

Minutes of the 133rd Imtac Meeting

Date and place: 8th June 2020, ZOOM meeting.

Present: Bert Bailie (Chairperson), Sheelagh McRandal, June Best, Sam Bell, Jean Dunlop, Aaron McKane, Alison Lockhart, Christine McClements, Eileen Drumm, Paul McCloskey, Dave Morton and Daryl Cupples.

Observers: Richard Williams (Consumer Council), Scott McClenaghan (Department for Infrastructure), Naomi Roberts (Equality Commission), Terry Butler (Translink).

Secretariat: Michael Lorimer

Apologies: Andy Boal, Nuala Crilly, Diane Marks.

1. Introductions and updates

1.1 Bert welcomed everyone and asked participants to introduce themselves.

2. Draft basic guidelines for the development of inclusive walking and cycling infrastructure in response to COVID-19

2.1 Michael briefed members about the background to the paper including plans announced by the Minister for temporary measures to make it easier for people to walk, wheel and cycle post lockdown. Michael also highlighted a number of additional changes to the current paper including mention of opposition to the use of shared space.

2.2 Members suggested inclusion of additional points including the prohibitive costs of cycling equipment for some disabled people and the need to make sure that rural issues are acknowledged.

Members also raised potential difficulties with pavement cafes and outdoor seating once pubs and restaurants re-open.

Action: Members were asked to submit additional comments before the end of the day.

Action: Members agreed that the Chairperson should sign off the final paper.

3. Draft Imtac statement about travel with assistance dogs post-Brexit transitional arrangements

3.1 Bert, Michael and June briefed members about the background to the paper including a recent meeting with DAERA officials. Bert stressed the urgency of increasing awareness of potential difficulties and briefed members on plans to contact local Ministers.

3.2 Members suggested the value in raising greater awareness amongst wider pet owners. Members also asked that greater clarity be provided on travel between NI and RoI and the wider EU.

Action: Members were asked to submit additional comments before the end of the day.

Action: Members agreed that the Chairperson should sign off the final paper.

4. Covid-19 updates

4.1 Michael briefed members on recent discussions around the reopening of Belfast City Centre and comments submitted to the Department about draft guidance to passengers and operators in relation to travel during COVID-19.

4.2 Michael and Terry briefed members about discussions at the recent Translink Accessibility Working Group and the draft guidelines providing passenger assistance during COVID-19.

4.3 Members asked that the guidelines also make reference to older people. Queries were also raised about the use of face coverings

(and the need for exemptions), prioritising lift access for those who need this only, the use of lanyards to highlight passengers who might require assistance / priority access and the arrangements for managing demand on reduced capacity services.

- 4.4 Michael highlighted the importance of agreeing assistance standards and communicating these and wider service impacts to disabled people, older people and carers.

Action: Members to submit comments by Thursday 11th June 2020.

5. Minutes of the last meeting / Matters arising

- 5.1 The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

Proposed: Sheelagh McRandal Seconded: Aaron McKane

- 5.2 Actions pending included:

- A letter to Minister Hargey re pavement cafes
- A draft report into urban and rural DRT
- The crash testing of wheelchairs / scooters.

6. Any other business

- 6.1 Members asked about the proposed work on inclusive design with DfC. Michael explained the priority given to the emergency response to COVID-19 but highlighted a proposed round table to be hosted by DfC in the near future.

Action: Michael to follow up with DfC.

- 6.2 Scott highlighted some of the on-going financial challenges COVID-19 is creating for the Department and the services it funds. Members highlighted how the limited availability of community transport and taxi services will impact on disabled people and older people as lockdown is eased.

- 6.3 Naomi briefed members about the on-going response from the Equality Commission to the COVID-19 situation.
- 6.4 Members discussed the recent meeting updating on the development of the Belfast Transport Hub. Acknowledging the good work that has been done to date members highlighted the following as key issues: (1) use of contrasting materials internally, (2) emergency evacuation from the proposed mezzanine level, (3) alternatives to the proposed internal Bluetooth navigational aid (BlindSquare) and (4) the provision of spending areas for assistance dogs. Members also agreed that highlighting operational issues at this time was important to inform the development of the infrastructure.

7.0 Future meetings

- 7.1 Bert proposed to schedule dates for quarterly Imtac meetings supplemented by much shorter ad hoc meetings to deal with issues arising from the current situation.

Action: Michael to send out future Imtac meeting dates.