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## Creating Access For All:

## Guidance for Historic Vessels

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[www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk](http://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk)

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# 1. Introduction

The UK is fortunate in possessing a magnificent collection of historic vessels reflecting our rich maritime heritage. They cover a broad spectrum of functions and types such as fighting, fishing, leisure, service and passenger vessels, and offer an insight into past societies and the evolution of our national identity. Not only significant for their cultural heritage value, they play a large role in their use as places for people to work, live and enjoy.

Like many heritage sites, historic vessels were not designed to be accessible to all and can present significant challenges for people with disabilities, health conditions or other impairments. However, many of these challenges can be overcome through innovative management practises, sensitive design interventions, and open communication with your audience.

## 1.1 What is the purpose of this guidance paper?

The purpose of this guide is to advise those who own, manage, or care for historic vessels of the options available to them to create an environment that is welcoming and accessible to every visitor. It considers people's different needs, and provides practical guidance on how these can be met in a variety of ways according to an organisation's resources and without making changes to the vessel which might affect its significance.

## 1.2 Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is mainly aimed at people who own, care, or manage historic vessels that are in one way or another open to the public — whether they are static, operational or on display in a museum environment.

## 1.3 What do we mean by disability?

Disabilities can be visible and invisible and can have an affect on people's lives in different ways. However, a disability is only disabling when existing barriers prevent someone from doing what they want or need to do.

### 1.3.1 Physical disabilities

Physical impairments are often what people think of first when people hear the term "disability". More visible impairments may include mobility problems, limited use of limbs, and speech difficulties. Additionally, there are many "invisible" physical disabilities that aren't always apparent or aren't present all of the time, for example, back pain, joint pain, and chronic pain from injury or repetitive motion.

Many physical disabilities, such as migraines, Tourette's syndrome, epilepsy and other seizures are a result of neurological rather than mechanical problems. Neurologically-based learning difficulties can include dyslexia and dyspraxia and can have an affect on someone's written, speech and planning abilities.

### 1.3.2 Sensory impairments

Sensory limitations can include hearing difficulties, deafness, vision difficulties and blindness as well as sensitivity to light and noise.

### 1.3.3 Cognitive limitations

Cognitive limitations can refer to a range of conditions that can impact someone in a variety of different ways. Autism, down syndrome, and brain injury can all affect a person's ability to absorb and convey infor-

mation. Where some people may find their lives relatively unaffected by their disability, others may require lifelong support.

### **1.3.4 Psychiatric limitations**

Almost everyone at some stage in their life will experience varying states of emotional stress and trauma that can have a profound impact on their day-to-day lives. For some people, these states are temporary and would not be counted as a disability, however psychological disabilities such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and chronic depression can have a permanent impact on someone's life.

## **1.4 Legislation**

The Equality Act 2010 aims to protect disabled people and prevent disability discrimination in all areas of life, including access to public goods, services, facilities. The Act defines disability as “a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”. This can include:

- Mobility problems
- Visual impairments
- Hearing impairments
- Speech impairments; and
- often hidden impairments such as:
  - ◊ Dyslexia;
  - ◊ Mental health problems;
  - ◊ Learning disabilities/difficulties; and
  - ◊ Conditions such as diabetes and epilepsy

## **2. First steps for providing access for all**

### **2.1 What do we mean by providing 'access for all'?**

Providing “access for all” means recognising people's different needs to enable them to fully enjoy an experience, and seeks to remove all unnecessary barriers to ensure everybody can access and enjoy our maritime heritage. It means empowering the end user by providing choice and not alienating them by delivering a service that is poorly designed or implemented.

### **2.2 Why is it important to think about access?**

Whatever use your vessel is put to —be it part of a museum collection, available for excursion days, or training and sailing — the central work of anyone who opens up a historic vessel to the public is to showcase the significance of a particular part of our heritage that is encapsulated by the design and associations of the vessel itself. By creating a barrier free environment, historic vessels will benefit from the attention of a large and diverse audience and can be a significant asset within the community.

#### **2.2.1 Increasing your visitor base**

Usefulness has always been the key to the survival of historic vessels and that use may now rest on the ability to explain and interpret a vessel's history in a way which will excite continued enthusiasm and

interest from as many people as possible. Increasing the accessibility to information is a key part of attracting a large and diverse audience.

It is currently estimated that there are approximately 10 million adults in Britain who are disabled —18% of the population — and a significant proportion of your potential audience. Around 1 in 20 million children are estimated to be disabled, compared to around one in seven working age adults and almost half of people over state pension age. Additionally there are more people who remain unrepresented by these statistics as they might not consider themselves disabled though they may require assistance during their visit, including people with injuries, older people, parents with buggies, and expectant mothers. Furthermore, for each visitor who may feel excluded due to certain access barriers, their immediate families, carers, and friends can also feel unwelcome resulting in a large section of society feeling ostracized.

### **2.2.2 Expanding staff and volunteer opportunities**

Improving disability access to your vessel will not only benefit your visitors, but can also help you develop a diverse workforce of staff and volunteers with a wide range of talents, skills, and experiences. Benefits can include an overall improved awareness of disability related issues within your organisation that will in turn help you provide more effective customer care; an enhanced reputation as an organisation that puts equality for everyone into practise; and improved staff morale through behaviours that show care for your staff's needs.

### **2.2.3 Increased interaction with local groups**

An effective tool when developing an access strategy is to work in partnership with disability organisations. Not only will this allow you to engage with disabled people on the main issues, it will also allow you to work in tandem with a wider network of likeminded groups, creating new avenues for collaboration.

### **2.2.4 Developing new funding opportunities**

The aim of many funding organisations across the UK is to support projects that will make a lasting difference for heritage, people and communities. However, within the current economic climate both projects and funders both find themselves under intense pressure. As competition for available funding increases, it is essential to ensure your project successfully addresses the desired outcomes of funding bodies.

Key outcomes of funding organisations can include engaging new audiences, encouraging inclusivity, broadening diversity and improving the interpretation of your heritage asset. By demonstrating a commitment to improving access, an organisation can illustrate how their understanding of heritage is coherent with that of the funders, strengthening their chances for external support.

A target of improving access for all can also open up a wide network of partnerships from whom you can gain experience and work alongside to secure joint project funding.

## **3. Where to begin**

### **3.1 Developing an access strategy**

#### **3.1.1 What is the purpose of an access strategy?**

The purpose of an access strategy is to set out your policy and demonstrate your commitment to creating an inclusive environment. It should: deliver a set of proposals to ensure that the needs of all are met; establish preliminary budgets and timescales; and identify who is responsible for managing the implementation of the strategy.

When developing your access strategy, it is important to address issues of conservation and access in a cohesive manner by identifying areas which will cause difficulties for people with physical, sensory or intellectual impairments and considering how to address them without adversely affecting the historically significant features of a vessel.

#### **3.1.1.1 Developing a conservation management plan**

Any access strategy will be greatly influenced by the chosen conservation route for a historic vessel – whether it is conserved for operational use or fabric preservation. A conservation management plan should be developed to establish the significance of a historic vessel, stating how that significance will be retained in any future use, alteration, management or repair. The plan should include information about the vessel to ensure that new work is appropriate including why the vessel is important; what is happening to it; and what policies are in place to manage and maintain it. It should also identify any accessibility issues that will inform the access strategy.

Further guidance on conserving a historic vessel from acquisition to implementing an appropriate conservation management plan can be found in National Historic Ships UK's *Understanding Historic Vessels: Conserving Historic Vessels (2008?)*<sup>1</sup>.

#### **3.1.1.2 Undertaking an access audit**

An access audit maps a sequential journey through your environment and should include every aspect of the visitor experience. It will help you identify existing access barriers; recognise where accessibility needs are currently being satisfactorily met; and recommend appropriate solutions where there is room for improvement.

Your access audit should include the following areas:

- pre-visit information
- visitors' journey to you by car, public transport, or other means
- approach including parking, paths, surfaces
- entrances
- reception and waiting areas
- horizontal circulation: corridors, ramps, welcome areas, doorways
- vertical circulation: lifts, stairs
- emergency exits
- wayfinding
- toilets and washing facilities
- finishes, colour and contrast
- lighting
- signage and information provision
- fittings and fixtures – including displays
- policies and procedures
- IT provision – a brief overview of software and hardware provision

An access audit can still be applied to vessels which are in operational use with consideration given to the

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1. Information on how to purchase National Historic Ships UK's publication *Understanding Historic Vessels: Conserving Historic Vessels* can be found online at [www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/publications](http://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/publications).

visitors' approach to the vessel, where it is moored, how visitors climb on board, handbooks or other briefing tools, moving around the vessel at sea, which parts of the vessel are open to them, toilet facilities as well as safety and emergency procedures. If visitors have the opportunity to take part in a hands-on experience, the audit should indicate whether this is accessible for all or has restricted use depending on physical ability.

### **3.2 What are your options?**

Once you have conducted your conservation assessment and access audit you can start to consider a range of options for improving access to your vessel based on your findings.

When considering your options, it is advisable to identify appropriate management solutions as they can eliminate the need for physical interventions that may be expensive and jeopardise the historical integrity of the vessel's fabric. Solutions such as staff training, improved information giving, relocating services/facilities and portable solutions can drastically change the landscape of your vessel's accessibility when implemented consistently and creatively.

Physical changes to a vessel may be required to comply with safety requirements (including MCA regulations), legislation to allow visitors on board, or to interpret and explain a vessel thoroughly. Where physical changes are proposed, other alternatives should always be considered first. If this is not viable, the design should be carefully thought out to ensure the loss of original fabric is minimal and wherever possible, reversible. Physical adaptations to a historic vessel will require working in consultation with external authorities and specialist organisations and it is useful to explore examples of solutions to access problems that are in operation across the sector.

### **3.3 Consultation & User Testing**

In order to ensure that any access solutions put in place will work for the end user, it is essential to gain input from an early stage of those who will most benefit from the proposed changes. This will not only provide you with the chance to gain feedback on existing access barriers and suggested solutions, but can also be a valuable opportunity to work alongside local organisations and increase your outreach. A quick search on the Disability Rights UK website will allow you to locate local organisations and find their contact details—<https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/organisations-your-area>. Surveys can also be carried out on site or online to gather feedback on your proposals.

## **4. Implementing your access strategy**

### **4.1 Staff Training**

Raising awareness and understanding amongst your team is an essential tool for improving access. Decision makers, staff and volunteers all need to understand access issues before starting to plan the process of improving access to a historic vessel. Designated members of staff should be tasked with the responsibility of implementing an access strategy to ensure an ongoing commitment to improving access is cascaded throughout the organisation. Disability awareness training; training on the operation of auxiliary aids; and training in the provision of specialist auxiliary services—such as BSL, Makaton and audio-description—will ensure your team are well equipped to provide good customer care. Often training can be linked to other skills development schemes such as Health and Safety and conservation management.

## 4.2 Pre-visit information

Pre-visit information is easy to make available and can help an individual better prepare for their visitor experience. Consideration should be given to what information should be provided, as well as how and where it can be distributed.

Key pre-visit information includes:

- advertising
- easy to use journey planner
- timetable information – routes and times
- information on connections with other modes of transport (including rail, bus, and taxi)
- information on entry requirements such as ticket purchase, fares, making reservations, and booking seats
- information about any limitations for concession travel users
- details of assistance available and how to get that assistance
- information on accessibility of facilities, services and alternative options
- facilities available including ramps, lifts, seating, services, toilets
- Information on changing & baby facilities
- Details of what to bring for vessel trips or cruises on operational craft

Effective use of accessible communication formats will enable you to reach all of your potential audience. Websites and printed materials are often the most convenient way to inform people about what you are doing and can be made easily accessible.

### 4.2.1 Websites

Your website is an exceptionally useful and affordable tool for providing pre-visit information. Often the first port of call for anyone with specific questions regarding access, it is essential your website conveys a welcoming and inclusive message by providing easy to understand, quick to find and up to date information to avoid people getting frustrated and clicking away.

#### 4.2.1.1 What information should be provided?

When deciding what information to provide on your website, it is useful to refer back to the visitor's sequential journey mapped out during the access audit stage to ensure you provide enough detail to answer any potential questions. You can include:

- **getting to your location**
  - ◇ by car
  - ◇ by bus (provide bus numbers, schedule and prices)
  - ◇ by train (provide distance of train stations to your location)
  - ◇ by taxi (provide local numbers & approximate fares from train stations)
  - ◇ mark your location on a map - link to google maps



- **parking facilities**
  - ◇ location of car park from main entrance
  - ◇ location of disabled bays and how many are available
  - ◇ pay and display facilities and location around the site
  - ◇ warning regarding surface of approaches (e.g. gravel or cobblestone)
- **opening times**
  - ◇ weekday opening times
  - ◇ weekend opening times
  - ◇ Bank Holiday opening times
  - ◇ times the site is likely to be at its quietest
  - ◇ early morning or late night opening times
- **prices**
  - ◇ full admission ticket price
  - ◇ family ticket prices
  - ◇ concession prices (including carer concessions)
  - ◇ suggested donations
  - ◇ include information on what you can access with a ticket
- **On—site navigation**
  - ◇ location of main entrance
  - ◇ level access details
  - ◇ signage and wayfinding
  - ◇ circulation of the site
  - ◇ emergency exits and procedures
- **Facilities and services**
  - ◇ welcome desk with lowered section
  - ◇ complimentary ticket services for carers
  - ◇ mobility scooters, wheelchairs and walking aids for hire
  - ◇ level and throughway access including ramp gradients, width of doorways, and hydraulic lifts
  - ◇ lifts with audio advice
  - ◇ pictorial symbols - what each one means and where you will find them
  - ◇ annotated maps and models
  - ◇ audio guides with script translations
  - ◇ braille, British Sign Language and large print copies of all written information
  - ◇ script translations of guided tours
  - ◇ language translations of written information
  - ◇ ear defenders
  - ◇ sensory backpacks
  - ◇ hearing loops and mobile phone loops
  - ◇ water bowls for assistance dogs
  - ◇ tactile floor guides
  - ◇ fast track services
  - ◇ lighting levels

- ◇ accessible toilets with lowered sinks and emergency pull cord
- ◇ baby changing facilities
- ◇ quiet spaces
- ◇ haptic models: 3D models of objects which communicate information through touch
- ◇ Evac chairs

#### 4.2.2 Pre-visit documents

Allowing potential visitors to download and print information about your facilities and services is an easy way to help people prepare for their visit and a cost effective means of providing accessible services. You might want to make the following items available for download from your website:

- a visual story featuring pictures of your vessel and the surrounding area with information about what a visitor can expect
- a map to show possible routes around your vessel and the surrounding area including where toilets and access services are located
- picture communication cards to explain parts of your vessel and the surrounding area—for example, pictures of different parts of the vessel with a clear explanation of their use; places to sit; places to eat; pictures of your staff who will be on hand to help

All of the above documents can be easily produced on a computer.

#### **Making your website accessible: Top tips**

- choose a content management system that supports accessibility e.g. Drupal and Wordpress
- use headings correctly to organise the structure of your content
- include alt text for images so screen reader users
- give your links unique and descriptive names e.g. "To learn more about our company, read [About Us](#)"
- use colour with care
- ensure that all content can be accessed with the keyboard alone in a logical way
- try not to hide information in a long Access Statement—make it easy to find and read
- use social media such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook as a way to shout about your access policies and communicate directly with potential visitors about their access requirements

#### 4.3 Printed information

Printed information such as leaflets can be a useful way to let people know who you are and the types of facilities and services you provide. All printed information should be made available in large print with simple and clear descriptions, ensuring that any background colour does not make the text difficult to read.

Where you distribute your printed information can have a significant impact on who visits you. Making leaflets available at train stations, community centres, care centres, and other community based organisations can help widen your visitor base and reach a more diverse audience.

#### 4.4 Language and phrasing

How you word what services are available will be a deciding factor for any visitor. Some words and

phrases can be barriers in themselves and it is essential to listen, respect and be open to changing your language in response to people's stated preferences. For example:

- the word 'disabled' or 'handicapped' is a description not a group of people. Use 'disabled people' not 'the disabled' or 'the handicapped' as the collective term
- use positive rather than negative language. Avoid phrases like 'suffers from' which suggests discomfort, constant pain and anguish
- a simple line of text saying 'not wheelchair accessible' focuses solely on the barrier and does not provide a visitor with enough information to make their own judgement on what they will be able to do. Instead try and include more welcoming and descriptive language. This will allow visitors to decide for themselves how to manage their visit

## 4.5 On-site information

### 4.5.1 Parking

Where it is possible to provide disabled parking, set-down areas should be as close to your main entrance as possible. There should be sufficient space to the side and rear to allow for transfer to and from wheelchairs and where practicable routes to and from the areas should be well lit. Where disabled parking areas cannot be provided, information on access to the nearest disabled parking areas should be clearly provided as part of the pre-visit information.

### 4.5.2 Wayfinding and Signage

Good wayfinding and signage should help visitors navigate their way around an unfamiliar environment and are an essential part of any access strategy. Good signage will benefit all users, and the provision of different wayfinding aids will enhance the experience of people with physical, sensory or cognitive impairments. By offering clear and consistent signage it will lessen the visitor's need to ask for help or directions which can be problematic for someone who is deaf or hard of hearing, or uncomfortable with approaching strangers.

It is important that any signage should be carefully integrated into the environment ensuring that the result does not obstruct, damage or detract from original fabric. The design and location of all signs need to be carefully considered to ensure they are easily readable without taking away from the overall experience of the environment.



Tactile maps and pictures give blind and partially sighted people the opportunity to explore objects and images.



Makaton is a language programmed using signs and symbols to help people to communicate.

### **Wayfinding and signage: Top tips**

- locate signs where they are clearly visible
- avoid barriers in front of signs so people can position themselves closer if needed
- use free-standing signs where necessary to protect original fabric from damage
- integrate new signs with existing historic signage
- structure sign content in a logical order
- within larger sites, signs should indicate distances between areas
- indicate possible barriers such as steps, their gradient and any assistance that is available
- use large print for all text – graphic panels should be at least 18pt with the main introductory text at least 48 pt. The minimum text size for publications should be 12 pt.
- use upper and lower case letters instead of all upper case as this is more readable
- ensure there is a strong contrast between text and background colour
- avoid reflection by using a matt surface
- keep text short and simple
- use recognised BSI and Makaton symbols to help people navigate text
- provide sign text in raised text and Braille
- use clear typefaces such as sans serif e.g. Arial, Univers or Verdana
- avoid justifying text as large gaps can be confusing
- be consistent in design and layout
- use simple tactile maps and diagrams

### **4.5.3 Lighting**

Effective lighting can be used to allow visitors to move safely around the environment, highlight any obstacles, and provide guidance along visitor routes. However, the very design of historic vessels often means that there is limited access to natural light and historic electrical equipment, though it may contribute to the overall significance of the vessel, might not provide adequate lighting solutions for visitors. This can be especially difficult when mitigating the risk of trip hazards and the ability to read interpretative text on board a historic vessel.

Good use of lighting should avoid glare, pools of bright light and areas of deep shadow – all of which can be problematic for older and for vision-impaired people. Sudden changes of light levels should be avoided to decrease the risk of strain on the eyes. Where possible, temporary light solutions can be used, including free standing lights.

### **4.5.4 Noise**

There are many aspects of a historic ship heritage site that can excite the senses – the sound of the sea, the clattering of an engine, different audios playing at the same time, and excited groups of visitors. However for people with sensory disorders such as Autism Spectrum Disorder, loud noises or a combination of noises playing together can be distressing.

Sensory backpacks can be a great way to provide access items for your visitors and they don't have to be expensive!

National Museums Scotland offer ear defenders, fidget toys, sunglasses, a cuddly toy and 20 visual communication cards in each of their backpacks, aimed at making the museum experience easier for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder.



### Noise: Top Tips

- advertise quieter times on your website and marketing materials to allow families to decide for themselves when best to visit
- create a quiet space where people can get away from the hustle and bustle of the environment. If possible blank walls, soft lighting, comfortable seating, soft blankets, colouring books and toys
- provide ear defenders to help block out noise
- allow families to know they can ask to be taken to the front of the queue and make it clear who can help them
- make it clear visitors can exit and re-enter your space if they need some time away. Offering repeat visits to your attraction allows visitors to experience everything in small doses.

### 4.5.5 Interpretation

Interpretation is the way in which the story and significance of a historic vessel is communicated to an audience. Its purpose is to catch the audience's attention, provoke thought, and connect them with a past they may know very little about. However, there are a range of barriers that can prevent someone from connecting with heritage, including:

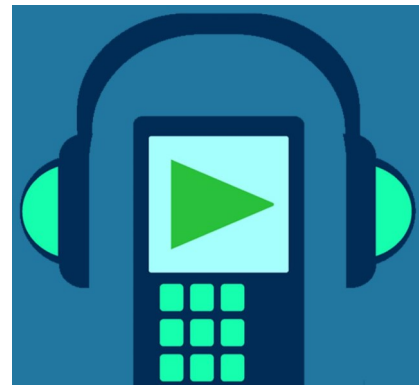
- only providing one way of taking in information
- long display texts
- overuse of technical language
- unreadable text because of its size or font
- videos without subtitles
- extra charges for audio guides and tours

Providing accessible interpretation is about telling a story through multiple formats so that everyone can enjoy and learn from their visit. In particular, it can help those with vision and hearing impairments or intellectual disabilities as well as those who may be unfamiliar with certain technical phrases or language. For some visitors, text written in large and clearly readable font, and in plain English, will greatly help them access the information. For other visitors with types of visual impairments, learning disabilities, dexterity or literacy difficulties (such as dyslexia) written information can be inaccessible. Therefore consider providing information in a range of accessible formats such as:

- pictorial symbols with captions which can often tell a story better than lengthy text
- annotated maps and models
- tactile guide books
- audio guides
- talking labels
- subtitles or captions on audio-visual equipment
- induction loops
- plain English leaflets
- large print leaflets
- printed transcriptions of audio guides



An Induction Loop, also known as a Hearing Loop or T-Loop, is an assistive listening system that provides access to facilities for those with a hearing impairment.



Audio guides can help a visitor navigate round your space and better take in information. Why not try offering a downloadable audio guide to your museum from your website.

Providing information in multiple formats does not have to be expensive. Most appropriate changes can be made through an office computer and equipment such as portable induction loops can be purchased for approx. £100-£200. One creative way to make an audio guide is to invite your staff and volunteers to record visitor information to create an audio tour.

#### **4.5.6 Sanitary facilities**

Creating wheelchair accessible toilets can be challenging when the visitor experience takes place entirely on the historic vessels. If possible, existing facilities should be converted to be made accessible for wheelchair users, though any adaptation should be carefully considered to ensure minimal impact on the significance of a vessel. In many cases, alternative locations can be found to offer access to disabled toilets, for example, housing toilets in your visitors centre, partnering with surrounding businesses such as cafes to use their facilities or signposting the nearest public toilets.

Whichever solution you choose, make sure it is appropriate to the overall use of your vessel and ensure that you provide clear information so that facilities are easy and quick to find.

#### **4.5.7 Physical access**

Ensuring that every visitor is able to physically access your historic vessel can be a daunting and often impossible task. Disabled access can prove difficult to introduce to all parts of a ship given that the barriers,

such as vertical and narrow through routes, may be an integral part of the vessel design. How easy it is to overcome these barriers often comes down to the overall size and end use of your vessel.

Any physical adaptations should be approached carefully and not only considered against damage to a vessel's significance, but also in light of what technology may be available in the future. The UK Disability Discrimination Act does not require access routes to be cut through original fabric and instead reasonable alternate means of accessing or viewing spaces can be offered. It is preferable to implement a reversible solution rather than make permanent changes so that new solutions can be embraced as they come to light.

Physical adjustments to your historic vessel are likely to be the most expensive part of your access strategy. However, wherever physical access cannot be provided to the visitor, appropriate management solutions should be utilised to ensure a consistent level of experience is delivered to every visitor.

#### **4.5.8 Level access**

Changes in level can be one of the most challenging areas of an access strategy for historic vessels, but it is possible to implement simple solutions that should accommodate getting everyone on board.

Temporary ramps can be an easy solution to allow people who are in wheelchairs, mobility scooters or have difficulty walking on and off your vessel easily. It is generally recommended that when somebody is sitting in a wheelchair or scooter the ramp should have a 1:12 slope (5 degree incline), which means that every 1" of vertical rise requires at least 1' (12") of ramp length. The use of a portable hydraulic lift can also make historic vessels accessible to wheelchair or scooter users and would not cause a permanent change to the vessel. If your vessel is on the water, the gradient of the gangway may be affected by tides and it can be advisable for visitors to check ahead for the best times to visit.

Once on board, ramps can provide access to different areas of the vessel. Where there is step level changes can be best managed by highlighting the edge of the step with either paint or lighting, and handrails can provide added stability. Installation of a lift or, for those able to transfer from their mobility aid, a stair lift can be especially helpful for wheelchair and mobility scooter users, as well as people with prams and other aids. Though any of these solutions will greatly improve access to separate levels of a vessel, it is essential that wherever new material and technology is added to a historic vessel every effort should be made to ensure it does not take away from the overall aesthetics of the vessel, or impact on original fabric.

Often providing access to certain parts of a historic vessel may not be possible in order to protect the integrity of the ship. In these instances, as much effort as possible should be made to ensure interpretation of inaccessible areas is provided to guests in other parts of the experience.

#### **4.5.9 Passageways and doorways**

Narrow passageways and doorways can be another barrier for many wheelchair and mobility scooter users. The minimum clear width for a single use wheelchair passage is 32 inches (815 mm) at a point for a maximum length of 24 inches and 36 inches (915 mm) continuously.

#### **4.5.10 Communicate with your visitors**

Effectively engaging with your visitors is a vital factor for the success of any heritage organisation, and can be one of the most effective and low cost management tools available to you for breaking down access barriers.

Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter create an accessible link between you and your audience through which you can better understand your visitors' needs, inform them of the services you offer, and work with them to ensure that their experience with you is as positive as possible.

## **5. Always remember—small changes can make big differences**

For some organisations, creating an environment that is welcoming and accessible to every visitor can seem like an impossible challenge. For others, a number of the strategies described in this guidance paper may already be part of their day-to-day duties. Wherever you might be on the journey, it is essential to remember how small changes can have a big impact. Having a dialogue with your visitors about their access needs; ensuring staff are well informed to offer help to visitors; reaching out to other local community groups; and supplying information in at least more than one format can go a long way to increasing your outreach and providing a welcoming and inclusive piece of heritage to all your visitors.

## **6. Case Studies**

In the development of this guidance paper we have drawn on the knowledge and expertise from across our sector. We would like to offer our special thanks to the Dudley Canal and Tunnel Trust, *Mary Rose* Museum, Scottish Fisheries Museum, Sea Change Sailing Trust, and the Solent Steam Packet (*ss Shieldhall*) for contributing to this paper by providing in-depth case studies which demonstrate different approaches to creating access to historic vessels. These case studies can be read and downloaded from the accompanying appendices.

## **7. Helpful links**

Below is a list of helpful links to websites, reports and guidance papers for further reading.

### **Ambitious about Autism—Making museums Autism friendly**

Ambitious about Autism is the national charity for children and young people with autism. They provide a number of services as well as raise awareness, understanding, and campaign for change.

<https://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/understanding-autism/out-and-about/making-museums-autism-friendly>

### **Culture Republic**

Culture Republic help heritage organisations across Scotland better understand who their audiences are, who they could be, and how to reach them.

<https://www.culturerepublic.co.uk/blog/news-&-resources/accessibility-at-museums-galleries/>

### **Disability Arts Cymru**

Disability Arts Cymru work with organisations across Wales to celebrate the diversity of disabled and deaf people's arts and culture, and aims to develop equality across all art forms.

<http://www.disabilityartscymru.co.uk/equal-spaces/equal-spaces-action-planning/working-in-partnership-with-disabled-people/>

### **Disability Cooperative Group**

Disability Cooperative Group are a committed group of museum professionals working with national charities, organisations, people with disabilities, academics, groups, disability networks in other sectors,



curators and managers to promote and embed inclusive practice in the heritage and cultural sector.

<http://www.musedcn.org.uk/>

### **Euan's Guide**

*Euan's Guide* features disabled access reviews by disabled people and their families and friends. We feature hotels, restaurants, cinemas, theatres and more.

<https://www.euansguide.com/>

### **Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)**

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) was created on 5 May 2006, replacing the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), with a remit to promote community cohesion and equality, as well as responsibility for housing, urban regeneration, planning and local government.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/7776/156681.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7776/156681.pdf)

### **Heritage Lottery Fund—Making your project accessible for disabled people**

Since its foundation in 1994, the Heritage Lottery Fund has been supporting and protecting heritage across the UK, awarding up to £7.9 billion to over 43,000 projects.

<https://www.hlf.org.uk/making-your-project-accessible-disabled-people>

### **Visit England—Writing an Accessibility Guide**

As the national tourism agency – a non-departmental public body funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), VisitBritain/VisitEngland plays a unique role in building England's tourism product, raising Britain's profile worldwide, increasing the volume and value of tourism exports and developing England and Britain's visitor economy.

<https://www.visitbritain.org/writing-accessibility-guide>

### **Vocal Eyes—State of Museum Access Report 2016**

Vocal Eye's mission is to increase the opportunities available to blind and partially sighted people to experience and enjoy art and heritage.

<http://vocaleyeyes.co.uk/state-of-museum-access-report-2016/>

## **8. Feedback**

This paper was drafted in April 2018 alongside a call to organisations across the maritime heritage sector to submit supporting case studies.

We welcome any feedback about the points raised in this paper, as well as further case studies to publish on our website.

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