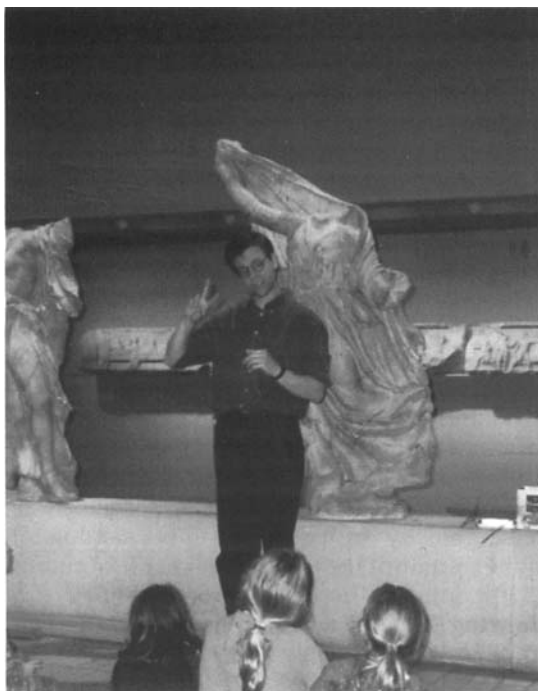


Editorial

CAROLINE MALONE & SIMON STODDART*

☞ One current obsession is archaeology in the public domain. This reveals itself in many issues (including Stonehenge). Fortunately archaeologists are resourceful and responsive. Many a great institution is putting welcome effort into opening the doors of our often dusty discipline. We experienced this at first hand a couple of weeks ago, when one of us and a nine-year-old daughter spent a night in the Egyptian (and Assyrian) galleries of the British Museum on a 'Sleep Over' organized by the Young Friends. Over 100 children with their minders — strict ratio of at least one adult to five children — camped amongst the friezes and statues of the gallery, including those of Nineveh first popularized some 150 years ago. After an entertaining and compelling health and safety talk — Health and Safety

Officers please note — the groups of children (and adults re-entering childhood) participated in a variety of enjoyable and educational activities. Almost without exception, the activity leaders held their audience captive. All emerged more expert in making pots and necklaces, building pyramids, wrapping mummies, dancing and storytelling. From 7 p.m. until 10 a.m. the next day (with a snatch of compulsory darkness between just after midnight and dawn) there was no break in activity, until the general public were greeted at 10 a.m. by a tired, but enthusiastic, throng emerging from distant galleries, clutching sleeping-bags, necklaces and fragile pots. The Young British Museum Society is to be praised in its endeavours to enthuse the next generation who will safeguard our past.



Instructions on how to build a pyramid with canes and rubber bands — and a creative response in the Duveen galleries of the British Museum. An Egyptian city, complete with Nile, was constructed alongside the sculptures from the Parthenon.

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Another imaginative reconstruction of the European past — an example from Ireland. The monastic structures at the Wexford Heritage Centre.

How much is this interest and enthusiasm visible among older generations? One measure of perceived interest (by journalists) is the range and frequency of reporting in national newspapers. By this measure, the origins of humanity seem to have the greatest impact on the popular imagination. A search by Zubrow & Frachetti (1998) of an extensive cross-cultural database of recent coverage of archaeology in the popular press shows that *Out of Africa* and the *Iceman* have been the most extensively covered topics in recent years. Both topics have insights into where we come from, at a global and at a European scale respectively. In general, the broad issue of human origins appears to dominate, because it crosses all cultures. It is a theme that recurs in Scientific journals (e.g. *Nature's* recent coverage by two of our advisory editors/trustees (Bahn 1998; Mellars 1998) as well as tabloid (popular) newspapers. In our experience of nearly a year as editors, three issues covered in the pages of *ANTIQUITY* have attracted the most intensive media coverage. Of these, two — *Jinmium* (*ANTIQUITY* 70 (1996): 751–73; 72: 173–8) and the *Taramsa* burial (*ANTIQUITY* 72 (1998): 475–84) — have been related to the global origins of humanity. The third — Simon James' article on the Celts (*ANTIQUITY* 72 (1998): 200–209) — was related to the politics of the origins of European nations. Readers could have found an engaging web page of *The Scotsman* (until it went off-line — how stable is this medium?) where the views of Teresa Gorman and Alex Salmond, deeply Conservative and Scottish Nationalist Members of Par-

liament respectively, were compared with those of Simon James from the University of Durham. Readers will now have to turn to the hard copy of the 13 March issue of *The Scotsman* to find the coverage. A full page (p. 15) outlines the varied academic views, while the contrasting political comment is found (p. 4) under the headline 'Scots told to keep cool on Celtic smear'.

The Archéodrome de Bourgogne near Beaune in Burgundy has now been open for 20 years. This park of archaeological reconstructions, strategically located near the north–south A6 motorway, still has vibrancy in its presentation of the past. It is a presentation based on considerable local investment by the Region of Burgundy. Comparable financial commitment by regional government in culture can be seen in many parts of Europe (see our picture above), but in the United Kingdom it is often privatized. Burgundy is fortunate to have a series of internationally famous sites, such as Solutré, Bibracte and Cluny, which are worthy recipients of investment, and whose importance was celebrated by an exhibition (and catalogue) which ran until the end of last year (Gautherot 1996). Some of the Archéodrome displays are showing signs of weathering, and in the late summer there were no activities of public engagement. Nevertheless, experimental archaeology is clearly the prominent theme — since there are almost no authentic artefacts on show. Instead the life-size displays are honest efforts to reconstruct elements of life and technology. The draw of this site is still strong, and more

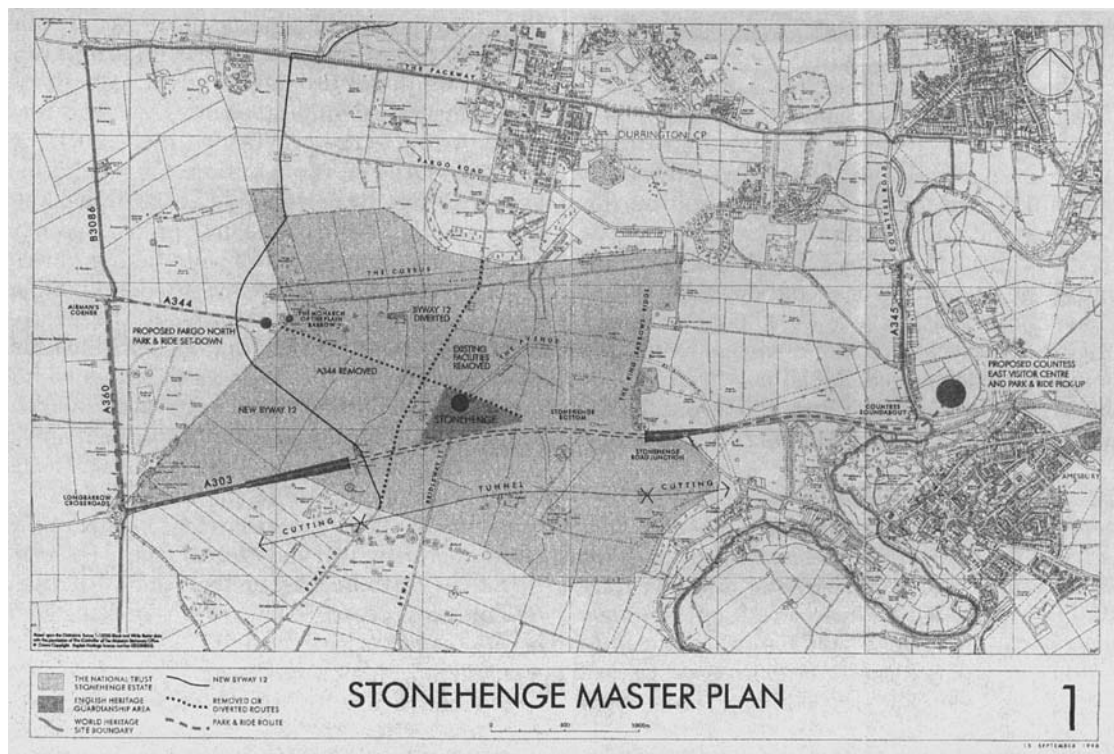
than 100,000 visit each year. The question which faces all such presentations — including examples in Britain such as Jorvik in York — is, where should such engagements with the public now be taken, in order to preserve their attraction? The Archéodrome has added a three-dimensional film presentation illustrating the fundamental contribution of Burgundy to European culture (from the Palaeolithic to Wine!) and — at a world level — the development of Time, another response to the appeal of human origins. Other explorations of virtual reality are bound to be developed, but all will have embedded messages that leave little room for alternative and disputed interpretations of the past.

☞ One disputed site is Stonehenge. The first debate is over the *meaning* of Stonehenge. This issue of *ANTIQUITY* contains responses by **John C. Barrett & Kathryn J. Fewster** and **Alasdair Whittle** to **Mike Parker Pearson & Ramilisonina's** interpretation of Stonehenge published in the June issue (*ANTIQUITY* 72 (1998): 308–26).

The second debate over Stonehenge relates to its modern condition. Readers of this journal have been regularly updated on 'progress' at Stonehenge over many decades, during which the site and its 'problem' have been debated, agreed, planned and then shelved on several occasions. In *ANTIQUITY* (70 (1996): 9–12), Geoffrey Wainwright of English Heritage outlined and discussed new proposals for roads and visitors and reviewed the old problems. These problems are well known and common to many sites awarded World Heritage status. They include excessive damaging traffic, excessive visitor numbers, difficulties in presentation, marketing and providing all the services necessary to justify the huge visitor numbers and their demands, not to mention the intellectual rigour demanded by academics on the site's presentation. Stonehenge has additional problems — its location between a very busy trunk road and a minor service road, the increasing demands of transport (now Highways Agency), the military installations close by and an increasingly vociferous local community, anxious that any development locally will not impinge on life and services in the town of Amesbury, or indeed, the county of Wiltshire. With visitor numbers running at c. 800,000 a year and set to increase if the site and its facilities are improved, there is clearly cause for concern, and this indeed has been a major fac-

tor in the length of time taken to decide the future at Stonehenge. A further recurrent factor has hindered progress, and that of course is money. A vast amount of money is required to do justice to the premier prehistoric site of Britain, and even though more than a decade ago we rather despaired of the careful, hesitating steps that both colleagues in archaeology and government ministers were taking in regard to Stonehenge's future, we are thankful that rash opportunism did not prevail. There have been numerous plans and options, ranging from motorways beside the site to massive diversions across the neighbouring countryside, on-site popular presentation, reconstructions nearby, huge visitor centres run by slightly doubtful commercial franchises and much more. The wrong choice made then would have been the wrong choice permanently, and Stonehenge is too fragile for any earth-moving or visible construction.

The latest pressure for a new plan is fuelled by the rush for a Millennium Park in the World Heritage site, which ever since the Millennium became an issue, perhaps three years ago, has galvanized effort and government attention. An earlier Editorial (*ANTIQUITY* 71 (1997): 794–6) discussed the ideas and the private enterprise that was entering the arena. But that Millennium Park idea has been bid for and has failed to win approval. Now, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sports, Chris Smith, has made it clear that Stonehenge must be sorted out. He is not the first Secretary of State to demand progress, but he has brought uniquely to the problem the means of solving it, which is a relatively vast injection of government funding. There have been meetings since November last year which identified local concerns on traffic impact, the need to provide a dual carriageway on the line of the A303 trunk road, and the need for improved visitor facilities. A second meeting, earlier this year, presented revised plans, which were well received. These include a visitor centre at Fargo North (west of Stonehenge), the closure of the small road, the A344, and the new *tour de force*, a road tunnel carrying the A303 trunk road as a dual carriageway along two alternative routes, enabling the restoration of much of the original Stonehenge landscape. Earlier proposals for this last major piece of the jigsaw puzzle were never explicitly funded — somehow English Heritage, the government agency for archaeology and the historic fabric of England, was to cope with the



Map of proposed tunnel and road diversions. (With kind permission of English Heritage.)

financial burden, making any suitable scheme impossible. By July, a 2-km long cut-and-cover tunnel, following exactly the line of the existing road, but with some widening of it, was proposed (but not universally accepted — as this Editorial shows, below) as the most cost-effective and also least archaeologically damaging solution. It was then included in the Targeted Programme of Improvements to Trunk Roads. For those unfamiliar with the ways of Britain, road building in the crowded island is always a contentious issue, and so too is the cost. Under the last government, an extravagant programme was proposed, with a mass of new roads, by-passes and improvements, and the cost was to be as astronomical as it was archaeologically damaging. The plan was instantly shelved by the incoming Labour government last year, and revisions have been under way ever since.

The new scheme is part of the Targeted Programme of Improvements for Trunk Roads. It consists of a 2-km long tunnel that extends from below the ridge to the east of Stonehenge (New Kings Barrows) under Stonehenge Bottom, and

quite out of sight from Stonehenge until it emerges again 800 m west of the site and near the west end of the Normanton Barrow group. On 22 September 1998, the Stonehenge Master Plan was published, and sets out the new and optimistic overview for the road scheme; it announces the £125-million investment that is to be made, and assesses the impact that the scheme will have on the landscape of Stonehenge. The recorded archaeology of the area is dense (450 scheduled sites) and much is nationally important, but the scheme, since it follows the already much damaged road line, disturbs or destroys only 16 minor sites, all severely damaged and only three of them now slightly visible. The scheme enables the busy, over-used, over-cultivated landscape to be restored to a downland environment, encircling Stonehenge and providing a fitting backdrop to the Stones and earthworks: 'The reunification of Stonehenge which restores its dignity and its sense of isolation set amongst 450 scheduled Ancient Monuments in a landscape of chalk downland and the protection of the archaeology forever, is the ultimate and most impor-

tant environmental objective of the Stonehenge Master Plan'. In conclusion, the plan lists the following nine items for change or removal: 'the combination of the Countess Road East visitor centre linked to Fargo North by a park and ride shuttle scheme will achieve greater environmental and sustainable benefits than any alternative scheme; the new visitor centre will provide excellent visitor and interpretation facilities that do not at present exist at Stonehenge; the existing unsightly and inadequate visitor facilities will be removed from the World Heritage Site; car and coach parking on the World Heritage Site will be eliminated; the free park and ride service to a set down point at Fargo North will reduce the number of cars on the A360 and the remains of the A344; the disturbance to archaeology will be minimal; the existing network of footpaths and bridle ways will be extended through the 2000 acre World Heritage Site; the new plans will cause minimal disruption to local people; there will be free access for the public to walk amongst the Stones and to experience the most powerful, mysterious and distinctive place in our world'.

All this seems almost too good to be true: free public entry to an authentic ancient place, restored to as much former glory as modern research and management can muster. The new plan is, of course, a compromise and there have been grander, and possibly better, ideas bandied around — access from different points, removal of the road problem altogether, to name but two. However, the main objective is clear — that the site and its landscape be made marvellous again. Farmers are to be generously compensated to stop ploughing and using the land intensively, and the bulk of the 2000 acres will revert from corn and intensive grass lays to a chalk downland flora, under extensive sheep grazing. What follows on the earlier plans for franchised visitor centres, parking, eating and entertainment are simply noted in this, the first plan, and 'in partnership with the owners of the Countess Road East site seek a private sector developer to build the new visitor centre'. The quality of what happens in the visitor centre will be of interest, since the presentation of the site will be intimately tied up with the commercial interests of engaging hundreds of thousands of tourists. We hope that the Secretary of State maintains an appropriate level of interest and control in the popular presentation of the site and its landscape.

But even as we write, opposition to the new scheme is emerging. The ability to satisfy all views on this contested monument (see below) will be more difficult to achieve. The cut-and-cover tunnel proposals are clearly not acceptable to all the interested parties. Here we publish some of the letters from archaeological colleagues who wish to state their views. Whilst the present proposal appears superficially to be the best we are likely to achieve within the money available, we begin to question the fundamental issue — just how much is Stonehenge, the symbol of the British ancient past, really worth to us and the nation? Is it worth merely the usual British compromise of only as much money as can solve the problem for the moment? Or is it so special and worthwhile that it is worth even half the final cost of the flimsy Millennium Dome that occupies so much political rhetoric at the moment? It seems that the figure — £125 million — has simply been plucked for discussion. There has, as yet, been no fully costed scheme for either the cut-and-cover tunnel, and perhaps more significantly, the long bored tunnel. Not even government ministers really know how much any of it will cost. As regular visitors to Italy, we ourselves wonder why some international engineering firms — who have successfully and quite cheaply (?) — built tunnels from one end of Italy to the other, are not brought in to cost alternative schemes, alongside the ponderous elements of British transport construction! The timetable is all rather short — after all, the end of the millennium is approaching fast, and for political expediency, progress must be evident soon. If you, the reader, feel strongly, one way or another, please enter the debate and make your views known.

PETER STONE* *writes on behalf of the Council for British Archaeology*:¹

The new proposals for Stonehenge recently outlined by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Chris Smith, move us significantly nearer to a real solution for problems that have beset the site for more than twenty

1 This piece has been written in early October. English Heritage has offered to brief the CBA on the new proposals for Stonehenge on 27 October. A number of the points raised in the above may therefore have been answered by the time *ANTIQUITY* is published.

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years. The CBA applauds the commitment of both Chris Smith and Jocelyn Stevens to finding a solution and acknowledges the huge debt that the archaeological community owes them for their perseverance in untying this particular Gordian knot.

There are effectively three elements to the problem: the location of whatever visitor facilities replace those presently in use, the A344, and the A303. The CBA strongly supports the proposed removal of visitor facilities from within the World Heritage site to a location just to the east of Countess roundabout. It must be right to remove as much as possible from the World Heritage site and the (April) proposal to build visitor facilities within the site was wrong. The Council also strongly supports the closure of the A344 and the removal of all but a short section of the present road that might act as an access road to a dropping off point somewhere near the Fargo plantation.

The Council welcomes the commitment to bury part of the A303 in a tunnel. However, while we fully understand the reluctance of Ministers to contemplate a long bored tunnel on purely financial grounds, we are concerned that this option has not been fully explored. There are two aspects to this concern. First, we have seen no recent engineering quotations for the construction of such a long bored tunnel. The figures usually quoted of between £200 and 300 million are now a number of years out-of-date. Tunnelling expertise has moved on significantly in this short time and it would be cavalier for the archaeological community to endorse a major development (for that is what a cut and cover tunnel is) within the World Heritage site without having full and up-to-date figures for all options in front of us. It has also not been made clear why the only option to the proposed 2km cut and cover tunnel is a 4km bored tunnel. It may be that engineering factors require a bored tunnel to be twice the length of a cut and cover; it may be that the real difference in cost is so significant that we really do face the situation of cut and cover or nothing. However, we need answers to these questions before we can come to a decision that we can defend with certainty to posterity.

Our second concern relates to the perceived economic value of the World Heritage site. The Minister for Roads, the Lord Whitty, confirmed

that the only reason for inclusion of the A303 upgrading into the Short Term Roads Programme is because of its 'heritage importance'. We applaud this commitment to the heritage but are concerned that Ministers have not made use of a section of the report of the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (*Tunnel Vision?* January 1997) which indicates that a long bored tunnel might well be justified as 'good value' economically if the full heritage value of the project were built into cost benefit equations. We are concerned that the work of the Parliamentary Office appears to have been ignored and that 'economic heritage value' has not been factored into the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions' figures when determining the type of tunnel to be constructed. We should like to be reassured that the economic value of the site has indeed been analysed, and that any data produced have been used to inform Ministerial decisions.

These are important concerns about which the Council would like to be assured before it can give active support to the idea of a 2km cut and cover tunnel. They also must come before a number of questions to which the Council would wish to have answers prior to making any final decision on the present proposals: Why, for instance, should the Highways Agency be allowed to pass on a third of the costs of any road to 'heritage sources'? What will happen to archaeological mitigation and the 'polluter pays' principle in future? What is going to happen to the interchanges at both Countess roundabout and Long Barrow Cross Roads? What measures will be put in place for car parking to the west and south of Stonehenge for those who wish to see the Stones but not travel the extra distance to the visitor centre?

We may have moved a huge step closer to resolving the problems of Stonehenge. However, let us be absolutely sure that we do not rush decisions simply because we can see an end in sight; rather we must ensure that decisions are taken in full knowledge of all options in order that our generation is not labelled the defilers of the Stonehenge landscape.

KATE FIELDEN, * *archaeologist and editor, writes: Announcements about Stonehenge, on 22 Sep-*

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tember this year, include the sensible decision to site a visitor-centre beside Countess Roundabout, at the edge of the World Heritage Site. Park-and-ride from Countess is sustainable in the longer term and could be implemented in advance of major road changes. But concomitant proposals for dualling the A303, with a 2-km cut-and-cover tunnel, are not encouraging.

Years of vacillation and defeat over the appalling problems of traffic and visitor management at Stonehenge would argue for caution. Analysis of the requirements of the site itself, visitors, traffic and local people, followed by consultation and production of a Management Plan, are vital to adopting the right solutions. This is the approach advocated by UNESCO for World Heritage Sites and it has been successful at Avebury, whose recently-published Plan (Pomeroy 1998) has been well received.

Unfortunately, we are now faced with road proposals for Stonehenge which cast doubt upon the validity of any Management Plan that may appear. Successful lobbying by local authorities seeking solutions to A303 traffic congestion has led to revival of a road scheme abandoned under the Tories in 1994 as too damaging (see Wainwright 1996). The implications of cut-and-cover at Stonehenge should be revisited as a matter of urgency, despite the absence of precise drawings and a full environmental impact assessment.

Diagrammatic plans presented on 22 September (English Heritage 1998) show a tunnel land-take four times the width of the present carriageway and destruction of or damage to 16 *known* archaeological sites near the Henge, including long and round barrows, field systems and linear features. The proposed tunnel portals lie close to the route of the ancient Avenue and important barrow groups. Extensive remodelling of Stonehenge Bottom would entirely alter topography possibly significant to the Henge builders. The cut-and-cover route lies over ground thought to be largely free of archaeological remains but the open space between the Henge and its encircling burial mounds may also have been of significance to those who created it. In any case, archaeological excavation in advance of road construction presents poor conditions for the recovery of pre-historic evidence and is, necessarily, once for all. The 20th-century cut-and-cover scar would

become the dominant archaeological feature in a designed landscape, the *whole* of which has been designated a World Heritage Site internationally accepted for its outstanding universal value.

At an international conference in 1994 called by the National Trust and English Heritage to promote a technically feasible alternative to cut-and-cover, Sir Angus Stirling, then Director-General of the National Trust, said

... the only feasible on-line route which avoids the disadvantages, and meets the essential requirements of this World Heritage Site, is a long bored tunnel ... There is no historic site in England where we shall uphold that duty with greater resolve and determination.

The long bored tunnel, from east of King Barrow Ridge and the ancient Avenue to west of Longbarrow Roundabout, was vigorously endorsed at a Highways Agency planning conference on the A303 in November 1995 (summary in Wainwright 1996). Along with closure of the A344, a long bored tunnel would be less damaging to archaeological and landscape interests and offers maximum flexibility in future visitor and site management. Walkers could explore a landscape free from intrusive tunnel cuttings, dual carriageways emerging through portals much larger than most of the individual scattered monuments, and the unremitting sight and sound of traffic.

The current A303 scheme is in the roads programme on 'heritage' grounds alone. Severe and irreversible damage to the already abused Stonehenge landscape and archaeology is now considered by English Heritage an acceptable trade-off for improved visitor-access to the Henge and a better experience on arrival. What has triggered this cavalier approach to conservation and sustainability? At the World Heritage Site of Lascaux, for example, further damage is ruled out and access to the 'resource' denied yet the demands of presentation and interpretation are satisfied and visitor-numbers are high. Our failure now to put protection and careful management of the *whole* World Heritage Site before other interests at Stonehenge will result in censure by future generations for having added, through short-term vision, to the degradations of our own (including the plough damage which should have been halted long ago). Who would have thought that the present

Stonehenge visitor-facilities would be considered a 'national disgrace' only 30 years after they were built? Protection of the site against damage by visitors and their facilities will also be jeopardised if, as is promised, free access to the Stones is allowed.

Such issues are not new to us: they were discussed by Christopher Chippindale (1994) and, more recently, for Avebury (Pomeroy 1998). Similar concerns were addressed in *Antiquity* (1996) by Dr Geoffrey Wainwright who argued firmly for the long bored tunnel at Stonehenge, saying

This will bring the issue of the price we put on the most important parts of our heritage into the public arena.

The many acres around the Henge now threatened by cut-and-cover were bought by public subscription and given to the National Trust for permanent safekeeping. Will the Trust abandon its commitment? And why hasn't the debate on costs been brought into the public arena?

As far as financial costs are concerned, no up-to-date figure has been sought for the road solution abandoned as too expensive, but the sum is estimated to be in the region of £300 million — less than half the price of the Millennium Dome. The Government has pledged to raise £125 million for the cut-and-cover scheme — almost half of what may be needed for a long bored tunnel. Surely, before agreeing to wholesale destruction at this world-famous site, every effort should be made to seek the shortfall elsewhere — perhaps from European or International organisations?

Meanwhile, in view of our responsibilities under the World Heritage Convention, let us return to the production of a properly consulted Management Plan, unconstrained by precipitate announcements. Successive abortive exercises in finding a solution to roads and a visitor-centre have, through the field-walking, topsoil stripping and test-trenching of archaeological evaluation, added substantially to the loss of fragile primary evidence from a precious finite resource; they have also raised questions about heritage management, ethics in archaeology, and credibility. A measured approach is needed: building on the logical consensus of 1994 to 1996, the aim would be for sustainable solutions even if some of these might only be achievable through phased development.

Stonehenge, abiding symbol of our national heritage, has been standing for three or more millennia; we must not be beguiled into condemning its environs to further unnecessary damage by spurious 'last chance' threats.

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LORD KENNET* writes:

It may be in order to try to discern what is going on in Whitehall about the Stonehenge Road. This is not easy, but attentive following for some years through Parliament, as a former minister responsible for the national heritage, as Chairman of the York University Conference on World Heritage Site status which led in due course to the new Local Authorities Forum, and as President of the Avebury Society in the same World Heritage Site as Stonehenge, leads me to these conclusions.

Dr Chris Smith, the Secretary of State for Culture, the Media and Sport, has repeatedly been misadvised about Stonehenge. Twice already he has had to change his mind about where the new Visitors' Centre should go; now, sensibly enough, after revisiting two sites carefully considered and abandoned years ago, he has returned to the consensus first achieved in 1994: the Visitors' Centre should be outside the World Heritage Site, at Countess Roundabout, and visitors in their hundreds of thousands should not be spilled straight into this highly vulnerable landscape.

Ha was also 'advised' that the equally agreed twin-bore tunnel was bound to be too expensive and need not be considered, even though tunneling is becoming steadily cheaper. (There is a 3.2 kilometre single bore, two-track rail tunnel being driven through the North Downs for £80 million.)

So along with the welcome return to Countess comes a quite unacceptable cut-and-cover tunnel, portals all within the WHS, which in-

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