

HIGH PEAK BOROUGH COUNCIL

The Executive - Individual Executive Decisions

31 July 2024

TITLE:	Public Convenience Renovations (New Mills, Chapel-en-le-Frith & Buxton Sylvan (Capital))
EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR:	Councillor Anthony McKeown - Council Leader HPBC Councillor Damien Greenhalgh – Deputy Leader & Executive Councillor for Regeneration, Tourism and Leisure
CONTACT OFFICER:	Matt Trewartha - Interim Head of Assets
WARDS INVOLVED:	Barms; Burbage; Buxton Central; Chapel East; Chapel West; Corbar; Cote Heath; Limestone Peak; New Mills East; New Mills West; Sett; Stone Bench; Temple

1. Reason for the Report

- 1.1 To provide information to Members about the review and refurbishment programme for the Borough's public conveniences and those that the Assets Team is proposing to refurbish during the 2024/25 year, with a combined capital budget of £500,000 and to agree to the pilot/trial implementation of a modest charge for using the toilets at Sylvan to contribute to an enhanced cleaning regime.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 To proceed with the refurbishment of the three public conveniences as per the report, and the refresh of the Buxton Town Hall facilities.
- 2.2 To agree to pilot/trial implementation of a charging scheme at the Sylvan Toilets following refurbishment – with a modest fee of 30p (which is a typical charge for similar facilities) and the equipment to collect the income.
- 2.3 To agree to a 12 month review period of the trial to determine the success of the charging.

3. **Executive Summary**

- 3.1 Public conveniences are a visible and highly important delivered service for the Council as they serve both the local public and visitors to the area. Whilst there is no legal requirement to provide them, the Council is of the view that we have a moral duty to provide hygienic, functional, and serviceable facilities to support economic growth. This intervention represents the first phase of a planned, multi-year review and refurbishment plan that focuses on the facilities that are most in need of repair or investment. Later phases of the programme are covered in outline and will be subject to further review and available budget.

4. **How this report links to Corporate Priorities**

- 4.1 The proposal will create a healthier and safer High Peak (Aim 1) and will protect and create jobs by supporting economic growth, development, and regeneration (Aim 3).

5. **Alternative Options**

- 5.1 The alternative option is not to make the proposed investment and to accept that, as a Council, the service we offer will deteriorate leading to increased complaints about the condition of the provision. (Not recommended)

6. **Implications**

6.1	<u>Community safety, including safeguarding and prevention of terrorism.</u> This approach will help improve public safety through improved hygiene at these sites.
6.2	<u>Workforce</u> Not applicable
6.3	<u>Equality and Diversity/Equality Impact Assessment</u> Installing a cashless payment facility at the Sylvan Car Park toilets is not considered a barrier to their use based on the latest cashless card report from Barclays (27 February 2024). See 7.14 for more information.
6.4	<u>Financial Considerations</u> These are significant capital projects but as part of economic development it is considered an important element in attracting visitors to the area and providing facilities for residents.

6.5	<u>Legal</u> Not applicable
6.6	<u>Climate Change and Sustainability</u> Improved / updated lighting is expected to reduce the amount of electricity consumed at each facility although the difference is expected to be marginal.
6.7	<u>Conservation and Enhancement of Biodiversity</u> Not applicable
6.8	<u>Consultation</u> Not applicable
6.9	<u>Risk Assessment</u> Not applicable

Martin Owen
Executive Director (Resources)

**Web Links and
Background Papers**

Contact details

Matt Trewartha
Interim Head of Assets
matthew.trewartha@highpeak.gov.uk

7. Detail

- 7.1 The Council provides public conveniences across the Borough which are intended to provide facilities for the public that, in addition to providing a service, also bring about a positive contribution to our growth, regeneration and tourism aims. A recent review of the facilities that we have, has identified three public conveniences at: Sylvan Car Park (Buxton), New Mills, and Chapel-en-le-Frith to be of a low standard which are generating complaints and negative publicity.
- 7.2 For these facilities the Council receives regular complaints about the condition, in terms of the quality of the offering and the cleanliness of them.
- 7.3 The Council has a daily cleaning regime, provided through its council-controlled company, Alliance Norse but, because of these toilets being at a low standard, the complaints around cleanliness are amplified.
- 7.4 As a Council we cannot fully police facilities during opening hours and, as such, we have little control over the vandalism that occurs. However, it is considered that with a better standard of facilities that the public may appreciate them more and those causing the damage may be less inclined to do so.
- 7.5 The intention is that the renovations will begin a new cycle that will allow us to have a rolling programme of review, renovation and improvement over the coming years. The next facilities subject to the review and renovation programme will be:
- 2025/26 – Pavilion Gardens (Buxton)
 - 2026/27 – Glossop Cemetery, Manor Park (Glossop) and Whaley Bridge
 - 2027/28 – Charlesworth, Hadfield and Chinley
 - 2028/29 – Edale, Bamford and Castleton
- 7.6 This rolling programme, which has been discussed with commissioning colleagues, is focused on the sites with the lowest standards first. If any individual site experiences a particular depreciation in quality or vandalism, then the programme can be altered to suit the need.
- The review process will also consider the wider suitability of the facilities in each of the area's including the potential to look at other models of provision including automated facilities.
- 7.7 Buxton Town Hall is subject to a separate review process around its future; however, the public toilets are also sub-standard. However, given their poor state and the time it is likely to take to agree the best option for the Council's accommodation needs, then a minor refurbishment and deep clean will be undertaken using the current year's budget.
- 7.8 With regards to the specific sites there is a £500,000 overall maximum budget that will be used across the three and the minor improvements to the Town Hall toilets with the proposed upgrades taking the inside of each facility back

to brick then installing new tiling, sanitaryware, lighting, doors to make them fit for purpose, and signage (to confirm the Council's ownership and contact details to report incidents or defects):

- Sylvan Car Park is one of three public conveniences in Buxton (Pavilion Gardens and the Town Hall being the others), it is on the main road through the town and is on the site of tourist coaches coming to the town – so is often the first impression of Buxton to tourists. It has a high usage and suffers from a high incidence of vandalism. The budget for the indicative cost of the works is £360k.
- New Mills was badly vandalised in October 2023 and, as such, has not been re-opened pending renovation works. The closure is causing issues locally in New Mills and this work will be prioritised. The budget for the indicative cost of the works is £40k.
- The Chapel-en-le-Frith conveniences are subterranean; directly underneath the marketplace. They are dark, unappealing and in a very poor condition. The budget for the indicative cost of the works is £100k.

7.9 As part of the proposal for Sylvan Car Park, we are proposing to install on trial/pilot basis, a paid entry system as a method of controlling the vandalism and to also provide income necessary to fund additional cleaning. As this is a primary facility, it is considered appropriate to use this location as the trial/pilot for a paid service.

7.10 This program of works will help us to reduce the number of complaints that we receive and mean that we are promoting tourism in these areas.

7.11 Whilst we have no current paid-for toilets in the High Peak to benchmark benefits and risks, other neighbouring local authorities that have them have used the receipts to enhance cleaning and have found they act as a deterrent to opportunistic vandalism (although those who are more determined will not be stopped). Where members of the public pay for facilities, they rightly expect a certain level of cleanliness, and we would need to work with our council-controlled company, Alliance Norse, to determine what the demand is over the seasons to match and enhance our cleaning regimes with usage.

7.12 Based on a review of other LAs to determine what charges are levied in similar market towns then 30p is typical. We want to make sure the toilets capture the tourist spend, without causing a burden to locals and provides the means to enhance the cleaning regime.

7.13 The costs of installing the equipment necessary to collect the fee is expected to be approximately £5k (requiring some 17k visits at 30p to recover this cost). By installing this at Sylvan Car Park and operating it as a pilot/ trial we can then use the data to assess its value for money and effectiveness.

7.14 The trial should be reviewed after six months, but allowed to continue for a full year in order that the Council can understand the full impact of the change. During this time, records will be kept around income, additional expenditure for enhanced cleaning, the number of complaints received around the quality and cleanliness of the facility and the level of vandalism. These metrics, where

possible will be benchmarked against previous years.

- 7.15 This would be a cashless facility to maintain convenience and avoid any cash-based costs and risks. The use of contactless payment is now at 'a record 93.4% of all instore card transactions' so is not considered a barrier to use. Barclays (27 February 2024) reported that 'the gap between younger and older audiences continues to narrow' and contactless card use for 'over-65s were the fastest growing segment for contactless usage' and even in the 85-95 year olds was 80.1%¹. Noting that just 2.4% of High Peak residents are in this age category (2021)² which would suggest that less than 0.5% may not be using cashless payments in this age category currently. These statistics underline a growing trend towards such payments that is expected to continue to rise.
- 7.16 The Sylvan toilets would not commence works until mid-September to allow for the town's festivals and the main tourists season to have subsided. As part of any closure, information will be displayed directing members of the public to alternative facilities.
- 7.17 As part of the planned closure, the Communications Team would ensure that notice is given to the public in advance through social media and the Council's website.
- 7.18 New Mills toilets have been closed for some time due to vandalism and it is intended that these will be renovated as soon as possible to reinstate the facility for the public.
- 7.19 As Chapel en le Frith only has one set of public toilets, it would be sensible to look to close these later in the year to reduce the impact on tourists but also so that the public don't overwhelm the local pubs and cafes, with requests to use the facilities.

¹ [The currency of convenience: 80 per cent of 85–95-year-olds now pay with contactless | Barclays \(home.barclays\)](#)

² [How life has changed in High Peak: Census 2021 \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)