

Open Parish Meeting on Car Parking in and around Avebury

Question and Answer Session

31 members of the public attended the meeting held at Avebury Chapel between the hours of 19:30 and 21:30 on the **10 September 2019**

Representatives present: Stacey Stephen (Chair, Avebury Parish Council), Liz Moore (Clerk, Avebury Parish Council), Janet Tomlin (GM, Wiltshire Landscape), Eva Stützenberger (Operations Manager, Wiltshire Landscape), Sarah Simmonds (Stonehenge & Avebury WHS Partnership Manager), Briony Clifton (NT Assistant Archaeologist, Stonehenge & Avebury WHS), Fraser Normington (Volunteering Co-ordinator, Wiltshire Landscape), Matt Claridge (Senior Business Support Co-ordinator, Wiltshire Landscape) and Helen Macbeth (Business Support Co-ordinator, Wiltshire Landscape).

Stephen Stacey (Chairman, Avebury Parish Council) welcomed everyone and explained that the meeting that night was a joint meeting arranged by both the NT and the PC. He said that a draft report of the meeting would be presented to the Parish Council at its ordinary public meeting on the 5 November 2019, which everyone was welcome to attend.

Jan Tomlin (General Manager, Wiltshire Landscape) took the Chair and introductions were made by all present including members of the audience. Jan Tomlin explained that the meeting had been arranged **to address the perceived lack of parking for local residents and businesses**. Members of the public were shown slides of (i) a map of existing car parks in the centre of Avebury that were both NT and privately owned (ii) a map showing the distribution of NT parking permits in the Parish and beyond and (iii) a chart showing the **average occupancy of the High Street car park** using data that had been collected by NT staff three times daily over a six week period during the height of the summer from 15 July to 31 August. It was noted that for one day, on the 22 July 2019, there had been no parking available in the High Street car park.

---- Jan Tomlin's presentation ----

During the presentation Jan Tomlin reported that funds had become available to resurface the small NT car park in the High Street subject to scheduled monument consent being obtained and fair weather. The work was scheduled to take place in the first or second week of November 2019.

Members of the public were invited to ask Jan Tomlin questions and offer proposed solutions (underlined)

1. Did NT staff check cars had permits when they carried out the vehicle count in the High Street Car Park?
 - a. The team did not count permits; they counted empty spaces.
2. Were the weather conditions noted at the time of the vehicle count?
 - a. no
3. Were the vehicle counts taken at the same time of day by all volunteers?
 - a. Yes [at 11:30, 13:30 and 16:00].
4. [A question about signage was deferred to later in the meeting]
5. How many people had been parking in the High Street car park without a permit?
 - a. Vehicle numbers had not been recorded
6. [A question was raised about the NT's obligations and ownership of the parking issue and was deferred to later in the meeting]
7. Was there a significant increase in NT volunteers parking in the High Street car park?
 - a. Volunteer numbers were increasing across the portfolio, but few volunteers use the High Street car park. They use the car park next to the Farm Yard.
8. Why was there suddenly no space in the High Street car park?
 - a. The NT did not have the data that demonstrated there was an increase in parking in the High Street car park. The data captured over the six weeks of summer suggests there are usually spaces available. Eligibility of people using the car park could be looked at using guidance from the WHS Management Plan. Sarah Simmonds (WHS Officer) explained that parking should be looked at within the **context of protecting the character of the landscape** and creating **sustainable tourism**. Guidance was contained in a range of policies including (i) The Wiltshire Local Plan (previously called The Wiltshire Core Strategy) which recommended that there should be **no substantial increase in parking** and (ii) WHS Management Plan which set out the approach to managing the WHS. She said that under both policies **there was room for flexibility**.
9. Why were there NT adverts encouraging people to come to Avebury when parking was an issue throughout the year? More car parks were not wanted.
 - a. Sarah Simmonds said that **sustainable tourism was about agreeing the best form of promotion**. Eva Stützenberger explained that the NT's advertising schedule was very carefully managed. For example, the opening of the Sculpture exhibition in the Manor Gardens had been timed for outside the school holidays.
10. There appears to have been an increase in the number of pagans visiting Avebury due to the cost of Stonehenge.

11. Problems were caused when the NT started to charge for car parking in the main car park [this was over 15 years ago]. In the last few weeks there has been a significant increase in people parking in the High Street car park and for the first time in 20 years a resident has not been able to use the car park. **There was a perception that an increase in the number of NT volunteers that had been given use of the High Street car park had caused problems for residents.** A better balance was needed to accommodate the needs of the people who lived in Avebury.
 - a. Jan Tomlin stated that access to the landscape at Avebury was free of charge and that one source of income to care for the landscape was from the main car park.
12. Why was there not a credit card machine in the main car park to help people who did not have coins to pay for parking?
 - a. Eva Stützenberger said that the NT had trialled a credit card machine but mobile phone coverage was required and unfortunately the signal was unreliable and so they had not gone ahead with the system.
13. What about a solution for tourists and to make space **for tourist parking in the West Kennett Farm car park** at the bottom of the Avenue?
 - a. Jan Tomlin said that the NT had not pursued that idea due to the sensitivity of the archaeology and fears of encouraging people to cross a dangerous road i.e. the A4, but agreed to look again at the idea.
14. Wasn't the car park at West Kennett Farm already full of NT staff vehicles?
 - a. Free parking was only available to NT members in the main NT car park off the A4361 Beckhampton road.
15. The main source of frustration was NT parking in the High Street car park.
 - a. Jan Tomlin agreed that some staff had been asked to use that car park, including volunteers working in the Cobblestones second hand book store. Eva Stützenberger added that some members of the NT staff were also parking in the High Street car park.
16. What was the percentage of visitors coming to the village, had it increased year on year and what were the number of car parking spaces available?
 - a. Jan Tomlin said that **the number of visits was going up** but the percentage of visitors was not clear as it was impossible to count visitors to the landscape. Eva Stützenberger reported that the numbers of visitors to the Manor and the Museum had not changed in the past few years.
17. **Could residents be allocated spaces in the High Street car park?**
 - a. Jan Tomlin agreed that it could be done. The NT currently had 661 permits for 46 spaces. Stephen Stacey asked whether the NT might consider **reducing the geographic distribution of permits to Avebury residents only.**

18. **Could the High Street car park be supervised with enforcement in operation?**
19. A resident expressed deep sorrow that on a rare visit to Avebury her disabled mother had not been able to park and had therefore been unable to visit her.
20. A resident mentioned that another resident had been told by the NT not to park a campervan in the High Street car park.
21. A resident referred to an email she had sent to the NT and PC that day to point out **the issues of large vehicles belonging to residents being parked along the High Street.**
- a. Jan Tomlin asked how there could be a rule for one but not another.
22. **Would it be possible for residents who owned large vehicles to have a permit for the High Street car park?**
- a. Jan Tomlin felt that that would be a challenge due to the dynamics of moving around the small car park.
23. Three points were raised as follows: **(i) at the weekend there was nowhere for residents' friends to park (ii) daughter attends the Circle Nursery and staff were always encouraging parents to park in the High Street car park so as not the block the High Street (iii) there was an issue getting farm equipment up and down Green Street due to parked cars** and sometimes it could be very challenging.
24. There was lots of parking available at the Sanctuary car park and on the Ridgeway. **The amount of live-in vehicles currently parked on the Ridgeway should be addressed** as it was particularly intimidating for other users.
- a. The NT had counted 9 vehicles and reported the issue to Wiltshire Council. Sarah Simmonds said that the top of the Ridgeway was not a formal car park and the issue of live in vehicles parking there illicitly needed to be addressed. She added that the Ridgeway National Trail had also expressed concerns about intimidation.
25. Live in vehicles attract other vehicles if parking is not monitored.
26. **If elderly people needing provisions can't park, then this is a serious problem.**
27. Winterbourne Monkton residents and volunteers are forced to drive and park in Avebury because there is no footpath linking the villages.
- a. Mr Stacey confirmed that various members of the community were currently researching how to get a permissive footpath installed.
28. It will be a shame if shop volunteers can't park. It's really important they can park in the High Street car park as a lot of them are elderly and need to park as close to the shop as possible. **Checking of permits and enforcement would help.**
29. The Red Lion PH car parking charge is paying for itself so **what about an ANPR for the High Street car park?**

30. Home deliveries on large vehicles have increased and can also cause problems.
31. A resident counted 15 out of 46 car parking spaces in the High Street car park that on one occasion were being used by NT staff. He suggested that those people should use the main NT car park instead.
- a. Stephen Stacey stated that increasing the supply of car parking spaces was going to be difficult and another approach might be to reduce demand or entitlement to residents' permits as previously suggested.
32. Laura Corbett and ASSC all had car parking provision so could the Parish Council rent those spaces and offer them to the community?
- a. Stephen Stacey said that **renting car parking spaces** for special events might be a safety valve.
33. Why does the NT need to use the High Street car park?
- a. Eva Stützenberger said that the main NT car park was usually at capacity in the summer and for elderly volunteers it was easier for them to park close to where they were needed.
34. **Why not reserve a limited number of spaces for volunteers in the main car park?**
35. In the last six months there has been an increase in the number of people using the High Street car park and no less people needing to use it for e.g. attending Church services, attending events at the Social Centre and friends visiting. Please could Jan Tomlin look at what has happened in the last six months?
36. There has been a huge increase in the number of people parking along the verges and this had resulted in wild flowers being reduced to mud. Parking on verges was a far bigger issue and a particular issue throughout the Parish on New Year's Day.
- a. **Stephen Stacey stated that one option might be for a residents' parking scheme for the High Street, Green Street and other areas although if implemented residents would face an annual costs.**
37. That did not solve the wider issue.
- a. Stephen Stacey said that Wiltshire Council Enforcement had generated revenue from Avebury at Solstice and this suggests there might be similar opportunities at other times.
38. Were the bays in the High Street car park marked?
- a. Not precisely but there were indicators and it relied on how people parked.
39. **What about using the local cadets to help with parking?** This had worked well for events on the Sports Field.
40. **What about encouraging a car park near to the 49 bus line** so that people could park and then catch the bus into Avebury?
41. **Could the NT accommodate large vehicles owned by residents in the staff car park?**

- a. The staff car park was already at capacity but **the NT would think about whether there was a suitable and more discrete location.**
- 42. **There could be better signposting to bus routes and bus companies on the NT website.**
- 43. Is there a bus route connecting Stonehenge and Avebury?
 - a. Sarah Simmonds explained that **money from designated funds had been allocated to the 'Explore the WHS and Beyond'** campaign and included improving sustainable transport links which might include a bus link between the two sites.
- 44. **Could there be a new car park and shuttle bus run by volunteers,** similar to the shuttle bus service provided at Dyrham Park?
- 45. What about using incentives?
 - a. Eva Stützenberger said that the NT already promoted visitor discounts for using public transport but not many people used the offers. For example, people could show their bus ticket in the Museum to get a discount off the entry price.
- 46. A Japanese tourist had recently highlighted the poor transport links to Avebury and from Avebury to Stonehenge.
 - a. **A bus link from Salisbury might also be part of the solution.**
- 47. Parking down the Avenue was getting worse.
 - a. Sarah Simmonds said that Wiltshire Council was aiming to reconstruct the area around the 'informal' lay-by using a methodology approved by the National Trust and reduce its capacity to about three cars.
- 48. A resident thanked everyone for coming together and felt heartened by the attendance of all present.
- 49. It's still not clear how the community fits into the NT's priorities and could the NT rethink how it accommodates the democratic rights of people living in the village?
 - a. Jan Tomlin said that the NT could generate more income from its assets in the village but chose not to do that, and that the Trust already supported the community through a range of undertakings. For example. The Community Shop and Sports Field were both leased to the village, both had been set up with pepper corn rents and the NT made no profit out of the leases and did not seek to benefit from either. The Post Office also benefited from low rent. She said that the cost, resource and work that went into Solstice and other Observances was huge and that the NT did actually do a lot for the community.
 - b. Stephen Stacey said that, whilst recognising the NT's contribution, it was for all stakeholders including the community to assume their responsibilities.

50. If it weren't for the tourists there would be no businesses in Avebury and so let's embrace the positive aspects too!

Stephen Stacey thanked everyone for attending.