

A cinema for some

I was so excited to visit the new luxury Omniplex Cinema in Salthill for the first time recently, but I ended up having a discouraging experience. I have FSHD muscular dystrophy, a genetic disease that is wasting away most of the muscles in my body. I have a hard time climbing stairs because my leg muscles are so weak and I also have foot drop, which literally causes me to trip over my own feet. Although there are stairs leading up to the entrance to the cinema, there is a platform lift for people who have difficulty with stairs or are unable to use them at all. I tried to use the lift, per the instructions provided by the cinema staff. I definitely closed the gate and the light came on. I pushed the button with the green light, holding it for a few seconds and ... absolutely nothing happened. The platform lift didn't move at all. A passersby said it never works. So, my question is, why can't they just install a ramp here so there are no electronic parts that can break down? This is a deluxe, 5 million euro, ten-screen cinema that opened in 2019 - and there's no access for the elderly, people in wheelchairs or parents with prams? Surely, this is a violation of the law.

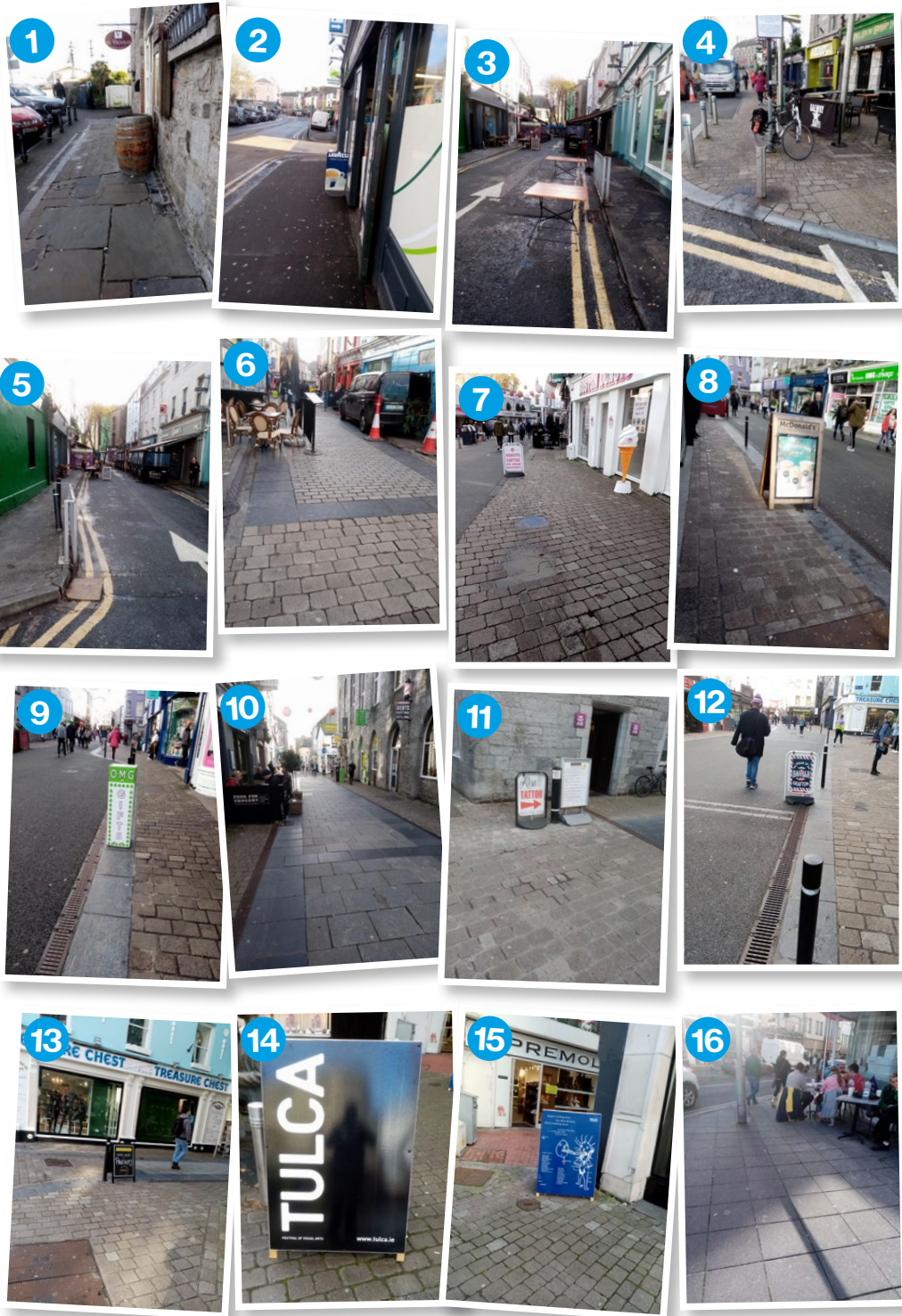
- Rose Foley



Author attempts to go to the cinema



A flight of stairs leads from the car park across the street from the cinema to the pedestrian crossing



OUR GOAL: To achieve the right of all people in Galway City to have universal access and to develop a disability-friendly society

Under Article 9 Accessibility in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, **access, on an equal basis with others is required.** Ireland ratified the Convention in 2018. However, on any given day in Galway City, this right can still be seen only as an aspiration in relation to people with disabilities.

This map, with accompanying photos of the main streets in Galway City Centre, highlights typical obstacles faced by people with disabilities in navigating their way around.

These photos deal only with access problems caused by street furniture – the parking of vehicles on footpaths and in disabled spaces, etc., is another story.

The range of people with access problems is vast. Physical disabilities, such as those afflicting people who use wheelchairs or people with visual impairments, can be more easily observed, but others are less obvious or unseen, such as intellectual disabilities, mental disabilities, hidden frailties, etc.

The expansion of outdoor dining in response to the easing of COVID-19 restrictions has resulted in seemingly carte blanche permission for just about anyone to put furniture/signs out on the street.

The right of access for people with disabilities does not seem to come into the overall general conditions of the new outdoor dining areas. Getting around the City Centre is becoming more problematic from an Access for All viewpoint.

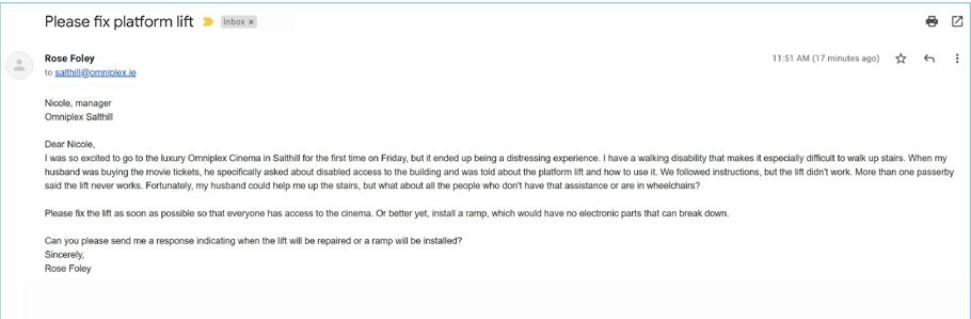
The individual photos clearly show the hazards faced by people with disabilities. Some of the obstacles are downright dangerous to navigate around, such as those in **Photos 4 & 16**, in which the only way around is to go out onto a busy street full of moving and parked vehicles.

Yet, it is not only outdoor dining that is causing problems: the opportunistic placing of temporary signs (**Photos 14 & 15**) is something that is tolerated by business, at times the wider public, and groups and organisations with decision making powers.

Eamon Mac Giobúin

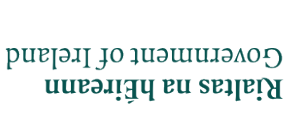


Omniplex Cinema, Salthill



Email to Omniplex Salthill management; no reply received to date.

The Community Mental Health Fund, supported by the Department of Health



MY DISABILITY IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY. I might not walk/see/hear but I am a complete person. ACCESS FOR ALL. To achieve the right of all people in Galway City to universal access and to develop a disability friendly society. GIVE ME SPACE. MY DISABILITY CAN'T BE SEEN, BUT IT STILL EXISTS.

ABLE-ISM IN THE CITY

PLACE
STAMP
HERE

My name is Justin, I am 20 years old, and I live in Galway city. I use a mobility scooter to get around the place, because I am unsteady on my feet, but also I have a heart condition as well, so I can't really walk very far. Navigating through the city is very hazardous for me, due to the amount of people that park on the footpath.

I often have to go through the Galway City University Hospital, because the other ways have a lot of potholes and a lot of branches, there's not a lot of slipways to get up and down from the footpath. The hospital is actually where I encounter most of my difficulties, with people parking on the pedestrian crossings, and on the flat bit of the kerb. There will be cars parked way over the footpath, so I have to reverse and go back down onto the main road.

People even park behind the bollards that are put there to stop you from driving onto the footpath, although it's illegal to park on the footpath and especially on the pedestrian crossings. I was coming up the other day and sure as heck there was someone parked literally behind the bollards straight onto the footpath, even though there was a few places actually, to park.

I want to move around like everyone else, I don't see why I have to experience this able-ism in the city.

Justin Murray

