Driving by Stonehenge on A303 this weekend? Do "citizen science"!

A Wiltshire transport campaigner is calling out to any cyclists travelling by car past Stonehenge on the A303 over the Easter holidays, to help a "citizen science" project to study the causes of traffic congestion at the site of the proposed £1.7Bn tunnel scheme.

Long-time cyclist Andrew Nicolson, who gave evidence as an objector at the Examination in Public of National Highways' A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down Project – the "Stonehenge tunnel" aims to collect dashcam or helmet cam footage and satnav or Strava traces from road journeys.

As convenor of the Transport Topic Group of the Wiltshire Climate Alliance, an umbrella organisation founded in February 2020, Nicolson is seeking evidence on the main causes of the exceptional traffic congestion that takes place where the road passes the iconic and world-famous prehistoric monument.

"Is it mostly because the dual carriageway goes into a single two-lane road? Is it the sheer volume of traffic? Or is it largely the 'rubbernecking' effect, where drivers slow down so that people in the car can get a good look at Stonehenge, causing tail-backs? We need evidence!" said Andrew, "And my research up to now suggests that rubbernecking is a big factor, if not the main one. I may be proved wrong, but if it is, then the massive project for two bored tunnels, threatening this World Heritage Site and disputed by archaeologists and transport campaigners, is taking a sledgehammer to crack a nut, when the stones could simply be screened off at driver's eye level."

"The annual Easter bank holiday weekend is one of the peak times of year for traffic hold-ups on the A303 past Stonehenge, with people from the home counties and the South of England heading for a weekend break or longer holiday in Somerset, Devon or Cornwall. We want data from road users in both directions."

Cyclists can provide evidence by filming through the windscreen using a car dashcam or their helmet camera. They may add running commentary on what they see - and how they feel – as they experience traffic conditions, such as the distance between cars, evidence of rubbernecking, obstructions and so on.

Hard data from a data logging satnav, GPS cycle computer or Strava mobile phone app, can complement the audiovisual record, with evidence of time, location and traffic speeds.

Andrew named the sections of interest: "For video, it's between the A303/A345 Countess Roundabout just East of Stonehenge and the A303/A360 Longbarrow Roundabout just to the West. That's the 3.5 miles, or 5.5km, where it gets really interesting! For Strava/GPS, it's between the A338 Hungerford/Salisbury turn-off, which is on the Hampshire-Wiltshire border, to the East, and the A36 Salisbury/Warminster turn-off to the West. That's about 15 miles (24km)."

People are asked to upload their footage to the cloud and email the link, and GPS data file, or any questions or comments, to transport@wiltshireclimatealliance.org.uk, preferably giving their real name.

IMPORTANT: Never handle or operate a mobile phone or any other device while driving, or as a passenger supervising a learner driver!

Nicolson and the WCA may reuse the video and data for non-commercial purposes, including objecting to the £1.7Bn National Highways A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down Project.

For more information go to www.wiltshireclimatealliance.org.uk/transport-roads.
See also stonehengealliance.org.uk for information produced by campaigners against the road scheme.