Foreword

This document sets out the Museum’s current services and future objectives for disabled people. Over the last three years, the British Museum has directed considerable attention to our services for disabled people and as a consequence, significant improvements have been made and continue to be made.

The expansion of this important museum function, though guided by the Disability Discrimination Act, has been nurtured by the Museum’s commitment to inclusion and Diversity and our aspiration to be a ‘Museum of the World for the World’. We know that with continued determination and dedication by our staff, the sustainability and further enrichment of these services will continue to grow.

Neil MacGregor
Director
1. INTRODUCTION

Since 1753 the British Museum has housed one of the greatest collections of human cultural history for the benefit of all the world. The Museum is committed to the diversity of all the individuals and communities of different races, countries of origin, first languages, beliefs, cultures, disabilities, genders, sexual orientation, age and income who use, support and work for it; and it recognises that:

- Equality of access for disabled people is integral to that diversity; and
- Enhancing services for disabled people has a direct and positive impact on the quality of experience for all users of the Museum.

The Museum states as its core principles and purpose that it will be the following:

- A museum of the World for the World
- A place for the ‘curious and studious’
- A collection held for the benefit of all the world, present and future, free of charge
- A forum for the expression of many different cultural perspectives
- A place to embrace the whole world, and to increase understanding of the links between and influences across different societies
- A place where the UK’s different communities can explore their inheritances.
‘... central to the Museum’s purpose in the UK today is achieving diversity at every level, in our staff and governance, curation, education and audiences’
(The British Museum Plan, 2005/06).

The Museum’s Primary Objectives

Key strategic priorities for the Museum are to ‘extend engagement’:

- **In London**
The Museum plays an important role in London, both in terms of its physical presence in the heart of London, attracting c. 5m visitors per annum and in terms of its relationships with the communities of London.

- **In Britain**
The Museum works widely across Britain; both with and through the museum community, but also through the education sector, broadcasting and new media to realise fully its national remit.

- **In the World**
Moving beyond the UK the Museum engages in a worldwide programme of sustainable partnerships to be a museum of the world and for the world.

2. VALUING DIVERSITY

The British Museum and Diversity
The British Museum values the importance of diversity in enriching the visitor and audience experience. In order to meet these responsibilities it has established a Valuing Diversity Working Party, which will ensure the Museum
is able to take action on its legal, ethical and business imperatives in order to secure the required services for its diverse audiences and employees.

**The British Museum’s Valuing Diversity Objectives**

The Valuing Diversity Working Party has identified the following objectives:

- **Audience**
  The British Museum will work with all its audiences, actual and potential, whether on site, in regions or through traditional and modern media, to make their Diversity integral to the Museum’s purpose.

- **Staff**
  The British Museum seeks to ensure that it recruits, develops and engages a diverse staff, including trustees, contract staff, volunteers and interns, to meet the needs of its diverse audiences and collections.

- **Practice**
  The British Museum aims to embed within its organisation an understanding of the centrality of Diversity in its collections and work including management, curation, display, programme, education and marketing.

- **Context**
  The British Museum makes sure that all who support and work with the Museum remain aware of and support Diversity as a core element of the Museum’s purpose.
3. DEFINING AND UNDERSTANDING DISABILITY

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA), from December 2006 all public bodies have a duty to promote disability equality, similar to the duty to promote race equality under the Race relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

The DDA defines a disabled person as someone with a:

‘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’ (DDA 1995).

The DDA covers a broad range of conditions, including people who have diabetes, multiple sclerosis, people living with HIV and AIDS, cancer, learning disabled people, people suffering from mental distress or heart conditions; people who are deaf, have a hearing impairment, or dyslexia, and people who are blind or visually impaired. It is also important to note that many people have rights under the DDA but may not consider themselves to be or refer to themselves as disabled (e.g. older people who are hard of hearing, people with a long term back condition or people who suffer from chronic fatigue syndrome).

The government estimates that over 15% of the UK population are considered disabled (approximately 11 million people). This substantial figure combined with the impact disability has on friends and family members emphasises the importance of addressing disability equality.

The British Museum adopts the social model of disability in preference to the medical model which focuses primarily on the impairment. The social model, however, argues that less emphasis should be placed on the disability itself and
more on addressing the physical, intellectual, sensory, cultural and attitudinal barriers to access and equality which are presented by the physical environment and culture in which disabled people live. With the lessening of these inequalities, it is argued, the challenges faced by disabled people will be significantly reduced.

For more information on the social model go to:
www.drc-gb.org/citizenship/howtouse/socialmodel/index.asp

4. THE DISABILITY EQUALITY DUTY

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 has been amended by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 so that it now places a general duty on all public authorities to better achieve disability equality when carrying out their functions. It is intended to eliminate institutional discrimination against disabled people and promote disability equality in a proactive way.

The General Duty

The general duty requires public authorities to demonstrate due regard to six key principles:

- To promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons
- To eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act
- To eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities
- To promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons
- To encourage participation by disabled persons in public life
• To take steps to take account of disabled persons’ disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons.

The Specific Duty

In addition to the general duty, certain public authorities are subject to what is known as "specific" duties. The key feature of this duty is the requirement to produce a Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan (DES).

The Disability Equality Scheme and Disability Action Plan are described as 'a practical framework to assist public authorities in planning, delivering, evaluating and reporting on their activities to ensure compliance with the general duty' (DRC, 2006).

5. ENFORCEMENT

Under the Disability Equality Duty (DED) the Disability Rights Commission, and its successor the Commission for Equality and Human Rights can take legal action against public authorities that have failed to carry out their responsibilities by issuing compliance notices.

6. CONSULTATION WITH DISABLED PEOPLE

Consultation is described by the MLA as '...an important tool for ensuring that an organisation’s policies and services have been influenced directly by those for whom they are most relevant' (Resource, 2003).
The British Museum recognises that for the DES to be successful and sustainable, disabled people must be involved in its development and continuation. The British Museum has a long history of consulting with deaf and disabled people in the promotion of equality of access to its services. This process has supported the development of the DES and will assist its continuation. Consultative feedback is sought regularly from a number of key disabled individuals and organisations and will continuously be sought to develop in order to ensure DDA compliance and good practice.

Involvement will therefore take place through:

- Face-to-face consultation
- Disabled user groups
- Partnerships with disability organisations (RNIB, SHAPE, RNID, St Mungo's, Camden Council, Vocaley, STAGETEXT, Artsline)
- Email consultation
- A newly formed disabled staff working party
- Telephone consultation
- Visitor feedback

7. PUBLISHING THE DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME

The Museum’s DES is published on the intranet, on the website and in large print. It will also be available in Braille. To receive a copy contact the Museum’s Access Manager on 020 7323 8506; jsamuels@thebritishmuseum.ac.uk.
8. IMPACT ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

The Museum has a dedicated in-house Access Manager and has created a Valuing Diversity Working Party to work with the Access Manager and the Human Resources Department to oversee and monitor the British Museum’s DED. The Valuing Diversity Working Party will review action and achievement of the Museum’s DED annually and seek resources to ensure that its objectives are achieved.

Additionally, after the re-launch of the Museum’s website (2007) the Museum is committed to the ongoing evaluation of the site in order to improve its web presence, and this will include targetted testing with users with specific access requirements and specialists in access technology.

9. LEARNING AND AUDIENCES

Current Access Services for Disabled Visitors to the Museum

Under the DDA Part IV – Education, disabled people have rights to equal provision to education and facilities. The Museum is fully committed to disability equality for its disabled and deaf audiences\(^1\) and achieves this through our Access\(^2\) programme in collaboration with additional key departments. Current services have assisted in developing a culture of inclusion within the Museum. Through the guidance and advice of the Access Manager, based in the Department of Learning and Audiences, the Museum has developed a great many services for its disabled audiences. The following list is by no means exhaustive:

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\(^1\) Many deaf people do not refer themselves as disabled but instead suggest that they are disabled by their environment similarly to any other audience who does not speak English as their first language.

\(^2\) The term Access refers to services for disabled people which enhance their intellectual, sensory and physical access to the Museum and its collections. Within this definition, attitudinal and cultural Access is also an important consideration.
• **Core services for blind and partially sighted audiences:**
  - Handling programme for visually impaired and learning disabled audiences
  - Audio description for temporary exhibitions
  - Tactile images and Braille for temporary exhibitions
  - Large print information for temporary exhibitions
  - Audio descriptive website highlights tour
  - Touch Tour in Egyptian Sculpture Gallery
  - Water bowls for dogs available at the Information Desk.
  - Magnifying Glasses
  - Parthenon Gallery touch provision
  - MAGIC Partner (Museums and galleries in the capital – website for deaf audiences).

• **Core services for deaf and hard of hearing audiences**
  - Induction loops in Clore Education Centre and Hartwell room
  - Portable Induction Loop system for most gallery talks
  -Monthly British Sign Interpreted Talks and interpretation for selected high profile events.
  - Occasional special events for deaf or hard of hearing groups

• **Additional learning initiatives**
  - Museum Studies programme for adults suffering from mental illness.
  - Handling tables for hands-on contact with artefacts from the Museum’s collections.
  - Sensitively designed temporary exhibitions aimed to meet the needs of disabled visitors.
  - Occasional creative projects for specific target audiences (autistic young people, learning disabled people, people with mental health difficulties).
o Gallery handling programme
o Partnership projects with City Lit.
o Adult Learners numeracy and literacy workshops.

Schools and Young Audiences

The Museum’s Schools and Young Audiences Team has a strong ethos of offering inclusive learning opportunities to all young visitors. It aims to make all mediated experiences accessible to all children. This includes the opportunity for teachers to discuss particular pupils’ needs before a visit and full co-operation with support staff (e.g. signers joining staff at the front, spoken commentaries delivered to a pupil by a paired adult during a session, open choice of seating as necessitated by pupil needs).

The Team sends out support notes for all taught sessions to allow teachers to prepare fully for the nature and content of a workshop and have been involved in English as an Additional Language research projects to ensure that what it offers is what teachers will find most useful. Teacher training twilights are offered each term for teachers to pre-visit the Museum and discuss fully their visit with a member of the Schools and Young Audiences Team. All family activities are available to all young visitors and their families and the aim is to support a diverse range of learning styles by providing visual, aural and kinaesthetic learning opportunities which mean that accompanying adults can select a mode of delivery most suited to the needs of particular children. This provision includes interactive family back-packs for use in galleries and printed family trails – a large print format of which is currently being developed. A set
of object boxes for use by 'special needs' pupils is available with associated gallery bags for the group to take support materials into the galleries.

In terms of physical provision, all areas of the Clore Education Centre used for young audience learning are fully accessible.

**Interpretation Unit**

The Interpretation Unit within the British Museum is responsible for the creation and evaluation of the intellectual structure of galleries and exhibitions. This includes in-depth audience evaluation and the editing of text. The Interpretation Unit exists to increase intellectual access to the collection and to encourage understanding of different cultures by the broadest possible audience.

The Interpretation Unit supports equality of access to Museum services in the following ways

- **Clear accessible text**

  Text is edited to a high standard, ensuring it is easy to read and understood by a wide audience base. This is particularly relevant to visitors with dyslexia, visual impairment or learning difficulties. Text is based on a House Style which is accessible and is adapted to respond to visitor needs.

- **Interpretation in its widest form**

  Alternative forms of interpretation are researched and recommended (as appropriate) including AV, sound and graphics, all of which increase visitor

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3 The term 'special needs' is used by the Department of Education and Skills to refer to children and young people in traditional education who are disabled. It is commonly unpopular amongst disabled people and so in every other context the term 'disabled' will be used.
access. Working closely with the Access Manager, the Unit ensures its work meets, and if possible exceeds current legal requirements.

• **Evaluation**

The Unit uses professional evaluators to provide feedback on major temporary exhibitions; and it strives to extend evaluation work to include specific goals for the permanent galleries and smaller temporary displays. Monitoring and evaluating the use of interpretation methods by the full spectrum of the Museum’s audience is an integral part of the Unit’s evaluation methodology. It has recently added questions on disability to its methodology and plans to act on the results as they emerge. It is constantly expanding its evaluation brief, for example new initiatives include using students to evaluate our permanent collections and working with specific audience segments such as families and disabled audiences.

**National Touring Programme**

Access and inclusion are central to the aims of the Museum’s national touring programme known as Partnership UK. This programme is the Museum’s means of engagement with audiences throughout the country, regardless of location, place of origin or circumstances. The diversity of the Museum’s collections is mirrored by the diversity of the UK’s population. To reach many different audiences, often for the first time, the British Museum is committed to working through strategic partnerships to extend engagement in a broad range of cultural artefacts, histories and issues to which all have right of access.

The principal members of Partnership UK are some seventeen museum, gallery and archaeology services across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland,
with two additional non-museum partners: Hayward Touring and the National Trust at Sutton Hoo.

**Website services**

The British Museum will re-launch its website during 2007. As part of the design process the Museum has included consultation with an access consultant. During the setting up of the new website, the Museum is putting in place good practice, and has a policy to make reasonable adjustments in order to make all web-based information and services on the Museum’s website accessible to all users regardless of disability.

Furthermore, the Museum has a policy that requires all content on the new website to comply with the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0 ([w3.org/TR/WAI-WEBCONTENT/](http://w3.org/TR/WAI-WEBCONTENT/)) to conformance Level "Double-A" and requires that as many AAA checkpoints as possible are also met. Any third party contracted to design a website hosted by the Museum will be required to meet the same standard. The Museum will state the policy on the website, and give a feedback mechanism for any user who has an access-related enquiry.

The Museum is also planning to develop specific content on the website that targets audiences with specific access requirements. An existing example of this is the Museum’s audio descriptive highlights tour.

**10. TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS**

This section outlines services for temporary exhibitions. For information on permanent galleries see sections 12 and 13.
The remit of the Exhibitions Department is to plan, develop and deliver a programme of world class exhibitions and displays for the Museum in London, in line with its objectives. It creates imaginative and innovative presentations of our collections and of loans from other institutions, which are both engaging and insightful to our audiences. Through this work the Department is committed to removing barriers to access and equality whether physical, intellectual, sensory or cultural.

Appropriate access of every exhibition for all audiences is developed and delivered through its core project team. As one of the project’s design stakeholders, the Access Manager provides support and advice to the core team in this important area of design.

Areas for the team’s consideration are:

- Design for maximum text size for exhibition labels and panels within the build parameters
- Design exhibition build and text so it is fully accessible to wheelchair users
- Provision of large print information in the exhibition, both panel and label text at 18pt in a sans serif font, Bliss Regular (the 'large print guide').
- Provision of audio guide tour, narrative or object highlights. All audio tours offered by the Museum are free of charge to visually impaired visitors.
- Provision of audio descriptive tour, for blind or partially sighted visitors
- Provision of tactile drawings and Braille text within the exhibition (desirable if an audio guide tour is not planned)
- Integration of appropriate housing for the large print (and tactile drawing guides) into the design of the exhibition structure
• Notification of access provision at the entrance to temporary exhibition galleries Rooms 5 and 35, including industry standard graphic symbols.

11. CAPITAL PROJECTS & ESTATES

The Capital Projects and Estates Department maintains an overview of the physical access requirements of visitors and staff within the Museum as part of its remit to care for and improve the estates buildings to ensure the Museum’s objectives are realised.

In 2003 the Department undertook two internal Access Audits: for front and back of house areas respectively. These audits have generated action lists to improve access to known problem areas and to act as sources of guidance for implementing improvements in the future.

The Department’s main activity is the development and management of major construction projects and as such it seeks the advice and input of the Access Manager and disabled user groups to inform new work and to gain feedback on completed schemes.

Projects that epitomise the Department’s approach include the Museum’s ongoing gallery improvement programme, which deals with both the fabric of the building as well as the display and exhibition of the collection where interpretative material and cabinets containing displays also need to follow the latest Access requirements.

There are a number of examples where specific projects have bench-marked the accessible environment within the Museum:
• The provision of hoists at either side of the main entrance staircase to the colonnade from the forecourt;
• Similar provision in the Duveen Gallery which houses the Parthenon Marbles;
• The installation of non-slip and high contrast stair nosing to the main internal public staircases;
• New and improved handrails to the north stairs in the King Edward Basement in line with BS 8830 - “Design of buildings to meet the needs of disabled people” - assisting access yet in-keeping with the character of the listed building;
• New seating with backs and arm-rests in galleries and public spaces.

12. GALLERIES

A fundamental element of the Museum’s Gallery Improvement Plan is that designs for the display of objects and information will be physically and intellectually accessible to a wide range of visitors. The planning of galleries will seek to ensure that circulation areas are clearly defined and lit and displays are accessible to all visitors. The Museum has evolved guidelines for the design of all graphic items in new galleries, including suitable fonts, minimum type sizes, recommendations on colour and contrast as well as guidelines on reading heights for all information panels and labels. Designers are encouraged to ensure that all text is sufficiently well lit for legibility and that materials are selected to minimise reflections.

The Museum is working toward the provision of large print guides for new galleries. Where appropriate the Museum will also aim to include other forms of sensory information such as tactile images. A new Museum way-finding signage scheme is also being developed and components such as the design of
the Museum map, choice of colours and the design of pictograms will be checked for clarity.

13. OPERATIONS

The purpose of the Operations Department is to provide and support Access for the Museum’s 4.8 million visitors per year, to ensure a safe and welcoming environment for both visitors and staff and to ensure the security and integrity of the Museum’s collections.

The Operations team are committed to providing an exceptional level of service for all Museum visitors. This commitment is achieved through the Operations staff acting as the 'champion of the visitor' by ensuring feedback to other departments to enable the delivery of required physical, intellectual, sensory or cultural access. This is in addition to providing the human face of the Museum and welcoming and supporting visitors on site.

This is demonstrated by:

- Regular input into exhibition design with a particular focus on physical access.
- Input into toilet refurbishment projects with an emphasis on baby change facilities and physical access;
- Input into the design of visitor pages on the Museums website;
- Free parking on the Museums Forecourt is available for disabled visitors;
- Use of free wheelchairs are available at both of the Museums entrances;
- The Great Court is furnished with an Information Desk and Retail Desk. Both are fitted with induction loops and various auxiliary aides are available for disabled audiences including magnifying glasses, large print
versions of the ‘What’s on’ guide, large print Museum plan, large print exhibition guides, purchase of audio tours and guided tours;

- Companions of disabled visitors are provided with free tickets to all events;
- Disabled audiences can purchase tickets at a concessionary charge;
- The Museum has fully accessible toilets, baby change facilities, shops and catering areas;
- The Museums galleries (with one exception room 16) and exhibition spaces are all accessible. The gallery spaces have regular guided tours and the entire gallery space-s are occupied with uniformed members of staff in the event of enquiries or emergencies;
- Companion dogs are welcomed and dog bowls can be found at the Information Desk.

14. RECRUITMENT / EMPLOYMENT

The British Museum aims to recruit and select a high calibre and highly motivated workforce who will focus upon achieving the aims and objectives of the British Museum. The Museum values the diversity of all who work for it.

The Museum continually reviews its Recruitment and Employment processes and monitors data at the recruitment and selection stage to ensure that discriminatory barriers to those that wish to apply to work at the Museum are removed.

The Museum will make reasonable adjustments to facilitate continued employment of people who are or become disabled, where possible.
A senior member of the Human Resources Department sits on the Valuing Diversity Working Party to ensure that the diversity strategy of the Museum and its employment processes are continuously developed.

To support these aims the Museum is working towards:

- Interviewing all applicants with a disability who meet the essential criteria for a job vacancy and consider them on their abilities;
- Ensuring that there is a mechanism in place to discuss with disabled employees what it can do to develop and use their abilities;
- Make reasonable adjustments to facilitate continued employment of people who are or become disabled, where possible;
- Provide an appropriate level of disability awareness training to all employees;
- Provide advice and support to managers of disabled employees;
- Address individual acts of discrimination through the Staff Grievance procedure;
- Investigate with Camden Council and the Disability Employment Forum opportunities to support the employment of disabled people;
- The formation of a disabled staff working party to help advise the HR department on best practice for its deaf and disabled employees.

15. TRAINING

The Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) refer to training as 'perhaps the most effective action any service provider can take towards improving provision for disabled people' (Portfolio 3, Training, Resource 2003).
The Museum recognises its responsibility for the actions of its employees during the course of their employment. Awareness training is currently provided via the following methods:

- Disability Awareness training for all Museum employees and volunteers provided by SHAPE⁴;
- Disability Awareness training to all new visitor service and security staff, provided by the Access Manager;
- Visual Awareness training to Visitor Service staff, provided by Action for Blind People.

16. MARKETING

The Museum’s Marketing Department produces a range of materials to support the promotion of the Museum’s permanent collection and its programme of changing exhibitions, displays, and events.

During the design process for printed materials, the Department consults with the Access Manager to ensure:

- Text on promotional material is as legible and clear as possible;
- Colour of text and background has suitable contrast to enhance legibility;
- Mainstream materials (e.g. free museum map and the What’s on event listings programme featuring all museum events) are made available in large print;
- Sign-interpreted events area clearly listed on printed materials (e.g. in What’s on sign-interpreted events are listed both in the main calendar and in a separate Access Section for ease of reference).

⁴ SHAPE is a specialist organisation supporting deaf and disabled people in the arts.
The Department works with key stakeholders in the Museum to ensure that the access provisions available for exhibitions are clearly visible on temporary signage and included in advertisements for events.

The Marketing Department is in the process of producing an access information brochure in partnership with the Access Manager. The brochure will be made available from the Information Desk, mailed out to visitors in advance who enquire about Museum access provisions, available for download from the Museum website, used as a training tool for staff dealing with public enquires about access, and serve as a tool to guide people about Museum access provisions on the day of their visit.

17. PROCUREMENT

The public procurement of goods and services by the Museum requires contractors to comply with all anti-discrimination legislation, including the DDA.

In its project management procedures the Museum also requires project managers and champions to confirm that all project specifications comply with law including the DDA. It is the role of each project manager to monitor the delivery of relevant contracts in conformity with the applicable terms and conditions.
18. RESOURCES

Exemplary access provision for all potential audiences at the British Museum will obviously have financial implications which will require an annual budget to ensure the Museum’s statutory obligations are met. Since that objective is the responsibility of many departments across the Museum, the financial provision required will fall across and be managed by all those departments affected.
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