

Matlock Bath Parish Council

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To: Derbyshire Dales District Council
Derbyshire County

15th May 2020

Dear <insert>

I am writing on behalf of Matlock Bath Parish Council regarding the repercussions of the Government's new guidelines and the lifting of some lockdown measures.

Following various representations, we have consulted with our residents to ascertain their views on how these new guidelines will affect them. Some of these views have been influenced by what we have already seen happening in the village in recent days.

Residents are extremely concerned and worried that the lifting of some restrictions will lead to an increase in visitor numbers. They would like to see local authorities discouraging visitors coming to villages in the area for a number of reasons.

Residents accept that the new guidelines allow for exercise in open spaces but feel that Matlock Bath does not meet the open space criteria due to nature of the village. Matlock Bath is a narrow limestone gorge and is known to be a destination where tourists gather and linger in considerable numbers. Whilst we accept that some people do come here to walk, we would say the majority do not. The village does not lend itself for social distancing. Both North Parade and South Parade have pavements which are narrow and in the majority of places allow only for 2 people to pass side by side, the remainder of the pavements do not allow for a 2 metre gap. Our many footpaths are narrow and again do not allow for a 2 metre gap from anyone passing. Although parts of Derwent Gardens do allow for social distancing, for example by the bandstand the pathway across the river does not as does not Jubilee Bridge. Lovers Walk is often too narrow to pass safely.

All residents stated that with an increase in visitor numbers they will be forced to stay in their own homes due to fear of an increase in transmission of the virus and because of the lack of social distancing that can be achieved in the village. Why should residents become prisoners because of fear? This in turn, could put pressure on mental health issues especially with a large number of our residents being elderly and/or vulnerable.

All residents expressed concern and were very anxious of the possibility of visitors bringing the virus in from other parts of the country where the virus is perhaps more prevalent, putting their own health at risk and an increase in the possible transmission of the virus.

Whilst some would like to see Matlock Bath "open for business" again, this should not be detrimental to the health and well being of our residents who do live here and also now is not the right time to be welcoming back visitors.

Since the lifting of some of the restrictions, we have seen two of our fish and chip shops open, both of which have queues continually outside. Residents now find that with people having to queue outside both establishments, they are having to walk in the road in order to try and keep a 2m distance. With an increase in traffic, this is extremely dangerous! Over the past few days we have seen the return of some motorcyclists who have parked outside one of the chip shops shoulder to shoulder, clearly not adhering to the social distancing rules. Now that the motorcyclists have returned and the parking bays full, residents are having to walk on the main A6. This is just not acceptable.

Residents have reported that even in Derwent Gardens, most visitors are ignoring the social distancing rules.

It has been reported that the play areas, specifically the one by Jubilee Bridge, have been broken into; the cable ties securing the gates have been cut. Instances have been reported whereby parents have lifted their children over the fence so they are able to go on the equipment. All notices on the equipment have been torn off and left on the ground. We feel that it is not acceptable that a child/children should be playing on a play area which has been closed to the public for health reasons. The fact that they have 'broken in' is a criminal matter and should be dealt with accordingly.

Residents have reported a large increase in the amount of litter. Whilst we have grown to accept this normally despite the number of bins and the excellent work of DDDC in cleaning it up, we do not feel it is acceptable that we have to have dirty tissues, contaminated food trays and papers, drinks containers etc left on benches as well as people 'throwing up' in the gardens. Hygiene at this difficult time is more important than ever.

As you can appreciate, residents in Matlock Bath are extremely worried about the effects these new rules will have on visitors returning to the area and want some assurance that the health of all residents will not be put at risk in any way.

We would like, therefore, to know what is being put in place to protect our village and the lives of those who live and work here, by both of our local authorities and the Police.

Although with the new restrictions unfortunately it is difficult to control the numbers who come to the village, but we feel that some action needs to be taken to dissuade them or help tackle any potential problems that ensue.

- **Police Presence** - Residents have appreciated the Police presence we have had and feel that this must continue with groups of people being dispersed. Clearly many of the visitors have NOT come to the village to exercise but to gather socially and buy fish and chips.
- **Matlock Bath is Closed** – We would like to see a more proactive approach discouraging visitors from coming by giving the message that “Matlock Bath is closed”. Apart from two fish and chip shops all businesses are, as are the toilets.
- **Cones** – Certain areas on the Parades have been coned off. Residents would like to see the whole of the Parades coned off to prevent parking on the A6. They would also like to see the closing of all car parks. The lack of parking will be a discouragement and will also be a method of restricting numbers to the village. The car parks could then be reopened when more of the businesses are allowed to open **and** we have a wider pavement in place (see extending pavement).
- **Pavement Clutter & A Boards** – All pavement clutter and A boards should be removed from the highway to give as much room as possible for people to pass and maintain social distancing safely.
- **Extending Pavements** – If the parking bays along the Parades are suspended, this would allow for an extension of the pavement so social distancing may be possible in some areas although not all. It may then even be possible, when more of the businesses are allowed to open to have a corridor system – one way on the pavement and the other direction on the road

- **One Way System** – We would like to see a one-way system in Lovers Walks to ensure that there is no passing which would enable better social distancing. Although this may be difficult to police, it should help. It works during the Illuminations.
- **Play Areas** – These should be securely locked with padlocks/chains and signage re-attached to the equipment.
- **Signage and Warnings** – Prominent signage and warnings need to be put up as a reminder that we are still in lockdown and that the village is still shut.
- **Public Toilets** – These are currently closed and we would like to see this continue. This fact should be widely advertised. However, our concern is that with no toilet facilities, visitors will defecate in our village causing another health concern.

All responses received are in agreement that, should visitors be allowed to return to our village, there will be many repercussions for the health and wellbeing of the residents and feel very strongly that tourists and motorcyclists should be discouraged from returning. It is accepted that businesses in the village will be keen to see visitors return, but only when it is safe for them, the visitors and the residents. Given the historic nature of the buildings on the Parades, it will be difficult for businesses to offer the required social distance measures.

We would be extremely grateful, therefore, if you could advise what measures are being put in place to protect our residents so that we can reassure those who live here that the authorities have the health, safety and welfare of the residents of Matlock Bath at the heart of their actions.

Yours sincerely



Julie Baranek
Clerk to Matlock Bath Parish Council