

East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Visitor Access Advisory Report

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agb Environmental Ltd

1.0 Contents

Please note during the development of the report some plans titled Existing Arrangement and Habitat Context and have been amalgamated so some Plan Numbers are not used.

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Thanks also to those who attended and contributed to the following stakeholder workshops:

Principle Stakeholder Workshop

Kim Strawbridge, Site Manager, Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust
Neil Harris, Habitat Regulations Delivery Manager, South East Devon Habitat Regulations Partnership
Sam Bridgewater, Head Wildlife and Conservation, Clinton Devon
Gordon Guest, Devon Countryside Access Forum
Andy Squires, Police Neighbourhood Team Leader, Sidmouth and Seaton
Steven Blanchford-Cox, Police Community Support Officer
John Wilding, Head of Forestry, Clinton Devon
Clare James, Estate Surveyor, Clinton Devon
Paul Swain, Operations Manager, Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust
Ed Lagdon, Ranger, Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust
Kate Ponting, Education Officer, Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust
Sama Euridge, Habitat Mitigation Officer, South East Devon Habitat Regulations Partnership
Amelia Davies, Habitat Mitigation Officer, South East Devon Habitat Regulations Partnership
Julie Owen, Project Officer (Devon Loves Dogs), South East Devon Habitat Regulations Partnership
Anne Mountjoy, Marketing and Communications Officer

Officer Working Group Workshop

Kim Strawbridge, Site Manager, Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust
Neil Harris, Habitat Regulations Delivery Manager, South East Devon Habitat Regulations Partnership
Sam Bridgewater, Head Wildlife and Conservation, Clinton Devon
Amanda Newsome, Natural England
Pete Youngman East Devon AONB Project Officer
Chris Rose, EDDC Manager, Development Management, Planning
Chris Hariades, EDDC Landscape Officer
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3.0 Summary

The East Devon Pebblebed Heaths, Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) cover some 1,400 ha. and are designated a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for the heathland habitat and Southern Damselfly and as a Special Conservation Area (SPA) for Nightjar and Dartford Warbler.

The Pebblebed Heaths have been occupied since at least the Bronze Age; there is therefore evidence of human use down the ages, the most significant feature being the Iron Age hillfort (Scheduled Monument) at Woodbury Castle.

The Pebblebed Heaths are registered commons and are used by the Royal Marines for training. Eighty percent of the area is owned by Clinton Devon Estates and managed by the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust; with the remaining areas leased or owned by the RSPB, Devon Wildlife Trust and other private individuals. The Heaths fall within the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

The current Local Plan identifies a requirement to build over 40,000 new homes in the East Devon, Exeter and Teignbridge districts by 2030. This level of growth has implications for recreation sites in the area, with significant increases in visitor pressure expected. There is a requirement under the Habitat Regulations to protect European conservation sites, including SPAs and SACs from the negative impacts of development.

The East Devon Pebblebed Heaths are Open Access Land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 with an estimation that 400,000+ visits are made annually by local people mostly travelling to the site by car (East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Visitor Management Plan. Liley *et al*, 2016). The Visitor Management Plan was developed to provide a framework for delivery of mitigation for the Pebblebed Heaths to ensure they can cope with the increased levels of recreation in the future, and to give confidence that the expected growth will not result in adverse impacts on designated features.

This report was commissioned by South East Devon Habitats Regulation Partnership to recommend a strategy for managing visitor numbers through car park space provision and distribution across the SPA/SAC.

The report has been compiled analysing background reports and existing data and undertaking site surveys to prepare a plan depicting the Existing Arrangement and Habitat Context.

The primary objective of this Visitor Access Advisory Report is to safeguard the SPA protected bird species (Nightjar and Dartford Warbler) and SAC heathland habitats from the adverse impacts and disturbance caused by people, particularly from dogs that are not on a lead. The principles applied to the Visitor Access Advisory Report seek to achieve this through: -

- 'gathering' visitors towards car parks that are away from sensitive locations and towards those that have less impact on protected habitats and species.
- retaining and developing the formal car parks that are as close as possible to the points of entry on to the Heaths, adjacent to the principal roads where the car parks are easy to find and easy to sign (e.g. car park name signs) thereby reducing car movements across the heaths and the scattered informal parking that occurs consequentially.
- maintaining the current number of car parking spaces across the heaths.
- establishing nodes as the starting point for promoted trails, to direct people away from sensitive areas at key times of the year and to create welcoming, attractive locations where visitors can engage with interpretation, messaging and wardens about the nature, value and significance of the Pebblebed Heaths and particularly about responsible dog walking.

- the development of cost-effective design and build standards that are appropriate to a countryside location within an AONB and maintenance of surrounding vegetation that gives confidence to car park users that they and their vehicles are secure when using the car parks.
- the partial, phased or seasonal closure of several car parks to enable a flexible approach to visitor management.

A SWOT analysis was undertaken for each formal car park to identify the key issues and opportunities. The outcome of these is summarised in an outline concept proposal for the approach to be taken to safeguard the habitat and protected species.

The report sets out some further principles to apply to the concept design of formal car parks, as well as some engineering and landscape principles that apply to low-key countryside recreation provision, these will form the brief for design development.

Concept designs for each of the formal car parks have been prepared using aerial photography as a base. Whilst this is not ideal it was the most cost-effective way of gaining a level of detail to undertake the concept plans.

The strategy and concept designs were presented at two stakeholder consultation workshops from which revisions were undertaken to incorporate specific requirements identified by site managers, the local police and Devon Countryside Access Forum (amongst others).

The car park concept designs have been developed into costed proposals, identifying the capital costs for undertaking the initial work and the maintenance cost over the life of the mitigation strategy (80 years). The costed recommendation is assessed against two options, which look at the balance of capital investment against maintenance costs over the life of the mitigation strategy.

Whilst this report does not recommend charging for parking to manage visitor numbers, as payment for parking at formal car parks is likely to displace visitors across the SPA/SAC undoing the principle of gathering visitors at nodes, the report does discuss charging options being adopted by other countryside managers.

On-going monitoring of visitor car parking throughout the mitigation strategy project is an important part of ensuring the successful protection of the habitats and species.

This final report from agb Environmental sets out the consultancy's recommendations to the South East Devon Habitats Regulation Partnership (SEDHRP) for a Visitor Access Advisory Report across the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths. The report contains a number of discussion points and concept designs and proposals. The authors recognise that the SEDHRP and land managers may wish to modify or amend the proposals following further consultation with stakeholders and the general public before adopting the strategy and signing off the programme of works.

4.0 Introduction

4.1 Habitat and Wildlife Significance

Lowland heaths are some of the most important habitats in Europe due to the rarity of species they support. The East Devon Pebblebed Heaths, Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) cover some 1,400 ha, and comprises the single largest area (1,112ha) of lowland heath in Devon (where there are 4,000ha). A biodiversity audit of the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths was undertaken in 2016 with over 3,000 species documented, 10% of which have conservation significance. (Bridgewater, S & Lesley, K. 2016. East Devon Pebblebed Heaths: Providing Space for Nature. Biodiversity Audit 2016. Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust.)

The Heaths were designated a SSSI between 1952-1986, as a nationally important example of Atlantic-climate lowland heath, supporting a wide diversity of heathland associated communities and important populations of birds and invertebrates.

It was designated a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) in June 1996 under the European Habitats Directive due to the significant areas of North Atlantic wet and dry heath and population of Southern Damselfly and also designated as a Special Conservation Area (SPA) under the EU Birds Directive, by regularly supporting 2.4% of the UK population of breeding Nightjar (1992) and 8% of the UK population of breeding Dartford Warbler (1994).

- Dartford Warbler (Annex 1 species under European law) remains on the heaths all year round. At the time of designation (1996) there were an estimated 128 active breeding pairs. This is the target level for maintaining this species in favourable condition (Natural England, Favourable Condition Table, 2013). Between 1996 and 2018 the population has been largely stable with sporadic temporary population crashes (in 2011 and 2018) coinciding with harsh winters.
- **Nightjar** (Annex 1 species under European law) is a summer breeding visitor arriving late April/May and departing in August/September. Breeding and ground nesting is closely associated with lowland heath, felled or recently planted areas. At the time of site designation (1996) there were an estimated 83 pairs. The target level for maintaining the population in a favourable condition is 62 pairs (Natural England, Favourable Condition table, 2013). The population on the heaths has been largely stable since records began, fluctuating only slightly between years.
- **Dragonflies** – Of the 41 known British species, 27 have been recorded on the heaths with the key species of conservation significance being the internationally endangered Southern Damselfly (Annex 4, Habitat Directive). This is associated with heathland mire habitat, of which there are three sites across the SSSI.
- **Additionally** - Hobby, Stonechat, Curlew, Moths (517 species recorded on the Heaths) and Butterflies – Over 50 species have been recorded on the SSSI historically. Of these 12 species are of national significance with two considered endangered. The key species is the Silver-studded blue, a rare heathland specialist.

4.2 Ownership and Management

The Pebblebed Heaths are registered commons and as such are Open Access Land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The heaths comprise several separate but adjacent common ownerships. Most of the designated area (ca. 80%) is owned by Clinton Devon Estates and managed by the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust for the benefit of wildlife and to promote the public enjoyment and appreciation of the reserve. Some smaller areas are leased or owned by the RSPB, with remaining areas privately owned and managed, including by the Devon Wildlife Trust.

4.3 Cultural Significance

The Heaths were designated as part of the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1963, being recognised as a significant landscape feature containing important natural habitats and archaeological features. The adopted strategy states. *“The protection and, where appropriate, enhancement of these important elements in landscape character will contribute to the conservation of the overall beauty of the area and its diversity. The council will have special regards to the effect of proposed developments on these different landscape elements.”*

Military

Each year 750 Royal Marine Commando recruits undertake their initial training on the Pebblebed Heaths spending ca. 30% of their 32 weeks in training out on the site.

Archaeology

The Pebblebed Heaths have been occupied since at least the Bronze Age where activities such as turf-cutting, burning and grazing have shaped the landscape. Other evidence of military and human settlement can be seen from Roman roads, parish boundaries, hollow ways, field systems, old quarries and numerous tumuli. The most important feature is the Iron Age hillfort of Woodbury Castle which is a Scheduled Monument. A total of 168 historic features are recorded across the site, 21 of which have Scheduled Monument status.

Recreation

The East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Visitor Management Plan (Liley et al., 2016) estimated that 400,000+ visits are made to the Pebblebed Heaths annually, with most visitors living locally and travelling to the site by car or van. Although there is no legal obligation to provide car parking on the heaths, there are 13 formal car parks across the site, with a further 30+ informal lay-bys, pull-ins and verges used for parking by the public.

4.4 Development Pressures

The current Local Plan identifies the requirement to build over 40,000 new homes in the East Devon, Exeter and Teignbridge districts through to 2030, 30,000 of which are within 10km of these three sites. There is a legal duty to ensure that new development avoids damage to the habitats and European protected species at these sites. The mechanism for ensuring that no negative impacts result at these sites from future housing developments was addressed in the South-east Devon European Site Mitigation Strategy (Liley et al. 2014b).

This level of growth has implications for recreation sites in the area, with significant increases in visitor pressure expected. There is a requirement under the Habitat Regulations to protect European conservation sites, including SPAs and SACs from the negative impacts of development. This obligation is also set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and applies to the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths, Dawlish Warren and the Exe Estuary.

The subsequent East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Visitor Management Plan (Liley et al. 2016) was developed to provide a framework for delivery of mitigation for the Pebblebed Heaths to ensure they can cope with the increased levels of recreation in the future, and to give confidence that the expected growth will not result in adverse impacts on designated features. The report makes a series of recommendations for the long-term management of access, focusing on influencing visitors' behaviour and ensuring the site is more robust in terms of its ability to absorb recreation pressure. Based on these recommendations the South-east Devon Habitat Regulations Partnership developed a five-year plan, and since 2017 priority actions have been delivered in line with this. A summary of the relevant sections of the report and recommendations follows in the report section *Data Gathering and Analysis*.

5.0 The Project Brief

The development and costing of car parking plans for a site as complex as the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths requires specialist support. The SEDHRP and managers of the Pebblebed Heaths require a consultant specialising in car park strategy and design to assess the current parking across the heaths and recommend an appropriate costed strategy to manage this access. Ensuring protection of the designated features, alongside providing safe and sustainable infrastructure, which is in keeping with the character of the heaths. To ensure that the work is continually informed by the ultimate objective to avoid impacts on designated features the consultant should have ecological understanding and experience of infrastructure projects set in sensitive countryside locations. This project will be led by the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust with support from the RSPB and DWT. The contractor will draw from the principles outlined within the Visitor Management Plan and with broad consultation from site management teams develop a long-term costed strategy for parking. It is also expected that EDDC and Natural England will also be consulted regarding requirements for planning permission and consents. DCC Highways may need to be consulted regarding car park entrances and prevention of roadside parking. This strategy will ensure that future funding is spent appropriately and efficiently to deliver works specifically designed to maintain the integrity of designated features. The work will be carried out alongside other mitigation actions relating to visitor flow and behavioural change making on site delivery more efficient and ensuring the different elements complement each other on the ground. Changes to car parks have the potential to be controversial and so this report will provide evidence to justify our decisions and works that are taken forward. Our objective is to protect the site whilst improving visitor enjoyment of it.

Required output:

- *Compile information on current parking offer across the heaths (visitor data available and survey of current carpark infrastructure in progress), with reference to the Visitor Management Plan*
- *Develop strategy for car park offer across heaths to achieve listed objectives. Should identify the general approach to car parking, focussing of resources and where parking should be encouraged or discouraged. The strategy should include details of financial considerations such as the effectiveness of charging to cover long-term management. A clear rationale explaining the choice of recommendations should accompany the strategy.*

Key objective: to limit impact of visitors on designated features (SSSI, SAC, SPA)

Supporting objectives:

- *protect the aesthetic of the landscape and character of heaths*
- *limit impacts on other site features e.g. SAMs*
- *improve the visitor experience for new and existing visitors but without creating a 'destination'*
- *prevent antisocial behaviour/camping etc*
- *understand the heaths car park offer in the context of the wider landscape*
- *prevent overspill parking on verges/roadside*
- *direct visitors as appropriate around site, focus access (visitor flows)*
- *support the increased understanding of the special qualities of the heath, education and responsible access (visitor behaviour)*
- *ensure visitor safety and minimise liability*
- *ensure financial viability regarding long term management*

Recommendations for design of car park offer to deliver strategy to include:

- *mapping of options for car parking offer across the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths*
- *risk register*
- *annotated graphics to illustrate options for individual car parks that will be retained*
- *options appraisal (objectives achieved; potential drawbacks; materials used; installation value for money; expected maintenance requirements)*
- *consent requirements (planning permission, Natural England consent etc)*
- *indicative costing for installation of options*
- *proposal of scheduling and prioritisation of works*

It is recognised that detailed specifications of works are likely beyond the scope of this project and that in order to comply with CDM regulations this element will be carried out once the final strategy and design has been agreed upon. An engineer or architect is likely required to take on the role of 'principle designer' and will draw up the final detailed plan of works which quotes can then be received against. If you have the expertise to also offer this service, please make that clear in your response.

5.1 Project Commission

Following submission of tenders in December 2018 agb Environmental was awarded the contract to undertake the project with Roger Worthington (CMLI, MICFor) undertaking the principal role. Roger came to the project with 25 years of experience in the Forestry Commission England as Senior Landscape Architect working on public access and recreation projects across England. He is working on the Pebblebed Heath Visitor Access Advisory Report in a private capacity with the knowledge and approval of the Forestry Commission.

Other input from :

- Alex Brearley, Project Manager and Director agb Environmental
- Les Cousins, Senior Ecologist, agb Environmental
- Richard Barrass, Civil Engineer
- David West, Funding Advisor

5.2 Project Methodology

The agb Environmental tender submission set out a process for delivering the Pebblebed Heaths car park strategy in the following manner.

- Data gathering and analysis – January 2019
- Survey data template - January 2019
- Site survey – February 2019
- Draft Strategy – March 2
- Stakeholder consultation – undertaken 7th March 2019
- Design Concepts – April 2019 (completed for stakeholder consultation 7th March)
- Summary Report – May 2019

6.0 Data Gathering and Analysis – Summaries of Key Reference Documents

6.1 East Devon Local Plan 2013 to 2031, (28 January 2016)

The East Devon Local Plan sets out a sustainable vision for future housing and workplace development across East Devon over the plan period that minimises damage to the ‘outstanding environment’, including the East Devon Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The plan specifically references the Pebblebed Heaths regarding the Habitat Regulations, with concerns that development of 17,100 new homes in the 2013 to 2031 period could lead to extra visitor pressure on the Pebblebed Heaths. Such pressure, principally recreation and dog use, could have an adverse impact on nature conservation, unless mitigation measures, as set out in the ‘South-east Devon European Site Mitigation Strategy’ are put in place. Such measures include improved wardening, amended management of sites, information and education, changes to access arrangements and points, habitat improvements and the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGS).

The plan states that development will only be permitted where it:

1. Conserves and enhances the landscape character of the area;
2. Does not undermine landscape quality; and
3. Is appropriate to the economic, social and well-being of the area.

These principles will be applied to the proposals for car parks on the Pebblebed Heaths.

6.2 South East Devon European Site Mitigation Strategy (Footprint Ecology, May 2014)

The South-east Devon European Site Mitigation Strategy mitigates the potential negative impacts of recreation arising from new housing in East Devon District, Exeter City and Teignbridge District on three European wildlife sites: Exe Estuary SPA, Dawlish Warren SAC and the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths SPA/SAC. The strategy considers potential change in visitor numbers and suggests a range of costed mitigation measures to ensure no adverse effect on the integrity of the European sites.

Footprint Ecology estimates the Pebblebed Heaths currently attracts 400,000+ visits per year from within 10km of the site, attributed in part to the high number of visits made by residents living within 1km (163 visits/year). The planned level of future house building within the 10km influence zone of the heaths is relatively low: 8% within 1km, rising to 11.8% within 3km and 13.4% within 5km. At 10km the percentage increase is 35.2% due to the inclusion of Cranbrook. These estimates result in a potential visit rate increase of 19.41%.

Footprint Ecology’s recommendations for the Pebblebed Heaths in the Mitigation Strategy

Section 7. Planning & Off-site Measures Recommendations

- Site development away from sensitive sites
- Management of visitor flows and access on adjacent land (outside European site)
- Provision of suitable alternative greenspace sites ('SANGS')
- Enhance access in areas away from designated sites

Section 8. On-site Access Management Recommendations

- Zoning (thought to be unsuitable for the Heaths due to Open Access designation)

- Infrastructure to screen, hide or protect the nature conservation interest
- Path design and management
- Management of car parking. There was a recommendation that car parking was reviewed as part of a wider Pebblebed Heaths Management Plan, with a view to: rationalising existing car parking by reducing opportunities to park in informal areas and lay-bys; enhance/ modify existing car-parks to support engagement opportunities and to steer visitors along preferred trails away from the most sensitive sites. Car parking charging was also raised as a potential future management measure to consider. The development of a coherent Visitor Access Advisory Report, including charging, was viewed as the *single most effective visitor management measure on the Pebblebed Heaths where over 90% of visitors arrived by car and where some 60% said they would visit the site less if there were car parking charges*. However, charging may not necessarily be an appropriate and cost-effective management measure for this site. The reasons for this are discussed in section 12.2.

Section 9. Education and Communication to Public/Users Recommendations

- Signs, interpretation and leaflets
- Codes of Conduct
- Wardening
- Provision of off-site information for local residents and users
- On-site and off-site education initiatives, such as school visits

Section 10. Enforcement Recommendations

- Legal enforcement
- Wardening

6.3 East Devon Heaths SPA & Pebblebed Heaths SAC: Visitor Survey Report (Ecology Solutions, May 2012)

Ecology Solutions (ES) undertook baseline visitor surveys and car park counts at 11 of the most popular access points across the SPA/SAC. A questionnaire captured where visitors had journeyed from, what transport they used, how long they stayed, what they did, other sites they visited, as well as asking some questions about management preferences.

ES extrapolated visitor numbers observed across the SPA/SAC and arrived at an estimate of over 5,000 visitors per day. Using a percentage of the current population visiting and multiplying this by the proposed increase in population in the catchment the report arrived at an increase in visitor numbers of 300 per day. The report recognised that the methodology produced a 'gross overestimation'.

Whilst the report didn't take into account how other factors might affect new house dwellers use of neighbouring countryside, such as popularity of other sites, new SANGS, changing recreation habits, or how new visitors might discover the Pebblebed Heaths. Current users tend to be long standing historic users rather than tourists, people from outside the area, or potentially new visitors.

A number of useful statistics were gleaned through the survey:-

- 93% of visitors arrived by car.
- Almost 60% of visitors were locals: 77% travelling less than 10km, 41% less than 5km.
- 45% of respondents said that they visit a minimum of once a week, with 20% visiting once a day.
- 67% cited dog-walking and walking as reasons for visiting.
- 42% of visitors were recorded as having at least one dog with them.

- Over 50% visit for between half an hour and an hour and 15% visiting for under 30 minutes.
- 32% visit for longer, staying for between one hour and three hours.
- Visitors were asked what attracted them to the Heaths, and the responses included:
 - convenient location (58.4%),
 - variety of natural habitats (55.7%),
 - no restrictions on dogs (43.7%)
 - far reaching views (43.0%).
- Asked whether their visiting habits would change if the following measures were implemented:
 - 61% said they would visit less if car parking charges were introduced.
 - 61% said they would visit less if they had to keep their dog on a lead.
 - 84% said their visiting habits would not change if required to pick up after their dogs.
 - 87% said introducing wardens would not affect their visiting frequency.
 - 57% said their visiting habits would not change if the Heaths became busier.
 - 78% said improving paths and surfaces would not change their visiting habits.
 - 82% said that restricting access to wildlife areas would not change their visiting habits.
 - 68% said that better information boards and leaflets would not change their visiting habits.

Based on these responses Ecology Solutions recommended the most effective way of limiting the potential increase in visitors and their impacts across the SPA/SAC would be through the introduction of parking charges across the heaths and/or the enforcement of all dogs being on lead. However, the negative consequences of such actions were not considered and to date the site managers have preferred an approach of positive engagement.

Ecology Solutions identified, numbered and mapped 13 'formal' car parks (historic stone/pebble surfaced areas) and 55 'informal' parking spaces (gateways, verges, lay-bys, passing places and rough ground) across the SPA/SAC. For consistency this report uses the same numbering system established by ES.

Ecology Solutions gave the number of car parking spaces at each formal/informal location, though there was no explanation as to how the number of spaces had been arrived. Through site survey, aerial photography and mapping this report verified the actual number of current car parking spaces at each location, using a standard countryside car park space of 3.0m wide by 5.0m deep and likely patterns of access road usage.

Several of the formal car parks and some of the informal parking spaces have been closed since the 2012 report. This strategy provides a new benchmark for parking spaces across the project area, validating and correcting subsequent changes.

The Ecology Solutions report provided a usage ranking from 1 to 4 (where 4=hardly used, 1=very busy). This too has been adopted within this report to identify the current usage patterns.

6.4 East Devon Pebblebed Heaths, Visitor Management Plan (Footprint Ecology, January 2017)

The report contained results from 12 visitor surveys conducted in 2015 by Footprint Ecology (FE) and included predictions on the distribution of recreational use and recommendations for future management to fulfil components of the wider South-east Devon European Site Mitigation Strategy to ensure increased levels of recreation would not result in adverse effects on the SPA/SAC sites.

Key findings from the visitor survey, some of which reflected the earlier Ecology Solutions report, were:

- The majority (91%) of interviewees had travelled to the interview location by car or van.
- Most interviewees were local, holiday makers only accounted for less than 5%.
- 3/4 of interviewees lived within 8.2km, most coming from Exmouth, Woodbury & Newton Poppleford.

- 73% of all interviewees were visiting to walk their dog.
- Other activities included walking (11%), cycling (5%), wildlife watching (4%), jogging (2%) family trip (2%).
- Many visitors had been visiting the for a long time: more than 50% had been visiting for at least 10 years.
- The median visit duration was short, between 30 minutes and an hour.
- 71% interviewees visited at least weekly.
- Visits were evenly spread throughout the day – before 9am (23%), 9-12 (24%), after 5pm (23%).
- The reasons given for people visiting included scenery/variety of views and good for dog(s).
- Compulsory charging, closure of parking, permits and the enforcement of dogs on leads during the breeding season were the most unpopular management measures.
- More dog bins, interpretation and waymarking of routes for activities were considered the most popular management interventions.

The Ecology Solutions Report identified 499 car parking spaces. These comprised 13 formal and 59 informal car parks. Paths across the study area amounted to a total length of 157 km (excluding roads).

Footprint Ecology mapped visitors walking and cycling routes and found median distances were just over 3km. They overlaid 77 Dartford warbler and 56 Nightjar bird territory areas and found no significant differences in the presence of Nightjar or Dartford warbler territories in areas with high and low visitor pressure. However, they highlighted data from other sites indicating that regular disturbance is known to have an impact on bird abundance. Whilst bird distributions appeared to be strongly clustered in some areas, other suitable habitats were found to be without birds. The study did not assess whether visitor pressure was influencing breeding success rates.

Whilst the FE report only looked at the current situation, rather than projected visitor levels, the report suggested that if vulnerable features could be protected the heaths could absorb greater numbers of visitors (linked to increased development) without detrimental impact, and visitor infrastructure could be enhanced to reduce impact further if visitor behaviours were addressed through awareness raising on the importance and qualities of the site and how behaviour can impact adversely on these.

The FE report included costed recommendations about how to avoid dispersal over the wider area or drawing more visitors to the Heaths by focussing recreation at key less sensitive sites and through the provision of associated interpretation, dog bins, and license permissions.

The report recommendations covered one aspect that has a direct bearing on this car park strategy: namely changes to car parks. These have been summarised in the bulleted points below.

- Improving formal car parks through better surfacing, bay arrangements, access onto/from roads and signage to influence where people park and provide the benefit of focussing interpretation, dog bins and warden time at key locations to ensure positive engagement with the most visitors. Little public support for improving formal car parks surfacing.
- Closing some formal car parks where habitats are less robust, and reducing the scattered roadside parking over the wider area that currently results in access from multiple locations, causes damage to roadsides/verges and detracts from the rural character, through physical objects (bunds, boulders, ditches), regulation (Clearway Order), or a combination of both. This was identified as carrying a risk of being unpopular and may inadvertently push parking to less desirable locations.
- Combining these first two approaches (improvement and closure) would set limits on car parking spaces to ensure no overall net increase in the number of parking spaces across the SPA/SAC.

- Footprint Ecology Map 20 (reproduced on the following page) shows the location of car parks identified for potential improvement work (red dot):

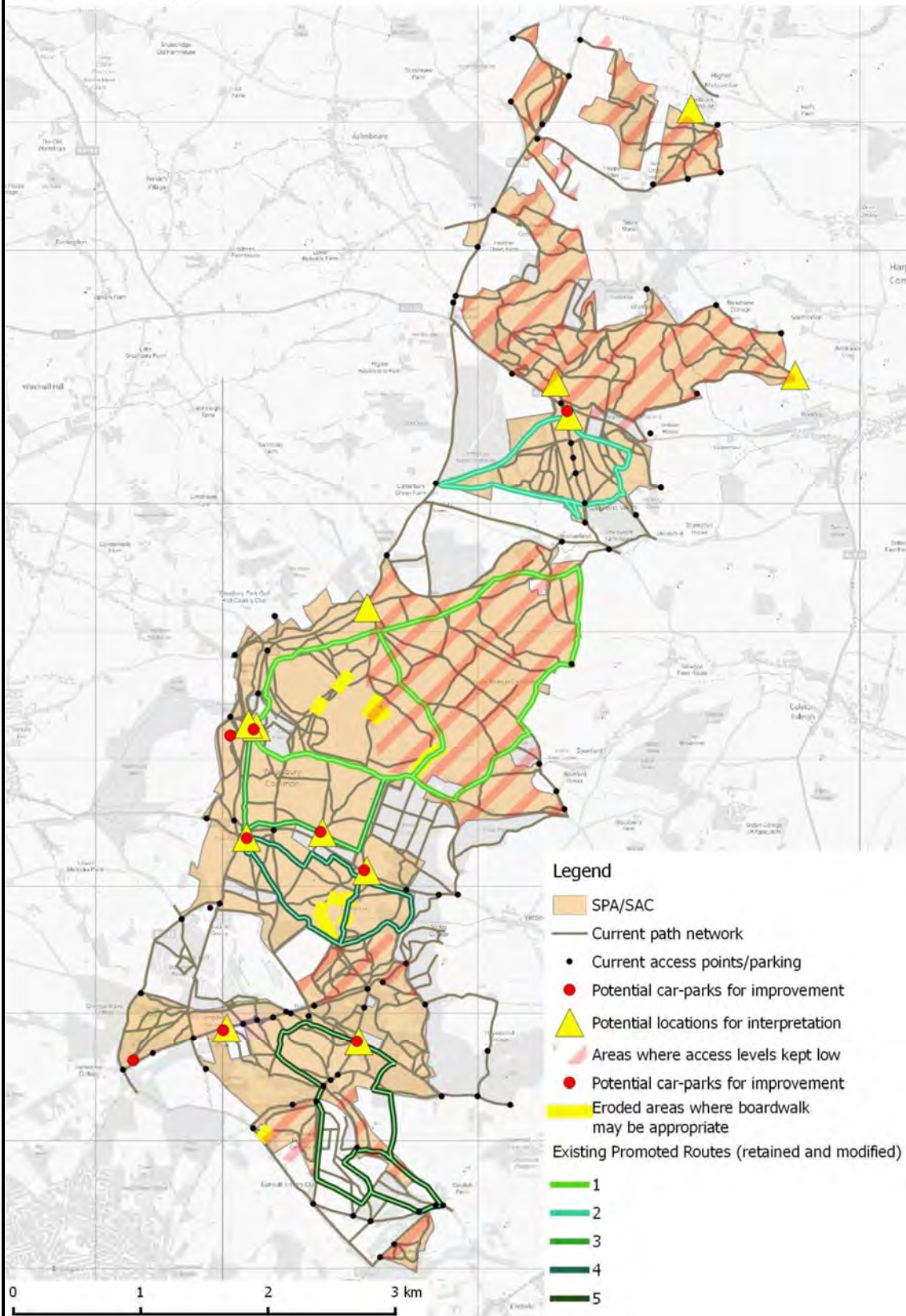
Joney's Cross,
Estuary,
Woodbury Castle,
Four Firs,
Model Airfield,
Uphams,
Lympstone,
Bystock and
Wheathill.

Areas where access levels should be kept low (red diagonal hatching) include:

Venn Ottery Common,
Aylesbeare Common,
Harpford Common,
Colaton Raleigh Common
East of Warren,
Southern end of Bicton Common (Tuckers Place),
Dalditch Plantation and Common.

Map 20: Summary of recommendations

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Plan 1. East Devon Pebblebed Heaths, Visitor Management Plan (Footprint Ecology, January 2017)

6.5 Clinton Devon Car Park Survey Report; Clinton Devon Estates, October 2018.

A report of twelve car parks, including a written description, photographic record and an annotated plan (based on OS data). It became apparent from site visits and examining aerial photographs that the OS data was insufficiently accurate for the purpose of this project (see below).

6.6 Police crime and incident reporting

In the period 01/12/16 – 31/12/18, 58 crimes and 73 incidents were reported to the police with most occurring at Woodbury Castle & Estuary View car parks which police reports identify as one location (44 Crimes, 69 Incidents). Warren, Four Firs, Uphams and Model Airfield all had one or two crimes reported during the same period.

Crimes and incidents are wide ranging in their composition including car break-in, raves, antisocial behaviour, dangerous dogs, criminal damage and traffic offences. Unreported incidents of fly-tipping, and vandalism are evident at most sites. The majority of all these can be reasonably attributed to dense vegetation surrounding car parks preventing passive surveillance from passing cars or walkers.

6.7 Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue, Woodbury Commons Tactical Plan

A plan of access points where locked vehicle barriers provide access to hard tracks across the Heaths for the Fire and Emergency Services. Problems occur when access points are blocked by public cars due to access point being within a formal car park, or people parking too close to gateway. The same problem applies to Clinton Devon maintenance vehicles and Royal Marines.

6.8 Royal Marine Access

As above.

6.9 Strategy for Pebblebed Heath for public access path/track network (Draft : Jan 2019)

Work being led by Kim Strawbridge. Draft trail plan incorporated (January 2019).

(See Appendix 1)

6.10 Other documents

- East Devon Pebblebed Heaths : Providing Space for Nature : Biodiversity Audit, 2018.
- East Devon & Blackdown Hills Landscape Character Assessment and Management Guidelines (Fiona Fyfe Associates, 2018).
- East Devon Partnership Plan 2019-24. Management Framework for the East Devon AONB (East Devon AONB Partnership, March 2019).
- National Character Area 148: Devon Redlands. (Natural England, 2013).
- Devon Biodiversity and Geodiversity Action Plan, Lowland heathland. (May 2009).
- East Devon AONB Historic Environment Action Plan, Historic Landscape Character Assessment and Management Guidelines (Wyvern Heritage and Landscape Consultancy, January 2015).

6.11 Data not gathered.

- Level survey data - It may be deemed necessary for more accurate surveys to be undertaken, but if needed this is likely to be limited to road junctions where drainage and levels are important. At the time of writing there are not thought to be any locations where this is the case.
- Service or utility data – this was not deemed necessary for the purpose of this report as the location of the works is in remote areas, away from buildings where services are more likely to exist. In addition the nature of the work proposed has been limited to keeping the car parking layouts and road entrance arrangements within their current footprint. All site work must be preceded by investigation for underground services. Any contractors undertaking works will need to be supplied with plans of any known Health and Safety issues, including services.

6.12 Survey Data Used in Compiling Project Area Wide Plans

- SPA/SAC and SSSI boundary
- RSPB ownership boundary
- Nightjar and Dartford Warbler breeding site locations data sets. Accurate territory records for Dartford warbler and Nightjar have been cross-referenced as part of the development of the strategy, but as this remains sensitive data it is not included in the mapping.
- Southern Damselfly location data set
- Mire Habitat location data set
- Vehicle Access Points: Public; Management and Forestry; Fire & Rescue; Royal Marines.
- Formal and Informal Car Parking locations: these were revised from Ecology Solutions 2012 report to take account of subsequent closures, alteration and changes in use.
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments – mapped from Historic England website mapping.
- Proposed path/track network for public access. Site mitigation work being undertaken in parallel with the Pebblebed Heaths Visitor Access Advisory Report .

The following tables (1 and 2) summarise the formal and informal car parking spaces across the Pebblebed Heaths. It takes as it's start point the Ecology Solutions data bringing this up to date following site survey, aerial photographic assessment and plan measurements undertaken as part of the current project.

Plan 2 (North) & Plan 3 (South) show the locations of formal and informal car parks.

Table 1: Formal Car Park Spaces across the Pebblebed Heaths at March 2019

CP No.	Formal Car Park Name	Current Spaces	Note on Current Situation
F 1	Joney's Cross	40	Occasionally used for heath events, when a warden is present to aid efficient parking. See SWOT analysis for detail.
F 2	Uphams	20	Relatively small inefficient car park shape. Important access on to Bicton Common and to Uphams Plantation for forestry operations and Marine activity. See SWOT analysis for detail.
F 3	Model Airfield	22	Popular location with plantation either side providing screening, shade and some shelter. Drop off point for military and school coaches due to long, wide entrance and proximity to interesting school visit locations and military training area. See SWOT analysis for detail.
F 4	Four Firs	47	See SWOT analysis for detail.
F 5a	Estuary Entrance	9	Small area of parking. Very busy, probably due to being visible from road and across from castle which is popular and recently reduced in size. See SWOT analysis for detail.
F 5	Estuary view	28	Large out of sight parking area, with view. Anti-social behaviour. See SWOT analysis for detail.
F 6	Woodbury Castle	18	See SWOT analysis for detail.
F 7	Warren	22	Popular accessible car park beside B3180. See SWOT analysis for detail.
F 8	Lypstone	15	Recently closed to public access by the private owner.
F 9	Frying Pans (Upper Thorntree)	15	15 if just parking around the outsides. Not often used probably due to the security problem of being completely screened. See SWOT analysis for detail.
F 10	Wheathill	31	See SWOT analysis for detail.
F 11	Squabmoor	15	Not really 15 formal spaces. It appears that this is uncontrolled parking amongst trees. Muddy surface on sloping site.
F 12	Bystock	8	Recently closed by the Devon Wildlife Trust
F 13	Venn Ottery	3	Small area beside gateway.
FORMAL PARKING SPACES		293	Yellow highlight indicates formal car parks tested with 5x3m space allocation in known pattern of use to attribute current total.

Table 2: Informal Car Park Spaces across the Pebblebed Heaths at March 2019

CP No.	Informal Car Park Name	Current Spaces	Note on Current Situation
i 1	MANOR COMMON	0	Access closed
i 2	LYNCH GATE (B3180)	0	No evidence of this exists
i 3	VENN OTTERY LAYBY, DOWNS FLDS	2	
i 4	VENN OTTERY DWT ACCESS, AYLESBURY HILL	4	Square of ground with field access through gate. No admittance sign on adjoining copse probably discouraging use of car park.
i 5	SCOTTS POLLARD TRACK, MANOR COMMON	4	Track at Little Orchard NE corner of Manor Common. Not obvious place to access. Unlikely to be used by general public.
i 6	AYLESBEARE N	0	No evidence of this exists
i 7	HEATHER DOWN	2	Muddy, pot-holed gateway. 2no field gates, one of which is Heather Down, no access to wider common. Space for 2 cars.
i 8	HALFWAY INN ACCESS	4	Large gravel lay-by with field gate access to the west. Aylesbeare Common access to the east over the B3180.
i 9	A3052 LAYBY	4	Formal roadside layby, it is not providing access to the common.
i 10a	ENTRANCE TO AYLESBEARE COMMON	1	Small are of bare gravel on entrance to track. There is one space being used for parking just on the junction.
i 10b	PRIVATE TRACK FROM JONEY'S CROSS TO AYLESBEARE COMMON	2	Anecdotally parking on side of track despite private signs
i 11	HILLSIDE LAY-BY PARKING	3	
i 12	HUNGER HILL BURROW	6	Verge parking, used by horse owners on adjacent fields.
i 13	BENCHAMS TRACK	6	Narrow lane, very tucked away location.
i 14	UNMETAL TRACK VENN OTTERY HILL BY PONDS	2	Very rough track. Parking at the entrance for two cars at best. Horse fields opposite.
i 15a	JUNCTION JONEY'S CROSS A3052 TO HAWKERLAND	1	Small area of bare gravel close to main road junction.
i 15b	ROAD EDGE PARKING BY HAWKERLAND ROAD	4	Passing place used for roadside parking. Road width 3.5m, Lay-by width 4m, Lay-by length 28m.
i 15c	ROAD EDGE PARKING BY HAWKERLAND ROAD	2	Barrier access to Hawkerland Common. Lay-by to south providing roadside parking and passing place. Road width 4.0m, Lay-by width 3m, Lay-by length 17m.
i 15d	ROAD EDGE PARKING BY HAWKERLAND ROAD	2	Passing place used for roadside parking. Road width 4.0m, Lay-by width 3.0m, Lay-by length 15m.
i 15e	ROAD EDGE PARKING BY HAWKERLAND ROAD	2	Passing place used for roadside parking. Road width 4.5m, Lay-by width 3m, Lay-by length 12m.
i 16	HAWKERLAND BARRIER, LOWER MORISH, COTLEIGH	2	Road width 4.5m, Lay-by width 3m, Lay-by length 12m.
i 17	B3180 CANTERBURY GREEN	1	Bridleway entrance track from B3180.
i 18	THE WILDERNESS, HAWKERLAND	5	Space for 3 cars opposite junction. Space for one car either side of bridleway entrance. Access to common west up bridleway.
i 19	STOWFORD FORD & TRACK EDGE	3	Tucked away location, hardly used, unlikely to attract use.
i 20	STOWFORD FORD PULL IN	3	Tucked away location, hardly used, unlikely to attract use.
i 21	STOWFORD WOODS, CROOK WOODS	10	Compaction of old oak tree roots is causing damage and potential risk to parked cars from falling limbs. See SWOT analysis for details.

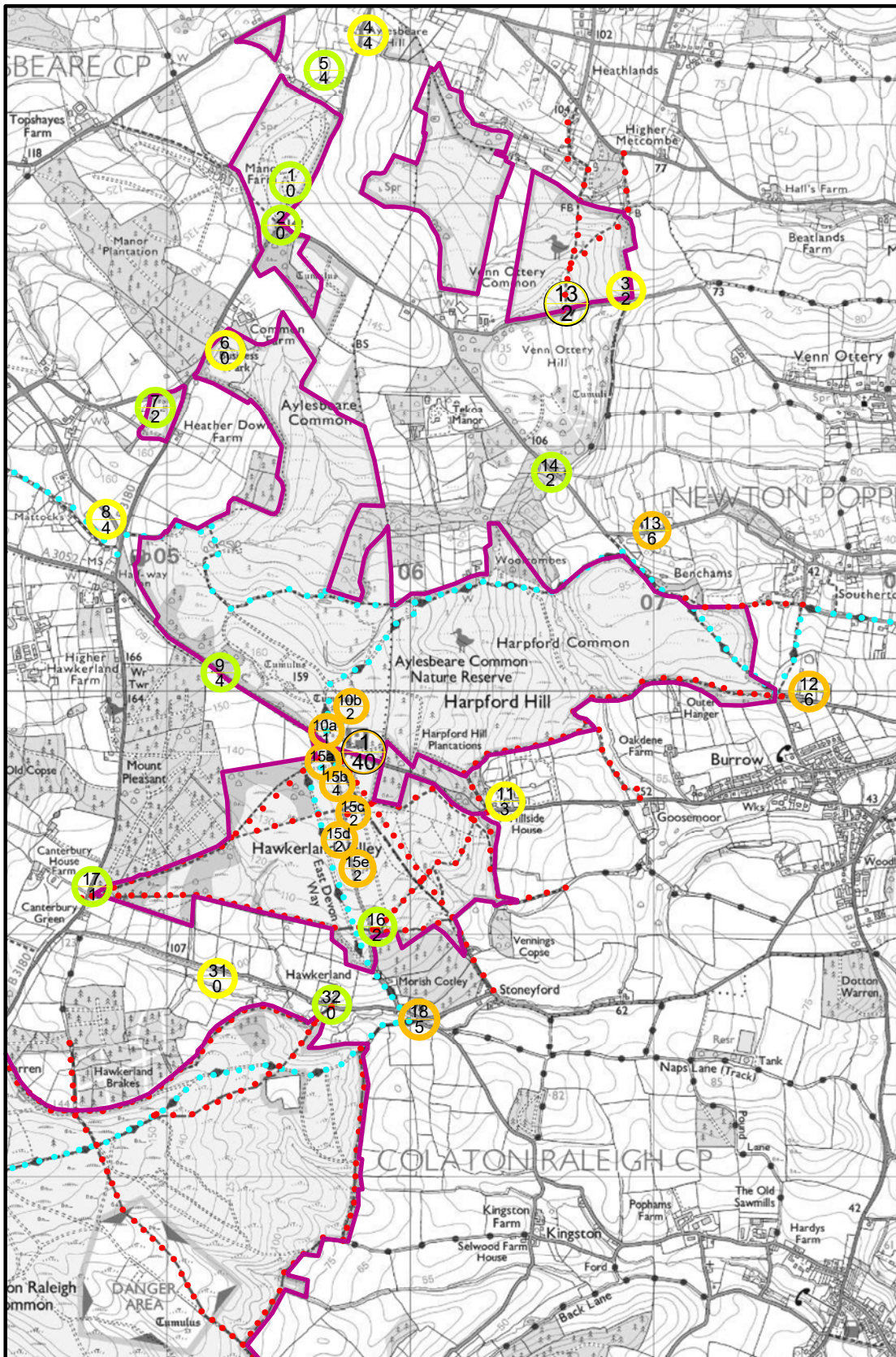
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i	22	BANANA FIELD, BOTTOM OF EXETER HILL, YETTINGTON	2	One space beside a gate and one lay-by space on the northern side of the road
i	23	ISLANDS Nth, PERMISSIVE PATH Ent	0	No evidence of this exists.
i	24	EXETER HILL SOUTH	2	One space either side of a gateway on the southern side of the road. Barrier on north side of road.
i	25	BOUNDERIDGE TUNNEL	1	Track crossing point about 300m East of Four Firs CP
i	26	NW Four Firs on bridleway	3	Bridleway track exits B3180 to the north and west of Four Firs, some distance along the track is one parking space, followed by two more further on.
i	27a	BRIDLEWAY OFF B3179, STOKES FIELDS	1	Small tarmac layby under tree beside a gate on the opposite side of the road to the bridleway entrance
i	27b	Formal layby west of Four Firs junction	2	Large highways lay-by the side road tarmac good quality close to junction space for 2 cars or one lorry
i	27c	Formal layby south of Four Firs junction	2	Large highways lay-by the side road tarmac good quality close to junction space for 2 cars or one lorry
i	28	CASTLE NORTH LAYBY	2	Currently a muddy lay-by.
i	29	BEACON LAYBY	1	Small muddy lay-by between road (Woodbury Salterton) junction and Woodbury Park entrance.
i	30	GOLF COURSE ENTRANCE AREA		Formerly identified as providing 4 spaces. There are no spaces at the Woodbury Park entrance or junction of the B3180.
i	31	Hawkerland Bks, Canterbury Green End	0	No evidence of this exists
i	32	Valley Barn, Hawkerland Valley	0	Muddy area adjacent farm buildings with bridleway access to common, not really a formal lay-by.
i	33	QUARRY CAR PARK	0	Former car park adjacent to the road with double metal gate at entrance preventing access.
i	34	QUARRY ENTRANCE BRIDLEWAY	0	
i	35	Entrance to Frying Pans (Endurance course layby)	10	Due to the poor security of Frying Pans people are preferring to park on the roadside where there are extensive lay-bys that are popular.
i	36	RV9 TUCKETS PLANT LAYBYS A&B	3	Two decent spaces under tree, to the south of the junction, marked with large logs. One very muddy rutted space just to the east of junction.
i	37	Hayes Triangle	0	Formal tarmac space appears to be for enabling larger vehicles to turn the corner. No signage to deter parking.
i	38	Bearden Barn, Island Plantation	4	Two separate gateways on to common with informal parking in space surrounding, damaging tree.
i	39	SANDY GALLOP	1	Space beside barrier
i	40	SQUABMOOR Sth FISHERMANS CP	8	
i	41	DALDITCH NORTH BARRIER	0	This is a track in front of a gate, it is not a parking space. It is popular because it provides access to Bystock Pools.
i	42	BYSTOCK POOLS SOUTH	4	Roadside parking on narrow lane. The road widens at Bystock Pools to provide space for four cars and retain some passing places (which are marked). Problem occurs if more than four cars park.
i	43	DWT ACCESS WRIGHTS LANE	1	Narrow lane with parking for one car adjacent gateway. Narrow track leads to Bystock.
i	44	LYMPSTONE, SQUABMOOR HSE	2	Recently closed.
i	45	LYMPSTONE LAYBY	3	Recently closed.

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i	46	STONY LANE, LYMPSTONE, BRIDLEWAY & B3180 JUNCTION	5	Several informal parking spaces around crossroads.
i	47a	LYMPSTONE COMMON EAST BRIDLEWAYS	2	Cattle area, bridleway entrance. Also passing point with tracks on verge evidence of some lorry passing problems. Currently well used due to recent roadside parking closures in proximity
i	47b	LYMPSTONE COMMON EAST BRIDLEWAYS	1	1 parking space at entrance barrier to common. Currently well used due to recent roadside parking closures in proximity.
i	48	EST BUDLEIGH COMMON Sth of Rd	0	No evidence this exists
i	49	LAYBY YETTINGTON, PINES RIDGE ROAD N OF ROAD	4	Good roadside lay-by 26m long. Currently well used due to recent roadside parking closures in proximity.
i	50	LAYBY YETTINGTON, PINES RIDGE ROAD Sth of Rd	1	Small space next to footpath onto common.
i	51	WHEATHILL CAR PARK LAYBYS	10	Roadside parking, wide stony surface good condition just next to Wheathill car park.
i	52	EAST BUDLEIGH COMMON SOUTH OF JONEYS BARRIER	2	2 parking spaces to the side of barrier accessing the common
i	53	THE WEDGE LAYBY	0	No evidence this exists
i	54	TING TONG LAYBY WALLYS Nth	0	No evidence this exists
i	55	TING TONG LAYBY PERMISSIVE Sth	1	Very muddy area opposite entrance to private property.
		INFORMAL PRKING SPACES	153	

TOTAL FORMAL & INFORMAL PARKING SPACES	446	This figure includes a reduction of an additional 26 spaces across the project area from 2012 (Ecology Solutions Report)
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'Formal' Car Parks

	No.4, 47 spaces, - very busy
	No.2, 20 spaces - moderately busy
	No.13, 2 spaces - not so busy
	No.9, 15 spaces - hardly used

No.	Count
1. Joney's Cross	40
2. Uphams	20
3. Model Airfield	22
4. Four Firs	47
5a. Estuary Entrance	9
5b. Estuary View	28
6. Woodbury Castle	18
7. Warren	22
8. Lymphstone	15
9. Frying Pan (Upper Thomtree)	15
10. Wheathill	31
11. Squabmoor	15
12. Bystock	8
13. Venn Ottery	3
Total	293

'Informal' Car Parks

	No.14, 2 spaces - moderately busy
	No.36, 3 spaces - not so busy
	No.39, 1 space - hardly used

No.	Count
1. Manor Common	0
2. Lynch Gate (B3180)	0
3. Venn Ottery Layby, Downs Fields	2
4. Venn Ottery Dwt Access, Aylesbeare Hill	4
5. Scotts Pollard Track, Manor Common	4
6. Aylesbeare N	0
7. Heather Down	2
8. Halfway Inn Access	4
9. A3052 Layby	4
10. Entrance to Aylesbeare Com.	1
10a. Private Track to Aylesbeare Com.	2
11. Hillside Layby Parking	3
12. Hunger Hill Burrow	6
13. Benchams Track	6
14. Unmetal Track Venn Ottery Hill By Ponds	2
15a. Road Edge by Joney's Cross	1
15b. Rd Edge by Hawksland Road	4
15c. Rd Edge by Hawksland Road	2
15d. Rd Edge by Hawksland Road	2
15e. Rd Edge by Hawksland Road	2
16. Hawksland Barrier, Lwr Morish, Cotleigh	2
17. B3180 Canterbury Green	1
18. The Wilderness, Hawksland	5
31. Hawksland Bks, Canterbury Green End	0
32. Valley Barn, Hawksland Valley North sheet	59
Total Informal Spaces (N&S)	153
TOTAL FORMAL & INFORMAL N&S	446

N.B. This figure includes a reduction of an additional 26 spaces across the project area from 2012 (Ecology Solutions Report)

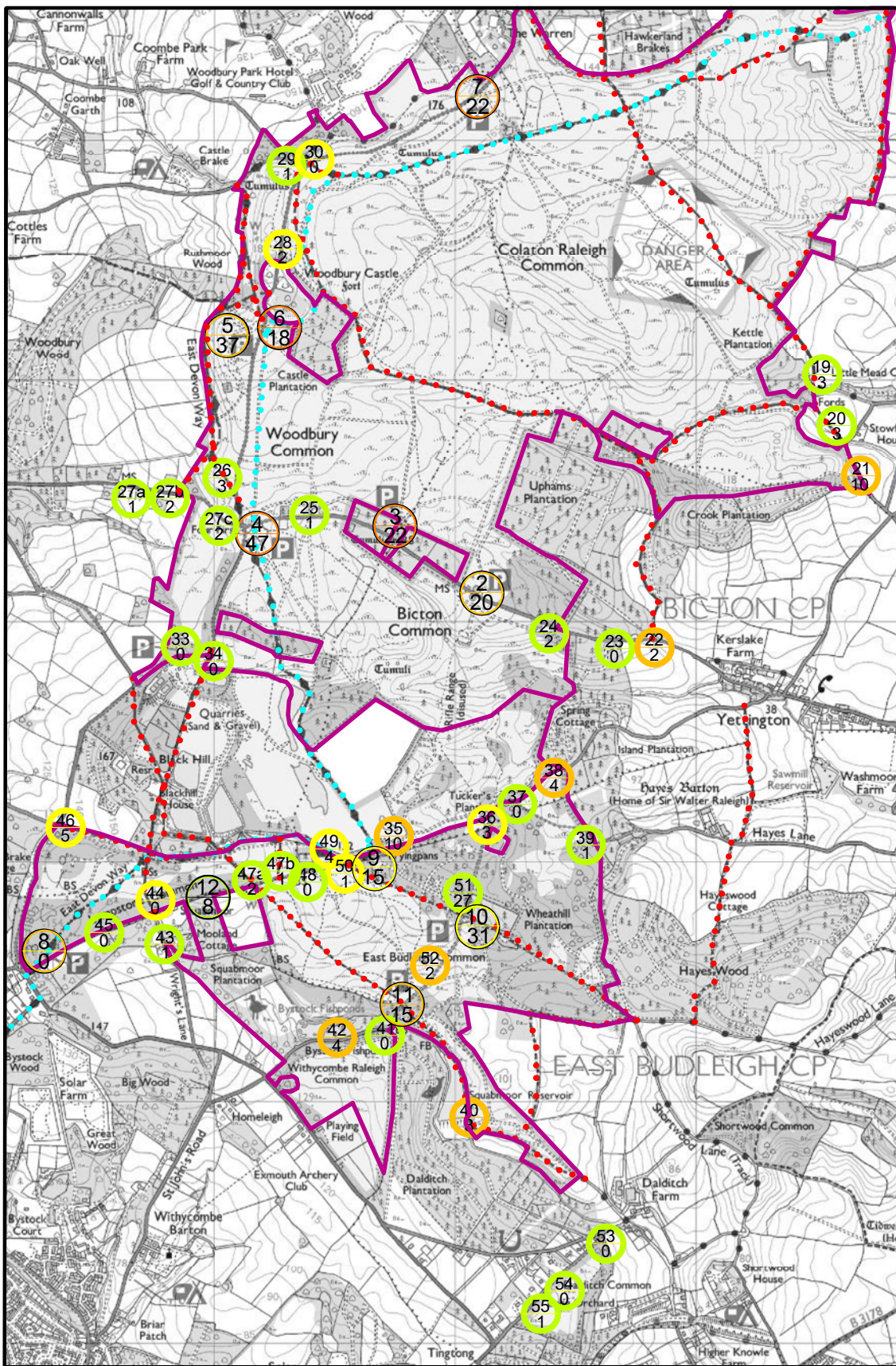
KEY

- SPA/SAC Boundary
- Scheduled Monument
- Right of way
- East Devon Way

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Accurate territory records for Dartford warbler and Nightjar have been cross-referenced as part of the development of the strategy, but as this remains sensitive data it is not included in the mapping.





'Formal' Car Parks

4/47	No.4, 47 spaces, - very busy
2/20	No.2, 20 spaces - moderately busy
13/2	No.13, 2 spaces - not so busy
9/15	No.9, 15 spaces - hardly used

	Nc
1. Joney's Cross	40
2. Uphams	20
3. Model Airfield	22
4. Four Firs	47
5a. Estuary Entrance	9
5b. Estuary View	28
6. Woodbury Castle	18
7. Warren	22
8. Lymptone	15
9. Frying Pan (Upper Thorntree)	15
10. Wheathill	31
11. Squabmoor	15
12. Bystock	8
13. Venn Ottery	3

'Informal' Car Parks

14/2	No.14, 2 spaces - moderately busy
36/3	No.36, 3 spaces - not so busy
39/1	No.39, 1 space - hardly used

	Nc
19. Stowford Ford & Track Edge	
20. Stowford Ford Pull In	
21. Stowford Woods, Crook Woods	1
22. Banana Field, Btm Exeter Hill, Yettington	
23. Islands North, Perm. Path Entrance	
24. Exeter Hill South	
25. Bunderidge Tunnel	
26. Bridleway Track, NW of Four Firs	
27a. Bridleway off B3179, Stokes Fields	
27b. Formal lay-by west of Four Firs junction	
27c. Formal lay-by south of Four Firs junction	
28. Castle North Layby	
29. Beacon Layby	
30. Golf Course Entrance Area	
33. Quarry Car Park	
34. Quarry Entrance Bridleway	
35. Entrance to Frying Pans/Endurance Course	1
36. Rv9 Tuckets Plant Laybys A&B	
37. Hayes Triangle	
38. Bearden Barn, Island Plantation	
39. Sandy Gallop	
40. Squabmoor S. Fishermans CP	
41. Dalditch North Barrier	
42. Bystock Pools South	
43. Dwt Access Wrights Lane	
44. Lymptone Com. Squabmoor House	
45. Lymptone Layby	
46. Lymptone Com. Bridleway B3180	
47a. Lymptone Com. East Bridleways	
47b. Lymptone Com. East Bridleways	
48. East Budleigh Com. S. of Road	
49. Layby Yettington, Pines Ridge Road N.of Road	
50. Layby Yettington, Pines Ridge Road S.of Road	
51. Wheathill CP Laybys	1
52. East Budleigh Com. S. of Joney's Barrier	
53. The Wedge Layby	
54. Ting Tong Layby Wallys North	
55. Ting Tong Layby Permissive South South sheet	9
Total Informal Spaces (N&S)	15
TOTAL FORMAL & INFORMAL N&S	44

N.B. This figure includes a reduction of an additional 26 spaces across the project area from 2012 (Ecolo)

KEY

- SPAS/SAC Boundary
- Right of way
- East Devon Wav

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Accurate territory records for Dartford warbler and Nightjar have been cross-referenced as part of the development of the strategy, but as this remains sensitive data it is not included in the mapping.



7.0 Project Area Analysis

Heathland habitats and protected bird species on the Pebblebed Heaths (Nightjar and Dartford Warbler) are sensitive to disturbance from people, and particularly from dogs. As such, disturbance from projected visitor increases up to 2031, because of proposed housing within 10km of the SPA/SAC, needs to be addressed to ensure the integrity of the European designated sites is preserved.

The landscape of the Pebblebed Heaths within the East Devon AONB reflects the long historic use of the land for a variety of uses (grazing, military use, settlement) and a few Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM) that are directly adjacent to formal car parks.

Most visitors to the Pebblebed Heaths travel a short distance by car from neighbouring settlements (Exmouth, Woodbury, Newton Poppleford), stay less than 1 hour, take a short walk, with a dog off-lead, visit regularly, throughout the year and have done so for many years. Any new visitor pressures from future developments are likely to come from Exmouth in the south and Cranbrook to the north west.

The Pebblebed Heaths are bisected by two key roads: -

1. West to East by the A3052 (Exeter – Sidmouth/Newton Poppleford),
2. North to South by the B3180 (Ottery St Mary/West Hill – Exmouth/Budleigh)

The site is also bisected in the south by two additional unnamed roads: -






3. Woodbury (B3179) - Four Firs – Otterton & East Budleigh
4. Lympstone (Pine Ridge) - Yettington

The main 'formal' car parks mostly sit adjacent to these four roads and provided the nearest access points for the local communities. These formal car parks are at unplanned, historic locations. They are poorly laid out, are 'constructed' with the existing underlying pebble material, which whilst robust is lumpy and in some locations potholed due to flat conditions causing ponding. The car parks are mostly screened by dense vegetation that leaves them prone to vandalism and anti-social behaviour. These materials and management of these formal car parks, whilst needing some improvements, generally reflect the landscape character of the AONB. The proximity of some formal car parks to Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM) needs addressing. These include Woodbury Castle Hillfort and the barrows at Model Airfield and Four Firs.

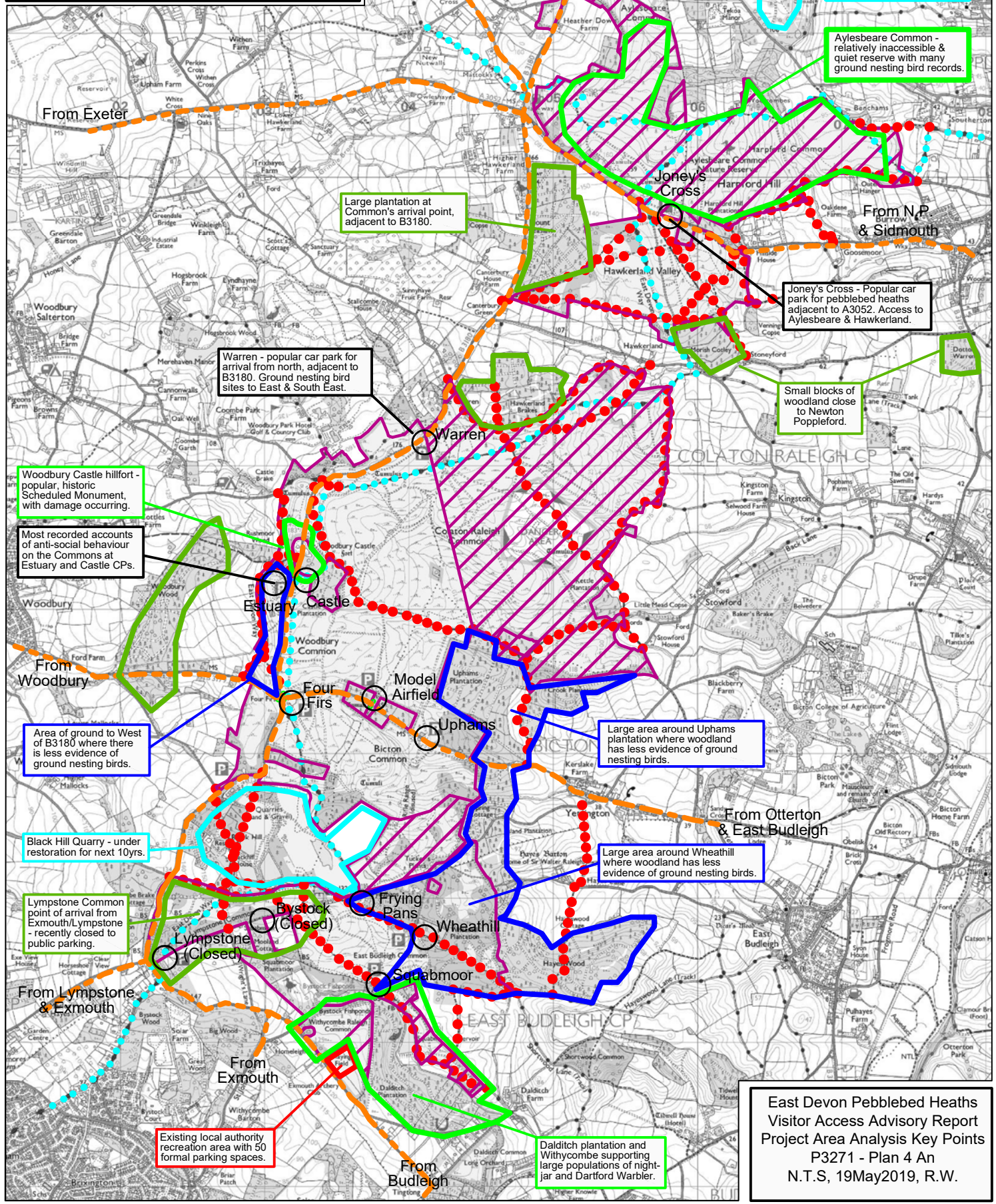
Other minor 'C' roads cross the Pebblebed Heaths where scattered car parking occurs in any available verge, lay-by or gateway. This informal access leads to several problems, including widespread habitat disturbance, difficulties for neighbours and emergency services when roads becoming blocked and lack of opportunity for engaging with visitors about key issues and messages.

Some recent formal car park and roadside parking closures have placed additional pressure on surrounding areas.

Former quarries at Venn Ottery Hill (to the north) and Blackhill (to the south) have resulted in reduced traffic disturbance across the area. Potential exists at these locations for post restoration recreation with visitor parking and public access, dependent on the value and sensitivity of the habitats that result from restoration works. The Project Area Analysis (Plan 4) also identifies blocks of woodland and conifer plantation within and surrounding the SPA/SAC where less sensitive habitats are near neighbouring communities.

- KEY**
-  SPA/SAC Boundary
 -  Areas of SPA/SAC identified by Footprint Ecology for keeping access levels low
 -  Principal roads to / through project area
 -  East Devon Way
 -  Public Right of Way

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 Accurate territory records for Dartford warbler and Nightjar have been cross-referenced as part of the development of the strategy, but as this remains sensitive data it is not included in the mapping.



East Devon Pebblebed Heath Visitor Access Advisory Report Project Area Analysis Key Points
 P3271 - Plan 4 An
 N.T.S, 19May2019, R.W.

8.0 Project Area Concept and Strategic Principles

The primary objective of this Visitor Access Advisory Report is to safeguard the protected bird species (Nightjar and Dartford Warbler) and heathland habitats of the SPA/SAC from adverse impacts and disturbance caused by people, particularly from dogs that are not on a lead.

Previous research by Ecology Solutions, (East Devon Heaths SPA and Pebblebed Heaths SAC Visitor Survey, May 2012) and Footprint Ecology (East Devon Pebblebeds Visitor Management Plan, 2017) identified that visitors to the Pebblebed Heaths are local (more than 75% live less than 10km from the site), visit frequently (up to 71% visit weekly), throughout the year, more than 90% arrive by car, take a short walk (approx. 70% with a dog), stay less than 1 hour and have been doing so for many years (see summary of findings in sections 6.2 and 6.3 of this report).

The principles set out below for this Visitor Access Advisory Report seek to provide for these key visitors and future visitors, without attracting increased numbers, in a manner that makes for an enjoyable and informative visit, whilst minimising the disturbance to protect species and habitats by ‘steering’ visitors towards car parks that are away from sensitive locations and towards those that have less impact on protected habitats and species.

8.1 Strategic principle 1 : A place of entry

The first principle that this strategy has sought to achieve is to retain and develop the formal car parks that are as close as possible to the points of entry on to the Heaths, adjacent to the principal roads where the car parks are easy to find and easy to sign (e.g. car park name signs). This approach seeks to reduce car movements across the heaths and the scattered informal parking that occurs consequentially.

- West to East by the A3052 (Joney’s Cross),
- North to South by the B3180 (Warren, Estuary/Castle, Four Firs)
- Woodbury (B3179) - Otterton & East Budleigh (Model Airfield, Four Firs, Wheathill)

Some visitors fall outside the statistical groups listed above by virtue of walking through the project area on a public footpath, arriving by horse or bike, living within the project area, staying for longer than one hour, etc. In aiming to provide quality parking at the key nodes through which the principal trails pass, the SPA/SAC will benefit from all people using the Pebblebed Heaths having access to the interpretation/messaging, trail start points, directional way-marking, dog bins, and wardening services – all of which aim to affect behaviour of visitors.

8.2 Strategic Principle 2: Moving visitors away from sensitive locations (a ‘gathering in’)

A strategic principle of this report is for the formal car parks to provide a ‘gathering in’ place for scattered informal car parking. Informal scattered roadside parking results in the dispersal of visitors, widespread disturbance and next to impossible opportunities for engagement by wardens, or communication through leafleting or by interpretation panels.

The informal roadside parking closures that have been identified have been located where wildlife and habitats are likely to be adversely affected by disturbance from unmanaged visitor numbers. Reducing and relocating informal roadside parking to formal car parks will ensure that roadside parking at the multiple, uncontrolled access points can be reduced, or withdrawn, to better control visitor access and dispersal over the Heaths with no net loss or gain in parking across the area.

Informal parking areas will not be actively promoted (e.g. no formally promoted trails passing through) though they will be monitored over the mitigation strategy project time frame to inform future management decisions.

This report is not recommending the introduction of car park charges as it is believed that the introduction of a charge at formal car parks will result in visitors seeking alternative roadside verges to avoid paying and thereby undermining the principle outlined here.

8.3 Strategic Principle 3: Promoting less sensitive locations

Promoting those locations where the surrounding habitat does not have sensitive habitats or protected species has been a key principle of this report. This applies primarily to conifer plantations (Uphams Plantation) and other woodland areas (Wheathill).

This principle has not been achieved in all situations as some retained formal car parks are located within, or in proximity to, heathland habitats used by ground nesting birds. The justification for this is that these car parks provide access to existing Public Rights of Way (e.g. East Devon Way) which pass through the area. Providing access from retained formal car parks to these pre-existing routes, with information, interpretation and messaging promotes responsible public access.

8.4 Principle 4: No Net Increase

A principle of these recommendations is to maintain the current number of car parking spaces across the heaths. This report does not propose any additional car park spaces, or any new formal car parks. Existing formal car park locations are already well distributed and can accommodate the current levels of use. The principal car parks have been designed to maximise the number of spaces available to equally balance the number of roadside car parking places that are proposed to be closed.

To increase the number of parking spaces available is likely to increase visitor numbers at peak times of the day/month/season which would result in increased damage to habitats and disturbance to ground nesting birds. Reducing the number of car parking spaces is likely to result in more people seeking to find alternative parking locations on roadsides or in neighbouring villages.

8.5 Strategic Principle 5: Creating nodes

The formal car parks provide the starting point for promoted trails and the opportunity to direct people away from sensitive areas at key times of the year.

Proposals in this report for improving the formal car parks have included designing the layout for easy, efficient and safe use, to create a welcoming and attractive setting where visitors can engage with interpretation, messaging and wardens about the nature, value and significance of the Pebblebed Heaths and particularly about responsible dog walking. The provision of dog waste bins is key to drawing dog walkers to formal car parks and enabling responsible picking up of dog waste which otherwise harms the heathland habitat.

Visitors who come to understand and care for the protected species and habitats become the greatest ambassadors and advocates for good behaviour amongst visitors, e.g. encouraging others to keep their dogs on a lead, or clear up dog mess.

8.6 Strategic Principle 6: Appropriate Design

Proposals put forward in this report promote the development of good design and build standards that are appropriate to a countryside location within an AONB; avoiding urban design, materials and finishes (see Section 10). Poor design and build of formal car parks will not necessarily result in less visitors, but more likely result in lack of respect, increased anti-social behaviour, fly-tipping and claims for damage.

Good design, build and maintenance of surrounding vegetation gives confidence to car park users that they and their vehicles are secure when using the car parks. Improving visibility within the car park and from adjacent minor roads improves surveillance from other site users, passing motorists and the police (advice from local police through stakeholder consultation).

8.7 Principle 7: Flexibility

Some visitors have been enjoying the Pebblebed Heaths for many years, so patterns of behaviour and favourite places and routes are held by them. The recommendations in the report seek, over time, to nudge the behaviour of visitors through providing good quality, countryside recreation access point at formal car parks, whilst closing other formal and informal car parks where disturbance is not wanted. This process of closure can be done by a low-key phased approach through gradual closure and reduced maintenance – again a process of nudging behaviour over time.






This report sets out recommendations for the partial, phased or seasonal closure of several car parks. This has been developed as a concept to allow management flexibility for controlling access and visitor numbers at certain times during the year, or for specific events when disturbance to ground nesting birds is not an issue.

8.8 Principle 8: Efficiency

Whilst not directly related to protecting the features of the SPA/SAC, improving the arrangement and construction of existing formal car parks to maximise their capacity, and reduce their long term maintenance makes the strategy more sustainable in terms of investment (capital, maintenance, management and public communications) and ensures that finances for managing the protection of the habitat features are not spent unnecessarily on the maintenance of the public access provision.

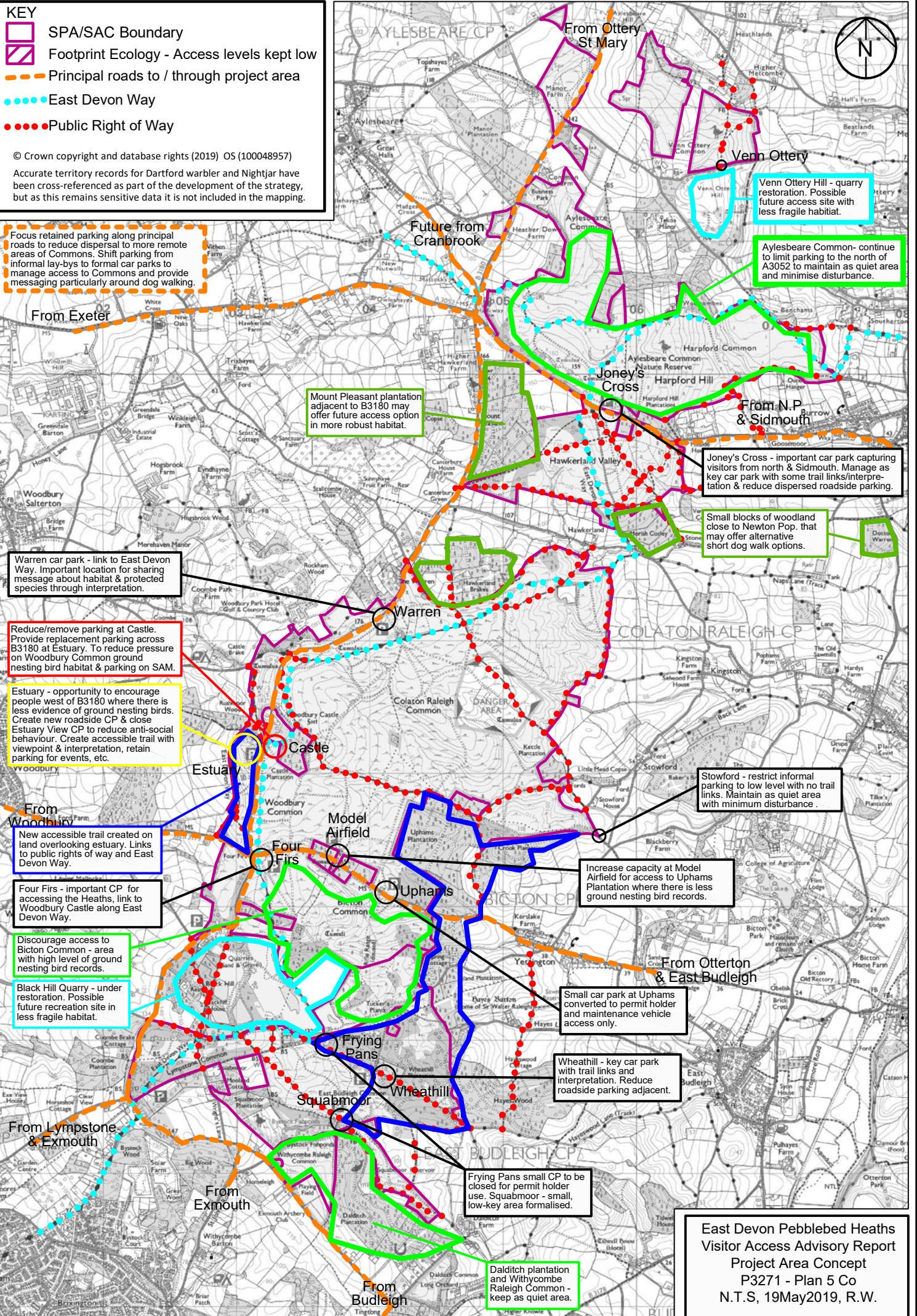
In addition, the following principles have been applied at a site level during the design development. These will be explored more fully in this strategy under the section on Concept Design Principles (Section 10), but the over-arching aim is to: -

1. Utilise the existing stone footprint of formal car parks and entrances as far as possible, to minimise disturbance to heathland habitats, or the need for formal planning approval. When areas of heathland habitat have been converted to stone surface in the redesign of car park footprints where possible similar compensatory areas have been converted the opposite way.
2. Maintain existing features and materials so as not to adversely affect the SPA/SAC soil characteristics and to reflect the landscape character of the AONB.
3. Restore the countryside character damaged by road-verge parking, through natural, physical measures, such as bunds and ditches.
4. Adjust formal car park layouts to protect and preserve Scheduled Ancient Monuments, to protect the designated areas from car parking through earth bunds rather than dug-in features like dragon's teeth that may damage heritage features.
5. Establish management principles for adjacent vegetation to reduce the likelihood of vandalism and anti-social behaviour.
6. Keep access for management, emergency services and MOD separate to public parking areas as far as possible.
7. Improve drainage provision within the construction proposals to improve flood attenuation.

- KEY**
-  SPA/SAC Boundary
 -  Footprint Ecology - Access levels kept low
 -  Principal roads to / through project area
 -  East Devon Way
 -  Public Right of Way

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Focus retained parking along principal roads to reduce dispersal to more remote areas of Commons. Shift parking from informal lay-bys to formal car parks to manage access to Commons and provide messaging particularly around dog walking.



Venn Ottery Hill - quarry restoration. Possible future access site with less fragile habitat.

Aylesbeare Common - continue to limit parking to the north of A3052 to maintain as quiet area and minimise disturbance.

Mount Pleasant plantation adjacent to B3180 may offer future access option in more robust habitat.

Joney's Cross - important car park capturing visitors from north & Sidmouth. Manage as key car park with some trail links/interpretation & reduce dispersed roadside parking.

Small blocks of woodland close to Newton Pop. that may offer alternative short dog walk options.

Warren car park - link to East Devon Way. Important location for sharing message about habitat & protected species through interpretation.

Reduce/remove parking at Castle. Provide replacement parking across B3180 at Estuary. To reduce pressure on Woodbury Common ground nesting bird habitat & parking on SAM.

Estuary - opportunity to encourage people west of B3180 where there is less evidence of ground nesting birds. Create new roadside CP & close Estuary View CP to reduce anti-social behaviour. Create accessible trail with viewpoint & interpretation, retain parking for events, etc.

Stowford - restrict informal parking to low level with no trail links. Maintain as quiet area with minimum disturbance.

New accessible trail created on land overlooking estuary. Links to public rights of way and East Devon Way.

Increase capacity at Model Airfield for access to Uphams Plantation where there is less ground nesting bird records.

Four Firs - important CP for accessing the Heaths, link to Woodbury Castle along East Devon Way.

Discourage access to Bicton Common - area with high level of ground nesting bird records.

Black Hill Quarry - under restoration. Possible future recreation site in less fragile habitat.

Small car park at Uphams converted to permit holder and maintenance vehicle access only.

Wheathill - key car park with trail links and interpretation. Reduce roadside parking adjacent.

From Lymington & Exmouth

Frying Pans small CP to be closed for permit holder use. Squabmoor - small, low-key area formalised.

From Exmouth

Dalditch plantation and Withycombe Raleigh Common - keep as quiet area.

From Budleigh

**East Devon Peblebed Heaths
 Visitor Access Advisory Report
 Project Area Concept
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