

Privy Counsel

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www.itaal.org.uk



EDITORIAL

This, the final issue of Privy Counsel, looks back over 8 years work, leaves markers for work still undone and talks frankly about the 'dark side' of disability, as well as providing a number of articles on 'loo' matters. It reports on ITAAL's efforts to place its work programmes with other organisations and includes two supplements - one analysing the Loo Survey and the second on the production of Local Loo Guides. Clara Greed provides penetrating insight into the current scene on away-from-home loo provision for all, Paul Highman reports on the The Sage Gateshead and many other ITAAL friends and colleagues contribute.

This issue will be available on the Centre for Accessible Environments (CAE) website and will go to the ITAAL microsite there in due course. But as always, do pass this copy round or donate it to a local organisation.

It remains only to say thank you to everyone who has supported and worked with ITAAL since 1997 and a particular thank you to Andrea Whittaker who has edited all seven issues of Privy Counsel.

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ITAAL'S ACHIEVEMENTS 1997-2005

1997

- Diana Twitchin's accessible loo article in the Disabled Drivers Motor Club journal brings immediate call for action – feasibility study supports this and Steering Group is formed. The Centre for Accessible Environments give charity cover.
- Loo Location Sheet devised giving detailed information on accessible loo interiors.
- Volunteer computer experts devise database to take Loo Location information and manipulate it for a Directory.
- Disability grapevine swings into action - 200 disabled people around England come forward as volunteers to collect loo information.
- Small grants and donations of money received. Railtrack give £20,000 unrestricted funding – ITAAL add a section on station loos to the directory.

1998-1999

- Spring 98 Loo Location sheets go to volunteers and support systems are set up.
- Loo entries divided into Full (those giving details of internal layout and fittings) and Short (those that only give full address and that the loo is to Part M minimum).
- Contacts made with pubs, restaurant chains and supermarkets et al to collect information on their accessible loo provision.
- Railtrack provide their station database to identify which rail companies manage which stations. All rail companies then contacted for information on the station loos.
- Loo location sheets flow in accompanied by growing range of information, issues and problems around accessible loos
- Equal Ability and Em En Designs begin discussions on the design of the directory.
- Support received from the British Toilet Association putting accessible loo provision into context within provision for all toilet users.
- Steering Group take decision to form ITAAL into charitable company.
- 4000 Loo location sites put into loo database. The Loo Location sheet proved to be so effective that out of 4000+ forms only 100 had to be rejected.
- Database entries checked for accuracy
- Clearing House set up to pass enquiries about loos to relevant organisations. Monitoring enquiries leads Steering Group to produce the Essential Companion.
- PAMIS notify ITAAL re Changing Places Campaign, details go into Essential Comp.
- Search for publication funding providing a great deal of worry.
- The Sumo Logo comes on line.

2000

- Database adjusted so that loo sites can be formatted for directory.
- Final design and publication plans agreed
- August – Is There An Accessible Loo? (ITAAL) becomes charitable company limited by guarantee set up with specific objectives to
 - **improve the provision of accessible toilet facilities for disabled people and**
 - **increase public understanding and appreciation of the personal care needs of disabled people.**
- Supporters Group and Privy Counsel newsletter set up.
- Respond to BSI (British Standards Institute) consultation document on Code of Practice for the Design of Buildings and Their Approaches to Meet the Needs of Disabled People: Part 2 Using Facilities within Buildings
- December - English Directory of Accessible Loos published (over 4000 entries). Lack of funding meant that the Directory had no official launch.

2001

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- January - Publication of Essential Companion to the Directory – covering issues and concerns about accessible loo provision. British Toilet Association and the Employers Forum on Disability purchased bulk copies to go to their members. By 2005 over 4000 copies in circulation in business and voluntary sectors.
- Clearing House system continued.
- Issues about portable accessible loo provision raised with Mobility Roadshow
- Networking continued with CAE, British Toilet Association and PAMIS. Development work included contacts with various groups with degrees of success.

2002

- Continue to publicise and sell the Directory and Companion, networking, Clearing House activities and Privy Counsel newsletter. ITAAL website being developed
- Purchaser Survey of Directory and Essential Companion carried out.
- Began preparatory work for the UK edition of the Directory, to include Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland incorporating feedback on the first edition.
- November submitted evidence to Part M Consultation Process
- Supporters Group and networks continue to be expanded and it is apparent that ITAAL is providing a neutral forum to talk about 'loo' issues.
- Rejection of funding applications raising serious concerns.

2003

- Main work emphasis on setting up the structures to develop the UK edition of the directory including identifying volunteers to find and record loos; updating database and moving it to the website; exploring opportunities for commercial partnerships on mapping and seeking funding for the work
- Continue to run Clearing House; publish Privy Counsel, expand Supporters Group.
- July – Disabled Persons Transport Committee seeking evidence re airline travel – ITAAL Supporters surveyed and evidence submitted.
- ITAAL website www.itaal.org.uk goes on line.
- ITAAL invited to join Vivacity 2020 Research Advisory group

2004

- Spring - work on UK Directory dropped because cannot raise money. ITAAL to concentrate on paid consultancy work to assist business sector to meet DDA requirements. The website to be expanded and ITAAL reference base extended and formalised through a major advertising campaign in 2005 to find and survey 1000 disabled people who use accessible loos.
- From June onwards work concentrated on change of direction.
- Attendance at Vivacity 2020 Advisory meetings highlights importance of this major research work.
- October 2004 ITAAL receive award 'Getting The Message Across' from the National Information Forum.
- Privy Counsel goes out with first copies of The Great Loo Survey.

2005

- February – core funding package turned down.
- Trustees forced to accept that without core funding to buy in administrative help, meet Trustee expenses and legal responsibilities as a charitable company, the work could not go on. ITAAL could no longer expect its volunteers to pick up costs. Despite the very obvious need for its work, ITAAL will be wound up at end of 2005.
- Closing tasks to pass work to other organisations and publish final Privy Counsel.

THE LEGACY OF ITAAL

Personal thoughts from the Chairman

In the spring of 1959, home for the weekend from college, my mother whisked me off to a job interview. She was anxious to ensure that I joined the ranks of the employed asap. My only recollection of that interview is Dr Guttman (later to become Sir Ludwig Guttman) saying I could have the job provided I went down the corridor and tried the loo – to make sure I could take care of my loo needs. He had been quietly assessing weak arms and legs. His secretary reported back that I managed the loo - I had joined the employed!

Loos and the ability to manage within them has stalked me ever since and in 1997 a series of continuing loo problems when out and about lead me to carry out a feasibility study to see if there was a need for a Directory of accessible loos. The response from disabled women was so great that the autumn of that year saw the start of the work to develop the English Directory of Accessible Loos. What we did not expect – and looking back it seems that we were very naïve – was the enormous number of issues and concerns about accessible loo design that would be brought to ITAAL along with concerns about the national lack of provision of away-from-home loos, the attitudes of loo providers to customers, management issues, and the problems facing disabled women where they relied on male carers to provide their care needs. Added to all this was the low priority given to loo issues within the disability charities. This was partly because they did not wish to talk about the 'dark side' of disability, thinking it better to portray disabled people as living active and useful lives.

There is an overview of the 8 years of ITAAL's work elsewhere in this issue.

Here I just want to jot down my personal observations (with tongue in cheek) as to whether much has changed since ITAAL came into being.

Design features

Many of the design features that give rise to most aggravation for disabled people are extremely simple, repeated time and time again and they are as frequent now as in 1997 – for example:

- Loo flush handles on the wrong side from the transfer space, requiring the ability to stretch across the loo bowl to reach the handle, impossible for those with unsteady mobility or unable to stand. This year I discovered two Loo of the Year Award loos with badly placed flush handles. I would like to do a survey to find out how many disabled people unable to flush the loo have the guts to go out and ask a passer by to flush the loo for them!
- Automatic hand driers situated with the loo roll holder beside the loo bowl with the result that the hand drier starts working puffing hot air at one, as you sit on the loo attempting to stand up or transfer across into your chair. The last time this happened to me (2004) I found myself on the verge of bashing the thing with my footplate. Trying to stand up with scorching air blowing into your face was very scary. And no I did not go and complain – I was still shaking from a near fall. This fault is almost always because efforts have been made to put baby change tables into the loo space and existing equipment is shunted sideways.
- Lack of a bar on the inside of the door to pull it closed. 'Yes deary – can I close it for you?' 'Do you know how to lock it?' 'I'm so glad they have a toilet you can use'.

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With luck you can get the door closed before the pat on the head.

- Bars and rails – oh boy – there should be a national competition to find the craziest bar and rail layout in an accessible loo. The prize to be presented by a gorilla – as so often one requires gorilla long arms in order to use the bars on offer. “Why have you been so long?” husband wants to know. “Where would you like me to start? The bars are a mile from the loo bowl and I had to keep shunting my chair round to find a position where I could use it to stand up.” Husband: “Don’t go in there – you’ll get stuck on the loo. The bars are in the wrong places”. (Husband is official loo tester to report any problems I might encounter.) Then there was the loo where all the bars were at knee level: this was discovered when already sitting on the loo. The Twitchin flexible stand-up policy meant that wheelchair came to the rescue yet again following much shunting round amongst the bars.

A detailed survey of loo providers and builders would establish whether they feel they have a special remit to test the staying power of disabled people by making life really difficult for them, or a remit to ignore any kind of design advice that just might provide their customer with a useable toilet facility.

- Space – Another national competition could highlight the lengths that so many loo providers will go to in order to be creative with the use of an accessible loo. Human nature seems to be ‘see a space –fill it quick’. Can you add to this list or recognise your own facilities?

Spare armchairs
Road bollards

Stepladders (large & small)
Ladder
Bicycle
Floor polisher & vacuums
Flower vases
Toys stored for nursery
Mops and brushes
Paint pots
Large packs of loo rolls,
Stacked restaurant chairs
Disposal bins for nappies + sanitary towel bin + hand towel bin
Boxes of polystyrene cups
Office supplies various kinds
Filing cabinets filled & obviously in use
Huge roller towels used and unused awaiting collection by laundry service
Goods trolleys
Shopping trolleys
Folding tables
Boxes of funding raising items
and so on and so on.

The above examples were reported from all kinds of accessible loo sites in shops, public conveniences, hospitals, offices, tourist venues and most distressingly, the office of a disability group.

- Space again – then there is a loo provider who seems to think you are making a mountain out of a molehill if you cannot turn your wheelchair inside the loo.

‘Just try a little harder to turn round, oh please mind the washbasin!’

‘We don’t get many wheelchair users here’.

Surprise, surprise!

Loo provider ‘bashing’

I have listened to some disturbing examples of Loo Provider ‘bashing’ where a disabled individual or group have been so critical of a loo provider’s finished accessible loo that the provider has lost all confidence in their ability to provide access. One theme runs through these examples: the disabled individual or

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group are seeing their own personal requirements as the standard against which they are measuring the facility. Where the provider has worked to Part M he may have been criticised for doing so as Part M is not considered adequate by this particular disabled person or group. Part M guidance has been developed over many years and provides a standard against which a majority of needs may be met. One Hospital Works Team were totally discouraged by the criticism lodged against a Part M design loo by its first wheelchair user.

Loo provider bashing just strengthens the provider's view that disabled people are not objective about toilet provision, are inconsistent or just fussy and want, indeed expect the provider to meet their every demand. Attending British Toilet Association conferences made me very aware of the range of toilet needs that have to be met and that disability provision is just one part of the whole. Unfortunately frustration is a daily part of disabled living and disabled people can be forgiven for letting rip occasionally. But there is a need to learn to use the complaints system properly and consistently. Loo providers should be made aware of inadequacies in design or fitting out of their loos, but this must be done in a positive way.

Management Issues

Here again, a range of management issues give rise to real frustration, including

- Tying up alarm cords out of reach. Probable reason – the loo is also used by parents and toddlers or members of the general public who may inadvertently set the alarms off, requiring a member of staff to come and reset the alarm. Staff may be totally unaware of the importance of the alarm for a disabled customer.
- Turning spaces blocked with nappy and/or sanitary bins. This is

now a major problem for wheelchair users, with people reporting they have been 'told off' for moving the bins out into the corridor in order to get into the loo. It beggars belief that a loo provider would believe that disabled people are 'just being difficult' in such a situation.

- Disabled people are often seen by loo providers as 'complainers'. The analysis of the Great Loo Survey gives some insight to this. Most disabled people are too involved in managing their every day lives to spend time making complaints but do feel that if a loo is unclean or has broken fittings they should bring it to the attention of staff for the benefit of disabled people coming after them.
- Lack of staff training on disability awareness including the interior fittings of accessible loos and the range of disabled people requiring them means that staff have little idea of the importance of such fittings to this customer group. In the last year I have had what can only be described as 'waste of time' discussions with staff members about accessible loo problems. The staff are young, often students and unable to find a senior staff member to deal with the complaint you wish to discuss. It is usually impossible to get a named person and address to write to. I wish I could say that where any listening does take place you are left with the feeling that something will be done. Some businesses have a notice on the wall giving a contact point – this should be encouraged. It is good business practice if your customers believe that you do want to hear what they have to say, and take action where required.

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A perception of 'special treatment'

Many people believe that disabled people are receiving special attention because they have locked loos (RADAR keys) available to them. The fact that the majority of accessible loos have been locked for many years because of vandalism and social misuse is quietly forgotten. This perception seems to be growing because of the slow but steady closure of public toilet facilities –often blamed on the implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act. Media attention on the sale of closed loo buildings for conversion into housing just adds fuel to the fire!

Understanding other people's requirements

Disability groups need to be more aware of and sensitive to each others' needs. The provision of adult changing tables is an instance of this. ITAAL has been pleased to support the PAMIS Changing Places Campaign since 1998, but has been very concerned at the lack of understanding about the needs of profoundly disabled children and adults. As ITAAL closes, MENCAP and PAMIS are developing a joint website to push the campaign further. They are not asking for the provision of these facilities wherever toilet facilities are provided but for a network of accessible loos with hoists and adult changing tables at central points within towns and cities so that these families can go out and about and become part of their communities. The Milton Keynes Shopping Centre is the only example of good practice known to ITAAL where the full range of disability needs has been catered for.

But, and it is a big but - ITAAL is aware that many physical disability groups are reluctant to admit this need, or see the provision of adult changing facilities as an attempt to make a radical change to the existing accessible (disabled) loo provision. What is needed is a clear admission that there are a group of

profoundly disabled people (children and adults) whose care needs can only be met by the provision of hoists and adult changing tables, and that this would require the provision of such facilities **alongside** existing accessible loo provision, not instead of the existing provision.

The provision of hoists in accessible loos is also a requirement for physically disabled people who require the support of one or more people to help them with care needs. Health and Safety requirements to protect care staff from injuring themselves when lifting mean that some disabled people cannot go out and about because of the scarcity of hoists in loos.

Developing the debate and finding a way forward

Finance is a major issue in the provision of away from home toilets and obviously it is easier for large business chains to meet a full range of customer toilet needs than it is for the small café or shop. There is urgent need for all stakeholders to come together and develop local plans that ensure all needs are met.

The ITAAL survey analysis demonstrates how things have changed over the last 8 years. In 1997 the public convenience would have been the primary accessible loo to be sourced by disabled people. Now it is the supermarkets and shopping centres. This is fine when the shops are open but after hours you can wander the streets in vain looking for a public toilet.

Local authorities have no mandate to provide public toilets and indeed are steadily closing those that our Victorian ancestors placed on the streets to meet public health needs. The younger generation solve the problem by 'peeing' in the streets as pubs close.

The issue of away from home toilet provision for all is growing like a volcano

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and will in due course erupt. Meanwhile numbers of disabled and elderly people will continue to stay at home – out of sight out of mind.

It's okay to talk about the issues

Over the past 8 years I have listened to many disabled people describing the negative impact loo issues have had on their lives and those of their families. Disabled people go to great lengths not to impose impossible demands on those who care or support them. Their stories reveal a great deal of distress and psychological misery caused in the effort to live a normal life, often thwarted by the attitude of local groups or individuals.

- **The provision of unisex accessible toilets** Many disabled people find the provision of an accessible cubicle within both male and female facilities un-acceptable because they have a carer of the opposite sex. For some peculiar reason members of the public are likely to assume that if a man is pushing a woman in a wheelchair into the ladies to access the 'disabled' cubicle then they are going to have sex. A number of disabled women have reported receiving verbal abuse, with the result that their partners now refuse to go out unless they can be sure of a unisex toilet. One elderly gentleman (a wheelchair user) trying to maintain a 'normal' life for himself and his wife (who has Alzheimer's disease) by having trips out now and again, was accused of being a paedophile in the doorway to the ladies. This prevented him getting to the accessible cubicle to help his wife.
- **Disabled women fair very badly in the 'loo' stakes.** The male has the advantage of a tap and can use a bottle in the privacy of their car or find a convenient hedge if no loo is available. Far too many

disabled women still opt not to go long distances, or inflict a no drinking programme on themselves before going out. There is also the possibility that the accessible loo on offer may be one that they cannot use because of the inadequacy of the internal layout. Yes, disabled women can go into a loo and find that the layout makes it impossible for them to use. It was this specific problem that resulted in ITAAL collecting detailed cubicle information to be included in the English Directory.

- **'Quality of Life'** - a statement that is run out regularly when discussing disabled living. As I worked through the ITAAL Loo Survey I found myself thinking that it is time we started to address just what 'quality of life' means. Many disabled people still find it difficult to get the services they require and the basic 'quality of life' they would like and should be entitled to. For some this will be at a very basic level of being able to go to the toilet when they choose. A holiday may consist of just a day out now and then but only if they can go somewhere where they know they can use a loo.
- **Personal experience** Writing this article reminded me of a letter received four years ago (about a year before she died) from Nancy Robertson, a work colleague and friend, also a wheelchair user. During our working time together we had travelled to all-day planning meetings over a two-year period, often leaving home at 8 am having had one drink each. Late afternoon would find us half way home indulging in a huge pot of tea, knowing that by the time the kidneys caught on that they could function we would be almost back home. Her letter said "I suppose

I must get used to the idea that I cannot manage accessible loos when out now (so often there is no room to allow me to position my chair in front of the loo bowl to lift forwards on to the loo seat) and must accept that I will not be able to go about so much – I should not complain I have had a good life”. She belonged to the old school of disability where talking about loos was a ‘no go’ area, and yet her working life had been spent trying to achieve a better life for disabled people across a whole range of issues. Whilst I was setting up ITAAL she had shared ideas and concerns about loo provision but wished to remain in the background.

- **The Planners are all male!** At my first British Toilet Association conference I was surprised that the majority of the audience were men, representing local authorities, town and country planning, engineering and other aspects of the sanitary industry. Clara Greed (see her article Swings & Roundabouts) confirmed “yes, men are the backbone of the planning structures”. This was 8 years ago but I have yet to see a real increase in the number of women in the planning system particularly where the subject of loos is debated. This is replicated in the disability field where disabled men often take the lead on planning issues and don’t always have an adequate understanding of the specific problems facing disabled women when accessing loos.

A final thought

It was the recognition that toilet facilities were needed by wheelchair users that led to the first accessible loos. Over the past 8 years ITAAL has seen that these facilities are vital for many other groups as well and their requirements must be taken into account. Nevertheless, providing these additional facilities should not make loos less suitable for wheelchair users. The needs of all toilet users must be taken into account. That is why the Vivacity 2020 research is so vital.

POSTSCRIPT

Mrs Bertha Rose of Maidstone Kent wrote in during the summer to say: “I am an amputee in a wheelchair at the moment. My daughter works with disabled people as well, so she is always checking out the disabled loos. Some I can just manage on my own, but others are impossible - bars that pull down from the wall are inaccessible from a wheelchair, no room to turn the chair round, not able to shut the door, wash basin one side, hand dryer the other - I could write a book about it all! I would like to help any way you need.”

Over the last few months there have been a number of similar enquiries about helping with ITAAL work, all of which we have had to turn down. ITAAL regrets its closure but hopes that there is sufficient evidence now in the public domain for the major disability groups to follow up the issues.

Janet Scammell, one of our trustees, summed it all up last week when she said “I am sorry that ITAAL has to close and I don’t suppose anyone else will pick up the issues. But at least ITAAL has made it acceptable to talk about loo issues.”

ITAAL'S WORK - THE FUTURE

Diana Twitchin

VIVACITY 2020 to take over the survey work

In 2003 ITAAL was invited to join the Advisory Group to the Inclusive Design of 'Away From Home' (Public) Toilets in City Centres research project which is part of Vivacity 2020. This is a university-based research consortium comprising the University of Salford, UCL, University of Sheffield and the London Metropolitan University. The research project has been funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) and is looking at a range of aspects to city centre living including housing, crime and the environment, as well as day-to-day aspects such as adequate public toilet facilities.

The aim of the research is to improve knowledge about the design of public toilets for ALL users, be they young or old, able or disabled, but also those with differing beliefs and experiences of toilet design. The research also aims to explore the assumptions and attitudes that shape the requirements of both toilet users and providers.

The research will be taking place until Spring 2006 and will look at toilet provision in London, Manchester and Sheffield. The researchers are talking with a wide variety of users, either in focus groups or one-to-one interviews, to find out how the current design of away-from-home toilets, those run by local authorities and those used in cafes, pubs, restaurants etc., meet or fail to meet people's needs.

ITAAL regard this research as a major step forward for all toilet users. It is providing factual evidence about the pros and cons of existing toilet provision; highlighting inadequacies in provision for

some toilet user groups as well as revealing assumptions from some that 'there are no problems for the people we support'. More importantly the research has raised discussion and debate around facilities to meet a 24-hour human need from the level of 'behind the bike shed' to that of rational adult discussion.

Following the decision to close ITAAL, we were concerned about the Loo Survey work that had begun and to which so many disabled people had taken the time and trouble to respond. (See attached Supplement for analysis of forms.) The Trustees were therefore delighted when Professor Julienne Hanson, leading the research, and Jo-Anne Bicard, the researcher asked if the survey responses could be passed to them as they would add valuable information to their work.

Under the Data Protection Act we could not hand over the information without permission from each person concerned. So everyone has been approached and their permission sought. As this newsletter is being prepared well over half the 113 respondents have written back saying 'yes'.

As Chair of ITAAL I have attended Advisory Meetings and had a number of discussion sessions with Jo-Anne at other times. I have been impressed with her sensitivity when talking with toilet users, her awareness of the tensions and expectations (or lack of them) amongst users/customers and loo providers, and often been enthused and fascinated by the curious facts and figures coming to light as the work progresses. It is also interesting to observe how many of their findings match ITAAL's experience. ITAAL may be leaving the scene but the researchers are listening and recording so I do not feel that the ITAAL closure is letting disabled people down. I look forward to the publication and dissemination of their work.

An ITAAL microsite on the CAE website

There has been a strong collaborative relationship between ITAAL and CAE since 1997 when they took part in the feasibility study to establish whether there was a need for a directory of accessible loos. From 1998 to 2000 when the ITAAL charitable company was set up CAE provided charity cover to ITAAL, managing its funds. ITAAL have been able to make full use of their information service to check out issues and concerns on design and building regulations and seek their guidance when problem-solving help was required.

ITAAL's closure could have meant that all the work and expertise on accessible loos developed over 8 years would vanish overnight. However, ITAAL trustees are delighted that we have been able to establish a lasting legacy for ITAAL by transferring our publications and key information from our website to a new microsite accessed via CAE's web page www.cae.org.uk.

We are in discussions with Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales about redirecting funding originally given to ITAAL for our website, to be used to develop the microsite.

The microsite will also benefit CAE in that it will allow their information service to monitor design problems and issues from the user point of view.

We hope the microsite will be up and running by 2006 when the ITAAL website closes.

ITAAL Clearing House

ITAAL has always operated a 'clearing house' policy whereby issues and concerns brought to us, but which were outside our remit, have been passed on to the most relevant organisation. To some extent this has helped raise awareness among existing organisations and encouraged them to talk to one

another. A note on a referring email saying ITAAL would like to know the outcome usually meant that the enquirer did get an answer. ITAAL monitored these enquiries and Trustees saw details at their meetings. Over the years it has been possible to spot growing problems, and on several occasions Trustees suggested action as a result of the monitoring process. This aspect of ITAAL is now closed.

ITAAL Website and email address

ITAAL enters a no-trading position from the 31 December and will make application to Companies House in March 2006 to be formally struck off the Register of Companies. The website and email address will no longer be available from 31 December 2005. This issue of PC carries details of organisations that have an interest in accessible loos, mostly as part of the wider access equation, whom you can go to for help or information. Full details are given for the Centre for Accessible Environments and you can check their website to find the ITAAL microsite early in 2006.

LLOYDS TSB Foundation for England and Wales funding support

The Trustees would like to record their thanks to the Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales who supported ITAAL with grants in 2002 and 2004. It must be noted that the decision to wind up ITAAL was made because we were unable to attract funding to pay for background administrative and trustee support. The work surrounding the aims and objectives of the organisation was continuing to move ahead in a very positive way.

The Lloyds TSB Foundation reacted very supportively to the news about closure, arranging to visit the office to discuss the situation in detail and consider redirection of their funding. They have agreed that ITAAL can recommend proposals from other charities to use the outstanding funds provided that proposals reflect

ITAAL's aims and objectives. Two proposals are now with Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales Trustees. This final issue of Privy Counsel is funded from the remaining Lloyds TSB Foundation grant.

Attracting funding for ITAAL's work has been an on-going, time-consuming and often emotionally draining problem. There is no getting away from the fact that ITAAL was often seen by potential funders as just a small, idiosyncratic organisation dealing with unimportant issues around disability.

As a welcome contrast, working with the Lloyds TSB Foundation has always been a very positive exercise and their input to proposals very helpful.

WHO WAS WHO IN ITAAL?

The women and one man behind ITAAL ITAAL represented the needs of both male and female disabled people but it was almost entirely a female steering group that saw ITAAL through its early years. Sarah Langton-Lockton, Janet Scammell, Andrea Whittaker, Bob and Diana Twitchin and Monnica Stewart (who died in 2004) remained with ITAAL as Trustees and provided constant support and encouragement, be it behind the scenes or attending functions as an ITAAL trustee. Erica Thomas joined us in 2004 to bring fresh insight into 'loos north of Watford'.

Bob Twitchin was the only male on the steering group to become a Trustee. Together with Pam and Tony Bamford he oversaw the development of the database for the directory and all three provided ongoing help and problem-solving as the

database was turned into the directory. He provided a brake in Trustee meetings on the 'girlie approach to loo issues' sometimes plaintively reminding us that 'men use the loo too!'

Monnica Stewart, who died in 2004, had such a large range of networks and contacts that it was customary to take problems to her as a first point of call. She was to share un-reservedly ideas and suggestions when ITAAL was being set up and when approached in desperation for problem-solving help, would always have a suggestion - knowing 'someone, who knows someone, who could help'. Her medical career covered the period when it was impossible to talk about 'continence' issues outside a hospital to today's 'lets reveal all approach' and she understood the psychological impact of continence problems on everyday life. Her reaction to failed funding applications was always to get the chair to laugh and then demand to know 'who are you approaching next?'

Trustees Each of the Trustees brought specific skills to the table and over the years pooled information, ideas and support that would enable ITAAL to develop its reputation. The fact that a majority of Trustees also had a disability meant that ITAAL could speak with authority on care needs.

Andrea Whittaker A special thank you is due to Andrea for her editing skills on Privy Counsel. She helped ITAAL set guidelines for presentation and language and would cheerfully take a mass of articles, information and news and return it as the finished product ready for printing.

Thank you also to **Leslie Green** who joined ITAAL in 2003 as Treasurer and provided financial support and guidance. Treasurers are very rare animals these

days: it took ITAAL 3 years to find Leslie through the REACH organisation.

The picture gallery puts faces to names.

Sue Maynard-Campbell was in at the beginning when the Directory idea was floated. She oversaw all the planning and design work for the Directory, came up with the Sumo design (see page 18), edited *The Essential Companion* and directed all publication and printing work for the Directory and *Essential Companion* working with **Mollie Barrett** of Em En Designs. Mollie would go on to design the ITAAL website which has received many accolades.

Friends and Listeners ITAAL benefited from the help and support of many people and there is room here just to mention a few. **Pam and Tony Bamford** were the brains behind the database, providing us with a database that would take information from the Loo Location Sheets, enable us to manipulate it for the range of tasks involved in creating the Directory, as well as absorbing the massive amount of information that had to be held. Pam and Tony also generously donated the software to ITAAL.

Sarah Langton-Lockton and the Centre for Accessible Environments who provided ITAAL with the necessary charitable cover that allowed ITAAL to seek funding for its work during the first three years.

Sue Cunningham Just as disabled men quietly dismissed the idea of a Directory that would tell disabled women where accessible loos were, Sue Cunningham (founder of All Mod Cons – the predecessor to the British Toilet Association) confirmed that she had faced an uphill job when developing All Mod Cons. She felt it was important that women should be represented within the planning systems and encouraged ITAAL

to get into such networks. She involved ITAAL when she was making representation to the Welsh Assembly about away-from-home toilet provision in Wales.

Laura Crawford and Jennie Grieve planned and set up the Welsh meetings, brought new insights into loo issues in the process and provided a warm welcome when visiting Wales.

British Toilet Association who provided information and support during the development of the Directory and offered reduced admission fees to conferences and exhibitions.

Loretto Lambe at PAMIS for her support and encouragement on adult changing table issues, and particularly for highlighting the misunderstandings within the disability world on these care needs.

The Volunteers behind ITAAL The success of the Directory was due to the voluntary work carried out by over 200 disabled people around England providing detailed information on accessible loos through completing Loo Location forms. Eight years down the road many of these volunteers are no longer in touch with ITAAL, others have come and gone. However a massive thank you is due to everyone who supported ITAAL's work. Volunteers gave a great deal of personal time to help develop the Directory.

ITAAL Networks ITAAL worked with various organisations over the years moving backwards and forwards between the disability and business worlds. Articles appear in this issue from several of these networks. ITAAL didn't ever have sufficient funding to send Trustees to conferences and meetings and therefore had to pick meeting opportunities very carefully, but it did make full use of email networking. This would allow regular and fast contact with busy people as well as allowing disabled people to work with ITAAL on their own terms and keep to time goals.

THE IMPACT OF ITAAL

Thoughts from some of our supporters

Sarah Langton-Lockton, Chief Executive Centre for Accessible Environments (CAE)

ITAAL's impact in its relatively short period of activity has been considerable. The Directory of Accessible Loos was both immensely useful to its readers and a tremendous achievement in harnessing the input of voluntary 'loo surveyors'. The Directory deservedly won a National Information Forum 'Getting the Message Across' award in 2004, and its Essential Companion, 4,000 copies of which are in circulation, has helped loo providers understand why it is so important to get the design and management of away-from-home loos right.

Most importantly, ITAAL has provided a voice for people whose lives are circumscribed and health compromised by inadequate public loo provision. The issues, through ITAAL's efforts, are now on the academic research agenda so that the experience of users will have tangible influence on the design and management of away-from-home loos.

CAE esteems the work of ITAAL very highly and we are delighted to be able to perpetuate it through a new microsite and other loo-related initiatives.

Loretto Lambe Director, PAMIS

PAMIS was very sorry to hear that ITAAL was to wind up its activities. This will be a great loss to the disability field. Over the years this small but very active organisation has produced many innovative resources, notably their Directory of Accessible Loos together with its Essential Companion. ITAAL has been very supportive of the work of

PAMIS and in particular in promoting our *Changing Places: Accessible Loos for All* campaign. Diana Twitchin, Director of ITAAL, took every opportunity to raise awareness of the need for fully accessible loos in public places – that is loos with adult size changing benches and hoisting systems. We are indebted to her for all her efforts on our behalf and of people with profound and multiple disabilities. We know that her work has certainly helped keep our campaign on the agenda.

Over the coming year the *Changing Places* campaign will be a priority for us all and we have recently set up a campaign consortium to take this work forward. The members of the consortium are *PAMIS*, Mencap PMLD Section, Nottingham City Council, Valuing People Support Team, The same as you? Support Team at the Scottish Executive and ITAAL. We are delighted that Diana has joined this group and that we will have the opportunity to call upon her extensive experience and knowledge to help us all in our work. *PAMIS* wishes everyone involved with ITAAL all the best for the future and thank them all for their support over the years.

Peter Ingram-Monk, Director Fieldfare Trust and SDEF, Scotland

The sad and disturbing news that ITAAL is to close is, in my view, a sad reflection on all the major disability organisations who with moderate imagination could contribute financially to an area of work that ranks very highly in the concerns of most people with a disability.

Although north of the Border and therefore out of the range of ITAAL, we have nevertheless maintained a keen interest in their work and in turn have received much helpful information from Diana for which we are very grateful. It is

our intention to continue the exchange of information and make any contribution possible to the hopeful resurgence of ITAAL.

Scotland and in particular some of its principal disability organisations, are tuning in to the problem of toilet accommodation, both public and private. Access work has been undertaken in the Stirling area by Scottish Disability Equality Forum (SDEF), one of the largest disability organisations in Scotland the Dumfries and Galloway Access Panel (DGAP) is undertaking audits of some 67 public toilets for which the Regional Authority has allocated substantial funds to renovate and update in accord with current best practice. The Coalition of Southern Access Panels may also follow this lead by contributing useful information to an access guide planned by DGAP.

Similarly Access Panels in the Highlands have worked very effectively to produce a comprehensive guide, available in standard and large print versions and on cassette, covering a whole range of premises in Sutherland, our most northern county, including toilet facilities. This guide is invaluable to all disabled visitors to this very attractive area. A similar guide, the work of local volunteers and updated every two years, already exists for Badenoch and Strathspey in Highland Region, another popular tourist area.

With the advent of accessible (up to a point) portable toilets, there is no excuse for organisers of field events, of which there are many varied types in Scotland, not to have at least some toilet facilities. While not expecting to emulate the very substantial work carried out by ITAAL, I am confident we will make a useful contribution.

Mollie Barrett, Em En Designs

Graphic training for potty designers – Look what I did!

Although I've been practising graphic design since the early '70s there's always new things to learn, and getting involved with ITAAL pushed me - no, NOT round the bend, Diana! - but into a couple of areas of technical endeavour which I might well have carried on avoiding. One is the handling of databases within publishing software, and the other is web design. Although not the ultimate in accessible sites (well, it was my first foray into it on a paid basis) the site nevertheless got some positive comment from colleagues whom I asked to test it for me, including one who gave me the following glowing testimonial:

"I think the website is excellent - extremely accessible just as the loos should be. I loved particularly the buttons, and also the light touch of the humour. I also like the fact that a flash (flush) download was not necessary. It might also be of interest to you to know that I looked at the site on a PC which is now over seven years old, running Internet Explorer 3.1. Everything seemed to work not just without problems, but also refreshingly (?) quickly."

This was back in 2003, and I'm very thankful to Diana and the trustees of ITAAL for trusting me to deliver!

There has been lot of water under the bridge since then, but what has been poured into ITAAL by so many people is no mere piddling effort, and I'm sure it will

not be lost down the drain of time and apathy. Have we been farting into the wind? No, this is a solid matter that will continue to thunder on!

Ed: Meetings (and indeed emails) with Mollie were always a great delight not least for her exploitation of language and innuendo whilst the very serious subject of loos was under discussion.

**Penny Nunn, Development Director,
IBS (Irritable Bowel Syndrome)
Network**

To all ITAAL volunteers and Trustees:
I read with sadness the news in the spring edition of Privy Counsel that ITAAL will be no more. Core funding continues to be a major headache for many organisations and we sympathise with your plight and understand fully the trustees' decision. I have enjoyed working with you over the past years and shall greatly miss your contribution to the toilet debates and campaigns.

The article about hidden disability (Privy Counsel issue 6) raises an issue that greatly concerns our members. Many people with IBS are not visibly disabled but have a severely compromised quality of life because of it. We echo Terry Gallagher's comments in his article Disabled Toilets are for Disabled People whatever the nature of their disabilities. Our recent Summer Symposium was entitled Working With IBS and speakers covered the issues of trying to work with IBS, what help is available and is IBS a disability within the meaning of the Disability Discrimination Act? In many cases it will be. Perhaps if those who only equate a disability with a wheelchair had been at our meeting they would understand how an apparently fit person might in fact be hiding a disability. Help and understanding, not confrontation,

would make the world a better place for everyone.

Many of our members, particularly those who have the diarrhoea type of IBS are grateful for their RADAR Key, and would have a poorer quality of life without it. They may not ever need to use an adapted toilet but having the assurance of a key is a great benefit.

I have just come back from South Africa where the public toilets are fantastic. This country could certainly do better on that score. The issue that faces us all is to make the provision of decent, accessible and clean public toilets available for everyone. This battle will be harder without the input of ITAAL.

**SWINGS AND ROUNDABOUTS: GAINS
AND LOSSES**

Clara Greed
**Reader in the Faculty of the Built Environment,
University of the West of England, Bristol.**

Taking stock of the 'state of play' regarding away-from-home public toilet provision, a mixed picture emerges. Whilst gains have been made through the Disability Discrimination Act, revisions to Part M and BS8300, these measures have also had negative effects. More than 40% of public toilets have been closed in the last ten years and the 'threat' of having to make existing toilets accessible has resulted in some local authorities closing their toilets altogether. This has resulted in many more people being inconvenienced including those who are not visibly disabled but require a toilet frequently because of, for example, urinary problems, old age, pregnancy, menstruation, stoma, and Crohns disease. The rest of the population, the

micturating majority, even the fit and healthy, also need to go to the loo several times a day if they are away from home. Local authorities can close toilets at will, because there is no mandatory requirement to provide public toilets. New toilets – adapted or not - are unlikely to be built if there is no funding or compulsion.

The improvement in accessible facilities, along with the ongoing closure of traditional public toilets, has led to resentment among 'able' toilet users. Battles break out with those wanting to use the adapted toilets for baby changing and others who find the regular toilets impossible to use. The able-bodied complain that their toilets are going to rack and ruin while the adapted toilet is seen as 'a waste of money' which 'nobody ever uses'. In spite of endless campaigns by toilet user groups the government seems happy with this 'divide and rule' situation as it diverts attention from the need to address the underlying issues. Meanwhile the government rattles on about creating sustainable, accessible, healthy, diverse cities. But they do not seem to realise that if they want to get people out of their cars and onto public transport then public toilets are the missing link.

The concept of the vibrant evening economy, emulating the sophisticated café society of continental Europe, has resulted in 'Ibiza not Barcelona'. Our city centres are full of pubs and bars, and lager louts urinating in the streets. Reacting to complaints, local authorities are introducing male street urinals, thus condoning such behaviour. There is nothing for women, and no hope for anyone with a disability or a man with any sense of shame. On being challenged as how they could justify putting good money into male street urinals whilst at the same time closing traditional toilets, local authority officers inform me, it is not a matter of gender inequality: the purpose

of the urinals is to prevent street fouling, NOT to provide public conveniences for all.

In fact a male bias permeates most aspects of toilet policy, including the activities of the manufacturers and providers, whilst female users' needs are marginalised within some of the campaign groups. Even where adapted toilets are available, a narrow 'stereotype' of 'who is worthy' to use them, and a 'one size fits all' approach, has not contributed towards a more inclusive, usable and comprehensive approach to toilet design. Many adapted toilets (some say the majority) are badly designed and maintained and do not meet the specific needs of users. No wonder some are under-used. Women are particularly disadvantaged as our toilets are still designed by front-facing urinals (men) who cannot begin to understand the problems encountered by those who have to do a three point turn, reverse and sit down to use the toilet (please note men only sit to shit).

Out on the street other horrors proliferate, such as Automatic Public Conveniences (APCs), which most of the nation is frightened of, and many cannot access. Other nightmares such as turnstiles and payment systems that restrict entrance, and which I thought we got rid of in the 1960s, are making a comeback. With no on-street toilets available in some areas one has to contemplate using off-street 'public' toilets. One is often expected to buy a drink first, as little signs are popping up on fast food outlets and pubs saying 'toilets are for use of customers only, refusal may cause offence'. It may also cause a puddle! Even this option is likely to go as the new licensing laws have taken away the requirement for licensed premises to provide customer toilets! Incredible!

All this is a particularly British problem. We do not have the Continental tradition

of being entitled to use toilets in cafés and restaurants, and we are bereft of our on-street toilets. Look further afield for salvation. There has been a restroom revolution in the Far East, especially in

China, Japan, Korea and Taiwan. There is a plethora of well-maintained public toilets, which are liberally distributed, and which contain a vast array of facilities for people with disabilities, and lots of ladies loos too. The conceptualisation of disability and accessible toilets seems to be more inclusive and varied than in the West, as it includes wheelchair users but lots of others too. Facilities are provided for those who require washing and changing facilities, including hot water, large sinks, disposal facilities, and adult changing benches.

Everything is kept in good condition by dedicated toilet cleaners and attendants. There is not the penny-pinching resentment, or smutty mentality, towards public toilet provision. It is a different culture. Toilets are seen as a public duty, a manifestation of civic pride and modernisation. The business case figures strongly. As the Mayor of Toyama commented, 'it is as important to the economy to provide public toilets as it is to build a new runway at the airport'. We need that spirit too. Then all the arguments would fall away and comprehensive public toilet provision would become an integral, and mandatory component of British life, for 'where there's a will there's a way'.

Clara Greed is a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and a Fellow of the Architecture and Surveying Institute. She has published widely on women in surveying and town planning and on planning policy and urban design. She has supported ITAAL's work since 1988. We are grateful to her for providing this overview of the current situation regarding away-from-home toilet provision.

THE SUMO LOGO

Your questions answered!

When we were searching for a logo, Sue Maynard Campbell remembered the Sumo Wrestling Festival that had taken place in England. When the wrestlers had arrived at their hotel, it had been discovered that they could not access and safely use the bathrooms in their suites. Builders had to be called in to make all the bathrooms accessible, and in particular reinforced. Rumour also had it that the wrestlers also couldn't get into the loos on the planes coming over.

Sue and Mollie came up with the ITAAL logo based on this story. The logo reflects the need for inclusion for all in the provision of loos.

GOOD NEWS

Sue Maynard Campbell, MBE BAHons., Solicitor reports on two positive initiatives

What a Change to 113 Chancery Lane!

I first went to 113 – the Law Society's headquarters - for my admission ceremony 25 years ago. I have to say I can't remember exactly what access was like but I believe my father hauled me up the steps in a manual wheelchair. I went at some point in the '80s and recall having to use a lift that was designed for wheelchair users and short people only – no one could stand with me. The Carey Street entrance was a distinct improvement, but a long-winded way of getting in, culminating in a horrendous portable ramp – a bit like a long hammock. But now.....

I really do feel included. The new entrance is so discreet that I missed it twice the first time I came. It is under cover so no more waiting for admission in the rain. You go up alongside the steps and come out where everyone else does, by the entrance doors. And the new loo – well I'm a connoisseur of loos and I would give this one 9.5 out of 10: pretty good by any standards, and not just useful for disabled people. The first dinner I came to I waited for it to be vacated, only to find the MC had used it as a dressing room!

Well done 113 for an excellent job! although for absolute perfection I'd like to see more manifestation on the lift glass to increase visibility.

Public Sector Duty to Promote Disability Equality

Those campaigning to reverse the lack of away-from-home toilets, and in particular accessible ones, may have a powerful new ally. From December 2006 public authorities, and those who use public money to provide services, will be subject to a general duty to promote disability equality. For many, including all local authorities, this will include developing a Disability Equality Scheme.

In developing their scheme authorities are required to **involve** disabled people. This does not mean just informing us what they are up to, or undertaking a mechanical consultation exercise. They will have to work out who might be affected by what they do or don't do, and develop ways in which we can be effectively involved in the framing of their policies and setting of targets. As a lead up to this they will need to review all their existing policies to see how they measure up to the new duty.

All this will not happen overnight, and effective involvement will be, to some

extent, trial and error, but we are now in to the period where the first schemes are being developed. Therefore, if you want to get involved, contact your local authority, or whoever else it may be who is making policy that affects your life, and tell them that you know what they have to do and that you want to be involved.

Equal Ability (www.equalability.com) is running a number of workshops for public authorities to assist them to prepare for this new duty to promote disability equality. We are also working with authorities in developing their Disability Equality Schemes, and in particular in putting in place effective, but realistic, ways of involving disabled people. We believe this new duty is a real opportunity to advance the rights and inclusion of disabled people.

The Sage Gateshead

Paul Highman,
Principal Information Officer
Centre for Accessible Environments

After ten years planning and extensive consultation with musicians, music presenters and performers, a new music venue and home for the Northern Sinfonia, the Sage Gateshead opened to the public on 17 December 2004. The building represents a new landmark on Tyneside, and situated adjacent to the Stirling Prize-winning Gateshead Millennium Bridge and the Tyne Bridge, forms the heart of a project to regenerate the area's river frontage.

The Sage Gateshead includes two auditoria, Halls One and Two, a rehearsal space, the Northern Rock Foundation Hall, and a 25-room Music Education Centre – each conceived as a separate enclosure. A concourse along the waterfront, which includes bars and a café, acts as a foyer for the auditoria and

hospitality areas for performers, audiences and students alike. The concourse links the facilities and offers dramatic views out across the river Tyne. The entire complex, including the concourse, is sheltered beneath a broad, enveloping stainless-steel roof that is shrink-wrapped around the building beneath.

The aim was to create both an international centre for musical performance and education, and an accessible public building. Access was key to the design approach, and from the outset, the Council demonstrated a genuine commitment to inclusion. Gateshead Council appointed as access consultant David Burdus, who worked on the project from inception to completion, and The Sage Gateshead Access Panel was established in 2000 to ensure disabled people's input into the design process.

Evidence of this commitment can be seen in the WC provision. The Sage has 36 cubicles which are accessible for wheelchair users. Of these, 18 are for users who transfer from the right, 12 for those who transfer from the left and six feature the peninsular-style layout. Twenty of the accessible cubicles are located in separate unisex rooms. These cubicles are larger in size than the standard Approved Document M layout, to accommodate bigger washbasins. However, the designers were careful to maintain the recommended distance between the basin and the pan. The remaining accessible cubicles are located within the gender-specific WCs.

The level of choice and flexibility is key to the success of the Sage. Within the accessible WCs a number of additional features have been installed, for example some of the cubicles feature Clos-o-mat automatic toilets, which provide flushing, warm-water washing and warm-air drying, one has a built-in powered hoist, another

has room to accommodate a portable hoist. Other cubicles have showers and height-adjustable bench-changing areas. These facilities are strategically placed throughout the building, to ensure balanced provision.

The inclusive approach is carried through into the gender-specific WCs. In the male areas, lowered urinals have been installed for toddlers, and both the male and female WCs feature lower-level washbasins. All this amounts to a commendable commitment to inclusive design, from the client, Gateshead Council, and the architect, Foster and Partners. There are inevitably some shortfalls – the signage is not as comprehensive as it could be – for example it would be helpful to indicate, perhaps through pictorial signs, which WCs feature a hoist or a shower and where these are located within the building. However, inclusive design is an ongoing process. As we learn more, access can be refined and improved, and in this case the service provider has created an excellent platform from which to develop.

Good news from Nottingham

Martin Jackaman, Day Service Modernisation Manager for Learning Disabilities Just to let you all know that the Nottingham City Council Executive Board has approved the reciting of the City Centre toilets that are currently under the Market Square. The Council is developing an existing site in Greyhound Street that is next to the Council House and this development will include a fully accessible "Changing Places Loo". Much work still to be done with architects, access etc but it is a major step forward and the success I was hoping for. The target date is May 2006. Hopefully we will be able to get the legal issues sorted and we can break new ground even if we have to learn on the way!!

**HIGHLIGHTS FROM PREVIOUS
ISSUES**

Peter Ingram-Monk's reference to portable loos prompts us to reprint this article first published in Privy Counsel Issue 3.

**THE MOBILITY ROADSHOW'S QUEST
FOR
THE IDEAL ACCESSIBLE LOO**

**Jan Gethings, Executive Director,
Mobility Choice**

It doesn't really matter how good the day was, how well the event was organised or even what the weather did, the two things we all remember when we get home were how good or bad the toilets were and what the food was like.

As organisers of the Mobility Roadshow one of the most challenging tasks to get right over the years has been the accessible toilets. With some 20,000 disabled people visiting the show over three days it is imperative that we have a reliable source of good quality units to call on each year. But this has proved to be more difficult than one could imagine.

There wasn't a sole distributor who could meet all our needs for the show, and the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act further exacerbated the problem, with the obligation now to provide accessible toilets as part of every booking, toilet hire companies were unable to supply us with their entire fleet of accessible units for fear of losing other contracts. Consequently we were forced to hire in units from a variety of sources – some decidedly better than others – to meet our needs.

Over the years we have had to put up with broken ramps, no handrails, no locks on doors, locked doors and no keys, or just plain all-round sub-standard facilities. I remember one toilet being delivered the night before the show was due to open (late evening delivery of course!). When I mentioned that the door handle was very small and could be difficult to manage, I was told "it's quite easy, all you need is a screwdriver" – obviously an essential item that everyone carries for a day out!

Determined to find a reliable solution, we came to the conclusion that the only way to find the number and quality of units we needed was quite frankly to build our own to Part M standards. For the Mobility Roadshow 2001 at Crowthorne, we hired some units from The Convenience Company. The quality of both the equipment and on-site service was exceptional, winning high praise from visitors who were clearly impressed with the facilities. We subsequently had discussions with them after the show and they agreed to work closely with us to build our own accessible toilets. These were used at this year's Mobility Roadshow, and for the very first time we did not receive one complaint about the toilets. Instead we received letters of praise; one visitor to the show even described them as being "better than their loo at home"!

The toilets are serviced and maintained by The Convenience Company on our behalf and are available for hire to other companies and organisations – with a percentage of the hire fee going to the Charity (Mobility Choice) that organises the Roadshow. As the units only require a 13 amp power supply, they are very adaptable for use in any environment. For further information on availability for hire contact The Convenience Company on 0115989 0011, and make your event memorable for all the right reasons!

CAN'T FLUSH THE LOO – THE HANDLE IS ON THE WRONG SIDE!
ITAAL have voted this the most common loo problem reported. We therefore reprint the following which first appeared in Issue 3 of Privy Counsel.

**A SOLILOQUY TO THE FLUSH
with apologies to Shakespeare**

Diana Twitchin

To flush or not to flush, that is the question
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to sniff the pongs and aromas of outrageous gases
Or to take arms against an orgy of builders
And by opposing end them?
To cry Let's Flush once more, and by that flush to say we end
The constant headache of a thousand natural whiffs
That flesh is heir to. 'Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished.

To weep, to flush, to flush, perchance to clean, ay, there's the scrub,
For in that flush of sound what dreams may come
When we have shuffled out this netty* cell,
That must give us pause. There's the respect
That makes calamity of so long a sit;
For who would bear the shouts and yells of dismay
The sitter's wrong, the proud man's (woman's) shame
The pangs of frustration or the world's dismay,
The flatulence of office that spurns
That patient knocking on the door, whilst the
Sitter doth cover their bare bodkin.

Who would far rather bear to grunt and sweat his weary life
Without that dread of something left undone.

The undiscovered country from whence no traveller returns relieved,
To make us better bear the loos we have, and
Move to tell of others that we long for.
Conscience doth make cowards of us all
The flush is our resolution
But 'tis past our cast of thought
Our enterprise is of great pith and moment
With huge regard for human niceties.
But 'tis lost in the name of action

Until.....YOU MOVE THE BLOODY FLUSH HANDLE!

* netty is the Northumbrian regional term for the loo!

ITAAL are grateful to the Employers' Forum on Disability for permission to print the following piece which appeared in the summer 2005 issue of Employers' Update. The Forum's member Helpline can offer practical solutions to queries about reasonable adjustments. Telephone 020 7403 3020 or email: enquiries@employers-forum.co.uk

AWARENESS COURSE FAILED TO LIVE UP TO ITS OWN STANDARDS

Liverpool City Council has paid £2000 compensation to a disabled woman who claimed she suffered discrimination on a disability awareness course.

The council consented to a judgment to pay £2000 damages on the day of the court case, which was taken under Part 111 of the Disability Discrimination Act. It highlights the importance of employers making reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled employees can participate in all areas of working life, including training.

The case related to a course run by the council in 2003. Rosemary Walker, then a worker for Merseyside Youth Association, had to tell fellow delegates about her condition on discovering that the toilets did not have adequate facilities to allow her to change her colostomy bag. On discovering there were no sanitary disposal boxes in any of the building's toilets, another delegate arranged for a box to be delivered.

Ms. Walker said she was subjected to humiliating treatment and asked the council to acknowledge it had treated her unfairly.

Bert Massie, chair of the Disability Rights Commission said: "I would expect local councils to be standard bearers on disability equality, so it's disappointing to hear of such unfair treatment."

USEFUL CONTACTS

In Wales

Got a Welsh loo problem? - then make contact with Graham Findlay, Access Officer with Disability Wales. His email address is graham@DWAC.demon.co.uk. Disability Wales address is Wernddu Court, Caerphilly Business Park, Van Road, Caerphilly CF83 3ED. ITAAL worked with Graham whenever we crossed the Bristol Channel and we are grateful for the help and support he gave.

Another contact for north Wales is Laura Crawford who says:

"I don't mind my name being forwarded for the contact for North Wales at all. Many people believed that all would be well on the accessible loo front after Oct 2004, but in my case it is getting worse because many of the builders and architects are not sticking to building regulation designs for accessible loos. People are paying out a lot of money for badly designed and constructed facilities. I personally find a number of the builders are putting in loo bowls higher than the regulation requires, which as a person with restricted growth, I cannot even get on. It is easy for a person who needs a high loo to put a toilet seat raiser on the bowl, but you cannot chop a bit off for a smaller person. Therefore at the moment, I am busy trying to consult with builders to influence them in the construction of loos."

Laura's email address is lauracrawford@talk21.com

Other useful contacts

Centre for Accessible Environments
70 South Lambeth Road
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www.cae.org.uk In 2006 CAE will carry the ITAAL microsite

PAMIS

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**British Toilet Association & Loo Of The
Year Awards**

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Access Association

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**If you do not wish to keep
this newsletter or the 2
supplements issued with it,
why not pass them on to
either**

- **a local disability
group**
- **a local Access Officer
or Access Group**
- **the local authority
department who
manage public toilet
provision**
- **the Continence
Advisor at a local
hospital**
- **the local newspaper
community affairs
reporter**

Or

- **hand it in to your local
branch library.**

**The views expressed in this
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those of ITAAL.**