

Access all areas? Scottish Civic Trust looks at how easy (or not) it is to play a full part in Scotland's heritage and invites others to share their views

What? – Improving access to heritage: Making local spaces, places and stories welcoming to all. A workshop run by the Scottish Civic Trust with Paisley's Les Fernie from Walking Tours on Wheels

Why? – to look at the barriers of accessibility in heritage

Where? – in St Matthew's Church in Paisley

When? – December 3, 2018 from 1030

How much? – absolutely free, but booking on Eventbrite is essential; link below

Getting out and about at some of Scotland's heritage attractions can be a little hit or miss for those with mobility concerns or additional needs.

In some cases, the access difficulty can be very obvious – an inability to create spaces for wheelchairs within some historic buildings, particularly those preserved in a ruinous state often with uneven ground, for example.

In others, however, it can be much more subtle – even down to the information on an organisation's website or a destination's signage.

As part of the Scottish Civic Trust's on-going Diverse Heritage Project, team leader Dr Jen Novotny, is bringing a workshop to Paisley to look at examples of best practice in the local area. The day's agenda aims to encourage others to speak out about examples of what they have found difficult, as well as sharing information on those doing a great job of welcoming all and learning from those who have made a difference.

The morning's session will open with a talk from Les Fernie, managing director of Walking Tours on Wheels, which runs regular guided tours around Paisley, taking in historic sites and telling the colourful stories attached to them.

So far, so similar to many hundreds of other tours you may say – only Les achieves this with both able-bodied and mobility-impaired visitors, showing them around from his mobility scooter.

Les' vision to tell the tale of his home town began in 1994 as Historical Paisley, but a series of health issues led to a progressive change and, in 2008, the name

changed to Walking Tours on Wheels, to reflect the fact that Les, from his own experiences and with a determination to show off his beloved Paisley as widely as possible, was now using his own wheels – and wasn't being held back.

After a discussion and a spot of lunch, both Reaching Older Adults in Renfrewshire (or ROAR, as it prefers to be known) and Paisley YMCA will also deliver short talks, both looking at what the young and older see as barriers to their enjoyment of heritage – in whatever form that may take.

“Scotland has a rich cultural heritage but there are a whole host of issues – some perceived and some real – which can affect the ability or desire of people to fully take part. When all members of our communities are engaged in cultural heritage, we all benefit,” said Dr Jen Novotny. “We want to bring people together to talk about how we can make our local places, spaces, and stories more welcoming and inclusive to us all.

“There are some great groups out there trying to address this. Today's event is all about highlighting some of these efforts, as well as discussing barriers and working together to come up with solutions.”

Others organisations which have been consulted include Renfrewshire Access Panel, Renfrewshire Council, Disability Resource Centre, Shopmobility, Glasgow Disability Alliance and Paisley THI CARS.

The event should particularly appeal to community groups and individuals within the local area, whether they're involved in heritage or not, which would like to learn more about taking steps to be more inclusive and all those interested would be made welcome.

You can book your place at

<https://improvingaccesstoheritagepaisley.eventbrite.co.uk>

The Diverse Heritage Project: Scotland is a diverse nation with rich heritage resources. We are working with people from all different backgrounds to ensure that diversity is celebrated and Scotland's historic places are welcoming and inclusive to all of us.

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