

For the attention of the Car Parks department.

carparks@derbyshiredales.gov.uk

Derbyshire Dales District Council
Town Hall
Bank Road
Matlock
Derbyshire
DE4 3NN

TEXT BELOW WAS SENT TO DDDC FROM DCA AND PICA – Please feel free to use this as a starting point to your own letter/email or just use this text with your own name.

Dear Sir or Madam

With the recent relaxation in lockdown, the recreational and instructed caving and mine exploration community has begun to return to the sport. Matlock Bath has long been a draw to explorers and outdoor education / Scout groups due to its easy parking and walking access to one of the most frequently visited mines in the area. Devonshire Mine is situated on private land around 15 minutes' walk from Temple Road car park. An access agreement exists with the landowner for its use and both recreational and professional users have funded and maintained the gates and lids on 4 different entrances as well as an annual safety inspection. The Derbyshire Caving Association have a long history of involvement with the mine, and the Peak Instructed Caving Affiliation's members take hundreds of young people and family groups underground to Devonshire mine every year.

It has recently come to our attention that the Temple Road car park in Matlock Bath has had height barriers installed. This is the only public car park in a reasonable walking distance of Devonshire Mine (and some other mines). The height of the entry barrier is so low that only cars will fit through. This is a huge problem for some mine users with high vehicles and will effectively exclude them from being able to access to the mines of the area. Many cavers and explorers have vans or other high vehicles. Most outdoor education centres or instructed caving providers also use vans and minibuses. Coaches occasionally drop off primary school or Scout groups here for led trips in the mines. None of these users will be able to park in Temple Road car park in future due to the height barriers.

We understand that Matlock Bath has had a problem with travellers over lockdown, but you have now prevented access to a large group of long term users. Not only that, but you have made it much harder to give that all important first underground trip to young people on outdoor education centre trips. Alternative parking sites are not an appropriate option for most of our users. The Station car park does take coaches and minibuses, but is over a mile away. Artists Corner car park is also too far and is also fitted with a height barrier. For a short trip in the mine, it is not reasonable to walk that distance, with road crossings and traffic to contend with on the main road. The much closer Mining Museum car park is limited to 2 hours maximum stay, far too short for a visit to the mine or museum! The New Bath Hotel used to allow parking for mine visitors on their private land, but has suffered from similar traveller problems and no longer offers any parking. There are simply no other options for mine users with high vehicles apart from parking on residential streets nearby to the mine, no doubt increasing the congestion that these car parks were built to remove. You will also no longer receive the money that these users would have paid for parking and potentially spent in the shops and cafes of the area.

We wish to highlight that we believe the installation of height barriers is not a fair mechanism to exclude a specific set of undesired users of these car parks, as it also excludes many other recreational and professional users who have every right to be there and who have been making use of the parking (and paying) for a long time. Height barriers are a poor alternative to proper policing of your facilities.

We request that that height barriers either be removed, or some mechanism put in place for explorers, Scout, outdoor centre, and commercial groups to access the Temple Road car park in high vehicles. We shall be sharing this letter with members of all affected organisations and asking them to contact you as well.

We look forward to your response detailing how you intend to support continued access to mine users who depend on the Temple Road car park.