

Access by Design

Issue 83 Summer 2000

The journal of the Centre for Accessible Environments

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Editor: Flora Gathorne-Hardy

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Subscriptions: Helen Carter

Advertising: Laura Matthews

ISSN 0959-1591

Published 4 times a year: March, June, September, December

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Subscriptions pre-paid, including postage, for any four consecutive issues: £20 UK and surface mail Europe and overseas; £24 airmail; £12 additional copies posted to same address; £12 student subscriptions. Cheques made payable to Centre for Accessible Environments.

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Talking point

The access world, as I write, is in an enjoyable state of fever and ferment, with big changes underway in how we design and update the built environment to better accommodate disabled people.

Two initiatives merit our attention: the first, the consultation on the Disability Rights Commission's proposals for a new Code of Practice: *Rights of Access, Goods, Facilities, Services and Premises*, for Part III of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA), published on 8 May for a three-month consultation period; the second, the review by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) of Part M and the opportunity (see article on p7) to contribute to the pre-consultation 'brainstorming'.

Paradoxically, while Part M and the DDA focus narrowly on the needs of disabled people, in doing so they prompt a wider consideration of how the generality of people use buildings. By looking at how people who see less well, hear less well and move less easily interact with the built environment, we shall surely learn how to design buildings that are suitable for us all.

For many of us active in the access field, the existence of a separate building regulation requiring access and facilities for disabled people has been an impediment to furthering inclusive design. It perpetuates the notion that disabled people are special and different and that buildings should be designed for that quaint stereotype, Le Modulor Man, with some access provision tacked on as an afterthought. We have building regulations for health and safety, for emergency egress and energy efficiency, but none under the welfare and convenience heading, other than Part M, requiring that buildings should be suitable for the people who use them.

The review of Part M provides the opportunity to rectify this, to integrate its requirements throughout the regulations and to address wider issues of welfare and convenience that are common to us all.

This issue of *Access by Design* is the first to be edited by Flora Gathorne-Hardy, the Centre's new Development Officer, generously assisted by Andrew Lacey, for whom, sadly, the project funding is now ended. Flora brings to the task a splendid track record in research, teaching, writing and projects fostering inclusive design and we wish her a long and rewarding innings as Editor.

Sarah Langton-Lockton

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Cover photo: supplied by Regent's Park Open Air Theatre. Photo taken by Alastair Muir.

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Editorial board: Sarah Langton-Lockton and Vin Goodwin

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Talking point

For six enjoyable days in June, Mary Noble and I were in Providence, Rhode Island, USA, contributing to *Designing for the 21st Century II*, the second international conference on universal design organised by the Adaptive Environments Center, Boston. We were there to present a workshop on the National Register of Access Consultants and to renew and make new contacts with the growing band of people who share our commitment to inclusion by design.

Among the goodies in their conference packs, participants received a Good Grips vegetable peeler with its chunky handle and effort-reducing design. Later in the conference, Sam and Betsey Farber, founders of the OXO Good Grips company, were among the 15 recipients of the first annual Ron Mace Designing for the 21st Century Leadership Awards. The awards are named in honour of Ron Mace FAIA, the architect and disability activist who first coined the term 'universal design' to convey the concept of designing products and the built environment to be aesthetic and usable to the greatest extent possible by everyone, regardless of age or ability.

The Good Grips story is itself a delightful one: the Farbers, having sought in vain for attractive, easy to use kitchen tools, came back from retirement to found a new company. The Good Grips range is now exported all over the world, features in many a design museum and is stocked in, among others, the Conran Shops. Covetable as well as functional, Good Grips kitchen tools epitomise universal design. Another award winner was Gregg Vanderheiden, founder and director of the Trace Research and Development Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison which plays a leading role in ensuring that telecommunications and information technologies take account of the needs of users with disabilities. He is credited with the phrase 'electronic curb cuts' to describe the many advances in information technology, now standard, which began, in American parlance, as 'disability accommodation'. These include talking books, voice-activated software and picture-based keyboards, now in widespread use in fast-food restaurants.

When it comes to building design, however, I feel we have barely made a start. Perhaps the best example of universal design in this context is the automated door. Readers are invited to suggest other developments in building design which in their view fulfil the brief for universal accessibility. The ramp, obviously, does not qualify.

Sarah Langton-Lockton

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Cover photo: supplied by The Science Museum.

Editor: Flora Gathorne-Hardy

Managing Editor: Andrew Lacey

Editorial board: Sarah Langton-Lockton and Sandra Grower

Subscriptions: Helen Carter

Advertising: Paul Highman

ISSN 0959-1591

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Talking point

This issue of Access By Design brings together what at first may seem to be an eclectic mix of issues. Contributors explore advancements in information and communication technology and its application to museum sites. There are debates about urban design and the complex landscape of streetscapes. The ways in which principles of sustainable development play out in practice are also explored.

What binds all these articles together and locates them within this particular issue is a recognition that inclusive design has entered the mainstream as an indispensable critical tool with which to check and refine evolving ideas. For example, there is an exciting charge between the rapid proliferation of computer screen graphics and the need to ensure that these graphics are combined so as to illuminate rather than cloud information. In this case, what could be seen as restrictions are in effect prompts for creative thinking, as those involved in the design process develop a far richer understanding of people's responses to cutting-edge information systems.

The same kind of creative charge can be detected between ideas of inclusive design and sustainability. In both cases, proponents call for people to step back from the design process in order to see more clearly the cultural assumptions, processes of decision making and institutional contexts which influence outcomes. Proponents stress the need for people to reflect upon, engage with and, if necessary, be prepared to change such influencing factors. They also assert that a series of values should inform this process of critical reflection and refinement of working practices. In this way, practitioners are invited to refresh their working practices in the light of what are profound challenges facing society to create places that sustain people and are sustainable in their use of the earth's resources. This challenge is illustrated by the article on urban design, which calls for the development of new vocabularies, design techniques and standards for creating and evaluating streetscapes.

Thus, rather than suffering from eclecticism, this issue represents an exciting detection of what people have long sought: namely, that designing for people is rightfully seen as an point of departure and measure against which the beauty and long-term viability of a place is tested and its fate is determined.

Flora Gathorne-Hardy

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Talking point

For the last two weeks I have taken time off (illuminating phrase, since nothing could have been more 'time on') to help with my new granddaughter, Molly.

Like all newborn babies, she is constantly in motion – all of it involuntary – but has no mobility. In contrast, her elder sister Katya has in the space of three and a half years acquired an astonishing mastery of her environment. I am minded in particular of her ability to ascend and descend stairs, initially as an extension of crawling, now as a handsfree glide. In order to acquire these skills she has required the challenge of a staircase that was not designed for her needs. This was the constant against which she could pit her determination and measure her skills.

At the other end of life, many older people, I observe, wish to continue doing the same things in the same way, however arduous, to demonstrate that they can still cope. It would seem, therefore, that the built environment should exhibit both enough adversity to test and stretch the competence of those who need to measure it and an absence of adversity for those who do not. Good environmental design accommodates diverse needs and preferences and, above all, offers choice.

Access by Design continues to seek out buildings and places which exemplify good design, ease of use and choice. A current favourite is the remodelled National Portrait Gallery, rationalised, enhanced as a gallery and a public space, immeasurably more fun now for a leisurely visit. The new Ondaatje Gallery is a glorious and accessible space, all the better for a lack of facile reference to the Ewan Christian main building. Building study on page 9.

Other articles in this issue similarly reflect CAE's quest for unselfconscious good manners as an attribute of accessible design. An excellent case in point is the new WC provision for adults and children at Debenhams in Oxford Street. More flamboyantly perhaps, but also infinitely courteous to the needs of real people, the Sydney Olympic Village breaks new records on exemplary accessibility.

All in all, a celebration of some real achievements in inclusion by design.

by Sarah Langton-Lockton

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Cover photo of The Museum of Scotland
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Talking point

This is a terrific issue of *Access by Design*, the last to be edited by Flora Gathorne-Hardy before she spends a few months undertaking voluntary work overseas as a landscape architect. Flora will be succeeded as Editor by Mary Noble, familiar to you as Manager of the National Register of Access Consultants.

When I joined the Centre in 1977, one of my jobs was to compile and lay out the journal (then called *Design for Special Needs*). The latter task involved cutting and pasting galley proofs into an uninspiring grid layout, interspersing text with plans and photographs of varying quality. Colour was unaffordable and the printing processes of the day delivered grainy pictures in every shade of grey.

In recent years, project funding from the Department of Health, the graphic design skills of Steve Paveley and digital printing technology have resulted in an altogether more handsome product, with colour photographs that do justice to the high quality of the inclusive design the journal celebrates.

The articles in this issue chart real advances in the passage from rhetoric to action in the field of inclusive design. The concepts that emerge from the practice and critique of accessible design are choice, convenience and dignity. Choice is perhaps the most important of these, offering a number of ways for people to use and enjoy the built environment, with no particular group accorded superior status.

In this context, CAE prefers the term 'inclusive' rather than 'universal' design since the latter has connotations of 'one-size-fits-all'. The recent Council of Europe Resolution 'on the introduction of the principles of universal design into the curricula of all occupations working on the built environment' states that the terms 'integral accessibility', 'design for all', 'universal design' and other variants are interchangeable.

We disagree. As we have written before in the journal, we believe that language matters, not as a sterile instrument of political correctness, but for the ideas and underlying cultural assumptions it conveys. We will continue to foster debate in *Access by Design*, not just on the language of inclusion but how in practical terms it finds expression in the built environment.

by Sarah Langton-Lockton

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Editor: Mary Noble

Editor-in-Chief: Sarah Langton-Lockton

Subscriptions: Helen Carter

Advertising: Paul Highman

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Talking point

This is the first issue of *Access by Design* edited by Mary Noble; it is full of good things. The theme, which informs all of CAE's work, is the theory and practice of 'inclusive design' and the examination of some of the conundrums inherent in this apparently simple term.

Tony Atherton, in his article on the work of Sport England, identifies the common misconception that meeting the needs of disabled people is about 'special provision'. He shows how revisiting some of the conventions of, for example, swimming pool design, and eliminating the hazardous footbath between the changing areas and the pool, can produce new solutions which resolve the hygiene issue more effectively and at lower cost, without creating an obstacle for many users.

Another common misconception is that meeting the needs of disabled users of the built environment involves a series of single right solutions, regardless of circumstance or aesthetics. Adrian Cave challenges this in the first article in a new series. He looks at steps and stairs and ways of detailing them that combine responsiveness to user need with sensitivity to context and which express with confidence the spirit of the age. We hope that readers will engage with this series and contribute examples, with photographs, of aspects of accessible building design which meet the criteria.

Those of us involved in the theory and practice of inclusive design need also to examine the language we use to describe accessibility. For example, we tend to describe lever taps as being suitable for people with weak grip or poor dexterity. This permits the language and concepts of the medical model of disability to continue to resonate, albeit in the context of building and product design. In fact, lever taps are simply good design as currently defined, with accessibility as a prime attribute.

Given the significance of the demographic shift and the growing need for an age-friendly approach to the design of products, environments and services (see review of *Living longer* on page 7), perhaps we could coin a new term – 'designing for real people' as opposed to 'designing for a multiplicity of so-called 'special needs'.

Sarah Langton-Lockton

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Editor: Paul Highman

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Talking point

31 October 2001 was a red-letter day for all those committed to the provision of accessible environments. The significance of this date? It marked the publication by the British Standards Institution (BSI) of BS 8300:2001 *Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people*.

Based in large part on user trials and validated desk studies which formed part of research commissioned by the former Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, BS 8300 will gradually supersede current guidance on accessibility. It will inform the revision of the Part M Approved Document and will become the technical reference for access audits. In the absence of mandatory access standards within the Code of Practice, it will be the de facto access standard for the 2004 duties in Part III of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA).

Because it is based on research, rather than conjecture, custom and practice or lobbying, the BS can be honest about its limitations. The foreword identifies the need for further research, for example on colour contrast and luminance, opening forces for door and window furniture, travel distances from workstations to accessible WCs and the safe design of stairs. Much of this is already underway. Richard Cullingworth, a member of the technical committee responsible for BS 8300, describes the standard on page 16.

The sustained effort that produced the BS was no doubt given impetus by the DDA and the looming 2004 duties. Drafted as civil rights legislation and in large part, at least in Part III, concerned with customer service, the DDA is emerging as the principal statute that requires buildings to be made accessible. The impact of the DDA on the design and management of the built environment, already detectible, can only gain in momentum in years to come. It will prompt more research on user need and behaviour and should result in a better fit between people and the buildings that serve human interaction and activity. The DDA presents one of the rosier scenarios for progress in the 21st century.

This issue of *Access by Design* has been edited by CAE's Information Officer, Paul Highman, and marks his debut as an editor. 'Multi-skilling' of staff is an ugly neologism but a valuable concept. CAE is committed to providing opportunities for its staff to acquire and deploy new skills with confidence. I know you will agree with me that Paul has risen to the challenge with aplomb.

Sarah Langton-Lockton

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*Cover photo of The Royal Exchange, London
(Photo courtesy of Smart)*

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Talking point

Access by Design is one of CAE's many success stories: circulation is growing fast and feedback confirms that the journal is valued both for its topicality and measured reflection. This a larger issue than usual, expanded to include more good news stories in the UK's progress towards a universally accessible built environment.

The major story for this issue is the publication of the Code of Practice for Part III of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA), revised to take account of the 2004 duties of service providers.

Access audits of premises are identified by the Code of Practice as a means for service providers to identify the reasonable adjustments they need to make and to incorporate these in an access plan or strategy. The market for access audits is already busy and will be given fresh impetus by the publication of the Code. In anticipation of this, CAE established the National Register of Access Consultants (NRAC), to promote high standards in access auditing and access consultancy work and to help clients identify appropriately qualified and experienced practitioners.

The report of the first annual conference of the NRAC is another of the good news stories in this issue. The event was packed and the tone upbeat, informed and lively. The Register has the support of government departments, the DRC, professional institutes and disability organisations. It is widely acknowledged to be necessary, useful and reputable. It is providing work for its members and growing numbers of clients are committed to appointing as access auditors or consultants only those who are members of the NRAC. Numbers registered, however, are growing slowly and need to increase significantly to meet demand.

CAE, with its relatively slender resources, can only do so much to encourage membership. We look among others to the professional institutes, whose job it is to work for their members' interests, to alert them more energetically to the need to acquire knowledge of accessibility and to validate this through registration with the NRAC.

Finally, a warm welcome to Adrian Cave, the Centre's new Chairman, an architect and access consultant who is Consultant Member number 001 on the National Register of Access Consultants. Adrian brings enthusiasm and expertise to his new role and the Centre's staff looks forward to a further period of planned growth, new initiatives and innovative work under his chairmanship.

Sarah Langton-Lockton

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Cover photo of the Library and Refectory at Southwark Cathedral. © Dennis Gilbert/VIEW

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Talking point

Readers are aware that CAE is concerned with the practicalities rather than the politics of equality of opportunity for disabled people. While neither overtly ideological nor involved in campaigning work, we do nevertheless have a simple set of values and beliefs that inform our work. Underlying these is our observation that the human population is diverse, and individual experience of life is unique. It is neither helpful nor accurate to divide us up into 'able-bodied' and 'disabled' people.

This is not to trivialise or deny the experience of disability and the barriers to inclusion that society can and does impose. The CAE perspective does, however, make disability an 'us' issue, rather than perpetuate notions of 'us' (the able-bodied) and 'them' (the disabled).

CAE's belief in an 'us' approach to accessibility is at the heart of our commitment to inclusive design, by which we mean 'designing for diversity' – pluralism rather than one size fits all. The concept of inclusive design is acknowledged by all engaged with it to express a quest rather than an authenticated body of design knowledge. There is more research to be done on how people in all their diversity interact with the built environment. Only then can we as a society have confidence that we know how to design to include.

Several articles in this issue explore, directly or indirectly, the concept of inclusive design in different contexts. The most challenging of these is provided by Southwark Cathedral. Here, the problem-solving and design skills of Richard Griffiths Architects have enhanced the beauty and utility of cathedral and related buildings, with many gains in accessibility as the result of an inclusive design approach. Not all the access enhancements meet the current orthodoxy on such matters, demonstrating the complexity of achieving accessibility in the historic built environment. A four-part building study provides valuable insights into the sensitivities, issues and compromises involved.

As a footnote to this, Clare Goodridge reports on research for the Disability Rights Commission which indicates that the concept of inclusive design has not yet permeated most professional institutes in the construction field.

Sarah Langton-Lockton

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Editors: Mary Noble and Paul Highman

Editor-in-Chief: Sarah Langton-Lockton

Subscriptions: Helen Carter

Advertising: Paul Highman

ISSN 0959-1591

Published four times a year: March, June, September, December

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Subscriptions pre-paid, including postage, for any four consecutive issues: £20 UK; £24 airmail; £12 additional copies posted to same address; £12 student subscriptions. Cheques made payable to Centre for Accessible Environments.

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Talking point

The big news story in this issue is about Part M. David Petherick writes on page 13 about the Government's proposals to amend both the requirements and the limits on their application, and the technical guidance in Approved Document M.

First, and perhaps most significant, is the revision of the requirement M1, which in the consultation package now reads 'Reasonable provision shall be made to ensure that buildings are accessible and usable by all those who could be expected to use the building'. This is a momentous departure from the 'access and facilities for disabled people' rubric that has dogged Part T and successive versions of Part M since 1985. It is truly radical (an adjective that can rarely be applied without hyperbole), and if the proposal survives the consultation process, which CAE heartily hopes will be the case, it will have a sustained and transforming impact on how buildings are designed, modified and used.

The Approved Document makes reference to the range of people who use buildings but its advice, based on BS 8300, is inevitably, at this juncture of time, about the needs of disabled people. It has long been an anomaly within building regulations that there has been no requirement that buildings should be suitable for the people who use them. The proposed amendment to Part M rectifies this. The revised Approved Document, through its omissions on the requirements of the baby buggy population, for example, will serve to remind us how little we know about the interaction of the human population with the built environment, and useful research will no doubt ensue.

Other important proposals include the extension of Part M to material alterations and some changes of use and a new role for access statements. They will all be on the agenda at a forthcoming series of CAE consultation seminars. Full details are in the leaflet enclosed with this issue.

Other articles in this issue reflect the range of ways in which accessibility is asserting its significance on the inclusive society agenda. And Judith Irving, newly appointed CAE Trustee, writes at first hand on why it matters.

Sarah Langton-Lockton

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Editor-in-Chief: Sarah Langton-Lockton

Subscriptions: Helen Carter

Advertising: Paul Highman

ISSN 0959-1591

Published four times a year: March, June, September, December

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Talking point

I write this the day after CAE's Annual General Meeting. It was the 25th AGM; the first was in 1977, the Centre having registered as a charity the previous year.

As usual, the 2002 event was a lively and enjoyable affair. It was attended by 70 members and guests, including the Minister for Disabled People, Maria Eagle MP, who launched new publications and made an excellent speech. The AGM itself was a model of economy, although I do not think it equalled the speed of the 1978 AGM, the first I was involved with, reported in *The Architects' Journal* as 'the fastest ever AGM'.

We met in The Garry Weston Library at Southwark Cathedral, part of the new two-storey wing designed by Richard Griffiths Architects for the cathedral's Millennium Project. The Dean of Southwark, The Very Reverend Colin Slee, welcomed us and spoke eloquently of his commitment to making the cathedral ever more accessible as new issues were identified and imaginative solutions devised.

Those attending the AGM this year included new friends, colleagues and supporters, but also some who have been members from the very start and whom I look forward to seeing at every AGM. Particularly welcome as a regular attendee is my predecessor as Director, Jean Symons.

At the time of the 1978 AGM we had 30 members and survived precariously on an income of £10,000 a year, derived almost entirely from grants. In 2001/2002 our turnover was more than £600,000 and our members, subscribers, clients and customers number many thousands. What unites us all is a belief in the importance of buildings that are beautiful, convenient and easy to use and manage. It is gratifying to CAE that growing numbers of people share this simple but potent belief and are applying their skills and energies to ensure that the built environment is increasingly suitable for all who use it.

In 1978 the only legislation on accessibility was the toothless Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act. Articles in this issue report on the powerful legislative tools that are now supporting the access agenda.

Sarah Langton-Lockton

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Cover photo of City Hall, London
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Editors: Mary Noble and Paul Highman

Editor-in-Chief: Sarah Langton-Lockton

Subscriptions: Helen Carter

Advertising: Paul Highman

ISSN 0959-1591

Published four times a year: March, June, September, December

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Talking point

On page 25 we show some pictures of the launch party for CAE's new video, *Access Audits: a planning tool for businesses*. A characteristically upbeat and enjoyable event, the launch was generously hosted by Barclays Bank PLC, sponsors of the video.

As a service provider committed to giving choice and control to its disabled customers, Barclays also features in the video. Due to the progress the bank is making in rolling out its DDA access improvement programme across the branch network, we were able to show branches before and after improvement. As an improved branch, the Leicester Town Hall Square bank graphically demonstrates the impact of an inclusive design approach.

On the day we filmed, the branch was bustling with customers for whom the revamped side entrance, with power assisted door and internal ramp (upgraded from a secondary entrance to a new principal entrance), was clearly the preferred way into and out of the bank. Inside the bank, better lighting, improved signage, low level counters, an audible and visual queuing system and induction loops at all counters offer all customers choice, dignity and equality.

'Inclusive design' and 'design for all' are the terms currently in vogue to denote the aspiration for environments that are accessible to and usable by all. While much in use, these terms are rarely accompanied by any sort of discussion as to what in practical design terms they might actually mean.

In fact, in some circles, even to raise the question is an act of political incorrectness akin to apostasy. However, it is important that such questions are asked and the issues explored and that buildings are subject to sensitive analysis to examine how design and management decisions help or hinder opportunities for choice and control by all those who seek to use a building.

This issue of *Access by Design* addresses such issues in a number of ways, not least through a rigorous and careful study of City Hall. It is by such patient analysis that lessons are to be learned on what inclusive design might actually mean in practice.

Sarah Langton-Lockton

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Cover photo of the Colosseum, Rome

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Editors: Mary Noble and Paul Highman

Editor-in-Chief: Sarah Langton-Lockton

Subscriptions: Helen Carter

Advertising: Paul Highman

ISSN 0959-1591

Published four times a year: March, June, September, December

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Talking point

I can report from my allotment on the Isle of Dogs an instance of the beneficial influence of the Disability Discrimination Act. The allotments, operated by the Mudchute Allotment Society, occupy two sites within the city farm, the largest in London, 32 acres of erratically tended fields, hen coops and pig pens, fringed by the skyscrapers of Canary Wharf.

A small car park within the main entrance to the farm serves plot holders and other visitors; at its northern end a padlocked gate provides entry for the vehicles of farm workers and other key holders.

For those whose allotments are on the upper site there is an awkward walk of several hundred yards from the car park. Several plot holders well into their 80s, all possessors of blue badges, sought permission to park nearer their plots.

This met with predictable resistance from the farm management on the basis that if the men could work their plots they could manage the walk from the car park.

The allotment society countered with some stout references to the DDA. It was suggested that the withholding of reasonable adjustments in the form of car parking arrangements might make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for these disabled men to access a service, namely their allotments, and thus compromise their civil rights. This argument swiftly won the day and four elderly gardeners kept their plots and continue to supply their families with home-grown vegetables.

This issue of *Access by Design* is full of nourishing fare – from Europe as well as home grown. It includes a case study on the legal implications for a retailer of installing an internal ramp in a high street shop, profiles of access groups in Germany and England, an outline of a research project that will encourage better public lavatory provision and an account of how access improvements were carefully and sensitively achieved in a small Norman church.

Our cover picture shows the dramatic, fractured circle of the Colosseum. Stephen Thorpe reports on the light, reversible, beautifully detailed, respectful but not derivative access projects there and at other heritage sites in Rome.

Sarah Langton-Lockton

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Editors: Paul Highman

Editor-in-Chief: Sarah Langton-Lockton

Subscriptions: Helen Carter

Advertising: Paul Highman

ISSN 0959-1591

Published four times a year: March, June, September, December

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Talking point

One of my first tasks when I joined CAE in December 1977 was to produce the next edition of CAE's journal. This involved a trip to a student lodging house on the less salubrious fringes of Hampstead and handing over typescript and images to a graphic design student keen to supplement his student grant. The finished product - pages of unbroken text interspersed with some grainy grey pictures - was full of important material but hardly a joy to look at or read.

Since then, there have been developments in printing technology and new insights into the principles of clear print. The cost of colour printing has reduced and *Access by Design* is now as handsome to look at as it is compelling to read. Email and the internet are new and much-used means of communication, but *Access by Design* continues to be the best medium for detailed study of that most complex of topics, the accessibility of the built environment, and for the analysis and appraisal of new building projects or of access improvements to existing buildings.

The Queen's House, Greenwich, is the subject of the building study in this issue, a four-part examination of recent access alterations from the perspective of the client, the National Maritime Museum, English Heritage, the architects, Allies and Morrison, and the access consultant, David Bonnett.

Our glorious cover picture shows the most significant of these changes, to the principal entrance on the north front. Steps down to the original Inigo Jones entrance door have been replaced by a shallow ramp from a gently dished semi-circular forecourt. The base of the original curved entrance staircase has been extended with two steps, so subtly executed that there is no disjunction with the original design.

Work of this quality is the result of reflection, dialogue and the application of creative problem-solving and design skills. Both outcome and process need to be recorded for the benefit of others engaged in similar work. *Access by Design* is a good medium for doing this.

Sarah Langton-Lockton

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Editor: Paul Highman

Editor-in-Chief: Sarah Langton-Lockton

Subscriptions: Helen Carter

Advertising: Paul Highman

ISSN 0959-1591

Published four times a year: March, June, September, December

Design by Steve Paveley 020 8940 7877

Typeset by Column Communications 020 8584 5255

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Talking point

Earlier today, 24 November 2003, I attended the *Access All Areas* awards ceremony at which the Minister for Disabled People congratulated eight small organisations that have excelled in their innovative and committed approach to serving their disabled customers. Set up by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) as a contribution to European Year of Disabled People, the *Access All Areas* awards gave service providers with under 50 employees the opportunity to compete within their region to show how they had made changes to their businesses to enable disabled people to use their services.

CAE played a role in publicising the awards and I was able to serve on the steering group and the judging panel. That this was such an enjoyable and stress-free experience says much for DWP's admirable administration and the thoughtfulness with which they looked after all involved.

Most exciting of all, however, is that we identified some very impressive – and diverse – winners. They included the wonderfully accessible and inclusive Willow Farm Riding School in the East Midlands and the Brewhouse Theatre and Arts Centre in the South West, a 350-seater theatre with gallery, function room, arts studio and restaurant, all accessible and used by disabled theatre groups and others. Other winners were: Mouzer Employment Consultancy in the West Midlands, Carlisle Council for Voluntary Service in the North West and The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, London and the South East. Commended entrants included a farmhouse bed and breakfast and holiday company, an optician and a caravan park.

All demonstrated that small service providers can meet their 2004 DDA duties with ease and without lavish expenditure by putting the customer first and thinking creatively about customer service. We plan a feature for the next issue of *Access by Design* that will look in more detail at some of these innovative and successful small service providers.

Putting people first is the guiding principle of inclusive design as well as good service provision. The new Part M – see article on page 29 – will give a huge boost to inclusive design. Some good news, then, in uncertain times!

Sarah Langton-Lockton

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Cover photo of the Hayward Gallery
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Editor: Paul Highman

Editor-in-Chief: Sarah Langton-Lockton

Subscriptions: Helen Carter

Advertising: Paul Highman

ISSN 0959-1591

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Talking point

It has taken the construction and property worlds rather a long time to wake up to the implications of Part 3 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) – Part 3 did, after all, start coming into force on 1 December 1996, and some very important duties on service providers have been in place since 1 October 1999.

Most readers will not need reminding that under the DDA service providers may be in breach of their duties in two ways: first, by affording disabled people less favourable treatment, and second, by failing to make a reasonable adjustment. Since 1 October 1999 service providers have had to make reasonable adjustments to policies, procedures and practices, provide auxiliary aids or services, and, most significantly in this context, find alternative methods of making a service available where a physical feature is a barrier.

In a sensible world then, service providers would have commissioned access audits in 1999 or 2000 in order to identify the physical features of their premises that compromise access to services, have put in place most of the adjustments that circumvent these, and would be well advanced with their access improvement programmes in relation to physical features in anticipation of October 2004.

Sadly, this has not often been the case. The 2004 duties are widely misunderstood, and many service providers are panicking. The DDA has no compliance standards for accessibility, and they may not know where to turn for appropriate design criteria.

What they need is an authoritative and timely design guide, based on the 2004 Approved Document M and BS 8300, in the context of the DDA. It so happens that the third edition of *Designing for Accessibility* is on its way. Due to be published on 15 March, *Designing for Accessibility* is the first title in a new joint publishing venture by CAE and RIBA Enterprises. To be closely followed by a new edition of the *Good Loo Design Guide*, *Designing for Accessibility* will be available from RIBA Bookshops and CAE. I shall write to you all shortly with further details.

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Editor: Paul Highman

Editor-in-Chief: Sarah Langton-Lockton

Subscriptions: Helen Carter

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ISSN 0959-1591

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Talking point

As I lamented in the last issue of *Access by Design*, it is depressing as one travels around the country to observe how few service providers appear to have made much progress in making their premises accessible. How refreshing, then, on my visit to Chelsea Flower Show on press day to see just how much has been achieved by the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) in the year of its bicentenary.

CAE's past Chairman, Anne Davies, and I have been informal advisers to the RHS for some years. We have been gratified to see the gradual improvements that have been put in place. Chelsea Flower Show is the largest and most renowned flower show in the world. Held in the grounds of the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, and taking in the hilly contours of Ranelagh Gardens, the show is open to visitors for just four days. The preceding hectic weeks of build-up are invariably marked by temperamental weather and various logistical challenges, which this year included the horizontally pruned plane trees destined for Christopher Bradley-Hole's Best Garden in Show, Hortus Conclusus. Wider than any entrance to the site, in the event the trees scraped through without apparent damage.

The Chelsea Flower Show 2004, despite being an outdoor show with temporary facilities, has done well by its many disabled visitors this year. There are acres of temporary decking, which evens up the ground and facilitates circulation, and some well-designed and equipped accessible WCs. There is good and consistent signage around the site and the show catalogue, despite being in frustratingly small print, has an excellent section on *Accessibility information*. This provides clear, factual information on a range of important topics, including designated parking spaces, the easy-access drop-off point, location of WCs, pre-booking of wheelchairs and the admission of assistance dogs.

The Chelsea Flower Show demonstrates that an unambiguous policy commitment, allied to a sustained programme of practical improvements, can bring tangible benefits for disabled visitors, even on a temporary and uncongenial site. So why do we see so little progress on the average high street?

Sarah Langton-Lockton

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Editor: Paul Highman

Editor-in-Chief: Sarah Langton-Lockton

Subscriptions: Helen Carter

Advertising: Paul Highman

ISSN 0959-1591

Published four times a year: March, June, September, December

Design by Steve Paveley 020 8940 7877

Typeset by Column Communications 020 8584 5255

The views expressed in *Access by Design* are those of individual authors and not necessarily those of the Centre for Accessible Environments. All correspondence should be addressed to the Editor.

Subscriptions pre-paid, including postage, for any four consecutive issues: £20 UK; £24 airmail; £12 additional copies posted to same address; £12 student subscriptions. Cheques made payable to Centre for Accessible Environments.

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Talking point

This is the 100th issue of *Access by Design*. To celebrate, we have a wonderful cover cartoon by Louis Hellman, who has done so much to add point to our publications over the last 30 years, added a few pages, and permitted ourselves a look back as well as our usual take on the here and now and what will be coming along in the future.

These first 100 issues of CAE's journal chart in fascinating detail efforts over this period to ensure that the built environment works for everyone. By far the most important set of ideas that have emerged on this topic are those encapsulated by the term 'inclusive design'. To shed light on this simple but, for many, still elusive concept, CAE has drafted the following principles.

Inclusive design:

- places people at the heart of the design process
- acknowledges human diversity and difference
- offers choice where a single design solution cannot accommodate all users
- provides for flexibility in use
- aims to provide buildings and environments that are safe, convenient, equitable and enjoyable to use by everyone, regardless of ability, age or gender

To promote understanding and encourage the practice of inclusive design, we have joined forces with Allgood, the architectural ironmonger, to sponsor a new award, the RIBA Inclusive Design Award. The new award will be announced on 16 October 2004 at the RIBA Stirling Prize Dinner and the celebration will be broadcast live on Channel 4.

Drawing on the 53 UK winners of RIBA Awards in 2004, we can now announce our shortlist. We have identified four buildings, which in our view best reflect, in aspiration and execution, the concept of inclusion by design. They are, in alphabetical order:

- 1 Chinese Arts Centre, Manchester
- 2 City of Manchester Stadium
- 3 The Horniman Museum and Gardens, Forest Hill, London
- 4 The Manchester Museum

The winner of the RIBA Inclusive Design Award 2004 will be the subject of a building study in issue 101.

We are not intending to rest on our laurels!

Sarah Langton-Lockton

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Editor: Paul Highman

Editor-in-Chief: Sarah Langton-Lockton

Subscriptions: Helen Carter

Advertising: Paul Highman

ISSN 0959-1591

Published four times a year: March, June, September, December

Design by Steve Paveley 020 8940 7877

Typeset by Column Communications 020 8584 5255

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Talking point

Issue 101 has an elegant symmetry to it. This issue takes forward the theme of inclusive design that was the hallmark of *Access by Design's* celebratory 100th issue, and has articles on both the theory and practice of this important new design philosophy.

The City of Manchester Stadium was the deserving winner of the RIBA Inclusive Design Award 2004. The award, sponsored by CAE and Allgood, the architectural ironmonger, has the potential to exert a growing influence over the design quality and usability of new buildings, and CAE is grateful to Allgood and the RIBA for this tremendous opportunity. I am pleased to announce that CAE and Allgood will be supporting the award again in 2005.

The judges for the RIBA Inclusive Design Award 2004 were Mike Hield, Managing Director of Allgood, Tony Chapman, Head of Awards, RIBA, and myself. We visited three buildings in Manchester, the Chinese Arts Centre, Manchester Museum and Arup Associates' City of Manchester Stadium. In London, we visited the Allies and Morrison extension to and refurbishment of the Horniman Museum. All four had much to offer, but the City of Manchester Stadium was the clear winner. Described in the building study in this issue by Mark Todd, the access consultant for the project, as 'accessible, beautiful, magnificent and inclusive', the stadium demonstrates that inclusive design can produce great architecture as well as people-friendly buildings.

The inclusive design approach goes beyond design issues. Having generated extensive consultation with end users at an early stage in the design process, it follows through into how the building is managed once completed. Customer service at the City of Manchester Stadium is outstanding and there is a palpable commitment to ongoing improvement.

We have confidence at CAE that inclusive design is a potent force. Our hope is that it will gradually infuse the design of all the 60 or so buildings which win RIBA Awards each year, and that it will become a synonym for what we currently understand to be good design.

Sarah Langton-Lockton

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Cover photo of the New Room, John Wesley's Chapel. © Jarrold Publishing. Photograph by Neil Jinkerson

Editor: Paul Highman

Editor-in-Chief: Sarah Langton-Lockton

Subscriptions: Helen Carter

Advertising: Paul Highman

ISSN 0959-1591

Published four times a year: March, June, September, December

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Typeset by Column Communications 020 8584 5255

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Talking point

The 2004 duties of service providers under Part 3 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) have the potential to transform customer service, benefiting us all. Six months after their introduction, what sort of impact are these duties starting to make? Articles in this issue of *Access by Design* provide a useful snapshot of the state of play.

Case law will determine how the law is to be interpreted and, ultimately, how effective it will be. Peter Williams and Richard Waugh report at length on the first two high-profile cases under Part 3 of the DDA to go to appeal. They tease out some of the conclusions that can tentatively be drawn from these first cases and note, for example, how complex it can be to define reasonableness. They observe also that providing a reasonable alternative method of making a service available is likely to be more complicated than any of us had envisaged.

Meanwhile, a number of well-managed enterprises have spotted the pro-business aspects of the DDA and have acted accordingly. At the small-business end of the spectrum, Janet Maitland Hair Excellence in Durham, an Access All Areas Awards winner in 2004, demonstrates that a commitment to customer service can have unexpected benefits, one of these being high levels of job satisfaction and low staff turnover. Greggs plc is a model for large service providers in the thoroughness of its strategic planning and the consistency of its implementation processes. Communication has been the key to this, as has been an understanding that physical improvements to premises must be allied with effective staff training.

Inclusive design continues to be a theme in this issue. Andrew Walker presents some cogent arguments in support of the concept, lent weight by his experience as an architect and wheelchair user. Andrew shares CAE's concern that inclusive design is all too often interpreted by the building professions as meaning designing for that demeaning commodity 'the disabled', rather than the whole population or, as Part M simply puts it – 'people'.

Sarah Langton-Lockton

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Editor: Paul Highman

Editor-in-Chief: Sarah Langton-Lockton

Subscriptions: Helen Carter

Advertising: Paul Highman

ISSN 0959-1591

Published four times a year: March, June, September, December

Design by Steve Paveley 020 8940 7877

Typeset by Column Communications 020 8584 5255

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Talking point

This is a typically wide-ranging issue of *Access by Design*, taking in major improvements to Trafalgar Square and the accessibility of the National Gallery, a comparison of approaches to accessibility in New Zealand and the UK, a model exercise in transforming office accommodation for the Treasury in Whitehall, further thoughts on the Ross and Roads cases, the accessibility of the internet and an access group's comprehensive audit of a town centre. There are also regular features such as reviews, *Newsdesk*, *Centre forward* and *A favourite building*, a first contribution by *Access by Design's* self-effacing editor Paul Highman.

The significance of the inclusive design approach is, as usual, one of the leitmotifs of this issue, as is the importance of a knowledge of the history of buildings and their context for their successful remodelling for the 21st century. Other themes are the contribution to be made by lateral thinking, particularly in relation to historic buildings, and the need for consultation with building users.

David Bonnett, describing his role as access consultant for the refurbishment of the Government Offices Great George Street for the Treasury, makes some pertinent observations about the value of consultation, notwithstanding a lack of guidance, even from those funding agencies for which it is a requirement, on an appropriate consultation process. The key to successful consultation, David suggests, is a professional approach adopted on all sides. To be effective, user experiences need to be shared in a structured and timely way. If this is not the case, expectations can be raised, often leading to disappointment and delay. Architects, he says, must be allowed to design, clients to control their projects, builders to build and managers to manage. Where user groups seek to direct the design, overturn agreed standards or ignore time or cost implications, frustration and disaffection are inevitable.

User consultation is in vogue. It is an intrinsic part of the inclusive design agenda, which seeks to engage users in a meaningful way in the design and development process. In this context, David's wise observations are therefore very timely.

Sarah Langton-Lockton

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Cover photo of Tate St Ives
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Editor: Paul Highman

Editor-in-Chief: Sarah Langton-Lockton

Subscriptions: Helen Carter

Advertising: Paul Highman

ISSN 0959-1591

Published four times a year: March, June, September, December

Design by Steve Paveley 020 8940 7877

Typeset by Column Communications 020 8584 5255

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Talking point

In this issue of *Access by Design*, we are once again presented with a diverse selection of issues, which confirm that inclusion remains firmly on the mainstream agenda and is a constantly evolving and absorbing issue.

Legislation continues to be amended and clarified. Peter J G Williams and Richard Waugh comment on one such amendment to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA). The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) has recently issued a draft code of practice for consultation, regarding the lifting of the exemption for transport services under Part 3 of the DDA.

The codes of practice provide frameworks for understanding the law, but it is case law that will determine how the law is to be interpreted. This summer, the DRC released details of the first retailer to be sued under the DDA, for failing to improve physical access to goods and services. This is the first case to involve the October 2004 duties under Part 3 and will no doubt be explored in detail in a future issue of *Access by Design*.

Inclusive design also continues to develop; existing guidance is built upon and elaborated as Graham Shirville and Geoff Cook demonstrate in their article on Light Reflectance Values.

International comparisons can also inform and expand our understanding of inclusion. Jo-Anne Bichard presents a fascinating account of the extensive and novel public WC provision in Tokyo and Kyoto, at a time when provision in UK is diminishing.

Finally, examples of buildings where the principles of inclusive design have been successfully applied are growing – the Classroom of the Future, at Mossbrook School, Sheffield, is one. Here the architect and the school demonstrate a genuine commitment to innovative and inspirational design. Their energy and enthusiasm has resulted in what Sarah Wigglesworth, the architect for the project, describes as an ‘inclusive, fun place to learn, for children of all abilities’.

Paul Highman

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Cover photo of The Sage Gateshead
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Editor: Paul Highman

Editor-in-Chief: Sarah Langton-Lockton

Subscriptions: Helen Carter

Advertising: Paul Highman

ISSN 0959-1591

Published four times a year: March, June, September, December

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Talking point

On 30 November 2005, members and guests gathered in the Guardroom in Lambeth Palace for CAE's 28th AGM. The last survivor of the great London seats of the Bishops along the south bank of the Thames, Lambeth Palace has been owned by successive Archbishops of Canterbury since 1200. Currently the home of Dr Rowan Williams, the palace is a wonderful complex of buildings, largely medieval, with the residence itself neo-Gothic. Not many of us had been there before, and it was a treat to hold the AGM in such an unusual and magnificent setting.

The main reason for being at Lambeth Palace, however, and the reason why we could hold the AGM in a first-floor hall, are the elegant access improvements designed by Richard Griffiths Architects. These include a cleverly sited through-floor lift, a delicate glass walkway and a beautifully detailed scissor lift to the 13th century crypt. Before the formal business of the evening, Richard Griffiths gave an excellent talk on the work of his practice at Lambeth Palace and other important historic buildings including St Albans Abbey, Southwark Cathedral (venue for the AGM in 2002), Eastbury Manor in Barking and Sutton House in Hackney.

Richard Griffiths made thoughtful observations on his approach to designing access improvements to historic buildings. It was, above all, he said a question of attitude, whereby problems were converted into opportunities through the application of creative and lateral thinking. He identified two approaches, the first being additive and resulting in access improvements which are reversible, temporary and often intrusive. The second, his preferred approach, was subtractive, involving solutions which were irreversible and permanent – and inherently more elegant. Such solutions sometimes raised archaeological issues, which were usually resolvable.

Following the AGM, we launched a new service, the CAE Supporters' Logo, for use by all those who wish to promote their association with CAE and their support for our work and objectives. This column is full, but an insert in this issue provides all the details.

Sarah Langton-Lockton

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Editor: Paul Highman

Editor-in-Chief: Sarah Langton-Lockton

Subscriptions: Helen Carter

Advertising: Paul Highman

ISSN 0959-1591

Published four times a year: March, June, September, December

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Talking point

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) has recently consulted on the desirability or otherwise of a change in the definition of disability for the purposes of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA). The consultation was prompted by the announcement by the Government of a discrimination law review, with a view to producing a Single Equalities Act (SEA), which would apply to six dimensions of equality: religion, race, gender, age, sexuality and disability. It is anticipated that the SEA would come into force in 2010.

CAE welcomes the consultation and the debate it is intended to foster. At present, the DDA offers protection to those who meet a tightly drawn definition of a disabled person. The focus of attention when people first seek redress against alleged discrimination is on whether they meet this definition, rather than on whether discrimination has occurred. If they cannot demonstrate that they are disabled within the precise terms of the DDA, their claim will be dismissed.

The DRC has not yet taken any position on the desirability of change, but will publish its conclusions on its website in the next few months when it has digested responses to the consultation. The change to the definition of disability that it has been examining is a broadening of the definition so that the law provides protection against discrimination on the grounds of impairment, regardless of the level or type of impairment. This would bring the definition into line with the social model of disability, which identifies 'disabling barriers' rather than 'impairment' as the problem to be tackled. Disabling barriers, in the words of the consultation document, 'are the attitudinal, economic, and/or environmental factors preventing certain people from experiencing equality of opportunity because of an impairment or perceived impairment'.

Since the social model of disability provides the basic premise of any law prohibiting disability discrimination, it makes sense for the definition to flow from this model. In contrast, the medical model focuses on impairment as the cause of limited opportunities and life chances. The existing definition is incongruous within a law seeking equal opportunities for disabled people in accordance with the social model of disability.

Sarah Langton-Lockton

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Cover photo of Kew Palace

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Editor: Paul Highman

Editor-in-Chief: Sarah Langton-Lockton

Subscriptions: Helen Carter

Advertising: Paul Highman

ISSN 0959-1591

Published four times a year: March, June, September, December

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Talking point

A brief item in Centre forward reports factually on developments in relation to CAE's Access Lab project. Tucked into this item is a reference to the imminent availability of the Access Lab space.

To elaborate on this, negotiations are well advanced for securing a lease for the other half of the ground floor in our office building in Vauxhall, at 70 South Lambeth Road. Initially, the space will be rented, pending a capital appeal for its purchase to be launched later in the year.

The Access Lab is a supremely important initiative for CAE. The intention is that it will be a place where people can gather – to talk or for formal or informal training – and a base – for activities and projects which will evolve naturally from the exchange of ideas and insights that it generates. Above all, it is intended to be a resource for all those in the local as well as the wider community who have an interest in the built environment and its suitability for all users.

At first, the Access Lab will be a single space, minimally equipped. A more conventional fit-out will follow once its use has taken shape. It will not be a showroom, but will be able to accommodate temporary exhibits and exhibitions, as well as provide for inclusive products to be tested in use.

Some projects are already taking shape. One will be an accessibility history archive, drawing on CAE's 30-year involvement with the movement for inclusive design, enriched with oral histories and Louis Hellman's cartoons.

Another project in its very early stages will seek to find ways of capturing and utilising the experiences, preferences and choices of a wide range of users of the built environment to take forward and add meaning and value to user involvement and consultation. We are interested in finding an academic partner for this project and would welcome contributions to the discussions that will determine its final form. Please contact me if you would like to be involved.

Sarah Langton-Lockton

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Cover photo of SIA House, Milton Keynes.
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Editor: Paul Highman

Editor-in-Chief: Sarah Langton-Lockton

Subscriptions: Charlotte Lin

Advertising: Paul Highman

ISSN 0959-1591

Published four times a year: March, June, September, December

Design by Steve Paveley 020 8940 7877

Typeset by Column Communications 020 8584 5255

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Talking point

This issue of *Access by Design* features building studies of two distinct and commendable buildings, the Spinal Injuries Associations' new headquarters in Milton Keynes, built with inclusion, sustainability and environmental awareness in mind, and the Gold Lane Housing development, an award winning housing project in North London. Proof that key issues such as inclusion and sustainability are being embraced by society more and more.

It has been a typically busy period for CAE. We are delighted to announce the publication of three exciting and informative new titles with RIBA Publishing. These are two new books, on internal floor finishes and glass in buildings, in the *Specifiers' Handbooks for Inclusive Design* series and *Museums and Art Galleries: making existing buildings accessible* by Adrian Cave.

In this issue, Jos Boys explains our exciting long-term plans for the CAE Access Lab. With the opening of the CAE Access Lab we are also developing a series of specialist seminars and workshops on key issues such as Disability Equality Schemes, design and access statements and inclusive public realm design – all ideal for professionals working in this field, and those seeking to supplement their existing skills. Check our website for dates and further information.

We are also pleased to announce that the National Register of Access Consultants (NRAC) has received a grant to obtain United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) accreditation for its professional certification process. The UKAS is the sole national accreditation body recognised by Government to assess, against internationally agreed standards, organisations that provide certification, testing, inspection and calibration services. Accreditation by UKAS demonstrates the competence, impartiality and performance capability of these evaluators. UKAS accreditation is fundamental to the progress and future of the NRAC, and will allow the NRAC to make a real impact.

This issue of *Access by Design* marks a change in style for the first time in eight years – we hope you approve!

Paul Highman

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Cover photo of Idea Store Whitechapel
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Editor: Paul Highman

Subscriptions: Charlotte Lin

Advertising: Paul Highman

ISSN 0959-1591

Published four times a year: March, June, September, December

Design by Steve Paveley 020 8940 7877

Typeset by Column Communications 020 8584 5255

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Talking point

After 29 years at CAE Sarah Langton-Lockton OBE has retired. Under Sarah's stewardship CAE has grown into a highly respected and influential organisation, which is the leader in the field of inclusive design providing expert and invaluable guidance through publications, information provision and consultancy services. Sarah has done much to shape, develop and promote the concept of inclusive design. I am personally indebted to Sarah for her advice and guidance on editing *Access by Design*. All the staff and Trustees wish Sarah a long, healthy and happy retirement.

This issue features a building study of the Idea Store Whitechapel – the deserving winner of the RIBA Inclusive Design Award 2006. The award, in association with the Centre for Accessible Environments and Nicholls & Clarke, celebrates inclusivity in building design, and demonstrates that good design results in environments that are safe, convenient and enjoyable to use by people regardless of disability, age or gender.

The judges for the RIBA Inclusive Design Award 2006 were Sarah Langton-Lockton, David Spooner of Nicholls & Clarke and Tony Chapman, RIBA Head of Awards. The judges visited five buildings in total: Evelina Children's Hospital, London, by Hopkins Architects, Holly Barn, Norfolk, by Knox Bhavan Architects (also featured in this issue), the National Gallery London East Wing + Central Portico Phase I, London, by Dixon Jones Ltd with Purcell Miller Tritton, The Egg, Bath, by Haworth Tompkins and the Idea Store Whitechapel, London, by Adjaye/Associates. All of the shortlisted buildings had much to offer, but the Idea Store Whitechapel stood out for the way in which it 'encapsulates so many of the principles of inclusive design and puts them into action. It is not just a statement, it is a living, breathing and inclusive place'.

The Disability Equality Duty came into force on 4 December. This legal duty requires all public bodies to actively look at ways of ensuring that disabled people are treated equally. It hoped that this will radically shift the way public authorities deliver their services. There is much work for CAE in this area, to assist public authorities with these duties, and to continue advising people on how to improve access to the built environment. CAE is looking forward to these new challenges in 2007.

Paul Highman

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Cover photo The Lanyon Building
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Editor: Paul Highman

Subscriptions: Charlotte Lin

Advertising: Wai-Mei Chan

ISSN 0959-1591

Published four times a year: March, June, September, December

Design by Steve Paveley 020 8940 7877

Typeset by Column Communications 020 8584 5255

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Talking point

In this issue of *Access by Design*, Michael Green and Johnny Kelly, from the law firm Macfarlanes, discuss a case where a landlord refused a disabled tenant permission to install a stairlift, to be funded by a local authority grant, in her block of flats.

The landlord refused consent after other tenants objected, due to aesthetic considerations and general inconvenience. The tenant brought proceedings against the landlord under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, however the Court of Appeal decided that the tenant had not suffered unlawful discrimination.

This confirms that disabled people cannot insist on common parts of blocks of flats being adapted to meet their needs.

A practical application of the inclusive design approach is successfully demonstrated in the building study of Queen's University Belfast on page 14. With approximately 250 buildings, many of them listed for their architectural importance, access to Queen's University demanded a considered and consistent approach.

The Estates Department has admirably risen to this task, implementing an access strategy, which permeates throughout the University – from its key listed buildings to the services and accommodation offered to students. An appreciation of the history and context of buildings is key to their successful modernisation. Queen's University was fortunate to engage an architect who was sensitive to these issues.

The holistic approach adopted, and the level of commitment shown by both management and staff, offers an inspiring case study to match Belfast's newfound exuberance and burgeoning prosperity.

Also in this issue, CAE's new Chief Executive, Kevin Davis FRSA, presents his vision for CAE in the coming years. Kevin rightly states that there is still much to do to embed the principles of inclusive design and that CAE continues to have a role in facilitating and brokering 'the accessible future'.

Paul Highman

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Cover photo of the public viewing gallery at the National Assembly for Wales
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Editor: Paul Highman

Subscriptions: Charlotte Lin

Advertising: Wai-Mei Chan

ISSN 0959-1591

Published four times a year: March, June, September, December

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Talking point

This edition of *Access by Design* brings both joy and sadness to its readers and CAE alike.

Paul Highman, our highly able and competent Editor of this journal is leaving us. Paul has been with CAE for some seven years now and has been editor of *Access by Design* since issue 89, some six years. Paul has made a hugely important contribution to the quality of this journal and has significant knowledge of the area of inclusive design. It is with great sadness that we have allowed him to leave! However, that sadness is tinged by the joy of knowing that Paul is leaving us to pursue a lifelong ambition to be a teacher. Those who know Paul will know how well suited he will be in his future endeavours. He leaves with our thanks and best wishes.

This edition also sees a remarkable building study on the National Assembly for Wales. Whatever one may feel about the political issue of devolution you cannot be impressed by the bold and eclectic buildings that have been spawned by this outpouring of nationalism in both London, Cardiff and Edinburgh. Indeed, over recent years we have seen erected some exceptional and iconic buildings truly honour the spirit of inclusive design. Some of those buildings have been covered in previous editions of *Access by Design*, The Sage Gateshead (issue 105), the Hayward Gallery (issue 98) and Laban (issue 97).

What a real shame it is, that the issue of accessibility does not have more of a role at the heart of some of the other major building projects in this country. Building Schools for the Future is a major project to rebuild or refurbish every secondary school over a 10-15 year period. I have attended many private sector design team meetings where accessibility is never mentioned, let alone included an access consultant. But this is not the fault of the private sector, but of the clients who do not demand this as part of the vision and brief for their new schools. Though it is also Government policy to reintegrate special needs children into mainstream educational provision.

If nothing else, this demonstrates to us all that no matter how far we believe the cause of inclusive design has come, we still have a very long way to go.

Kevin Davis

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*Cover photo of the Livery Hall, part of
Goldsmiths' Hall, London
Credit: the Goldsmiths' Company*

Editor: Katie Dock

Subscriptions: Charlotte Lin

Advertising: Wai-Mei Chan

ISSN 0959-1591

Published four times a year: March, June, September, December

Design by Steve Paveley 020 8940 7877

Typeset by Column Communications 020 8584 5255

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Talking point

I begin this edition of *Access by Design* by welcoming to CAE our newest member of staff and new editor of this journal. Katie Dock joins CAE from Dorling Kindersley. I am sure her knowledge of publishing will progressively raise the style and develop the quality of the journal.

This edition of the journal comes at a time of great change in the world of disability. As we witness the closure of the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) and the birth of the Commission for Equalities and Human Rights (CEHR), we need to reflect on advancements made under the DRC and congratulate all those who have worked to make it successful. Progress since its inception has been substantial. I am sure that we all will now be watching, as its successor takes shape, to see whether disability remains as high a priority in the future as it has been under the DRC.

CAE is a strong believer in the principles of inclusive design; in many respects we welcome the dawn of the Single Equality Bill and the CEHR as all forms of discrimination are drawn together into a single representative organisation. Like many others, however, we will be working to ensure that disability and accessibility remain at the forefront of thinking.

In response to the advent of the CEHR, we have asked Vivien King to review the legal issues surrounding the Single Equality Bill. Vivien has agreed to take over our regular legal section of the journal; her assessment of the Single Equalities Bill can be found in this edition.

Kevin Davis

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Cover photo of The Lightbox gallery and museum at night
Credit: Peter Cook

Editor: Katie Dock

Editorial Assistant: Wai-Mei Chan

Subscriptions: Charlotte Lin

ISSN 0959-1591

Published four times a year: March, June, September, December

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Talking point

This edition of *Access by Design* could, in some ways, be called controversial. I say this because we have chosen to focus this edition on some of the most difficult, challenging and new issues facing the field of inclusive design. It is times like this that I wonder whether we should start a letters page to allow readers to contribute to these debates.



The phrase 'Lifetime Homes' has been with us for some time. However, many local authority planning departments have voiced their concern to us about how difficult it is to implement Lifetime Homes standards, given the vast array of differing standards used by local authorities. We have asked Mike Donnelly of Habinteg Housing Association to take a look at this issue to help demystify some of the myths around the issue. Vivienne King has also written a fascinating article, exploring how disability discrimination laws relate to the common parts of buildings.

The next area of controversy surrounds tactile paving and its differing applications. Brian Towers traces the development of tactile paving and argues the case that it is no longer being used in the somewhat limited way in which it was originally intended – a topic of debate that I know will run and run.

Finally, a growing area of focus for both Government and business: accessible transport. We report from a recent transport conference discussing what has been done so far, what still needs to take place, and how quickly this might happen.

An interesting and controversial edition this truly is. I am sure we shall return to these issues in future editions.

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Credit: Dennis Gilbert/VIEW*

Editor: Katie Dock

Advertising: Wai-Mei Chan

Subscriptions: Charlotte Lin

ISSN 0959-1591

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Talking point

In this issue of *Access by Design*, arts and consultation come together as we examine the extraordinary work that has taken place in transforming the iconic Royal Festival Hall on London's South Bank. This building – loved by some and loathed by others – has undergone a wide range of improvements. At each stage of the development process, the Access Consultative Group played a central role. The refurbishment of this Grade I listed building has exceeded many expectations in terms of access improvements. Continuing the arts theme, we look at how theatre captioning designed for people with hearing impairments moves beyond the traditional surtitles and subtitles we have known in the past.



Housing is also a prominent topic this issue, beginning with an introduction to the London Accessible Housing Register. This moves on to an inspiring account of how user engagement can be used to deliver high-quality kitchen design. This article provides us with food for thought about how other areas of inclusive design could benefit from actively consulting users throughout the design process.

In a joint article with Joe Dickinson, Vivien King follows on from the issues she raised about landlords of common parts in *Access by Design* 113. They examine the inconsistencies in legislation between physical features and auxiliary aids.

I remarked in the last issue that we were touching on a number of controversial topics. Brian Towers' article on tactile paving has, as hoped, opened the debate on the uses of this important tool. As I remarked then, we do not have a letters page in the journal, but next issue we plan to feature an article outlining a response to Brian's research. In the meantime, Carol Thomas has written an excellent research-based article investigating potential delineators for shared surfaces.

And finally, it is with great sadness that we heard about the death of Roger Jarvis on 20 February 2008. Roger was a great friend of CAE, and he will be sorely missed. We shall be including an obituary in the next edition of the journal.

Kevin Davis

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Cover photo of Millers Day Centre, Beverley, East Yorkshire

Credit: Matthew Gates, Atkins Leeds

Editor: Katie Dock

Advertising: Wai-Mei Chan

Subscriptions: Charlotte Lin

ISSN 0959-1591

Published four times a year: March, June, September, December

Design by Steve Paveley 020 8940 7877

Typeset by Column Communications Ltd 020 8579 0436

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Talking point

This edition of *Access by Design* focuses on how inclusive design has become embedded into many aspects of our lives through the work of those who design and create buildings, environments and services.



Probably the most complex aspect of inclusive design exists where it comes into contact with public services. To demonstrate this, we draw on a fascinating case study in East Riding of Yorkshire, where a new residential and day care centre has recently been established. The centre's thoughtful and inspirational design has set it apart from similar buildings, which have a tendency to portray a rather institutional impression. The building is accessible and welcoming for the building's staff and residents alike, and blends into the surrounding area with ease. The café is open to anyone who might be passing by, encouraging the integration of the facility into the local community.

Making existing buildings accessible, however, often presents an even greater challenge. We hear from an organisation that seeks to make the inaccessible accessible through the use of 'virtual access'. When physical access is restricted, unsafe or too costly, virtual access offers building proprietors an alternative approach, allowing them to open up their environment to anyone who visits.

In recent editions of *Access by Design*, we have published a number of articles that deal with the often-controversial issue of tactile paving. In this edition we have dedicated space to this subject once again, so that representatives from three leading organisations can respond to previous debates. In a similar vein, this issue of the journal reports on an innovative tactile street signage system pioneered in Australia.

So where can we go from here? I, for one, have begun to muse whether there might one day be a fusion between the virtual world and the tactile elements of signage and paving. There is the potential to create a new paradigm in virtual guidance systems for visually impaired people. Perhaps more of this some other time...

Kevin Davis

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*Cover photo of Hazelwood School, Glasgow
Credit: Buro Happold/Alan McAteer*

Editor: Katie Dock

Advertising: Wai-Mei Chan

Subscriptions: Charlotte Lin

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Talking point

There is a topic that has been attracting more attention than ever in recent years. It is certainly growing in prevalence within disability circles, and there is a surge of interest across the other equality strands. The issue that is turning heads across the board is that of consultation. People everywhere are beginning to appreciate the value of actually talking to their audience or end user.



I have never been a fan of the word 'consultation', as it implies that the decision has been made and the proposer is merely seeking approval. I prefer to use 'engagement', which suggests that users get a chance to shape the emerging proposals. Whatever it is called, it is a prominent thread throughout this issue of *Access by Design*. Our building study, which traces the creation of a school for children with sensory impairment, demonstrates how the design team immersed themselves in consultation from the outset. They talked not only to the children but to their parents and teachers, too – the people who often have a far more comprehensive knowledge of a topic than anyone gives them credit for.

The thread continues to an account exploring the installation of a new Changing Places facility at City Hall. David Morris stresses the importance of looking beyond the best practice guidance to assess the experiences of the users. Ann Sawyer then explains that consultation should not grind to a halt once a project is complete.

John Gill reveals the opportunities that technology offers in terms of improving access to transport information, but highlights the importance of early consultation. The Inclusive, Accessible, Archaeology project demonstrates how self-assessment is a type of consultation in itself, enabling users to build up an invaluable profile of themselves.

Neil Crowther updates us on EHRC projects, in which he draws parallels between the equality and human rights agenda and inclusive design. Perhaps the impending Single Equalities Bill will simplify anti-discrimination legislation: as Vivien King demonstrates in her regular legal slot, a recent case has divided opinion in the House of Lords.

Kevin Davis

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*Cover photo of Hazelwood School, Glasgow
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Editor: Katie Dock

Advertising: Wai-Mei Chan

Subscriptions: Charlotte Lin

ISSN 0959-1591

Published four times a year: March, June, September, December

Design by Steve Paveley 020 8940 7877

Typeset by Column Communications Ltd 020 8579 0436

The views expressed in *Access by Design* are those of individual authors and not necessarily those of the Centre for Accessible Environments. All correspondence should be addressed to the Editor.

Subscriptions pre-paid, including postage, for four consecutive issues: UK £24; students and additional subscriptions to the same address £20. Overseas £36; students and additional subscriptions to the same address £32. Cheques made payable to Centre for Accessible Environments.

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Talking point

There is a topic that has been attracting more attention than ever in recent years. It is certainly growing in prevalence within disability circles, and there is a surge of interest across the other equality strands. The issue that is turning heads across the board is that of consultation. People everywhere are beginning to appreciate the value of actually talking to their audience or end user.



I have never been a fan of the word 'consultation', as it implies that the decision has been made and the proposer is merely seeking approval. I prefer to use 'engagement', which suggests that users get a chance to shape the emerging proposals. Whatever it is called, it is a prominent thread throughout this issue of *Access by Design*. Our building study, which traces the creation of a school for children with sensory impairment, demonstrates how the design team immersed themselves in consultation from the outset. They talked not only to the children but to their parents and teachers, too – the people who often have a far more comprehensive knowledge of a topic than anyone gives them credit for.

The thread continues to an account exploring the installation of a new Changing Places facility at City Hall. David Morris stresses the importance of looking beyond the best practice guidance to assess the experiences of the users. Ann Sawyer then explains that consultation should not grind to a halt once a project is complete.

John Gill reveals the opportunities that technology offers in terms of improving access to transport information, but highlights the importance of early consultation. The Inclusive, Accessible, Archaeology project demonstrates how self-assessment is a type of consultation in itself, enabling users to build up an invaluable profile of themselves.

Neil Crowther updates us on EHRC projects, in which he draws parallels between the equality and human rights agenda and inclusive design. Perhaps the impending Single Equalities Bill will simplify anti-discrimination legislation: as Vivien King demonstrates in her regular legal slot, a recent case has divided opinion in the House of Lords.

Kevin Davis

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*Cover photograph of Elephant House at Copenhagen Zoo
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Editor: Katie Dock

Advertising: Wai-Mei Chan

Subscriptions: Charlotte Lin

ISSN 0959-1591

Published four times a year: March, June, September, December

Design by Steve Paveley 020 8940 7877

Typeset by Column Communications Ltd 020 8579 0436

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Talking point

As the economic storm clouds gather it would be easy to believe that access to buildings might drop down the agenda. Then again, none of us has ever shied from the challenge of changing current thinking around buildings. The simple fact is that there is probably no better time than now to embed the concept of inclusive design into the thinking of architects, developers and those charged with large public sector schemes. We need to continue to present the simple belief that 'inclusive design is good design'. Contrary to the view of those who fear change, inclusive design is also good-value design, both during construction and throughout a building's lifetime.



We must be vigilant that access and inclusion remain a top priority for those in local and national Government. As the Single Equality Bill looms, we must not lose sight of the fact that the drive towards inclusive design arose from a desire to provide equality of access for disabled people.

This is demonstrated clearly in this edition's Building Study, which looks at Shape's new headquarters. Several years ago, an organisation working in the disability field might have thought twice about moving to the third floor of an old building. Businesses no longer need to be so restricted in their choices, thanks to the availability of access professionals who can help them to design and improve their premises. The creation of inclusive environments is also the focus of the article from Ann Skippers, which explores the role that planners may have in the process.

Finally, I have learnt in my time at CAE that sanitary facilities are probably the most controversial and difficult aspect of designing an inclusive environment. The wetroom certainly has an important role to play in this. As the article by David Spooner shows, when manufacturers communicate effectively with users, innovative solutions can be achieved.

I hope you enjoy this edition of *Access by Design*, and I wish you the very best for a successful 2009.

Kevin Davis

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Editor: Katie Dock

Advertising: Wai-Mei Chan

Subscriptions: Charlotte Lin

ISSN 0959-1591

Published four times a year: March, June, September, December

Design by Steve Paveley 020 8940 7877

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Talking point

For those who have spent large parts of their lives working in the arena of inclusive design, it probably felt like the first BS 8300 would never arrive, and that the importance of building accessibility would never be truly acknowledged. However, BS 8300 did eventually arrive, and its role in promoting inclusion has certainly been recognised. Following its first extensive public review, we now have the 2009 edition. On a similar note, those who drew up and publicised the first Lifetime Homes standards in the early 1990s may be surprised that the standards are only now being given real force and drive through Government initiatives and new guidance.



This edition of *Access by Design* draws together these two strands by examining the newly launched BS 8300, the development of a new Lifetime Homes training programme (developed by CAE and Habinteg) and DD 226, which offers best practice guidance on Lifetime Homes.

This issue of the journal also focuses on the design of external environments, looking at case studies of gardens, parks and transport environments. I have been struck by how countryside access has become an area of growing interest and development, so these are timely discussions. I suspect that as we continue to challenge buildings in terms of inclusive design, our expectations for the countryside and other outdoor spaces can only increase.

And finally, a word about the remarkable High Court case against RBS (page 2). This is a landmark case for the Disability Discrimination Act, and it should provide a foundation on which to build more case law regarding 'reasonable adjustments'. It will be interesting to see how other businesses react in light of the judgment. I am sure this is not the last we shall hear of this case.

Kevin Davis

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Cover photograph:
Artist's impression of the
Roundhouse, Camden

Editor: Katie Dock

Advertising: Wai-Mei Chan

Subscriptions: Charlotte Lin

ISSN 0959-1591

Published four times a year: March, June, September, December

Design by Steve Paveley 020 8940 7877

Typeset by Column Communications Ltd 020 8579 0436

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Talking point

Following a considerable wait, the Government has now published the Equality Bill. Much has already been said and written about the Bill, but this edition features several articles that consider the potential implications of its introduction. Whichever view one adopts, drawing together the various strands of equality should, in theory, make it easier for employers and service providers to understand the comprehensive approach they need to take.



In the context of the new Bill, we have a very timely article from Vivien King that asks some challenging questions about how the Disability Discrimination Act has come to be interpreted. She posits the view that without answering certain questions beforehand, the Equality Bill risks not meeting the needs and expectations of disabled people.

Life is never quiet at CAE. This autumn, we shall be holding a special event to celebrate our fortieth anniversary of working in the field of access and inclusive design. Looking back through the previous 118 editions of *Access by Design* (formerly known as *Design for Special Needs*), it is astonishing to consider how far CAE has come. It is also remarkable that the services CAE offers today are needed as much now as they were 40 years ago, when a small group of influential people came together and set CAE (or Centre on Environment for the Handicapped, as it was then known) on its path.

And finally, one other change. We have taken the decision to make *Access by Design* a full-colour publication, putting an end to the mixture of colour and black and white pages that have featured in previous editions. As our focus has moved from guidance drawings to case studies of good practice, we are embracing the opportunity to demonstrate what can be achieved through the extensive use of colour photography. I hope that this change brings even greater enjoyment to your experience of the journal.

Kevin Davis

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Cover photograph:
Hythe Bay C of E Primary School, Kent

Editor: Katie Dock

Advertising: Wai-Mei Chan

Subscriptions: Charlotte Lin

ISSN 0959-1591

Published four times a year: March, June, September, December

Design by Steve Paveley 020 8940 7877

Typeset by Column Communications Ltd 020 8579 0436

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Talking point

Katie Dock, Editor of *Access by Design* and of our successful monthly Access Newsletter, is leaving CAE to take up a new career in teaching. Katie has done a tremendous job for the journal and has introduced a number of innovative changes. I know many of you will join me in thanking her for her dedication and skill during her two years as Editor. Interestingly, one of the first emails I ever received from Katie was in September 2007 to tell me that the Disability Rights Commission was launching the 'Access Group Resources' website. Little did she know that two years later we would be relaunching the site with a new image, supported by both CAE and Katie. You can explore the new site at www.accessgroupresources.co.uk – more on this in the next edition.



As you will see from the Newsdesk section, the revamped Exhibition Road in London will include shared surfaces. These plans have caused much controversy, not least because of the opposition to shared surfaces (and often shared spaces as a whole) from some disability groups. Having looked at this scheme and similar ones, we have come to the conclusion that the concept of shared space should be cautiously encouraged. Shared spaces have the potential to benefit a wide range of users by reducing traffic speeds, thus improving safety.

Shared surfaces, which may form part of a shared spaces scheme, present certain issues that must be carefully considered. This is not the first time there has been debate about street design; there was also opposition when dropped kerbs were introduced. Yet solutions were found that enabled people with impaired vision to safely navigate through what could have been very dangerous environments. I do, however, accept that tactile paving still causes concern amongst some groups.

We at CAE are confident that an innovative solution can be found that will help to ensure shared space environments are safe for all users.

Kevin Davis

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Cover photograph:
Darwin Centre Phase Two, Natural History Museum
(Photograph copyright Torben Eskerod)

Editor and Advertising: Madeleine Gray

Subscriptions: Charlotte Lin

ISSN 09591591

Published four times a year: March, June, September, December

Design and typeset by The Charlesworth Group

www.charlesworth.com

The views expressed in *Access by Design* are those of individual authors and not necessarily those of the Centre for Accessible Environments. All correspondence should be addressed to the Editor.

Subscriptions prepaid, including postage, for four consecutive issues: UK £24; students and additional subscriptions to the same address £20. Overseas £36; students and additional subscriptions to the same address £32. Cheques made payable to Centre for Accessible Environments.

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Talking point

This year, CAE celebrates its 40th anniversary. I feel incredibly privileged to be leading a charity which has such an impressive record in championing the need for accessible and inclusive environments. However, my time at CAE so far has been relatively short, and I am conscious of all those who have led this organisation in the past as Trustees or as paid staff, some of whom pay tribute to the organisation's work in this issue.



Key to CAE's success was the work of my predecessor, Sarah Langton-Lockton. When I first took over from Sarah I could not but be struck by the commitment of a person who had dedicated 27 years of her life to the immense task of changing attitudes to the built environment. A greater achievement even than this, however, was the manner in which Sarah made CAE not just an authoritative voice on inclusive design but a sometimes challenging organisation which was highly valued and respected by so many who came into contact with it during the formative years of their careers.

I am hopeful that all of us involved in CAE can continue to ensure that it is as influential, informed and informative a voice as we embark on the next 10 years to our Golden Jubilee.

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Cover photograph:
St Paul's Cathedral
(Photograph copyright Peter Smith
and St Paul's Cathedral)

Editor and Advertising: Madeleine Gray

Subscriptions: Charlotte Lin

ISSN 09591591

Published four times a year: March, June, September, December

Design and typeset by The Charlesworth Group
www.charlesworth.com

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Talking point

It is safe to say that our first journal of the new decade is one of the most varied we have seen for some time. From single equalities to case law, from St Paul's Cathedral to ageing continence, we have it all.



For me, one aspect of particular concern is the dawning of the Equality Act. As you read this, the law is being rushed through Parliament to ensure it gains Royal Assent before the forthcoming general election. The speed with which this process is happening has, I know, alarmed many legal observers. There is always a fear that in haste something is omitted or the meaning of the law becomes entangled to the point where it becomes unenforceable. In this edition of *Access by Design* Vivien King has done an excellent job of dissecting what we expect to be the key relationships between the new law and the current Disability Discrimination Act. I was struck by her closing remarks to the article:

It certainly is easier to understand than the present maze of legislation but whether it will give disabled people what they wish for and require, we will have to wait and see. It will all of course depend on its implementation

This edition also features an evaluation of the David Allen v Royal Bank of Scotland PLC case, which, fifteen years after the implementation of the DDA, finally seems to have created some case law, subject to final appeal. As the article makes clear, this marks a new threshold for banks and other service providers and there is much that we can all applaud. What we must all now ensure is that what is learned here is enshrined in the new Equality Act, and that it is not another fifteen years before service providers are forced to face up to the responsibilities they have to provide access for all their users.

Kevin Davis

