

News story: Major boost for the south-west as plans published for £1.6 billion A303 Stonehenge upgrade

The route for the £1.6 billion A303 upgrade near Stonehenge, a key part of the 'South West expressway', has today (12 September 2017) been published by Transport Secretary Chris Grayling.

Linking the M3 in the south-east and the M5 in the south-west, the 'expressway' will upgrade this key route and improve journey times for millions of people. This major investment will support economic growth and tourism in an area where congestion and slow journeys have long had a negative impact on the region's economy.

A tunnel near Stonehenge will remove the traffic blight on local communities and enhance the famous landmark. It will reconnect the 2 halves of the 6,500 acre World Heritage site which is currently split by the road, and remove the sight and sound of traffic from the Stonehenge landscape.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

This government is taking the big decisions for Britain's future and this major investment in the south-west will provide a huge boost for the region.

Quicker journey times, reduced congestion and cleaner air will benefit people locally and unlock growth in the tourism industry.

The scheme will also support 120,000 extra jobs and 100,000 new homes across the region, helping us build a country that works for everyone.

The A303 upgrade between Amesbury and Berwick Down is a key part of the government's £15 billion road strategy – the biggest investment in roads in a generation. The scheme includes the 1.8 mile-long tunnel, a free-flowing dual carriageway and a much-needed bypass north of Winterbourne Stoke.

Highways England chief executive Jim O'Sullivan said:

Highways England is committed to delivering a high quality, modern road on this vital route between the south-west and the rest of the country.

The A303 and the World Heritage site has suffered from congestion for many years. This scheme will enhance, protect and restore tranquillity to one of the UK's most iconic landscapes.

We have listened to feedback from consultation and believe this preferred route will help improve traffic flow, reduce rat-running on the surrounding roads, bringing improvements to local communities and benefits to the south-west economy.

A [public consultation was held earlier this year which attracted considerable feedback from thousands of individuals and organisations](#). Following this and further engagement with local communities, heritage groups, archaeologists, historians and engineers, Highways England has modified the plans, including moving the position of one of the entrances to the tunnel to avoid conflicting with the solstice alignment. The route ensures the Stonehenge World Heritage site will be protected and enhanced for people from across the world to enjoy.

Secretary of State for Culture, Karen Bradley said:

Stonehenge has captured the imagination of people around the world for centuries and is a site of global importance. With over 1 million visitors a year it is one of the jewels in the UK's crown and it is important that we preserve it for generations to come. This investment from the government will help make the visitor experience much more enjoyable and this is good news for local residents and businesses who will benefit from the new route.

The government will also continue to work closely with key heritage bodies to ensure this scheme respects and protects the Stonehenge World Heritage site.

The government is committed to upgrading all remaining sections of the A303 between the M3 and M5 to dual carriageway standard, starting with 3 schemes: one at Stonehenge, one between Sparkford and Ilchester and the third on the A358 between Taunton and Southfields.

The preferred route includes:

- 8 miles of free-flowing, high-quality dual carriageway
- a tunnel at least 1.8 miles long underneath the World Heritage site, closely following the existing A303 route, but a further 50 metres away from the monument, avoiding important archaeological sites and avoiding intrusion on the view of the setting sun from Stonehenge during the winter solstice
- a new bypass to the north of the village of Winterbourne Stoke
- junctions with the A345 and A360 either side of the World Heritage site.

Details of the [preferred route are available on the scheme webpage](#).