University of Essex Access Forum (EAF)

Notes of meeting held on 12th November 2011


1. Apologies: Syd Kent, John Crust, Alexandra Seabrook, Jan Cooper, Mark Vinter

2. Minutes of last meeting agreed.

3. Matters arising:

   a) Loughton parking: works have been held up due to resurfacing of main car park. 2 designated spaces at upper level by Corbett Theatre Cafe to be completed in the summer

      ACTION – IH to request update from Roy Abbott

   b) Heavy Doors: IH reported that work is well-underway. All doors originally assessed as top priority have now been replaced or adjusted. Works will continue on a priority basis until full list complete.

   c) Zest: no works have been progressed. Explanation/update has been requested from Richard Murphy and Peter Church.

   d) Darren Baker has been invited to join the Access Forum (and has!).

   e) Departmental Access Guides: are now available online. However although permission was negotiated to update Access@Essex directly (and RM/KB attended training), unfortunately the launch of the new university site has halted progress and we are unlikely to have access for maintenance purposes for the foreseeable future.

   f) Square 2 furnishings: no action taken as yet.

      ACTION - RM & AJ to discuss with Mike Willis in spring term.

4. Brief updates:

   a) Elmer Square: technical space in the new lecture theatre has proved the only major access hitch since its design was readjusted to achieve desire sightlines in a way that prohibited w/c access. This cannot be addressed completely, even though still at drawing stage because of knock-on effect to other spaces whose dimensions are already determined. EAF has registered disappointment at this outcome in the context of a new build. However a number of ‘reasonable adjustments’ have been negotiated via Sue Pellegrino, Access Consultant to the build.

   b) Campus Access Interactive Map – work is on-going; map functionality now extends to all internal spaces on campus; plans to incorporate interactive maps within the planned square-based totems (in conjunction with Caliba) have been dropped, but alternatives (projection via windows) are now being actively explored. KG presented to Vice-chancellor last month. Work on an iphone App has been commissioned by Estates (MV) and recently completed. KG will present to next EAF meeting.

   c) University dark room: EAF approached by Mariya Ustymenko (Photographic Society) to audit the dark room and consider access improvements (for w/c users in particular). JC has confirmed that fire safety considerations need not obstruct, so discussions are moving forward.
5. **HHS student reports on campus access issues**: report from Tracy Burge on HHS annual access exercise by from this year’s student cohort.

a) **Library**: accessible entrance (why does it need to be controlled?); information required of disabled visitors on entrance which is experiences as somewhat patronizing (what are the security issues? will they be addressed by the design of the new student centre, which will offer a new route/fire exit out?); signage to accessible lift (poor – can this be addressed?)

b) **Laundry** – door closing heavy and accessible washer/dryer not working?

c) **Campus shop** - internal ramped access leading into campus shop very slippery in wet weather for ambulant disabled customers.

d) **Accessible toilets** – lack of signage at square level, including info on location of university radar keys (for locked toilet facilities).

e) **Health Centre**: no automatic door provided for users on entry which could pose a problem for wheelchair or walking aid users and also the paving slab alignment to and from the health centre is very uneven and posed a problem for wheelchair users.

f) **Biological science building** The corridors were very narrow, so when someone was coming the other way students had to stop and wait.

g) **Santander bank**: getting into the bank was good as there was a door button for automatic entry. However, none on the inside, so users found getting out difficult – the door was heavy; a crutch-user needed assistance.

h) Generally **heavy doors** (this is already being dealt with by Estates, see 3b above)

i) **SU issues**: not experienced as wheelchair-friendly; automatic entrance door regularly fails to work; students had to reverse in to SU and over doorframe ridge, which held up other people entering/exiting; the large door from the SU to Lab J is difficult to open for chair users, especially with the pool tables so close to the door.

**ACTION:**

- a) AJ to follow up with Mary Pelowski and John Crust
- b-h) IH to follow up within Estates
- i) SU (KG) to investigate further

6. **Student mental health and wellbeing** – AJ reported that Mental Health is to separate from the Disability team and combine instead with the Counselling Service, to become a new Student Support team, known as either the Wellbeing Service or Mental Health and Counselling (name to be confirmed).

7. **EAF Terms of Reference**

a) Amended wording of EAF’s Terms of Reference (ToR) agreed.

**ACTION:** RM to finalise draft and circulate

b) Communication structures with Estates discussed. Despite existence of ToR to this effect, EAF are still not routinely notified of new works nor invited on to project steering groups. Agreed that:

- EAF will be included in all major works from RIBA Stage C onwards
- EAF will be copied into Estate’s (4-monthly) Capital and Development Joblist, detailing pending works and works in progress.
**ACTION:** IH to report back to MV/RH/AN to ensure mechanisms are understood and in place

8. **Under-Podia Access Map** – RM reported that design of 1st draft map is nearing completion, subject to approval from Communications and External Relations etc

9. **A.O.B.**

   a) RM raised issue of EAF management and the workload that currently falls to the Chair. TB proposed exploring the option of creating a voluntary post for an HHS student by way of work experience. To be discuss further, but could take responsibility for such activities as:

      - Convening EAF meetings, agenda-setting and minute-taking
      - Updating department access guides and campus/under-podia access maps
      - Liaison with Estates on specific projects e.g. door weights
      - Maintenance and update of Access Issues List

   **ACTION:** TB and RM to explore options further

10. **Date of next meeting** – to be confirmed