full commitment is given to the needs of all NUMs, especially cyclists, who provide a realistic sustainable mode of transport to, from and between nearby population centres including Salisbury, and the WHS itself, that delivers on the positive commitments made in both of Highways England's Accessibility and Cycling Strategies, in particular:

- "make every-day journeys as easy as possible",
- "journeys which are safe, secure, comfortable and attractive",
- "enable users of all abilities to cycle, encouraging cycling as a sustainable form of transport",
- "facilities will support the development of integrated, high quality cycle routes that are safe, direct, connected, comfortable and attractive", and
- "In particular, we want to contribute to a connected, comfortable, attractive and high-quality cycling network, suitable and safe for use by people of all ages and abilities".

OBJECTIVES

While current traffic levels and speeds on the existing road network (particularly the A303 and A360) are a significant deterrent, the current road surfaces provide full 24/7/265 use by any form of cycle, including but not restricted to: touring, road, hybrid, mountain bicycles, trikes, tandems, recumbents, and their electric variants, plus most importantly the various types of disabled cycle, whether hand powered or electric assisted.

All new or existing routes must be constructed and maintained to at least an equivalent surface characteristic so that safe easy use by any form of cycle 24/7/365 is ensured. For example, while most motorised traffic will be removed from the A303 between Stonehenge Road and Longbarrow, at least some of the existing road surface should be retained and enhanced to meet these and other foreseeable needs (such as farm, statutory utility and emergency vehicles).

Specifically, for the A303 route from Stonehenge Road to Longbarrow it is requested that at least a 4m width of the existing road is retained throughout this length, with a new surface layer of green tarmac (as used for bus lanes in some UK cities) overlaid, so that this enhanced high quality surface blends into the surrounding grassland.

This would provide:

- safe easy access 24/7/365 by any form of cycle,
- a quality bound surface facilitating effective drainage, greatly reducing the need for maintenance,

- avoiding excessive roughness (eg from gravel surfaces which inevitably deteriorate with time) which impede progress by those with narrow tyres, towing trailers, laden touring machines, or the disabled,
- permit essential utility vehicle access without 'chewing up' the adjacent surfaces,
- even with the inevitable vegetation overgrowth, the central 3m would remain clear,
- so wide enough for safe both way use, avoiding significant conflict between NUMs,
- minimise disturbance to the surface and any possible archaeology below, and
- be much less conspicuous than either the existing road, or any unbound surface.

The same principles should govern the design specification of the other (new and existing) routes and crossing facilities for vulnerable road users, to open up and enhance safe and sustainable access to and through the area.

CONCERNS

With the closure and removal of the A344 past the Stones cyclists have lost the ability to use this historic alignment, which only increased severance further (as together with Stonehenge Road it provided a reasonable direct east-west route between Amesbury and Shrewton). The substitute surfaces provided, access to which was denied for 5+ years, are in any case totally inadequate for most cyclists. Furthermore, use of them has also been actively discouraged by officials of organisations managing the WHS, because these inadequate surfaces are unable to cope with even low levels of pedestrian use without sustaining damage.

When in recent years Longbarrow roundabout was modified no effective provision was made for vulnerable road users to negotiate this 'expanded' junction, again increasing severance and risk to NUMs.

These examples highlight why similar mistakes/failures to meet the needs of cyclists and other vulnerable road users, which do not accord with published Strategies, including those of Highways England, must not be repeated with this scheme.

CONSTRUCTION

Should any scheme be given the go-ahead it will also be very important that the needs of cyclists are fully observed during the construction phase (we cannot have the loss of existing access, even for short periods, justified on safety or other grounds, without *acceptable -to cyclists- alternatives* being provided). So, we also ask for full consultation on these aspects at the relevant time, with the principle of priority to cyclists and other NUM needs to fulfil the Cycling Strategy commitments:

- "programme of work to ensure that we deliver enhanced, high quality cycle facilities", and
- "needs of cyclists will be considered, both during construction and as part of any completed scheme".

CONCLUSION

This is one of the most important road schemes in Southern Britain in recent decades because of its potential impact on the Stonehenge WHS, travel to and through the area, and for NUMs who have progressively been disenfranchised over decades by the growing traffic and inadequate implementation of previous schemes. Full opportunity should now be taken to demonstrate the published commitment to improving access and safety for all vulnerable road users, by investing in world class facilities for what is one of the UK's premier World Heritage Sites and tourist destinations.

I therefore ask that you enter into early and meaningful dialogue with local cyclists, including myself, so the detail of the scheme fully reflects and meets our needs.

Roger Upfold, Life Member CTC (Cycling UK) and Sustrans Supporter
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