



Report on Walking routes in Newry City Centre

April 2014

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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 fifth 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 Newry city centre in December 2013. It considers provision on key pedestrian routes in Newry measured against accepted accessibility standards¹. 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 city centre. A key aspect of the report is linkage between the pedestrian environment and the bus station in Newry. We have produced two reports, a text only version and a version with photographs used to highlight barriers and good practice.

Our findings

Imtac has previously compiled a report² 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 have also been observed on the routes examined in this audit of Newry City centre including:

- Poorly maintained and uneven surfaces

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

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

- Poorly installed and maintained tactile paving
- The absence of essential facilities such as dropped kerbs and tactile paving
- Poorly installed controlled and uncontrolled crossings
- Problems created by parking on or around pavements
- 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 Newry city centre. This is particularly the case in areas where recent public realm works have taken place. In these areas the pavements are of high quality and good practice has largely been followed around the provision of crossing opportunities.

Despite these improvements significant issues remain with many of the pedestrian routes in Newry city centre. There has been no significant recent investment in pedestrian provision on many of the routes in the city centre. In many areas pavements are narrow and in a poor state of repair. More worryingly many key junctions and crossings fail to provide even minimal levels of safe and accessible provision for pedestrians. These problems are particularly acute in the area around the bus station where the poor quality of provision makes this area hostile and hazardous for all pedestrians. Issues identified by this report in these areas need to be addressed as a matter of urgency. An additional concern identified by this report is the use of shared space in the areas around the squares in the city centre. Failure to provide appropriate delineation between the pavement and road surface in these areas presents significant challenges for people with a visual impairment in particular.

In more general terms the audit of Newry and other locations in Northern Ireland does highlight an historic lack of investment in quality, safe and accessible pedestrian facilities in our towns and cities. It is essential that this is addressed when considering future changes to the public realm in towns such as Newry.

Audit of key routes

Kildare Street

- 1 The pavements at the northern end and eastern side of Kildare Street are broad with furniture located in a line beside the kerb.



- 2 There is an uncontrolled crossing at the northern end of Kildare Street at its junction with Upper Water Street, Sugar Island and Trevor Hill. The tactile paving is incorrectly laid and in poor state of repair. Given the heavy traffic in the area using this crossing safely is likely to be challenging for some older and disabled people.



- 3 The pavement on the western side of Kildare Street adjacent to the canal is broad. However there are different surface types used in the area and the random location of furniture may make navigation difficult for people with a visual impairment.



- 4 There is a controlled crossing at the junction of Kildare Street and Bank Parade. The crossing does not meet acceptable standards with no tactile paving provided at all, control boxes poorly located and no tactile rotating cone.



- 5 Proceeding south on Kildare Street the pavements are relatively broad and a good state of repair. There is a significant crossfall on the eastern side.



- 6 The pavement on the eastern side narrows considerably approaching the junction with Margaret Square. Dropped kerbs have been provided at this busy junction but no tactile paving included. Signage poles have been placed in the middle of the dropped kerb. Pavement cafes restrict an already narrow pavement.



- 7 On the pavement at the western side of the Margaret Square there is no dropped kerb in line with the dropped kerb provided on the eastern side.



- 8 At the junction of the bridge linking Kildare Street with Monaghan Street dropped kerbs have been provided. These are not inline and have no tactile paving. The dropped kerbs direct people into the middle of a very busy junction and therefore represent a hazard.



- 9 Proceeding in a southerly direction the pavement on the eastern side of Kildare Street narrows considerably following the junction with Margaret Square. Bins provide a frequent and random obstruction.



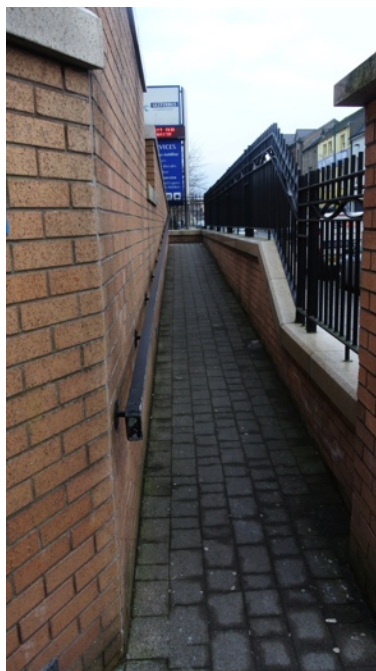
- 10 There is a wider pavement in good condition on the western side of Kildare Street approaching the bus station.



- 11 There is a good example of an uncontrolled crossing at the bus station. However there is a bin in the middle of the tactile paving on the eastern side and the open van doors extend into the crossing. The historic cobbled road surface in this area also makes using this crossing difficult for some disabled people and older people.



- 12 Access to the bus station from Kildare is via ramp or steps. The design of both are reasonable given there are constraints around the site. However the ramp is long and overly narrow in places. Both these issues are likely to cause difficulties for some disabled people.



- 13 Bins continue to be a problem on the narrow eastern pavement on Kildare Street. There are a number of vehicle entrances along this pavement with no tactile paving to indicate a potential hazard for visually impaired pedestrians.



- 14 The pavement on the western side of Kildare Street continues to be broad and of a high standard.



- 15 At the junction of Kildare Street and O'Hagan Street there is no appropriate crossing opportunity for pedestrians. The kerb has been dropped at one side of the junction only with no tactile paving provided. Parked delivery lorries and heavy traffic make this an intimidating junction for all pedestrians.



- 16 The pavement narrows considerably on both sides of Kildare Street after the junction with O'Hagan Street. The quality of the walking surfaces is generally poor and obstructions on the pavement are a significant issue.



- 17 The junction at Kildare Street, Bridge Street and Mill Street is very busy. In-line Dropped kerbs have been provided across Kildare Street either side of the junction. However no tactile paving has been provided.



- 18 No dropped kerbs have been provided for pedestrians to cross either Bridge Street and Mill Street at the junction with Kildare Street.



Hill Street

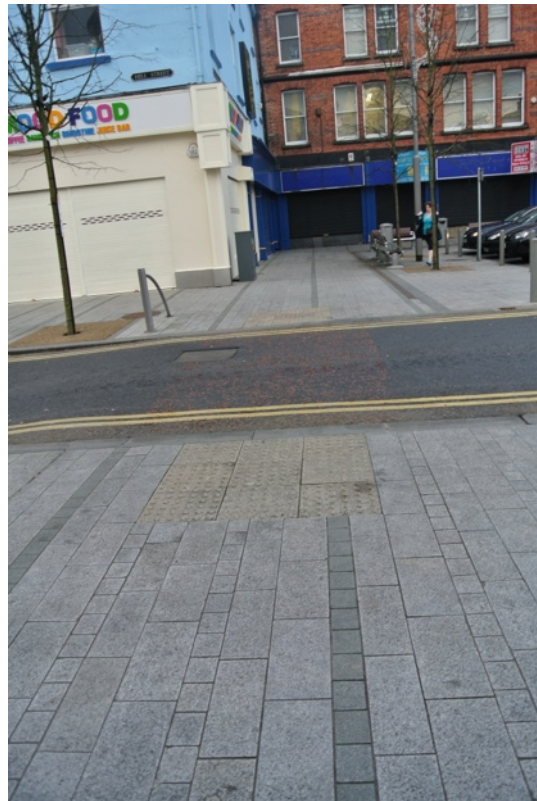
- 19 The pavements at the northern end of Hill Street are generally broad, of reasonable quality and generally clutter free. There is no accessible opportunity to cross Hill Street at the junction with Kildare Street or along Hill Street until the junction with Margaret Square.



- 20 A recent public realm scheme has improved surfaces around Margaret Square. The square is busy with parking for taxis and cars. There are no kerbs in the area with dish drainage channels used to delineate between the flush road and pedestrian surfaces. This type of delineation is not something Imtac would recommend.



- 21 There are four in-line controlled crossings on the square. These follow good practice in relation to the provision of this type of crossing. However given the “shared” nature of the area consideration should be given to extending the length of the tactile paving at these crossings.



- 22 Street furniture has been used to mark out clear pedestrian routes in the square. However accessibility and safety in the area would be enhanced by the inclusion of visibility bands on bollards and other furniture.



- 23 Proceeding up Hill Street towards Marcus Square the pavement on both sides provides a broad high quality walking surface. The kerb has been reintroduced at this point. There is a lack of consistency in the location of street furniture with parking meters located at the building line and kerb line in different locations.



- 24 There is an in-line raised uncontrolled crossing on this section of Hill Street. Once again there is an opportunity to enhance pedestrian accessibility at this crossing by extending the length of the tactile paving. Bins and maintenance work are potential obstructions at this crossing.



25 Similar shared space design used in Margaret Square has also been used in Marcus Square. There are significant issues with the design particularly on the eastern side of the square where there is no clear and safe route for pedestrians.



26 As with Margaret Square in-line uncontrolled crossings have been provided. Once again pedestrian accessibility could be improved by extending the length of the tactile paving over the width of the crossing.



- 27 As with Margaret Square the design attempts to use street furniture to mark out pedestrian routes. However accessibility and safety in the area would be enhanced by the inclusion of visibility bands on bollards and other furniture.



- 28 The flush surface between pavement and road continues for a short distance along Hill Street. Unmarked bollards and a dish drainage channel provide a less than satisfactory delineation.



- 29 Approaching the cathedral on Hill Street the public realm scheme ends. At this point there is an inline flush uncontrolled crossing. The use of tactile paving at this crossing is incorrect and there is no contrast between the tactile and surrounding paving. A kerb is reintroduced after this crossing.



- 30 There is another inline flush uncontrolled crossing at the entrance to the Cathedral. The use of tactile paving at this crossing is incorrect and there is no contrast between the tactile and surrounding paving. The paving in this area is in a poor state of repair.



- 31 Towards the junction of Hill Street and O'Hagan Street a telephone kiosk represents a major obstacle. There is also a significant crossfall on the pavement.



- 32 Approaching this junction there is another in-line flush uncontrolled crossing. The issues reflected in paragraphs 30 and 31 are present here. In addition, the location of street furniture presents numerous obstacles for users of the crossing.



- 33 There are dropped kerbs at both sides of the junction between O'Hagan Street and Hill Street. However no tactile paving has been provided.



- 34 Paving surfaces in this area of Hill Street are of poor standard.



35 Kerbs have been dropped around the junction of Mill Street and Hill Street. Once again tactile paving is not provided.



36 Clutter on the pavement including bins, Aboards, shop displays and pavement cafes restrict pavement width in this area of Hill Street.



Mill Street

37 The pavements on Mill Street are narrow in places.



38 The absence of dropped kerbs means there is no accessible opportunity to cross Mill Street at the junction with Georges Lane. The pavement surfaces are poorly maintained.



Bridge Street

- 39 There are traffic lights mid way along Bridge Street at the entrance to the Roads Service car park on the southern side and the exit of the bus station on the northern side. No provision has been made for pedestrians at these traffic lights and whilst dropped kerbs are in place no tactile paving has been provided. An extremely hazardous junction for some disabled people.



Bridge Street, Buttercrane Quay, Merchants Quay, Francis Street Junction

- 40 At this junction there is controlled crossing. This junction has some of the poorest quality provision for pedestrians ever encountered by Imtac. Issues include the absence of appropriate tactile paving or dropped kerb provision, the inappropriate use of tactile paving, the inappropriate location of control boxes and poles and the absence of tactile rotating cones. The junction is in urgent need of improvement as current provision for pedestrians is wholly inadequate and for some disabled people and older people hazardous.



Merchants Quay/CornMarket

41 Bins create obstructions on the pavement.



42 There is a good example of an in-line uncontrolled crossing at the junction leading to Cornmarket.



- 43 Parked cars restrict access to dropped kerb provision at the roundabout at Cornmarket. Tactile paving has been damaged by parked vehicles.



- 44 There is no appropriate access across road to the retail park approaching the Cornmarket roundabout. The pedestrian route through the retail park is difficult.



Monaghan Street

- 45 There is a Roads Service car park just off Monaghan Street close to the retail park. A reasonable in-line uncontrolled crossing has been provided. However on one side this leads pedestrians into bushes.



- 46 Monaghan Street has recently been subject of public realm improvements. A reasonable example of an in-line uncontrolled crossing has been provided at the entrance to the retail park. The location of poles at one end does create obstacles.



- 47 The walking surface on the pavement on the southern side of Monaghan Street is broad, high quality and furniture has been located in a single line.



- 48 There is a good example of an in-line uncontrolled crossing across the next junction on the southern side of Monaghan Street.



- 49 There is a good example of controlled pedestrian crossing close to the junction with Railway Avenue and Monaghan Street.



- 50 Continuing in a westerly direction on the southside of Monaghan Street shop displays restrict pavement widths.



- 51 There is a reasonable in-line uncontrolled crossing at the junction between Monaghan Street and Patrick Street including an island in the middle. Given the traffic levels in the area this junction will present a challenge for some disabled people and older people.



- 52 Close to the roundabout at the western end of Monaghan Street a garage forecourt extends on to the pedestrian area presenting unexpected obstacles.



- 53 There is an opportunity to cross Monaghan Street approaching its junction with the roundabout. Whilst there are dropped kerbs no tactile paving has been provided.



- 54 On the northern side of Monaghan Street there are examples of inconsistencies in the placement of street furniture. This creates additional obstacles and restricts good pavement width.



- 55 Further up the northern side of Monaghan Street furniture is better located providing a clutter free pedestrian route.



- 56 There is a good example of an in-line uncontrolled crossing at the junction with Railway Avenue.



- 57 There is another good example of an inline uncontrolled crossing at the vehicle entrance further down the north side of Monaghan Street.



- 58 There is another reasonable example of an in-line uncontrolled crossing at the junction with Kilmorey Street. The utility covers do have the potential to minimise the impact of tactile on the western end of the junction.



- 59 There is a reasonable example of a controlled pedestrian crossing just after the Kilmorey Street junction. Whilst the paving has been renewed and correctly installed the signals have not and have no tactile rotating cones.



- 60 The northern pavement narrows as it approaches the junction with Merchants Quay. Clutter on the pavement restricts pavement width further and creates obstacles.



- 61 The problems with clutter are worse on the southern section of pavement in the same location.



Monaghan Street, Merchant Quay, Margaret Street junction

- 62 The junction with Monaghan Street, Merchant Quay and Margaret Street is heavily trafficked. There is a controlled crossing across Monaghan Street which is reasonable apart from the signals not having rotating tactile cones.



- 63 There are further controlled crossings across Merchant Quay and across Margaret Street. The provision at these crossings is very poor with inappropriate use of tactile paving, poor locations for control boxes and no rotating tactile cones. There are public realm improvements in the vicinity so it would be hoped that problems with the pedestrian facilities will be addressed.



- 64 Pedestrians on Margaret Street are “corralled” by extensive railings in the approaches to the junction. This reinforces the perception that this junction is not a safe place for pedestrians.



Merchants Quay towards Sugar Island

- 65 The eastern side of this section of Merchants Quay is currently undergoing public realm improvements. This will hopefully improve what is currently a poor pedestrian environment. The pavement on the western side of Merchants Quay here is narrow and in poor condition in places.



- 66 The frontage of buildings extend into the pavement in one location forcing pedestrians into the road.



- 67 At the busy junction with Edward Street there are dropped kerbs but no tactile paving.



68 Cars block the pavement around a car showroom.



69 Parked cars extend onto the pavement creating a series of obstacles on what is already a narrow footway which is further restricted by utility equipment.



- 70 There is a non-standard in-line controlled crossing at the junction of Merchants Quay and Sugar Island. The tactile paving on the northern side of the road do not appear to lead to the end of the pavement which is narrower than the tactile. This is confusing and potentially hazardous for people with a visual impairment.



Sugar Island

- 71 There is a controlled zebra crossing at this point across Sugar Island. The wrong colour tactile paving has been laid.



- 72 Bins and other clutter obstruct what is already a narrow pavement on both sides of the road.



Bank Parade

- 73 There is a broad raised in-line uncontrolled crossing around the junction between Bank Parade and Sugar Island. No tactile paving is provided.



- 74 There is a further crossing opportunity outside the entrance to the Council offices. Again no tactile paving has been provided. Parked cars block one side.



- 75 Unmarked bollards opposite the Council Office restrict pavement width and represent a potential obstacle as does the carriage of the cannon.



- 76 An in-line uncontrolled crossing opportunity is provided close to the junction with Kildare Street. The kerbs have been dropped but no tactile paving has been provided.



Next Steps

Imtac has previously been involved in a similar audits of pedestrian facilities in Belfast City Centre, Lisburn and Bangor³. Following the publication of the these reports 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 Newry. 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.

³ Belfast Streets Ahead Quality Walking Corridor Review (Aecom 2010), Report on Walking Routes in Lisburn City Centre (Imtac 2013), Report on Walking Routes in Bangor Town Centre (Imtac 2013).