

Minutes of the 146th Imtac Meeting

Date and time: 4th October 2023 at 1pm

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

Present: Bert Bailie [BB] (Chairperson), Aaron McKane [AMc], Andy Boal [ABo], Jackson Minford [JM], June Best [JB], Vivien Blakely [VB], Christine McClements [CMc], Hayley Smallwoods [HS], Sam Bell [SB], Lynsey Burrows [LB], Rebecca Bamford [RB], Nigel Flynn [NF], Paula Meenan.

Observers: Scott McClenaghan [SMc] (Department for Infrastructure), Hannah Brown [HB] (Consumer Council), Danielle Campbell [DC] (Translink).

.Secretariat: Michael Lorimer [ML]

In attendance: James Redmond [JR] (DfI Transport Planning and Policy)

Apologies: Terry McCorry [TMc], Eileen Drumm [ED], Dermot Devlin [DD], Brian Drury [BD] (Equality Commission) Andrea Brown [AB] (Disability Action).

1. Welcome and introductions

1.1 BB welcomed everyone including new members attending their first meeting. He asked everyone to introduce themselves.

2. New Transport Strategy and Plans for Northern Ireland and the approach to decarbonisation

2.1 JR gave members a comprehensive overview about the development of the new Transport Strategy for Northern Ireland including the background to the strategy linked to the emission reduction requirements of the Climate Change Act and how these guide the sustainable and road user hierarchies that will form the basis of the emerging Transport Strategy. JR explained how this

approach was already informing the current consultation about the vision and objectives of the Eastern Travel Plan.

- 2.2 Members made a series of points in response including the continued car centric design of infrastructure including housing, challenges for disabled people around moving to electric vehicles (EVs) including cost and accessibility of charging infrastructure, the likely continued importance of the car for some disabled people and people living in rural communities, additional barriers for disabled people around making active travel and the importance of simple solutions such as better footway maintenance.
- 2.3 BB thanked JR for his presentation and commitment to further engagement with the Committee.

3. Chairperson's updates

- 3.1 BB updated members about participation with ML in a CIHT/Living Streets roundtable and subsequent publication of a policy brief "Making walking and wheeling more inclusive and safer."
Action 1: ML to circulate a link to the CIHT walking and wheeling policy paper.
- 3.2 BB briefed members about the positive meeting with DfI Permanent Secretary Julie Harrison in August, attendance at DAERA and DfI Carbon Budget events, the latest Accessibility 4 Nations meeting hosted by MACS and a meeting DfI Sponsor Team where an early meeting with the new Permanent Secretary, Denis McMahon, was discussed. BB also indicated that meetings will take place with David Cowan and Chris Conway from Translink in the coming months.

4. Observer updates

- 4.1 DC updated members on the bus feedback event in Derry in August, as well as plans for a similar event in Belfast and to restart meetings of the Bus Procurement Framework Working Group.

- 4.2 DC informed members that a new partnership between Translink and Disability Action would start soon around Disability Action undertaking assessments of mobility scooter users. DC updated members about progress with two projects looking at bus stop accessibility and rail halt accessibility. DC also updated members about training being undertaken by Translink staff.
- 4.3 Members asked about the provision of a sensory room at the new Belfast Transport Hub. DC confirmed this was under consideration and an update will be provided as soon as a decision is made.
- 4.4 HB informed members the Consumer Council had submitted a response to the DfT PSVAR Call for Evidence. She updated members about the Air Passenger Survey and future plans for a survey about assistance services. HB also briefed members about the current EV survey and plans for in depth interviews. She stressed the importance of feedback from groups including women and disabled people in relation to experiences of using EVs.
Action 2: ML to circulate links to the Air Passenger Survey and the EV survey to members.
- 4.5 Members asked whether issues had arisen in Northern Ireland for people travelling by air in power chairs and scooters with batteries. BB noted this had been an issue raised at the recent A4N meeting.
Action 3: HB to report back on any issues relating to batteries and travelling by air.
- 4.6 SMc updated members about the ongoing difficult funding situation, proposals for Imtac meeting with the new Permanent Secretary, participation in the recent A4N meeting and the recent meeting between the Sponsor Team and Imtac. He also provided an update on the current review of community transport and the analysis of over 7000 responses received in relation to the recent concessionary fares consultation.

- 4.7 ML asked that the minutes record thanks to BD for securing a meeting with UN Rapporteurs prior to the recent Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD) hearing in Geneva.
Action 4: ML to provide members with a short brief about the recent CRPD hearing and next steps.

5. Current consultations

- 5.1 ML proposed that discussion around the Eastern Transport Plan consultation be deferred as a stand-alone meeting with the ETP team will take place on Monday 9th October.
Action 5: ML to circulate a link and details of the ETP meeting to members.
- 5.2 ML provided an overview of the current DAERA consultation on carbon budgets. Members expressed concerns over how realistic the targets for emission reductions are, whether politicians will have the conviction to implement changes and whether Departments can work together rather than working in silos.
- 5.3 BB stressed the need for members to prioritise comments on the draft response in time for the closing date on the 11th October.
Action 6: ML to draft the carbon budget response and circulate, members to respond by 10th October.

6. Policy paper

- 6.1 ML briefed members about the discussion draft about the future role of the car in mobility for disabled people and older people. Members highlighted issues around challenges around the design of EV wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs), costs of vehicle adaptations and the future challenges for the Motability scheme.
Action 7: Members to feedback comments on the draft policy paper by the 20th October and to also feedback on the whether a separate ZOOM meeting should be held for further discussion.

7. Working group and other updates

- 7.1 ML briefed members about the request for advice from Translink about the future provision of tactile surfaces in railway stations including the pressing timescales for decision making. Members stressed the importance of further engagement with blind and partially sighted people to inform decisions and the need for additional time if required.

Action 8: ML and DC to feedback a request to Translink and the Department from the Committee for further time to allow appropriate engagement about options for future tactile provision at stations.

- 7.2 ML briefed members about a meeting with Danny Donnelly MLA on the 5th October to discuss the possible incorporation of CRPD into legislation in Northern Ireland.

- 7.3 ML informed members of the intention to involve Imtac in the development inclusive design guidance linked to the development of the Active Travel Plan in Northern Ireland.

- 7.4 ML informed members about a focus group being run by Imtac on the 11th October for non-users of community transport, as part of the review of community transport services.

Action 9: Members to let ML know if they wish to attend the Community Transport Workshop on the 11th October.

- 7.5 ML updated members about positive changes made to the latest Public Transport Statistics issued by the Department following engagement with Imtac.

- 7.6 Members asked about attending working group meetings.

Action 10: ML to circulate details of upcoming working group meetings with all members free to attend.

8. Minutes of the last meeting / Matters arising

8.1 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

Proposed: Andy Boal Seconded: Sam Bell

8.2 BB asked members to feedback any information about potential venues for meetings outside Belfast.

Action 11: Members to feedback information about venues for future meetings.

9. Any other business

9.1 JB raised the need to clarify the situation for travel with assistance dogs following the introduction of provisions of the Windsor Framework. She also raised the impact of Blue Green Algae issues are having on assistance dogs owners.

10 Date, time and venue of next meeting

10.1 29th November 2023, 1pm at the Crescent Arts Centre and online using ZOOM.

List of actions

Action 1: ML to circulate a link to the CIHT walking and wheeling policy paper.

Action 2: ML to circulate links to the Air Passenger Survey and the EV survey to members.

Action 3: HB to report back on any issues relating to batteries and travelling by air.

Action 4: ML to provide members with a short brief about the recent CRPD hearing and next steps.

Action 5: ML to circulate a link and details of the ETP meeting to members.

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