

1. THE TASK

Transport for Leisure Ltd. (TFL) has been contracted by the Malvern Hills Conservators (MHC) and Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership, and with financial support from the Countryside Agency, to undertake a short study of issues relating to the management of the Conservators' eight main car parks within the AONB.

These eight car parks are situated at the following locations:

1. North Quarry
2. West of England
3. Beacon Road
4. Earnslaw Quarry
5. Gardiners Quarry
6. Black Hill
7. British Camp
8. Hollybush

In addition TFL has been asked to look at the whole issue of parking on Castlemorton Common.

There are an estimated 600 parking places in these car parks, which generate an income for the Conservators of between £70,000 and £80,000 per annum, a sizeable proportion of the MHC's total income. This income also represents a significant "visitor payback" by which visitors (as well as the local community) contribute to the work of the MHC, and thereby to the conservation of the Malvern Hills AONB.

The study asks for advice on five main areas of concern. These are:

1. Car Park Pricing Policy
2. Enforcement Policy
3. Design of Car Parks
4. Servicing Car Parks
5. The specific issues relating to parking on Castlemorton Common.

The detailed brief is attached to this report as Appendix Three.

TFL's response to the brief is in four sections.

The first is a brief analysis of the policy context, mainly derived from the *Malvern Hills AONB Management Plan of 1996*, and the *Malvern Hill Conservators Management Plan 2000-2005* for the land managed by the Malvern Hills Conservators. This is supplemented by a number of key documents, notably the *Malvern Hills AONB, Malvern and Ledbury Area Tourism Economic Impact Assessment 1998/99*, the *Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Visitor Survey 1999-2000* and the *Malvern Hills AONB Sustainable Tourism Strategy*, (all work commissioned by the Heart of England Tourist Board) and a short report on the car parks on the Hills managed by MHC by Karspace Management Limited (2001).

It is also worth mentioning in this context the report undertaken in 1995 by Transport for Leisure for the Countryside Commission and the former Hereford & Worcestershire County Council, *Green Networks across the Malvern Hills*. This looked at a wide range of issues including traffic and transport issues. This report is referred to in the AONB Management Plan, and many of its key recommendations, including the development of the Hills Hopper, were incorporated in the 1996 AONB Management Plan.

This is followed by a short suggested visitor and traffic management strategic overview, based on the above desk study, but supplemented by site visits on March 18th, 19th and 24th 2002, as well as as informal discussions with MHC and MH AONB staff.

The third section responds to each of the key questions in detail set out in the brief in the light of this overview.

The next section looks at each of the MHC operated car parks in turn, with reference to the satellite car parks also in MHC or public ownership in the vicinity, and suggests, for each of them, priorities for action, where possible with outline costings.

The final section is an Action Summary, looking at a possible five year delivery timescale, and suggesting possible external funding sources including the Herefordshire and the Worcestershire Local Transport Plans.

2. THE POLICY AND RESEARCH CONTEXT

The Malvern Hills AONB Management Plan of 1996 remains the key document guiding policy relating to Visitor Management within the whole of the AONB, including those areas of the Conservators land under investigation. This Management Plan itself reflects some important national strategies for conservation, including the government's *Sustainable Development: The UK Strategy*. However, it is also worth noting that since 1996 key policy documents such as the *Transport White Paper: A New Deal for Transport* (1999), the *Ten Year Transport Plan* (2000), *The Rural White Paper – Our Countryside: The Future* (2000) and the *Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000* have been produced which would, if anything, have strengthened the Management Plan's prime objectives in terms of environmental sustainability and managed access to the countryside.

Transport issues in general, and both traffic management and parking receive extensive treatment in the Plan, most notably in 3.10.24 which deals with Recreation and Management Issues, and much of 3.11 which deals with Accessibility and Transport. Parking is also dealt with in considerable detail in this section, and in 3.11.14 it is concluded that the management of car parks and the provision of supporting information for motorists, both on and off site, can have significant influence in regulating visitor movement. How this should be done is fully explored in the Plan, as it is recognised that whilst restricting or "containing" car parking is a mechanism to protect certain heavily used sites from overuse, creating other car parks elsewhere may not provide a solution, whilst even traffic management solutions can themselves be visually intrusive and urbanising in a sensitive location. However, an important objective, MH61, which touches on a core issue of principle for the MHCs' car parks, and which is subsequently fully supported by the Conservators, is to restrict parking areas in and around the main pressure areas to that capacity which already exists, or to small-scale additions where a clear need is demonstrated, or where they can facilitate visitors to provide a clear environmental gain.

The eight key Management Objectives within the AONB Management Plan relating to Traffic Management and Car Parking are listed in Appendix One in the Report.

In 1999 the Malvern Hills Conservators published their own **Management Plan**, for the land managed by the Conservators. This covers the period 2000-2005.

Not surprisingly this document, though only concerned with part of the AONB, and indeed some small areas of land outside the AONB, closely follows the AONB Management Plan. Primarily it looks at a wide range of planning, land use, conservation and access issues.

Traffic Management is also recognised as being a key issue for the Conservators, who make an important distinction between their own duties relating to traffic circulation and parking on their own land and the issues of management on the public highways which are the responsibility of the three local highway Authorities, Herefordshire Council and Worcestershire and Gloucestershire County Councils.

As the Plan rightly notes “it is unrealistic to separate the two in preparing a cohesive traffic management strategy or the area”. Though it is not their prime responsibility, the Conservators would wish to have an influence on the provision of such a strategy. The Plan also notes (which is of particular relevance to the present study) that traffic management has a direct bearing on vegetation management, for instance in the damage caused to vegetation and disturbance to wildlife by vehicles straying off-road, tracks and parking and parking areas.

It is noted (p. 22) that the “main areas reach capacity in peak periods, with car drivers then attempting to park their vehicle on verges and in grass areas. Parking charges are collected from machines, but many visitor avoid paying.”

The Conservators’ Plan cross references the AONB Management Plan on other major traffic management issues. What is a matter of concern to the Conservators, however is the “policy gaps” identified in the Plan (p. 26) relating to traffic, transport and access issues. These are all highly relevant to the present study and suggest important work that still needs to be done in the Malvern Hills AONB and on MHC land in particular:

- *The role of speed restrictions and traffic calming measures in improving the safety of grazing stock and visitors;*
- *The use of cattle grids to contain grazing territories;*
- *Traffic congestion on and adjoining key sites;*
- *Promotion of bus and rail services and the provision of public transport information and key site.*
- *The provision of information about the Conservators; function at railway stations and parking areas;*
- *The use of information boards at key access sites as a means of influencing traffic movement;*
- *The use of highway signing to influence visitor distribution and movement;*
- *The visual impact of transport signage and street furniture;*
- *The impact of traffic on the neighbours to the Conservators’ land.*

The proposed Future Management proposals therefore indicate, among their aims and objectives (14): “*To participate in the development and implementation of a sustainable transport strategy for the area.*”

The Malvern Hills AONB, Malvern and Ledbury Area Tourism Economic Assessment of 1998/99, undertaken by the Research Unit of the Heart of England Tourist Board for the AONB and published in May 2000 emphasises the enormous importance to the local economy of the resource the Conservators in particular have to manage, which includes 1.25 million trippers, 1.11m day trips and 0.14m overnight visitors, spending £28 million in the local economy and supporting 740 jobs directly and 200 jobs indirectly. The report also, by implication, underlines the close social and economic symbiosis between all the Malvern townships with the countryside literally on their doorstep.

The detailed **Malvern AONB Visitor Survey of 1999-2000** also prepared by the Heart of England Tourist Board for the AONB JAC, gives a breakdown of visitor origins and activities, with 67% of visitors coming from Worcestershire (46%), Gloucestershire (14%) and Herefordshire (7%), and a further 17% from the West Midlands. No less than 87% were

recorded as being repeat visitors, though first time visitors increase significantly among UK touring visitors (39%) and UK overnight visitors (25%) but not surprisingly 68% overseas touring visitors and 78% overseas overnight visitors are first timers. The high percentage of repeat, local visitors emphasises how the AONB is seen very much as a local resource. On the one hand this defines a strong local catchment market for the AONB, but one whose established habits, including short hop car journeys to and around the AONB, will be difficult to change.

On the other hand, walking is the main reason many visitors choose to come to the Hills, around 67% giving this as the main reason for their visits, with “general countryside visit” second in popularity as a reason for coming, noted by around 30% of visitors.

Not surprisingly, modes of transport suggest domination of the private car, with 82 % of visitors arriving in the AONB even allowing for those many local visitors who do walk from home, with only 3% using public transport, though this rises to 5% when residents from the three AONB “parent counties” of Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire are discounted. Less than 1% of visitors were recorded using the Hills Hopper recreational bus service.

This is hardly surprising given the fact that the Hills Hopper, excellent as it is, only operates on a two hourly headway on a limited numbers of Sundays and a single Bank Holiday from the end of June to the end of September. For this reason alone is only likely to be used by dedicated public transport users without any other means of access to the AONB. British Camp and Wyche Cutting have an hourly all-year Sunday service (144); on other days there is virtually no access by public transport to any part of the Conservators land south of Wyche Cutting. In such circumstances 3% of visitors being recorded as bus users must be seen to be encouraging.

A point to note is that whilst only 3% of respondents cited traffic/parking issues as something that spoiled their visit (though this might in fact overlap with “congestion/crowded/people” which also scored 3%), this was jointly the third most unpopular issue after too many dogs and too many cyclists or mountain bikers on the Hills.

It is important to stress that this was not a survey of visitors using the car parks. As far as we are aware, there have been no detailed surveys of car park usage either on the Conservators land or within the AONB as a whole. The 600 available places are not likely to be used evenly. Whilst it is clearly true that at certain times of certain days of the year the most popular car parks are overflowing with all the attendant problems described above, other car parks in less frequented areas appear to remain significantly underused. One interesting fact to emerge from the visitors survey is the popular sites chosen by the interviewing team to carry out their task. Not surprisingly British Camp and Black Hills dominated, with 230 interviews being carried out at these two sites alone, with just 20 interviews collected at North Quarry and a token 2 at Tank Quarry. The *Survey Report* notes that early in the season neither North or Tank Quarry produced enough visitors to provide “an adequate sample”.

It is clearly essential that, as an early priority, detailed car parking surveys spread over differing times and days are undertaken to find out exactly what is the spread of visitors between the eight main car parks and adjoining areas where parking is permitted, plus a calculation of the levels of overflow and on-road parking. At the moment there is little more than anecdotal evidence about exactly what is happening during the busiest periods.

The fourth HETB study relating to visitor behaviour in the Malvern Hills is the *AONB Sustainable Tourism Strategy* produced in 2001. This is an admirable document outlining research and policy context for sustainable tourism in the Hills. In its reference in 2.10 to the *National Policy Context* and *Transport White Paper* the report authors note that the national

objective of integration between transport, environment and land use planning at the local level in the Malvern Hills AONB will be achieved through the preparation and implementation of relevant sections of the appropriate Local Transport Plans in the three counties. The authors note:

As one of the key issues for the AONB is the increase in car borne visitors to the area and the comparatively low use of public transport, effective transport solutions necessary to achieve the objectives of this (sustainable tourism) strategy will also need to be included in these plans.

There is also a summary of local community consultations carried out in Spring 2000. This included the fact that even among local people living within easy walking distance of the hills, 75% used their cars to get there and only 22% walked, with 53% also declaring that “nothing” would encourage them to use public transport to do so instead of their cars.

Among significant issues addressed in Section 3 *Key Issues within the AONB Influencing the Strategy* is **Transport Management**. The report notes that both the towns of Malvern and Ledbury, despite being key gateways into the AONB, lack integrated signage, transport, parking and dispersal plans for visitors. They note low use of the Hills Hopper even for guests staying in Malvern and Ledbury, (though in fact the only guests who could conceivably use the service would have to be staying on one of perhaps just twenty Saturdays in July, August or September) as well as lack of integration between bus, train, cycling and walking routes to the Hills.

In the **Programme of Action** (Section 4) the report’s authors suggest the importance of improving the ability of visitors to make informed choices through understanding and appreciation of the importance of the AONB as a special landscape and of the vulnerability of the area.

The **Action Plan** include a whole section on Transport Management Initiatives. What is rightly emphasised in this study is the need for a holistic, fully integrated approach, with visitor education, information, good signage, positive incentives to encourage the use of public transport, cycling and walking forming part of a comprehensive approach to how visitors reach, move around and experience the Malvern Hills. At the moment such a comprehensive approach is clearly not in place.

A tightly focused, if brief study, of specific management problems relating to the eight car parks was commissioned by the Conservators from **Karspace Management Ltd.** (untitled) in 2001, car park management specialists. This looks at a number of specific issues in terms of signage of the car parks and walking routes from them, siting of pay-and-display machines, pricing policies, revenue collection and enforcement. There are some useful points in that study which are referred to at other points in this study.

What is clearly missing from the review of current policies and strategies, including the Local Transport Plans of both Worcestershire and Herefordshire (Gloucestershire, only occupying the southern tip of the AONB is less directly concerned) is any reference (as suggested in the Sustainable Tourism Strategy) to the AONB and its major traffic and transport problems and opportunities, even though with 1.25 million visitors the AONB is arguably one of the most important generators of leisure traffic in the two counties. There are generalised references in both LTPs to the management of rural traffic, but no specific reference to the problems and opportunities within the AONB as such. As these two highway authorities have responsibility for all the management of all traffic on the public highway, with something like 82% of its 1.25 million visitors being car borne (most of the remaining 18% being locals who walk there), this omission needs to be corrected. A joint Visitor and Traffic Management Plan developed and funded through both LTPs, (probably with one of the two main authorities

taking the lead), would access considerable expertise and, equally important, financial resources to tackle specific issues such as the need to control on-road parking, as well as other specific issues such as traffic calming and speed controls, for example along the A449 in the vicinity of British Camp, or the B4218 in the approach to Earnslaw Car Park and Wyche Cutting.

Informal contact with officers within Herefordshire Council have indicated that lack of consultation by either authority with the AONB JAC has been by default rather than design. Neither side has, perhaps, fully realised the importance of traffic management for the AONB within the wider context of visitor and indeed overall resource management. This lack of close co-operation so far between highway and land management authorities partly explains the lack of progress on transport matters within the AONB.

The two LTPs are five year Plans covering 2000-5, and major revisions are not planned until 2004 for the next five year cycle. This would, however, give scope for urgently necessary detailed research to be undertaken and specific proposals to be developed in terms of a Visitor and Traffic Management Plan, which would form part of the AONB Management Plan, but the traffic elements of which could also find their way into the two LTPs for funding proposals. Any complementary measures to improve the skeletal Hills Hopper or other bus services might be developed through the Malvern Hills Rural Transport Partnership with Wider Welcome Funding. Bidding for such funding, for example for a park-and-ride experiment, would be very strongly supported if it could be demonstrated the proposal was part of a wider Visitor Management Plan.

However it is also worth reporting that both local authorities would welcome dialogue with officers of the Conservators and the AONB Partnership to discuss any aspects of traffic problems within the AONB. Whilst major schemes, such as for example traffic calming, Quiet Lanes or sections of rural clearway would undoubtedly need to be funded and developed through the LTPs, if there are specific problems, for example the need for new waiting or parking regulations on roads close to specific car parks, officers are prepared to consider specific solutions sympathetically and, if criteria would be met, to take forward the necessary action even within the current LTP cycle.

3. PRINCIPLES BEHIND A TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AND PARKING STRATEGY FOR THE CONSERVATORS' CAR PARKS

Based on the established policies and related research work outlined above, we put forward the following five principles to be applied to the five areas of study for each of the car parks and on Castlemorton Common.

- 1. All traffic management and parking provision on or near Conservators' land should support the wider AONB Management Strategies and the MHC's own Management Plans. In particular they should reflect the need to maintain use of the land by visitors within the overall carrying capacity of the area, and agreed Limits of Acceptable Change. There should therefore be no general increase in car parking capacity on the land owned by MHC.**
- 2. Revenue from car parking charges should continue to be treated as an important source of Visitor Payback to support both the conservation and management of the natural and man-made assets within the Conservators' care. However maximising revenue should in no way prejudice the sustainable management of the AONB or the Conservators' land.**
- 3. The Conservators' car parks are the prime visitor gateways to the Malvern Hills, and should therefore on the one hand reflect a good quality, welcoming**

experience commensurate with a landscape heritage of national importance, and on the other provide an opportunity, through good quality information and signage, to influence visitor understanding and behaviour.

- 4. The close proximity of the MHC managed land to the townships that form the Malverns offers opportunities to develop strategies relating to sustainable tourism and visitor signage that can benefit both the local community and visitors. The development of walking links onto MHC land can help to reduce car dependency and add to the perceived tourism product represented by the townships.**
- 5. Reducing the pressure on the most heavily used car parks, especially in the central areas, can be achieved most effectively by developing holistic strategies aimed at developing alternative modes of travel, as part of a wider Visitor and Traffic Management Plan that needs to form an integral part of the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Local Transport Plans and the AONB Management Plan.**

4. PUTTING PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE – DEALING WITH THE SPECIFIC ISSUES RELATING TO THE MHC CAR PARKS

Pricing policy

Q1. How will pricing policy interact with parking patterns outside MHC’s car parks (roadside, villages, and towns).

There are currently four methods of payment in MHC car parks. Individuals pay £1.50 for what in effect is an all “day ticket” to park at any MHC car park; alternatively they have a season ticket costing just £20 or if they live in the immediate local areas where Community Charge payers are precepted to pay a contribution towards the costs of the MHC, they can purchase a pass from the Conservators costing just £1 (basically an administrative fee) - for unlimited use. Fourthly they can ignore the signs and if, on the relatively unlikely chance they get caught by car park wardens, they can pay a retrospective charge of £1.50, hardly a strong deterrent to make sure appropriate payment is made.

Compared with most other countryside recreational sites in the UK, these are modest fees. £2 is generally the norm in most National and Country Parks. Some modest increase, say to £2, is not likely to be a problem, in that people who are already paying the fee of £1.50 are not likely to become fee dodgers as a result. However any increase in the shorter term which is higher than this will cause progressively strong resistance, especially among local users, leading to more roadside parking and illegal parking. On the other hand this would almost certainly boost sales of the season tickets and the £1 local precept ticket. There would also be the benefit of more people being prepared to walk from the town, especially if it was cheaper to park in town, and routes to the Hills were properly signed from the town centre.

Application and enforcement (using local traffic wardens) of on-road parking restrictions in areas close to car parks would, however force even reluctant payers to pay the extra fee, though at a stage above, say, £3, political resistance would become increasingly manifest, and the Conservators, as members of the local community, are likely to be strongly affected by this, especially as letters begin to appear in the local press.

Bus use is unlikely to be boosted significantly, however, by high car parking charges, as the single bus fare between Malvern and British Camp on the 144 at £1.60 is already more than a

day's parking and a flat fare for two on the Hopper at £5.50 is more than the highest imaginable increase even at British Camp.

Q2 Should MHC change all day/all car park ticket arrangements ?

All day parking for a single fee is a great convenience for the visitor who wants to visit more than one site within the MHC's jurisdiction or go for a short walk, enjoy a famous view or visit a pub, or just want to use a loo. On our visit on 24th March a good deal of this behaviour was noted. It would require a detailed survey of car parks, noting number plates, to have an accurate assessment of how people use car parks for what is sometimes described as "site-hopping", that is staying for a short time at several sites, and whether this is mainly done by local people with passes or season tickets, or visitors from further afield who are buying a single day ticket and using it at two or more car parks. Without a measure of how common this practice is, and who is doing it, it is impossible to ascertain what the impact would be.

If it is the intention of MHC to reduce site sipping and thereby adding to traffic pollution, then charging a fee for a stay at each car park has much to commend it – though it would not affect the holders of local passes or season tickets. However, it would also be difficult to enforce, as someone would have to scan the displayed ticket carefully to ascertain where it was issued, though issuing different coloured tickets at each car park could enable this to be done fairly easily – always assuming that tickets are available in different coloured paper. Given the high percentage of repeat visits and local visitors to the AONB, changing visitors habits would be difficult to achieve, especially among older visitors who would deliberately or otherwise claim not to understand the new rules. Older people who simply stop at various viewpoints would claim to be penalised, and there is likely to be backlash from traders, who again would claim that short stay business was being driven away. This is not to suggest that this course of action should not be pursued, rather that there needs to be a clear understanding of what level of site hopping does in fact occur, and who is doing it, before action is considered.

It may be better to have a timed system of ticketing – namely a £2 ticket valid for up to four hours (which covers the average visitor stay) and a £3 for over four hours, thus covering the needs of all-day walkers who effectively take a parking place out of use for most of a day. Clearly displayed time tickets would be easier to check and as this system is common to most public car parks (including those in Malvern) it is more easily understood and more likely to be respected.

Q3 Should all car parks be the same price? Could an 'altitude' charge be introduced? Could this help congestion and increase income?

In classic economic theory, the availability of parking space at certain car parks such as British Camp or Black Hills is a commodity for which demand exceeds supply and the pricing mechanism is a way of matching the two.

Where this mechanisms fails to work is that demand is both seasonal and highly weather dependent. So demand at British Camp on a wet and windy day in January is likely to be minimal but on a fine August Sunday afternoon infinite. This would then suggest a pricing system which was less in the low season but increased significantly in the peak.

Unless prices at the busy car parks are significantly higher, behaviour is not likely to be affected until the point is reached where visitor and local community backlash begins to be a factor, which far from solving the problem could make matters worse as visitors begin to leave the cars in any available on-road or roadside space.

Given the suggested short and long stay price differential outlined in Q2 above, maximising revenue may be best achieved by better information provision, primarily a well designed leaflet, which warns visitors when certain key parks are likely to be full, and directs them at such times to other car parks, including the high capacity and probably under used parks such as North Quarry Park and Earnslaw Quarry. This might even have to include signs at the approach roads and at the car parks entrance themselves, manned by stewards, directing visitors towards alternative parking destinations. This would itself reduce pressure of overuse at the key locations and deter people from parking on the verges if they felt people were in the area. Again the times of worst pressure are probably no more than 3-4 hours in the middle of the day, between (say) 11am and 3pm.

The one car park where there is opportunity to look at something a little more radical is at North Quarry where usage appears to be low and capacity could be as high as 100 cars (together with an overflow opportunity in the adjacent Tank Quarry). Assuming the Hills Hopper was a little more frequent (i.e. an hourly, or even a half hourly, park-and-ride shuttle between North Quarry and British Camp) then visitors could be offered a £1 discount off a single or family ticket, effectively bringing the charge down to £2 or £1. The Hopper could also be rerouted to serve one or more town centre car parks where capacity is available on Sundays.

The transformation of the Hills Hopper from what is a skeletal service to one which can be a genuine park-and-ride alternative is beyond the scope of this study, but could almost certainly qualify for funding from the Countryside Agency's Wider Welcome Rural Transport Partnership scheme.

Q. 4 Visitor passes – are they the right price? Should they be for more than one year? Is the distribution system adequate?

By any yardstick, £20 for unlimited access to the core areas of the AONB for a season is a splendid deal, especially as by so doing visitor can be made to feel that they are making a useful contribution to the conservation work of the MHC, though in practice if full maintenance costs of the car parks, including vandalism, is taken into consideration, the “profit” from car park operation is much less than it seems.

If prices of day tickets are increased as suggested in Q1, there will be a good case to increase the season ticket after the day tickets are increased, as these will now represent even better value for money, to £25. Given the fact that costs were increased to £20 from £15 only a year ago, this may be politically sensitive even in 2003. This increase may depress sales slightly in the short term, but they will recover fairly quickly as the new price differentials are understood. Higher rises than this will again run the risk of backlash.

A year seems an exactly the right period to offer the deal, and the annual renewal gives opportunity not only to issue a new “disc” but to give season ticket purchasers a newsletter about what is happening on the MHC land, including projects financed by their contribution. Even more importantly such a newsletter can provide information to influence behaviour, including why it is a bad idea to take a car to British Camp or Black Hill on a Sunday afternoon when there lots more space at North Quarry or even Earnslaw Quarry. Other choices can also be highlighted, including the availability of Sunday bus service 144 and the Hills Hopper (offering excellent opportunities for park-ride-and-walk days out along the main ridge), or even for taking a direct walk from Great or Little Malvern, returning by bus. Annual Pass holders – residents and visitors alike – are key stakeholders who need to be brought into the fold, potential members of the recently established “Companions of the Malvern Hills” as well as providing a valuable database for MHC which can be accessed when required.

As far as we can judge the distribution systems from the Conservators Office or the Malvern or Ledbury TICs works very well, though these outlets should be advertised at car parks and in promotional literature. It is important for reasons stated above to retain names and addresses as this is an important data base, including a source of visitor surveys and even a recruitment pool for future volunteers.

Q.5 Residents' passes – are they the right price? Should they be for more than one year? Is the distribution system adequate? Should some smaller car parks be restricted to local residents?

Local residents are almost certainly not covering their administrative costs in terms of staff time, paperwork, printing etc, and increasing the £1 charge to £2 (even in the light of recent increases) would seem reasonable, especially as most of those paying the £2 will be perceived by members of the local community and pass-holders as coming from outside the area. However an accurate breakdown of these costs, per permit, should be provided, to respond to the inevitable complaints in the local press and in the Conservators' own post.

A year seems a reasonable interval for renewal discs as it is for Visitors, and the same criteria should be adopted in terms of retaining what is a valuable database and ensuring regular communication with a strong client base.

The one car park where Residents should (with the disabled) get priority is at Beacon Road. This is a narrow and difficult car park along a cul-de-sac road, which at the time of our survey on March 24th was being abused by people parking on the access rather than paying even the modest current charge of £1.50. Some traffic management and rationalisation is required here – see next section. Giving local people and the disabled priority here will be seen as an important concession at a time when tougher attitudes to casual off-road parking have to be imposed.

The semi-permanent use of the car parks by local residents which seems to be occurring in the lower part of Beacon Road and at the entrance to North Quarry – where local householders appear to have claimed the entrance as “theirs” presumably ignoring the 23.00 curfew - needs to be rationalised. If it is agreed that this usage should be continued, special marked reserved areas should be designated and an appropriate annual rental for use of the space claimed.

Q.6 Pricing for different vehicle categories – ticket prices for motorcycles, coaches, horseboxes.

We have nothing but anecdotal evidence to suggest that motor cyclists probably don't pay anything for their usage of the area. The answer might be to set some areas aside in some of the larger car parks for motor cycles and charge a flat £1 fee, ticket to be retained for inspection if challenged.

Coaches have a minimal one coach parking space available near British Camp, which should be used for setting down and picking up only, with a longer stay car park available at Priory Road North in Malvern at Malvern Hills DC rates. This could be combined with promotion of an easy, interpretive walk from British Camp to the centre of Great Malvern for school and other groups, encouraging a refreshment stop in the town. If demand is higher than the two current spaces, temporary on-road or off-road parking could be arranged.

Horses and horse boxes are a different issue, being difficult to manoeuvre and not compatible with making use of limited car parking areas. It is suggested that the approach should be for the Conservators or AONB Partnership to identify farms at key points on the bridleway network, preferably away from the main ridge of the Hills, where, for an appropriate payment

to farmers, horse boxes and vehicles can be parked in safety and security, to allow riders to access suitable circular or even linear routes.

Q7 Currently there are car parks on the hills where no charge is levied (generally not MHC) – should this be rationalised?

There is little doubt that as far as visitors are concerned, there needs to be a single, unified car parking “system” on the Hills so they know where they can take their vehicles whether for an hour or a full day visit, and leave them in reasonable safety, understanding exactly what the payment system is.

Free spaces on private land can never entirely be eliminated, but as a principle, informal parking areas on public land, including highway verges in the major hot spots, should either be closed – by means of stone boulders, ditches or wooden dragons’ teeth - or incorporated into the system by means of charging, or, as at the Hayslad spring on West Malvern Road, be accepted as a short stay facility.

For example, the 24 spaces on Jubilee Drive (full when inspected on 24th – after the church service) needs to be chargeable (churchgoers excepted) with a standard metered system, as it is clearly being used by visitors, some of whom could be staying there all day. Likewise Tank Quarry, which would appear to be lightly used, needs to be seen to be operated under the same jurisdiction as the adjacent North Quarry

What is more complicated are the overflow areas, for example at Black Hill or Castlemorton Common, which need to be contained and rationalised, so it is quite clear on what land parking is permitted and to be paid for, and on what land parking is forbidden. Again full extent of the problem must await more comprehensive surveys, but much will depend on good quality information to direct people to the right places..

Enforcement policy

Q.7 Ticket dodgers – should they be fined, and if yes, how much? Should they be pursued for non payment?

The current policy of the Conservators towards users who do not pay their charges can only be described as benevolent. If you are caught – and anecdotal evidence is that many people regard the current system as little more than an honesty box - the worst that happens is that you have to pay your £1.50 within a defined number of days. This is hardly a strong deterrent against non-payment, and if attempted in other forms of public or private activity such as on trains or buses, it would certainly result in fairly significant avoidance of payment.

What the loss of this income as a result of non-payment is hard to define, (and we are not aware of any data to support average levels of avoidance) but it is difficult to believe that it is as low as 10-20% as suggested from limited surveys, unless indeed there are a very high proportion of local residents and season ticket holders who are remarkably honest in their habits. We also suspect that many people find other places to park where payment, let alone fines, is not an issue, including on roadside verges or places, as on Jubilee Drive, where parking seems to be free despite it taking place on an extended lay-by which is in fact MHC land. In other cases there is even strong deterrents against paying, such as a fairly extended walk to the nearest ticket machine, a requirement which all but the most scrupulous are likely to quietly ignore.

KMP’s estimate is that a minimum of £14,000 of extra income could be gained by a combination of ensuring all users paid the relevant charges and from fines from non-payers. This may be an underestimate.

Malvern Hill District Council adopt a simple but effective system for their car parks. Anyone found parking without the relevant, up-to-date ticket is immediately fined £20 which if not redeemed by cash payment within 7 days, is increased to £40. Such a system is standard in most urban and many rural car parks. This invariably works, but the occasional non-payer is eventually be pursued through the courts using the services of a local solicitor.

It is recommended that MHC adopt the identical system

Q.8 Out of date residents' passes – should there be a fining system?

Residents who do not renew their passes should be treated in exactly the same way as other non-payers and the relevant fines should be imposed.

Q.9 Disabled badge holders may assume that, contrary to the terms of their badges, they do not have to pay – how can this confusion be avoided? Is the parking charge worth collecting given the number of people involved?

The question of disabled badge holders is an emotive one. People with disabilities are not necessarily on low income and abuse of privileges are common. On the other hand prosecution for non-payment can lead to very negative publicity in the local press and from pressure groups.

As a compromise solution it is suggested that the MHC might wish to consider allowing Badge Holders to park free of charge at one car park (Beacon Road – which, it is suggested, should become an exclusive Local Residents and Disabled Car park) but charge them a standard flat rate of £1 at other car parks.

Q.10 Verge parkers – what can be done about them?

The verge of a public highway is part of the highway. Parking on the verge is therefore legal, unless it compromises safety (usually indicated by a single or double white line in the centre of the road) or causes an obstruction. However if a Traffic Regulation Order (under the Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984) is in force, including single or double yellow lines, or even a rural clearway which does not require yellow lines only small repeat signings – an appropriate solution for Jubilee Drive - parking in such an area is a criminal offence. Local Traffic wardens can be employed to ensure regulations are met. Under current legislation such wardens have to be employed and empowered by the local police force, (except in specific “parking control zones”) almost as a kind of special constable. Most police authorities are reluctant to do so because of extra costs, but if a relevant authority which could include MHC or MHDC, were prepared to pay the relevant salary and other costs, the Police authority is more likely to accept this arrangement. The ideal solution would be to combine car park duties with traffic warden duties, so that a single employee on duty can attend to both on and off-highway parking matters.

Where the verge is adjacent to MHC land, creating some form of physical barriers including low ditches, (as at Castlemorton Common), well placed rocks or dragons' teeth will help prevent vehicles simply drawing off the road and parking on the adjacent land. However, such measures must be executed so that a car is not to cause a safety hazard, nor to allow vehicle owners to sue MHC for causing damage to their vehicles.

Q11. Motor cycles – how can a ticket system work here?

A standard £1 charge for motorcyclists is recommended to be imposed for all day parking, with, in the larger car parks, an area of say six bays laid out for motor cycle use. Users will be

asked to retain their tickets for inspection rather than displaying them on their machine. This makes enforcement difficult, but the threat of inspection is likely to act as an incentive.

Q.12 Who should enforce policy? Should an outside agency be employed for some, if not all, car park duties?

At the moment, an MHC Warden combines her general countryside duties with that of car park warden and cash machine emptier. Given the range of tasks and responsibilities such a countryside manager has for the Conservators, we doubt if this is a wise use of an important resource.

Two other options are to employ a commercial organisation such as KML or to seek partnership with another public agency, in this instance Malvern Hills District Council.

We would fully endorse the view that using a commercial agency has its difficulties, most notably potential public relations difficulties in enforcement cases, lack of direct control over staff, and indeed the wider issue of income being diverted into the private sector.

Discussions with Malvern Hills District Council Officers have revealed that Malvern Hills Council not only have the capacity to undertake the enforcement and cash collection work, but changes in local arrangements have released some spare staff capacity which might otherwise result in job losses or redundancy.

Malvern Hills DC car park wardens could therefore not only provide regular patrols to cover all eight car parks in the Hills, regular emptying of machines, and the issuing of enforcement notices, but deliver regular site surveys to provide data such as vehicle counts. This data, which is currently non-existent, is essential for any future traffic and visitor management strategies. Another huge advantage would be the introduction of a single system for Malvern Hills DC and the MHC parks, albeit with different pricing regimes, but a common fine collection system. Residents passes and season tickets could also be sold at MHDC outlets. Promotion of the network of car parks, signing of routes to the Hills by car, by bus and on foot from the town centre could be developed as an integral whole, all of which could help to reduce car dependency and provide tangible benefits as visitors are encouraged to spend money in the town centre rather than arrive and leave without any contribution.

In effect this would be an Agency arrangement between the MHC and Malvern Hills District Council. It is beyond the scope of this study to determine exactly what the costs and terms of reference would be, except to suggest that it would be more than amply covered by the recovery of unpaid charges and fines, and any additional income raised would benefit both MHC and Community Charge payers of Malvern Hill in terms of income raised through the Agency arrangement. MHC would also benefit by being able to accept continuous advice from experienced, professional MHDC staff on such issues as the cost and maintenance of pay and display machines, legal issues, surface treatments, maintenance issues and security.

Design of car parks

Q.13 Are the car parks adequately signed off the public roads?

The simplest answer to this question is indeed not. In almost every case there is little or no signing off the public highway. Where such signing exists it is in the wrong place (e.g. attracting people into the Lower Wyche quarry where there are few or no facilities).

Most of the cars parks we visited are discreet to a point of secrecy, and only the site of a ticket machine or a small green sign indicating the £1.50 charge (impossible to see at more than 20 mph) being a clue to what is there. A sign, for example saying North Quarry which in any

case faces the opposite direction to that of visitors coming out of Great Malvern town, tells the visitor nothing. There is no information available in Malvern, nor signing from the town centre.

In most cases, a visitor to the Hills would face complete bafflement and is only likely to find somewhere to park by noting other parked vehicles and joining them. The one exception to this situation is at British Camp, where the massive visual impact of the car park conveys its own message. This partly explains why British Camp is so heavily used, and why it quickly reaches saturation.

No doubt this results in much of the aimless driving around looking for somewhere to park noted in the *AONB Management Plan*.

No doubt, too, the policy of discreet car park signing has evolved through a worthy, if sadly self-defeating, effort to minimise the impact of unnecessary signage in otherwise attractive locations. However, a public highway with lots of randomly parked cars is not an unspoiled rural location. Standard DTLR approved small blue signs, in both direction at each and every one of the main car park access entrances from the main road network, is clearly essential and will help to reduce some of the confusion and aimless visitor movement, which is surely a more serious problem than allegedly intrusive signs. Signing on the highway is a highway authority responsibility and a suitable clear signing strategy from Great Malvern needs to be devised in partnership with the two main highway authorities.

Q.14 Could signage be used to direct visitors to less used car parks and if so how and at what cost?

There is little doubt that a coherent signing strategy would increase the use of the less used car parks and thereby reduce pressure on the over-used ones. Until a detailed study is undertaken, it is difficult to assess the capital costs of such signs, and whether, for example existing posts could be used or separate posts need to be erected at given locations, but assuming around 20 signs were required, together with erection costs, the total cost is likely to be in the order of £4,000 - £5,000. How great a contribution would be required from MHC for this, or how much the two highway authorities could meet from their existing budgets would have to be explored further.

Q.15 Collection of money: who should do it? Is it a single person activity?

This issue has been dealt with by Q.12 above. The collection of cash, its banking and security would be dealt with by MHDC in precisely the same way it deals with its own car parks, with cash either being paid directly into MHC account or a repayment system based on receipts less agency costs being established.

Q.16 Should some car parks be unsigned for use by locals?

The one car park which would appear to qualify for this treatment, to be shared between Disabled Permit holders and Local Permit Holders is at Beacon Road. Such an arrangement would allow the disposal of a ticket machine, which currently insufficiently serves this long linear car park, which could be used (and similar income gained) at what is now a free 24 place car park at Jubilee Drive. This car park would remain unsigned, but appear in the suggested guide to transport and parking on the Hills.

Q.17 How when one car park is full, can the overflow be encouraged to find and use other car parks?

Information should be available to visitors in Malvern (in the form of a well produced leaflet referred to below) to indicate that both British Camp and Black Hill are heavily used and there are good alternatives at peak times.

At very heavy periods of peak usage, it may be necessary to have a volunteer warden presence at the busiest car parks, to direct visitors to where capacity exists (e.g. from British Camp or Black Hill to Earnslaw or North Quarry/Tank Quarry) with the development of a shuttle bus to link to popular sites. Such a scheme needs much fuller investigation and discussion as part of a wider Visitor Management and Traffic Strategy for the AONB.

Q.18 How to improve road safety, especially at British Camp?

The situation at British Camp, with the main, very busy A449 through the centre, is best described as dire. The situation on the B4218 at Wyche Cutting is almost as bad. The current attitude of the two highway authorities is that until there is a death or more than one injury, action is not a priority.

This is unacceptable on both safety and environmental grounds. There is a clear case for some form of traffic calming on both roads and pedestrian facilities, such as a central island, at both points.

However the best way of achieving this is through a more comprehensive Visitor Management and Traffic Strategy for the whole AONB which could identify key points for action at British Camp, Wyche and elsewhere, which could be developed, as elsewhere in protected landscapes throughout the UK, via the LTP Process. We urge early discussions with the two highway authorities and Malvern Hills District Council to start this process.

The issue of security is one to be addressed at all eight car parks. In some respects improving appearance and getting greater use of the car parks will itself act as a deterrent – car crime flourishes when no one else is around. However, at the most vulnerable car parks, such as North Quarry, Tank Quarry and perhaps Earnslaw and West of England there may eventually be a case for establishing a CCTV system with video recording. The mere presence of the camera, working or not, will significantly reduce casual crime and car theft. How this would operate and who should monitor requires further investigation, but if Malvern Hills DC was also considering such a system, a joint initiative could be developed.

Q.19 How to improve traffic flow in car parks?

Each car park has to be looked at on its own merits, but it is notable that three of the large quarry car parks, Earnslaw, Gardiners, and North Quarry are huge, circular areas without any kind of marking. Use of “herringbone” style car parking bays, using logs or old timber (secured by stakes into the ground) to mark out bays, could increase capacity significantly at both North Quarry and help create a central parking area, whilst marked bays to ensure efficient nose to tail parking plus some central parking at the other two quarries would both increase capacity and at the same time give both areas a more user friendly feel.

Q.20 Are the car parks as good at providing information as they could be?

Only two of the car parks, British Camp and Black Hill, have any kind of information provision in the form of attractive interpretive panels, which have little visitor management information as such, and certainly no reference to public transport. Signing at all car parks is either poor or no existent not only to the car park, but from the car parks along key trails.

The opportunities that the car parks offer to welcome visitors and influence behaviour on the Hills are largely being missed. There needs to be a communication strategy in place as part of

the proposed Visitor Management and Traffic Plan, which will develop the “Welcoming” role of car parks, linked to effective signing of key trails, public transport routes (Hopper and regular services) and other local facilities. Providers of such facilities might be encouraged to contribute to the display, providing it did not become too much like advertising as a result. Integral to this will be good quality printed literature, in a strong corporate house style, which also emphasises messages relating to long term sustainable management of what is a priceless national asset.

Q.21 Designs to encourage people to buy tickets

The siting of car parking meters is important in terms of being very noticeable as people arrive in their vehicle and within easy walking distance of where they park, and preferably forming part of a key welcoming and information point – Black Hills is in fact a notable good example, though not in terms of access for people using the overflow areas. There also needs to be a discreet reminder at main vehicle and walking exit areas “Have you paid and displayed?”, and details of the penalties for non payment ought also to be clearly, even prominently, displayed.

Q.22 Are parking meters in the best places to be seen/ broken into?

The more car parks are used by the law-abiding public the less likely vandalism of machines is to be a major problem. However, this remains an issue of concern in isolated locations, and frequent emptying with notices to indicate they are emptied every evening (whether this is strictly true is another issue) is likely to help. Well positioned prominent locations are likely to score both on usage and reduced vandalism. KML note with approval how the current machines are built into stone surrounds to discourage vandalism. Solar-powered machines can occupy a more varied choice of locations (see below) and for that reason are more adaptable than conventional machines.

Q.23 Can the aesthetic landscaping of the car parks be improved and if so, at what cost?

The quarry industry of the Malvern Hills has bequeathed to the present generation what might seem a heaven sent opportunity in terms of hidden locates in which to conceal several hundred cars without huge visible impact on the landscape. However old quarries are also bleak, and at times dangerous places in terms of rock fall. Their enclosed, somewhat claustrophobic nature can also provide a cover for anti-social activities, including car crime, which in turn can deter usage. Tank Top Quarry, (owned by WCC) for example is a perhaps classic example of a car park and picnic site which is seriously underused for these reasons.

There is little doubt that in order to make the main large quarry car parks more welcoming places a great deal of money will have to be spent, in terms of marking out parking places, (logs staked into the ground will also reduce the appeal of the car parks as skid pans for local boy racers), planting areas to soften hard lines and keep visitors away from rock faces, picnic areas, signing of trails, provision of information, viewpoint benches; Earnslaw Quarry top car park for example, offers superb views if there was anywhere to sit.

It is impossible to hazard even an educated guess at the costs involved, and it is likely that a programme of improvement will have to be planned over several years to achieve high standards at all eight car parks under the Conservators care.

Sources of funding for such improvement could include Landfill Tax (assuming that there is a landfill site within 10 miles of the Hills), Aggregates Tax and the Environment Action Fund; as a charitable body the MHC are eligible to source funding which would not be available to local authorities.

Servicing car parks

Q.24 Are the current accounting categories correct for monitoring the effects of changes in car park policy?

Current accounting categories are useful for giving an indication of single day visitor usage of car parks, in terms of general peaks and troughs, and the split between the eight locations in the AONB. It does not reflect patterns of local or season ticket use.

A much more detailed survey is required of visitor behaviour, which is best achieved by surveying actual usage of official and unofficial car parks by all users at key times of the day and differing weeks of the year, to establish patterns of visitor use. Such information as weather conditions, public events in the area etc needs also to be recorded as part of the survey.

Q.25 Collection of money: who should do it? Is it a single person activity?

As suggested above, this should be a Malvern Hills District Council activity based on an agency agreement with MHC

Q.26 Enforcement of fines: should this be done by another agency?

As above.

Q.27 Service contract on meters – is this adequate? Should there be a trained individual at MHC who can deal with faults?

As above, also dealt with on an agency basis with MHDC and in the light of officer experience.

Q.28 Could solar panel meters increase income across more car parks?

Solar panel metres could offer many major advantages to MHC, including provision of extra meters where power supply provision is problematical, e.g. on the other side of Jubilee. They also give out the right kind of sustainability messages to the public in terms of low, renewable energy consumption.

A briefing note which includes the cost of such metres, and some major suppliers, is attached at Appendix Two.

Q.29 On Castlemorton there is a voluntary car park attendant who earns a proportion of parking fees collected. Could this be better managed?

We understand that this activity has now ceased with the departure of the individual concerned. How collection is best handled should form part of an overall visitor management strategy for Castlemorton Common which is dealt with in the next section.

Car parking on Castlemorton Common

Q.30 Proposal for managing parking on this common and reduce off road parking.

Hollybush and Castlemorton Commons are described in the MHC Management Plan (Zones 4 & 5) as “a unique and important landscape” of open, unfenced common “bounded by irregular areas of enclosed holdings of cottages and farms, with small fields, orchards, dense

hedgerows and numerous hedgerow trees. A complex vegetation mosaic, which also varies in scale locally, diversified the open aspect of the grassland; encroaching scrubs, naturally regenerating trees, damp bracken hollows and pollarded trees.....”

Much of the area of a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and also a Special Wildlife Site

It is noted that cars are often driven onto the common, creating some erosion and unofficial tracks. Roadside parking also causes serious erosion and damage and to counter these impacts, small roadside ditches have been dug to keep cars on the highway. Within the areas are key honeypots such Berrow Down, the Mill Pond (a particularly lovely informal parking and picnic area) and the dramatic Gullet Quarry

Dealing with car parking in this whole complex and very special area of the AONB must be seen as part of a wider visitor management and nature protection strategy for the area, and cannot be dealt with adequately within the framework of this limited study. What is clear, however, is that indiscriminate parking and driving over extensive areas of these two commons is totally unacceptable on both landscape and nature conservation grounds. During our brief visit it was clear that there was significant erosion and damage, tyre marks, with evidence, on Berrow Downs of visitors themselves having a miserable time of it as vehicles and their occupants were clearly bogged down in places in soft ground.

On the other hand we sense that this informal use of the area for passive recreation is seen as “traditional” among local communities, a relaxed way of using the landscape which has gone on for generations.

Nevertheless such usage is unacceptable, and the Conservators are quite right to have limited its use. It is noted that over 500 cars, at peak times, are sometimes parked on the Common, clearly submitting this sensitive, ancient landscape to pressure well beyond what would be the “limits of acceptable change”.

An overall Management Plan for the two commons is required as a matter of urgency. Car parking at Castlemorton and Hollybush needs to be determined not by demand, whether traditional or otherwise, but by the carrying capacity of the area. This will require the formalisation and designation of certain areas for car parking, ideally areas where because of topography visual impact is minimalised.

Such car parks should differ very considerably in appearance from the more urban car parks on the main hill area. They may have some hard standing, or “grasscrete” for the heaviest used areas, but remain rural in feel, and use made either of ditches or grass covered earth mounds, and appropriate small scale landscaping to soften impact as well as to prevent further traffic penetration on to the common. Mounds would conceal parked vehicles, yet still allow people to enjoy what would be an otherwise unspoiled view across the common from a parked vehicle. Local walks could be signposted (though not necessarily waymarked) from the car parks, and interpretive panels erected help to explain the special qualities of the landscape and its natural features. And why it needs protecting from too many feet and tyres.

How many of these cars parks and how many car parks spaces should be created should be determined not by peak demand, but by what is defined in the Sustainable Tourism Strategy as the carrying capacity of the area. They also must not be too large. Obvious places are the Mill Pond, Berrow Down and Hollybush which are already used for existing parking. Size should not be too large, no more than say 40 places, with the options of extensions for (say) another 20-30 places at times of highest demand.

The Mill Pond, as well as being an existing popular picnic area, is already attractively laid out, though reduction of the numbers of cars parking on the slope south of the hard core track

down towards the pond might be considered, as this would increase available picnic area and recreational space and reduce visual impact.

Borrow Down suffers problems of vehicle erosion onto the common, and will need some careful treatment and screening to prevent further incursion onto the common, as will the informal car park at Hollybush Common west of the church (see next section).

There are restrictions on exactly what structures can or cannot be erected on Common Land and we assume that this is an area where the Conservators will have expert knowledge and be able to determine appropriate solutions within the constraints of Commons legislation.

One small parking area (about 10 spaces) which ought to be taken out of use when opportunity permits, is the Gullet Quarry, a very special and dramatic location which is currently misused in the evenings by anti-social and occasionally rowdy elements. Ideally this cul-de-sac road should be closed from the cross roads to vehicular traffic leaving it as a place for pedestrian use, and for interpreting a remarkable geological feature. There are special problems of restricting vehicular access at the moment linked to the concerns relating to the occupant of a nearby cottage and her access rights as well as her anxieties, justifiable or otherwise, of people passing on foot, but these problems will eventually have to be overcome and planned for accordingly.

All these car parks should be chargeable, and use of solar powered pay and display machines, supported by enforcement, would seem the way forward. Details of suitable suppliers and costs are at Appendix Two.

5. RESULTS OF THE SURVEY OF THE EIGHT MHC MAIN CAR PARKS WITH KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1: North Quarry

Estimated Capacity: 100-120 vehicles if car parking spaces were marked out in herringbone fashion.

On 24 March at 17.35 13 cars were in the car park and 6 on the access road

Free/Charged: £1.50

Ticket Machine available: Yes

Attractions/trails accessed: Access to the main ridge, Worcestershire Way and the Worcestershire Beacon. Close to the townships of Great Malvern and Malvern Link.

A WCC run car park and picnic site, at Tank Top with capacity for around 50 cars, free of charge, is 100 metres away, but is little used because of the perceived security risk.

Information Provision: Virtually no signage from the town centre, and no signs indicating it is a car park at the entrance. Very limited information provision in the car park itself, some footpath signs marking the entrance points to footpaths leading to the ridge and to the Worcestershire Way, but otherwise footpaths are not marked. Although fairly easy to find, the access path to the Beacon is not as well used or as obvious as other paths to and along the top of the ridge. This may also be partially due to the rather steep gradient.

Visual impact: Fairly well screened by the old quarry and tall trees, but not as enclosed as Tank Top, making it less vulnerable to criminal activity.

On-road parking in vicinity: Some parking by local people along the access road. This seems to be residents using a free parking facility which probably continues overnight.

Observations/Recommendations: This could be a good alternative to the Beacon Road/West of England car parks, as it allows access to the same area of the ridge and the Beacon with opportunities of circular walks, as well as to the Worcestershire Way.

However, the other car parks giving access to the same area are a preferred option for most Sunday walkers, as the climb out of the North Quarry car park is considerably steeper and longer than from the others.

It could, however, be developed into a prime park and ride site if there was a more frequent bus service available at peak times which was also well promoted. This could even include the bus operating into and around the car park. Prominently displayed bus timetable information close to the ticket machine is essential to achieve this.

At the moment the car park is distinctly uninviting and requires resurfacing, and parking bays laid out with rough timber, secured by stakes into the ground – this would reduce joy riders. A couple of picnic tables to replace the worn out benches would help make the areas seem more friendly, also good signing both of the low level and high level routes and available circular walk, as well as the access route along the main ridge from the north of the car park - which are not at all clear at the moment.

This car park does have potential to be developed into a more strategic point for both walking and as an interchange with public transport. Signing from the main road and even the main cross roads near the town centre would be hugely beneficial in terms of increasing use and taking pressure away from the more heavily used car parks. It would also help to have this and other key car parks clearly indicated on both current Landranger and Explorer OS Maps.

2: West of England

Estimated Capacity: 120 spaces in three distinct interlinked areas, corresponding to rock shelves that once formed part of the old quarry access.

(9+15 cars counted on 24 March 2002 at 15.05)

Free/Charged: £1.50

Ticket Machine available: 2 ticket machines at both entrance points

Attractions/trails accessed: The main ridge and the Worcestershire Beacon, the Hayslad Spring on the main road below, accessed by a generally busy lay-bye.

This is, perhaps more than any other of the car parks, a fascinating area in itself, being gently wooded yet with a mixture of geological and industrial archaeological interest.

Information Provision: The existence of this car park is hardly evident for drivers approaching from Malvern, there being no signage on the road, and no information when you arrive, and minimal provision or facilities..

Visual impact: Minimal – well screened by trees.

On-road parking in vicinity: A parking bay on the road popular with visitors accessing the Malvern Water Spring (7 cars counted on the study day)

Observations/Recommendations: This car park lends itself to quite different treatment. Because of its location requiring a moderately steep climb to the Beacon, for most people it is not a substitute for Beacon Road or even Earnslaw – even though Earnslaw is slightly steeper. It has a rather different function. Potentially it is a small, informal Country Park within the Hills, a place where people can enjoy relative peace and quiet, with attractive woodlands, and good, if steep, access to Worcestershire Beacon. Visitors could also enjoy access to what could be a number of short, circular waymarked trails within this forested, formerly quarried area (but not on the open access land) with a high degree of interpretation. We draw attention to the skilful way this is done in many German Forests and Forests Parks, such as the Bavarian Forest National Park, which achieves the very highest, internationally recognised standards of visitor management and nature protection. To suggest this more formalised approach to visitor management in areas such as this will somehow compromise visitor management ignores examples of best practice from other parts of the world, and indeed within the UK. Its development must be seen to balance more restrictive policies in more vulnerable areas such as Castlemorton Common.

The old quarry road through the site could provide excellent disabled access if cars no longer used it as a rat run or short cut.

Our recommendation therefore is to close the southern entrance completely and remove the P&D machine, and have just one entrance, in the north which would have to be improved to ease access from the south along West Malvern Road. This will focus visitor information towards the three main parking areas, reduce the need for two parking machines to one, and allow for better site management, giving visitors of a sense of entering a very special area. Once in the site visitor would be encouraged to park, enjoy good quality interpretation, a choice of easy and less easy trails, including the superb rock exposures at the quarry face, providing barriers keep people at a safe distance. Seats and picnic tables should be provided (and perhaps even removed from less suitable, more intrusive sites elsewhere on MHC land) to encourage people to stay longer to enjoy the area. This is an area that can absorb relatively high numbers of visitors and their cars relatively easily and has potential therefore to take pressure away from British Camp.

3: Beacon Road

Estimated Capacity: 45 in the upper area, around 20 in the lower. ,

14 in the lower car park, 4 in the upper car park on 14th March between 1-2pm

Free/Charged: £1.50

Ticket Machine available: In the upper car park, but no machine in the lower one

Attractions/trails accessed: The main ridge, Worcestershire Beacon and associated viewpoints, This is the easiest access point to the beacon. Pub/lunch/afternoon tea facilities around Wyche Cutting. Toilets at Wyche Cutting.

Information Provision. Poor. This car park not signed from the main roads. As most of the Conservators car parks, it is used mainly by Sunday walkers, families and dog walkers, who have a good selective knowledge of the area and no need to carry a map. No mention of public transport provision, yet hourly (Sunday) buses stop nearby.

Visual impact: Acceptable – not intrusive

On-road parking in vicinity: On 24th March 02, over twenty cars were parked on roadsides close by, even though there was more than adequate access in the car park available.

Observations/Recommendations: This is a difficult location. Access to the upper car park via a single narrow road may present problems with cars turning or having to reverse out of extremely narrow bays. Bays are so narrow drivers frequently park over the lines, thus sterilising the adjacent place.

There is also some confusion with the lower bays, with only one machine available. Much of the road is public highway with use by local residents as a free parking area.

Issues of local semi-permanent parking, use of the highway for parking and lack of turning space need to be resolved.

Our recommendation would be to give priority at this car park a) to the disabled and b) to local residents, and not to promote the car park except to these groups. This would remove the need to have a second machine available. However there may well be concerns at the potential loss of around £9,000 of revenue (1999 figure), probably from low season users, but this ought to be more than adequately compensated by the increased use of Earnslaw if this was well signed and promoted from Malvern and along the B4218..

The little parking bay by the church on Jubilee Drive (around 20 spaces – 14 in use on 24.3.02) owned by MHC raises some safety concerns. Though primarily initially created for churchgoers, it is in effect a free car park for walkers.

The road at this point - Jubilee Drive - is fairly bendy, and the cars have to go to the middle section of the road to avoid walkers getting out of cars or the cars reversing. This creates a hazard with visibility obscured by the bend, i.e. either walkers, or cars coming from the opposite direction would not be visible to the motorists.

Despite these problems (which may have to be resolved by some traffic calming measures), it would be impossible to remove or close this parking area. Compromise might be to give users of the church free parking at times of church services, (banning non church parking at times of services) but charge visitors, and walkers in particular, the standard rates. It might also be useful to make it a short stay car park only, directing longer stay users some 400 metres away to Earnslaw Quarry

4: Earnslaw Quarry

Estimated Capacity: 130 over on 2 levels,

Just 4 cars there on 25 March 2002 at 14.35 - all on the upper level.

Free/Charged: £1.50

Ticket Machine available: Yes

Attractions/trails accessed: The main ridge and Worcestershire Beacon from the alternative access road to the Malvern Hills.

Information Provision: Signed (damaged) indicates access from the B4218 road.

Visual impact: Well screened from the hills and the road, but a rather bleak and forbidding appearance despite some attempts at softening with a wooden barrier, and some signage. A high capacity alternative to the Beacon Road/West of England car parks, but with a steep climb up to the main ridge.

On-road parking in vicinity: None as the main road is narrow and dangerous at this point

Observations/Recommendations: This is a large, probably very underused car park which could easily take pressure of other car parks in the area, especially if its internal appearance was improved and it was well promoted. This might include timber parking bays (also to reduce joy riders), some planting and creation of picnic facilities, perhaps even stone benches at the edge of the upper car park to facilitate enjoyment of the open views, better signing (including walking routes to the main ridge and Wyche Cutting) and interpretive facilities.

The smaller quarry at Lower Wyche immediately to the south of Earnslaw is also a storage/workshop area used by MHC staff (and the only car park currently well signed off the highway). There are no facilities and it is not a very welcoming area. Given the very large, underused capacity of Earnslaw Quarry close by, it is suggested that this car park is closed. This would also reduce security risk at the workshops.

5: Gardiners Quarry

Estimated Capacity: 60 plus, divided between the main quarry area (up to 40) and the shelf above the main road (20). 18 cars parked on 24 March 2002 at 12.21

However, also a large, informal overflow area, well screened, below Jubilee Drive and around the café. This is closed during the winter months but could hold around 60+ vehicles.

Free/Charged: £1.50

Ticket Machine available: Yes for the top section, but not for the large overflow area. It is difficult to believe that substantial revenue is not lost when this area is open, as it is a long walk back uphill for anyone honest enough to pay. A P&D machine is required here which could be removed at the end of the season.

Attractions/trails accessed: To the main ridge up a steep trail, but also other local walks westwards into the AONB including the Worcestershire Way. However the main use of the car park is probably drivers stopping to rest and admire the view.

Information Provision: Not signed, but clearly visible from the road. No interpretation boards, but footpath to the main ridge is obvious.

Visual impact: The parking outside the quarry is visible from the main ridge path, and is likely to have a quite significant impact in the main season, especially if cars stray southwards along the rocky shelf.

On-road parking in vicinity: None observed but tyre marks on verges especially around the junction to Brand Green where there is a well, suggests seasonal problems, which are severe where Jubilee Drive meets the A449 near British Camp.

Observations/Recommendations: This is far from being an ideal location, as the most attractive areas to park are outside the old quarry in most exposed areas. More than most other car parks this probably relies on passing trade.

No information about bus services was available, although buses call there every hour on Sundays. Some refreshments, with their own parking facilities, are available a little further down the road.

6. Black Hill

Estimated Capacity: 45 in the main area, up to 50+ in the overflow areas of hillside.

28 cars counted on 24 March 2002, at 11.30

Free/Charged: £1.50 Ticket Machine available: Yes, but not well situated for the large overflow areas above Wynds Point.

Attractions/trails accessed: British Camp (a well used walkway parallels the B4243) and up to the main ridge. There is also a short disabled trail close by.

Information Provision: The car park is not signed from the road. A high quality information board is situated close to trails and ticket machine.

Visual impact: When the car park is functioning within capacity, this is acceptable. At busy times when the overflow areas are in use, this will have a significant impact on the landscape.

On-road parking in vicinity: Even on a relatively quiet Sunday in March, (24th) with ample space in the car park, 9 cars chose to park on B4232, around the bus stop - a loss of MHC income of £13.50. At peak times this can be a major problem with severe congestion posing a real danger to other road users and loss of access for emergency services which could cost lives. Traffic Regulation is clearly essential here, reducing roadside parking perhaps with a rural clearway, which must be seen to be enforced.

Observations/Recommendations: This is an attractive car park because of its location, and clearly draws local people for some very short stays, including several dog walkers. There is a gentle climb to the lower part of the ridge, but not much opportunity for circular walks.

There must be some concern about the visual impact of the overflow car park which is very exposed, and the on road parking. This is the second most popular of the eight MHC car parks and clearly is considerable under pressure at peak times, acting as an overflow for British Camp.

7. British Camp

Estimated Capacity: 175

70 cars and 6 motorcycles counted on 24 March 2002, at 11.15 am.

Free/Charged: £1.50

Ticket Machine available: Yes

Attractions/trails accessed: The main honey pot site of the Malverns. British Camp attracts a huge number of casual visitors even those with little interest in the remarkable archaeological features of the site, but who enjoy the extensive views from the summit. The remains are accessed via a series of hard surfaced paths. There is a popular route down to the British Camp Reservoir. There is also a natural access point to the main ridge both southwards towards Castlemorton Common and The Gullet, and northwards via Herefordshire Beacon. Even when visited on a relatively quiet Sunday in March, this area was very busy with visitors.

There is a popular hotel close by providing refreshments and there are public toilets across the main road.

Information Provision: The car park is not signed, but is perhaps all-too-obvious from the main road. An interpretation board and a bus timetable available, but no information on where the bus stops.

Visual impact: Significant, although the car park is screened from British Camp by surrounding woodland.

On-road parking in vicinity: On March 24th 9 cars were parked outside the hotel and near the bus stop on the B4232.

Observations/Recommendations: British Camp, with its expanse of blacktop and painted parking bays is something of an aesthetic disaster, which is hardly acceptable at the entrance to one of the finest ancient monuments in the English Midlands. Measures to reduce its visual impact might include wooden or stone clad planting areas to divide up the main bays, (even at the cost of the loss of some car parking space) and to direct traffic in a circular flow, and landscaping of other features. Removal of the toilets from the far side of the A449 to the car park side would also reduce some pedestrian –vehicle conflict. British Camp merits a full landscaping study in its own right.

8. Hollybush

Estimated Capacity: 20 + but difficult to estimate as at busy times visitors clearly spread all over the common land.

Free/Charged: Officially £1.50 but if fees are not collected users do not pay.

Ticket Machine available: None

Attractions/trails accessed: Part of the Hollybush/Castlemorton The Commons are an area of informal access.

Information Provision: None

Visual impact: Could be quite alarming at the busiest times

On-road parking in vicinity: None noticeable as the Common offers extensive opportunity for informal, off road parking

Observations/Recommendations: The issues at Hollybush are identical to those of Castlemorton and are dealt with in detail in that section of the report. The Hollybush site itself is a triangle of land above Golden Valley where motorists stop to admire the view and enjoy a picnic. It is a very exposed site and any formalisation of the parking runs the risk of unacceptable visual impact. Nevertheless this is something that needs to be tackled with skill and care, and overflow parking discouraged so that the area retains its special qualities and is not urbanised, even temporarily, by the sheer number of visitors and their cars. What happens at Hollybush is therefore best dealt with as part of the overall management plan for the Hollybush/Castlemorton area referred to in the previous section.

The small car parking area to the west, at the end of the Worcestershire Way near Midsummer Hill is privately owned and not in control of the MHC. There are only a handful of spaces here, ten at most, and once the Worcester Way is diverted as has been recommended, its significance is likely to decline. Its future will have little impact on what happens at Hollybush or on Castlemorton Common.

6. PUTTING THE STRATEGY INTO ACTION - A PRIORITISED PLAN

We suggest a Seven Point Programme of Action, starting in Spring 2002, and continuing perhaps over a eight to ten year period into the life of the next Herefordshire and Worcestershire Local Transport Plans 2005-10.

It is difficult to offer clear guidance on priorities, as Action Points 1 – 6 require initial but continuing action starting in the very near future (i.e. during the Spring and Summer of 2002, whilst Action Point Seven will form part of a longer term implementation programme.

Action One – establishing a Partnership for a Visitor Management and Transport Strategy for the Malvern Hills AONB

We suggest an early meeting with representatives of the following key stakeholders - Malvern Hills Conservators, Malvern Hills AONB Partnership, Herefordshire Council, Worcestershire Council, Malvern District Council, Countryside Agency, Malvern and Hereford Rural Transport Partnerships.

The initial purpose of this informal group will be to:

- Review the proposals set out in this report
- Produce or commission a Visitor and Traffic Management Plan for the AONB which will lead to a formal submission as part of the next Herefordshire/Worcestershire LTPs, and will form part of the next Malvern Hills AONB Management Plan and MHC Management Plan.
- Work together to implement the further Action Points identified below.

Action Two - establishing a fuller data base of visitor travel patterns within the AONB

Current data traffic and visitor movement is incomplete and makes it difficult to define effective strategies or indeed to have good baseline information against which to monitor future outputs as and when new measures are introduced, or to set against agreed targets. Such information is essential for external funding from almost all sources. The AONB Partnership and the MHC should therefore:

- Commission professional or student help during the summer of 2002 to carry out detailed surveys of visitor and local parking behaviour at all eight MHC and subsidiary car parks and informal on road parking within the AONB, with vehicle counts at formal and informal car parking areas, noting registration numbers, at hourly intervals on a variety of days – weekends, a Bank Holiday, and in contrasting weather conditions.
- Provide statistical analysis of this data to feed into the proposed Visitor and Traffic Management Plan.

Action Three – Develop and agree an Agency Agreement with Malvern Hill DC to operate and manage the eight MHC car parks, This will include:

- Revision of current MHC car park pricing and conditions
- cash collection
- vehicle counts and surveys
- machine maintenance
- advice on requirements for overall security and maintenance.

Action Four - Produce a “green travel” guide to the AONB aimed at local people and visitors. This will indicate:

- all public car parks within Great Malvern and the AONB, explaining the tariff rates, availability of tickets, the visitor-payback scheme,
- main walks and access points from the town centre car park onto the Hills and from the main car parks/bus stops to key trails and viewpoints
- details of regular bus services to access the Hills (primarily services 675, 144 and the Hills Hopper)
- Distribute to TICs in the region, all guest houses and hotels in Malvern, post offices, library, supermarkets, MHC, MHDC and Town Council offices, by post at time of renewal to all season ticket and local parking pass powers, and have copies available in leaflet dispensers at main car parks and rail stations. Much of the content could also be included in the 2003 Malvern Tourist Brochure.

Action Five - developing the Hill Hopper

- Seek immediate Wider Welcome funding to increase the current (summer 2002) service to hourly
- Work with the two Rural Transport Partnership to secure a daily service through the summer season and all year if practical
- Consider how the Hopper can be adapted to create a more frequent park and ride service between Malvern Town, North Quarry, Wyche Cutting and British Camp at the busiest times

Action Six - undertaking a visitor management plan for Hollybush and Castlemorton Commons.

This may form an integral part of an overall Visitor and Traffic Management Plan for the AONB but, given the particular vulnerability of this area, and its immediate problems, we would recommend it be prioritised in order to ensure key measures of control, and indeed revenue collection, are implemented, at an early date.

- Examine the special problems of this area in order to balance the need for informal enjoyment and access by motorised visitors with the need to protect a vulnerable eco system and special landscape heritage.

Action Seven - investing in the MHC Car Parks as Gateways to the Malvern Hills

- Develop a rolling programme of capital investment in each of the main car parks to reduce their environmental impact and improve their aesthetic appearance to a standard equal to the environment they serve.
- Use income from the car parks as matching funding to develop all eight car parks – which are also linked by the Hopper bus - as part of an integral, sustainable network to enhance the visitor and local community experience of the Malvern Hills and to assist their conservation by effective visitor management, interpretation and education.

Appendix One

KEY POLICY MEASURES IN THE MALVERN HILLS AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN RELATING TO TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT AND CAR PARKING

MH.54 To enhance the appearance of visitor car parks, where necessary

MH.58 To undertake traffic management measures which ameliorate adverse effects of congestion and conflict, including possible use of an advance warning system for congested areas at peak periods and dissemination of traffic information to appropriate locations and media outlets.

MH.61 To restrict parking areas in and around the main pressure areas to that capacity which already exists, or to small-scale additions where a clear need is demonstrated or where they can facilitate a redistribution of visitors to provide a clear environmental gain.

MH.62: To consider promotion of parking areas peripheral to the main visitor areas where they can provide an alternative to those under press, and be linked to “park-and-ride routes.

MH.63 To promote well-designed, informal and small scale parking areas for low key countryside recreation at appropriate locations, but to prevent parking giving access to areas which are too sensitive and fragile.

MH.64 To promote improvement to the environmental quality of existing parking areas.

MH.65 To make greater use of parking areas for the provision of information and interpretive material, particularly that which encourages visitors to leave their vehicles and explore, perhaps by “park-and-ride” or on foot, rather than drive between attractions.

MH.66 To discourage indiscriminate parking where it intrudes on or damages the landscape, and to promote the removal or rationalisation of such parking where it already has such adverse effects.

Appendix Two

SOLAR POWERED P&D MACHINES – BACKGROUND NOTE

There are a number of examples of usage from around the UK. These machines tend to be purchased by local authorities for small scale on street parking, where laying a cable infrastructure for grid connected machines would prove disruptive and not cost effective. They have been employed by the Woking Borough Council, Kirklees, Halifax and Ealing. All the authorities contacted confirmed lack of operational problems and economic benefits of solar powered P&D.

They are quick and easy to install as pavements do not have to be dug up for a mains connection, which costs approximately £500 for a cable only a short distance from the machine, but increases to about £1800 for a conventional machine slightly further away.¹ Therefore deployment of PV (solar powered) machines reduces costs and ensures minimal disruption - a bonus for pedestrians and conservation areas. The machines are economical to run as there are no electricity charges and can be relocated easily whenever parking facilities may change. They produce enough electricity to power the machine even on a cloudy day, and the excess is stored in a battery. Interestingly, the best efficiency is achieved when the solar panels are positioned in a way which provides “solar shading” rather than in full sun, as in full sun conditions more of the energy is converted into solar thermal energy rather than light/electrical energy.

The small scale energy efficient P&D projects can be more cost effective than installation of conventional machines. For Woking, the installation of 14 PV machines cost £ 41,315, whereas the quote for the total cost of the installation of conventional machines was for £ 41,440. The cost of a PV machine per unit is around £2,500, with the mains powered version retailing at around £2,150 + grid connection and installation and running costs (see above). They are also estimated to save £130 - £150 per year in electricity charges.

The PV machines have one additional advantage over conventional P&Ds. As there is no underground wiring for the new machines, the information about ticket sales, takings and attempted thefts is transmitted by microwave technology to a central computer. This saves on the employee time, as the information does not have to be physically downloaded from a remote to the central computer, and the system is easier to operate.

Siemens have come up with a state of the art PV P&D machine, with advertising space (which could be used for public transport information), tariff selection and credit/cash card payment option. They also offer servicing.

Contacts:

1. Producers:

- Schlumberger - Arthur Crossley, UK Sales Manager, phone number: 07802 201846 or 01202 850850

¹ Renewable Energy Case Study 31.

- Metric Parking Division, Metric Group Limited, Metric House, Love Lane, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 1YG, tel: 01285 651 441, fax: 653 944
- BriPark Ltd tel: 01732 771775
- PES House, 17 Deer Park Road, London, SW19 3XJ, tel: 020 8543 3281, fax: 020 8543 5344, Email sales@pesparking.com, and
- www.blick.co.uk

2. Others:

- New and Renewable Energy Enquiries Bureau, ETSU, Harwell, Didcot, Oxfordshire, OX11 0RA, tel: 01235 432 450, fax 433 066
- British Photovoltaic Association, tel: 01189 324418, Email: pv-uk@dial.pipex.com, www.pv-uk.org.uk
- Solar Trade Association Ltd, tel: 01208 873518, www.solartradeassociation.org.uk,