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## Report to Protocol Agenda - “Access to the Mansion House”

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### **History**

The Mansion House is the official residence of the Lord Mayor since 1715. It was built between 1705 and 1710. Since 1715 it has hosted city, national and international events. It is included in the City of Dublin Record of Protected Structures and is a National Monument. As the official residence of the Lord Mayor, all citizens of Dublin should be able to access the building without difficulty.

Next door to the Mansion House are the public rooms – the Round Room dating from 1821 and the Supper Room dating from the 1890s.

Prior to 2013 the entrance to the left of the Mansion House was a shared entrance between the Mansion House Oak Room, the Round Room and Fire Restaurant (the Supper Room). This entrance consisted of a ramp and steps. The ramp was not compliant with Part M of the Building Regulations 2012 as it was too steep in gradient and too long. It was also slippery and there had been a number of slips on it.

### **2013 works**

In 2013 major works were done to Fire Restaurant and this entrance which reinstated the arms of the Mansion House forecourt thus restoring the 18<sup>th</sup> century baroque forecourt, moved the entrance of Fire Restaurant to beside the Royal Irish Academy and removed the ramp and installed a platform lift to allow access to the Mansion House Oak Room and Round Room.

### **Platform Lift**

The platform lift has been in use since completion of those works in 2013 but there have been instances when it has been out of order. If out of order visitors to the Mansion House have to access via either the Round Room or Fire Restaurant. The platform lift is also not strong enough to cater for heavy wheelchairs – those over 350kg. Following research, it was agreed that a new platform lift with increased weight capacity up to 500kg be installed. This work has been approved and we are awaiting final confirmation of dates from the contractor but would be hopeful that the work will commence shortly. The Lift supplier has advised that the bespoke lift is due for installation on the first week in March.

### **Complaint submitted for investigation under the Disability Act, 2005**

On 9<sup>th</sup> December 2013 an official complaint under the Disability Act 2005 was lodged to Owen Keegan, Dublin City Manager. It was lodged by Billie Sparks, Women's & Equality Officer with the Labour Party on behalf of Mick Keegan, Chairman of Labour Disability. The summary of the complaint was that the Labour Disability Group were seriously concerned that access to the many facilities at the Mansion House had been restricted as a result of the removal of the access ramp and replacement with a platform lift.

The complaint was investigated by Elaine Hess, Inquiry Officer with Dublin City Council. In her Determination, she advised that the previous ramp was not in compliance with building regulations and that it was not possible to provide a level access route or a gently sloped access route as per the Building Regulations therefore it was not possible to provide an integrated service as per Section 26 of the Act. The removal of the ramp and replacement with steps and a platform lift went through a statutory and formal planning process and was granted Part 8 planning approval, a Disability Access Certificate and a Fire Certificate. However she did agree there were design, operational, management and maintenance issues with the current lift which have led to difficulties for people in wheelchairs using the new lift and gaining access to the Mansion House and the Round Room. Therefore she stated that while the Council had provided access, that access could be improved through improvements to the lift, communication with groups using the Mansion House and procedures for the breakdown of the lift.

### **Consultation meeting of Mansion House Disability Access Focus Group**

On Friday 1<sup>st</sup> December a consultation meeting of the Mansion House Disability Access Focus Group was held at the Mansion House. Attendees included representatives from the PPN Disability Linkage Group. A presentation was given by an Access Consultant and the views of those present were aired. A walk through of the Mansion House was done by all present so that obstacles could be highlighted by those present.

Suggestions raised included:

- Install automatic doors at the platform lift. This was included in the order for the platform lift to be installed shortly.
- Exploring ways where larger numbers of ambulant disabled visitors arriving at the same time to the Mansion House / Round Room can be facilitated.
- Means of full access to the Mansion House which would remove the need to access via the Oak Room.
- Regarding the PPN Disability Linkage Group suggestion to the reinstatement of the ramp; it was agreed that 7 possible options outlined may be explored :

- Please note most of the options will require the extension of external circulation (ie. ramp or new lift) into the formal garden at the front garden of the Fire Restaurant building.
  - Removal of platform lift and installation of compliant ramp- with new lift to be provided in the garden of Fire Restaurant
  - Provision of an additional platform lift to existing arrangement.
  - Keeping the Platform Lift and steps whilst adding a steep ramp within the curtilage of the Access route
  - Identifying if a new ramp could be installed in the garden area whilst maintaining the existing steps and upgraded platform lift
  - Installation of steps and new Part M Compliant ramp with a proposed lift in front of the existing terrace / corner of garden area
  - Review side entrance ramp to access Round Room
  - Provide wheelchair access at the main entrance of the Mansion House

In any solution a stairs and a lift will always required due to the 2m level change required. Recommendations made by the Consultant included training for the Mansion House in the area of assisting those with disabilities and communication channels including the Lord Mayor's page on the Dublin City website. These recommendations are being followed through.

Another meeting is being arranged to follow up on the items raised.

**Deirdre Ni Raghallaigh**

**Senior Executive Officer**  
**26<sup>th</sup> January 2018**