

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
COUNCIL HELD ON 16 March 2023

STATEMENT and QUESTION from Mr Peter Rastall, Derbyshire Dales Resident

“I am disappointed to hear that two years after agreeing to stop using glyphosate, the council are proposing to reintroduce its use. Why on earth would this be the case, when the World Health Organisation says it is very likely to be highly carcinogenic, and linked to lymphoma?”

As I'm sure you well know, the simplest way to reduce risk and protect both your workers and public is to simply not use this. Surely an alternative (which presumably has been in use for two years now) is the better option?”

RESPONSE:

We appreciate the concerns around the use of glyphosate and we are trying to balance this against this other factor such as, complaints and service requests received and the resources available to provide hand removal. Therefore, we are proposing to reintroduce its use in a significantly reduced and limited manner. The use will solely be considered for closed churchyards and access roads to cemeteries and leisure centres. All other areas will continue to be managed with a weed ripper and hand weeding. This was decided in 2020 following a review of possible alternatives.

Please note the point in the report that we will continue to work towards finding a suitable replacement for glyphosate.

STATEMENT and QUESTION from Ms Hillary Hart, Derbyshire Dales Resident

“The scientific proof of the damage that Glyphosate does to biodiversity, the environment and its contribution to global warming is irrefutable. Would the Council please explain to me and the voting electorate what possible justification there is for reintroducing its further use in the Derbyshire Dales?”

RESPONSE:

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Please note the point in the report that we will continue to work towards finding a suitable replacement for glyphosate.

STATEMENT and QUESTION from Mr Bill Sellicks, Cressbrook Local Resident

“My wife and I never expected to be second home owners. My dockworker father-in-law received compensation for a life-changing industrial accident in 1977, which he used to buy a modest property in Hitchin, Hertfordshire. He died before he could enjoy it. After my mother-in-law died, the sale of that house provided the deposit to buy our one-bedroom flat in Cressbrook Mill in 2006. We were only just able to afford it with a mortgage for 50% of the cost. The flat was never intended as an investment – apart from ourselves, we offer it free of charge to family and friends, occupying the flat for well-over the 70 days stipulated in the legislation. It is not rented-out as a holiday property. We love walking in the area, contribute to the local economy, employ local tradespeople and get involved in local campaigns and organisations. We pay our Council tax in full. We are not, in the words of Michael Gove, ‘... people in privileged positions (who) abuse the system by unfairly claiming tax relief and leaving local people counting the cost.’¹

According to DDDC’s Local Plan², settlements like Cressbrook are classed as rural areas, ranked below the 5th tier in the development hierarchy. They are ‘... those villages ... where nearly all services and facilities must be accessed in higher order settlements (and) are, for the purposes of this plan, considered as ‘countryside’. In these locations, development will be strictly limited to that which has an essential need to be located in the countryside.’ The only facility Cressbrook has is a community-run pub. Most residents need a reliable car to access shops, schools, doctors’ surgeries and employment opportunities. The Local Plan rules out most development in places like Cressbrook because it is unsustainable. If owners such as ourselves were to sell, how would a small flat in what is mainly a holiday complex suddenly become sustainable for a local person?

The most recent DDDC Housing Needs Surveys³ that we can find for Tideswell, Litton and Bakewell all identify a need for 2 and 3 bedroomed houses and some 2 bedroom bungalows for affordable rent. Only in Bakewell is there a need for ‘some flats for younger single people’. Whilst some of the larger 3 bedroom flats at Cressbrook Mill are permanently occupied, nobody lives permanently in The Bobbin Mill where our flat is situated. There is a significant service charge to cover the managing agent, grounds and common area maintenance and a continuing programme of repairs to the buildings (one is over 200 years old). We have, at times, had to carry shopping and even furniture up the stairs when the lift has been out of commission. The flat has little storage space. Heating is by electric storage heaters, which are not economical under current circumstances. There is no mobile signal. It is classed as band C for council tax purposes. Total costs, excluding utilities and mortgage for 2022 were £3360. Even if owners such as ourselves were to sell, in what sense would our flat be ‘affordable’ or practical for young people in Bakewell? How could it be made to work?

From the survey, it is clear that doubling council tax for owners such as ourselves is locally popular. We do not blame residents for that, but a few of the responses worryingly border on the vindictive, with one urging tripling or even quadrupling the tax. Such responses suggest that second home owners are being stereotyped as

wealthy, privileged and unprincipled; easy targets in hard times. A vote in support of the measure will satisfy the electorate in the short term. Nevertheless, we hope that Councillors will look beyond that, and consider exactly how to achieve their aim of providing affordable accommodation in a way that is fair, effective and does not have unintended consequences. One such consequence could be that unsuitable accommodation such as ours is released onto the market for no useful purpose. We find it difficult to see what the outcome would be – would places like Cressbrook Mill be blighted – we have no idea. The Report of the Director of Resources and Director of Housing implies that a discount could be considered in certain circumstances, but does not suggest that such a discount might be available to those whose properties are unsuitable. We suggest that be considered to avoid such an undesirable outcome.

1. Press release; 'Gove closes tax loophole on second homes'

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/gove-closes-tax-loophole-on-second-homes>

2. Derbyshire Dales District Council Local Plan

<https://www.derbyshiredales.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy-and-local-plan/local-plan/local-plan-information-and-adoption>

3. Derbyshire Dales Housing needs surveys

<https://www.derbyshiredales.gov.uk/housing/housing-strategy-and-enabling/development-in-the-peak-park/housing-needs-surveys>

RESPONSE:

Thank you for your feedback which will be taken into account as part of the overall evaluation of the consultation responses received where exemptions to this will be reviewed, subject to Member approval being received this evening. A further report is planned to be submitted to Council in the summer.

However, to respond to the other specific question raised, the Council is not looking for all second homes to be brought back into "affordable" use, as most will be well out of reach of many looking to get on the housing ladder. If second homes become a first home then there is an increase in the number of homes for those who live and work in the district. If there is a re-sale to someone who takes a property as a holiday let then the intention behind this report is that it will bring in the additional tax to be used as set out in the report.