



*** FAREHAM ACCESS GROUP

DISABILITY DOESN'T
STOP US!

October 2009

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**Our next meeting at Portchester Parish Hall is
at 11.15am on Tuesday November 10th 2009**

Welcome to another edition of the Fareham Access Group Newsletter. At the time of writing, the leaves are changing colour on the trees so we are on the way to autumn and dare I say "It will soon be Christmas".

We have already booked a venue for the FAG Christmas lunch and you will have hopefully already received details. Our treasurer Richard has secured funding to enable us to enjoy a **free** Christmas lunch this year so hopefully, you have reserved your place.

Hampshire PCT Board Meeting

Advance notice for the future meetings in 2009:

Thursday 26th November – NHS Hampshire at Ferneham Hall, Fareham

Note from Richard

Lorraine and Richard used to attend on behalf of the group, if anyone feels able and interested enough to attend even if only to the one at Ferneham Hall, then please do. It does keep you up to date with what is going on out there. We also had a lot of input into facilities at GP surgeries and Hospitals so is useful networking.

What a load of old bollards

Street furniture such as seating, bins, planters and bollards can often end up being more of an obstacle than an asset for disabled people.

The key is to make sure that it is well colour contrasted with it's surrounds, that it doesn't block off or obstruct common walkways, that it doesn't restrict required circulation

space, and, in the case of seating, that it is not too low down, of a variety of heights, leaves room for assistance dogs, and includes seating with and without arms.



Bollards can represent the single greatest barrier to a wide variety of disabled people.

They are often not well enough colour contrasted, or are do not contrast well enough with their surrounds when it is raining or the ground is wet.

They are difficult to see or notice in low light.

They are often located too close together or in inappropriate places.

Above is an example of poorly thought out use of bollards - the bollards are in a row and difficult to see for visually impaired people in daylight, but when it has rained and the floor slabs are darker, they do not stand out at all - representing a hazard.

Theatre

No Limits Theatre presents 'Cuckoo Jack' at the Ashcroft Arts Centre in Fareham on Wednesday December 10th at 7.30. No Limits uses dance, drama, music and design to challenge expectations and break down barriers between people with and without a disability. Tickets are £10.50 or £9.50 concessions. There is usually another discount for group bookings of 10 or more. A post show discussion is available.

Ashcroft claim to have easy access for wheelchair users. (Please ask when making your booking.) They also have a induction loop in all areas for those with hearing difficulties. I know a certain guide dog, who has checked out the facilities, on

numerous occasions. There is an accessible toilet and I think two disabled parking spaces.

This sort of event might appeal to members of Fareham Access Group.

Distraction Burglary - Do not be a victim

Distraction Burglary is where a bogus caller tells lies to con their way into a home to steal possessions, or create a diversion so that an accomplice can sneak in. These criminals often use fake identities, including water, gas and electricity company personnel.

THE MESSAGE IS SIMPLE –

If You're unsure, Don't open the door

STOP - Are you expecting anyone? Is the Back door locked?

CHAIN - Put the security chain on before opening the door.

CHECK - Ask to see the caller ID and check it by phone.

October Fest in Fareham

Half term week sees a festival of history, music and dance in Fareham town centre, library, museum and at the Ashcroft from 24th to 31st Oct;

Disability Claims Management News - New Claims Launched

1st October 2009 - New claims launched today

Two new claims have been launched today. The first by a client who was denied access to disabled parking and toilet at a hotel, the second who was victimised because of their disabilities by parents of a partner.

For more information please visit the Latest Claims page here.

<http://www.disabilityclaims.org.uk/latestclaims>

A man is standing drinking at the bar in a pub when the man next to him whispers, 'do you want to buy any pirate DVD's?'
'No thanks, I hate Treasure Island.'

Citizen influence on delivery of local services

'We Can!' is a quarterly magazine for people interested in getting involved in and influencing the delivery of services in their local area, produced by Communities and Local Government Department. It "shows how government is working with organisations and networks at national, local and regional levels to support initiatives that help citizens shape the places they live in, and the services they use and enjoy." September issue at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/wecansep2009> .

From our archives

John Rattle informed Lorraine that the Post Office in White Hart Lane,Portchester that he was taken to, is being considered for a low level counter.

Source - *John Rattle, Stakeholder, Manager Post Office Ltd. Email 20.01.04*

White Hart Lane Post Office

This week Lorraine saw a pale grey box type object fitted to the front of one of the counter sections. It had a wheelchair symbol and states it is not a seat! The front section pulls down to form a 'table' for signing books etc. it is a bulky barrier to everyone else.

Source - *L & R Herrington 28.01.2004*

A champion emerges as minister admits DLA threat

The last two weeks have finally removed any uncertainty about whether DLA (Disabled Living Allowance) is under threat, but they have also brought real cause for optimism.

Lord McKenzie of Luton, the parliamentary under secretary of state for work and pensions, was asked last week in a House of Lords debate which disability benefits the government are 'considering integrating into the wider social care budget in England'.

Lord McKenzie replied:

"At this stage, we do not want to rule out any options and so are considering all disability benefits."

Even when care minister Phil Hope's claim that DLA is 'not under threat' was referred to and Lord McKenzie was specifically asked to rule out the using DLA as a source of

funding for social care, his response was “no particular benefit is ruled out of consideration.”

So, whilst we can't say why Phil Hope made his 'be very happy' statement, we can now say with certainty that it does not reflect the government's stated policy. For more, see:

Senior minister confirms DLA is under threat

<http://www.benefitsandwork.co.uk/news/latest-news/1115-senior-minister-confirms-dla-is-under-threat>

But that same Lord's debate also brought a real ray of hope in the form of a champion prepared to fight for DLA and AA (Attendance Allowance).

Lord Ashley of Stoke warned the minister that “any attempt by the Government to withdraw these benefits, or any benefits at all, will be very strongly resisted by disabled people, by their organisations and by many Members of both Houses of Parliament.”

Lords warn attack on DLA and AA will be “very strongly resisted”

<http://www.benefitsandwork.co.uk/news/latest-news/1116-lords-warn-attack-on-dla-and-aa-will-be-very-strongly-resisted>

Lord Ashley – former MP Jack Ashley - is a formidable campaigner, with victories dating right back to the thalidomide campaign of the 1970s. It will not have brought any joy to ministers' hearts to see Jack Ashley, and a number of other noble Lords, lining up against them. And it's a tribute to the efforts of Benefits and Work campaigners that this issue has gone from being almost entirely unacknowledged – or dismissed as scaremongering - to being debated in the House of Lords in less than three months.

Elsewhere, the No 10 petition has perked up again, now reaching over 17,000 signatures. As few as another 1,000 signatures should see it getting into the top 10 petitions before the care consultation ends on November 13th. Do you know people who haven't signed yet?

Try and encourage them along to; <http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/AttendanceA/>

Meanwhile, the Big Care debate website continues to be swamped by people protesting about the threat to disability benefits. From a feeble 130 posts when we began this campaign, there are now 2,219 responses on the Executive Summary page and 606 on Having Your Say. The total is far higher than that achieved by any similar government consultation and the responses are overwhelmingly hostile.

If you haven't yet sent a response, please do so by visiting this link:

<http://careandsupport.direct.gov.uk/greenpaper/execsum/>

Or emailing: careandsupport@dh.gsi.gov.uk

A campaigner which we think is an inspiring example of spontaneous campaigning:

“Today I was in the Shopping Centre on my Shopmobility scooter when I saw Mr. Jack Straw doing his shopping. It was too good an opportunity not to speak with him, so after a few swift manoeuvres I asked for one minute of his time. I told him that I had worked for the past 32 years in the NHS and had now been diagnosed with RA [rheumatoid arthritis] hence the scooter and that I have just been awarded DLA and what a difference it has and will make to myself and indeed others and to please not take it away.... He said “he wouldn’t” and gave me his card to write to him and of course I will follow it up with a letter.”

We’re not suggesting that gangs of claimants on Shopmobility scooters should roam our town centres hunting for MPs spending their expenses – pleasing though that image is - but if you’re able to, why not make an appointment to see your MP at their regular surgery and put your views across in person?

With an election looming, the fact that people are prepared to actually visit them in their offices will make a real impression, particularly on MPs with slender majorities.

Good luck,

Steve Donnison

Please feel free to forward or publish this email.

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POST YOUR NEWS

Remember that you can post your news in the Benefits and Work forum, if you’re a member, at:

<http://www.benefitsandwork.co.uk/forum?func=showcat&catid=13>

and/or in the free welfare watch forums at:

<http://welfarewatch.myfineforum.org/index.php>

You can also keep up with news about opposition to the green paper at the Carer Watch campaign blog:

<http://carerwatch.com/cuts/>

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service

(HFRS) can provide a *free* home safety visit where there is an identified need. If you are in one of their target groups, they can visit your home, fit smoke detectors and provide safety advice.

To be considered for a home safety visit: www.hantsfire.gov.uk to complete the online form.

Alternatively you can contact the Community Fire Safety Department,

Telephone: 023 8062 6809 or write to:

Community Fire Safety Team
HFRS Headquarters
Leigh Road, Eastleigh,
Hampshire SO50 9SJ

An Appeal

Hopefully, you will have found something of interest in this newsletter. If you feel that you can contribute anything of interest for FAG members, please send to Norman or Joan.

Coast path joy



HAPPY DAYS From left, Liz Giles, Richard Sturgess, Agnieszka (with Nipper the jack russell), Carl Gumbrell, Russell Cleaver, Councillor Ray Ellis, Alan Brind, Richard Herrington, Peter Adams and Viv Rance

WORK has finally started on a coastal pathway to open it up to disabled people.

The mile-and-a-quarter Fareham Easy Access Trail, which runs around Fareham Creek, should be completed by early December after years of fundraising and negotiations.

The £120,000 project will transform the footpath into an all-weather surface which can be used by wheelchair users and pushchairs.

Hampshire County Council teamed up with the FEAT project, started by

Fareham Action Group, which encouraged local authorities to improve access to footpaths for disadvantaged users.

FAG founder Lorraine Herrington had been one of the driving forces on the project, but she died suddenly last November.

Her widower Richard said: 'It will be a lasting memorial to Lorraine.'

Money came from the county, Fareham Borough Council, Veolia Environmental Trust, Groundwork UK, and the FEAT partnership.