

## University of Glasgow

## Academic Standards Committee - Tuesday 15 April 2014

**Periodic Subject Review: Update on Responses to Recommendation 2 arising from the Review of School of Physics and Astronomy held on 13 and 14 February 2012**

Mrs Catherine Omand, Senate Office

***Recommendation 2***

The Panel **recommends** that Estates and Buildings address two pressing issues regarding accessibility for disabled students and staff of the School: access to the Common Room in the Kelvin Building (as recommended in the 2006 DPTLA); and access to the University Observatory. [*para 3.8.18*]

For the attention of: **Estates and Buildings**For information: **Head of School*****Response: Estates and Buildings***

University Observatory – Access improvement works to this building were completed during summer 2012, this made provision for a new ramped approach at the main entrance, automated entrance doors and provision of a new disabled toilet.

Kelvin Building – Access improvement works required to this building have been debated in the past however they would require significant changes to the building. This can be reviewed in the future.

***Response – Head of School***

As part of the first phase of the Observatory refurbishment a wheelchair ramp has been installed providing access to the building for disabled users and a new disabled toilet facility has been installed.

The passenger lift in the Kelvin Building is small and antiquated with manually operated double doors. Wheelchair users are unable to operate the lift on their own and require assistance. The floor area is insufficient for a wheelchair user to turn round and the lift does not meet modern standards for disabled access. Even so, with assistance, wheelchair users still can access the lecture theatres and teaching labs on levels 2, 3 and 4 of the Kelvin Building and the School office on level 5. However, the common room and all rooms on level 6 are completely inaccessible as these can only be reached by narrow stairs.

Several schemes have been proposed in recent years to replace the main passenger lift with one which meets modern standards for disabled access in order to provide unassisted access to the main teaching areas and for a separate and additional one-floor lift to provide direct access to the common room. However, these schemes have not proceeded due to very considerable costs involved.

The School of Physics and Astronomy strongly supports the principles of improving access to the public areas of the Kelvin Building and to the common room in particular. It strongly endorses the recommendation of the PSR panel that Estates and Buildings address this issue.

***Updated response from Estates and Buildings – October 2013***

The issue of disability access to the Common Room and other rooms on level 6 is understood and in the past options of new lifts have been considered. The relocation of the common room is not an easy alternative as locations are not readily available. As part of the campus estate strategy we will be looking at key investments across the estate and from this we will develop asset plans for all major buildings. I would suggest that when we do this work we take the opportunity to comprehensively review facilities in Kelvin as part of the asset plan.

***Updated response from School – February 2014***

The School noted ASC's agreement that further consideration was required to try and address the issue of accessibility for disabled students and staff, and that a space audit should be requested in order to try and identify alternative space.

In autumn 2013 the Head of School, in collaboration with the School Accommodation Officer and Superintendent, issued to all staff and PGR students an accommodation questionnaire seeking input on the state of Kelvin Building and plans for its redevelopment - not only in relation to disability access (although this was identified as a priority) but in the wider context of the Campus Redevelopment Plan. The School's Management Team and Research and Strategy Committees discussed the questionnaire responses in October and November 2013 and the Accommodation Officer presented an overview of its results for discussion at our Research and Teaching Staff Forum in December 2013.

These consultations and discussions formed the basis of a draft proposal for significant - and prompt - redevelopment of the Kelvin Building. The School has communicated this proposal to Estates and Buildings as part of the ongoing consultation on the Campus Redevelopment Plan (and specifically as an alternative to re-sitting Physics and Astronomy in a new building). Options for solving the current disabled access issues were included as part of the proposal. The consensus view of the Management Team, Research and Strategy Committee and Research and Teaching Staff Forum was to favour the installation of appropriate disabled access to the existing Common Room, accomplishing the necessary structural alterations as part of the overall renovation of the building.

***Response from Director of Estates and Buildings – March 2014***

I would first like to thank the School for their proactive approach in considering the opportunities of Kelvin Building, this is extremely helpful. I can also confirm that all the major buildings including the Kelvin Building are being considered as part of the Estate Strategy. Following consultation and with detailed input from Court and SMG a draft Estates Strategy will be presented to Court in June. This will set the priorities for investment including the relocation of schools and where schools are not moving the refurbishments of retained properties. It is therefore possible that in a relatively short period of time there should be a clearer view on the investment in the estate after which it will be more appropriate to review this matter.