

MAIN HALL INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

Executive Summary

1. This paper addresses infrastructure capacity issues in relation to visitor numbers at Holyrood. The paper also sets out scope for increasing engagement opportunities by providing exemplar accessible provisions in the public area for people with profound and multiple disabilities.

Issues and Options

2. The Scottish Parliament has one of only 91 Changing Places facilities within Scotland which is suitable for severely disabled visitors who require care assistance and the use of a hoist and changing bench. The current facility is located within the first aid room in the Garden Lobby and access to the facility requires an escort to be provided by Visitor Services and can impact on the staff resources available within the Main Hall. Whilst we have received positive feedback on this facility, creating an additional facility in the Main Hall will make it more accessible to the general public without having to book it on request. We therefore recommend improving the accessible toilet provision by providing a Changing Places facility within the Main Hall.
3. We also propose removing the double doors and screen, which presently separates the area containing the shop and toilets from the Main Hall. This will not only improve general circulation for visitors but will significantly improve accessibility, particularly for visitors with mobility needs, for example people with guide dogs; wheelchair users; and visitors with prams. These remain the only doors in the public area which are not accessible. All other doors have been automated throughout the External Security Facility and to the exit of the building.
4. As a result of removing this screen wall there will be a requirement to make the internal shop perimeter wall more resilient. This is likely to take the form of a glass screen and door which we are confident can be achieved without impacting on the overall look and feel of the shop.
5. The unprecedented success of the Great Tapestry exhibition in September 2013, a month in which we welcomed a total of 53,827 visitors, highlighted limitations on the existing public toilet infrastructure in the Main Hall. While the visitor numbers experienced in September were exceptional, the lack of capacity in this area is regularly apparent at peak times during the parliamentary week:
 - On business days Outreach Services can have up to 5 groups of 40 arriving between 9.30 and 14.00. These numbers, which include school groups, are in addition to casual visitors and government and parliamentary business visitors.

- On Mondays and Fridays the Outreach Services team can have multiple groups of around 60 – 80 individuals arriving and or leaving at the same time, throughout the day. In addition to these groups, there is the potential of up to 200 public tour attendees.
 - And, on Tuesdays and Wednesdays we can have upwards of 400 - 500 visitors arriving at the same time to attend Member-sponsored events, Cross-Party Group meetings and other meetings adding to pressure in the Main Hall area.
6. Given the frequent pressures on these facilities observed during busy periods over a number of years, we suggest taking the opportunity now, in advance of our Festival of Politics and the return of the Great Tapestry this summer, to increase the capacity of the public toilets in the Main Hall.

Planned Works

7. Various options for improving the provision of toilets have been considered and a preferred option has been identified by Facilities Management that achieves maximum increase in capacity without the need for structural alterations. The proposed work, which necessitates the relocation of the first aid room, will increase capacity in both male and female toilets and include the provision of a new Changing Places toilet adjacent to the shop which includes a ceiling track hoist system; adult sized changing bench and adequate space for two care assistants.
8. The above approach aims to maximise provision of these important facilities but also requires us to take full account of structural constraints and to minimise structural alterations, which is important in terms of controlling the required scope of works, the installation programme timescale and the associated cost.
9. We also propose to remove the screen wall containing the large doors that constitute a barrier for accessing the toilets, the shop and the exit, to greatly improve circulation for all within the extended Main Hall. Double doors and an over panel will be installed at the front of the shop. The doors will be held open during shop hours to maintain the open and accessible ambience but will be closed at all other times.

Timing

10. We will look at the feasibility of implementing the design currently being finalised ahead of some of our major events and exhibitions this summer. Should that not prove possible then we would look at other options for the latter part of 2014.

Resources

11. A summary of the cost plan linked to the scheme design is provided in Annex A.

Publication

12. This paper can be published however it is recommended that Annex A is withheld due to the ongoing procurement exercise. In order to secure a best price from tenders, Annex A should only be published after an award of a contract for the programme of works.

Decision

13. The SPCB is asked to endorse Facilities Management's proposals that will enhance visitor facilities and accessibility arrangements for members of the public visiting Holyrood and to agree to move to the tender stage of the project.

Jerry Headley
Facilities Management
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