

imtac



Annual Report **2018/19**



About Imtac

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

Imtac's 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 (hereafter referred to as the Department).

About this report

Under agreements with the Department Imtac is required to produce an annual report with details of its achievements over the previous year and its plans for the coming year. The Committee is also required to identify key issues that it believes the Department should address in 2019/20.



Chairperson's message (2019 - 13th report)

As this is my first Annual Report as Chairperson it would be remiss of me not to start by acknowledging and thanking my predecessor, Max O'Brien, for his contribution to the work of Imtac. I would also like to thank David McDonald for his significant service to the Committee including a lengthy period as our Treasurer. Finally I would like to express gratitude on behalf of all the Committee to Moira Doherty for her contribution to furthering an inclusive transport system during her time at the Department for Infrastructure.

This has been another busy year for Imtac. Progress continues to be made in making travel more accessible and inclusive in Northern Ireland. Highlights this year include the development and launch of the new Glider service in Belfast with disabled people and older people fully involved in its design and in the delivery of training for the Glider staff. I would like to thank all our members and our secretariat, Michael Lorimer, for their hard work over the past twelve months. I would also like to thank officials from the Department and our observer organisations for their on-going support.

Engagement with wider groups of older people and disabled people has long been a priority for Imtac. I am pleased that this continued with five public meetings held around Northern Ireland in March this year. I will seek to ensure Imtac continues to broaden the scope of our engagement in the coming year including developing better links with MACS and DPTAC, our equivalents in Scotland, England and Wales.

In concluding my remarks I would like to highlight one aspect of the feedback we received at our recent public meetings. Whilst most people attending acknowledged improvements have been made to transport and travel in recent years, they commented that these improvements were most pronounced in the Greater Belfast area. Delivering improved travel options for people living outside this area and particularly for people living in rural areas remains a priority for Imtac and the greatest challenge for policy makers and providers.

Bert Bailie
Chairperson
July 2019



Achievements in 2018/19

The following outlines the contribution Imtac has made in the past twelve months towards a more inclusive and accessible transport system in Northern Ireland.

1. Supporting the delivery of BRT/Glider

In previous years Imtac had contributed to the design of Glider vehicles and halts. This year the Committee provided significant support to the Department and Translink both in the run up to and following the launch of the service in September 2018. Highlights included:

- ▶ Imtac worked with Translink to secure the delivery of Disability Equality Training to around 100 Glider staff. The training was delivered by Transport for All, an organisation of disabled people from London, supported by local older people and disabled people.
- ▶ Working with both Translink and the Department, the Committee helped produce “Access to Glide”, a guide for disabled people and older people to Glider services. Access to Glide was produced in a range of formats including an Easy Read version.
- ▶ Advising Translink on priority seating signage on-board Glider vehicles.



Achievements in 2018/19

2. Supporting wider improvements to public transport

As well as advising on Glider services Imtac continues to provide advice around making public transport services accessible to all users. Highlights and achievements this year include:

- ▶ The development and publication of a position paper¹ setting out Imtac's recommendations around how future procurement can make bus travel more inclusive and accessible.
- ▶ Meeting with the Belfast Transport Hub design team to discuss the emerging proposals for the project.
- ▶ Providing Translink with advice around the emerging proposals for the redesign of Yorkgate Railway Station and published a paper² setting out the Committee's recommendations around improving accessibility at railway halts.
- ▶ Working with Translink to create a poster promoting priority access for wheelchair users on buses.
- ▶ In partnership with Translink, we established a dedicated working group to develop proposals to improve the accessibility of bus and train services.
- ▶ We made recommendations to the Department about changes to Commercial Bus Operator Permit scheme designed to improve access to non-Translink public transport services.



¹ www.imtac.org.uk/publications/recommendations-imtac-future-translink-bus-procurement

² www.imtac.org.uk/publications/comments-imtac-footbridge-access-lambeg-railway-halt

Achievements in 2018/19

3. Supporting a more accessible pedestrian environment

Nearly every journey involves using the pedestrian environment. Removing barriers to pedestrian journeys is essential in making the wider transport system accessible. During the past year highlights and achievements included:

- ▶ Undertaking street audits and publishing reports with recommendations for improvement for proposed public realm schemes in Dromore³, Newry⁴ and Enniskillen⁵.
- ▶ Working with the Department for Communities (DfC), we undertook street audits and published recommendations for the Clifton Gateway⁶ and Streets Ahead (Phase 5)⁷ public realm schemes.



- ▶ Finalising an evaluation of the impact of pavement café licensing on the mobility of older people and disabled people.
- ▶ We updated and published a revised position paper⁸ setting out the Committee's opposition to the use of shared space street design.
- ▶ Publishing a position paper⁹ setting out the Committee's position around cycling.
- ▶ Contributing to the "Better Bedford Street" project.

³ www.imtac.org.uk/publications/recommendations-imtac-public-realm-proposals-dromore-town-centre

⁴ www.imtac.org.uk/publications/recommendations-imtac-public-realm-proposals-newry-lower-hill-street

⁵ www.imtac.org.uk/publications/comments-imtac-about-public-realm-proposals-enniskillen-town-centre

⁶ www.imtac.org.uk/publications/recommendations-imtac-public-realm-proposals-clifton-gateway-belfast

Achievements in 2018/19

4. Involving disabled people and older people

Involving disabled people and older people is at the core of everything that Imtac does. The Committee believes that older people and disabled people are best placed to advise about issues that affect their lives. Highlights and achievements this year include:

- ▶ Imtac organised five public meetings across Northern Ireland attended by over 100 people. The majority of people attending were older people and/or disabled people. A report¹⁰ has been published highlighting the issues raised at the meetings.
- ▶ In May 2018 the Committee ran a “Give the Glider a Go” day at Dundonald Park & Ride. The event was a chance for older people and disabled people to try out the Glider vehicle before the service was launched. Around 40 people attended this event.



- ▶ Working with the Department Imtac promoted a survey seeking the views of disabled people and older people about taxis. Over 700 people responded to the survey.
- ▶ Imtac involved older people, disabled people and others in the Belfast street audits.
- ▶ Imtac co-ordinated the involvement of local disabled people in the Disability Equality Training delivered to Translink’s Glider staff. Local people took Translink staff out on real world guided journeys around Belfast using bus and rail services.
- ▶ We invited disabled people and older people from outside Imtac to become members of the new Translink Accessibility Working Group.

⁷ www.imtac.org.uk/publications/recommendations-imtac-public-realm-proposals-belfast-streets-ahead-phase-5

⁸ www.imtac.org.uk/publications/revise-statement-shared-space

⁹ www.imtac.org.uk/publications/imtac-statement-cycling

¹⁰ www.imtac.org.uk/publications/report-issues-arising-imtac-public-meetings-held-during-march-2019

Achievements in 2018/19

5. Other achievements

In addition to achievements listed above the following were also highlights achieved during the year:

- ▶ Imtac held its first committee meeting outside Belfast in September 2018 in the Guildhall in Derry. In future Imtac plans to hold at least one of its committee meetings in the West, recognising the contribution of members from across Northern Ireland.



- ▶ The Committee was successful in a funding application to the Big Lottery Awards for All. The funding will be used to create an online hub for disabled people and older people to access information about transport and travel in Northern Ireland.

Our Plans for 2019/20

Over the next twelve months Imtac will seek to further the development of an inclusive and accessible transport system in Northern Ireland. It will do this by continuing to work closely with policy makers and transport providers as well as by engaging with and listening to disabled people and older people.

The Committee has published a Work Programme¹¹ agreed with the Department detailing tasks that will be undertaken in the next twelve months.

The plans for the coming year include:

- ▶ Providing Translink with advice on vehicle design
- ▶ Producing a paper with recommendations on inclusive design of small bus (9-22 seats) in particular.
- ▶ Providing advice on key infrastructure projects including the Belfast and North West Transport Hubs.
- ▶ Providing advice on the implementation of the Translink Ticketing Project.
- ▶ Providing further advice on strengthening the accessibility requirements of the Commercial Bus Permit Scheme.
- ▶ Providing advice around making applications and renewals for concessionary fares easier.
- ▶ Continue to provide advice on new public realm schemes in Northern Ireland.
- ▶ Provide advice and make recommendations for improvement of accessibility around the Rathlin and Strangford ferry services.
- ▶ Provide advice and support for initiatives to improve access to taxi services.
- ▶ Provide advice and support for initiatives to improve urban and rural demand responsive transport services.
- ▶ Provide advice and support to improve the provision of online information about transport and travel services in Northern Ireland including the redesign of the Translink website.
- ▶ Assist Translink to review and update its Access Policy, Station Facilities and Access Guides.
- ▶ Assist Translink in looking at awareness raising measures around respect for priority seating.

¹¹ www.imtac.org.uk/publications/imtac-work-programme-201920-0

Our Plans for 2019/20

- ▶ Continue to promote the provision of Disability Equality Training for staff involved in the delivery of transport services and policy.
- ▶ Undertaking activities that highlight the impact of pavement clutter on disabled and older pedestrians.
- ▶ Continuing to look at ways to involve more disabled people and older people in the work of Imtac.
- ▶ Assisting the Department undertake a survey around the attitudes of older people and disabled people to concessionary fares.
- ▶ Repeating a survey of on-street Blue Badge use in Belfast City Centre.
- ▶ Develop and launch a website with information and advice about transport and travel in Northern Ireland.
- ▶ Develop closer links with the Mobility & Access Committee for Scotland (MACS) and the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC).

Our advice to the Department for Infrastructure

Imtac believes that the past year demonstrates progress is being made by the Department and others in developing a transport system that is accessible and inclusive for all. Key to this progress has been the recognition by policy makers and service providers of the value of engaging directly with disabled people to ensure that public investment benefits everyone in society. **It is important that this positive engagement continues in the coming year.**

The Committee received positive feedback about improvements to public transport during public meetings during the last year. While this is encouraging it was clear that many of the improvements benefitted people travelling in the Greater Belfast area the most, with travel by public transport more challenging for people living in other areas. Part of the reason for this disparity is due to service levels in these areas. However for disabled people and older people in particular disparity in the accessibility between services in Greater Belfast and other areas is a major barrier to travel. **In order to address this disparity Imtac recommends that (1) vehicle design for Ulsterbus and Goldline be changed to offer the equivalent level of access to Belfast and Foyle Metro services, (2) proposals to be brought forward to extend the provision of audio visual next stop information systems on Goldline, Ulsterbus and Foyle Metro services and (3) notice requirements for wheelchair users to travel on Ulsterbus and Goldline services are removed.**

Many older people and disabled people rely on alternative transport services to make local journeys or to connect to the wider public transport network. These services include taxis as well as rural and urban community transport services. The feedback Imtac has received in recent years is that accessing these services is becoming increasingly difficult for some older people and disabled people. It is essential that these services work better for people if wider investment in the transport system is to work for everyone. **Imtac recommends that the Department work with Imtac, operators and others to begin the process of looking at improving the provision of demand responsive transport services in Northern Ireland.**

The pedestrian environment is another area where disabled people and older people face significant barriers that restrict access to local amenities and wider travel. Although investment has been made and improvement has taken place, Imtac believes more needs to be done to recognise the value of pedestrian journeys including removing barriers and obstacles placed on our pavements. **In the coming year Imtac recommends that the Department and others work with the Committee to look at proposals for (1) implementing a pavement café licensing system that prioritises pedestrians, (2) exploring the introduction of a ban on A Boards on our pavements and (3) exploring options for preventing parking on pavements.**



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