

North Yorkshire Disability Forum

Planning for All meeting

Monday 7th October 2019, 2pm
Priory Centre, York

Present

Jane Simpson	Jane Simpson Access
David Walker	Scarborough BC
Marcus Whitmore	Scarborough BC
Peter Jones	Hambleton DC
Michelle Lanaghan	NYBCP
Robrt Harper	NYBCP
Phil Dodson	NYDF
Ian Lawson	NYDF
Danny Boyes	NYDF
Claire Canavan	Healthwatch North Yorkshire
Romy Bearder	Harrogate BC
Emily Havercroft	Selby District DF

Apologies

Richard Graham	North Yorkshire Dales NP
Ann Mornington	Hambleton DC

Welcome and Introductions

Presentation from Ian

Ian introduced the session and talked about disabled people's experiences.

Please see separately attached document for notes

Providing an idea of the barriers faced by disabled people when there is a lack of thought around inclusion.

Speaker

Jane Simpson

Architect and registered access consultant

Jane is recognised as an authority on accessible buildings and is the Royal Institute of Architects representative, on the group reviewing building regulations.

Presentation

For details please see separately attached document

Q&A

Ian mentioned that bins in accessible toilets, when baby change is also put in there, can be the biggest problems. It was agreed and noted that loo roll holders can also be a big problem.

Conversation was had around 'detail' being incredibly important when it comes to access. The biggest issue with this being around the amount of time available to go through drawings, and to try and find the details and address these. There are clear obvious issues that should not be missed. But it's about having the right level of detail.

Logic around how people look at spaces.

Thinking the space through, how people get there, access it, use it, navigate it, etc. What is the best for the building and for those using it? Best and most appropriate way of bringing everything together. Conflicts also need to be taken into account.

Access statements were discussed as essential and that planners need to see these as a way of taking their responsibilities seriously to the community. Why are they not compulsory? – validation requirements are just that this is submitted, not necessarily that they are adequate. At this point permission should perhaps be refused if insufficient? Design access statements need to say specifically what the access will be, but people are not trained to create these.

- Perhaps there needs a design guide on access statements, which sets out what needs to be included and covered. Almost like a template that people can follow?

Examples discussed of appeal decisions – where facilitating access for all has been the issue – access consultant brought in to support this. Ann Skippers, ex-planning chair, has written a lot on planning and access. Julie Fleck details are also included on the attached list document from Jane, for finding out more information.

How far can planning compel changes and push things? Jane suggested: Planning and building regs do not catch everything and/or include all disabilities. But she felt that getting an access statement helps to get access into the heads of designers and pushed more to the forefront of the planning process. Getting them to write this may help to get them to think.

- Providing policies and guidance on access statements can really help with access statements, identify why and how they may fail, and what is expected.

Good example: Manchester have their own access guide.

‘Detail’ is the answer. It is complex - conversation had around communications between departments, to try and make this happen. For example: superbly designed buildings can be accessible, but no external access provided to actually get people there, etc. Trying to get all parties around the table for connectivity is a nightmare, but crucial for making this happen properly and vital for making these projects work.

Ian asked – is this not making a good case for all councils to make it a matter of course to look at access and joined up thinking? First class example of the benefits of access.

Discussion around the lack of certain roles required for this, in place at council level. However, Jane explained that using a local access group and/or a recognised access consultant is often just as good.

Mandate 420 states that all public projects should include inclusivity. So, there is a real need to get developers to understand that access groups and consultants exist. Also, that the sooner access is considered and built into planning and design, the cheaper it is long term and the better for all. That they can bring in more money and a wider market long term.

New development projects are important for this way of thinking, but it was also highlighted that current environments and access standards also really need looking at. Jane said how much more improvement work could be done to enhance standard. For example, if something is being looked at anyway (e.g. resurfacing) on a regular update basis, a standard set of improvements could be made in relation to access, if considered as a matter of course.

Claire asked about the importance of client and user representation. Any guidelines for best practice of how that should be done? Jane explained that this depends on the building/project. Sometimes this can be called a 'consultation' but really just lip service. It really needs to be looked at in terms of guidelines around consultations including time scales, access to this etc. Very difficult to get access groups involved, but when and where this can happen, it is incredibly successful and helpful. Often Jane acts as an advocate. But would be great to get more groups involved with things.

Question was asked around - new pubs and restaurants and hearing impaired customers – pubs/cafes don't seem to be installing hearing loops. Why?

Jane talked about the problem with these - in that loop systems need to be in a location which is suitable. They can pick up sound in the whole pub for example. Ideally a quiet zone is where this would help. Good lighting is useful for lip reading, but loops do pick up everything. Loops can be very tricky. Technology is moving on quickly and may well be through wifi by 2021.

Our 'One Big Ask'

NYDF are asking that planners request an access and design statement with planning applications for new developments.

Phil said that from NYDF point of view – this meeting was the start of a conversation. Taking away from this we would like people to look into access and design statements more throughout. North Yorkshire has five disability forums, as well as the NYDF, and would like to extend this conversation, so that those groups can be used more directly. When designs come in, disability forums can be used to discuss this further and ask for feedback.

Jane explained that there is also an access association nationally, which anyone can join to learn a lot more.

Phil also asked – obviously there is a lot more people out there, working in planning/building/etc through the council – what is the best way to reach out to colleagues who cannot be here today, but might like to be part of the conversation? Jane thought counsellors who are interested in access, can be a great way to feed into this process and help to get things done.

Conversation around how different areas have very different pressures, whether that be new housing, etc. Where there is pressure to move quickly, sometimes the access issues are less considered. Jane talked about how families on lower incomes often have more access issues, therefore affordable housing/new housing projects should absolutely be making time for full consideration of this. It shouldn't have to be difficult if it is set up as a matter of course.

There maybe needs to be a policy which helps to say what should be in an access statement?

Wrap up session and next steps

Phil talked about how disability adaptations are not exclusive to those living with disabilities, any adaptations can help the wider community. Inclusion for all, not just for disability needs to be considered. People forget that access for everybody is important for all. People need to understand that the disability market is huge. The more accessible, the more customers.

A big thank you to Jane and to everyone for attending.