

STATEMENT OF REASONS FOR A TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER ON ROUTES WITHIN THE STONEHENGE WORLD HERITAGE SITE

1 SUMMARY

1.1 Throughout this document the expression 'BOAT' is used as an abbreviation for 'Byway Open to All Traffic'.

1.2 It is proposed that a TRO should be made under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, Section 1, prohibiting the use by motorised vehicles (with exceptions for agricultural access; essential maintenance; emergency vehicles; vehicles associated with the security and operation of the Stonehenge site, and invalid carriages) of

- the part of the A344 from Airman's Corner to BOAT Amesbury 12
- BOATs within the World Heritage Site including BOAT Woodford 16, BOAT Berwick St James 11, BOAT Wilsford cum Lake 1, BOAT Amesbury 12 and BOAT Durrington 10, and
- BOAT Wilsford cum Lake 2 and BOAT Amesbury 11

The reason for this TRO is to improve the amenity of the area.

1.3 The TRO would bring very substantial improvements to the landscape setting of Stonehenge and to the experience of visitors to the Stonehenge World Heritage Site (WHS). It would make a significant contribution to delivering the vision set out in the Stonehenge WHS Management Plan, which is supported by all key stakeholders including Wiltshire Council.

2 LOCATION

2.1 This note refers to routes within the Stonehenge World Heritage Site (WHS), shown on the attached map at Figure 1. The WHS is bounded on the western side by the A360 and B3086, on the northern side by The Packway through Larkhill, on the eastern side by the A345 and River Avon and on the southern side by a line between Great Durnford and Druid's Lodge.

2.2 The proposed traffic regulation order would apply to the following road and BOATs.

- the A344 from Airman's Corner junction eastwards for a distance of approximately 130 metres during non-daylight hours (exact times to be specified according to season)
- the A344 from a point approximately 130 metres to the east of the Airman's Corner junction to its intersection with BOAT Amesbury 12
- The BOAT from Druid's Lodge to Larkhill including:
 - BOAT Woodford 16 from the A360 at its southern end to the Berwick St James parish boundary
 - BOAT Berwick St James 11 from the Woodford parish boundary to the Wilsford cum Lake parish boundary
 - BOAT Wilsford cum Lake 1 from the Berwick St James parish boundary to the Amesbury parish boundary
 - BOAT Amesbury 12 from the Wilsford cum Lake parish boundary to the Durrington parish boundary, crossing the A303 and A344
 - BOAT Durrington 10 from the Amesbury parish boundary to a point to the south of the Durrington Down Farm access roads approximately 230 metres to the south of Fargo Road at its northern end
- The BOAT from Hill Plantation in Wilsford Cum Lake to the A303 including:
 - BOAT Wilsford cum Lake 2 from Hill Plantation in Wilsford cum Lake Parish at its southern end to the Amesbury parish boundary at its northern end
 - BOAT Amesbury 11 from the Wilsford cum Lake parish boundary to the A303 at its northern end.

3 PROPOSAL

3.1 To seek approval for the publication of a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) prohibiting motorised vehicular traffic on the above BOATs and the specified sections of the A344 within the WHS.

3.2 Access for horses, horse-drawn vehicles, walkers and cyclists would be unaffected. Exceptions would be made for agricultural access; essential maintenance; emergency vehicles; vehicles associated with the security and operation of the Stonehenge site, and invalid carriages.

4 STATEMENT OF REASONS

4.1 Under the provisions of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, Section 1 (1)

“the traffic authority for a road... may make an order... where it appears to the authority making the order that it is expedient to make it -

(f) for preserving or improving the amenities of the area through which the road runs”

It is on this basis that the Order is proposed.

The amenities of the area

4.2 In this case, the “area” in question is the Stonehenge World Heritage Site. The BOATs cover almost the entire length of the WHS from north to south, and the A344 spans about half of its breadth from west to east. There is a widely recognised need to improve the amenities of this area, and the proposed TRO would form a fundamental part of a wider project that would bring very substantial benefits to the WHS, including improvements to road safety. The long-term vision for the area is set out in the Stonehenge WHS Management Plan, which also provides the policy framework within which any improvements must be delivered.

The World Heritage Site

4.3 Updated Government policy to strengthen the protection of World Heritage Sites has recently been published jointly by the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Department for Culture Media and Sports in a document entitled “Circular 07/09 Protection of World Heritage Sites” (available at www.english-heritage.org.uk/whcircular).

- 4.4 The Stonehenge WHS comprises one of the richest concentrations of prehistoric monuments in the world. At its centre is Stonehenge itself, arguably the UK's best known and most important ancient monument.
- 4.5 The triangular area of land around the Stones is managed by English Heritage on the behalf of the Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport. Much of the surrounding land is owned by the National Trust, with the area to the north of the monument managed for free open access to pedestrians.
- 4.6 The impact of traffic on the WHS has long been a matter of concern and was raised by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in 1986 when the site was inscribed on the World Heritage List. The Committee
- “noted with satisfaction the assurances provided by the authorities of the United Kingdom that the closure of the road which crosses the avenue at Stonehenge (i.e. the A344) was receiving serious consideration as part of the overall plans for the future management of the site.”*

Stonehenge World Heritage Site Management Plan 2009

- 4.7 The Stonehenge WHS Management Plan is an agreed framework guiding long-term decision-making in the WHS. It represents a high degree of consensus among all of the key stakeholders in the site.
- 4.8 The original Management Plan was published in 2000. It was adopted by Salisbury District Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance, and was referred to at length in the A303 Stonehenge Improvement scheme and Visitor Centre public inquiries. It has been used as a strategic framework by the National Trust when developing a Land Use Plan for its land at Stonehenge (National Trust 2001).
- 4.9 Management Plans should be reviewed periodically, and in December 2007 the UK Government asked for the revision of the Stonehenge Management Plan to be carried out as a matter of urgency. In announcing this, it was made clear that the revised Management Plan would provide the framework for the development

of the new Environmental Improvements Project. The revised Stonehenge WHS Management Plan was developed in full consultation with stakeholders, including Wiltshire County Council; it was published in 2009 and supersedes the 2000 Management Plan.

4.10 At its Cabinet meeting on 15 July 2009 Wiltshire Council endorsed the Stonehenge (WHS) Management Plan 2009 as supplementary guidance and a material consideration in determining planning applications that affect the Stonehenge WHS, and as a replacement for the 2000 Stonehenge WHS Management Plan previously adopted by Salisbury District Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance.¹ Wiltshire Council is now both the planning authority and the local highway authority.²

Relevant parts of the Stonehenge WHS Management Plan 2009

4.11 The relevant parts of the Stonehenge WHS Management Plan 2009 are as follows.

- Chapter 6.0 listing the key management issues
- Chapter 10.0 describing issues relating to roads and traffic
- Chapter 14.0, Section 14.6 describing aims relating to sustainable traffic management and transportation.
- Chapter 15.0 describing how the management plan may be implemented

4.12 In Chapter 6 the relevant key issues are identified as follows.

- Issue 34: Roads and traffic have an adverse effect on the WHS
- Issue 35: Road Safety

¹ see item 10 of the minutes available from the Internet at the following address:

<http://194.72.162.210/documents/dscgi/ds.py/View/Collection-1759>

² On 1 April 2009, Wiltshire County Council took over the functions of four local authorities, including Salisbury District Council, to form a new unitary authority known as Wiltshire Council. Before 1 April 2009, Salisbury District Council was the planning authority for the Stonehenge World Heritage site and Wiltshire County Council was the highway authority for roads other than the A303.

- Issue 36: Access to the WHS
- Issue 37: Car parking facilities for visitors

4.13 In Chapter 10 key issues are described more fully. This chapter is attached at Appendix A for easy reference. However the main transport issues are the large number of vehicle collisions within the WHS; the promotion of sustainable access to the WHS: damage to BOATs by off-road vehicles, and uncontrolled parking on BOATs and in adjacent residential areas.

4.14 Chapter 14 presents aims, policies and actions relating to issues. Aim 5 in Section 14.5, Sustainable Traffic Management and Transportation, of the Stonehenge Management Plan states the following.

“Aim 5: To reduce the impacts of roads and traffic on the Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS and to improve sustainable access to the Site (issues 34-37).

Policy 5a – Measures should be identified and implemented to reduce the impacts of roads and traffic on the WHS and to improve road safety (issues 34-36).

Policy 5b – Proposals should be developed, assessed and implemented, if practical, for the closure of the A303/ A344 junction, of the A344 between the junction and the current visitor centre site, and for restricted access on some or all of the remainder of the A344 up to Airman’s Corner, depending on the location of new visitor facilities (issues 34 and 35).

Policy 5c – Vehicular access to Byways within the World Heritage Site should be restricted apart from access for emergency, operational and farm vehicles (issue 36).

Policy 5d – Measures should be taken through an exemplary Green Travel Plan to encourage access to the Site other than by car (issues 36, 37).”

4.15 Chapter 15 describes actions required to implement the aims and policies identified in Chapter 14 including “restrict motorised access on the remainder of the A344” and “Vehicular access to Byways within the WHS should be restricted...put in place a Traffic Regulation Order...”

4.16 The proposed TRO would specifically address Policies 5b and 5c. It would also make a significant contribution to Policy 5a, greatly reducing the level of traffic using the A344, the road which passes closest to the Stonehenge monument at the heart of the WHS. Policy 5d would be addressed by the related planning application for new visitor facilities, which would include an Outline Travel Plan; however, restricting vehicular access by means of the proposed TRO is fundamental to encouraging access to the site other than by car.

The Stonehenge Environmental Improvements Project

4.17 In December 2007 the Government announced that the A303 Stonehenge Improvement scheme, which would have addressed the impact of traffic on the WHS, would not go ahead due to the costs of placing the A303 in a 2.1km bored tunnel. This also meant that English Heritage's proposed new Stonehenge visitor centre could not go ahead, since planning permission was conditional on approval for the road scheme.

4.18 In making this announcement, the Government asked English Heritage, working closely with key stakeholders, to put forward alternative proposals for environmental improvements, including new visitor facilities that could be delivered by 2012. As part of this new Stonehenge Environmental Improvements Project, consideration would be given to the closure of at least part of the A344, in order to reunite Stonehenge with its ancient Avenue and to fulfil the commitment made to UNESCO by the UK Government in 1986.

4.19 English Heritage intend to submit a planning application in autumn 2009 for a new visitor centre and parking at Airman's Corner, about 2.5km to the west of Stonehenge. A fully accessible visitor transit system would operate between Airman's Corner and the Stones. It is proposed that closure of the A344 between the A344/A303 (Stonehenge Bottom) junction and BOAT Amesbury 12 would be sought by means of a Section 247 Order under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended. Other works required as a consequence of closing the road would be implemented by the Highways Agency (changes at Stonehenge

Bottom and improvements to Longbarrow Crossroads) and English Heritage (remodelling of the junction at Airman's Corner to accommodate changed traffic flows and provide safe access to the new visitor centre). This present proposal, for a TRO to restrict access by motorised vehicles on the remainder of the A344 and on BOATs within the WHS, would form an integrated part of the Stonehenge Environmental Improvements Project.

5 RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE MAKING AN ORDER

5.1 Under the provisions of Section 122 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 the local authority has certain duties conferred upon it. These are listed below along with relevant comments.

Duty to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic (including pedestrians) and the provision of suitable and adequate parking facilities on and off the highway

5.2 Vehicles currently using the A344 would be diverted onto the A303. Improvements (described earlier) would be made to the roundabout at Longbarrow Crossroads and a new roundabout would be provided at the Airman's Corner junction to deal with diverted traffic. Travel distances for vehicles currently using the A344 would be somewhat greater than at present. Accident rates are expected to reduce as a result of the removal of the A303/A344 junction and the junction improvements noted above.

5.3 Conditions for non-motorised users of the restricted section of the A344 would be significantly improved by the removal of motorised traffic in terms of noise, safety and perceived threat from traffic.

5.4 The BOATs would be closed for recreational motorised use. This represents a loss of amenity for potential motorised users of the BOATs within the WHS, such as trail riders. However, alternative routes are available for these users via the A360 and the A345. Balanced against this loss of amenity for recreational motorised vehicle users is a potential reduction in damage to the surfacing of the

BOATs and a more tranquil experience for non-motorised users and visitors to the WHS.

5.5 Closing the BOATs to motorised vehicles would also prevent (legal) parking within the WHS. This is recognised as a significant benefit to the amenity of the WHS. The new visitor centre at Airman's Corner would provide a large centralised car park for visitors to Stonehenge and the WHS.

5.6 On balance, the benefits to the WHS in terms of reduced noise; reduced visual intrusion; reduction of perceived danger from traffic; reduction in damage to unsurfaced BOATs and properly ordered parking are considered to outweigh the loss of access for recreational motorised users.

Securing and maintaining reasonable access to premises

5.7 Accesses to premises would not be affected by these proposals except for the existing Stonehenge Visitor Centre, which is part of the Stonehenge Environmental Improvements Project and the subject of a separate, but fully integrated, planning application to the local authority.

The effect on the amenities of any locality affected and the importance of regulating and restricting the use of roads by heavy commercial vehicles, so as to preserve or improve the amenities of the areas through which the road runs

5.8 The improvements to the amenity of the area are discussed at length earlier. There is no anticipated change to the use of roads by heavy commercial vehicles other than the diversion of traffic from the A344 to the A303 as noted earlier.

The national air quality strategy

5.9 There are no known air quality issues.

The importance of facilitating the passage of public service vehicles and of securing the safety and convenience of persons using or desiring to use them

5.10 There are no known issues relating to public service vehicles.

Any other relevant matters

5.11 There are no other known relevant issues.

Appendix A

Text extract from Stonehenge WHS Management Plan 2009

10.0 ROADS AND TRAFFIC

10.1 Highways network and usage

Issue 34: Roads and traffic have an adverse effect on the WHS

10.1.1 Roads and transport have long had major influences on the WHS which is traversed and surrounded by roads and byways, many of some antiquity. The A303 and A344 are highly visible routes that cut through the WHS landscape and adversely impact on the Stonehenge Avenue, the character of the Site as a whole, and on people's access to enjoyment of the Stones themselves and of the wider landscape. Their current routes presumably reflect Stonehenge's prominence as a landmark. The western boundary of the WHS is the A360 and part of the eastern boundary is formed by the A345 which also cuts through the Durrington Walls Henge. The northern boundary of the site is the Packway which is the main access route to the army base at Larkhill. There is a minor road running south from Amesbury through the settlements in the Avon valley and also Ministry of Defence roads in the Larkhill area. In addition, there are historic byways running primarily north-south through the World Heritage Site as well as a number of public footpaths.

10.1.2 Significant volumes of traffic pass through the WHS on the A303 trunk road as well as on the A344 and also along the other main roads bounding the Site to east and west. The settlements around the Site and down the Avon valley also generate traffic. Stonehenge itself generates traffic with c900,000 visitors to the Stones annually (and more who just stop at the car park but don't visit), most of whom come by car or by coach. In the future the volume of both commuter and leisure-related traffic is likely to continue to grow in line with national trends. The Management Plan should reflect the Government's integrated transport policy aims to reduce reliance on the private car and encourage alternative means of travel.

10.1.3 Concerns about roads and traffic include:

- The impact on the WHS;
- Traffic congestion, particularly along the A303, but with knock-on effects on other routes in the area;
- Concerns of local residents that changes to traffic management within the WHS will cause additional traffic and congestion in the surrounding settlements;
- The need to manage visitor access to the WHS in the most sustainable way possible;

- Management of traffic and access on byways within the WHS;
- Road safety, especially at the junction of the A303 and A344, and also at Airman's Corner (also known as Airman's Cross).

10.1.4 The impact of traffic has long been a matter of concern and was raised by the World Heritage Committee in 1986 when the site was inscribed on the World Heritage List. The Committee then 'noted with satisfaction the assurances provided by the authorities of the United Kingdom that the closure of the road which crosses the avenue at Stonehenge (ie the A344) was receiving serious consideration as part of the overall plans for the future management of the site'.

10.1.5 Proposals to improve the A303 go back over many years. The Amesbury bypass was built across the River Avon and up to King Barrow Ridge in the 1960s. There was then an intention to continue the dual carriageway westwards past Stonehenge, with the potential for a flyover at Countess Roundabout, which was not built. Around the same time the junctions between the A303 and A344 in Stonehenge Bottom and the A303 and A360 at Longbarrow Crossroads were improved.

10.1.6 The most recent proposals to improve the stretch of the A303 past Stonehenge date back to the early 1990s when the process of initial route identification was started. Some 50 route options were considered as part of this exercise, including ones that sought to pass to the north or south of the World Heritage Site boundaries. A public consultation in 1993 failed to identify an acceptable route. In 1995, a widely attended Planning Conference explored options for improving the A303 between Amesbury and Berwick Down and resolved that any route for the improved A303 should avoid the archaeologically and visually sensitive area known as the Stonehenge 'Bowl'.

10.1.7 With support from English Heritage and the National Trust, the Highways Agency in 1998 began developing a scheme for putting the A303 in a tunnel under the central part of the World Heritage Site. The developed version of this scheme (the Published Scheme) proposed a bored tunnel 2.1km in length past Stonehenge with the remainder of the A303 in the World Heritage Site also dualled and with a bypass for Winterbourne Stoke. The scheme would also have closed the A344 and enabled the relocation of the visitor facilities. The scheme was the subject of a Public Inquiry held in 2004.

10.1.8 The Inspector's Report, published in July 2005, recommended in favour of the scheme promoted at the Inquiry. However, as a result of a substantial increase in the cost of tunnelling, the Government decided to review whether the scheme still represented value for money and the best option for delivering improvements to the A303 and to the setting of Stonehenge.

10.1.9 Following the review, the Government have stated their view that there are no acceptable alternatives to the 2.1km bored tunnel scheme, but that its cost cannot currently be justified and would not represent best use of taxpayers' money. In the absence of a scheme to remove the A303 from the centre of the WHS, the Government have asked that alternative opportunities be explored for the delivery of environmental improvements at Stonehenge, including new visitor facilities and examination of the case for closing the A303/A344 junction.

10.1.10 Closure of the A344 adjacent to the Stones would meet the concerns of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee as stated in 1986, but it would also have implications for traffic movements elsewhere in and around the WHS. Closure of the A344/ A303 junction (and possibly of more of the length of the A344) would increase traffic loading on surrounding roads, particularly the A360 via Longbarrow Crossroads. There is also the risk that traffic seeking to avoid delay would use the minor roads through settlements such as Larkhill and Durrington. The distribution of traffic could depend to some extent on the future location of the visitor facilities for Stonehenge. Closure of the A303/A344 junction would therefore require mitigation measures to manage traffic elsewhere in the area.

10.1.11 The future of the A303 and A344 is clearly the major traffic issue facing the WHS.

10.2 Road safety

Issue 35: Road Safety

10.2.1 Road safety is a significant issue within the WHS. There are regular collisions in this area, in particular at the A303/A344 junction, at Airman's Corner junction, and on the A344 near the entrance to the Stonehenge car park. In the last 3 years, there were 72 casualties in the WHS, including 2 fatalities and 9 serious injuries. Fewer than 10% of the collisions were due to excessive speed, whilst most of the collisions were due to poor manoeuvres or failing to

look properly or judge the other person's path or speed. Other factors included foreign drivers inexperienced with driving on the left, illegal right turns from the A344 onto the A303, and positive breath tests. Pedestrian and cycle safety on roads within the WHS should be reviewed. Improved crossing arrangements for roads crossed by other rights of way should be provided where possible.

10.2.2 All roads within the WHS are currently subject to the national speed limit (60 miles per hour), except the A344 by the Stones and the roads within built-up areas. As such, many vehicles pass through the WHS at high speed, and there is no indication to motorists that they are travelling through a WHS. The volume in the passage and speed of traffic on the A303 makes it very difficult for pedestrians and cyclists to cross it, for instance, when travelling on Byway 12 from Stonehenge to the Normanton Down barrows or from Bridleway 10 on King Barrow Ridge to the southern side of the WHS. However, it is recognised that it would not be practical or effective simply to reduce the speed limit on the A303 and other WHS roads. Other measures would have to be sought to allow pedestrians and cyclists to feel safe near these roads.

Table 4: Number of reported collisions & casualties in the WHS between March 2005 and April 2008
■ 48 collisions, including 7 at the A303/A344 junction, 8 at Airman's Corner junction, and 3 on the A344 near the entrance to the Stonehenge car park
■ 72 casualties, including 2 fatal, 9 serious injuries and 61 slight injuries (source Wiltshire Constabulary 2008)

10.3 Public transport provision and sustainable access

Issue 36: Access to the WHS

10.3.1 At present the majority of visitors to Stonehenge arrive by car. A key issue is to work with private and public transport operators to explore reliable, alternative and more sustainable methods of reaching the WHS through better use of coaches and public transport. Bus service provision to the Stones and the wider WHS is relatively limited, although there is an existing commercially operated service from the Salisbury railway and bus stations, which includes Sunday and Bank Holiday operation. Improving opportunities for visitors to access the WHS by public transport from bus stations in Salisbury, Amesbury and Devizes, and the rail station at Salisbury, should be considered in the future. The potential of promoting Grateley Station on the Waterloo to Exeter line, and Pewsey rail station with its direct link to

London Paddington, could be investigated due to their proximity to the WHS. These stations provide important 'hubs' for connecting WHS destinations further afield, such as Avebury and Bath.

- 10.3.2 Access for pedestrians to the Stonehenge circle and much of the wider WHS has improved since 2000. The introduction by the National Trust of pedestrian gates on its open access land has improved access to the landscape, previously only possible via stiles. A new gentler ramp for disabled visitors has been provided at Stonehenge. Since 2000, the National Trust has also created areas of open access land at Durrington Walls, the Cuckoo Stone and fields west of Stonehenge. Cyclists have access to Rights of Way, but their use is restricted by heavy traffic levels on the roads through the Site. Improved signage could direct cyclists to alternative routes. Despite these improvements, current arrangements for pedestrian and cyclist access within the WHS and to Stonehenge are considered inadequate, having regard to the large numbers of visitors and the speed of passing vehicles. Closure of the A344 would improve this situation.
- 10.3.3 The current rights of motorised vehicular access on existing byways within the WHS is a key issue. Byway 12, for example, is of historic interest and importance as a routeway, and its further realignment away from the Stones could be potentially damaging to archaeological remains. The current number of offroad vehicles using this byway is already causing much damage, for instance, to low-lying barrows through erosion and widening of the byway. There may be scope in the future for restricting motorised vehicular use of byways to limit access by unauthorised traffic within and around the WHS. This measure would help protect the character of these routes, but should be considered in the context of the existing wider rights of way network to assist appropriate access.
- 10.3.4 There may be opportunities for local 'pedestrian gateways' to the Stonehenge WHS sited at carefully selected points to encourage exploration of the landscape by visitors and as a local amenity. Such 'pedestrian gateways' could be serviced by an 'explorebus' type service perhaps linked to visitor facilities and local residential areas.

10.4 Car parking facilities and usage

Issue 37: Car parking facilities for visitors

- 10.4.1 At present, visitors to Stonehenge can use the visitors car park, which comprises a permanent car park with a hard surface, and a fenced overflow car park which is grassed. These two car parks cover 1.1 hectares. The surface car park contains space for eight coaches and 123 cars. The overflow contains space for around a further 150 cars and is in use for 6 months of the year. During the peak summer months, capacity is sometimes exceeded even in this overflow car park, and the adjacent field is then used for further car parking. There are increasing numbers of visitors who park on Byway 12.
- 10.4.2 There is particular concern that Larkhill could come under pressure as an unofficial parking area should there be major changes to the parking provision for visitors to Stonehenge, for example, if new parking is a long way from the Stones. Similar concerns were raised with the previous Visitor Centre scheme in the 2000 Plan. Unless controlled, this could have serious implications for security within Larkhill Garrison and for traffic control in a residential area. Similar concerns have been raised by residents of villages in the Woodford Valley.
- 10.4.3 There are also concerns about parking at Woodhenge by residents of Countess Road.
- 10.4.4 Any new parking provision will have to consider the needs of local residents as well as the needs of the natural and historic environment and those of visitors.