



**Report to: Joint Museums Committee, 13<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

**Report of: Assistant Director of Communities, Worcestershire County Council**

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**Subject: TEMPORARY ADJUSTMENT TO HARTLEBURY ADMISSION CHARGES**

**1. Recommendation**

- 1.1 That the Joint Museums Committee note the upcoming event at Hartlebury Castle planned by Hartlebury Castle Preservation Trust and agree the altered admission charge for this event.**
- 1.2 That the Committee delegate any further temporary admission charge alterations at Hartlebury Castle to the Assistant Director of Communities, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee, until the managing agreements between Hartlebury Castle Preservation Trust and Worcestershire County Council have been reviewed and amended.**

**2. Background**

- 2.1 Hartlebury Castle Preservation Trust (HCPT) and Worcestershire County Council's (WCC) agreement on funding (May 2017) sets out that admission charges will be agreed annually between the two parties. In addition, WCC has delegated the decision making on altering existing charges at the museum sites to its Joint Museums Committee.
- 2.2 Until now, this agreement has been implemented via a proposal from HCPT on alteration to admission charges to the Hartlebury Strategic Board being taken to the Joint Museums Committee in November each year. HCPT are finding this process is not flexible enough to accommodate new opportunities for its business.
- 2.3 HCPT will be presenting a major weekend event in September 2022 and require an uplift in admission charges to cover the costs of delivering the event.
- 2.4 This is a major re-enactment event highlighting local Civil War history presented by nationally significant re-enactment society The Sealed Knot. The Trust has been working for over two years to set up this visit and dates were only confirmed in March this year. This is a hugely prestigious event and has the clear potential to deliver on three of the Trust's primary strategic objectives 1) to significantly increase the number of family visits to Hartlebury Castle, 2) to significantly raise the profile of the Castle – locally, regionally and nationally, 3) to ensure that the Charity is financially resilient so that the site can remain open. Clearly, WCC will also benefit from these objectives.
- 2.5 HCPT will be taking all of the financial risk and operational responsibility for the event.

- 2.6 Other visitor attractions implement a special price for specific events where they offer significant added value to the normal experience e.g., in 2022, Sudeley Castle's *Fantasy Forest Festival* and Warwick Castle's *Midsummer Carnival* and *Sundown Spectacular Festival*. Many attractions (e.g., Sudeley Castle) offer special events on a grounds-only charge, with an additional charge to view the house. HCPT have considered going ahead on this basis, but it would likely result in a very poor uptake for museum admissions and therefore negligible revenue for WCC. Both Museums Worcestershire and HCPT believe that a full site admission charge for events is the best solution.
- 2.7 HCPT expect there to be significant demand for the event. The site capacity will be up to 750 a day.

### 3. **Preferred Option**

- 3.1 The Management and Funding Agreements between HCPT and WCC are scheduled for review this year and an amendment to the process of adjusting admissions charges will be worked up by the Hartlebury Strategic Board. In the interim, it is proposed that this committee delegate any further Hartlebury admission charge adjustment decisions to WCC's Assistant Director of Communities, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Joint Museums Committee.
- 3.2 HCPT require the following admission fee uplift for the event on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

	<i>adult</i>	<i>child</i>	<i>concession</i>	<i>family</i>
<i>2022-23 admission</i>	£11.50	£6.50	£10.00	£32
<b><i>Proposed 3&amp;4 Sept admission</i></b>	<b>£15</b>	<b>£10</b>	<b>£13.50</b>	<b>£40</b>

- 3.3 WCC will receive their normal allocation on all admissions with the uplifted portion of the admission charge all going to HCPT. This means that for this event only, the proportion of the admission charge will change from that set out in 4.1.3 of the Funding Agreement.
- 3.4 Guardian and Worcestershire Annual Pass holders will be allowed access to the event with no additional charge.

### 4. **Alternative Options Considered**

- 4.1 An increased grounds-only admission charge is an option. The event activity will all take place in the grounds. HCPT are fully prepared to pursue this option but recognise that whilst it would deliver on the Trust's strategic objectives it would likely deliver negligible admissions to the museum on that weekend and so it cannot be recommended.
- 4.2 Alternatively HCPT propose that the museum close for the event and HCPT would compensate WCC based on normal income for the equivalent weekend in previous year.

This would give visitors a confusing message and would mean that WCC were stepping back from supporting HCPT in its objectives for the site. This cannot be recommended.

## **5. Implications**

### **5.1 Financial and Budgetary Implications**

The proposals will support HCPT meet their business plan for Hartlebury and are anticipated to offer some increased income for WCC.

### **5.2 Legal and Governance Implications**

These proposals temporarily amend the 2017 agreements between WCC and HCPT. A review at this year of these agreements is already planned and will likely propose permanent amendments to the agreements.

### **5.3 Risk Implications**

HCPT will be taking on all the financial and operational risks of this event.

### **5.4 Corporate/Policy Implications**

There are no corporate implications identified.

### **5.5 Equality Implications**

As the proposal relates to a short-term event and amendment to the admission charge, it is considered that the equality implications are minimal. This will be considered in more detail within the plans to amend the current Management and Funding agreements.

### **5.6 Human Resources Implications**

As the operational responsibility for the event will be taken on by HCPT, all HR implications are theirs rather than the joint museums authorities. WCC staff will support the event on the weekend in their usual roles.

### **5.7 Health and Safety Implications**

This event will have additional H&S responsibilities for the site, these will be taken on by HCPT. WCC H&S advice will be sought if useful to HCPT.

### **5.8 Social, Environmental and Economic Implications**

These proposals aim to increase the events programme and the viability of the visitor attraction at Hartlebury, bringing additional social and economic benefits to Worcestershire.

#### **Ward(s):**

**All wards**

#### **Contact Officers:**

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#### **Background Papers:**

**Joint Museums Committee meeting 19 November 2021, agenda item 11**