

Disability Inclusion CIC



Hastings and St Leonards

Seafront Access Audit

Prepared by

Disability Inclusion CIC

For

Hastings Borough Council

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Introduction

This audit has been carried out in response to a brief from Hastings Borough Council in October 2016.

The aim of the audit was to identify and review current arrangements and access improvements to the main resort beaches at Pelham in Hastings and Marina in St Leonards, and to encourage wider use of the promenade and foreshore.

The access audit and recommendations will be used to inform decisions by the Hastings & St Leonards Charitable Foreshore Trust and Hastings Borough Council.

Background to the Project

Informal access audits were undertaken by the Hastings and Rother Disability Forum (HRDF) / East Sussex Disability Association (ESDA) more than 10 years ago and a number of improvements were made as a result. In addition, Hastings Borough Council has also used external agencies to provide access guides to the main beaches. The access audits will review and update the current arrangements and report on the outcome.

Scope

This audit primarily looks at the Seaside and Blue Flag Award Beaches at Pelham in Hastings and Marina in St Leonards. It also identifies general potential improvements to encourage greater use of other parts of the promenade and beach, including specific events and activities. In particular, the audit:

- Reviews existing facilities and arrangements
- Identifies current issues and problems
- Suggests potential solutions
- Suggests a prioritized action plan for the next one to three years

Methodology

This audit has been carried out by Disability Inclusion CIC, with support from volunteers of the HAVE (Hastings Access to Venues and Events) group.

Disability Inclusion is a User-Led Organisation, with all of its Directors being disabled people. We work with organisations in the private, statutory and voluntary sectors to help make their services and facilities inclusive for disabled people, and with individual disabled people to help them maximise their rights to independent living.

HAVE is a local group run by disabled people whose aim is to work with local venue owners and event organisers to improve opportunities for disabled people with different impairments to access the many tourist and community events that take place in Hastings and the surrounding area.

A number of site visits along the seafront were carried out by disabled people with a range of impairments, and this information has been combined with research into the different types of information provided for visitors to the town.

Findings

Pre-arrival Information

Hastings Borough Council Website

The Hastings Borough Council website (<http://www.hastings.gov.uk>) includes a page which provides information about the beach in Hastings, including lifeguard patrols, the bathing water standards, dog walking, beach barbecue conditions, and use of Chinese lanterns. There are also links to the relevant pages where visitors can report dog fouling, litter or needles on the beach. When looking at the website for the purposes of this audit, the links to pages for reporting these issues were listed in the A-Z of services, but it was difficult to find the general information – this was actually found using Google.

The site also includes information about on and off-street car parking facilities, as well as details of community venues in the town and the range of services provided by Hastings Borough Council.

1066 Online Website

The 1066 Online website (<http://www.1066online.co.uk>) provides a wide range of information for visitors to the 1066 area. This includes historical information, information about transport links, and details of key attractions to visit - a number of which are located near to the Pelham end of the Hastings and St Leonards seafront.

This site was easily navigable by people with different impairments and the information was found to be clear and useful.

Visit 1066 Country Website

The Visit 1066 Country website (<http://www.visit1066country.com>) includes information about the history of Hastings and the 1066 area. It has a short piece of information about Hastings beach and links to information about walking and walk routes, as well as the different attractions to visit and events taking place in the area. There is also information about the variety of accommodation available for people visiting the town.

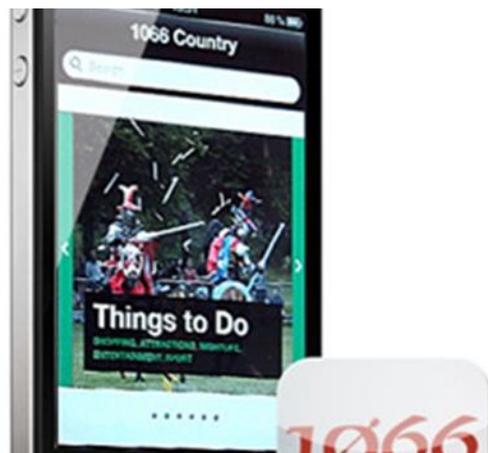
This site was also found to be navigable by people with different impairments, with the various sections clearly defined and textual information and photographs provided.

1066 Country Smartphone App

The 1066 smartphone app helps people make the most of their visit to 1066 Country by being able to view information about things to See & Do, Food & Drink, What's On, Where to Stay and places to Shop. Each listing contains an image, description, opening times, admission prices, location and contact details.

This app only appears to be available for the iPhone so is not accessible to users of Windows and Android smartphones. When a Voiceover user with limited useful sight tested the app for the purposes of this audit, it was initially unclear, apart from typing something in the search box, how to go further than the home screen where there was a picture and a page selector. The words "Festivals, theatre, music, comedy, sport, exhibitions", for example, do not display to Voiceover as links that can be clicked on, but on experimentation it became evident that clicking on those words would bring up the listing for that particular category. This meant that the listing could then be read in more detail.

The app is very useful for people wishing to find out about facilities in Hastings and St Leonards on the go, and if the categories on each page are displayed as links, this will make the app more accessible to Voiceover users and will be a good alternative for those with visual impairments to accessing printed information. An alternative would be to include a navigation button at the top of the screen, which users can click on and bring up a list of the categories available.



Screenshot of 1066 Country smartphone app

Social Media

Hastings Borough Council has a Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/Hastingsboroughcouncil?fref=ts>) and a Twitter account (<https://twitter.com/hastingsbc>), where information is regularly posted regarding events and other useful information for people living or visiting the town.

DisabledGo Website

The DisabledGo website (<http://www.disabledgo.com>) has information about both Pelham and Marina beaches. In discussion with members of HAVE, it appeared that the site was little used, and when reviewing it specifically for this project, they found it generally difficult to use for a variety of different reasons. With regard to information about beaches in Hastings, the easiest way to search was by entering the term “Beaches” into the search box on the home page. However, attempts to bring up lists of different types of venues in the town produced various, and sometimes ambiguous results. The detailed access guides for each area are split into quite a number of different sections, requiring the visitor to click on each tab in turn. This was found to be quite tedious and was particularly difficult for some screenreader users as there appeared to be no way of selecting the tab using the keyboard.

The information about the beaches at Pelham and Marina reads rather oddly as, fitting in with the style of the majority of DisabledGo’s information, it is written as if it is a building rather than an outdoor space. The information was last updated in September 2013, as is the case for quite a few other venues and facilities in the town.

Standing Maps

Monolith signs (standing maps) are located at various locations on the seafront including the southern end of Robertson Street, near to the accessible toilet at Pelham beach, Hastings Pier, Warrior Square, Azur at the Marina Pavilion, and the junction of Kings Road and London Road.

These maps present information about the beaches in Hastings and St Leonards in an easily readable form. Ideally they are best suited for sighted visitors. However, the boards stand at around 6ft in height, which makes them less suitable for those with visual impairments or who may not be able to reach the top of the board. This kind of information would be better accessed via a smartphone app

and in these cases and this could be investigated .



Standing map at the junction of Kings Road and London Road

Transport Links to Hastings and St Leonards

Visitors to Hastings and St Leonards are able to access regular train services from London, Tunbridge Wells, Ashford, Eastbourne, Lewes and Brighton. The town's railway stations are Hastings, Ore, St Leonards Warrior Square and West St Leonards. Train services are provided by Southern Trains between Ashford and Brighton and Hastings and London Victoria, and by South-Eastern Trains between London Charing Cross and Hastings.

There are two National Express coach pick-up and drop-off points in the town, at Queens Road and St Leonards Warrior Square.

Bus services to Hastings and the surrounding area are provided by Stagecoach Bus, and cover the major towns and villages including Dover, Folkestone, Rye, Battle, Bexhill and Eastbourne. The majority of routes make use of low floor buses, with the exception being route 98.

The main road links into the town are the A21 and the A259, enabling visitors to travel by car from London, Eastbourne and Brighton. Hastings has a number of off-street car parks which are the responsibility of Hastings Borough Council. In these car parks Blue Badge holders can park in designated Disabled Parking bays for three hours without charge, but must purchase a pay and display ticket if they wish to stay for longer and display this alongside their Blue Badge. They must pay standard pay and display charges if parked in a non-designated bay.. There is also on-street parking throughout the town, which is the responsibility of East Sussex County Council. Blue Badge holders can park on-street all day without charge.

There are a number of taxi and private hire firms covering the Hastings and surrounding area. Taxi ranks include those located outside Hastings Station and in Havelock Road in the town centre. There is some provision for wheelchair accessible taxis.

The sections below give particular consideration to parking and public transport facilities available in both of the main seafront areas of Hastings and St Leonards.

Tourist Information

The Tourist Information Centre is located on the ground floor of Muriel Matters House in Pelham Place. The building has level access from the street and there are automatic sliding doors at the entrance. A wide range of information is provided about the town's facilities and activities.

Pelham Beach

Arriving by Car

There are two public car parks along the seafront area between Pelham Place and the Old Town. These are the Pelham car park and the Rock-a-Nore car park.

The Pelham Place car park is a popular car park which has access to the beach. It has a tarmac surface with level access and a number of paved walkways, making it easy for access by people with mobility impairments, providing safe routes for people walking from their cars to the promenade. There are dropped kerbs at the entrance to the car park. There are 18 Blue Badge parking bays, where Blue Badge holders can park free for three hours. The 2.2m height restriction to the entrance of the car park makes it inaccessible to drivers of larger wheelchair accessible vehicles and means they must rely on a nearby on-street parking space with enough room for rear access being available.

There is on-street parking available on the opposite side of the road where Blue Badge holders can park all day without charge.

The Rock a Nore car park is located on the beach at the eastern end of Hastings sea front, in the Old Town. This large car park services the majority of visitor parking for the Old Town and is near to most of the facilities. The car park has a rough surface so may be difficult for people with mobility impairments to access. There are 15 Blue Badge parking bays, which can be found in the area of the Yacht Club. Blue Badge holders can park for three hours without charge. The 2.2m height restriction to the entrance of the car park makes it inaccessible to drivers of larger wheelchair accessible vehicles and means they must rely on a nearby on-street parking space with enough room for rear access being available.

Public Transport

The nearest bus stops to Pelham Beach are on either side of Pelham Place, near to Cavendish House. The Pelham car park. These bus stops serve routes 20, 20A, 70, 71, 75, 100, 101 and 357. travelling west, areas served include the town centre, Hastings Pier, St Leonards Warrior Square and Bexhill.

Toilets

There are three sets of public toilets between Pelham Place and the Old Town. These are located in Pelham Place, at Rock-a-Nore Road and on The Stade Open Space.

The toilets in Pelham Place are open from 7:00am to 10:00pm from 1 April or Easter (whichever is earlier) to 16 October, and from 7:00am to 6:00pm from 17 October to 1 April or Easter (whichever is earlier). There are standard ladies and gents' toilets and a unisex accessible Changing Places toilet, which has an electronic key that is only accessible to caretakers, rather than a NKS RADAR key lock. This means that people wishing to use the accessible toilet must ring a bell and wait for the caretaker to come and open it for them.

Closing toilets in the evening is problematic as disabled people needing to use an accessible toilet have much less choice of facilities to use, as many restaurants and pubs lack accessible toilet facilities. In this particular case they would need to travel back into the town centre to the toilets at Harold Place.

The toilets in Harold Place are currently open from 7:00am to 10:00pm between 1 April or Easter (whichever is earlier) and 16 October, and from 7:00am to 7:00pm between 17 October and 1 April or Easter (whichever is earlier). The opening times are extended to midnight on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, as well as on Bank Holidays and days when there are town events, Easter Sunday, : May Bank Holiday Sunday, and August Bank Holiday Sunday. There are standard ladies and gents toilets and two unisex accessible toilets which have an electronic key that is only accessible to caretakers, rather than a NKS RADAR key. Again, this means that people wishing to use the accessible toilet must ring a bell and wait for the caretaker to come and open it for them. A number of members of HAVE mentioned that the bell to call the caretaker to open the accessible toilet at Harold Place does not work. There is a separate baby and parent room with changing tables, a toddler seat and a sink.

The toilets in Rock-a-Nore Road are open from 7:00am to 7:00pm between 1 April or Easter (whichever is earlier) and 16 October, and from 8:00am to 4:00pm from 17 October to 1 April or Easter (whichever is earlier). On Bank Holidays and days when there are town events the opening times are from 7:00am to 9:00pm, but may close earlier if appropriate. There are standard ladies and gents toilets and a unisex accessible toilet which can be accessed using a NKS RADAR key. There is a separate baby and parent room with changing tables, a toddler seat and a sink.

The toilets on the Stade Open Space are open from 7:00am to 10:00pm between 1 April or Easter (whichever is earlier) and 16 October, and from 7:00am to 6:00pm between 17 October and 1 April or Easter (whichever is earlier). There are standard ladies and gents toilets and a unisex Changing Places accessible toilet.

If the current proposals by Hastings Borough Council to close public toilets at Harold Place and Rock-a-Nore Road go ahead, this will have a significant impact on people who need to use an accessible toilet. As previously mentioned, they have far less choice of facilities to use, as many restaurants and pubs lack accessible toilet facilities. We would therefore ask Hastings Borough Council to negotiate with local businesses which have an accessible toilet to allow NKS RADAR key holders to use their facilities.

Access to the Promenade and Facilities

Access to the promenade is on Pelham Place, near to the toilet facilities and the Pelham car park, and has level access. Here there is a recycled plastic walkway which provides access to the pebble beach for wheelchair users and children in pushchairs. The right hand path is narrower than the left and the stretch immediately in front of the beach. The narrower paths may not be wide enough for larger power wheelchair users. Installation of this walkway has been welcomed as it now makes this part of the beach accessible to wheelchair users and others with mobility impairments.



Recycled plastic walkway at Pelham Beach



Recycled plastic walkway at Pelham Beach

The promenade is regarded as a shared space for both pedestrians and cyclists. Whilst this promotes use of the space by everyone, it relies on a good deal of consideration by all, and people with visual and / or hearing impairments, and those with mobility impairments, feel very vulnerable when cyclists travel too fast as they cannot move out of the way quickly enough. The area around the boating lake can become very busy during the summer when there are large numbers of people.

Venues and Facilities

Travelling east from Pelham Place towards the Old Town, there is an area with wooden benches and picnic tables. Many of the benches have an A-frame design, meaning that they are fixed to the tables at each end. It is therefore necessary to climb over the bench in order to sit down, which is difficult for people with mobility impairments and makes them inaccessible to wheelchair users. However, there are some other benches in this area which are fixed to the table in the middle, meaning that someone can sit on either side of the fixing. These tables are more square in shape and there is a little more space at the ends for wheelchair access. The concrete base on which many of the benches on the grass area are situated has sunk and the immediate surrounding area has become rather uneven due to significant rainfall. Access is therefore difficult for anyone with mobility impairments. This could be resolved by positioning the benches on a thicker concrete base.

Some of the picnic tables on the beach are easier to get to by wheelchair users than those on the grass area opposite as they have a concrete from the path, so we would suggest that extending the walkway here would make all of these benches wheelchair accessible.



Picnic bench surrounded by sunken muddy area



Picnic bench on concrete base with walkway to the path

There are a number

of seats along the promenade which have backs to them, making them usable by people with physical impairments who need a backrest. Hastings Borough Council has plans to make the memorial bench situated just before the main area of attractions more attractive by inserting some planters or similar at each end. Provision of seating along the promenade is welcomed, as this provides a rest point for anyone with mobility impairments when enjoying a walk along the seafront.

The Pelham children's playground is managed by Hastings Borough Council and it is very well used. The facility is regularly maintained but has experienced some flooding around it.

The large area containing crazy golf facilities and a number of catering kiosks is privately operated. However, the path surrounding this area is owned by Hastings Borough Council. The signage to these facilities is white on a blue background, which can be difficult for visually impaired people to read.

The area contains a number of wheelchair accessible picnic tables. On the main seafront path there are some seats facing on to the crazy golf area, except that the view is rather obscured by bushes.



Bench facing crazy golf area



Accessible picnic tables at catering area near crazy golf

The large covered multi-use games area is managed by Hastings Borough Council and is available for hire. It is well used, particularly during the spring and summer seasons. The facility can be used in all weathers as it is covered by netting, and it has level access throughout. Access is via a gate on the promenade and another on the pebble beach. However, the gate on the beach would not be accessible to wheelchair users. We suggest that both gates are open when in use to allow easy entry / exit, as people could easily become trapped if this is not the case.

The next large area of facilities is privately operated, although the public walkway and promenade are the responsibility of Hastings Borough Council.

Moving towards the Stade area, the surface of the path was rather uneven coming up to the Hastings Lifeboat and East Hastings Angling Club. There is a car park which is only accessible by Permit holders who work for these two organisations.

There are a number of different boundaries of ownership to consider around the Stade area, and many of the facilities are privately operated.

The miniature railway track has a number of crossing points which have a wooden strip between the tracks, making it easier to cross by wheelchair users and other people with mobility impairments.

The Stade Open Space has level access throughout and has a barrier at the entrance to stop cars driving on to it. However, there are two Blue Badge parking

bays immediately outside the barrier. However, one of these is often used for emergency vehicles to park during public events.

The area outside of the Stade Hall and the public toilets is a roadway for service vehicles and cyclists. Like the shared space on the seafront, this relies on people being considerate to each other and vehicles / cyclists driving slowly. There is a five mile an hour speed limit along this area.

The Stade Hall and Classroom on the Coast are located in the same building, which has level access throughout and its own ladies, gents and unisex accessible toilet facilities. These venues, as well as the Stade Open Space, are managed by Hastings Borough Council and are available to hire. Those hiring the facilities are asked at the time of booking whether they need to bring a vehicle on site before and after the event for loading and unloading purposes.

Seafront Events

The seafront between Pelham Place and the Stade Open Space benefits from a number of tourist events during the summer months, including Stade Saturdays during June and July, the Hastings Carnival and the Beach Concert in August, the Seafood and Wine Festival in September and Hastings Bonfire in October.

We understand that some public events are commissioned by Hastings Borough Council but their management is outsourced to private organisations. We also understand that other events are organised by private or community organisations but funded by Hastings Borough Council. Whichever is the case, both funders and event organisers have responsibilities under the Equality Act to make events accessible to disabled people. We suggest that Hastings Borough Council includes in any contract a condition that the outsourcing organisation meets its responsibilities under the Equality Act in terms of access arrangements for disabled people. We would also suggest that Hastings Borough Council venue booking information should include information about making events accessible and a question on the booking form to enable organisers to show how they will be meeting these requirements. It is also important that Hastings Borough Council continually monitors the accessibility of tourist events for disabled people in order to ensure that appropriate arrangements are being carried out.

Marina Beach

Arrival by Car

There are two car parks between Hastings Pier and West Marina. These are the underground car park in front of the pier, and the Marina car park.

The underground car park in front of Hastings Pier and the White Rock Theatre has level access and a number of paved walkways, making it easy for access by people with mobility impairments and providing safe routes for people walking from their cars to the promenade. The 2.1m height restriction to the entrance of the car park makes it inaccessible to drivers of larger wheelchair accessible vehicles and means they must rely on a nearby on-street parking space with enough room for rear access being available.

The nearest on-street parking to Hastings Pier is located on the opposite side of the road between the White Rock Hotel and the end of Robertson Street.

The Marina car park is located opposite the Royal Victoria Hotel. It has a tarmac surface and has level access, with dropped kerbs at the entrance. There are 12 Blue Badge parking bays, where Blue Badge holders can park free for three hours. However, drivers displaying a Blue Badge must pay standard car parking charges if parked in a standard bay. The 2.2m height restriction to the entrance of the car park makes it inaccessible to drivers of larger wheelchair accessible vehicles and means they must rely on a nearby on-street parking space with enough room for rear access being available.

There is very limited on-street parking at the St Leonards end of the seafront, with the majority only being available to permit holders.

Public Transport

The bus stops on either side of Warrior Square serve a number of bus routes, i.e. 20, 21, 22, 24, 70, 75, 98, 99, 304, 305 and 349. All except the 98 and 99 provide access from London Road and further away into Silverhill and beyond. The 98 and 99 provide access from Dover, Folkestone and Rye, Hastings Old Town, along the entire seafront to Bexhill, Hailsham and Eastbourne.

Toilets

There are two sets of public toilets along the promenade between Hastings Pier and West Marina. One set of toilets is located on the lower promenade at Warrior Square, and the other at the Marina Pavilion next to Azur. Both facilities have standard ladies and gents' toilets, as well as a unisex accessible toilet which can be

opened using a NKS RADAR key. There are also toilet facilities in the Visitors Centre at Hastings Pier and in the privately owned Pavilion Café.

The toilets at Warrior Square are open from 7:00am to 9:00pm from 1 April or Easter (whichever is earlier) to 16 October, and from 7:00am to 5:00pm between 17 October and 1 April or Easter (whichever is earlier). They are open from 9:00am to 9:00pm on all Bank Holidays and during town events, but may close earlier if appropriate. There are both standard ladies and gents toilets and a unisex accessible toilet which can be accessed using a NKS RADAR key. The wall-plate displaying the opening times is out-of-date. In consultation with disabled people in connection with this audit, we have learned that opening times are unreliable and we understand this may be connected with the opening times of the beach café. On these occasions people must travel some distance to the next nearest accessible toilet at either West Marina or Hastings Pier.

The toilets at the Marina Pavilion are open from 9:00am until 9:00pm between 1 April or Easter (whichever is earlier) and 16 October, and from 9:00am to 5:00pm between 17 October and 1 April or Easter (whichever is earlier). The toilets are generally open from 9:00am to 9:00pm on all Bank Holidays and during public events, but may close earlier if appropriate. There are standard ladies and gents toilets and a unisex accessible toilet which can be accessed using a NKS RADAR key.

Access to the Promenade and Facilities

There are three ramped access points from the main seafront to the lower promenade between the pier and West Marina. These are: the entrance to Bottle Alley next to Hastings Pier, the exit from Bottle Alley at Warrior Square, and Marina next to Azur. However, there is no real access for wheelchair users and children in pushchairs to the pebble beach along this area of the foreshore. There is seasonal beach matting at Marina, but we suggest laying a recycled walkway similar to that situated at Pelham beach.

The ramps to the lower promenade, and the lower promenade itself, are regularly used by cyclists and sometimes service vehicles. As mentioned earlier in this report, the promenade is regarded as a shared space for both pedestrians and cyclists. Whilst this promotes use of the space by everyone, it relies on a good deal of consideration by all, and people with visual and / or hearing impairments and anyone with mobility impairments feel very vulnerable when cyclists travel too fast as they cannot move out of the way quickly enough. This is a particular problem when the promenade is crowded, as people feel unable to move freely without the fear of being run into. There are also a number of points on the upper promenade where the cycle path and pedestrian walkways merge, which again can cause problems as cyclists often travel too fast for them to slow down or stop for a

pedestrian crossing. We believe that this problem will particularly arise once the kiosk immediately above Bottle Alley is open, as the path will become rather narrow and will cause congestion when the area is busy.



Steps leading down to the lower promenade at Warrior Square



Construction of kiosk above Bottle Alley are well

Cycling path and footpath merge at Warrior Square / other footpath comes off of roadside pavement

marked with yellow edging, which is particularly good for people with visual

impairments. The steps near to Azur are poorly marked and would benefit from similar yellow or white edging.



Steps at Warrior Square with yellow edging



Poorly marked steps next to Azur



There is a continuation ramp opposite the Royal Victoria Hotel, near to Azur which is a segregated ramp round the steps at West Marina. However, the bottom of the ramp does not join up with the cycle path, which could be confusing for both pedestrians and cyclists.

1Continuation ramp opposite Royal Victoria Hotel which does not meet cycle path

The lower promenade between West Marina and Bridge Way has a Netpave surface designed to encourage cycling along this coastal route. However, this surface has become rather uneven due to significant weather damage, making it difficult for people with mobility impairments to access.

Lighting along the upper promenade is reasonably good, although there are some dark spots. However, lighting is poor on the lower promenade around the beach café and at Marina near to Azur. This causes difficulties particularly for people with visual and cognitive impairments, but being a safety issue in general for everyone. We would therefore recommend that the lighting be improved along these areas.

There are a number of seats along the promenade between Hastings Pier and West Marina which have backs to them, making them usable by people with physical impairments who need a backrest. Provision of seating along the promenade is welcomed, as this provides a rest point for anyone with mobility impairments when enjoying a walk along the seafront. However, the fact that there is no space between each of the seats makes it impossible for wheelchair users to sit level with people on the seats. Spreading the seating out a little more along the lower promenade (e.g. by taking out every third seat) would provide space for wheelchair users or children in pushchairs.

Some of the seating on the lower promenade near to Azur has steps up to it, making it inaccessible for some people with mobility impairments.



Figure 2 Seating on lower promenade without space for wheelchair users

Figure 3 Stepped seating on lower promenade next to Azur



Venues and Facilities

We are aware of plans to develop Bottle Alley, and we welcome this as it is rather under-used. The lighting along Bottle Alley is poor in many places, and needs to be improved.

There are a number of stepped access points along Bottle Alley to the upper promenade. These steps are very poorly marked and we would suggest yellow or white edging is added to make these more accessible to people with visual impairments.

There are a number of places where kiosk facilities could be located. There are two spacious areas with round tables which are accessible to wheelchair users.



4 Unmarked steps down to Bottle Alley



5 Accessible tables under Bottle Alley

The lower promenade between Bottle Alley and West Marina has three catering kiosks which are privately owned. The beach café at Warrior Square is located with the toilet facilities to one side and a children's play area to the other. It has a step at the entrance, but can also be accessed via a movable wooden ramp. However, the suitability of this ramp for power wheelchairs is questionable. This could be resolved by the café owners purchasing a portable folding ramp from a supplier such as The Ramp People. Some of the picnic tables have fixed bench seating, whereas others have moveable chairs and are also wheelchair accessible. The staff at the café will carry drinks to the tables if requested.

The fish and chip kiosk has a hatch which is very high for many people from a standing position, and is certainly not accessible to wheelchair users



Figure 6 Fish and chip kiosk on lower promenade

The Bistro further along the lower promenade towards Marina can only be entered via a number of steps down so is not accessible to wheelchair users or anyone with significant mobility impairments.

Azur is a large, privately owned venue providing conference and function room facilities on the lower floors, and a restaurant on the upper floor. The larger function room has level access via the seafront. The main entrance to the building, and specifically the restaurant, is accessed via a ramp on the upper promenade, and there is a lift down to the lower floor where the function rooms are located.

Hastings and St Leonards Sailing Club is located between the privately owned Azur and the chalets on the lower promenade. This whole area would benefit from clear signage.



Chalets on lower promenade

There are a large number of chalets on the lower promenade past Azur and opposite the Royal Victoria Hotel. These can be accessed using steps or via a ramp. However, it is difficult to see where the ramp starts, so this could benefit from some tactile edging at the bottom and top.

There are two areas containing chalets at West Marina. The old bathing pool site adjacent to Cinque Ports Way is purpose-built and the chalets are more private and more accessible to people with mobility impairments than the other site, which has a fairly steep bank and uneven ground and can be covered by shingle at certain times of the year.

Seafront Events

The area between Bottle Alley and West Marina does not benefit from many tourist events. There is a desire to encourage more activity along the St Leonards end of the town. However, we recognise that this end of the seafront is better suited to general beach use rather than large events, as there is insufficient space to hold large events and the area does not benefit from the wider facilities such as cafes and restaurants.

WE are mindful that much of the old bathing pool site at West Marina is under-developed and under-used. We feel it could be developed as an area to cater for larger events.

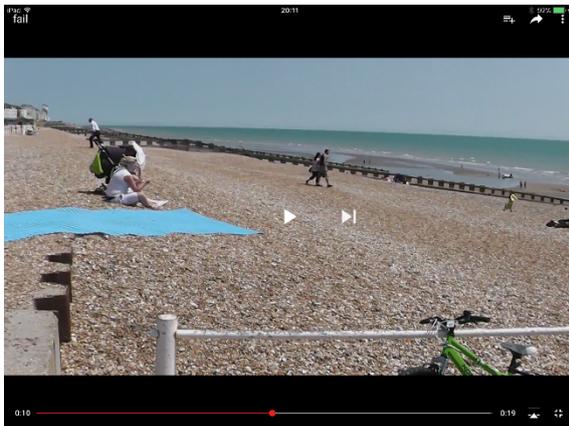
The main event held in the St Leonards area is the annual St Leonards Festival. Although it is not held directly on the seafront, it is held in Warrior Square Gardens, which is very near and encourages the many visitors to the area to walk down to the seafront and access the various facilities along it. We understand that Hastings Borough Council commissions a private organisation to manage the event. As mentioned in the previous section of this report, we would recommend that where Hastings Borough Council outsources the organisation of an event to a private organisation, or where it financially supports events in the area, there should be a requirement for event organisers to comply with their duties under the Equality Act to make their events accessible to disabled people.

Specialist Equipment

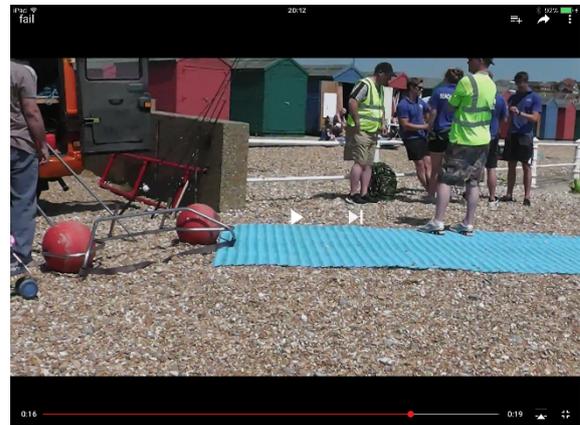
Hastings Borough Council has a Tyrlo beach wheelchair which can go into the sea. However, this is a rather complicated system to use and has therefore had little use. It was purchased around 10 or more years ago and there are now more modern solutions available. We would suggest that a newer system is purchased from a supplier such as

AccessRec, alongside promoting the availability of the wheelchair and how it can be accessed.

Hastings Borough Council has some beach matting which can be positioned on the pebble beach in order to provide a level surface to make an area wheelchair accessible. We understand that it is very heavy to manoeuvre and put into position. We also understand that sadly it has had little use, either because event organisers are unaware of its existence, because of the need for Council staff to bring it out and position it and take it back up on each day, or because of fears that it is not secure enough and can be tripped over. Some lighter matting has been purchased more recently, and this is easier to transport, and this may be a suitable alternative.



The sea is to the far right, the beach stretching to it, and the mermaid event starting at the very edge to the right slightly more forward. The images shows the end of the matting, placed to



The top end of the matting, placed randomly on the beach, behind a large van and nowhere near the Tarmac-ed road where access should start!

The above photograph shows an example of an event where the beach matting was used at the Mermaid On the Beach event in June 2014, when a wheelchair user wishing to take part in the event was assured by the organisers that access arrangements had been put in place, only to find on arrival that the matting had been wrongly positioned and the event was far from accessible.

This event is one which could have been attractive to families with younger children. A young girl may have wished to take part in the event and would have arrived to find that they were excluded from this because of the above situation. This would reinforce to them the

stereotypes which exist around young disabled people being excluded from mainstream activities that their peers would be able to enjoy.

We would suggest that the beach matting is promoted to event organisers wishing to hold events on the beach, and that training is provided to relevant staff / event organisers around appropriate positioning.

Recommendations

The recommendations listed below are categorised according to ease of implementation / suggested timescale.

- 1 = Under 1 year
- 2 = 1-2 years
- 3 = 2-3 years

Recommendation	Timescale
Consolidate and review pre-arrival information on various websites (including DisabledGo 2013)	1
Publicise the availability of temporary access matting and information about sources of other equipment which may be useful to event organisers.	1
Publicise the Changing Places toilets at Pelham Place and The Stade more widely via the Hastings Borough Council website and other relevant outlets.	1
When commissioning other private or voluntary sector organisations to organise public events on behalf of Hastings Borough Council, include a condition in the contract that all aspects of the event planning, publicity and arrangements on the day must meet the requirements of the Equality Act in terms of access arrangements for disabled people.	1
When Council-run venues and facilities are hired for events, include a question on the booking form to check whether appropriate access arrangements have been made for disabled people.	1
Include information about the access arrangements for disabled people at public events in any publicity such as flyers, posters and online events pages.	1
When letting seafront kiosks and facilities to private owners, include in their tenancy agreement a requirement to make their facilities wheelchair accessible where practical, and to use clear signage.	1

Investigate the possibility of making monolith sign information / maps available online.	2
Add tactile paving to top and bottom of ramps from upper to lower promenade between Warrior Square and Marina.	2
Add yellow or white edging to steps from Bottle Alley to upper promenade.	2
Add yellow or white edging to the steps to the lower promenade near to Azur.	2
Place decking from the path to the edge of the picnic tables on Pelham Beach to make them accessible by wheelchair users.	2
Place picnic tables at Pelham Beach on a substantial concrete base to prevent the base sinking as a result of heavy rainfall.	2
Purchase additional beach matting similar to that used at Pelham Beach and the Old Town for use on Marina Beach to make one or two areas permanently accessible to wheelchair users.	3
Improve lighting on upper and lower promenade between Warrior Square and Marina.	3
Investigate and trial different models of all terrain wheelchair and purchase as appropriate	3
Provide local disabled people with a key card with a code to enable them to access the town's accessible toilets which rely on an electronic key system.	3
Develop the under-used area on the old bathing pool site to cater for larger tourist events	3

References

Hastings Borough Council – The official website of Hastings Borough Council <http://www.hastings.gov.uk>

Visit 1066 Country – The official tourism website for 1066 country <http://www.visit1066country.com/>

1066 Online – A guide for residents and visitors to Hastings and St Leonards <http://www.1066online.co.uk/>

DisabledGo – Detailed access information to venues across the UK and the Republic of Ireland <http://www.disabledgo.com>

The Ramp People – Suppliers of a wide range of ramps, including folding wheelchair ramps <http://www.therampepeople.co.uk/>

AccessRec – Supplier of beach access chairs and ADA mats <http://accessrec.com/>