



**Report on Walking routes in Portrush Town Centre**

**(April 2017)**

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## **About us**

The Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (Imtac) is a committee of disabled people and older people as well as others including key transport professionals. Our role is to advise Government and others in Northern Ireland on issues that affect the mobility of older people and disabled people.

Our aim 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.

## **About this report**

This report has been developed by Imtac to inform its response to Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council on its proposals for a major public realm scheme in Portrush. The scheme is designed to bring significant improvements to the town in time for the hosting of the British Open golf tournament in 2019. As this will be one of the biggest events ever staged in Northern Ireland, the public realm scheme in the town has regional significance.

The report was compiled following an inspection of Portrush town centre in February 2017. It considers the current provision of pedestrian facilities on streets that form part of the proposed public realm scheme measured against accepted accessibility standards<sup>1</sup>. The report identifies potential barriers for disabled people and older people. A key aspect of the report is linkage between the pedestrian environment and bus and rail facilities in Portrush. Two reports have been produced, a text only version and version where photographs have been used to highlight barriers and good practice.

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<sup>1</sup> For the most comprehensive guidance see [Inclusive Mobility \(Department for Transport 2005\)](#)

## Key findings

In 2012 Imtac compiled a report<sup>2</sup> highlighting common barriers in the pedestrian environment which were identified by consulting with disabled people and older people. These barriers have also been identified by Imtac when undertaking walking audits in various locations across Northern Ireland. Many of these barriers were also observed in the routes examined in this audit of Portrush including:

- Poorly maintained and uneven surfaces
- Poorly installed and/or maintained tactile paving
- Poorly installed controlled and uncontrolled crossings
- Clutter on pavements including bollards, bins, A-boards and seating
- Parking on pavements and across dropped kerbs
- Absence of appropriate pedestrian infrastructure such as dropped kerbs

Because of the physical constraints in Portrush many of the streets are narrow and as a result footway width is a major problem in many of the streets in the town. In some areas this width falls below what Imtac would view as safe and accessible for everyday use, in other areas it will be insufficient to accommodate pedestrians during the peak summer season. Increasing footway width must be a priority for the public realm scheme.

Problems of pavement width are compounded by the positioning of street furniture such as bins and seating. Whilst much of the street furniture is essential in what is a busy seaside town, again and again the report shows how the placement of furniture, often where there is a narrow footway, creates an additional barrier on the footway. The public realm scheme must address and improve the problems created by the current location of street furniture

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<sup>2</sup>[Highlighting barriers in the pedestrian environment - Report into issues, good practice and recommendations \(Imtac 2012\)](#)

Tactile paving is provided at most crossings throughout the town. This has in most cases been installed correctly with the exception of a number of controlled crossings. The contrast of tactile paving with the surrounding paving is consistently poor in all areas of the town and must be rectified as part of the public realm scheme.

The report contains some examples of locations where pedestrian provision in the town is not safe or accessible. This includes the failure to provide corduroy hazard paving and appropriate handrails at steps. The report also highlights areas of the town, such as the junction between Kerr Street and Main Street close to the Harbour, where no safe and accessible provision has been made for pedestrians to cross the street. The public realm scheme must ensure that steps are upgraded to meet accessibility requirements and that safe and accessibility crossing opportunities are provided in all areas of the town.

The report has identified issues for people who use public transport. The footway from the railway station is exceptionally narrow and does not, in the opinion of the Committee, provide a safe and accessible route for pedestrians and must be improved. The walking distances to and from the bus stop and the main attractions in the town are prohibitive for many older and disabled people. The Committee recognises that traffic constraints prevent buses from accessing central areas of the town, however one solution could be to look at a smaller, accessible shuttle bus to link to key attractions in the town, particularly during the busy summer season.

Although not covered by this report, Imtac recognises the importance of parking in a town such as Portrush and will be considered as part of a separate parking strategy. On-street parking is important for both traders, residents and visitors alike. Appropriate numbers of accessible on-street and off-street parking bays in key locations across the town are essential for disabled people. These should be provided with appropriate infrastructure including dropped kerbs to enable access to the footway. In seeking to improve the public realm and to enhance the pedestrian environment there must be a more balanced approach to the provision of on-street parking. The proposed Parking Strategy for Portrush is important and should seek to fully utilise both on-street and off-street parking in the town, supporting an improved and more inclusive

pedestrian environment. The Committee would welcome the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Parking Strategy.

Examples of good practice are identified. The frequent provision of crossing opportunities on Main Street is particularly commendable. Feedback from Imtac members resident in the area indicates that Transport NI have been responsive in resolving access issues in the town, providing for example dropped kerbs where issues have arisen.

## Audit of key routes

### Dunluce Avenue

- 1 Buses servicing the town terminate on the western side of Dunluce Avenue. Basic facilities, including shelter from the elements, have been provided. However there remains a considerable distance from the bus stop to the main attractions in the town, a distance that will be difficult or impossible for many older people and disabled people to manage.



- 2 One of the main car parks for the town is located directly opposite the bus stops. An uncontrolled crossing is provided from the car park to the footway on the western side of Dunluce Avenue. Tactile paving has been laid incorrectly and fails to provide an adequate contrast with the surrounding paving.



- 3 The footway towards the town is narrow but relatively uncluttered.



- 4 The footway broadens around the health centre on Dunluce Avenue. An uncontrolled crossing is provided here with access to the car park. The tactile paving does not contrast sufficiently with the surrounding paving. The positioning of a bin partially blocks the crossing on the car park side.





- 5 The pavement broadens further as Dunluce Avenue turns towards the town. The random positioning of large planters in this area creates the potential for hazards for people with a visual impairment.



- 6 There is another uncontrolled crossing at this point providing access to and from the car park. The tactile paving does not contrast sufficiently with the surrounding paving.



- 7 There is a controlled crossing providing access to the eastern footway on Dunluce Avenue. The tactile paving has been installed incorrectly on this crossing and the contrast with the surrounding paving could be improved.



- 8 The broad footway continues along the western side of Dunluce Avenue until a side street is reached. An uncontrolled crossing has been provided with tactile paving. However multiple bollards (designed to prevent pavement parking) create significant hazards for people with a visual impairment in particular. The pavement narrows considerably after this point.



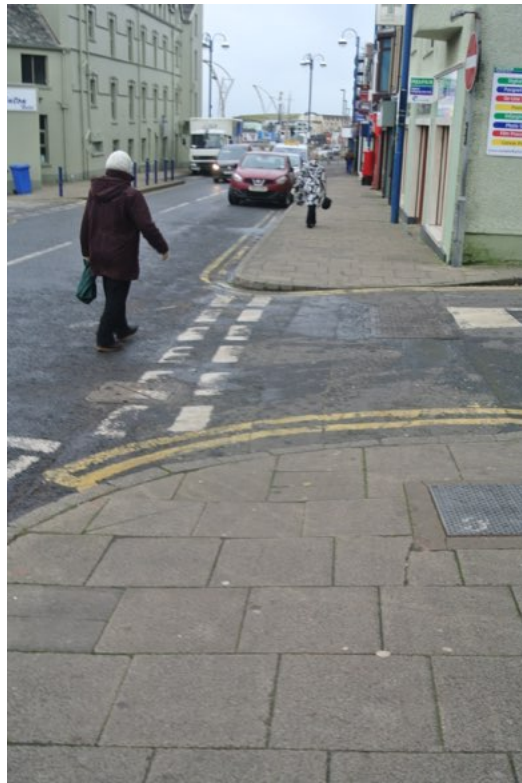
- 9 At the junction with Eglinton Street there is a section of dropped kerb providing access to the traffic island between Kerr Street and Eglinton Street. There is no tactile paving provided at this uncontrolled crossing.



- 10 The footway on the eastern side of Dunluce Avenue is quite wide and was relatively uncluttered during the site visit.



- 11 At the junctions with Victoria Street (pictured) and Eglinton Lane dropped kerbs have been provided but there is no tactile paving.



### **Eglinton Street/Kerr Street /Station Square**

- 12 A lack of footway width is a major issue on the western side of Eglinton Street from the exit of the railway station to Station Square.



- 13 The footway broadens out at Station Square. Station Square has benefitted from recent public realm improvements.



- 14 A controlled crossing has been provided from Station Square across Kerr Street to a traffic island. Tactile paving has been installed incorrectly on this crossing.



- 15 There is another “informal” uncontrolled crossing from Station Square across Kerr Street to the war memorial. The kerb is dropped here, but no tactile paving has been provided.



- 16 A further controlled crossing is provided from the traffic island to the eastern side of Eglington Street opposite to the Spar. Tactile paving has been installed incorrectly on this crossing.



- 17 BT telephone kiosks on the footway on Eglington Street obstruct sight lines for pedestrians and drivers at this crossing. The pavement is relatively broad in this section of the street.



- 18 An uncontrolled crossing has been provided to enable people to access the western footway and Mark Street further along Eglington Street. This is a good example of an uncontrolled crossing although parking does obstruct sight lines for pedestrians and drivers.



- 19 On the western side of Eglinton Street there is a further uncontrolled crossing across Mark Street towards the war memorial. No tactile paving has been provided at this crossing.



- 20 The pavement on the eastern side of Eglinton Street narrows towards Main Street and Causeway Street. There is an indication that pavement cafes and shop displays may reduce pavement width further during summer months. The location of bins further reduces pavement width at points.





- 21 The pavement on the western side of Eglinton Street is exceptionally narrow at points.



- 22 There is an uncontrolled crossing across Eglinton Street just before the junction with Causeway Street and Main Street. The tactile paving does not contrast sufficiently with the surrounding paving.



- 23 At the junction of Eglinton Street, Causeway Street and Main Street there is a traffic island. Although dropped kerbs with tactile paving have been provided to enable pedestrians to cross between these streets this is less than satisfactory as it is extremely difficult for people with visual impairment to navigate safely.



### Causeway Street

- 24 The footways on both sides of Causeway Street are relatively narrow. Signage associated with road works obstructed the eastern footway at the time of the survey.



- 25 On the eastern footway there is a junction with Craig Vara . Provision for crossing this street is confusing and in need of upgrading.



- 26 There are steps provided from the eastern footway of Causway Street providing access to the promenade. There is no corduroy tactile paving provided at the steps to indicate a potential hazard for people with a visual impairment.



## Main Street

- 27 The footway on the western side of Main Street close to the junction with Eglington Street is relatively narrow. The location of bins and trees further restricts width. A van parked on the pavement creates a major barrier for all pedestrians.



- 28 There is an uncontrolled crossing at the church to the eastern side of Main Street. Tactile paving is provided but does not contrast sufficiently with surrounding paving.



- 29 The footway on the eastern side of Main Street near the junction with Causeway Street is narrow. A variety of clutter including large refuse bins narrows the footway further.



- 30 An uncontrolled crossing is provided across the junction with Manse Avenue on the western side of Main Street. Lack of contrast and tactile paving is again an issue as is the location of litter bins as is a cross fall on the footway.



- 31 A well designed uncontrolled crossing (other than tactile paving contrast) across Main Street is provided just after Manse Avenue.



- 32 At this point on the western footway is a series of shops (including a chemists) only accessible via steps or a ramp. The ramp has a reasonable gradient but is completely obstructed by a pavement café and associated A boards. The ramp also has a section with an unprotected edge. Although attempts have been made to improve the visibility of this section it remains a potential hazard for people with visual impairment.



- 33 On the eastern footway at this point a major building project blocks the footway entirely. No provision has been made to provide an accessible route around the obstruction.



- 34 There is another uncontrolled crossing across Main Street just after this point. No tactile paving has been provided on the eastern footway.



- 35 Approaching the junction with Atlantic Avenue on the western side there is a collection of street furniture. Although in a consistent line the area would benefit from reducing the amount of clutter.



- 36 The eastern footway there is similar clutter. The provision of pedestrian railings on both sides of the road does appear to be unnecessary.





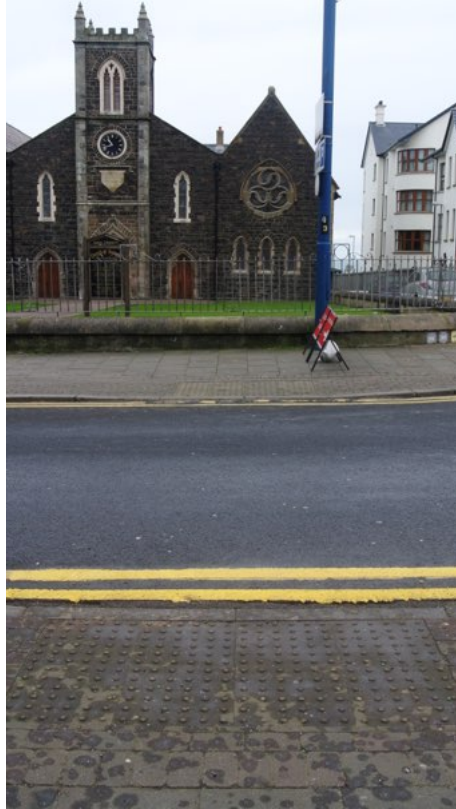
- 37 An uncontrolled crossing across Main Street is provided before the junction with Atlantic Avenue.



- 38 There are uncontrolled crossing across Atlantic Avenue on the western footway and Church Pass on the eastern footway. Although adequate the area would benefit from improved surfaces and stronger contrast between tactile paving and the surrounding paving.



- 39 There is another well designed uncontrolled crossing across Main Street just after these junctions opposite Holy Trinity Church.



- 40 The footway narrows on the western side after the junction. Bollards create additional obstructions.



- 41 The footway on the eastern side is relatively narrow but also uncluttered in this area.



- 42 An uncontrolled crossing across Main Street is provided outside the White House. The tactile paving does not contrast sufficiently with the surrounding paving.



- 43 Traffic sign poles and bins create obstructions on an already narrow western footway at this point.



- 44 An uncontrolled crossing across Main Street is provided approaching the junction with Bath Street. The tactile paving does not contrast sufficiently with the surrounding paving.



- 45 The footway on the western side of Main Street continues to be narrow but relatively uncluttered.



- 46 An uncontrolled crossing is provided across the junction with Bath Street. There are significant crossfalls on the footway around this junction. Bins and A Boards obstruct narrow pavements on Main Street after the crossing.



- 47 Just after this point a dropped kerb is provided on the western footway of Main Street but not on the eastern footway. This could be confusing and dangerous to someone with a visual impairment.



- 48 An uncontrolled crossing is provided across the junction with Antrim Gardens on the eastern footway. The footway narrows after this point.



49 The footway on western side remains narrow but uncluttered.



50 There is an uncontrolled crossing across Main Street just before the junctions with Causeway View and Mark Street. The tactile paving does not contrast sufficiently with the surrounding paving.



- 51 Vehicles parked at the hotel on Main Street overhang the footway reducing available width and create potential hazards for people with visual impairment.



- 52 Uncontrolled crossings have been provided across both Mark Street and Causeway View to enable pedestrian access to the remainder of Main Street. The tactile paving does not contrast sufficiently with the surrounding paving.





- 53 Utility works were taking place on Main Street in this area so a proper assessment could not be made. However vehicles parked on the western footway created obstructions along the street.



- 54 There are limited opportunities to cross Main Street along the section from Mark Street to Kerr Street. Difficulties are particularly acute at the harbour end of the road at its junction with Kerr Street where there are no safe, accessible routes to cross. This needs to be rectified. As this is a link with the Coastal Way the lack of basic pedestrian access is a major concern.



## Atlantic Avenue/Church Pass

- 55 Atlantic Avenue and Church Pass provide a crucial link between the east and west strands in the town. Pedestrian access to West Strand is via a set of steps between Mark Street and Kerr Street. The steps are currently inaccessible, with no corduroy tactile paving provision, limited handrails and are extremely unattractive.



- 56 The footways along Atlantic Avenue are extremely narrow with a number of vehicle access points. There street would benefit significantly from enhancing pedestrian facilities including broader footways and pedestrian priority at vehicle entrances.



- 57 Church Pass currently only has a narrow footway on the southern side of the street. As with Atlantic Avenue pedestrians would benefit from enhanced provision and priority at vehicle entrances along the street.



### **Bath Terrace/Bath Street**

- 58 Bath Terrace and Bath Street will provide important linkages to the proposed extended promenade on the west on the town.



- 59 Safe and accessible opportunities for pedestrians to cross to the promenade from Church Pass are required.



- 60 There are major access issues with the changes in levels between Bath Terrace, Bath Street and Bath Road. If the proposed promenade is to be a space for all solutions must be found to make this space inclusive.



- 61 Current crossing facilities at the corner of Bath Street/Terrace are in need of upgrading including correctly installed tactile paving.



- 62 The surfacing of footways along Bath Street are generally poor and in need of an upgrade.



## Ramore Avenue

- 63 Currently Ramore Avenue has footway on the southern side only. This footway is narrow and junctions and crossings are in need of upgrading to include correctly installed tactile paving.



- 64 Proposals to create a footway on the northern side on the street linking with the promenade are to be welcomed. The scheme must include opportunities to cross Ramore Avenue and other improvements such as well-designed crossings at junctions on the southern side of the street.



## **Next Steps**

Using the information in this report Imtac will now seek to have detailed discussions with the Council and the design team responsible for developing the public realm proposals for Portrush. The Committee is concerned to ensure that the investment in public realm in the town brings benefits to all.