

The Stained Glass Museum

Registered Charity: 1169842

Access Policy Statement

Originator: Jasmine Allen, Curator

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Approved by: Board of Trustees

Date of meeting: 22 June 2020

Name of Chairman: Jeffrey West

1. Our Purpose

The Stained Glass Museum collects, preserves, displays and interprets examples of our stained glass heritage to share with diverse audiences, inspire visitors, and deepen our understanding and enjoyment of the art of stained glass.

2. Vision Statement

Our vision builds on the Museum's success over the last 40 years and sets out our ambition to become a nationally designated collection, with a dynamic learning programme and high-quality visitor experience.

The Stained Glass Museum plays a unique role in providing a bridge between existing artistic, heritage and research organisations and the public, and in preserving and advocating for our stained glass heritage. These three fundamental aspects; engaging diverse audiences, collaborating with creative communities, researchers and partnering organisations in the sector, collectively form the foundations of our vision to be:

An accessible visitor attraction with a nationally recognised collection that provides learning experiences for all and actively promotes the preservation, study and appreciation of stained glass.

3. Introduction

This policy guides The Stained Glass Museum's approach to maximising access to its collections and associated information, activities and events. We define access as something that is made possible when physical, cultural, economic, social, intellectual, digital, psychological and emotional barriers are removed or reduced.

We believe museums exist for all, and are committed to widening access, regardless of age, physical and intellectual ability, level of education, ethnicity, religion, social/economic status, sexuality and gender.

Access and the museum's future aspirations are inextricably linked, and the museum has recently undergone a 2-year Resilient Heritage Project *Windows onto the future: investigating options for a more accessible and resilient Stained Glass Museum*. The Strategic Options Appraisal produced during this project focused on ways in which we can fulfil our future vision to be an 'accessible visitor attraction'.

4. Responsibilities and Policy management

The Director and Trustees of The Stained Glass Museum are responsible for ensuring that the Museum meets its obligations under the Equality Act (2010) and Public Sector Equality Duty by doing everything reasonably possible to make the museum and collections accessible to the widest range of people.

Access is a shared responsibility underpinning all areas of the Museum's activities, and line managers are responsible for ensuring that the work of their staff takes into account the need to maximize access by addressing the barriers outlined within the policy. Everyone involved in developing, delivering or maintaining spaces, activities, interpretation, resources and other services for our users is responsible for making them as accessible as possible.

An Access Action Plan for the Museum has been developed for 2020-2022, identifying outcomes, milestones, timeframes and individuals responsible. This policy, and the Access Action Plan, are managed by the Director, working with the museum's team. The policy and plan are reviewed and updated annually.

5. Relevant legislation and Policy Context

Our policy is informed by legislation under the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Equality Act 2010.

The Equality Act (2010) bans unfair treatment and helps achieve equal opportunities in the workplace and in wider society. The Act replaced previous anti-discrimination laws and covers nine protected characteristics which cannot be used as a reason to treat people unfairly – age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity/paternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The Act prohibits unfair treatment when providing goods, facilities and services, when holding public functions, in the management of premises, and in education.

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

Our approach to access is also informed by Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that “everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.” Cultural rights are inseparable from human rights, as recognized in Article 5 of the 2001 UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Diversity, and can be defined as the right of access to, participation in and enjoyment of culture. This includes the right of individuals and communities to know, understand, visit, make use of, maintain, exchange and develop cultural heritage and cultural expressions, as well as to benefit from the cultural heritage and cultural expressions of others.

6. Definition of Terms

When we refer to “access” we mean the opportunity to engage with our museum, its collections, content and expertise. There are a number of key barriers to access:

- **Physical** – people with physical disabilities or limited mobility, as well as the elderly and those caring for young people, who may not be able to access the museum, its programme of events, social media channels or website;
- **Sensory** – people with sensory impairments, i.e. blind and visually impaired, deaf and hearing impaired, who may require adjustments, additional signs and facilities in order to access the museum and its programmes;
- **Intellectual** – some people may find the museum specialist in its approach to subjects and how they are presented; some may have learning disabilities which affect their ability to engage with the museum; and some may not be able to read or speak English;
- **Attitudinal** – some people may have a lack of awareness of the museum and the subjects and issues it deals with, or our programmes and services; or not feel welcome to access the museum and that it is “not for people like them”;
- **Cultural** – some people may feel that the museum is not relevant to them, or that the museum does not reflect their cultural or social heritage or interests;

- **Economic**– we will take into account that ability to pay can be a barrier to access and offer opportunities for those on lower incomes to access the museum and its activities and events;
- **Geographical** – some people live too far away to visit the museum or face logistical challenges relating to rural isolation or poor transport infrastructure;
- **Digital** - some people may not have access to the Internet at home, technology or use a mobile phone or may not be comfortable using digital tools or technology, or keep their use of digital tools to a minimum for health reasons.

7. Identifying the needs of different users

The Stained Glass Museum recognises that in order to ensure the museum is accessible to all, it needs to proactively identify the differing needs of users, in consultation with them. This is recognised as an area for improvement (see Access Action Plan), but we currently do this by:

- 7.1. Understanding our audiences and potential audiences through research and data:** We look at regional data as well as our own audience data and research, to understand and anticipate differing audience needs. Research carried out with the Audience Agency in 2015-16 has helped us understand current visitor demographics as well as motivations, perceptions and knowledge of the museum and its subject matter (specialist, general or little or no), and levels of international visitors, all of which help us identify and plan to meet differing needs.
- 7.2. Working with community partners and participants:** Consultation and co-design with schools, home educational groups and others within the community underpin our approach to identifying and meeting differing needs to ensure provision is designed with rather than for different audience groups. Where possible we draw on expertise and lived experience to inform our approach to shaping programmes, facilities and services.
- 7.3. Responding to visitor feedback:** While we aim to anticipate and meet the differing needs of our audiences, we have robust processes in place for responding to customer comments and complaints and ensuring that they feed into future planning and service improvements.
- 7.4. Learning from sector best practice:** We seek opportunities within our sector networks to learn about how other museums and cultural organizations have identified and met the needs of audiences by attending conferences and training events, seeking out case studies and visiting sites and projects, and embedding this process of learning from others in the development phase of new projects, programmes and facilities.

8. Our Commitment to Maximising Access

The Stained Glass Museum is committed to maximising access to its collections, activities and events. We are committed to on-going training in access issues for staff and volunteers, and endeavour to be responsive to recommendations on improving access.

Trustees are aware of the difficulty of access in the museum's present operating environment. Recent work undertaken during a 2-year Resilient Heritage Project *Windows onto the future: investigating options for a more accessible and resilient Stained Glass Museum*, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund focused on ways in which we can fulfil our future vision to be an 'accessible visitor attraction'.

8.1. Physical access

The Stained Glass Museum is located within Ely Cathedral which, as a Grade-I listed building and scheduled monument is subject to legislation pertaining to historic buildings. The museum occupies a space on the first-floor level of Ely Cathedral known as the south triforium, approached by a wide spiral staircase of forty steps. Access to the Museum is therefore restricted for those who are unable to climb the stairs. The installation of a stair lift or climbing chair has been ruled out by the Fire Officer on safety grounds. Installation of a lift would require significant alterations to the building's fabric and is unlikely to be permitted. Our current provision and commitment to maximising physical access includes:

- Actively seeking to address the issue of the museum's inaccessible access in all future development plans,
- Working with Ely Cathedral and external funding bodies to improve physical access to the museum; and reduce physical barriers by creating more opportunities for ground-floor level access engagement with the museum's collections and programmes (where possible, outreach activities and events are held on the ground floor of Ely Cathedral, or off site to cater for those with access needs);
- Upholding the statutory requirements of the Equality Act (2010) by taking reasonable steps to ensure that policies, practices and procedures do not discriminate against disabled people; by providing auxiliary aids and services which enable disabled people to use the museum; and by removing, altering or circumventing physical barriers within our buildings;
- Providing information about physical access to the museum to all visitors and enquirers in advance of their visit, and ensuring information about access can be found on our website;
- Ensuring stored collections are available to the public and researchers through temporary exhibitions and behind-the-scenes tours as well as research appointments;
- Providing an interactive touch screen facility at the ground floor level to provide a virtual tour of the museum gallery from the ground floor;
- Signposting the nearest parking spaces for blue badge holders;
- Providing handrails to aid visitors climbing the stairs;
- Providing seating throughout the public galleries and shop.

8.2. Sensory access

- Equipping our staff with the awareness and skills to successfully communicate with and provide a quality service to people with access needs through staff training;
- Ensuring a portable hearing loop is available at the museum admission desk and that this is advertised to visitors;
- Provision of key information in alternative formats, including large print labels;
- Ensuring written interpretation is formatted with due regard for access guidelines;

- Ensuring that video-based exhibits have subtitles if they use the spoken word;
- Incorporating multisensory aspects to exhibits (e.g. to touch, smell, hear), and tactile and audio interpretation into exhibitions and galleries where appropriate and possible;
- Continue to develop our offer for visitors with particular sensory requirements, to include, for example, pre-arranged touch tours;
- Working towards ensuring that our websites meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards (www.w3.org/WAI/intro/wcag)

8.3 Intellectual access

- Ensuring that the text used in our galleries, exhibitions, educational resources, publications, marketing materials, websites and social media channels is carefully tailored to the needs of their intended audiences;
- Ensuring interpretation labels and signage is designed and situated to be as legible as possible, within the constraints of the building and restrictions imposed by Ely Cathedral;
- Exploring opportunities to develop more accessible and more layered interpretive materials making the greatest potential afforded by digital solutions, where resources are available;
- Ensuring that the content and delivery of our (formal and informal) learning programmes are tailored to the learning needs of their audiences;
- Continuing to deliver a range of tailored inclusion work to support the development of entitlement and ownership in non-traditional audiences;
- Developing offsite outreach sessions for those who are unable to access the museums and collections.

8.4 Attitudinal access

- Ensuring that the museum's promotional activities and marketing materials represent a diverse range of visitors and present the museums and collections as welcoming, non-threatening, and inclusive for people who are not regular museum visitors;
- Ensuring that visitors are made to feel welcome on arrival and are put at their ease;
- Creating environments in which people feel comfortable, valued and able to explore and learn at their own pace and level.

8.5 Cultural access

- Making the museum, its collections and our programmes as relevant as possible to diverse cultural and social groups;
- Respecting, responsibly and appropriately interpreting and presenting varied cultural and intellectual views of collections and the ideas they represent and evoke;
- Recognising and challenging historic oppression, racism and injustice;
- Using our collections, knowledge, independence and ethics to highlight the issues that matter to our communities and wider audiences;
- Improving the provision of materials in languages other than English where appropriate.

8.6 Economic access

- Maintaining affordable admission prices to the museum;
- Ensuring that entry to the museum is free at least one day a year, and that some events are free, alongside charged programmes and events;

- Developing measures to mitigate economic barriers to access where possible, for example by providing transport and refreshments within targeted projects;
- In partnership work to increase participation from individuals, families and groups experiencing economic disadvantage through targeted projects and programmes.

8.7 Geographic access

- Providing online information about our collections via website and social media, developing and sharing online content and resources;
- Providing object loans to other museums, regionally, nationally and internationally;
- Delivering activities as outreach in communities that may experience geographic barriers.

8.8 Digital Access

- The Stained Glass Museum is committed to improving the information and interpretation of our collections online via its website, blogs, and social media channels for a global audience;
- In developing online content via the museum's website, blogs and other digital platforms, the museum endeavours to consider on-going updates, maintenance and longevity of technological tools and platforms.

9. Interpretative methods used to exhibit the collections

Interpretation is developed with regard for the principles outlined above, in line with sector good practice. Current interpretative methods include:

- In-gallery panels and labels;
- Large print label books;
- Audio-described guide to highlights of the collection;
- Spotlight and behind-the-scenes tours (regular, for all visitors);
- Special interest talks and tours (pre-booked, on request);
- Self-led trails for families;
- Self-led discovery bags for families;
- Interpretative and descriptive films with closed captions;
- Object handling opportunities;
- Behind the scenes experiences and demonstrations;
- Online collections search and collections web pages;
- Museum guidebook;
- Exhibition guides

10. Enabling the public to access the museum, its collections and associated information

The museum is open to the public seven days a week, all year round, Monday-Saturday (10.30am-5pm), Sunday (12.30-4.30pm).

Individuals, community groups and researchers have the opportunity to access collections which are not on display by special request and by prior appointment. The Museum offers behind the scenes tours and experiences to see collections not on display as part of our public programming, e.g.: special open evenings and behind-the-scenes tours.

Digital access to collections is possible online to the public through its online collections search, including object records, photographic images and information about original architectural contexts where available.

11. Use of languages other than English

We recognize that our audience demographic includes significant numbers of numbers of visitors whose first language is not English, both in terms of international tourist visitors and our multi-lingual local and regional population. We are also mindful of the importance of languages other than English in the context of working with source communities and international research partnerships. While currently limited, we are committed to improving our provision in this area to make our collections more accessible to these audiences. We have created some other language guides. We also seek to ensure our family activities are accessible to families who may have limited English, as well as children on a range of ages, by emphasizing visual rather than verbal instructions.

12. Other Relevant Policies

- Care and Conservation Policy
- Documentation Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Handling and Complaints Policy
- Grievance and Disciplinary Procedure
- Forward Plan 2017-2022 (especially Action Plan)
- Learning Forward Plan (especially Action Plan)

Appendix 1 Access Physical Audit and Action Plan (Feb 2019)

No.	Location	Issue	Who is affected	Photo	Recommendations	Department	Priority	£	Update May 2020
1	Outside the Cathedral – west end and south end	Signage not visible. Black signs also not very legible and contain incorrect opening hours.	All visitors		Draw attention to marketing department. Request shared sign or double sign – one for SGM	Curator / Marketing at Ely Cathedral	High	£2,000 (estimate)	Not done – EC Marketing responsibility
2	Cathedral entrance	Step into the Galilee Porch is uneven	All visitors		Talk to Ely Cathedral as this is a shared entrance	Curator/Ely Cathedral	Low	N/A	These had been re-taped but by March 2020 the tape was rubbing away again
3	West Door and ramp	Step from Galilee Porch through west doors – ramp not easy to locate	All visitors		Suggest to EC that a sign about ramp access be introduced. Ensure welcomers are trained using ramp	Ely Cathedral	Low	N/A	The ramp is behind the door. No signage but I had noticed the ramp in place more often before lockdown.

4	Stairs to the museum	Steps and fading hazard strips	All visitors		Replace old hazard strips to make steps clearer. Consider carpeting floor with industrial carpet?	Curator / Director of Works EC	Medium	0	Would EC allow SGM to replace the old hazard strips?
5	Mezzanine on stairs	Signage not visible. This roundel sign is too high up for visitors to notice.	All visitors		Improve signage to museum – perhaps splashes of colour	Curator	Medium	0	Not a priority to remove the sign at the moment (May 2020)
6	Mezzanine stairs	Two stairs to mezzanine. The hazard strips are dirty yet they were cleaned in November 2018.	All visitors		Need hazard strips to be cleaned again / on a regular basis.	Curator / Director of Works EC	Medium		Can these be cleaned on a regular basis – e.g. once a month by staff on a rota?
7	Mezzanine stairs	Top step is broken and uneven.	All visitors		The top step needs repair.	Curator / Director of Works	Medium		Jasmine – I expect you have raised this with EC – so it is a question of noting that the issue has been raised.

8	Mezzanine	Labels behind the Perspex	All visitors	As per image above.	The labels are difficult to read due to the lack of light but also due to EC spotlights in the s-w transept.	Curator / Director of Works EC	Medium		Could these labels be printed in a larger font?
9	Christ Blessing Children window	Children swinging on rail and sitting on ledge. Bags being placed near window	Stained glass!		Consider introducing perspex protective cover	Curator	Medium	£100's (estimate)	Inform visitors not to leave bags here. Bags are to be left behind the desk which happens now.
10	Entrance to gallery	Possible banged head and step hazard	All, and especially tall visitors		Mind your head/step sign	Curator	Medium	£100 (estimate)	Was a sign (paper) put up asking visitors to mind their head?
11	Gallery layout guide	The Layout to the Main Gallery sign is too narrow and not well placed	All visitors		Enlarge the Layout to the Main Gallery sign and place it in a more visible location.	Curator	Medium		Would need a small grant for this – combine with 13. Gallery exhibits signs?
12	Gallery exhibits	Location of signs	Visually impaired, elderly		Addition of painted text on display boards, titles, quotes etc.	Curator	Medium	£500 (estimate)	Would need a small grant for this.

13	Gallery and cathedral	Easier access to the cathedral for visitors to SGM workshops and activities	Workshop attendees		Introduce visitor stickers?	Curator	Low		This will necessitate a discussion between EC and SGM. Not a priority.
14	Gallery, the braille panel	Currently the braille panel is not on display (February 2019)	Visually impaired visitors		Rehang the braille panel	Curator / Finance & Office Manager	Medium	£0	Is this panel on the mezzanine? Can it be accessed easily?
15	Gallery, Experimental panel	Sharp corners	All visitors		Hazard tape the sharp corners	Curator	Medium		Re-tape the plastazote into place.
16	Gallery into the office	Stairs	Visitors attending workshops		The stairs make it more difficult for less mobile people to attend the SGM workshops	Curator	Low		There is no easy answer to this problem as access to the mezzanine is via stairs only in both directions.

Appendix 2 – General Access Action Plan

No.	Access	Issue	Who is Affected	Recommendations	Dept.	Priority	£
1	General	Identifying Access Needs	All	Commission an Access Assessment of the museum from external experts (e.g. a disability-led consultancy) to produce recommendations which can be embedded into our Action Plan.	Director		
2	Physical	Accessibility of Museum in its current location	Visitors with physical disabilities, poor mobility, wheelchair and mobility scooter users, visitors with buggies and pushchairs	Ensure that any future development of the museum addresses its poor physical accessibility			
3	Sensory	Staff trained to communicate successfully with access needs	Visitors with hearing impairments	Training staff on using the portable hearing loop; Developing staff awareness and skills to successfully communicate with and provide a quality service to people with access needs through staff training;	VS		
4	Sensory	Providing key information and written interpretation in alternative formats	Visitors with visual impairments	Consider making available labels in braille format; Provide new Audio guides (after pandemic)	VS Curator		unknown £20,000+
5	Sensory	Multi-sensory exhibits	Visitors with sensory impairments	Consider incorporating multisensory aspect to displays / exhibitions (e.g. to touch, smell and hear) using tactile and audio interpretation where possible. (after pandemic)	Curator Learning Officer		
6	Sensory	Diversify the museum offer to	Visitors with sensory impairments	Introduction of specific sensory exhibits, activities and tours	Curator		

		those with particular sensory requirements		(After pandemic)	Learning Officer VS		
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7	Intellectual	Continue to create and develop more layered interpretive materials to cater to a wide range of audiences	Multiple audiences	Produce children's guide Provide more information about buildings and original contexts via digital interpretation. Consider reinterpreting exhibits in new ways and under new themes	Learning Officer Curator		
8	Intellectual	Engage with geographically diverse audiences	Multiple audiences	Develop handling and offsite learning sessions and materials	Learning Officer		

9	Attitudinal	Ensuring people see the museum as welcoming, non-threatening and inclusive	Irregular and non-museum visitors	Make sure the activities and social media content represent a diverse range of visitors	VS Curator Learning Officer		
10	Attitudinal	Visitor welcome	Museum visitors	Retrain staff on the importance of making visitors feel welcome on arrival and making them feel comfortable and at ease; work to educate and train on combatting societal racism and stereotypes.	VS		
11	Attitudinal	Museum experience	Museum visitors	Ensure visitors feel comfortable and respected and are able to explore and learn at their own pace and level – seek to provide comfortable seating and different methods of engagement	VS		

12	Cultural	Diversify audiences	Those who feel the museum does not relate to them	Develop programmes promoting the collection to a wide range of culturally and socially diverse groups in society	Curator Learning Officer		
13	Cultural	Language other than English	Those whose first language is not English	Improve and increase the provision of materials in languages other than English where possible (including audio guides and written guides / labels)	Curator Learning Officer Specialist translator		
14	Attitudinal / Cultural	Collections and interpretation	Underrepresented minority groups; all	Address imbalance in collections, and seek to acquire new exhibits to diversify collections and challenge historic oppression, racism and injustice.	Curator Learning Officer All		

15	Economic	Pay barrier	Economically disadvantaged	Provide free entry to the museum on set days, and advertise widely.	Curator Learning Officer		
16	Economic	Participation in activities from the economically disadvantaged / young people	Economically disadvantaged	Apply for grants to work with individuals, groups and families experiencing economic disadvantage on specific projects Seek to find funding to pay for coaches and subsidise school visits	Curator Learning Officer		

17	Digital	Website meets Web Content Accessibility Guidelines	Website users	Working towards ensuring that our website meets the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards (www.w3.org/WAI/intro/wcag)	Curator VS Web team		
18	Digital / Geographical	Develop Collections Blog	Researchers	Develop online collections blog as a way of sharing more information about the museum's collections	Curator		
19	Digital / Geographical	Increase social media presence	Social media audiences	Continue to develop and promote content for the increasing number of social media platforms to connect with a diverse range of audiences.	VS Curator Learning Officer		