

Imtac Annual Report 2016

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August 2016

Making our information accessible

As an organisation of and for disabled people and older people Imtac recognises that the way information is provided can be a barrier to accessing services and participation in public life. We are committed to providing information about our work in formats that best suit the needs of individuals.

All our documents are available in hard copy in 14pt type size as standard. We also provide word and pdf versions of our documents on our website – www.imtac.org.uk. In addition we will provide information in a range of other formats. These formats include:

- Large print
- Audio cassette or CD
- Daisy disc
- Braille
- Electronic copies on disc or via email in PDF or word
- Easy read

We will also provide information about our work in other languages if you require this.

If you would like this publication in any of the formats listed above or if you have any other information requirements please contact:

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About Imtac

Imtac is a committee of disabled people and older people as well as others including key transport professionals. Its role is to advise Government and others in Northern Ireland on issues that affect the mobility of older people and disabled people.

The aim of the Committee is to ensure that older people and disabled people have the same opportunities as everyone else to travel when and where they want.

Imtac receives support from the Department for Infrastructure (hereinafter referred to as the Department)

About this report

The Accessible Transport Strategy (ATS) 2015 requires Imtac to produce an annual report with details of our achievements over the previous year. The Committee are also required to identify key issues that we would advise the Department to address in the coming year and submit these to the Minister.

Chairperson's Message

This year has been another busy year for Imtac. I would like to thank all members for their contribution and commitment. I would like also to express my gratitude to the officials from the Department and Observers from our partnership organisations for their contribution and help. Last but not least, as Chairperson, I would like to pay tribute to hard work of our Executive Secretary, Michael Lorimer.

As with many organisations Imtac was faced with significant reductions to our budget this year. Although this has meant some difficult decisions, including suspending meetings of three working groups, important issues were addressed. Despite these constraints the Committee has made a significant contribution towards making travel more inclusive in the last twelve months. Highlights this term include the development of a unique training course for taxi drivers in which disabled people were involved at every stage. Imtac developed a paper on existing barriers and issues to inform the development of the new Accessible Transport Strategy 2025. Finally Imtac has contributed to the development of major transport projects such as Belfast Rapid Transit.

I am pleased on a personal level that Imtac in the past year has involved more individual disabled people and older people as well as their organisations in its outreach work as well as in wider policy and service development. The Committee has also built stronger partnerships with policy makers and transport providers. During the next year Imtac will look at ways to strengthen both partnership and engagement, seeking to ensure that more people have the opportunity to raise their transport and access issues with Imtac, policy makers and transport providers.

The coming year will be an interesting and demanding one for all of us. There is a new Department for Infrastructure with an expanded role and remit. I want to take the opportunity to welcome Minister Hazzard into post and look forward to meeting him soon. The coming year represents an opportunity for the Department to renew its commitment to address the remaining barriers to travel for older and disabled people through the ATS 2025. The new Programme for Government will offer an opportunity to address wider barriers and issues faced by disabled people and older

people. I sincerely hope that the new Executive takes the opportunity to renew broader commitments to deliver rights and equality for disabled people and older people.

G Max O'Brien

July 2016

Achievements in 2015/16

In developing a Work Programme Imtac seeks to assist Government and others to reduce the barriers to travel experienced by disabled and older people. In doing so the Committee has taken account of commitments and obligations under the Accessible Transport Strategy 2015¹, the Northern Ireland Executive Disability Strategy² and the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities [disabled people] (UNCRPD)³.

The following outlines the contribution Imtac has made in the past twelve months towards a more inclusive transport system.

1 Supporting the development of the new Accessible Transport Strategy 2025

During the past year the Department has made significant progress in developing a new Accessible Transport Strategy. Imtac has assisted and supported the Department by:

- Publishing a report reviewing the results of the “Disabled and Older Peoples Attitudes to Public Transport Survey.
- Publishing a report setting out the Committee’s views of a vision and key strategic priorities for the ATS 2025. The report contained recommendations on how to measure the success of the new Strategy.
- Promoting the consultation on the draft ATS 2025 and encouraging people and organisations to give their views. This included a workshop organised by Imtac attended by about 50 people representing disabled people, older people, policy makers and transport providers.

¹ <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/drd/accessible-transport-strategy-for-northern-ireland-2005-15.pdf>

² https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/ofmdfm_dev/disability-strategy-2012-2015.pdf

³ <http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml>

2 Supporting better engagement with disabled people and older people

Imtac views engagement with disabled people and older people as a key component of inclusive transport policies and services. Engagement is a key commitment under the Disability Strategy and a key obligation under UNCRPD. During the past year Imtac has:

- Routinely involved organisations of and for disabled people and older people in our work with the Department, other Departments, Translink and other stakeholders such as local councils.
- Involved organisations of and for older people and disabled people in major projects such as changes to the Blue Badge Scheme and Belfast Rapid Transit (BRT).
- Involved disabled people in the making of video content for a Driver Vehicle Agency (DVA) Taxi Driver Training Course.
- Examined potential mechanisms for improving future engagement.

3 Supporting more accessible travel

A key part of the work of Imtac is to advise the Department and others around removing barriers to travel for disabled and older people. The work of the Committee includes all aspects of travel including pedestrian journeys, travel by public transport, travel by taxis, travel by community transport, travel by sea and air, and travel by private transport and parking. During the past year Imtac has undertaken activities in the following areas:

Pedestrian issues

- Worked with officials from the Department for Social Development, the Minister for Social Development and the Social Development Committee seeking to ensure that guidelines for the licensing of pavement cafes include appropriate protection for all pedestrians.
- Worked with Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) and local council representatives to raise awareness of the need for inclusive design around public realm schemes.

- Worked with Belfast City Council and Ards and North Down Council around issues with specific public realm schemes.
- Worked with the Cycling Unit in the Department around the development of cycle routes in Belfast City Centre.
- Worked with Transport NI to address concerns raised about the use of tactile paving.

Public transport

- Organised a stakeholder meeting on behalf of the Department to discuss options for visual displays on the new BRT vehicles.
- Met with the Chief Executive of Translink to discuss a range of issues including training and information provision.
- Assisted the Department with the introduction of audio visual information systems on Metro buses.
- Met with Translink officials to discuss the development of the proposed Belfast Transport Hub.
- Examined issues around the accessibility of bus and coach services in Northern Ireland.
- Supported draft regulations placing additional duties on buses drivers in relation to disabled people.

Taxis

- Undertook a significant project with DVA officials to produce two training courses for taxi drivers aimed at improving services for disabled people. The project included the production of two videos featuring contributions from disabled people. Disabled people were involved in all aspects of the project including planning, directing and editing of videos and finalising supporting materials.
- Briefed the Environment Committee on the importance of new Taxi Accessibility Regulations.
- Discussed improving taxi rank accessibility with officials from Transport NI.
- Participated in a Regional Development Committee event looking at access issues for taxis in Belfast City Centre.

Private transport and parking

- Worked with Transport NI officials to assist with the introduction of changes to the Blue Badge Scheme, including organising engagement with wider stakeholders.

Access to sea and air travel

- Imtac members took part in visits organised by the Consumer Council to review access arrangements at the ferry terminals in Larne and Belfast.

4 Organisational changes

- Due to reduced resources Imtac decided to suspend meetings of three of its working groups.
- Made changes to the timing of annual recruitment of Imtac members.
- Reviewed and revised the Memorandum of Understanding with the Department.

Our Plans for 2016/17

Over the next twelve months Imtac will seek the further development of an inclusive transport system by engaging and listening to disabled people and older people and working with and advising policy makers and transport providers. Imtac has published a Work Programme agreed with the Department for 2016/17 that details tasks that will be undertaken in the next twelve months. Imtac will:

- Advise and assist the Department in finalising the ATS 2025 and associated delivery plan.
- Publish a report with recommendations for improving engagement through the ATS 2025 and take forward measures as appropriate.
- Undertake a number of agreed tasks associated with the ATS 2025 delivery plan.
- Provide advice to Councils on public realm schemes and the licensing of pavement cafes.
- Provide advice to the Department as a key stakeholder in the development of Belfast Rapid Transit, the Integrated Transport Project and changes to the Blue Badge Scheme.
- Publish a paper with recommendations for improving access to bus and coach services.
- Provide advice to Translink and the Department around the development of the Belfast Transport Hub.
- Explore opportunities to develop projects to (1) redesign the Imtac website as a resource on issues around travel for older and disabled people and (2) extend outreach activities across Northern Ireland.

Our advice to Government

During the past twelve months the Department has made good progress in developing the ATS 2025. Imtac has welcomed the proposed vision and strategic approach to the Strategy outlined by the Department in the recent consultation. **The priority for Government in the next year should be the publication of the Accessible Transport Strategy and associated delivery plan.**

Despite the improvements to transport services in recent years, many older and disabled people still find getting around difficult. This is particularly true of people living in rural areas. Imtac believes there is a need to take a fresh look at what is needed to make transport work better for people in rural and urban areas. **The Committee welcomes the development of the Integrated Passenger Transport Project by the Department. Progressing the project should be a priority for the Department this year.**

Use of the pedestrian environment is part of nearly every journey. Too often disabled people and older people encounter unnecessary barriers on pavements that make journeys difficult or impossible. The introduction of licensing of pavement cafes this year presents an opportunity to reduce some of these barriers. **As a statutory consultee on all applications for a pavement café licenses, Imtac recommends that Transport NI ensure the safety of all pedestrians remains the priority**

Imtac strongly supports the use of inclusive design. This means that services (including vehicles, other infrastructure and information) are designed to be accessible and usable by as many people as possible, reducing the need for specialised services or provision. **In the coming year Imtac would like to work with officials from across the Department to promote understanding of inclusive design principles. As an initial step we would welcome the opportunity to brief the Minister about the benefits of inclusive design.**

Imtac Members (June 2016)

G Max O'Brien (Chairperson)

Max was appointed to his second term as Chairperson of Imtac this year. Max is a retired civil servant and trade unionist. He has also held a number of other public life positions with the Mental Health Commission and University of Ulster.

Bert Bailie (Vice Chairperson)

Bert is into his second term as an Imtac member. He is a retired civil servant and transport professional having previously worked for Roads Service. He is an active member of the Lisburn Branch of Parkinson's UK.

Sam Bell

Sam is serving his first term as Imtac member. Sam is a retired engineer. Sam has a daughter with a disability and has served on the Boards of Mencap in Northern Ireland and Carers NI.

June Best

June is into her second term as an Imtac member and is Convenor of the Information and Training Working Group. June has a visual impairment and is a guide dog owner. June is User Representative for Guide Dogs locally and is the Northern Ireland Ambassador for the Office of Disability Issues.

Samantha Browne

Samantha joined Imtac as a member for the first time this year. Samantha is deaf and has a visual impairment and has been active volunteer for Sense NI, an organisation that represents people who are deafblind.

Vivien Blakely

Vivien is serving her first term as an Imtac member. A power chair user, Vivien is a member of the Omnibus Partnership and involved with the MS Society in Northern Ireland.

Nan Carville

Nan is serving her first term as an Imtac member. Nan is retired. As a person living with hearing loss Nan is an active volunteer with Action on Hearing Loss.

Moira Heap

Moira is serving her first term as an Imtac member. Moira is a power chair user. Since retiring as a solicitor Moira has been active on a number of groups in the Craigavon area.

Dame Joan Harbison

Joan was appointed to her second term as an Imtac member earlier this year. Joan has significant experience of public life positions including as Chief Commissioner with the Equality Commission and as the interim Older Peoples Advocate.

Joe Kenny

Joe is serving his first term as an Imtac member and Convenor of the Public Transport Working Group. Joe is blind and works for the RNIB in Belfast.

Peter Livingstone

Peter is serving his first term as an Imtac member. Peter is a strong advocate for people with learning disabilities and has been an active volunteer for Mencap in Northern Ireland.

Ursula Marshall

Ursula joined Imtac as a member for the first time this year. A wheelchair user, Ursula is an active member of her community involved with organisations including Mid Ulster Seniors Network, Disability Action, Womens Aid and Cookstown Police and Community and Safety Partnership.

Henry Mayne

Henry is serving his first term as an Imtac member. Henry recently retired as from working as a social worker with the Belfast Trust. Henry is a blind and has a range of interests including cycling.

Paul McCloskey

Paul joined Imtac as a member for the first time this year. A disabled person, Paul is currently Chairperson of the North West Forum of People with Disabilities. Paul is also a volunteer car driver for his local Rural Community Transport Partnership.

Eimear McCracken

Eimear is serving her first term as an Imtac member. Eimear currently works for Belfast City Centre Management.

David McDonald

David was recently appointed to his second term as an Imtac member and is the current Treasurer to the Committee. A powerchair user, David is Chairperson of the Omnibus Partnership. David has worked with a number of Government Departments on key projects.

Sheelagh McRandal

Sheelagh is serving her first term as Imtac member. Sheelagh is a retired engineer and active in a number of organisations in her local community including the Womens Institute.

Jim Nash

Jim is into his second term as an Imtac member. A disabled person, Jim is actively involved in a number of organisations in his local city of Derry / Londonderry including the RNIB and the Cedar Foundation.