

Draft Minutes of the 115th Imtac Meeting

Date: 10th December 2015, The Mount, Belfast

Present: G. Max O'Brien (Chairperson)

Sam Bell, Sheelagh McRandal, Jim Nash, Moira Heap, Paul McCloskey, Eimear McCracken, Nan Carville, David McDonald, Ursula Marshall, Joe Kenny, Henry Mayne, Bert Bailie.

Observers: Ciaran Crilly (DRD), Terry Butler (Translink), Jenny Robinson (Consumer Council), Naomi Roberts (Equality Commission), Frank Fleming (Equality Commission), Orla McCann (Disability Action).

In Attendance: Diane Marks (Individual Guide Dog owner)

Secretariat: Michael Lorimer

1. Introductions, apologies and consideration of absences

1.1 Apologies were given and accepted from Joan Harbison, June Best, Peter Livingstone, Ann Gamble and Vivien Blakely.

1.2 Max welcomed Diane Marks who will be observing at the meeting,

2. Appointment of Convenor of Personal Mobility Group

2.1 Max indicated that he had received two expressions of interest in the position from Sheelagh McRandal and Peter Livingstone. There were no other expressions of interest. Max proposed that Sheelagh and Peter share the position. This proposal was agreed.

2.2 Max reminded members to submit expenses.

3. Chairpersons and policy updates

- 3.1 Max updated members on a recent meeting with Celia Chambers who has replaced Keith Walsh in DRD and a proposed meeting with the new Chief Executive of Translink, Chris Conway.
- 3.2 Max updated members about recent positive engagement with Transport NI around changes to the Blue Badge Scheme. Further meetings are proposed for the New Year.
- 3.3 David, Joe and Michael updated members about the development of a taxi driver training course with DVA. Each expressed disappointment over the content of videos produced by DVA. Michael agreed to circulate the videos to all members. Members were asked to treat the content as strictly confidential. The Committee agreed to a proposal from the Business Group that Imtac cannot endorse the proposed videos and that an urgent meeting be sought with DVA to ascertain if changes can be made.
- 3.4 David gave members a Treasurers Report. He indicated that the Business Group will be highlighting additional inescapable costs for the Committee arising out of the 2015 members recruitment.
- 3.5 Michael updated members on recent developments with regard to Belfast Rapid Transit. Michael indicated that the Department will be seeking the views of Imtac on vehicle design in the New Year. Members expressed disappointment that the proposed 80mm step into vehicles has not been resolved. Members were also informed that it is planned to purchase 22 new feeder buses for the service. Imtac has also been invited to sit on a DRD Stakeholder Group.
- 3.6 Michael informed members that AV was now available on all Metro buses. Michael also updated members on the pilot of a smartphone app which will provide information about stops and services.

- 3.7 Michael informed members that revised Guidance around licensing pavement cafes has been shared with the Social Development Committee and Minister. Imtac will receive an update once the Minister has approved the revised guidance.
- 3.8 Michael updated members on problems highlighted by the public realm scheme in Bangor. Issues included the inflexibility of materials on steep gradients and the failure to budget for upgrading signals and control boxes at controlled crossings.
- 3.9 Michael highlighted the recently published Get on board! From RNIB, highlighting the public transport needs of blind and partially sighted people in Northern Ireland. Max indicated that whilst all the issues raised by the report are recognised by Imtac, the Committee would support a broader approach to some of the recommendations, rather than solutions specific to impairment.

4. Observers updates

- 4.1 Orla updated members on the submission by Disability Action to the ATS consultation and plans to review user involvement in DATS. Orla also informed members that DATS has received an additional £200,000 from the November Monitoring Round – decisions are still be taken on how this money will be spent.
- 4.2 Jenny updated members on plans to publish a report into the airport visits earlier this year and changes made at City of Derry Airport. The Consumer Council has also successfully launched a factsheet on air travel for people with autism. Visits to seaports are being planned for early 2016. Max encouraged Jenny to make use of Imtac.
- 4.3 Max welcomed Frank Fleming to meeting. Frank gave members a report on the outcome of the Every Customer Counts pilot. The pilot had sought to work with businesses in the Newtownards area to improve access to services for disabled people. The results of the pilot have been disappointing with low uptake from businesses.

The Commission are now looking at alternative ways to educate and encourage business to make services more accessible. Members asked a series of questions with a particular emphasis on how the behaviour of businesses can restrict access to the pedestrian environment.

5. ATS 2025 updates

- 5.1 Ciaran updated members on the outcome of the ATS consultation. 195 responses were received. Although responses are still being considered Ciaran indicated that in general issues being raised can be categorised as (1) soft issues that may only require minor changes and (2) hard issues that may require significant policy changes. Ciaran indicated that a strategy may not be finalised until after April 2016.
- 5.2 Max highlighted to members the positive ATS workshop held by Imtac in November. Max expressed disappointment about some comments made about Imtac papers by Imtac observers at the workshop. Max encouraged everyone to use to the established formal and informal mechanisms to comment on Imtac papers in the future.

6. Current consultations – Conduct of Passengers and Drivers on Public Service Vehicles

- 6.1 Michael briefed members on proposed changes which will bring Northern Ireland in line with regulation in the rest of the UK. Michael indicated that the regulations largely mirror the GB regulations, however seats in the wheelchair user space have not been mentioned in the consultation. Members raised concerns that assistance required by disabled people, other than wheelchair users, was not clear from the consultation.
Action: Max asked members to send comments by mid-January 2016.

7. Work Programme task – Improving Participation and Engagement

- 7.1 Michael briefed members on the purpose and content of the draft paper. Ciaran indicated that the Department saw Imtac as the main source of engagement with disabled and older people.
Action: Max asked members to send comments by mid-January 2016.

8. Minutes of the last meeting / Matters arising

- 8.1 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.
- 8.2 There were no matters arising.

9 Any other business

- 9.1 June Best has asked that Imtac raise with Translink the absence of spending areas for Guide and Assistance dogs at stations. This was agreed.

10 Dates of future meetings

- 10.1 To be confirmed.