User-Led Accessibility Audit Report: The Hamilton, Watts, Panoz, and Smurfit Buildings

Date Of Audit: **May 2024**

Audited By: **Glen Wilkie, Faolán Doecke-Launders, Wilson Williams**

Area Zone: 4

Premises Manager: **Jonathan Fitzpatrick**

Executive Summary of Accessibility Issues

Emergency / Fire Evacuation Concerns:

The audited buildings pose a **High-Risk** of potential harm to a person in a wheelchair or with mobility issues in the case of an emergency. There would be no access to lifts during a fire as is common practice, however the issues raised from the solution to no lift access are as follows:

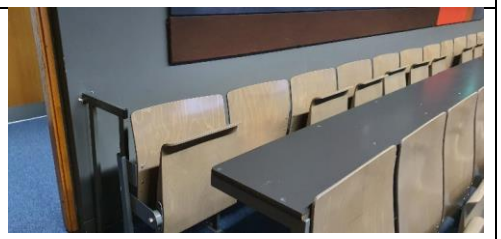
- The main staircase adjacent to the Hamilton library and in the main building hall do not have any form of **wheelchair call button** in the case of emergencies.
    - These are present and functioning in the Watts building; however, the wardens were **unclear on procedure** of responding to refuge point calls and the location of the staircases are in largely staff areas.
- Staircase accessed by the rear of the Global Room fire exit has a wheelchair emergency call button at refuge point on every floor, but its **presence and access are seemingly unclear** to students and workers in the Global Room at the time.
    - A test of this emergency call button was done and although the light was present and a noise was made at refuge point, it **did not alert any warden or member of security** and thus made its presence void of use, and potentially more dangerous for someone to be waiting expecting help that will never arrive.
- The wardens informed us they do have access to evacuation chairs, but they have **not all been routinely trained** in their use, and their access to these chairs would **not be immediately accessible** due to their storage behind many other objects.
- **Clearly accessible and identified refuge areas were unclear** and unbeknown to the audit team, despite warden assistance and knowledge.
    - The wardens made their desires clear to have **more information and communication on this issue**, as they do not feel adequately informed.

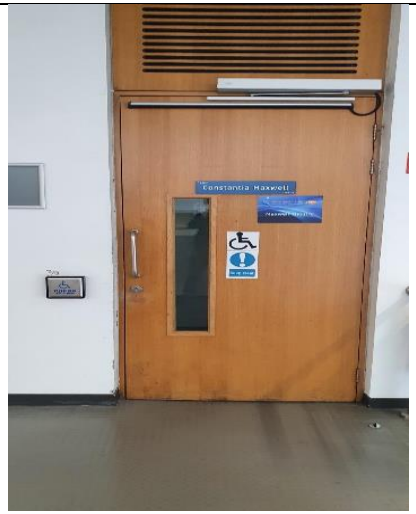
The specific issues identified from this audit are detailed in a tabular form below. This information is also available in a linear format here: User-Led hamilton report linear.docx

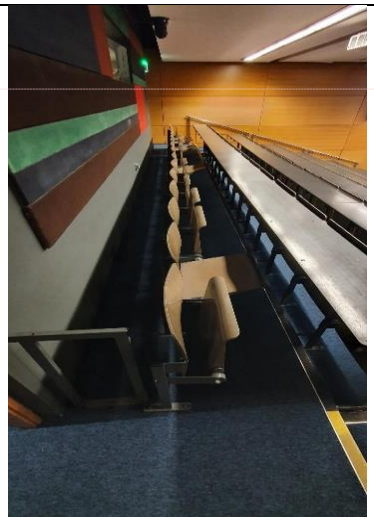
Feature	*Access Comment*	*Action Required*	*Image*
Ground floor wheelchair access to the lecture halls.	Wheelchair access to the front of lecture halls in the Hamilton Building are accessed by an exterior set of heavy metal doors adjacent to the Union shop.	This door needs to be automated – as well as the front door entrances to the relevant lecture halls.	
Wheelchair accessible entry and exit points	Hamilton and O'Reilly automatic door interior entrance has a steep incline ramp with a mat – only access for wheelchair users:	There is a mat placed on this ramp to prevent slipping but wheelchair users have cited that the mat often gets stuck in their wheelchair. Need to remove or consider alternative.	

Accessible staircase for visually impaired students	Main atrium staircases have very worn tactile strips: There is also a lack of colour markers for identifying the bottom and top stairs for visually impaired users	Implement colour markers and strong tactile strips to the staircase.	
Injury risk – main atrium staircases	Risk of injury for visually impaired students when walking beneath main atrium staircases	Consider coloured identifiers or distinct signage to mitigate risk. Add materials around the edge of staircase at head-height for blind students	

Inaccessible student social spaces / society areas	The Westland Row buildings are inaccessible due to step access and lack of lifts once in these buildings. Corridor and door widths are often not at regulation standard of 80-90cm to allow for comfortable manuvering space.	Install ramp or lifts to access these areas also widening doorways and corridors to meet regulation. School of Maths are planning to make one of these entrances accessible to allow maths help room to be accessible to disabled students.	
Assistive hearing devices (loop systems) in teaching spaces	Presence of assistive listening devices or infra-red technology was unable to be determined from the scope of our audit	Ensure all teaching spaces have assistive listening devices installed.	N/A
Entrance to East End Lecture Theatres (LTEE1, LTEE2, LTEE3)	Entrances have functional automatic doors but a steep gradient to access seating, difficult for someone with mobility issues to navigate.	Address the steep gradient to make it more accessible.	
East End Lecture Theatres – Seating Arrangements	No accessible seating present, seating arrangements are standardised and fixed, no	Provide adjustable desks and create accessible seating areas. Clearly mark these areas for wheelchair users.	

	space allocated for wheelchair users or those with diverse needs.		
Entrance to MacNeil Lecture Theatre	Entrance has functional automatic door on right side, wheelchair accessible exit via Hamilton student shop or lift.	Install automation on left side and ensure clear signage.	
MacNeil Lecture Theatre – Seating Arrangements	Wheelchair accessible roll-in spaces are available in the back of the hall but other seats are fixed and standardized.	Improve seating arrangements to provide more accessible options. Clearly mark these areas for wheelchair users	

Maxwell Lecture Theatre	Entrance has automatic door functionality, accessible by lift only.	Maintain accessibility features and ensure clear signage. Clearly mark these areas for wheelchair users	

Maxwell Lecture Theatre – Seating Arrangements	No accessible seating arrangements available, the lecture hall has stairs and is not accessible.	Create accessible seating areas and address the accessibility of the lecture hall. Clearly mark these areas for wheelchair users	
Joly Lecture Theatre – Entrance and Exits	Entrance has functional automatic doors, wheelchair accessible exit via Hamilton student shop or lift.	N/A	**N.A**

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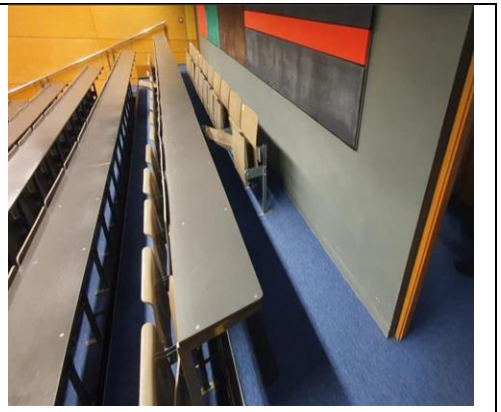
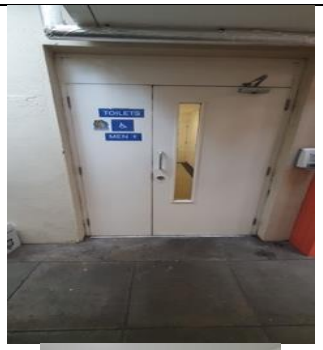
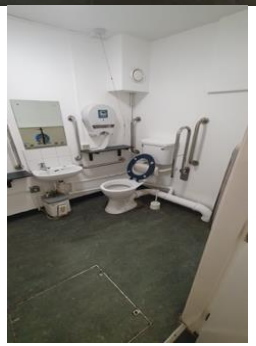
Joly Lecture Theatre – Seating Arrangements	Sufficient seating space for wheelchair access at the back of the theatre should be implemented as gold standard for all teaching spaces.	Use this as a model for other teaching spaces.	
All labs – access to workspace	Inaccessible without intervention but use of free-standing height-adjustable desk has been used for students with mobility issues in the past. Difficulty accessing fume cupboards as required during experiments.	Maintain access to this accommodation and ensure an appropriate number of adjustable tables are available to accommodate student demand. Designate an accessible area and provide assistance for accessing fume cupboards.	**NA.**

All labs – Access to sink	No under access sink in present in any of the labs.	Install a free standing under access sink as discussed with Chief Technician	
Bathroom – ground floor	Located just past the Security Desk. Access obstructed by two-heavy automated doors. Lack of maneuvering space and sink obstructed by electrical box.	Automate the doors, clear obstructions around the sink.	

			 
Academic Registry – access to facilities	Located on the first floor of the Watts building – Automatic door infrastructure present but non-functional. Wheelchair accessible service desk is obstructured.	Fix the automated doors; Automate the enabled toilet door in hallway; Lift at ground level entrance could be used by wheelchair users if wayfinding improved to AR Helpdesk;	

		and ensure the wheelchair-adapted service desk is unobstructed and usable. Remove printer and space is presently used for taking photos for student cards – provide elsewhere	
The Global Room – access to facilities	Large amount of furniture reduces maneuverability of wheelchair users	Reduce furniture to allow for easy access.	

Appendix 1: Introduction to the User-Led Audit

What is a User-Led Audit?

A User-Led Audit involves community members who experience accessibility challenges firsthand. These individuals will lead the evaluation of our physical and sensory environments to ensure our campus meets their needs effectively. This approach allows for authentic insights that are often overlooked in traditional audits, leading to more impactful and meaningful improvements.

Why User-Led Audits?

- **Authentic Feedback**: Direct from community members affected by accessibility barriers, ensuring that changes reflect real needs.
- **Empowerment**: This initiative empowers those impacted by accessibility issues to contribute actively to solutions, fostering a sense of ownership and involvement.
- **Comprehensive Improvements**: Beyond compliance, these audits aim to enhance actual usability and comfort, making our campus welcoming for everyone.

What is the Audit Tool being used?

The Audit Tool being used has been specifically designed for this initiative and continues to be constantly updated and developed as we move through each audit stage. The Audit Tool is an Excel-based program designed to streamline the data collection and analysis process for auditing accessible spaces.

The tool serves two primary functions:

- **Data Collection:** Users can systematically record detailed information about the accessibility features of various spaces. This includes inputting specific criteria and observations related to physical access, facilities, and compliance with accessibility standards.
- **Data Production:** The tool processes the collected data to generate comprehensive reports. These reports provide insights into the current state of accessibility, highlight areas of non-compliance, and suggest improvements.

Audit Objectives:

- To conduct detailed physical and sensory access audits across the TCD campus, identifying barriers to accessibility.
- To engage with the TCD community, particularly those with disabilities, ensuring a user-led approach in identifying and addressing accessibility issues.
- To develop and implement actionable recommendations for enhancing campus accessibility, informed by audit findings and user experiences.
- To foster a culture of inclusivity and awareness regarding accessibility issues within the TCD community.

Appendix 2: Reference Standards

- **Building Regulations 2010, Technical Guidance Document M (TGD M):** Access and Use: Provides guidance on complying with Part M of the Building Regulations for accessibility.
- **National Disability Authority (NDA) - Building for Everyone:** A Universal Design Approach: Offers comprehensive guidelines on universal design for accessible buildings and public spaces.
- **Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) - Best Practice Access Guidelines**: Focuses on best practices for designing accessible environments, particularly for wheelchair users and those with mobility impairments.