

**Summary of the mudcat forum 28 October 2013 to 13 March 2014:  
traffic issues relating to the proposed new Salcombe Hill campsite.  
To read all the discussions, visit the website.**

**Subject:** Sidmouth campsite to move?

**From:** [GUEST](#)

**Date:** 28 Oct 13

Front page story in Sidmouth Herald last week about a possible new site for camping and dance to replace the Bulverton.

[Calling time at the Bulverton?](#)

**From:** [Howard Jones](#)

**Date:** 29 Oct 13

It seems to be up a long, fairly steep and narrow lane. I'd like to know more about what's intended, and in particular what they're proposing to provide by way of 'dedicated transport'. My impression is that this will be much more difficult to access on foot or by bike, and if the transport is too crowded, too expensive, too infrequent or doesn't run at the times people want they will resort to their cars.

Will the LNEs at the Bulverton move here? If so, how will people who are not camping get to and from there?

What they are proposing might be wonderful, but at the moment it's easier to see the potential problems. There's no mention of it on the Folk Week's website. They need to tell festival-goers what's proposed, why it will be good, and bring them onsite.

**From:** [Susan B](#)

**Date:** 29 Oct 13

My understanding from the article is that Bulverton would close and all would be relocated to the new site (including day parking?). It has some advantages - the campsite and event venue would be more co-located and flatter, which is really needed for the increasing number of caravans. And it should be much better for noise - it won't disturb locals as much (until they build nearby and start complaining again...).

But ... I'm concerned about the access to and from the town. I've often ended up walking between town and the Bulverton site due to being up late, or the buses having problems. This proposed site is about three times the height above sea level. It is in the fields next to one used in the late 70s and I remember (when a lot younger and fitter) having trouble getting up and down that hill then. The OS map marks it as steeper than 1 in 5. I'll probably be able to walk up it, but down will be impossible (arthritis knees are like that!).

My other access concern is for people with significant mobility disabilities. In recent years my daughter has just trundled up and down the hill to and from Bulverton as the buses were not accessible. The steep hill to the proposed site will make it inadvisable to take your electric wheelchair or scooter up or down it, as they would overheat. Unless the "dedicated transport" is accessible the people in town won't be able to go to the venues, and disabled campers won't be able to get into town.

These things may have been thought of and solutions found, but it would be nice if there was a discussion forum on the Folk Week website and more information! Annoying that they didn't put information there at the same time as telling the Herald.

**From:** [GUEST,Mr Positive](#)

**Date:** 29 Oct 13

Access for dozens of caravans up the steep hill would be silly verging on absurd.

One breakdown (burnt clutch or whatever) and there would be a queue and chaos - no room for wide vehicles to pass unless both squeeze into the sides.

Much easier (flat but narrow) access is available via Thorn Park from the northeast which could be made one-way.

Access to the fields themselves (once you reach them) would be no problem at all. Walking from town is only just over a mile, but it is STEEP, UNLIT, NARROW and potentially far more dangerous at night than walking to the Bulverton site.

Everything depends on reliable and frequent transport

**From:** [GUEST](#)

**Date:** 30 Oct

I'm sure here's been a huge amount of preparation & planning for this application, and some of the comments in the thread so far highlight challenges which were identified at the outset...

These include-

"people with significant mobility disabilities"

"Much easier (flat but narrow) access is available via Thorn Park from the northeast which could be made one-way." (concerning arrival & departure of caravans)

"Everything depends on reliable and frequent transport"

While the application is still under consideration, I can understand why there is a reluctance on the part of organisers to jump the gun and go public - it might even affect the outcome.

My fingers are crossed.

John

**From:** [Steve in Sidmouth](#)

**Date:** 30 Oct 13

It is rubbish to suggest that open discussion could 'affect the outcome' - except maybe in a positive way by instigating improvements at an earlier stage. Having the details splashed across the front page of the Sidmouth Herald was intended surely to ensure a complete absence of both local and folkie debate.

**From:** [Dave Earl](#)

**Date:** 30 Oct

I hope that the consultations mentioned above will include full consideration of the needs people with mobility problems.

Ideally I would like to see a festival officer appointed to oversee such aspects and who REALLY understands what people with such challenges require.

In recent years I have felt that although the festival team meant to do the right thing(s) there were some shortcomings that could have been avoided if matters had been discussed with a person who would need to use the facilities and access.

Do you think that with a new site it may be possible to get things nearer to an optimum?

**From:** [Steve in Sidmouth](#)

**Date:** 30 Oct 13

Dave Earl makes some good points concerning the benefits of management liaison with users of festival facilities. For many years the easily addressed shortcomings of the Blackmore Gardens marquee have remained substantially unaddressed. I have yet to write up this year's experiences.... The floor was entirely different - very springy but awfully sticky. If they had found a competent dancer and asked about the proposed change we might have got something more suitable. Towersey can do it, so why can't Sidmouth?

The Bulverton site and the roads leading to it do indeed have some gentle slopes but they are pussycats compared to Salcombe Hill.

[All about slopes, angles and gradients, and towing caravans up them!](#)

Approximate areas of new and old sites are given on my previous link.

If you include that some facilities may be on the field with the dance tent, the actual area for camping may be the same or larger than at Bulverton - and it promises to be much more user friendly (once you have got there).

There are a couple of very large and quite tempting fields immediately to the north east of the proposed new site: these might be a car park or overflow camping. They are flat too. And of course there are the alternative commercial sites nearby.

**From:** [GUEST,Howard Jones](#)

**Date:** 30 Oct 13

"Once you have got there" is the issue. Also, will this become the base for more events, and will this lead to a move out of the town?

**From:** [Steve in Sidmouth](#)

**Date:** 31 Oct 13

*Also, will this become the base for more events, and will this lead to a move out of the town?*

There are two issues, the number of scheduled events and attendance at those events.

The Bulverton experienced many very poorly attended daytime events - ten or twenty people in a freezing marquee with space for 800. It is to be hoped the new venue can be better

utilised.

There are about 75 events each day. If the new venue drew 150 people over and above the numbers who attended Bulverton, and if it did this three times each day, that is 450 event-attendances down in town or an average of six per event - assuming all the people would have gone to an in-town event rather than stayed in their tents!

In practice, much will depend on the scheduling of 'attractive' events at the new venue - if they are at the times of 'attractive' major events in town there may be no noticeable effect.

**From:** [steve harris](#)

**Date:** 31 Oct

One possibility for a "second site" would be to retain use of all or part of the Bulverton camp site. For this to work, there would have to be enough customers who didn't care about being that far from the Dance Tent.

It is useful to have more than one camp site - it can help manage potential conflict between people with different ideas about sleeping times and noisy times.

Does anybody know what the bridleway between the proposed new site and Fortescue is like? An answer to some of the road safety issues?

**From:** [Steve in Sidmouth](#)

**Date:** 31 Oct

Bridleway: you would add about 600m to your journey and it would take far longer if you didn't want to risk your ankles. You'd be risking them anyway unless you had proper walking boots.

The bit I walked the other day was flat, covered in leaves and very muddy - but it won't be wet in August of course. There is a section of about 450m where you drop down 60 or 70 m in height so the gradient there is around 1 in 7 and without the benefit of tarmac. Trees overhang from both sides, delightful on a sparkling summer day.

Through the woods there is a sort of hairpin bend to take out the worst of the steepness but you do most of the 500' (150m) height up or down on the bridleway rather than along Sid Road, so it is still a real hike. Salcombe Hill turns at 45 degrees to take out the worst of the steepest slope also, but over that section it is still between 1 in 4 and 1 in 5.

Salcombe Hill is what could be called a serious hill.

**From:** [Susan B](#)

**Date:** 02 Nov

Separate campsite for people with disabilities - no, no, no!!!! (And I know that the organisers have said no, for different reasons) People want to be with other people - not separate from friends. And to have a good support network you need to be on the same site as everyone else. If it was a separate site nearer town there would still be the issue of transport to get up to the new venue. If the transport issue is sorted adequately then this is potentially a better site for those with mobility problems.

Someone suggested consultation with users/people who know about disability. The problem is that people think they know, because they know (or are) one person. The reality is that different things will be barriers for different people. So, you really need several people who

have a range of experience to advise. As a community occupational therapist (now retired) I have offered to do an assessment/survey of venues in the past, but this was not taken up.

**From: Dave Earl**

**Date:** 02 Nov 13

I accept that segregation of people with mobility issues is not a thing to be recommended for all the reasons you give. I'm not trying to set myself up as an "Expert" but I am a user of the "Equal Access" facilities as those of you who I have met will know.

The problem I have had in the past is not with "facilities" as provided, they have been excellent in themselves but I think they were sited in the wrong place. Halfway down the sloping field with an uneven surface to walk over or use a wheelchair/scooter on seems to me to be far from ideal. I have mentioned this to the campsite infrastructure people at the festival for the past few years. They say that the facilities have to be where they are because the water, drainage and power input points are in that part of the site.

At this point in time we don't know how the services are going to be provided on the new site so what I was asking for was consultation as to where the camping /camper/ caravan area(s) are to be sited in relation to "Equal Access" loos and showers wherever such things get sited. Didn't I see somewhere that the Scouts have put a HQ building of some sort nearby. I imagine that will have all the services so tapping into those may be a possibility

I understand that the new site is more level than the Bulverton field so I'm expecting not to meet the difficulties experienced in recent years on the Bulverton site.

**From: ripov**

**Date:** 02 Nov 13

Many years ago there was a festival bus (run by Alpha) from Salcombe Regis campsite down that hill. Best white knuckle ride ever. The lady who drove it was (and still is) an absolute marvel. That was a 15 seater; later, larger buses didn't go that way! The road during festival week is clogged with pedestrians, so I assume that any bus service would take the longer route.

I wonder also if the local residents and many campers who use other camp-sites in the area, although well used to on-site acoustic performance, will appreciate a nearby Late Night Extra drowning out quiet music and conversation?

**From: Steve in Sidmouth**

**Date:** 18 Dec 13

There has been a lot more local discussion about the proposal to move the campsite - most of it very much opposed to the idea.

The site has received its licence to go ahead but with the comment from the chairman:

**there were no relevant licensing objections and there was no alternative but to grant the application.**

To date the transport and traffic aspects have not been publicised - many residents have objected on grounds of public safety with so many people walking up and down

Salcombe Hill and with motor traffic in conflict.

It seems to be proposed to use a couple of 16 or 24 seat minibuses - to replace the double deckers - and maybe up and down Salcombe Hill Road.

People who know the road well say that any such idea is simply a fatality (or several) waiting to happen. Drivers of vehicles of this size generally avoid Salcombe Hill!

There is local concern (but no firm information as yet) about whether local folkies will be able to drive to and park at the new venue as they can now at the Bulverton.

Recent letters and articles in the local paper start here:

[letters and articles late Nov to 13 Dec 2013](#)

**Some people are wondering if there is a hidden 'subtext' to the proposed move - that the council and/or organisers know that the Bulverton land may soon become unavailable and so a new site has to be found - whatever its drawbacks in terms of public safety.**

**From:** [GUEST, topsie](#)

**Date:** 19 Dec 13

Many years ago, before I got arthritis, I made it on foot from the Ham to the bar in the Late Night Extra with a pint in my hand - in 35 minutes. [No, I didn't carry the pint all the way, a friend was buying a round at the bar as I came in and caught my eye.]

(I have a recurring dream where I am in a campsite on my own, and there is a festival going on somewhere over the hill near the sea. I know that I am supposed to be at the festival but I never actually get there. I fear my dreams may come true.)

**From:** [Steve in Sidmouth](#)

**Date:** 31 Dec 13

I have drawn together some of the arguments for and against the move to the proposed campsite, based around who would benefit and who might not. There is more to add but comments welcome on the table in this webpage.

[summary as of 31 Dec 2013, for comment](#)

One recent comment (not yet included in the above) again stresses the difficulty of providing adequate yet safe transport for the hundred or more people who want to get down into town for around 9.30am. Some would walk, there are no footways, the road is in parts too narrow for two small buses to pass (even without pedestrians in the way), you cannot safely cycle, and so on.

**From:** [Steve in Sidmouth](#)

**Date:** 02 Feb 14

Latest article in the Sidmouth Herald (31 January) states that the Bulverton campsite will be used in 2014.

Under a front page banner headline "**FolkWeek campsite move delayed by red tape**" it is stated that festival chiefs have been told they need planning permission!

Thus we are expected to believe that it has recently been discovered that the new site would require a planning application as well as a licence application (for alcohol/entertainment etc). This would have been known probably a year or more ago given the number of people who have been involved, including from the town council, and indeed it is referred to here:

[views of a local resident](#)

as well as in one of the articles published here:

[articles published 13 December 2013](#)

It is more plausible that the upbeat October announcement

[First public announcement of campsite move](#)

was intended to be a dry run to gauge opinions and the strength of any opposition. This is often done in planning for new homes on Green Belt or for contentious alterations to existing buildings - let the first wave of criticism die down and then slip it through when no-one is looking.

In October it was claimed that a final decision would be made by Christmas. In the latest article this deadline slipped to the end of January - and with the need to obtain planning permission being cited as the reason why the new deadline could not be met.

So for this year it is back to the Bulverton - "our much loved and well established campsite and clubhouse".

**[From: Girl Friday](#)**

**Date:** 03 Feb 14

As users of the disabled area of Bulverton campsite.. it was frustrating that the flat area where we were situated was at the bottom of that steep slope - but we managed it. Having once walked from The Triangle to Woodlands Hotel.. that hill is steep enough... we couldn't manage anything steeper, or indeed longer. The buses are invaluable to us, though we could drive, and use our blue badge (if there was available town parking.)We don't like the sound of this new campsite at all, and the buses would have a struggle up Salcombe Hill - not to mention towing our caravan up it ! Think we shall not come to Sidmouth this year.

**[From: Richard Bridge](#)**

**Date:** 03 Feb 14

Sue, it looks as if you will be on Bulverton anyway this year. For when you do get forced to use the new site - bring your caravan in from the other end. At some point there will SURELY be buses and the sensible thing would be a temporary one-way system/partial road closure with ONLY pedestrians allowed down Salcombe Hill and ONLY buses - sensible sized ones - coming up.

**From:** [Steve in Sidmouth](#)

**Date:** 03 Feb 14

There is a lot of discussion re: the mass transport issue.

It is key to using the proposed new site.

I'm loading some more material soon but for the moment, the Bulverton will be used again in 2014. That's really all you need to know!

No-one should ever try and tow a caravan up Salcombe Hill. Oh dear me no..... Getting caravans to the site is easy enough via the top road. It is the mass transport between the site and the town at peak times that is problematic, and potentially dangerous.

The proposed new site has some advantages ONCE YOU GET THERE - but not for some groups of people - here is my analysis as of the end of last year:

[who would benefit or lose out by moving the campsite?](#)

If you are interested in the new site, please do read the information that is already available before asking questions: sit down with a glass or two of something and start here. [Page folk213](#) is the initial announcement in October.

**From:** [ripov](#)

**Date:** 01 Mar 14

Buses (ie Alpha Coaches) from the Bays to Salcombe Regis currently go the long way round via the A3052, and then need to take a run at the hill. I would suggest that buses going directly up Salcombe Hill would need modified back axles (to get up the hill loaded) and improved brakes (in case they don't manage it.)

**From:** [Richard Bridge](#)

**Date:** 01 Mar 14

A fleet of 15 seaters would do it easy.

**From:** [steve\\_harris](#)

**Date:** 13 Mar 14

*A fleet of 15 seaters would do it easy.*

Quite right, Mr Bridge. A fleet of only 20 buses at peak times :-)

**This discussion will have been continued.**

**For full details go to: [mudcat.org/thread.cfm?threadid=152651](http://mudcat.org/thread.cfm?threadid=152651)**