

STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORT
BY THE STATE PARTY
(in compliance with Paragraph 169 of the Operational Guidelines)

STONEHENGE, AVEBURY AND ASSOCIATED SITES

United Kingdom (373bis)

In accordance with Decision **44 COM 7B.61** of the World Heritage Committee, the United Kingdom State Party has produced a State of Conservation Report for the Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites World Heritage Site.

As requested, this report is structured according to the format set out in Annex 13 of the *Operational Guidelines (2021)*. The specific points raised in the World Heritage Committee's Decision are reproduced in text boxes.

Table of Contents

1	Executive Summary	2
2	Response from the State Party to the World Heritage Committee's Decision 44 COM 7B.61 , paragraph by paragraph	3
3	Other current conservation issues identified by the State Party which may have an impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value	22
4	In conformity with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, describe any potential major restorations, alterations and/or new construction(s) intended within the property, the buffer zone(s) and/or corridors or other areas, where such developments may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, including authenticity and integrity	25
Annex A	Update on stakeholder and advisory group input to the scheme	27
Annex B	Amended Extract from National Highways' Heritage Impact Assessment: Summary of Impact of the existing and proposed road on the OUV of the WHS	29
Annex C	Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMs)	33

1. Executive Summary

At the time of inscription in 1986 it was recognised by the State Party, UNESCO and ICOMOS that the A344 road, a few metres from the standing stones of Stonehenge, needed to be re-routed due to its adverse impact on the integrity of the World Heritage Site (WHS). This was achieved in 2013 with the closure of the A344 and the relocation of the visitor centre. The result was a significant improvement to the visitor experience and the enhancement of the OUV of the site by opening up the landscape and removing the traffic. As a result of collaborative endeavours such as these the State Party believes that the WHS is in a better condition today than when it was first inscribed in 1986.

Meanwhile the A303 road has become of increasing concern. As one of the major roads from London to the South West of England, traffic flows are now frequently above capacity and have long been a cause for safety concerns. The increased traffic has also increased the adverse impact on the integrity of the site.

The State Party is committed to finding a solution to reunite the landscape and restore tranquillity to this iconic prehistoric landscape. After more than 50 proposals over the last 30 years, this scheme is as close as it has ever come to succeeding in this objective. In March 2020 an unprecedented £1.7 billion was allocated by the UK government towards implementing the A303 road improvement scheme. This scheme, developed in close collaboration with the UK heritage bodies in recognition of the highly sensitive and internationally important nature of the site, proposes a 3.3km bored tunnel that would remove most of the A303 within the WHS from view. It offers a significant improvement in comparison with the aural and visual intrusion of the current situation.

44 COM 7B.61 raised concerns regarding the proposed A303 road improvement scheme at Stonehenge. This report seeks to address these concerns along with a detailed explanation of the next steps for the Development Consent Order (DCO)¹. At the request of National Highways² the heritage bodies, including Historic England³, remain in active discussion to ensure that should the DCO be consented under redetermination, the scheme will be designed and delivered for the benefit of the OUV of the WHS. The potential to explore such opportunities under the scheme with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies during an Advisory Mission would be welcomed.

Whilst respecting the World Heritage Committee's Decision, the State Party firmly considers that there is sufficient evidence to illustrate why the WHS should not be placed on the List of World Heritage in Danger were the A303 scheme to be consented. It submits that within the context of the scrutiny by heritage bodies and experts that will occur at every stage of the detailed design process, the Committee can have confidence in the provisions secured for the design and delivery of the proposed scheme. These will ensure that not only would the OUV of the WHS be maintained and protected, but that the scheme would deliver considerable enhancements.

In addition to the major focus on the A303 improvement scheme, the report covers progress on a number of the WHS Management Plan 2015 policies and actions, such as the Governance Review and Setting Study, followed by an update on transport issues generally.

It concludes with an update on conservation issues affecting the wider WHS including the impacts of the pandemic on management and provision of public access, as well as recent projects that contribute

¹ The means of obtaining permission for major developments categorised as nationally significant infrastructure.

² Highways England, which operates, maintains and improves England's motorways and major roads was renamed National Highways in August 2021.

³ Historic England (formerly English Heritage; officially the Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England) is the Government's statutory adviser on all matters relating to the historic environment in England.

to the duties of the State Party under the World Heritage Convention.

2. **Response from the State Party to the World Heritage Committee’s Decision, paragraph by paragraph**

1. *Having examined Document WHC/21/44.COM/7B.Add,*
2. *Recalling Decisions 42 COM 7B.32 and 43 COM 7B.95, adopted at its 42nd (Manama, 2018) and 43rd (Baku, 2019) sessions respectively,*
3. *Notes the progress made with the new management and governance arrangements, and implementation of the 2015 Transport Strategy, as well as the initiative to introduce Traffic Regulation Order on roads where traffic has an adverse impact on attributes of the property, and urges the State Party to continue finding solutions to address these negative impacts;*

The State Party is able to provide the World Heritage Centre with updates on further positive progress with the current review processes for both the governance of the WHS and its Management Plan. In addition, a number of works, including those guided by the 2015 Transport Strategy, are being successfully implemented within both parts of the WHS. These updates illustrate that new solutions are continually being developed in partnership across the WHS to address the adverse impact from traffic on the attributes that convey the OUV of the property.

Governance Review Update

The objective of the **Governance Review** is to ensure that the WHS Management Function is put on a firmer, more resilient and more sustainable long-term foundation. It will put forward recommendations on how best to reshape the existing governance structure, or on creating a new one. The project is managed by a **Trust Transition Project Board** comprised of a representative from each organisation and key stakeholder groups on the WHS Partnership Panel. This review is supported by funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF)⁴ Resilient Heritage programme. All members of the Board are committed to working together to find an agreed solution following consultation with interested parties. It is anticipated that the agreed governance arrangements will be in place by the end of 2022.

In parallel (as an expectation of the bid for NLHF funding), the Board continues to consider the establishment of an independent charitable trust to raise funds and add value to the WHS, its partners, and the wider community. Any new charity would work in parallel with the Partnership’s governance structure and management function but would not conduct any of its operational functions.

A **new independent Chair of the WHS Partnership Panel** was recruited in November 2021. The new Chair has experience of complex governance arrangements and is accomplished in gaining and sustaining consensus with a wide range of stakeholders. The new Chair also has a good understanding of UK heritage management having held senior positions in Natural England⁵ and the NLHF.

⁴ The National Lottery Heritage Fund is a public body distributing funds raised through the state franchised lottery to heritage causes.

⁵ Natural England is the government’s adviser for the natural environment in England.

Management Plan Review Update

A review of the **WHS Management Plan 2015** has commenced, overseen by the WHS Management Plan Review Steering Group. The review will evaluate the current Management Plan and assess the continued relevance of the current set of actions. The new concise and easily navigable online Plan will have an increased focus on the UN Sustainable Development Goals and how climate change may affect the property. A community consultation will take place, enabling local people to participate in shaping the updated Plan. The WHS Coordination Unit are working to a timetable that would have the updated Plan in place by April 2023. In the interim the 2015-2020 Management Plan remains active.

Transport Update: Avebury

Work to address transport issues identified at Avebury is ongoing, guided by the [Avebury WHS Transport Strategy 2015](#). The following updates present an indication of key areas of this work and the timescales within which they are operating.

At **Avebury speed limit changes** are being introduced on three of the roads that cross the site to reduce the speed limit from 60mph to 50mph and ensure the safety of road users and visitors to the WHS.

Options for **closing the B4003 West Kennet Avenue at Avebury** are still under consideration, as large vehicles passing each other on the narrow road and cars parking on the verges are causing erosion to sensitive archaeological remains. Where areas of particular damage and sensitivity have been identified, repair solutions have been devised. Once funding has been obtained these will be implemented in parallel with longer term solutions to avoid repeat occurrences (such as road marking to restrict parking).

A **winter closure (Traffic Regulation Order⁶) of Ridgeway National Trail near Avebury** was established in 2004 because of damage caused to the surface by motor vehicles when the ground is soft, making the route difficult for non-motorised users (e.g. walkers, cyclists, horse riders). Between 1 October and 30 April each year the public are prohibited from using any motor vehicles on the Ridgeway National Trail.

An **Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO)** came into operation on 1 May 2021, which will last for up to 18 months. This prohibits the public from driving motor vehicles (apart from motorcycles) on part of Byway Avebury 1 and all of Byways Berwick Bassett 12, Fyfield 40 and Winterbourne Monkton 10. Notwithstanding this, there are substantial and growing adverse impacts of vehicles encamped in large numbers on the Ridgeway sporadically throughout the year. The National Trust and other partners are working collaboratively to address the issue.

The combined effect of both orders currently prohibits motor vehicles year-round on most of the Ridgeway National Trail near Avebury between 1 May and 30 September, until 30 April 2023. A number of areas on the Ridgeway have been repaired and the ETRO is enabling Wiltshire Council and its partners to test the extent to which these can withstand motorised vehicle use.

Transport Update: Stonehenge

Traffic and parking on Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs) in the Stonehenge part of the property continues to have harmful impacts within the landscape setting of monuments and on amenity for

⁶ A Traffic Regulation Order is a legal tool which allows a local authority to manage the use of any named road.

visitors. A commitment from National Highways to undertake monitoring of the usage of these byways to inform decisions about addressing those impacts would be secured through the proposed A303 scheme. The scheme would also improve connectivity for non-motorised users by providing new restricted byways on the line of the decommissioned A303 and sections of the A360.

Traffic on the A303 continues to have a damaging impact on the significance of Stonehenge and multiple other monuments, the integrity of the WHS property, the unique nature of the prehistoric landscape and visitor understanding and experience. The A303 remains the major road and traffic issue facing the Stonehenge half of the WHS (Paragraph 11.1.21 WHS Management Plan 2015). The challenge of addressing this issue was noted in the Statement of OUV adopted at the 37th Session of the World Heritage Committee in 2013.

Annual traffic monitoring data for the A303 between the junctions located on the western and eastern boundaries of the WHS collected by Wiltshire Council and subsequently National Highways demonstrate that since the WHS was inscribed in 1986, traffic flows have increased by approximately 170% up to 2019 and are forecast to grow by a further 65% by 2044. This would mean that the traffic flow had more than tripled since the WHS was inscribed. As traffic continues to grow the route will remain in use by vehicles travelling between London and the South West of England.

The National Highways' proposed A303 scheme aims to enhance the integrity and authenticity of the WHS overall by removing traffic congestion and the sight and sound of traffic on the current A303 from a significant part of the Stonehenge part of the WHS in accordance with Management Plan Policy 6a⁷.

4. Also notes the forthcoming setting study and related boundary review of the property and requests the State Party to submit the draft setting study to the World Heritage Centre for review by ICOMOS;

Update on Stonehenge and Avebury WHS Setting Supplementary Planning Document

Wiltshire Council has commissioned an independent consultancy to prepare the **Stonehenge and Avebury WHS Setting Study** for development as a **Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)**. The Setting Study will assist in meeting the State Party's obligations to UNESCO to provide an appropriate mechanism to protect the WHS and its setting, and in establishing standards for best practice in the management of the WHS.

The Study will employ a robust methodology to identify features which contribute to the significance of the WHS based on the Statement of OUV. It will provide indicative mapping based on appropriate modelling of the setting, including the physical surroundings of the asset, experiential elements, intangible associations, relevant views and viewsheds into and out of the WHS, the relationship between monuments, and astronomical alignments.

⁷ "Seek a solution to mitigate the negative impact of the A303 on the WHS, its attributes of OUV and its setting to sustain its OUV and enhance the Site's integrity. Work with partners to identify such a solution that also addresses current and predicted traffic problems and assists in delivery of social and economic growth."

The Study will provide guidance on the evidence required from developers to assess how different types of change and proposed development in the setting could impact on the WHS and its OUV. Methods and tools relevant to this purpose that are both appropriate and effective will be identified alongside guidance on relevant approaches to possible mitigation. The Study will provide an accessible and practical tool to a wide range of potential users including heritage managers, developers and planners.

Work on the SPD commenced in July 2021 and it is expected that a draft will be provided to the World Heritage Centre for Technical Review by ICOMOS in Summer 2022, when the statutory public consultation will also be launched. Should the World Heritage Centre require further information regarding the Setting Study in advance of this consultation, the State Party will be pleased to provide this on request. Following consultation, the SPD will be finalised on the basis of comments received, and then adopted by Wiltshire Council as part of its development plan (see additional detail below regarding the policy context for development of this document – the Wiltshire Council Local Plan).

Update on Boundary Review

The potential for boundary modification will be reviewed following completion of the SPD, the brief for which stipulated that its recommendations should contribute to any future boundary review. Further funding will be required to undertake any such work and exploration of options to achieve this will be progressed in due course.

Update on Wiltshire Council Local Plan

Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015) Policy 59 requires that precedence should be given to the protection of the WHS and its OUV. This policy also advises that additional planning guidance be produced to ensure its effective implementation (see update above on the WHS Setting SPD). Officers of Wiltshire Council are working to ensure that the strength of the policy is retained as part of the **Wiltshire Core Strategy review** and the creation of the **Wiltshire Local Plan**. Historic England is also actively engaged in the Local Plan review process.

The Local Plan review will set out a positive vision for the future of Wiltshire up until 2036 and the Wiltshire Local Plan will be the basis against which planning applications are determined. Having an up-to-date plan helps protect against any harmful, speculative and unplanned development. The draft Local Plan will be consulted upon towards the end of 2022 with an estimated adoption date of the end of 2023. The State Party will ensure that the World Heritage Centre is updated regarding any change to the policies regarding the WHS.

5. Further notes the small-scale design refinements, which have been made to the A303 improvement scheme within the property;

The State Party believes that over the long course of development of the current A303 scheme, a considerable number of improvements have been incorporated since UNESCO first expressed regret in 2007 that no progress had been made in the implementation of the scheme for a 2.1km tunnel. Plans for a 2.1km tunnel were withdrawn at that time as the UK Government judged that the scheme would not represent best use of taxpayers' money.

Development of the scheme has placed protection and enhancement of the WHS at the forefront of planning and design. With this objective National Highways has consulted and worked collaboratively with the World Heritage Centre and the UK’s heritage bodies since 2014. In particular, the recommendations from previous joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Advisory Missions provided constructive feedback about how to refine the solution and address concerns.

Changes and Improvements to the Scheme

The World Heritage Centre will be aware of some of the changes and improvements made over time, including those made since the last Advisory Mission. The State Party submits that the incremental and cumulative contribution of all these alterations to the successive evolution of the scheme has resulted in a proposal that has significantly improved upon its predecessors.

When the scheme was originally reconsidered in 2014 after the earlier 2.1km tunnel proposal was withdrawn, early collaboration and consultation with Historic England⁸ and the National Trust, identified an extended tunnel at least 2.9km long as the basis for a scheme that, if sensitively designed, would sustain the OUV of the WHS. A preferred route closely following the existing surface A303 through the western part of the WHS was developed in 2017 to minimise heritage impacts identified during archaeological survey and evaluation fieldwork. A new junction was also proposed to the west of the WHS. The preferred route included a number of heritage benefits as set out under Table 1 below.

Subsequent refinement of the preferred route included statutory public consultation and benefited from a third joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Advisory Mission in March 2018. Following the last Advisory Mission further improvements were made to the scheme before the DCO application was made.

Table 1: Elements Incorporated into the Scheme to Minimise Negative Effects and Enhance Positive Effects on the Attributes that convey the OUV of the WHS

	Elements Incorporated into the scheme to Minimise Negative Effects and Enhance Positive Effects on the Attributes that convey the OUV of the WHS	
Heritage Impact (Examples of Attributes affected)	2017 Preferred Route	2018 DCO Scheme (following 3rd joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Advisory Mission)
Severance of the Stonehenge Avenue (Attributes 1, 2, 6)	Reconnection of the Avenue to enhance its integrity	Confirmed reconnection of the Avenue including establishment of chalk grassland
Interruption of the midwinter solstice alignment (Attribute 4)	Western portal repositioned to remove severance of the midwinter solstice alignment caused by the current A303	Design refinements to avoid intrusion of highway infrastructure and traffic, and associated light pollution into the midwinter solstice alignment

⁸ At that time, prior to 2015, known as English Heritage before the organisation separated into two different bodies.

Harmful impact within the setting of Winterbourne Stoke Crossroad Barrows, Diamond Group due to the existing Longbarrow Junction (Attributes 2, 3, 5)	Relocation of the existing A360 road and the replacement Longbarrow roundabout 100m west	Relocation of the existing A360 road and the replacement of Longbarrow roundabout by a further 500m (to a total of 600m to the west, outside of WHS)
Visual & Aural Effects of Traffic on A303 (Attributes 3, 6, 7)	Existing A303 replaced with a restricted byway for use only by walkers, cyclists and horse riders, farm and emergency vehicles	Confirmed downgrading of existing A303 and approximately 1.25km of the A360 to restricted byways designed to integrate with chalk grassland and so reduce severance, providing the ability to explore the WHS and beyond
Visual & Aural Effects and Severance of Landscape (Attributes 3, 6, 7)	Bored tunnel at least 2.9km long	Tunnel length through centre of WHS increased to 3.3km. Cutting design with shallow grass slopes and chalk grassland mitigation softens views of the cutting from heritage assets important to the understanding of the OUV, within the WHS
Ability to Explore the WHS and Experience the Relationships between Monuments (Attributes 3, 5, 6)	Reconnection of public rights of way currently severed by the A303	Removal of vehicular link between byways in vicinity of Normanton Down Barrow Asset Group, ensuring enhanced tranquillity of the WHS at this location
Loss of archaeological remains through excavation of the western and eastern cuttings (Attributes, 2, 6)	Western portal and approach cutting positioned through an area where the evidence from prior evaluation and survey demonstrates that the archaeological impacts can be effectively minimised	Detailed Archaeological Mitigation Strategy (DAMS) to ensure delivery of archaeological programme to the highest standards, commensurate with international importance of WHS
Severance between monuments (Attributes 2, 3, 5, 6)	Positions of tunnel portals optimised within the landscape Removal of severance from the King Barrow Ridge and associated barrow groups to the south	Road (and traffic on it) designed to be hidden within deep retained cuttings Inclusion of an extended 150m green land bridge towards the western end of the WHS, designed to reduce the visual severance between monuments and reinstate physical access between them
Restoring the character of the landscape without parallel (Attributes 2, 6)	Removal of current surface road infrastructure helping to eliminate physical intrusions in the landscape and improve the experience for users	Recreating chalk grassland habitat, delivering additional biodiversity and reducing the extent of agricultural cultivation within the WHS
Disturbance of dark skies (Attribute 4)	Subject to design for DCO	No lighting of eastern and western tunnel portals, or approaches, or on new Longbarrow junction

		Keeping lighting within WHS to absolute minimum needed for safety; achieving positive impact upon dark skies and appreciation of astronomical alignments
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Commitments and Requirements to Engage with Heritage Bodies and Communities

In addition, the following commitments and requirements to incorporate advice from heritage bodies and experts, and to engage with communities have been included within the draft DCO and associated documentation:

- Incorporation of a set of design commitments and principles to ensure that the WHS remains a major consideration in the next stages of detailed design;
- Incorporation of comprehensive requirements for consultation with heritage bodies and other stakeholders on all aspects of the design with potential to affect the OUV of the WHS;
- Incorporation of commitments to further consultation with the Heritage Monitoring and Advisory Group (HMAG) and the A303 Scientific Committee, in addition to statutory approval, to ensure delivery of a programme of archaeological investigation and mitigation to the highest research and professional standards, commensurate with the international importance of the WHS;
- Inclusion of a requirement for specific consultation with academic experts on the A303 Scientific Committee to develop strategies for plough soil artefacts and tree hollow sampling;
- Development of an inclusive Public Archaeology and Community Engagement (PACE) programme to create opportunities for engagement and learning alongside the archaeological programme with not only local, but also national and international communities;
- Provision for Delivery of a range of ‘legacy’ benefits through associated programmes that extend well beyond the construction footprint of the road scheme;
- Incorporation of commitments to ensure that the opportunity to continue to refine the scheme’s design remains open.

The State Party would welcome the opportunity to explore the commitments and opportunities to continue to refine the scheme’s design in a manner that could reduce the extent and width of the open cut at the western end of the WHS with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies.

The State Party submits that, within the context of the scrutiny by heritage bodies and other experts to which the proposals have been subjected at every stage and would continue to be so under the detailed design process and programme of archaeological mitigation, the World Heritage Centre can have confidence in the safeguards included under the scheme to ensure that not only will the OUV of the WHS be maintained, but that this carefully designed solution will also deliver further considerable enhancements for the WHS and its OUV.

Positive additional benefits for the WHS would include:

- An enhanced heritage knowledge base and increased opportunities for learning and information sharing arising from the extensive archaeological investigations required by the scheme both inside the WHS boundary and outside;

- Creation of a wealth of new information regarding the archaeological landscape of the WHS and its environs which will be made publicly accessible including through the PACE programme, allowing for increased understanding of the WHS;
- Additions and improvements to the public rights of way network, to aid access to the landscape for more people;
- A commitment to work with key stakeholders to develop opportunities to digitally augment access to archaeological sites within the WHS, carefully taking account of archaeological and ecological sensitivities, as well as landholder requirements;
- Securing a net gain for biodiversity, with new areas of chalk grassland habitat created by the scheme complementing ongoing and planned grassland reversion work.

Throughout the scheme development collaboration with UK heritage bodies and other heritage experts has been structured through a series of different groups (see ANNEX A). This has ensured the provision of heritage expertise throughout and critical feedback and advice to National Highways on aspects of the scheme where the WHS would be affected. The provisions contained within the draft DCO, which include consultation and collaboration with heritage bodies on design matters, allow for refinement of the current scheme in a manner that would bring further benefits to the WHS. As a result the UK heritage bodies have continued to influence the development of the scheme, ensuring that opportunities identified with potential to minimise adverse impacts or maximise beneficial impacts on the WHS are acted upon.

6. Recalls that the Committee has previously noted that the 2018 joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Advisory mission and the State Party's own Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) highlight that the current overall proposal would impact the integrity of the intended spatial relationships between monuments, a key part of the prehistoric 'landscape without parallel' as inscribed;

The State Party offers the following clarification that the Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) referred to as its own document (above), is that produced by National Highways as part of their application for the scheme. It is referred to hereafter as the HIA.

The report from the 2018 Advisory Mission recognised that the proposed scheme “...would deliver substantial benefits for parts of the WHS through the reunification of much of its landscape and would enhance future public enjoyment and appreciation of the WHS through the removal of the noise and visual intrusion of traffic caused by the current road. Specifically, the ‘Proposed Scheme’ would improve the current situation, through:

- *removal of a large section of the existing A303 surface road in the centre of the WHS and consequent reconnection of northern and southern parts of the WHS;*
- *additional opportunities for experiencing and interpreting the landscape of the WHS; and*
- *realisation of archaeological potential of those parts of the site which are to be physically affected through comprehensive archaeological investigation.”*

However, in addition it also identified that the scheme “...will also adversely affect the integrity and authenticity, and therefore the OUV of the WHS”.

Considerable work has subsequently been undertaken (as set out under the response to paragraph 5 of **44 COM 7B.61** above) to build on the benefits identified by the Advisory Mission as well as address the concerns raised.

The State Party remains of the opinion that the current situation with the A303 cannot be allowed to continue and its adverse impacts on the public appreciation of the Stonehenge WHS landscape and the archaeological monuments within it must be addressed. An unprecedented level of funding has been allocated by the UK government towards implementing the A303 road improvement scheme. This scheme has been developed in close collaboration with the UK heritage bodies in recognition of the highly sensitive and internationally important nature of the property.

Existing A303

The existing A303 is highly intrusive both visually and aurally, not only within the setting of Stonehenge. The sight and sound of traffic from the current road and its junction with the A360 at Longbarrow roundabout is similarly intrusive to other important groups of assets such as the Normanton Down Barrows, the Winterbourne Stoke Crossroads Barrows and the Diamond Group of monuments. It has a negative effect on the visual and physical relationships between them and the dry valleys they are grouped around in the western part of the WHS. It bisects the WHS across its full width, severing King Barrow Ridge and the Stonehenge Avenue and disrupting visual and physical relationships between monuments as well as presenting a substantial and hazardous barrier to public access to explore and appreciate the WHS. In the eastern part of the WHS vehicles on the A303 are visible in long distance views from Durrington Walls towards Vespasian's Camp and King Barrow Ridge.

The adverse effects of the existing road on the OUV of the WHS therefore affect its integrity, Stonehenge itself as an iconic monument (Attribute 1), the relationship of multiple monuments to the landscape (Attribute 3), to astronomy and the skies (Attribute 4), to each other (Attribute 5), and the landscape without parallel (Attribute 6). The influence of the remains of the monuments and their landscape settings on architects, artists, historians, archaeologists and others is also adversely impacted by the existing A303 (Attribute 7).

Proposed Scheme

In contrast, placing a substantial length of the existing A303 in a tunnel and relocating the current Longbarrow roundabout to the west, well outside of the WHS boundary, seeks to address the longstanding threat to the integrity of the WHS.

Setting the road and its traffic down within a deep cutting would remove that harmful obstruction in views between those asset groups and monuments that convey the OUV of the WHS (Attribute 5). In doing so it would also provide benefits to the authenticity of the property, and substantially remove or, at the very least significantly reduce, other adverse effects on multiple monuments that help to convey the OUV of the WHS.

Reconnecting Stonehenge physically with the wider WHS would provide wider benefits for the integrity of the WHS, and transmission of its OUV. This reintegration of the landscape would create opportunities for visitors, and local communities previously cut off from the WHS, to safely explore the publicly accessible parts of the WHS and a more extensive portion of the property using public rights of way and National Trust permissive open access land. Monuments within the WHS would be visually and physically reconnected and relationships to and between many other monument groups on either side of the existing road would be re-established (Attributes 3, 5). Critically, the surface dual

carriageway within the WHS stretching from King Barrow Ridge in the west to Vespasian's Camp in the east would be removed, and replaced with chalk grassland, allowing the Stonehenge Avenue to be reconnected where it is severed by the current A303 (Attribute 2).

The proposed scheme would return the central section of the Stonehenge part of the WHS, including areas beyond the visual envelope of the defined topographic bowl around Stonehenge, to a more tranquil environment and enhance the dark skies environment (Attribute 4). The natural environment of the WHS is fundamentally important to its character and experience. Increasing the coverage of chalk grassland, and by extension the protection of archaeological remains, presents a significant enhancement under the scheme in line with the first priority within the WHS Management Plan 2015 (Attributes 3, 6). Supported by reducing aural and visual impacts in the central area, this would create an uncluttered and respectful setting for the Stonehenge stone circle and multiple other monuments, and a more authentic representation of their cultural heritage value (Attribute 6).

The negative effects identified in the HIA have been considered in detail by National Highways and the heritage bodies, and opportunities to minimise those effects on the integrity of the intended spatial relationships between the monuments of the WHS have been taken. Cumulative changes to the scheme to address those issues based on collaborative discussion are set out under the response to paragraph 5 of **44 COM 7B.61** above and highlighted further in relation specifically to the design of the cuttings in the response to paragraph 7 of **44 COM 7B.61** below.

Conclusion

Consequently, the HIA concluded that the proposed scheme represents a beneficial impact on the integrity of the WHS. In contrast the HIA assessed the existing surface road to have a major negative impact as a result of the severance of the WHS across its entire width.

This is illustrated graphically in Figures 1 and 2 below:

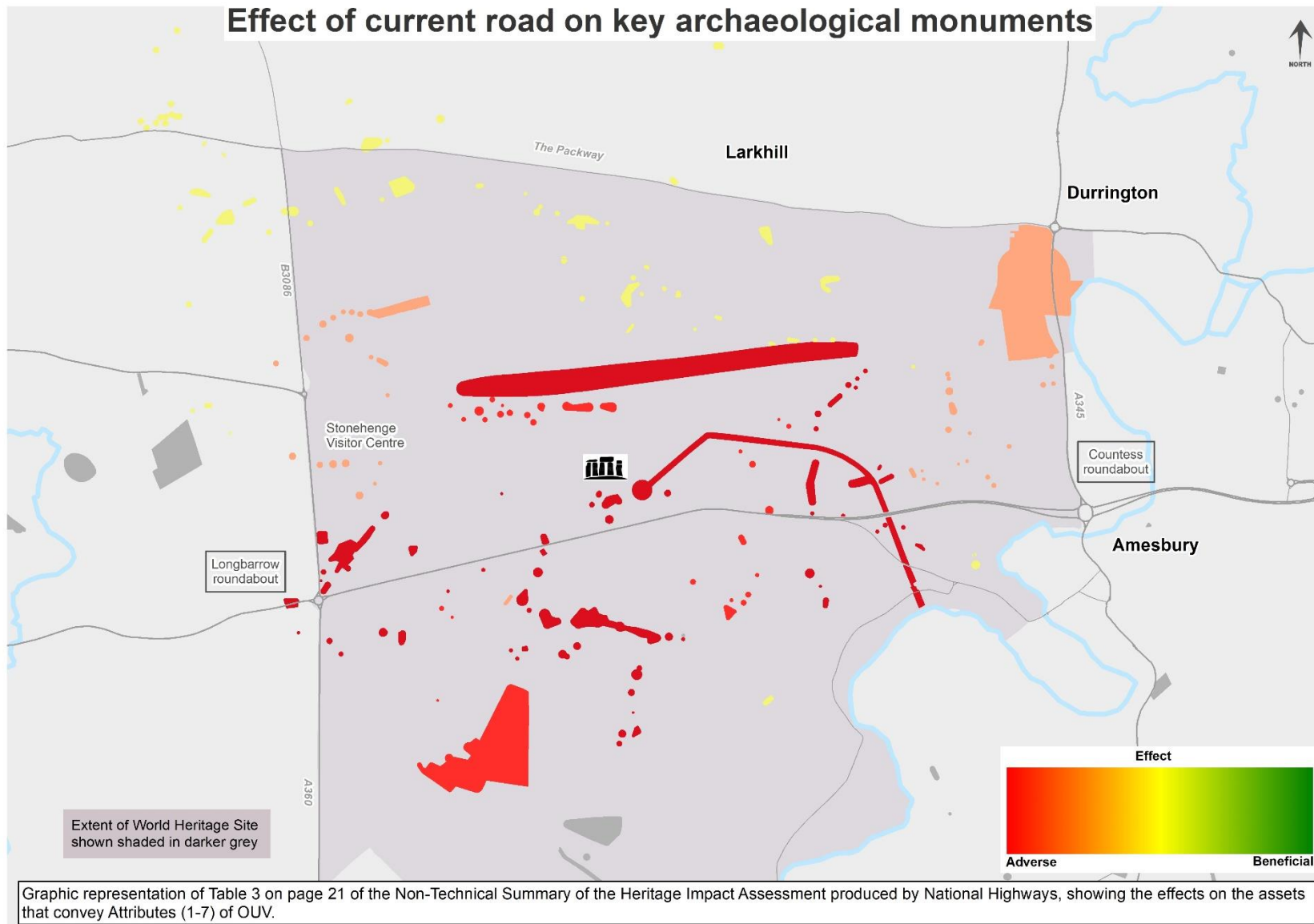
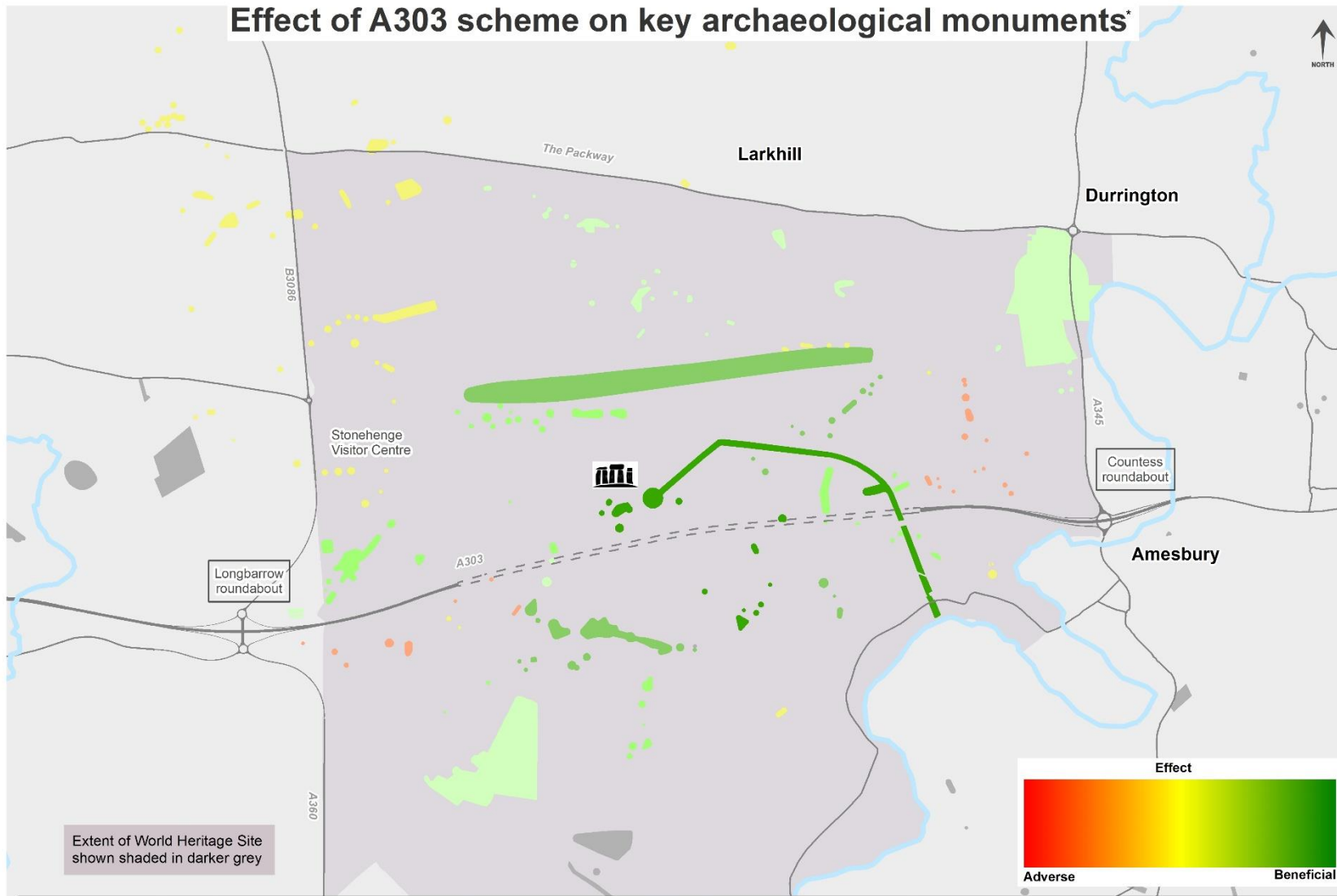


Figure 1 - Effect of existing road on key archaeological monuments within the WHS



Graphic representation of Table 3 on page 21 of the Non-Technical Summary of the Heritage Impact Assessment produced by National Highways, showing the effects on the assets that convey Attributes (1-7) of OUV.

Figure 2 - Effect of proposed A303 Scheme on key archaeological monuments within the WHS

7. Reiterates its concern that, as previously advised by the Committee and identified in the 2018 mission report, the part of the A303 improvement scheme within the property retains substantial exposed dual carriageway sections, particularly those at the western end of the property, which would impact adversely the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property, especially affecting its integrity;

Throughout development of the scheme opportunities to reduce and minimise the impacts of the cuttings and traffic have formed a particular focus of discussion. The current scheme has removed and concealed approximately 3.45km of the existing 5.4 km of surface A303 road.

Western Approach Cutting

As indicated in the response to paragraph 6 of **44 COM 7B.61** above, the siting and form of the western approach cutting have been designed to remove the visual and aural intrusion of the existing surface road and reduce the impact of the cutting on the integrity of the WHS. Placing the carriageway beyond the tunnel section within a deep cutting would conceal the road, the sight and sound of traffic, and vehicle lights in key views within the landscape. Including a 200m grassed canopy has minimised the visibility of the tunnel portal; moreover, neither the road nor the cutting would be lit. This approach is designed to benefit visual connectivity between key monument groups, currently adversely impacted by the existing surface A303.

The western portal and its approach road have been sited carefully to avoid monuments within the WHS and to make best use of the topography to further conceal built features from monuments in the landscape. The 150m wide green bridge has been sensitively placed to enable the visual relationships between the Winterbourne Stoke Crossroads Barrows and the Diamond Group to be re-established, providing north/south physical connectivity along a public right of way that is prevented by the current road. This would benefit OUV and the integrity of the WHS.

The cutting has also been designed through the use of retaining walls, to minimise the footprint of the scheme within this part of the WHS, thus minimising direct physical impacts on archaeological remains and the topography of the WHS landscape. Shallow grass slopes in the upper portion of the retained cutting, and chalk grassland mitigation beyond the retained cutting to the north and south, have been designed to soften the views of the cutting from the heritage assets conveying the OUV of the WHS and minimise visibility of the road within the landscape.

Subject to detailed design, there may be further opportunities to mitigate the residual impacts of the cutting as noted above in the response to paragraph 5 of **44 COM 7B.61**. However, to date, by including a cut and cover canopy at the western portal and a 150m green bridge, the length of open carriageway within the western end of the WHS has been reduced to approximately 850m.

Eastern End of the Tunnel

At the eastern end of the tunnel, similarly careful choices have been made regarding the location of the approach road and eastern portal to avoid monuments within the WHS and to follow a shallow dry valley to maximise concealment. The eastern portal is positioned to make best use of the topography to partially conceal the new structure within the landscape. This is recognised by the 2018 Advisory Mission Report which concluded that *“the eastern portal has been positioned in the least impactful location available close to the WHS boundary”*. The tunnel portal is hidden by a grassed canopy in

views from the Avenue, New and Old King Barrows and Countess Farm barrows. The approach road has been designed to reuse approximately 1km of the existing dual carriageway infrastructure and utilise the topography to minimise the sight and sound of high-speed traffic across this part of the WHS. The cutting would remove long distance views of traffic from Durrington Walls and Woodhenge, and the conversion of the surface A303 at King Barrow Ridge to a byway would improve non-motorised access to key monuments in the surrounding landscape.

The State Party therefore submits that all these design elements incorporated into the deep cuttings in the western and eastern sections of the scheme would result in a slight benefit to the OUV of the WHS with regards to integrity and the relationships of monuments to the landscape, to each other, and as part of the landscape without parallel (see **ANNEX B**).

8. Notes with concern that, although consideration was given to extending the bored tunnel and to greater covering of the cutting, as requested by the Committee, it was determined by the State Party that the additional benefits of a longer tunnel would not justify the additional costs;

The State Party acknowledges the concern regarding the justifications presented for the 3.3km tunnel. It welcomes this opportunity to summarise those justifications in heritage and other environmental terms as they have been assessed during development and submission of the proposed scheme (as set out in the response to paragraphs 6 and 7 of **44 COM 7B.61** above).

As detailed in the 2019 State of Conservation Report, previous consideration was given to how further mitigation could be introduced at the western portal which would reduce any residual effects of the scheme. The options considered were extending the bored tunnel, and extending the cut and cover section at the western portal.

Extended Bored Tunnel

Evidence was presented as part of the 2019 DCO Examination⁹ of the scheme setting out the technical and heritage reasons why an extended bored tunnel was not considered to be a feasible solution. A similar solution was previously rejected by a Public Inquiry¹⁰ in 2004.

The assessment also concluded that in order to achieve a longer tunnel, other significant enhancements associated with the current scheme would be lost. It would not be possible to improve the setting of the Winterbourne Stoke Crossroads Barrows by relocating and downgrading the A360 road immediately adjacent to it. Consequently, these monuments would continue to be significantly affected by the proximity of traffic using the A360 and the Longbarrow roundabout. In this scenario therefore, despite the longer tunnel, elements of the existing infrastructure would continue to impact the OUV of the WHS in terms of its integrity, the relationship of monuments to the landscape, to each other and as part of the landscape without parallel. In addition, it would not be possible to implement the significant extensions of chalk grassland within the WHS that would be created with the currently proposed scheme.

⁹ The review of the application by the UK Planning Inspectorate when consideration is given to all the important and relevant matters including the representations of all Interested Parties.

¹⁰ An inquiry set up by a UK Government minister to investigate, in this case, an application for an earlier proposal for the A303 road improvement scheme.

The location of the tunnel portal would be dictated by a number of factors, including primarily topography, and this would bring the total tunnel length to 4.885km. In order to maintain public access to Stonehenge via the visitor centre (as the gateway to this part of the WHS), a junction at the end of the tunnel would still be required to connect to the A360 and local communities. The extension to the tunnel would force the connection closer to the village of Winterbourne Stoke. When this relocated junction was assessed it was identified that it would lead to engineering and safety complications, increased journey times and would likely displace traffic onto the local road network. To mitigate this, it would be necessary to retain the A360 and the existing Longbarrow roundabout, with its intrusive lighting system, in its undesirable position next to the WHS boundary.

Cut and Cover Tunnel

Evidence was also presented as part of the 2019 DCO Examination of the scheme regarding consideration of the combination of a bored tunnel as per the current scheme design, and a cut and cover tunnel that would extend to the western boundary of the WHS.

Whilst an extended cut and cover section is feasible, it was concluded that it would neither avoid impacts on all attributes that convey the OUV of the WHS, or its integrity. The cut and cover extension would have the same construction footprint in the WHS as the DCO Scheme, and so the impacts on Attribute 2 (the physical remains of the Neolithic and Bronze Age ceremonial and funerary monuments and associated sites) would remain. Assessment of the benefits of reinstating the ground above the carriageway indicated that it would provide connectivity between some of the key asset grounds but that this would not be significantly more beneficial to the OUV of the WHS than the proposed scheme.

These issues will be reviewed and addressed again under the Secretary of State for the Department for Transport's redetermination of the scheme (see response to paragraph 9 of **44 COM 7B.61** below).

9. Reiterates its previous request that the State Party should not proceed with the A303 route upgrade for the section between Amesbury and Berwick Down in its current form, and considers that the scheme should be modified to deliver the best available outcome for the OUV of the property;

Following a lengthy development programme, National Highways presented a scheme that sought to deliver the best possible outcome for the OUV of the property. That scheme underwent formal Examination in 2019 and was recommended for refusal by the Examining Authority in January 2020. The scheme was initially approved by the Secretary of State for the Department for Transport in November 2020, but the decision was the subject of a legal challenge (for a more detailed explanation of this process see the response to paragraph 11 of **44 COM 7B.61** below). Following an order of the High Court, the decision to grant the DCO was quashed. Consequently, at the current time the DCO application cannot proceed and must be redetermined. At the request of National Highways, the heritage bodies, including Historic England, remain in active discussion to ensure that should the DCO be reconseented, the scheme will be designed and delivered in the best way possible for the benefit of the OUV of the WHS. The potential to explore opportunities to achieve this under the scheme with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies would be welcomed and is discussed in more detail in the responses to paragraphs 5 and 8 of **44 COM 7B.61** above.

The Secretary of State for the Department for Transport has now commenced the process of redetermining the DCO application. On 30 November 2021 he published a statement ([The Statement of Matters](#)) on the UK Planning Inspectorate's website, setting out the matters on which he is seeking further representations to inform that process. The Statement of Matters sets out how the redetermination of the application as a consequence of the court judgment will be handled. The Secretary of State for the Department for Transport has given National Highways the first opportunity to make further representations for the purposes of his redetermination of the application. He will then invite all Interested Parties to provide written comments on both the response of National Highways and the matters he has highlighted for consideration as part of the redetermination process.

These matters include:

- Material updates to the information relating to alternatives considered during the Examination of the proposed scheme by the UK Planning Inspectorate (including the relative merits of a longer tunnel option), and relating to the relative merits of alternatives to the proposed scheme;
- Any changes since the Examination concluded regarding whether the proposed scheme would still be consistent with relevant local and national policies;
- Any updates to the assessment of the impact of the proposed scheme on carbon budgets and on climate, including greenhouse gas emissions and climate change adaptation in line with UK Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations and the National Policy Statement for National Networks;
- Unless already covered by the matters set out above, the adequacy of the environmental information produced in support of the application and whether any further or updated environmental information is now necessary given the time since the examination closed; and
- Any matters arising since the original determination of the scheme in November 2020 which are material to the Secretary of State for the Department for Transport's redetermination of the application.

The State Party (via the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport) has ensured that Decision **44 COM 7B.61**, as a matter arising since the original determination of the scheme and material to the redetermination, has been notified to the Secretary of State for the Department for Transport. In addition, in the event an Advisory Mission has been reported on in advance of the Secretary of State for the Department for Transport's redetermination, the State Party will ensure this is similarly provided together with any other material comments from the World Heritage Centre. The State Party will ensure that the World Heritage Centre is kept updated in relation to the progress of the redetermination process for the application.

10. Notes furthermore the State Party's commitment to ongoing engagement with the Committee, the World Heritage Centre, and ICOMOS, but also considers that it is unclear what might be achieved by further engagement unless and until the design is fundamentally amended;

The State Party acknowledges the need for clear objectives in its approach to engagement with the World Heritage Centre and Advisory Bodies. It will ensure engagement interventions are purposeful and provide information that has not already been extensively relayed.

There is and will continue to be opportunity for engagement, consultation and collaboration in regard to the scheme and its impact on the property's OUV. The time being taken to carefully consider how the A303 scheme can best be reviewed and taken forward, following the quashing of the DCO, highlights the State Party's commitment to seeking an outcome that will protect and enhance the property's OUV. The State Party will also ensure that National Highways uses the detailed design process (subject to redetermination of the scheme) to address as many of the World Heritage Centre's concerns as possible, recognising that all parties involved are ultimately seeking to maximise protection and enhancement of the property's OUV.

An Advisory Mission invitation has been issued, to take place in early 2022, subject to the availability of the World Heritage Centre and Advisory Bodies. The State Party would welcome this opportunity for active engagement focussing on the current iteration of the scheme and the modifications that have been made since the last mission took place in 2018, with the benefit of discussion about associated benefits and challenges within the property itself. An Advisory Mission would allow the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies to engage with the landscape and current situation on the ground, and experience the state of the property on completion of the scheme through an immersive virtual reality tool. It would also provide the opportunity to explore the issues raised at the 2021 World Heritage Committee and in this State of Conservation Report in constructive dialogue about the scheme with the shared objective of design and delivery for the benefit of the OUV of the WHS.

11. Regrets that the Development Consent Order (DCO) has been granted for the scheme; and therefore, further considers in conformity with Paragraph 179 of the Operational Guidelines that the approved A303 improvement scheme is a potential threat to the property, which - if implemented - could have deleterious effects on its inherent characteristics, notably to its integrity;

Following the adoption of the Committee's decision in July 2021, there have been further developments in relation to the scheme. The State Party summarised these in a separate notification to the World Heritage Centre in January 2022 and is able to provide further clarification here.

Subsequent to the Secretary of State for the Department for Transport's decision to grant consent for the A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down (Stonehenge) DCO application on 12 November 2020, a legal challenge was lodged with the High Court in the week commencing 21 December 2020, as reported in the State of Conservation Report update submitted in February 2021. This challenge was taken forward with a Judicial Review hearing, which took place 23 – 25 June 2021.

The UK's Judicial Review process is a type of court proceeding in which a judge reviews the lawfulness of a decision or action made by a public body or minister, in this case the Secretary of State for the Department for Transport. The role of the court is not to re-make the decision or consider the merits of the scheme, but to assess whether the process of the decision-making followed correct procedure.

On 30 July 2021 the Judicial Review judgment was handed down. The judge upheld two of the five grounds submitted (some of which were subdivided, making ten in total):

- That the Secretary of State for the Department for Transport did not receive a precis of, or any briefing on, the parts of those documents [under the scheme] relating to impacts on heritage assets which the [Examining Authority¹¹] accepted but did not summarise in its report; and
- That the Secretary of State for the Department for Transport had failed to consider the relative merits of two alternative schemes for addressing the harm resulting from the western cutting and portal, firstly, to cover approximately 800m of the cutting and secondly, to extend the bored tunnel so that the two portals are located outside the western boundary of the WHS.

The other grounds were rejected.

The two grounds upheld related to the decision-making process, and not to the evidence submitted by National Highways as part of the DCO application and examination, or the merits of the scheme.

As part of their development of the road scheme, National Highways undertook an evaluation of alternatives at an early stage. This involved identifying and assessing around 60 possible surface and tunnel routes before consulting on the one that they considered to be the best solution.

National Highways submitted a report into their evaluation of alternatives as part of the A303 Stonehenge DCO application, which was supplemented with further information and discussed during the Examination of the scheme. The Examining Authority and Secretary of State for the Department for Transport had concluded that they did not need to comment on the relative merits of the alternatives because National Highways had already carried out a full appraisal of options before the DCO application was made. The court ruled that this had been the wrong approach for the "*wholly exceptional*" circumstances of the project, and that the Secretary of State for the Department for Transport was legally required to consider the merits of alternatives to the western cutting and portals.

As a result, the decision to grant the DCO has been quashed. The full judgment can be found at the UK Courts and Tribunals Judiciary [website](#). Please see the response to paragraph 9 of **44 COM 7B.61** above with regard to the details of the redetermination of the DCO.

The State Party has submitted throughout this report evidence to support its view that rather than being a potential threat to the property, the scheme is capable of delivering significant enhancements for the WHS, its characteristics, and importantly, its integrity.

¹¹ The Examining Authority is the Inspector or the Panel of Inspectors appointed to conduct the Examination of the application.

12. Notes moreover that in the event that DCO consent was confirmed by the High Court, the property warrants the inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger;

The State Party firmly believes that the WHS should not be placed on the List of World Heritage in Danger as a result of the scheme. It has submitted in this report that the proposals have been subject to scrutiny at every stage so far by national and local heritage bodies and other experts and would continue to be so under the detailed design process. Consequently the World Heritage Centre can have confidence in the safeguards included under the scheme. Those safeguards ensure that not only will the OUV of the WHS be maintained, but that this carefully designed solution will also deliver further considerable **enhancements** for the WHS and its OUV.

As a result of the collaborative engagement and partnership working that continues to deliver successful management and protection of the OUV of the property and its integrity, the State Party believes that the WHS is in a better condition today than when it was first inscribed in 1986. The current surface A303 presents a significant challenge which all involved with this iconic World Heritage Site remain committed to addressing. To that end all parties have worked in collaboration to take account of the advice previously provided through the 2018 Advisory Mission (and previous missions) to ensure that the scheme delivers the substantial benefits recognised in the Mission Report, as well as seeking to address the concerns it highlighted. Significant improvements have been made to the scheme in the intervening years, including due to the continued input of the UK heritage bodies.

As the World Heritage Centre will be aware from the State Party's prior update in January 2022 and this report, the DCO was quashed and not upheld by the High Court and is now undergoing a process of redetermination. The State Party believes that, in the event the scheme receives consent once again, it is capable of addressing the longstanding objective to address the persistent threat of the A303 to the integrity of the WHS. In addition, it believes that it is capable of delivering significant enhancements to the property that will create an uncluttered and respectful setting for the Stonehenge stone circle and its landscape, and a more authentic representation of its internationally important cultural heritage value.

*13. Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2022**, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 45th session in 2022, **with a view to considering the inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger if the A303 route upgrade scheme is not modified to deliver the best available outcome for the OUV of the property.***

The State Party submits this report in response to the Committee's request.

The State Party welcomes ongoing engagement with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies in working towards solving the universally recognised adverse impact of the current A303 on the iconic Stonehenge landscape. It does not believe that the property should be inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

3. **Other current conservation issues identified by the State Party which may have an impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value**

(a) **Legacy Benefit Projects**

- i) Exploring the World Heritage Site and Beyond: Landscape Access, Sustainable Transport and Tourism Strategy:

Three objectives were included in the WHS Management Plan 2015: to produce a Sustainable Transport Plan, a Sustainable Land Access Plan and a Sustainable Tourism Plan. These three topics were brought together into a single project which started in Autumn 2019 led by a Project Board made up of representatives of the WHS Partnership Panel, and a draft report was presented in April 2020. A facilitator will assist the Project Board to review the potential actions contained in the report and decide which may be appropriate to develop further. The Project Board aims to make a recommendation to the Partnership Panel in early 2022 and, where appropriate, actions will be incorporated into the revised Management Plan.

- ii) Connected Communities:

The Connected Communities Working Group is progressing feasibility and design work for three key routes. The aim of this work is to improve accessibility, making it easier for people and visitors to enjoy walking or cycling around the area including the WHS.

- ii) Biodiversity:

The A303 improvement scheme has helped set up a Biodiversity Working Group (covering a wider geographic remit than the area of the Stonehenge part of the WHS itself), which has obtained funding for a series of biodiversity projects and work is underway to develop more.

- iii) Burrowing Animals:

The WHS Burrowing Mammal Strategy seeks to address threats from burrowing animals to the physical remains that contribute to the OUV of the WHS. A draft report was issued in March 2020 including a landscape scale strategy for use by land managers who have responsibilities for the management of the WHS. Work is being done to finalise the strategy which aims to protect vulnerable monuments from damage by cultivation and from burrowing animals addressing two of the key priorities of the WHS Management Plan 2015. Guidance for landowners is also being produced.

(b) **Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on management of the property**

The operation and management of the sites, monuments and visitor facilities within the WHS landscape by both the English Heritage Trust (EHT) and the National Trust (NT) were severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic in both 2020 and 2021. Repeated and prolonged lockdowns saw the **Stonehenge visitor centre and monument** site open to visitors for only 5 months of the 20/21 financial year, which reflected impact on the wider national EHT estate. At Stonehenge, where approximately 70% of visitors usually come from overseas tourism, these effects were most sharply felt with visitor numbers only reaching c. 180k compared with c. 1.5m in pre-pandemic years.

With support from the UK Government the EHT were able to keep up all essential conservation activities at all its sites, including Stonehenge, during the pandemic, without any staff redundancies.

During lockdowns and when the sites were closed there was a **significant prevalence of trespass and increase in other heritage crime**, and this continued into 2021. Despite the financial impacts felt by both EHT and NT and consequent reductions in staffing levels throughout this period, both organisations maintained regular site checks from specialists to ensure the protection of the monuments under their management, the landscape, and collection items in the visitor centre and museum, increasing security where necessary to ensure that the OUV of the property was not compromised.

Wildlife and the landscape around the Stonehenge monument flourished during lockdowns as usual wear and tear to the grassland from pedestrian visitor footfall was minimised and traffic on local road networks was significantly reduced. This period of recovery of the chalk grassland was beneficial to the OUV of the WHS. Increased sightings of hares, deer and bird species including the Great Bustard within the Stonehenge landscape were noted.

At the **reopening of Stonehenge following the first lockdown in July 2020**, the EHT and NT worked in collaboration to establish and monitor a **new walking route to the Stonehenge monument** from the Visitor Centre to address restrictions on the use of visitor buses and the need to maintain social distancing. The route operated for over 12 months and was achieved without erosion or degradation to the landscape or archaeological assets nearby. The collaboration between the EHT and NT during this difficult period for the property ensured that **permissive open access** was maintained throughout periods when it was legally permissible to do so. They also enabled access to Stonehenge for members of the public in search of solace and inspiration, allowing visitors to continue to experience the OUV of this area of the WHS in the interim months of the pandemic.

The usual managed **open access for the solstices and equinoxes** were not possible during the on-going pandemic due to restrictions on large gatherings. Instead, the EHT provided a very well received online live broadcast of the monument (over 5 million viewers internationally for the summer solstice of 2020) supplemented by optional curated content. This gave insight to the nature of the stones, the landscape and the history of these seasonal celebrations. Finally, in September 2021, the EHT hosted managed open access for the Autumn Equinox at Stonehenge, the first occasion of this kind since Winter Solstice 2019.

The **response of visitors and staff when they have been able to return to the WHS landscape** between the various lockdowns was notable. Many visitors noted meeting up with friends and family as their first venture out after lockdown, the importance of being able to spend time in the landscape and open air, the value of these ancient heritage assets during times of crisis, and the permanence and timelessness that brings reassurance and comfort when facing current challenges.

As lockdown eased, the NT facilitated academic research supported by Historic England and the Heritage Alliance ([Places of Joy: The Role of Heritage After Lockdown](#)) which focussed on Avebury as one of its case studies. The research looked at heritage locations as places of reunion, sociality and escape, and how they are used to satisfy deeper psychological and socio-cultural needs.

More generally, during the lockdowns **the WHS Coordination Unit began to collect information regarding the impacts of the pandemic from partners within the WHS**. This is ongoing and may in due course facilitate more detailed discussions about measures to address those impacts and

understanding as to how to manage them in the event of similar occurrences in the future.

(c) Landowner advice regarding metal detecting within the WHS

Addressing Policy 3a and Action 21 of the WHS Management Plan 2015, the Coordination Unit have produced a guidance document for landowners to understand the impact and restrictions on metal detector use within the WHS. The document, entitled ‘Metal Detecting in the Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites World Heritage Site: A Guide for Farmers and Landowners’, has been distributed to local farmers. It is available on the [WHS website](#) and the guidance will be reviewed regularly.

(d) Interpretation enhancement – installation of new panels

The English Heritage Trust (EHT) in partnership with the National Trust (NT) have recently installed new interpretation panels at the **guardianship sites of West Kennet Long Barrow, Silbury Hill, The Sanctuary and Windmill Hill** that have been well received by visitors. New World Heritage Site boards were also installed, indicating the major sites in the Avebury part of the World Heritage Site and their relationship to one another.

Four new interpretation boards are planned for **Fyfield Down Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), near Avebury**. These will introduce visitors to the archaeological and geological landscapes, lichens, and other wildlife that they can see within the SSSI. The boards will also mention the positive management needed to look after this important landscape. The project is due to be completed this financial year. Funding is also being sought to provide a more creative, digital interpretation of the Fyfield Downs landscape, such as via story maps, or employing 3D virtual reality.

A number of farms within the WHS have expressed an interest in providing educational access and engaging the public. Two Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier agreements have been set up with educational access, within the Avebury part of the WHS. These agreements commenced on 1 January 2022 and will last for 5 years.

(e) World Heritage Site Condition Survey 2022

The World Heritage Site Condition Survey is carried out every 10 years to gain a detailed understanding of the condition of the property and provide a baseline for ongoing review. The results of this survey enable an assessment of the success of conservation and management interventions and assist in planning future approaches as well as informing the response to the cycle of Periodic Reporting.

The timetable for delivery of the 2020 survey was delayed due to Covid-19, leading to the project being unsuccessfully tendered in February 2021. Subsequent to this, Historic England has been examining alternative options for delivery, with the aim of providing a more sustainable model for this and future WHS Condition Surveys that deliver greater public value and project legacy. The project is now due to be re-tendered, with survey work anticipated to start later in 2022.

(f) Agri-environment Schemes Update

Agri-environment schemes remain an effective response to protecting sensitive archaeological remains from damage through cultivation. These schemes are extremely important for protecting the physical remains and enhancing the setting of prehistoric monuments within the WHS through measures such as grassland restoration, erosion repair, protection from burrowing animals and scrub control. Payments

have also supported educational access and interpretation to aid the public enjoyment and understanding of WHS archaeology, natural and historic features.

The area covered by agri-environment schemes has increased in both parts of the WHS since 2020. At **Stonehenge** around 70% of the landscape is currently in agri-environmental stewardship, (a 30% increase), with management options and capital works helping to protect and/or enhance the setting of c. 500 historic features. At **Avebury** around 70% of the area is in a scheme which benefits over 300 historic features. Following withdrawal from the EU, the UK Government is putting in place arrangements for **Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMs)** to succeed EU funded schemes as they expire (see **ANNEX C**). An additional strand of the UK Government's Agricultural Transition Plan is the **Farming in Protected Landscapes** programme which runs from 2021 to 2024 (also see **ANNEX C**). This grant is available to farmers and land managers within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which covers part of the Avebury site.

Farmer groups, known as **Farmer Clusters**, have a potentially major role to play in helping to deliver WHS objectives. Farmers within a cluster work together across a landscape to deliver better outcomes and target management. There are currently two clusters covering the WHS; one covering the Avebury landscape, and a further group is currently being developed which includes the Stonehenge landscape with the support of a local biodiversity partnership (formed by the Biodiversity Working Group) and National Highways funding. A [spatial opportunities map](#) including historic features has been produced which will help inform future potential priorities on the ground and opportunities for future funding.

4. In conformity with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, describe any potential major restorations, alterations and/or new construction(s) intended within the property, the buffer zone(s) and/or corridors or other areas, where such developments may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, including authenticity and integrity

Stonehenge Lintels (Application Reference S00241272) (CLT/WHC/EUR/21/13558)

Details of this conservation project undertaken by the English Heritage Trust (EHT) with the potential to impact on the Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites World Heritage Site were requested by the World Heritage Centre in September 2021, and submitted by the State Party in January 2022.

The works entailed the repair of the mortar holding the sarsen lintels in place in the stone circle at Stonehenge, comprising the removal of failed cement-based mortar and replacement with lime-based mortar following an inspection and subsequent report by Historic England's engineering team in 2019. The State Party can confirm that none of these repairs were considered to be urgent at the time of the report and consequently did not represent a serious concern for the monument or the OUV of the WHS.

While the work was being undertaken, the EHT ran a Conservation in Action programme where visitors were encouraged to take account of the work being undertaken. The EHT's webpage regarding the work can be viewed [here](#), and the various reports were previously included as attachments to the State Party's notification letter.

Stonehenge Educational Centre Project (Planning Application Reference 20/10807/ FUL)

The English Heritage Trust (EHT) provides free visits to Stonehenge for all education groups with around 50,000 students each year visiting the site in this way. A further 12,000 students per year experience volunteer-led Discovery Visits, some elements of which are delivered in partnership with the National Trust (NT). This education offer widens students' understanding of Stonehenge and its landscape.

When the Stonehenge Visitor Centre opened in 2013, an Education Space was made available by sectioning off a part of the visitor café during school term times. While successful in many ways, the EHT considers that it has become increasingly clear that the learning experience provided could be much improved in quality by offering a wholly dedicated Education Space. Teacher feedback suggested this should also include devoted outdoor and eating space for school groups in order to address any safeguarding concerns from being in a main visitor area.

When Government Cultural Recovery funding became available as a result of the pandemic, a focus for the EHT was to build back education visits to Stonehenge to meet and perhaps exceed the reach and quality of their pre-pandemic education offer, following the restrictions on school visits during 2020 and 2021. Using this funding, a new temporary Education Centre comprising of a purpose-built classroom, welfare facilities and an outdoor courtyard has been constructed to the west of the Ancillary Building adjacent to the Stonehenge Coach Park. The building itself is located outside of the WHS, with the western boundary line running through the adjacent new linked outdoor courtyard used for school lunches. The building has been designed as an extension of the existing Ancillary Building using the same materials, form and massing, and as such is in keeping with the rest of the site. The potential effects on the OUV of the WHS and in particular the key views identified of highest significance to the OUV of the WHS were taken into account in its design, in discussion with both Historic England and heritage specialists in the Local Authority. The new space, which has temporary planning permission for 2 years, opened in early October 2021 and has already proved very popular with schools. The planning application for this temporary building can be viewed [here](#).

The State Party will provide further information regarding these proposals to update the World Heritage Centre in due course.

5. Public access to the state of conservation report

The State Party is content for the full State of Conservation Report to be uploaded to the World Heritage Centre's State of Conservation Information System.

6. Signature of the Authority



Henry Reed
Senior International Policy Adviser, Cultural Diplomacy
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

ANNEX A

Update on stakeholder and advisory group input to the A303 Stonehenge scheme:

A collaborative relationship has been structured through a programme of consultation commitments where the heritage bodies, and other key stakeholders, provide feedback and advice to National Highways on aspects of the scheme where the WHS would be affected. As a result, they have continued to influence the development of the scheme so that every opportunity is taken to avoid or minimise potential adverse impacts on the WHS.

Through regular meetings and consultations with the **Heritage Monitoring and Advisory Group (HMAG)**, National Highways and their archaeological contractor, Wessex Archaeology, have been able to draw on the advice and experience of Historic England, Wiltshire Council, the English Heritage Trust and the National Trust. The advice of the group, as set out in its Terms of Reference, ensures that National Highways focusses on a heritage-centred approach to meet the exemplar standards of practice that the WHS ‘landscape without parallel’ deserves.

The Detailed Archaeological Mitigation Strategy (DAMS) and the Outline Environmental Management Plan (OEMP) were updated as part of the 2020 planning process, and provide the basis on which the next set of documents have been formulated, alongside the Heritage Management Plan (HMP) and the various Construction Environmental Management Plans (CEMP). Continuing engagement with HMAG has refined strategies for archaeological science as the foundation of the proposed programme of archaeological investigation.

Four Technical Strategies were developed (covering geoarchaeology, recovery and dating of human remains, environmental archaeology and scientific dating) together with strategies for the capture, handling and archiving of digital data and for selection and retention of archaeological materials. These Technical Strategies form an important component of the archaeological mitigation strategy and underpin the archaeological approaches and methods set out in the Site Specific Written Schemes of Investigation (SSWSIs). They form a key consideration in the development, consultation and approval process for the SSWSIs supporting the application of an intelligent, question-led application of archaeological science and method. This responds to the archaeological research agenda developed in consultation with the Scientific Committee (see below). Particular areas of focus for a research-question led approach have centred on plough soil artefact and tree hollow sampling. These and other areas were developed through a series of research framework workshops attended and contributed to by HMAG, the Scientific Committee, Historic England specialists and additional members of the academic community with particular expertise in areas of relevance to the WHS and wider landscape.

The **Scientific Committee** of independent specialists and experts continues to play a key role, advising HMAG, National Highways, and their archaeological contractor, Wessex Archaeology, in how to strive for exemplar standards in delivering the archaeological programme. The Scientific Committee continues to meet regularly and has actively contributed to development of the technical strategies and research questions, as well as the Public Archaeology and Community Engagement (PACE) programme (see below). A number of additional members have been invited to join the Committee since the start of 2021 to incorporate further specialist knowledge and skills (e.g. scientific dating and experience in large-scale archaeological evaluation strategies) that were considered would benefit the Committee’s core purpose as set out in the Terms of Reference for the group. The Committee provides a considerable breadth of expertise and a broad range of views that bring diversity to discussions and has contributed

to the scheme through workshops, meetings and written comments. Members of the Scientific Committee maintain their independence and ability to express their personal opinions publicly.

The **Stakeholder Design Consultation Group (SDCG)** facilitates consultation by National Highways on aspects of scheme design and key design features both within and outside the WHS with heritage bodies including HMAG, as well as other environmental stakeholders. The key purpose of this group is to ensure that safeguarding and protection of OUV is at the forefront of the detailed design process. National Highways will reconvene these meetings in the event the scheme is consented and a detailed design process commences.

Following the last State of Conservation Report, the **Public Archaeology and Community Engagement (PACE) programme** has been progressed for the scheme. This aims to raise awareness of the importance of the WHS landscape and encourage the enjoyment of and engagement with the archaeological process and any discoveries made. It targets wide reaching audiences locally, nationally and internationally, complementing existing provision by key heritage bodies. The programme is being developed by National Highways' archaeological contractor, a highly regarded educational charity, locally based, with decades of experience of working in and around the WHS. Their work is overseen by the PACE steering committee, which includes representatives from the WHS co-ordination unit, HMAG, local museums and other heritage organisations.

Aside from the groups related to the scheme itself, the **Legacy Benefits Steering Group** also plays an important role in developing the benefits package already being delivered with funding from National Highways and input from a wide group of representatives from across the WHS. The group identifies potential legacy schemes and projects, and decides which to pursue to maximise the positive outcomes of the scheme, guided at all stages by the WHS Management Plan 2015. Individual projects brought forward by the Group are discussed under Section 3 of this report (other current conservation issues).

ANNEX B

Amended Extract from National Highways Heritage Impact Assessment: Summary of Impact of the existing and proposed road on the OUV of the WHS - This table is extracted from National Highways’ HIA, amended to include additional columns showing the ‘Improvement steps in the significance of effects between the existing A303 and the Scheme’, and ‘Summary Reasoning’ to explain in summary the reasoning behind each assessment in the HIA.

Scale of effect as shown below

Very Large Adverse	Large Adverse	Moderate Adverse	Slight Adverse	Neutral	Slight Beneficial	Moderate Beneficial	Large Beneficial	Very Large Beneficial
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Attribute of Outstanding Universal Value	Impact of existing A303 surface route	Significance of effect of existing A303 surface route	Impact of Scheme	Anticipated significance of effect of Scheme	Improvement steps in the significance of effects between the existing A303 and the Scheme (see scale of effect above)	Summary reasoning
1. Stonehenge itself as a globally famous and iconic monument	Moderate Negative	Large Adverse	Major Positive Change	Very Large Beneficial	↑↑↑↑↑↑↑↑ (+7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Scheme would enhance the setting of the Stonehenge monument, improving its aural and visual environment by removing the existing A303. It would physically and visually reconnect it with the wider WHS to the south, improving relationships between this monument and other monuments in the landscape and improving the visitor experience at the monument. It would provide the opportunity to enhance physical access to the wider landscape.
2. The physical remains of the Neolithic and Bronze Age funerary and ceremonial	Moderate Negative	Large Adverse	Negligible Negative Change	Slight Adverse	↑↑ (+2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Scheme reduces physical and contextual severance and visual impacts on a number of assets. It avoids intruding on the midsummer sunrise / midwinter sunset solstitial axis.

monuments and associated sites						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Scheme alignment has been developed to avoid known concentrations of archaeological remains that make a significant contribution to the OUV of the WHS and minimise the loss of archaeological remains.
3. The siting of Neolithic and Bronze Age funerary and ceremonial sites and monuments in relation to the landscape	Minor Negative	Moderate Adverse	Negligible Negative Change	Slight Adverse	↑ (+1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Scheme removes the existing surface A303 across much of the WHS. This enables the physical reconnection of monuments to the wider landscape and safe access between the north and south parts of the WHS. This will facilitate visitors' ability to appreciate and understand the visual and spatial connections between monuments and the wider landscape. The Scheme's cutting design, chalk grassland reversion, 200m canopy and 150m Green Bridge aid its visual integration within the landscape.
4. The design of Neolithic and Bronze Age funerary and ceremonial sites and monuments in relation to the skies and astronomy	Minor Negative	Moderate Adverse	Moderate Positive Change	Large Beneficial	↑↑↑↑↑ (+5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Scheme removes views of the existing A303 south of Stonehenge where it crosses the winter solstice sunset alignment by placing the road in a bored tunnel at this point. No lighting is proposed for the Scheme.
5. The siting of Neolithic and Bronze Age funerary and ceremonial sites and monuments in	Moderate Negative	Large Adverse	Negligible Positive Change	Slight Beneficial	↑↑↑↑↑ (+4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Scheme removes the A303 and its associated visual clutter and distraction from sightlines, improving visual connections between monuments. Placing part of the road in a bored tunnel removes the severance of the A303 and provides the

relation to each other						opportunity to enable physical access between some Asset Groups.
6. The disposition, physical remains and settings of the key Neolithic and Bronze Age funerary, ceremonial and other monuments and sites of the period, which together form a landscape without parallel	Moderate Negative	Large Adverse	Negligible Positive Change	Slight Beneficial	↑↑↑↑ (+4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The scheme removes the existing surface A303 across much of the WHS. This improves the setting of numerous assets within the landscape and will enable visitors to better appreciate their disposition and relationships.
7. The influence of the remains of the Neolithic and Bronze Age funerary and ceremonial monuments and their landscape setting on architects, artists, historians, archaeologists and others	Negligible Negative	Slight Adverse	Negligible Positive Change	Slight Beneficial	↑↑ (+2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Scheme would have a beneficial impact on the key views which have inspired artists and others, including present-day visitors and those for whom the property has spiritual associations.
Integrity	Major Negative	Large Adverse	Negligible Positive Change	Slight Beneficial	↑↑↑↑ (+4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Scheme would remove the existing A303, addressing a longstanding threat to the Integrity of the WHS. Removing a substantial length of the existing A303 would improve the ability to access all parts of the WHS and would

						reduce aural and visual impact over the increased length where the road would be in a tunnel.
Authenticity	Negligible Negative	Slight Adverse	Negligible Positive Change	Slight Beneficial	↑↑ (+2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Scheme would avoid impacts on major assets associated with the OUV of the WHS and would involve mitigation by archaeological excavation. • It would have a positive impact on setting and the designed relationships between assets.

ANNEX C

Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMs)

Prior to 2021, agri-environment schemes were supported through European Union funding. Following withdrawal from the EU, the UK Government is putting in place arrangements for **Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMs)** to succeed EU funded schemes as they expire. ELMs are the cornerstone of the new agricultural policy for England (Agriculture Bill 2020) replacing direct payments with an environmental scheme paying public money for public goods including enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment. ELMs are due to be introduced from 2024 and are intended to support the rural economy while achieving the goals of the 25 Year Environment Plan and a commitment to net zero emissions by 2050.

This includes a grant to help support projects that help nature recovery, mitigate the impacts of climate change, provide opportunities for people to discover, enjoy and understand the landscape and cultural heritage, and/or support nature-friendly, sustainable farm businesses.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-land-management-schemes-overview/environmental-land-management-scheme-overview>

Farming in Protected Landscapes programme

The UK Government has just introduced the Farming in Protected Landscape programme, a three year transitional grant funding programme (2021-2024), whereby Protected Landscapes in England are able to support farmers and land managers to help grow their businesses and create more jobs. This will increase resilience of farm businesses, which in turn contributes to a more thriving local economy and community.

This programme provides funding to support cultural heritage under one of its four themes (Place - see below). The expected outcomes include that historic structures and features are conserved, enhanced or interpreted more effectively. In terms of World Heritage Sites, this would provide funding for the conservation of historic structures and features, and closely aligns to UNESCO's request to ensure conservation of landscape defining features.

The programme has four objectives:

Climate—supporting the delivery of net zero through nature and nature-based solutions to help communities mitigate and adapt to climate change

Nature—supporting their leading role in the delivery of the Nature Recovery Network and achieving the Government's commitment to protect 30% of land by 2030

People—providing a natural health service that will improve the nation's public health and wellbeing through increased access to nature across all parts of society, as part of our green recovery

Place—supporting these landscapes as centres of excellence and green innovation that are flourishing places to live and work, each with a strong identity and cultural heritage, and high recognition as attractive visitor destinations.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/funding-for-farmers-in-protected-landscapes>