

By email to A303Stonehenge@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

25 July 2022

Dear Sirs,

A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down (Stonehenge) Development Consent Order

Thank you for your letter of 13 July inviting comments on the submission by National Highways in response to the Secretary of State's letter of 20 June 2022.

The Heart of the South-West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) remains strongly supportive of the principle of improving the A303 and A358 to dual carriageway standard throughout the complete length between the M3 motorway and the M5 at Taunton.

The LEP is of the view that the creation of a second strategic route to the South-West from London and the South-East is of great importance to the economic prosperity of the South-West, which currently lags behind the UK average.

Productivity of labour in the Heart of the South-West, in terms of Gross Value Added per hour, places the LEP in the bottom third of LEP areas. This reflects both the relative rurality of the South-West but also its peripherality. Improved strategic connectivity is therefore a key requisite of improving economic performance in the South-West peninsula.

We therefore wish to re-state our full support for the A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down improvement, and our view that the scheme needs to be completed at the earliest practicable date.

The National Highways response provides an updated comparison between the DCO proposal and options which would comprise either a longer cut and cover tunnel, or a longer bored tunnel. While each of these alternatives would offer a slight reduction in the impact of the whole project on the heritage assets of the World Heritage Site it is apparent that they would add complexity to the arrangements of the junction with the A360 and would have some traffic disbenefits.

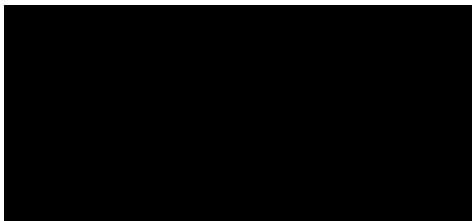
Creating opportunities in Devon, Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay

However, probably the most significant impact of both options for longer tunnels would be a major increase in cost of the project (estimated at £466m for the longer bored tunnel or £392m for the longer cut and cover tunnel), and a delay, measured in years, of its eventual completion.

Such a cost increase and further delay to the project could not, in our view, be justified. The National Highways assessment makes clear, in Table 3 (Longer bored tunnel) and Table 5 (Longer cut and cover tunnel) of *Document Reference Re-determination 4.2 – Overarching Response*, the overwhelming heritage benefit which would be given by the DCO scheme, as a consequence of removing the A303 traffic from its current path alongside Stonehenge. The additional heritage benefit of either of the longer tunnel options is, by comparison, relatively limited.

We therefore confirm our wholehearted support for the A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down improvement as promoted through the DCO, both for the economic benefits which it will deliver, and also for these undoubted heritage benefits.

Yours sincerely,



David Ralph
Chief Executive



Creating opportunities in Devon, Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay

Heart of the South West LEP CIC, is a Community Interest Company Limited by Guarantee.

Registered in England and Wales.

No. 8880546, Registered Office, PO Box 805, Exeter, Devon, EX1 9UU