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Dear Chief Planning Inspector,

A303 Stonehenge Redetermination

I wish to provide some comments for consideration in connection with the redetermination of the A303 Stonehenge Tunnel proposal from National Highways in the light of comments made by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee and other bodies.

I am writing as a grandfather to four young children, father of three daughters and wish to help ensure that important heritage areas in the United Kingdom such as the Stonehenge area and its associated road network do not suffer further damage as a result of poor custodianship by those presently charged with this responsibility.

In my opinion, and unfortunately, I must express that I do not believe that over the last 40 years the public authorities in the UK have been particularly good custodians of heritage sites or important landscapes. We only have to think of the lasting damage caused by the penny-pinching decision-making against a tunnel which savaged the landscape through which the M3 Motorway runs north of Winchester. More recently we have had the over-zealous destruction of ancient woodland around the southern portal of HS2 in the Denham, Buckinghamshire area and a similar disregard for irreplaceable woodlands in the proposals to enlarge the Junction 10 interchange of the M25 near the RHS gardens at Wisley, Surrey.

In comparison with our European peers, the UK always seems to design less attractive-looking projects which cost substantially more. I am thinking here of the Gotthard Base Tunnel in Switzerland which was completed a few years ago. It was an elegant project, has delivered real benefits to the Swiss and neighbouring economies to facilitate long distance freight and passenger movements, and was achieved with much lower total construction costs per kilometre than the instant Stonehenge project.

Sadly, it is necessary to conclude that over the last forty years, the UK has failed to develop a long-term consistency of purpose and capability for these important projects, across the fields of political leadership, sensitive design and project management and, most importantly, cost-effective civil engineering.

In the absence of a senior political and project team capable of combining the necessary vision to deliver a much longer tunnel than presently proposed, to smooth the planned access roads practically invisibly into the surrounding landscape and without damaging the buried archaeological material, all at staggeringly high UK civil engineering costs, my strongest advice would be to DO NOTHING in this area for the next forty years.

Future generations may well give thanks for that decision.

If, however, the Secretary of State is determined to do SOMETHING, then I would urge those responsible to address the following matters:

In particular to call on National Highways:

- to make suitable changes to the Scheme to take the 2021 World Heritage Committee Decision into account;
- to acknowledge that the Secretary of State found the Scheme's impact on the proposed western cutting area would be "significantly adverse";
- to fully assess alternative routes less damaging to the World Heritage Site e.g., a southern bypass route or a longer tunnel would reduce impact on the World Heritage Site;

- to explore alternatives to hard engineering solutions in the context of safeguarding and enhancing the World Heritage Site - e.g. a package of measures to reduce road traffic, road emissions and improve access to the South West;
- to update the scheme construction costs; and
- to update the carbon assessment and costs.

National Highways should also take the following matters into account since the Examination closed:

Concern for climate change has increased with the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report and the need to take urgent action to reduce emissions, not increase them as any new Stonehenge road scheme would; and the Environment Act 2021 sets new ambitions around nature recovery.

Conclusion

In conclusion, in the absence of the very highest standards of leadership, sustained over the project life span of 10 to 15 years, and necessary to make this project one that our grandchildren will look back upon with admiration, please just put it into the (very) long grass.

Yours sincerely,

Colin Hooker B.Sc (Hons)