

# The National Coal Mining Museum for England

## Access Statement

The National Coal Mining Museum for England aims to be accessible to all. The Museum is located on the original Caphouse Colliery, and as such, many of the original buildings have been retained, to illustrate a working environment. As a result, in achieving a balance between authenticity and access, not all areas are easily accessed, particularly by wheelchair users. The bulk of the main Caphouse Colliery site is reasonably level, with tarmac and concrete surfaces between buildings, with pedestrian routes clearly signed. However, there is a section of the site at a considerably lower level that incorporates the Stables, Pit Head Baths and a Education rooms. Access to this part of the site is either via a long sloped road, with a gradient of around 1:12, or a steep and long set of stairs with handrails each side.

There is limited car parking in the lower section, including one disabled access car parking space.

There are eleven designated disabled car parking spaces alongside the main orientation, galleries, shop and restaurant building, and further spaces between that building and the retained colliery buildings around the courtyard. There is level access from these spaces into the main building.

Maximum travelling distance between buildings is approximately 50m on the main site, level to the Lamphouse and Underground Tours buildings, and the Steam Winding Room. There is approximately a 10m sloped area, maximum gradient around 1:12 to access the 1842 displays. There is a slight slope, approximately 1:18, between the Steam Winding Room, Control Room and Coal Interface Gallery Buildings.

Travelling between the main Caphouse Colliery site and the smaller Hope Pit site can be along a pedestrian route, via the train, or by moving the car to the other site, approximately 350 metres distance. The train service has a ramped access to the platform, with handrails, and one train carriage has been adapted to carry one wheelchair, with assistance from trained staff.

**The Hope Pit site is a little more spread out**, with the central area reasonably level, a slightly graded tarmac route to the Hope Store, and a tarmac surfaced wide footpath route, with a gradient of a maximum 1:12 to the Winding Engine building. All routes are surfaced but some areas between buildings are uneven.

The site has clear directional signage and a tactile wayfinder map.

Car parking is available either at the top of the site or adjoining the various buildings, and whilst there are no designated spaces for disabled people, there is usually the facility to park on the aprons in front of the Hope Garage and Store.

**Extra care must be taken when touring the site, especially between what were working buildings, as some surfaces may be uneven in places, partly caused by potential ongoing subsidence, with mine workings beneath. Every effort is made to avoid potentially hazardous surfaces, and visitors are advised to stick where possible to clearly even and firm surfaces, not taking short cuts over uneven, unmarked routes.**

**Guide dogs and assistance dogs are welcome. Any special requirements or queries you may have regarding accessibility, so as to make your visit an enjoyable one, can be discussed in advance of your visit.**

**The Main Building** is single storey, modern build with level entry access, and automatic main entrance doors. It incorporates:

### **Reception Desk and Shop**

The reception desk is directly opposite the main entrance and has a lower section of counter, and a sound induction loop to assist hearing impaired visitors. At this point are also available a guidebook, with a large scale coloured map of the site, and audio tour guide devices.

The audio tour guide has information about all galleries and buildings that you can visit on site, with reference to number coding in those locations, and has a volume control.

There is good circulation space from the reception desk to the shop area, with most items on display at a reachable height. Staff are available to assist anyone with difficulty reaching items or reading labels etc.

### **Mining Lives Gallery**

This gallery is partly on a level to the rear of the shop and partly on an upper level accessed via a ramp and short flight of stairs with handrails. There is good circulation space throughout the gallery areas, and some seating.

Some of the exhibits are in open displays, and others are within well lit glass cabinets, with clear print labels and information boards. Adjoining some of the displays are large print versions of the labels, for ease of reading. TV monitor screen information is accompanied by audio and subtitles. A small theatre area with TV video has restricted space, but is accessible by a wheelchair user, who may have to reverse out.

The tour of the site takes visitors out of rear manual double doors to an external ramp.

### **Toilets in the Main Building**

Male and female standard toilets are located in a lobby off the Reception and Shop area.

### **Café**

Accessed from the top level of the Gallery, in turn accessed by ramp and stairs, the café has ample circulation space around the service counter, with a tray shelf at a suitable height for wheelchair users. There is reasonable space between tables, but this could be a little restricting in the centre for wheelchair users and ambulant disabled people with walking aids.

## **Conferences and Education**

The conference facilities are in the main building, with a self-contained level access, having automatic doors. The conference room can be one or split into three, and has suitable door width for wheelchair access.. An accessible toilet and standard toilets are available close to the rooms.

The Learning Curve teaching rooms are accessed from a Lobby, with separate route from the main entrance, on a level. There are double doors, both needing to be used to gain sufficient width for wheelchair access. Into the teaching rooms, the doors have finger guard strip covering the hinges, resulting in 730mm clear door opening width, a little tight for standard sized wheelchairs.

## **Screens Building**

This building is currently in its original working state and only the first floor is accessible to the public. It is approached by an external metal fire escape staircase. Once inside there is a small area for a talk by the guide, with a limited amount of bench seating, and the guide accompanies the rest of the tour to the building. It involves climbing short flights of narrow stairs and negotiating a covered ramped corridor between two sections of the building. The building has original machinery in it, not working at present.

## **The Lamproom and Caphouse Winder**

The approach is via a short ramp into a small display area, which has clearly labelled exhibits, and some interactive features, which are all within accessible reach for everyone. There is a level route into the Lamproom past display exhibits, with queue barriers towards the lamp collection point for the Underground Tour. As the exit from this area is through a narrow passage to the outside, there is an alternative side door collection point for wheelchair users.

## **Underground Tour**

The underground tour covers a distance of around 600m in total, and lasts for about an hour. It is fully accompanied, with explanations and information from an experienced guide, who also has strict safety procedures to follow. Much of the time will be spent travelling along the walkways, with very limited opportunity to sit and rest. As this is in an authentic mine, there are uneven floors, of varying widths, and also some ceilings that are lower, so as to necessitate bending over in places.

Prior to entering the tour, visitors must collect battery packs that are attached to a waist belt, weighing around 3Kgs/7 lbs, as well as a lamp to carry, and hard hat to wear. The battery pack can be attached to a wheelchair. Two standard manual wheelchairs are available for use and the Museum designates a tour each day specifically for wheelchair access

Accompanied by the guide, there is a working cage style lift that descends 140 metres to the seam. The lift does have a handrail and lighting.

Whilst the underground is accessible to wheelchair users, part of the tour is inaccessible, and there is a limit of 2 wheelchairs in the tour at any one time, for safety reasons. Electric wheelchairs are not permitted because of the interference from batteries, but hearing aid users can retain their aids.

## **1842 Gallery**

This is a small building, with level, automatic doors access. It has a gallery of reproduced scenes from Victorian times, with low lighting levels, routes accessible by wheelchairs, audible continuous commentary and seating in the entrance. There are large clear print information signs.

## **The Steam Winding Room**

There is a combined ramp and stairs access to the building. Once inside there is a small viewing platform, and very narrow short flight of stairs to the lower area, which is not accessible by a wheelchair user. There are interactive switches on the top level, within accessible reach.

## **Control Room**

This small room has level access via an entrance lobby, but very restricted internal circulation and turning space. There glass viewing panels at low level.

## **Coal Interface Gallery**

This is a modern building with a short, easy gradient ramp to an automatic single door entry. There are two floors of displays that include large items of machinery, mostly with clear labels and information posters and some interactive features.

Between floors is a steep set of metal stairs with handrails, and a passenger lift, the latter having clear tactile controls.

There is generally reasonable circulation space between exhibits, and a good level of lighting throughout. Some of the recorded sounds from displays produce a potential clash of sound.

## **Pithead Baths**

This building has been retained in its original state, and visitors are able to view showers and changing areas, as well as the First Aid Room, from a level central corridor, and the entrance has a short ramp.

## **Stables**

The stables area arranged around a cobbled surfaced yard that is a little uneven, and may be difficult to walk on or for wheelchair passage. It is at the lower end of the main site, accessed via the sloped road or long steps. There is a disabled access car parking space nearby.

## **Settling and Balancing Ponds**

These ponds are accessible from the Hope Pit and are mainly fenced off, although can be seen from the adjoining footpaths, which are wide, stoned surfaces that are a little uneven in places, and have varying gradients, as steep as 1:10 in places.

Some reed beds are unprotected so that care should be taken adjoining them. The only seats along the routes are in the picnic area, on a sloped hillside near one of the reed beds, about halfway round this section.

## **Nature Trail**

From the Hope Pit, the routes around the settling and balancing ponds lead down the hillside to link with the stoned, reasonably level path in the bottom of the valley, that is the start of the nature trail. There are two viewing hides, on the slopes adjoining the ponds.

From Caphouse Colliery main site, access to the Nature Trail is by way of a part concrete and part stoned path, reasonably level at first, across the railway line and past the Adventure Playground.

The path then progressively steepens through woodland, with some unevenness and moss partly covering stoned paths that have been left as natural as possible. There is then a set of stone steps to lower paths. There is an alternative route down a long slope, approximately 1:15 gradient adjoining the Engine and Fan Room partly down the slope, to avoid the steps.

There are two picnic areas close to the top of the slopes on the North side of the Trail, with varying steepness of stoned paths to the base of the valley.

The Nature Trail is very difficult terrain for a wheelchair user, and a carer/companion would need stamina to push a wheelchair along much of the route. If you have an electric wheelchair or scooter, make sure the batteries are fully charged before entering the trail.

## **Hope Pit**

### **Toilets**

Ladies and Gents, and an Accessible Toilet are located with external level access from a footpath to the rear of the Hope Garage.

### **Hope Stores**

A modern purpose built building, with level access to the entrance via a lobby, with good width manual single door each end of the lobby, of suitable width for wheelchair access.

Most of the display area on the ground floor is an open area, with good lighting and circulation, and all displays have clear information labels.

The first floor is accessed either by a staircase with handrails each side, or a passenger lift, with tactile buttons to the control panel.

On the first floor is a small viewing gallery, so as to be able to see through a low viewing window, the work being carried out in the Workshop.

On the first floor are ladies and gent's toilets, and an accessible toilet.

### **Hope Garage**

There is level access through a single door, with adequate width for a wheelchair user.

Part is still used as a workshop, garage and stores, but an open area, with good circulation space and light, is utilised as an exhibition area. There are clear glass screens around equipment to view, as well as lit glass cabinets with display material, and all signs and labels are clear. There is also a pre-recorded commentary and video on an overhead monitor, with subtitles. The garage contents can be viewed through an open mesh partition.

### **Hope Winding Engine**

A very small building which is approached from the rest of the site up a sloped footpath. At its entrance are double doors which both need to be opened to allow wheelchair access.

Internally there is a viewing area, at its narrowest 750mm and at its widest 2 metres. There are two touch button screens at 900mm height.

### **Hope Compressor House**

Double doors access to this building, with suitable width in single leaf for wheelchair access, and on a level.

Completely level interior, well lit and with good circulation space, with low level glazed screens for viewing, and clear signage and labels.

### **Hope Fan House**

This building is accessed via an aluminium ramp with handrails each side, intermediate platform and a gradient of approximately 1:15. The level entrance is then through double manual doors, with each leaf 1 metre width.

There is a good lighting level and good circulation between work display areas that are on platforms. The interactive parts of the table display can be reached from the adjoining level route, as well as from the raised platform. There are other small items displayed and clearly labelled in lit glass cabinets.

An external level footpath to the rear is accessed from the fire exit door of the building, which has 750mm door opening width, and the distance is approximately 15 metres to the Fan Shaft. Inside there is a level platform immediately inside the building, but then a long ramp down to view the shaft itself, and water levels information. The ramp has a central handrail.

Anyone feeling unable to descend the ramp can view the shaft through video monitors, located at the top of the ramp, and having subtitles.

### **Hope Inman Shaft**

This building is on a sloped section of site, separated from the rest of the Hope Pit by the railway line. Its first floor is approached via a gate, suitable for wheelchair access. Passing over the railway line on a level tarmac path and bridge, to give level access to the first floor.

A graded tarmac footpath, approximately 1:15 goes around the building to give separate level access to the ground floor. Doors into both levels are single manual doors, of suitable width for wheelchair access.

Internally, there is reasonable lighting level and circulation, and interactive displays at accessible heights.