

Report by Susan Charles, Honorary Chair of

'Access Bath and North East Somerset'

The original access route to the rear of Keynsham Leisure Centre via Bath Hill and through Keynsham park, was created and paid for by the Keynsham Lions in the 1970s, to enable members of the Keynsham Seals club, and other disabled users of the Leisure centre, to safely have access to the pool level by having adjacent disabled parking at the rear of the building.

This facility was removed in 2007 for health and safety reasons. The then Contracts Manager for Aquaterra wrote, and I quote - "I am really not comfortable with using the rear door as a means of access". Neither B&NES or Aquaterra offered an equivalent or improved access, as required under the then '1996 Disability Discrimination, Goods and Services Act'.

Parking at the front of the building has never been suitable or safe or specifically designated for disabled users of the Centre. This situation is much worse now with the building work being carried out on Keynsham town centre.

There is an arranged 'drop off' point at the front of the Leisure Centre, for groups and others arriving - but if you are an independent user arriving on your own or a disabled person unable to be left by their carer - then use of this drop off point is not possible. The one disabled bay at the front is not solely designated for users of the Centre and not always available. It is certainly not safe to use in the location or up to the necessary standard required. There is no choice but to find a parking space elsewhere, which particularly at present can take some time. It usually means having to park some distance away on the road in Temple Street and then having to alight from your vehicle and often with mobility equipment - wheelchairs, frames, walking sticks and such - straight onto the roadside from your car. Most disabled people are unable to move quickly and on exiting their car are faced with oncoming traffic as well as a busy bus route. Also being in close proximity to the pedestrian crossing and Fire Station can cause issues. There is now the added problem of having Contractors vehicles in the vicinity.