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Confirmation of arrangements for Hampshire County Council's proposals to adjust access and charges to the *Enda Ryan Poppy Pods* at Tile Barn Outdoor Centre

1st August 2022

1.0 Introduction

Following the consultation with Poppy Pod members and other interested parties in March 2022, Hampshire County Council would like to inform you of the confirmed new arrangements relating to the Enda Ryan Poppy Pods at Tile Barn Outdoor Centre.

The high-level proposals detailed in the Consultation document were:

- 1.1 To enable all Tile Barn customers to access the Poppy Pod facility throughout the year, including military and non-military customers.
- 1.2 To secure the financial sustainability of the centre by maximising income from available assets which will support on-going maintenance and investment in the future.
- 1.3 To develop a means-tested approach to maintain access for low-income military personnel and their families.

Responses to the consultation provided Tile Barn Outdoor Centre with useful feedback and a range of opinions on the proposed arrangements. The Centre considered all the responses carefully and adjusted some of the original proposals with revised arrangements. These revised proposals were scrutinised by County Council Members and further adjustments were made as a result of the scrutiny process. At his decision day on 13 July 2022, the Executive Member for Recreation, Heritage, and Rural Affairs approved the revised approach to access and pricing for the Poppy Pods to take effect from 1 September 2022, as set out below.

The Centre is unable to respond to individual comments or suggestions, but you can read some extracts from the consultation feedback in Appendix A. Thank you for taking time to support the Centre with this important consultative process.

2.0 Summary of Findings and Key Adjustments to the Proposed Arrangements

The consultation illustrated that many people have very strong aspirations to maintain military family access to the Pods in line with the original concepts. Many people also acknowledged that these facilities need to be operated on a sustainable financial footing, enabling future investment.

The confirmed arrangements are set out in detail below in section 3. A summary of the key arrangements including adjustments are:

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- a 2-month priority booking window for military members will operate from 1st January each year.
- Subject to availability and the respite weekends referenced below, military families will be able to book all term time weekends and school holiday periods.
- From 1st September 2022, 50% of the available term time weekends will be open to military members only.
- Subject to availability and the respite weekends referenced below, the Centre will enable public access during school holiday periods and half of term-time weekends. At these times, there will be shared use of the facility by military and public customers.
- In addition to the military only weekends, the Centre will advertise two weekends a year, starting in 2023, specifically targeted at respite for serving and ex-serving military personnel (and their families) who have mental or physical disabilities or are on low incomes. There will be no charge to customers on these weekends. Access will be evaluated by welfare officers and military charities.
- From 1st September 2022, military families will receive a 40% discount. This discount will be subject to review in 2023 (as referenced below) with the intention of future annual reviews thereafter.
- A review of the new Pod access arrangements will take place during Autumn 2023. This review will also focus on utilisation levels, pricing, and customer discounts to ensure the financial viability of the Poppy Pods moving forward. Poppy Pod Members will be consulted about any significant changes proposed to these arrangements arising from the review in Autumn 2023.
- The public price of a Pod stay is subject to an annual pricing review and military discounts will be calculated from this.

Many people commented that the Pods were often oversubscribed and securing a booking is very challenging. The new online booking and discount system will enable a more efficient booking process and the ability to see live availability.

Subject to availability and the respite weekends referenced above, the confirmed arrangements will open access to public use during school holiday periods and half of term-time weekends. The Centre expects that most military bookings will take place during the 2-month priority window (commencing 1st January each year) and therefore customers accessing the Pods will largely remain military due to the high demand.

The Centre is currently exploring ways to extend the Pod season with options such as under-floor heating and awnings for the Pods and Roundhouse.

Current Arrangements	Proposed Arrangements	Confirmed Arrangements
<p>3.1 Provision of current military family bookings</p> <p><i>The current arrangements are that members of the full time serving military or veteran military personnel once registered have full and complete access to stay in all 20 Poppy Pods with their family during all weekends or school holiday weeks between March and October each year.</i></p>	<p>a) Except for the provision of military-only weekends (see item (b) below), all customers of Tile Barn Outdoor Centre, both military and non-military, will have equal opportunity (subject to the priority booking window referenced in item (c) below) to book a stay in the Pods during weekends and school holiday periods, subject to when the facility is open.</p>	<p>Proposal (a) is confirmed although the number of military-only weekends is significantly increased (see item (b) below).</p>

<p><i>The cost to the family is a £15 booking fee per pod/per night. Total cost of a stay for a family of 4 for a weekend is £30 or for a 4-night week £60. Larger families can still access the pods but would have to book 2 adjacent pods thus doubling the cost.</i></p> <p><i>This access arrangement has been in place since 2019 when we changed from an annual membership fee system. At this time the military families paid an annual membership fee and had free access to the pods once a member. This led to large numbers of cancellations of pods mostly at last minute meaning we had an underutilised facility.</i></p>	<p>b) The centre would advertise a minimum of two 'military-only' free weekends specifically targeted at respite for physically and mentally disabled personnel and those on low income. We envisage engaging with current military charities (i.e Blesma, RBL and MOD unit welfare officers) to refer suitable families and administer their stay with the centre.</p> <p>c) Military families will also be offered a priority booking window for one month before the Pods go on general sale. This will ensure military families have first refusal for popular holiday periods.</p> <p>d) The current booking fee would be replaced by a discount payment scheme, where a discount code will be provided to military families enabling reduced prices based on the public rate. Please see item (e) below and Appendix B for details.</p>	<p>Proposal (b) is confirmed and dates for these respite weekends will be confirmed in January 2023. If demand for Pods is not maximised on these respite weekends, then any excess availability will be offered out to the general military membership but not the public.</p> <p>Existing access and payment arrangements will apply up until 31st August 2022.</p> <p>From 1st September 2022, the Centre will advertise half of the available term-time weekends as military only. Subject to availability and the respite weekends, the remaining term-time weekends and all school holiday periods will be accessible to both military and non-military families. The breakdown of these dates will be made available on the booking website in due course.</p> <p>Revised Proposal (c) is confirmed on the basis of a priority 2-month early booking window starting 1st January 2023.</p> <p>Proposal (d) is confirmed. Adjustments to the discount rates are explained in item (e) below.</p>
<p>3.2 Military Discounts</p> <p><i>The current arrangements are that members of the full time serving military or veteran military personnel once registered pay a £15 booking fee per pod/per night.</i></p> <p><i>This is a 77% discount based on our current public rate of £65 per pod per night in the peak period. The discount equates to 62.5% in the low season when the current public rate is £40 per pod.</i></p>	<p>e) The Centre proposes to introduce a military discount code providing a 25% discount from the public rate for both peak and off-peak periods during 2022, reducing to 15% discount from 1st April 2023.</p> <p>Proposed pricing can be seen in Appendix B.</p> <p>f) The Centre would continue to advertise at least two military only free weekends. Please see item (b) above.</p>	<p>Proposal (e) has been adjusted. The Centre acknowledges that these proposals may place an increased financial burden on some military personnel.</p> <p>For arrival dates from now until 31 August 2022, the current fee arrangements will apply. For arrival dates on or after 1st September 2022, all military Pod bookings will receive a 40% discount from the public rates.</p> <p>The Centre reviews all its pricing on an annual basis to ensure it achieves a</p>

		<p>balanced budget position. Military discount rates will be reviewed in Autumn 2023, as part of a wider review of the arrangements relating to the Pods, and thereafter annually and are subject to change.</p> <p>Poppy Pod Members will be consulted about any significant changes proposed to these arrangements arising from the review in Autumn 2023.</p> <p>The discounts are applicable to current and ex-service/retired personnel.</p> <p>Regarding the military only free weekends, see item (b) above.</p>
<p>3.3 School and youth group bookings</p> <p><i>Schools and youth groups can currently book the pods during term time Monday-Friday for outdoor educational experiences in the New Forest in line with the service mission.</i></p> <p>The current 2022 cost to school users for using the facility is £16.38 per person or £65.52 for a pod with 4 occupants. (prices INC VAT).</p>	<p>g) The Centre does not anticipate altering the access arrangements for these user groups however the Pods may be used by schools and youth groups at weekends and school holidays if there is availability.</p>	<p>Proposal (g) is confirmed.</p>
<p>3.4 Stakeholder use</p> <p><i>The centre supports the local branch of the RBL with free facility use at tile Barn during the local Anzac commemoration event held on the last Sunday in April. This includes use of the pod roundhouse area and the Anzac room of the Bunkhouse building.</i></p> <p><i>This is largely organised and supported by the Brockenhurst branch of the RBL.</i></p>	<p>h) The Centre proposes to continue offering this support to the RBL and will liaise with them around their access needs.</p>	<p>Proposal (h) is confirmed.</p>

4.0 Revised Poppy Pod Customer Journey

Stage 1: Military personnel register with the Poppy Pod scheme	Stage 2: Pod Bookings & Availability	Stage 3: Military Mailing list
<p>Military personnel and families register for the Poppy Pod scheme on the Centre's website.</p> <p>Military memberships will last for 3 years. The Centre will verify applicant military credentials at the time of registration.</p>	<p>Each year (commencing 1st January 2023) the Centre will open a 2-month early booking window for Military members to book Pods throughout the year. The booking system will show the dates which are military only and those open to the public.</p> <p>From 1st September 2022 until 31st December 2022, the existing booking process will remain and the price to military customers will reflect the 40% discount already applied. From 1st January 2023, military customers will use a bespoke booking portal login which will show availability and their discounted price.</p> <p>Please note that from 1st January 2023, the website will display the public price and public availability. Military customers will see full availability and their discounted price when logged into the booking portal.</p> <p>All customers will book Pods directly through the Centre's website. Customers will be able to request specific Pods and the Centre will accommodate this if possible. Pod availability will be in real time and payment will be taken at the time of booking.</p> <p>Further details on the booking process will be shared with</p>	<p>Registered military users of the Poppy Pod scheme will normally receive an email in December, explaining the process and providing links to the booking portal.</p>

	<p>registered military members in due course.</p> <p>All Pod bookings will be subject to the Centre's normal Booking Terms & Conditions.</p>	
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5.0 Next steps

The arrangements set out above are now confirmed. The Centre understands that this consultation has generated some strong feelings, but we hope that all users of the Pods will see these as fair and reasonable arrangements. Tile Barn and Hampshire County Council are passionate about supporting our armed service personnel and their families. The Poppy Pods is a unique residential respite facility which is greatly valued. We are seeking to ensure that this facility is maintained for future generations.

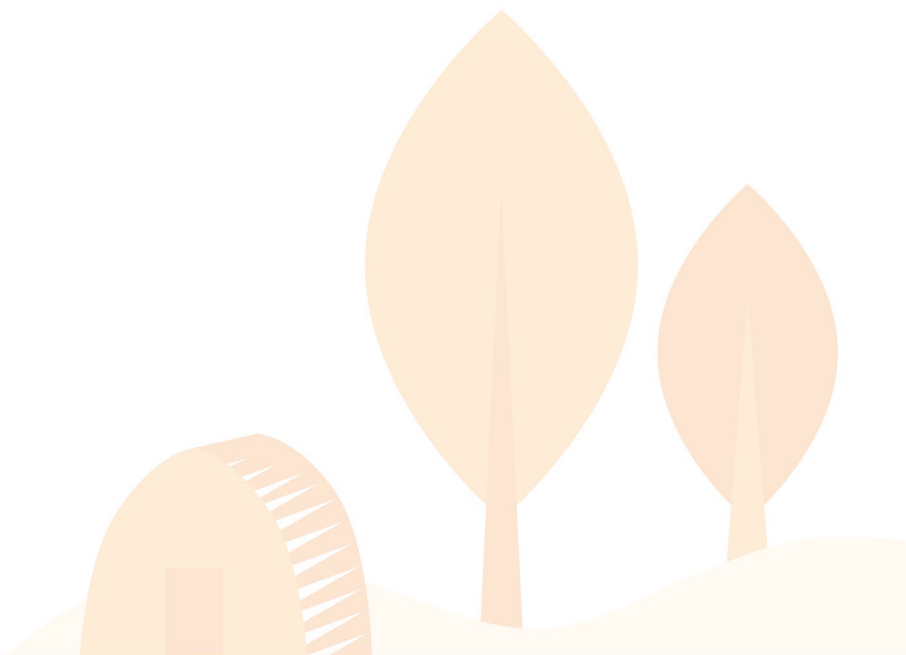
Changes to pricing for military Pod members will take effect for arrival dates on or after 1st September 2022.

In June 2022, the Centre released dates and availability up to 31st August 2022, based on the existing access and fee arrangements. Further communications will be shared with military members and the public for Pod bookings and availability beyond 1st September 2022 in due course.

Thank you for contributing towards this consultation process and we very much look forward to seeing you again in the Poppy Pods soon.

Tile Barn Outdoor Centre

1st August 2022



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Appendix A – Comments relating to proposals to adjust access and charges to the *Enda Ryan Poppy Pods* at Tile Barn Outdoor Centre

The following statements are comments from people who contributed to the consultation which relate to the Enda Ryan Poppy Pods at Tile Barn Outdoor Centre.

- This should remain as a primarily military facility; it is hard enough to get dates to stay without it being opened to civilians. The proposed pricing for military families is far too great an increase, especially for those serving members on low incomes.
- I think it sounds very reasonable to balance the books, so to speak.
- I personally believe the proposed prices being charged will deter some military families from using the facility on a regular basis. If a 25% discount could be retained for the 2023 season and beyond, I honestly believe you may retain the interest of many families.
- As a family of 6. At the prices that the pods are increasing to, I won't be able to afford the pods. But it was fun whilst it lasted.
- I do appreciate the requirement to review the current process and price structure, and fully appreciate the offer of means tested free access for respite for those Service personnel and Veterans with disabilities and on low incomes. I do, however, have a couple of concerns in that I don't think this fully recognises at all the benefit that a dedicated space provided to the military community.
- Far too big price hike that will stop us from using the pods now. Such a shame
- Totally agree with the proposals. Could the pods allow Dogs as this would allow more forces families to use the facility.
- As a serving military family, we feel the proposal to be not in the spirit to the vision of the scheme nor does it reflect the significant financial contributions made by the AFCC. We do not support the proposal.
- I believe the discount for military personnel should be greater than 15%. 25% sounds more reasonable.
- The proposal is absolutely fine.
- All makes good sense and should increase occupancy.
- Whilst I'm content with the proposal, I am an officer so able to afford the increase in the military rate whereas other military personnel with young families may not be able to do so. Therefore, would it be possible to increase the level of military discount for the junior ranks (OR1 to OR4) (e.g. 25% to 33%)?
- I believe that changing this facility to only allow military personnel to take a standard "discounted" rate, commercialises a facility which was intended to benefit military personnel. It is a real shame that this is what is being proposed, especially considering the benefit and respite it currently provides to families.
- I believe that Hampshire County Council should continue with current arrangement and only allow usage by Military families and school/community groups only.
- I have never been able to book as it is always booked up
- I am military however haven't booked to use the poppy pods as I could not find any dates at all on the booking system. If the new pricing system opens up bookings then this is a great move, if it reduces interest from HM forces this could push the community away even more if they have had the same booking issues as me.

- If on peak prices triple like is stated in this document, I won't be bringing my family to the poppy pods again. Part of the appeal also was having a short break away in a location where all the neighbouring families were from the military community.
- I feel part of the attraction was being able to mix with military families, who has experiences similar to our own. I see the attraction with opening to the general public to increase revenue. But feel there should be more than 2 weekends dedicated military personal times. Maybe a full week in the summer holidays and a weekend during each of the school breaks for sole use by military, veterans and their families. This would create a happy compromise and open the centre for all, but not forgetting the purpose this village was created for.

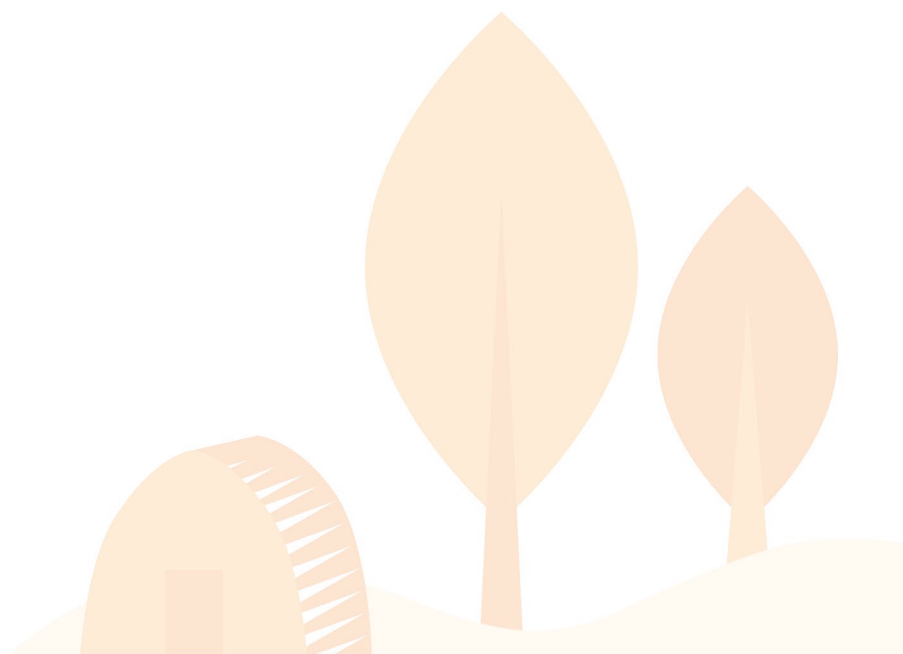
Appendix B – Confirmed Military & Public Prices*

	2022 Public price	Military Price up to 31 st August 2022 per pod/per night.	Military price from 1 st September 2022 per pod/per night including 40% discount.
Peak 1 st May – 30 th September	£68.25	£15.00	£40.95**
Off Peak*** 1 st October – 30 th April	£42.00	£15.00	£25.20**

*All prices are inclusive of VAT at the appropriate rate.

** 2023 Prices will be subject to an annual pricing review.

*** The Pods are normally closed to all bookings from the first weekend of November to the last weekend of February



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