

A303 / Rat Running – Multi Agency meeting: 24 March 2014

Response from WC Highways, in consultation with HA

An action arising from the above meeting relates to traffic on the A360, for joint action by the Council and the Highways Agency :

1 (e) Revisit options for putting in place temporary diversion signs so that non visitor centre traffic can be diverted off of the A360 onto alternative routes

It is understood that the action is intended to avoid through traffic on the A360 being obstructed in the event that the demand for parking at the visitor centre (VC) exceeds the available car parking capacity, and that queuing on the VC site access road becomes full to the extent that traffic backs onto the A360 at Airman's Corner, in effect blocking the junction to other (through) traffic.

It is the Council's view that the priority must be for English Heritage, as the body responsible for the operation of a 'private' leisure facility, must be responsible for managing the associated demand. It is far more appropriate that the EH make all efforts to find and negotiate additional temporary holding areas, or alternative parking areas on private land, and, possibly, the A344 as tasked under the actions from the 24th March meeting:

1(b) Negotiate use of the overflow park for more than just the summer season (secure relevant permission and carry out necessary preparation of the land to ensure it is suitable for use in all weathers)

Nevertheless, the action 1(e) has been addressed.

Any diversion of non visitor centre traffic would have to consider both south and northbound traffic.

Southbound traffic could quite easily be diverted at Shrewton:

A **Onto the B3086**, with decisions related to onward travel left to drivers at The Packway junction.

- (i) With local management of traffic at Airman's Corner (which could be organised by EH should the situation demand), the entry arm for southbound traffic could quite easily be kept free of obstruction, with all queuing on the A360, west and south arms of the roundabout, with onward southbound A360 trips being unimpeded. Departing coaches from the VC coachpark would also be free to get away from the site. However, should VC traffic arrive on this arm, and be unable to move into the A344, then blockage could occur. Traffic within the A344 without tickets could be encouraged to leave the area by being marshalled through the coach park to join the B3086 for onward travel (it is acknowledged that EH do not favour this arrangement because of the potential of visitors simply parking in a spare coach space, and because of potential pedestrian/vehicle conflict).
- (ii) Another option available for southbound traffic would be to proceed via The Packway to the A345, then to Countess. This would be an appropriate route for

southbound traffic wishing to proceed eastbound on the A303, and possibly for Salisbury bound traffic who could use the A345 through Amesbury; it would be a wholly inappropriate route for drivers to get back to the A360, as it is almost inevitable that if the VC is operating beyond car parking capacity, then the A303 will be operating over capacity; such diversions would therefore simply add to the delays for all concerned.

B Onto the B3083

- (i) Traffic could be diverted at Shrewton to Winterbourne Stoke, along the B3083. Traffic diverted onto this route could add to eastbound delays on the A303. It would be very unattractive for travel eastwards along the A303 beyond Longbarrow.

The prospect of diverting traffic via Shrewton onto the B3086 is likely to be wholly unacceptable to the residents of Shrewton, which, as a community, has raised concerns since the VC opened about the amount of traffic diverting from the A303 through the village. Any diversion of non visitor centre traffic through the village would inflame this situation. Concerns have also been expressed by the Winterbourne Stoke community, although the impact here is far less because of the already busy A303 through the village, and the lack of frontage development on the B3083 in the village.

Northbound traffic on the A360 arrives via both Countess and Longbarrow roundabouts. To avoid the approach to Airmans Corner, A303 westbound traffic could be signed northbound along the A345 Countess Road, then via Larkhill along The Packway and on to Shrewton. A345/Amesbury northbound traffic would either travel via Countess roundabout or via Old Stonehenge Road (thus avoiding some of the potential delay on the A303 east of Old Stonehenge Road junction). Traffic arriving at Longbarrow from Old Stonehenge Road would have to be either directed back to Countess, then via Larkhill, or onwards to Winterbourne Stoke, to turn right from the A303 to the B3083.

Traffic through Shrewton on the B3086 would raise the same issues as previously stated. For traffic travelling via Winterbourne Stoke, the concern relates to right turn movements at the B3083 junction, where no provision is made for waiting right turn vehicles, and potential safety concerns arise.

For both north and southbound A360 traffic drivers will assess the potential for delays, and many would risk there being delays at Airman's Corner; it is possible that satnav information relating to A303 delays might be the more significant determinant for routing decisions.

It is considered that options for diverting both south and northbound non visitor traffic away from the A360 would be unacceptable to the communities likely to be most affected. Furthermore it would require action on the part of the highway authorities to address problems related only to the (lack of adequate) provision of parking at a 'privately' controlled site.

It should be noted that visitor traffic represents a relatively small proportion of total traffic; it is highly questionable as to why the majority users of the highway should be diverted and inconvenienced to accommodate the traffic associated with the VC.

Diversion of VC traffic

As an alternative, if additional private parking cannot be sourced as an overflow car park, or holding area, another option is suggested here, likely to be less onerous in terms of signing and management than seeking to remove non visitor centre traffic from the A360. It should be considered only as an interim arrangement until such time as EH have resolved the problems caused by demand exceeding capacity.

It is known that the majority of VC visitors arrive along the A303 from the east. This has been a long established fact from traffic surveys undertaken at the site access etc (at least 60 % of vehicles at the former access departed to the east). It is also known that, of the three main arms of the Airman's Corner, the B3086 carries the minor flows (the TA for the VC site application shows 2012 forecast pm August flows as 209 on the B3086, 729 on the A360(W), and 1166 on the A360 (S)).

It would appear that it might be better to consider temporarily diverting local B3086 traffic away from Rolleston Road, and to seek to route westbound A303 visitor centre traffic via the B3086.

At first signs of over-demand, temporary signing at Countess roundabout could be erected to direct traffic along the A345 to The Packway, and onwards to the Rolleston Road junction. To the north of the coach park exit onto the B3086 traffic for the VC could be held in a queue (on an advisory basis only, by EH marshalls) on Rolleston Road. Traffic could then be drip fed to Airman's Corner junction as and when space was available in the A344 arm of the junction. Advisory signs could be placed at Rolleston cross roads for local traffic (209 vehicles August pm peak hour) to seek alternative routes. This arrangement would minimise the VC arrivals via the A360, and minimise the potential extraneous traffic through Shrewton, and through Winterbourne Stoke.

General Comment

It is highly unlikely that any of the above diversion schemes could be guaranteed to deliver the outcomes intended unless there was a local presence by the police at Airman's Corner roundabout to direct traffic, if necessary. EH marshalls have no powers to direct traffic and could only operate in an advisory role. There would be a need for a full risk assessment were EH staff to be engaged in such activities on the highway.

There has been insufficient operational experience of the VC site to be able to forecast when demand might cause a backup of traffic into the Airman's Corner roundabout. The issue has only arisen to date over the 2013/14 winter holiday period, and this was partly owing to saturated grassland used for circa 150 overflow parking spaces.

EH should be encouraged, through examination of their pre-booked and walk-up ticket sales, to establish a robust predictive model to forecast when demand will exceed capacity. There seems no way that walk-up ticket arrivals can be controlled. If they are to be refused access

because of over-demand, then a formal management arrangement to clear that traffic from the site must be established.

Measures need to be secured to ensure that all 500 spaces on the site are permanently usable, and not subject to closure as a result of inclement weather; all other potential overspill areas that could be used for parking should be fully considered. EH are tasked with addressing this issue.

Local drivers will use their own knowledge of the local road network to make decisions as to their choice of route. They could be helped in this regard by being given advance warning of delays on the A360 at Airman's Corner. This could be aided through the provision of temporary signs on the southbound approach to Shrewton and the north and westbound approaches to Longbarrow and Countess junctions. Such signs could be put in place relatively quickly by EH staff.

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