

Stonehenge  
World Heritage Site Management Plan Consultation and  
Environmental Improvements Consultation  
c/o English Heritage  
1 Bedford Avenue  
London WC1B 3AU

14<sup>th</sup> October 2008

By email to [stonehengewhsm@uk.grayling.com](mailto:stonehengewhsm@uk.grayling.com)  
[stonehenge.environmentalimprovements@uk.grayling.com](mailto:stonehenge.environmentalimprovements@uk.grayling.com)

Dear Sir/Madam

### **The Future of Stonehenge: Public Consultation**

The UK National Commission for UNESCO is pleased to have this opportunity to respond to the concurrent public consultation regarding Stonehenge on (i) World Heritage Site Management Plan Review; and (ii) Stonehenge Environmental Improvements.

#### **1. About the UK National Commission for UNESCO**

- 1.1 UNESCO<sup>1</sup> is unique in the UN system in operating through National Commissions in its Member States ensuring the engagement of civil society experts in the fields of education, culture, the sciences and communication and information. Under the UNESCO Charter National Commissions are tasked to advise their governments on all matters to do with UNESCO. The UK Commission was re-established by Hilary Benn in March 2004.
- 1.2 The Commission is an independent civil society body working in partnership with Her Majesty's Government and in close collaboration with the UK Permanent Delegation to UNESCO in Paris. The Commission is headed by a Board of Directors with four sectoral Committees - including Culture - and two country Committees. The Commission has over 200 members, all independent and *ad hominem* experts in education, culture, science and communication & information. [See Appendices I and II for the terms of reference of the Commission and its Culture Committee.]
- 1.3 The Commission responded to HM Government's 2006 public consultation the A303 Improvement Scheme in support of the Published Scheme as the best balanced option for achieving a sustainable solution to meet the objectives of the then Management Plan, the principles of the World Heritage Convention<sup>2</sup> and deriving substantial public benefit. The Commission was most disappointed at the Government's decision announced in December 2007 that although the Published Scheme was the appropriate option it was not affordable.

#### **2. Stonehenge and the UK's Obligation under the World Heritage Convention**

- 2.1 Stonehenge is one of the few UK sites that is immediately recognised around the world. It is used as a symbol of Britain, acting as a magnet and raising the profile of Britain as a cultural tourism destination. A far higher proportion of the one million annual visitors attracted to the Stonehenge site are from overseas than any other heritage site outside London. It also, of course, is an important heritage site in its own right, part of an important landscape that includes a collection of prehistoric monuments that is without parallel on a global basis.

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)

<sup>2</sup> The UNESCO Convention concerning the protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)

- 2.2 Since the Inscription of Stonehenge as a World Heritage Site in 1986, there has been a commitment by Government to improving public access and its surroundings, and to enhancing its environment. Nearly twenty years have passed and the issues remain, despite exceptional and substantial investment in exploring various options.
- 2.3 The Commission continues to believe that the current setting of the Stonehenge World Heritage Site and the arrangements for its one million-plus visitors each year are unsatisfactory; and that urgent decision and action are needed.
- 2.4 The Commission recognises that HM Government does not take its international duties lightly, and that since the UK ratification in 1984 of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, HM Government has taken its responsibilities and obligations as State Party under the Convention very seriously. The UK is recognised as an international leader in setting standards of excellence for the management of cultural heritage assets. The work by HM Government Departments and experts has been long acknowledged as making significant contributions to the implementation of this specific Convention and in associated areas. It is vital that the UK maintains this excellent reputation in action as well as word.
- 2.5 World Heritage sites are a well-recognised international brand which obtain more than their fair share of press coverage. In the years building to the 2012 Olympics and beyond, the actions of the UK over the management of its own cultural heritage of “outstanding universal value” will be closely scrutinised by the international community and should maintain the highest practicable standards. There are currently a number of perceived problems at UK sites and whether genuine or not these are beginning to damage our reputation. There needs to be decisive action to show that the UK has the ability and the mechanisms for the speedy resolution of problems and shortcomings when they arise.

### **3. Consultation Response**

- 3.1 In preparing for this response, the Commission examined the consultation documentations in detail. Members of the Board and the Culture Committee made a site visit on 9 September to receive presentations from English Heritage colleagues; to observe the current visitor centre and facilities and to inspect the five options for the location of a new centre. The response has been circulated to the full UKNC Culture Committee and Board before submission.
- 3.2 Sections 4 and 5 below detail the Commission’s response to the questions set out in the public consultation documentations.

### **4. World Heritage Site Management Plan Review**

- 4.1 The Commission congratulates English Heritage on completing the draft Management Plan under consultation to a high standard within a very demanding timescale. Following the Stonehenge’s previous Management Plan which was praised in 2000 by UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee for its high quality and is used as a model for other inscribed sites, the Management Plan under consultation is comprehensive and well-structured.
- 4.2 The Commission is particularly encouraged that the Management Plan under consultation highlights UNESCO’s overarching strategy relating to HM Government’s aims towards UNESCO and the role of the Commission. This follows on well from the Minister, Margaret Hodge’s reference in correspondence on the recent Review of World Heritage Policy of a return to the original spirit of the Convention and its focus on international co-operation.
- 4.3 The Commission considers that World Heritage Sites provide a unique opportunity to raise awareness of global issues and hence to act as a means of achieving both UNESCO’s mission and the UK Government’s aims for international sustainable development. We would, for example, welcome further development of partnerships between UK World heritage Sites and sites in developing countries, perhaps particularly in capacity-building, and would like to see this clearly articulated at all levels of management, including all World Heritage Site management plans. The Commission congratulates English Heritage and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport for their leadership in this respect and looks forward to further developments. The Commission would be pleased to assist in this important area.
- 4.4 The Commission’s responses to specific questions are set out below.

**Q1: Do you agree with the Vision for the World Heritage Site? If not, what needs to be changed?**

Yes, the Commission broadly agrees with the vision of the World Heritage Site, but would prefer a more succinct and engaging text which clearly champions this iconic site.

The Commission suggest that the following, which is based on the original text, might be considered:

**“Vision**

*The Stonehenge World Heritage Site conserves, enhances and interprets its Outstanding Universal Value for future generations as a masterpiece reflecting 8,000 years of human creative genius and cultural tradition.*

**Goal**

*By 2012 the Stonehenge World Heritage Site (WHS) will become a more tranquil, more fully presented and interpreted landscape that can improve understanding of the site and develop its enjoyment and educational value for future generations. This vision will be achieved through the restoration of the landscape by reintroducing permanent grasslands, developing a network of paths linking currently inaccessible sites, a high quality visitor centre, an improved management plan, and improved conservation.”*

**Q2: Do you support the five Strategic Objectives of the Management Plan? If you have concerns with any of them, indicate them.**

Yes, the Commission is in support of the five Strategic Objectives set out.

The Commission would note, recognising that it is rightly not a priority area at this point, that the current boundary of the Stonehenge World Heritage Site is arbitrary and would need to be clarified in due course.

**Q3: Do you support the eight long-term aims? If you have concerns with any of them, indicate them.**

Yes, the Commission is in support of the eight Long-Term aims set out.

**Q4: Which, if any, of the eight aims should be prioritised during the lifetime of the Management Plan?**

The Commission believes that Aims 3 and Aim 4 should be prioritised. Specifically, Aim 4 should reflect stronger emphasis on the educational aspect of the Stonehenge World Heritage Site. As such, when planning the new visitor centre, consideration should be given to providing dedicated space for access & learning purposes, including citizenship. This could be further utilised to undertake, for example, capacity-building projects to assist developing countries.

Lower in priority would be Aim 6. The Commission recommends that in implementing this Aim, there should be no further excavation in the Site before the findings of current research investigations (some of which have been ongoing for five years) are published. The action plan must include a publication strategy, including accessible information for all levels of audience. A full range of publication media, including digital should be considered.

**Q5: Are the contents of the Management Plan broadly acceptable? If not, what are the areas which concern you?**

Yes, the contents of the Management Plan are broadly acceptable. The Commission believes that more focus should be given to the overall branding and promotion of World Heritage Sites; including signage, the use of UNESCO / World Heritage Site logos and map notations.

**Q6: Have we missed out anything? If so, indicate them.**

No

## 5. Stonehenge Environmental Improvements

- 5.1 The Commission still believes that improvement to public access to the Stonehenge World Heritage Site and its surroundings are long overdue. In considering the five options for the location of a new visitor centre, the primary driver should be to arrive at an option that can be realistically achieved, especially in relation to the ability to gain the land and access to the land required and the number of visitors to be transported.

### Q1: Do you agree that the visitor experience at Stonehenge should be improved?

Yes, the visitor experience at Stonehenge should most definitely be improved.

### Q2: Which of the options for new visitor facilities do you prefer?

Of those offered: Option 3a (but with very limited car parking at Area X) or 3b would be preferable from a visitor experience point, but lie inside the WHS and would impact on the site's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). That impact could be managed with appropriate scale of development and parking, but there would be issues of long views into the WHS to consider amongst other points.

Option 4 has the potential for a visitor centre and parking outside the WHS, though the better quadrant at Option 4 would be to place it in the dry valley in the SE quadrant. This has the advantage of being low-lying and any visitor centre or car park might be less visible, but it is inside the WHS.

Option 2 is superficially attractive of proximity to the Stones, visitor access and experience and screening from trees, but it has significant vehicular access problems through military land.

A detailed evaluation of visual and other indirect and direct impacts on the OUV would be helpful in developing a considered opinion.

### Q3: Which of the options for new visitor facilities do you least prefer?

The least preferred options are:

- (i) Option 1 (Area V) "Redevelopment of the current visitor facilities site" given the constraints of the existing site and potential further impacts on the OUV.
- (ii) Option 5 (Area Z) "Rollestone Camp" as it is the furthest from the Stones; and there are potential obstacles in obtaining the necessary land and access. It would give a poor introduction to the area for visitors.

### Q4: Do you agree that the environment around Stonehenge should be improved?

Yes, it is a disgrace.

### Q5: Do you agree that A344 adjacent to Stonehenge should be closed?

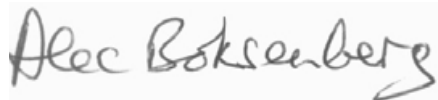
Yes. When Stonehenge was inscribed in 1986 the then Department of the Environment informed the UNESCO World Heritage Committee that plans to enable the closure of the A344 road were 'under preparation'. Since then the World Heritage Committee has consistently urged the UK to bring this closure about.

### Q6: Do you have any other comments about the proposed improvement?

One site not currently under consideration is that of Greenlands Farm, to the north of Airman's Cross. The Commission would recommend serious consideration of this potential new site which lies in a deep valley. Though the site is still within the WHS, the visual intrusion into the WHS (and outside) would appear to be significantly low, and there are existing buildings on site.

- 6 Whilst the Commission is very pleased to see action being taken, it is important that a proper balance is achieved between conserving the important features of the site and making the WHS accessible. Consultation at this early stage is a helpful mechanism. The UK National Commission would be pleased to assist further in developing a sustainable and acceptable solution to providing appropriate environmental improvements at this internationally-renowned site.

Yours faithfully



**Professor Alexander Boksenberg CBE FRS FInstP FRAS  
Chair,  
UK National Commission for UNESCO**



**Sue Davies OBE FSA HonMIFA  
Chair, Culture Committee,  
UK National Commission for UNESCO**



United Kingdom  
National Commission for UNESCO

**Secretariat**  
Suite 98, 3 Whitehall Court  
London SW1A 2EL  
t: +44 (0)20 7766 3490  
f: +44 (0)20 7930 5893  
[www.unesco.org.uk](http://www.unesco.org.uk)

## UNITED KINGDOM NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR UNESCO

### PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVES

The UK National Commission for UNESCO was re-established by Hilary Benn in March 2004. It is an independent body, currently a 'not-for-profit' company limited by guarantee, and is in the process of registering as a Charity in England, Wales and Scotland. It works in partnership with Her Majesty's Government and in close collaboration with the Department for International Development's Permanent Delegation to UNESCO in Paris.

The Commission comprises an overarching Board of Directors, four Sector Committees and two country committees for Scotland and Wales. It also has a series of task-specific and cross-sectoral working groups. Over 200 individuals make their experience and expertise freely available to the work of the Commission, which is supported by a very modest Secretariat. The UKNC has an important role to play in improving UK input into all aspects of UNESCO's policy-making and programmes.

The UKNC's main objectives are:

1. to provide expert analysis, comment and advice as input to UK policy-making on key UNESCO programmes and issues;
2. to bring to the attention of Government aspects of UK policy towards UNESCO or matters in which UNESCO has legitimate interest;
3. to participate as far as practical in UNESCO's programmes, their preparation and evaluation, in debates and in decision-making activities;
4. to develop a capacity to reach out as broadly as possible to UK civil society, through a wide variety of channels, so as to enable as many people and organisations as possible to understand more about UNESCO, and to participate as widely as possible in its programmes and debates;
5. to facilitate the management of UNESCO activities in the UK; and
6. to develop constructive working relationships both with the UNESCO Secretariat and with other National Commissions.

Further information may be obtained from the UKNC's web site at [www.unesco.org.uk](http://www.unesco.org.uk).

## Appendix II: Term of Reference of the Culture Committee of the UK National Commission for UNESCO



United Kingdom  
National Commission for UNESCO

**Secretariat**  
Suite 98, 3 Whitehall Court  
London SW1A 2EL  
t: +44 (0)20 7766 3490  
f: +44 (0)20 7930 5893  
[www.unesco.org.uk](http://www.unesco.org.uk)

### CULTURE COMMITTEE

#### Terms of Reference

1. To be the formal link between civil society, relevant departments in Her Majesty's Government (primarily the Department for Culture, Media & Sport) including the Devolved Administrations and UNESCO on matters relating to all aspects of culture. Specifically, to co-ordinate civil society's culture-sector contribution to the biennial UNESCO general conferences, UNESCO conventions, and to UK policy on UNESCO's programme in the culture sector.
2. To promote recognition and awareness of and participation in UNESCO's cultural work, and to promote the work of UNESCO as an organization where all countries can learn from each other.
3. To participate, as appropriate, in UNESCO's early development of initiatives for cultural activities.
4. To advise and work with HMG, particularly the Department for Culture, Media & Sport, on UNESCO's cultural activities which have specific relevance to the UK (including the Devolved Administrations), including UNESCO requests and initiatives, Conventions, World Heritage Sites' matters, and cultural education.
5. To provide independent and expert analysis, comment and advice to HMG on cultural matters relating to UNESCO, including as input to UK (including the Devolved Administrations) policy-making on key UNESCO programmes and cultural issues.
6. To advise HMG on ways of raising awareness of UNESCO's cultural work in the UK across the whole of civil society, but in particular in the UK culture sector.
7. To encourage and facilitate the use of UK cultural expertise around the world, especially within developing countries.
8. To establish links with other National Commission Culture Committees of UNESCO Member States, to share and receive appropriate knowledge and research.
9. To undertake such actions as would enhance culture internationally.

26 August 2005