

Adapt this email to fit your office and coworkers. Parts to edit are highlighted in purple. Send out by noon on Thursday 25th February, giving recipients enough time to respond to the consultation!

Subject: Consultation about changes to the Building Regulations regarding Gender Neutral Toilet Provision

Hi all,

I became aware of this yesterday - a “consultation” the government is running about being able to provide gender neutral toilet facilities. It is essentially very thinly veiled transphobia- they are looking to change regulations so that separate facilities must be provided for just “men” and “women”. The increase in “gender neutral”, or desegregated toilet provision over the last several years is something which has been transformative for the trans and gender non-conforming community - allowing people to freely use a bathroom with fear of hostility, harassment, scrutiny or physical aggression. For many these spaces are a lifeline.

What we all share in common is our involvement in architecture - *so some of your first thoughts may just be how impractical this is in terms of how often we work with existing buildings (or new ones!) where there just isn't space or money to provide separate facilities.* It also fails to account for the other practical things we are all familiar with in designing bathrooms - parents taking their child to a bathroom, disabled people who have an assistant of a different gender etc. I think that even for architects who may not know what it is like to live your life as a trans or gender non-conforming person, taking away the option of gender neutral provision would strike as an odd and outdated move – so it isn't hard to figure out the motivation is political.

Some more info on the consultation:

The [government consultation](#), entitled “Toilet provision for men and women: call for evidence” says that it's aim is to “ensure that everyone is fairly served”, but it's framing and claims that “male-only/female-only spaces” are being “replaced with gender-neutral toilets” expose its disingenuous foundations.

The government claims that desegregated facilities place women at a “significant disadvantage” and make them “feel less comfortable” . There is no evidence of this, and it also completely ignores the experiences of women who are trans or gender non conforming, who often face hostility, scrutiny and physical aggression in single-sex spaces.

Women's specific “sanitary needs” are also given as a reason to segregate, with a deliberate lack of consideration for other people who can share the same needs. [Trans men](#), [non-binary](#) and [intersex](#) people may also experience menstruation, pregnancy or menopause, and have just as much right to suitably equipped washroom facilities as anyone else.

The consultation also fails to consider the experiences of those who are discriminated against because they are incorrectly perceived to be trans, including black women (due to

racist ideas about femininity), butch/lesbian women, gender non conforming and intersex people. It is a failure of the Equality Act not to protect these people's need for safe access to toilet facilities.

How you can respond:

I have already written my response to toilets@communities.gov.uk. There is a [letter template](#) produced by a group of members from [United Voices of the World - Section of Architectural Workers](#) if you feel inspired to respond but are short on time.

I think it would do a lot for those this affects most, to have architectural workers speaking up about why this is a bad idea, not just for those this legislation would be seeking to harm, but from our own experiences of designing toilet provision in schools, galleries, workplaces etc. It may be more powerful to simply speak from your own perspective, rather than use the copy/pasted letter template.

It's always hard to gauge how much impact these letters can have - but it is a start - and if you feel compelled to share the news of this proposed change with those in other practices it would be great to increase awareness so that it doesn't just slip under the radar.

Link to the government statement:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/toilet-provision-for-men-and-women-call-for-evidence/toilet-provision-for-men-and-women-call-for-evidence>

The deadline for public responses is this Friday February 26th at 11.45pm.

Thanks all for reading, and gratitude to those who might take the time to send a response.

Best,

Name