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Isles of Scilly Town Hall

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Access Review of Proposals and Existing Facilities at Planning Submission Stage

A/ Introduction

The Isles of Scilly Town Hall Project will repurpose the existing Town Hall in Hugh Town, St Mary's, to provide a new museum and performance space.

Section B of this report reviews the proposed plans for remodelling and extending the Town Hall building, as shown in drawings by Purcell Architects, issued in April 2022. The report focuses on circulation and physical access, as well as sensory and cognitive disability. Recommendations will be expanded to cover more detail during later stages of the design process.

Section C of the report is a review of disabled access on approach and within the existing Town Hall.

The Appendix of this report sets out the relevant legislation and guidance. Note that throughout the report "AD M2" and "AD K" refer to Building Regulations Approved Documents Part M (Volume 2) and Part K.

Important aspects needing clarification before next design stage

The following features need to be clarified:

- Will the central external door entrance from Church Street into the exhibition space (which currently has one step) be a public entrance?
- Will the entrance from Silver Street be a service entrance, and not a public entrance?
- Wheelchair accessible seating positions should be shown in the hall at ground floor level and on the balcony, to provide wheelchair users a choice of location. Any positions should have access to a means of escape route. AD M2 states that for an auditorium with 132 seats there should be 2 permanent and 4 removable wheelchair positions.

- Fire protected routes and the locations of safe wheelchair refuges should be reviewed following consultation with a fire expert, especially on the upper floors, for instance from the second floor volunteer area.

Building description

The Town Hall is a Grade II listed Victorian building, owned and managed by the Council of the Isles of Scilly . It is located in the centre of Hugh Town, between the Town Beach situated to the north of the town centre and Porthcressa Beach immediately to the south. The main stone structure was built in 1887-1889 and runs north-south between Church Street and Silver Street. It has outbuildings on the eastern side and a 20th century three-storey extension on the western side.

It currently houses a small museum entered from Church Street, a hall (used until recently for performances and events and with another entrance from Silver Street), and office and meeting spaces for council staff.

Outline of proposals

The proposals will demolish the later extensions on both sides of the existing building, leaving the original stone block, containing the single storey hall and the two-storey portion with attic rooms above, which includes the first floor former council chamber.

On the west side of this block, a new three storey extension will contain the museum entrance/shop from Church Street and ancillary accommodation (e.g. WCs) at ground floor level. Exhibition and archive rooms will be located on the upper floors.

On the east side, a new two storey extension will be constructed, which will house museum exhibits, including the pilot gig suspended from the ceiling. There will be cafe/bar counters on each floor, so it will double up as a café during the day and as foyer spaces when performances or events occur in the hall.

The hall will be re orientated so that the stage will be at the south end of the building. A new balcony will be inserted, with its floor level with the former first floor council chamber and also with the new first floors of the east and west extensions.

Vertical circulation will be via a new passenger lift, connecting all the key levels, and two new staircases in the new extensions. A lightwell will bring daylight into the centre of the building.

It is envisaged that the following activities and events will be held in the building.

- Museum and archive displays and activities
- Music concerts, theatre and dance
- Film screenings and slide shows
- Lectures and educational events
- Community events, craft markets, meetings and functions
- Participation classes
- Foyer café/bar supported by a catering kitchen
- Volunteer resource area

The proposals for the Town Hall will revitalise this well-loved civic building and provide an inclusive cultural centre for the Isles of Scilly. It will fully meet all access standards, including accessible entrances, lift and stairs, refreshment areas, WCs and the improved performance space in the hall. The proposals will provide an opportunity to display the museum exhibits, so that they can be interpreted by all. Once the project is complete, the Town Hall will be a valuable asset for the local community and for visitors from further afield.

B/ Access Review of Proposals

Approach and Arrival

1. The current drawings do not include any alterations to the building approach, except for improvements to the level entrance from Church Street and a service entrance with an external ramp from Silver Street. The car park on the south side of the building, which currently has 10 parking spaces, will remain as existing.
 - *Future design development: A review of the approaches to the building should be carried out; for instance, for people arriving from the town centre along Church Street, as well as from the car park. There should be an inclusive approach to the entrance on the north side of the building. An example where possible alterations could be carried out, is to alter the cobbled area at the road junction to the east of the proposed entrance. This would ensure that people with mobility and/or sensory impairments can pass safely from the car park to the Church Street entrance. Marking out a designated accessible parking bay in the car park should also be considered.*

Museum entrance from Church Street

2. The museum entrance from Church Street will be into a new extension on the west side of the original Town Hall building. The entrance door, adjacent to a glazed shop window, will be automated. The existing central entrance door into the exhibition space (which currently has one step) will not be used as a public entrance.
 - *Future design development: Approach and entrance signage, when it is developed at a later stage, should be clearly visible for people, particularly those with visual impairments. The entrances should also have the recommended manifestation to all glazed doors and panels.*
3. Inside the new entrance door will be the museum reception and shop. Because of their significance, the existing stone steps will be retained.
 - *Future design development: The details of the counter and shop display units will be designed during the next design stage.*

4. Visitors will pass from the entrance/shop through an opening and up a ramp into the introductory exhibition space.
 - *Future design development: The gradient, length and handrails on the proposed ramp need to be specified.*

Service entrance from Silver Street

5. The entrance on this side of the building will be into the new east extension, and will be a service entrance. It will have a gentle sloping path into the building, entering through a glazed lobby with two sets of wide doors.

Circulating around the ground floor

6. Due to the fact that there is a change of level of about 1m between the main entrance on Church Street and the rear entrance on Silver Street, an internal change of level via a short ramp and a flight of six steps will be required. The ramp and steps are shown in the introductory exhibition space, rising up to the level of the hall and the remaining ground floor level rooms. The accessible route bypassing the steps will be via the new passenger lift located in the exhibition space.

Circulating around the upper floors

7. **Up to and around first floor:** The first floor will be served by two new staircases on each side of the building, a main staircase in the west extension and another open staircase in the east extension, which wraps around the gig hanging from the ceiling. First floor levels between these two staircases will be level, however the connecting route will pass through the hall balcony. The accessible route bypassing both these staircases will be via the new passenger lift.
8. **Up to and around second floor:** Only the new main staircase in the west extension will rise to the second floor, where it will serve the archive spaces and office/ meeting rooms in the west extension. A further flight of five steps is shown up to the volunteering area at the front of the building. The accessible route bypassing the main staircase and these five steps will be via the passenger lift.

9. **New stairs and steps:** All new stairs and steps will be designed to the current standards set in AD K, with regards to flight widths, numbers of steps in a flight, extending handrails on both sides of flights and step nosings with visual contrast.
10. **Passenger lift:** The passenger lift located in the exhibition space will be designed to AD M2, with at least a minimum car size of 1400 x 1100mm. At ground floor level it will have doors on each side to accommodate the short rise between the entrance level from Church Street up to the hall level, six steps higher. There will be 1500 x 1500mm square waiting spaces at each lift landing. Controls, call buttons and signage, on landings and within the lift car will meet the requirements in AD M2 3.29 – 3.34. The passenger lift will not be an evacuation lift.
11. **Platform lift:** There will be a short-rise platform lift up to the stage with at least a minimum car size of 1250 x 800mm for an unaccompanied wheelchair user. 1500 x 1500mm square waiting spaces are required at both lift landings. Controls, call buttons and signage, on landings and within the lift car will meet the requirements in AD M2 3.34 -3.49.
 - *Future design development: The size of the platform lift and space around it needs to be reviewed, to ensure that it is usable by a wheelchair user.*

Horizontal Circulation

12. Throughout the proposals there will be wide circulation corridors (1200mm or wider) and new doors that will meet current access standards in terms of door widths, 300mm offset at the leading edge of the door, ironmongery, vision panels etc.
 - *Future design development: Where door closers are necessary, they should meet AD M standards with regards to the force required to open them. It should be noted that for ease of circulation, the use of doors and doors with closers should be minimised, and no closers should be installed on wheelchair accessible WC cubicles. Where there are wide doors which are likely to be heavy to open, they should be automated or held open on electromagnetic fasteners.*

Museum visitor route

13. From the introductory exhibition space, the visitor route will be up the short ramp and six steps, followed by the main staircase to the first floor rooms on the north side of the building. The accessible route will be via the passenger lift. The route for all museum visitors will be through the hall at balcony level to the first floor gig display in the eastern extension.
14. The return route to ground floor level for museum visitors will descend the eastern staircase and pass through the foyer/café bar and through the hall to the shop and exit into Church Street. The return wheelchair accessible route from the first floor gig display will be back through the hall at balcony level and down in the passenger lift.
 - *Future design development: Seats on the balcony will need to be removed to allow all visitors, especially wheelchair users, to reach the doors opening into the first floor gig display.*

Hall

15. The hall will be entered through the Church Street entrance, the same entrance as used by museum visitors. From this entrance the route will go up the six steps or via the platform lift to hall level. Within the hall wide gangways are shown at both sides of the seating blocks. At ground floor level, flat seating rows are shown towards the front of the hall and seven rows of retractable seats at the rear of the hall, reached up a central stepped gangway. There are also seating rows on the first floor balcony.
 - *Future design development: Wheelchair positions will be required in the hall, with some at ground floor level and some on the balcony, so that wheelchair users have a choice of location. Any positions should have access to a means of escape route. AD M2 states that for an auditorium with 132 seats there should be 2 permanent and 4 removable wheelchair positions.*
 - *Future design development: If acoustic lobbies are required between the circulation areas and the hall, these will need to accommodate wheelchair access with adequate space clear of the door swings.*

16. The change of level up to the stage from the hall or from the changing rooms will be via steps on each side of the stage, or via the new platform lift at the west side of the stage.

Offices

17. The proposals show offices and meeting rooms at first floor level in the west extension, and a volunteering area reached up five steps from the second floor. Both of these areas will be served by WC cubicles.
 - *Future design development: If a communal kitchenette/tea-making facilities is included in the proposals for staff and volunteers, note that AD M2 (Paras 4.13 – 4.16) states that shared refreshment facilities should be inclusively designed, with a lower height worktop with clear knee-space under. This is so that wheelchair users have equal access to the facilities.*

Refreshment areas

18. A key aspect of the scheme is the inclusion of café/bar areas on the ground and first floors of the east extension.
19. Servery and bar counters will be designed to include a lowered section with under-counter space suitable for wheelchair users.
 - *Future design development: If drinks shelves are required, they should be designed with differing heights to be suitable for seated, as well as standing patrons. Any seating should suit people of differing body types and abilities, including firm seating with back and arm-rests, suitable for people with joint/mobility impairments.*

WCs and sanitary provision

20. General WCs: Two blocks of general unisex WCs will be located at ground floor level in the new west extension. Reached from the café will be one general unisex WC.
21. Unisex wheelchair accessible WCs: One unisex wheelchair accessible WC will be at ground floor level in the west extension and there will be an accessible unisex/ baby-changing cubicle reached from the café. There will be two further

unisex wheelchair accessible WCs in the staff/ meeting room area at first floor level and in the volunteering area at second floor level. All the new wheelchair accessible WC cubicles will meet AD M2 recommended minimum sizes (1500mmx 2200mm, excluding any ducts within the cubicle).

22. For performers there will be a changing room with an accessible WC shower which will have direct access to the steps and platform lift to the stage.
- *Future design development: In the general WCs there should be a cubicle in each block of WCs, designed to meet the needs of ambulant disabled users as per AD M2 Diagram 21. The outward opening doors will assist people who require more space in front of the WC pan and the grabrails will assist people with limited body strength.*
 - *Future design development: If baby-changing facilities are included in a unisex wheelchair accessible WC, then the cubicle will need to be larger to accommodate the extra space for the equipment and bins. It is understood that a 'Changing Places' facility for changing older children/adults is being developed elsewhere in Hugh Town, so one will not be included in the Town Hall proposals.*

Means of escape for people with disabilities

23. Under the Equality Act and BS9999, Council of the Isles of Scilly , as a service provider and employer, has a duty to ensure that disabled people can leave the premises safely in the event of a fire, so any emergency plan will take account of disabled people. Key to this process is the development of Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs), which will be available for the public, and drafted specifically for members of staff and volunteers with disabilities.
24. **Means of escape strategy:** Because there is no wheelchair access to the upper floors in the building at present, the current escape strategy does not require any evacuation procedures specifically for people who are unable to descend stairs. In the proposals we anticipate that wheelchair users and people who are unable to negotiate stairs will be able to reach all levels of the building via the passenger lift. The fire consultant will need to develop an egress strategy from these levels, making use of assisted evacuation from wheelchair refuges located within fire protected lobbies on the upper floors. It would include clear unobstructed routes and level thresholds to all external exits. Each wheelchair

refuge will consist of a dedicated 900 x 1400mm space with signage and an information panel, located in the fire protected area.

- *Future design development: Protected routes and the locations of safe wheelchair refuges should be reviewed following consultation with a fire expert.*

25. **Visual alarms, e.g. flashing beacons:** Visual alarms, e.g. flashing beacons, will be provided for people who are not able to hear the audible fire alarm signal, for instance where people are alone within the general and accessible WCs or changing facilities.

Other access issues

26. **Wayfinding and Signage:** A signage strategy within the building will be developed to assist people with cognitive, wayfinding and orientation issues.

27. **Visual environment and lighting:** The proposals will include a new lighting scheme. It will provide even lighting levels in circulation areas and feature lighting where communication is essential, such as at service counters and the bar/café serveries. There will be good lighting levels in the exhibition areas, the foyer areas (e.g. for people to read menus and programmes) and in WC facilities (e.g. above basins and mirrors).

- *Future design development: We recommend that the new décor follow good practice with regards to transparent and reflective surfaces, and also colour contrast between doors and walls, floor and walls, plus contrast between sanitary fittings, ironmongery and switches and their backgrounds. However, even though contrast is necessary for people with visual impairments, it is important for people with dementia and cognitive disabilities to avoid uneven light levels and adjacent floor areas with very different colours, texture or bold patterned surfaces, which can be disorientating.*

28. **Audio Enhancement:** At this stage, audio enhancement systems are still being specified. The detailed design of such systems and the audio environment can, however, significantly affect people's ability to communicate with others and hear information.

- *Future design development: Appropriate floor, wall and ceiling finishes should be chosen to minimise echoes, as people with partial hearing loss can find reflected sound very disturbing. Hearing enhancement systems should be appropriately chosen, particularly where they are used in separate, but adjacent spaces, (to minimise overspill) or where background noise may be an issue. We also recommend that reception points, e.g. box office and café/bar counters have an induction loop to assist people with hearing aids.*

B/ Access to and within the current building

This section reviews disabled access at the existing Town Hall, collecting data through a virtual site visit via video-link on 25 November 2021 with the Town Hall staff. It considers access into and around the building and identifies the key access barriers which will need to be resolved. The recommendations in this report section have been fed into the initial stages of the design process, led by Purcell Architects and the design team.

Approaches and parking

1. The nearest car park is in the parking area to the rear of the building, where there is space for around ten vehicles. It should be noted that only Scilly Isles residents have cars and some use golf buggies. Parking provision is not very strictly enforced. Visitors to the building also park in surrounding streets, where there is space. In the car park there are no designated accessible parking bays marked out.
2. Currently the most accessible entrance is to the front of the hall, where disabled people can be dropped off in Church Street. There is small, uneven kerb (around 60mm high) to the pavement from the roadway.
3. At both entrances there are ad-hoc drop-off spaces for visitors being dropped off by taxi.
4. For people approaching by bicycle, there are cycle stands opposite the front entrance on Church Street.



Parking at rear of Town Hall



Front of Town Hall: view from Church Street



View westwards along Church Street, showing cycle parking to left

Approach by foot or wheelchair

5. Because the building is in the town centre, it is likely that many visitors (particularly tourists) will arrive by foot. Some people will arrive by wheelchair or mobility scooter. The pavements immediately in front of the building appear level, with a suitable width for safe wheelchair passage. However, the route from the car park to the front of the building appears to have a cobbled section, which may present problems for people with mobility or balance impairments. Cobblestones are also a difficult surface for wheelchair users to cross.



Cobbles on route from carpark

Main entrance and reception

6. The original main entrance to the Town Hall is from Church Street. It consists of double doors, which open inwards directly from the pavement. The opening width through one door leaf is approximately 800mm, which gives just sufficient clearance for a wheelchair user; however, there is a 150mm high step inside the doors, so it is not an accessible entrance.
7. A short distance along Church Street is another door, which now serves as the main public entrance. This is a 900mm wide push-pad automated, outward-opening glazed single door. More accessible than the original entrance, it opens into the visitor reception area.



Main entrance off Church Street



New public entrance off Church Street

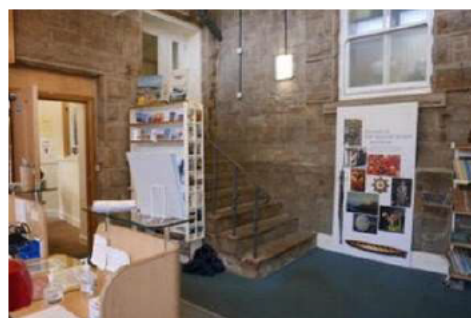
8. The reception area is a small well-lit space, with a reception counter on the window-side. The counter has a lowered section (720mm high) for wheelchair users. There is no hearing enhancement system (audio-induction loop) for visitors with hearing impairments.



Reception counter

9. The reception area provides access via a ramp to a small museum space and offices at the front of the building, which are discussed later.

10. An original flight of six stone steps rises up from the reception area to the level of the hall. The WCs and staircases to the upper floors are also reached by passing through a lobby at the top of these steps.



Six steps leading from main reception

Rear entrance to Town Hall

11. The rear entrance is only accessible for people with mobility impairments with assistance. It consists of a small porch, which has outward-opening single timber doors on both sides (clear opening width approx. 900mm). Small steep ramps (gradient approximately 1:10) slope down to each door with a handrail to one side. The door thresholds have a slight lip. In wet weather, sandbags are stacked up at the doorways to prevent water ingress.



Rear of Town Hall

12. The porch itself is small, measuring approx. 1550mm x 2300mm. A set of outward opening double doors provide access into the hall (clear opening width of approx. 800mm to one leaf).



Rear entrance with sandbags across threshold.

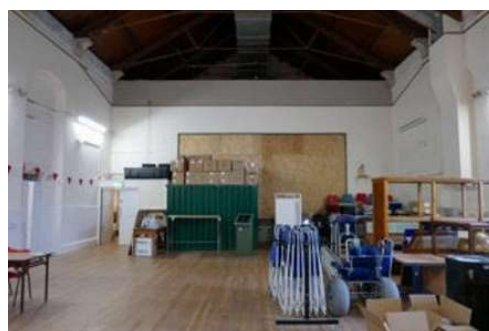
Key access issues with approaches, entrances, reception

- *There is only one accessible entrance from Church Street (the single door in the extension). The reception area is quite restricted in size, and it could lead to increased congestion if someone in a larger wheelchair is moving to exit the building against the general inward flow of traffic.*
- *The pedestrian route from the car park to the accessible public entrance crosses a cobbled section of roadway, which could be inaccessible to people with walking difficulties or who use wheelchairs.*
- *The rear entrance has uneven thresholds at the porch doors and has restricted manoeuvring space within the porch.*
- *The only internal connection between the front entrance from Church Street and the hall is via the six stone steps.*

Hall

13. The hall is accessed from the main reception up a flight of six stone steps, which leads to an internal corridor and narrow double doors into the hall (650mm clearance to one leaf). The hall itself is a large open space. The proscenium stage at one end is currently boarded off for use as a store. A small flight of steps leads up to the stage.

Halfway along the western wall of the hall are narrow double doors (500mm clear opening width to one leaf) leading to the WCs within the extension at ground floor level.



Interior of hall - looking towards stage from rear doors



Interior of hall - looking from stage end

Key access issues with the hall

- *Due to the steps from the reception and the uneven threshold at the rear entrance, there is no easy access for wheelchair users or anyone with a more severe mobility impairment to reach the hall.*

- *There is only stepped access to the stage, which limits access for disabled performers.*
- *Double doors into the hall and from the hall to the WCs are too narrow for wheelchair passage (750mm clear width through one opening leaf is the minimum width recommended in AD M2).*

Museum

12. On the ground floor at the front of the building is a small museum. It can be entered via the original front entrance; but in practice, visitors are encouraged to enter via the reception door and exit via the original double doors to create a one-way route. Between the reception and the museum is an internal ramp.

In this area, partition walls have been inserted to form offices and stores. It is anticipated that these walls will be removed in the project proposals.

The museum space contains a range of tall glass cabinets and cases on plinths. Structural columns interrupt the circulation space in the centre of the room.



Museum interior, looking towards the reception and front of the building



Interior of Museum, viewed as one enters from the reception area.

Offices

13. There are other offices for council staff on each level of the building. These are situated at the northern end of the building (the front, overlooking Church Street) and in the extension on the west side.



Upper floor office space/ meeting room

Key access issues with the museum and office spaces

- *The small museum is usually entered via the ramp from the front reception area. However, visitors are generally required to exit via the main double doors at the front of the building, which have a 150mm high step at the threshold, so disabled people have to return via the reception door. Note that the exhibition cases, objects, signage and interpretation was not audited for this report.*



Step at front entrance/exit doors from museum to external footpath.

- *The only office spaces with ramped access are the two small office areas adjacent to the museum space, but there is no wheelchair accessible WC near them. The other offices are either reached by steps or through narrow doors and corridors. It would be possible for people with ambulant disabilities to reach the ground floor offices in the western extension via the rear entrance, but the numerous internal doors and small lobbies precludes access for wheelchair users.*



Small lobby at base of stair leading to office

- *There is no lift access to the upper floor office spaces.*

General and accessible WCs (including change-facilities)

14. There are toilets on the ground and first floors of the building within the extension on the western side.
15. Alongside the general WCs there is also a right-hand transfer unisex wheelchair accessible WC on the ground floor.



Accessible WC on ground floor

Key access issues with the WCs

- *The ground floor WCs (including the only accessible WC) can only be accessed via the very narrow double doors from the hall, or via a series of internal doors leading through one of the offices. The route in either case is not suitable for wheelchair users or people with larger walking aids, who would struggle to open the doors independently.*
- *There is no baby or adult changing facility.*

Staff kitchenette/tea-making facilities

16. There is a staff kitchenette within the extension on the ground floor, plus a small kitchenette/tea-making area in the first floor corridor. The main kitchenette facility consists of a kitchen sink, L-shaped worktop and storage cupboards.



Ground floor kitchenette

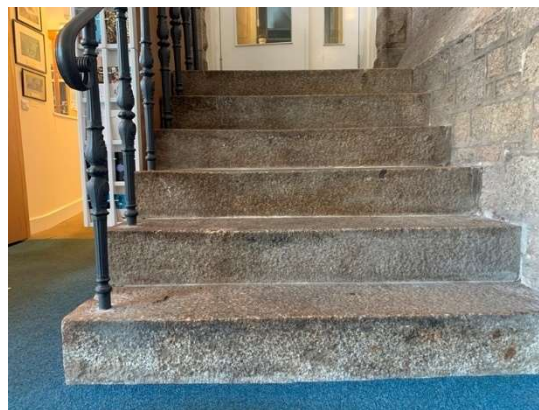
Key access issues with the staff kitchenette/tea-making facilities

- *The tea-making facilities for council staff are within the extension, and the access from the main reception is via steps.*
- *There is no lift access to the first floor for anyone unable to manage the internal stairs.*

Circulation ramp and steps

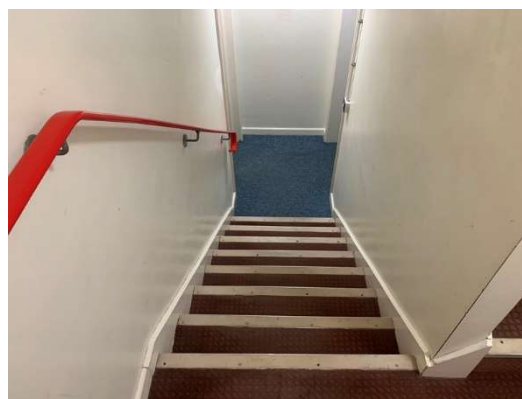
There are currently numerous sets of stairs connecting different parts of the building, plus a small internal ramp from the reception to the museum. These are described below:

17. **Staircase from reception to museum and rear corridor:** This is a flight of six stone steps with one ornate handrail, and has no contrasting nosings.



Stone staircase from main reception to other parts of the building

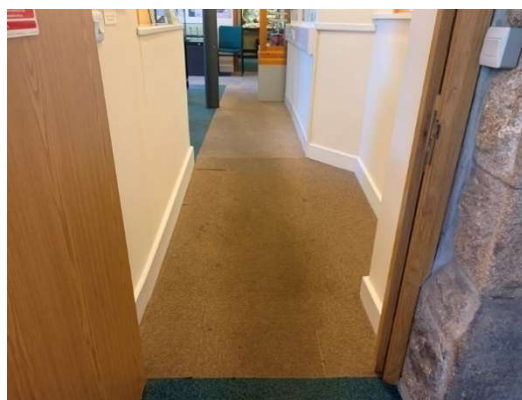
18. **Circulation staircase at front of building:** This narrow staircase leads from a small lobby at the top of the stone steps to the first floor spaces above the museum (old council chamber and office extension). The staircase is fairly steep, with a handrail on one side only.



Narrow circulation staircase adjacent to hall, leading to upper floor offices.

19. **Circulation staircase adjacent to the hall:** This is a narrow, carpeted staircase rising in four flights from the ground to second floor. It only has one handrail which has good visual contrast, as do the stair nosings. There is a small enclosed landing at each level.

20. **Ramp from main reception area to ground floor museum:** This has a steeply sloping gradient (greater than 1:10), is narrow (approximately 950mm, compared to the recommended ramp width of 1500mm) and has no handrails.



Short ramp from reception to museum

Key Access Issues with Ramps & Steps

- *The stone steps from reception are steep and have only one handrail, so people who require support on either side (eg. with hemiplegia) may struggle to ascend or descend safely. They also do not have visually contrasting nosings.*

- *There is no alternative lift access to the hall or upper parts of the building from the front entrance from Church Street, so wheelchair users must enter the hall via the rear doors from the car park.*
- *There is no lift access to the first floor offices, so these spaces are inaccessible to any wheelchair users or anyone who cannot manage steps.*
- *The internal ramp is steeper and narrower than permitted by current access standards. It has no handrails to assist people who require support.*
- *The circulation stair adjacent to the hall is very narrow, with only one handrail, and restricted space in the landing lobbies. This presents access issues, not only for wheelchair users (who cannot reach the upper floor offices), but also for anyone who needs handrails either side.*

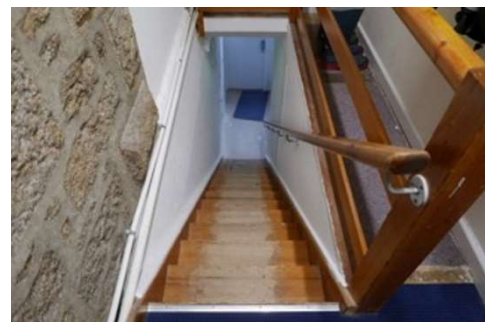
Emergency egress routes

21. Emergency egress routes from the ground floor are via the external doors at the front and rear. For wheelchair users, this would be via the door from the main reception, which has a level threshold.

From the upper floors, the escape routes are from the second floor, via the main staircase descending to the hall, or alternatively from the first floor via the main staircase or smaller rear staircase to an external exit at the back of the building.

Key Access Issues with egress routes

- *The main issue with egress is the lack of level access for wheelchair users, or anyone with mobility or sensory issues who cannot manage steps.*
- *There is also insufficient space at stair landings for wheelchair refuges, which must be located within a fire protected enclosure, for someone who needs to wait for assistance to evacuate the building.*



Emergency escape stairs leading to rear of building

Appendix: Legislation and guidance

The Equality Act 2010 (formally the Disability Discrimination Act 1995/ 2005) sets out rights and duties for service providers, employers and educational institutions.

The Equality Acts defines a disabled person as ‘someone who has a physical and mental impairment, which has an effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.’ The effect must be substantial, adverse and long-term.

Physical and mental impairment includes sensory impairments. It includes hidden impairments including, for example, mental illness.

a) Equality Act 2010

Under the Equality Act 2010 it is unlawful for service providers to treat disabled people less favourably because they are disabled. The service provider must not indirectly discriminate against a disabled person unless there is a clear reason to do so. They must also not treat a disabled person unfavourably because of something connected with their disability, unless there is a clear and fair reason. For this form of discrimination, the service provider must know or should reasonably have been expected to know that the person is disabled.

A service provider must not harass a disabled person in relation to access to everyday services and there is protection from direct disability discrimination and harassment for people who are associated with a disabled person or who are wrongly believed to be disabled.

Service providers have to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people in the way they deliver their services. This is so that a disabled person is not put at a substantial disadvantage compared to non-disabled people in accessing the services.

Examples of reasonable adjustments could include:

- installing an induction loop for people who are hearing impaired
- providing disability awareness training for staff who have contact with the public
- providing larger, well-defined signage for people with impaired vision
- putting in a ramp at the entrance to a building which has steps

What is considered a reasonable adjustment for a large organisation like a bank, may be different from what is a reasonable adjustment for a small local shop. It is about what is practical in the service provider’s individual situation and what resources the business may

have. They will not be required to make adjustments that are not reasonable because they are unaffordable or impractical.

Service Provider Provisions

The duty to make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010 Service Provider Provisions is an anticipatory duty owed to disabled people at large. It is not simply a duty to individuals. The duty to make reasonable adjustments, in relation to providing auxiliary aids and overcoming physical barriers to access, applies to the areas of the property where the service is provided, and the access to these areas.

Employer Provisions

Under the Equality Act 2010 there is a duty placed on employers to make reasonable adjustments to enable disabled people to take employment. Employers must take reasonable steps to alter arrangements made, or alter any physical feature that puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage. The duty to make adjustments is not anticipatory but is specific to the needs of individuals. There is no requirement to make wholesale changes in anticipation.

The organisation cannot fully anticipate a disabled employee's needs, since individual disabilities vary. Our review considers the general circulation and facilities requirements for staff who may use mobility aids and other walking aids or who may have a visual or hearing impairment.

Once employment is offered to a disabled person, or an existing employee develops a disability, where this affects mobility, vision, hearing or other normal functions, his or her needs must be fully assessed. We recommend that the organisation holds confidential discussions with the individual and engage a professional access advisor to assess the need for suitable and reasonable adjustments to all work areas affected, including a personal emergency escape plan.

Equality Duty Provisions

The Disability Equality Duty requires all public bodies (e.g. councils, large institutions) to actively look at ways of ensuring that disabled people are treated equally. All of those bodies covered by the specific duties must also have produced a Disability Equality Scheme, which they must implement.

b) Access standards

Building Regulations Part M2 and K

The design and construction of a new building, or the material alteration of an existing one, must comply with Building Regulations. For buildings in England and Wales, Building Regulations Part M2, *Access to and Use of Buildings* and Building Regulations Part K, *Protection from Falling, collision and impact*, are intended to ensure that reasonable provision is made for people to gain access to and use buildings.

Guidance accompanying the Building Regulations (known as 'Approved Document M2 or K' or AD M2 or AD K) set out a number of 'provisions' as suggested ways in which the requirements of the Regulations might be met. It is unlikely to be reasonable for a service provider or employer to have to make an adjustment to a physical feature of a building which it occupies, if that feature accords with the relevant provisions of the most up to date version of AD M2 and K.

BS 8300:2018

As the Building Regulations provide only a baseline standard of accessibility for new buildings and buildings undergoing redevelopment, a second document is essential reference when assessing the access requirements of disabled people to existing buildings and landscapes; the British Standard 8300:2018, *Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people – Code of Practice*.

Other Guidance

There are other 'best practice' guides, such as the Centre for Accessible Environments 'Designing for Accessibility', which gives advice concerning design issues not covered in AD M2, AD K or BS8300:2018, and the Sign Design Guide, providing useful information on signage.

c) BS9999 Section 46.7 Use of personal emergency evacuation plans

Personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs) are recommended for all people requiring assistance to leave the building. Through the recording of PEEPs, the management team should be made aware of the amount of staff support required for each evacuation. There are three types of PEEP that might need to be developed.

i) Individual PEEP for disabled people who are regularly in the premises, for example staff and regular visitors

Following discussions with an individual, a plan can be developed for their specific needs which should contain details of how they will evacuate the premises. By taking into account the individual needs of a person when preparing a PEEP, management will be able to make any reasonable adjustments to the premises or procedures that are necessary. They will also be able to make provision for actions to be taken in the event of a false alarm, or if the person cannot return to the building after a fire.

ii) PEEPs for visitors to the premises who will make themselves known to staff, such as event patrons

Visitors who are likely to require assistance in the event of an evacuation should be encouraged to make themselves known to staff on arrival. Management should be encouraged to have available, especially at reception, staff who are trained in disability awareness. This will make this process more comfortable for disabled people and more effective for management. The generic PEEPs should provide a wide range of guidance for differing disabilities and be adapted for the individual premises. They need to include what the visitor should do in an evacuation, and what the management response will be. They should also reflect what specific fire safety provisions are provided for disabled persons on the premises, e.g. fire alarms adapted for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. It is important that the generic PEEP is discussed with each visitor and their particular needs taken into account where possible.

iii) PEEPs for visitors not previously identified to staff, such as café users

The standard evacuation plan should include measures to make evacuations suitable for all persons on the premises. Information for disabled people should be noted in fire action notices and in the fire management plan. It is vitally important that staff are trained so that they are aware of the facilities and their responsibility to evacuate disabled people and know how to use features such as evacuation lifts or refuges. Enough staff should be available at all times to make sure that evacuation plans are viable. This is particularly important where features such as carry-down procedures are to be adopted to evacuate mobility-impaired people.