

Agenda Item No. 4(d)

**DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF CABINET MEMBER – HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND  
INFRASTRUCTURE**

**23 March 2017**

Report of the Strategic Director – Economy, Transport and Communities

**COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE CHARGES 2017-2018**

(1) **Purpose of Report** To seek the Cabinet Member's approval for the proposed charges at Countryside Service sites for 2017-18.

(2) **Information and Analysis** At the Cabinet Member meeting of 10 November 2015, a report was approved laying out the various charges levied by the Countryside Service for the period 2016 – 2018 (Minute No. 150/15 refers). This included a variety of charges including those for car parking, cycle hire, entries to buildings and events. As part of the process to increase income generated by the service (in order to offset some of the cuts faced by the service), it is proposed to introduce a number of activities not previously charged for in 2017 rather than wait until the next review in 2018.

These are:

1. **Use of sites for commercial activities.** In the past individuals and companies have approached staff to run activities such as management training exercises, exercise classes and activities such as erecting mobile climbing walls, etc. Some are very low key with individuals wanting to start a business and others from established firms. The usage can be spasmodic meaning drawing up a licence is not economically justified, however, the development of such activities could be financially beneficial to the Authority in the future if they proved successful. It is suggested that a pro forma agreement for limited use is developed. The organiser must demonstrate that it has adequate insurance cover to protect its and the Authority's interests. It is suggested that usage is charged at £35/hour for the first 10 occasions (to encourage start-up businesses) after which, if the business is successful, a more formal arrangement would be sought.
2. **High Peak Junction Workshops.** The current admission charge is £2.70 for an adult but unfortunately visitor numbers are very low with only 291 visitors paying admission compared to 33,476 who access the

adjacent visitor centre. This generated only £441.70 in admission in 2015-16. In 2016-17, a donations system was trialled during free workshops events; this was more successful than charging admission and generated £639. Significantly more income is generated via the sales from the centre. Improved refreshment provision has seen sales income increase by £18,000 in the two years since 2014-15 to date, mainly through drinks and ice cream. At present there is no shelter on site for people having a drink which significantly affects sales when the weather is poor. It is felt that if the drill room could be available as a space to have a hot drink, it would significantly increase sales on bad days but to do this, the admission charge would have to be abolished so the public could access the room.

The admission charge currently includes use of an audio tour and it is suggested that admission is offered free of charge but with a £1 charge for the audio tour and the retention of the donations box. It is expected that significantly more income will be generated by visitors in this way and visitors will stay longer on site generating more sales in the Visitor Centre whilst having an improved experience and understanding of this historic site.

3. **Group booking rates (escorted visit), Middleton Top and High Peak Junction.** Escorted group tours are an excellent way of interpreting the sites rich industrial heritage. There is an opportunity to increase the number of escorted group tours and income to both Middleton Top and High Peak Junction. The agreed charge for 2016-18, however, is set at £26.60 which is uneconomic when considering the administration and cost of bringing in staff (Engine House Wardens) for a pre-booked visit. Comparisons with similar attractions indicate that the group market can stand a charge considerably higher than this.

The agreed 2016-18 charges include a charge for staff led activities at £35/hour and it is suggested that this figure should be adopted for group bookings

For example: A group visit involving two staff for 2 hour payment would cost £140 (4 x £35).

Charges are currently set on the basis of one of three principles:

- It is accepted that the service is subsidised and set accordingly.
- The charge is set at “the going rate” by comparison with other similar facilities.
- The charge is the actual cost of providing the service.

Item 1, as a letting, is set at the “going rate” category, item 2 is subsidised, whilst item 3 is set at the “actual cost” rate.

(3) **Financial Considerations** As detailed within the report.

(4) **Social Value Considerations** Under the provisions of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 Derbyshire County Council is required to consider how the economic, social and environmental well-being of the County might be improved through the support and procurement of local services. The proposals set out in this report aim to improve the services offered at our countryside sites whilst improving their ability to offset their running costs through charging. The continued availability of these sites improves the quality of life for Derbyshire residents whilst also promoting environmental sustainability.

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: legal, prevention of crime and disorder, equality and diversity, human resources, environmental, health, property and transport considerations.

(5) **Key Decision** No.

(6) **Call-In** Is it required that call-in be waived in respect of the decisions proposed in the report? No.

(7) **Background Papers** Held on file within the Economy, Transport and Communities Department. Officer contact details – Chris Coombs, extension 39821.

(8) **OFFICER’S RECOMMENDATION** That the proposed charges, as set out above, be approved.

**Mike Ashworth**  
**Strategic Director – Economy, Transport and Communities**