

# **Chepstow Museum - Access Statement**

## **Introduction**

This statement, deals in the main with issues of geographical and physical access. However matters of, intellectual, social, and cultural access, including the provision of access to our service through the Welsh language are also addressed.

Please note “The access statement does not contain personal opinions regarding our suitability for those with disabilities but aims to describe the facilities and services we offer for all our visitors.”

Chepstow Museum is located in the town of Chepstow. It is one of three museum buildings directly run by Monmouthshire County Council Museums Service. Its home is a fine Grade II listed 18<sup>th</sup> century town house, Gwy House, located in Lower Chepstow, opposite Chepstow Castle car park and the Tourist Information Centre, in what Monmouthshire County Council is now designating the ‘cultural quarter’ of Chepstow, and certainly the tourist main destination. There are currently six gallery spaces housing displays about the history and development of the town, the working life of the town and its people, their leisure activities, domestic life, the history of Gwy House itself, Views of Chepstow Castle, as well as a gallery for changing exhibitions. It also has an attractive and well stocked retail area selling appropriate retro and period gifts, cards, toys, games etc. At the rear of the museum is a boat house displaying a conserved traditional salmon fishing boat from the Wye. Most workshops, lectures and large scale events are held in the nearby Drill Hall just behind the Museum.

## **Practical Information**

Chepstow Museum  
Gwy House  
Bridge Street  
Chepstow  
Monmouthshire  
NP16 5EZ

Tel: 01291 625981  
e-mail: [chepstowmuseum@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:chepstowmuseum@monmouthshire.gov.uk)  
Follow us on twitter: @chepstowmuseum  
[www.chepstowmuseum.co.uk](http://www.chepstowmuseum.co.uk)

Admission Free

Opening Hours:

Monday – Saturday (inc Bank Hols) 11-5, Sunday 2-5

Extended hours July-Sept inclusive, open 10.30am, close 5.30pm

Reduced hours Nov-Feb inclusive, close 4pm

Closed, Christmas Day, Boxing Day and following, & New Years Day

Pre-booked group and school visits can be arranged out of normal hours

## Geographical Access

### Train

Chepstow Station is approximately 5-10 minutes walk away from the museum. Taxis are often available at the station. There is a car park close by in Station Road. For further information follow this link

<http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations/cpw/details.html>

or telephone National Rail enquiries on 0845 748 4950

### Coach and Bus

National Express coaches direct to London Victoria, Heathrow, Gatwick, Cardiff, Swansea & West Wales, from Chepstow Bus Station in Thomas Street, 5-10 minutes walk from Museum.

<http://www.nationalexpress.com/home.aspx>

Buses direct to Bristol, Newport, Monmouth, etc also from Chepstow Bus Station, to Lydney, from bus stop opposite the Museum

For online information about bus timetables, follow this link

<http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/publictransport/>

For online information for public transport, follow this link.

<http://www.traveline-cymru.info/>

### Car

The Museum does not have its own dedicated car parking, but there is a large public car park just across the road: Chepstow Castle Car Park has 99 car spaces and 5 coach spaces, 4 disabled spaces (which are free). This is a Pay & Display car park, free on Sundays, and free at all times for disabled and motorbike parking.

The Drill Hall where Museum events are often held has a car park adjacent. This is only 2 minutes from the Museum entrance too. 80 Car spaces, 3 disabled spaces. No coaches. Pay & Display (free on Sundays and free at all times for disabled and motorbike parking)

For Chepstow Car Parking information online follow this link

<http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/parking/>

### Disabled parking

The 4 disabled parking bays in the car park across Bridge Street are located almost directly opposite our main entrance, There would be a distance of c25 metres to our main entrance.

### Bikes

There are railings in the museum forecourt which may be suitable for chaining a bike. We cannot guarantee the security of the bike while on our premises. Chepstow is on the National Cycle Network (Route 4, London – Fishguard) and the Celtic Trail. For more information:

<http://www.sustrans.org.uk/what-we-do/national-cycle-network>

### Walkers

Chepstow is at the start/finish of several major hiking routes: Offa's Dyke Path, The Wye Valley Walk and the Wales Coast Path, with markers near the Museum on the Riverside. Chepstow also has Walkers are Welcome status.

## Physical Access

The Museum's status as Listed Building makes changes to improve access more problematic but our policy is to enhance access to the building and museum collections for those with a physical and sensory disability.

## **Entrance**

The main entrance is approached from Bridge Street on to a level forecourt. There are two shallow steps up to the portico entrance. The double doors which are fixed open during opening hours (118cms opening width), open into a small lobby. Push chairs can be left here, and school groups can leave bags and coats and there is an umbrella stand. There are notice boards here with posters for community and regional events, and leaflet racks for local attractions and other local information. An internal single glazed door which is normally closed, can be pushed or pulled open (83cms wide) and opens by the reception desk into the entrance hall.

### **Ramped entrance**

There is a ramped entrance with railing alongside, from the Museum forecourt on the left hand side of the building leading up to double doors, where there is a bell. Front of house staff assist with the opening of the doors and entry into the museum at this point.

## **Reception**

The reception desk is always manned by our front of house staff who welcome everyone to the Museum. Staff request large bags and rucksacks to be left with them here (to avoid any collisions with clocks and other period furniture on open display). There is an induction loop in this area. Trails and quiz sheets are also made available at the desk. Wi-Fi is available in the public areas.

The museum shop also occupies the entrance hall. There is room to manoeuvre a wheelchair or a pushchair. Top shelves would not be accessible from a seated position but front of house staff will assist.

The arched areas of the entrance hall have elaborate plasterwork ceilings and at the far end the cantilevered staircase to the first floor forms an area beneath with a display cabinet about Chepstow's WW1 VC Able Seaman Williams, Galleries and corridors to galleries open off this entrance hall through doorways all just over 1 metre wide. The entrance hall also houses some of the Museum collections of late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century long case clocks from Chepstow clockmakers.

## **Toilet facilities**

On the ground floor, off the corridor leading from the entrance hall, there are two unisex toilets with washbasins and hand driers, one of which, (189cms x 196cms) designed for wheelchair access, also has baby changing facilities. Signage on the doors is also in Braille. The wheelchair accessible toilet has a sliding door (76cms opening width) toilet with contrasting seat, wash hand basin, hot water provider, soap dispenser, hand drier, alarm pull, 4 grab rails, toilet roll dispenser (52cms from floor) bin, full length mirror.

## **Flooring**

Lobby and entrance have terrazzo floor and the entrance hall has stone tiles. The changing exhibitions gallery has original wooden floorboards. Other galleries and corridors have carpet tiles but there are no deep piles. The toilet facilities are quarry tiled. The stairs are partially carpeted with nosings that also provide differentiation.

## **Lighting**

The reception area and shop are brightly and evenly lit. Lighting in most of the galleries is sensor operated so that the majority of the lights are activated by the visitor. Stairwell and corridor galleries are constantly lit at optimum levels. Light levels in some areas are low due to conservation needs of more vulnerable objects.

## Displays

On the ground floor, there are two galleries opening off the entrance hall:

the Story of the Development of the Town includes a central display with reconstruction paintings of the town throughout its history. There are cased displays for objects and wall mounted framed displays for prints, photos and other 2D material. Labels have a hierarchy with larger text and smaller text for individual objects. Small text is minimum of 14 point mostly larger. Larger Subject headings in acrylic lettering above cases and panels.

The room also has a 'teddy bear house' for children to select a bear to take around the museum with associated family trails on different themes...

Changing Exhibitions gallery includes fold out wall panels for maximum display of 2D material. Two built in wall cases with internal lighting. Throughout museum 2D work is hung to level to ensure visibly accessible to all users wherever possible.

A corridor from the entrance hall leads to a room with reconstructions of Hospital and School – both phases in the History of the House. The corridor continues with displays about Chepstow at Play framed wall panels of photographs, programmes etc and accompanying labels, suspended penny farthing and large poster for the film of Ivanhoe made in Chepstow in 1913.

The corridor leads to the largest gallery in the Museum (a 1930s extension to the Georgian house, built on as a hospital ward) with displays and recreations of aspects of Chepstow's working life, once important port and busy market town. Many of the cases are built into frameworks that complement the theme of the display eg vaulted cellar for the Wine Trade, recreation of Old Bank doorway for history of banks, old Shop front for displays about shops in the High street etc. This gallery includes new computer touch screen interactives, installed at a height suitable for users in wheelchairs.

The first floor galleries are accessed currently only by shallow stairs up the original curved cantilevered staircase from the entrance hall, below an oval domed skylight. Wheelchair access is currently not possible to the first floor.

The walls of the stairwell are hung with oil paintings of Chepstow and the Wye.

The first floor landing also has longcase clocks, some period furniture, paintings, and display case.

Galleries opening off the landing:

The Print Room – Wall hung framed prints of Chepstow castle with contemporary visitors comments; the room also houses an activity station for young visitors with drawers including craft activities as well as quests to take around the museum, puppets, period toys and other activities related to the displays. There is also a dressing up box with Victorian children's clothing, and a specially created big book about a young girl's first visit to Chepstow Museum, with an associated bag of objects to handle. Surfaces to use for these activities include a plan chest (housing conservation board) and the tops of cupboards which also house the museum's paper collections. Domestic History – cased displays of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century objects on the themes of washing, ironing, cooking, hairdressing, etc and some free standing associated exhibits.

Wye Tour Gallery (in the course of completion) featuring a reconstruction of part of a Wye Tour boat in which visitors can experience various interactive and filmic interpretations of the tour down the river from Ross to Chepstow popular with visitors in late 18<sup>th</sup> /early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

At the back of the Museum – Boat House display

Accessed independently around the outside of the building, on level surface, through wide back gates and onto bonded gravel area, the reconstructed Chepstow boat house displays a conserved late 19<sup>th</sup> century local traditional salmon fishing stopnet boat. Touch screen interactive interpretation incorporating filmed oral histories cut with archive photos and documents.

## **Intellectual Access**

Displays are designed to attract and engage visitors catering for different learning styles, needs, and levels of knowledge. As well as conventional panels and cased displays, there are atmospheric reconstructions and interactives.

There are 8 touchscreen interactives. All have been designed with retuning local visitors in mind so that there are different levels of fuller content. Some have been designed to give greater access to our collections – especially photographic archive, others to enable bigger stories / more information to be more interestingly accessed. There are different styles of interactive – game based, photo archive, ‘journey based’, story based, oral history etc.

Other interactive exhibits include – hidden doors that when opened reveal birds and animals of the We Valley and the sound they make. Film is also being used in the new Wye Tour gallery, as are more basic interactive ways of looking at text and pictures.

Objects to handle and reproduction clothing, are also used to actively engage young and old.

Handlists or leaflets have been substituted for labels in changing exhibitions largely composed of paintings (so that users are not constantly moving backwards – to look at the picture - and forwards – to read the labels)

Members of staff where possible provide assistance and additional information or take enquiries for further in depth information.

Occasional use of costumed interpreters within the museum, as well as talks, dayschools, events and workshops on specific themes are all employed to stimulate and satisfy access to knowledge and information about the collections, exhibitions, Chepstow and the locality.

Photographs and other items from the collections have already been used to take history onto the streets of Chepstow in ceramic wall tiles that form part of the town trail, and results of research (eg the history of shops in the High Street) on to plaques in the pavement. Images and information made accessible at all hours to locals and visitors alike.

Our aim is to employ varied and appealing ways, using new technologies where appropriate, to improve intellectual access to the Museum collections and their stories, and to encourage and engage with new and wider audiences as well as our established visitors and users.

## **Social and cultural access**

We continue to tackle real or perceived cultural and social barriers. Free entry to the Museum is an important plank of this policy. Events and workshops all have a reduced cost admission (concession rates) for Senior Citizens, Students, young people, disabled and their carers, and unwaged.

We will continue to undertake initiatives to reach and engage with different sectors of the community, for example by taking displays and activities from the museum out to other unrelated events, setting up a ‘pop up museum’ in a vacant High Street shop for a short term project, and recruiting volunteers for different projects from a wider age and interest base.

We recognise Welsh as an official language and its equal status with English. Newly generated exhibition content is bilingual as are associated publicity and publications where possible. New touch screen interactives have bilingual options.

## **Additional information**

- All staff receive training that includes disability awareness and customer care.
- Assistance dogs are welcome inside the museum. Non-assistance dogs are not.
- All measurements are approximate.
- We welcome suggestions on improving our service through comments books, phone, email etc.

