

DISABILITY ACCESS – EAST GRINSTEAD AREA

Charity Number 1079603

APRIL 2019 NEWSLETTER

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Friends,

It is with deep sorrow that I have to report the failure of our application for “Access for All” funding at East Grinstead station (Lingfield were also unsuccessful). I am bitterly disappointed because, on starting my research into why we have failed, it seems to me that the criteria for consideration as laid down by the Department of Transport has not been taken into account. Of course we understand that the Department have sought to spread the successful applications throughout the UK, but it is particularly galling when we observe that the overwhelming majority of those chosen have footfalls way below our current figure, and we know that our station staff are dealing with more applications for assistance for those with disabilities than many others.

I will be discussing with the Town Clerk and others where we go from this point. As you will know, we have spent a great deal of time and effort in putting the case, but we are determined to continue the fight to get recognition for all with disabilities and with mobility impairment using our station.

Best wishes,
Paul Johnson

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Chairman and Committee cordially invite you to attend the Annual General Meeting on Tuesday 9th July 2019 in the Cranston Suite at East Court. There will be a reception commencing at 1:30 pm at which tea/coffee will be available and the main meeting will commence at 2:00 pm. No further notice will be issued regarding this meeting so please make a note of the date and come along to support us.

WAITROSE COMMUNITY MATTERS CHARITY INITIATIVE

Disability Access was selected to participate in the Waitrose in-store Community Matters Charity Initiative for the month of March. Our share of the Waitrose donation for the month was £477. This is a magnificent amount and our thanks go to all customers and supporters of our group for making this amount possible.

MARTELLS

On Monday 4th March at the invitation of Mrs Margaret Martell, Paul Johnson, Cliff Barrow and Bob Astington, representing Disability Access, visited

Martells store in East Grinstead. The purpose of the meeting was to provide Mrs Martell with feedback on the measures taken during the refurbishment contract to offer easy access to all departments for people with any form of mobility problem. The store is a conversion of the Whitehall Centre which during its lifetime has seen varied use. The meeting was very constructive and it is obvious that careful consideration has been given to all aspects of accessibility by means of a lift between floors and ramps for wheelchair users where changes in floor levels occur. There is easy access to all departments with the exception of the Linen Department which can only be reached by a short staircase where provision of an adjacent ramp was not possible.

LINGFIELD PAVEMENT

Following complaints made by a resident of Lingfield about the condition of the pavement on the north side of Vicarage Road, a visit was made by Cliff Barrow and Bob Astington of Disability Access to view the problem. It is obvious that the problem has arisen due to long term neglect whereby the hedges have overgrown the pavement and the roots have caused the surface to break up. This considerably reduces the useable width of the pavement and the poor surface is a hazard for pedestrians with mobility problems and it is unsuitable for wheelchair or mobility scooter use. The pavement on the south side, however, is perfectly serviceable and for this reason we concluded that the cost to reinstate the pavement on the north side would be unreasonable as pedestrians and users of mobility aids can easily use the pavement on the other side and therefore no action was recommended.

EAST COURT TERRACE

In the November 2018 Newsletter, an article detailed progress being made to provide ramped access to one end of the terrace at the rear of the East Court Mansion. This ramp has now been completed and people using buggies, wheelchairs or mobility scooters can now gain access to the upper terrace. Until now it has only been accessible by steps or by taking a longer route via the War Memorial. The terrace provides magnificent views across the estate to the Ashdown Forrest and easier access has been an ambition of the Town Council for some time. Vice Chairman of the Amenities and Tourism Committee, Cllr Christine Mainstone, who is also the Town Council representative on the Disability Access Committee said. "We are so pleased to be able to invite those with mobility issues to enjoy the grounds from all aspects. While it was possible to reach the terrace previously it involved a longer way round on the East Court drive past the War Memorial to reach the top terrace. This was difficult for many people, particularly those who cannot manage steps or walk long distances. We are delighted this will be very much more convenient for them and all other visitors".

DISABLED TOILETS AT EAST COURT

Work to refurbish the toilets located in the car park adjacent to the East Court Mansion has now been completed. This much needed facility is available to the public from early morning until 5 pm when the toilets are locked. There are separate male and female toilets and one disabled toilet for which a

RADA key is required. Disability Access were consulted at planning stage to advise on access for disabled people.

Disability Access can provide RADA keys for a charge of £5. For further details please contact the Disability Access office.

BLUE BADGE REMINDER

If you are a Blue Badge user you should receive a letter reminding you to renew your Blue Badge approximately three months before your badge expires. However, it has been brought to our attention that some members have not received a reminder letter. Our advice is to be aware of the date your Blue Badge expires and reapply at least three months beforehand.

GRENESTEDE TALKING NEWS

Do you have sight problems? Get a free audio version of local news.

Grenestede Talking News is a free service for people with sight loss. Become a 'listener', and every week you will receive a CD of articles read out from local newspapers like the East Grinstead Courier and many on-line news sources.

If you don't have a CD player, we may be able to lend you one. It's a great way to know what's going on in the neighbourhood.

Volunteers to read, edit or record articles are also welcome!

To find out more call Christine Jordan on 01342 325823.

MOBILITY EQUIPMENT LOAN SCHEME

The Mobility Equipment Loan Scheme has become a flagship service offered by Disability Access and now that spring is here once again the service will be expecting a rise in demand for wheelchairs and other mobility aids. This happens every year at this time because people are able to get out in the warm sunshine and require assistance in travelling. A small wheelchair placed in the back of the car opens an opportunity for travel further, for example to the seaside or countryside.

Use of our service has grown and we now get enquiries from the Queen Victoria Hospital, Riding for the Disabled, MS Society and Parkinson's UK. Also, the range within which we provide this service has widened. We not only serve users locally but also in more distant parts of East and West Sussex and we also have users in Surrey and Kent.

Currently we have on loan, 16 mobility scooters, 40 lightweight wheelchairs, 13 wheeled walkers (rollators) and 5 walking frames.

The majority of equipment in our inventory has been donated to us and in this respect we are particularly grateful to Heatherley Cheshire Homes who have donated many wheelchairs, but there are occasions when items of equipment have to be renewed and the cost is met from our funds. In particular this occurs when batteries for mobility scooters need to be renewed and these can cost up to £200 each.

This service is a free loan service supported entirely by voluntary contributions and is available for people of any age with mobility problems. If you are interested please contact the Disability Access office and let us help you.

VISUALLY IMPAIRED READERS GROUP

Henceforth, the Visually Impaired Readers Group will meet on the third Tuesday of each month instead of the last Tuesday as of now. Meetings commence at 10:30 and finish at midday. New members are welcome to join this friendly group and free transport is available if required. If you are interested telephone the library on 01342332900 or Jean on 01342325793.

DAWNS (DISABLED ADULTS WEALDEN NORTH SOCIAL)

DAWNS is a social group open to anybody with any form of disability in North Wealden or its surroundings including East Grinstead.

Dawns Kurling takes place fortnightly at the Parish Hall in Ashurst Wood and social events are arranged monthly.

For more information about Kurling or monthly social meetings and how to become a member please contact Jo Keel on 07759948788 or WealdenNorthSocial@aol.com or visit our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/dawnskurling

AUDIO OR EMAIL NEWSLETTER SERVICE

You can receive this newsletter by email or as an audio recording on a CD. Either method is not only good for the environment but will reduce Disability Access production costs at a time when funding is becoming more difficult. If you can help in this way please let us know.

OFFICE CONTACT DETAILS

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