

6. Toilet Enhancement Strategy

1. Purpose

This report seeks approval of the proposed strategy for the future management of public toilets owned or operated by the Authority.

2. Context

As we await communication from Defra on the three-year settlement, we have updated our Medium Term Financial Forecast (MTFF) and modelled several scenarios. Unfortunately, in every scenario, we would be unable to balance the budget from next year onwards. Although we could use our decreasing reserves to underpin some of the expenditure for a finite amount of time, this isn't financially sustainable.

When the MTFF was presented to Authority in March 2025, we always knew we needed to plan for forecast funding gaps. In order to reduce the funding gaps we are using one-off additional capital funds (25/26) on income generating projects to help sustain our future revenue requirements. However, as the Defra grant is at best maintaining this years grant and costs continue to escalate, this isn't sufficient to cover all our expenditure. This means we must plan to reduce our costs, or plan significant revenue growth – where possible and feasible.

The Authority has owned and operated 17 public toilet facilities for many years, many of which were constructed in the 1970's. While some toilets provide services considered essential to the facilities operated by the Authority e.g. trails, others offer no direct benefit to the Authority, however, these toilet facilities further the Authority's statutory purposes. While many Local Authorities within the region and nationally have closed or commenced charging at public toilet facilities, the National Park Authority has not closed any, or implemented charging to date.

Significant staff time is currently being absorbed in undertaking reactive day to day repairs and ongoing management of the toilets, with a reducing workforce and increasing pressure on finances this is not efficient, effective or sustainable. Existing toilet facilities, across the National Park, require capital investment to improve the standard and experience for users.

Proposals

2.1 Do nothing:

This is not a preferred option. The toilets are currently a significant cost of c.£250,000 p.a to the Authority through their general maintenance and upkeep. Costs continue to rise, year on year, and the financial performance of these assets is no longer sustainable to the Authority's financial position or financial objectives.

2.2 Undertake works only:

This is not a preferred option. Although implementing an enhancement project across the toilets would constitute capital spend, the capital grant provided by DEFRA to the Authority for spend in the 25/26 financial year, was provided with two strictly defined spending criteria:

1. Innovation, invest-to-save, and income generating activities stream
2. 30by30 delivery stream

It is therefore not possible to use the 25/26 capital grant to simply enhance the toilets in isolation of any future income generation or innovation. Whilst you could state that

the toilets support indirect income, as explained in 3.3, this is a tenuous link and one at risk of challenge by DEFRA and/or potential audit processes.

In the absence of the 25/26 Capital Grant investing capital in the toilets without a strategy to see a financial return on any such outlay is not a viable use of Authority funds. A capital budget programme was provided to Members in Spring 2025, this programme identified capital spend and origin of funding, across the medium term, toilets were not identified and therefore not included.

2.3 Undertake works and commence charging

This is the preferred option. Although the toilets are a significant cost to the Authority, they do assist in supporting income generating assets, such as concessions, trails and car parks. Income from concession rents and pay and display operations equates to over £500,000 p.a. Incoming revenue, such as the aforementioned, are forecast to grow over the medium-term financial plan, where capital investment is being made to support revenue growth.

Utilising the 25/26 capital grant to invest in enhancing toilets enables the Authority to provide modern, well equipped, inclusive facilities and commencing the implementation of charging users meets the DEFRA spending criteria. Initially, it is proposed to implement works and charging at the following sites:

Dovedale, Millers Dale, Parsley Hay, Tissington and Hartington.

Whilst the 25/26 capital grant enables the Authority to undertake investment without the burden of repayment, this proposal returns the initial investment of £379,000 in just over five years with 83% of the investment returned within the medium term, net revenue (25-30) is forecast to be £316,422.

All works would be subject to tender. Tender returns are anticipated before the end of the calendar year with site works commencing across the named sites throughout Q4 25/26 for completion no later than 31st March 2026. This timeline is specific to the spending criteria outlined by the capital grant provided by DEFRA.

It is proposed that charging to the user be 50p inclusive of VAT. Income shown at section 5b below is shown exclusive of VAT. The proposed charging rate is comparable to other public sites locally and nationally where rates vary from 20p - £1.

Further rationale can be found at section 5b below.

2.4 Close all toilets:

This is not a preferred option. Closing the toilets would be detrimental to the public, the environment and to Authority stakeholders (partners etc). *See section 5d below.*

Whilst this is not considered an option at this stage, should the Authority not seek to implement the proposals herewith the option to close and/or dispose of the toilets will need to be reassessed due to the significant cost burden of £250,000 p.a that these assets incur year-on -year to the Authority.

3. Recommendations

- 1. To approve the proposal detailed at paragraph 3.3 of this report to commence charging at any and/or all of the public toilet facilities operated by the Authority.***
- 2. To delegate the future implementation of the decision at recommendation 1 above to the Head of Assets and Enterprise in conjunction with the Chief***

Finance Officer and the Monitoring Officer.

- 3. To delegate authority to review the charges when considered appropriate to do so and implement a revised charging structure at any and/or all of the public toilet facilities operated by the Authority to the Head of Assets & Enterprise in conjunction with the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer, and in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of Resources Committee.**
- 4. To approve the drawdown of up to £380,000 from the 25/26 Capital Fund to enable toilet enhancement project works at the sites detailed in paragraph 5b.**
- 5. That approval be granted to incur capital expenditure for the toilet enhancement project works at the sites detailed in paragraph 2.3 up to £380,000, pursuant to Part 3, C3,(c) and G1 of Standing Orders, subject to compliance with the Contract Procedure Rules and Standing Orders generally.**
- 6. To delegate authority to the Authority Solicitor to enter into and determine the terms and conditions of any contracts/agreements required in the best interests of the Authority, subject to compliance with the Contract Procedure Rules and Standing Orders generally.**

5. Corporate Implications

a. Legal

Pursuant to section 65(5) of the Environment Act 1995, the Authority has power to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to the accomplishment of its statutory purposes. The provision of public toilet facilities further the Authority's statutory purposes. This power is subject to any express statutory or public law constraints which should be considered holistically and continually as the Authority progresses.

b. Financial

Detailed financial modelling was undertaken to assess the viability of the capital investment against a range of user volumes and cost profiles for the period 2025-2030. The models adopted for each site were identified as most realistic in respect of user and cost forecasts. Forecasting was based, in the most part, on actual footfall data captured over a 6 – 8 week period.

Footfall data was collected at the sites between August and October 2025 and this data has been profiled over an annual period, to reflect 8 weeks of school holidays (higher use) and 44 weeks of non-holidays (lower use). This data provided a baseline user volume for each site. A 5% year-on-year increase in users has then been applied.

Some assumptions were made at sites where it was not possible to collect data within current time constraints. Namely, Tissington and Hartington. Car parking and pay and display data was also analysed to assist in informing user volume assumptions at the sites.

Paddle gates have been sourced to allow card payment charging (no site will accept cash) and mitigate the risk of users tailgating. Due to the age of the toilet buildings and the size requirements of the gates these have been difficult to source and are being made specifically for the PDNPA sites.

It is proposed that charging to the user be 50p, inclusive of VAT. Income below is shown exclusive of VAT. The proposed charging rate is comparable to other public sites locally and nationally where rates vary from 20p - £1.

A 10% deduction has been made to the gross revenue, over the term, to account for potential non-payers. This also includes for any period of time for which the paddle gates / charging mechanisms are not operational.

The capital required for the proposed works will be sourced from the 25/26 DEFRA capital grant. Whilst the 25/26 capital grant enables the Authority to undertake investment without the burden of repayment, this proposal returns the initial investment of £379,000 in just over five years with 83% of the investment returned within the term. Net revenue (25-30) is forecast to be £316,422.

Gross Income Forecast 2025-2030		Cost Forecast 2025-2030	
	TOTAL		TOTAL
Dovedale	£ 322,938	Dovedale	£ 177,556
Millers Dale	£ 347,568	Millers Dale	£ 119,133
Parsley Hay	£ 118,608	Parsley Hay	£ 124,035
Tissington	£ 118,608	Tissington	£ 53,928
Hartington	£ 29,652	Hartington	£ 52,563
TOTAL	£ 937,374	TOTAL	£ 527,215
<i>less 10% non payers</i>	<i>£ 93,737</i>		
	£ 843,637		
Total Investment inc. contingency £379,000		Net Income (25-30)	£ 316,422

User Forecast 2025-2030		Non Payer Profile		
	TOTAL	10%	15%	20%
Dovedale	807,345	80735	121102	161469
Millers Dale	868,921	86892	130338	173784
Parsley Hay	296,519	29652	44478	59304
Tissington	296,519	29652	44478	59304
Hartington	74,130	7413	11120	14826
TOTAL	2,343,434	234343	351515	468687
Potential Lost Income		£93,737	£140,606	£187,475

Tenders are anticipated for return by the end of the 2025 calendar year. Recommendations proposed are based on budget costs and a contingency allowance of 15% (exc. paddle gates – fixed cost):

The paddle gates are a fixed cost item that have been difficult to source due to the dimensions required and the contactless payment inclusion. Despite best efforts only one supplier has been identified and an exemption will be sought to progress with this supplier for the ordering of this infrastructure based on their single quote.

Capital Works	
Dovedale	£100,000
Millers Dale	£75,000
Parsley Hay	£10,000
Tissington	£10,000
Hartington	£17,000
	£212,000
Contingency	£32,000
Paddle Gates	£135,000
TOTAL	£379,000

c. National Park Management Plan and Authority Plan

Manage our visitor assets and facilities in a sustainable and inclusive way so users are inspired to enjoy, care for and connect to the special qualities of the National Park

The proposed project will contribute towards the following objectives:

Authority Plan:

Objective E (Assets)

- To have best practice arrangements in place for the Authority's assets

d. Risk Management

There is a risk that stakeholders (partners, public) disagree with the proposals and share their opinions on public platforms, media and through direct communications with the PDNPA CEO. However, market research has been undertaken to enable the Authority to evidence that other public and private sectors are already charging for the use of toilets, locally and nationally. The financial challenges the Authority faces means that alternative ways to continue to provide facilities to users need to be imagined and implemented, if the Authority elect not to implement these proposals the toilets will potentially face closure and disposal. Should the latter happen this is at a much greater impact to users.

There is a risk that users refuse to pay to use facilities and use the natural environment as a replacement, this will have a negative impact on habitats, ecology and the condition of the National Park. Work will be undertaken through our Visitor Services, Rangers and Comms teams to provide suitable education and messaging, discouraging any such behavior. Site signage to assist in explaining charging rationale will also be considered on a site by site basis.

The paddle gates are being provided by a single supplier and are being manufactured to a PDNPA bespoke specification. This could make the sourcing of parts difficult and more expensive. However, the gates come with a three year warranty and the card payment element comes with a one year warranty. Should there be operational issues the parts may take longer to arrive therefore prolonging non-charging periods. This risk has been recognised in the use of the non-payer 10% allowance in section 5b above.

Works are due on site in Q4 of the 25/26 financial year and the weather could be detrimental to the delivery of works on site, subsequently causing a delay to the implementation of charging and a delay to income generation beginning to be realised as at 1st April 2026.

An equality impact assessment has been considered, the sites will continue to provide accessible toilets, with Millers Dale and Parsley Hay maintaining the presence of an operational Changing Place too. The named sites herewith will be inclusive for all.

e. Net Zero

The proposed works have no impact on Net Zero. However, an increase in energy use may be seen. In the future solar installation may be considered at these sites, subject to planning.

6. Background papers (not previously published)

None

7. Appendices

None

Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date

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