

THE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (17.01.2005)

Minutes of the 77th meeting of the Development Committee of the Society, held in the Library, at the National Tramway Museum, Crich, Matlock, Derbyshire, on Monday 17th January 2005, at 11.00 am.

Issue: 1

Present: Messrs A.W.Bond (Chairman) and I. M. Dougill, Dr. A. Minion, Messrs A. Smith, G. Wilton and M.C.Wright.

Apologies for absence: Dr R.G.P.Tebb.

77.1 Access for the visually impaired

Dr Minion introduced his report which had been written following a visit to the Museum on Friday 29th October by the Derbyshire Association for the Blind (DAB). They had assessed the Museum, its exhibits and facilities from the viewpoint of the visually impaired.

He indicated that the Association had looked at the Museum from the viewpoint of the partially sighted and the elderly, but he hoped that their comments would be of benefit to all our visitors.

Dr Minion then considered the areas of the Museum where there were hazards or where improvements could be introduced:

Railings at the rear of the Printshop

Dr Minion asked whether these railings were necessary, which Mr Wright indicated they were, in order to prevent the visitors walking in front of tramcars at a 'blind spot'. Dr Minion suggested that these and all railings should have their 'knobs and knuckles' picked out in a contrasting colour, possibly gold and indicated that the DAB recommended gold hammerite paint. It was agreed to consider this point, but to continue to pick out features such as 'coats of arms' etc on traction pole bases.

Kerb edges

Dr Minion suggested that the DAB would like to see kerb edges white lined. It was suggested that this would place us permanently in the 1940's period, and even then not all kerb edges would be painted.

He commented that whilst 'blister paving' was the modern way of indicating an imminent hazard, brass studs are an acceptable alternative. Dr Minion indicated that these were required, particularly at the top and bottom of the steps leading to the children's playground. Mr Smith felt that brass studs could be slippery and cause a hazard in itself. He also did not feel that 'wholesale' white lining was appropriate.

Street furniture

The main concern was contrast and a difficulty differentiating colours and textures. Street furniture was easy to bump into, and whilst white or yellow bands were recommended, Dr Minion felt that gold bands would be equally acceptable. He felt that most of our street furniture would lend itself to having a 'band' picked out. It was agreed that we should first carry out a trial with bands on certain poles before this idea was pursued generally. The gold bands must be done in a sensitive manner in order that we do not look like a 'theme park'.

Mr Wright commented that Beamish, the Black Country Museum and 'Milestones' at Basingstoke did not pick out edges etc on street furniture. Mr Smith suggested that we experimented on modern furniture such as litter bins. Mr Wright commented that the most photographed area was around the Red Lion and north.

Emporium bookshop (now known as Barnett's sweet shop)

Dr Minion indicated that the ramp was a hazard and suggested railings on the side and edge of the ramp. It was noted that 'Long Row' in Belper was having railings installed and it was thought that this could be a useful pointer as to how this might be dealt with.

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Red Lion

One or two tables and chairs outside the Red Lion were seen as a hazard, whereas additional tables were thought to reduce the hazard. Mr Wright confirmed that the number of tables would be increased.

Rita's Tea Rooms

The small wall at the bottom of the ramp from the street was felt to be a tripping hazard.

Former Ice Cream Hut

The small plinth protruding into the footpath and the boot scraper were both seen as hazards. Further along the street the foliage was seen as a problem and it was agreed that it would be cut back.

Bowes Lyon Bridge

The knuckles on the railings should be painted, whilst the protruding ends of the fencing poles should be made less hazardous.

It was agreed that amendments to and painting of the railings at the Museum was potentially the most expensive item, but Mr Bond indicated that there were funds available from the grant under which Dr Minion had been employed.

Signage

Dr Minion had looked at signage. Some signs were too high and many could be a foot (0.3m) lower. Many problems suffered by the visually impaired related to tunnel vision and lower signs were helpful in this regard. The 'Cross Here' sign would be lowered by about 12 inches (0.3m).

He had been experimenting with signage and showed examples of 'foam board' signs with black lettering on a yellow background and signs with white lettering on a dark blue background. He suggested an A2 size would be appropriate. The signs would be colourfast and come with a ten year guarantee. Mr Wright suggested 'white on blue', as more traditional, rather than yellow. It was agreed that the proposed new signs for the toilets, including the disabled toilet in the 'Red Lion', should follow this pattern. Mr Smith suggested a period 'corporate' pattern for signage.

Exhibition Hall

Dr Minion had considered the exhibition hall with the needs of the visually impaired in mind. The 'tram at night', whilst very successful and atmospheric, created too much contrast between the tram in darkness and the bright shop windows. He suggested a subtle etching on the rear of the window glass to make it evident that they were glass. Mr Bond suggested stick on lettering would be more in keeping with our Victorian / Edwardian theme. Dr Minion also suggested a spotlight on the exit door to highlight the way out. He also suggested that the solid door panels be replaced with glass panels with lettering.

He indicated that the (Blackpool former toastrack) benches were a problem for the visually impaired and suggested that they be repainted and placed on carpet in a contrasting colour.

The 'Way Out' sign should be 12 inches (0.3m) lower, whilst the external sign hanging from the chain was too low. The chain adjacent to the traverser pit was poor and could trip up a child who was running and not looking where they were going. Dr Minion favoured an 'A' board.

Dr Minion suggested standardised 'clip on' foam information boards, clipped on to the handrails of the tramcars on display, in either yellow & black or blue & white, as suggested above. They could also act as a physical barrier to prevent visitors boarding the trams. The varied signs on tramcar exhibits were in the wrong font and gave indigestible amounts of information. A Science Museum study had suggested 'small chunks' of information. Mr Bond cautioned against employing signs which spoil the image created by the exhibition.

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The dark tunnel to the children's play area was poor; Mr Wilton suggested a sign saying 'much more to do' or similar and a colourful mural.

The Workshop Gallery

The lighting was very poor and the wattage could be tripled. Mr Bond explained that this was caused by the cost limitations of the grant at the time of construction. Dr Minion indicated that the grey carpet, whilst it did not show dirt and discolouration, was a neutral colour; a contrasting colour would be preferable. Mr Bond pointed out that the carpet had a circular pattern in two-tone grey.

Wakebridge and the Woodland Walk

Dr Minion had considered these areas in outline only. He indicated that the toilet needed a clearer sign for the benefit of the visually impaired on the door.

It was agreed to consider these areas at a later date.

77.2 Future action

Dr Minion agreed to amend his presentation booklet which would be placed before the Board when they considered his thoughts on a Board 'walkabout'.

77.3 Next Meeting of the Committee

This was agreed as Monday 28th February at 11am.

There being no other business, the meeting was closed at 12.40 pm.