

A303 Stonehenge

Briefing Note

Background

The scheme is being promoted by National Highways with the support of Heritage England, the National Trust, and Wiltshire Council. The Secretary of State (SoS) for Transport has approved the Development Consent Order (DCO) for the scheme, and as the outstanding legal issues are being resolved a start on site is expected this summer.

The scheme

The A303 Stonehenge upgrade comprises eight miles of dual carriageway between Amesbury and Berwick Down, a tunnel at least two miles long underneath the World Heritage Site, a new bypass to the north of the village of Winterbourne Stoke with a viaduct over the River Till valley, a new flyover over and junction with the A345 (Countess Roundabout) , and a new junction with the A360 (Longbarrow Roundabout) located further to the west away from the boundary of the World Heritage Site.

Construction is expected to take about 5 years and cost in the region of £2 billion.

Early stages of the work include extensive archaeological surveys, construction of site compound, alterations to side roads and the laying of an electricity supply from Wilton to the site along the A360. These advance works are likely to start shortly.

Wiltshire Council Involvement in the Approvals and Consultations

The DCO and associated agreements contain various requirements for National Highways to obtain approval from the Council, or to consult the council, on specific aspects of the scheme. These include archaeology, ecology, landscape, noise and air quality, groundwater, and drainage considerations as well as matters in connection with the council's road network affected by the scheme. The Council, along with other key stakeholders, will also be involved in the development of the detailed design of the scheme.

The programme for approvals by the Council includes a consultation process on 27 documents, with the council also being consulted on a further 19 documents for approval by the SoS. The timescale for responding to the consultations is defined in the DCO and there is only a period of two or three weeks to respond to each depending on the stage.

The documents to be reviewed or approved are complex with numerous cross references and are of a very specialist nature. The council has identified suitably qualified and experienced staff for this task, with many of them having experience of the examination of the DCO and who have helped shape the current requirements.

The council officers will also be liaising with National Highways and their contractors regarding other aspects of the scheme, especially in connection with the local roads being changed in connection with the scheme, and the section of the former trunk

road through Winterbourne Stoke which will become the responsibility of this council when the scheme is completed.

The council's Highway Network Management team are working with National Highways regarding the scheme, and especially regarding the works to be carried out by SSEN to provide the power supply for the tunnelling machines, which will require the temporary closures of the A360 with appropriate diversion routes and traffic management.

The Council's officers will continue to have regular meetings with the National Highways team and their consultants to continue the joint working and ongoing liaison on this important infrastructure scheme and its many aspects. This will include how collectively we can maximise the opportunities and benefits for Wiltshire and its residents during the construction and operation of this scheme, and involvement in the various community, member and specialist liaison groups being established by National Highways to deliver the project.