



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba



Summary of Findings of the Accessibility Audit of The Scottish Parliament

**Commissioned by the Gender Sensitive Parliament
Advisory Group**

March 2026

1. Purpose of this Summary

This document provides a high-level summary of the key findings from a series of independent accessibility audits of the Scottish Parliament estate, carried out in October and November 2025.

The audits assessed the accessibility of:

- the external environment and approaches
- the Garden Lobby area, including adjacent buildings
- the Assembly Building, including public and staff areas

The purpose of the audits was to assess compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and relevant best-practice standards (including BS 8300), and to identify opportunities for improvement that support inclusive access for all users.

2. Overall Findings

Across all areas audited, the Scottish Parliament estate was assessed as “Grade B – Satisfactory, with minor works required.”

The audits found that:

- the estate provides a generally high standard of accessibility
- many inclusive features are already in place and functioning well
- no issues were identified that prevent access to parliamentary services
- most recommended improvements are minor, targeted, and proportionate

No significant health and safety risks were identified.

3. Key Strengths Identified

3.1 Inclusive Design and Access

The audits identified a strong baseline of inclusive design across the estate, including:

- step-free access to public areas
- accessible passenger lifts serving all key levels
- generally wide circulation routes suitable for wheelchair users
- consistent, high-quality wayfinding signage
- well-designed reception and security arrangements with staff support available

3.2 Accessible Toilets and Facilities

The estate provides:

- a Changing Places toilet for visitors with more complex needs
- a wide distribution of independent-use accessible toilets

- accessible showers and changing facilities
- assistance dog spending areas
- accessible seating and counters in public-facing areas

Overall provision was considered adequate for current staff and visitor numbers.

3.3 Emergency Evacuation and Safety

The audits found:

- robust emergency evacuation arrangements for disabled people
- Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) in place for staff who require assistance
- trained staff and clear procedures for supporting visitors during evacuations
- appropriate use of evacuation lifts and evacuation chairs

These arrangements were assessed as comprehensive and well-managed.

4. Key Areas for Improvement

While overall accessibility was good, the audits identified a number of recurring themes where improvements would enhance the visitor and staff experience.

4.1 External Arrival and Drop-Off Arrangements

The most significant accessibility issue identified relates to arrival by vehicle, particularly for visitors with reduced mobility.

Key findings include:

- no designated vehicle drop-off point close to the main public entrance
- long walking distances from nearby drop-off locations
- uneven surfaces and limited wayfinding signage in some external areas

The audit recommends exploring options to provide a closer, more accessible drop-off facility.

4.2 Lighting and Visual Contrast

In several locations, particularly in circulation routes:

- lighting levels were found to be low
- poor lighting reduced visual contrast between floors, walls, and signage
- glare from architectural lighting affected readability of signs in some areas

Improving lighting in targeted locations would particularly benefit:

- people with visual impairments
- older visitors
- people with cognitive or sensory differences

4.3 Wayfinding and Information

Wayfinding was generally good, but improvements were recommended to:

- clarify accessible routes where multiple options exist
- improve signage to accessible toilets in some locations
- ensure information on the Parliament website accurately reflects on-site arrangements, particularly around drop-off locations and accessible facilities

4.4 Staff Training and Awareness

Across multiple areas, the audits noted that:

- many staff provide effective, informal support to visitors
- however, not all staff who regularly interact with the public have received formal disability awareness and etiquette training

Providing consistent training would help ensure a confident, welcoming and inclusive experience for all visitors.

4.5 Quiet and Sensory-Friendly Spaces

The audits identified the value of quiet or low-stimulus spaces for:

- visitors with autism or sensory sensitivities
- people experiencing anxiety or cognitive overload

While quiet spaces are available, improvements were recommended to:

- enhance their comfort and atmosphere
- improve visibility and signage so visitors are aware they exist

5. Nature of Recommended Improvements

The majority of recommendations:

- are minor works, signage changes, or management actions
- can be delivered through routine maintenance or refurbishment
- do not require major structural change
- can be prioritised over time based on need and feasibility

Where recommendations relate to architectural features of a listed building, the audits recognise that changes must be balanced against design and heritage considerations.

6. Commitment to Continuous Improvement

The audits demonstrate that the Scottish Parliament:

- meets its duties under the Equality Act 2010
- has invested significantly in inclusive access
- has effective systems in place to support disabled people

The recommended actions provide a clear, proportionate roadmap for further improvement and reflect a commitment to ensuring the Parliament remains welcoming and accessible to everyone who works in, visits, or engages with it.

7. Next Steps

The audit findings will be reviewed and higher priority recommendations prioritised as individual pieces of work.

All other recommendations of a lower priority are noted and will be considered as part of any projects or refurbishment programmes taking place in those areas identified.

Facilities Management Office
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