# EIA Quality Mark Case Study

## A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Issues:</th>
<th>Purpose of the project:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>In the spotlight</strong></td>
<td>Highways England is seeking to improve the A303 at Stonehenge by providing a dual carriageway between Amesbury and Berwick Down. The project’s five core benefit themes are: improving journey times and reliability; boosting economic growth in the South West; reconnecting, conserving and enhancing the WHS; providing positive legacy for local communities; and improving the environment. AECOM supported the development of a preliminary design for the scheme and completed the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA), and the draft Development Consent Order application.</td>
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<td>The Stonehenge monument, and the historic landscape in which it is set, is internationally recognisable and renowned. It is this renown that makes the project controversial and has driven high levels of public participation and scrutiny.</td>
<td><strong>Description of the project:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Building in the World Heritage Site (WHS)</strong></td>
<td>The scheme includes two major junction improvements, a twin-bored tunnel of approximately 3km, a bypass of the village of Winterbourne Stoke, a viaduct over the River Till Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), four green bridges, the placement of large quantities of tunnel spoil, and the creation of calcareous grassland.</td>
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<td>The placement of much of the A303 within the WHS in tunnel will have significant benefits but there remains a requirement for a large cutting at the westernmost end of the WHS. This issue has been a key focus for stakeholders and has demanded, and continues to demand, considerable attention from the project team.</td>
<td>The scheme is located in open, rolling countryside dominated by the iconic Stones and the associated Stonehenge WHS ancient landscape, and is on or adjacent to: the River Till SSSI; River Avon SSSI and Special Area of Conservation (SAC); and Salisbury Plain SAC and Special Protection Area (SPA).</td>
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<td><strong>Tunnel spoil and Parsonage Down</strong></td>
<td><strong>Stone Curlew and RSPB Normanton Down</strong></td>
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<td>The scheme will generate large volumes of excavated material. Initial assessments indicated that off-site disposal would result in significant traffic related effects. An on-site solution is therefore being progressed which could realise benefits, but this needs to balance and address local concerns raised by landowners and parishioners.</td>
<td>The scheme interacts with the Schedule 1 Stone Curlew in two ways: the loss of a breeding site; and potential for increased disturbance of a dedicated reserve. This has been the most prominent ecological issue on the project.</td>
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## EIA Learning Outcomes

### Lessons learnt:

#### Stakeholder engagement
Given the significant heritage interest with the scheme, engagement with various statutory and non-statutory heritage stakeholders has been integral to the development and assessment of the scheme. A Heritage Management Advisory Group was developed on the scheme to steer and input into the design of archaeological field surveys and the EIA and HIA methodology, which was critical to the understanding of the Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS.

A Scientific Committee of recognised independent academic archaeological experts also contributed to the archaeological fieldwork methods, to ensure that these remain cutting edge and at the forefront of archaeological research as part of the project. This open and collaborative approach to stakeholder engagement fostered positive working relationships that allowed even the most contentious of issues to be debated and resolved constructively.

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#### Lessons learnt continued:

#### Collaboration – Co-location
The ongoing success of the project can in part be attributed to efficient and effective collaboration within the project team. The co-location of the project team, which includes professionals from several organisations, in the client office has been fundamental to this success as it facilitated the evolution of an innovative and environmentally sensitive design and the ‘designing out’ of potential significant effects early in the scheme’s evolution.

#### Innovation
By bringing together experts from several disciplines, the project became a melting pot of innovation in engineering and environmental solutions. For example, the scheme includes four green bridges which will greatly enhance connectivity through the A303 for biodiversity and non-motorised users, and, to inform the sensitive design of the River Till viaduct, the scheme undertook a novel bridge shading study. These innovative solutions have been well received by stakeholders. While always ensuring compliance, it is important for EIA to push boundaries and to encourage and facilitate innovation.

#### Demonstrating commitment to sustainability
In an age of increased scrutiny of government spending and a growing awareness of environmental issues, there is substantial pressure for public projects to achieve the highest levels of fiscal and environmental sustainability. Anticipating the challenge, AECOM proposed the inclusion of three cutting edge sustainability approaches: CEEQUAL, Circular Economy and Natural Capital Assessment. These approaches have continued to support the ongoing development of the project since submission of the draft DCO application, and it is anticipated these will improve the sustainability performance of the project through construction and operation.

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