APPENDIX B

Leicestershire County Council

Communities & Wellbeing Service

Heritage and Museums

Museum Access Policy
2021-2025

Contents

Museum Access Policy

1. Introduction

Leicestershire County Council's Museum Service wants to create a culture where people of all backgrounds and experiences feel appreciated and valued, providing access for everyone regardless of ability, age, gender, cultural or social background, sexual orientation, faith, language, location or wealth. We are committed to achieving equality of opportunity in our service delivery by removing or minimising barriers that prevent people engaging with our buildings, collections, website, social media channels, learning programmes, events, volunteer opportunities, and engaging with our staff.

We want to see a Leicestershire with a rich history that values its heritage, engages its communities, welcomes those who visit the county, and works together to ensure a future for the past. We will do everything that we can to achieve this, whilst recognising the limitation of our buildings and resources to offer the broadest and most engaging access for all our users for the benefit of everyone.

2. Scope

The policy covers provision at Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre, 1620s House and Garden at Donington le Heath, Harborough Museum, Charnwood Museum, Melton Carnegie Museum, our collection facilities, our website and other online activities, and in other venues where we deliver outreach programmes e.g. schools, universities and community venues. The policy relates to access for our users and does not cover access in relation to staff, volunteers, freelancers, or contractors.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to state our commitment to increasing access to our services and resources by identifying ways to provide an accessible, engaging, innovative, sustainable, relevant, and responsive service of the highest quality.

4. Definition of Terms

When we refer to access, we mean the opportunity to engage with our service through our buildings, collections, content, events, and expertise. We have listed the key barriers to access below, with an example to illustrate how they could be experienced.

- **Attitudinal -** e.g. Some people may feel museums are not relevant to them and our service does not reflect their lived experiences.
- **Intellectual -** e.g. Some people may find our stories, and the way that we tell them, difficult to understand.
- **Cultural -** e.g. Some people may feel that our collections do not reflect their communities, social and cultural heritage, or interests.
- **Economic -** e.g. Some people may not be able to afford to visit our sites or have access to the internet.

- **Geographic -** e.g. Some people may not be able to visit our sites due to their location.
- **Physical/sensory -** e.g. Some people with physical disabilities, limited mobility, hearing or visual impairment may not be able to access our sites, activities, websites, or social media channels.
- **Technological -** e.g. Some people may not have access to the internet and therefore are excluded from our digital content.

5. Responsibilities

The Museum Service reviews performance, policies, and procedures through the County Council's governance and reporting structure. Cabinet is responsible for the executive functions and decisions of the Council. The Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee scrutinises the executive functions and decisions of the County Council in respect of the Adults and Communities Department. Together they help ensure the Museum Service, the Department and the Council meet their obligations under the Equality Act (2010) through doing everything reasonably possible to make the service accessible to the widest range of people and improve lives through culture.

The Head of Service is responsible for ensuring service managers work with their teams and colleagues to maximise access by addressing the barriers outlined above.

It is the responsibility of all County Council employees and volunteers to behave in ways that promote equality and are non-discriminatory. This also applies to the way they behave to members of the public in the delivery of services and through the development and maintenance of sites to be as accessible as possible.

Our service carries out regular evaluation with audiences and consults stakeholders on any proposed changes to services. We are committed to improving our understanding of our non-users to help ensure the broadest possible access to our facilities, services, and collections.

Leicestershire County Council has a Corporate Equalities Policy and Action Plan, this is disseminated through Departmental Equality Groups, which focus on addressing areas for improvement and reviewing Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessments (EHRIA). We will complete an EHRIA for any new provision and changes to existing provision.

6. Policy Statements

We are committed to maximising access and will uphold the statutory requirements of the Equality Act (2010). We will do this in a number of ways, including, but not limited to:

Physical access
Physical access to museums makes an important contribution to people's health and wellbeing and we will take all reasonable steps to ensure our venues and the buildings we operate are accessible. We work in historic buildings and landscapes which means we are committed to putting in place measures to mitigate this.

We will do this by:

- Providing accessible seating throughout our galleries.
- Ensuring our sites and facilities are wheelchair accessible.
- Providing alternative engagement opportunities when access is difficult.
- Providing high quality online content for those who cannot leave their homes.

Sensory access

We will consider sensory needs when developing our services and designing our buildings and strive to provide alternative methods of engagement for those with additional sensory access requirements.

We will do this by:

- Providing services in alternative formats.
- Considering sensory requirements in the design of our buildings, exhibitions and engagement.
- Striving to consult on sensory requirements with users and non-users and working with specialist organisations.
- Providing quieter spaces with less sensory engagement for those who need it.
- Providing access to handling collections at our sites, in schools and community venues.
- Providing training for staff and volunteers.

Intellectual access

We recognise that not everybody thinks, learns and understands in the same way and we will try to provide a variety of ways to provide access to the programmes and information we provide which cater for a range of audiences and needs.

We will do this by:

- Providing signage and information that is accessible to a broad range of visitors.
- Using best practice standards and guidelines (including the Museums Style Guide and MENCAP guidelines) to ensure the text we use in exhibitions, educational resources, publications, websites and social media channels meet the needs of our intended audiences.
- Providing a varied learning programme for schools, SEN schools and SEN units in mainstream schools.
- Ensuring our guides, front of house staff and volunteers receive training and resources to support them to tailor information to meet the needs of different audiences.
- Using technology and interactivity and providing information in other formats to help people engage with our displays and exhibitions.
- Evaluating our interpretation to make sure that we are communicating effectively.
- Consulting with specialist user groups and organisations to make sure that we are doing things in the right way.
- Working in a collaborative way with specific groups to make sure that our stories are told in ways that are engaging and effective.

Attitudinal access

We will strive to remove barriers to our service created due to a lack of understanding, misconceptions or bias.

We will do this by:

- Engaging with a range of communities and groups to understand potential barriers, including those where there are low levels of engagement.
- Fully embedding our corporate values of Positivity, Trust & Respect, Flexibility, Openness & Transparency.
- Providing training that supports our staff and volunteers to effectively communicate and engage with different types of user.
- Ensuring our activities and platforms do not use negative stereotypes or reinforce misconceptions.

Cultural access

We recognise that our museums, collections and stories that we tell may not reflect the cultural experiences, heritage and interests of all the communities of Leicestershire and therefore we will strive to reflect our communities better.

We will do this by:

- Evaluating and identifying areas where we can improve the relevance of our museums, collections and the stories we tell, to communities who are not currently well represented.
- Working in a collaborative way with specific groups and communities to remove cultural barriers and make sure that our museums, collections and stories we tell are more representative.
- Ensuring our staff and volunteers receive training and resources to support them to identify and overcome cultural barriers to accessing our services.
- Consulting with specialist user groups and organisations to make sure that we are doing things in the right way.

Economic access

We recognise that entry charges and geographic location can prevent some audiences from accessing our sites, so we will ensure we offer a variety of programmes, activities and price points to make it easier for these audiences to engage with us.

We will do this by:

- Offering a variety of prices within our retail and refreshment offers.
- Offering a range of prices for our programming of events and activities.
- Providing community offers.
- Offering free activities and resources on site and online.
- Further developing online formal learning sessions for schools that cannot afford transport to our sites.

Geographic access

We will make the most of our existing network of buildings and acknowledge some sites will be difficult for some of our audiences to access in person. We will seek to provide offers that allow audiences to engage in different ways.

We will do this by:

- Providing a varied and engaging touring exhibition programme, that may include venues outside the service, so our objects and stories are available in different locations.
- Loaning objects and exhibitions to other museums and galleries nationally and internationally, and receiving loans from other museums and galleries, enabling Leicestershire residents to see things that they would not normally be able to see.
- Providing quality online experiences and resources which enable people across the world to engage with our collections and stories.
- Continuing to develop our digital learning programme for schools, colleges and universities.
- Working alongside colleagues in other LCC departments, other authorities and agencies to explore all the opportunities to continuously improve transport links and access to our museums and sites.

Technical access

New technologies are providing new ways for us to interpret our sites and collections, tell our stories and engage with our audiences. However, we recognise lack of access to technology, poor content and systems and applications that do not meet access standards create new barriers for audiences and we are committed to avoiding this.

We will do this by:

- Making our websites and mobile applications accessible, in accordance with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.
- Ensuring that our onsite WiFi provision allows our users to engage with our digital interactives and content on their own specialist devices if required.
- Aiming to make access to our own specialist and technical expertise and resources fully available to all, including those who cannot access our digital offer, through home visits, on-site meetings, activities and events, postal and phone-based engagement.
- Sharing our technological learning and practice with other heritage and community organisations.

7. Related policies, legislation, and guidance

Government

- The Equality Act 2010 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/accessible-communication-formats
- Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

Leicestershire County Council

- Leicestershire County Council's Equality Strategy 2020-24 Action Plan 2020-21 https://leics.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet/AboutUs/Pages/Equality-Strategy.aspx
- Working together for the benefit of everyone, Leicestershire County Council's Strategic Plan 2018-22 https://leics.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet/AboutUs/Pages/Our-Vision-and-Priorities.aspx
- International WCAG 2.1 AA accessibility standard https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/about-the-council/equality-and-diversity/equalities-policy-statement

Museum and Heritage Service

- Collections Management Framework
- Collections Development Policy

Guidance

- Autism East Midlands Environmental Audit
- Kids in Museum Audit
- Association for Accessible formats https://www.ukaaf.org/

8. Review Date

To be reviewed by 30th November 2025.

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