



## **Report on Walking routes in Bangor Town Centre**

**July 2013**

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## **About us**

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 Regional Development.

## **About this report**

This report is the fourth in a series of reports compiled by Imtac looking at the accessibility of key walking routes for disabled people and older people in town and city centres across Northern Ireland. The report was compiled following an inspection of Bangor town centre in May 2013. It considers the provision of pedestrian facilities in Bangor measured against accepted accessibility standards<sup>1</sup>. The report is a snapshot of current provision and seeks to identify potential barriers for disabled people and older people and recommends how these barriers could be resolved. The report also highlights examples of good practice in the town centre. A key aspect of the report is linkage between the pedestrian environment and the bus and rail station in Bangor. We have produced two reports, a text only version and a version with photographs used to highlight barriers and good practice.

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

## Our findings

Imtac has previously compiled a report<sup>2</sup> highlighting common barriers encountered in the pedestrian environment across Northern Ireland which were identified by talking with disabled people and older people. Many of these difficulties were also observed on the routes examined in this audit of Bangor town centre including:

- Poorly maintained and uneven surfaces
- Poorly installed and maintained tactile paving
- Poorly installed controlled and uncontrolled crossings
- Clutter on pavements including bollards, bins, A-boards and seating

Despite the barriers identified by this report there were examples of good pedestrian provision in Bangor Town Centre. This includes generally broad pavements and good provision of dropped kerbs. In addition on the day of the audit there did not appear to be issues with illegal parking on pavements or across dropped kerbs, an issue that causes major access difficulties in other locations.

Two specific issues are particularly problematic in Bangor and should be prioritised for improvement. The first is greater prevalence of A-Boards and pavement cafes in the town compared to other locations. This creates numerous potential barriers on pavements across the town. The second issue is the widespread inappropriate use of tactile paving in locations across the town centre. In many locations the tactile surface does not follow accepted practice<sup>3</sup>. This not only creates problems for people with a visual impairment, but the over-provision of tactile paving also creates difficulties for other disabled people who find walking on surfaces painful or uncomfortable.

In more general terms the audit of Bangor and other locations in Northern Ireland does highlight an historic lack of priority given to investment in quality, safe and accessible pedestrian facilities in our

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

<sup>3</sup> Guidance on the use of Tactile Paving Surfaces (DETR 1998)



towns and cities. It is essential that this is addressed when considering future changes to public realm in towns such as Bangor.

## Audit of key routes

### Bangor Bus and Railway station to Main Street

- 1 Both entrances to the station offer wide and generally uncluttered pavements.



- 2 The station forecourt is cobbled and has constant vehicle movements. Signs encourage pedestrians not to use this area. Bollards mark out the boundary between the forecourt and pedestrian routes. The bollards would benefit from a stronger contrasting band.



- 3 Bins, trees and telephone boxes restrict pavement width in the footway bounding the station forecourt. The surface is uneven in places.



- 4 There is a good example of an in-line uncontrolled crossing at the entrance to the station forecourt. The high traffic levels make this a difficult crossing to use.





- 5 There is an uncontrolled crossing at the top Dufferin Avenue. The kerb is dropped but no tactile paving is provided. The steep cross fall at this junction will present difficulties for some disabled people.



- 6 A safer alternative route is available by crossing the road using controlled crossings at the side entrance of the station.
- 7 There is a good example of an in-line uncontrolled crossing between the pedestrian entrance of the station across the exit for buses.



- 8 There are good examples of controlled crossings across Abbey Street linking the station to the Park and Ride/Roads Service car park.



- 9 There is a broad pavement towards Castle Park Avenue.
- 10 At the junction with Castle Park Avenue there is an in-line uncontrolled crossing with a traffic island. The tactile paving on the island are laid incorrectly and are potentially dangerous.





- 11 There is a good example of a controlled crossing on Castle Park Avenue. This is reached via the entrance to the Roads Service car park. The entrance includes well-designed in-line uncontrolled crossings including tactile paving.



## Upper Main Street

- 12 There is a good example of a controlled crossing at the Post Office.



- 13 A-Boards, pavement cafes and shop displays create barriers along both sides of Upper Main Street.



- 14 Dish drainage channels create additional hazards in the area.





- 15 There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing at the junction of Market Street. A dropped kerb is provided but there is no tactile paving.



- 16 There is a good example of a controlled crossing at Asda supermarket. A-Boards in the area restrict access.



- 17 There is controlled crossing at the junction with Castle Street/ Hamilton Road. The control box at the crossing at the end of Upper Main Street is too far from the tactile paving. There is also loose tactile paving presenting a potential trip hazard.



- 18 There is a traffic island at this crossing. The use of tactile paving here is unconventional and could be confusing for people with a visual impairment. Again some tactile paving is damaged and loose.





- 19 The controlled crossing at eastern side of Upper Main Street is adequate. However there are issues with the use of tactile paving on the traffic island (see 18).



### Lower Main Street

- 20 There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing at the junction of Central Avenue. The tactile paving is badly damaged on one side of the crossing. The positioning of A-Boards makes this area potentially hazardous.



- 21 There is a controlled crossing at the junction with Hamilton Road. There is non-standard use of tactile paving at this crossing which has the potential to create confusion for people with a visual impairment and unnecessary discomfort for other disabled people.



- 22 Pavement clutter is particularly severe on the eastern side of the street.





- 23 A-boards and a pavement café create barriers on the western side. Screening the café would help reduce hazard although it still encroaches on the pavement.



- 24 There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing at the junction with King Street. There is damage to the tactile paving and a mix of coloured slabs used. A-Boards restrict access at the junction.



- 25 There is a controlled crossing midway down the street. There is non-standard use of tactile paving with the potential to create confusion for people with a visual impairment and unnecessary discomfort for other disabled people.



- 26 There is an unscreened pavement café and A-Boards at the northern end of Main Street.





- 27 There is a controlled crossing at the northern end of Main Street. There is non-standard use of tactile paving as well as damage to the paving slabs presenting a potential trip hazard.



### Queens Parade

- 28 There is a controlled crossing at the eastern end of Queens Parade. There is non-standard use of tactile paving as well as loose slabs at this crossing.



- 29 The surface quality of the pavement on the southern side of Queens Parade is poor in places creating potential trip hazards particularly for people with visual impairment.



- 30 There are a number of in-line uncontrolled crossings across Queens Parade. There is overuse of tactile paving on these crossings with little contrast with the surrounding paving. Bollards placed on the southern side restrict access and would benefit from a stronger contrasting band. This has the potential to create confusion for people with a visual impairment and unnecessary discomfort for other disabled people.





- 31 At the junction of Southwell Road/Greys Hill dropped kerbs have been provided. However these are not in-line and no tactile paving has been provided.



- 32 There are good examples of in-line uncontrolled crossings at the Eastern end of Greys Hill.



- 33 There is no tactile paving on the in-line crossing at the entrance to the car park on Queens Parade.



- 34 The location of street furniture (seating and bins) on the Northern side of Queens Parade restricts what is a wide pavement. Locating street furniture in a line would reduce this impact.





- 35 There are steps down to the sunken gardens at McKee Clock. Corduroy warning paving should be provided.



### Quay Street

- 36 There is a controlled Zebra crossing on Quay Street. There is non-standard overuse of tactile paving on this crossing. There is also non-standard use of different coloured paving. The crossing on the eastern side is further restricted by bollards.



- 37 Access at the junction with High Street is restricted by A-Boards and bollards.



### Bridge Street

- 38 Unrestricted pavement cafes and parked motorcycles create significant hazards on Bridge Street.





- 39 There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing at the southern end of Bridge Street at the junction with Mill Row. The tactile paving is badly damaged.



## High Street

- 40 There is a controlled crossing at the western end of High Street. There is non-standard use of tactile paving at this crossing.



- 41 A-boards restrict access to what is a reasonable in-line uncontrolled crossing at the junction with Albert Street. The tactile paving does not however contrast with the surrounding pavement.



- 42 There is a controlled crossing midway up High Street. There is non-standard use of tactile paving at this crossing.





- 43 This crossing leads to a traffic island where incorrect use of tactile paving will make navigating this crossing difficult for people with a visual impairment.



- 44 There is a good example of an in-line uncontrolled crossing at the junction of Holborn Avenue.



- 45 A-Boards, shop displays and tables and chairs restrict pavement width along High Street.



- 46 There is a good example of a controlled crossing at the eastern end of High Street. The benefits of the crossing are reduce by the placement of A-Boards.





- 47 There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing at the junction with Beatrice Avenue. There is a lack of contrast between the tactile paving and the pavement surface. Also a variety of coloured tactile paving has been used.



- 48 The same issues are present at the in-line uncontrolled crossing at the junction with Alfred Street.



- 49 There is a controlled crossing at the junction with Bingham Street. There is a non-standard use of tactile paving. There are problems with the use of tactile paving on the associated traffic island (see 43).



- 50 There is an in-line uncontrolled crossing at the junction with Mill Row. There is non-standard (over) use of tactile paving. There is significant damage to the tactile paving suggesting illegal or inappropriate pavement parking which potentially obstructs pavement width on occasions.





## **Next Steps**

Imtac has previously been involved in a similar audit of pedestrian facilities in Belfast City Centre<sup>4</sup>. Following the publication of the Belfast report meetings were held with Roads Service to identify actions to address the barriers identified. Actions were identified as achievable in the short term, medium term and the longer term.

The Committee proposes that a similar approach be taken in Bangor. Following the publication of this report we will seek to meet with Roads Service to identify achievable actions to address the barriers identified in the report. We will seek to involve local organisations of and for disabled people in these discussions.

The Committee is also aware that DSD and North Down Borough Council has developed a Town Centre Masterplan for Bangor. The Masterplan includes proposals for major improvements to streets covered by this report. Imtac will seek to work with DSD and the Council to ensure that issues highlighted in this report are addressed as part of any investment in public realm in Bangor.

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<sup>4</sup> Belfast Streets Ahead Quality Walking Corridor Review (Aecom 2010)