

## Press Release

For immediate release – 1st November 2022



### **BuDDy Tour of Chiltern Open Air Museum assesses disabled accessibility**

**Ten disabled volunteers from disability charity Buckinghamshire Disability Service (BuDS) have spent a day at the Chiltern Open Air Museum near Chalfont St Giles, helping to improve accessibility for disabled people.**

The trip, called a *BuDDy Tour*, is one of several taking place to Buckinghamshire tourist destinations and visitor attractions as part of the charity's new *Fair4All Visitor* project. This project, backed by Buckinghamshire Business First and Visit Buckinghamshire, aims to help Buckinghamshire businesses become more successful by improving and publicising their disabled accessibility and inclusion.

The BuDDy Tour is part of Visit Buckinghamshire: Boost programme of support being delivered in partnership by Visit Buckinghamshire, Buckinghamshire Business First and Buckinghamshire Council, and funded by the UK Government through the UK Community Renewal Fund.

Jacqui Gellman, Outreach Manager at COAM, said:

“It was a real pleasure to welcome the BuDDy Tour to the Museum and their constructive and expert insight was very helpful. We are committed as a Museum to steadily increasing our disabled accessibility and inclusion and we are delighted to say that, following the Tour, the Museum and BuDS have agreed to work in partnership to achieve this over future years. As a

first step, the Chiltern Open Air Museum will be working to become a Fair4All Card Partner, so that disabled visitors can easily let our staff know how best to help them”.

Chair of Trustees, Andrew Clark, said:

“The BuDDy Tourists thoroughly enjoyed their day at COAM, and there is much that they appreciated and praised. It is fantastic news that the Museum and BuDS will be working in partnership from now on, including joining our Fair4All Card scheme.

COAM has real strengths in some areas of accessibility and inclusion. It has lovely helpful staff and volunteers with good disability knowledge and a positive attitude. The Museum’s displays of historic buildings and gardens are very inclusive for many disabled people, and have strong sensory components which are hard to find in other museums. COAM is already, and could be even more so, a key ‘must visit’ destination for many disabled people, especially autistic and learning-disabled people and people with mental health conditions. BuDS is looking forward to helping the Museum build on this opportunity.

The Tourists did highlight that some parts of the Museum site present challenges for disabled people with mobility impairments. This wasn’t news to the Museum, which is already committed to a positive trajectory of improving physical access going forward. BuDS has a great deal of experience of improving disabled access at heritage sites and museums, and we look forward to helping them plan and deliver physical accessibility improvements which enhance the character and educational content of the Museum”.

Janneke Elford, BuDS’ Project Manager, added:

“Our BuDDy Tourists, as we call them, used their lived experience as disabled people alongside BuDS’ renowned accessibility expertise to provide constructive feedback on all aspects of the Chiltern Open Air Museum’s site, buildings and facilities. The Tour included people with lived experience of neurological conditions such as MS, long-term medical conditions, mobility impairments (including walking aid, manual and power wheelchair-users), neurodiversity, visual loss, hearing loss, learning disability and mental health conditions.

We have already conducted similar BuDDy Tours of other leading visitor attractions in Bucks and we look forward to doing more”.

Lucy Dowson, Tourism Development Manager of Visit Buckinghamshire said:

“We are really excited to see businesses within the visitor economy here in Buckinghamshire actively taking steps to improve their accessibility and inclusion for visitors. This work also benefits our local residents too. As the Birthplace of the Paralympics, and with the help of our businesses, we would like to make Buckinghamshire one of the most accessible and inclusive destinations to live, work and visit!”

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#### Notes

BuDS is Buckinghamshire's only independent pan-disability charity. A working community of over 200 disabled people, it works to improve the lives of all disabled people by fixing the big problems that they encounter, such as bad accessibility, poor services, wrong attitudes or inadequate help. More information: [www.buds.org.uk](http://www.buds.org.uk)

The Chiltern Open Air Museum tells the history of the Chilterns through historic buildings, landscapes and culture for the enjoyment, inspiration and learning of present and future communities. Founded in 1976 to rescue threatened historic buildings, it now includes 37 buildings, a historic working farm, gardens, orchards and a range of artefacts and displays. More info: <https://coam.org.uk/>

The Fair4All Card is a secure photo card only for disabled people. The Card helps businesses and services to easily understand and provide the support disabled customers need. More info: [www.fair4all.org.uk](http://www.fair4all.org.uk)

