

Disability Access Forum High Hirst Allotment: Accessibility Audit 2026

On Thursday 30th April 2026, Gareth Muir, Hebden Royd Town Council Local Environment and Allotments Officer met with June Eaton from Hebden Bridge Disability Access Forum to assess accessibility issues on site. A site assessment was undertaken identifying issues which could result in barriers to accessibility for existing and potential site users. The following is a summary of the issues discussed with solutions to mitigate the identified issues.

- Information relating to the location of the site was missing from the HRTC website, it was suggested that this was added to the allotment webpage along with information regarding the parking, which is on street. Bus times and routes were also suggestions to be added to the webpage
- Manor Drive leading to the allotment entrance has overgrown vegetation obscuring the entrance and the nearest pavement is covered in vegetation. CMBC Highways to be contacted regarding this with a view to clearing the obstructions.
- Additional signage was suggested for Manor Drive in an easy read format: black text on white background using plain English from a first-person perspective. Plot signage was suggested to be black text on a white background in a large format to help identify the individual plots.
- Site entrance – the gate although lightweight was impeded by weeds, which will be removed during site maintenance. A suggestion was made to replace the existing latch with an ‘Easy Latch’ to aide in opening and closing.
- Pathways were identified as requiring maintenance to surfaces with redressing to fill potholes. A suggestion was made to keep the pathways clear of obstacles.
- The water tap was identified as having a trip hazard next to it, which will be back filled with aggregate and surrounding vegetation to be removed. A sign to be installed reading ‘WATER’ and information for new Tenants that the taps are a ‘hozelock’ fitting which can be difficult to attach.
- The compost bays were identified as being of sound construction with signage indicating which bays to fill, however it was suggested that additional signage is put in place to indicate which bays should not be filled.

- The slope from Plot 19 to Plot 41 was identified as being very difficult to traverse using walking aide(s) and/or a wheelchair. Due to this being access to Lawfield for grazing animals installing additional steps would not be appropriate as these could result in the livestock being injured. The presence of a handrail was identified as a positive, however it was suggested that encroaching vegetation was kept clear to prevent a trip hazard and that contrasting colours were used to aide those with visual impairments.
- Plots 1 to 19 were identified as the most accessible on site. Meaningful adjustments could be made to enable new Tenants with additional mobility requirements to install abutting and adjoining paths to enable wheelchair access with the ability to turn around. A suggestion was made to include information on the website that HRTC was amenable to enabling prospective Tenants to make meaningful adjustments to use the site on a case-by-case basis. This could take the form of an 'access statement'. Wording of which could be 'We (HRTC) welcome applications from those with additional needs, with meaningful adjustments being made where required'.

Additional comments from June Eaton:

- Toilets. It would be good to give information on the nearest toilets to existing and prospective tenants, on your website and/or in the information for applicants. That is important information for many. Some people with continence issues can use non-accessible toilets but need to know where they are. Do you have good relations with Dodnaze Community Centre? They do have an accessible toilet there, so perhaps you could explore whether they would welcome allotment tenants at times they are open? Otherwise, I guess the nearest toilets are in Hebden town centre.
- Seating. Could you consider a bench in the common access area, somewhere near the compost bins? People who cannot walk far or stand for long, might find that helpful.
- Path surfaces Although expensive, it would obviously help wheelchair users (and pushchairs) if the allotment paths had a firm surface, especially in wet weather. Maybe you could consider improving the area at the entrance, to the tap and to the first few plots? As well as potential tenants, existing plot holders might have friends or family members who need access to the plots and who would benefit from that. I attach some path

surface information, which Councillor Nikki Harvey sent me during our planning for the Woodmeadow path. As you know, compacted, smaller hardcore as on the Woodmeadow path, is accessible for many users if maintained.

- Allocation. I realise you have a long waiting list. But would it be possible to prioritise the plots nearest to the entrance, if they become vacant, for disabled people, particularly those with mobility impairments or using wheelchairs/scooters? (Note - some places have problems accommodating very large mobility scooters. This might not be an issue at the allotments but may be worth considering in advance.)
- Handrail to slope down from plot 19 - although white or yellow give the best visual contrast against a dark background, you could consider other pale colours.

Suggested actions going forward:

1. Add additional information to the allotment webpage including location, accessibility and parking information.
2. Contact CMBC Highways with a view to remove encroaching vegetation blocking access to the site entrance.
3. Explore additional signage on Manor Drive to direct site users to the allotments.
4. Continue pathway maintenance to ensure access and movement on site is not restricted, e.g. filling potholes, clearing encroaching vegetation.
5. Amend existing signage into accessible formats on site; at the water point, compost bays and individual plots.
6. Ensure that the handrail from Plot 19 down the slope is not impeded by vegetation and is made visually striking through the addition of contrasting colours.
7. Provide accessibility information to existing and potential Tenants.
8. Undergo further review of the site at differing times of the year to identify additional hazards, e.g. pathway accessibility during wet ground conditions.