

Heritage Services Access Policy

2024-2027

Single Member Decision – 14 May 2024

Scope

This policy applies to the Roman Baths, Victoria Art Gallery, Bath Record Office, Bath's World Heritage Centre and Clore Learning centre.

Introduction and purpose

Heritage Services priority is to provide maximum access to our buildings, monuments, and the collections to as wide an audience as possible to facilitate learning, understanding and emotional connection.

We'll endeavour to do whatever it takes to make sure people thoroughly enjoy their interactions with our sites and collections. We understand that there are many barriers to access but, as a service, we are committed to making all aspects of our operation as fully accessible as our resources allow, including access to buildings, collections, events, exhibitions, learning and to our visitors as well as staff and volunteers. Further to this policy, we have community engagement strategies which outline our plans and intentions for engagement.

The provision of access to the collections will be balanced against care of the collections by managing access in line with the Roman Baths Collections Access Policy (Use of Collections), the Roman Baths Collections Care and Conservation Procedures, the Roman Baths Documentation Procedures, and the Roman Baths Research Framework.

This policy is consistent with Bath & North East Somerset Council's Equality policy commitment. Bath & North East Somerset Council is committed to celebrating diversity and promoting equality throughout our services and communities.

We will adhere to all national and international statutes of law, including the Public Sector Equality Duty, Equality Act 2010, Data Protection Act 2018, and the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. We will also follow national standards, ethical codes and best practice guidelines including Code of practice for customer service, PAS 197:2009 Code of practice for cultural collections management, PAS 197:2000m and Guide to good practice in commissioning accessible websites, PAS78.

If you would like to discuss your access needs, please contact our Customer Service team.

Telephone: 01225 477785

Email: romanbaths_enquiries@bathnes.gov.uk

Considerations

When we consider our accessibility, we recognise that people will have differing needs and we will endeavour to remove barriers and ensure equity of access.

Physical accessibility – the ability of people with physical disabilities to reach and appreciate every part of our sites, and the needs of the elderly and of people caring for young children.

Sensory accessibility – whether people with impaired senses (e.g. vision or hearing) can enjoy and appreciate our buildings, exhibitions, and the collections.

Intellectual access – whether people with learning disabilities can engage with and enjoy our buildings, exhibitions, and the collections.

Cultural access – the needs of people for whom English is not a first language, or whose background knowledge of English history and culture may be limited.

Social access – whether our environments and colleagues are welcoming to visitors from all sections of the community.

Geographical access – whether the collections are accessible to those who are not able to visit our sites.

Economic access – whether our experiences are affordable and provide value for money for visitors to our sites.

Policy

Our service is committed to maximising access by, for example:

Physical access

- Upholding the statutory requirements of the Equality Act (2010) by taking reasonable steps to ensure that policies, practices and procedures do not discriminate against disabled people; by providing auxiliary aids and services which enable disabled people to use our buildings; and by removing, altering or circumventing physical barriers within our buildings ensuring that lift access is provided to all public spaces, where practicable.
- For the collections not on display, we offer behind the scenes tours of the Victoria Art Gallery and also the Roman Baths collection items stored at Lansdown. If an item were to be requested, and it is stored in a space which is not accessible, we will arrange a viewing appointment in a room which can be easily accessed.
- Providing information about parking spaces for blue badge holders.
- Ensuring that our public spaces, including toilets and information desks are accessible to wheelchair users.
- We can provide wheelchairs and a motorised scooter (at the Roman Baths).
- Providing plenty of accessible seating throughout our buildings.
- An access guide is available online for the Roman Baths, Victoria Art Gallery, and Bath's World Heritage Centre.

Sensory access

- Recruiting front-of-house staff who have the awareness and communication skills to successfully communicate with and provide a quality service to people with visual or hearing impairments.
- We provided training opportunities for staff including, Introduction to BSL and Sighted Guide training.
- Working with the Guide Dog Association for the Blind to facilitate visits for Guide Dogs in training.
- Ensuring exhibitions and galleries use a good range of multisensory exhibits and incorporate Braille and tactile images where appropriate.
- Videos on our websites have subtitles if they use the spoken word.
- A BSL and VI version of the audio guide, as well as transcripts of the tours (Roman Baths).
- Installation of multimedia projections throughout the site (Roman Baths).
- Introductory sessions for partially sighted people for every exhibition (Victoria Art Gallery).

Intellectual access

- Ensuring that the text used in our galleries, exhibitions, educational resources, publications, website and social media channels is carefully tailored to the needs of their intended audiences, in line with the service's presentation style.
- Providing effective wayfinding signage and a map (Roman Baths).
- Ensuring that the content and delivery of our learning programmes are tailored to the learning needs of their audiences.
- Providing a tailored programme for special schools and SEN units in mainstream schools and colleges.
- Ear defenders are available and at the Victoria Art Gallery sensory support bags are available for visitors to use during their visit.
- Providing Evening Explorers sessions, including for Neurodiverse children.
- Providing information in a variety of languages and promoting applications such as Google Translate.
- At the Victoria Art Gallery Bloomberg Connects is available.

Cultural access

- Ensuring the collections and programmes are as relevant as possible to a culturally and socially diverse society.

Social access

- Ensuring that our promotional activities present our spaces as a welcoming, nonthreatening, inclusive destination.
- Front-of-house colleagues are recruited and trained on their communication skills, and it is paramount that they ensure all visitors are made to feel welcome on arrival and throughout their visit.
- Creating environments in which people can feel comfortable, valued and able to learn at their own pace and level.

Geographical access

- We have developed a number of resources to support virtual learning.
- On our websites, we have walkthroughs of both the Roman Baths and Victoria Art Gallery.
- We regularly post on social media, share newsletters and write blog posts.
- All of the Victoria Art Gallery's oil paintings and sculptures can be viewed on the Art UK website.
- As part of our events programme, we also deliver events within the community and across the local area.
- Items within the collections are also available to loan and therefore can be viewed at other locations.
- We receive numerous queries and, where possible, our curatorial teams support such research with the provision of remote resources.

Economic access

- We offer free entry to Bathnes residents with our Discovery Card scheme.
- The temporary exhibition in the King's Lounge (Roman Baths), Bath's World Heritage Centre and the Upper Gallery of the Victoria Art Gallery are free to visit.
- We offer variable prices at the Roman Baths and have endeavoured to be considerate with our pricing categories, for example our children's ticket is available to 6 -18 year olds.
- The Service will pilot offering free admission to school groups for schools where 30% of pupils receive free school meals.
- We will also build on our partnership with Tickets for Good, providing free tickets to those most affected by the cost of living pressure, who might find price a significant barrier to entry.

This document can be made available in a range of languages, large print, on tape, electronic and other accessible formats from the Corporate Equalities Team.

Telephone: 01225 396364

E-mail: equality@bathnes.gov.uk

Reviewed: January 2024

Next review: January 2025

