

Open Floor Hearing, City Hall, Salisbury
22 May 2019 morning session
Kate Freeman Ref 20018942

The copyright status of some images that I would have liked to have included in my written representation was established after the deadline to meet Deadline 1. For that reason, I would be grateful if the Examining Authority could consider accepting the following illustrated statement as an addendum to my Written Representation which was concerned with the way the A303 Stonehenge Expressway would not enhance the usual experience of visiting Stonehenge.

1. My comments are personal but informed by my involvement with the Stonehenge Alliance social media and communications. I was pleased to have the opportunity to express a point of view verbally since it concerns the question of trust. I witness time and time again two distinct views, both of which I share.
2. The first is of appreciation of Stonehenge not just as a monument but as a World Heritage Site. Our posts and tweets are shared regularly with people from all around the world: Pakistan, Australia, Spain, USA, Canada, India, - as well as people across the UK but especially locally. The love that Stonehenge WHS inspires everyone from all walks of life is phenomenal. What is clearly understood is that this is an entire landscape that excites, fascinates and brings hope peace and tranquility. It defines everything that Heritage could possibly be.
3. To illustrate the sense of “entire landscape” I would like to refer you to Map C below which shows “Plot of Features revealed by the analysis of aerial photographs.”



Figure 1 Darvil T et al, (2005) “Stonehenge World Heritage Site: An archaeological research framework” English Heritage and Bournemouth University

4. The WHS and its setting is comprehensively scored with Bronze Age field systems¹ as well as numerous scheduled monuments. Looking at these you have to ask yourself: "This is magnificent. Wherever can you put a road through that lot without significant damage. You can't, surely. Can you?" Many people comment are discomforted that the surface would hide a road that could accommodate more traffic, an unsustainable mode.
5. The second view that I repeatedly read on social media is that of cynicism. To quote one Chris, yesterday, who said:

"I think the response from the public & experts has been wonderful but have my doubts as to whether we will win. We cannot trust any government dept (as we have already seen!) & probably BIG money involved so Highways England can plough ahead with their destruction!! We have the same corruption involved with the closing of Poole A&E & Maternity centre & despite it being shown to have been a "done deal"..."

6. Cynical comments are made frequently and is very serious. People feel they're being taken for a ride. That all the processes are nothing but a tick box exercise. After all, UNESCO's own mission reports at the invitation of our government and consequential World Heritage Committee recommendations are being sidelined as far as possible.²
7. Take for example the consultations. What did they consist of? Local parochial events with one in London at the Society of Antiquaries. The signs advertising them were so small you could trip over them before you knew they were there. You need to ask: where were the efforts to reach the world wide community of interest? Where were the exhibitions to catch people who appreciated Heritage? Those who came from abroad? For instance, why not an event at St Pancras? Or at Heathrow? Or at the British Museum? Or the National Gallery? In Edinburgh? Belfast? Cardiff? We have been told that the scope of the community engagement was approved by Wiltshire Council. Is not keeping consultation, however, to a minimum a cause for cynicism? We are well aware that any responses from around the world have been thanks to the efforts of civil society and the world wide web.³
8. Experience in planning applications for Stonehenge has shown that what is promised on paper or at meetings is not delivered. For example, I have in front of me images that I could not include in my written representation that are in the public domain:⁴ A pair of photos showing the A344 before and after it was stopped up. By the Heel Stone and by the junction. Both have fences removed in

¹ Archaeologist, Dr David Field refers to these in his Written Representation and considers that the ancient field system was established "by at least the Bronze Age".

<https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/ipc/uploads/projects/TR010025/TR010025-000715-David%20Field%20Written%20Representation.pdf>

² See for instance the dismissive response by Highways England's Chief Executive Jim O'Sullivan to the question by Local Transport Today about UNESCO's call for a rethink with Local Transport Today (18 August 2017) <http://stonehengealliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/LTT-18-August-2017.pdf>

³ Please see a selection of views from around the world my Annex that led to involvement in the consultations.

⁴ "Stonehenge The Master Plan" 22 Sept 1998 English Heritage /DCMS.

the after photos. But because the land is not jointly held but owned separately by the National Trust and English Heritage/DCMS, the former giving free access and the latter charges entrance, they are managed with a great deal of new fencing as shown on the Examining Authority's accompanied site visit.

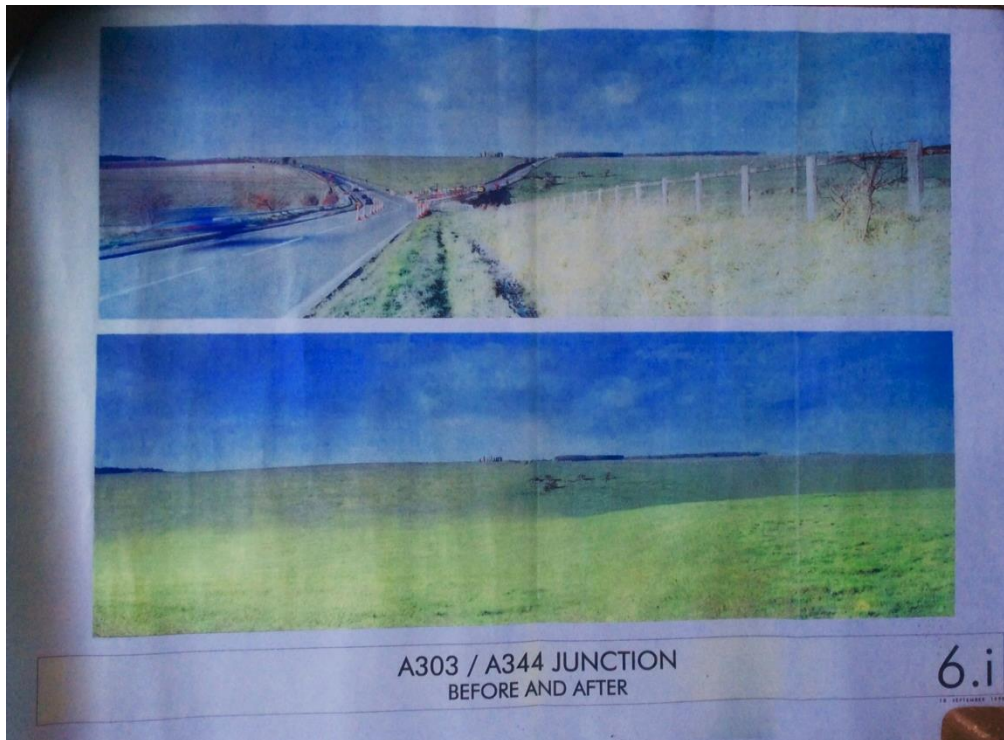


Figure 2 Photo montage - Before and After A303/A344 is stopped up



Figure 3 Photo montage - Before and After removal of A344



Figure 4 Permissive path along former A344, April 2018

9. A further example is the change to the old visitor centre and car park. What was “a national disgrace” we expected to disappear altogether. Unlike the car park the old visitor centre and porta cabins at least had the merit of being below ground level, not visible from inside the Stonehenge triangle.



Figure 5 The Old Visitor Centre was barely visible from the Stonehenge Monument field, October 2008



Figure 6 Fencing around former Visitor Centre and swathe of tarmac visible from Stonehenge Monument field, April 2019

The chain link fencing has disappeared but the new stainless-steel fencing around the bunker of the former visitor centre and ramp is highly visible.

10. Planners gave permission for visitors to be transported on picturesque land trains but they proved impractical and below capacity, subsequently replaced with large coaches that need a substantial turning circle and an acre of tarmac to accommodate two parked coaches and queues of waiting passengers with airport style fencing, paving and curbstones. The infrastructure that was promised is now a thing of the past. In its place is a commercial tourist enterprise reminiscent of my recent experience of visiting the Mona Lisa in the Louvre.
11. Other promises which were not delivered: In the course of the stopping up of the A344 public inquiry, I attended a meeting with English Heritage where the project manager promised that there would not be any conventional street lights at the reconfigured roundabouts. They would be low lights. Instead there is a forest of street lights in the middle of the Special Landscape Area. The car park has been expanded to meet demand rather than designed to contain demand through booking. The coach park has doubled in size and mature beech trees felled. These developments were given subsequent planning permission due to operational and management failures. Furthermore, the safe cycle crossing that was promised as part of the stopping up of the A344 plans as well as the Visitor Centre has still not been delivered.⁵
12. The public has been presented with 302 lengthy documents, plans and photo montages that are there to persuade, to sell the scheme. Nevertheless, the photo montages that we really needed to help visualize the impact of the scheme on the landscape at the accompanied site visit (ASI) do not exist, such as fencing in the landscape.
13. On this record, I have every reason to believe that new technological fixes to removing street lighting from the roundabouts and slip roads will fail over time. Perhaps some tragic event might lead to high fences around green bridges and along the new byway after planning permission has been granted. Or due to an unforeseen increase in visitors there will be further intrusive infrastructure that might be necessary for operational reasons.
14. How can we be sure that what is promised will be delivered? The case for the layman is unconvincing. The cynicism that I encounter regularly through social media is reflected by my own observations and experience. The risk of operational reasons to impose unsightly infrastructure is high.
15. People around the world are watching what is happening at Stonehenge WHS. Tens of thousands of people have so far said they do not want this scheme to damage their WHS. Many more will add their voice if this WHS is put on the list of World Heritage in danger by the World Heritage Committee. The Examination is an opportunity to redeem and enhance our country's reputation for looking after

⁵ Planning permission for new Visitor Centre granted by Wiltshire Council, conditions 27 "Policy TR12 (ii) Cycleways and footpaths" Ref S/2009/1527/FULL

its heritage and restore trust in a process that UNESCO has criticized for its brevity. It is vitally important that this scheme is not be seen as a fait accompli.

Questions by Examining Authority and answers with additional comment

1. *Was I against any tunnel?*

Whilst I am keen to support sustainable transport, I recognize that Stonehenge is an exceptional landscape. I have therefore accepted a tunnel could be a solution if it were long enough to avoid further damage to the WHS and its setting. However, I have since been made aware that a tunnel could last around 100 years. In which case what happens to the landscape after that period? What changes and technological advances will there be 100 years hence? How will the landscape be understood and appreciated in the future?

There has been a lack of alternative solutions during the 'optioneering' phase of the scheme for the public to consider.

2. *Was archaeology less important than the longevity of the tunnel?*

I might have misunderstood the implication of this question but the archaeological heritage is highly motivating. The discoveries continue to astonish, inform and excite the imagination. Academic enquiry could be permanently halted by the construction of a tunnel, irrespective of its length.

3. *Was the experience of tranquility on other visits similar to the visit I described in my written representation?*

Broadly yes. If the wind is from the North/East the traffic can be more noticeable at the north east corner of the Stonehenge monument. When the prevailing wind is from the South West the sound is not noticeable. Whilst on the accompanied site inspection around location H walking alongside the A303 towards the site of the proposed tunnel portal the song of the skylarks was notable despite the closeness of the roaring traffic.

Concluding remark

My starting point for my written representation was questioning the value of spending £1.7bn (or more) to enhance the experience of a typical visit to the Stonehenge monument and its immediate surroundings to meet a key Highways England objective. The ASI on 21 May was a valuable opportunity to visualize firsthand the enormity of the scheme's impact on the landscape, heritage and people's lives first hand. It reinforced my view that we need to find a better solution to a seasonal traffic problem that protects Stonehenge WHS particularly when the solution would ruthlessly slice through Stonehenge WHS.