

STEAM **Museum of the** **Great Western Railway**

Access Policy Statement

2016 – 2018



Access Policy Statement

Museum: STEAM – Museum of the Great Western Railway

Governing body: Swindon Borough Council

Date approved by governing body: 4th October 2016

Date at which policy is due for review: September 2018

1.0 Mission Statement

1.1 This policy statement has been written in accordance with STEAM's Statement of Purpose.

1.2 The **key purpose** of STEAM is: *Unlocking our heritage collections for everyone, to celebrate Brunel's historic Great Western Railway and its legacy.*

1.3 Informed by the Museums Association's definition of Museums, by the Museum Association's Code of Ethics, and by our own Statement of Purpose, STEAM defines its **core organisational ethos** as follows. These are our guiding principles for staff, volunteers, Friends, visitors and users:

- Collecting, preserving and safeguarding objects, archives and photographs pertaining to Brunel's historic Great Western Railway and its legacy for the public, now and in perpetuity.
- Designing and delivering vibrant and relevant displays, exhibitions, activities, events and experiences, now and in the future.
- Informing, educating, engaging, entertaining and inspiring all of our visitors, by making our collections available to them, now and in the future.
- Enriching the lives of the community local to Swindon, and the wider Great Western Railway community, and celebrating Swindon's status as the hub of the GWR ("Made in Swindon"), now and in the future.
- Establishing STEAM as the authoritative source on the Great Western Railway and as a centre of excellence commensurate with the size of the Museum.
- Achieving quality recognition regionally and nationally from professional bodies, funders and our peers.
- Where possible, sourcing goods and services from Swindon and its surrounding area, to support our local economy and celebrate our region, emulating the founding principles of the Great Western Railway.
- Attracting at least 100,000 general paying Museum visitors per annum.

2.0 Swindon Borough Council Policy Background

2.1 This policy has been written in line with Swindon Borough Council's (SBC) Equality and Diversity Vision and Strategy and the Swindon Equality Scheme, which includes the Council's Equality Policy Statement.

2.2 **SBC's Vision and Strategy** states "Swindon Borough will be a place which protects and promotes equality and Diversity through: Opportunity - Access – Fair Treatment, whilst understanding and reducing the costs of inequality for Swindon's diverse population. So that

everyone can flourish, Swindon will be an equal society which recognises and respects people's different needs, situations and goals, establishing real freedom by removing the barriers that limit what people can do and can be."

It also states "The strategy is for everyone who uses or delivers services, facilities and information provided by or on behalf of the Council. This includes service users/customers, members of the public, partners, contractors, employees and elected members."

2.3 SBC's Policy Statement states "The Council recognises that people may experience discrimination and less favourable treatment or privilege on the grounds of their: age, disability, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, gender or marital/civil partnership status, religion or belief, sexual orientation, and financial or economic status, homelessness or lack of a fixed address, political view or trade union activity, and may be prevented from achieving their full potential."

It also states, "We are committed to challenging all forms of unfair and unlawful discrimination, false assumptions, prejudice and stereotyping. We will develop policies, procedures and practices to ensure all people have fair and equal access to our services and job opportunities".

2.4 SBC has a public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010. The Act brought together existing laws and made them stronger. It also strengthened existing duties and places new duties on public bodies.

3.0 Our Definition of Access

3.1 STEAM recognises that there are many barriers to access at all levels of the Museum service and understands that all visitors have different needs. However, we believe that everyone has a fundamental right to engage with and enjoy the Museum and its collections.

3.1 We define access as something that is made possible when physical, sensory, intellectual, financial, cultural, emotional and attitudinal barriers are removed, reduced or overcome

4.0 Our Commitment to Access

4.1 This Policy supports our Mission Statement by providing a framework that aims to include all our visitors, potential visitors, volunteers and staff.

4.2 STEAM aims to welcome all members of society into the Museum, regardless of sex, age, social status, ethnic origin or ability. STEAM strives to provide the widest possible access to its building, collections and services in order to provide learning, research and enjoyment by all.

4.3 STEAM will make its collections and building accessible, by removing as many barriers to access as practicable, and we will continue to develop and improve our service, within the limits of budgetary, resourcing, legal and planning considerations and the conservation and security of the collections.

4.4 STEAM's Access Policy Statement is a public document available to all.

5.0 Areas of Access Covered by this Policy

5.1 Physical access: We aim to maintain buildings and facilities that are as physically accessible as possible to enable people with physical disabilities, the elderly and those caring for young children to appreciate the Museum.

5.2 Sensory access: We aim to enable visitors to receive a sensory experience and enjoy the Museum's environment, exhibitions and collections, including those with impaired vision or hearing.

5.3 Intellectual access: We aim to recognise and provide for different learning styles and abilities and to adhere to a text strategy, which takes into account different visitor needs.

5.4 Financial access: We aim to keep charges competitive, and consider the ability to pay when setting fees and charges for activities and events. We aim to offer a range of services to suit differing incomes to ensure as many people as possible are able to access our services.

5.5 Emotional and attitudinal access: We aim to provide an excellent standard of customer care to ensure that all visitors feel welcome and comfortable in our venue.

5.6 We are aware of other barriers to access that could exist within our service e.g. geographical and cultural. We aim to take account of these in our action plan. We aim to engage the broadest audience in our exhibitions, lifelong learning programme and events, within the limitations of the existing collections.

6.0 Access Audits, Access Policy and Plan

6.1 The last Access Audit was undertaken in June 2016 by SBC's Equality and Diversity Manager. It covered the external environment (car parking, transport options, and routes to the building), the internal environment (all aspects of a museum visit), and remote access (website and telephones). It is due for review in June 2019.

6.2 An Access Action Plan has been prepared for 2016 -19, which sets out the work required to improve access, by removing barriers identified by the audit and by customer feedback. This is implemented and monitored by the Lifelong Learning and Curatorial Manager and the Service Delivery Manager.

6.3 An action that has been identified for 2017 is the development of a comprehensive, specialist audit framework for assessment of the accessibility of all museum functions and services. A review of the Access Action Plan will be conducted when this framework has been prepared and applied.

6.4 The Access Policy Statement will be reviewed annually in September, along with the Access Action Plan, by STEAM's Management Team.

7.0 Evaluation of Services, Consultation and Audiences

7.1 The Museum will evaluate its services and use this information to ensure our services meet visitor needs.

7.2 Consultation with users and the development and implementation of a strategy for the consultation of non – users are identified as actions in the Forward Plan and in the Access Action Plan (to be completed by December 2017: Year 2 - 1D6 and 1D7). This work will include identification of barriers to participation and access. By April 2018, users and non - users will be clearly identified, along with any barriers to access and participation (Year 2: 1D8). An Audience Development Plan will be prepared by July 2018 to develop and widen the Museum’s audiences (Year 3: 1D8).

8.0 Staff and Training

8.1 Access is the responsibility of everyone who works in or visits the Museum, including staff and volunteers.

8.2 Swindon Borough Council is an Equal Opportunities employer. All people will receive equal opportunities in recruitment, employment and training.

8.3 All new and existing staff and volunteers will receive training in areas of equalities awareness and equality legislation appropriate to their role and needs. This will be identified during induction and the annual appraisal process.

8.4 The Museum is committed to providing volunteer opportunities, seeking to recruit volunteers from diverse backgrounds.

9.0 External Environment: Car Parking and Access Routes

9.1 There is ample Blue Badge parking available via car parks provided by Swindon Designer Outlet Village, one of our site partners. The primary pedestrian route from the car park to STEAM is via a level, paved and hard surface and seating is provided along the route.

9.2 The Museum will work with site partners to review external signage and will create a clear accessibility statement for its website.

10.0 Building and Associated Services

10.1 The Museum building was completely refurbished in 2000 and a high level of accessibility was factored into this process. There are some limitations due to stepped access to some exhibits, but alternative solutions will be investigated as part of our Access Action Plan.

10.2 There are lifts available to all floors of the Museum.

10.3 The Museum is committed to providing a safe environment for all. It has procedures for the safe evacuation of all users and staff in an emergency, as outlined in our Emergency Plan.

10.4 The Museum adheres to all current guidelines and legislation relating to Health and Safety and all staff are made aware of Museum procedures during their inductions.

10.5 We will conduct risk assessments for all Museum events and activities that take place.

11.0 Visitor Welcome and Customer Care

- 11.1** All staff members are involved in implementing this policy, assisting and welcoming our customers across the different service areas.
- 11.2** Information for potential visitors explaining our opening times, services, and access to the collections is available on leaflets, by telephone, via email, social media and on our website. A review of accessibility information on the website is part of our Access Action Plan.
- 11.3** The Reception Desk will always be staffed when the Museum is open to the public, and all users of the Museum will be treated with equal respect within an inclusive atmosphere, and welcomed according to their individual needs.
- 11.4** We will provide visitor facilities to meet our customers' needs at the Museum, including a shop, a café, accessible toilets, baby and adult changing facilities, access for pushchairs, a number of manual wheelchairs and motorised scooters and seating for the comfort and ease of visitors.
- 11.5** Wherever possible, the Museum will provide adequate signage and navigation to suit a range of needs, and will respond to requests made by the public regarding information required in alternative formats, as resources allow.
- 11.6** The Museum has a policy and procedure for Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults.
- 11.7** The Museum has installed hearing loops at the Reception desk, and some corporate hire spaces.

12.0 Collections

- 12.1** The Museum is committed to increasing public access to the collections and Information, and to increasing knowledge of the collections and heritage of the historic Great Western Railway.
- 12.2** We will provide varied means of access to the collections, which includes permanent displays, temporary exhibitions, loans, object handling, publications, events, activities, the STEAM website and external websites (e.g. Your Paintings).
- 12.3** To increase access to the collections not on display, we offer research facilities by appointment, a remote Public Enquiry Service, the STEAM Picture Library website and access to curatorial staff. "Behind the scenes" is part of the Talks and Tours programme.
- 12.4** Stored collections are available to view by appointment, subject to compliance with current Museum policies.

13.0 Interpretation

- 13.1** The needs of visitors are taken into account when preparing and presenting collections, information and interpretation.
- 13.2** Text guidelines are followed for displays, exhibitions and learning activities.

13.3 The Museum will provide levels of information and interpretation to suit a range of audiences and abilities.

13.4 Information on displays will be provided in a range of formats, for example labels, large print, film (including subtitles), audio, interactives, sound and smell effects, talks and tours.

14.0 Learning

14.1 The Museum will provide learning programmes that are tailored to the needs and requirements of specific groups and audiences.

14.2 Learning materials will be made available for different audiences and abilities as required, and as resources allow.

14.3 We will continue to develop our handling collections and active learning environments.

14.4 The Museum will provide a range of suitable handling materials for different audiences and levels of ability.

14.5 We will provide specific resources to enable Special Needs groups to better engage with the Museum's collection and heritage.

15.0 Commercial

15.1 The Museum regularly reviews and benchmarks its fees and charges, which are approved by the Council's Cabinet. A range of ticket pricing options is available.

15.2 Car parking charges at Swindon Designer Outlet Village car parks can be redeemed on purchase of a ticket to STEAM.

15.3 Throughout the year, STEAM will offer visitor promotions to encourage greater participation by families and lower income groups, including "Kids for a Quid" during the school summer holiday, and reduced entry to the annual Christmas at STEAM weekend.

15.4 The Museum offers a range of highly discounted season ticket options for individuals, seniors, students and families.

15.5 The STEAM Gift Shop stocks a variety of merchandise to suit diverse interests and budgets.

15.6 The Museum has a range of affordable options available for commercial hire by charities, groups, families and businesses. Such events will introduce new users to the collection and encourage a wide range of user groups that may think museums are not for them.

16.0 Communications

16.1 The Museum will ensure that all information and communications follow good practice and SBC's guidelines for text and style.

16.2 The Museum aims to keep the public informed of its collections, temporary exhibitions, events and activities through appropriate publicity including social media.

16.3 The Museum will provide a range of ways that people can communicate with us.