



New Zealand Historic Places Trust Pouhere Taonga
**Sustainable Management of Historic Heritage
Guidance Series (draft for consultation)**

Providing for Accessibility in Heritage Places



28 October 2010

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Providing for Accessibility in Heritage Places

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This document is a new guide proposed for inclusion within the Sustainable Management of Historic Heritage Guidance Series (the guidance series) published by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust Pouhere Taonga (NZHPT). The series aims to assist local authorities, owners of heritage places, iwi and hapū and other stakeholders in the protection and conservation of historic heritage under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) and other related resource management and planning legislation.

This guide updates the 2000 NZHPT publication *Guidelines for Making Heritage Buildings Accessible* (authored by Julia Gatley). This guide differs from the earlier 2000 guide by focusing on providing links to other guidance sources, updating legislative provisions and providing a guidance framework for the assessment of proposed access-related work involving heritage buildings. While some of the legislative and building code information in the earlier 2000 guide has been superseded, the 2000 guide remains a valuable source of information about accessibility and heritage buildings.

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Cover photo: Access ramp, Former Hanover Street Baptist Church (The Monkey Bar) Dunedin, Registered Category I historic place. Photo, R. McClean, February 2010

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1 Introduction

Accessibility aims to ensure people can value, enjoy, visit and experience places. An accessible environment is one that is usable by all people to the greatest extent possible.¹

New Zealand's legislative provisions for accessibility apply to everyone, since everyone experiences disability during their lifetime, especially for an aging population. This is termed the universal application of accessibility.

Rather than focusing on 'disabilities', accessibility aims to provide for the needs of people, in all their variety, needs and diversity. It aims to connect people with a place – to match together the intended use of a place and the intended user. In this manner, disability can be thought of as 'differing-ability' and accessibility about providing for the range of differing abilities.²

For the purpose of this publication, accessibility aims to improve physical access to heritage places, including heritage buildings, places, sites and landscapes. This means examining methods and ways to improve access to heritage places for those in our community who cannot walk or who rely on walking aids and wheelchairs.

The NZHPT supports accessibility to ensure heritage places remain useful for present and future generations. If people cannot access a place, then the result will be neglect and decay.

This document provides supporting technical information to the guidance framework to help in assessment of accessibility-related works at heritage places. The guidance framework is available in the accompanying information sheet – *Accessibility and Heritage Buildings*. This guidance is an update on the 2000 NZHPT publication *Guidelines for Making Heritage Buildings Accessible*.³

The guidance framework contains objectives or principles to be achieved in relation to three areas:

1. Sustainable management of historic heritage.
2. Alterations of heritage buildings.
3. Basic accessibility requirements.

Achieving these principles will involve the selection of the most appropriate accessibility method and design for each historic place on a case-by-case basis.

The principles are not intended, however, to be a substitute for any of the accessibility legislative or building code requirements. Instead, the principles are prepared to assist in the design of accessibility-related work at heritage places in

The term 'building' in this document has the same meaning as the definition of building under the Building Act 2004 which includes a range of temporary and fixed structures

The term 'heritage building' has the same meaning as 'historic building'. See Info Sheet No [add no] of the guidance series

¹ Ronald L. Mace, Graeme J. Hardie and Jaine P. Place, *Accessible Environments: Toward Universal Design*, North Carolina State University, The Centre for Universal Design, 1991, p 2; Barrier Free NZ Trust, *Resource Handbook for Barrier Free Environments*, February 1997, p 1

² Pers com, Ellen Andersen, Māori Heritage Adviser, NZHPT, 31 May 2010

³ Julia Gatley, *Guidelines for Making Heritage Buildings Accessible*, NZHPT, 2000

order to help achieve building code compliance as nearly as is reasonably practicable and appropriate.

As background, this document provides detailed and technical information in relation to issues concerning accessibility and heritage places, key information about existing sources of guidance, planning and documentation and the legislative framework. The guidance includes a discussion on accessibility and historic Māori marae.

The approach of this guidance aims provide links to other available sources of information and guidance, especially guidance publications prepared by Standards NZ, the Barrier Free NZ Trust and the Australian heritage agencies.

1.1 Australian and New Zealand Technical Guidance Framework

The Heritage Chairs and Officials of Australia and New Zealand (HCOANZ) provide a policy framework for the development of technical heritage buildings guidance. HCOANZ is a forum consisting of the Australian Heritage Council, Australian State heritage agencies and the New Zealand Historic Places Trust (NZHPT).

To avoid duplication and to promote best practice heritage information and guidance in Australia and New Zealand, the HCOANZ framework promotes the sharing of guidance for adaptation and use across State and National jurisdictions.

This guide makes reference to the following Australian guidance (including any subsequent updates) in relation to accessibility and heritage places:

- Australian Heritage Commission (now Australian Heritage Council), *Improving Access to Heritage Buildings, A Practical Guide to Meeting the Needs of People with Disabilities*, 1999.
<http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/ahc/publications/commission/books/access-heritage-buildings.html>
- Department of Environment and Resource Management, *Ramps, Lifts and Access, A Guideline*, Queensland Government (last updated 2 May 2006).
http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/heritage/owning_a_heritage_place/guidelines/ramps_lifts_and_access/index.html
- Heritage Victoria of Victoria, *Access for all to Heritage Places*, December 2008.
http://www.heritage.vic.gov.au/admin/file/content2/c7/HVC015_Disability_Access_dc05.pdf

Archaeological authority process under the Historic Places Act 1993

All pre-1900 archaeological sites are protected under the Historic Places Act 1993. An archaeological authority is required from the NZHPT to destroy, damage or modify an archaeological site.

If access-related work requires earthworks at or near a pre-1900 building, an archaeological authority may be required from the NZHPT.

Further information about the archaeological authorities can be obtained by contacting the NZHPT:
www.historic.org.nz

2 Accessibility and Heritage Issues

2.1 Background

People and cultures have diverse needs and abilities. Sometimes there is not always a good match between the needs of people and their environment. Buildings and open spaces often have a wide range of physical barriers involving steps, fences, walls and floors.

An accessible environment is one that is usable by all people to the greatest extent possible and that adheres to New Zealand's legislative provisions.⁴

Rather than focusing on 'disabilities', accessibility aims to provide for the special needs of people and their impairments.⁵ As outlined in the New Zealand Disability Strategy:

Disability is not something individuals have. What individuals have are impairments. They may be physical, sensory, neurological, psychiatric, intellectual or other impairments. Disability is the process which happens when one group of people create barriers by designing a world only for their way of living, taking no account of the impairments other people have.⁶

For the purpose of this publication, accessibility aims to improve physical access for people to heritage places, including buildings, places, sites and landscapes. This means examining methods and ways to improve access for those in our community who cannot walk or who rely on walking aids and wheelchairs.

⁴ Ronald L. Mace, Graeme J. Hardie and Jaine P. Place, *Accessible Environments: Toward Universal Design*, North Carolina State University, The Centre for Universal Design, 1991, p 2; Barrier Free NZ Trust, *Resource Handbook for Barrier Free Environments*, February 1997, p 1

⁵ The term disability is defined in the Human Rights Act 1993 as: (i) Physical disability or impairment: (ii) Physical illness: (iii) Psychiatric illness: (iv) Intellectual or psychological disability or impairment: (v) Any other loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological, or anatomical structure or function: (vi) Reliance on a guide dog, wheelchair, or other remedial means: (vii) The presence in the body of organisms capable of causing illness

⁶ Minister for Disability Issues, *The New Zealand Disability Strategy, Making a World of Difference Whakanui Oranga*, April 2001, 7

Access for all

While this guide is focused on improving physical accessibility, there is a growing international emphasis on improving social, cultural and intellectual accessibility, such as those persons with learning difficulties. For example, Jonathan Rix and Ticky Lowe from the UK Access to Heritage Project have developed a number of recommendations for improving access to heritage places for people with learning difficulties.⁷ Jonathan Rix also explores how a model of Down Syndrome can help to explore the intellectual accessibility of heritage places.⁸ This movement is influencing changes to the management of some heritage properties, especially those managed by the UK National Trust, with the use of access audits as part of standard property management practice.⁹

In addition to wider social accessibility issues, there is also a separate field of research and policy relating to 'sustainable accessibility'. Sustainable accessibility tends to focus on new forms of transportation networks which integrate land-use and public transportation in urban areas.¹⁰

Public expectations and standards regarding accessibility have changed and developed over time. These changes have are reflected in the disability, human rights and building laws, including the New Zealand Building Code and Standards New Zealand NZS 4121.

The NZHPT supports improving accessibility to ensure heritage places remain useful for present and future generations. Restricted accessibility limits the ability of all persons to fully enjoy and utilise a place.

Improving accessibility in a heritage environment can be achieved, even in small ways. This often means aiming to overcome challenges such as elevated front steps or narrow doorways which are often an integral feature for traditional Maori buildings, Victorian, Edwardian, Art Deco or Modern Movement buildings. As outlined by Julia Gatley in 2000:

There is potential for conflict between the provision of increased accessibility and the retention of a heritage building's character and value. The aim should be to provide the greatest level of accessibility without compromising or destroying the parts of the building that make an important contribution to its heritage significance.¹¹

⁷ Jonathan, Rix, Ticky, Lowe and the Heritage Forum, 'Including people with learning difficulties in cultural and heritage sites, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol 16(3), 2010 pp 207-224

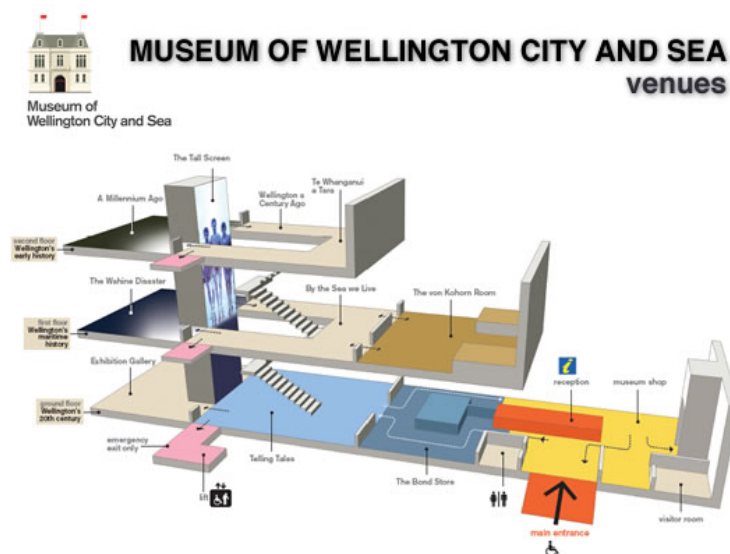
⁸ Jonathan, Rix, 'Checking the List: Can a model of down syndrome help us explore the intellectual accessibility of heritage sites? *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol 11(4), 2005, pp 341-356

⁹ Loveless, Jan and Pellegrino, Sue, 'For ever, for everyone' *Interpretation Journal*, Vol 9(3), 2004, pp 10-14

¹⁰ Curtis, Carey and Scheurer, Jan, 'Planning for sustainable accessibility: Developing tools to aid discussion and decision-making' *Progress in Planning*, Vol 74, 2010, pp 53-106

¹¹ Julia Gatley, *Guidelines for Making Heritage Buildings Accessible*, NZHPT, 2000, p 1

The aim should be to achieve the highest level of compliance with the legislative provisions while at the same time retaining heritage values of the place. It does not mean that making provision for improving accessibility can be ignored or discounted.



Access and Floor Plan. Museum of Wellington City and Sea, Wellington Waterfront.

The museum has a modern lift connected externally to the heritage building so to avoid damage to historic fabric.

Image: Wellington Museums Trust

<http://www.wmt.org.nz/venue-hire/mowcas.html>

2.2 Universal design and heritage

Universal design is a set of principles and guidelines which aims to promote design approach to ensure the environment and products are accessible for everyone. The concept is enshrined in the *United Nations International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol* and is promoted by a range of governments, groups and organisations. Universal design was, in part, inspired by work of the late Ronald Mace and a team of researchers at the North Carolina State University (the Centre for Universal Design) which developed seven principles of universal design in 1997. Ronald Mace defined universal design as the 'design of products and environments to be usable by all people to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design.'¹² The seven principles are:

1. Equitable use.
2. Flexibility in use.
3. Simple and intuitive use.
4. Perceptible information
5. Tolerance for error.



Centre for Universal Design
North Carolina State University,
USA.

<http://www.ncsu.edu/www/ncsu/design/sod5/cud/index.htm>

¹² North Carolina State University, The Centre for Universal Design,
http://design.ncsu.edu/cud/about_ud/udprinciples.htm

6. Low physical effort.
7. Size and space for approach and use.

In terms of equitable use, the guidelines aim to 'provide the same means of use for all users: identical whenever possible; equivalent when not' and 'avoid segregating or stigmatizing any users.'¹³

The Centre for Universal Design at North Carolina State University and other design centres (for example the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design in Ireland or CEUD) publish a range of guidelines and information to promote universal design. As an example, the design guide for residential rehabilitation developed by the Centre for Universal Design provides guidance about the design of residential entrances, including that ideally there should be one entrance without steps at the front of the house.¹⁴

In New Zealand, universal design is promoted by the Department of Building and Housing and other initiatives such as Smarter Homes.¹⁵ The Department of Building and Housing state that universal design is a way to integrate the needs of all users, regardless of age or ability, into the initial design of residential buildings. This approach is a 'fundamental change from earlier practice of providing separate and stigmatising design solutions for people with disabilities, such as an entry ramp at the back of the building.'¹⁶

There can be a tension between the objectives of universal design and the preservation of heritage buildings. Heritage buildings are, by nature, designed according to a particular historical architectural approach and are often distinctive in terms of a wide range of factors, including setting, doorways, hallways, bathrooms, handles and switches, etc. At an early stage of universal design development, the Centre for Universal Design at North Carolina State University recognised the need to adapt the principles of universal design for heritage buildings. For example, instead of the one access way approach, the Centre for Universal Design recognised that separate routes for people with disabilities may be justified in heritage buildings and 'at times there will simply not be a solution to inaccessibility.'¹⁷

In a summary of universal design issues, Richard Duncan of the Universal Design Institute states that often the response to universal design is two extremes:

¹³ *ibid*

¹⁴ North Carolina State University, The Centre for Universal Design, *Residential Rehabilitation, Remodelling and Universal Design*, 2006

¹⁵ *Smarter Homes* is owned by the Department of Building and Housing. It was created in a joint initiative by the Department, the Ministry for the Environment, Consumer, Beacon Pathway Ltd and URS, with assistance from a number of other organisations interested in helping consumers access good quality, reliable and independent information about smart homes.

<http://www.smarterhomes.org.nz/design/making-your-home-adaptable/>

¹⁶ Department of Building and Housing, 'Access for people with disabilities in buildings that provide public accommodation' *Codewords*, September 2008, Issue 031

¹⁷ Ronald L. Mace, Graeme J. Hardie and Jaine P. Place, *Accessible Environments: Toward Universal Design*, North Carolina State University, The Centre for Universal Design, 1991, p 28

One path is to mistakenly attempt to make everything ‘fully usable by everyone’ by abandoning creative, interesting and challenging designs. The other path that is sometimes followed is an unfortunate refusal to meaningfully engage the issue by assuming that nothing can be done and that implementing an accessibility or universal design scheme will ruin the integrity of an existing building or proposed design.¹⁸

Richard Duncan advocates for avoiding both extremes and acknowledging that ‘universal solutions aren’t possible for all situations...This is why it is promoted as a goal toward which to strive.’¹⁹

The NZHPT’s approach is also to aim for universal design, but also to recognise that while universal design solutions will not be possible for all heritage environments, there will be design solutions that are. As promoted in this document, the important matter is the careful design approach to remove barriers to accessibility while preserving heritage values.

¹⁸ Richard Duncan, ‘Universal Design’ www.universaldesign.ie

¹⁹ *ibid*

3 Key information

3.1 Existing guidance

3.1.1 Department of Building and Housing

The Department of Building and Housing has a major role in terms of the Building Act 2004 and the New Zealand Building Code. This role is discussed in section 4 below. In addition to regulatory and code issues, the Department of Building and Housing have published guidance in relation to accessibility issues.²⁰ The guidance, available on the department's website, includes:

- Accessible car parking spaces.
- The international symbol of access.
- Accessible reception and service counters.

3.1.2 Office for Disabilities Issues

The Office for Disability Issues was established in 2001 to provide dedicated policy support to the Minister for Disability Issues. It is the focal point for Government on disability issues. The Office for Disability Issues prepares and maintains the New Zealand Disability Strategy. The Office for Disability Issues also publishes a range of information, research and guidance about disability on their website.²¹ As an example, the Office for Disability Issues undertook a major research project in 2007 with the Centre for Housing Research Aotearoa New Zealand. This research examined ways that New Zealand's housing stock could be future proofed for an inclusive society.²²

3.1.3 Human Rights Commission

The Human Rights Commission advocates and promotes respect for human rights in New Zealand. In addition to making investigations under the Human Rights Act 1993 and the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 (see below), the Human Rights Commission provides public information about disabled rights. For example, the Human Rights Commission website includes information about the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol, disabled children's right to education, accessible public transport and mental illness.²³

Office for
Disability issues
Te Tari Mō Ngā Take Hauātanga
Administered by the Ministry of Social Development
Office for Disability
Issues.

<http://www.odi.govt.nz/about-us/index.html>

²⁰ See, Department of Building and Housing, 'Access for people with disabilities in buildings that provide public accommodation' *Codewords*, September 2008, Issue 031

²¹ <http://www.odi.govt.nz/about-us/index.html>

²² Centre for Housing Research Aotearoa New Zealand and the Office for Disability Issues, *Housing and Disability: Future Proofing New Zealand's Housing Stock for an Inclusive Society*, May 2007

²³ <http://www.hrc.co.nz/home/hrc/home.php>

3.1.4 New Zealand Standards

The building control guidance framework includes non-mandatory standards. Standards (NZS), established by Standards New Zealand, are often referred to in building code compliance documents as acceptable solutions or verification methods.

The most relevant NZS for accessibility is NZS 4121. This is the primary national standard for the design for access and mobility in terms of buildings and associated facilities. NZS 4121 has unique legal status under section 119 of the Building Act 2004 being the only NZS cited in the legislation. It sets the benchmark for 'best practice' in providing access. For example, the definition of an accessible route from NZ 4121 is a fundamental aspect of achieving compliance with the Building Act 2004 and the Building Code. Another relevant standard is AS/NZS 1657 which relates to fixed platforms, walkways, stairways and ladders.



The Barrier Free NZ Trust

<http://www.barrierfree.nz.org.nz/>

3.1.5 Barrier Free NZ Trust

The Barrier Free NZ Trust is a non-government organisation that aims encourage, promote and facilitate the 'creation of environments that are accessible and usable by everyone in the community, including people with disabilities.'²⁴ The Trust provides advice, education and information in relation to universal accessibility issues.

The primary source of guidance, published by the Trust, is the *Resource Handbook for Barrier Free Environments*.²⁵ The Handbook includes guidance for promoting a barrier free environment for everyone, including:

- Legal requirements for access.
- Alternative means for complying with legal requirements.
- Guidance for checking and reporting on building compliance and accessibility.
- Guidance for the display of the International Symbol of Access (ISA).

The Barrier Free NZ Trust also holds seminars that provide training to promote barrier free environments and explanation of the Handbook. Information can be obtained from the Barrier Free NZ Trust website: www.barrierfreenz.org.nz

3.1.6 NZHPT

The NZHPT published *Making Heritage Buildings Accessible* in 2000, which is updated by this document.²⁶

²⁴ <http://www.barrierfreenz.org.nz/>

²⁵ Barrier Free NZ Trust, *Resource Handbook for Barrier Free Environments*, 2005

²⁶ Julia Gatley, *Guidelines for Making Heritage Buildings Accessible*, NZHPT, 2000

In 2007, the NZHPT published the *Sustainable Management of Historic Heritage Guidance Series*. The Guidance Series includes guidance for the Building Act 2004 and historic heritage. The guidance is available from the NZHPT's website:

www.historic.org.nz

3.1.7 International

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol (2006)

The primary international organisation that is responsible for accessibility is the Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at the United Nations (known as United Nations Enable). The Secretariat is responsible for the maintenance of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol (2006). New Zealand ratified the Convention in September 2008 as provided for under the Disability (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) Act 2008.

The purpose of the Convention is 'to promote and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.'²⁷ The principles of the Convention are:

- Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons.
- Non-discrimination.
- Full and effective participation and inclusion in society.
- Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities.
- Equality of opportunity.
- Accessibility.
- Equality between men and women.
- Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.²⁸

In relation to buildings and accessibility, the Convention promotes the concept of 'universal design'. Universal design means the 'design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design. Universal design shall not exclude assistance devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed.'²⁹ Under Article 4, all State Parties have a general obligation to undertake or promote research and development of universally designed goods, services, equipment and facilities, which 'would require the minimum possible



United
Nations
Enable

<http://www.un.org/disabilities/>

²⁷ Article 1, *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol*, 2006. www.un.org/disabilities. Accessed November 2009

²⁸ Article 4, *ibid*

²⁹ Article 2, *ibid*

adaptation and the least cost to meet the specific needs of persons with disabilities.'

Additionally to the general obligation to promote universal design, Article 9 of the Convention requires that State Parties take appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to the physical environment, transportation, information and communications, on an equal basis with others. The measures include the elimination of obstacles and barriers to accessibility to buildings, roads, transportation and other indoor and outdoor facilities, including schools, housing, medical facilities and workplaces.³⁰

The Office of the Health and Disability Commissioner recommends the following action to provide accessible equipment and environments for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol:

Ensure that 'universal design' principles are followed in your organisation - i.e. the design of products, environments, programmes, and services should be such that they require the least amount of adaptation during their lifetime and are easily accessible to people with different types of impairment. For example, all areas of your premises should be accessible to people with mobility impairments; and your programmes and service delivery should cater to the needs of people with intellectual or sensory impairments. Also ensure that any external venue that you use to host any meeting or event is fully accessible.³¹

ICOMOS Ename Charter on the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites

In 2008, the General Assembly of ICOMOS ratified the Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites (known as the Ename Charter). The Charter is a non-binding international declaration that promotes understanding and appreciation of cultural heritage, foster public awareness, safeguard tangible and intangible values and respect the authenticity of cultural heritage sites. The Ename Charter is designed to provide guidance for heritage places that are open to the public and where interpretation is provided.

The Ename Charter has seven principles to guide and help determine which technical means and methods are appropriate in particular cultural and heritage contexts. The first principle relates to access and understanding. This principle states that:

Interpretation and presentation activities should also be physically accessible to the public, in all its variety.



St Josephs Church, Pauatahanui, registered Category I historic place. As part of restoration works in 2004, a new driveway was built to improve access to the church. Photo, NZHPT 2007

³⁰ Article 9, *ibid*

³¹ Office of the Health and Disability Commissioner, 'Are you Committed to the Convention?', <http://www.hdc.org.nz/publications/other-publications-from-hdc/disability-resources/are-you-committed-to-the-convention>

In cases where physical access to a cultural heritage site is restricted due to conservation concerns, cultural sensitivities, adaptive reuse, or safety issues, interpretation and presentation should be provided off-site.

Australian Heritage Agencies

As indicated in the introduction, the NZHPT, as part of HCOANZ, aims to promote common guidance and standards framework for heritage places in Australia and New Zealand. As part of this framework, the NZHPT makes reference to the following documents (including any subsequent updates) as part of this guidance:

- Australian Heritage Commission (now Australian Heritage Council), *Improving Access to Heritage Buildings, A Practical Guide to Meeting the Needs of People with Disabilities*, 1999.
<http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/ahc/publications/commission/books/access-heritage-buildings.html>
- Department of Environment and Resource Management, *Ramps, Lifts and Access, A Guideline*, Queensland Government (last updated 2 May 2006).
http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/heritage/owning_a_heritage_place/guidelines/ramps_lifts_and_access/index.html
- Heritage Victoria of Victoria, *Access for all to Heritage Places*, December 2008.
http://www.heritage.vic.gov.au/admin/file/content2/c7/HVC015_Disability_Access_dc05.pdf

Authored by Eric Martin, of the Australian Heritage Commission (now Australian Heritage Council), *Improving Access to Heritage Buildings, A Practical Guide to Meeting the Needs of People with Disabilities*, 1999³², provides comprehensive guidance for accessibility and heritage places. The main sections include:

- The need for access
- Developing an access strategy
- Transport and parking
- Access to principal entry
- Circulation throughout main level
- Internal access to other floors
- External circulation to other items within a site
- Toilets
- Other facilities

³² <http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/ahc/publications/commission/books/access-heritage-buildings.html>

- Information presentation and interpretation

The general approach adopted by the Australian Heritage Commission is summarised below:

Eric Martin, *Improving Access to Heritage Buildings, A Practical Guide to Meeting the Needs of People with Disabilities*, Australian Heritage Commission (now Australian Heritage Council) 1999

SUMMARY OF PRINCIPLES

Each case must be individually and carefully assessed. Nevertheless some general principles apply:

GENERAL APPROACH

1. Review the significance of the place and identify the elements of greatest significance.
2. Undertake an access audit to determine the place's existing and required level of accessibility.
3. Evaluate accessibility options within a conservation context.
4. Establish a policy on access and heritage and prepare an action plan.
5. Implement the action plan.

TO CONSERVE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

1. Make alterations sympathetic to the original building.
2. Ensure designs are reversible.
3. Ensure new material is evident on close inspection.
4. Preserve items of higher significance if a compromise is required.

TO PROVIDE ACCESS

1. Make the main or principal public entrance accessible where possible.
2. Ensure an accessible path of travel to all areas and facilities.
3. Where toilets and facilities are provided, ensure that at least one is accessible to disabled users.
4. Methods of interpretation and communication should aim to be suitable for all users, and for a range of disabilities.
5. Comply with Australian Standards particularly AS1428.1 for details.
6. Use modern technology and methods where appropriate if it makes access easier.
7. Train staff and volunteers to understand the needs of people with disabilities and the best means of ensuring their appreciation of the place. Training should be a regular occurrence, with special procedures to include new staff and volunteers.

It is important to note that following this procedure will not necessarily protect someone from an action under the Disability Discrimination Act [Australia].

The Department of Environment and Resource Management, *Ramps, Lifts and Access, A Guideline*, Queensland Government³³, provides guidance for owners, managers and designers for improving access and mobility to heritage places. The document adopts the general approach outlined in the earlier Australian Heritage Commission 1999 guidance outlined above. Chapter 5 of the Queensland guideline outlines commonly occurring access issues for heritage places. This section includes detailed principles and recommended methods for detailing with issues such as access routes, access to principal entry, separating entrances, options for level changes, stairs and other matters.

Other international guidance

In October 2004, English Heritage published *Easy Access to Historic Buildings*.³⁴ This publication is used internationally as a best practice guide for managing access to heritage buildings. In addition to the statutory of heritage provisions specific to England, the publication provides a range of practical advice and examples in terms of horizontal movement; vertical movement; emergency egress; lighting, signage and information; landscapes and settings; and street and other future.

In addition to the English Heritage guide, there are a wide range of international publications relating to accessibility, universal design and heritage places:

- US National Parks Service, 'Making Historic Properties Accessible', Preservation Brief No.32, US Department of the Interior, 1993.
- International Standards Organisation (ISO) 9527: 1994, *Building Construction – Needs of disabled people in buildings, design guidelines* [currently being updated by ISO/CD 21542 *Accessibly and usability of the built environment*].
- Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (CEUD), *Universal Design Handbook*, 2001.
- Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (CEUD), *Inclusive Design Toolkit*, 2007.
- US Corporation for National and Community Service, *Inclusion, Creating an Inclusive Environment*, January 2004.
- Architects Council of Europe and others, *The Build-For-All Reference Manual*, Supported by the European Commission, 2006 (www.build-for-all)



Hastings Municipal Theatre, Hastings, registered Category I historic place. The addition was constructed in 2005 to enable improved use and access into the theatre while preserving interior fabric.
Photo, NZHPT 2007

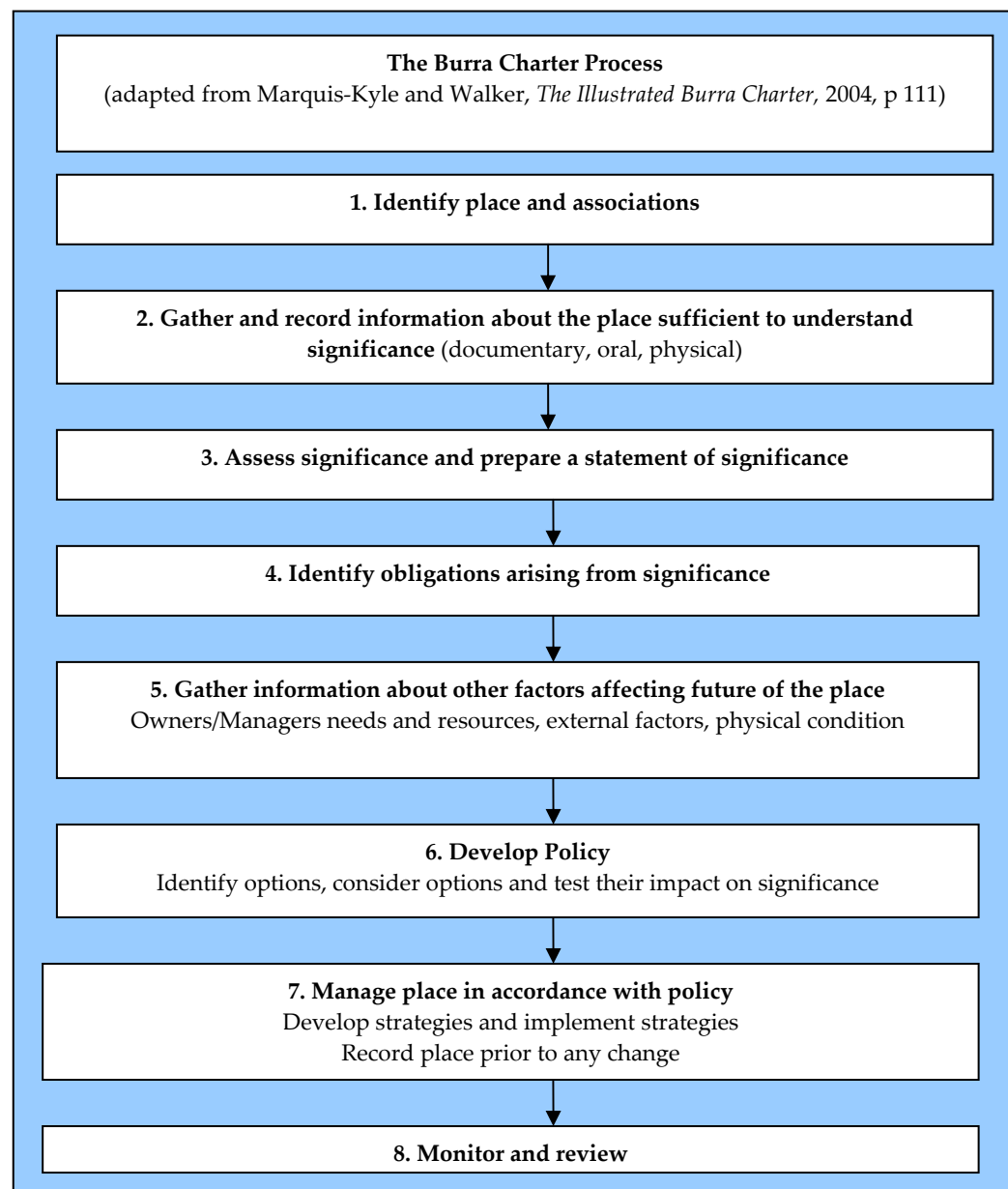
³³ http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/heritage/owning_a_heritage_place/guidelines/index.html

³⁴ English Heritage, *Easy Access to Historic Buildings*, October 2004

4 Planning and documentation

4.1 Identification of heritage significance

All work involving heritage places should be coordinated in an integrated manner as part of the values-based approach (see diagram below). This approach emphasises that strategies for heritage are developed by firstly understanding significance and then developing policy that respects the significance of the place. Understanding the significance of a place will inform those parts of the place that are to be conserved and those other parts of the place that can be changed or altered. Guidance on identification of heritage significance is available from the NZHPT.³⁵



³⁵ NZHPT, 'Identification of Heritage Places Guidance' draft for consultation, October 2010: <http://www.historic.org.nz/en/ProtectingOurHeritage/ConsultingOn.aspx>

4.1.1 Conservation plan and documentation

A conservation plan is a document that provides a statement of significance and outlines number of policies to manage a place in accordance with its significance. Accessibility work involving a heritage building should be informed by a conservation plan. Guidance on preparing a conservation plan is available by contacting the NZHPT.

As indicated above, the preparation of an inventory of historic fabric is an important aspect for the management of heritage. Accurate records of work, including measured drawings, involving strengthening or alterations, carried out on a heritage building should be prepared, duplicated and safely stored as archives. These records will assist future owners or developers to understand the history of structural interventions and any works to remedy any adverse effects from historical strengthening work.

4.1.2 Funding assistance

Accessibility work on heritage places can involve significant costs for an owner or developer. The NZHPT has developed an incentives toolkit for heritage places.³⁶ This toolkit identifies potential sources of regulatory and non-regulatory incentives. The toolkit, for example, provides guidance on funding assistance, especially the NZHPT's National Heritage Preservation Incentive Fund and heritage funds provided by local authorities. For further information, contact the NZHPT or visit the NZHPT's website.³⁷

³⁶ NZHPT, 'Heritage Incentives Toolkit', draft for consultation, August 2010:

<http://www.historic.org.nz/en/ProtectingOurHeritage/ConsultingOn.aspx>

³⁷ <http://www.historic.org.nz/ProtectingOurHeritage/FundingProtection.aspx>

5 Legislative Framework

5.1 New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000/New Zealand Disability Strategy

The New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000 aims to achieve, for New Zealanders, the improvement, promotion and protection of their health and the promotion of the inclusion and participation in society and independence of people with disabilities.³⁸

The New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000 provides for the development of the New Zealand Disability Strategy which is a framework for the Government's overall direction of the disability sector in improving disability support services.³⁹

The current New Zealand Disability Strategy (the Strategy) was approved by the Minister for Disability Issues in April 2001. As an introduction to the Strategy, a number of barriers to accessibility are outlined, including physical accessibility:

Despite New Zealand having strong standards for physical accessibility, access to public facilities and other buildings such as marae is poor....⁴⁰

The Strategy contains a range of relevant objectives and actions relating to accessibility. For example, Action 6.6 states to 'ensure the locations and buildings of all government agencies and public services are accessible'. As indicated above, the Strategy does mention that marae often have barriers to physical accessibility. Action 11.5 states that all Government-funded or sponsored marae-based initiatives meet the access requirements of disabled people (and encourages all other marae-based initiatives to also meet those requirements).

5.2 Human Rights Act 1993/New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990

The Human Rights Act 1993 and the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 provide the legislative framework for the protection of human rights in New Zealand. Under section 18 of the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990, the right to freedom of movement is affirmed. This right includes that 'everyone lawfully in New Zealand has the right to freedom of movement and residence in New Zealand.'

The New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 also affirms the right to freedom from discrimination. The basis of prohibited grounds for discrimination is outlined in section 21 of the Human Rights Act 1993, which includes disability. The Human Rights Act 1993 also provides for access rights to employment work places, public areas, vehicles and facilities.



Hokitika Public Library
Showing accessibility ramp
Photo, NZHPT 2010

³⁸ Section 3, New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000

³⁹ Section 8, *ibid*

⁴⁰ Minister for Disability Issues, *New Zealand Disability Strategy*, April 2001, p 8

Any person may make a complaint to the Human Rights Commission for inquiry with respect to any right contained in the Human Rights Act 1993. A complaint may also be lodged with the Health and Disability Commissioner with respect to disability.

5.3 Building Act 2004

The Building Act 2004 (the Building Act) regulates all building work in New Zealand. Building work involving alterations for accessibility would be classified as 'building work' under the Building Act.

The Building Act contains a number of provisions related to accessibility. Importantly, the purpose of the Building Act means that, in exercising functions under the Building Act, building consent authorities need to ensure that buildings are safe and 'contribute appropriately to the health, physical independence, and well-being of the people who use them.'⁴¹ Further, buildings are to be designed, constructed and able to be used in ways that promote sustainable development.⁴²

Accessibility and sustainable development are critical principles for the design, maintenance and management of heritage buildings.

Section 4 of the Building Act also contains a number of principles to be applied in performing functions or duties, or exercising powers, under this Act. These principles, which must be taken into account, apply to the Minister responsible for the administration of the Building Act, Chief Executive of the Department of Building and Housing and territorial and regional authorities.⁴³ The principles cover matters relating to household units, preventing harmful effects, durability, building costs, standards, innovation, fire mitigation and safety, protection of other property, efficient use of energy, efficient use of water, and waste reduction. Of particular relevance to accessibility and heritage are:

- (k) the need to provide, both to and with buildings to which section 118 applies, facilities that ensure that reasonable and adequate provision is made for people with disabilities to enter and carry out normal activities and processes in a building.
- (d) the importance of recognising any special traditional and cultural aspects of the intended use of a building.
- (l) the need to facilitate the preservation of buildings of significant cultural, historical, or heritage value.

Always seek advice from the appropriate building consent authority before starting any access-related work on a heritage building.

⁴¹ Section 3(b), Building Act 2004

⁴² Section 3(d), Building Act 2004

⁴³ The principles only apply to territorial and regional authorities when they are performing functions or duties, or exercising powers, in relation to the grant of waivers or modifications of the building code and the adoption and review of policy on dangerous, earthquake-prone, and insanitary buildings or, as the case may be, dangerous dams (section 4(1), Building Act 2004)

5.3.1 Accessibility under the Building Act

Sections 117 to 120 of the Building Act contains specific provisions for access to buildings by persons with disabilities. Unless the context otherwise requires, these provisions relate to parts of a building (including driveways, access ways, passages within and between complexes and developments and associated landscaping, if any) and any premises or facilities.

Section 118 requires that reasonable and adequate accessibility (including way of access, parking provisions and sanitary facilities) must be made for persons with disabilities in buildings that are publicly accessible. These are buildings to 'which members of the public are to be admitted, whether for free or on payment of a charge.'⁴⁴ These buildings must display the international access symbol.

The section 118 requirement of the Building Act applies, but is not limited to, a range of buildings types specified in Schedule 2. This list includes a range of public-type buildings such as public toilets, banks, childcare centres, courthouses, hotels, hospitals, libraries, churches, shops, restaurants, petrol stations, cultural institutions and car parks. In relation to homestays, the Department of Building and Housing advise that homestay with facilities for up to five guests can normally continue to be treated as a private house.⁴⁵

Section 119 of the Building Act refers to NZS 4121 (the Access Standard) as a compliance document for buildings and associated facilities that are dedicated to accessible accommodation.

Generally, the majority of accessibility-related work for heritage buildings will constitute an 'alteration' under the Building Act 2004. All alterations to existing buildings must comply as nearly as is reasonably practicable with the Building Code.

There are some consent-related exemptions for accessibility related works in Schedule 1 of the Building Act. Alterations to an entrance or an internal doorway of a dwelling to improve access for persons with disabilities, do not require a building consent, if compliance with the provisions of the building code relating to structural stability is not reduced.⁴⁶ Further, alterations to the interior of any non-residential buildings are also exempt from building consent requirements, if the alteration does not reduce building code compliance, including access and facilities for persons with disabilities.

While territorial authorities may grant building consents subject to waivers or modifications of the building code, they cannot grant waivers or modifications for access and facilities for people with disabilities.⁴⁷ Consequently, any request for a waiver is submitted to the Chief Executive of the Department of Building and Housing which issues a determination. In making a determination, the Chief Executive must consult with the Office for Disability Issues in relation to accessibility matters.

⁴⁴ Section 118(1), Building Act 2004

⁴⁵ *Codewords*, September 2008, Issue 031, p 4

⁴⁶ Schedule 1(af), Building Act 2004

⁴⁷ Section 67(3), Building Act 2004



First Church of Otago, Dunedin Registered Category I historic place. Accessible entry. Photo, NZHPT, 2010

Always seek advice from the appropriate building consent authority before starting any structural works.

5.3.2 Change of use

The Building Act regulates changes to the uses of buildings. A change of use may involve a range of conversion situations, especially the creation of new household units where there were none before.⁴⁸ In the case of the creation of new household units, the building, in its new use, is required to comply, as nearly as is reasonably practicable, with the building code in all respects.⁴⁹ For other changes of use, the building is required to comply, as nearly as is reasonably practicable and to the same extent as if it were a new building, with respect to fire safety, sanitary facilities, structural performance and disabled access provisions of the building code.⁵⁰

5.3.3 New Zealand Building Code

All new building work in New Zealand must comply with the building code prepared under the Building Act 2004. All alterations and change of use to existing buildings must comply nearly as is reasonably practicable with the building code.

The Building Code is a performance-based code, which means it states how a building and its components must perform as opposed to describing how the building must be designed, constructed or altered.

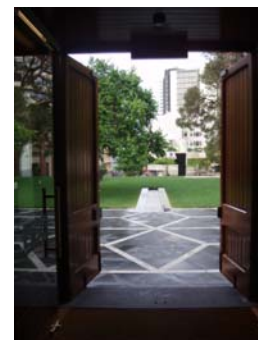
Compliance documents (previously known as approved documents) provide one means of complying with the clauses of the building code. Buildings built to the method (acceptable solution or verification method) described in the compliance document are automatically deemed to comply with the code.

The key relevant compliance document for accessibility is Clause D1, Access Routes.

Depending on the nature of the work, other compliance documents may be relevant such as F4 (safety from falling), F8 (signs), G 1-G3 (hygiene, laundering, food preparation), G5 (reception counters) and G9 (electricity switches).

In addition to the compliance documents, it is possible to design an alternative solution for improving accessibility. An alternative solution is a building design that demonstrates compliance with the building code. It can differ completely or partially from those described in the compliance documents.

Guidance about the Building Code and the Building Act 2004 is available from the Department of Building and Housing's website: www.dbh.govt.nz or www.building.govt.nz



Cathedral Church of St Patrick & St Joseph, Auckland
Registered Category I historic place
Open accessible doorway
Photo, NZHPT 2010

⁴⁸ Katharine Wheeler, 'Change of Use', *Build*, August/September 2008, pp 78-79

⁴⁹ Section 115, Building Act 2004

⁵⁰ *ibid*

As noted above, the NZHPT has published a separate guide to the Building Act as part of the *Sustainable Management of Historic Heritage Guidance Series*. This guide provides an explanation of matters such as heritage-related terms, project information memorandum and notification, building consents and general guidance for making changes to heritage buildings.⁵¹

5.4 Resource Management Act 1991

The Resource Management Act 1991 (the RMA) governs the use of all land, air and water in New Zealand. The purpose of the RMA is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources. The protection of historic heritage from inappropriate subdivision, use and development is a matter of national importance under section 6(f) of the RMA.

The use of any structure, including alterations and removal is regulated under section 9 of the RMA. This means that the use of a building may be regulated by a rule in a regional or district plan.

All district plans contain 'heritage schedules' that are lists of significant heritage. If a building is listed in a district plan heritage schedule, then it is likely that certain activities such as demolition, relocation, alterations and additions will be regulated. A building can be individually listed or as part of a wider precinct or historic area.

Works to improve accessibility of a listed heritage building may or may not require resource consent. Generally, consent will not be required if the work is minor and classified as repair and maintenance or the work is limited to a part of the building that is not regulated by the district plan. This is often the case for interior work.

If resource consent is required, the applicant will need to consult any affected parties, including the NZHPT if the building is registered under the Historic Places Act 1993.

The NZHPT considers that the district plan should facilitate the improvement of accessibility of heritage buildings in a manner that is compatible with heritage values. If the accessibility work does comply with the principles and standards outlined in this guide, the work should be supported by the territorial authority.

It is important that at the earliest stages of planning to undertake accessibility-related work, that contact is made with the relevant local authority and gain an understanding of the relevant RMA-related rules that may apply to the building.

For further guidance about historic heritage under the RMA, see NZHPT's, *Sustainable Management of Historic Heritage Guidance Series*.

5.5 Historic Places Act 1993

It is important that at the earliest stages of planning for accessibility, to make contact with the relevant local authority and gain an understanding of the relevant RMA-related rules that may apply to the building.

Expert advice should be obtained from professionals experienced in accessibility and disability issues.

⁵¹ NZHPT, *Sustainable Management of Historic Heritage Guidance Series*, Guide No.6, 'Building Act 2004', August 2007

The Historic Places Act 1993 promotes the identification, protection, preservation and conservation of the historical and cultural heritage of New Zealand. The Historic Places Act 1993 provides for the establishment and maintenance of a Register of historic places, historic areas, wahi tapu and wahi tapu areas. The purposes of the Register are:

- a To inform members of the public about historic places, historic areas, wahi tapu, and wahi tapu areas:
- b To notify owners of historic places, historic areas, wahi tapu and wahi tapu areas where necessary for the purposes of this Act:
- c To assist historic places, historic areas, wahi tapu, and wahi tapu areas to be protected under the Resource Management Act 1991.⁵²

The Register is maintained by the NZHPT and is made available to the public from the regional and area offices of the NZHPT. Information about the Register is available from the NZHPT website: www.historic.org.nz

If a building that been constructed before 1900 it may also be considered an archaeological site under the Historic Places Act 1993. Under section 2 of the Historic Places Act 1993, an archaeological site is defined as any place in New Zealand that either – was associated with human activity that occurred before 1900; or is the site of the wreck of any vessel where that wreck occurred before 1900; and – is or may be able through investigation by archaeological methods to provide evidence relating to the history of New Zealand. Under section 9(2) of the Historic Places Act 1993, the NZHPT may declare any post-1900 site to be covered by the archaeological site definition in section 2 by notice in the *Gazette*.

Section 10 of the Historic Places Act 1993 directs that an authority is required from the New Zealand Historic Places Trust if there is ‘reasonable cause’ to suspect an archaeological site (recorded or unrecorded), may be modified, damaged or destroyed in the course of any activity. An authority is required for such work whether or not the land on which an archaeological site may be present is designated, or a resource or building consent has been granted.

Prior to carrying out any accessibility work on a pre-1900 site (or a building that is suspected to date from 1900), it is advisable to contact the NZHPT at the early stages of the project in relation to the applicability of the archaeological authority process under the Historic Places Act 1993. Major work, for example, to the foundations of a pre-1900 building or any earthworks may require an archaeological authority from the NZHPT for the work to proceed.

It is advised to contact the NZHPT at the earliest stages of planning to undertake accessibility-related work on a building registered under the Historic Places Act 1993 or it is a property relating to pre-1900 human activity and potentially an archaeological site.

⁵² Sec 22(2) Historic Places Act 1993

Marae

Marae are special buildings of cultural heritage value and are unique to New Zealand Aotearoa. Marae may be both historic and contemporary and provide an important cultural institution for tribal communities. A marae complex can comprise of a range of traditional Māori buildings that include not only whareniui (meeting house), but also wharekai (dining hall), pātaka (storehouse) and pouhaki (flagpole). Whareniui and wharekai are often located in a marae setting. Marae may also be associated with wharekarakia (church), urupā and papakāinga (residential village).

The paepae (threshold) is fundamental to the tangible and intangible values of the Marae and control the cultural realms of noa and tapu particularly within powhiri ceremonies. In physical terms, the paepae is the threshold between the exterior marae ground, often referred to as the realm of Tumatauenga (Atua of challenge), and the interior of the whareniui the realm of Rongo (Atua of peace).

The cultural role of the paepae is further enhanced within ceremonial contexts as the kuia of the marae sit on paepae to affirm the mana of the marae to the manuhuri (visitors).

These physical thresholds do present barriers for accessibility. However within the context of marae participation, people of disability are there with support and assistance.⁵³ Physical barriers like paepae are often overcome by whānau lifting wheelchairs up steps or over paepae. To achieve full accessibility to historic marae, often alternative means of entry will need to be developed. These include ramp access through alternative door entries, removeable ramps, and where possible permanent ramp access.

Careful design and holistic approaches to accessibility issues require proper discussion to ensure there is a balance between tikanga values of the marae and the ability of the marae to manaaki (host and assist) visitors of all physical abilities. It is often helpful to visit Marae which have achieved this. Tamatekapua Marae at Ohinemutu, for example, has a prominent accessibility ramp as part of a new designed front entrance.

The NZHPT Māori Heritage Advisers should be contacted for advice in relation to any proposed work involving Māori built heritage and accessibilities. The NZHPT Māori Heritage Advisers can also provide information about marae that have adopted improved accessibility provisions.

⁵³ While the presence of whanau to support and provide assistance in a marae context is recognised, it is noted that this aspect does not meet the unaided accessibility requirements of the building code.

6 Guidance framework

The guidance framework is designed to help in the assessment of accessibility-related works at heritage places. The guidance framework contains objectives or principles to be achieved in relation to three areas:

1. Sustainable management of historic heritage.
2. Alterations of heritage buildings.
3. Basic accessibility requirements.

Achieving these principles will involve the selection of the most appropriate accessibility method and design for each historic place on a case-by-case basis.

The principles are not intended, however, to be a substitute for any of the accessibility legislative or building code requirements. Instead, the principles can assist in the design of accessibility-related work at heritage places in order to help achieve building code compliance as nearly as is reasonable practice and as appropriate.

Assessment 1. Sustainable Management of Historic Heritage

1. Sustainable management of historic heritage		
Matters to consider		
1.1	Diversity and Community Resources	Recognising diverse cultures, social and physical environments and communities
1.2	Sustainability	Taking a precautionary approach in order to safeguard the options for present and future generations.
		Enabling compatible, original and new adaptive uses
1.3	Research and documentation	Ensuring interventions are informed by sufficient research, documentation and recording, where culturally appropriate
		All changes should be fully documented in drawings and photographs
1.4	Respect for physical material	The degree that the intervention involves the least possible loss of heritage significance and the least loss of material of heritage value, including any irreversible or cumulative effects
1.5	Understanding significance	Whether the values of the place are clearly understood before decisions are taken that may result in change
		Decision making, where change is being contemplated, should take into account all relevant values, cultural knowledge and

		disciplines
		Understanding significance should be assisted by methods such as preparation of heritage assessments and conservation plans
1.6	Respect for contents, curtilage and setting	The extent to which interventions respect the contents and surroundings associated with the place
1.7	Add other relevant values as relevant	Respect values; Māori heritage

The sustainable management of historic heritage principles can be adopted to assist in the evaluation of accessibility-related work. The principle of diversity and community resources recognises that there are diverse cultures, social and physical environments in New Zealand Aotearoa. Recognising this diversity, and the various community needs and abilities, is the first step in carrying out a heritage accessibility assessment. As part of this assessment, there is a need to identify the barriers that are obstacles to communities enjoying and experiencing the place.

Following the identification of community diversity and barriers, the heritage accessibility assessment needs to consider a range of principles, including sustainability, research and documentation, respect for physical material, understanding significance, respect for contents, curtilage and setting. These principles are adopted internationally to guide works involving heritage buildings. As indicated above, these principles should be detailed in a heritage assessment and conservation plan.

For places of significance to Māori, Māori heritage values will also be an important consideration. For these places, the assessment will need to recognise and provide for the relationship of Māori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral lands, water, sites, wāhi tapu and other taonga following the spirit and intent of the Treaty of Waitangi (Te Tiriti o Waitangi).



Accessible bridge providing access to Kerikeri Mission House & Stone Store Registered Category I historic place Photo, NZHPT 2010

Assessment 2. Alterations of Heritage Buildings

2. Alterations of heritage buildings	
Matters to consider	
2.1	Ensure all significant heritage fabric and fixtures are not altered, obscured or removed. Permanent damage to significant fabric and settings must be avoided
2.2	Any new ramp or other addition should be compatible (able to co-exist) with the heritage values of the building in terms of materials, scale, size, proportion, location and surface configuration
2.3	Ensure all significant interior volumes are not significantly altered by raising floor level(s)
2.4	Incorporate all historic patterns of access and movement (i.e. entrances, hallways, stairways and passage ways) are retained
2.5	Historic door thresholds and sills should be retained, especially when the thresholds are integral to the heritage values of the building
2.6	The installation of new openings (such as doors) to principal facades and elevations should be generally avoided. Any new door opening should be sympathetically designed but clearly distinguishable as a new alteration
2.7	Significant doors, original or early hardware (doorknobs, locks etc) and door surrounds should be retained and repaired appropriately. Lever action door handles can be made to replicate the historic style of the door

The NZHPT supports improved accessibility to ensure heritage remains useful for present and future generations. Maintaining continuity of use or adapting places for new uses ensures heritage retains liveability and utility. The process of change is called adaptation which means to modify a place to suit it to a compatible use, involving the least possible loss of cultural heritage value.⁵⁴

Making heritage buildings accessible often requires alterations. The careful design of alterations is of paramount importance. Ensuring the least possible loss of cultural heritage value will involve retaining surviving heritage fabric, respecting the historic design of the building, avoiding work that compromises or obscures heritage fabric, and appropriately recording new work.

The compatibility of design of new accessibility work is an important consideration. A compatible ramp or other accessible work is one that is not visually obtrusive and has well-matched materials and proportions with regards to the existing historic building. Achieving compatibility requires a carefully designed concept plan specific to the heritage values and requirements of the building and early consultation with the NZHPT.

⁵⁴ ICOMOS New Zealand Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Value, 1993

Check list for design of new ramps⁵⁵

Ramps must be built to comply with NZS 4121 with regard to matters such as gradients, widths, hand railings and landings. In addition, ramps can be built to be compatible with the heritage values of the place:

- Ramps should be built for the main or principal public entrance where possible and if heritage values are not adversely affected.
- Ramps for separate entrances should be avoided and should only be considered where there are not other options that maintain heritage significance.
- All accessibility options that have less impact on the place should be explored prior to design and construction decisions.
- The ramp should not obscure significant elements and elevations of the place. Elements such as handrails and balustrades that pass in front of important features such as windows and verandas should be avoided.
- Construction materials are sympathetic in scale, nature and texture to the existing place.
- Construction materials should be the same quality as the existing material of the place.
- The scale, character and proportion of the ramp is in keeping with the place.
- The ramp should not be overly too long making it visually dominating and inconvenient for some users.
- The connection between the ramp and the place should not damage or require removal of significant fabric.

⁵⁵ Adapted from Department of Environment and Resource Management, *Ramps, Lifts and Access, A Guideline*, Queensland Government (last updated 2 May 2006), p 11

Assessment 3. Basic accessibility requirements

3 Best practice basic accessibility requirements	
Matters to consider:	
3.1	Ensure an accessible path of travel to all areas and facilities where possible. The principal entry should be defined clearly and be of the correct grade, width, clear of obstacles and provide a firm surface
3.2	Provide the required disabled parking area. Landscaping may be required to ensure the parking area is compatible with the setting of the place
3.3	Keep the distance from the parking area or drop-off point to the principal entry as short as possible, while maintaining the integrity of the site
3.4	Make the main or principal public entrance accessible where possible. Separate entrances should be avoided and should only be considered where there are no other options that maintain heritage significance
3.5	Where toilets and facilities are provided, ensure that at least one is accessible to disabled users
3.6	Consider how accessibility is provided for as a means of escape in public buildings
3.7	In cases where physical access to a historic place or area is restricted due to heritage values, because of the natural terrain or safety issues, interpretation and presentation should be provided at alternative locations

While heritage places should be open to all people, the reality is that many heritage buildings were not built for diverse needs, including people with wheelchairs, prams, walking aids or with impaired vision or other needs. The challenge is to improve accessibility while respecting the heritage values of the place.

As outlined in this document, principles of universal design are now enshrined within the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol (2006). A fundamental principle of universal design is to provide equitable use – that environments can be used by all people without the need for adaptation or specialised design. Equitable use aims towards providing the same means of use for all users and avoiding segregating or stigmatizing any users.

Making the main or principal public entrance to a building accessible is an important method to achieve the requirements of the building code and the principles of universal design. A compromise alternative separate entrance should only be considered to preserve heritage significance. Any alternative or separate entrances should consider the impact on independent and dignified access to the building.