

ATHLONE

"A report on access and safety issues for pedestrians with sensory and physical disabilities"

ADDENDUM

MARCH 2006

A. EAST - MAIN DUBLIN ROAD: 2.1

Observations

- The new footpath outside *Athlone Business Park* has not been dished/ tactilely marked for wheelchair access.
- The high footpath outside of *Lidl* has not been dished for wheelchair access.
- The footpath has not been completed on the approach to the *IDA Centre* or on the town side of the *Athlone I.T.* building.
- Tactile paving has been installed on the footpaths at the vehicle crossings outside the two entrances to the *Athlone I.T.* building, but no crossover has been identified on the road surface.
- There is no tactile paving installed at the roundabout crossovers outside the *Athlone I.T.*
- Tactile paving has been installed at the pedestrian crossing close to *Athlone I.T.*; although the layout of the paving is correct on the college side of the road, the wrong colour slabs have been used on the new footpath. No tactile paving has been installed on the opposite side of the road, making it potentially hazardous for vision-impaired persons. The traffic control pole is still in an isolated position, inaccessible to wheelchair users (162-164).
- A good number of side roads off Auburn Road/ Retreat Road have had tactile paving installed at the dished sections of footpath; examples include Ashgrove, Ard na Glug, Retreat Heights and Auburn Heights. In places, red tactile blister paving has been installed where it should be buff coloured.
- Red tactile paving has been laid at the crossing on Grace Park Road, which is incorrect. The service covers within the area of the tactile paving have not been covered correctly (138-140).
- At Cartronroy Heights the footpath has not been sufficiently dished for wheelchair access and tactile paving has not been installed.

Recommendations

- Ensure that all new footpaths are completed correctly and comply with regulations regarding wheelchair access and tactile information for vision-impaired people.
- All vehicle crossovers must be identified with colour-contrasting road markings, and/ or change of surface texture.

- It is essential that if tactile information and guidance paving is installed at one side of a crossing point, the *equivalent* facility is installed on both sides of the road. Failure to do this results in a long cane user being stranded on the roadway, unable to find the corresponding safe access point.
- Remove the raised island at the traffic control pole and install a wheelchair accessible section of footpath outside the business premises, opposite the college.
- Install a protective barrier rail at the crossing point if an isolated section of path is to be installed outside these business premises, to prevent the parking of vehicles at the crossover.
- Install the correct colour and layout of tactile paving on this section of footpath; red tactile blister paving is used only at traffic controlled crossings while buff colour is used at all other points.
- Re-site the push button control pole so that it is within easy reach on the right hand side of the crossing point.

Commendations

- The speed bumps outside the entrance to the *Athlone I.T.* have been well colour-contrasted.
- The bollards recently installed on the road across from the college have been colour-contrasted.
- New clear signage has been installed at the designated disabled person's parking spaces in the car park at the *Golden Island Shopping Centre*, and the kerb edges have been removed around the parking spaces.
- A new crossing has been installed outside the primary school on Grace Park Road which is well identified and signed.

B. TOWN CENTRE - MAIN STREET: 2.5

Observations

- Red tactile paving has been installed at the audible street crossing outside *Mary's Discount Store*. This blister paving has not been installed correctly, as it does not lead to the inner shoreline.
- The push button control poles are sited in the wrong position at three out of four of the crossing points. They are out of reach of a vision-impaired pedestrian standing at the road edge in the correct position to cross at the signal.
- The audible signals at this crossing is unusually loud, but they are well synchronised.
- The new bollards that have been installed at the top and bottom of Payne's Lane have not been colour-contrasted.
- There is a lack of colour-identification on bollards, poles, etc. along John Broderick Street.
- A new push button controlled crossing has been installed at the shopping centre end of John Broderick Street, which has been correctly laid with red tactile paving.
- The steps outside Dunnes Stores have not been colour-identified.
- The bollards at the edge of the new pavement outside Dunnes Stores have not been colour-contrasted.
- The Y junction at the top of Sean Costello Street presents a serious potential hazard, as the footpath ends without any tactile warning.

- The adjoining steps on the footpath have neither colour nor tactile warning at the top or bottom.
- Protective rails have been installed at the extensions of the footpath at the corners of both Griffith Street (Nuts Corner) and Friary Lane. These rails have not been colour-identified. There is no tactile warning at these vehicle crossovers (112/113).
- The footpath across from the *Prince of Wales Hotel*, outside the church, has been dished incorrectly, directing wheelchair users and vision-impaired pedestrians out into the flow of traffic on the main street.
- The road markings on the designated crossing places in the town centre are badly worn.
- At the entrance to Lloyds Lane, the cobblelock bricks are lifting and present as a potential trip hazard. The footpath has been dished on either side but has no tactile warnings indicating a vehicle crossover.
- There is no tactile warning at the top of the steps leading down to the river from the *Subway Bar*, close to the end of the tactile guidance paving (134/135).
- The centre pedestrian refuge outside St Peter's Church has been marked with red blister paving; it should be buff coloured. Only one side of the road has been tactilely identified and only one half of the road crossing has been colour marked in white (144).
- There is a bollard to prevent vehicle access in the centre of the gateway into St Peter's Church, which has not been colour-identified. This presents as a potential trip hazard (145).
- Bollards have been installed at the top of the steps leading down to the river below the castle, which, though well painted in black, have not been colour-contrasted.
- The designated disabled parking spaces opposite the Garda station and round the back of the Bastion have been colour-contrasted in red asphalt, but are still not accessible from the footpath, as they have not been dished/ dropped. No overhead signage is in place at these designated parking spaces (149/152).
- There is no safe designated crossing on Northgate Street, at the busy junction with the main street.

Commendations

- The protruding edge of the bottom step in Custume Lane has been removed, thereby avoiding a potential accident (129/130).
- Tactile guidance paving has been installed to assist long cane users across a wide section of footpath (132).
- A designated crossing has been installed on the Ballymahon Road at Groveland, at the level crossing. This crossing has been well identified with clear road markings, advance signage and tactile paving (156).
- There is a new footpath and protective rail on the western side of the bridge, leading to the pedestrian crossing (136/137).
- Corduroy hazard warning strips have been laid at the top of the steps leading down to the river, below the castle (142).
- Designated crossing places have been installed on Northgate Street, close to the hospital and outside the railway station.

Recommendations

- Where a footpath ends, especially in the centre of the street, with vehicular movement to either side, it is essential that tactile warning pavement is installed to inform vision-impaired pedestrians. Tactile guidance must be installed to direct vision-impaired pedestrians to the safest line of travel.
- Where a footpath has been dished/ dropped, it is important that the sloped section of path should not direct a wheelchair user out into the flow of traffic.
- Install safe, indented crossing places at all major junctions, but especially at crossings such as Northgate Street, which is a street leading to the railway and bus stations, the hospital and the day care centre.
- Ensure that tactile information paving is installed at *both* sides of the road at dished wheelchair access points, and at pedestrian refuges in the centre of the road.
- Ensure that service covers are fitted with tactile paving when located inside an area assigned for tactile paving.
- Ensure that the correct colour and layout of tactile paving is laid at all times.
- Colour-contrast all bollards, using highly contrasting colours, both along the pavement and at entrances to gateways and buildings.
- Ensure that designated road crossing markings are continued across the complete width of the street and do not cease halfway across, leaving partially sighted people, who may be reliant on colour-identification, stranded on a pedestrian refuge.
- Re-site traffic control poles so that they are reachable by a long cane user who is correctly lined up at the kerb edge.

C. TOWN CENTRE - MARDYKE STREET: 3.1

Observations

- A lot of work has been done at the junction of Mardyke Street, St Mary's Square, Gleeson Street and Pump Lane, where there is a considerable difference in the level of the adjoining footpaths. This has been done to facilitate all pedestrians, but especially wheelchair users. A flight of steps, complemented by a wheelchair accessible ramp, have been installed (105-110).
- Tactile paving (corduroy hazard warning strip) has been correctly installed at the top and bottom of each set of steps and at the bottom of the ramp, but has been omitted at the top of the ramp.
- A well designed hand rail has been installed throughout the facility, but it has not been colour-contrasted to ease visibility for partially-sighted pedestrians.
- The risers of the steps have not been colour-identified.
- The outer edge of the top and bottom steps of each flight have not been colour-identified.
- The dished crossing points next to this facility have not been tactilely-marked on either side of the road, or in the centre of the road (111).
- A number of bollards in the vicinity of this facility have not been colour-contrasted.

Recommendations

- The top and bottom step of each flight of steps should be colour/ texture contrasted to aid identification.
- The risers of each individual step should be highlighted to make them more obvious.
- The handrails complementing the steps and the wheelchair ramp should be colour contrasted to assist partially sighted people. Please refer to the accompanying photographs titled "Edinburgh" for a good example of how this may be done.
- Tactile hazard warning strips should always be installed at both the top *and* bottom of a facility, to inform of a change of level underfoot.
- Colour-contrast all street bollards and litter bins for ease of visibility.

D. WEST - MAGAZINE ROAD / ABBEY ROAD / RETREAT ROAD ETC.: 4

Observations

- The handrail on Magazine Road has been repaired, but not colour-contrasted.
- The dished crossover outside the Radisson Hotel has not been tactilely-identified.
- There is no overhead signage at the two designated disabled person's parking spaces on Abbey Road.
- The vehicle crossover at the entrance to the bus station has been identified by good road markings, but no tactile paving has been installed at this point (153).
- Tactile paving has been incorrectly installed on Retreat Road, close to the roundabout, however no crossover has been identified on the road surface (160).

E. ENTRANCE TO THE COUNTY COUNCIL BUILDING

Observations

- There is no car parking attached to the county office and therefore no disabled person's parking space, other than the already existing space on the Main Street (see below), which is a considerable distance from the front entrance.
- There is no tactile guidance strip leading from either of the street entrances to the main door, to assist long cane users or guide dog users.
- The steps leading to the County Council offices from the street have been identified by corduroy hazard warning strips at both the top and bottom, but the steps are inconsistent in length and depth, and therefore hazardous to a vision-impaired pedestrian (116/117).
- The risers of the steps have not been colour-contrasted.
- The existing handrail is insufficient for the length of the steps and it has not been colour-identified (124).
- A clear glass panel has been inserted beneath the hand rail, making it very confusing for a partially sighted pedestrian, and causing a glare/ reflection difficulty on a bright day (122/125).

- Glass panels and grey/ silver steel have been used in the forecourt of the building, approaching the main door, which represent an orientation problem to people with poor vision (119/120).
- The use of white and pale grey ground covering in the forecourt, combined with the light grey and glass fronting the actual building itself, present a serious problem for people suffering from photophobia (intolerance to glare or light source) on a bright day.
- The outdoor furniture (benches, litter bins, signage etc.) has not been colour-contrasted to the surroundings, making it extremely difficult to identify (118).
- The lettering of the signage advertising the building is lacking in colour (121).
- There is no signage to indicate the entrance to the building either on the walls or on the glass panels outside or on the automatic glass doors.
- The steps immediately outside the main door, although identified by corduroy hazard warning strips at the top and bottom, have not been colour-identified on the outer edges, and the risers have not been highlighted (126/127).
- There is a handrail at one side of the steps only and this has not been colour-contrasted.
- There is a narrow protective barrier/ rail at the top of the steps, which is designed to prevent people from walking along the ledge outside the windows, above the steps. Up-lights have been set into this ledge, shining on the glass front of the building. These factors, combined with the lack of a hand rail on this side of the steps, presents as hazardous and source of confusion to people who have difficulty with depth of perception or three dimensional vision (128).
- Underfoot light sources have been sited outside the building, which represent a serious problem to people with vision-impairment.
- A number of the broken and uneven paving slabs in the forecourt present as potential trip hazards, as does the change of surface from smooth to cobblestone (123).

Recommendations

- Ensure that all paving slabs are laid flush and replaced where necessary, to avoid any potential trip hazards.
- Install a directional guidance paving strip leading to the main door from the disabled parking place.
- All flights of steps must have adequate handrails installed at the recommended intervals.
- All handrails must be colour-contrasted to the surroundings.
- Risers of all steps must be highlighted for ease of visibility.
- The outer edge of the top and bottom steps of each flight must be colour/ texture contrasted.
- All glass panels must be colour-identified, especially at the top of steps and in the line of pedestrian travel.
- Clear colour-contrasting signage should be installed at the main entrance to the building.
- Underfoot lighting is often a cause for disorientation and confusion, especially to people suffering from intolerance to light source, and should be avoided. Consistent lighting from overhead is recommended, especially where changes of level underfoot are to be found. People's ability to adapt to different levels of light can vary greatly, depending on various eye conditions; some these conditions can cause momentary 'blindness'. Underfoot light sources can be a major problem for

people suffering from photophobia (intolerance to glare) and should be avoided, especially in the vicinity of steps.

- All outdoor furniture should be well colour-contrasted, especially where there is a glare factor from the surroundings.
- The entrance to the building should be clearly identified by suitable signage, appropriately sited.
- The partial barrier to the left, at the top of the steps outside the main door, should be closed in to avoid the light behind it causing confusion to partially-sighted people; in addition it should be colour-contrasted.

Disabled Person's Parking Place: 3.2

Observations

- There is one disabled person's parking space in Dublin Gate Street, which is the only designated parking space available to people with disabilities, visiting or employed in the new County Council offices. This parking space has no overhead signage.
- There are a number of obstructions on the footpath, which are hazardous to a vision-impaired person (115).
- The bollards in the vicinity of this parking space have not been colour-contrasted.
- Red asphalt has been used to identify the designated parking space, rather than blue, which is the internationally recognised colour for disabled parking.
- The kerb edge has been dished only at the transfer space next to the parking space, and this dished section was observed to be partially blocked by an illegally parked vehicle, making wheelchair access to the path from the road impossible (114).

Recommendations

- Install overhead signage to identify the disabled person's parking space.
- Install a dished/ dropped area of footpath to the side of the designated parking space, to allow for easier access to the footpath, and to prevent the path being made inaccessible by illegally parked vehicles.
- Ensure that when a kerb edge has been removed to allow for wheelchair access, the dished area is identified by tactile paving.
- Remove or re-site all unnecessary obstructions from the area surrounding the designated parking place, to allow for wheelchair manoeuvrability.
- Identify the parking space through use of recommended signage and colour.
- Monitor the designated parking place to ensure that it is not abused.