Minutes of the 153rd Imtac Meeting

Date and time:	Wednesday 25th June 2025 1:00 - 3:15 pm
Place:	Hybrid meeting held at the Crescent Arts Centre, Belfast and via ZOOM.
Present:	Bert Bailie [BB] (Chairperson), Dave Morton [DMo], Jackson Minford [JMd], Eileen Drumm [ED], June Best [JB], Terry McCorry [TMc), Christine McClements [CMc], Julieanne Crothers [JC], Hayley Smallwood [HS], Vivien Blakely [VB], Caroline Dorsett [CD], Johnny Harvey [JH], Cinzia Savattoni [CS], Jonathan Mitchell [JMl].
Observers:	Brian Drury [BD] (Equality Commission), Sean Coulter [SC] (Department for Infrastructure), Michelle Kelly [MK] (Consumer Council), Rosanna Jack [RJ] (Translink), Anna Doran [AD] (Commissioner for Older People).
Secretariat:	Michael Lorimer [ML]. Angela Reid [AR].
Apologies:	Sam Bell [SB], Dermot Devlin [DD], Rebecca Bamford [RB], Paula Meenan [PM], Barbara Fleming [BF], Andrea Brown [ABr] (Disability Action).

1 Welcome, introductions and apologies

1.1 BB welcomed everyone, acknowledging members and observers attending their first meeting, and asked people to introduce themselves.

2 Chairperson's updates

2.1 BB updated members that a request to meet Minister Lyons to discuss the Disability Strategy was refused, with a meeting with officials offered instead. BB explained the meeting was productive, discussing Imtac's concerns about the involvement of Deaf and disabled people in the process and preserving the work done to date on the Strategy. BB concluded by saying Imtac had held an online feedback session for the Department for Communities in April and that a draft Strategy is expected this year.

2.2 BB informed members that an introductory meeting was held with Minister Kimmins at the end of March.

2.3 BB briefed members on ongoing engagement with the DfI Permanent Secretary including a meeting with the Department, Imtac and Translink, the Inclusion Conference in May and the delivery of Disability Equality Training to the Department's Senior Leadership Team.

2.4 BB updated members about a meeting between Imtac, the Department and Translink on the 26th March, explaining this was a follow up to the meeting with the Permanent Secretary in November.

2.5 BB briefed members on his chairing of the Transport for Health engagement events held in March and April, a number of meetings with the Department to discuss the emerging Eastern Transport Plan and his attendance at the recent Accessibility Four Nations meeting. He also updated members on the recent Business Committee meeting which focused mainly on planning for the AGM.

2.6 BB indicated that due to other pressures planned periodic meetings with Disability Action and the Department Sponsor Team have not happened before he steps down.
Action 1: TMc and ML to liaise to arrange periodic engagement meetings with Disability Action and DfI Sponsor Branch.

3 Observers Updates

3.1 MK started by thanking both BB and JB for their service and support.

3.2 MK highlighted to members the publication of Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) rankings for assistance services at airports with both Belfast airports ranked as very good and City of Derry as good. MK paid tribute to the work of the accessibility forums at each airport and thanked the Imtac members who chair the forums.

3.3 MK informed members that a piece of research looking at the accessibility of public transport is currently being finalised and will be shared with members in due course.

3.4 MK briefed members on ongoing work on electric vehicles including the development of an online tool for consumers to assess the benefits or otherwise of purchasing an electric vehicle and work with Imtac around charging infrastructure for houses without a driveway.

3.5 Members asked about whether airlines would be rated in the same way as airports and how Dublin Airport was rated. MK explained there were no plans to rate airlines and that Dublin fell outside the remit of the UK rating scheme.

3.6 AD informed members that Siobhan Casey was appointed as the new Commissioner for Older People in April and has been meeting with groups of older people since taking up post.

3.7 AD highlighted to members a live survey about the Commission Corporate Plan and work currently underway reviewing Age Friendly initiatives which includes transport and mobility.

3.8 BD briefed members on the work of the Commission in responding to the DWP Pathways to Work Green Paper. He highlighted the recent joint statement issued by Committee's of devolved Governments expressing concerns about proposed welfare changes.

3.9 RJ thanked BB and JB for their work and support. She highlighted to members positive outcomes from the work on bus procurement with the introduction of Metro buses with two spaces for wheelchair users. RJ indicated that an opportunity is being identified to allow members and others to test the vehicles and provide feedback. **Action 2: Secretariat to liaise with DC/RJ to arrange date for testing buses and circulate details to members.**

3.10 Members asked about what is being done to ensure drivers permit two wheelchair users onboard. Members also raised issues about how complaints about accessibility are addressed by Translink. RJ indicated that drivers are being briefed. She committed to looking at the complaints issue further. ML suggested the Consumer Council could be involved in discussions.
Action 3: RJ/DC, ML and MK to liaise about issues raised about Translink complaint handling and report back.

3.11 SC informed members about the Inclusion Conference organised by the Department in May. SC briefed members that following the conclusion of the Budget Consultation decisions could now be made, highlighting Ministerial statements indicating an increased allocation for community transport. SC indicated that the review of community transport will conclude this year, and the Department will engage with Imtac shortly about the next phase. Discussion took place about the difficulties of accessing community transport services.

4 2025 / 2026 Work Programme

4.1 BB explained that as the work programme is still to be agreed with the Department there is an opportunity for members to have further input. ML provided members with an overview of the interim work programme.

4.2 During discussion members expressed support for utilising working groups and ad hoc groups to deal with workload. Tackling pavement parking was seen as priority with support for a range of actions based around education, information and enforcement. Members also suggested post completion assessments of public

realm schemes and promoting DET to consultants and organisations employed or funded by DfI.
Action 4: Members were asked to submit further comments about the interim work programme in the next 10 days.

5 Other updates including the Transport for Health task

5.1 ML provided members with an update on the Transport for Health task including the report drafted around the survey results and the subsequent engagement events held in March and April. Work is currently underway on a draft report which will form the basis of further engagement after the summer. ML paid tribute to work of Rebecca Bamford in drafting the report and facilitating engagement events.

5.2 ML provided an update on other issues including plans for further DET sessions for the Department in September, the ongoing review of the Bus Stop Design Guide, the launch of the Harlander autonomous vehicle and Translink projects including proposed access audits of railway stations, provision of audio and visual information at bus stops and the ongoing development of Grand Central Station. Members asked questions about a response to the Imtac report on Grand Central and tackling issues of parking on bus stops.
Action 5: ML/AR to circulate details of DET training in September and opportunities for members to participate.
Action 6: ML to liaise with RJ/DC about a response from Translink to the Imtac report on Grand Central.

5.3 ML gave an update on a recent briefing by Danny Donelly MLA to the Communities Committee on the consultation about his proposed UNCRPD Private Members Bill. Concerns expressed by Imtac about the weakness of the due regard duties have been acknowledged but the Bill will be presented to the speaker as per the original proposal. The Bill will only proceed if selected by the Speaker.
Action 7: Members to be kept informed about any progress with the Private Members Bill.

6 Current consultations

6.1 ML updated members on Anti-Poverty Strategy, published in recent days. Members agreed Imtac should develop a response. **Action 8: ML/AR to circulate further details of proposals to respond to the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy.**

6.2 ML provided an update on the consultation about the DWP Pathways to Work Green Paper. Members had a lengthy discussion about the potential significant negative impacts of the proposals on the lives of disabled people. It was agreed that Imtac should submit a response, echoing the unified calls from all organisations for a rethink from the UK Government. **Action 9: Given the closing date, members agreed that ML should draft a Green Paper response and seek comments / approval from the Chairperson.**

7 Minutes of the last meeting

7.1 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.
Proposed: Terry McCorry **Seconded: Dave Morton**

7.2 There were no outstanding matters arising.

8 Any other Business

8.1 It was agreed to defer discussion of the report on taxis written by Dermot Devlin until the next meeting.

8.2 BB thanked members for their support during his time as chairperson. He paid particular tribute to JB for her support as Vice Chair. He thanked the Secretariat and wished TMc well as the new Chairperson. Members and the Secretariat paid tribute to both BB and JB.

Action 10: ML/AR to arrange a social event for members and others to say thank you to BB and JB.

9 Date, Time and Venue of Next meeting

9.1 TMc gave an overview of responses to date about arrangements for future meetings. Members provided further feedback.
Action 11: ML/AR to draft proposals for future meetings and engage further with members before final decisions being made.

9.2 The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 30th September 2025, starting at 1pm at the Crescent Arts Centre and online.

List of Actions

Action 1: TMc and ML to liaise to arrange periodic engagement meetings with Disability Action and DfI Sponsor Branch.

Action 2: Secretariat to liaise with DC/RJ to arrange date for testing buses and circulate details to members.

Action 3: RJ/DC, ML and MK to liaise about issues raised about Translink complaint handling and report back.

Action 4: Members were asked to submit further comments about the interim work programme in the next 10 days.

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Action 6: ML to liaise with RJ/DC about a response from Translink to the Imtac report on Grand Central.

Action 7: Members to be kept informed about any progress with the Private Members Bill.

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