



**Mapping and Performance Check of the Supply of  
Accessible Tourism Services  
(220/PP/ENT/PPA/12/6491)**

*Case Study 1*

**London, U.K**

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**European Commission**  
**Enterprise and Industry Directorate General (DG ENTR)**

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**Case study: London**

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## Executive Summary

London is a world tourist destination. The city has a mix of old and new infrastructure. This presents a challenge that all historic cities face when addressing accessibility, investing in changes while maintaining a 'sense of place' and identity. London has a policy of inclusive design for the benefit of both residents and visitors to ensure that as many as possible can enjoy the city. New build can incorporate accessibility from the outset, however it becomes more costly to change a public realm, much of which was developed in the nineteenth century. This requires long term investment, which London has made and continues to make, as it undertakes a programme of change that takes it into the future. The Mayor of London champions accessibility and supports changes through a framework of policy and strategy that the Greater London Authority has developed.

The 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games proved a catalyst for some accelerated change and investment to make London more accessible, essential with the eyes of the world watching. This brought many benefits for the provision across the supply chain with improvement in: information, the public realm, transport and accommodation. This has provided a legacy that London can build upon. Disabled people believe that overall there is better accessibility in the supply chain and the visitor experience in London. , They also believe though that more still needs to be done, as London has not yet reached its goal of being fully accessible. Information about accessibility needs to be collated and marketed better. The basics like wheelchair access and accessible toilets have to be pushed harder. The transport programme continues to make more of the old tube system accessible. More needs to be done to ensure that Boroughs work more closely together to ensure a more homogenous public realm. There also needs to be greater engagement with small and medium enterprises to ensure they improve their accessibility. There's also a requirement for getting disabled people to work with organisations. Not just to help get it right but to lose historical mistrust and doubt about the next 'accessibility solution'.

## 1.0 Introduction

London is a world-class city and a key destination for inbound visitors to the UK. In 2012, 15.5 million visitors spent time in the capital, spending over £10bn. This represents 54% of all inbound visitor spending in the UK (?).<sup>1</sup> Tourism supports 226,000 jobs or around 5 per cent of all employment in the capital and accounts for £6.6 billion ‘tourism direct Gross Value Added ‘ of £34.3 billion nationally.<sup>2</sup>

Being ‘accessible’ is a very broad term and covers many individual needs. It is not therefore easy, or indeed possible, to map everything that is being done in London to meet the very wide range of needs of people with a range of disabilities or impairments, for example from mobility, hearing and visual to learning difficulties, dietary requirements, allergies and long-term illness.

It is possible, however, to highlight policies and resulting good practice that is in place in London with the aim of making it an inclusive city, one that welcomes and serves everyone. The size and scale of London means that change cannot happen overnight, but it has embarked on a journey to develop and evolve, with the aim to one of the most accessible, cities in the world.

## 2.0 Overview and background information

All tourism businesses in the United Kingdom have obligations under The Equality Act 2010, which requires them to treat everyone accessing their goods, facilities or services fairly, regardless of their age, gender, race, sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment, religion or belief. They are required to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ to the built environment and the services and facilities they provide. However, a report, ‘Games Changer’<sup>3</sup> commissioned by the GLA in March 2013, identifies that ‘stakeholders, including the Equality and Human Rights Commission, state that disability is losing prominence within the confines of the Equality Act’. It’s observed that at borough level ‘disability is now a “subset of absolutely everything”’.

Other legislation which impacts on accessibility is Part M of the Building Regulations in England which promotes inclusive design, requires the ease of access to and circulation within all buildings, together with requirements for facilities for disabled people.

The Mayor of London, together with the London Assembly members, is

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<sup>1</sup> [www.visitbritain.org/insightsandstatistics/inboundtourismfacts/index.aspx](http://www.visitbritain.org/insightsandstatistics/inboundtourismfacts/index.aspx)

<sup>2</sup> Working Paper 53 – Tourism in London: GLA: [www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/wp53.pdf](http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/wp53.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> ‘Games Changer’ GLA Post Olympic Games Report: <http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/equalities/london-2012-legacy/an-evaluation-of-london-s-accessibility-for-disabled-visitors>

accountable for the strategic government of Greater London. This includes responsibility for transport, planning, economic development and wealth creation, social development and the improvement of the environment. The Mayor has responsibility for the management of the Greater London Authority (GLA) London's governing body and has a key role in running the city and sets out plans and policies to improve the city. The current Mayor, Boris Johnson, wants London to be the 'best big city in the world'. His work includes making it easier for people to move in and around the city, improving London's environment, helping the capital's businesses to thrive.

To help achieve these aims and deliver his plans, the Mayor recognises the need to work in partnership to improve the capital and invests in and works with many different people and organisations to achieve this aim. In respect of Tourism, the Mayor of London and a network of commercial partners fund 'London & Partners' a not-for-profit public private partnership. London & Partners was created to bring together the remits of the capital's promotional agencies: **Think London**, **Study London** and **Visit London**. The aim is to create one single promotional organisation for London that can speak with one voice] to all audiences in the UK and internationally. They work in partnership with organisations in London and across the world.<sup>4</sup>

The London Enterprise Panel is the body through which the Mayoralty seeks to manage partnerships and work with London's boroughs, business and Transport for London to take a strategic view of the regeneration, employment and skills agenda for London.<sup>5</sup>

From the early 1990's there was positive action to improve transport and infrastructure to make the city more accessible. The Greater London Authority Act 1999 places responsibility for strategic planning in London on the Mayor, and requires him to produce a Spatial Development Strategy for London which he has called the London Plan; he is also required to keep it under review. In 2004 the first Supplementary Planning Guidance to the London Plan was published. The Guidance, called **Accessible London: Achieving an Inclusive Environment** gave advice on how to promote and achieve an inclusive environment in London. This guidance highlighted an aim to improve the tourism environment, visitor information and management to provide a better visitor experience and manage the pressure on key tourism locations. It also recognised how the National Accessible Standard (NAS serviced and self-catering accommodation, which aims to give disabled people an easy to understand accessible rating system, could help the tourist industry to make accommodation more accessible. It was recommended that Boroughs should be aware of these standards and ensure that proposals in their areas comply with or exceed these standards.

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<sup>4</sup> London & Partners: [www.londonandpartners.com/about-us/](http://www.londonandpartners.com/about-us/)

<sup>5</sup> London Enterprise Panel: [www.london.gov.uk/priorities/business-economy/working-in-partnership/london-enterprise-panel](http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/business-economy/working-in-partnership/london-enterprise-panel)

In 2011 the Plan was updated and the guidance is currently under review. Key policies in this plan that affect tourism are:

- London's Visitor Infrastructure which requires that at least 10% of new hotel bedrooms are wheelchair accessible.
- Town Centres where the provision of Shopmobility schemes and other measures to improve access to goods and services for older and disabled Londoners should be promoted<sup>6</sup>

The city of London also provides guidance, 'Designing an Accessible City'.<sup>7</sup> Inclusive design is also implicit in all aspects of the plan

The impetus to speed up the process of improving accessibility in London came, however, with the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games acting as a catalyst for change by encouraging businesses to make their premises, facilities and services more accessible. The Games were also seen as a vehicle for changing perceptions about disabled people by promoting economic inclusion. Boris Johnson, Mayor of London said "I urge all London businesses, including shops, restaurants and hotels to start thinking now about they can make their goods and services as accessible as possible in time for and to reap the benefits of the 2012 Games."<sup>8</sup>

In 2009, accessibility was addressed in the London Tourism Action Plan 2009-13 developed by the London Development Agency. This identified actions to improve accessibility, which are shown in Annex 2.<sup>9</sup>:

In 2010, as part of the preparation for the 2012 Games and beyond, a report 'Accessible Hotels in London' commissioned by the GLA and others was published. Its purpose being to provide evidence to inform a new London Plan policy on the percentage of accessible hotel bedrooms required to meet demand now and over the next 20 years.<sup>10</sup> The report provides a useful definition of a room which is 'accessible', as 'one which minimises barriers to use for as many people as possible'. It notes that

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<sup>6</sup> [www.london.gov.uk/priorities/planning/publications/accessible-london-achieving-an-inclusive-environment#sthash.ICP1B44k.dpuf](http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/planning/publications/accessible-london-achieving-an-inclusive-environment#sthash.ICP1B44k.dpuf)

<sup>7</sup> City of London – Designing an Accessible city: <http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/about-the-city/what-we-do/access-disability/Pages/Designing-an-accessible-City.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> London 2012: a legacy for disabled people <http://odi.dwp.gov.uk/docs/wor/leg/legacy-full.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> London Tourism Action Plan 2009: [www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&ved=0CDgQFjAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ealing.gov.uk%2Fdownload%2Fdownloads%2Fid%2F4091%2Freg16-london\\_tourism\\_action\\_plan\\_200913\\_2009&ei=EkPqUsvEOMurhAe584HgAg&usq=AFQjCNHPDh0TAjPofogUZ1urQHojh5WzYQ&sig2=mJttL0H9oaQJttizKr7Zg](http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&ved=0CDgQFjAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ealing.gov.uk%2Fdownload%2Fdownloads%2Fid%2F4091%2Freg16-london_tourism_action_plan_200913_2009&ei=EkPqUsvEOMurhAe584HgAg&usq=AFQjCNHPDh0TAjPofogUZ1urQHojh5WzYQ&sig2=mJttL0H9oaQJttizKr7Zg)

<sup>10</sup> Accessible Hotels in London: <http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/planning/publications/accessible-london-achieving-an-inclusive-environment>

this 'is a wider definition than a room being wheelchair accessible as it allows use by people with disabilities other than mobility impairments.

The Mayor's vision from now to 2013 and beyond, is for London to be the "best big city on earth". To do this implies that London needs to be more accessible and inclusive, which the 2011 London Plan<sup>11</sup> reflects. It talks about implementing the Tourism Vision, which requires improvement the quality, variety and distribution of visitor accommodation and future development meeting the highest standards of accessibility and inclusion. Key policies, which impact on tourism also include:

- An Inclusive Environment which requires all new development in London to achieve the highest standards of accessible and inclusive design
- London's Visitor Infrastructure which requires that at least 10% of new hotel bedrooms are wheelchair accessible
- Town Centres where the provision of Shopmobility schemes and other measures to improve access to goods and services for older and disabled Londoners should be promoted

It also highlights a number of other policies on the design of the public realm, car parking facilities, the walking and pedestrian environment, accessible sports facilities, access to arts and culture,. The point is reinforced that

The 'Equal Life Chances for All' framework produced by the Mayor also impacts on accessibility in the city<sup>12</sup>. Amongst the stated aims are:

- Promoting accessible and inclusive design through planning processes
- Ensure that transport accessibility takes into account the whole-journey approach, reducing the journey time difference between step free and non step free journeys
- Developing InclusiveLondon.com so that people planning a trip to the city will be able to find out about the accessibility features of hotels, restaurants, pubs, shops, museums and tourist attractions, the 2012 Games venues and more.
- Improve the accessibility of London as a visitor experience through policies to improve the public realm and transport. Also to produce guidelines for businesses on access requirements, and develop a triage service to support businesses in implementing the guidelines

The Mayor has a transport policy and strategy which sets out a 20 year vision, this includes improving accessibility. Published in March 2012 'Taking forward the

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<sup>11</sup> London Plan 2011 <http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/planning/london-plan>

<sup>12</sup> 'Equal Life Chances for All' <http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/archives/Equal%2520Life%2520Chances%2520for%2520All%2520FINAL%25202012.pdf>

Mayors Transport Accessibility Transport Plan the issues of improving accessibility to London's transport is addressed in this document.<sup>13</sup>

London is the hub of the UK's rail network. There are some 366 train stations managed and operated by various rail companies including Transport For London (TFL). The Department for Transport strategy document 'Railways for All' sets out what is being done to improve accessibility on the railways, which includes London.<sup>14</sup> The Equality Act 2010 requires all station operators to take reasonable steps to ensure that they do not discriminate against disabled people. A guidance document 'Accessible train station design for disabled people: A code of Practice' provides guidance to all station operators so that they continue to improve access to their services.

Whilst policies and strategies have been in place for sometime to improve the accessibility of London, the hosting of the Olympic and Paralympic games gave an added impetus to this ambition. The Mayor declared that he "wanted to make the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games the most accessible ever". At the 'Accessible and inclusive Games: the London story' conference the GLA shared with stakeholders and interested parties how they did this.<sup>15</sup> It provided an opportunity to showcase how the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA), the Greater London Authority (GLA), London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (LOCOG) and the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) worked together to deliver an accessible experience for disabled people coming to London in summer 2012. This event highlighted the following:

- Showcased the role the inclusive design planning and development process played in helping to achieve the most accessible games ever.
- Illustrated how access and inclusion was embedded into the planning, construction and delivery of the venues, park and village.
- Told how London got ready to welcome disabled visitors – accessibility for visitors programme – , improvements, Inclusive London web site, Destination London.
- Demonstrated how the inclusive design process is being taken forward in London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) legacy work and how this process can be extended to other major development projects in London and beyond.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Accessible Transport: <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/assets/downloads/corporate/taking-forward-the-mts-accessibility-implementation-plan-march-2012-final.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Railways for All: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120409061727/http://assets.dft.gov.uk/publications/railways-for-all-strategy/railways-for-all-strategy.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> London Story Conference <https://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/equalities/london-2012-legacy/how-london-produced-the-most-accessible-and-inclusive-games-the>

<sup>16</sup> London Legacy Development Corporation <http://www.londonlegacy.co.uk/the-park/accessibility-and-inclusive-design-2/>

In the period leading up to the games there was a reorganisation of administration in the city which saw the abolition of the London Development Agency, responsible for delivering the Mayor's vision for London to be a sustainable world city with strong, long-term economic growth, social inclusion and active environmental improvement.

Another benefit and legacy of the games came from a policy by the Mayor to invest £220 million in his 'Great Outdoors' programme to improve more than 50 of the capital's public spaces in time for the Games, making them more accessible and more pleasant places to experience. London's South Bank, one of the capital's most popular visitor destinations, also benefitted from a £4 million makeover. The Mayor, working with Southwark and Lambeth Councils and local business and residents' groups, wanted to ensure that during the summer of 2012 and beyond everyone visiting the capital, particularly those with accessibility needs, could enjoy the South Bank's many cultural attractions (including Tate Modern, Royal Festival Hall and Queen Elizabeth Hall);, restaurants, cafes, bars and shops, by making it much easier for people to access this historic and popular part of London. The improvements affect a two-mile stretch of the riverside between Tower and Westminster Bridges. Key locations to benefit include Bankside, the Southwark Cathedral quarter and Clink Street, and the Globe theatre and Oxo Tower areas, which saw improved pavement layouts, better lighting and signage, increased seating, and more access ramps and handrails.<sup>17</sup>

Whilst business under public control, such as transport and larger private businesses, for example major hotel chains, have responded to the legislation and market opportunities by improving accessibility, not all businesses in the capital have similarly responded. A report<sup>18</sup> prepared for the Office for Disability Issues and the Department for Business and Innovation and Skills found that in the UK as a whole this 'sizeable yet poorly addressed segment of the consumer market is worth £80 billion p.a. For an average business disabled customers may account for up 20% of the customer base. The risk of losing custom is also recognised as being high as consumer experiences of disabled people affect the choice of friends and family. It cites the main barriers to SMEs being more focused on disabled customers relates to:

- A low awareness of the opportunity to boost sales and profits by being more accessible
- This is compounded by fear and discomfort with disability

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<sup>17</sup> GLA investment: [www.london.gov.uk/media/mayor-press-releases/2011/05/mayor-to-invest-4m-into-access-improvements-to-londons-south#sthash.kRs2JsPO.dpuf](http://www.london.gov.uk/media/mayor-press-releases/2011/05/mayor-to-invest-4m-into-access-improvements-to-londons-south#sthash.kRs2JsPO.dpuf)

<sup>18</sup> 2012 Legacy for Disabled People: Inclusive and Accessible Business: [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/31715/10-1126-2012-legacy-for-disabled-people-case-for-the-disabled-customer.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/31715/10-1126-2012-legacy-for-disabled-people-case-for-the-disabled-customer.pdf)

- A narrow understanding of ‘access’ e.g. many think it relates mainly to wheelchair users who account for around 8% of disabled people.
- There is confusion around the concept of the legal obligation to make ‘reasonable changes’.

There has also been a demise in many local Access Groups, the voice of disabled people in their community. However, **Inclusion London**<sup>19</sup> was founded in October 2008, recognizing that at that time there was no single organisation able to provide services at a London-wide level for London’s disabled and Deaf people’s groups and give voice to their concerns, which will also benefit those visiting London with access requirements. They play an important part in helping shape London for visitors and residents through improving accessibility.

### 3.0 The integration of the supply chain

The vision for London to be more accessible, together with legislation and the range of policies, plans and strategies, as outlined above, have over the last decade helped to drive change in the city to make it more accessible starting with information, through to managing the customer journey through the supply chain. If inclusive tourism is to be a reality for disabled people, then all parts of the supply chain, that is the different stages that people go through from decision-making (information and marketing), booking, travelling, to and around a destination and the experience while there must be accessible. For some the need is so critical that if any part fails a barrier is created for them and could mean they are potentially excluded from enjoying a full tourism related experience.

Information is vital for all visitors. However it is even more important for many people with Access Requirements. Information about accessibility is needed across the supply chain. Different people will require different types of information and level of detail to help decide whether or not a place is suitable for them. Information plays a key role in the decision making process and attracting visitors and the quality, accuracy and reliability of this information is crucial.

Information provision about accessibility plays a key role in not only communicating with potential visitors to help them in their decision making, but can also be an indicator of what is in place within the supply chain so that the strength and weakness of accessibility within a destination are identified. As change progresses and accessibility is addressed in the supply chain, so information needs to be updated to reflect these changes. This is what

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<sup>19</sup> Inclusion London: [www.inclusionlondon.co.uk](http://www.inclusionlondon.co.uk)

happened in the lead up to the Olympics. It was recognised that the existing visitor accessibility information needed to be addressed and enhanced. A new website Inclusive London<sup>20</sup> was developed and the Official Tourist Website VisitLondon<sup>21</sup> also improved its accessibility information.

**Time out** 'Open London',<sup>22</sup> is an example of a guide that was produced for the Paralympics, as an integrated guide, to help bring together information about the supply chain to help make it easy for those with access requirements get around and find places that they can access.

Information is usually obtained through audits. The GLA Games Changer report identifies that from 2009-2012 the number of London boroughs commissioning destination audits to understand better the accessibility in the borough for publication on their website, increased from 15 to 19. However for visitors (who unlike local residents are less likely to use the borough website), the information often lacks prominence. A key problem that was identified is that whatever level of detail the audits deliver, the information once provided to the boroughs rarely appears on mainstream information or other visitor websites, to be of any use to those who need it.

The report flags up that organisations representing disabled people, expressed concern that the finances required to collect this information i.e. paid-for audits, can be a wasted resource, particularly if the information is hard to find, and in some cases not visible at a borough level and/or inaccurate/out of date. The point is also made that any data collection, information about accessible facilities requires systematic maintenance in order to be effective and trusted by the user. The report identifies that across London there are two main issues arising:

1. How the data is collected – the auditing process used is inconsistent across boroughs.
2. How the information is presented – there are concerns that it is not always accurate and up to date.

Direct Enquiries developed InclusiveLondon.com for the GLA launching it in March 2011 and a free iPhone app linked to the website was launched at the beginning of 2012. The app provides a range of information to people with access needs, including those with disabilities, older people and parents with

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<sup>20</sup> Inclusive London: [www.inclusivelondon.com/defaultIL.aspx](http://www.inclusivelondon.com/defaultIL.aspx)

<sup>21</sup> VisitLondon – Accessibility: [www.visitlondon.com/traveller-information/essential-information/accessible-london](http://www.visitlondon.com/traveller-information/essential-information/accessible-london)

<sup>22</sup> Time Out 'Open London': <http://www.randomhouse.co.uk/editions/time-out-open-london-an-inspirational-guide-to-accessible-london-official-travel-publisher-to-london-2012-olympic-games-and-paralympic-games/9781846702327>

young children and buggies.

Its purpose is to locate accessible places while on the move around the capital. Visitors can use it to locate accessible hotels, restaurants, pubs, shops, museums, art galleries, tourist attractions, reflecting the supply chain.

According to the 'Games Changer' report, up to March 2013, the website and App has received over 12 million hits since its launch, has over 35,000 businesses registered. The App was named App of the week by the Sunday Times. This reinforces the value of providing such detailed information. However, the report also states that looking forward, stakeholders and disabled people want to see more access information available in mainstream provision and believes this should be the public sector focus. Private sector specialist sites will probably continue meeting the needs of a niche audience without public sector intervention. Public sector promotion of them however is essential. In the long term integrating access information into mainstream sites will reach a much larger audience including those people who don't see themselves as having a disability. To achieve this it is key that more inclusive terms are used such as 'accessibility', rather than the focus being on the word 'disability' this wider audience is to feel the information is appropriate for them and are to use it.

Access Statements, are a description of the accessibility of a business are also important to attract potential customers. Whilst a business might not have made a conscious effort to address accessibility and may not have every facility that some disabled people require, by providing this additional information about their business can provide enough information to encourage some people to that business, because of the awareness of what is on offer.

Research shows that 76% of consumers say that these influence their decision to visit<sup>23</sup>. There is a recognition that more needs to be done to promote these to business to encourage them to produce a Statement.<sup>24</sup> VisitEngland promotes the use of these and has produced an online tool to help guide a business through the process of producing one.<sup>25</sup>

## **Training**

Disabled people often find, like most people, that the most positive experience were to be found at properties where there is a high level of customer service

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<sup>23</sup> Accessible Hotels in London, LDA: <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/archives/Accessible-Hotels.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> Accessible Hotels in London, LDA: <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/archives/Accessible-Hotels.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> VisitEngland Access Statement Tool: [www.tourismtools.co.uk](http://www.tourismtools.co.uk)

and awareness from staff.<sup>26</sup> This intangible, or service element of tourism is therefore so important. It is also vital that there is consistency in delivering this positive experience across the supply chain in a destination. With this in mind and in preparation for the Olympics and Paralympics the GLA developed an online training programme, Destination London.<sup>27</sup> Many major hotel groups, such as IHG have their own in-house training and this course is for any business that does not have such a programme. Aimed at Accommodation, Attractions, Retail, Food & Drink Staff with different learning routes for Managers and team members, it is an introduction to accessibility to help staff gain knowledge and confidence and get ideas for better customer service. The course offers a certificate upon completion. This course was launched quite close to the major events of 2012 and interviews with GLA staff indicate that take-up of the course by businesses has not been as large as anticipated. The key reason for this is the difficulty of engaging with businesses. However, some major companies that have used the course include retail stores TopShop, TopMan, Ralph Lauren, John Lewis and Pizza Express, a restaurant chain.

Other significant disability awareness training is undertaken by TFL staff. Inclusion London and Transport for All, user-led organisations have also been appointed to improve the way staff on the capital's tube network provide assistance to disabled and older passengers. They will deliver training at five "centres of excellence", at Stratford, King's Cross St Pancras, London Bridge, Green Park and Westminster stations. The training is important as disabled and older passengers tell TFL that staff who are disability equality trained and confident to assist them make all the difference to a journey<sup>28</sup>.

In October 2013 TFL announced that London's 24,500 bus drivers are to receive further training on the needs of older and disabled passengers. They have partnered with accessibility charities Transport for All and Age UK London to develop a new training programme aimed at improving drivers' understanding of passengers' needs. Mike Weston, TfL's Director of Buses observes that: "We also realise it is equally important to invest in bus staff. It is the drivers who are delivering the service and who can make a big difference to passengers who experience challenges using the network. This training demonstrates that a driver taking a little time, using respect and their own initiative, can make all the difference in the world to many older and

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<sup>26</sup> VisitBritain Focus Group 2003 – Not published.

<sup>27</sup> Destination London: [www.london.gov.uk/destinationlondon/](http://www.london.gov.uk/destinationlondon/)

<sup>28</sup> <http://disabilitynewsservice.com/2013/05/transport-for-london-wins-praise-for-rolling-out-the-ramps/>

disabled passengers.”<sup>29</sup>

Details of the supply chain in London, with examples of what has either been done or is planned to improve accessibility for visitors to the city, are shown in Annex 3. The views of disabled people, from interviews about their perceptions and experience of London and its accessibility are shown in Annex 4.

## 4.0 Provisions for cross-impairments

There are a number of different ways of defining disability and the term "disabled people". The Equality Act 2010 defines disability as a 'physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities'. The GLA recognises that many users of British Sign Language (BSL) do not see themselves as disabled but as part of the Deaf community, a linguistic minority with its own history and culture. Also, disabled people's organisations prefer the social model of disability. This includes understanding and addressing the physical and social barriers that prevent disabled people from participating on an equal level with others. The Greater London Authority has adopted this social model of disability. Policy and planning requirements have previously been based around the definition of wheelchair accessibility, but this is now considered to be too narrow a definition of disability, as well as being based on an out-dated medical model of disability.

As outlined above the Mayor and the GLA have a number of different policy and strategy strands to develop London as an inclusive city that is accessible for both residents and citizens alike. Adopting an inclusive approach ensures that all access needs of disabled people, whatever they may be are, where possible, taken into account. The Equality Act of 2010 also ensures that disabled people do not experience discrimination or exclusion on the grounds of disability. The GLA policy goes further however, as it recognises the wider benefits of creating an accessible city. Its policy of supporting the concept of inclusive design means designing and building places that everyone – regardless of disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, race or faith – can enjoy confidently and independently with choice and dignity.

The aim is therefore, to ensure that as many people as possible, residents or visitors, regardless of any disability or impairment that they might have, do not experience barriers within the city and can play a full part in its economic, social and cultural life.

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<sup>29</sup> Mayor Watch: [www.mayorwatch.co.uk/tfl-and-charities-unite-to-boost-bus-drivers-awareness-of-mobility-needs/201327496](http://www.mayorwatch.co.uk/tfl-and-charities-unite-to-boost-bus-drivers-awareness-of-mobility-needs/201327496)

## 5.0 Business approach – building a business case for accessibility

Whilst businesses are required by law to make reasonable changes to be more accessible it is acknowledged that this alone is unlikely to be a motivator for real change. Rather it is the economic benefits, which are likely to be the driver to address this issue.

London has in place at the centre of its government, policies and strategies to help create a framework of realising the vision of making London Inclusive and more accessible. The Olympic and Paralympic Games added an impetus and a focus for this vision and saw increased investment in London's transport and infrastructure to benefit both the city and those who have access requirements. This also reinforces the role of local government in leading the way through its vision and commitment to make the public realm accessible from which businesses can then benefit if they in turn address accessibility. The £4 million spent to improve the accessibility of the South Bank, a major tourism honeypot in the city, is a good example of this and confirms not only political support of accessibility, but also the belief that the investment is justified on the grounds of return on investment, that it fits with the vision of creating an inclusive city and responds to the needs of disabled people and others who have access requirements that live and work or visit the city. It also recognises the economic, social and cultural benefits that come from accessibility and the business opportunities that can be opened up to a much wider audience, as well as contributing to an improved quality of experience for all users.

There are very few examples of businesses that are able to demonstrate direct financial benefits gained from improved accessibility, it is not something that is generally measured. Most businesses making changes will absorb them into their general business performance. However, the InterContinental Hotel Group (IHG), which includes Holiday Inn, Crowne Plaza and Intercontinental Hotels and Resorts, invested £40 million into disabled access in the early 2000s. They have demonstrated that being accessible is good for their business. IHG invested in hoists in 5 hotels across England, 3 of which generated a revenue of £450,000 in 3 years. They also offer accessible bedrooms and bathrooms, menus available in large print and induction loops for the hard of hearing. In addition they developed a Disability Awareness training programme that is mandatory for all staff. The London Eye is an example of an attraction, that has installed facilities for wheelchair users and people with mobility issues and benefitted from improving accessibility. This attraction has an average attendance of 40,000 visitors with disabilities per year, worth over £210,000, and 99 per cent of disabled customers say that they would recommend the London Eye to friends because of the disabled facilities provided.

As part of the 2009-13 Tourism Strategy, there was an aim by the London Development Agency to develop the business case for improving accessibility. In partnership with others, they produced 'Accessible Tourism: Making it work for your business'. Published in 2010 it sets out the case through the size and spend of the potential and under-served market.<sup>30</sup> Also reinforced were possible tax incentives for businesses, 'that many of the adjustments potentially needed in relation to duties under the Disability Discrimination Act will qualify for tax relief, either as a revenue expense, or through capital allowances'.

VisitEngland, the National Tourist Board for England, also sets out the business case for Accessible Tourism.<sup>31</sup> The business case is also made primarily by raising awareness of the market opportunities for tourism businesses. Key things highlighted is how 27% of the population have a long-standing health problem and that there is a multiplier effect as someone with access requirements is likely to be travelling with one or more people, so even larger numbers of business can be won or lost. They also point out the need to be prepared for the changing population, as the ageing population is growing. By 2025 more than a third of the UKs population will be over the age of 55 and there is a correlation of increased disability with ageing. Another factor is that those with access requirements are described as a very loyal market and will also recommend to others. Data about spend is now captured by VisitEngland and the latest figures show that in 2009 UK residents with a health condition or impairment and their travelling party spent almost £2bn on overnight trips in England.

It is of course not only the tangibles of infrastructure and facilities that affect accessibility but also customer service and attitude. If businesses are trained in disability awareness and have a keen understanding of accessibility they stand to gain. Research has shown that a survey of disabled consumers' buying behaviour revealed that 66% choose businesses where they have received good service. 2/3 seek businesses with good reputation for customer service. For over 37% good, 'disability aware' service is the primary reason for choosing a business. Over 1/3 of disabled customers do not complain about

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<sup>30</sup> Accessible Tourism:  
[http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference\\_library/publications/6595.aspx](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/publications/6595.aspx)

<sup>31</sup> VisitEngland – Business Case: [www.visitengland.org/busdev/bussupport/access/buscase/](http://www.visitengland.org/busdev/bussupport/access/buscase/)

the poor service they have received –the business therefore may never know why they have lost that customer<sup>32</sup>.

Reflecting on the accessibility of transport and the built environment as part of the Olympic legacy the conclusions are that London used the 2012 Games as a springboard for transforming the capital into one of the most welcoming and accessible cities and that ‘This work has shown that there is a strong economic, moral and social case for inclusive design to be a core feature of the training for built environment professionals, for example architects, town planners, civil and structural engineers, and surveyors.’<sup>33</sup> This is key and of vital importance for any destination, that the public realm is accessible, that people can reach the destination and move around easily. With this in place the business case is strengthened even more for business in terms of attracting business. In 2010, prior to the Games a report for the GLA identified that ‘closer working is needed with the industry to build its understanding of the issues, to articulate the business case and to encourage more consistency in customer care standards throughout chain hotels’<sup>34</sup>.

Whilst the business case is recognised and promoted by such bodies as VisitEngland and the GLA, and is also understood by a number of businesses, there remains the challenge of reaching out to many other business, those Small and Medium Enterprise Businesses that have yet to respond to this market. Some of these barriers are outlined above in the report 2012 Legacy for Disabled People. However the report is also very incisive as it states that no one yet has all the answers ‘to removing the barriers preventing government from realising the full potential of this opportunity’. In other words, more needs to be done to communicate the business message and some of these proposals are reflected in the recommendations below.

## 6.0 Evidence of impact

The measure of impact comes from understanding the views and responses of those for whom improving accessibility was intended for. In 2010 the GLA commissioned a baseline report which they repeated in 2012 to gauge the views of Disabled People to understand what improvements, if any they found in their experience and the accessibility of the city. The aim was to

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<sup>32</sup> 2012 Legacy for Disabled People: Inclusive and Accessible Business  
[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/31715/10-1126-2012-legacy-for-disabled-people-case-for-the-disabled-customer.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/31715/10-1126-2012-legacy-for-disabled-people-case-for-the-disabled-customer.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> Inspired by 2012: The legacy from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games  
[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/224148/2901179\\_OlympicLegacy\\_acc.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/224148/2901179_OlympicLegacy_acc.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> Accessible hotels in London: [www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/archives/Accessible-Hotels.pdf](http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/archives/Accessible-Hotels.pdf)

understand the impact that the Olympic Games had made to achieve the clear aim of the Mayor to make London an Accessible City.

As indicated in this case study there were a range of initiatives to improve the accessibility of information provision, parts of the public realm, transport, accommodation and hospitality amongst other things. A conclusion of the 2012 report is that 'In this time consumer access ratings have positively increased across the visitor journey, indicating that these types of improvement have had a significant impact on the disabled person's experience'. Clearly the planning and investment made at this time has resulted in disabled people feeling that accessibility in London, as a visitor, has improved.

The report goes on to highlight that 'The good news is that all sectors score more positively across all criteria and the concerns of consumers are not as deep as the stakeholder findings. From a low base in 2009 the positive rating scores in 2012 show improvement into the 60% range. There is still room for improvement however as the positive ratings equate to an average of 56% across all sectors. In reality a business achieving just over 50% satisfaction rates would consider there is still much to do to improve the customer experience'. The report also identified that 'staff attitude and knowledge featured in the top 3 most important access needs. All sectors except accommodation showed improved positive ratings for this area. Transport showed a marked improvement (up 20%) demonstrating that when there is a training focus and a defined channel to the audience there is greater impact on the visitor experience'.

However, the report also goes on to say 'The previous study required the identification of a series of baseline measurements to adopt to measure progress. Three years on our opinion is that these measurements are quantitative rather than qualitative. They reflect change but not necessarily visitor priorities e.g. there are more step free stations on the network however South Kensington, feeding several of London's must see attractions, is still not one of them'.

Asking consumers how the many access initiatives and improvements are affecting their visitor experience overall is probably the only way to realistically measure the added value benefit and economic impact that improved accessibility offers cities and businesses.

An example in London where being accessible has an impact on their business is the O2 Arena, based in London Docklands. It is the world's most popular arena with around 8 million visitors in any given year with disabled people making up a sizeable proportion of this who visit. It is a dynamic business with not only the Arena to manage, but also many different

independent businesses under a single roof. It is likened to a 'city under a tent' with 24 bars and restaurants, attractions on the roof as well as the Arena itself. There is always continual development and building to improve the venue.

Accessibility is seen as being crucial for business because the O2 is all about creating experiences that wow, thrill and excite their fans and customers, and they do not want to restrict anyone from enjoying this. Therefore they want to make sure all of their events and facilities are accessible to everyone. Managing the customer journey, especially to ensure it is accessible, is really important to them, making sure that they can have an influence on the experience of everyone that visits. The customer journey starts from the marketing, when they hear about an event, to how it is booked through to their arrival and the experience they have when there

Much has been done to be make the O2 more accessible. They have a number of procedures and initiatives in place to ensure The O2 is completely accessible. Any new activity or venue being launched in The O2 is designed to the Disability Discrimination Act (or Equality Act) standards to ensure compliance. They also have regular audits to ensure they are continually up to the world-class standards they set and aim to provide. This includes everything from a hearing loop in the arena to assessable facilities and services in all of their other spaces such as the British Music Experience and Brooklyn Bowl. They have special car park pick up points for those fans and customers that need help getting from there to the venue, and their own disability booking line. There are facilities in place to allow disabled customers to use the roofwalk experience, 'Up at The O2', and they also have the 100<sup>th</sup> 'Changing Places' toilet in the arena.

Ensuring accessibility is definitely seen as being good for business. It has meant that they are the only arena-based venue in the country to hold a Gold standard for accessibility awarded by '**Attitude is Everything**' for its commitment to Deaf and disabled customers.<sup>35</sup> . This has set a standard for other music venues as well. For O2 it has improved their customer and fan experience, and allows even more fans and customers to experience the venue. The Paralympics also helped raised their profile on a global level as an accessible venue.

It is also very important for the O2 that the public realm and transport are accessible. As a result of this they have various drive up and pick up points for customers using all of their facilities. Whether this be from embarking or

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<sup>35</sup> O2 Attitude is Everything Charter award: <http://www.attitudeiseverything.org.uk/news/the-o2-arena-goes-for-gold>

disembarking from their riverboat service, Thames Clippers, to the lifts and ramps they have throughout the venue. They also have their own raised viewing platform in the arena for ease of accessibility, and a service animals space.

As a venue that houses many different business they implement a very strict accessibility contractual policy that tenants and partners have to adhere to when it comes to creating any experiences or opening a new destination within The O2. They also hold our own voluntary Access Advisory Forum or “Triple AAA Forum” , which was established in 2008. Members come in and tell them what needs to be done and how it should be done before any new work is carried out.<sup>36</sup>

## 7.0 Conclusions

It is vital to remember is that the issue of accessibility is dependent upon personal access needs. For some the supply chain of tourism needs to be accessible throughout, whereas for some it need only be in parts. Nevertheless, this reinforces the need to ensure that the supply chain is accessible throughout if London is to attract and serve the large and increasing numbers of people who have access requirements. Therefore complete accessibility is probably only achieved when a destination is fully inclusive across the whole supply chain or visitor experience.

London is a very good example of a tourism destination where changes in the supply chain to make it more accessible are driven by legislation, requiring service providers to make reasonable changes to ensure their services and facilities are accessible to most people and the impact that major event such as the Olympics can have in driving the Access improvement agenda forward. Compared to over a decade ago, the supply chain in London; from information to transport, accommodation, attractions and hospitality has been transformed in many ways to be more inclusive and meet the different access needs of a range of people. Even though London hosted the highly successful Paralympic Games in 2012 many recognise that however that the city is not perfect by any means and on-going work is needed. However, this is to be expected in a city where major investment is needed to change historic infrastructure, to make it accessible, whilst in some instances seeking also to preserve a sense of place, the very thing that people come to see.

London has a champion for accessibility in the form of the Mayor and the Greater London Authority. There is political will and ambition to change the

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<sup>36</sup> All Access Advisory Forum: [www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Case%20Studies.pdf](http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Case%20Studies.pdf)

city. This is in response to the understanding that to be successful London needs to be an inclusive city, as this will bring economic, social and cultural benefits not only to its residents but also to those wanting to visit. Of course being more accessible increases the opportunities of more people to visit either on business or leisure or visiting friends and family and to enjoy what the city has to offer them.

To achieve this change there are policies and strategies in place and through these some change has been made. However, there remains the issue of ensuring 'joined up thinking' across a city as large as London. Whilst the Mayor can and does influence those things that he has control of e.g. public transport, individual boroughs have some autonomy in their approach to managing the public realm. Their approach may vary and what they can do is dependent on resources available, not only in terms of budgets but also in terms of human resources. Not every borough has an Access Officer to act as a 'local access champion' and be a resource to help guide and advise with policy and strategy at this local level.

There are some examples where the business case for accessible tourism is clear, such as IHG quantifying the return on investment on the hoist facilities they have provided in some hotels. However as a number of reports highlight more has to be done to communicate with the industry the benefits of being accessible and this requires further in-depth case studies being produced. Businesses also need to understand what they can do to be more accessible. Again it is reported that more needs to be done to promote Access Statements to the accommodation sector in the city and this probably to other parts of the supply chain also.

While the Olympics gave a huge boost to improving accessibility and was a catalyst for accelerated change with investment in changing, improving and introducing new accessible infrastructure, reviewing information, and addressing training needs, there remains much to do.

The GLA training programme 'Destination London' needs to be marketed and promoted more to encourage greater use by businesses in the city. This appears to be the only business support tool offered to VisitLondon apart from the resources produced by VisitEngland, which again probably need to be promoted far more. London & Partners the body responsible for marketing London also might make a key priority of marketing the many accessible places, venues and events to disabled people.

Whilst many larger businesses are addressing accessibility, there remains the challenge of reaching significant numbers of Small and Medium Enterprise businesses in London. These are the backbone of tourism and contribute significantly to the visitor experience. It is clear that more needs to be done to

reach out to them; to engage with this agenda, dispel myths, present the business case and highlight the tools and resources that are available to help them make their businesses more accessible and to take advantage of this significant market.

Martyn Sibley, a leading voice on disability issues in the UK, believes that ultimately the key is attitude, to understand how discriminating it really is not be inclusive. Businesses need therefore to begin to think more inclusively and recognise the true business potential of this market. Many already do and examples are shown in this report, but there are remain more who still need to do approach their business differently.

## 8.0 Recommendations

1. Bring together, as a recognised working group, a partnership of significant players of the supply chain e.g. the boroughs, marketing/information providers, planners, business support, transport, accommodation, hospitality, retail providers etc. with representatives of disabled people, to ensure a focus on accessibility to ensure a seamless visitor experience for those with access requirements and enhance the quality for all.
2. Give consideration for the post of an Access Officer to be funded and supported in each borough of the city, perhaps by the GLA, to act as a knowledge resource and local champion for accessibility.
3. Ensure that transport improvements prioritise upgrades that have a positive impact on the visitor economy e.g. focus on the tourist honeypot areas.
4. Ensure there is a high profile and positive promotion of all the advances that London has made to ensure that disabled people and others with access requirements, both domestic and from overseas, have a greater awareness of the accessibility of the city to ensure demand is there, to reinforce the business case. Without such demand businesses can fail to see the market.
5. Ensure there is consistency of access information published across boroughs, with transparency about how it is collected and any criteria used.
6. Promote to, and encourage businesses to produce Access Statements based on VisitEngland's online tool.
7. Address an issue of information provision in relation to Blue-Badge Parking and Toilets, ensuring it can be easily found and is pan-London, not covering just certain boroughs.
8. Develop a high profile marketing campaign aimed at the business community, informing them of the vision, policy and strategy and their

role in this and where they can get advice and support to improve the accessibility of their business.

9. Look at and better understand the communication channels where SMEs might receive or look for business advice. Look at providing a toolkit and resources for these intermediaries and how they can be trained and inducted into the issues of accessibility, have a clear understanding of access issues and knowledge of signposting SMEs to useful tools and resources. In particular the focus should be on SME membership organisations and industry associations where for example access issues could be highlighted in newsletters, or links to access tools provided on their websites. Banks, Chambers of Commerce and any other intermediary providing business support to SMEs should be similarly targeted.
10. Develop and promote in-depth relevant and measured case studies within the City to develop further the business case. For example focus on an area i.e. the South Bank where investment has been made to make it accessible and undertake a study of the customers who are using the area and the businesses to show 1.) the benefits of the public realm being accessible i.e. transport to get there and the area itself being accessible with good signage and its effect on drawing people into the area 2.) the benefits that can be gained by businesses if they extend this accessibility into their businesses, understand the difference it makes to the customer and to the customer base and financial position of a company.
11. Lessons learned from such a case study should then be shared with others in the city.
12. Following recommendation 9, look at training provision and promoting courses such as 'Destination London more effectively to businesses. Attitude of staff can be a key enabler or barrier to accessibility depending on awareness and the customer service they offer.

## Annex I: Criteria and justification for best practices

**Table 1: Criteria and justification for best practice**

Criteria	Justification	On track/off track
<b>Relevance</b>	London has a Champion for Accessibility in the form of the Mayor and has in place relevant policies and strategies to develop London as an inclusive city. Even though London has been transforming itself over the last decade, the hosting of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic games accelerated development and showed how event can contribute to focusing on the access agenda and contribute to change.	
<b>Transferability</b>	The principles of what London is doing can be applied to all destinations as a model approach. Through policies and strategy being in place, the role of partnerships and approach, addressing the issue of ensuring the public realm is accessible to create an environment where businesses if they become accessible can flourish and lessons can be learned from the London experience.	
<b>Efficient &amp; Effectiveness</b>	Whilst the city looked at the impact of the 2012 Games on the visitors perception of the accessibility of the city, it failed to look at the economic impact e.g. that it has made a difference, increased customer numbers and spending, making it difficult to highlight all aspects of the business case within the context of the city.	
<b>Sustainability</b>	The public realm is being developed with a clear policy of inclusive design, it is likely that this does not add to costs, rather it saves them, if considered at the time of planning and building. For businesses costs to make changes will vary enormously on what is	



	reasonable alterations to services and facilities that they wish to make depending on size and turnover. Small low-cost changes such as improved information and trained staff can make a big difference in the longer-term	
<b>Innovation</b>	London has some examples of innovation. E.g. Improvements in information have been possible through the use of technology. The tube has introduced portable ramps into some stations. PhotoRoute is highly inclusive and is useful for showing pictorially step free routes and used by those for whom English is not a first Language.	

## Annex 2

### Extract from London Tourism Plan 2009 - 2013

Areas of activity	Years
Advise tourism businesses on how to improve their environmental performance	1-4
Key year one actions	Partners
Support the delivery of the Green Tourism for London programme for hotels and its extension to attractions and theatres	Visit London, Considerate Hoteliers, British Hospitality Association, Society of London Theatre/Theatre Management Association, Independent Theatre Council
Areas of activity	Years
Encourage tourism businesses to become more accessible to those with special access needs	1-4
Effectively communicate the physical, economic and social accessibility of London's visitor offer to Londoners and visitors	1-4
Key year one actions	Partners
Develop a Disability Awareness training module as part of the development of a cross sector customer service standard	Institute of Customer Service, DCMS, Accessibility Forum
Increase the number of hotels publishing audited access information on Visit London.com	Visit London
Build the business case for investment by hotels and attractions in accessible facilities and publicise best practice	DCMS, Tourism for All
Publicise the market opportunity through workshops and one annual conference	Visit London, GLA
Undertake further research in to the requirements of disabled visitors	DCMS, GLA
Publish an Open London Guide Book that provides accessibility information on London's visitor attractions and facilities	Tourism for All

Source: London Tourism Action Plan 2009:  
[www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&ved=0CDgQFjAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ealing.gov.uk%2Fdownload%2Fdownloads%2Fid%2F4091%2Freg16-london\\_tourism\\_action\\_plan\\_200913\\_2009&ei=EkPqUsvEOMurhAe584HgAg&usq=AFQjCNHPDh0TAjPofogUZ1urQHojh5WzYQ&sig2=mJttL0H9oaQJttizKr7Zg](http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&ved=0CDgQFjAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ealing.gov.uk%2Fdownload%2Fdownloads%2Fid%2F4091%2Freg16-london_tourism_action_plan_200913_2009&ei=EkPqUsvEOMurhAe584HgAg&usq=AFQjCNHPDh0TAjPofogUZ1urQHojh5WzYQ&sig2=mJttL0H9oaQJttizKr7Zg)

## Annex 3

### **Public Realm**

Much of London is based on infrastructure built in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century when accessibility was not a priority. Whilst some areas of London are cleared for new build the challenge is to preserve the heritage of the city where appropriate but to make it as accessible as possible for both visitors and residents alike.

The Games Changer report identifies how stakeholders see inconsistencies of approach in public realm improvement and the interpretation of planning policy. Boroughs feel that there is no synergy with others and that they are operating in isolation when deciding best practice for accessibility. A number of the 33 London boroughs have Access Officers, these are non-statutory jobs, often part time and their role is to promote and seek to ensure a convenient and accessible environment for the whole community, with particular reference to disabled people, and provide advice on issues of accessibility for disabled people. This impacts on the provision for tourism, by ensuring at the local level the public realm and businesses providing services which both local residents and visitors alike use are accessible. Their numbers are in decline in the city, budget constraints and changing priorities are cited as reasons for this. It is thought there are currently around 11 in post. Where there are Access Officers, the report identifies that it is clear that inclusive design is a priority and in a small number of cases there appears to be a joined up approach between planning, street scene, public realm and visitor information. But unfortunately in many cases – due to resources or policy – departments work in isolation. This creates an added barrier for other organisations e.g. BIDs to navigate their way through.

Access Officers are often under pressure in respect of guideline interpretation appropriate to the location. Some Boroughs have adopted slightly different standards from the Department for Transport 'guidelines' e.g. for tactile paving the guidance suggests red or yellow colouring which many consider garish in a conservation area setting. As a result one borough might instead favour dark charcoal paving, while another favours 'Battenberg' as more appropriate. There is inconsistent use of blister paving, street tails and which one of the eight different hazard warning corduroys to apply. While accepting the desirability of a sense of place and individualism, the results can create an unsafe environment for visitors moving from one borough to another. Visitors, it must be remembered, see no administrative boundaries in a city. Concern was raised that in the public realm design aesthetic can take priority over inclusive design. The City of London Corporation Head of Access, Rob Oakley reports that his team spends time working with and trying to educate

architects about inclusive design and why it matters. This extends to investigating the level of inclusive design awareness built into architects training and education, which he found to be minimal.

The report also highlights concern about the impact of planning regulations and how they are applied. An example is given of, a Paddington hotel that sought planning permission to remove a staircase and install a lift. The hotel had four staircases, but due to the property having listed building status the only acceptable planning solution meant retaining the staircase and installing the lift in another location losing four bedrooms. As the acceptable planning solution was not financially viable this hotel – like many in the area – remains inaccessible for mobility-impaired visitors. Paddington BID reports that restrictive planning policies are preventing the upgrading of accommodation to become more accessible. This mainly impacts SMEs, often family-run hotels of 30-40 rooms.

Accessibility Planning Officers and Chief Executives suggest that there is a lack of clarity about ‘ownership’ of and accountability for accessibility issues at a local level. Some participants in the research asserted that statutory service providers tend to view the accessibility of their services as either the responsibility of transport providers, as low priority or an afterthought in their service planning.’

Topline consumer satisfaction with the accessibility of the public realm shows that

the overall access ratings for public realm between 2009 and 2012 have increased; 55% are now positive compared to 39% in 2009. There are specific aspects of the public realm that have improved<sup>37</sup>:

- 56% are positive about accessible road crossings / dropped kerbs (+15%)
- 52% are positive about clear routes and pavements (+16%)
- 55% are positive about appropriate signage / way finding (+23%)

**Transport for London** (TFL), which has responsibility for managing the Tube, Buses, Dockland Light Railway, Overground, Tram and River services, produces a range of access information in alternative formats to help plan journeys. A range of videos are offered as well as guides for ‘Getting around London’ and ‘Accessible Services’ and a range of accessible maps showing step free stations.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Games Changer:

<sup>38</sup> TFL Transport Accessibility [www.tfl.gov.uk/gettingaround/transportaccessibility/1167.aspx](http://www.tfl.gov.uk/gettingaround/transportaccessibility/1167.aspx)

**National Rail** provides a 'Stations made Easy' information facility on their website for each station nationally, including mainline and metro stations serving Greater London. Every station has been access audited to provide the information. It is an interactive tool that helps people to find their way around stations and, where possible navigate away from features that make using stations difficult e.g. stairs to find a more suitable route. Routes are also displayed in photographs. Accessibility information tells passengers when staff are available and whether there are any accessible toilets.<sup>39</sup>

**PhotoRoute** is a photo-based map application from **Enabled City**, and helps any visitor, including those who find steps and stairs a challenge, by following step free routes using the images as a wayfinder tool. Designed to help visitors get the most out of their visit to London Most routes start and end at main transport links such as underground or overground stations, while some journeys are designed to be circular, enabling the user to dip in and out of the routes.<sup>40</sup>

**Artsline** is a disabled led charity established in 1981 it provides searchable information on over 1,000 arts venues across London. Using an established access team to visit venues, they have validated what access was in place and where improvements needed to made to achieve the best possible access advice the venue on how this might be achieved. They have an online website of approved accessible arts and entertainment venues which has transformed into their current interactive online database. Visitors from overseas, using the site has consistently grown to over 10,000 unique users each month.<sup>41</sup>

**London Theatres** use Access Maps, produced by Enabled City, for a selection of London Theatre venues. The maps are easy-to-follow, detailing journeys that have step-free access, using: Simple language, Photograph and a time-bar that shows traveling times between each part of the journey. They also offer a guide that is published 3 times a year detailing information about accessible performances as well as a detailed venue access information guide, listing 70 theatres.<sup>42</sup>

## **Accommodation & Hospitality**

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<sup>39</sup> Stations Made Easy: [www.atoc.org/clientfiles/files/publicationsdocuments/ATOC\\_lores.pdf](http://www.atoc.org/clientfiles/files/publicationsdocuments/ATOC_lores.pdf)

<sup>40</sup> PhotoRoute: <http://photoroute.com/london>

<sup>41</sup> Artsline: [www.artsline.org.uk](http://www.artsline.org.uk)

<sup>42</sup> Theatre Guide: [www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk/access/](http://www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk/access/)

A report commissioned by the GLA prior to the Olympic and Paralympic games, 'Accessible Hotels in London'<sup>43</sup> identified There are uncertainties in any forecast beyond 2-3 years, but for planning purposes, their central scenario suggests that demand for accessible rooms in London will increase from 4% to 7.5% of the total over the 2010 to 2031 period. Demand by wheelchair users is likely to increase from around 1% to 3.5% of the total over the same period. It is noted that the projection for wheelchair users is less robust and should only be seen as a rough order of magnitude. It is sensitive to assumptions and dependent not only on how fast institutional barriers are removed in London and the UK but also and more critically on when and to what extent they are removed in other countries, which is clearly difficult to predict. Hotels built since 1999 have been required by Building Regulations to ensure 5% of new rooms built to be wheelchair accessible. This had the effect of increasing the supply of hotel rooms but was noted as being unlikely to raise the number to any significant degree, with only around 100 new accessible rooms expected to be provided each year, the equivalent of raising the supply by just 0.1% each year. The London Plan 2011 sets a target of 40,000 (10% of which are wheelchair accessible) net additional hotel bedrooms across London between 2007 and 2026 (Policy 4.5). The evidence supporting this target is the GLA's Hotel Demand Study (June 2006). It follows that with this increase other parts of the supply chain also need to be able to cope with the increased capacity to meet the needs of these visitors. However, such adjustments also increase business opportunities to increase customer numbers and revenues in the future.

The 'Games Changer' report included consumer research about the supply chain including accommodation. It compares responses from an earlier survey and report undertaken in 2009, 'Is London Ready to Welcome Disabled Visitors?'.<sup>44</sup> The key finding was that similar to 2009 respondents are more likely to be using mid-range accommodation more than budget hotels. The findings also highlight:

- Still a lower % of respondents using mid-range hotels in 2012 (37%) compared to 2009 (53%)
- A higher % of respondents are using B&Bs in 2012 (15%) compared to 2009 (10%)
- A lower % of respondents are using luxury hotels in 2012 (15%) compared to 2009 (24%)

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<sup>43</sup> Accessible Hotels in London: [www.london.gov.uk/priorities/planning/publications/accessible-hotels-in-london](http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/planning/publications/accessible-hotels-in-london)

<sup>44</sup> Is London Ready to Welcome Disabled Visitors?: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100528142817/http://www.lda.gov.uk/server.php?show=ConWebDoc.3596>

- Around 10% stayed in serviced apartment / self-catering (not tested in 2009)

In January 2010, only 5 premises in London were participants in the National Accessible Scheme<sup>45</sup>, managed by VisitEngland. This increased to 7 in November 2012. However consumer awareness of the scheme has increased from 24% in 2009 to 34% in 2012 and 7% of respondents used NAS rated properties.

Economy chain Premier had in place an ongoing refurbishment program in place for 2012 to bolster existing accessible offerings while expanding its number of accessible rooms. “As part of this refurbishment program we have and will continue to convert half of our universally accessible bathrooms to wet rooms, if the size, layout and suitability of the hotel allows,” according to Jon Brind, head of safety and security for the brand, which has approximately 130 properties in greater London. Other amenities included in Premier Inn’s 2,200 existing accessible rooms include vibrating pillow pads with flashing beacons for guests with hearing disabilities.

Hilton Worldwide encourages development of accessible rooms through a flexible room layout as each hotel has the ability to customize rooms with accessibility equipment to increase the number of accessible rooms, in addition to providing dedicated equipment for guests with hearing disabilities.

Ufi Ibrahim, Chief executive of the British Hospitality Association hopes that the recent momentum to improve accessibility will not fade after the 2012 Games. She observes that it “also draws into question the longer term, whether this is an area where investment is going to be made and be seen to be an opportunity,” she said<sup>46</sup>.

VisitEngland promotes accessibility not only through the NAS but also its quality scheme, which is not compulsory, but helps businesses improve quality in different ways, which also includes highlighting the benefits of being accessible.

Hospitality in the city has seen improvements in accessibility according to the ‘Games Changer’ report. The Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) show there are over 22,000 bars and restaurants alone in the

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<sup>45</sup> National Accessible Scheme: [www.visitengland.org/busdev/accreditation/nas/](http://www.visitengland.org/busdev/accreditation/nas/)

<sup>46</sup>Hotel news now:

<http://globalaccessibilitynews.com/2011/11/01/paralympic-games-gives-london-hotel-industry-chance-to-improve-accessibility-for-people-with-disabilities/>

capital.<sup>47</sup> The types of Eating and Drinking establishments respondents report visiting in 2012 follows a similar pattern to that reported in 2009.

Key differences include:

- 56% of respondents who went to a traditional pub (+13%)
- 11% who visited a nightclub (-17%)

A significant proportion who visited coffee shops and sandwich bars (47% and 46% respectively) was also recorded. This sector has seen an increase of 12% in relation to the overall access ratings received (59% in 2012 versus 47% in 2009).

The sector received a high % of positive ratings across all factors. Some of the largest increases in ratings have come from factors relating to information and staffing:

- 48% were positive about the availability of information (+21%)
- 52% were positive about information in alternative formats (+26%)
- 52% were positive about information accuracy (+25%)
- 54% were positive about staff attitude and knowledge (+24%)

The report notes that it is important this sector continues to build on the fact that they have become more accessible, and these improvements must come from across the board (coffee shops through to hotel restaurants) because visitors with access needs frequent all of these types of establishment.

The Coeliac Society reports however that the catering industry in the UK is missing out on an estimated £100 million a year by not catering for people with coeliac disease and their friends and families. They describe the experience of eating away from home as perhaps the biggest challenge facing people with coeliac disease. Increasingly, in every aspect of life, people eat and drink on the go. For people with coeliac disease, eating out can be challenging and at times frustrating.<sup>48</sup> Increasingly, however there are more restaurants in London offering Gluten and Wheat free menus, reflected in various online guides. One such guide recognises that 'chain restaurants may not be everyone's idea of a gastronomic meal out, however the advantage they have for the allergic or intolerant diner is that many have allergy menus and procedures in place to cook safely for those with food sensitivities'.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Working Paper 53 – Tourism in London: GLA:  
[www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/wp53.pdf](http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/wp53.pdf)

<sup>48</sup> Coeliac UK: [www.coeliac.org.uk/food-industry-professionals/caterers-and-restaurateurs/](http://www.coeliac.org.uk/food-industry-professionals/caterers-and-restaurateurs/)

<sup>49</sup> London Gluten Free Guide: [www.glutenfreemrds.com/2012/07/gluten-free-guide-london-eating-out.html](http://www.glutenfreemrds.com/2012/07/gluten-free-guide-london-eating-out.html)

## Attractions

Most, if not all of London's major attractions are accessible. The London Pass, which is a sightseeing card entry to a choice of popular tourist attractions in the city lists 60 attractions for visitors to choose from. The Visitor Attraction Quality Scheme (VAQAS), managed by VisitEngland, helps attractions improve accessibility through suggested best practice guidance. To date there are 31 attractions in London participating in the scheme.<sup>50</sup>

There are many web-based resources such as Disability Horizons<sup>51</sup>, an online disability related magazine, that make suggestions of the 10 top accessible places to visit. These include iconic attractions such as the London Eye, where it is noted there is step free access to the Wheel and Buckingham Palace which provides information 'for all forms of disability' including maps of the layout. The Science Museum has a number of interactive galleries where visitors are encouraged to interact with the exhibits through vision, sound and cognitive ability. The Victoria and Albert Museum offers facilities for People with Learning Difficulties or Dyslexia, including a guiding service and Scanning Pen, used to read and then speak aloud gallery guide or object label text around the museum. The Natural History Museum offers a **touchscreen** British Sign Language (BSL) multimedia guide, with an interactive map to explore the Museum. Exhibitions can come to life with BSL-interpreted video clips, gallery tours and highlights, specimen stories and scientist interviews. Most of the large attractions also offer information in Braille or large print format. The Tate Modern offers disabled people concessionary admission for paid exhibitions and carers can enter 'free of charge'. Bespoke touch tours are offered to Deaf Blind Visitors. Assistance dogs are also welcome and a drinking bowl is available for them. Most major attractions will have hearing loops available where necessary.

## Entertainment

It is thought that London has some 230 professional theatres. Theatre is a major attraction for visitors situated in the heart of the West End of London, an area known as 'Theatreland'. Most of these theatres are housed in older buildings built before access was a consideration. However, the theatres have done much to ensure they are inclusive. The Official London Theatre Guide website<sup>52</sup> has a range of information which includes:

- A PDF venue access guide to 70 theatres

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<sup>50</sup> VAQAS: [www.qualityintourism.com/](http://www.qualityintourism.com/)

<sup>51</sup> Disability Horizons: <http://disabilityhorizons.com/2012/08/10-accessible-london-attractions/>

<sup>52</sup> Official London Theatre Guide: [www.officallondontheatre.co.uk/access/](http://www.officallondontheatre.co.uk/access/)

- Online Access Information provided by Direct Enquiries
- Enabled maps, with photo routes, provided by Enabled City, with step free routes to theatres from transport links.
- A PDF Blue Badge Parking guide
- Access London Theatre guide, published 3 times a year giving details of: Audio Described Performances for visually impaired people, Captioned and British Sign Language interpreted performances for deaf and partially hearing visitors.

The Royal National Theatre has won London Awards for its work to be more accessible. In addition to the accessible performances described above also on offer are 'Relaxed Performances aimed at anyone who would benefit from a more relaxed performance environment including people with an Autistic Spectrum Condition, sensory or communication disorders, or a learning disability. They also offer backstage tours, accessible to all, where visitors have a chance to touch props and speak with those involved in productions. They offer the Contego system, an easy-to-use wireless listening device, for use on these tours for the hearing impaired including hearing aid users.<sup>53</sup>

## **Retail**

Oxford Street, one of the world's premier shopping streets, has over 300 shops, designer outlets and landmark stores such as Selfridges. It can be considered a tourist attraction in its own right with a quarter of all visitors coming from overseas. Interviews reveal that all stores in this area are compliant with legislation, but that some stores may do more than others to address accessibility. Other 'traditional' shopping areas include the King's Road in Chelsea and Covent Garden. However, London has more recently opened large new, 'edge of city' shopping centres such as the Westfield Centres in Shepherd's Bush and at Stratford City, immediately adjacent to the Olympic Park.

The Games Changer report identifies that it is clear that while people do shop when they come to London, retail is often not the key reason or influence behind their decision to visit. It is often a secondary activity that they undertake when they are there.

Despite this fact, the report observes that retailers have collectively worked hard to improve the experience for people with access needs. This is reflected in the significant improvement recorded for the overall access rating that went up from 14% in 2009 to 60% in 2012. These improvements were recorded across a number of areas, especially in relation to information provision and staffing:

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<sup>53</sup> Royal National Theatre: [www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/your-visit/access](http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/your-visit/access)

- 51% were positive about the pre-trip availability of information (+12%)
- 45% were positive about pre trip information in alternative formats (+18%)
- 52% were positive about pre trip information accuracy (+16%)
- 54% were positive about staff attitude and knowledge (+29%)

Whilst these figures suggest an improvement they also indicate however, that much still needs to be done to improve the retail experience of disabled people in London.

### **Shopmobility**

Shopmobility schemes, based at shopping centres throughout the UK, provide short-term hire of wheelchairs and scooters to help you get around the shops. A number of London's shopping centres have a Shopmobility scheme nearby or in the centre of the shopping area. A scheme usually has an office with adjacent blue badge parking spaces. The offices offer manual or electric wheelchairs, as well as scooters, for hire and use. Some schemes can provide volunteer escorts if necessary. Some of these are trained to guide people with visual impairments. Some schemes provide equipment for free, otherwise services and charges vary.<sup>54</sup> Results however, from the Games Changer report indicate a surprising drop in awareness by disabled people of this scheme, with 72% of respondents being aware of Shopmobility in 2009, falling to 58% in 2012 with 22% using the scheme in that year.

### **Transport**

Transport for London continues the accessible improvement programme at a good pace in spite of severe budget restrictions limiting the scale of initially planned work and targets set for providing step-free access. London's transport network has become significantly more accessible over the past 10 years.

Accessibility of streets has been improved through Better Streets and other public realm initiatives, two fully step-free extensions have opened on the Docklands Light Railway (DLR), and service on the London Overground has been enhanced beyond recognition, and includes six new accessible stations. The proportion of all stations and stops across London's rail-based public transport system with step-free routes between street and platform is approaching 40 per cent and will rise to 45 per cent by 2015. It is expected to reach 50 per cent before the end of the decade

### **Mainline Rail**

The Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) have produced a website [www.disability-onboard.co.uk](http://www.disability-onboard.co.uk) which gives extensive advice and information to

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<sup>54</sup> Shopmobility: [www.visitlondon.com/things-to-do/activities/shopping/shopmobility](http://www.visitlondon.com/things-to-do/activities/shopping/shopmobility)

disabled people when travelling by rail. Produced with the advice and guidance of disabled people a range of travel tips are provided. Passenger Assistance is free and available to anyone who needs assistance due to a disability, temporary impairment, or older age. staff can help with such things as being met at the station, purchasing a ticket, getting to the right platform and boarding a train using a ramp. It is recommend that if assistance is required that it is booked it at least 24 hours in advance of travel. The reason given for this is that it enables train companies to check the accessibility of the stations people will be using, help them plan the journey best suited to their needs, and if necessary, arrange alternative transport to the nearest accessible station e.g. use a booked taxi. Whilst the reasons for advance booking can be understood, it is not mandatory, but some disabled people feels that this removes their ability to be spontaneous and travel at any time they wish. The infrastructure of the railway however is such that it does not fully enable independent travel for disabled people across the network.

Southern trains operate a Priority Card Scheme. All trains have specially designated Priority Seats, which can be used by anyone, but they should be given up if they are needed more by people with disabilities, expectant mothers, elderly passengers or those carrying infants. Recognising that some might be reluctant and uncomfortable asking someone to give up a Priority Seat when needed and explaining why. Southern launched a priority seat card to overcome this issue and can be used by those who register for a card with the company which they can show to fellow passengers.<sup>55</sup> Southern have also introduced an easy read accessibility guide for passengers with learning difficulties or for whom English is not their first language. It's laid out in simple easy to understand language with pictures to illustrate each point.

### **Tube Trains**

The Tube carries 1 billion passengers a year, with 3.5 million journeys each day on 11 lines serving 270 stations. London Underground has 66 stations which are step-free from street to platform. Each station has at least one ticket machine with lower buttons and coin and card slots for wheelchair users. All of the ticket offices have induction loops. There are more than 250 wide-aisle automatic ticket gates on the Tube for easy access.

In 2011 Byelaws were changed to make it easier for some assistance dog users to use Tube stations. Assistance dogs which have been specifically trained in how to use escalators (and carry the appropriate identification) are now able to use escalators. Tactile warning surfaces are being installed on staircases as stations are refurbished similarly on platforms also. Seats are available on all platforms. To reduce the step up at some stations, platform humps are being installed on some platforms. These raise the platform to the level of the train. At some stations, staff will deploy boarding ramps to help wheelchair users board and alight. This service will be available at 33 Tube

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<sup>55</sup> Southern Railway Priority Card: <http://www.southernrailway.com/your-journey/accessibility/priority-seat-card/>

stations. All trains have clearly marked priority seating next to doors. These are for disabled people, pregnant women, older people, those travelling with children and anyone less able to stand. Passengers are expected to leave these seats free or vacate them if they see someone who might require a seat. If no one offers, feel free to ask. Dedicated wheelchair spaces are available on Victoria and Metropolitan line trains. District, Jubilee and Northern line trains have multipurpose areas suitable for wheelchairs, luggage and pushchairs.

All trains have automatic voice announcements. These announce the current and next stations, and the destination of the train.

The District, Jubilee, Metropolitan, Northern, Piccadilly and Victoria lines have visual information displays inside the train. These show the current and next stations, and the destination of the train.<sup>56</sup>

Transport for London also rolled out the use of boarding ramps to 40 extra platforms and 19 more stations in 2013. TfL introduced the ramps as a temporary measure during the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games – across 16 stations – and they proved so popular with disabled passengers that they were retained after the games ended. The portable ramp scheme will soon cover more than half of the 66 stations that are step-free from street to platform. It also makes 149 of the 195 platforms that are step-free from street to platform accessible from street to train, thanks to the ramps – which bridge the gap between platform and train – as well as existing raised platform sections, low-floor trains and other improvements.

TfL is also improving signage that shows step-free routes through stations, and has launched a new Twitter feed (@TfLAccess) to update disabled passengers on service improvements and advise them of any changes – such as lifts or escalators that are out of order – that may affect their journeys.

Among other improvements, a “world-leading” system on the Victoria line now gives real-time visual information on disruptions for passengers who cannot hear the driver’s announcements.

TfL plan to make 27 more underground and overground stations step-free over the next eight years, but is applying for Department for Transport funding to extend this number.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Transport for London: [www.tfl.gov.uk/gettingaround/transportaccessibility/1169.aspx](http://www.tfl.gov.uk/gettingaround/transportaccessibility/1169.aspx)

<sup>57</sup> <http://disabilitynewsservice.com/2013/05/transport-for-london-wins-praise-for-rolling-out-the-ramps/>

## **Buses**

The entire fleet of 8,500 buses on 700 routes in London, one of the largest bus services in the world, are now low-floor and wheelchair accessible (with the exception of Heritage Routemasters). The introduction of the iBus and Countdown systems, prompting audio and visual route announcements on the bus, to assist the hearing or visually impaired, and arrival times of bus stops, has also transformed bus service information. In addition, 71 per cent of bus stops are fully accessible and TFL plans to invest a further £18m to increase this figure to 95 per cent by 2016.<sup>58</sup>

## **Taxis**

London has Europe's largest fleet of wheelchair accessible taxis. All of London's 22,000 black cabs can now accommodate wheelchairs and act as a crucial link to other forms of accessible transport. All are equipped with ramps. Every one of them is meant to carry a portable step, so that disabled people can step more easily up into the vehicle. However, there are dissenting views on the accessibility of London cabs. The website 'www.inclusive-london.com' which is described as 'The Unofficial Visitor Guide' states that 'London has the least accessible taxi fleet in the UK and that there are other vehicles that are 'more widely accessible as well as considerably cheaper'. A serious barrier to the accessibility of cabs is however the attitude of some taxi drivers as it is recorded that too many disabled people – particularly assistance dog users and wheelchair users – have had the experience of being driven past or turned away for a taxi journey. Others are told that the ramp isn't working; that the driver doesn't know how to operate it, or that the driver has forgotten the step.<sup>59</sup>

## **Parking**

Blue parking badges allow cars carrying people who are registered blind or who have severe walking difficulties to park near shops, stations and other facilities. The scheme is a national one, however within some London boroughs standard entitlements do not apply. As the 'Games Changer' report observes, from a visitor perspective, Blue Badge Parking remains fragmented and unclear with no London wide reference source. The exception being the four central London boroughs who have a standalone website hosted by the City of London Corporation.<sup>60</sup> The Department for Transport reviewed the Blue Badge parking scheme in 2008 yet a problem with the inconsistency of information appears to remain unaddressed. This is despite a surge in

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<sup>58</sup> Mayor Watch: [www.mayorwatch.co.uk/tfl-and-charities-unite-to-boost-bus-drivers-awareness-of-mobility-needs/201327496](http://www.mayorwatch.co.uk/tfl-and-charities-unite-to-boost-bus-drivers-awareness-of-mobility-needs/201327496)

<sup>59</sup> Transport for All: <http://www.transportforall.org.uk/news/time-to-end-disability-discrimination-in-the-taxi-industry>

<sup>60</sup> Blue Badge Parking: [www.bluebadgelondon.org.uk](http://www.bluebadgelondon.org.uk)

popularity of visitors using private cars to travel to London over a similar period (from 18% to 34% between 2009 and 2012). The report shows that the availability of Blue Badge parking remains the most important transport factor for visitors to London. While showing an increase of 12% on 2009, only 36% considered the availability of blue badge parking to be good/ excellent.

### **River Boats**

Increasingly London is looking to the River Thames and riverboats as a means of moving across the city. All piers are wheelchair accessible. Most riverboats are accessible, and most new riverboats have dedicated wheelchair spaces. Users are advised to check with individual service operators about the level of accessibility on their boats. Staff are on hand to offer help in boarding and disembarking from riverboats. However, they state that it is advisable for any people with mobility impairments who are travelling as a group to provide advance notice to the operator concerned, to ensure a smooth journey.<sup>61</sup>

### **Toilets**

Access to public toilets is important for everyone, however it is particularly important for many disabled people that accessible toilets are available. The 'Games Changer' report finds a big increase in levels of satisfaction since 2009; however at 48% it remains less than half. It also identifies that with funding cuts, the resources needed by the Boroughs for the upkeep and maintenance of public toilets, is not sustainable. While the Boroughs do not have a duty to provide toilets, they have the power to do so. Increasingly they are seeking alternative ways of providing facilities e.g. working with private sector businesses like bars and restaurants to provide public access. The scheme is rolling out in several boroughs. Some businesses signing up to take part receive a small fee. It seems the uptake by businesses was initially slow however numbers are increasing. However, how these partnership schemes will affect the provision, quality and availability of accessible toilets in the future is as yet unknown. A report published by the GLA in 2011 records that it is not known how many of the public toilets available in London are accessible, with only half the boroughs providing or publishing information on access. However, there are 900 toilets in London registered as part of the National Key Scheme run by the charity RADAR. In this scheme, disabled people can purchase a key to use toilets reserved for their use in business premises or public buildings. However, toilets in the National Key Scheme can still be restricted to customers, so they are not necessarily public toilets.<sup>62</sup>

### **Changing Places Toilets**

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<sup>61</sup> Riverboats: [www.tfl.gov.uk/gettingaround/transportaccessibility/1177.aspx](http://www.tfl.gov.uk/gettingaround/transportaccessibility/1177.aspx)

<sup>62</sup> Public Toilets in London – Update Report 2011  
[www.london.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s4497/Public%20Toilets%20-%20Appendix%201%20-%20draft%20repo.pdf](http://www.london.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s4497/Public%20Toilets%20-%20Appendix%201%20-%20draft%20repo.pdf)

Changing Places toilets are different to standard disabled toilets with extra features and more space to meet the needs of a range of people; those with profound and multiple learning disabilities, as well as other serious impairments such as spinal injuries, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis or an acquired brain injury, often need extra facilities to allow them to use the toilets comfortably. There are currently 33 Changing Places toilets across London<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Changing Places: [www.changing-places.org/find\\_a\\_toilet/location\\_map\\_and\\_national\\_register/10/distance.aspx?address=london,uk](http://www.changing-places.org/find_a_toilet/location_map_and_national_register/10/distance.aspx?address=london,uk)

## Annex 4

From interviews with Inclusion London, the following are responses by disabled people to the accessibility of London.

### 1. A general view of accessibility in London

#### Buses

- A lot has been done, it is better than before e.g. 10 – 20 years ago.
- Still more can be done – a number bus networks are not always as accessible as they could be e.g. audio visual information on buses is not always working or if it breaks down nothing replaces it. It's useful for VI/Deaf people and tourists.
- Deaf people say the visual information on buses/tubes has been a benefit.
- Improved buses – now wheelchair accessible with bus ramps – 90% work.
- Bus stops – sometimes it not possible for the drivers to get close to the pavements due to various problems like broken pavements, other obstacles like rubbish bins etc. Drivers need to park closely to the curb for the ramp to work.
- Big issue for Wheelchair users is the lack of space on buses – the clash with buggy/pram users.
- On the plus side Buses overall are good. On the negative side is that drivers are not always helpful or willing to intervene e.g. asking buggy users to move or giving people time to sit down etc.,
- Some of the larger tourism companies have woken up to the commercial advance of disabled tourists.

#### Tube:

- Getting better
- A limited number of tube stations are step free including from platform to train
- Disabled people have to plan their journey in advance so they know which station they can access, check if lifts are working, making sure they destination is also accessible and all facilitates are working.
- Information is available on line, but when the service breaks down there is often no replacement so you don't know what is happening.

#### Public Spaces:

- External environment can still be difficult, particularly for people with visual impairment and wheelchair users, not all Local Authorities have money for road, pavement repairs. Outdoor furniture can be a problem sometimes e.g. rubbishes bins being in the wrong place, advertising signs being obstructive etc. Still need some work to ensure environment is accessible to everyone. Some local authorities are good but that's only a few.

#### Theatres and Museums:

- The BSL deaf community has seen a lot of positive changes – there is more interpreted theatre, museums and galleries like Tate Modern, Hampton Court, plus other Royal Palaces etc., now have regular interpreted tours. Hampton Court recently trained a number of Deaf people to become tour guides.
- Subtitled cinema is also becoming more popular and cinemas in the West End now provide this on specific days.
- Better wheelchair access to various museums and restaurants

## **2. What is being done really well?**

General view is that things have improved but not to the point where disabled people feel equal to non-disabled people. For example often disabled people have to plan ahead their visits e.g. to restaurant or the theatre etc., they have to check information (and hope it is up to date and correct) nothing can be done on the spur of the moment. If they do not check, and decide to turn up, and could find it is not accessible (or have if information suggested it was accessible, but had changed or something was not working but had not been updated on the internet) that exclusion can mean the whole family is excluded not just the disabled person. For providers it means reputations can be undermined.

- Tubes have a good scheme called Turn up and Go for people with VI. Station staffs are trained to provide assistance; you don't have to book in advance. However, some stations do not always provide it. Worth checking in advance.
- Transport for London training for all Public Transport staff is good; It is delivered by older and disabled people.
- Electronic information on the tube and on station platform provides good information, but when it breaks down there is no replacement. Often deaf people only know something has changed if they see people listening or leaving the platform.
- Information about retail or theatres is patchy and can be unreliable. You have to check in advance. An example: Westfield Shopping Centre in East London- London Access Forum was involved from the design stage. Recently a member went to WH Smith to buy stationery for a Westfield Access meeting only to find the layout made it practically inaccessible. He was told by the manager of that branch it was a standard design. So he now has to take this up with WH Smith HQ. It seems that the advice and guidance of the Access Team at the design stage had not been taken on board.

## **3. What can be done better?**

- Improve the quality of information and make it more widely available. People need to know where good transport access is so they can plan their journeys. But it seems information is not widely available. Some people do not have IT, so there is a need for more accessible paper type information, make information available at Tube stations & Bus stations etc.
- Deaf people say they would like more visual information and in BSL – Deaf tourist who do not use BSL need more visual information or via international sign language.
- One example of how information should improve; is the door to door policy the London underground have – if, for example, a tube station, which is publicized as accessible and is not, disabled travellers have to travel to the nearest accessible station – London Transport should provide a taxi service back to their original destination.
- Disabled people need to lead on access issues to ensure providers deliver.
- Foot paths and pavements need to be improved
- Bus stops need to be made accessible so that disabled people with mobility issues can get on to the bus from the pavement e.g. Croydon Trams are fully accessible and has flat access to enable people to get on and off buses.
- Bus drivers attitudes need to improve – they have training etc. but not enough is done to ensure wheelchair users can get onto the bus.

**4. How important is that all of elements of the supply chain are accessible to people, what is the effect on people if some parts are not accessible?**

- It can be demoralising when you have planned your journey only to find you cannot continue due to various barriers. It can cause extra delays and hardship. One example given was a wheelchair user who could not get onto a bus because the buggy user refused to move from the designated space – had to wait another 1.5 hours in the snow for a bus which would allow her to get on to.
- If you find that when you have arrived and there is no ramp on a tube or train – you have to hope someone will assist you to get off, if not or there is no one around who can help or pull the assistant chain (if you can find it) you might find yourself going past your station or stop with no way of knowing how you will get back. Often disabled people find it so stressful they decide not to travel, they try and stay local but miss out on opportunities such as social networking, volunteering, visiting events etc. They become invisible, or pay for expensive taxis which they cannot afford.

**5. What difference do you think the Olympic & Paralympics games made in terms of accessibility provision in London – what is the legacy?**

- Both Olympics and the Paralympics games was a great experience – so many people volunteering to assist tourists, older and disabled people. Volunteers were great, very helpful and this shows how support could be provided when this is done well.

- There was a campaign to influence Transport for London to produce a number of portable ramps for tubes – originally 16 stations had them and now continues to about 20 additional portable ramps available.
- Both events had a lot of good deaf access and deaf community involvement in several projects – Deafplus was asked to help train 12 deaf volunteers to assist.
- Olympics/Paralympics lasting impacts include some stations now has a raised surface for wheelchair users, sign/signage posting has improved, made it easier to see information, directions and signs e.g. for toilets etc– this has continued somewhat.
- Legacy has increased awareness, but it was suggested that there was also a negative focus that all disabled people could/should be the same as disabled athletics. It has not recognized disabled people as individuals with their own skills and abilities.

**6. How can change be brought about to ensure all of the different elements come together to create a fully accessible ‘supply chain’ for disabled people and many others for whom accessibility is important?**

**Key recommendations;**

- Keep up the campaign for accessible transport and improved access
- Support and encourage local Deaf and disabled and their organizations to get involved in access issues including at planning and designing stages
- Inclusive design teams from the start to finish – deaf and disabled people should be involved
- Promote the importance of access issues/legislation to design teams
- Use media to promote the issues – and use the law / equality act when necessary to drive the changes needed.
- Use the deaf media to promote/info the deaf community
- More visual and signed information
- Show good examples of how complaints work. One example – a well known Coffee shop tables were not the right height for a wheelchair user. A disabled people wrote to the HQ of the Coffee chain and quoted the Equality Act etc. Within a month table were changed and now more accessible.
- Need to campaign to improve road crossing and traffic light changes – sometimes they change too fast and the disabled person has not crossed the road before the cars/bikes have started off.
- Local Authority used to support local mobility forums and used them as consultation with local older and disabled people, but resources were cut and many of these opportunities have now ceased. The impact is that there is less consultation.

## Further information

An Accessible and Inclusive Games: The London Story 30<sup>th</sup> August 2012

Presentations:

[www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Accessible%20and%20inclusive%20games%2030%20August%20-%20FULL%20PRESENTATION%20PACK.pdf](http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Accessible%20and%20inclusive%20games%2030%20August%20-%20FULL%20PRESENTATION%20PACK.pdf)

Transcript of Event:

[www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Transcript%20Accessible%20and%20Inclusive%20Games%2030%20August%202012%20conference\\_0.pdf](http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Transcript%20Accessible%20and%20Inclusive%20Games%2030%20August%202012%20conference_0.pdf)