

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

UK National Commission for UNESCO Supports the Published Scheme for the A303 at Stonehenge and Urges UK Government to Take a Decision as a Matter of Urgency

London, UK – 8 June 2007. The UK National Commission for UNESCO calls for the UK Government to take a decision as a matter of urgency and proceed with implementing the Published Scheme recommended in 2004.

The UK National Commission for UNESCO believes that the Published Scheme presents the best balanced option for achieving a sustainable solution to meet the objectives of the Stonehenge World Heritage Site Management Plan, the principles of the UNESCO Convention concerning the protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972) and deriving substantial public benefit.

Stonehenge is an iconic site on a global level. The current setting of the site and the arrangements for its one million-plus visitors each year, however, have been described as a “national disgrace”.

Since the Stonehenge’s Inscription as a World Heritage Site in 1986, there has been a commitment by the UK Government to improving public access to the monument and its surroundings, and to enhancing its environment by removing the nearby roads. However, nearly twenty years have passed and the issues remain, despite significant investment in exploring over fifty route options, considering over half a dozen options for a new visitor centre, and the full democratic process of a Public Inquiry into proposals for the improvement of the A303, which resulted in the Inspector’s recommendation of the Published Scheme in 2004. The most recent public consultation concluded in April 2006 and a decision is yet to be published.

It is imperative that a decision is taken immediately, so that a permanent solution can be put in place in time for the London 2012 Olympic Games.

ENDS

For further information, please ring the UK National Commission for UNESCO on +44 (0)20 7766 3491.

Notes to Editors

- ***The UK National Commission for UNESCO is an independent body set up by HM Government to act as the national coordinator for UNESCO’s activities and policies in the UK; and as a focal point for UNESCO HQ, HM Government and UK Civil Society. For more information, visit www.unesco.org.uk.***

- **The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** is a Specialized Agency of the United Nations. It is headquartered in Paris whose purpose is “to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among nations through education, science and culture”. For more information, visit www.unesco.org
- **The Published Scheme** was recommended by an independent Inspector following a full statutory public inquiry in 2004. It involves (i) a grade-separated junction with the A360 at Longbarrow Crossroads and (ii) a 2.1km bored tunnel running south of the existing A303, with the portals beyond the horizon from Stonehenge.
- The concept of **World Heritage Sites** is at the core of the World Heritage Convention, adopted by UNESCO in 1972, to which 180 nations belong. (The UK ratified the Convention in 1984.) The Convention required the establishment of the World Heritage List, under the management of an inter-governmental World Heritage Committee as a means of recognising that some places, both natural and cultural, are of sufficient importance to be the responsibility of the international community as a whole. The World Heritage Committee meets once a year, and consists of representatives from 21 of the States Parties to the Convention. The Committee is responsible for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention.