

Committee(s):	Date(s):
Barbican Centre Board	24 May 2016
Subject: Gender Neutral Toilet Provision	Public
Report of: Managing Director	For Information
Report author: David Duncan – Head of Audience Experience	

Summary

This report provides an update on the introduction of gender neutral toilets on level - 2 of the Barbican Centre, which was the subject of significant press and social media coverage. The report provides the background to the issue, a summary of the feedback received and the current activity in relation to this issue.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The Barbican is committed to providing a supportive, inclusive and flexible space for all our audiences and staff.
2. As a result of internal discussions and in response to the programme planned for the Pit theatre in October 2016, we introduced gender neutral toilets on level -2 of the Centre. This development was warmly welcomed by attendees at the Transpose festival in the Pit and other audience members, but subsequently gave rise to some adverse comments from patrons of Cinema 1, which shares these facilities.
3. On 5 April a broadcaster with a large Twitter following complained that this implementation of gender neutral toilets was detrimental to women and caused longer queues for them. This generated significant press and social media coverage for several days in the broadsheets and tabloid media.
4. As soon as the situation arose internal discussions took place to review the situation. It was agreed that the Equality and Diversity group, led by the Director of Arts, at Director level will urgently assess provision and locations going forward whilst recognising the future programming likely to occur in the Pit.
5. Additional signage indicating the locations of alternative gender specific facilities was installed and thoroughly briefed front of house staff were positioned outside toilets to assist customers. We agreed the following line:

“In response to the customer feedback and press comments the Barbican is actively reviewing its existing provision of some gender neutral toilets within the

Centre. We fully support the policy, which is increasingly good practice in venues, educational institutions and is being discussed by the City Corporation itself. We also acknowledge that there are difficulties with the scheme as currently implemented on level -2, in the foyer outside Cinema 1 and the Pit Theatre due to the physical layout of the space. The Barbican are looking to relocate the provision of gender neutral toilets to elsewhere in the Centre in the near future. We are taking advice from specialist bodies in order to review how we can better implement this provision and better clarify and communicate the policy. “

6. The Barbican will continue to provide both gender specific and gender neutral toilets, and our audiences remain welcome to use any facilities in line with the gender with which they identify.
7. The Audience Experience team continue to record all related audience feedback. To date (social media excepted) we have received:
 - 7 complaints in writing
 - 2 telephone complaints.
 - One comment received in person on Saturday 8 April.
8. It should be recognised that some of these comments were from customers who, having read press articles, mistakenly assumed all of the Barbican's toilets had become gender neutral.
9. No further comments have been received since 10 April with the exception of a group of three customers expressing general gender neutral views on 29 April.
10. Set out below is a list of the actions that have been taken (or are being taken) following the initial introduction of the toilets:

Completed and ongoing:

- Signage advising of other toilet locations installed in cinema foyer – completed
- Pro-active well briefed staff in cinema foyer advising of other locations and answering any questions.
- Any Audience feedback is being recorded
- Q&A for staff has been produced
- The Head of Audience Experience met with the Chairman to update on progress on 20 April.
- Update to Management Team was provided on 25 April

In progress:

- Working group continues to meet and progress
- CoL being contacted in relation to their plans to introduce GN toilets.
- Research relating to other venues plans is underway and due 12th May.

- Case info on further education buildings being summarised.
 - Contact has been made with specialist bodies for advice.
 - Women's group to be identified for input.
 - CoL trans-awareness training is being refreshed. On relaunch this should be made compulsory.
 - Consideration being given to other sites within the building.
11. It should be noted that all public bodies have to follow the Public Sector Equality Duty. This Duty covers three responsibilities:
- to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation against anyone with a protected characteristic
 - to promote equality of opportunity between people with and without a protected characteristic
 - to foster good relations between people who do and don't share the protected characteristic.
12. Promoting equality includes removing the disadvantages experienced by trans people, meeting trans people's needs and encouraging trans people to take part in public life or other activities where participation is disproportionately low. Fostering good relations includes tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people who do and don't share a protected characteristic.

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