

Application by Highways England for an Order Granting Development Consent for the A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down

The Examining Authority's Second Written Questions and requests for information (ExQ2) Published 5 July 2019

Responses from Suzanne Keene: Interested Party

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Question Lv.2.4

ii. Have attempts been made to map projected tranquillity with the Scheme in place?

Any mapping exercise intending to show the results of the completed scheme must show the effects for the whole site as well as Stonehenge itself and take account of increased visitor numbers requested by the Public Accounts Committee (see also Question Lv.2.4, below).

It must also be realistic and truthful. For instance will a further car park extension be required? I hope the Inspectors will note the shocking accounts of promises versus the actual outcomes provided in Kate Freeman's evidence ([REP3-069](#)).

iv. Has the connection between tranquillity and the feeling of completeness of the landscape and the interconnectedness of its features been considered?

If this has been considered, that has been only to dismiss its importance.

The UNESCO Statement of Universal Value says of the site: "including settlements, burial grounds, and large constructions of earth and stone. Today, **together with their settings**, they form landscapes without parallel." (my italics: from UNESCO Statement of Outstanding Universal Value). This means *all* monuments not only the Stones.

31% (737) of the 2,370 Relevant Representations mentioned landscape, a very few supporting the plan. For just two of these hundreds of examples, PM Scrayfield: "Stonehenge itself is unique, not only within the UK, but unique in world-wide terms. Further, the monument itself does not stand alone but can only be truly understood in its context as the hub of a vast 'ritual landscape'. ..." Rebecca Cave: "... the entire scheme is an assault on an ancient sacred area. ... wilful vandalism of one of the key sites in Britain and I believe would signal the beginning of the end of what Britain has to offer culturally to the world." (There are many, many other relevant quotations.)

Highways England's Environmental Statement on Astronomy and Archeoastronomy demonstrates the intricate interconnections between the monuments¹.

The completeness and interconnectedness of the landscape is fundamental to its sense of place. Ironically in view of current support for the scheme, in 2009 English Heritage conducted a research project and gave much publicity to the importance of *sense of place*².

Question Lv.2.4

Tranquillity

The issue of tranquillity appears to remain in dispute in that the visitors to the WHS and particularly the Stones would appear to influence the degree of tranquillity at the Stones and in the vicinity of the Stones. As a consequence, the degree of effect from the current road is arguably reduced and the degree of benefit from its removal in respect of tranquillity in the area of the Stones may be regarded as less significant.

Do you consider that tranquillity will be achieved at the Stones as a consequence of the scheme?

No, it will not.

Relevant to this question is the request by the Public Accounts Committee, who have asked how the cultural value expressed in the Contingent Valuation Survey will be realised in the scheme and what measures will be taken to increase visitor numbers and access (although the CVS is a notional means of monetising aspects of the scheme, not intended to result in realisable improvements.)³ The Committee requests a report within three months (i.e. by mid September) on "innovative schemes to encourage people to visit the site and the surrounding areas" (p. 6) and to "encourage as many people as possible to the World Heritage Site".

The Department replied that the design of the site would make it a "much more usable piece of public space" (para. 21). It is of great concern that the Department for Transport thinks of one of the world's premier World Heritage Sites as no more than a "usable piece of public space".

As Interested Parties have observed (for instance Kate Freeman, [REP2-190](#)) the monument on the opposite side from the relatively unobtrusive A303 is already noisy and busy, with a constant flow of traffic from shuttle buses and other transport and crowds of visitors accessing the site.

¹ Highways England 6.3 Environmental Statement, Appendix 6.1 Annex 5, - *Astronomy and Archeoastronomy (APP-200)*.

² English Heritage, *Heritage counts: 2009 England*. https://historicengland.org.uk/content/heritage-counts/pub/hc09_england_acc-pdf

³ House of Commons, Committee of Public Accounts, *Transport Infrastructure in the South West, One hundred and fourth report of Session 2017-19. 24 June 2019*.

Evidence has been submitted about the effects of large numbers of visitors at the Avebury WHS with great concern about any increase in numbers (the Avebury Society, [REP2-057](#), [REP4-046](#); Avebury Parish Council, [REP2-056](#), [REP4-096](#)). The effects on Avebury offer hard evidence of the predictable effects of increasing visitor numbers to Stonehenge, where already the car park has been enlarged despite objections because of heritage damage.

Therefore it is clear that the scheme would absolutely not achieve one of its claimed prime objectives and confer greater tranquillity on the site; quite the reverse, it will result in it becoming busier and far more difficult to appreciate for its World Heritage qualities.