



Farm Accessibility: Changing Places Funding

CANTERBURY OAST TRUST, SEPTEMBER 2025

The story behind our accessibility goals

In early 2022, we held engagement sessions with our staff and the people we support - those at the very heart of our community. These conversations marked the beginning of a deeper reflection on our vision, mission, and values.

During these sessions, wheelchair users shared a powerful truth: their experience at the Rare Breeds Centre isn't the same as everyone else's. When they visit for events, parties, or even a simple day out at the farm, they cannot stay as long as they'd like to because we don't have the toilet facilities they need.

Without a Changing Places toilet, visitors with complex disabilities are unable to use the toilet safely or comfortably. Some are forced to cut their visit short. Others cannot visit at all. This is a quiet exclusion we're determined to change.

It turns out just 1% of visitor attractions across the UK have a Changing Places facility. That means 99% of venues are, by default, excluding thousands of families, not by intent, but by design.

In another conversation, we spoke to an individual who said his children's favourite place to visit, Legoland, was their favourite simply because it can support both of his children: one with severe autism who is prone to sensory overload, and the other who just wants to enjoy a family day out. At Legoland, his child with additional needs can access a calm space, use proper facilities, and decompress, without cutting the day short or impacting their sibling's experience.



It was from these discussions that our new strategic aim was born: for the Rare Breeds Centre to become a truly accessible venue. One that reflects our values as a charity supporting people with disabilities, championing inclusivity, where no one has to miss out, and no one has to choose between care and inclusion.

This image comes from the Changing Places Facebook page showing a typical facility - this one located at The Helix in Falkirk.



What is a Changing Places facility?

Changing Places toilets go far beyond standard accessible toilets. They are designed specifically for people with complex care needs and include:

- A height-adjustable, adult-sized changing bench
- A ceiling hoist system
- Ample space for up to two carers
- A centrally positioned toilet with space on both sides
- Privacy screen, large waste bin, and non-slip flooring

This facility will not only meet the physical needs of our visitors and supported individuals, it will uphold their dignity, safety, and independence



Our vision for inclusion

Installing a Changing Places facility at the Rare Breeds Centre is more than a practical upgrade, it's a statement of our values. It ensures that no one is left behind or made to feel like a burden when visiting us or enjoying our farm.

This project will:

- Enable children and adults with complex disabilities, including our own supported people in our accommodation and life skills services, to enjoy a full day at the farm
- Support families and carers with peace of mind and confidence
- Align our site with national accessibility standards
- Demonstrate leadership in rural inclusion
- Open up new partnerships with SEN schools, day centres, and disability networks



It's also part of a wider accessibility plan

In 2023 we were successful in obtaining funding for an accessible trailer for our farm, making one of the most popular of our attractions available to one wheelchair user per trip. Now, these fun sightseeing trips around the farm are finally available to all of our visitors, regardless of disability. We have also, just this month, launched a new website featuring an accessibility toolkit to help those with a wide variety of disabilities navigate the content with ease.

Earlier this year, we also secured funding for an accessibility audit for the entire farm site with the aim of making the Rare Breeds Centre a place that accommodates and is welcoming to a wide variety of disabilities.

Recommendations from the audit are now being sourced and costed for future implementation. But a Changing Places facility remains at the heart of our accessibility provision, because if we cannot provide dignified and appropriate toilet facilities for everyone, then we are not truly inclusive.

We are partnering with experienced builders and trusted suppliers who meet all Changing Places compliance standards to ensure this facility is not only fully functional but built to last. Below, you'll find a breakdown of estimated costs, funding secured so far, and what's still needed. This is a vital project, and one where your support could make a real, lasting difference. Every contribution brings us closer to making this essential facility a reality.

Summary of Project Expense

1	Preparing existing building Construction	£30,741
2	Changing Places Equipment & installation	£22,603
3	Legacies & donations Funding already received	£27,500
Total funding still needed		£25,840

Thank
you