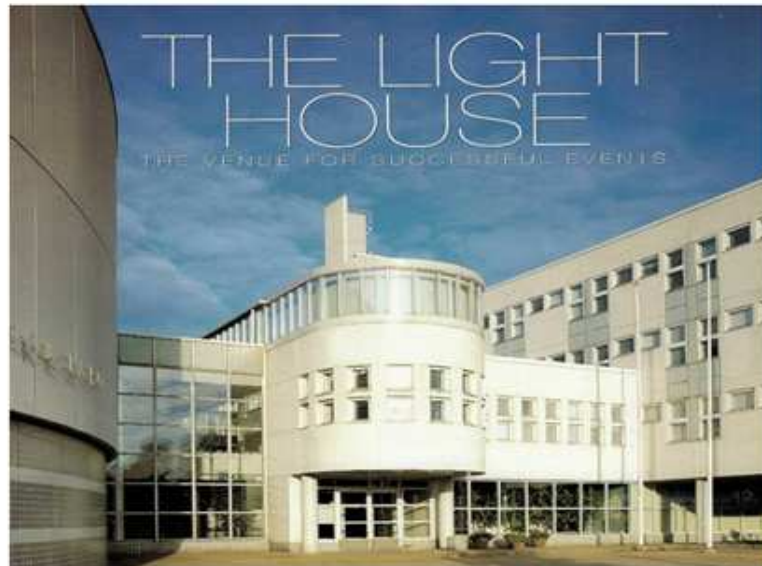


The Lighthouse, Helsinki, Finland

Finish Association of the Deaf (FAD)



MAIN ENTRANCE

Visited by

Liam O'Dwyer

Frank Murray

Sean Byrne

Brendan Madigan

12th November 2008

Team for visit:

Frank Murray - Project Manager

Brendan Madigan - Deaf Architectural Technician and Project Advisor

Sean Byrne DDA - Representative

Liam O'Dwyer - CIDP CEO

Dates of visits:

11th and 12th of November 08

Contacts at facility:

Markuu Jokinen - Executive Director and President World Deaf Federation

Anne-Mari Laurento - Project Manager

Kaisa Alanne - Development Director

Tina Naukkarinen - Museum Curator

Markuu Jokinen - Administration Director

Description of services provided at the facility:



Administration, Finance and Facility Management
Development and Language Support Services
Advocacy and Policy Development Services
Audiology and Family Support Centre
Interpreters, Degree and Third Level Personal Development and Information
Technology Services
Temporary Accommodation for Children / Parents and Students
Museum, Auditorium, Library, Media Development and Recording Studio Services
Coordination of Regional Support and Network Services
Hard of Hearing Services
Technical Support Services (shared)
Restaurant, Photocopy and Coffee Stations (shared)
Family and Children Play Areas

Description of the facility itself:



MAIN FOYER

Large spread out four story building on about three acres, set in the outskirts of Helsinki beside forest. Built twenty one years ago with government funds. Each organisation has its own suite of offices with reception, IT, meeting rooms, restaurant etc shared. Facility is bright, great colour scheme but now dated with very narrow corridors but good bright space in each room. Administratively focused buildings with some good public and shared spaces. The general feel of the building is very institutional – bit like a hospital but the specialist areas are well designed, warm with relaxing colour schemes.

Exterior:

White building very striking with lots of glass and well landscaped. Beside motorway and busy public transport connections.

Interior:

Showing its age but the open spaces are in good condition. The colour scheme in key offices is impressive and thought through but the corridors and reception look very institutional.

Environment:

Wonderful environment surrounded by trees and plants but with no obvious open areas for circulation outside.

Lessons for Village Project:



RESTAURANT / CANTEEN



ENTRANCE FOYER

Interior colour scheme vital

Use of emergency lights in corridors and stairwells

Need to support regional network and village with IT platform

Management company to run facility each organisation pays its share

Importance of restaurant, auditorium and open area around entrance

Key role for museum and library

Audiology needs child friendly room for parents as well - 20 sq metres

Family support therapy

Sign language tuition for all employees

Parents and cochlear implant associations

Acoustics of whole building vital for cochlear implanted people and hard of hearing people

Library €10,000 for books each year

Possibility of EU joint partnership with Deaf Heritage - excellent catalogue system

Good mix of Deaf and Hearing staff, interpreters on site

Positives for inclusion:



AUDITORIUM

- Restaurant important - largely self service, rooms at the side for small groups of people or visitors
- Management company
- Acoustics and colour vital and the capacity to shade natural light
- Restaurant run independently
- Auditorium important for outside groups
- Need for open spaces inside building
- Media and recording studio important
- Link IT platform with regional network
- Meeting rooms need to be larger because of interpreting and signing
- Community development approach to operating the facility
- Timetable of public transport in reception on a screen

Negatives to be avoided:

- Administration building needs a social side i.e. evening events
- Parents need to see children around
- Corridors too narrow
- Coordination of the multi organisational operation is vital, needs on site leadership
- Too institutional, needs shops and open spaces throughout
- Very large administrative staff - expensive to run

Summary:



VIDEO PRODUCTION AREA



OFFICES

Good visit, important information. Have learned much about their management structure, but their on site coordination is poor. They were very accommodating, open and fair in their analysis. Clear that the Lighthouse is an administrative and policy centre, the children and families section gave it a good feel as did the restaurant and museum.

Other Comments from the group:



Room Bell

CLASSROOMS – Section C

Environment:

The family area at the rear of the complex was the only homely part of the building. The rest of the building was not child friendly and would also tend to intimidate first time parents. As a hearing person the silence was very noticeable throughout. This is an administrative centre.

The atmosphere is very pleasant and cheerful. The attitude of the staff is professional. The building is situated beside the busy road but there are plenty trees to protect it.

Lessons for Village Project:



MUSEUM

As a building I thought it disappointing. Its success is due to the enthusiasm of the people on site.

It was difficult to see where one activity starts and another finishes. Large scale does not make for child friendly facility.

The angle of the 175-seat auditorium is almost 180 degree which is far too wide for audiences. The maximum should be 120 degree or less, if possible, for better viewing purposes;

The entrance to the auditorium should be located at the rear in order to avoid visual distraction.

The swimming pool (suitable for rehabilitation purposes) & sports hall should not be part of the Administration Centre.

The colour of the background walls in the video production area should be black for ease of viewing during the video production area.

A suitable humidifier is vital for the video production area to reduce heat emission from the rows of light during production work.

Too many narrow and long corridors can confuse visitors or even the staff when trying to find an office or person in the Centre. The design of the building is poor and that better directional signs are needed.

Crucially the Centre does not comply with the Irish Fire Safety and Building Regulations.

The services run by different organisations at the Light House are excellent. The organizations here in Ireland should be the same.

One management company (shared by all groups) to run the centre e.g. reception, maintenance, security and IT.

All Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Parents and staff should work together for the Deaf Community.

Positives for inclusion:



SWIMMING POOL

Auditorium and recording suites. We may have to develop a multi-use space which will create a challenge. Location adjacent to larger foyer means it can operate when the rest of the building is closed. Canteen is excellent both in location and for the amount of natural light (at first floor immediately adjacent to foyer and auditorium so you could run a function conference without the need for large numbers of people accessing the entire building.

The Finnish staff are very helpful and are willing to exchange information with us. It is up to several Irish deaf associations to establish communication with them and to expand their views on how to improve administration and how to set up services to standards of excellence. These associations should also take care to contact the Norwegian, Danish, Dutch and other progressive centres by email or organised visits.

Auditorium is an excellent facility, has a very large stage and large backroom, very good lighting and sound control room in the back.

Family Support Centre to support the needs of the Deaf children and the parents.

The restaurant is very important for all the groups to meet.

The building should be friendly and homely.

Should be a lot of open plan offices not small offices.

Large meeting rooms to accommodate interpreters and IT equipments

Negatives to be avoided:

Sterile and impersonal building. Easy to get lost in it.

Should limit our height to a maximum of two stories.

Had the impression that there was a large number of support staff to run the facility for the different groups. The canteen is contracted out for example. Two curators in the museum! We will have to have a much tighter structure to make economic sense. Lots of small office spaces meant that people do not often meet, usually this occurs in the canteen.

Dependence on single source of funding. For example, should the FAD (depending on The Finnish Slot Machine Association and State Administration) receive a decline in annual funding, it could affect the Centre badly perhaps forcing it to reduce its services or even close down some departments.

This building reminded me of a hospital & I don't like to see this happening here.

The sloping auditorium seats 175 people is almost semi in which both end are not suitable for viewing.

The corridors are too narrow & dark and are not safe for Health & Safety.

Very poor directions in the building and no signs. No name for each organisation. Very confused to find the offices

Summary:

The trip was well worth the effort. The facility is good but now dated and there are details that would be unacceptable to the authorities in Ireland.

It was also interesting to note that people did not always know what their colleagues were doing.

I got the feeling that the educational element could have been located elsewhere and it would not have mattered.

We should have researched and prepared a list of queries before visiting the Light House – our very tight visiting schedule precluded this.

For further information, refer to the Light House presentation (powerpoint) dated 12.11.08.

There was not enough time to research & to meet people from another group there. The staff is very friendly and professional. The visit was very important and to meet the organisations, their services and the structure of the building itself.