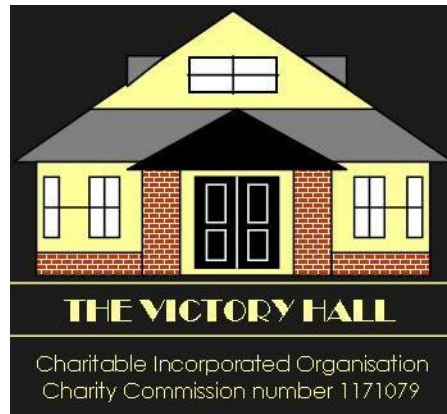


# VICTORY HALL DALSTON



## HALL CAPACITY & SAFE OCCUPANCY

The Victory Hall, The Green, Dalston, Carlisle CA 5 7QB, Cumbria  
Registered Charity No. 1171079

[www.victoryhall-dalston.org.uk](http://www.victoryhall-dalston.org.uk)

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18<sup>th</sup> April, 2024

## Introduction & background:

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 is the governing legislation for fire safety in village and community halls. Every hall has a maximum capacity in terms of numbers attending any event whether covered by the hall's premises license or other events.

This capacity is not necessarily related to the type of event or the comfort of those attending, but the time it takes to evacuate the people from the hall and any other rooms in the building.

The Victory Hall was built in 1922 and, while having modern improvements and extensions, the Trustees of the Victory Hall define it as a traditional brick and/or stone building with plaster internal partitions and ceilings, and timber roof supports, timber floor, etc..

Therefore, the Victory Hall's capacity is limited to ensure evacuation in a maximum of 2½ minutes.

Just for information, if the hall was a lightweight construction of combustible material, such as a traditional Scout hut, the evacuation time is lessened to 2 minutes. If it was a traditional structure built to modern building regulations with a greater non-combustible structure, the time is more generous for evacuation, 3 minutes.

The total capacity of any hall or room is based on the width and the position of emergency exits and in which direction the doors open (inwards or outwards). To calculate this, it has to be assumed that – if there is more than one emergency exit - one of those exits might be blocked or near the seat of smoke or flame, so calculations are made on the basis of the remaining exits, the widest exit being blocked.

Fire doors are based on 'units of exit width' which in turn is based on 545mm being the average width of an adult's shoulders! According to the Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service guidelines, a double fire exit allows 80 persons passage in one minute, whereas a single door only allows 40 people to exit in the same time. **The Trustees have agreed a limit of no more than 200 people to be the capacity of the main hall to ensure a safe exit within the 2½ minutes time.**

However, if a door opens inwards rather than outwards, then that door is rated as only allowing 60 people to exit within the 2½ minutes periods allowed no matter how wide the door. This means that if **the Social Room is used on its own with the dividing doors closed, then only 60 people can be evacuated safely.** The Reading Room on its own only has one exit door but that is allowable as it is within 18 metres of any occupant. However, even when the **Social and Reading Rooms are combined, it is still only 60 people in total who can be safely evacuated within the target time.**

All these calculations are to show the capacity the building can accommodate in terms of safe evacuation in an emergency. It takes no account of how the building is actually occupied and the difference to evacuation procedures made by different activities, use of furniture and other factors.

To this end, the Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service signpost village halls and community buildings to both their own guidance, UK Government guidance and other sources of information, as does ACRE (ACTion in Cumbria) This guidance gives an indication of the maximum occupancy the building can accommodate in terms of safety. It is not a guidance of how comfortable it might be to host the projected numbers.

The guidance from these Emergency Services indicate a floor area suitable for each activity to ensure safe use of the building. For example, a floor area of 0.5m<sup>2</sup> per person when seated in theatre-style seating. Once gangways and circulation space for emergency exits is taken into account, this would allow a safe limit of 130 people in the audience for a production in the Main Hall. However, this is the formula used to ensure safety, not comfort! Neither does the hall have that number of seats! The Hall's Trustees offer the following guidance of safe limits for various activities as a maximum capacity they can allow for each area. As already stated, it doesn't guarantee this limit allows comfortable and practical use for individual events. Hirers will need to determine their own occupancy limit, but these must not exceed the occupancy guidance that follows.

## GUIDANCE ON MAXIMUM ALLOWABLE CAPACITY

### THE MAIN HALL

#### Standing events (Occupant density of 0.3m<sup>2</sup> to 0.5m<sup>2</sup> per person):

- No seating is provided, and circulation space for bar/serving hatches.
- Allowance for circulation spaces at doorways
- **The Victory Hall recommends a maximum capacity of 120.**
- The window seats may be used as occasional seating, any additional seating will reduce the maximum capacity by approximately 2 people per chair, assuming chairs are around the edge of the room.

#### Theatre-style seating (0.5m<sup>2</sup> per person):

- There should be a gangway on each side of the seating and a centre aisle as well.
- The gangways should not exceed the width of the single emergency exit door, therefore should be one metre wide, approximately.
- No seat should be more than 7 seat widths away from a gangway.
- Regulation requires a clear space of at least 305mm between the back of one seat and the front of the seat behind it. A greater distance will allow more comfort, of course.
- **The Victory Hall recommends a maximum capacity of 100 for theatre-style seating.**

#### Cabaret-style seating (1.0m<sup>2</sup> per person):

- Using tables, normally circular, with seating around approximately 2/3 of the circumference, all facing in the same direction.
- Allowing circulation space for serving hatches, exits, etc.
- **The Victory Hall recommends a maximum of approximately 60.**

#### Dining (1.0m<sup>2</sup> per person):

- Tables for dining normally circular while buffet tables are rectangular.
- Circulation space allowed for main entrance, exit to toilets and emergency exits.
- Circulation area for serving hatches deemed to require 10m<sup>2</sup> of floor area.
- 3 rectangular buffet tables require 5.4m<sup>2</sup> of floor space including circulation space.
- **If no serving hatches or buffet, i.e., table service, maximum capacity recommended: 84**
- **With bar and serving hatches, maximum capacity recommended: 72**
- **If serving tables for buffet, maximum capacity recommended: 72**

#### Modern dancing (0.5m<sup>2</sup> per person):

- **With some seating and occasional tables, recommended limit of approximately 80**

#### Sales of work, etc. (1.5m<sup>2</sup> per person)

- Capacity includes visitors and participants
- Positioning of tables and display stands should enable gangways to allow easy entry and exit.
- If numbers exceed a safe capacity, organisers will be expected to have measures to control numbers.
- **Emergency services guidance for maximum capacity, 66**

## THE SOCIAL ROOM

**The maximum safe limit allowed in the Social Room at any one time for any activity is 60 people**  
(emergency exit doors open inward)

### **Theatre-style seating** (0.5m<sup>2</sup> per person):

- There should be a gangway between the two exit doors of the Social Room.
- There should also be an aisle along the wall the other side of the seating and along the back of the seating.
- The gangways should not exceed the width of the single emergency exit door, therefore should be one metre wide, approximately.
- No seat should be more than 7 seat widths away from a gangway.
- There should be a clear space of at least 305mm between the back of one seat and the front of the seat behind it. A greater distance between seats may give more comfort but will reduce capacity.
- It is assumed that space will be needed for presenter and table at front.
- **The Victory Hall recommends a maximum capacity of 40**

### **Cabaret-style seating** (1.0m<sup>2</sup> per person):

- Using tables, normally rectangular, with seating on three sides of the table, all facing in the same direction.
- Allowing circulation space for entrance and exit and circulation.
- 8 table maximum
- **The Victory Hall recommends a maximum of approximately 32 people**

### **Informal dining** (1.0m<sup>2</sup> per person):

- For example, teas & coffees, light lunches.
- 'Bridge' tables normally used for such functions, 9 are stored in the Social Room
- **The Victory Hall recommends a capacity of approximately 36.** (under review)

## THE READING ROOM

- This room has one emergency exit, allowed as all occupants are within 18 metres of the exit.
- The dividing screen can be opened from within the Reading Room so can be used as an emergency exit although not included in the Victory Hall's safety plan.
- The Reading Room with its mini-kitchen is seen as only suitable for events seated around the 'conference' style table layout.
- **10 seats only are provided for use in the Reading Room**

## THE READING & SOCIAL ROOMS COMBINED

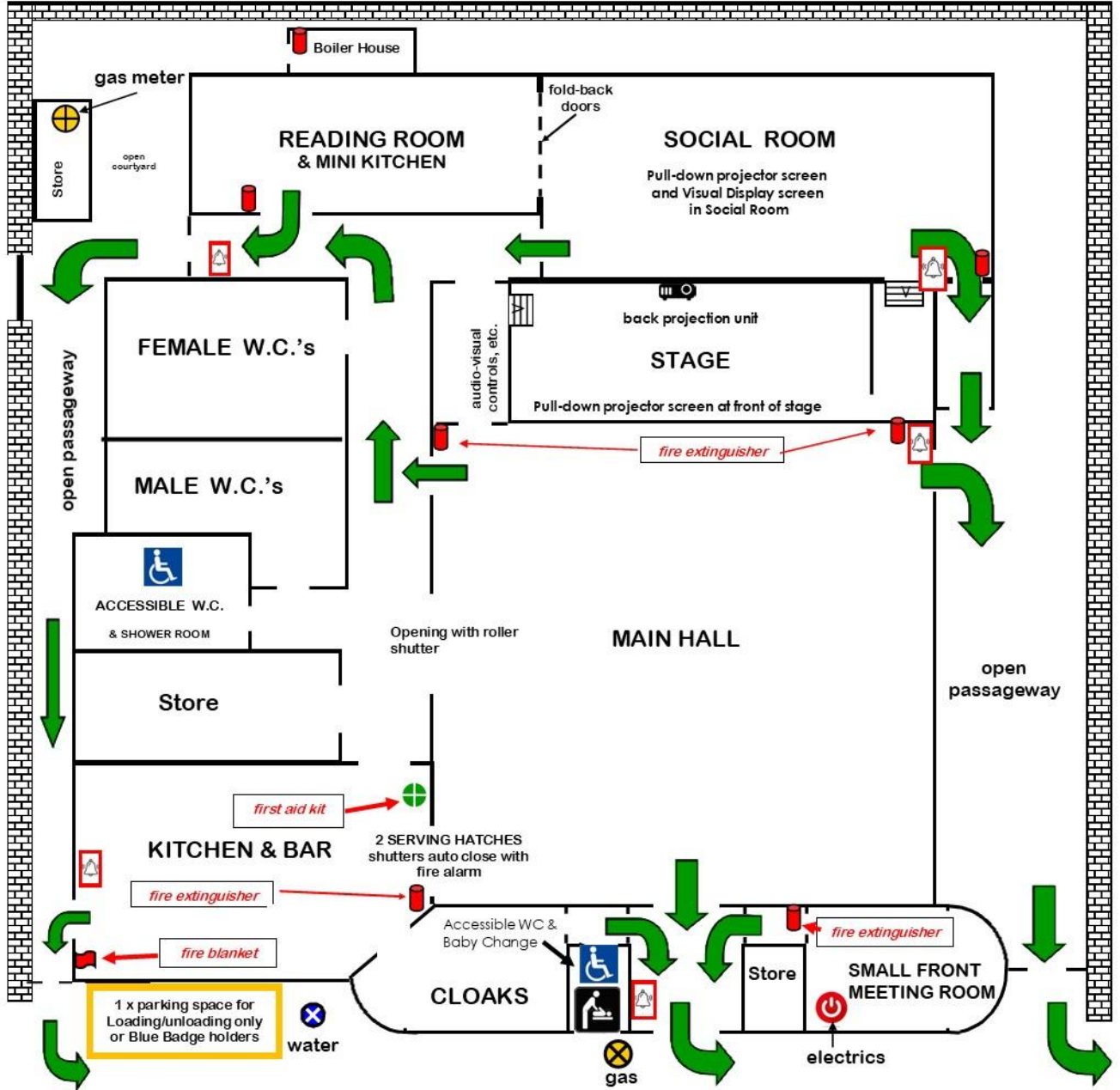
- Although the combined rooms have three exits, two of them open into the same space so must be considered as causing a pinch point.
- Both remaining doors are inward opening and, as one has to be discounted in case of blockage during an evacuation, safety evaluation is based on only one exit being available but with an inward opening door.
- **Maximum safe capacity is 60 in total**

## THE SMALL MEETING ROOM

- Set up for informal meetings with a small 'conference' table.
- Only one exit with inward opening door.
- **6 seats only are provided for use in the Small Meeting Room**



# EMERGENCY EXIT ROUTES & SAFETY INFORMATION



B5299 CARLISLE ROAD

**ASSEMBLY POINT**  
flagpole in front of Co-op

Linear off-road car parking along roadside. More parking in village car parks 40 metres north



**THE VICTORY HALL**  
The Green, Dalston  
**CA5 7QB**



**What3words:**  
patch.privately.bolt

Reviewed: Feb. 2024  
JA

