



United Kingdom  
National Commission for UNESCO

## **PRESS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release

### **UK National Commission for UNESCO Disappointed at Government Decision Against the Long-awaited Vital Improvement for the A303 at Stonehenge**

**London, UK – 6 December 2009.** The UK National Commission for UNESCO is most disappointed at the UK Government's decision not to implement the Published Scheme improvements for the A303. The announcement was a much delayed response to the most recent public consultation which concluded in April 2006.

Since Stonehenge's Inscription as a World Heritage Site in 1986, there has been a stated 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.

More than twenty years have passed and the issues remain, despite significant investment of public funds 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.

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". The Government's decision today means that no permanent solution can be put in place in time for the London 2012 Olympic Games. Not only does the road improvement fall, but the proposed new Visitor Centre also falls as its planning approval was conditioned on the Published Scheme. It is difficult to interpret this decision as improving public access and enhancing the environment of this globally-important site.

Whilst the UK National Commission for UNESCO strongly supported the Published Scheme, the decision has been made. We must look to finding an alternative way of 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. The UK National Commission is keen to work together with Government and all interested parties to make such a solution reality by 2012.

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

## Notes to Editors

- **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](http://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.