



Creating Access For All:

Guidance for Historic Vessels

Appendix 4: Scottish Fisheries Museum



Victoria Wallworth, 30 August 2018

www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk

Plaice and Memory: Accessibility at the Scottish
Fisheries Museum

At the Scottish Fisheries Museum our work on accessibility is varied, longstanding, and ongoing. Members of our staff team have personal experience of disabilities and so the museum has a vested interest in making our facilities and activities as accessible as possible, both in terms of physical and hidden disability.

Although our many buildings vary in age, size, shape and type we have had flat and ramped access to all but 1 of our 10 galleries since the mid-1990s. Our Fisherman's Cottage is not fully accessible but can be viewed through a window in an accessible gallery. Our tearoom is a vibrant hub for the local community and tourists alike. Its refurbishment, along with renovations made to our main entrance and shop in 2017, has created a lighter, brighter welcome for all our visitors. The tables we have introduced in the tearoom are also more wheelchair friendly. Crockery used to serve the delicious teas, coffees, toasties and cakes on offer are plain white which helps ensure that they are not distracting. Other facilities, like our toilets, have also been decorated with accessibility in mind. Wall colours are different from appliance colours and doors are also coloured differently. We are very lucky in Fife to be close to ground-breaking services and facilities including Homelands Accessible Holiday Lodges based in Fife and Euan's Guide based in Edinburgh. We have sought advice from Homelands about physical access to our buildings and improvements that we can make to our signage and displays to improve access for those with visual impairments. These connections have also allowed us to develop a useful access guide that can be viewed and downloaded from our website pre-visit.

Alongside physical changes to our buildings and facilities, we were also keen to address potential barriers to engagement with our collections and learning programme. After learning about the first Disabled Access Day in 2015, staff attended training at the Museums Association and Fife Council to determine how the museum could best serve and benefit disabled people in a meaningful way. It was made clear through this training that making changes to benefit disabled visitors often benefits many other audiences. Some people will not always appear to have a disability or acknowledge that they do. Where the museum is concerned, many of our visitors are older and sometimes live with visual impairments and hearing loss, for example. A decision was made to start by focusing on making collections accessible to visitors with visual impairments. We sought help and advice from Fife Society for the Blind. The staff there offered advice and ideas for how best use our resources to usefully develop our offer. We launched our new touch and descriptive tours on Disabled Access Day 2015 alongside object handling. During this initial testing we realised that these activities were also relevant for younger audiences as many families responded positively throughout the day. For the following Disabled Access Days we repeated the activities, building on our experience. We advertised more widely and didn't specifically mention that the tour had been developed for visually impaired people. On the day we welcomed range of visitors, including a family with an autistic young adult and a family with an individual living with dementia. Both of these groups were positive about their experience. To help encourage participants to evaluate their experience we offered a free cup of tea to anyone who filled in a survey. What was also clear to staff, however, was that the activities did not provide most benefit for disabled individuals. The choice to visit

was not theirs. It was their families who felt the real benefit of the inclusive atmosphere and accessible activities: they could enjoy the museum as a family group. Accessibility is not about opening up opportunities that are so tailored to a specific disability that they exclude others. Accessibility is making collections, spaces and stories available to all.

Following these successes, we began to think about how to build on our object handling work by bringing our collections out into our local community. As part of our recent HLF project to create a permanent Fishermen at War gallery we started to think about how we could engage with our local community about war memories. We ran 3 pilot sessions based around wartime objects and images with a local lunch club run by the East Neuk Project with tremendous success. To evaluate these sessions, a special survey form was created for participants to fill in which included emojis as well as a traffic light system. Although reminiscence was something that had been tried previously, we took the decision to re-evaluate what we could provide and ensure that our offer became consistent. We looked at the varied items within our lending collection and began to consider the kinds of themes that they would best support. We consulted the Rethinking Heritage report when developing our themes and offer, with special attention being paid to the idea that any collection has links to broader, relatable themes. Although our collections are related to fishing and the fishing industry, we realised that many of our objects represent local memories and family life. In view of this, the themes we decided that we could resource with our collections include: Local Memories, The Home, Leisure/Days Out, Clothing, Fishing, Wartime. A brief guide to reminiscence sessions run with the museum's resources has been developed so that these themes and the objects that support them are recorded. Sessions based around these themes have been delivered at local care homes and with local groups with great success.

We are continuing to further this work by organising Dementia Friends training for our staff and volunteers as well as investigating ways to make our buildings, collections and activities accessible to people who are neurodiverse.

Supporting Documents

This access guide does not contain personal opinions as to our suitability for those with access needs, but aims to accurately describe the facilities and services that we offer all our guests/visitors.

Access Guide for The Scottish Fisheries Museum



We look forward to welcoming you.

If you have any queries or require any assistance
please phone 01333 310628
or email enquiries@scotfishmuseum.org.



Getting to the Museum



- The museum is at Harbourhead in Anstruther.
- Car or bus is the best way to get to Anstruther as the nearest train station is at Leuchars; 26 Kilometres or 16 miles away.
- The local bus service is provided by Stagecoach. The routes X60 and 95 service Anstruther. Timetables can be found at <https://www.stagecoachbus.com/timetables>. There is also a flexibus provided by Moffat and Williamson. Details of this service are available from www.go-flexi.org or telephone 01382540624.
- The nearest bus stop is directly outside the museum. The stop on the same side of the road as the museum is 16.5 metres or 54 feet from the museum. The stop on the opposite side of the road to the museum is 16.5 metres or 54 feet, alternatively using the dropped kerb and ramp, 21.5 metres or 72 feet. The stop on the opposite side of the road to the museum has a bench and shelter.



Bus Stop Opposite the Museum.



Bus Stop Outside the Museum.

- The museum does not have its own carpark.
- There is a public car park, across 1 road, 21.5 metres or 72 feet from the museum. It has 70 spaces, 2 are disabled spaces and 2 are electric vehicle recharge points. It is free from October until April and for blue badge holders throughout the year. From the 1st of April until the 30th of September it is 70p per hour for up to 2 hours, 90p for 2 to 4 hours or £1.20 for over 4 hours.



Car Park with Museum in Background.



Car Park from museum entrance.

- There is a short stay public car park at the harbour. It has 32 spaces. It is free from October until April and for blue badge holders throughout the year. From the 1st of April until the 30th of September it is 70p per hour for up to 2 hours, 90p for 2 to 4 hours of £1.20 for over 4 hours.

Arrival

- Paved surfaces outside the museum are tarmacked. The waterfront is cobbled and the pavement along the front is tarmacked and is narrow in places.



Anstruther Waterfront from Waterside.



Anstruther Waterfront from Museum Corner.

- The museum entrance is on the ground floor.
- There is a ramp to the museum entrance with a handrail on one side. Alternatively there are two steps to the door of the museum with a black handrail on the right and a brown handrail which matches the wood panel on the left.



The Museum Entrance.



Ramp into Museum.



Steps into the Museum.

- The museum entrance has 2 manual doors which open inwards. Both doors are heavy to open and staff are happy to assist.
- The museum entrance door width is 92cm or 3 foot.

Reception and Ticketing Area



- The reception is on one level.
- The reception desk is opposite the door. It has a wooden front and side.
- The reception desk is 91 cm or 36 inches high.
- There is no seating in the reception.
- The reception flooring is linoleum.
- The reception is evenly lit by ceiling spot lighting.
- There is a hearing loop at the reception desk. There is also a pen and paper.
- There is a complimentary ticket for Carers.
- Entry is £9 for adults, £7 for concessions and free for accompanied children and Carers.



Shop

- The museum shop is in the same area as the museum's reception and ticket desk.
- The display racks in the shop are around the walls of the shop and are open display racks with one glass cabinet.
- There are two tables on the floor in the bookshop area. There is a toy stand and two postcard stands on the floor.
- We are consistently trying making improvements to our shop.



Shop from Toilets Looking Towards the Desk and Tearoom



Shop from Tearoom Looking Past the Desk to the Toilets

Attraction (displays, exhibits etc.)

- The museum's interpretation is text based. The smallest is 14 point and all text is a sans serif font.
- Our graphic panels are dark coloured text on an off white background, or white text on a dark background.
- In-house temporary exhibitions have a large print version available.
- A descriptive touch tour is available upon request in advance.
- There are three videos in the museum. One without sound, two with sound but no subtitles.
- There is whale song as a background noise in our whale gallery.
- There is a button in the wheelhouse that makes the sound of a boat engine.
- When there is work going on in our working boatyard, the sound of the tools can be heard in the historic boatyard.
- The museum has 2 to 4 seats for visitors in each of its galleries.
- The museum is set across several historic buildings.
- Access to the museum from the reception is across our paved and cobbled courtyard.
- The door from the courtyard into the museum opens into the courtyard and is heavy. The door at the exit of the museum to the courtyard opens into the courtyard and is lightweight.



Surface of Museum Courtyard

- Access to the Cottage and Net Loft is up a flight of stairs. There is a viewing window from our steam gallery.



Flight of Steps to the Cottage and Net Loft.

- There is ramp access throughout the museum. In gallery 1 there is a 7 degree gradient; this is the steepest gradient. Assistance for this gallery is available upon request. There is an internal phone at the bottom of the ramp to call for assistance.



Steepest Ramp

- At one point the museum is 76cm or 30 inches wide. This is the narrowest part of the museum. The standard door width in the museum is 80cm or 31.5 inches wide.



Narrowest Point in Museum

- There are two doors from gallery 7 to gallery 8. The first is mid-weight the second is light-weight.
- There is a map showing the extent of the museum on our website at: <http://www.scotfishmuseum.org/explore-the-museum.php>
- There are further images of the museum displays on our website at: <http://www.scotfishmuseum.org/gallery-description.php>

Public Toilets

- The museum has three sets of public toilets.
- All of the toilets are lit with fluorescent light.
- The toilet floors off the museum shop and between gallery 7 and 8 are laminate floor. The floor of the toilet off gallery 1 is concrete.
- The sink tap in the Disabled toilet is operated by lever. The rest of our taps are operated by turning or push button (combined tap and flush).
- There are Ladies, Gents and Disabled toilets off of the museum shop, to the right of the museum entrance.



Access to Disabled, Ladies and Gents Toilet

- The sink in the ladies toilet is 92cm or 36 inches high.
- The ladies cubicles are 90cm or 35½ inches by 169 cm or 66½ inches.



Ladies Toilet



Cubicles in Ladies Toilet

- The gents toilet has a cubicle and a urinal.
- The cubicle in the gents toilet 167cm or 65½ inches by 107cm or 42 inches and is narrow at the end opposite the toilet.
- The toilet is 44cm or 17½ inches high.
- The urinal is 63cm or 25 inches high
- The sink in the gents toilet is 83cm or 32½ inches high.



Gents Toilet

- The disabled toilet has a space to the left of the toilet as you enter the cubicle. The space is 47cm or 18 inches wide. The toilet is 44cm or 17 inches high.
- The disabled toilet has a vertical handrail to the right of the toilet as you sit down and a horizontal handrail to the left of the toilet as you sit down
- The sink is 72cm or 28½ inches high.



Disabled Cubicle

- The museum does not have a Changing Places toilet, but there is one for public use in Anstruther at [Waid Community Campus](#). Please check the Changing Places website for facilities and opening hours.

- There is a baby change and two toilets off of Gallery 1. The cubicles are 117cm or 36 inches x 81.5cm or 32 inches. The toilet is 44cm or 17 inches high. It is possible to lock the door to the baby change and toilets to create a family facility.



Two Toilets off of Gallery 1

Standard Cubicle



Baby Change.

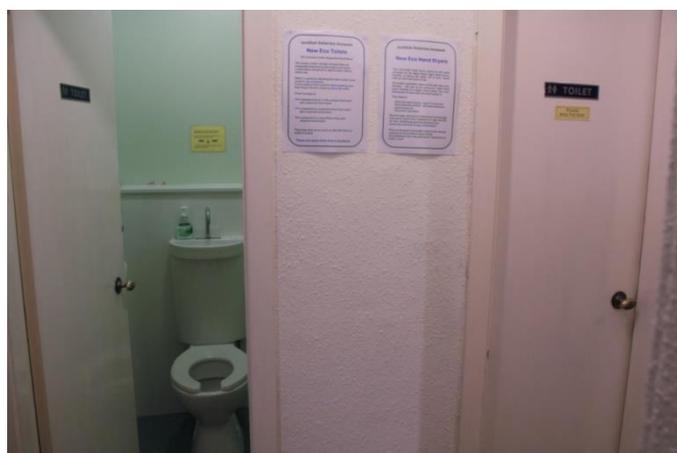
- There are two toilets between gallery 7 and gallery 8, next to our library.
- The cubicles do not have an entrance area and are directly off of the corridor.
- The doorways to these toilets are 57cm or 22.5 inches wide.
- The toilets are 44cm or 17 inches high.
- Both cubicles are 112cm or 44 inches by 130cm or 51 inches.
- The first has a towel rail to the right of the toilet and a shelf behind the toilet.
- The second has a sloped step 7cm or 3 inches to 14cm to or 5.5 inches high, a shelf behind the toilet and a shelf below the hand dryer.



Uneven Step into The Toilet.

Cubicle with Towel Rail

Cubicle with Step and Shelf



Toilets Between Gallery 7 and 8

Tea Room



Tearoom from Entrance

- The museum has a tearoom to the left side of the shop as you enter the museum. This is to your right as you exit the galleries.
- The tearoom has counter service.
- The tearoom counter is 111cm or 44 inches high.
- The tearoom menu is available in printed format on the tables. A large print format is available. Specials are noted on a chalkboard next to the counter. Staff are happy to read the menu should you require assistance.
- The tearoom offer gluten-free sweet and savoury products, a non-lactose soup and has a list of potential allergens which is available from staff upon request.
- The tearoom has two areas. The doorway to the second area of the tearoom, the Merchant's Room, is 52cm or 20.5 inches wide.
- The nearest toilet from the tearoom is on the opposite side of the shop.
- When occupied the space between tables is 102 cm or 40 inches wide.
- The chairs and tables are a light oak laminate. The chairs have a faux-leather cushioned seat and do not have arm rests.
- The tables are supported with a central pillar to allow access for wheelchairs and buggies.

- The table height is 75cm or 29 ½ inches.
- The chair height is 48 cm or 19 inches.
- The Breakfast Bar is 115cm or 54 ½ inches high
- The two chairs for the breakfast bar are 79cm or 31 inches high.
- The first area of the tearoom can have high levels of background noise at opening and at lunchtime.
- The Merchant's Room is lit by spotlight.
- The first area of the tearoom is lit by overhead and side lighting.
- The floor of the tearoom is linoleum.
- The white crockery and silver coloured cutlery contrast with the wooden tabletop.
- There are highchairs available for small children.



Tearoom from corner



Tearoom from Counter



Merchant's Room from corner to entrance



Merchant's Room from entrance

Additional Information

- We welcome all assistance dogs and have two water bowls available for visiting dogs.
- We do not have a designated space for charging mobility scooters or battery powered wheelchairs. We would try to accommodate any charging requirements should they arise but please be aware that this is dependent upon demand and capacity.
- The museum's story is linear. A map is given to each visiting group upon arrival and there are fish painted on the floor to indicate the path through the museum.
- There is a touch and audio descriptive tour available. Please request this in advance.
- There is a selection of objects for handling with personal interpretation. It may also be possible to grant permission to touch some objects on display. Please request both of these services in advance.
- There is no quiet policy in the museum.
- The museum does not use strobe lights.
- Staff will always ask permission before taking photographs at workshops and talks.
- Our Fire Alarm is sound only. In the case of alarm emergency lighting will be triggered. Four of our fire exits are not wheelchair accessible and are labelled as such.

Future Plans

- The museum is working through a programme to improve accessibility.
- We are currently working to improve our offer for visitors with visual impairments and visitors who are neurodiverse.
- We welcome feedback from visitors about anything that we could do to improve our experience.

Contact Information

Address: Scottish Fisheries Museum Trust Ltd, St Ayles,
Harbourhead, Anstruther, Fife, KY10 3AB

Telephone: 01333 310628

Email: enquiries@scotfishmuseum.org

Website: www.scotfishmuseum.org

Hours of
Operation: April to September: Mon – Sat: 10 to 5.30
Sun: 11 - 5
October to March: Mon – Sat: 10 to 4.30
Sun: 12 – 4.30

Local Public
Transport: The local bus service is provided by
Stagecoach. The routes x60 and 95 service
Anstruther. Timetables can be found at
<https://www.stagecoachbus.com/timetables>.

There is a Flexibus provided by Moffat and
Williamson. Details of this service are
available from www.go-flexi.org or telephone
01382 540624.



REMINISCENCE SESSION GUIDE



Scottish Fisheries Museum
Boats, fish and folk...

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All images in this pack are owned by The Scottish Fisheries Museum unless otherwise stated.

The Scottish Fisheries Museum

The Scottish Fisheries Museum was founded in the old fishing town of Anstruther in Fife, at a property known as St Ayles. The Museum first opened on 4th July 1969.

This area has long been associated with the fishing industry and from the 12th century onwards there are written records referring to the fisheries here. It is also the site of a 15th century chapel to St Ayle and, in the 16th century, lodging for the Abbot of Balmerino was built. This is now the oldest remaining building on the Museum site.

The Museum explains the various types of fishing methods used for different species of fish around the coast and islands of Scotland. The displays also illustrate, by using model boats and full-size vessels, the great variety of boats used by fishermen. The people involved with the industry are obviously key to the story and the galleries vividly display the working and domestic lives of men, women, and children who all contributed to the fishing and associated industries. These include boat building, coopering, engineering, fish processing, the repair of nets and the baiting of lines.

During the early 1900s, the Museum's buildings themselves were used for a ships' chandlery business, with a number of storage areas being leased to fishermen as net stores. The courtyard area was used for barking and drying nets and is where the original "gallowes" still remains *in situ* for visitors to see.



The Museum has now expanded to include a number of adjacent domestic properties which date from the 18th and 19th centuries. All of these are associated with fisher families. In 1997, the former Smith & Hutton Boatyard, where fishing vessels were built for owners all over the UK, was developed to house most of the Museum's impressive collection of full-size vessels.

In 2000, the Zulu Gallery was added to house the 22m Zulu drifter 'Research'. The Museum's two sea-going fishing vessels, Reaper and White Wing are used for promotional visits to other harbours with fishing connections. These visits coincide with local festivals and celebrations during the summer months. In addition, to complement these permanent displays, the Museum holds several temporary exhibitions annually. During its history, the Museum has collected appropriate material evidence from all around the coast of Scotland, including the Western and Northern Isles. It is committed to continue collecting such material from across Scotland.

In 2007, the collections held at the Scottish Fisheries Museum were formally 'Recognised' as being of 'National Significance'. They include over 65,000 artefacts, 74% of which have been deemed to be of international, UK, or Scotland-wide importance by independent assessors. They are preserved, interpreted and made accessible to the public to the standard required of a 'national' museum.

These collections include:

- Fine art, photographic and document archive and library
- Boats, model boats
- Engines, navigational aids, safety equipment, galley equipment, coopers' tools

Fishing equipment held includes:

- Fishing gear, including nets and lines and the Buckland Collection of salmon and eel spears.

Social and Domestic Life collection includes:

- Costume, furniture, cooking utensils and decorative items from the East Neuk.

Natural History collection includes:

- Buckland fish casts

Introduction to the Guide

This pack has been produced by the Learning and Access Officer at the Scottish Fisheries Museum to provide a guide for reminiscence sessions run using the museum's collections.

The wealth of items housed at the Museum reflects both the fishing industry and the domestic lives of those who were involved in it. Objects include technical fishing gear alongside costume and items related to local history. The photographic collection held at the Museum is very extensive too, providing images of life at sea and on land for the thousands of people involved with an industry that stretched across Scotland and beyond.

Such a diversity of objects lends itself whole-heartedly to reminiscence work with older people.

Following the launch of 'Rethinking Heritage' by Historic Royal Palaces (HRP) in December 2017, this guide has been produced in line with current research and thinking on the duty of heritage sites to make their collections and sites more accessible to people with dementia. This document briefly indicates the ways that the Museum's collections could be used in reminiscence work and dementia-friendly activity sessions. It also gives advice about how these kinds of sessions could be evaluated. This guide is by no means fully comprehensive or prescriptive.



Advice on Working with People Living with Dementia (summarised from 'Rethinking Heritage' (HRP, 2017))

Dementia is a progressive condition involving diseases of the brain and is **not** part of the normal ageing process. Although there are over 100 different types of dementia, the most common include Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia, which can be caused by strokes

There are no fixed ways in which dementia can affect a person. The affect that dementia has depends on the condition and the person.

A person living with dementia may:

- Have problems with their day to day memory
- Have trouble making decisions, solving problems or carrying out a series of tasks in a sequence
- Have language or communication problems
- Be confused about time or place
- Have sight problems, visual impairment or visual hallucinations
- Have difficulty controlling their emotions or show changes in their mood.
- Show changes in behaviour

Living with dementia doesn't mean that a person can't live well. Many of those with dementia continue to drive, socialise and work for instance. Even as their dementia progresses, people can continue to lead healthy and active lives and continue to enjoy their hobbies, friendships and relationships.

Themes and Objects

Reminiscence sessions should be geared around a theme that is easily accessible and relatable to participants.

Below are some themes related to the Museum's collections, including examples of objects and photographs which could be used to aid discussion.

Local Memories

Nets (traditional and modern)

Whiska

Slate

¼ cran herring basket

Ruskoline Sack

Stamped barrel lids



The Home

Iron

Lino sample

Knitting needles

Housemaid Cloth Tea Towel



Leisure/ Days Out

Knitting needles and wool

Playing cards

Brownie Camera (and Instruction manual)

Suitcase



Clothing

Gansey (navy)



Knitted shawl
 Fisherlass petticoat
 Oilskins
 Whiska
 Wool
 Waistcoat
 Hat(s)



Fishing

Oilskins
 Sou'wester
 Fid
 Cringle
 Netting needle



Lamp
 Steering Wheel
 Floats
 Rope Fender



Wartime

Lamp
 Replica documentation pack (inc. Ration Book & Identity Card)
 Britain at War CD
 Suitcase
 Gansey (navy)
 Royal Naval woollen jumper (white)



Structuring the Session

Successful reminiscence sessions stimulate all 5 senses. This doesn't have to be by creating a smell or a sound, for example, but could be triggered through questions related to sounds and smells that the participant might have experienced in the past. Reminiscing about these experiences can trigger strong memories for participants and help them enjoy talking about their pasts. Objects can be used to help aid memories through all five senses. The feel of an object, its shape, its smell, the sound it makes when you turn it over, can all awaken strong memories for participants.

Prompting Questions

It is helpful to structure reminiscence sessions around themes to help guide conversation. Prompting questions can help participants delve deeper into their memories.

Local memories

When did you first come to the East Neuk?

What was your favourite place? Why?

What did you like to do in the East Neuk?

Whereabouts did you visit?

Where did you live?

What was your school like? Did you have a favourite teacher?

Days Out

Where did you go on days out? How did you get there?

What were cars and buses like when you were younger?

Who did you go on days out with?

Did anyone ever say 'are we there yet?'

What did you like to do when you went out?

The Home

Where did you live?

What was your house like? Can you describe the layout?

Who did you live there with?

Did you have a favourite room?

What kind of food did you like to eat at home?

What was your morning routine like when you were growing up?

What radio ads can you remember?

Leisure

What games did you play when you were young? How did they work?

Who did you play with? Where did you play?

Did you have a favourite toy?

What was your favourite thing to do at the weekends when you were younger?

Did you have a favourite TV programme or magazine?

What kinds of films did you like to watch?

Clothing

What was your favourite outfit in the 60s/70s/80s? Why did you like it? How did it make you feel?

What kind of clothes did your parents wear?

What were your winter clothes like? What did they feel like?

What kinds of clothes did you wear on holiday?

Evaluating the Session

Reminiscence session evaluations should take a number of factors into account. Participants may not be able to fill in a lengthy questionnaire, for example. They may find remembering exactly what they did in the session (and the sequence of activities) difficult and confusing.

If you're undertaking a one-off reminiscence session, you will not be able to gauge the long-term impact of the activities. What you will be able to do is determine which activities and methods work well and which do not. You could start the session with some questions to gauge participants' level of knowledge or wellbeing. These could be really simple, like: What do you know about (site, topic)? How are you feeling today?

To make evaluation easier, you could use a traffic light system of stickers, allowing participants to show whether they enjoyed particular aspects of the session or how confident they now feel about the topics you discussed. You could even use emojis to give options for levels of understanding (smiley face, straight line mouth, unhappy face).

Although you should not assume that participants can't evaluate their experience themselves, it might not always be possible for them to articulate their thoughts or provide you with comprehensive answers to your questions. You could observe them yourself during the session and note down their reactions and responses to activities. You should write these observations down directly after the session as participants may feel uneasy were you to do this during the session.

Another option is to supplement your participant evaluations with added information gleaned from their carers or support workers. They will know the participants much better than you do and will be able to tell you whether they enjoyed the session and what they got out of it.

Making Existing Buildings Accessible: Museums and Art Galleries

Case Study: Scottish Fisheries Museum, Anstruther, Fife

The museum is housed in a group of disparate buildings facing the harbour, and at the foot of the 10m raised beach. In 1969 when it opened, following sale by the last of the fishing industry users, the buildings consisted of a merchant's house (1721), the mid-16th century Abbot's lodging, and various former storehouses built around an enclosed courtyard – the site of the former chapel of St Ayle (an offshoot of the Cistercian Abbey at Balmerino in North Fife to which the site had been chartered by William de Candela in 1318 – demolished c. 1850). All of these buildings were 'A' listed, while to adjacent 19th century terraced houses, with smokehouse, were added in the 1980s ('B' listed) giving a plan view of a number 9 lying on its side, with the long axis to the landward side (illus. 1).

A period of steady expansion over the first 15 years had been followed by 5 lean years, and in 1989 the Trust appointed a new General Manager with a view to rectifying the situation. Some consultancy work had been carried out in previous years, with a view to improving the entrance, shop and tearoom facilities; but the estimated costs were substantial and the proposals did not find favour.

Nor were the displays in the best of order. The buildings were domestic in scale and, of necessity, the museum had created the displays in a series of separate, usually small, rooms. Given that these were in separate buildings, the potential for confusing visitors was considerable. The addition of the two terraced houses, while solving many of the previous storage problems, perpetuated the piecemeal aspect with the creation of a final cul-de-sac at the end of the tour, and made any chronological presentation of the Scottish fishing industry virtually impossible. The other outstanding problem was the presence of a small aquarium inside the museum, which complicated the problems of controlling relative humidity in a seaside location, and which was suffering in comparison with larger, modern and more professionally run aquaria in St Andrews and North Queensferry.

A review of the situation in 1989/90 was entrusted to a team of three – Architect, Board Member and General Manager, later joined by the new Curator¹, on the basis that the Board had a healthy suspicion of consultants, a very unhealthy cash flow, and who knew the museum better than our own people? It was soon agreed that we needed to create a one-way circuit for visitors (no cul-de-sacs), that the sequence should run from prehistoric to modern times, and that, given the talk current at the time about facilities for disabled access, provision of these should be our guiding rule. In addition, the necessary improvements to the small tearoom, miniscule kitchen and entrance/shop (in the wrong place and too small) were to be taken into account, not forgetting to provide a new home for the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) which we accommodated (and which paid us rent!). And, given our parlous financial state, it would be more than slightly useful to keep all aspects of the museum at least partly operational while the work was in progress (curators look away now).

From entrance pavement to highest point, there were 18 levels to be linked. We did not wish to use lifts, due to bad experiences elsewhere, and the need to accommodate their machinery into an already crowded site. There were five existing sets of stairs, two of which had to be retained as the historical entrance to the Abbot's Lodging building (which contained displays of a fisherman's home and net loft) – perhaps an AV could cover these displays for wheelchair visitors? Linking

many of the more modest of the remaining 15 changes of level had obvious solutions, indeed within our in-house capability, but in others, even the initial measuring of wall thicknesses and levels in adjacent, but unconnected, buildings was extremely difficult. The insertion of metre-wide ramps into small rooms meant less room for display cases – the rooms often became the display case. Some ramps required railings – could these become display material, and still remain legal? Using different materials to suit the context, they did. We learned too that space for the ramps was not all lost; there were gains where stairwells were covered; some ramps were high enough to permit displays below, or at least, storage (By the end of the project we reckoned to have gained 8% of useable space).

By May 1990, we had obtained endorsement for a project, estimated at £230,000 – a formidable sum for an organisation struggling at the same time to improve its annual income of £67,000 – and were putting together a fundraising group from within our own Board, with friends from outside. As summer visitors provided the bulk of our income, the work was divided into five sub-contracts with the first three scheduled to finish in time to open the public access fully by Good Friday 1991.

Parochialism, something of an art form in East Fife, raised its head at this point. Memories of the financial costs of having used contractors from outwith the area were still fresh, and while there was a reasonable number of local firms, these were generally small and some had direct involvement in the Museum Board. The resultant need to strike a balance between competitive tendering was to prove a continuing thorn in the flesh of the Architect, albeit the worst of the blood-letting was over the allocation of these early contracts.

Closure of the aquarium provided temporary storage, and stage III was begun almost immediately since it did not impinge on the public areas. This involved the digging out of the long narrow back court behind the terraced house down to ground level display of the east side of the courtyard to provide the necessary return route to the visitors' starting point. The ramp thus created entered the older buildings at a point where one of the original staircases would be demolished, and the concrete was designed to terminate just inside the old wall where central heating pipes ran at right angles to it. We did not wish to lower these and risk air-locking, so they were bridged with a light metal plate and the ramp continued in wood in the ground floor display. We then realised that if we re-floored the ceiling level with the rest of the floor above, we would have insufficient headroom to meet legal requirements. Answer: replace the square meter involved with ¼" steel plate (illus. 2). The main concern in excavating down two metres beside the foundations of three-storey buildings was of course, stability, and it was necessary to build a metre-wide concrete buttress alongside the building as digging proceeded, thereby creating a flat, stepped shelf beside the ramp. The area was roofed over with concrete beams (in case we should wish to build above at a later date) and the resulting tunnel painted white throughout. Stage III was now the "Cresta Run"; and the shelf? – an ideal location for the safe display of the collection of small marine engines, in the right location ahead of the large engines display into which the ramp debouched.

While the development of the "Cresta Run" in the north east corner was comparatively straightforward, those working at the north west corner were experiencing heavier weather. The plan here was to replace the existing entrance staircase by a ramped system which would obliterate a cellar/cupboard, be driven through a ground floor wall, follow the curvature of the north west corner building as it rose, then angle southwards through a second major wall into one of the main display galleries. Once visitors had viewed the sailing displays there, they would exit by ramp over the lower displays to reach the highest level of the whole system (through the same two walls).

This was the area which had given the biggest headaches at the measuring and levelling stage; no design problems arose from that, but we were to hit the practical problems of breaching 18th century walls. The only dressed stones in the buildings were at the window and door surrounds; all of the walls were built of rocks obtained from the foreshore. By definition, these were the hardest of (usually) rounded stones which had resisted further erosion, and their nature had dictated the very dimensions of the whole structure – no chance here of cutting neat apertures with a Stihl saw, it was multiple needles and Acrow-props, and the very careful removal of sometimes sizable rocks, with the end result resembling a shell hole rather than a doorway (the work coincided with the first Gulf War – there was much reference to Scud missiles, which some wags claimed did less damage).

The holes re-faced and the dust removed, the building of the ramps began. We knew that this was the section where it was most difficult to maintain the recommended 1:12 maximum slope. We had extended the low end of the ramp as far back as possible, and similarly the high end by cutting into the ceiling of a cupboard fortuitously below, but although we had to accept a short section of 1:11, this was not the real hold-up. Wheelchairs have four wheels, but generally no springs – we were asking the joiners to follow the curved wall on a rising slope, using flat boards, with no camber to upset the pedestrian public, but with all four wheels on the deck for the wheelchairs. After a week of unparliamentary language, they did it – perfectly (illus. 3).

Meanwhile the Museum frontage was being transformed. We had taken the decision that it would not be practical to consider employment of staff requiring wheelchair facilities, although this could be possible for volunteers manning the shop or acting as guides (we had 60 – 80 volunteers and five staff). That decision allowed us to create a larger office at first floor level, accessed from the stone stair to the Abbot's Lodging, and situated above the new toilets and TIC which was given separate access from the street and its own disabled toilet. The former office, accessed by a wooden stair (above the kitchen!) was converted to use by the Curator with access to the main display level; and the offending stair removed. In turn, that permitted enlargement of both kitchen and tearoom, which absorbed the area previously used by the TIC. The large gate providing the main entry to the courtyard was removed and the tiny entrance/shop vastly extended into this area. We still had to allow for occasional access/egress of large display items for the courtyard, so the front and rear doorways were carefully aligned, the railing on the entrance ramp from street level made removable, and the shop/reception furniture in this area made mobile (illus. 4).

That left the niggling question of the first and second floors of the Abbot's Lodging (the south east corner). The displays of a fisherman's house and net loft had always provided a suitable closure at the end of visits, although historically showing the early years of the 20th century. Wheelchair access was impossible, both by the external stone fore-stair and internal wooden stair between floors; and the relationship between the two floor levels and that of the display of the "Age of Steam" next door could not have been worse – the implied horizontal extent of any ramp would be colossal. And yet an AV solution could break down, like a lift, and seemed a poor option compared with our other efforts. Could we create a window? There was a cupboard where a breakthrough might be made – it seemed possible to create a two-part window through which a wheelchair user could look up into the loft and down into the room, and see a fair bit of each; but these were the oldest walls in the place – was the thickness really the 18 – 24 inches our measurements indicated? Wisely we decided to probe through from inside the cupboard, no small exercise in itself. Result – three feet thick – pause. This would make little impact on the view of the attic, but constricted the sight line into the house enormously. Answer: the thickness of the wall was a bonus – it permitted the positioning of two wide mirrors at 45o top and bottom in the cupboard to give a view of all of the room, except the wall from which the viewer was

looking; and that was solved via a third mirror on the far wall (unseen by pedestrian visitors) and again, the result was in historical context as well (illus. 5).

We had been blessed in our choice of Architect; the team hadn't fallen out (well not much); the workforce had (largely) been inspired by what we were trying to achieve – but did it all work? We were visited by a lady who had handled one of our applications for grant aid, along with her Chairperson – herself a wheelchair user. We took them round, fearful of the verdict on the 3 – 4 yards of steeper ramp. “Don't worry”, the Chairperson said, “It's in the mind really. People won't fall over backwards, they only fear they will. Stick a phone on the wall so they can ask for help.” (We did and it's seldom used). We completed the circuit. The Chairperson wished to go back through the system (we hadn't thought of that). On the way her colleague confessed cheerfully that she had regarded the project as so complicated that it would never come to fruition. We returned to the top of the chicane – at which point the Chairperson launched herself full tilt down the steep section, ending up with a triumphant wheelie at the starting point. “Great”, she said.

We were breaking new ground in the museum world at that time, and achieved more than we realised. The one-way chronological route was hardly innovative, but it solved our immediate problem; creating ramps was the open-sesame to solving future problems. No more buggy parking problems while harassed parents carried wriggling toddlers; the arthritic elderly too were finding slopes easier to manage than steps; and always the delight of a new dimension as artefacts were seen from different heights and angles. In the following nine years the museum saw two massive extensions – a £750,000 doubling in size by creating a loop to include old boatyard premises along the street, turning the old “figure 9” into a squashed U-shape; then a further purchase and incorporation of the Sun Tavern site to fill in the “U” at a similar cost. Each had its problems, but the approach laid down in 1990/1991 continued to serve so well that when an Edinburgh disabled group visited, following completion of the Boatyard project, and we asked their Chairperson to highlight any faults, she said “Well, there's a wee thing here, and a little thing there, but they're so trivial I would never have mentioned them, if you hadn't asked.”

The museum's work was recognised in various ways², but the best reward by far is seeing the visitors' faces afterwards.

J K Lindsay, May 2004

¹ Walter Flett Faulds, Architect, Pittenweem
Dr R G W Prescott, University of St Andrews
J K Lindsay, General Manager
M Tanner, Curator

²

1992	Best long established visitor attraction (Scottish Tourist Board)
1994	Visit by Princess Royal
1997	Joint Second (Scottish Museum of the Year) Special Award for access for the disabled 1991 – 97 (Society for the Interpretation of Britain's Heritage)
2000	Return visit by Princess Royal Highly Commended (Scottish Museum of the Year)

Disabled Access Day

What is Disabled Access Day?

The day was about highlighting the fantastic access that already exists in places.

It is a day to celebrate good access and created opportunities for people to try something new.

When is it?

10th - 12th March 2018.

What are we doing?

Friday the 10th of March

Rest Area available in former whaling gallery

Saturday the 11th of March

From 11 until 4 Mel will be in the courtyard with the museums object handling box for visitors to drop in and touch some of the objects. This is included in a museum ticket.

At 12:30 there will be a touch and descriptive tour. Assemble for this in the courtyard. This is included in a museum ticket.

Mel will be handing out surveys for the museum. Completed surveys can be exchanged for a voucher for a free cup of tea or filter coffee.

Rest Area available in former whaling gallery

Sunday the 12th of March

From 11 until 4 Mel will be in the courtyard with the museums object handling box for visitors to drop in and touch some of the objects. This is included in a museum ticket.

At 12:30 there will be a touch and descriptive tour. Assemble for this in the courtyard. This is included in a museum ticket.

Mel will be handing out surveys for the museum. Completed surveys can be exchanged for a voucher for a free cup of tea or filter coffee.

Rest Area available in former whaling gallery

What are our other accessible resources?

Hearing loop.

Ramp access throughout, with the exception of the cottage which has a viewing window.

Access statement.

Carers Go Free.

Touch Tour Plan

-) 45 minutes
-) As little travel time as possible.
-) Limit group numbers to 10 – can we offer more than one tour?
-) Can we buy in clear, loose, plastic gloves for touching gallery objects?
-) Offer – electric (?) – magnifying glasses.

Gallery One:

-) Early Fishing – the original hunter-gatherers who only collected enough fish to feed their families.
-) Early Fishing techniques: **touch** the fish weir trap.
-) Early Boats: log boats.

Gallery Two:

-) Fishing – the commercial shift.
-) 19th C Fishing techniques: *Sma' Lines* – **touch** example of *sma' lines*.
-) 19th C Fishing techniques: *Drift-Netting* – **touch** an example of a cotton drift net with cork floats. **Contrast** this with a net made of hemp.
-) Costume of Fisherfolk: John McGhie *The Fisherlass* – **touch** a creel, petticoat and a shawl to illustrate.
-) Sailing Boats, Safety and fish-finding.

Gallery Three:

-) Herring Market: a woman's work at the *farlans* - **Touch** cloots, a barrel stamp, a barrel.

Gallery Four:

-) Steam to Petrol Engines.
-) **Touch**: modern netting.

Temporary Exhibition Space:

-) Fifie/Scaffie/Zulu – boat hulls.
-) Clinker and Carvel hull models.

List of Objects Needed for Touch Tour

-) *Sma' Line* sample without hooks
-) Hemp net sample
-) Fishwives Creel
-) Fishwives shawl
-) Gansey
-) Cloots sample (one in the Herring Lasses handling kit)
-) Barrel (use one from the herring market scene)
-) Barrel Stamp – Crown Brand if possible
-) Fifie/Scaffie/Zulu hull models
-) Clinker and Carvel hull models