

CORK CITY COUNCIL

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ACCESS IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

2007 – 2015

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INTRODUCTION

The **National Disability Strategy**, which underpins the participation of people with disabilities in society, was launched by the Government on 21st September 2004.

The strategy builds on existing policy and legislation in this field including the Employment Equality Act 1998, Equal Status Act 2000, and Equality Act 2004.

The main aim of the strategy is to provide an understanding of Disability and Accessibility within the Disability Act 2005.

The key components of the strategy are:

- Disability Act 2005
- Education for persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004
- 6 Government Department Sectoral Plans
- Multi Annual Funding Programme - €900 million to 2009
- Citizens Information Act 2007 on personal advocacy

The Disability Act 2005 places a number of requirements on public bodies including local authorities and the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government principally.

Section 25 requires that public bodies ensure that their public buildings are, as far as practicable, made accessible to people with disabilities not later than 2015.

Section 26 requires that public bodies, where practicable and appropriate, ensure their mainstream public services are accessible for people with disabilities, and provide assistance if requested, with Access Officers appointed to co-ordinate arrangements.

Section 27 requires that services supplied to public bodies are accessible to persons with disabilities, unless it would not be practicable or justifiable on cost grounds or would result in an unreasonable delay.

Section 28 requires that public bodies, as far as practicable, communicate in forms that are accessible.

Section 29 requires that heritage sites, to which the public has access, are accessible, as far as practicable, to persons with disabilities.

Sections 38, 39 and 40 specify complaints and inquiry procedures; and

Section 47 requires that, in so far as practicable, all reasonable measures are taken to promote and support the employment by public bodies of persons with disabilities.

Disability Statistics

In the European Union 15-20% of persons have a disability. The 2006 Census figures identified 8.3% of the population as having a disability. This figure is expected to increase as the number of old age pensioners is set to grow by 75% over the next 30 years.

Wheelchair users make up 1%
People with visual impairments 1.4%
People with hearing difficulties 14%
Older people 10%

The 2006 Census found that 12.5% of the population of Cork City has a disability, this equates to 14,875 persons.

Cork City Council will conduct a disability census of its employees to establish the number and percentage of employees with disabilities.

APPROACH

- In 2002 Cork City Council adopted the **Barcelona Declaration**. The Barcelona Project takes its name from the Barcelona Declaration “The City and the Disabled” signed in Barcelona in 1995. The Declaration advocates the right of disabled people to equal opportunities and recognises their contribution to the society and the environment they live in.

Cork City Council has ratified the Barcelona Declaration to promote equal opportunities for people with disabilities, to design and provide accessible services and to consult with people with disabilities and their advocates.

- Cork City Council is currently in the process of producing its second **Social Inclusion Booklet**. The first edition was published in 2004.

The Social Inclusion booklet provides employees of Cork City Council with information to assist them in delivering a service that meets the needs of disadvantaged groups in Cork.

Section 1 provides an analysis of the extent of social exclusion

Section 2 provides an overview of the main policy responses to combating social exclusion

Section 3 provides a summary of achievements made by Cork City Council in tackling social exclusion

Section 4 identifies steps that employees should take to promote Social Inclusion as part of their daily work

The purpose of the booklet is to familiarise Cork City Council employees with the concepts of social inclusion and equality. It is also designed to ensure the social inclusion and Equality agenda remains a high priority within Cork City Council.

- For the past 8 years Cork City Council has engaged with the **Cork Access Group** to discuss the impact our current or planned services will have on people with disabilities.

The Cork Access Group, comprising 20 persons with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments has the aim of improving access and independence for all those within the community.

While in the main their work has been with the Roads & Transportation Directorate they have also had an input into other projects such as our recently constructed New Civic Offices.

The Cork Access Group also meets on a regular basis with other local bodies including Aer Rianta, Iarnrod Eireann etc. The goal of the Cork Access Group is to work together with these bodies to improve access in all areas and to try to ensure new and existing public buildings and infrastructure are accessible and safe for those represented by the group.

One of their main goals is to create an awareness of the issues faced on daily basis by members of the disabled community and to improve access for all with mobility problems.

The Roads & Transportation Directorate has found the meetings with the Cork Access group to be very useful, productive and informative over the years. It has allowed Cork City Council to interact first hand with the users of the infrastructure provided.

- Cork City Council commenced **Customer Care Training** which incorporated **Disability Awareness Training** in 2004.

In 2004 Senior Management Team attended the inaugural course. In 2004 110 staff attended, and in 2005 a further 128 staff attended. Initially the Customer Care Section and Training Section put together a programme in conjunction with the Cork Association for the Deaf and the National Council for the Blind who delivered the course on our behalf.

In more recent years Cork Access Group and Cork City Partnership have also delivered courses on our behalf. In 2006 and 2007 a total of 327 staff attended Disability Awareness Training and 70 staff attended **Diversity Awareness Training** which was delivered by Open Minds.

It is intended to continue the roll out of these programmes to heighten awareness of disability and diversity issues among all staff.

A **sign language course** for city council staff commenced in September 2005. This course was run by the Cork Association for the Deaf. Its aim is to provide staff with basic sign language skills to enable them converse with those who are hearing impaired. Employees were drawn from all directorates/functional areas. The course was carried out over a period of 30 weeks. 15 staff participated and certificates were awarded on completion of the course.

Cork City Council ran an intensive 1 day **Accessibility Training** course for Engineering and Architectural staff. Employees were drawn from across the organisation with staff from the following areas in attendance- Architects, Building Control, Roads & Transportation and the Fire Service. It is intended that further training courses will be offered in the future.

- An **Eclipse Reader Machine** is located at the Reception Desk in City Hall. The Eclipse Reader Machine is designed mainly for use by persons with a visual impairment. The functions of the Reader include enhanced positive and negative modes, a range of brightness, adjustable line markers and blanking that facilitates easier reading and tracking of text.

- Cork City Council is committed to providing its services where possible to all its citizens in a format that is easily accessible. Our **website www.corkcity.ie** was redeveloped in 2004 with accessibility being an important aspect of this project. Since 2004, the suite of Cork City Council websites (<http://www.corkcity.ie/relatedsites/>) uses CSS technology which ensures that the websites are accessible to more of our citizens. Employees developing the websites have attended courses on web design for accessibility and have liaised with the National Disability Authority and the National Council for the Blind in Ireland regarding the design. New websites are designed and developed to achieve WCAG WAI Level 2 accessibility levels. However further work on some of our earlier websites is required to ensure that they reach this level. The Access Cork Website www.accesscork.ie website conforms to the WCAG WAI Level 3 accessibility levels.
- 11 of the City Council's websites are registered with **Browsealoud** which is a computer programme that reads aloud all website content including PDF and MS Word documents. As you move the cursor over words, they are spoken aloud. Browsealoud is free to the end user. Browsealoud makes using the Internet easier for people who have low literacy and reading skills, English as a second language, dyslexia and mild visual impairments. Browsealoud is a Windows browser plug-in designed for use with Internet Explorer 4 upwards or Netscape Navigator. By installing the Browsealoud plugin onto your PC, you can have the web pages on the Cork City Council website read back to you.

Awards and Nominations

2008: The Access Cork website www.accesscork.ie won 2 awards in the 2008 Irish eGovernment Awards: the Accessible Irish eGovernment Award and the Project Management Irish eGovernment Award. The Accessible Irish eGovernment Award was awarded for best website to respond to and provide for persons with disability. This was awarded to the site or online service that has succeeded in clearly enhancing online access for those with disability. Key factors included improved access to resources and information for those with disability in accordance with government guidelines.

The Irish Project Management eGovernment Award was awarded for demonstrating outstanding skills in the management and delivery of an ICT project and meeting the objectives set out for that project. Key factors included innovative thinking, project definition, scoping, resource management and customer satisfaction.

2007: The Cork City Libraries website www.corkcitylibraries.ie was shortlisted for the Accessible Irish eGovernment Award category.

2006: The Cork City Council's website www.corkcity.ie won an Irish eGovernment Award for best local government web innovation. This award was for the website or online service that has succeeded in clearly delivering better services, information and efficiencies to its target audience. Key factors include enhanced customer service, an increase in efficiencies, access to local information or resource savings, simplicity or ease of use and innovation.

- In March 2008, Cork City Council undertook a Census of all employees to ascertain the numbers of employees within the Council who have a disability. The Disability Act 2005 defines disability as follows: “Disability, in relation to a person, means a substantial restriction in the capacity of the person to carry on a profession, business or occupation in the State or to participate in social or cultural life in the State by reason of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment”. The result of this census, together with existing HR records indicates that, as at the 31st December 2007, 3.6% of employees in Cork City Council have a disability. (58 employees) This is in excess of the public service requirement of 3%. In a further commitment to the employment of persons with disabilities Cork City Council has participated in the IASE Job Shadow Initiative 2008 and is actively exploring further options to support this and similar initiatives in this employment of persons with disabilities
- **Library Link - Serving the Housebound** In 2006 Cork City Libraries sought and received €50,000 under the National Disability Strategy Fund for the purchase and fitting out, including wheelchair lift, of a van for the housebound service. The van was fitted out in the last quarter of 2006. Fitting out included the installation of the wheelchair lift, shelving, a work desk, and ICT equipment. A driver was re-assigned to the Libraries from another part of the Council in February 2007, enabling the service to commence.

In March 2007, Cork City Libraries launched a new van-based service to bring library services to people who cannot travel to their local library. This is a city-wide service and is free of charge. Members of the public who are housebound for whatever reason may borrow books, DVDs, video tapes and audio-books on CD or on cassette, and may make requests for items to satisfy their personal interests. The van, manned by library staff, calls to individual homes, day-care centres, and nursing homes, on a weekly schedule. Users may select items from the shelves in the van or can have selections handed to them in their houses. The new van is fully wheelchair accessible and runs on bio-fuel.
- The **Corporate Plan 2004-2009** which was adopted by the elected members in November 2004 sets out the strategic priorities of Cork City Council until 2009. Equality is one of nine Core Organisational Principles and Quality Service is one of four Corporate Goals.

In addition our Customer Action Plan is based on the 12 Quality Service Standards.
- In 2004, the Social Inclusion Unit in the City Council funded the making of a **DVD on housing options for people with disabilities**. The DVD was made by the Centre for Independent Living and was circulated to organisations dealing with persons with disabilities for distribution to their members.
- On Friday 18th April 2008 Cork City Council officially launched an information DVD **Access Aware** in the Millennium Hall, City Hall, Cork .

Arising from meetings between Cork City Council and Cork Access Group came a proposal to develop a DVD that would show examples of good practice in Cork where access has been incorporated into the design of the built environment.

The DVD is targeted at providing information on good practice for engineers, planners and architects. It was produced by the Cork Access Group with funding from Cork City Partnership and Cork City Council.

The DVD presents very clearly the impact of good design specifications on making buildings, footpaths, etc accessible to people with disabilities. It will be of very practical use to professionals working on the design of the built environment because it shows local examples where accessibility has been incorporated into the design of the built environment. These examples show what can be achieved with the minimum of cost and at the same time ensuring the maximum accessibility to people with disabilities.

The DVD was produced by Framework Films, a Cork-based company and filming took place during 2007. Members of the Cork Access Group filmed locations in Cork where there were good examples of where accessibility had been incorporated into the design of the built environment.

ACCESS AUDITING

APPENDIX 1 PUBLIC BUILDINGS

Accessibility Audits were carried out by consultants appointed for the purpose of providing guidance on both the physical works and building management procedures required for ease of access and use of specified buildings by people who may be members of the public visiting the building or using its services or employees of Cork City Council. A total of 23 buildings were audited.

The audit identified elements under a priority grading as requiring action under the following categories;

1. Health & Safety - Immediate
2. Essential and Immediate - Year 1
3. Important Barriers to Universal Access Year 2
4. Maintenance Related - Year 3 and onward

APPENDIX 2 ROADS & TRANSPORTATION

The Roads & Transportation Directorate received notification in July 2006 that Cork City Council had received funding under the National Disability Strategy to carry out work under various headings, one of these being an Accessibility Audit of roads and footways in the city. This enabled the Roads & Transportation Directorate to engage consultants to carry out audits before the end of 2006 with a view to preparing programmes of physical works for 2007 and beyond.

Cork City Council consulted with interested stakeholders, principally the Cork Access Group, in both the drawing up of the consultant's brief and the carrying out of the audits. The audits include an examination of pedestrian mobility issues such as footway widths, obstructions on footways, texture/evenness, shape, colour, etc of surfaces and kerb heights, paving gradients and signals at crossings.

The audits were divided geographically into areas such as city centre, major road classes, minor road classes, particular areas near hospitals, colleges, schools, churches etc to enable the audit work to be sub-divided to match available funding.

Phase 1 of the accessibility audits dealt with all road classes except Local Tertiary, i.e. National Primary, National Secondary, Regional (Primary & Secondary), Local Primary and Local Secondary. Local Tertiary Roads, which comprise over 50% of the city's roads, were excluded with two exceptions – those in the city centre and also those in suburban areas in the vicinity of hospitals, colleges, schools, churches etc, were included in Phase 1.

Phase 2 of the Audit was carried out in 2007. This covered virtually all of the remaining Local Tertiary Roads, which are principally side streets and housing estates. These account for over 50% of the entire network.

Table 1

Class	km. of roads		% and km. of roads in Cork city		Class	Phase 1	Phase 2
						km. of roads audited	
National	7.60%	32	7.10%	30	NP	16	
			0.40%	2	NS	2	
Regional	9.70%	41	4.20%	18	RP	18	
			5.50%	23	RS	23	
Local	82.70%	350	11.80%	50	LP	50	
			16.50%	70	LS	70	
			54.50%	230	LT	17	211
Total	100.00%	423.08	100.00%	423.08	Total	196	211
						407	

Note:- the South Ring Road and South City Link Road, comprising 14 km, were excluded from all auditing as these are urban motorways without pedestrian facilities. A further 2km were also not audited.

As can be seen later, the Implementation Plan is prioritized in a broadly similar manner to the surveys, i.e.

1. City Centre
2. National, Regional & Local Primary Roads
3. Local Secondary Roads together with Local Tertiary Roads audited in Phase 1
4. Local Tertiary Roads audited in Phase 2

Whilst Cork City Council was carrying out accessibility improvements on its roads/ streets for many years, we welcomed this opportunity to develop longer term programmes in order to carry out the accessibility works on a more structured basis and larger scale than heretofore.

In order to procure consultants to carry out the audits, submissions were invited in September 2006. Following on from this tender documents/brief was issued to 6 no. consultants and priced proposals were invited by 23rd October 2006. The total road length included was 180 km (44% of total road network to be audited overall). Except for the city centre island (where all roads were included), the Local Tertiary Class was excluded at that stage. The latter are principally housing estates or minor streets.

Orders were placed with the lowest three consultants. As the tenders were within our estimates we included some extra roads of the Local Tertiary Class to bring the total Phase 1 audit length to 196 km.

In 2007, on receipt of further funding, we extended the contracts of two of the consultants and carried out the Phase 2 audits of the remaining roads, all Local Tertiary Class.

Although Roads & Transportation staff have regular meetings with the Cork Access Group, the audit process helped to further raise our awareness and expand our knowledge of disability access issues. Significant long-term benefits have accrued from the Access Audit process. There now exists an in-house accessibility awareness and auditing capacity in order to meet obligations to disability proof new road works in the future. It is important that this core of expertise is retained within Cork City Council.

In 2007 we received grant funding of €10,000 for Non-National Road accessibility works and also allocated €80,000 from our National Roads Upkeep grant for similar works on the N8. This work was carried out in-house through use of direct labour Roads staff.

The level of activity and expenditure required in forthcoming years will need to increase significantly to meet the prescribed deadline of having all possible roads accessible by 2015. This will require significant funding and extensive contract work to be undertaken to cope with the volume of work up to 2015.

APPENDIX 3 WEBSITES

In 2007 Cork City Council began Accessibility Audits for some of its websites and this work will continue in 2008. The Accessibility Audits highlighted coding and design issues which have prevented some of our websites from being fully compliant. These issues are presently being addressed in the websites that were audited in 2007. In 2008 we will also be arranging end user adaptive testing of the websites to highlight issues for people who have visual, sensory and physical challenges.

APPENDIX 4 PARKS ,CEMETERIES AND AMENITY AREAS

Access Audits for our Parks, Amenity Areas and cemeteries will be completed by June 2008.

Following on from the issues highlighted in these audits it is intended to draw up a programme of works by September 2008.

To date remedial works have been carried out to the following Parks and Amenity Areas to ensure that these facilities, as far as practicable, are accessible to people with disabilities:

Loughmahon Park, Atlantic Pond, Tory Top Park, The Lough,
Lee Fields , Clashduv Park, Bishop Lucey Park, Fitzgearld's Park
Gerry O Sullivan Park, Kilmore Park, Glen Park, Meelick Park ,
Glenamoy Park, Mahon/Blackrock Walk

All new Parks and Amenities are now designed in a manner to ensure that facilities as far as practicable are accessible to people with disabilities.

A large volume of remedial works have also been carried out in our cemeteries and it is envisaged that small volume of work will be required to make all our cemeteries accessible to people with disabilities.

CONSULTATION

In relation to the audits on our roads and footpaths Cork City Council consulted with interested stakeholders, principally the Cork Access Group, in both the drawing up of the consultant's brief and the carrying out of the audits. The audits include an examination of pedestrian mobility issues such as footway widths, obstructions on footways, texture/evenness, shape, colour etc of surfaces and kerb heights, paving gradients and signals at crossings.

Staff developing the websites attended courses on web design for accessibility and liaised with the National Disability Authority and the National Council for the Blind in Ireland regarding the design of our sites.

Cork City Development Board has developed a range of initiatives for people with disabilities.

The original Cork City Development Board Strategy "Imagine Our Future" identified a number of key actions that were to be monitored under the Strategy. Actions that were the specific responsibility of the City Council were:

- Monitoring the implementation of Part M Regulations
- Ensuring that all footpaths at defined crossing areas will be dished
- A quality Audit of footpaths was to be carried out

Other initiatives in the Strategy that were the responsibility of the City Council in partnership with other agencies were:

- Ensuring that all modes of transport will be fully and safely accessible to people with disabilities
- Re-develop the Railway and Bus Stations to meet the needs of people with disabilities

Arising from the implementation of the Strategy, the City Council engaged in extensive consultation with the disability sector.

These consultations in turn lead to the following 3 projects:

1. Access Brochure

Cork City Council, through the Department of Community and Enterprise have undertaken the production of an access brochure for Cork City Centre. This brochure serves as a guide to accessible venues for people with disabilities who are living in or visiting Cork. The brochure includes information on venues which are accessible, under the following headings – Accommodation; Transport; Leisure; Shops/Shopping Centres; Bars, Pubs & Nightclubs; Cultural venues; Banks and Post Offices. The guide also contains useful contact details for organisations dealing with people with disabilities.

The City Council established a Steering Group to assist with the development of this project. This steering group included representatives from a wide range of groups

supporting people with disabilities. In all a total of 11 disability groups, representing both the physical and sensory disability sectors were involved in the steering group.

2. Access all Areas Website

Following on from the success of the brochure, the City Council has led the development of a website with details of accessible venues in Cork. A steering group comprised of representatives from the voluntary sector and the business community participated in the project. This website www.accesscork.ie won two Irish eGovernment Awards - Accessible Irish eGovernment Award and the Project Management Irish eGovernment Award – at the 2008 Irish eGovernment Awards. The Irish eGovernment Awards, jointly run by the Public Sector Times newspaper and web usage and content experts Elucidate, are now in their sixth year. They are the recognised benchmark for excellence in Irish eGovernment services and standards. The Awards raise awareness and recognise the innovators, developers, forward thinkers and experts who are pioneering the changes happening in how the Irish Government delivers services to its citizens. This website conforms to the Web Accessibility Initiative's AAA guidelines.

3. Access all Areas Conference

The City Council organised a conference with Cork County Council and the Cork Access Group on the theme of accessibility in the built environment. The conference took place in the Millennium Hall, City Hall. Over 300 people attended the event which was a huge success. A conference report was produced and was widely distributed.

PRIORITISATION METHODOLOGY

The public building audits identified elements under a priority grading as requiring action under the following categories;

1. Health & Safety - Immediate
Critical and immediate health and safety risk and health hazard implications requiring immediate action.
2. Essential and Immediate - Year 1
Having legal non-compliance requiring immediate action.
3. Important Barriers to Universal Access Year 2
Impacts which should be addressed as soon as reasonably possible to improve access and facilities for those with disabilities.
4. Maintenance Related - Year 3 and onward
Works which should be undertaken as part of any future refurbishment schemes or as part of a maintenance programme allied to financial review.

In relation to Roads & Transportation there are two factors regarding prioritisation to be taken into account:-

- (a) The category or location of road to be included early in the programme.
 - (b) The types of defect to be included in the initial programme.
- (a) Category or location of road - As already stated, the prioritisation of road locations broadly follows our approach to the audits themselves, i.e. an emphasis on busier roads in the earlier years of the 2008-2015 implementation period. These roads would be generally those with the greatest pedestrian movement and although some of these roads may not have large pedestrian numbers, the heavy volumes of vehicular traffic would still affect pedestrian mobility, e.g. at road crossings.

The order of priority for roads would thus be:-

1. City Centre
2. National, Regional & Local Primary Roads
3. Local Secondary Roads plus Local Tertiary Roads audited in Phase 1
4. Local Tertiary Roads audited in Phase 2

- (b) Types of defect - The Consultant's Brief for the Accessibility Audit required that "*Action Priority Categories - 1, 2, 3, 4 – to be agreed between Client and Auditor following recommendations made by the Auditor*". Category 1 represents the highest priority, with Categories 3 & 4 being more of a desirable or discretionary nature. As there were three auditors involved, these Action Priority Categories were rationalised and a common list was agreed for all audits. Some defects in the lower categories, are not included in this Implementation Plan.

More significantly, there are large numbers of actions, particularly in the provision of new footpaths or widening of existing ones, which could not be practically undertaken for the following reasons. In the older built-up areas of Cork city there are many narrow roads and streets that do not have footpaths of the recommended width of 1.8 metres on both sides of the road. This could not be achieved without large scale land acquisition and demolition. Many have footpaths on one side only but this may be less than 1.8 metres in width or indeed less than the recommended minimum of 1.2 metres. In many cases there may be alternative routes such as a parallel street for someone to use. Where there is sufficient width on the road, we plan to include the footpath work but in most cases, narrow footpaths or the lack of them entirely did not arise without good reason.

Though factor (a) above determines the category of road to receive early attention, there are likely to be adjustments in programmes to cater for local demands. Some work will be advanced to meet requests from particular persons or groups where locations or routes are identified which are used regularly by people with disabilities. Ongoing meetings with the Cork Access Group will assist in this regard.

The development of 'Green Routes' in recent years has put an emphasis on work along public transport routes and this will also continue.

Detailed action plans have been developed based on the results of the audits. There are a number of issues which influence the development of action plans.

- (a) Although the auditors have given estimated costings of various works, the variations in the figures indicate the wide range of costs which will be encountered when work takes place. The annual expenditure figures in Appendix 2 are very approximate and more accurate costings will be developed based on experience in real contract situations.
- (b) All programmes are subject to funding and Appendix 2 is based on all necessary funding being available through a combination of own resources and grant aid.
- (c) Omitted work can still be considered for post 2015. The level of expenditure shown in Appendix 2 represents a very large increase over previous years and sets a very ambitious target for Cork City Council to achieve. It includes all work which is both high priority and practicable.
- (d) Some of the work identified in the Audits will be naturally incorporated as part of street improvement contract schemes on an ongoing basis.

Completion of actions detailed in this plan is subject to the necessary funding being available.

