

Minutes of the 138th Imtac Meeting

Date and place: 29th September 2021, ZOOM meeting.

Present: Bert Bailie [BB] (Chairperson), Aaron McKane [AMc], Brian Murray [BM], Paul McCloskey [PMc], Alison Lockhart [AL], Andy Boal [AB], Dave Morton [DM] Jackson Minford [JM].

Observers: Attracta Tremers [AT] (Department for Infrastructure), Brian Drury [BD] (Equality Commission), Richard Williams [RW] (Consumer Council), Andrea Brown [AB] (Disability Action).

Secretariat: Michael Lorimer [ML]

Apologies: Diane Marks [DM], Terry McCorry [TMc], June Best [JB], Dermot Devlin [DD], Eileen Drumm [ED], Jean Dunlop [JD], Christine McClements [CMc], Vivien Blakely [VB].

1. Welcome and introductions

1.1 BB welcomed BD and AB to their first Imtac meeting. He asked everyone to introduce themselves.

2. Chairperson's Updates

2.1 BB updated members on correspondence regarding the Executive Covid Recovery Plan sent to the First and Deputy Ministers in early August. Despite an initial acknowledgement no formal response has been received. Following discussion, it was agreed to co-ordinate further correspondence in partnership with like-minded organisations.

Action: ML and AB to discuss organisations. ML to co-ordinate correspondence with TEO.

Action: BD agreed to explore what role IMNI could play in a coordinated approach.

- 2.2 BB updated members on the recent meeting with Minister Mallon, acknowledging the Minister's swift response to his correspondence regarding the COVID Recovery Plan. As well as concerns about the Plan and the presentation of the Annual Report a range of other issues were discussed including taxis and members concerns about bus service level reductions post COVID. He welcomed the Minister's proposal to involve Imtac on a working group looking at implementing aspects of the new PSA with Translink.
- 2.3 BB briefed members on a meeting with Chris Conway, David Cowan and Terry Butler. Although areas of disagreement were highlighted it was agreed ensure pre-COVID engagement between Imtac and Translink be reinstated including meetings between Chair, CEO and Senior Management Rep and regular meetings of the Translink Accessibility Working Group. It was also agreed look at briefing Translink Teams on the implications of their reasonable adjustments duty and progress the delivery of DET to the Senior Management Team.
- 2.4 BB updated members on a recent meeting with Andrea Brown to discuss secretariat secondment and areas of common interest including the development of the Disability Strategy.
- 2.5 BB briefed members on the latest meeting of the A4N Group, hosted by Imtac in August. Issues discussed included post Brexit travel with assistance dogs, gaps in data and research and taxis. He highlighted the need to improve engagement from the Welsh Government in the work of the Group.
- 2.6 BB highlighted a meeting with Motability in July, linked to the work of A4N, to discuss concerns how the organisation uses extensive reserves. He explained that this work is being led by MACS but that Motability has approached him seeking an introductory meeting with Imtac.

Action: ML to progress meeting with Motability and keep members informed.

3. Observer updates

3.1 AT updated members on some additional issues arising from the recent meeting with the Minister including using the Department's Walking and Cycling Group to raise concerns about barriers on active travel paths and progress with the proposed pavement parking campaign. She also highlighted the Ministers thanks for Imtac's input into the recent published report into the survey on the impact of the Concessionary Fares Scheme.

3.2 RW updated members on the recent review of the websites of local airports and Translink. A report will be issued in due course. He highlighted a accessibility audit of City of Derry Airport due to take place on the 4th November, input from the Consumer Council on the new PSA between DfI and Translink, work with Guide Dogs to raise awareness amongst local airports, airlines and ferry companies of post Brexit arrangements for travel with assistance dogs and concerns raised with Easyjet and the CCA about the airlines face cover policy.

Action: ML and RW to liaise over the City of Derry accessibility audit.

3.3 BD updated members on preparations for next report to the UN on key issues relating to the UK implementation on UNCRPD as well as other policy work including responding the DoF consultation on Changing Places provision and the DWP Health and Disability Green Paper.

3.4 AB briefed members on key issues for Disability Action including the importance of influencing the development of the new Disability Strategy and research being undertaken to inform the list of issues for the UNCRPD report.

3.5 PMc asked whether the airport website audit included City of Derry and when social distancing measures would be removed on DATS

services. RW confirmed City of Derry was included. AB confirmed that social distancing measures would remain in place at least until after the next Executive COVID update.

4. Task 2 Post Covid Priorities – post workshop discussion / next steps

4.1 ML briefed members about discussions at the two recent workshops with members to discuss the 6 key strategic priority areas. He indicated that the discussions had reinforced how many of the priorities were interlinked. He also highlighted discussions around how climate change and technology could change concepts of mobility in the short, medium, and long term and that this needed to be reflected in the papers. ML indicated the next steps would involve drafting papers reflecting long term strategic issues and short-term practical measures. He proposed that the Committee use papers to undertake wider engagement with Deaf people, disabled people, older people and others. BB asked members to endorse this approach.

Action: ML to draft papers considering workshop discussion and circulate for member comments.

Action: ML to develop plans for engagement around strategic priorities.

4.2 BM asked about the likelihood of new ticketing systems resulting in the half-fare concession becoming free. ML responded that the Minister had indicated her support for equalising concessions but resources remain a barrier. He agreed that new ticketing systems were likely to impact specifically on half fare Smartpass users.

Action: Members requested an update on the roll out of the ticketing system at the next meeting of the Translink Accessibility Working Group.

5. Other updates

- 5.1 ML updated members on developments with the Disability Strategy including agreement on a vision and outcomes, revisions to the timetable, workshops held in August around strategic actions, comments on a proposed position paper and planned further engagement workshops in October. BB asked that the minutes record the Committee's thanks to JB for her ongoing work on the Co Design Group.
- 5.2 ML updated members on a recent meeting with DAERA regarding post Brexit travel with assistance dog arrangements attended by JB and himself. Grace periods have been extended indefinitely meaning no routine checks will be undertaken for travel between GB and NI.
- 5.3 ML briefed members about engagement with Belfast City Council (BCC) around the next steps in implementing the Bolder Vision for Belfast including a meeting attended by JB and himself where the importance of public transport access and accessible parking in the city centre was discussed. A consultation will be issued shortly around connectivity and the city centre. Imtac has offered to assist BCC to engage with Deaf people, disabled people, older people and carers.
- 5.4 ML updated members on follow up meetings held with DfI following the meeting with Minister Mallon about pavement parking. The Department have agreed to fund a public awareness campaign which is currently being developed by Ardmore Advertising. It is planned to run the campaign in conjunction with a consultation on options for tackling pavement parking.
- 5.5 ML briefed members about meetings with Translink that have taken place to discuss the pilot of new low-floor coaches and the roll out of AV on buses outside Belfast. Members will have an opportunity to review the new coach design in coming weeks.
Action: ML to circulate details of low-floor coach event.

- 5.6 ML informed members of meetings to discuss proposed cycling infrastructure Belfast and the review of pop-up lanes in the city. ML continues to attend the Junctions Working Group looking at improving walk, wheel, and cycle access at key junctions in the city centre. He indicated access at bus stops remains a major issue.
- 5.7 ML updated members on progress with reducing barriers on the Hazelbank Park shared path with broad agreement with the Council to widen the gaps between barriers. He highlighted raising barriers on other paths operated by Councils at a recent Walking and Cycling Group meeting and a broad agreement to work with DfI and Sustrans to seek their removal.

6. Current consultations

- 6.1 BB asked members to consider a response on proposals to light the Comber Greenway. Members agreed accessibility standards are required for Greenways and lighting should always be provided in an urban environment. Members acknowledged that other considerations applied in rural areas and proposals for lighting should be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Action: ML to complete the response on the Comber Greenway lighting consultation based on members comments.

- 6.2 ML briefed members on the proposals for the routeing of BRT 2 Phase 2 north south route. It is proposed that Imtac does not express a preference for the North route, other than prioritising social inclusion in the decision. He also highlighted issues around connectivity to the Transport Hub, the impact of proposals to include Donegall Place on the route, easy interchange between Glider and other bus services and the impact of BRT on existing bus services and the need for better feeder services.

Action: ML to draft a response on BRT Phase 2 routes and circulate to members for comment before submitting a final response on the 4th October.

6.3 BB and ML briefed members on the consultation proposing a rise in taxis fares to assist the trade in recovery from COVID. ML highlighted the specific impact a fare rise would have on disabled people and older people but acknowledged this needed to be balanced against the need for services to be available. RW acknowledged the difficulty in balancing these issues. AL pointed out the significant issues encountered by disabled people accessing taxis prior to the pandemic.

Action: ML to draft a response to the taxis fares consultation and circulate for comment. The draft will indicate the impact of fare rises on Deaf, disabled and older people and the need for the Department to consider measures to mitigate the impact of any changes.

6.4 BB asked members to consider a response to the Department of Finance consultation to amend Building Regulations to require greater provision of Changing Places facilities. ML indicated the role of CMC in securing the consultation and briefed members on a recent conversation with her regarding the changes. Members agreed that Imtac should welcome and support the proposal as well as indicating the wider benefits of Changing Places Toilets, the need for funding from Government and a proactive cross government approach when investing in new or refurbishing buildings.

Action: ML to draft a response on the DoF consultation and circulate to members for comment before submission.

7. Minutes of last meeting / Matters arising

7.1 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

Proposed: Aaron McKane Seconded: Alison Lockhart

7.2 There were no further matters arising.

8. Any other business

- 8.1 BB explained to members proposals to change the recording of minutes including the use of initials rather than first names and a list of actions at the end of minutes.
- 8.2 ML briefed members on initial proposals to look at restarting face to face meetings. He explained it is proposed to look at face to face full lmtac meetings, retaining remote/virtual meetings for smaller meetings. ML indicated that remote/virtual attendance will be a retained as an option for any member and that venues will need to facilitate this as well as social distancing and our usual accessibility requirements. A more detailed risk assessment will be undertaken for future face to face meetings.
- 8.3 AMc raised issues with lift deployment during recent coach journeys.
Action: BB agreed to raise general issues about the operation of coaches with Translink, making clear he wasn't addressing individual complaints.
- 8.4 PMc raised concerns about parking provision at Drumahoe Park & Ride.
Action: Park & Ride provision to be added to the agenda of the next meeting of the Translink Accessibility Working Group.

9. Dates of future meetings

- 9.1 Wednesday 1st December 2pm – 3.30pm

List of actions

- Action 1 ML and AB to discuss organisations. ML to co-ordinate correspondence with TEO.**
- Action 2 BD agreed to explore what role IMNI could play in a coordinated approach.**
- Action 3 ML to progress meeting with Motability and keep members informed.**
- Action 4 ML and RW to liaise over the City of Derry accessibility audit.**
- Action 5 ML to draft papers considering workshop discussion and circulate for member comments.**
- Action6 ML to develop plans for engagement around strategic priorities.**
- Action 7 Members requested an update on the roll of out of the ticketing system at the next meeting of the Translink Accessibility Working Group.**
- Action 8: ML to circulate details of low-floor coach event.**
- Action 9 ML to complete the response on the Comber Greenway lighting consultation based on members comments.**
- Action 10 ML to draft a response on BRT Phase 2 routes and circulate to members for comment before submitting a final response on the 4th October.**
- Action 11 ML to draft a response to the taxis fares consultation and circulate for comment. The draft will indicate the impact of fare rises on Deaf, disabled and older people**

and the need for the Department to consider measures to mitigate the impact of any changes.

Action 12 ML to draft a response on the DoF consultation and circulate to members for comment before submission.

Action 13 BB agreed to raise general issues about the operation of coaches with Translink, making clear he wasn't addressing individual complaints.

Action 14 Park & Ride provision to be added to the agenda of the next meeting of the Translink Accessibility Working Group.