

REGULATORY COMMITTEE
8TH OCTOBER, 2003

A303 STONEHENGE IMPROVEMENT -
DRAFT TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS

Purpose of Report

1. To inform Members of the draft Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) that the Secretary of State for Transport proposes to make in connection with the A303 Stonehenge Improvement and to seek Members' support for the Orders.

Background

2. On 5th June, 2003, the Highways Agency published Draft Orders under the Highways Act 1980 relating to the A303 Stonehenge Improvement which is being promoted as an exceptional environmental scheme in recognition of its unique context. The implications were considered in a report to this Committee on 23rd July, 2003 and it was resolved, inter alia:-
 - (i) *To advertise the Traffic Regulation Orders under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 prohibiting motorised vehicles from using the A344 between Airman's Corner and Byway Amesbury 12 and Byways within the World Heritage Site subject to confirmation of the A303 Stonehenge Improvement Scheme Orders.....*
3. Notification has now been received from the Highways Agency that the Secretary of State for Transport proposes to make two further Orders under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 which will supplement the previous Orders. The Orders are:-
 - (i) The A303 Trunk Road Stonehenge Improvement (Countess Roundabout to Longbarrow Crossroads) (Prohibition of Certain Classes of Traffic and Pedestrians) Order 200 ; and
 - (ii) The A303 Trunk Road Stonehenge Improvement (Stonehenge Byway) (Prohibition of Motor Vehicles) Order 200 ;

The Highways Agency would welcome the County Council's support for these Orders.

The Draft Orders

4. One of the effects of the previous Orders was to close the existing A303 past Stonehenge and replace it with a new dual carriageway in a twin-bore tunnel. It is proposed that certain classes of traffic should not be allowed to use the 2.1km long tunnel. These are:-
 - (i) Bicycles
 - (ii) Animals ridden, led or driven by a person
 - (iii) Vehicles drawn by animals
 - (iv) Motorcycles where the cylinder capacity of the engine is less than 50 cubic centimetres
 - (v) Invalid carriages; and
 - (vi) Pedestrians

This would avoid danger to persons and non-motorised traffic using the road, prevent the likelihood of accidents or other dangers arising and allow the safe passage of vehicular traffic.

5. The first of the two Orders, (i) above, would prohibit these classes of user from the new dual-carriageway trunk road between Countess Roundabout and Longbarrow Crossroads and hence the tunnel. There would be exemptions for the Police and emergency services and other persons in circumstances specified in the draft Order.
6. The second Order, (ii) above, would prohibit motorised vehicles from travelling along the new Stonehenge Byway which the Secretary of State proposes to construct on the route of the existing A303, in order to preserve and improve the amenities of the area through which the byway runs, namely the Stonehenge World Heritage Site (WHS). The Order would prevent use of the byway by vehicles considered to be unsuitable having regard to the intended character of the byway and the adjoining landscape and would conserve and enhance the flora, fauna and beauty of the area.
7. The diversion route for non-motorised traffic and pedestrians prevented from using the tunnel would be from Countess Roundabout via the A345 through Amesbury to Stonehenge Road and the new Stonehenge Byway. For motorcycles with a cylinder capacity of less than 50 cubic centimetres, the alternative route would be from the A303 at Countess Roundabout, along Countess Road to its junction with the Packway, along the Packway to its junction with the B3086 at Rolleston Crossroads, along the B3086 to the A360/A344 junction at Airman's Corner and along the A360 to the A303 at Longbarrow Crossroads.

Main Considerations for the Council

8. The Stonehenge WHS Management Plan consultation draft was considered by the Environment and Transport Committee on 3rd November, 1999. It was resolved, inter alia:-
 - “(i).... that there is general agreement with the principles of managing the area in such a way as to improve the downland setting of the Stones and other archaeological features.....

- (iv) To assist in measures to control access by motorised vehicles on byways within the World Heritage Site.....”
- 9. This Committee has previously resolved to advertise TROs at the appropriate time prohibiting motorised vehicles from using the A344 and byways within the WHS.
- 10. There would be some loss of amenity for users of motorised vehicles who would be prevented from using the Stonehenge Byway but such use is contrary to the aims of the Stonehenge WHS Management Plan.

Environmental Impact of the Proposal

- 11. There would be a significant improvement in the environment of the WHS through placing the trunk road in a tunnel and preventing the use of the Stonehenge Byway by motorised vehicles.

Reasons for Proposal

- 12. The County Council supports the Stonehenge WHS Management Plan and has resolved to advertise TROs prohibiting the use of the A344 and byways within the WHS by motorised vehicles should the A303 Stonehenge Improvement go ahead. It would be appropriate for the County Council to also support the present Orders.

Proposal

- 13. That the following Orders be supported by the County Council and the Highways Agency be informed accordingly:-
 - (i) The A303 Trunk Road Stonehenge Improvement (Countess Roundabout to Longbarrow Crossroads) (Prohibition of Certain Classes of Traffic and Pedestrians) Order 200 ; and
 - (ii) The A303 Trunk Road Stonehenge Improvement (Stonehenge Byway) (Prohibition of Motor Vehicles) Order 200 .

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The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:

None.