

Lichfield City Council

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Deputy Town Clerk: Anthony D Briggs

TB/JW/J1/2

26 September 2017

To: Members of the Johnson Birthplace Advisory Committee

Councillors R Awty, Mrs G Boyle, J Brooks, C Spruce, A Thompson and R Yardley

Representative of Johnson Society

Mr P Jones

Also to:

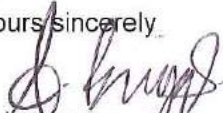
Museums and Heritage Officer (Joanne Wilson)

Dear Committee Member

Johnson Birthplace Advisory Committee

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Johnson Birthplace Advisory Committee to be held in the Moulton Room, Guildhall at **10.30am on Tuesday, 3 October 2017.**

Yours sincerely



Deputy Town Clerk

Apologies for Absence

AGENDA

1 MINUTES

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 March 2017 (**copy attached**). [Minutes received by City Council on 24 April 2017].

2 MUSEUM ADMISSIONS 2016/2017 (ANNUAL REVIEW)

The Museums & Heritage Officer to report on admission figures for this period, as **Appendix 1** attached.

3 MUSEUM ATTENDANTS

Five Attendants are employed in a rota across public opening hours (with only one Attendant on duty at any time). Two of the current Attendant team (Janet Hill-Gibbs and David Titley) have given notice of their retirement, with leaving dates in October and December 2017. One of the retiring attendants currently works the largest individual number of hours, including three Saturdays out of every four. Between the two, they currently provide 75 hours of cover per month (65 in shorter opening months). Five attendants remains the optimum number in order to ensure that weekend rotation and full rota cover can be maintained.

RECOMMENDED:

- a) *That the thanks and appreciation of the Committee, together with best wishes for the future, be given to Janet Hill-Gibbs and David Titley*
- b) *That the Committee formally supports the view that five Attendants is the optimum number for the Birthplace currently*
- c) *That the City Council's Staffing Committee is requested to give consideration to the replacement of the two retiring Attendants at its meeting of 2 November 2017.*

PART-TIME MUSEUM ADMINISTRATION ASSISTANT

As the number of users and the range of activities at the Birthplace Museum grows, so too do the demands on the time of the Museums & Heritage Officer and the Museum Attendant team. Staffing levels at the Museum have not changed since 2000, the year when paid Attendants were introduced to welcome visitors at the front desk. With no change to opening hours, the number of visitors to the Museum has increased from 3,603 in that year to 17,300 in the 16/17 financial year. Following the introduction of free entry in 2005 numbers have consistently risen, with a 57% increase in the last 10 years.

In addition to the rise in visitors, there are many more activities at the Museum which have been introduced over the last decade such as the primary and A-level school visit programme, family activities in school holidays, Christmas events, clubs, groups and adult learning. As the profile rises, more partners are becoming interested in working with the Museum.

Attempts have been made to delegate day-to-day and administrative duties to Attendants during desk shifts, but the increasing number of visitors and customers means that this can only be ad-hoc at best. Some additional administration hours have been undertaken by a Museum Attendant since 2016, however the retirement of two Attendants from the team in winter 2017 will represent the loss of this regular administrative support.

As the Museum is at the start of the next phase of its future, a part-time post dedicated to administration and events support would allow the smooth running of day-to-day and commercial activities to continue, while more of the Museum & Heritage Officer's time could be spent on development, undertaking works laid out in the Birthplace Forward Plan and areas of work requiring expertise. At present, such important work is unavoidably piecemeal.

Employing a part-time administration assistant would therefore be hugely beneficial, bring the Birthplace to comparable staffing levels for similar sized Museums with c.17,000+ users, and would be a significant step in continuing to ensure a secure and sustainable future for the Museum.

A draft job description for the role is attached (**Appendix 2**). At the suggested point the total annual cost including salary, pension and National Insurance costs would be approximately £13,090. This would be partly offset by the change in Attendant personnel, with a projected saving of £3927.60 (based on the cost to LCC of approximately 335 additional casual administration hours that had been undertaken in 2016/17 by retiring Attendants). The remaining sum can be identified from existing City Council budgets.

RECOMMENDED:

- a) *That the Committee give consideration to the draft job description (Agenda Appendix 2) and;*
- b) *That the Committee requests that the draft job description, as approved by this Committee, be considered by the City Council's Staffing Committee at its meeting of 2 November 2017.*

LOANS TO DR JOHNSON'S HOUSE, LONDON

The M&HO developed the current Birthplace exhibition 'Johnson & Garrick, a Friendship in constant repair' in collaboration with the curator of Dr Johnson's House in Gough Square. A Small number of items were received on loan from the London house in June 2017, and the curator of Gough Square has now confirmed which items from Lichfield they wish to borrow in return, so that the exhibition can travel to London in mid-October. A full list of items is attached as **Appendix 3** for information.

The items will be transported by a professional art transport company, and full insurance will be in place (paid for by Gough Square). As there is no meeting of Council until 23 October, and considering that Dr Johnson's House is an Accredited Museum which presents no

concerns regarding the care and security of these objects, it is intended that the devolved powers stated in the Birthplace Museum's Documentation Procedural Manual will be used: *"The final decision to lend an item should be made in consultation with the Town Clerk, Leader of the Council and the Chairman of the Birthplace Advisory Committee. Decisions may be taken to full Council where applicable"*

RECOMMENDED: *That the items listed at Appendix 3, and the use of devolved powers, be noted.*

5 REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT UPDATE: ACCESS AUDIT REPORT

At the March 2017 meeting of this Committee it was reported that a brief to recruit an external consultant to review the Museum was in preparation and that the work would be undertaken over the summer. Shortly after that meeting, the opportunity arose to join a project funded by West Midlands Museum Development, and in June an access audit of the Museum was undertaken by an external expert.

Carrying out and responding to periodic access audits is a requirement of Museums Accreditation, and the report is valuable to informing future developments at the Birthplace. A full copy of the report is enclosed. The summary of recommendations can be found on page 15. Members should note that there is minor inaccuracy regarding listing status on page 12 in reference to the Market Street steps. Although added in 1995, the steps are indeed subject to Grade I listing planning restrictions.

In light of this opportunity the timetable has been amended and our interpretation consultant will now be invited to review the Museum over the winter months.

RECOMMENDED: *That the report be noted, and suggested actions are implemented or investigated further by the Museums & Heritage Officer as applicable.*

6 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

In the Calendar of Meetings as 10.30am on Thursday 22 March 2018.

7 ANY OTHER URGENT OR NECESSARY BUSINESS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN

* * * * *

Lichfield City Council

Minutes of the Johnson Birthplace Advisory Committee Meeting held in Committee Room 1, Guildhall at 10.30 am on Thursday 23 March 2017

PRESENT:

Representing Lichfield City Council: Councillor R Awty, and Councillors Mrs G Boyle, C Spruce and R Yardley.

Representing Johnson Society: Mr D Arthur

In Attendance: Joanne Wilson (Museums & Heritage Officer)
Tony Briggs (Deputy Town Clerk)

Apologies: Councillor J Brooks

37 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 4 October 2016 be confirmed as a correct record. [Minutes adopted by Council on 24 October 2016.]

38 FORWARD PLAN

Members considered the updated Forward Plan 2017-2020 (**Agenda Appendix 1**). The Museums and Heritage Officer outlined work identified for the 2017/18 financial year, including; the establishment of an improved online shop area as part of the new website plans; non-user consultation; the development of group-specific literature advertising tours and talks. Many of the development items included and all elements under the heading of 'To assess and seek alternative solutions to the physical limitations of the building' will begin to be addressed by the Incoming Consultant.

Councillor R Awty enquired as to the impacts and timings of the closure of St Mary's. Councillor R Yardley advised the Committee that St Mary's is due to close at the end of March 2017 and that the proposed conversion is forecast to be completed by April 2018.

RESOLVED: That the Forward Plan 2017-2020 be adopted.

39 MUSEUM ACCESS POLICY STATEMENT

The Museums and Heritage Officer provided an overview of the statement to the Committee. The Committee discussed the limitations of the Birthplace Museum in regard to disabled access and the possibility of a ground floor toilet and greater 'street level' presence. It was acknowledged that while appropriate options have been and will continue to be investigated and implemented (such as the virtual tour available on the Museum's website), the restrictions enforced by the coveted Grade I listing of the building, and the need to preserve the structure and layout of the Museum to preserve authenticity, severely limited the options available.

RESOLVED: That the Museum Access Policy Statement be adopted.

40 OPENING HOURS

The Committee discussed the recommendation of the Museums and Heritage Officer that consideration be given to extending the Museum opening hours to the standard 'Summer' hours of 10.30am – 4.30pm in October and March, thereby creating a shorter Winter opening hours season. Councillor C Spruce stated that the recommendation was based on experience and the need was clear. It was proposed by Councillor C Spruce, Seconded by Councillor A Thompson and

RESOLVED: That the Museum opening hours during October and March be henceforth extended to standard 'Summer' hours, beginning during October 2017; and that the Museums and Heritage Officer prepare a report on the impacts of this decision to be presented at a future meeting of the Committee.

41 REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT UPDATE

Members considered the update provided by the Museums and Heritage Officer regarding the preparation of a brief to be sent to a selection of recommended museum consultants to tender. The brief focuses on Museum facilities, access (in the broadest sense) and the visitor experience (including displays); The report is scheduled to be completed over the Summer with its conclusions reported at the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

42 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

In Calendar of Meetings as 10.30am on Tuesday, 4 October 2017.

**THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS
THE CHAIRMAN DECLARED THE MEETING CLOSED AT 10.53 AM**

The
Samuel Johnson
Birthplace Museum & Bookshop

**Visitor Numbers 2016/2017
Annual Report**

2016/2017	2015/2016	2014/2015	2013/2014
17,687	18,523	17,291	16,756

This represents a 5% decrease on the previous period

Analysis

This was the eleventh full period after the introduction of free admission to the museum in October 2005. 2016/17 visitor figures represent a 60% increase on visitor numbers in 2007/08*. A significant rise in visitor numbers to 16,004 was seen during 2009/2010 for Johnson's tercentenary celebrations. Following an initial decrease in 2010/11, a steady increase has led to numbers that now regularly exceed that previously unprecedented year.

Apr – Jun 2015	4,813	Jul – Sep 2015	6,628
Apr* – Jun 2016	4,226	Jul – Sep 2016	6,034
Quarterly difference: -12%		Quarterly difference: -9%	
Oct – Dec 2015	3,785	Jan – Mar 2016	3,075
Oct – Dec 2016	3,813	Jan – Mar 2017	3,479
Quarterly difference: +1%		Quarterly difference: +13%	

Of the 17,657 visits to the museum in 2016/2017:

- 613 attended a paid event at the museum (340 in 15/16)
- 55 attended as part of an adult group visit (133 in 15/16)
- 408 attended as part of a school group visit (398 in 15/16)

Sales income had dropped with an average spend per head of 38p (down from 64p in the previous period). However, the 2016/2017 period has seen a 16% increase in donations on the previous year, with annual donations at £ 7,546.61 (before additional gift aid refund) and an average gift of 45p per standard visitor. This and the increase in events admissions has seen an overall increase in income (see graph overleaf).

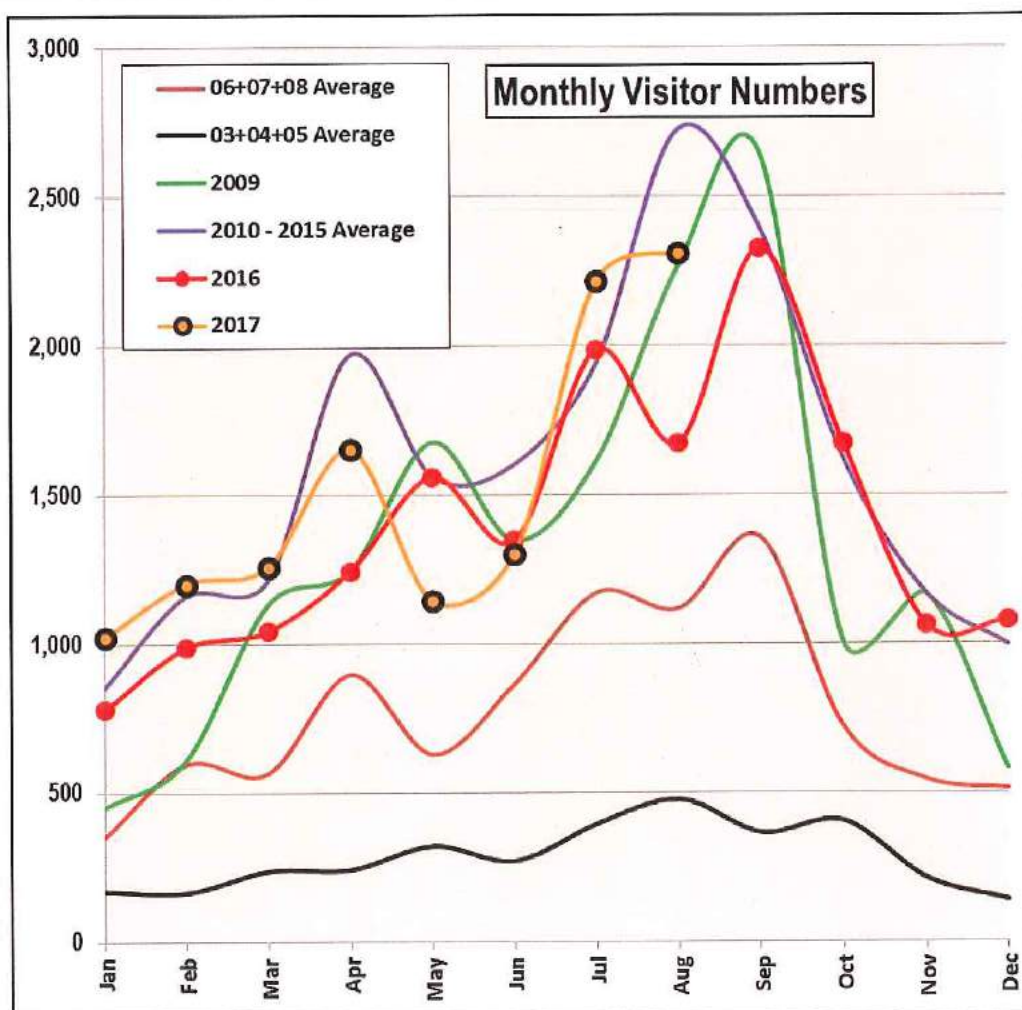
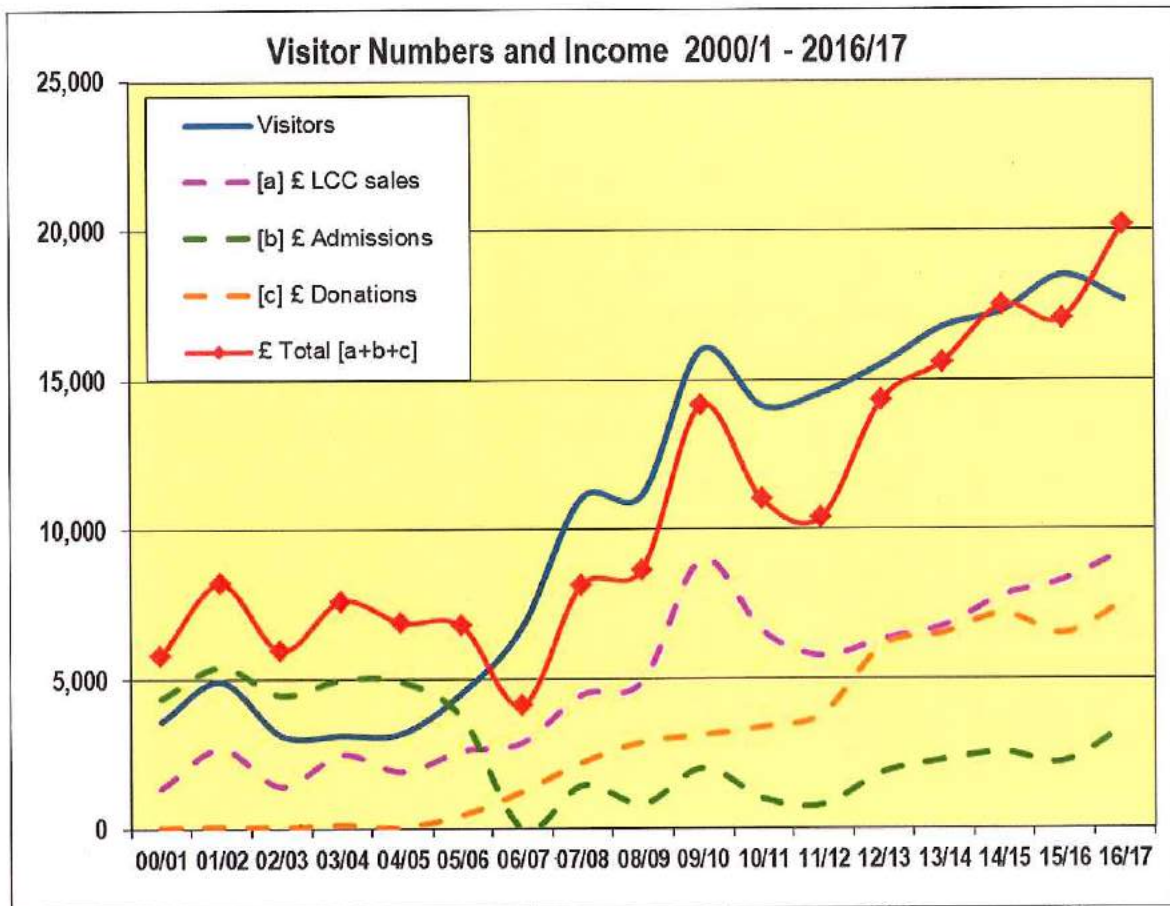
*2007/08 is used as the baseline because bookshop visitors were reclassified as service users from April 2007

*the calendar quarters given total less than the annual reporting figures due variations in the date of week 1.

Indications from the beginning of the present financial year

The initial figures from the present financial year indicate an increase in visitor numbers, with a busy summer period:

Apr – Jun 2016	4,226	Jul- 2 nd week of Sept 2016	4,394
Apr – Jun 2017	4,143	Jul- 2nd week of Sept 2017	5,278
Quarterly difference: -2%		Difference in this period: +20%	



JBAC 3 October 2017: APPENDIX 2

PART-TIME MUSEUM ADMINISTRATION ASSISTANT

Job Title: Museum Administration Assistant
Job Location: Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum
Employed by: Lichfield City Council
Report to: Museums and Heritage Officer

General

The Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum is a Grade I listed building governed and operated by Lichfield City Council. It is both an historic house and a museum dedicated to the life, work and personality of Samuel Johnson. It receives over 17,000 visitors a year. The Museums and Heritage Officer manages the Birthplace, and Museum Attendants are employed 7 days a week to welcome visitors and open the house at weekends. We are looking for a new Administration Assistant to support the Museums & Heritage Officer and Museum Attendants with the day-to-day running of the Birthplace and our events.

The Administrative Assistant will provide general office support, be responsible for bookshop stock and help to prepare for events that take place at the Museum. We are looking for a friendly, helpful, conscientious and enthusiastic person. As it is a varied role, an organised, hands-on and motivated approach is essential, as well as accurate record keeping and excellent IT and communication skills.

Duties:

- General office duties including record keeping, filing and photocopying
- Cash handling and keeping accurate records of sales and donations
- Keeping the Museum diaries up-to-date and processing Attendant daily sheets
- Ordering and sourcing stock and supplies, liaising with LCC Clerical Officer
- Organising and maintaining donated book stock and souvenir storage areas
- Answering general email and telephone enquiries
- Taking bookings for Guided Tours and School visits, and liaising with guides
- Preparing for events, clubs and activities: creating and sourcing materials (e.g. leaflets, signage and props), arranging refreshments and setting up rooms, liaising with volunteers and bookers.
- Assisting with the promotion of the Museum and events (e.g. arranging mailshots)
- To follow all training received and fully support the inclusive and welcoming ethos of the Museum
- Any other administrative and events preparation duties required

Normal working hours

This is a part-time role, 22 hours a week. Working days are Tuesday-Thursday within office hours 9am – 5pm. Occasional evening and weekend working may be required for events, for which time off in lieu is granted.

Salary

Scale Point 14 -16, starting salary £16,781 pro-rata

Holidays

26 days per annum pro-rata (increasing to 30 after 5 years of service)

Other terms and conditions

The post is subject to a six month probationary period for new employees. All other terms and conditions of service will be in accordance with the National Joint Council for Local Government Services 'Green Book'.

Closing Date:**PERSON SPECIFICATION**

	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE	METHOD OF ASSESSMENT
Experience	At least 1 year of experience in an Administrative post. Cash-handling experience.	Experience of events organisation or support.	Application form References Interview
Qualifications	A Level English A Level Maths at Grade C or above, or equivalent	Degree level or equivalent	Application form References Interview
Particular skills and abilities	Good IT Skills and experience of Microsoft Word, Excel and Outlook. Good time management and organisational skills Excellent verbal and written communication skills Excellent customer service skills Ability to keep accurate written and financial records Ability to follow instructions	Ability to use desktop publishing software (e.g. Publisher)	Application form References Interview
Other factors	Friendly and welcoming manner Responsible Able to work without direct supervision Flexible approach The role includes the lifting of books, folding tables & chairs	Interest in Samuel Johnson and or/local history Willingness to wear Georgian costume for special events	Application form References Interview

JBAC 3 October 2017: APPENDIX 3

Full list of loans requested by Dr Johnson's House, Gough Square as part of the exhibition 'Johnson and Garrick, a friendship in constant repair' (35 items)

Paintings

2001.183	David Garrick as a Young Man
2001.137	Garrick as a steward of Stratford
2000.340	Garrick (from Tragedy and Comedy) by Pether
2001.500	Garrick between Tragedy and Comedy, after Reynolds

Prints & Drawings

2001.67	Garrick as Richard III (Pastel by Bartholomew Dandridge)
2001.28	Lichfield Grammar School
2017.5	Peg Woffington
2008.694	Garrick and Madame Violetti
2000.213	David Garrick Esq. (After Gainsborough)
2001.958.1	Rowlandson 'Imitations at Drury Lane Theatre'
2001.169	Garrick as Hamlet
2001.167	Garrick in Romeo and Juliet
2008.148	David Garrick Esq (Universal Magazine)
2001.163.1	The Immortality of David Garrick
2002.163.2	Key to 2001.163.1

Personal and commemorative items

2001.122	Garrick's Snuff Box (portrait of Peter Garrick)
2000.149	Jubilee Medal
2001.53	Samuel Johnson's Punch Bowl
2000.132	Garrick's seal
2001.144	Garrick's walking stick
2001.143	Medallion (Pingo)

Books, Printed ephemera and Manuscripts

2013.9	Gentleman's Magazine July 1736 (with Edial Hall advertisement)
2002.234	Receipt (signed by Garrick's father)
2002.235	Receipt (signed by Garrick's mother)
2001.85	Mr Garrick's Affairs
2001.86	The Trial of Mrs Docksey
2001.55.230	The Dramatic Works of David Garrick
2001.1379	The Common Prayer as Read by Mr Garrick
2001.947	Drury Lane Prologue (1924 facsimile)
2001.66	Playbill for Richard III
2001.27	Playbill for the Fair Penitent
2001.101	Boswell's Verse from the Jubilee
2001.1138	Anna Seward's copy of Boswells 'Tour' with notes on Garrick
2001.55.222	Memoirs of David Garrick
2000.241	Invitation to Garrick's Funeral



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Ironbridge
BIRTHPLACE OF INDUSTRY

Access Audit

Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum
Breadmarket Street
Lichfield
Staffordshire
WS13 6LG

Prepared by:
Ann Johnson of
Wave-length Social Marketing CIC

Visit date: 30 June 2017



DELIVERED BY



Access Audit

Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum

This Audit is part of the
West Midlands Museum Development Programme

Funded by Arts Council England



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



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Executive summary

The Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum is in a characterful central part of the city of Lichfield, and, as the bookshop his father owned is still trading in the same building, this a wonderfully evocative experience. The museum is primarily a reminder of the work of Dr. Johnson and not a house furnished of the period.

Whilst the city centre location could be advantageous, signage is small, so there is every chance it will be missed, even by those looking for the museum, or mistaken for just a local bookshop.

Due to the age of the museum and its location off a pedestrianised shopping area, physical access to the house is difficult. The entrance is at the top of steps as when originally built, which poses an instant barrier to people with physical impairments and to those with pushchairs.

Due to the narrow door entrances and further stairs to each floor, some of those who can manage the entrance steps may then only be able to access the bookshop and ground floor rooms. In addition, with small rooms and tight corners throughout, even a lift to the four upper floors - should this be possible - would not create full access. For this reason we would encourage the museum to do more to tell visitors about the history and work of Dr. Johnson within the bookshop area, and on the street immediately in front of the museum.

The museum does not have a café or toilet facilities, but both are available to the visitor in the immediate vicinity, and this is mentioned on the website.

We were pleased to hear ideas being discussed for the museum, to make it more prominent to passers-by and encouraging those with physical disabilities into the shop and ground floor area. These are not inconsiderable challenges to overcome, but they are certainly worth pursuing, as the museum is a real little gem.

Introduction

Background

An Access Audit is regarded as the first step towards improving accessibility. An audit is an important tool to identify barriers within a building and also external areas - car parking, public access, signage etc. At Wave-length we also believe that a building is only part of the experience for a visitor and so within our organisational audits we seek to understand the accessibility related to expectation of the visitor, information provided and the level of service provision. The audit provides a 'base-line' assessment against which initial recommendations can be made. With the results of the access report, service providers are better equipped to make short and long-term access improvement action plans.

Within our audits we always aim to go beyond overcoming the physical barriers by seeking out and understanding the wider social and environmental barriers that can face both the visitor and those providing the service. In doing so we can offer a wider set of recommendations; identify and highlight any potential risks, then propose appropriate solutions. We believe that a holistic response as such provides for a more sustainable and flexible range of solutions.

Equality Act 2010

The policy of the Equality Act is not a minimalist policy of simply ensuring that some access is available to disabled people; it is, so far as is reasonably practicable, to approximate the access enjoyed by disabled people to that enjoyed by the rest of the public. The purpose of the duty to make reasonable adjustments is to provide access to a service as close as is reasonably possible to get to the standard normally offered to the public at large (and their equivalents in relation to associations or the exercise of public functions. Equality Act 2010 Statutory Code of Practice: Services, Public Functions and Associations, 2011, page 90, 7.4

Spending power of people with disabilities

There are believed to be 11.9 million disabled people in the UK with a disposable income collectively worth £80 billion according to the DWP. Campaign groups regularly cite this figure and find it useful to remind businesses and politicians that disabled people are a sizeable economic force and should not be forgotten. The estimated £80 billion is often referred to by charities and campaigners as the Purple Pound.

Whilst the spending figure and how it is reached might be questionable, there are some key things to consider in respect of access and visitor numbers within the estimated spending power of 11.9 million people with a disability. Whilst the number represents individuals, many of course make visits to venues/sites/attractions with others, and if we assume that they visit with one friend/partner then it of course increases the quoted financial spend. If we then consider an average family with one member having a disability, we begin to realise that the figure of £80bn might be the baseline spend of a family and those connected with people with disabilities. Equally, should a group decide to make a booking (say 20 people from a Women's Institute) and if one of the party had an access requirement, the choice of visit would be influenced by one member of the party. So whether the figure of £80bn is correct or not, we can assume that if our services are not best suited to an individual with a disability we potentially turn many people away from the activity/service we offer.

Visitor experience

Many individuals with disabilities are unable, or perceive they are unable, to visit museums and art galleries because of varying life circumstances such as: poor health; transportation problems; physical, mental, hearing or visual limitations; fatigue; low income. Often in such cases, some individuals are afraid to confront their own inability to understand an exhibit and, instead of asking for assistance, shy away from the experience altogether.

In understanding this and wishing for repeat visitors, much should be considered to ensure that such a visitor feels able to access the site with limited need to ask for assistance. This can be achieved by pre-visit information, signage within the venue and design that allows free flow of access. Exhibit flow, lighting, sound and easy availability of information all play an important role in maximising independence within the visit. Getting this part of the visit right means that instead of shying away from the experience the individual will want to return to see new exhibits, bring along friends and family, thereby building visitor loyalty. Another strength of the Purple Pound is in understanding that people with access needs return to where they are most comfortable, thereby strengthening their spending pound.

So, when planning for improved access, we should see wider than the individual with the condition and understand the value of their (and their group's) loyalty, all of which takes the need of improving access beyond that of the law; it makes social, moral and economic sense.

Managing expectation

Many activities/visitor sites often concentrate on the visit itself, but much of the pleasure of a visit is the looking forward to visiting and sharing it with friends and family. Therefore managing the pre-expectation of the visit is crucial as it can change an anticipated experience to one of disappointment and frustration. Ensuring your website, communication and pre-visit information is clear, informative and honest allows a potential visitor to decide whether this visit might be right for them or a member of the family with a reasonable adjustment need. It provides them with the information to make an informed choice about whether to visit or not, and if they do, what extra aids they might need to bring along.

A recent report from Vitalise, a national disability charity, highly recommends that visitor sites should provide good information so as to encourage wider visitor numbers. (This organisation was re-named as Revitalise in 2015 and is referred to as Revitalise in the rest of this report.) It is certainly shocking to see in their report that new and potential visitors decide not to attend a site based on information provided ahead. At Wave-length we believe this is often not simply that the place isn't accessible, but that the venue has missed explaining in enough depth the accessibility, support or challenges that might be met. Wave-length has also carried out research on local Shropshire based attractions and raised concerns with both VisitEngland and the local authority on the level of access information provided.

Whilst the Revitalise survey looked at a wide breadth of visitor attractions, there seems to be much to learn from it for small museums and galleries. Interestingly, of the larger attractions, the National Railway Museum in Durham came out on top of the league table of accessible attractions listed, with the Imperial War Museum in Manchester second and the World Museum Liverpool third.

The report rated 85 of the top 100 attractions by factors including wheelchair access, numbers of disabled toilets, disabled parking spaces and disability and carer concessions. The study found that over half the attractions did not have full wheelchair access, while almost half have fewer than two disabled toilets per 100 visitors. 15 of the top 20 attractions were housed in historic buildings, demonstrating the imagination with which barriers to accessibility can be overcome and setting an example for less accessible venues to follow.

However what Wave-length found most interesting from the Revitalise survey was the apparent disconnect between the accessibility claims of UK venues and the actual experiences of the people

with disabilities who visit them. An astonishing 65% of disabled people decided against visiting a tourist attraction because they found the accessibility information to be insufficient, confusing or difficult to obtain. 56% said they found tourist attractions' accessibility claims to be exaggerated.

4 out of 10 said they had been physically unable to get into a venue they had previously been informed was accessible. Over half said they just do not trust the accessibility information provided by attractions and venues. Not surprisingly, 70% of those polled said a lack of confidence in accessibility information sometimes held them back from visiting tourist attractions at all.

An overwhelming 95% of the respondents to the Revitalise survey said UK tourist attractions could do more to increase their accessibility. When asked to rate what they thought were the most urgent improvements that tourist attractions and venues needed to make, more accessible ramps and lifts between floors and easier access from outside came out on top, with over 80% of respondents rating these as 'very important'.

The learnings from the Revitalise report have been considered by Wave-length when carrying out this audit.

Aims of the study

For this study we will be visiting eight museums and reviewing their access. These include accredited museums and those working towards accreditation within the West Midlands.

In involving eight museums across the West Midlands it allows for the sharing of good practice across each site, so waiting to publish the reports following all audits has been useful. In taking a collective approach each can learn and understand the other's challenges and how they might be or have been overcome. The museums can share initiatives and then also avoid the need to keep re-inventing the wheel.

We have carried out the audits in a pragmatic way, ensuring the balance of organisational and visitor challenges. In doing so we have considered the environmental, financial and social needs of both sides. We have focused on improving existing services so that the museum can further enhance its access to visitors, seek wider opportunities and widen its customer base. To allow us to do this we have considered the structure of the venue, the visitor experience and, in line with the review undertaken nationally by Revitalise, the visitor expectation of the museum/art gallery.

Please note the audit is not to measure a building's compliance with Part M of Building Regulations. It is also worth noting that an Access Audit does not mitigate a venue or service from claims of discrimination within the Equality Act but it does provide evidence that the managers of a venue seek to understand the barriers faced, plan for development and seek to further enhance the visitor experience.

The elements covered in the proposed access audit depend on the type and nature of the buildings and museum services. There will however be common elements across all. These would include:-

- Accessing information and expectation ahead of the visit – website information/literature provided
- Getting to the premises - access from road or car park, lighting, signage, surfaces and street furniture
- Getting into the premises – entrance, steps, thresholds, doors, lobby/reception area, any seating and lighting
- Getting around the premises – corridors, doors, stairs, lifts, signage, floor surfaces, tonal contrasts and lighting
- Using the services in the premises – toilets, washrooms, changing and bathrooms, any eating areas, public room layout, lighting, heating, switches, handles, seating, furniture, alarms, health and safety issues, management and staff responses
- Exploring alternative ways of providing access to services – where a physical feature makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for a service to be accessed
- Getting out of the building in an emergency – fire exits, emergency routes, lighting and warning systems and safe refuge
- Communication materials – instruction sheets, guides, suggestion forms etc.
- Staff development, support and training
- Policies, procedures and practices

Building type

The Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum and bookshop is located in the centre of Lichfield, on the corner of Market Street and Breadmarket Street, opposite the market square. The building is a Grade I Listed townhouse and the museum is spread over five floors.

Johnson's father built the house in 1707 and Samuel was born there on 18 September 1709. Between the time of Johnson's death in 1784 until the house was bought for the city by John Gilbert in 1900 to retain as a museum, it was used as a commercial property for various trades.

Museum purpose

The museum opened in 1901 and is dedicated to the life and works of the author and lexicographer Dr. Samuel Johnson who wrote the first authoritative *Dictionary of the English Language*.

The museum still retains a bookshop along the main pedestrian walkway that also forms part of the entrance to the museum.

The museum holds a collection of over 8,000 items relating to Johnson himself, his circle and c.18th Lichfield. This collection includes prints and paintings, furniture, manuscripts and books, including many early and rare editions of Johnson's work.

There is also a significant manuscript collection, including signature letters from Johnson and his family, and other important figures such as Boswell, Anna Seward, Hester Piozzi, Joshua Reynolds and Sarah Siddons.

Governance

The building and collection is owned by a Charitable Trust, of which Lichfield City Council is sole Trustee. Lichfield City Council then employs staff and manages the contents, events and exhibits.

Users of the building

Visitor numbers are approximately 18k per year and on an upward trend. These include people visiting the house or the bookshop, and attending clubs, events and readings.

Admission to the museum is free to all visitors, other than for some special events.

Main findings

Website, feedback and visitor communications

Website

The museum website is easy to navigate and uses modern imagery along with a virtual tour of the house. It has some useful information on access, but needs to be clearer about limitations. For example, the information about the five steps up to the entrance is useful for someone with physical limitations, but expectations could be managed even further by mentioning the absence of a lift, and that wheelchair users won't be able to get into the museum even if they are assisted in gaining entry to the bookshop.

Other communications

The museum has 271 'Likes' on Facebook and 947 Followers on Twitter. The museum shares information, exhibits and news items on both these social media platforms.

Third party websites

Enjoy Staffordshire has a useful summary of the access limitations, along with information on the aids available. There is also a useful checklist on access.

<http://www.enjoystaffordshire.com/Lichfield-Samuel-Johnson-Birthplace-Museum/details/?dms=3&venue=2200209>

Visit Lichfield has a detailed and useful section on the museum's accessibility.

<http://www.visitlichfield.co.uk/samueljohnson>

Visit Heart of England has some access information but does not refer to the physical barriers for visitors entering and making their way around the house.

<http://www.visitheartofengland.com/newdetail.aspx?group=70&cat=211&county=6&id=7e4a63a0-b872-4a64-a836-c32ed063b126>

Hardcopy leaflets

The printed leaflets provide useful information about access, including availability of a hearing loop and large print guides, and it also details some of the physical limitations.

Feedback

The museum garners feedback via survey forms (which are currently kept upstairs), comment cards, and by talking to visitors as they leave.

Feedback on Trip Advisor is generally 'Excellent' or 'Very Good'. However, there are some negative comments relating to disability access, and other comments from visitors who have enjoyed the museum but still mention the access challenges.

Approach, routes and street furniture

Lichfield city centre is fairly flat and the museum is well signposted around the pedestrianised areas with their generous pavements. Being in the centre, the museum is easily reached by public transport (images 1 and 3).

The museum is on a corner of two streets with an A board immediately outside, and other signage and information around the perimeter, but there is sufficient pavement area to navigate around easily (images 2 and 3).

However, the signage is small and some of it is high up and so may not be seen immediately by people with visual impairments.

Car parking and external ramps

The museum is easily reached from the city centre car parks which all have accessible bays, some of which are free to Blue Badge holders. Blue Badge holders can also use the on-street parking bays without any time limit.

There are no external ramps in or around the immediate area of the museum.

Entrances, external steps and internal surfaces

The front entrance is accessed via stone steps with a supporting handrail, and this is the only public entrance into the bookshop and museum (images 2, 3 and 4). Whilst there is a side door into the house, this would take considerable work to make it accessible due to the age and shape of the steps (image 1). In addition, once inside the house, wheelchair users would have little turning space and would not be able to access the bookshop area from here (image 8).

We understand that the current front entrance steps are not an original feature of the house and therefore likely not to be covered by Listed Building regulations: The original steps into the bookshop are hidden behind the current steps. This may help plans to replace the steps with a ramp, thus improving access for all.

The front entrance is a solid door so it is not possible to see if someone is approaching: Consequently, reception staff will not be aware if someone needs assistance in entering.

The entrance door is wide enough for the average wheelchair.

Reception areas and lobbies

Visitors enter directly into the bookshop and can then choose whether to visit the museum as well. The bookshop is light, and spacious enough for a standard wheelchair user to navigate around. However, there is unlikely to be enough room for motorised buggies.

The reception desk is of a good height to communicate with visitors whether standing or seated, and museum information is available here (images 5 and 6).

The well-informed staff and volunteers manning the bookshop also act as a welcome point to explain the museum's history to visitors. They are also able to provide some context to the museum to help the visually impaired.

A wheelchair user unable to walk would not be able to access the museum beyond the point of the shop. This is due to the first step of the stairs up to the first floor protruding across the museum entrance door (images 7 and 10). It is difficult to see how this barrier could be removed in a listed building situation. With this in mind, consideration should be given to improving the experience for people (not using wheelchairs) unable to manage stairs to experience the two ground floor rooms, including the bookshop area.

Corridors, internal doors and internal ramps

For those able to manage the stairs, the rooms on all the upper floors are light, spacious and easy to navigate.

There are no internal ramps, and no obvious challenges with internal door thresholds, passageways and flooring.

Internal stairs and lifts

There is no lift at the museum. The stairs to all floors have even treads, clear nosing and bannister rails to the full length.

Toilet and rest room facilities

There are no visitor toilets at the museum, but being in the centre of Lichfield there are public toilets and cafés nearby with toilet facilities.

Facilities

The bookshop, based in the same room that Johnson's parents ran their bookshop business from since 1708, is spacious (images 5, 15 and 16). Today, the shop sells second-hand books, a wide range of gifts and souvenirs including new books on Johnson and Lichfield, original engraved prints and maps, scarves, jewellery and gift bags. All proceeds support the upkeep of the museum.

There is a meeting room facility on the upper floor for educational visits and where groups can meet (image 14). Space here is limited, but fold-up chairs help make the best use of the space (image 12).

Aids

Ample seating is provided around the house, with additional fold-up chairs available if required (images 12, 14 and 16).

Text cards and information boards are clear, with large font sizes, and left or centre-justified text; these are placed so that visitors can get close enough to read them. There are quotes on the walls (image 18) and, for those wanting to learn more, detailed information packs and academic papers are available. All items in display cabinets can be seen easily and have accompanying text cards (image 20).

The museum offers interactive exhibits for children (image 17), several tactile items and handling objects (image 19), and trails for different ability levels around the house. There is also an opportunity in one of the upper floors for both children and adults to try on period outfits.

A film showing in one of the upper rooms (image 14) depicts the life and times of Dr. Johnson. This provides useful information for all visitors, but particularly for those with visual and learning difficulties.

For those unable to use the stairs, there is a VDU in the bookshop showing another film (images 15 and 16). This is an excellent portrayal of the life of Dr. Johnson including images and a short dramatization of his early life: It is supported by a handbook on his life and works. The seating provided to watch this film is a solid, hard-to-move chair, which means a wheelchair-user pausing to watch the film or read the handbook would block the easy navigation of the shop for other visitors (image 16).

Wayfinding

The museum is easy to navigate around with each room leading through to the next.

Lighting and acoustics

All rooms and stairwells have good natural and directional lighting, and display cabinets throughout the museum are well-lit (image 20).

No sudden or continuous noises were experienced during our visit.

Means of escape and building management

In the event of fire staff conduct a sweep of the floors and help visitors out of the building. There are also CCTV cameras on each floor and in each room which can be checked from the reception area.

As well as an audible alarm, the system also flashes to alert visitors with a hearing impairment of the need to evacuate.

Staff, support and general visitor experience

Admission is free, and donations are encouraged at various points around the museum.

The museum runs group activities and hosts other, including Latin meet-up groups, storytelling and educational talks. There is a calendar of events including one in which volunteers in costume dance and perform in the pedestrianised area at the front of the building.

The museum offers group tours that can assist groups with learning, visual, neuro and hearing impairments.

Museum staff and volunteers receive some basic training from the council, including Welcome to All, First Aid and lone working. Anyone attending specialised training will cascade the learning down to the rest of the team.

Recommendations/Conclusion

The following recommendations and considerations are offered as a guide to improving access for visitors with a range of disabilities, impairments and health conditions. Should you plan to go ahead with any of the recommendations then we advise you obtain independent costings and specific guidance on the viability, benefits and risks involved.

Actions we would recommend you implement as soon as practicable

Such actions are either linked to health and safety, or are simply low cost activity that would improve the experience of the visit. Health and safety recommendations address only the public areas immediately identified on the day of our visit. We have only included areas obvious to us as part of our disability audit and not as a comprehensive health and safety audit. It is advised that you seek the advice of a competent Health and Safety professional should any of the points below require clarification or raise further concern.

Low cost short-term recommendations and considerations

- i. Review the disability access information on the website, in particular the restrictions for those with physical impairments. Include more detail on the challenges of the entrance steps, mention that it is stairs-only access the upper floors and that a wheelchair user cannot go beyond the bookshop. Adding some images to demonstrate these challenges would also be helpful.
- ii. Place some of the visitor survey forms on the ground floor for visitors who cannot use the stairs. This will ensure you get a more balanced feedback, from those who are only able to experience the ground floor and not the whole house.
- iii. Consider replacing the solid chair in the bookshop with something more portable so that a wheelchair user watching the film or reading the handbook can move into the space and avoid blocking the walkway.

Actions we would recommend you consider in the mid to long term

- i. Consider some larger or more prominent outdoor signage or banners to grab the attention of passers-by, and let visitors, including the visually impaired, know that they have arrived. Changing the signage and messaging seasonally would help keep up the interest level.
- ii. Provide an Access Statement on the website, including all the existing information, plus a link to Blue Badge parking in Lichfield and mention of the film in the bookshop.
- iii. Given the access difficulties for people unable to manage the entrance steps, we recommend that, if funding can be found, a ramp be installed to replace these steps. We suggest that this ramp should run alongside the house, ideally on the right-hand side of the door entrance as you face the house (image 2). This would minimise the required gradient, as the pedestrianised area slopes down past the house. However, the feasibility of this ramp and its location will need to be discussed with appropriate heritage and building contractors. On the day of the visit we discussed the potential this ramp might provide by presenting the opportunity to expose the original steps, and for these to form a feature of the ramped area, for example being visible through a transparent screen. Funding for work of this nature could be sought as part of an access and heritage bid.
- iv. Even if a ramp is installed, due to the space limitations it is unlikely the bookshop would be accessible for those in motorised buggies. Signage outside the building should make this clear.
- v. Consider an approach to assisting people through the entrance door if they are having trouble opening it, for example by installing a bell to ring for assistance.

Opportunities we would recommend that you consider in widening visitor numbers, developing your business planning or events diary

- i. Provide more costume drama activities at the front of the museum to attract attention and draw people into the museum.

- ii. Put a strategy in place to increase social media engagement, for example encouraging the sharing of images, 'Like and share' competitions and sign-ups to receive preview or exclusive event information.
- iii. As Samuel Johnson is known to have struggled with mental health issues, we would encourage the museum to consider this as part of the exhibition. This would help address issues of mental health stigma and encourage discussion on how mental health impacts on academic achievement.

Sharing of good practice

The following section seeks to provide you with an information starting point so you can further enhance the adjustments and opportunities you seek to achieve within your museum. It offers links to further discover and provides inspiration to stretch accessibility to all within the community. Some of the areas may offer reasonable solutions that you might not be able to apply but nevertheless it might inspire you to do it in part or when a change is made to a website, room or communications.

The choices of information to share with you are as result of questions asked and information sought from others in the West Midlands Museum Development programme.

This is just a sample of the best practice and information available to you, you may choose to consider these or make further searches.

Award-winning museums

At the time of providing this report we have not visited the museums referred to in the Revitalise Report as part of the top choices for access by disabled visitors. We are however able to see their websites and information/facilities provided and share some of the learning that might assist other museums and therefore widen visitor appeal. The museums named are the National Railway Museum in Durham; Imperial War Museum Manchester and the World Museum Liverpool.

National Railway Museum in Durham: Whilst they do not necessarily provide all the fine detail of the breadth and width of facilities you are still, as the reader, clear of the facilities they provide.

What strikes you is the friendly welcoming approach to access within the page 'We aim to provide a friendly, accessible environment for all our visitors and the widest possible access to our buildings, exhibitions and collections' instead of just providing a detailed statement.

Learning: *It might be useful for all museums to read their access information and ask if you are simply being informative – or could you be more welcoming when providing access information?*

When reading the statement from the Imperial War Museum in Manchester most visitors would feel the sense of welcome and understand the range of services and the challenges that might be met when visiting the museum. This allows an individual planning their first visit to feel confident and informed ahead of setting out. The general visitor statement also has much about transport links – floor plans etc. The War Museum's statement of information is interesting in its breadth of support:

"We are committed to ensuring IWM North is accessible to all visitors, regardless of disability, and hope the facilities we have introduced enhance your visit. These include:

- Six manual wheelchairs available for use free of charge* (IWM North is fully accessible by wheelchair)
- Accessible toilets on the ground floor
- Lifts to all floors
- We aim to offer audio described tours and object handling sessions where possible. Please check whether this facility will be available by calling 0161 836 4063 or emailing learningnorth@iwm.org.uk at least one week before your planned visit date. Signed tours are regularly available. Please check the events webpages to find out if BSL (British Sign Language) interpretation will be provided.
- Large-print copies of IWM North's Floor Plan and What's On leaflet
- A warm welcome to guide and hearing dogs
- Induction loop systems at the Information Desk, WaterShard Café, Shop counter and Learning Studio

- Sixteen designated parking spaces for people with disabilities. Please note charges apply to all parking.
- Please be aware that the building has been designed to encourage visitors to consider the confusion experienced during conflict. As a result the floor of the main exhibition area has a gentle slope and visitors with mobility issues may wish to take extra care in this area. There are also different lighting levels over two floors.

* Subject to availability. Wheelchairs are distributed on a first come, first served basis.

All of our Front of House staff receive training in disability awareness. If you have any queries, or need any assistance, please ask. We will be more than happy to help you. If you have any feedback we would love to hear from you. You can leave comments at our Information Desk on your day of visit or email us: contact@iwm.org.uk. “

Learning: *Again the statement sounds welcoming, if a person has a hearing or sight impairment they might choose the day of their visit more carefully or ring ahead to arrange handling sessions and in doing so feel as if it would be no trouble. Whilst you may not be able to offer all that this museum can, maybe you could look at whether you can offer some? Or if you offer similar already are you telling people? And are you encouraging people to give feedback?*

The World Museum Liverpool seems to take sharing accessible information to another level and of course within their information they celebrate their accessibility award through Revitalise – see <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/wml/visit/access.aspx>. What strikes you on this website is the use of film and images to not just talk about access but to show areas as well. They also speak about their museum being Autism Friendly.

Learning: *Whilst it might not be practical or necessary to provide a film of your accessibility and services, images are useful and great in helping people understand the services you provide and any possible challenges. If you do not have enough room on your website to include extra images then why not create a separate document and link it from the website so as to provide more information about Access to the Visitor. Include any awards or badges you have received, as The World Museum have done, on your website. Creating and including further images/film might be enhanced by talking to local disability networks who could support you with this.*

Certification, awards and charters

Should you wish to further your disability access support, keep existing services under review and then share commitments with visitors you might want to look at some of the following badges/accreditations etc. or alternatively research your own national, regional or local ones:

Autism Charter <http://www.autism-alliance.org.uk/Connect-to-Autism/autism-charter> opening text from the site:

The Autism Charter has been produced in collaboration with people with autism. It sets out realistic and achievable aspirations for venues to become autism-friendly. This means, above all, being ready to make adjustments where needed so that people with autism and their families feel welcome. We know that all venues are different which is where the help and advice from Autism Alliance UK comes in.



Dementia Action Alliance <http://www.dementiaaction.org.uk/>. This is an organisation that you can join, currently it appears to be via voluntary donations from those able to offer support. The opening of the Alliance reads: Organisations across England committed to transforming the lives of people with dementia and their carers.

The Dementia Action Alliance is a movement with one simple aim: to bring about a society-wide response to dementia. It encourages and supports communities and organisations across England to take practical actions to enable people to live well with dementia.

You may also wish to become members of the Disability Action Alliance. This is a large group of service providers and employers who share and work together within many sectors of the UK to improve access and services to people with a disability. It is free to join and offers a range of information and support to its members. <http://disabilityactionalliance.org.uk/>

In addition you could join a disability network group in your area, support their work and in return ask if they would assist you in improving access at your site, help with promotion and assist in keeping it under review.

Colour Visual Stress

Some organisations now expand their accessibility to those with Colour Visual Stress.

According to the British Dyslexia Association people with visual stress may experience one or several of the following:

- Blurred letters or words which go out of focus
- Letters which move or present with back to front appearance or shimmering or shaking
- Headaches from reading
- Words or letters which break into two and appear as double
- Find it easier to read large, widely spaced print, than small and crowded
- Difficulty with tracking across the page
- Upset by glare on the page or oversensitive to bright lights

So when designing hand-outs and large information boards, for colour backgrounds you might consider the following:

- The use of cream or pastel coloured backgrounds can mitigate this difficulty as can coloured filters as an overlay
- The choice of colour of text on white backgrounds can also affect clarity e.g. using red on a whiteboard can render the text almost invisible for some dyslexic students. For information on dyslexia friendly text see Dyslexia Style Guide.

Art beyond sight

Often we think that if we provide a verbal transcript or a personal tour guide to assist a visually impaired person around a museum or gallery that this might be sufficient, and for many it can be. However, as a museum we may want to go over and above this when offering a more accessible service and consider aspects such as subject, form, colour, direction of art etc.

The following guidelines comprise a basic methodology that museum educators and art teachers can use to create successful verbal descriptions of painting, sculpture, and architecture, as well as works in other media <http://www.artbeyondsight.org/handbook/acs-guidelines.shtml> . It offers a very broad overview of the varying approaches that might be adopted.

Touch Objects

Offering the opportunity to touch, explore and fully comprehend artefacts or pieces of art can assist all visitors to a museum/gallery and especially people with visual impairments and other sensory needs. You may consider offering this for some of your permanent artefacts, most popular items and/or something that best demonstrates the purpose of your museum/gallery. The links below show the work being undertaken by the V&A in relation to touch items, we have also included some amazing work completed by the Museum of Prado in Madrid. Whilst you may not be able to stretch to the work undertaken by these two large organisations you may be inspired to create something best adapted for your site, perhaps a scaled down model or a 3d replica. If you do create touch items, ensure you communicate this within your marketing so as to increase visitor numbers.



The work of the V&A in creating Touch Objects: <http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/3761/3276>

3d Art images from a Madrid Gallery <http://www.boredpanda.com/classic-paintings-3d-visual-impaired-prado-museum-madrid/>

Information Technology

It is hard to keep up with IT and how it might support a gallery or museum, but if you are looking to attract more people, perhaps young people, the deaf and hard of hearing or the visually impaired, then using IT equipment that talks to phone apps now carried by most people might be

a new and exciting way to do this. It also offers a way of sharing more information about your exhibition without big areas of text.

Most apps follow a similar template sharing the gallery or museum's collection through images along with further information about each piece. It can replace the guided tour and/or become essential to those with visual, hearing and language barriers. Some museums/galleries allow you to download the app from their website ahead of the visit.

As with all technology development it comes with a word of warning; it can be expensive, do more than you can reasonably use or be out of date quickly. So if planning to go ahead, take your time, do plenty of research and decide what you need and not simply what you can get as it might be that you can then justify seeking funding or sponsorship to make happen. We found an interesting article on the Museums Association website on app technology along with a few case studies; this might be a good starting point <http://www.museumsassociation.org/museum-practice/apps>

Further ideas and options

Other museums and art galleries are extending the visitor experience in many other ways including the following:

- Specialist guided tours with support for the hearing impaired and the visually impaired
- Ring fencing tours and times of day that consider the needs of people with autism and similar conditions who might be stressed and react to something they cannot fully comprehend, unexpected noise, lights flashing and/or activity that has the potential to make a person jump. In some cases this means having times when activity/noise etc. is at a minimum and informing the visitors of this.
- Other museums with popular exhibits have been offering sessions aimed at the visitor with a need for reasonable adjustment so that they might be able to handle more of the exhibit, experience the exhibit in a different way or simply be able to get around more easily

Appendix One: Means of escape for disabled people in public places

Evacuation of people with mobility impairments from rooms above ground level should be clearly considered and planned either through the use of limited access; Evac Chairs or the use of refuge spaces as with all areas of Health and Safety and especially in relation to fire expert advice should be sought when designing evacuation processes. Should you use Refuge spaces you should consider the following requirements (extract from the Government's Community Report 2008 on *The adequacy of refuges, escape stairs and management procedures*):

Most standards for refuges are broadly similar. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 5000 (2003) *Building Construction and Safety Code*, provides one of the most comprehensive definitions of a refuge outlining certain key features deemed necessary in an area of refuge in the United States. The following extract describes the approach taken:

The adequacy of refuges, escape stairs and management procedures

- A wheelchair space of 760mm x 1220mm for each 200 occupants or a fraction thereof, based on the occupant load served by the area of refuge
- An effective evacuation route based on the occupant load should be a minimum of 910mm wide
- Access to any designated wheelchair space should not be through more than one adjoining wheelchair space
- The refuge must maintain 'tenable conditions' for a period of 15 minutes when the exposing face is subjected to maximum expected fire conditions
- Illuminated signs complying with the requirements for exit signage reading 'area of refuge' and that include the international symbol of accessibility should be provided to identify the location of areas of refuge as follows:
 - At each door providing access to the area of refuge
 - At all exits not providing accessible means of egress
 - Tactile signage shall be located at each door to an area of refuge

- The refuge shall be equipped with a two-way communication system and appropriate instruction

A British Standard introduces the principles of evacuation of people with disabilities, and highlights the need for an effective management procedure for such an evacuation. BS 5588-8: 1999v section 3.14 defines a refuge as an "area that is enclosed with fire-resisting construction (other than any part of it that is an external wall of a building) and separated directly by a safe route to a storey exit, evacuation lift or final exit, thus constituting a temporary safe space for disabled people to await assistance for their evacuation...

...refuges are relatively safe waiting areas for short periods. They are not areas where disabled people should be left alone indefinitely until rescued by the fire brigade, or until the fire is extinguished."

In addition to the above information regarding refuge spaces, you might find the following extract from the UK Fire Safety Advice Centre useful. This should help to inform decision-making in relation to supporting someone safely out of a building.

Means of escape for disabled people in public places

In public places the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 requires the Responsible Person when conducting a fire risk assessment and considering the means of escape from fire to incorporate the recommendations of:

- The British Standards Institute BS 8300:2009 *Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people*
- The guide *Means of Escape for Disabled People* can be downloaded at the Department of Communities and Local Government website.

These are not statutory documents but authoritative guidance on the design and management of buildings to enable the safe evacuation of people with disabilities. Includes guidance for people with hearing and sight loss. Includes application to existing buildings. Copies of the British Standard may be obtained from the local library or you may have to purchase one from the British Standards Institute.

The following guidance should be read in conjunction with the British Standard BS 8300:2009 *Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people*. The evacuation plan should only be devised by persons familiar with the location and the people involved.

- Disabled people, like everyone else, should always have available, safe means of escape in the event of fire.
- The nominated person in charge must, with the assistance of the Responsible Person, make the best practicable arrangements for ascertaining what areas are used by disabled people, and must, in consultation with them, make adequate arrangements for their evacuation in the event of fire. These arrangements must be tested.
- A Personal Fire Evacuation Plan should be drawn up for every disabled person or group of disabled people in the building. Regular building users who are disabled should receive a copy of a Personal Fire Evacuation Plan. If the building is one with a large number of visitors then simple relevant fire evacuation instructions should, so far as possible, be handed to disabled visitors by reception staff.
- So far as is reasonably practicable, fire compartmentation in buildings used by disabled people, and any other arrangements, must comply with BS 8300:2009 *Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people*.
- Lifts must not be used in the event of fire unless they meet the special requirements of PD 7974-6:2004 *The application of fire safety engineering principles to fire safety design of buildings*. Human factors. Life safety strategies. Occupant evacuation, behaviour and condition.
- A sufficient number of people should be trained in advance in giving assistance to disabled people so that the necessary number would be present in the event of an emergency.

- Where necessary, arrangements must be made for the presence of the disabled person to be known to those who would give assistance. This could be done with an in-out tally at the entrance or by informing someone, provided the desk or office involved is permanently manned during the day. In some cases, for example ensuring that deaf or blind people are helped out, a floor warden system may be more appropriate.
- The placing of restrictions on disabled people, requiring them to be accompanied at all times by potential helpers, should where possible be avoided. In buildings with good fire compartmentation it will usually be possible for people to work unaccompanied, provided there are adequate numbers of potential helpers elsewhere in the building. However, disabled people who would need assistance to leave in an emergency should not use buildings at times when insufficient helpers may not be present to assist evacuation (e.g. evenings and weekends). Also, if compartmentation in one area does not reach the standard of BS 8300:2009 Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people then it may be necessary to require that a disabled person only uses the area when sufficient numbers are immediately at hand. A disabled person might use a particular floor for normal work and other places in the course of their work.
- Disabled people should not use any part of a building where it would be difficult for them, even with help, to escape in the event of fire. Use of basements by wheelchair users, where there is no basement level exit, is likely to be an example of this. Activities which might take place in such areas should be moved to different areas, so far as is reasonably practicable, to avoid excluding disabled people.
- In the case of work above ground floor level by people who use a wheelchair or have difficulty with stairs, arrangements should be based on horizontal movement away from fire through fire-resisting doors to an area of refuge. BS 9999 indicates the layout requirements for this. Procedures could be based on the following principles:
 - When the fire bell rings the disabled person asks assistance from anyone nearby to help in evacuation. The disabled person and helpers wait, without causing obstruction, in a place near the stairs until other occupants have gone down and the disabled person is then carried or helped downstairs. It may be necessary to provide one or more Evac chairs for this.

- If insufficient helpers are on hand the disabled person moves to the main stairwell, or another one if this had been considered by prior agreement with the emergency party to be more convenient, unless there are signs of smoke or fire in which case they go to the stairwell furthest away from the fire, and wait in the stairwell for assistance.
- The emergency party gathers and if the disabled person is known to be in the building they go the pre-arranged staircase or, if that is in or very near the fire, to the alternative staircase and carry the disabled person down
- A fire safety adviser can help in the application of this code to particular circumstances, and should be consulted in any case where it appears that building modifications might be required to provide safe means of escape for disabled persons.
- Disabled people should include those temporarily disabled through injury

Legal Overview

The Fire and Rescue Service's role as enforcing authority is to ensure the means of escape in case of fire and associated fire safety measures provided for all people who may be in a building are both adequate and reasonable, taking into account the circumstances of each particular case.

Under current fire safety legislation it is the Responsible Person as defined by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 to provide a fire safety risk assessment that includes an emergency evacuation plan for all people likely to be in the premises, including disabled people, and how that plan will be implemented. Such an evacuation plan should not rely upon the intervention of the Fire and Rescue Service to make it work. In the case of multi-occupancy buildings, responsibility may rest with a number of Responsible Persons for each occupying organisation and with the owners of the building. It is important that they co-operate and co-ordinate evacuation plans with each other. This could present a particular problem in multi-occupancy buildings when the different escape plans and strategies need to be co-ordinated from a central point.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995/2002 (DDA) (superseded by the Equality Act 2010) does not make any change to these requirements: it underpins the above fire safety legislation in England and Wales by requiring that employers or organisations providing services to the public take responsibility for ensuring that all people, including disabled people, can leave the building they control safely in the event of a fire. Where an employer or a service provider does not make provision for the safe evacuation of disabled people from its premises, this may be viewed as discrimination. It may also constitute a failure to comply with the requirements of the fire safety legislation mentioned above.

Appendix Two: Images



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3



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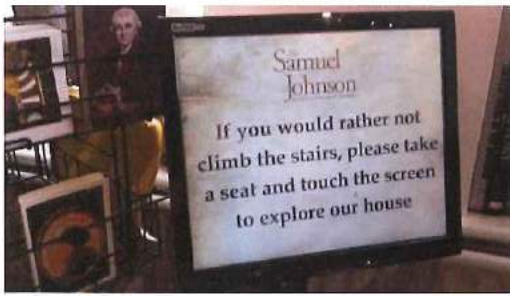
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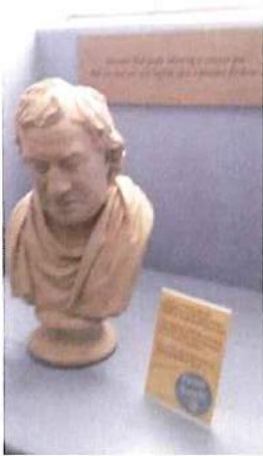
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