THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Estates Department

Ashworth
Accessibility upgrade

November 2019

History of the Building

The Ashworth Building, based on the King's Buildings campus is named after Professor of Zoology James Ashworth. He worked closely with architects John Lorimer and John F Matthews to create a purpose-built building that contains a lecture theatre, research and teaching labs and a suite of rooms for a museum collection.

Special glass was used for the windows, reducing the sun's UV rays to protect the specimens in the building. The renowned sculptor Phyllis Bone was commissioned to create a variety of oval plaques displaying animals from different habitats which are featured on the external walls of the building.

The building was officially opened by HRH Prince George on 15th May 1929. Extensions of the Ashworth Laboratories were completed in 1966 and again in 2004.

The Project

The Accessibility Improvement project comprised of the refurbishment of the original main entrance, including upgrading the entrance lobby and automation of two sets of doors. The project also included the construction of a new set of external steps and ramps and associated alterations to the hard landscaping, to create an accessible route into the Ashworth laboratories from the parking area adjacent. The works also included the installation of external floodlighting to the front façade of the listed Ashworth 1 building. Works were completed 2018.

Examples of work carried out

To create an accessible route into the main entrance the original steps into the building were required to be removed. The external steps were replaced with new wet-cast concrete steps to the same setting out as the original steps but incorporating new inset anti-slip nosings and contrasting tactile paving at the top and base of the steps. These were designed and manufactured as bespoke items.

Two symmetrical ramps were formed, providing wheelchair access into the building from the parking area, where new accessible parking spaces were formed and the existing ground levels and paving altered to suit. This involved the construction of two new retaining walls to contain a new landscaped area to the east side of the ramp, the formation of a series of level resting places and relocation of the existing benches.

Internally the two original sets of double doors were automated, providing push-pad access for the external door and PIR automated internal doors. A new entrance matting was laid across the full width of the lobby, designed to highlight the change in surface for those with limited vision, with the scraper bars of the matting manufactured in bamboo rather than the more traditional aluminium, to create an aesthetic more sympathetic to the historic fabric.

In addition to the accessibility works, the upgrading also incorporated new external LED floodlighting to the building façade and up-lighting to the fan-vaulted lobby. LED Lighting was also incorporated into the new bespoke stainless steel handrails, designed and manufactured to suit the curved geometry of the new ramps.