

Agenda Item No. 7(z)

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

20 September 2016

Report of the Strategic Director – Economy, Transport and Communities

**COUNTRYSIDE SERVICES VISITOR CENTRE REVIEW AND  
RECOMMENDATIONS (HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND  
INFRASTRUCTURE)**

(1) **Purpose of Report** To report on the outcome of the public consultation on the future of Tapton Lock and Hayfield Visitor Centres, and to seek approval for revised operating arrangements arising from this exercise.

(2) **Information and Analysis** On 26 January 2016, Cabinet approved consultation on proposals within two reports dealing with the restructuring of the Countryside Service. The first (exempt) report dealt with the budget proposals and staffing implications of the restructure and is the subject of a separate report on this Cabinet agenda. It was considered that the impact of these changes on public access to Countryside sites would be limited. The second highlighted potential changes to the future provision of customer facing services at Tapton Lock Visitor Centre and Hayfield Visitor Centre which were to be the subject of public consultation given the potential implications for public access in these localities.

Cabinet authorised officers to open dialogue with external parties in relation to alternative delivery models and commercial opportunities at these centres, together with public consultation concerning the potential changes at these centres. A further report was to be submitted to Cabinet on the outcome of the public consultation and the dialogue with external parties.

Visitor Centres operated by the Countryside Service have historically not operated at a profit, nor have they achieved sufficient income to cover operational costs or contribute to the financial support of wider service delivery. The principal visitor destinations of Elvaston Castle, Shipley Country Park and Middleton Top/High Peak Junction were identified within the initial Countryside Service management restructure as those sites with the largest existing markets and therefore the principal focus for income generation for the Service.

Tapton Lock and Hayfield, whilst providing valuable visitor services, have more limited audiences, and required further business case development to identify ways to cover their overheads. Equally, it was considered feasible that other providers could potentially operate out of those centres, for example under lease arrangements. Opportunities to continue some of the offered services elsewhere were considered, including the redeployment of Trampers (all-terrain motability scooters), should those services not be able to be maintained on site.

### **Alternative delivery models and commercial opportunities**

Alternative models for service delivery and income generation have been considered to make each centre more financially viable.

These include:

- Seeking additional means of income generation, using County Council staff resources.
- Seeking partners to operate jointly or uniquely on the premises to deliver similar services at reduced financial burden to the authority.
- Letting of premises to a third party for alternative uses.

For Tapton Lock, some additional income opportunities have been identified in relation to its close links to boat operations, management of the canal and partnership working. This has included discussions with the Chesterfield Canal Trust. To date, one expression of business interest for a commercial operation has been received. There may, however, be wider market potential for letting part or all of the building, based on the significant population in the local area.

At Hayfield, there are significant constraints from the small area of shop space available. Without significant investment and expansion, this limits the scope of the building for alternative uses. A number of approaches have been made by third parties to the Service around future development opportunities. Four organisations have expressed an interest in either using the existing Countryside Centre or redeveloping their own facilities at the site. These interests are at a relatively early stage of development, pending a decision on the future of the Centre, but demonstrate a potential demand for premises.

The Director of Property has indicated the potential to let either Tapton or Hayfield centres. In addition, any lease agreements might be able to be made conditional, for example to retain some social value in any future development. This might be a means, of providing some form of mitigation for the loss of public services, such as provision of toilets, information space, or tramper hire. This may be acceptable to some organisations, although this may also constrain income potential. Longer term there may be an opportunity to include Hayfield in the portfolio of sites considered for mixed used

development by the emerging Derbyshire Developments Ltd, although any proposals would need to be the subject of further detailed public consultation.

### **Consultation Review**

A public consultation on the future of the visitor services at Tapton Lock and Hayfield Visitor Centre began on 24 March 2016 and ran until 6 May 2016.

The consultation was made available and promoted through the Derbyshire County Council website and was communicated by e-mail to a contact list of stakeholders provided by the teams operating out of the respective visitor centres (including local community, partner and interest groups, and individuals registered with the Centres e.g. as volunteers or users of the Tramper schemes). Hard copy questionnaires were also made available in the Visitor Centres themselves for the period of the consultation.

In total, 552 consultation responses were received.

In addition to the formal consultation questionnaire responses, representations were also received from a number of individuals and organisations, highlighting potential implications of proposed closures, including:

- Separate letters from the Peak District Local Access Forum and the Derby and Derbyshire Local Access Forum.
- Letter from Kinder Visitor Centre Group (Hayfield).
- Brimington Parish Council (re Tapton).
- E-mail correspondence from individuals.

Further related correspondence includes representation from the local MP on behalf of Kinder Mountain Rescue Team's interest in the Hayfield car park.

A petition was also received prior to the consultation period from Hayfield Parish Council, in relation to the Sett Valley Trail and concern at long term effects of funding cuts. This petition of 176 signatories was received by the Cabinet Member - Highways, Transport and Infrastructure on 22 March 2016, but predominantly concerned on-going management of the wider countryside asset rather than the visitor services themselves.

Analysis of the consultation highlights a number of key points:

### **Quantitative Analysis**

Overall, 552 responses were received as a result of the consultation, the vast majority from individuals (92%), although formal responses on behalf of organisations were also received.

A total of 405 responses were received in relation to Tapton, with 75 for Hayfield. The remainder were in consideration of both centres.

Most respondents were relatively infrequent visitors (70% visiting a maximum 2-3 times per year), but the vast majority of respondents (approximately 94%) 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' with the possible closures of the Visitor Centres at both Tapton Lock and Hayfield.

Of the services provided, toilets were valued most importantly at each centre (approximately 80% of respondents). Information services were also valued highly at each, although refreshments/shop provision was highlighted less strongly at Hayfield than at Tapton, with only 30% valuing it as 'very important'.

The Tramper is highlighted as a special case for consideration, with the hire service considered 'very important' by up to 26% of respondents, even though most visitors are not users of this service.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

A summary of the written comments from respondents is attached at Appendix 1. The headline themes from those who 'strongly disagreed' with the proposals to close the centres highlight:

- Tapton Lock is a place valued by the local community, with a significant population within easy access from the town. Tapton Lock acts as a symbol of the restoration of the canal and more loosely with the regeneration of Chesterfield.
- Hayfield is more predominantly highlighted as a focus for serving tourists and visitors from outside the area with its location being a starting point for access to the outdoors, and associations of Hayfield with Kinder Scout and the mass trespass.

The organisations which have expressed an interest in a potential commercial use in the centres put forward ideas for improved sustainability predominantly focus on improving sales, publicity and increasing opening hours (specifically at Hayfield which has limited opening hours). They also suggested further investment in the infrastructure in the countryside sites surrounding the visitor centres. Further commercial opportunities are also highlighted, particularly for Tapton Lock, from the potential for chargeable services in relation to the Canal. Many of these suggestions have already been explored by the Service in recent years as part of service development and budget reviews and have been implemented where appropriate.

Many of the responses highlighted concerns about wider Countryside Service activities, such as maintaining the management of the Sett Valley Trail or the Chesterfield Canal. These are outside the scope of the specific Visitor Services responsibilities consulted upon, but reinforced the importance of these countryside sites and their value for local people and visitors alike. The

Visitor Centres were identified as providing a focus and a means to promote access to these locations.

Whilst the overwhelming majority of consultees who responded to this consultation strongly opposed the closure of the centres, it should be noted that there was a small number of consultees who felt that such services were not a priority for them, or their families. Some expressed the opinion that the County Council can no longer afford 'gold plated' service provision and that limited resources should be focussed on the provision of statutory services. Others made comments that questioned the viability of a shop or café that could not be run profitably without being subsidised.

## **Consultation Conclusions**

### **Appendix one provides the detail of the responses to the consultation**

At the end of the consultation period, 560 individual responses had been received. Members are asked to note that of the 560 responses, 405 were made directly in connection with Tapton Lock and 75 with Hayfield. A further 47 were made in relation to both centres and visitor services more generally throughout Derbyshire. Of the remaining 33 respondents, 20 stated that they had never visited either site and 13 did not provide an answer.

The predominance of Tapton responses reflects visitor footfall through the Tapton lock visitor centre and its popularity as a community resource. Tapton Lock Visitor Centre is on the Trans Pennine Trail which has over 35,000 visitors past the Tapton Lock visitor centre with over 25,000 people coming into the centre.

The outcome of the consultation is that there is a strong demand for some form of visitor facility at each centre. The Consultation suggests that this might not need to be the Council and, subject to finances and conditions to minimise impacts to service users, new occupants could provide an alternative means of managing the sites. It is, therefore, recommended that where it proves necessary to close operation of a centre by the Countryside Service, alternative provision through a third party organisation is sought, subject to financial considerations. Although also contingent upon external factors, the on-going restoration of the Chesterfield Canal and the regeneration of Chesterfield Waterside will each act to increase the audience and market for Tapton Lock in coming years and further increase income potential to create a financially sustainable future to offset cuts.

It is further noted from the consultation that there is a strong interest organisationally and from members of the Chesterfield Canal Trust in the future of Tapton Lock. The Countryside Service is a member of the Chesterfield Canal Partnership and these links encourage maintaining a

presence on the Chesterfield Canal and maintaining existing partnership working.

Several consultation responses highlighted that income at Hayfield also has the potential to be increased, primarily from exploiting the outdoor tourism market. It also showed that currently, visitors are typically accessing the wider countryside and village facilities rather than the visitor centre itself. With such limited space, opportunities to increase visitor dwell time have yet to be developed, with the County Council's Sett Valley Trail only providing opportunities to a limited audience. This is in comparison with the draw of Kinder Scout and the village of Hayfield itself. Considerable investment by Derbyshire County Council would be required to increase the scope for income generation at Hayfield which is unlikely in this current financial climate.

Given the financial position of the Council, it is not considered feasible to retain both of the Centres. However, it is considered that financial and other considerations set out in this report favour the retention of Tapton, subject to future review.

**(3) Financial Considerations** Neither Tapton Lock Visitor Centre nor Hayfield Visitor Centre are currently covering their overheads through income generation. Net costs for operating visitor services at each centre amounts to £20,752 per annum and £18,314 per annum for Tapton Lock and Hayfield respectively. Immediate cost savings as a result of closure are reduced by some indirect staffing costs used to support the centres but would realise £16,900 per annum at Tapton Lock and £14,700 per annum at Hayfield.

Both centres have some potential for greater income generation, subject to further investment and improved marketing. However, there are insufficient resources available to do this at both locations.

In the short to medium term, the already well-established partnership working with the Chesterfield Canal Trust acts to further benefit the marketing of Tapton Lock and to increase dwell time, and hence spend, in the Visitors Centre when visitors access boat trips. There is also potential to increase income, estimated at c£15,000 per annum, from the increased boating and the lease of moorings on the Canal by 2019-20.

In consideration of these income streams, there is a strong argument to maintain Visitor Centre operations at Tapton Lock to enable these streams to be developed. In order to meet the cuts allocated to the Countryside Service gap funding in the order of £16,900 per annum would need to be secured from 2017-18 to cover the current shortfall in the budget until the income potential is realised. This cost could potentially be met from the balance of the 2015-16 unallocated underspend within Economy, Transport and Communities, as reported in the Revenue Outturn 2015-16 reported to the Cabinet Member

meeting on 2 August 2016, where it was approved for this balance to be used to cover slippage in delivery of cuts, and one off projects agreed at future Cabinet Member meetings. This would allow the revenue cut to be made in 2017-18 whilst protecting the Centre in the short term until it is able to generate sufficient income to cover its costs.

Although also contingent upon external factors, the on-going restoration of the Chesterfield Canal and the regeneration of Chesterfield Waterside will each act to increase the audience and market for Tapton Lock in coming years and further increase income potential. Wider economic considerations for the canal are considered as part of the Derbyshire Waterways Strategy, approved by Cabinet on 17 June 2014 (Minute No. 218/14 refers) and the Chesterfield Canal Strategic Investment Plan approved by Cabinet Member - Highways, Transport and Infrastructure on 21 June 2016 (Minute No. 73/16 refers).

Income at Hayfield has the potential to be increased, primarily from exploiting the outdoor tourism market. It should be noted that current visitors are typically accessing the wider countryside and village facilities. Opportunities to increase visitor dwell time have yet to be developed, with the County Council's Sett Valley Trail only providing opportunities to a limited audience in comparison with the draw of Kinder Scout and the village of Hayfield itself. Considerable investment would be required to increase the scope for income generation at Hayfield. However, in the light of current budget pressures, it is not feasible for the Council to make any further investment, so it is therefore recommended that Cabinet should decide that the Countryside Service ceases to operate Hayfield Visitor Centre at the end of the 2016-/17 financial year which will enable the Director of Property to commence negotiations with alternative operators.

The principal benefit for visitors to Hayfield is the use of the car park, a facility which serves local communities, walkers and visitors to the village alike. As this is available on a 24/7 basis through automated ticket machines, it is less dependent on Visitor Centre opening hours. Income from parking charges amounting to £19,500 in 2015-16, is separate to the Centre itself and it is proposed should continue to provide a means of maintaining access to and management of the Sett Valley Trail.

Options to find a suitable tenant/partner to operate from the Hayfield Centre have been considered and discussions have been held with suitable tenants. The Director of Property has confirmed this potential, subject to a commercial market rate (to be confirmed) being agreed. This will act to further offset costs to the Countryside Service on top of the direct costs savings.

The closure of Hayfield Visitor Centre or letting to other parties will incur some limited additional costs. Issues such as relocation of affected staff to

alternative operational bases will be considered as part of the wider Countryside Service Review.

(4) **Legal Considerations** There would be potential financial implications for the Council from a closure of Tapton Lock, where a number of agreements are in place with partners, with a mutual benefit of increasing use of the waterway. Partners include the Chesterfield Canal Trust, for trip boat bookings which are carried out by Visitor Centre staff. A licence agreement with the Williamthorpe Angling Club, which manages fishing on the Canal would also be impacted, with the ability to support day ticket sales impacted. A recent agreement with Canoe England for boat licencing for its members and promotion of a canoe trail would also need to be reviewed.

(5) **Human Resources Considerations** Ceasing to operate Hayfield Visitor Centre would have implications for the staff employed in its management and those who use it as an operation base. These are dealt with in an exempt report on the Countryside Service restructure to be considered by Cabinet at this meeting.

Informal consultation has already taken place with the Trade Unions and employees, and formal consultation will begin should this report be approved.

(6) **Equality and Diversity Considerations** An Equality Impact Analysis has been carried out in association with the proposed closures of the centres attached at Appendix 2.

This highlights that for both locations that there will be some impact on protected characteristic groups in terms of physical disability, arising from the potential loss of Trampler hire service and the provision of disabled toilet facilities.

It is proposed that, subject to a decision on closure, alternative options are sought for Trampler hire. At this stage, it is envisaged that the Trampers would move to Shipley Country Park which is outside the area, but where, however, demand for Trampler hire is exhibited.

Similarly, for the provision of toilets, the retention of this service as part of any lease arrangement would be preferred. However, in the event that retention of the toilets is not possible, there are a number of outlets in the village of Hayfield which could provide an alternative, albeit limited option.

(7) **Property Considerations** In order to provide on-going revenue streams to the Countryside Service to offset its costs, it is considered that the property at Tapton Lock should be retained. This would also provide options for future development should market conditions change in the future and in the light of regeneration initiatives around Chesterfield and the Canal.



For Hayfield, it is considered feasible to lease the property as it stands, or to allow for its partial or full redevelopment by an interested party, to increase its potential. This would be subject to funding and business case considerations.

To the south of Hayfield Visitor Centre is a large public car park, managed by the Countryside Service. This function would be retained as a significant income generator for the Countryside Service. Any potential future redevelopment of the building would need to take this into consideration.

(8) **Social Value Considerations** Derbyshire County Council funding for the work of the Countryside service provides access and wellbeing opportunities for all, and provides green infrastructure and countryside facilities for the people of Derbyshire. The proposal to reduce funding for these services, as outlined in the consultation, could be expected to reduce these wider social benefits.

(9) **Transport Considerations** Hayfield Visitor Centre lies adjacent to the public transport terminus for local bus services and acts as a bus turning area. The immediate northern side of the building acts effectively as the bus stop. Any potential future redevelopment of the building would need to take this into consideration.

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: prevention of crime and disorder, environmental and health considerations.

(10) **Key Decision** No.

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

(12) **Background Papers** Held on file within the Economy, Transport and Communities Department. Officer contact details – Richard Bonner, extension 39657.

(13) **OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATIONS** That Cabinet:

- 13.1 Notes the outcome of the public consultation on the future of Tapton Local and Hayfield Visitor Centres.
- 13.2 Agrees to continue to pursue income opportunities at Tapton Lock and to maintain opening of the Tapton Lock Visitor Centre, subject to annual review and to pursue income generating opportunities in order to establish a financially self-sustaining operation.

- 13.3 Approves the use of unallocated departmental underspend up to £33,800 in order that revenue budget cuts can be achieved, whilst income streams are developed at Tapton Lock by 2018-19.
- 13.4 Approves the closure of Hayfield Visitor Centre on 31 March 2017.
- 13.5 Authorises the Director of Property to market the Hayfield Visitor Centre to interested parties to realise rental income, but subject to maximise social value.
- 13.6 Agrees that as a result of any changes at Hayfield Visitor Centre, to relocate the Trumper hire service, subject to agreement, to an alternative local location, or failing that to an alternative Countryside Service site where demand has been demonstrated.

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

## Consultation on possible closure of visitors services at Hayfield Countryside Centre and Tapton Lock Visitor Centre

### Analysis of consultation responses

A questionnaire was published on the Derbyshire County Council website for members of the public to complete should they wish their views on the possible closures to be considered. Paper copies of the questionnaire were also made available to those who requested them and were placed in visitor centres and libraries across Derbyshire.

At the end of the consultation period, 560 individual responses had been received. Since opinion is being sought in relation to two separate visitor facilities it is pertinent to state that of the 560 responses, 405 were made directly in connection with Tapton Lock and 75 with Hayfield. A further 47 were made in relation to both centres and visitor services more generally throughout Derbyshire. Of the remaining 33 respondents, 20 stated that they had never visited either site and 13 did not provide an answer.

A number of those taking part in the consultation were representatives and members of special interest groups and clubs. These are set out in full on page 3.

### Headline themes

The following statements have been listed in an order that approximately reflects the weight of opinion attached to each theme. In many cases, consultees make comments which fall into a number of categories which makes any kind of weighting process more complex.

**Headline themes derived from the comments of those who strongly disagree with proposals to close visitor services at TAPTON LOCK which they regard as:**

- A well-used and much valued part of the community with friendly, helpful staff and a place where people of all ages meet and relax in pleasant surroundings with essential facilities such as toilets and refreshments.
- A vital part of the drive to encourage residents to be more active and live less isolated lifestyles. The centre provides opportunities for those with both physical and mental health issues to enjoy the outdoors and to socialise with others.
- An essential resource for those who enjoy outdoor interests like cycling, running, walking, canoeing, fishing and wildlife. Serving the Trans Pennine Trail and Chesterfield Canal the centre is ideally placed to provide refreshment and information to this user type.
- A truly accessible site which is situated within walking distance of the town centre and can be used by all at low or no cost and without needing to make a car journey. Facilities for disabled users and children as well as flat and easily navigable terrain make it a vital resource for more vulnerable or disadvantaged users.

- A key part of the ongoing project to restore Chesterfield Canal. Tapton Lock provides ticket sale facilities and is the start and end point of canal boat trips. Improvements made at Staveley Basin have widened the scope for increasing future canal traffic.
- A centre for education; giving high quality advice and information relating to both local history/heritage and wildlife/environmental subjects. Knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff provide an excellent resource for local residents and visitors alike.
- A place that puts Chesterfield on the map for tourists from outside of the local area. This is a destination that people come to in order to start their exploration of the Chesterfield Canal and as such is important to the economic growth of the area.
- An excellent focus for waterside regeneration currently underway in Chesterfield which aims to provide jobs and growth within the town. Tapton Lock facilities are beneficial to regeneration projects and promote the use of the waterside area and make it a more attractive place to visit.

**Headline themes** derived from the comments of those who strongly disagree with proposals to close visitor services at **HAYFIELD** which they regard as:

- A tourist 'mecca' for visitors and a gateway for visitors to the nationally renowned Kinder Scout area which plays an important role in the local economy. The centre provides an invaluable information service for visitors from outside the local area, with car parking facilities and a bus service making it a very accessible starting point for exploration of area.
- An essential service for local people (particularly the elderly and those with young children) in a remote rural community who rely on the public toilets and bus services that run from the centre.
- An excellent resource for those who enjoy outdoor/countryside pursuits like cycling, running and walking. Situated at the start of the Sett Valley Trail, the centre is ideally placed to provide refreshment and information to this user type.
- A key facility for those with limited mobility in this area, particularly in light of the fact that the Trampler service cannot be accommodated at the nearby New Mills visitor centre.
- An accessible location for local people and visitors participate in activities which are beneficial for health and well-being, including physical exercise and artistic/creative projects.
- A centre for education. Hayfield has links to the historical 'mass trespass' of Kinder Scout in 1932 and the expert rangers based at the centre provide a wealth of information to visitors on both heritage and wildlife/environmental subject matter.

### List of groups represented in the 560 consultation responses

For ease of reference, these have been split according to which of the two visitor centres the consultees stated that they visited.

Tapton Lock	Hayfield
<a href="#">Chesterfield Canal Trust</a> Chesterfield & North East Derbyshire Ramblers Chesterfield Spire Cycling Club <a href="#">Chesterfield Waterside Limited</a> Chesterfield Walk Club DCC Tapton Lock Volunteer Group <a href="#">Derby &amp; Derbyshire Local Access Forum</a> Derbyshire Association of Scuba Divers Erewash Rambling Group <a href="#">Junction Arts</a> National Trans Pennine Trail Office <a href="#">Re-think</a> St. Helen's Walking Group St.Peter & St.Paul School Trustee of 'Friends of the Leominster Canal' White Hall Outdoor Pursuits Centre	<a href="#">High Peak Community Arts</a> <a href="#">High Peak Access</a> Peak & Northern Footpaths Society Marple Bridge & Mellor U3A Walk <a href="#">Hayfield May Queen</a> <a href="#">Kinder Mountain Rescue</a> <a href="#">Hayfield Civic Trust</a>

### List of suggested organisations

Consultees were asked if they could think of any organisations that might be interested in providing services at the visitor centres as an alternative to Derbyshire County Council:

Tapton Lock	Hayfield
BTCV Canal & Rivers Trust <a href="#">Chesterfield Canal Trust</a> Commercial organisation to run café Chesterfield Cycle Campaign Derbyshire Wildlife Trust Hollingwood Hub owners Lottery Funding Local Businesses Monkey Park Community Interest Company Sustrans Volunteers Walking For Health (NHS)	<a href="#">Hayfield Parish Council</a> <a href="#">Hayfield Civic Trust</a> <a href="#">Hayfield May Queen</a> <a href="#">Kinder Visitor Centre Group</a> Local Business National Trust Peak District National Park <a href="#">Sustainable Hayfield</a> Tourist Information Voluntary Staffing (as at New Mills centre) Volunteers

## Summary of ideas to generate income

Consultees were asked if they could suggest ways in which the visitor centres could be better used to generate income. These suggestions are summarised below:

### Tapton

- Run or host more events including literary/arts festival, walking festivals, angling competitions, boat/canal related festivals and seasonally themed events. Involve local businesses by asking them to sponsor such events.
- Use the facilities for a range of activities such as craft workshops/classes, pop-up gallery space, meeting hire and activities for children (including creation of a play area which would increase 'dwell time' at the lock).
- Improve the quality and range of food and drink available at the café and extend opening hours in the summer months so that the facilities can be enjoyed in the evening. A large number of people suggested that the café may be better as a privately run enterprise.
- Improve the quality and range of products available at the shop, for example more extensive range of books, local craft products, local produce and outdoor clothing/equipment.
- Changes to the way that the centre is staffed were suggested in terms of taking on more volunteers for example people who are local college students, unemployed or retired and also involving those with learning difficulties in the running of the café.
- Publicise the facilities at Tapton further along the canal so that more people are aware of the services on offer.
- Charging was suggested for the following; residential moorings on the canal, car parking in the surrounding area, booking boat trips and using the public toilets
- Offering a number of countryside/health related services for a charge including; canoe hire, cycle hire, supported long-distance cycle services, forest schools and jogging club.
- Further investment in completing the canal restoration which would in turn bring many more people, boats and business to Tapton.
- Service to provide memorial benches or tree-planting at the site.

### Hayfield

- Invest in the centre to improve facilities to make it more appealing to potential users and open for more hours throughout the week (with the help of volunteers) as comments suggest that the centre is often closed and not used fully.
- Improve the quality and range of products available at the shop, for example more extensive range of books, local craft products, local produce and outdoor clothing/equipment.

- Offering a number of countryside/health related services for a charge including; cycle hire and climbing/walking groups.
- Extend the use of the site to have caravan parking and build log-cabins as tourist accommodation.
- Better promotion and advertising of the centre within the village and also further afield and more events could make use of the facilities on offer at the centre.

### **Summary of 'other' comments**

Consultees were asked if they had any other comments or alternative suggestions for how the council could make savings. These suggestions are summarised below:

- A number of staffing-related suggestions were made including the creation of a 'strategic pool' of staff to replace the use of more expensive agency workers, employment of an entrepreneur to maximise potential at DCC sites and reducing the amount of/salaries of councillors and highly paid executives.
- Accommodation changes were also suggested including selling County Hall and moving to office space at Markham Vale and selling off other council owned assets that may not be currently used to their full potential. One other suggestion was that other DCC services such as swimming pools and leisure centres could be privatised.
- Installation of technology to generate renewable energy was suggested as a way of reducing the cost of running DCC offices and other facilities.
- Savings could be made by reducing the number of letters sent out by DCC to householders. And in a similar vein, suggestions were made that more use was made of apps and web-based material to cut down of the costs of leaflet production. A 'friends of' list was also suggested so that users of countryside services could sign up for regular bulletins and newsletters.

### **Summary of comments from those who are not in favour of maintaining the provision of services at either Tapton or Hayfield:**

Whilst the overwhelming majority of consultees who responded to this consultation strongly opposed to the closure of visitor centres, it should be noted that there was a small number of consultees who felt that such services were not a priority for them or their families.

Some expressed the opinion that the council can no longer afford 'gold plated' service provision and that limited resources should be focussed on the provision of statutory services. Others made comments that questioned the viability of a shop/café that could not be run profitably without being subsidised.

There were also a number of comments suggesting that the services may have been mis-managed over recent years and were suffering commercially as a result of this.

# Derbyshire County Council

## Equality Impact Analysis Record Form 2012



Department	Environment, Transport & Communities
Service Area	Countryside Service
Title of policy/ practice/ <b>service</b> or function	Countryside Visitor Centres
Chair of Analysis Team	Martin Dowson

### Stage 1. Prioritising what is being analysed

- Why has the policy, practice, service or function been chosen?
- What if any proposals have been made to alter the policy, service or function?

- A review of the delivery of Visitor Services has arisen as part of considerations for the restructure of the Countryside Service and in order to meet targeted budget savings as a result of reductions in government funding. In a Highways Transport and Infrastructure report to Cabinet, 26<sup>th</sup> January 2016, the proposed closure of Tapton Lock Visitor Centre and Hayfield Countryside Centre for public facing visitor services was identified
- This Equalities Impact Analysis considers the impacts of the proposed loss of specific services offered through the Visitor Centres. Cabinet approved officers to open dialogue with external parties in relation to alternative delivery mechanisms and development opportunities at these Centres, with the possible closure of the Centres if options failed.

- What is the purpose of the policy, practice, service or function?

Countryside Visitor Services operated out of the two centres each provide the following public services or functions:

- Staffed (over-the-counter) information provision on DCC countryside sites and services
- Retail sales, including refreshments and small value items
- Provision of public toilets
- Trampler (mobility scooter) hire



## Stage 2. The team carrying out the analysis

<b>Name</b>	<b>Area of expertise/ role</b>
(Chair) Martin Dowson	Countryside services and site knowledge
Chris Coombs	Countryside services and site knowledge
Kirstie Matkin	Library service and previous EIA experience

## Stage 3. The scope of the analysis – what it covers

The two service areas with potential implications for equalities are :

1. Tramper hire – provided for a specific group with mobility difficulties – removal of this service would specifically disadvantage this group
2. Disabled toilets provision (open 7 days, 9-5pm) – removal might disadvantage users with mobility difficulties, with potentially less access to alternative options in the local area.

There are secondary considerations with respect to :

- Refreshment sales – this service is taken advantage of by some regular local users (highlighted in particular at Tapton Lock) as part of an opportunity to meet up and chat with other members of the community. This form of social contact may be significant to certain sectors of the community, but it was noted that availability of other immediate local alternatives make this not a significant consideration.
- Information provision – there is some consideration that this service may serve certain sectors of the community or individuals with less access to Information Technology, with potential implications for reducing promotion of opportunities for accessing the countryside and the outdoors. This was not felt to be specific to protected characteristic groups and the impact to levels of opportunity of secondary significance.

These latter two aspects are therefore not considered within the scope of impacts as significant. It is also considered that these services impact everyone in the community equally.

## Stage 4. Data and consultation feedback

### a. Sources of data and consultation used

<b>Source</b>	<b>Reason for using</b>
Countryside public consultation on visitor centre closures (April – May 2016)	Usage and importance of facilities/ services
Tramper hire user register (Tapton and Hayfield)	Demand assessment
Visitor Survey data (Tapton Visitor Centre) 2015	Priorities for improvement of facilities/ services from visitors
Derbyshire Observatory data	Demographics of local communities

<b>Source</b>	<b>Reason for using</b>

## Stage 5. Analysing the impact or effects

### a. What does the data tell you?

<b>Protected Group</b>	<b>Findings</b>
Age	<p>Within the public consultation, the highest proportion of respondents (57%) were from age groups between 55 and low 70's.</p> <p>As this age range are accessing the services more, as a result, they will therefore be impacted more by any changes.</p>
Disability	<p>The public consultation included 69 respondents who specifically declared that they have a disability, 42 of whom highlighted mobility issues.</p> <p>Tramper hire is relatively limited at Tapton and at Hayfield. This perhaps reflects both the size of the visitor market and also the relatively limited variety of routes available for Tramper users to explore.</p> <p>Looking at levels of Tramper usage, for 2015/16, the Tramper was used on a total of 40 occasions at Tapton Lock (from 24 different users) and only 20 occasions at Hayfield (from 15 different users).</p> <p>Tramper users at Hayfield included 12 visitors from outside Derbyshire/ the area. Most uses as a result are single occasion hires, with only 3 users using the Tramper 2 or 3 times.</p> <p>Most users at Tapton Lock were from the Chesterfield / Sheffield areas, with more multiple uses. 3 individuals used the Tramper more than 5 times in that period.</p> <p>[For reference Tramper hire levels on a larger 'Country Park' sites at Elvaston, data shows annual usage to be 123 year.</p> <p>Interestingly, the service is valued by users and non-users alike. In the public consultation, the Tramper hire service is highlighted as a 'very important' service by 25% of respondents even though 74% indicated they never used the service.</p> <p>In the 2015 Visitor Survey at Tapton Lock, out of the 149 responses, which included a variety of feedback, one respondent, who declared they had a physical disability, noted that it was 'great' that there was a Tramper.</p>
Gender (Sex)	<p>In the public consultation, responses came more or less equally from both sexes (48.7% female , 46.7% male)</p> <p>At Hayfield, the responses were higher from women (64% female, 37% male), whereas at Tapton the balance was more equal (49.6% male, 47.4% female).</p> <p>The reason for the difference is unclear, but the sample size is smaller at Hayfield and therefore may be statistically skewed.</p> <p>From the information available and consultation it is not believed that the proposals would pose a disproportionately adverse impact to this group</p>

Gender reassignment	No data is available From the information available and consultation it is not believed that the proposals would pose a disproportionately adverse impact to this group
Marriage and civil partnership	No data is available From the information available and consultation it is not believed that the proposals would pose a disproportionately adverse impact to this group
Pregnancy and maternity	No data is available From the information available and consultation it is not believed that the proposals would pose a disproportionately adverse impact to this group
Race	86% of respondents were white. There are no other identified ethnic groupings. From the information available and consultation it is not believed that the proposals would pose a disproportionately adverse impact to this group
Religion and belief including non-belief	No data is available From the information available and consultation it is not believed that the proposals would pose a disproportionately adverse impact to this group
Sexual orientation	No data is available From the information available and consultation it is not believed that the proposals would pose a disproportionately adverse impact to this group

### Non-statutory

Socio-economic	<p>Predominant respondents to the public consultation for Hayfield Countryside Centre (over 50%) are from the immediate Hayfield and New Mills localities.</p> <p>In terms of demographics, derived from the Derbyshire Observatory, this 'sub cluster' area is the most rural, with the lowest percentage of people aged 20-29 and the highest percentage of people aged 45-64. Individuals tend to be married with no children living in the household. They are more likely to work from home or be self employed, with many people employed in the agricultural sector. Unemployment is low in this sub cluster. The sub cluster has a high number of cars per household and people in this sub cluster are the least likely to use public transport to travel to work. Individuals are less likely to be from a BME background.</p> <p>Predominant respondents to the public consultation for Tapton Lock are local with 29.5% from Chesterfield and surrounding wards eg Dronfield, Sheffield, Brimington.</p> <p>In terms of demographics, the main feature of this 'sub cluster' area, as derived from Derbyshire Observatory data, is of young single people living</p>
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	<p>alone. It is the sub cluster with the highest percentage of single people, the highest percentage of 16-24 year olds and the second highest percentage of 25-44 year olds. It has more single people of working age living alone and residents are more likely to be divorced and separated with fewer people living as a couple, than other sub clusters.</p> <p>This area has more flats and fewer bungalows than other areas and more people who walk to work than is usual. The sub cluster also shows high levels of unemployment, long term unemployment and those who have never worked. There are above average percentages in routine and semi routine occupations such as caring, leisure, sales and customers service. There is a high percentage of households without a car or van and a higher than average percentage of BME groups from Asian and other EU countries</p>
Rural	<p>See notes in the socio-economic section above - Hayfield and Tapton are very contrasting areas, with Hayfield a rural location. It is noted that Hayfield Countryside Centre is located at the bus terminus for the village and is therefore a significant location for those using public transport.</p>

- b. What does customer feedback, complaints or discussions with stakeholder groups tell you about the impact of the policy, practice, service or function on the protected characteristic groups?

<b>Protected Group</b>	<b>Findings</b>
Age	<p>Public consultation highlights the value of accessibility to the countryside sites and facilities connected to the visitor centres (specifically the flat and easy access trails/ towpath). This is particularly beneficial for the mobility impaired (and by implication the older demographic) and which both local people and visitors are able to use for activities beneficial for health and well-being. The Trail facilities themselves, however, are not directly affected by potential closure of the visitor centre however.</p> <p>For Hayfield, the toilets are highlighted as an 'essential' service for local people (particularly the elderly and those with young children) in a remote rural community who rely on bus services that stop adjacent to the centre.</p>
Disability	<p>Public consultation highlights Trumper hire as a key service for those with limited mobility. Positive reference is also made to the accessibility of the site (flat and easy trails) for the mobility impaired.</p> <p>The provision of toilets are highlighted as 'essential' services for local people (particularly the elderly) in a remote rural community who rely on the public toilets and bus services that run from the centre.</p>
Gender (Sex)	<p>From the information available and consultation it is not believed that the proposals would pose a disproportionately adverse impact to this group</p>

Gender reassignment	From the information available and consultation it is not believed that the proposals would pose a disproportionately adverse impact to this group
Marriage and civil partnership	From the information available and consultation it is not believed that the proposals would pose a disproportionately adverse impact to this group
Pregnancy and maternity	From the information available and consultation it is not believed that the proposals would pose a disproportionately adverse impact to this group
Race	From the information available and consultation it is not believed that the proposals would pose a disproportionately adverse impact to this group
Religion and belief including non-belief	From the information available and consultation it is not believed that the proposals would pose a disproportionately adverse impact to this group
Sexual orientation	From the information available and consultation it is not believed that the proposals would pose a disproportionately adverse impact to this group

### Non-statutory

Socio-economic	The public consultation for Tapton highlights the social element strongly. The Visitor Centre is it noted as being a well-used and much valued part of the community ...and a place where people of all ages meet and relax in pleasant surroundings with essential facilities such as toilets and refreshments. The centre provides opportunities for those with both physical and mental health issues to enjoy the outdoors and to socialise with others.
Rural	The provision of toilets are highlighted as 'essential' services for local people (particularly the elderly and those with young children) in a remote rural community who rely on the public toilets and bus services that run from the centre.

- c. Are there any other groups of people who may experience an adverse impact because of the proposals to change a policy or service who are not listed above?

None identified

#### d. Gaps in data

What are your main gaps in information and understanding of the impact of your policy and services? Please indicate whether you have identified ways of filling these gaps.

Gaps in data	Action to deal with this
No Gaps identified	

### **Stage 6. Ways of mitigating unlawful prohibited conduct or unwanted adverse impact, or to promote improved equality of opportunity or good relations**

Provision of Toilets & Trampler Other than to lose the facility completely, alternatives means of maintaining some level of service to users would be preferable, or to identify and promote suitable alternative opportunities.

Should the Countryside Service be unable to operate out of the Visitor Centres, mitigation options are scoped as follows:-

Trampler hire could be retained for public use by :-

- Continuing to offer the service on-site, but managed through an alternative operator if available (for example if the Visitor Centres were to be able to be leased out)
- Move the Trampler to Shipley Country Park where there is established demand, and where it can continue to be managed and promoted by the Countryside Service.
- Publicising alternative opportunities at the Visitor Centre for a period of time to redirect current users.

Disabled Toilets could be retained for public use by:-

- Continuing to offer the service on-site, but managed through an alternative operator if available (for example if the Visitor Centres were to be able to be leased out)
- Developing an alternative management model, for example, automated / chargeable opening.
- Promoting existing alternatives opportunities through other providers eg New Mills (Town Council) or Bowden Bridge (Peak Park Authority) for Hayfield, Poolsbrook Country Park (Chesterfield Borough Council) or Tapton.

## Stage 7. Do stakeholders agree with your findings and proposed response?

Consultation offered the opportunity to propose alternative means of operating the Visitor Centres. Whilst most responses suggested means of increasing income/ efficiency to maintain staffed services, a number also suggested volunteer-based alternatives. A number of alternative organisations were also identified. This confirms that in general and at least for some respondents, this is an acceptable alternative to closure and complete loss of facilities.

## Stage 8. Main conclusions

Based on analysis the following is highlighted to be of importance and to be noted by decision-makers:

### Tramper Hire.

Provision of Tramper hire services should be able to be retained to maximise benefit for disabled users within the County. This might be at alternative local locations to the existing Visitor Centres if this can be agreed with relevant organisations.

There will be a direct impact to a very limited number of registered users if the service is not able to be relocated locally. However, it is foreseeable that there could be a positive net benefit to other communities, if relocated to Shipley Country Park.

The wider balance of benefits should be a significant consideration in assessing alternative locations.

### Disabled Toilets

It is recognised that alternative public toilet facilities are not available in the immediate vicinity to the Visitor Centres, although there are several potential alternatives available through other public bodies or as private facilities in local retail outlets in the area. These alternatives however, may be less able to be accessed by those with mobility issues.

The loss of public toilets, *per se* is not an equalities issue, but is also a consideration for non-statutory groups. Specifically at Hayfield, the location of the toilets a complementary facility to the bus terminus in a rural community where that service is relied on by many, is a strong consideration, and opportunities for alternative operators out of the site to continue to offer public toilets should be pursued.

**Stage 9. Objectives setting/ implementation**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Planned action</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>How will this be monitored?</b>
Alternative offer of Trumper hire	Relocate to a Countryside Country Park where demand is established	Countryside Service	March 2017	Countryside Service Management meeting
	Publicise (local and on DCC web-site) alternative arrangements in advance of relocation of the service and write to registered users to inform of proposed changes.	Countryside Service	January 2017	Countryside Service Management meeting
Alternative offer of toilets	Identify alternative tenants for the Visitor Centres who might offer public toilets, if this can be achieved at current or reduced revenue cost to the Countryside Service	Countryside Service	September 2016	Countryside Service Management meeting
	Develop business case for automated chargeable toilet facilities, if this can be achieved at current or reduced revenue cost to the Countryside Service	Countryside Service	March 2017	Countryside Service Management meeting
	Publicise (local and on DCC web-site) alternative arrangements in advance of changes to the service	Countryside Service	January 2017	Countryside Service Management meeting



**Stage 10. Monitoring and review/ mainstreaming into business plans**

Please indicate whether any of your objectives have been added to service or business plans and your arrangements for monitoring and reviewing progress/ future impact?

To monitor as part of the wider Countryside Service restructure proposals and service review.

**Stage 11. Agreeing and publishing the completed analysis**

Completed analysis approved by \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_

Where and when published?

**Decision-making processes**

**Where linked to decision on proposals to change, reduce or withdraw service/  
financial decisions/ large-scale staffing restructures**

**Attached to report (title):**

**Date of report:**

**Author of report:**

**Audience for report e.g. Cabinet/ date:**

**Web location of report:**

**Outcome from report being considered**

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**Details of follow-up action or monitoring of actions/ decision undertaken**

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**Updated by:**

**Date:**