

Grand Pavilion Porthcawl

Access Statement

07 September 2023

This Access Statement has been prepared by Jane Toplis Associates Ltd RIBA NRAC, Access Consultants. We have been advising the project team throughout the design and construction process. The criteria on which the proposed redevelopment works are judged take on board the management's duties under the *Equality Act 2010 (formally the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005)*, *Building Regulations Approved Documents K and M* and relevant guidance, such as *BS8300:2018, Design of Buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people – Code of Practice*. Other reference documents used are *Planning for Inclusive Access in Wales - Good Practice Guidance Toolkit, by Disability Wales* and *The Sign Design Guide by Peter Barker and June Fraser, by the Sign Design Society and RNIB*.

Introduction

The project to remodel and extend the Grand Pavilion is an opportunity to dramatically improve access for all. The ambition is to create a friendly and welcoming venue irrespective of age and ability, with the building being better able to support the range of events currently held at the building; including theatrical and community productions, live entertainment, creative workshops, conferences, banquets, events and festivals.

The existing building contains a number of barriers to access. These include segregated ramped entrance routes on the front elevation, compromised staircases and narrow heavy doors. The existing lift does not meet current minimum dimensions and there is no lift access to the first floor balcony and roof terraces. The accessible WCs do not meet minimum requirements. The back-of-house areas are particularly inaccessible, with narrow angular corridors and no accessible dressing room. Reaching the stage is only possible via narrow flights of steps.

The building will benefit from the proposed overhaul, enhancing inclusive design and enabling everyone to make use of the important entertainment, refreshment and work opportunities available therein.

Improved entrances

The central entrance from the Esplanade will be upgraded to a fully inclusive entrance, reinforcing the symmetry of the Art Deco façade by extending forward a new central flight of steps. On both sides of these steps will be stone seating plinths with gently sloping symmetrical paths behind, which lead up to the automated central entrance doors. Another new ramp from the Esplanade up to the café/bar will provide this part of the building its own accessible entrance.

On the lower level parking provision will be reduced to make way for the new extensions on both sides of the auditorium. The revised parking will focus on designated accessible parking bays, a spacious drop-off point, bays for electric vehicle charging and secure cycle racks. The pedestrian entrance at this level will enter the building at lower ground floor level through new automatic entrance doors, arriving adjacent to the lift. All approaches and external entrances will be clearly signposted and illuminated.

Enhanced circulation

The proposals provide more spacious foyers on each level and improved vertical circulation cores serving all floors. New foyer staircases will bring patrons up to the auditorium balcony, down to the new studio theatre at lower ground level and to the existing multi-use space under the auditorium. All existing and new staircases are to be upgraded with continuous handrails, improved lighting and well-defined steps. The existing lift is too small for someone using a large wheelchair and it struggles to meet the demands of the Grand Pavilion's audience. Its replacement by a new larger lift will extend lift access to the auditorium balcony and rooftop function suites, and it will also be used for evacuation of disabled people in an emergency. New lifts are planned to link the back-of-house facilities and the stage.

Performance spaces

Within the main auditorium there will be a choice of seating positions for wheelchair users and their companions. The improved lift provision will access new dedicated wheelchair positions at auditorium balcony level and these will be supplemented by extra positions adjacent to the loose seating rows in the auditorium itself. Within the auditorium a new flight of steps and platform lift will enable audience members to reach the stage, for instance during presentations or events that require audience participation. The new studio theatre will also have a choice of easily accessible wheelchair positions in the upper rear row and at the front of the raked seating. As well as the provision of audio enhancement in the performance spaces, there will be opportunities to hold relaxed and dementia friendly performances.

The back-of-house areas will be reorganised so that all key spaces will be accessible. The dressing rooms under the auditorium stage will be rationalised and wheelchair accessible

facilities added. A new back of house lift and staircase will take performers from this level up to the auditorium stage and a gentle ramp will lead to the studio stage.

New facilities

A major focus of the works is to bring the internal facilities within the Grade II listed building up to current access standards. The existing auditorium and bar/café areas will be refreshed and will be augmented by fixed and pop-up refreshment counters located in the foyers and in the new roof-top function suites. All staffed serving counters will have reduced height sections so that they are wheelchair accessible and induction loops to aid communication with people who use hearing aids.

Multiuse/community rooms, incubator spaces and studios, some of which will be for rent, will be reachable from the foyers and will have their own facilities.

WCs (including wheelchair accessible cubicles) will be distributed throughout the foyers at all levels, so that the time needed to reach these facilities during performance intervals will be reduced. Each new block of front-of-house toilets will provide at least one ambulant disabled cubicle and, space allowing, will have larger than standard width cubicles. Also proposed are some gender-neutral front-of-house cubicles. As well as baby changing facilities, there will be a Changing Places cubicle which is designed for changing adults and older children. It will be located near the main entrance so it is easy to find for both Grand Pavilion patrons and also members of the public visiting Porthcawl.

Detailed design

Accessibility will be an important factor in the choice of ironmongery, internal finishes and other fixtures and fittings, for instance when designing stairs, WCs and doors. The design of the visual environment will ensure that there will be sufficient contrast between walls, floors, doors, ironmongery and sanitary fittings. The lighting scheme will ensure adequate illumination and minimisation of glare and reflection, particularly on circulation routes. Any other fixtures such as seating and built-in work-stations will be designed to suit people of different body types and abilities. The more logical circulation and improved visual and acoustic environment will benefit people with cognitive and learning disabilities.

Conclusion

Whilst we recognise that there may be some restrictions when adapting a Grade II listed building, the proposals overcome most of the existing access barriers. Once the project is complete, we believe that Porthcawl's Grand Pavilion will be an extremely popular venue, both for local people and for visitors from further afield.