

Lack of Public Toilets in Dover

Alan Sencicle, December 12th, 2018

In November, the BBC Radio 4 'You and Yours' programme focused on facilities for the elderly and disabled in both towns and shops. The availability, ease of use and access to public toilets, was an issue that concerned many contributors to the programme. It became clear that if a town lacked adequate toilet facilities, shoppers would shop elsewhere. It has been said "a welcoming town has adequate toilet facilities which will help persuade visitors to return again and again".

Sunday December 2nd was wet and windy. Dover town centre looked run down and depressing. Walking from the seafront through the A20 underpass, steps on the eastern side were not available as the area was flooded. This was still the case when I returned the following Sunday. This does not present a welcoming sight to tourists.

Passing by the St. James development, I was reminded that, unusually for a retail park, no public toilets have been provided. Couldn't they have been funded by the car parking charges that are now in force?

Walking past the Stembrook public toilets was even more depressing. Here a group of people consuming alcohol were camped out in the shelter of the outer access to the disabled toilet so as to avoid the persistent rain. I then discovered these toilets are closed on Sundays from October to March! For half the year there are no public toilets available in Dover on a Sunday. This is completely

unacceptable, particularly as many shops in the town are open on Sundays.

Lack of signage is another problem. There is a 'Toilets 200 yards' sign in Pencester road pointing towards Stembrook. There is no sign, to the Stembrook toilets, in the Market Square. At the previous public toilet facility, in the vicinity of Biggin Hall, a sign states "These toilets are permanently closed, the nearest public toilets are in Stembrook". For the tourist, there is no sign that gives a clue as to where Stembrook might be? In any case the sign is incorrect for 6 months of the year on a Sunday! I wonder what thousands of German and Italian tourists, disembarked from cruise ships, have made of it?

New tourism initiatives are now being put into place in an attempt to prevent any further decline in Dover's economy. Steps must be taken to ensure that Dover is fit for the purpose of attracting tourists and shoppers, whose expectations are surely much higher than what are currently on offer? We need to do better.



Stembrook Toilet Block