



Hexham Old Gaol Access Plan

HEXHAM OLD GAOL

This plan uses the VAQAS access plan template as a basis. It includes information from surveys and advice provided by Disability North, and members of Action for Differently Abled People in Tynedale (ADAPT), and information from museum staff and general visitors. All staff have received disability awareness training.

Hexham Old Gaol re-opened in 2006 following refurbishment to improve access to the buildings and displays. It is run by The Woodhorn Trust.

The Gaol is the earliest recorded purpose-built prison in England, and opened in 1333. It was used as a prison until the 1840s.

The displays explore crime and punishment through the ages, and the lives and times of the Border Reivers, local families who lived, feuded and fought along and across the English-Scottish border in Tudor times.

There is a website for the Woodhorn Trust that may be of interest to visitors to set the scene before you arrive.

www.experiencewoodhorn.com

Information and any pre-visit enquiries should be directed to oldgaol@woodhorn.org.uk or by telephone (01670) 624523.

Location

The Old Gaol is in the town centre, behind the Market Place and close to Hexham railway and bus stations. There are brown and white signs and black finger posts around the town which direct visitors to the Gaol.

The Old Gaol does not have a car park. There is a short stay pay and display car park behind Prospect House, the Northumberland County Council building next to the Old Gaol. The main town car park is approximately 300 metres away at the bottom of the hill.

There is a coach dropping off point outside Hexham Abbey, and level access from there to the Old Gaol.

There are two disabled parking bays in the Market Place.

Site Access

There is a ramp as an alternative to the 4 steps with a handrail to the entrance door. There is a press button to open the glass door. The door opens outwards. The door is wide enough for a wheelchair or a double buggy.

Admission charges apply. Well-behaved dogs are welcome at no charge. Carers do not pay an admission charge.

Physical description

Flooring on the ground floor is stone in the reception area, with a wooden floor in the display room. Floors in the other rooms are stone. There is a wooden ramp down into one of the top rooms. There is a glass lift to take visitors between the floors and allow a view of one of the dungeons. There is seating provided at intervals around the museum. Artificial lighting is used throughout.

Interpretation boards are all in large text with illustrations. There are objects displayed in upright glass cases. There are costumes to try on and a mirror for visitors to see how they look with the costumes on. A family pack and general guide is available for visitors.

There is a tactile map of the Borders, showing where Reiver families were located in the 1500s.

The Border Library is based in the Old Gaol. This is run by volunteers. If a volunteer is in the room, visitors can ask questions about the subjects covered in the museum, and on local music, history and culture. At weekends there are handling sessions held in the Library. Visitors can do shieldmaking in this room. Occasionally there are special events, including events run by reenactors.

There is a film on the top floor, exploring a Reiver raid and the feuding between families.

Visitor Services

We acknowledge that different users have different needs, and are committed to providing an inclusive service. We are always open to comments from visitors and representatives of particular interest groups.

There is a glass lift to take visitors between the floors, and this allows visitors to view one of the dungeons.

The Old Gaol has an induction loop system covering the reception desk and all audio and audiovisual presentations.

There are handling materials in the galleries, and an additional handling collection at the reception desk.

The museum collections that are not on display are stored at the main Woodhorn site. Access to information can be made via the Woodhorn Trust website, using the Archives service collections section and search facility, or directly to Hexham Old Gaol staff.

Information is provided in large print, French and German. Visitors wishing for information to be given in languages other than English, for example Braille, British Sign Language, and Welsh, are asked to contact the Old Gaol ahead of their visit.

General Visitor Information

Telephone (01670) 624523

Email oldgaol@woodhorn.org.uk

Website <http://www.hexhamoldgaol.org.uk/>

Postal address Hexham Old Gaol, Hallgate, Hexham NE46 1XD

Hours of operation

April to end September, open Tuesday to Saturday 11am – 4.30pm, last admissions 4pm

February, March, October, November, open Tuesdays and Saturdays, 11am – 4.30pm, last admissions 4pm

Open school Summer holiday Mondays, Bank Holiday Mondays, for special events which are publicised in advance, and by appointment.

Improving Services

Every year we carry out a visitor survey to assess the service provided and to identify changes that will make the visitor experience better. Changes are made during the closed period. Staff are always happy to receive suggestions for improvements.