



Pleasley Parking Charges – Answers to the FAQs

Pleasley Pit has two budget elements, the annual running costs and the maintenance of the pit buildings on a periodic basis. This is a bit like your bills at home to pay for heating and water bills, but equally occasionally you might need to fix the gutters, replace the windows or even the roof.

The annual budget covers a number of things including services bills, annual and more regular inspections, insurance, litter collection and removal (including dog waste), landscape maintenance, supporting public events and security. It is always very tight, and often ends the year overspent. This is not a position we can see continuing on an ongoing basis and so have been looking at the options; there is limited opportunity to reduce the costs while increasing income is the other side of the balance sheet.

The capital costs of maintaining a historic building are considerable. For example the chimney took little maintenance while it was in use and hot, but now it is cold it suffers significant degradation from rain and frost particularly. Currently there is a repair estimate of around £140,000 for the chimney and further costs with other urgent major works. However realistically the charge at the car park can only contribute a small amount to this budget, but may help unlock grants by providing the “match funding” often required.

In addition, once we have these costs covered we want to see improvements at Pleasley Pit in terms of the “visitor experience”. The tours the Friends of Group provide are invaluable, but the conservation, display and explanation of many of the artefacts requires some attention. These tours are provided free of charge, albeit with a request for a donation, by the Friends of Group towards some of the conservation works they chose. These funds are held by the Friends independently to the Land Trust.

The fee is not really “one size fits all”; we are offering an annual fee to any regular visitors, so if anyone visits 10 times a year this is a cheaper option. Equally any member of the Friends of Group has the annual fee covered by their membership. Considerable thought was put into the cost of the fee with a strong desire that it would not be too high, indeed there have had some comment from people involved in parking suggesting this has been well considered – the comments tending to be that it is low.

As to how the fee is allocated; you will understand that there is a cost to collecting a fee, but 80% of the fee comes to the Land Trust for use at Pleasley. The Land Trust is uniquely set up to see funds raised at Pleasley Pit cannot be spent elsewhere. As outlined, we anticipate this will help cover the annual costs we incur on site or maybe help unlock larger funds for the maintenance of the buildings.

The method of payment is constrained by both the desire to be cash free to reduce the risk of cash in an exposed location and the provision of the power and data for a card based system would be a considerable expenditure, which for a trial may not be recovered. As such a phone based system became the only option in the short term and is under review currently. I understand that there are some issues around the smartphone app. We understand not everyone has a smartphone although research suggests over 90% of people do have one, but the older demographic of visitors to Pleasley will be over represented in this minority, as will the socio-economic issues in the area. As such there is a telephone payment option which is based on a local rate 0300 number. Equally, but not well advertised, a parking slot can be booked in advance from a computer or land line phone.