

Notes of the 3rd Congleton Equal Access Advisory Group

Congleton Town Hall – FOCUS ON EVENTS

Friday 19 April 2024, 11am – 12.30pm – meeting held on Zoom

Present: Deborah Lawson (Chair), Tom Stephens, Pam Carey, Denis Murphy, Cllr Kay Wesley, and Jackie MacArthur (CTC officer),

Guests: Rachel McCarthy, Town Centre and Events Officer, Eddie, Congleton Rotary, Mark Bailey Congleton Live, Val (Equal Access Interest Group)

Apologies: Nichola Brain, Alec Scaresbrook, Diane Ritherdon.

1. Deborah welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave quick introductions.
2. Briefly discussed the notes of the previous meeting.

2a Noted that website entries about Congleton on national disability websites need improvement. Action all. Thanks to Tom for the information. Three main websites dealing with accessibility are:

<https://www.euansguide.com/> is based on Streetview mapping and provides access details and reviews of the premises listed. The public adds the details in the form of a tick list of facilities relating to accessibility and how the reviewer found the visit. Businesses and venues can add themselves to Euan's Guide! <https://www.euansguide.com/venues>

<https://wheelmap.org/> is international and covers the UK. It shows Congleton very well as it is based on Streetview in the same way as Euans guide.

<https://www.accessable.co.uk/> (This is the rebrand of the original Disabled Go). The business owner must make entries. This site provides detailed information about venues so that you can decide if they're accessible to you. You can search for various place types based on the filter settings on the page that go together to add to the venue's accessibility. If you want to get a business or venue added to this directory, email suggestaplace@Accessable.co.uk asking to be added.

2b Create an Excel list of all the actions from the Equal Access Survey and via this group with short-term, medium-term and long-term goals.

The Focus of this meeting was Events.

Chair Deborah created a document drawing out the key issues from the survey results and quick wins discussed at the meeting. This 8-page [Equal Access at Events document](#) can be

downloaded here from the Town Council's website. It contains several quick wins added in blue, which will be included on the Excel sheet.

Tom also produced a short document with considerations for events in the building, on the street, and in Green Open Spaces, summarised below.

Events in a Building

- Consider venue accessibility (is it wheelchair accessible, and if so, how).
- Is signage and venue lighting good enough for visually impaired visitors?
- Is assistive technology available, and if so, what listening devices, captioning services, or other technological aids are available to enhance accessibility for people with hearing problems or impairments?
- Consider seating arrangements. Offer designated seating areas for guests with mobility problems and provide ample space for wheelchair users.
- Where the event is not seated, provide rest seats and enough space to ensure wheelchair circulation is possible.
- Ensure that Toilets are accessible and appropriately equipped for guests with disabilities.
- Consider what you need to do in case of a fire alarm to get visitors with mobility problems out of the building safely.
- Encourage feedback from guests with disabilities on their experience at the event to identify areas for improvement and ensure future events are more accessible.

Street / Town centre

- Consider car parking availability.
- The arrangement of stalls and stages should allow for the circulation of disability equipment, baby buggy, and pram users.
- Keep dropped kerbs clear at all times. Where streets have been closed to traffic, dropped kerbs mustn't be treated as unimportant when setting out stalls.
- If appropriate, a viewing area is set aside for disabled individuals or attendees with small children so they can see what's going on.

Large areas such as park

- Is the approach to the venue solid ground, or will you need a temporary pathway? Soft mud and loose gravel can be problematic for many.
- Are there viewing areas set aside for disabled or attendees with small children so they can see what's happening?
- What signage does the venue offer? Is the signage large and in high contrast?
- Is there information on accessible transport routes?
- Accessible entrances should be identified and published to aid wheelchair and buggy/pram users.

Other points and actions raised at the meeting

- a) Encourage Congleton event organisers to add as much information as possible on the website in advance so that eventgoers with disabilities know what to expect and can plan their attendance.
- b) Look to train some accessibility marshals to help at events - perhaps Friends for Leisure, Ruby Fund, or the nurseries may be able to help.
- c) Issues around providing safe refuge and clear walkways at the most crowded events – something for the event organisers to work out. Rotary has more barriers to help create routes.
- d) Christmas is a major event for the town council and town – find ways to improve safety for all those wishing to attend, including individuals with a disability.
- e) Jazz and Blues – no control over the venues – but will indicate in the publicity what facilities the venue has and if accessible. Will also produce a larger size booklet and look to create some quieter zones.
- f) Group members will try to attend the next Makers Market and highlight any issues with potential solutions. (Deborah did this and drew up a report, which has been sent to Vicky, who manages the Makers Market).
- g) Need to educate the general public on issues facing people with disabilities at Congleton events – Rebecca may be willing to help with a short video to explain issues – such as being bashed over the head with shoulder bags when in a wheelchair.
- h) Need to consider disability parking at events.
- i) Look into the cost of getting someone to sign at large events.

AOB

Agreed that Able World would be a good addition to this group – see if they are able to attend.

Date of next meeting – Friday 31 May 11am – 12.30 pm