



Learning and Participation

Arts, Culture and Education from **The Customs House**

Information about Visiting The Customs House

This document may be useful for new visitors to The Customs House including groups and people with access needs who are planning a visit.

Throughout this document we signpost the best person to get in touch with if you have specific needs as an individual or as a group representative. We hope you find this a useful document to plan your visit.

If you are coming as a group for a self-led visit we would advise you get in touch in advance so we can advise you what is happening in the building.

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1. Arriving at The Customs House

The Customs House is a theatre, gallery and cinema.

We also have The Green Room Café and spaces for workshops and community events.

There is a large free car park at the rear of The Customs House and a layby for buses, cars, taxis and mini buses to drop groups off by the front of the building.

We are 5 minutes' walk from the Shields Ferry and 10 minutes' walk from the metro/bus station. Redline taxis currently sponsor our cinema and offer favourable fares.



Front of the Customs House

If you are coming to see a performance in the theatre and have your tickets you can travel by metro (with your theatre ticket (for free 2 hours before and after the performance)).

If you are coming in a coach or mini bus you can usually drop off your group members at the front of the building EXCEPT at exceptionally busy times such as during the pantomime season.

2. Entering the Building

The Customs House main entrance is up a small flight of stone steps (3 steps). There is a ramp to the right of the main entrance. The exterior and interior double doors open on pressing a silver button at waist height.



Steps to the front door with ramp to the right

The Customs House also have level access at the back entrance of the building over Daltons Lane. Daltons Lane is cobbled so we would suggest the front entrance and ramp is better for wheelchair access.



Level access via the back entrance to the box office

3. The Entrance

Entering through the front doors Box Office reception is on the left. The entrance is a well-lit space with lots of posters and leaflets on the walls. It can be fairly busy with people purchasing tickets or waiting to go into a show. Sometimes there is music playing in the space.

If you are coming on a booked visit the group leader should make themselves known to our friendly team. They will make sure the member of our team is notified you have arrived.

In this space you will see: doors to the Main House (the theatre), the entrance to The Green Room cafe, a corridor to the toilets, lift to the cinema and Riverview room, stairs to the upper floors and an accessible lift.



The Box Office Can be a busy place if you need any assistance please ask our friendly staff

4. The Green Room

On the ground floor we all have The Green Room Café which serves meals. It can be quite busy. If you are bringing a group and want to use the Green Room to buy refreshments it is worthwhile letting us know so we can reserve a table. We have a copy of our menu in large print on high contrast paper. If you need any help accessing the menu please ask a member of staff.



5. Toilets

There are female and male public toilets on the ground floor along a corridor from the box office as well as an accessible unisex toilet.

6. Lift to The Studio Cinema

Further down this corridor there is another lift that takes visitors to the Studio Cinema. This could also be used as an alternative route to the gallery for a visitor in a small wheelchair. It is not suitable for large chairs or mobility scooters.



7. Riverview Room

This space is used for private hires.

8. The Theatre

As we are a receiving house (we get shows in from outside our organisation) each show in the theatre is unique. Usually as you enter the theatre the lights will be on and there may be some music that suits the show playing. When a show begins the lights will dim and auditorium music fade out.

Admission to the theatre is for ticket holders only, except for pre-arranged behind the scenes tours through our Box Office Manager. If you have any access requirements (or wish to book a tour) please call the Box Office before you visit 0191 427 8183.



A photograph of the theatre from the stage

The First Floor

9. Lower Fusion

You can take the accessible lift or stairs from the main entrance to Lower Fusion. This is a space that displays smaller art exhibitions.



Lower Fusion with a view towards the bridge to Daltons Suite

There is a bar concession stand that is open when the building is busier. The space is well lit and there is a limited amount of seating available.



Bar concession (open at busy times)

10. The Bridge

The bridge links Daltons Suite. The assisted door open using a silver button or a sensor. The bridge has hand rails along both sides.



Door into the bridge leading to The Daltons Suite

11. The Daltons Suite

This area is usually not open to the public. This is our space for events like performances, weddings, conferences and sometimes workshops. If you are interested in hiring the space for an event you would talk to our events team please email events@customshouse.co.uk The room is large with a wood effect floor. We can change the lighting in the room and there are also a large number of small windows that can be opened.



The Daltons Suite dressed for a formal occasion

The Second Floor: The Gallery and Redline Studio Cinema

You can take a short flight of stairs to the Gallery and Studio Cinema. Access to the Studio Cinema is through the Gallery and a door on the left. If you require lift access to the Gallery you can take an alternative route through a lift on the ground floor.



Steps from Lower Fusion to the Gallery

12. The Gallery

The gallery has a varied programme of art exhibition with different types of artwork on display. A large print guide is available at the Box Office. As the gallery programme changes we can't describe what exactly will be in the space.



Virginia Bodman (above) and Stephen Livingstone (below) exhibitions show how different the gallery can appear

The Gallery space has wooden laminate floors, white walls and a mix of natural and artificial light. Sometimes there are videos playing in the Gallery which create sound.

Sometimes there are activities happening in the Gallery like 'Drawn Together' our adult drawing group, masterclasses or school workshops. You are welcome to come in and enjoy the exhibition. If the exhibition is being changed or there is a private event there will be sign on the door advising it is closed. This is to ensure the safety of our visitors.

If you would like a photo of the current Gallery setup or to confirm exhibition dates email our Gallery Learning Officer
Lesley@customshouse.co.uk.

13. The Redline Studio Cinema

The Studio Cinema is through the Gallery. You walk over a small landing with carpeted floor (if you go down the stairs you are in the Step Up Gallery). There is another set of doors that are opened near the starting time of films. The cinema concession stand is to the right selling snacks, cold drinks and teas and coffees. The cinema is to the left.

The lights will be on as you enter and fade before the film starts. We programme a series of relaxed screening these are for anyone who is nervous about attending the cinema. Technical adjustments are made to the lighting and sound (the space is not made fully dark and the volume adjusted), audience noises during the film are not discouraged, you can enter or leave whenever you wish and the film is available for concession prices for Max Card holders.



The Redline Studio Cinema

Check online for our film times.

The cinema is also available to hire for private events contact event@customshouse.co.uk for current prices.

14. The Step Up Gallery

The Step Up is our space for showcasing children and young peoples' artwork created through our schools learning programme.

There are bannisters along both sides of the stairwell. You can exit the Step Up Gallery through the fire exit at the bottom or through the doors on the right into the Green Room.



NPS School Exhibition (2017)

15. Upper Fusion

This space displays art exhibitions by local emerging artists. It is accessible via the main stairwell or the access lift. It has a glass ceiling so has a mixture of natural and artificial light.



Mike Clay's Exhibition (2017)

16. Daltons 5

School workshops happen in the Daltons Suite, Gallery or Daltons 5. We have already talked about Daltons Suite and the Gallery.

Daltons 5 isn't usually open to the public. Daltons 5 is on the ground floor across Daltons Lane through the rear entrance of the main house. Please note Daltons Lane is a brick lane with a fairly irregular surface. When you enter the space you go through a small entrance with a light switch and fire extinguisher.

When you enter the room one wall covered in floor to ceiling mirrors. These can be covered with blacks (black curtains) to avoid distractions. The other walls are decorated with a graffiti mural. There is a window covered in bars for our safety and the premises security. The floor is wooden laminate. The lighting is quite bright and suitable for most creative purposes. If lighting has been changed for the workshop the facilitator will notify people attending.

Sometimes the room can be quite noisy depending on what else is happening in the building.



Entrance (left) and Youth Theatre rehearsing in Daltons 5 (right)

If you have a session led by a member of the Learning and Participation Team they will usually have a radio to contact the Duty Manager. This space is also available for groups to hire. Contact events@customshouse.co.uk for current prices.

17. Schools Programme

Are The Customs House schools' programme suitable for all learners?

Our motto at The Customs House is 'Arts and Entertainment for All' and we will strive to make our schools programme inclusive and our building accessible and welcoming.

All of our in-school workshops can be adapted to suit the needs of learners. We would ask you to have a chat with our learning officer Elizabeth Kane so she can understand your learners' needs and work with you to make your schools' workshop fit your group.

Contact Elizabeth@customhouse.co.uk or telephone 0191 427 8198 (please leave a message if Elizabeth is not at her desk)

<p>We hope you have found this information useful. If you have any suggestions that would improve this information please email Elizabeth@customhouse.co.uk</p>
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