

National Museums NI Access Policy

Date: February 2025

Our **vision** is to: Celebrate who we are; telling the stories of our past, challenging our present, shaping our future

We do to this by fulfilling our **mission** of:

- Developing, managing and caring for the collections
- Playing a leading role in the economic and social wellbeing of this place
- Making collections accessible to the widest possible audience
- Building an organisation where people feel valued

National Museums NI is custodian of a rich and varied collection that tells the story of this place, its people and our place in the world.

Our role is to work with the public to explore and share stories about real objects in each of our museums that helps all of us to gain new knowledge and understanding.

Our museums are best known as much loved visitor attractions for those who want to enjoy time out with family and friends or learn something new – welcoming both those who live here and tourists who visit. However, the impact of our work extends well beyond that.

National Museums NI is committed to three core principles which will underpin our strategic approach and permeate everything we do:

1. Ensuring museums are for everyone
2. Connecting our collections with people
3. Delivering a future-focused, effective museums service

While our museums welcome all, we recognise that barriers still exist for many – whether physical, cultural or attitudinal.

To overcome these barriers, we are committed to promoting equality of access and participation, creating spaces that reflect the diversity of Northern Ireland's population. **Inclusion isn't just a goal; it's a fundamental part of who we are and what we do.**

We will work to ensure that diverse voices are heard and multiple perspectives are represented in our interpretation, programming and operations. We aim to make our museums places where people feel connected to the stories they see, so that they can find relevance in our heritage and culture.

By partnering with local communities and underrepresented voices, we will continue to build museums that belong to everyone.

Overarching aims of this Access Policy

- Deliver more public benefit by continuing to increase access to and enjoyment of the National Museums NI's collections.
- Ensure that free entry to the Ulster Museum continues to be made available and that access to the Ulster Folk Museum, Ulster Transport Museum and Ulster American Folk Park remains affordable with appropriate concession ticketing options in place.
- Use digital technologies to bring the Museums' collection to audiences locally, nationally and internationally that are unable to visit our museum sites.
- Continue to improve our welcome to all and ensure that our facilities make this possible.
- Provide information in formats that are accessible to all visitors.
- Deliver an action plan to improve the physical, sensory, and intellectual access to the Museums' collections, information about the collections and access to the museums.

Access to our buildings

- Ensure all National Museums NI spaces are accessible and inclusive where people can be themselves, feel represented and welcomed, fulfil their potential and connect fully with collections and the stories they tell.
- Provide all visitors with access to our museums, making alternative provision where required, within the constraints of our exhibit buildings and health and safety regulations.
- Ensure that building projects plan to provide physical access facilities for all visitors.
- Consider the needs of all visitors in our safety procedures. All occupants of the sites will be evacuated at the same time in an emergency.

Activities for all

- Plan and deliver public activities to ensure that they are accessible and ensure a balance between care of collections and provision of access.
- Deliver a wide range of learning programmes for different audiences, designed to suit differing levels of knowledge, backgrounds, interests, and learning styles.

- Interpret the collection in ways which aims to meet a range of visitor needs.
- Ensure digital presentations of our collection and resources are accessible both onsite and offsite.
- Continue to consult people with disabilities, specialist organisations, and other museums and galleries, on the best ways of improving intellectual access.

Responsibilities and accountabilities

- As a service provider and equal opportunities employer, National Museums NI complies with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Race relations (NI) Order 1997; and other Northern Ireland specific legislation relating to equality and access underpinned by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.
- The Executive Team of National Museums NI retains overall responsibility and accountability for this policy, including its communication and promotion.
- Ensure that equality and diversity awareness form an integral part of induction and ongoing training for all our people.
- It is National Museums NI's responsibility to ensure that all staff and contractors are aware of our access policy and the part they can play in putting it into practice.
- National Museums NI's Diversity Inclusion and Access (DIA) Group aims to embed equality, diversity and inclusion across National Museums NI, and champion DIA with its partners and across the sector, supported by data, insight, and feedback.
- The Diversity Inclusion and Access Group meets regularly to discuss improvements to National Museums NI provision and to agree upon recommendations including from visitor feedback, access reviews and assessments for further action. Recommendations from the Group are approved by and implemented through the Executive Team, and, where appropriate, by the Trustees.

Capital projects

National Museums NI is working on plans for major capital works at the Ulster Folk Museum and Ulster American Folk Park. These capital projects will seek to address any existing access restrictions or limitations. These works will create improved access to collections for all of our visitors. This will include:

- Improvements to the welcome experience to provide a more welcoming and inclusive space for all.

- Improve our visitors' experience by upgrading a host of amenities including new digital external signage and better toilet provision, with an emphasis on sustainability, accessibility, comfort, and wellbeing.
- Open our collection to a broader and more diverse demographic and communicate better with a diverse range of audiences.
- Transform our Education facilities at the Ulster Folk Museum into a Centre for Creative Learning for families and community groups, school children and adult learners.

During periods of capital redevelopment our ability to accommodate all access needs may on occasion be compromised until our new facilities become available. We will do everything we can to continue to welcome all during this time.

This policy will be reviewed: February 2026.