



FOR PUBLICATION

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET MEMBER DECISION – INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENVIRONMENT

11 May 2022

Report of the Executive Director - Place

Derbyshire County Council Woodland Festival – Three Year

1. Divisions Affected

1.1 Aston.

2. Key Decision

2.1 This is not a Key Decision.

3. Purpose

3.1 To seek the Cabinet Member's approval to formalise the Council's commitment to stage the Woodland Festival for a further period of three years from 2022 to 2024 inclusive and to approve a suite of special event car parking charges for the Derbyshire County Council Woodland Festival, Elvaston Castle Country Park in September 2022.

4. Information and Analysis

4.1 The Derbyshire County Council Woodland Festival is a two-day event which has been held annually for 20 years. The event is a celebration of traditional and contemporary woodland crafts and skills, and is a vehicle to promote Derbyshire's countryside destinations, visitor services and woodland management throughout the County. It is very popular with the public and certainly has regional recognition, consistently attracting 10,000 visitors annually and now entering its 21st year, well positioned

for communicating the Council's relevant corporate objectives and green environmental agenda.

- 4.2 Financially, the event currently covers most of its costs from admissions and paying exhibitors, albeit it places a huge demand on staff resource both in the preparation and operation of the event. During 2022-23, options will be explored that seek to attract sponsorship and alternative commercial opportunities to expand the 2023 Woodland Festival with the objective of enhancing its visitor experience and increasing income generation to the Council. In order, to explore this potential further, it is necessary that the Council formerly continues its commitment to the event for the next three years.
- 4.3 It is therefore proposed that the Derbyshire Woodland Festival at Elvaston continues and takes place on:
- 17 and 18 September 2022
23 and 24 September 2023
21 and 22 September 2024
- 4.4 Car park charges at countryside destinations, including Elvaston Castle, are payable as standard by pay and display, levied every day of the year, including public holidays, by off street parking order. The special event charge for the Woodland Festival is a variation of the off street parking order and acts as the price of entering the festival and is used to offset the cost of staging the event. This is a legal process requiring advertisement of the charges in advance of the event. In 2021, the public paid a special event charge of £10 per car and £5 per motorcycle to park and enter the event. A £15 weekend ticket was also available to purchase at the gate on the Saturday.
- 4.5 The current special event charges were set in 2018 and have not been increased since then. It is proposed that in 2022, the charge will be £15 per car and £7.50 per motorcycle on each day of the event from 9.30am onwards for all visitors to the park, including blue badge and season ticket holders. A £20 weekend ticket will be available for purchase on the Saturday. A review of the special event car park charges will be undertaken during 2022-23 for the September 2023 Woodland Festival.
- 4.6 Visitor data has shown that most attendees travel from up to a 50-mile radius of Elvaston, including a high percentage of visitors from Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Staffordshire, South Yorkshire and from all over Derbyshire.

- 4.7 During the Woodland Festival's special events charge period, members of the public with a parking season ticket for the Park will not be able to use their season ticket, and those with disabled parking permits will not be able to park at the site free of charge. Instead, they will either need to pay the special event charge for parking and entering the Woodland Festival or, if they are visiting the Park for other purposes, purchase a discretionary parking ticket for £2 which will allow them to park for up to one hour. These arrangements will be strictly imposed using Civil Parking Enforcement Officers, including close monitoring of the urban clearway on Borrowash Road, the only public approach to the Country Park.
- 4.8 In a typical year, the Festival is supported by approximately 90-120 paying stallholders and caterers. This income is one of the critical components (alongside car park income) of the Festival meeting its costs and a fundamental attraction to visitors in offering immense variety, comprising 80% of what the Festival offers. Preparations for the 2022 Festival will be targeted to encourage a greater variety of food and beverage offers from Derbyshire businesses and ensure that the Climate Change agenda and the Council's Million Trees initiative is promoted. There is a huge array of stalls selling bespoke gifts, crafts, textiles, furniture, and timber products, environmental organisations and a wide variety of food and drink to choose from – including vegetarian and vegan options.
- 4.9 National and regional skilled demonstrators, craftspeople and performers share their amazing skills with safe opportunities for visitors to engage and have a go, comprising 20% of what the Festival offers, (accounting for 45% of the events expenditure). The Festival represents a brilliant day out for all the family with lots of fun activities for children and plenty to keep visitors entertained.
- 4.10 The aim has always been to host an inclusive event, attractive to all members of the public, especially those that otherwise would not have the opportunity to participate in the crafts on offer at the event. The car park charge has been set at a level that would not dissuade visitors on low incomes. Consideration is given to the location and access of blue badge holder parking, with close proximity to the event.
- 4.11 Festival related infrastructure provision and services (accounts for up to 40%+ of the events expenditure), may still be subject to companies pricing greater risk into these and more limited availability being some of the consequences of Covid-19. This includes temporary traffic management measures as a deterrent against inconsiderate/dangerous

parking and to reduce congestion during the woodland festival weekend.

4.12 The commitment of key staff to organise this Festival is considerable. Over the Festival weekend and during set up requires a huge commitment from staff across the service, leaving only minimal cover elsewhere. Thirty + staff, volunteers, scouts, and crowd marshals are the minimum required to deliver the Festival each day at the scale it has now reached.

4.13 Planning for the 2023 Woodland Festival will be undertaken with the objective of expanding the event and will include the consideration of:

- a) Securing new private and/or social sector enterprise in organising and delivering the whole event and in providing its entertainment, hospitality, and retail offers.
- b) Promotion, education, and activities encouraging visitors to the event to participate in action to enhance biodiversity, protect woodlands and trees, and tackle climate change.
- c) A new attraction of a Derbyshire farmers market/artisan craft area. This is an opportunity to promote appropriate small Derbyshire producers to a new audience enhancing the local economy. The attraction will draw on experience within the Council of organising the Derbyshire Food Festival and will require additional infrastructure. However, this can be offset again from income from stallholders, etc. It is of central importance not to lose the balance and atmosphere/ethos of the event through the addition of new commercially focused stalls, therefore, careful vetting will be a strong operational focus in the set-up of this new attraction.
- d) The provision of a wide range of food and beverage offers across the event space.
- e) An enhanced car-parking operation that uses mobile/contactless payments, rather than the current requirement for cash to be used and seeks to expand the carparking space available.

5. Consultation

5.1 Not required.

6. Alternative Options Considered

6.1 The alternative options considered in respect of this decision were as follows:

- 6.2 Cancel/do nothing – This option was discounted because the Festival has value to the Council and the community, as cited under corporate objectives. In addition, the Council could face considerable reputation loss as the Festival is well established and popular with residents and visitors alike.
- 6.3 Run a reduced Festival – This option was discounted because a reduced programme has the same costs as staging the full Festival in terms of infrastructure, promotion, etc, but would likely attract fewer visitors and fewer paying stallholders upon which income depends.
- 6.4 Source an external company to run the festival on behalf of the Council – This option has been discounted for 2022 as there is insufficient time to explore it robustly. However, as referenced in Paragraph 4.13 (a), it will be considered for 2023.
- 6.5 Retain suite of event charges at existing rate (£10 and £5) - This has been rejected as they have not been increased since 2018 and there was a considerable increase in the cost of festival infrastructure in 2021 as a result of the Covid pandemic. In addition, the festival needs to contribute to delivering the Council's Five Year Financial Plan.

7. Implications

- 7.1 Appendix 1 sets out the relevant implications considered in the preparation of the report.

8. Background Papers

- 8.1 None identified.

9. Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1 - Implications.

10. Recommendations

That the Cabinet Member:

- a) Approves the Council's commitment to arrange the Woodland Festival each September during 2022, 2023 and 2024.
- b) Approves the suite of special event car parking charges, as set out in the report, at the Derbyshire County Council Woodland Festival at Elvaston Castle Country Park on 17 and 18 September 2022.

- c) Notes that a further report will be prepared for consideration during 2022-23 that sets out proposals for introducing new commercial arrangements for the 2023 Woodland Festival.

11. Reasons for Recommendations

- 11.1 So that the Council formerly continues its commitment to the event for a period of at least three years to plan and resource the event effectively.
- 11.2 This charge will act as the price of entering the festival and will be used to offset the cost of staging the event.

12. Is it necessary to waive the call in period?

- 12.1 No.

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Implications

Financial

- 1.1 Following on from the success of the 2021 Festival, which generated more income than in any previous year, the c £29,100 cost of staging the event was offset by £34,664.35 of car park income and a further £3,084 of stallholder income. It is proposed to increase the special event charge to £15 per car and £7.50 per motorcycle to park and enter the event in 2022 as the previous rate was set in 2018 and there are inflationary pressures on the cost of running the event. The approach to offsetting the running costs will continue, derived from charging a full range of complementary stallholders, exhibitors, and catering outlets, as well as looking to secure a sponsor for the event.
- 1.2 The Festival is staged at a cost of c £29,100 annually (with costs covered in a successful year by income from special event parking charges and income from charging stallholders and caterers). This event, whilst covering its costs, must be noted, does not cover staff time involved in its organisation and delivery.

Legal

- 2.1 Car park charges at countryside destinations, including Elvaston Castle, are payable as standard by pay and display, levied every day of the year, including public holidays, by off street parking order. At the time of writing the report, the standard charges are 2 hours - £1.60, 4 hours - £3, all day - £4.80 and Season Tickets £80.
- 2.2 The special event charge for the Woodland Festival is a variation of the Off-Street Parking Order. This charge acts as the price of entering the festival and is to be used to offset the cost of staging the event. It needs to be advertised each year regardless of whether it increases.
- 2.3 It is proposed that the temporary change to the parking charges is made through the 'Notice of Variation' procedure under Section 35c of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. This will involve publishing a notice giving details of the proposed charges at least 21 days before they come into force. The notice must be displayed at all car parks to which the special event car parking charges will apply. There is no procedure for objections to be made to the notice.
- 2.4 In terms of Traffic Management, to provide a deterrent against inconsiderate/dangerous parking and to reduce congestion during the

woodland festival. Derbyshire County Council makes an order under Section 14 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984(as amended) to prohibit stopping at any time.

“B5010 Broad Lane, Oak Road, Ball Lane, Thulston/Elvaston (both sides from junction with B5010 London Road in a northerly direction for 970m, to its junction with Castle Court).”

- 2.6 The Traffic Management includes procurement of the Supply, Installation and Collection of the Temporary Clearway Signage and Advance Directional Signage, provision of fully trained Traffic Management Operatives, Full PPE and Transport, and their applications to the appropriate Highway Authorities. GTM - Go Traffic Management Limited in 2021.
- 2.7 Two Civil Parking Enforcement Officers are also deployed for enforcement of the yellow lining / clearway during the festival weekend.

Human Resources

- 3.1 The dedication of key staff to organise this Festival is considerable. The Festival weekend and during set up requires a huge commitment from staff across the service, leaving only minimal cover elsewhere. Thirty + staff, volunteers, scouts, and crowd marshals are the minimum required to deliver the Festival each day at the scale it has now reached.

Information Technology

- 4.1 None.

Equalities Impact

- 5.1 The aim has always been to host an inclusive event, attractive to all members of the public, especially those that otherwise would not have the opportunity to participate in the crafts on offer at the event. The car park charge has been set at a level that would not dissuade visitors on low incomes. Consideration is given to the location and access of blue badge holder parking, with close proximity to the event.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 6.1 The Festival is a showcase/well positioned for communicating the Council's corporate objectives and green environmental agenda/ campaigns, including the Queen's Green Canopy tree planting, million

trees initiative, climate change, health and wellbeing through engagement and participation, and active lifestyles outdoors.

- 6.2 This proposal will help deliver the following Council Plan priorities: Resilient, Healthy and Safe Communities; High Performing, Value for Money and Resident-Focused Services; A Prosperous and Green Derbyshire.

Other (for example, Health and Safety, Environmental Sustainability, Property and Asset Management, Risk Management and Safeguarding)

- 7.1 None.