

THE FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM

ACCESS POLICY

2019-2024

Approval	<i>Fitzwilliam Museum Syndicate, 25 November 2019</i>
Renewal	<i>No later than September 2024.</i> The Fitzwilliam Museum will be mindful of new developments in practice, legislation, and the access implications of any changes to our site and building. We will review this policy annually with full renewal at least once every five years.
Owner	Assistant Director, Operations and Engagement

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1. Our Commitment to Accessibility

The Fitzwilliam Museum, as lead partner within the University of Cambridge Museums Consortium (UCM), share the UCM commitment to maximising access for everyone, whether they are a visitor, student or researcher, volunteer or member of staff. It is important to us that our museums and collections are welcoming and inclusive.

We are committed to removing barriers – physical, intellectual, sensory, social, geographic, cultural, economic and digital - that prevent access, to offer the widest, richest, most engaging access for all users. We will seek to make reasonable adjustments to improve access, within the limits of our site and resources, and to go beyond our responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Equality Act 2010.

The Fitzwilliam Museum is open free of charge, 6 days a week (Tuesday-Sunday) throughout the year. Information about opening times, gallery closures, and general access information is available on the Museum's website. Public galleries provide access to objects from all five collections departments (Applied Arts; Antiquities; Coins and Medals; Manuscripts and Printed Books; Paintings, Drawings and Prints). Visitors are advised to contact the Museum in advance if they are travelling to see a particular collection object as displays are dynamic and specific objects may be on loan, off display for research or conservation purposes, or in store. Individuals and groups have the opportunity to access collections which are not on display by special request through the Museum's study rooms. Digital access to collections is possible online to the public.

2. Purpose & scope

The purpose of this policy is to set out the Fitzwilliam Museum's commitment to maximising access, and to identify the ways in which we can achieve this, within the Fitzwilliam and through working together across the UCM consortium. Its development was informed by an external access assessment conducted by Goss Consultancy on behalf of Shape Arts at the Fitzwilliam Museum in 2015, as well as subsequent access assessments across the consortium in 2019 and our work with partners and participants.

This policy focuses on The Fitzwilliam Museum and complements the UCM Access Policy and Action Plan which covers cross-consortium provision. The UCM consortium provides support, advice, training and resources to support access and, where appropriate, coordination and collaboration to maximise efficiency and effectiveness. The consortium undertakes a collective lobbying role on behalf of the constituent members, advocating for the importance of museum and collections access within the University.

The work of the Fitzwilliam Museum, and the wider UCM, as an integral part of the University of Cambridge, is underpinned by the University of Cambridge's commitment to Accessibility, Equality and Diversity.

3. Responsibilities & Policy Management

The Director and Syndics of the Fitzwilliam Museum are responsible for ensuring that the Museum meets its obligations under the Equality Act (2010) and Public Sector Equality Duty by doing everything reasonably possible to make the museums and collections accessible to the widest range of people.

Access is a shared responsibility underpinning all areas of the Museum's activities, and line managers are responsible for ensuring that the work of their staff takes into account the need to maximize access by addressing the barriers outlined within the policy. Everyone involved in developing, delivering or maintaining spaces, activities, interpretation, resources and other services for our users is responsible for making them as accessible as possible.

An Access Action Plan for the Museum has been developed informed by external access assessments, covering the period 2019-2024, identifying outcomes, milestones, timeframes and lead departments responsible.

This policy, and the Access Action Plan, are managed by the Assistant Director, Operations and Engagement, working with Senior Management Team. The policy and plan are reviewed and updated annually, with progress reviewed on a monthly basis at Senior Management Team meetings. Expert input on access and inclusion issues, and leadership on access and inclusion programming, is provided by staff within the Learning Department.

4. Legislative and policy context

Local authority, university and national museums must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Equality Act 2010. The Equality Act (2010) bans unfair treatment and helps achieve equal opportunities in the workplace and in wider society. The Act replaced previous anti-discrimination laws and covers nine protected characteristics which cannot be used as a reason to treat people unfairly – age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity/paternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The Act prohibits unfair treatment when providing goods, facilities and services, when holding public functions, in the management of premises, and in education. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

Our approach to access is also informed by Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that “everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.” Cultural rights are inseparable from human rights, as recognized in Article 5 of the 2001 UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Diversity, and can be defined as the right of access to, participation in and enjoyment of culture.

This includes the right of individuals and communities to know, understand, visit, make use of, maintain, exchange and develop cultural heritage and cultural expressions, as well as to benefit from the cultural heritage and cultural expressions of others.

5. Definition of terms

When we refer to “access” we mean the opportunity to engage with our buildings, collections, content and expertise. There are a number of key barriers to access:

- **Physical/sensory:** people with physical disabilities, limited mobility, hearing or visual impairments may not be able to access the museum, our website, social media channels or programmes
- **Intellectual:** some people may find the museum too specialist in its approach to subjects and how they are presented; some may have learning disabilities which affect their ability to engage with the museum; and some may not be able to read or speak English
- **Geographical:** some people will live too far away to visit the museum or face logistical challenges relating to rural isolation or poor transport infrastructure
- **Cultural:** some people may feel that the museum is not relevant to them and does not reflect their cultural or social heritage or interests
- **Economic:** some people may not be able to afford to visit the museum or take part in our programme
- **Attitudinal:** some people may have a lack of awareness of the museum and the subjects and issues it deals with, or our programmes and services; or not feel welcome to access the museum and that it is “not for people like them”.
- **Digital:** some people may not have access to the Internet at home, technology or use a mobile phone or be comfortable using this medium.

6. Identifying differing needs of users

The Fitzwilliam Museum takes a proactive, multi-faceted approach to identifying the differing needs of users.

6.1 Working with external experts:

In 2015, the Fitzwilliam Museum commissioned Goss Consultancy to undertake an access assessment of the Museum on behalf of Shape Arts. In 2019, Goss consultancy returned to undertake further assessments across the UCM consortium and to provide further input. The detailed recommendations produced by Goss in their 2015 and 2019 reports ensure that the current access policy and action plan are informed by external expertise from a disability-led consultancy.

6.2 Understanding our audiences and potential audiences through research and data:

We look at government data sets, as well as our own audience data and research, to understand and anticipate differing audience needs, for example looking at regional demographic statistics relating to disability. UCM-wide audience research in partnership with the Audience Agency helps us understand current visitor demographics as well as motivations, self-reported levels of knowledge of the

subject matter of the museum (specialist, general or little or no), and levels of international visitors, all of which help us identify and plan to meet differing needs.

6.3 Working with community partners and participants:

Consultation and co-design underpin our approach to identifying and meeting differing needs to ensure provision is designed with rather than for different audience groups. Long-standing collaborations with health, community and education partners, and the audiences they serve, gives us access to expertise and lived experience to inform our approach to shaping programmes, facilities and services.

6.4 Responding to visitor feedback:

While we aim to anticipate and meet the differing needs of our audiences, we have robust processes in place for responding to customer comments and complaints and ensuring that they feed into future planning and service improvements.

6.5 Learning from sector best practice:

We seek opportunities to learn about how other museums and cultural organizations have identified and met the needs of audiences by attending conferences and training events, seeking out case studies and visiting sites and projects, and embedding this process of learning from others in the development phase of new projects, programmes and facilities.

7. Providing access

The Fitzwilliam Museum is committed to maximising access by, for example:

7.1 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 the museum; and by removing, altering or circumventing physical barriers within our buildings;
- Ensuring that where possible our galleries, exhibitions, learning spaces, cafés, shops, toilets and information desks are accessible to wheelchair users;
- Ensuring that if any aspect of an exhibition is not accessible via level access, we will provide an alternative way to access the information;
- Signposting the nearest parking spaces for blue badge holders;
- Providing manual wheelchairs;
- Providing seating throughout our building.

7.2 Sensory access

- Equipping our front-of-house staff with the awareness and skills to successfully communicate with and provide a quality service to people with access needs through a regular programme of staff training;
- Provision of key information in alternative formats, including large print labels and floor plans;
- Ensuring written interpretation is formatted with due regard for access guidelines;

- Ensuring that video-based exhibits have subtitles if they use the spoken word;
- Incorporating multisensory aspects to exhibits (e.g. to touch, smell, hear), and tactile and audio interpretation into exhibitions and galleries where appropriate and possible;
- Continue to develop our offer for visitors with particular sensory requirements, to include, for example, pre-arranged touch tours;
- Working towards ensuring that our websites meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards (www.w3.org/WAI/intro/wcag)

7.3 Intellectual access

- Ensuring that the text used in our galleries, exhibitions, educational resources, publications, marketing materials, websites and social media channels is carefully tailored to the needs of their intended audiences;
- Exploring opportunities to develop more accessible and more layered interpretive materials making the greatest potential afforded by digital solutions;
- Providing effective wayfinding signage within the museum building / site;
- Ensuring that the content and delivery of our learning programmes are tailored to the learning needs of their audiences;
- Continuing to deliver a range of tailored inclusion work to support the development of entitlement and ownership in non-traditional audiences;
- Continuing to facilitate and develop offsite outreach sessions for those who are unable to access the museums and collections.

7.4 Attitudinal access

- Ensuring that our promotional activities and marketing materials represent a diverse range of visitors and present the museums and collections as welcoming, non-threatening, and inclusive for people who are not regular museum visitors;
- Ensuring that visitors are made to feel welcome on arrival and are put at their ease;
- Creating environments in which people feel comfortable, valued and able to explore and learn at their own pace and level.

7.5 Cultural access

- Making the museums and collections and our programmes as relevant as possible to our culturally and socially diverse society.
- Improving the provision of materials in languages other than English where appropriate.

7.6 Economic access

- Maintaining free entry to the museum;
- Maintaining a high quality free offer of public events and programmes for a variety of audience groups where funding allows, alongside charged exhibitions, programmes and events;
- Developing measures to mitigate economic barriers to access where possible, for example by providing transport and refreshments within targeted projects;

- Continuing to support participation from individuals, families and groups experiencing economic disadvantage through targeted projects and programmes.

7.7 Geographic access

- Providing a rich online experience, including live-streams, podcasts and other online content;
- Providing object loans to other museums, regionally, nationally and internationally;
- Delivering activities as outreach in communities that may experience geographic barriers;
- In some cases, providing transport bursaries to support participation by schools from more remote locations.

8. Interpretative methods used to exhibit the collections

Interpretation is developed with regard for the principles outlined above, in line with the Fitzwilliam Museum access guidelines and sector good practice. Current interpretative methods include:

- In-gallery panels and labels, produced in line with guidance;
- Large print label books;
- Supplementary written interpretation in booklets in galleries;
- E-guide to highlights of the collection;
- Audio-described guide to highlights of the collection;
- Bookable tours by trained Blue Badge guides;
- Special interest talks and tours;
- Self-led trails for families;
- Self-led activity kits for families;
- Self-led story packs for families;
- Interpretative and descriptive films with closed captions in multiple languages;
- Exhibition specific audio interpretation;
- Tactile reproductions;
- Object handling opportunities;
- Behind the scenes experiences and demonstrations;
- Collection online
- Online exhibitions and displays;
- Podcasts;
- Exhibition catalogues (digital and print);
- Guidebooks.

9. Enabling the public to access the collections, buildings, site and associated information

The Museum is open to the public, free of charge, Tuesday to Saturday 10.00 - 17.00 and Sundays and Bank Holidays 12.00 - 17.00. Level access is available at the Courtyard Entrance and a lift is available giving access level to the vast majority of the Museum's public spaces. If any aspect of an exhibition is not accessible via level access, we endeavour to provide an alternative way to access the information which may include digital methods.

Individuals, community groups and researchers have the opportunity to access collections which are not on display by special request. The Fitzwilliam Museum offers enhanced research access to our collections in one of six study rooms. Visitors generally require one working day's notice to access materials in the Reference Library and three weeks' notice for all other study areas. The Museum offers behind the scenes tours and experiences to see collections not on display as part of our public programming, eg: Late night openings, pop up displays.

Digital access to collections is possible online to the public through Collections Explorer, including object records, photographic images and 3-D scans where available.

10. Use of languages other than English

We recognize that our audience demographic includes significant numbers of numbers of visitors whose first language is not English, both in terms of international tourist visitors and our multi-lingual local and regional population. We are also mindful of the importance of languages other than English in the context of working with source communities and international research partnerships. While currently limited, we are committed to improving our provision in this area to make our collections more accessible to these audiences. We offer free museum Floor Plans in a variety of relevant languages selected in response to data on tourism trends and languages spoken by local and regional residents, and have created some multi-lingual / subtitled resources in the context of particular projects, and have some self-led family resources in community languages. We also seek to ensure our family activities are accessible to families who may have limited English, as well as children on a range of ages, by emphasizing visual rather than verbal instructions.

11. Collections care and management

The **Collections' Care and Conservation Policy, 2019** and **Collections' Care and Conservation Plan, 2019** set out the policy and procedures by which the Fitzwilliam Museum looks after its collections. Through careful management of risk, the Museum aims to strike a balance between long-term preservation and the accessibility of the collections for public display and research, thus ensuring that they are a source of inspiration, learning and enjoyment for the widest possible range of people. As part of this, we are committed to building opportunities for visitors to develop understanding around collections care and management into activities, interpretation, learning resources and research initiatives.