

Tamworth Castle Museum Access Policy

2023 – 2028

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out Tamworth Castle Museum's commitment to maximising access to the Castle, museum collections and archives, and to identify the ways in which we achieve this across the service.

2.0 Scope

This Access Policy relates to all collections held by Tamworth Castle Museum as well as our services, activities, facilities, content, and programmes onsite, off-site and online. It is published online at www.tamworthcastle.co.uk

3.0 The Public Sector Equality Duty (the Equality Duty)

Tamworth Borough Council

Tamworth Borough Council has a public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010. The Act brought together existing equality laws and made them stronger. It also strengthened existing duties and places new duties on public bodies. The protected characteristics listed in the Act are

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion / Belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Tamworth Castle Museum will adhere to all national and international law, including specifically in relation to access but not exclusively the Equality Act 2010, Freedom of Information Act 2000, Data Protection Act 1998, and the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.

Tamworth Borough Council is a Disability Confident Committed Employer and this policy is consistent with Tamworth Borough Council's Equality and Diversity Policy 2020 - 2024 which states that: 'We aim to create and maintain a community that embraces change and welcomes diversity; diversity helps to build such communities by celebrating differences and combining our talents.'

We will be guided by national standards, ethical codes and best practice guidelines, including, but not exclusively:

- BS8300 Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people,
- BS8477:2007 Code of practice for customer service,
- PAS 197:2009 Code of practice for cultural collections management and
- PAS78 Guide to good practice in commissioning accessible websites.

4.0 Museum Accreditation Scheme

The Accreditation Scheme is the recognised standard for museums and galleries across the UK. It is managed as a UK Partnership between Arts Council England, the Welsh Government, Museums Galleries Scotland and the Northern Ireland Museums Council.

An approved Access Policy is both good practice and a key requirement of the Museum Accreditation Scheme, under which Tamworth Castle Museum has Full Accreditation status (Accredited No 648). Museums participating in the Scheme must have an Access Policy or statement approved by the governing body. It covers how people can see, use and reference the collection, gain access to the museum buildings and sites, and how the museum shares information about the collection with people.

5.0 Access assessment and action plan

An Access Audit was completed in 2022 by Direct Access Consultancy Ltd and an in-house Accessibility Guide was produced in January 2023.

The Access Action Plan will be developed in conjunction with the Access Audit 2022, setting out the work required to improve access by removing barriers identified by the audit, customer feedback, and engagement with local support and advocacy groups. This is implemented and monitored by Tamworth Borough Council.

6.0 Our commitment to access

Tamworth Castle Museum is committed to and believes that people from all audience groups have a fundamental right to access, engage with, and enjoy the collections and museum services. We recognise that there are many barriers to access at all levels but are committed to making all aspects of our activities as fully accessible as our resources allow, including access to buildings, collections, events, exhibitions, and learning.

Tamworth Castle Museum is committed to increasing public access to collections and information associated with those collections, to increase knowledge and understanding of the objects that the service holds and Tamworth's cultural heritage. We will ensure sustainable access to the collections and also that any competing demands of access and long-term care of collection items will be managed in accordance with the outcomes of a collection care risk assessment.

We will provide welcoming staff and learning opportunities for different audiences, different levels of ability and tailor our programmes to meet the needs of specific groups. We will promote all our activities and collections using accessible means of communication.

We are committed to an audience-first focus, developing a programme of activities and events that are designed to involve, inform and engage groups from a wide range of backgrounds and all sectors of Tamworth's diverse community.

In order to eliminate and reduce barriers and ensure equality of access we will consider the following aspects of accessibility to our services and collections.

- **Physical:** we aim to maintain buildings and facilities that are as physically accessible as possible
- **Sensory:** we will develop a wide range of sensory experiences and build into our service activities and programmes

- **Intellectual:** we acknowledge that people have different learning styles and we aim to provide information in a range of formats appropriate to the needs of a wide range of visitors
- **Cultural:** we acknowledge and recognise cultural differences and seek to represent varied cultural experiences and issues where possible through our programmes and exhibitions
- **Emotional / Attitudinal:** we will ensure that all visitors feel welcome, valued and comfortable in our buildings
- **Financial:** we will aim to minimise financial barriers and aim to keep charges as competitive as possible to ensure that as many people as possible can access our services, heritage sites and collections.

7.0 How Tamworth Castle Museum will deliver the policy

We will ensure delivery of our approach in a number of ways which include but are not limited to:

Consultation and audiences

- The Museum is committed to understanding who its visitors/users and non-visitors/users are, so that we meet their needs and provide access to collections and services.
- The Museum is committed to developing and diversifying its audiences through its Access Plan
- We will consult with non-users/less-engaged users to identify barriers to participation.
- We will consult regularly with our audiences and non-users to ensure the broadest possible access to our facilities, services and collections.

Community links and outreach

- The Museum is committed to actively engaging with diverse local communities. Our Access Plan will develop links with target audiences, especially through partnership and co-production with other community, cultural and educational organisations and groups.
- The Museum will develop outreach options for those who are unable to visit the Museum.
- The Museum is committed to providing volunteer opportunities and seeks to recruit volunteers from diverse backgrounds. The recruitment and management of volunteers is guided by Tamworth Borough Council's Volunteer Policy.

Premises

- The Museum operates from five sites, Tamworth Castle, Holloway Lodge, The Stables, The Gatehouse (Upper Lodge Kiosk) and Amington Store.
- The Museum is committed to providing access to all of its buildings and facilities. There are some limitations due to the physical constraints of listed buildings and the Scheduled Monument site, especially in office and store areas.
- Information for potential visitors explaining our opening times, services and access to the collections is available on our website, social media, leaflets and by telephone and e-mail.

Collections

- The Museum is committed to increasing public access to the collections and archives, and to increasing knowledge and understanding of the collections and heritage sites.

- We will provide varied means of access and interpretation to the collections including permanent displays, temporary exhibitions, loans, object handling, tours, events and activities. The provision of access will be balanced against the appropriate care and management of the collection in question.
- A Collections and Archives Officer is employed on a full-time basis and is able to deal with enquiries in person or via email or telephone regarding collections objects and archives.
- To increase access to collections that are not on display, we offer research facilities, web-based resources and access to the Collections and Archives Officer.
- Stored collections are available to view by appointment with the Collections Officer.
- Collections are continually reviewed to better reflect diverse local communities, although due to capacity new items are only added to the collections if they are of particular significance and relevance.

Information

- The needs of visitors are considered when preparing and presenting collections information and interpretation in the galleries, exhibitions, off-site and online.
- The Museum will ensure that all information and communications (including leaflets, labels, blog content, social media, and website) follow good practice and the Museum's guidelines for text and style. A review of our website was undertaken by Vocal Eyes in 2022.
- The Museum aims to keep audiences informed of its collections, temporary displays and events through appropriate publicity including social media and its website.
- We will provide information and interpretation to suit a range of audiences and abilities. Information and interpretation will be provided in a range of formats, for example labels, large print, film, interactives and audio, as resources allow.
- The Museum aims to present labels, displays, online and marketing materials that respect a diversity of backgrounds. Images and/or descriptions of the Museum will reflect the diversity of the community.
- English is the main language used across all Tamworth's communities and will continue to be the primary language used in delivery of our services, although we recognise other languages used by Tamworth's residents. The Museum's Access Plan will consider, where possible, the provision of targeted translation on the website and in the main galleries.
- We will provide information about access provision on our website www.tamworthcastle.co.uk

Learning and Programming

- The Museum will provide a range of suitable handling materials drawn from the collections for different audiences and levels of ability.
- We will provide learning programmes that are tailored to the needs and requirements of specific target groups and audiences.
- Educational materials will be made available for different audiences and abilities, as required and as resources allow.
- Temporary exhibitions, events and activities will be programmed throughout the year for people with a wide range of abilities.
- The Museum will develop an annual events programme to further support and deliver knowledge and learning to different audiences and levels of ability.

- The Museum will continue to develop and expand its educational offer encouraging schools and young people to experience the Castle across all Key Stages.
- The Museum will continue to explore opportunities to engage and work with interns from local Higher Educational facilities.

Customer Care

- All staff members and volunteers are involved in implementing this policy, assisting and welcoming our customers.
- The Museum will work within the framework of Tamworth Borough Council's customer care commitments and standards.
- All users of the Museum will be treated with equal respect within an inclusive atmosphere and welcomed according to their individual needs.
- We offer baby changing facilities, easy access toilet facilities, parking for pushchairs and seating for the comfort and ease of visitors.
- Wherever possible, signage and navigation is produced to suit a range of needs and responds to requests made by the public regarding information required in alternative formats, as resources allow.
- We provide visitor facilities to meet our customers' needs at the Museum including a shop and takeaway hospitality area.
- The Museum is committed to providing a safe environment for all. It has procedures for the safe evacuation of all users and staff in an emergency.
- Our staff receive online Safeguarding training and we follow Tamworth Borough Council's Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk of Abuse & Neglect Policy and Procedure.

Staff and Training

- Tamworth Borough Council is an equal opportunities employer. All people receive equal opportunities in recruitment, employment and training. The Museum is committed to increasing the diversity of its workforce within Tamworth Borough Council's policies.
- As part of staff induction process, new staff will receive equality and diversity online training.
- We will ensure that contractor, consultants and outside agencies working for, or with Tamworth Castle Museum adopt and observe our access policies.

Financial

- The Museum does carry entrance charges but will always offer concessionary tickets and where possible, opportunities for multi-buys.
- The Museum will provide some activities free of charge so that all parts of the community can enjoy its services.
- The Museum will explore opportunities to further develop free access such as through Heritage Open Days.
- Volunteers should not be deterred from offering their services because they feel they cannot afford to volunteer. The Museum's Volunteer Policy sets out circumstances in which travelling expenses can be offered.

