

Newark Castle: Charging Options

This paper sets out the preferred option for ticketing for Newark Castle following its redevelopment, and outlines the assumptions behind them, which have been established in discussion with NSDC staff.

Both NSDC and the core funders (the National Lottery Heritage Fund/Towns Fund) are keen to maximise local use of the castle, while also considering the financial sustainability of the site.

	Preferred Option
Ticketing Model	Headline adult entry charge of £8 (inc VAT, 2023 prices) No concessions Children go free Free return within 12 months Joint ticket with NCWC £12
Charges for Local Residents	50% discount for N&S residents, making adult entry charge £4, no charge for children
Visitor Number Assumptions	
Annual visits from N&S residents	8,600 <i>Represents 3.5% penetration into N&S District population for initial visits, with each initial visit generating 1.0 additional visits within the following 12 month period.</i>
<i>of which initial visits</i>	4,300
<i>of which repeat visits within 12 months</i>	4,300
Annual Visits from Non-NSDC Residents	16,900 <i>Represents 3.5% penetration into current Newark town tourist visits, plus 0.1% penetration into current N&S District tourism visits.</i>
Total Annual Visits	25,500
% Of all Visits From N&S Residents	34%
Total Ticket Income, ex VAT <i>(excludes charges for tours and special events)</i>	£98,017

Notes

Any assumptions around visitor numbers and the impact of charging at Newark Castle can only be estimates.

We do know that visits to NCWC from local people have risen substantially since the museum became free to local residents (up 31% in the period April-August 2023 compared with the same period the previous year).

In particular, assumptions around repeat visits are challenging. National data suggests 23% of visits to museums are made by repeat visitors within a 12 month period (i.e. each initial visit generates an average of 0.3 additional visits within a 12 month period). However, this covers a wide range of free and charging sites, and it can be assumed that free sites and those with free return entry generate a large proportion of those repeat visits.

Heritage Fund guidance on estimating visitor markets for heritage attractions suggests that penetration rates of 5% or higher should only be applied in exceptional circumstances.

For comparison, NCWC (free to residents) has achieved 2,599 visits from local residents since April this year (1.8% penetration for initial visits). This could realistically increase to 3% penetration over the remainder of the financial year.

The current split at NCWC is 42% N&S residents, 58% from outside the district.

Newark Castle itself has limited capacity, and will require timed booking slots at busy periods. 25,500 visitors a year represents an average of 112 visitors per open day. 29,200 represents an average of 129 visits per open day.

Benchmarking

The Heritage and Culture team at NSDC undertook a benchmarking exercise to consider similar attractions in the region / around the country to understand potential pricing and demand that could be sustained at a refurbished Castle attraction. The sample data below demonstrates that a standard ticket ranges from £3.80 to £16. The average standard price is £9.53. The most expensive often offer free entry or discounts for residents, and both English Heritage and the National Trust offer free entry with membership.

English Heritage – Roche Abbey	£6.50 adult, £5.50 conc, £3.50 child, £16.50 family
English Heritage – Lincoln Bishop’s Palace	£8.50 adult, £7.50 conc, £4.50 child, £21.50 family
English Heritage – Gainsborough Old Hall	£11 adult, £9.50 conc, £6.50 child, £28.50 family
National Trust – Tattershall Castle	£10 adult, £5 child, £25 family
Nottingham Castle (local authority)	£12 adult, children free
Newark Air Museum	£10 adult, £9 conc, £5.50 child, £28 family
Lincoln Castle	£16 adult, £15 conc, £8.50 child, £40.50 family
National Civil War Centre – Newark Museum	£8 adult, £7 conc, £4 child, free for N&S residents
Knaresborough Castle Museum (local auth)	£3.80 adult, £2.80 conc, £2.20 child, £11.10 family

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