

Minutes of the 145th Imtac Meeting

Date and time: 28th June 2023 at 1pm

Place: Hybrid meeting held at the Crescent Arts Centre, Belfast and via ZOOM.

Present: Bert Bailie [BB] (Chairperson), Aaron McKane [AMc], Terry McCorry [TMc], Andy Boal [ABo], Dave Morton [DMo] Jackson Minford [JM], June Best [JB], Alison Lockhart [AL], Jean Dunlop [JD], Vivien Blakely [VB], Christine McClements [CMc], Dermot Devlin [DD], Sam Bell [SB].

Observers: Scott McClenaghan [SMc] (Department for Infrastructure), Hannah Brown [HB] (Consumer Council), Danielle Campbell [DC] (Translink), Brian Drury [BD] (Equality Commission) Andrea Brown [AB] (Disability Action).

Secretariat: Michael Lorimer [ML]

In attendance: Rebecca Bamford [RB], Nigel Flynn [NF].

Apologies: Brian Murray [BM], Eileen Drumm [ED]

1. Welcome and introductions

1.1 BB welcomed everyone including Rebecca Bamford, Nigel Flynn and Danielle Campbell attending their first meeting and Scott McClenaghan returning after a break. He asked everyone to introduce themselves.

2. Chairperson's updates

2.1 BB congratulated JM on his success at the recent Council Elections. He informed members that he had written to Michaela Hollywood to congratulate her on behalf of Imtac on the award of an MBE.

2.2 BB highlighted a recent meeting with the Department regarding the budget situation and the recent EQIA consultation. He explained that Imtac had been approached by Talkback to discuss issues on the programme, but the opportunity was declined.

3. Observer updates

3.1 HB updated members on a recent site visit to Belfast International Airport and improvements made at City of Derry Airport following a previous site visit. She thanked DD and CMc for their assistance around the design of a Changing Places Toilet recently registered at City of Derry. HB also highlighted an upcoming trip to test the Larne to Cairnryan P&O ferry service. Members were also encouraged to feedback experiences of assistance services at local airports.

Action 1: ML to circulate details of the P&O site visit.

Action 2: Members to feedback experiences of assistance services at local airports through ML or directly to HB.

3.2 AB updated members about current funding uncertainty around DATS and the impact on staff and users. Members expressed dissatisfaction with the current budget situation.

3.3 BD gave members an overview of a paper outlining statistics and applications for assistance received by the Commission about disability and how decisions about which cases receive legal support are made.

Action 3: ML to circulate the paper from BD for further comment from members.

3.4 BD also updated members on the timetable and process for the UN Committee on the Rights of People with Disabilities review of progress of the UK Government in addressing issues identified by the Committee in 2016, including the approach being taken forward by the Independent Monitoring Mechanism for Northern Ireland. Members stressed the importance of an opportunity to engage with rapporteurs. Members also stressed the importance

of the Equality Commission continuing to push for legislative reform to strengthen the rights of disabled people in Northern Ireland.

Action 4: BD agreed to feedback comments and continue to liaise with ML over developments.

- 3.5 DC updated members on progress in relation to training, promotion of the JAM card and promotion of the current concessionary fares consultation. She also highlighted plans to hold a testing of new Foyle Metro vehicles in Belfast later in the summer. Members suggested the testing of vehicles should be in Derry.

Action 5: DC to liaise with ML over venue for testing Foyle Metro vehicles.

- 3.6 SMc gave members an update on the budget situation including decision making following the current EQIA funding. He stressed the Department were keenly aware of the need for some more certainty in coming weeks. He also stressed the importance of organisations' and individuals' input to consultations and encouraged members to respond to the Concessionary Fares Consultation. Members commented that there could be legal challenges over cuts being proposed across Government.

4. Current Consultations

- 4.1 ML briefed members about a Call for Evidence from the Department for Transport around potential updates to the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations. ML suggested that he circulate details and that interested members work together to develop a draft response by the closing date on the 4th September 2023.

Action 6: ML to circulate details of the Call for Evidence and members asked to indicate a willingness to get involved.

- 4.2 ML briefed members about the current consultation from the Department about the Concessionary Fares Scheme and set out a

suggested approach of using the consultation to set out a refreshed Imtac position to concessionary fares.

- 4.3 During discussion members stressed the importance of retaining travel before 9.30am and travel on both bus and rail services. Members did not express opposition to proposals to charge a fee for administration of the scheme but questioned the values of savings this would deliver. Members did not contest the proposal to set out a position on concessionary fares but stressed it was important not to attempt to justify cuts to services.

Action 7: Due to issues with Wi-Fi at the meeting the discussion paper will be recirculated with members invited to make further comment on the approach.

Action 8: It was agreed that members also be invited to the meeting on the 30th June 2023 with ML circulating the link.

5. Policy papers

- 5.1 BB thanked members for their contributions to drafting and asked, unless there were any outstanding issues with the papers, for agreement to publish the Belfast Blue Badge Report and the Position Paper on Demand Responsive Transport for publication. Members agreed to publish both papers.

Action 9: ML to publish papers on the Imtac website and circulate to stakeholders.

- 5.2 BB introduced the discussion paper on people who rely on cars for mobility. Members raised a number of issues relating to climate change and the transition to electric vehicles including whether it really benefitted the environment and practical issues relating to accessibility.

Action 10: Due to issues with Wi-Fi at the meeting the discussion paper will be recirculated with members invited to make further comment on the approach.

Action 11: ML to work with members to draft an initial position paper for next Imtac meeting.

6. Working Group and other updates

- 6.1 ML explained the reasons why working groups had not met recently.
- 6.2 Members received an update on the Cycling and Council workshops held at the end of March. A report on the council workshop will be published shortly.
- 6.3 ML briefed members on progress on active travel issues reflecting the requirement in the Climate Act for DfI to spend 10% of the transport budget on active travel. This has included discussions with the Department and consultants around producing an active travel plan for Northern Ireland, proposals for active travel in small settlements from ABC council, testing options for segregation of cycling and pedestrian paths and providing advice on specific schemes to promote active travel.
- 6.4 ML briefed members on proposals for improvements to Castlederg Town Centre referring to comments included in members packs.
Action 12: Members to submit any comments and queries about the Castlederg paper in the next 7-10 days.

7. Minutes of the last meeting / Matters arising

- 7.1 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.
Proposed: Andy Boal Seconded: Aaron McKane
- 7.2 ML agreed to follow up on the update about the proposed Maghera Public Realm scheme. All other outstanding items had been dealt with before the meeting or through the agenda.

8. Any other business

- 8.1 BB asked for feedback about the venue. Feedback included resolving issues with Wi-Fi connectivity, greater spacing around tables and looking at improving acoustics.

9. Dates for the next meeting

9.1 BB outlined a desire to restart the practice of a meeting outside Belfast, starting potentially in September.

Action 13: ML to look at venues and locations and circulate dates and details of the next meeting.

List of actions

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