

RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION TAKEN BY AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER

This form **MUST** be used to record any decision taken by the Elected Mayor or an individual Executive Member (Portfolio Holder).

The form must be completed and passed to the Chief Officer responsible for Legal and Democratic Services no later than NOON on the second working day after the day on which the decision is taken. No action may be taken to implement the decision(s) recorded on this form until 7 working days have passed and the Chief Officer responsible for Legal and Democratic Services has confirmed the decision has not been called in.

1. Description of decision

- (1) That the Head of Regeneration, Property and Local Economy be authorised to instruct Legal Services to serve notice on the Harpur Trust to terminate the Council's leasehold interests in Blue Peris and White Peris.**
- (2) That the closure of the outdoor activity centre service that operates from the site, which officers will endeavour to complete by October 2025, be authorised.**
- (3) That the implications set out in the report be acknowledged.**

2. Date of decision

23 July 2025

3. Reasons for decision

To implement the recommendations within the Council's Sport and Leisure Strategy 2024-2034 and Sports Facility Strategic Review, approved by Executive in November 2024. The Sport and Leisure Strategy was approved by the Executive on 9 July 2025 after consultation.

To meet the budget assumptions within the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the agreed 2025/2026 revenue budget for leisure services contract management.

To ensure that the Council complies with its legal obligations contained within the leases for Blue Peris and White Peris and in respect of the contractual arrangement with its leisure facilities operator and staff currently employed to run the centre.

4. Alternatives considered and rejected

The Council could continue to operate the Centre, but there is no budget to continue the subsidy and all options to increase income have been explored.

The possibility of exploring other avenues for disposal of the lease could potentially be explored; however, the feedback to date indicates that there is a high risk that an alternative operator would not be forthcoming.

In early discussion with the Harpur Trust, it was established that taking over the running of the Centre was not something that the Trustees would consider.

5. How decision is to be funded

The Council will be entitled to a 27% share of the net proceeds from the sale of the property; however, it would be prudent to assume that the net amount will be negligible once any costs for dilapidations have been taken into account. Costs associated with the required redundancies will be borne by the Council under the terms of the contract with GLL.

6. Conflicts of interest

Name of all Executive members who were consulted AND declared a conflict of interest.	Nature of interest	Did Standards Committee give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and date of dispensation)	Did the Chief Executive give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and the date of the dispensation).

The Mayor has been consulted on this decision

Not Applicable

Signed 

Date: **23 July 2025**

Name of Decision Taker: **Mayor Tom Wootton**

This is a public document. A copy of it must be given to the Chief Officer responsible for Legal and Democratic Services as soon as it is completed.

Date decision published:23July2025.....

Date decision can be implemented if not called in:1August2025.....

(Decision to be made exempt from call in.....NO.....)

Bedford Borough Council – The Mayor

Date of Report: 23 July 2025

Report by: Service Director for Public Realm, Highways and Waste Management and Head of Regeneration, Property and Local Economy

Subject: BLUE AND WHITE PERIS MOUNTAIN CENTRE, DINORWIG, CAERNARFON, LL55 3ET

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out the options considered for the future of the Blue and White Peris Mountain Centre and recommends that the Council exercises the break clauses set out in the leases.
- 1.2 The report also sets out the implications of serving notice together with the timetable for closure of the service and relinquishing the property.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Mayor is invited to consider and, if satisfied, to:

- (1) Authorise the Head of Regeneration, Property and Local Economy to instruct Legal Services to serve notice on the Harpur Trust to terminate the Council's leasehold interests in Blue Peris and White Peris.**
- (2) As a result of this, to authorise the closure of the outdoor activity centre service that operates from the site, which officers will endeavour to complete by October 2025.**
- (3) Acknowledge the implications set out in the body of this report.**

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To implement the recommendations within the Council's Sport and Leisure Strategy 2024-2034 and Sports Facility Strategic Review, approved by Executive on 20 November 2024.
- 3.2 To meet the budget assumptions within the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the agreed 2025/2026 revenue budget for leisure services contract management.
- 3.3 To ensure that the Council complies with its legal obligations contained within the leases for Blue Peris and White Peris and in respect of the contractual arrangement with its leisure facilities operator and staff currently employed to run the centre.

4. THE CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 The Blue and White Peris Mountain Centre was established by the former Bedfordshire County Council and transferred to Bedford Borough Council when it became a unitary authority in April 2009. Blue Peris is held on a 99-year lease from the Harpur Trust dated 26 June 1975 and White Peris is leased on a co-terminus term with Blue Peris. The rent payable under each lease is £1.00 per annum and they are held on full repairing and insuring terms.
- 4.2 The Centre comprises a detached 3-storey building (Blue Peris), a detached 2-storey building (White Peris) and a detached 2-storey outbuilding with associated parking. The buildings date from the 1880s and sit in a site totalling 0.437 hectares (1.08 acres). It is located on the outskirts of the village of Dinorwig on the edge of the Eryri (Snowdonia) National Park. The Centre provides catered accommodation for up to 60 people in the Blue Peris building and a further 13 within the White Peris Building on a self-catered basis.
- 4.3 The site is currently operated by Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) under the Council's leisure services contract. The Centre provides a range of outdoor education/adventure activities for school groups, Further Education and Higher Education, youth groups, team development, and individuals undergoing National Governing Body Awards. The leases require the Council to prioritise use of the site by schools from Bedfordshire; however, no contribution towards the running costs is received from Central Bedfordshire.
- 4.4 The net cost of operating Blue and White Peris Mountain Centre was £135,000 in 2024/2025 and is estimated at c.£185,000 for 2025/2026 (leisure contract costs excluding apportioned operator's overhead and margin, plus utilities). This excludes outstanding repair and maintenance costs estimated in the site condition survey.

- 4.5 The Sport and Leisure Strategy and Sports Facility Strategic Review, considered by Executive on 20 November 2024, advised that only around one third of the bookings at the Centre are from Bedford Borough-based groups, with the remaining two-thirds coming from outside the Borough. It was also pointed out that the Bedford Borough schools that currently use the centre are likely to be able to access a choice of similar facilities closer to Bedford. The Executive accepted the recommendation from the Sports Facility Strategic Review that the Council should review options to surrender the current lease or transfer it to an outdoor activity operator. The review, therefore, identified the reduction of net running costs of the site to the Council to zero; this informing the leisure services contract management budget build for 2025/2026, which assumes the removal of budget for the site from October 2025.
- 4.6 The Council's lease includes the option to break by giving 12-months' notice and assignment of the lease is not permitted.

5. DETAILS

- 5.1 The Council has held meetings with the Harpur Trust who indicated that they would consider a proposal for the property to be sold or for the lease to be transferred to an outdoor activity operator. Discussions with the current operator, GLL, and another experienced operator indicated that the scale of accommodation available would not be viable for them.
- 5.2 The break clause within the lease agreements is complex; however, in summary, the Council can serve 12 months' notice to bring the lease to an end. Serving notice requires the Trustees of the Harpur Trust to use their best endeavours to dispose of the freehold of the property and that the proceeds from the sale will be split in proportion to the initial investment made by the parties. The Harpur Trust contribution was the value of the property at the commencement of the lease, which is stated as £47,910, plus a contribution of £40,000 towards the capital cost of conversion. The former County Council invested a total of £32,499, which amounts to 27% of the total. The most recent valuation of the property, which was commissioned jointly by the Harpur Trust and the Council in March 2023, is included in the confidential appendix to this report. The price achievable will depend on market conditions in the period after service of the notice.
- 5.3 The lease requires the Council to keep the property in full repair having regard to the age of the buildings. The Council obtained a condition survey in preparation for the letting of the new leisure contract in February 2024; however, any assessment of the dilapidation's liability was deferred until a final decision was made on the future of the property. The condition survey provides a guide as to the repairs that might be required; however, the Council's liability will be limited by the impact of any dilapidations on the value of the property, which is very unlikely to be equivalent to the actual cost and any plans for the buildings. It is not possible to quantify what the Council's liability for dilapidations might be at this stage, but it would be prudent to assume that the Council may not receive its full 27% of proceeds from a sale.

- 5.4 The leases do not include any requirement on the Council to keep the property open, but service of the notice to break will require the Council to hand the property back with vacant possession and, therefore, the recommendations assume discontinuation of the service operated from the property. The Council's approved revenue budget for 2025/2026 assumes that it will cease to fund the operation of the Centre from October 2025. If the Council decides to close the Centre ahead of expiry of the notice period, it will be responsible for meeting the costs of securing the property. It is expected that the Harpur Trust will agree to an early surrender if the sale completes before expiry of the notice. The question will be asked as to whether an earlier exit can be agreed.
- 5.5 The Council has the right to remove any facility from the leisure services contract with GLL; this will be undertaken by way of an Authority Change Notice under the contract Change Protocol. GLL will deal with the necessary redundancy process; however, the costs will be picked up by the Council under the terms of the contract. The process of closing the service will necessitate the cancellation of school bookings, which will be undertaken by GLL with support from the Council where necessary. The total number of bookings for school residential courses currently stands at 25 for the 2025 calendar year, with only eight of these (representing five schools) being from Bedford Borough-based schools.

6. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 6.1 The Council could continue to operate the Centre, but there is no budget to continue the subsidy and all options to increase income have been explored.
- 6.2 The possibility of exploring other avenues for disposal of the lease could potentially be explored; however, the feedback to date indicates that there is a high risk that an alternative operator would not be forthcoming.
- 6.3 In early discussions with the Harpur Trust, it was established that taking over the running of the Centre was not something that the Trustees would consider.

7. KEY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Legal Issues – relevant legal power

In dealing with this matter, the Council will have regard to its general powers of competence under the Localism Act 2011 and the s123 of the Local Government Act 1972. The Council will be required to serve notice in accordance with the provisions of the lease and to comply with any obligation there under. The Trustees of the Harpur Trust will be required to act in accordance with their obligations under the Charity Acts. The Council's Legal Services team will be instructed to serve the notice and provide Legal advice/support in connection with this matter.

7.2 Policy Issues

The termination of the lease accords with the Council's Sport and Leisure Strategy 2024-2034 and Sports Facility Strategic Review approved by Executive on 20 November 2025. The Sport and Leisure Strategy was approved by the Executive on 9 July 2025.

7.3 Resource Issues

The Council will be entitled to a 27% share of the net proceeds from the sale of the property; however, it would be prudent to assume that the net amount will be negligible once any costs for dilapidations have been taken into account. Costs associated with the required redundancies will be borne by the Council under the terms of the contract with GLL.

7.4 Risks

The key risk is financial in that the sale of the property may not achieve sufficient a return to cover the Council's liabilities that arise as a result of terminating the lease.

There is a reputational risk as the Centre has been a popular facility for local schools in past years and the communications around its closure will need to be handled carefully. The risk is reduced slightly by declining bookings from Bedford Borough-based schools, with this currently standing at eight bookings for residential courses for the whole of 2025, as a result of Council and school budget constraints reducing demand, and, for local schools, the availability of residential and outdoor activity opportunities closer to the Borough.

7.5 Environmental Implications

There are no direct environmental implications arising out of the recommendations in this report.

7.6 Equalities Impact

In preparing this report, due consideration has been given to the Borough Council's statutory Equality Duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, as set out in Section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010.

An Equality Analysis has been undertaken regarding the recommendation. This concluded that there will be some adverse impact on young people from the Bedford Borough schools who have been using the service, however the negative impact is reduced by the fact that usage by Bedford Borough schools is very low (five) and that these schools have access to alternative outdoor education and activity provision that is located closer to the Borough.

The closure of the service is financially prudent in the context of the Council's strategic review of leisure facilities as the usage by Bedford Borough schools is low, alternative provision is available, and it will ensure available resources can continue to support the Council's core leisure provision.

7.7 Impact on Families

The limited use of the Centre by Bedford Borough schools and the fact that there are alternative options for similar activities available within closer proximity to the Borough, mean that the impact on families will be minimal.

7.8 Community Safety and Resilience

There are no direct community safety and resilience implications arising out of the recommendations of this report.

7.9 Impact on Health and Wellbeing

The limited use of the Centre by Bedford Borough schools and the fact that there are alternative options for similar activities available within closer proximity to the Borough, mean that the impact on health and well-being will be minimal.

8. SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS AND OUTCOME

8.1 The following Councillors, Council units, Officers and/or other organisations have been consulted in preparing this report:

Portfolio Holder for Customer Experience (including Leisure, Recreation and Culture)
Corporate Leadership Team
Deputy Chief Executive & Executive Director of Environment
Service Director Governance
Service Director for Education, SEND & Schools
Head of Leisure & Culture
Strategic Lead Leisure
Manager for Sports Development & Leisure
Manager for Assets & Development
Finance
Greenwich Leisure Limited
The Harpur Trust

8.2 No adverse comments were received.

9. **WARD COUNCILLOR VIEWS**

9.1 This report is not relevant to an individual ward.

10. **CONTACTS AND REFERENCES**

Report Contact Officer:	Tom Perrett, Head of Leisure and Culture Margaret Birtles, Manager for Assets and Development
Declarations of Interest by the Report Author:	None
File Reference:	None
Previous Relevant Minutes:	Executive: 20 November 2024 – Sport and Leisure Strategy 2024-2034 and Sports Facility Strategic Review Executive: 9 July 2025 – Approval of Sport and Leisure Strategy 2024-2034
Background Papers:	None
Appendices:	A: Valuation of Blue and White Peris by Gerald Eve dated 7 March 2023: Not for publication (Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12a to the Local Government Act 1972. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person including the authority holding that information).