



**visits4u case studies:
The Charterhouse
London, United Kingdom**

The Charterhouse

London, UK

Title: Inclusive Access to a Walk through History

Description

The Charterhouse is a heritage building in the City of London. Originally London's largest cemetery for victims of the Black Death in 1348, then a Carthusian monastery, a private mansion, a boys school and an almshouse (from 1611 to this day) it had been closed to the public and hidden behind a brick wall for 400 years.

To share the rich history of this enduring site parts of the Charterhouse were uncovered to allow pre-booked tours with professional guides or resident almshouse Brothers.

Recently, to delve further into its fascinating stories, the Charterhouse worked with the Museum of London to undertake the "Revealing the Charterhouse" museum project.

Visitors to the Charterhouse include domestic and international tourists, scholars and school parties. Accessibility within such a challenging site, both physical and cognitive, has always been supplemented by staff, volunteers and the Brothers themselves..

Becoming inclusive:

1. Description

The Charterhouse naturally wished to improve its accessibility to generally improve the welcome it can give to all its visitors and the parts focused on were all the potentially public areas.

The greatest challenge was the actual building fabric of a rambling heritage site with many level changes and uneven surfaces. The character and integrity of the site obviously needed to be retained as much as possible.

Listed buildings present a unique but not insurmountable accessibility challenge. The work meant balancing what could be changed without detracting from its unique heritage value, with the ultimate goal of making a building open to all.

2. Description of steps taken, changes and progress

Initially an access audit of all public areas was commissioned to identify the priorities of necessary works. With support from the City Bridge Trust's Access and Sustainability grant funding, a comprehensive pan-disability access audit was undertaken. Thereafter, the access consultant worked closely with the teams at the Charterhouse to ensure every opportunity for improving access was explored, at all times respecting the heritage and historic fabric of the buildings and the estate.

From the access audit, a clear action plan was developed to help prioritise recommendations as part of the "revealing the Charterhouse" project, from 'quick wins' to more extensive refurbishments. The Charterhouse team encouraged an on-going relationship with the access consultant to advise at every stage - including full participation in the development of the new museum and visitor facilities.

Key challenges included physical accessibility to original doorways and fortunately it was possible to adjust some of the historic raised thresholds to achieve step free routes and entrances, the provision of new lift access to the first floor, and improving signage, wayfinding and communication, which included the provision of better lighting and installing hearing induction loops.

3. Main stakeholders / actors

The access auditor told the Charterhouse about the City Bridge Trust, a UK funding body that provides grants for charities within the Greater London area to undertake audits and a contribution to access improvements. This allowed the Charterhouse to benefit from an early audit which in turn informed the designs for a major project with financial support from both City Bridge Trust, donors, and Heritage Lottery Fund.



Primary stakeholders were the staff and resident Brothers who have an inordinate amount of pride and fondness for the Charterhouse and, of course, visitors from all over the world able to see, for the first time, a building steeped in history with so many stories to tell.

Results and Impact

By October 2017, The Charterhouse were thrilled to report that the Charterhouse had achieved its annual visitor projection of 24,000 people to the museum within the first nine months of opening. Of those who have visited so far, 99.5% would recommend the Charterhouse to a friend.

“A real treasure. A hidden gem!”

The improved access will contribute to its future sustainability as a primary destination for visitors to London.

Further information

The Charterhouse

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