

# **STEAM Museum of the Great Western Railway**

## **Access Policy**



**ACCREDITED  
MUSEUM**

---

# Access Policy Statement

**Museum: STEAM – Museum of the Great Western Railway**

**Governing body: Swindon Borough Council**

**Date approved by governing body: 4<sup>th</sup> October 2016**

## 1.0 Mission Statement

**1.1** This policy statement has been written in accordance with STEAM's Statement of Purpose.

**1.2** The **key purpose** of STEAM is: *Unlocking our heritage collections for everyone, to celebrate Brunel's historic Great Western Railway and its legacy.*

**1.3** Informed by the Museums Association's definition of Museums, by the Museum Association's Code of Ethics, and by our own Statement of Purpose, STEAM defines its **core organisational ethos** as follows. These are our guiding principles for staff, volunteers, Friends, visitors and users:

- Collecting, preserving and safeguarding objects, archives and photographs pertaining to Brunel's historic Great Western Railway and its legacy for the public, now and in perpetuity.
- Designing and delivering vibrant and relevant displays, exhibitions, activities, events and experiences, now and in the future.
- Informing, educating, engaging, entertaining and inspiring all of our visitors, by making our collections available to them, now and in the future.
- Enriching the lives of the community local to Swindon, and the wider Great Western Railway community, and celebrating Swindon's status as the hub of the GWR ("Made in Swindon"), now and in the future.
- Establishing STEAM as the authoritative source on the Great Western Railway and as a centre of excellence commensurate with the size of the Museum.
- Achieving quality recognition regionally and nationally from professional bodies, funders and our peers.
- Where possible, sourcing goods and services from Swindon and its surrounding area, to support our local economy and celebrate our region, emulating the founding principles of the Great Western Railway.
- Attracting at least 100,000 Museum visitors per annum.

## 2.0 Swindon Borough Council Policy Background

**2.1** This policy has been written in line with Swindon Borough Council's (SBC) Equality and Diversity Vision and Strategy and the Swindon Equality Scheme, which includes the Council's Equality Policy Statement.

**2.2** **SBC's Vision and Strategy** states "Swindon Borough will be a place which protects and promotes equality and Diversity through: Opportunity - Access – Fair Treatment, whilst understanding and reducing the costs of inequality for Swindon's diverse population. So that everyone can flourish, Swindon will be an equal society which recognises and respects people's different needs, situations and goals, establishing real freedom by removing the barriers that limit what people can do and can be."

It also states “The strategy is for everyone who uses or delivers services, facilities and information provided by or on behalf of the Council. This includes service users/customers, members of the public, partners, contractors, employees and elected members.”

**2.3 SBC’s Policy Statement** states “The Council recognises that people may experience discrimination and less favourable treatment or privilege on the grounds of their: age, disability, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, gender or marital/civil partnership status, religion or belief, sexual orientation, and financial or economic status, homelessness or lack of a fixed address, political view or trade union activity, and may be prevented from achieving their full potential.”

It also states, “We are committed to challenging all forms of unfair and unlawful discrimination, false assumptions, prejudice and stereotyping. We will develop policies, procedures and practices to ensure all people have fair and equal access to our services and job opportunities”.

**2.4** SBC has a public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010. The Act brought together existing laws and made them stronger. It also strengthened existing duties and places new duties on public bodies.

### **3.0 Our Definition of Access**

**3.1** STEAM recognises there are barriers to access at all levels of the Museum’s service and understands that visitors have different needs. However, we believe everyone has a fundamental right to engage with and enjoy the Museum and its collections.

**3.2** We define access as: Something made possible when physical, sensory, intellectual, financial, cultural, emotional and attitudinal barriers are removed, reduced or overcome.

### **4.0 Our Commitment to Access**

**4.1** This Policy supports our Mission Statement by providing a framework that aims to include all our visitors, potential visitors, volunteers and staff; and is a public document available to all.

**4.2** STEAM aims to welcome all members of society into the Museum, regardless of sex, age, social status, ethnic origin or ability; striving to provide the widest possible access to its building, collections and services in order to provide learning, research and enjoyment by all.

**4.3** STEAM will make its collections and building accessible, by removing as many barriers to access as practicable, and will continue to develop and improve our service, within the limits of budgetary, resourcing, legal and planning considerations and the conservation and security of the collections.

### **5.0 Areas of Access Covered by this Policy**

**5.1 Physical access:** We aim to maintain buildings and facilities that are as physically accessible as possible.

**5.2 Sensory access:** We aim to enable visitors to receive a sensory experience and enjoy the Museum's environment, exhibitions and collections, including those with impaired vision or hearing.

**5.3 Intellectual access:** We aim to recognise and provide for different learning styles and abilities and to adhere to a text strategy, accounting for different visitor needs.

**5.4 Financial access:** We aim to keep charges competitive, and consider the ability to pay when setting fees and charges for activities and events. We aim to offer a range of services to suit differing incomes to ensure as many people as possible are able to access our services.

**5.5 Emotional and attitudinal access:** We aim to provide an excellent standard of customer care to ensure visitors feel welcome and comfortable in our venue.

**5.6** We aim to engage the broadest audience in our exhibitions, educational programmes and events; within the limitations of the existing collections, accounting for other barriers to access e.g. geographical and cultural

## **6.0 Access Audits, Access Policy and Plan**

**6.1** The last Access Audit was undertaken in June 2016 by SBC's Equality and Diversity Manager. It covered the external environment (car parking, transport options, and routes to the building), the internal environment (all aspects of a museum visit), and remote access (website and telephones).

**6.2** An Access Action Plan has been prepared for 2021 which sets out the work required to improve access, by removing barriers identified by the audit and by customer feedback.

**6.3** The Access Policy, Statement and Action Plan will be reviewed periodically.

## **7.0 Evaluation of Services, Consultation and Audiences**

**7.1** The Museum will evaluate its services through a variety of means, including consultation with users and non-users, and use this information to ensure our services meet visitor needs.

## **8.0 Staff and Training**

**8.1** Access is the responsibility of everyone who works in or visits the Museum, including staff and volunteers.

**8.2** Swindon Borough Council is an Equal Opportunities employer. All people will receive equal opportunities in recruitment, employment and training.

**8.3** All staff and volunteers receive annual training on equality legislation and awareness appropriate to their role.

**8.4** The Museum is committed to providing volunteer opportunities, seeking to recruit volunteers from diverse backgrounds.

## **9.0 External Environment: Car Parking and Access Routes**

**9.1** STEAM has its own blue badge parking near the main entry doors; on a flat gravelled surface, with further being available in car parks provided by the Swindon Designer Outlet Village (DOV), one of our site partners.

**9.2** The route from the DOV car parks is via a level, paved, hard surface with a pedestrian crossing for Kemble Drive and seating along the route and no steps.

**9.3** The Museum will work with site partners to review external signage to create a clear accessibility statement for its website.

## **10.0 Building and Associated Services**

**10.1** The Museum building was completely refurbished in 2000 with a high level of accessibility factored into the process including but not limited to:

- Lifts to all floors
- Procedures for safe evacuation of all users and staff in emergencies; outlined in our Emergency Plan
- Current Health and Safety guidelines
- Hard floors with both steps and ramps available to most places.

**10.2** We conduct risk assessments for all Museum events and activities, ensuring staff are briefed.

## **11.0 Visitor Welcome and Customer Care**

**11.1** Staff and volunteers will implement this policy; assisting and welcoming customers across our different service areas in a manner that is respectful, inclusive and tailored to the customer's individual needs.

**11.2** Information for potential visitors explaining our opening times, services, and access to the collections is available in either digital or analogue formats.

**11.3** We endeavour to provide facilities to meet visitor needs at the Museum, including a shop, café, accessible toilets, changing facilities, pushchair access, a number of manual wheelchairs and motorised scooters and seating; where and when possible.

**11.4** Where possible, the Museum will provide adequate signage and navigation to suit a range of needs, and will respond to public requests regarding information required in alternative formats, as resources allow.

**11.5** The Museum has a policy and procedure for Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults.

**11.6** The Museum has hearing loops at the Reception desk, and some corporate hire spaces. It won the Tony Martin Award in 2018 for audio inclusivity.

## **12.0 Collections**

- 12.1** The Museum is committed to increasing public access to the collections and the information held therein. This will increase knowledge of the collection and the heritage of the Great Western Railway.
- 12.2** We will provide varied means of access to the collections, which include: permanent displays, temporary exhibitions, loans, object handling, publications, events, activities, the STEAM website and external websites (e.g. Art UK).
- 12.3** To increase access to the collections not on display, we offer research facilities by appointment, a remote Public Enquiry Service, the STEAM Picture Library website and access to curatorial staff.
- 12.4** Stored collections are available to view by appointment, subject to compliance with current Museum policies.

## **13.0 Interpretation**

- 13.1** The differing needs of visitors are taken into account when preparing and presenting collections, information and their interpretation to suit a range of audiences and abilities.
- 13.2** Text guidelines are followed for displays, exhibitions and learning activities.
- 13.3** Information will be provided in a range of formats, such as: labels, large print, film with subtitles, audio, interactives, sound effects, talks and tours.

## **14.0 Learning**

- 14.1** The Museum will provide learning programmes tailored to the needs and requirements of specific groups and audiences.
- 14.2** Learning materials will be made available for different audiences and abilities as required, and as resources allow.
- 14.3** We will continue to develop our active learning environments and ability to handle collections for a range of different audiences and ability levels
- 14.4** We will provide specific resources to enable Special Needs groups to better engage with the Museum's collection and heritage.

## **15.0 Commercial**

- 15.1** The Museum regularly reviews and benchmarks its fees and charges, which are approved by the Council's Cabinet. A range of ticket pricing options is available.
- 15.2** Car parking charges at Swindon Designer Outlet Village car parks can be redeemed on admission to STEAM. Exclusions apply to special events.
- 15.3** Over the course of the year, STEAM will offer promotions and discounts to encourage greater participation.

**15.4** STEAM offers a Season Ticket option for unlimited visits for 12 months; creating a saving across each visit after the second visit.

**15.5** The STEAM Gift Shop stocks a variety of merchandise to suit diverse interests and budgets.

**15.6** The Museum has a range of affordable options available for commercial hire by charities, groups, personal and businesses. Such events will introduce new users to the collection and encourage a wide range of user groups that may think museums are not for them.

## **16.0 Communications**

**16.1** The Museum will ensure all information and communications follow good practice and SBC's guidelines for text and style.

**16.2** The Museum aims to keep the public informed of its collections, temporary exhibitions, events and activities through appropriate publicity.

**16.3** The Museum will provide a range of ways that people can communicate with us.

**Date Policy was reviewed:** *July 2021*