



Buckinghamshire Cultural Inclusion and Access Manifesto

Background

Buckinghamshire is the birthplace of the Paralympic Games, a rehabilitation programme that developed into an international movement and is considered the most inspirational international sporting and cultural event.

In 2022 Buckinghamshire Culture, Discover Bucks Museum, Waddesdon Manor and the National Paralympic Heritage Trust in partnership with Amersham Museum, Aylesbury Waterside Theatre, Bekonscot Model Village, Buckinghamshire Archives, Chiltern Open Air Museum, Elgiva Theatre, Marlow Library, Milton's Cottage, and Queens Park Arts Centre developed a project called **Together We Build** to celebrate 10 years since the London 2012 Paralympic Games, supported by a National Heritage Lottery Fund Grant and Buckinghamshire Council funding. A key outcome for this project was the development of and commitment to a disability access manifesto for, but not restricted to the partners of this project.

Definition of disability

In this document, we use the definition of a 'disabled person' as set out in the Equality Act 2010. Someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.

'substantial' is more than minor or trivial, eg it takes much longer than it usually would to complete a daily task like getting dressed

'long-term' means 12 months or more, eg a breathing condition that develops as a result of a lung infection

We follow the social model of disability, as defined by Scope:

The model says that people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment or difference. Barriers can be physical, like buildings not having accessible toilets. Or they can be caused by people's attitudes to difference, like assuming disabled people can't do certain things.

The social model helps us recognise barriers that make life harder for disabled people. Removing these barriers creates equality and offers disabled people more independence, choice and control.

Definition of Cultural Organisations

Throughout this document we are defining culture in its widest sense, embracing: our lives, identities and communities; heritage, museums, galleries, arts centres, cinemas, music, theatres, libraries, festivals, events, practice and industry, tourist attractions, libraries, parks and country parks. This encompasses public, voluntary and private organisations.

Definition of Access & Inclusion

Throughout this document, we use the term 'access' in relation to the extent to which barriers prevent disabled people reaching, using and participating in cultural sites and activities. Where there are no barriers preventing disabled people from participating, that is good access. Access refers to all aspects of an organisation's operations: organisational (governance, policies, recruitment, evaluation, communications); physical/environmental, intellectual, sensory, cultural, attitudinal, financial and technological.

We use the term 'inclusion' in relation to the extent to which disabled people can use and participate in cultural sites and activities on an *equal value basis* with non-disabled people. An equal value basis means that disabled people's experience of a cultural site, artefact or activity is of equal value to that of non-disabled people, although the nature of that experience may be very different.

Manifesto Vision

It is fundamental that inclusion and participation in culture are essential to human dignity and to the exercise and enjoyment of human rights. This refers to access and participation of disabled people as visitors, audiences, volunteers, employees researchers and contributors.

While inclusion will mean different things depending on the setting, the starting point and driving force should always be the requirements and needs of disabled people and their personal experience.

We believe that Buckinghamshire, as the birthplace of the Paralympics should hold the torch and light the way towards achieving seamless inclusivity for disabled people, being proud of our heritage and playing a leading and influential role in providing access to participation in culture.

As leaders in the cultural sector, we will establish strategic partnerships between disabled people, their organisations and cultural institutions to ensure continued focus on guaranteeing the availability of enriching cultural experiences for all.

People at all levels, including those responsible for future strategies and policies will continue to fulfil their commitment to inclusion and promote positive attitudes towards disabled people, the integration of disabled people in society and the importance of overcoming prejudice and misinformation.

We affirm our commitment to:

1. Article 30 of the United Nations Convention:

States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities:

- a) Enjoy access to cultural materials in accessible formats.*
- b) Enjoy access to cultural activities, in accessible formats.*
- c) Enjoy access to places for cultural performances or services.*

2. The spirit of the Salamanca Statement which posits that cultural institutions are also places of learning and key in building inclusive communities.

We pledge to:

- Strive to make the cultural offer both inclusive and sustainable.
- Seek opportunities to develop and innovate new programmes to progress and support disabled people in different roles within cultural organisations.
- Establish a network of disabled people and their organisations to develop innovation and good practice.
- Meet regularly as a collective group of cultural institutions and disability representatives to drive forward the vision of the manifesto.
- Develop and signpost opportunities for people with disabilities to access a diverse range of inclusive cultural experiences.
- Identify how we can support each other to achieve our aims and maximise our impact by promoting our work through our respective networks.
- Share experiences and insights in order to enrich our individual programmes, develop new and innovative partnerships and ensure the resilience of our offers.
- As a collective, work strategically to create new opportunities and overcome barriers.

In 2023, Year 1 we will:

1. Gain approval from our management boards to support this manifesto.
2. Complete a [Visit Britain Access Guide](#)
3. Sign up to BuDS [Fair4All Card Partner scheme](#), or similar schemes.
4. Carry out a uniform inclusion and access survey across the cultural venues, with an action plan for further targets, priorities and programmes.
5. Invite and encourage wider cultural organisations to sign up to this Manifesto.
6. Work towards establishing a pan-disability network of local disabled people and disabled people's organisations to guide and advise on the development and implementation of this manifest

APPENDIX A

Article 30 – Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport

1. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities:

a) Enjoy access to cultural materials in accessible formats.

b) Enjoy access to cultural activities, in accessible formats.

c) Enjoy access to places for cultural performances or services.

2. States Parties shall take appropriate measures to enable persons with disabilities to have the opportunity to develop and utilize their creative, artistic, and intellectual potential, not only for their own benefit, but also for the enrichment of society.

3. States Parties shall take all appropriate steps, in accordance with international law, to ensure that laws protecting intellectual property rights do not constitute an unreasonable or discriminatory barrier to access by persons with disabilities to cultural materials.

4. Persons with disabilities shall be entitled, on an equal basis with others, to recognition and support of their specific cultural and linguistic identity, including sign languages and deaf culture.

5. With a view to enabling persons with disabilities to participate on an equal basis with others in recreational, leisure and sporting activities, States Parties shall take appropriate measures:

a) To encourage and promote the participation, to the fullest extent possible, of persons with disabilities in mainstream sporting activities at all levels;

b) To ensure that persons with disabilities have an opportunity to organize, develop and participate in disability-specific sporting and recreational activities and, to this end, encourage the provision, on an equal basis with others, of appropriate instruction, training and resources.

c) To ensure that persons with disabilities have access to cultural organisations; sporting, recreational and tourism venues.

d) To ensure that children with disabilities have equal access with other children to participation in play, recreation and leisure and sporting activities, including those activities in the school system;

(e) To ensure that persons with disabilities have access to services from those involved in the organization of recreational, tourism, leisure and sporting activities.

APPENDIX B

Examples to illustrate the meanings of Access and Inclusion

A blind person wanting to visit an art exhibition. If the blind person can learn about, travel to, enter and tour the exhibition, perhaps with a guide dog or a sighted guide, the exhibition could be said to be accessible to the blind person. But if the blind person cannot experience the art except visually, then a barrier exists which means their experience was not of equal value to sighted people, so the exhibition could not be said to be inclusive. If the blind person can experience the art through other sensory experiences, such as sound and touch, then that barrier would be removed. The blind person's experience would have equal value to sighted people and so the exhibition could be said to be inclusive as well as accessible.

A wheelchair-using young adult wanting to visit a music concert. If the young person can learn about, travel to, enter and see the concert, it could be said to be accessible to them. But if they were required to arrive early, or to use a rear exit to gain access, or to watch without their friends, or to have a restricted view of the stage, then their experience could not be said to be of equal value and it therefore the concert would not be inclusive.

An autistic person wanting to visit a museum. If the autistic person can learn about, travel to and enter the museum, but they were unable to look at the exhibits because the venue was always too busy and noisy, it would not be accessible to them. Setting aside a period when entrance was restricted, and sensory stimuli reduced, would remove that barrier and make the museum as a whole accessible. But if the majority of exhibits in the museum required sensory input which most autistic people would find distressing, then the exhibit could not be inclusive. Alternative or adapted exhibits which autistic people could enjoy and which had equal value to those available to non-disabled people would make the museum inclusive.