



**An assessment of facilities at the North West
Transport Hub**

(April 2020)

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About Imtac

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. Its role is to advise Government and others in Northern Ireland on issues that affect the mobility of older people and disabled people.

The aim of the Committee 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

There was a significant engagement between Translink and Imtac during the development of plans for the North West Transport Hub. Following Initial meetings in 2016 Imtac published a paper¹ setting out recommendations to inform the design of the hub. Subsequent meetings between added to and enhanced these initial recommendations.

The initial phase of the the North West Hub was completed in late 2019. A site visit involving Imtac members and representatives from the Consumer Council took place on the 26th February 2020. This report details the findings from the site visit, assessing the provision at the new station against Imtac's recommendations and key inclusive design considerations. Because work on the approaches to the station including car parking and bus infrastructure is not complete this report is focuses on the station and its facilities only.

Key design considerations

In making its assessment Imtac has used the best practice inclusive design standards. In relation railway stations "Design Standards for Accessible Railway Stations²" offers the current best template for ensuring inclusive design.

¹ <https://www.imtac.org.uk/publications/comments-imtac-about-proposed-north-west-transport-hub>

² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/425977/design-standards-accessible-stations.pdf

Based on best practice and its own work Imtac has number of key broad design considerations it sees as essential to ensure infrastructure is accessible and inclusive. In summary these design considerations are:

- Step-free, easy access throughout including approaches to the station, within the station and to and from platforms
- Inclusive facilities including toilets, ticketing and retail and a spending area for assistance dogs
- The provision of well-designed inclusive seating
- The provision of inclusive information including audio visual information and well-designed signage
- The use of contrasting materials throughout buildings and their approaches

One further essential component of inclusive and accessible facilities is the availability of staff to provide appropriate assistance if required.

Key findings

Step free, easy access

There can be perceived difficulties providing accessible and inclusive infrastructure when working with a listed building. The North West Transport Hub provides an excellent example of how to work with a listed building, maintaining the heritage and character of the building at the same time as providing inclusive and accessible infrastructure.



(Image shows interior of the station looking towards the access to platforms. Toilet facilities are on the right, ticket desk to the left)

All public facilities in the building are provided on the same level providing step free access from entrance to platform.

The main entrance / exit door and the access doors to platforms are fully automated. Side door access to the Greenway is semi-automated with push button controls.



(The image on the left shows the main entrance to the station. The image on the right shows the entrance to the station from the Greenway)

Platforms are wide with seating and other clutter located in a central line.



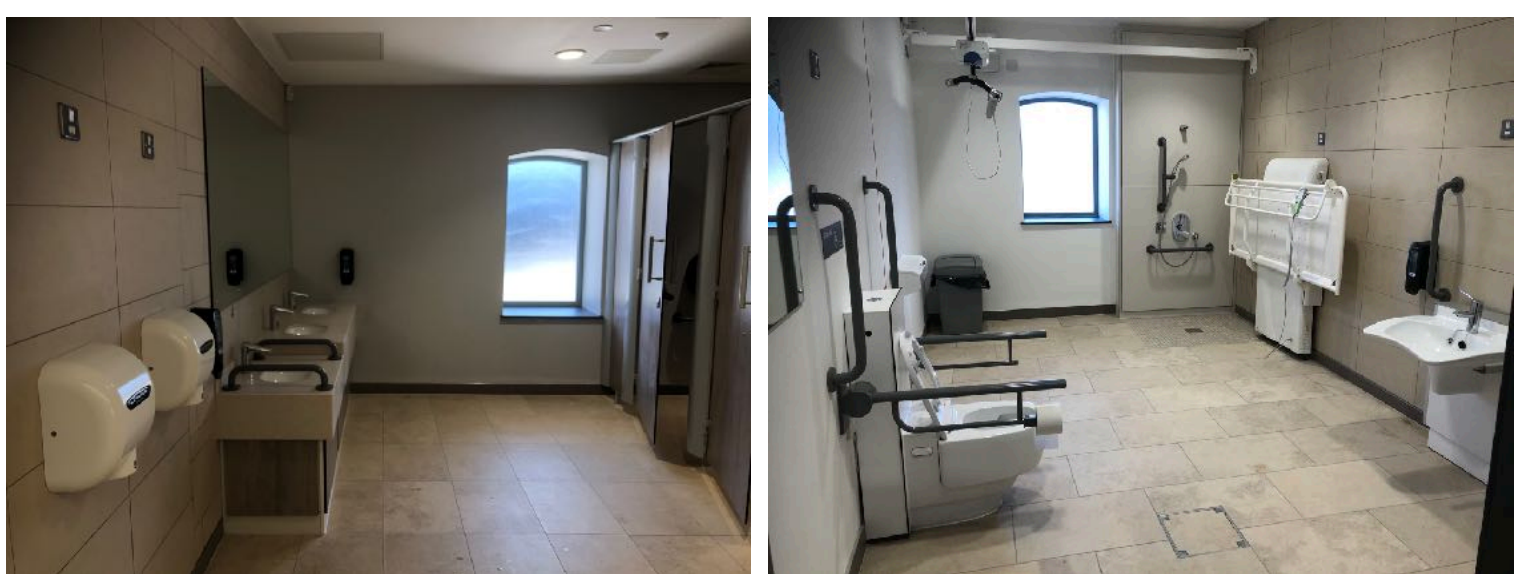
(The image shows the wide, unobstructed platforms at the Hub)

There is, in the main, a clear, clutter free route through the station from entrance to platforms with seating, retail and other facilities located away from these desire lines. The only blemish is the central location of an advertising screen.

In general there is good consistent lighting provided in all public areas inside the station. Given the sunny day, it was not possible to assess lighting on the platforms.

Facilities

The North West Transport Hub provides the full range of toilet facilities including a Changing Places facility meeting design standards, a generous, separate accessible toilet, a generously proportioned parent / baby changing room and standard male and female facilities meeting inclusive design standards. The Committee believes the toilet provision at the station provides an exemplar and should be used as the benchmark for future new and refurbished Translink stations.



(The image on the left is the interior of the male toilets. The image on the right is the interior of the Changing Places facility.)

Access to the cafe and other retail space was generally good.

As work on the active travel spaces at the station was ongoing an assessment of these facilities was not possible.

A ticket desk designed with the appropriate low-level counter and induction hearing loop system has been provided. Signage could be improved to make the location of the desk more obvious.



(The image shows the ticket / information desk in the Hub.)

Seating

Seating has been provided both internally and on platforms at the station. All seating provided has armrests. There is a problem on some of the styles of seating with a lack of contrasting between armrests and the other parts of the seat.



(The image shows seating in the Hub with poor contrasting)

Imtac and best practice recommends that a section of perch style seating be provided within the station. Although this type of seating has yet to be provided Translink officials gave assurances that it would be installed soon.

As work was ongoing no assessment was made of seating provision on the approaches to and outside the main station building.

Information provision

Due to the listed roof most of the directional signage inside the station and on platforms is wall mounted. Where provided the design of the directional signage is excellent.

Totem directional signage has been provided externally outside the main entrance and the side entrance / exit to the Greenway. Again the design is good. Based on feedback it was felt a further totem could be provided within the concourse close to the main seating area.



(The image on the left shows the signage totem outside the main entrance. The image on the right the totem outside the Greenway entrance.)

Destination signage on platforms is clear and obvious meeting design standards.

Signage has been provided on the doors of toilet facilities. This signage included tactile Braille lettering and generally meet good design standards. There are, however, some inconsistencies in the toilet signage at the Hub compared with other Translink destinations. Imtac recommends Translink develops an organisation wide policy around toilet signage to ensure consistent design and messaging across all facilities.



(The image on the left shows directional signage to the male toilet. The centre image signage on the Parent / Baby changing room door. The image on the right is signage on the door of the Changing Places facility.)

There are a number of areas within the station (including the ticket desk, the male and female toilets and the side entrance from the Greenway) where stainless steel lettering or symbols have been used. Poor contrasting makes these signs less easy to read or identify. Each location would benefit from additional or relocation of existing signage:

- An additional wall mounted information sign (using blue and white) located above the ticket desk
- Relocating wall mounted signage in the male and female toilets closer to the toilet entrances
- Provision of additional standard (blue and white) signage at the entrance from the Greenway

On the visit neither the audio announcements or the train visual display screens were working. The departure / arrival display screens were, however, provided at key locations across the stations on platforms and within the stations. These included a number of screens located at eye level making them easier to read for some passengers. This provision should be replicated at all future new stations and refurbishments.

An additional screen has been provided close to the ticket desk providing information about bus departures and arrivals from the station. This provision is to be commended.



(The image shows the bus departures screen, alongside a train arrival / departure screen at the Hub)

Contrasting

When visiting the recently redeveloped Portrush railway station, poor contrasting was a consistent issue. Contrasting is, in the main, not a significant issue at the North West Hub.

Good contrasting has been achieved between the flooring and walls throughout the station.

Internal and external doors contrast well with surrounding walls.

In general most signage contrasts well with its surroundings and writing / symbols contrast well with signage background.

On the platforms the platform edge, including the appropriate tactile surface contrasts with the rest of the platform surfacing.

Within the toilet facilities contrasting has been used well to highlight fixtures and fittings including handrails and grab rails.

Contrasting bands have been used on glazed areas and doors. Stronger bands would have provided an even better contrast.

As previously highlighted there are some issues with the lack of contrast in the design of some seating and signage used within the station.

Assistance dogs spending facilities

As with other recent station developments no spending area has been provided for assistance dogs at the North West Hub. This is despite advice given by Imtac and best practice guidance.

Imtac recommends that Translink develop a clear policy around the provision of spending areas at stations and that this policy be incorporated into any future plans for station redevelopment or refurbishment.

Station approaches

Because of ongoing works it was not possible to comment on the approaches to the station including car parking and bus facilities during the visit. This assessment will be undertaken once the works are complete.

There was the opportunity on the day to look at temporary access arrangements to the station for people arriving by bus. To avoid passengers having to cross the busy and dangerous junction at the roundabout, a temporary, screened walkway has been provided. There were significant access issues with the provision on the day of the visit including:

- The temporary pedestrian route blocked on the day, forcing pedestrians to use the unsuitable crossing
- The temporary pedestrian route was too narrow to be used comfortably by a range of pedestrians
- The surfacing of the temporary pedestrian route was uneven in places, presenting potential hazards for pedestrians

Translink must take steps to ensure that measures are undertaken by contractor to ensure safe and accessible pedestrian routes to and from the station are maintained at all times.



(The image on the left shows the pedestrian walkway gated off on the day of the visit. The image on the right shows the other end of the walkway.)

Conclusion

Translink must be commended on the work completed to date at the North West Hub. The station and the facilities provided are in the main an exemplar of accessible and inclusive design. Imtac does have a number of relatively minor recommendations it believes will further improve the station. These have been summarised below. The Committee has also summarised a number of recommendations arising from the assessment that it would like Translink to take forward on an organisation wide basis.

Site specific recommendations

- Provide additional signage above the information/ticketing desk.
- Provide an additional signage totem in the central concourse close to the central seating area.
- Relocate current gender signage for toilets closer to the entrance points to toilets.
- Provide additional signage at the entrance to the station from the Greenway.
- Install perch type seating as soon as possible.

- Provide better contrasting on moveable seating currently located in the community space.

Organisation wide recommendations

- Translink to develop an organisation wide policy around the provision of toilets including the design and wording of toilet signage to ensure consistency of provision across its infrastructure.
- Translink to develop a clear policy on the provision of assistance dog spending areas at their stations.