



Access News

Spring Edition

Welcome!

Welcome to the first edition of Access News, the University's newsletter that shares the progress being made to improve physical accessibility for students, staff and visitors using the campus.

At the University equality issues are absolutely central to delivering a campus that is welcoming and accessible for all. We are continually striving to create equality through making visitors, students and staff feel welcome by identifying and removing barriers that restrict access to our services; this being in keeping with the Equality Act 2010.

A significant amount of work has been completed towards improving access to service and curriculum. This newsletter brings to life some of the stories of accessible projects and the positive impacts on our users.



Working in Partnership

Head of Student Support, Christopher Warrington, talks about the importance of working collaboratively to improve access across campus.

Working alongside colleagues in the Student Opportunity Directorate, my role is to bring together those services providing support to students, including Disabled Students Support (DSAS), the Counselling and Mental Health Teams and the International Student Office.

The University has a complex estate and making it accessible remains a challenge. Recently the Disability Service, Facilities Directorate and LUU have worked together to identify and resolve access issues. One issue we've looked at is to make sure that the key fobs needed to use the North-South Access Route out of hours are readily available to students and well publicised, with updated

information now available on the Student Education Service Website. It's a good example of how we need to work in partnership across teams to continually review and improve the accessibility of our campus.

Another way in which we're working towards supporting the accessibility of the campus is through the DisabledGo website this lists the accessibility details for all of our buildings to support students, colleagues and visitors. www.disabledgo.com

To help us all have a shared understanding of student support I've been working with teams across campus to understand how to make it easier for them to meet the needs of our students. Working with staff and the Student Exec in LUU is a key part of this.



Creating Award Winning Accessible Residences

Across our residences portfolio we ensure that we offer exceptional homes to our students and visitors, whilst maintaining accessibility and convenience.

Storm Jameson Court is an outstanding student and conference/visitor accommodation, set in a contemporary designed building, providing capacity for up to 300 people attending events.

In 2012 the residence, which provides accommodation to meet the needs of students and visitors with various mobility and sensory impairments, was accredited to the highest standard possible, under the 'Visit Britain' National Accessibility Scheme. It went on to win an 'Access for All' National Tourism Award in recognition of its exceptional accessible facilities.

Marni Smythe, a Storm Jameson resident throughout the 2014/15 academic year, when asked "What is your overall impression of the accommodation (including facilities) that you have been provided with?" responded "Fantastic, I moved in straight away. There were only minimal alterations required and these were addressed immediately."

St Marks, postgraduate halls of residence, prides itself on providing a safe and secure environment for residents and visitors.

Umar Ibrahim Wambai said, in relation to his accommodation at St. Mark's during 2014/2015, "Ever since my accident and I became disabled I have never been as confident as I am right now."

Both halls of residence offer the following specific features that create an accessible environment:

- Improved accessible car parking facilities and drop-off
- Level access around the site
- Prominent entrances and level egress
- Clear routes and level horizontal circulation throughout
- Considered floor and wall surfaces (both materials and finishes)
- Choice of vertical circulation via lift and stairs
- Accessible accommodation
- Accessible wcs in communal areas.



As they were so impressed with the development, a selection of the Canadian Paralympic team utilised Storm Jameson Court as their base during the 2012 Paralympics.

Accessibility was central to the Laidlaw Library

Completed in 2015, the new undergraduate Laidlaw Library was designed to offer accessible facilities to people of all abilities, along with an accessible environment for staff, visitors and members of the public. Key to the Library's strategy was providing as much openly accessible space as possible to the public, keeping the ground floor free to access.

Through experience, design and consultation with users with disabilities the site provides:

- Links to the public transport infrastructure
- Local accessible car parking facilities and drop-off
- Level access around the site
- Prominent entrances and level egress
- Clear routes and level horizontal circulation throughout
- Considered floor and wall surfaces (both materials and finishes)
- Choice of vertical circulation via lifts and stairs
- Accessible general and specialist facilities, including disability support suites
- General provision wcs, suitable for use by people with ambulant disabilities
- Accessible wcs
- Accessible changing facilities.

Dr Stella Butler, University Librarian said: (TBC) "The services we offer here at the library are at the hub of student life and providing good accessible building is critical to ensuring equality and inclusion for all students. We're really pleased with the Laidlaw and we worked closely with the architects to ensure the layout worked well."



Refurbishing Existing Buildings Institute for Transport Studies

The £3.9M refurbishment of the Institute for Transport Studies over the coming months will extend and modernise the building, to create a first-class learning environment to match the Institute's standing as a world leader in transport teaching and research. Consultants have provided advice and guidance on accessibility issues to both the existing and new environments. The work includes:

- Improvements to the externals, including inclusive seating
- enhanced entrance with automatic doors
- social space
- new reception and waiting area
- improved circulation throughout
- new lifts
- accessible WCs and showers
- flexible teaching spaces
- new finishes, including: paint finishes to walls, floor coverings, new internal doors



CAMPUS DEVELOPMENTS

You will be aware that work is underway as part of the £520M investment in a transformative campus developments programme. All of the projects in the campus masterplan have a key focus on improving accessibility for all users.

A number of current projects in the campus developments portfolio addressing access issues include lift improvements at the Brotherton Library, and general access improvements works at the Edward Boyle Library, Worsley building, Psychology and the old Geography building.

To keep up with regular project updates visit www.leeds.ac.uk/campusdevelopments



Access across Campus

Equality and Diversity Officer at Leeds University Union, Gemma Turner shares her thoughts.

“On a daily basis I meet with students who come to me with ideas on how to improve access across campus. When we talk about access, it takes many forms, it ranges from providing hearing loops to creating wider open spaces, and even going as far as having tactile flooring in buildings. I raise the students’ ideas to the Senior Access Committee, who are welcoming of the feedback and ideas to improve access.

It’s important for the University to keep listening and engage further in the conversation with staff and students. I’d like to see ‘access experience’ improve further for users, the University should continue to provide welcoming facilities for those with special access requirements by making it a nicer experience rather than it being just a provision.

We will always be up against barriers, but proactive attitudes and culture lead to positive outcomes, such as – if you can’t adapt it, look at alternatives!

On a personal level, when I first attended Senate meetings in my role, there was no space for my wheelchair and no accessible microphone. I was delighted when my feedback was taken on board and a wheelchair space was created along with an accessible microphone. I welcome the positive response and would like to see it continue.

Contact details etc

If you have any feedback about this newsletter or ideas for future content, please email us at esoffice@leeds.ac.uk



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Leeds
LS2 9JT
www.leeds.ac.uk