

Minutes of the 149th Imtac Meeting

Date and time: 26th June 2024 at 1pm

Place: Hybrid meeting held at the Crescent Arts Centre, Belfast and via ZOOM.

Present: Bert Bailie [BB] (Chairperson), Terry McCorry [TMc], Vivien Blakely [VB], Andy Boal [ABo], Dave Morton [DMo] Jackson Minford [JM], Eileen Drumm [ED], Dermot Devlin [DD], Lynsey Burrows [LB], Paula Meenan [PM], Rebecca Bamford [RB].

Observers: Judith Andrews [JA] & Scott McClenaghan [SMc] (both Department for Infrastructure), Michelle Kelly [MK] (Consumer Council), Simon Corrigan [SC], Danielle Campbell [DC] & Rosanna Jack [RJ] (all Translink), Brian Drury [BD] (Equality Commission).

Secretariat: Michael Lorimer [ML].

Apologies: Aaron McKane [AMc], June Best [JB], Sam Bell [SB], Christine McClements [CMc], Hayley Smallwood [HS], Hannah Brown [HB], Andrea Brown [ABr], Barbara Fleming [BF].

1. Welcome and introductions

1.1 BB welcomed everyone. He asked everyone to introduce themselves. He congratulated MK about her recent appointment as Head of Transport at the Consumer Council.

2. Chairperson's update

2.1 BB updated members on correspondence to and responses from four Executive Ministers and the Infrastructure Committee. He briefed members on the recent positive meeting with Minister O'Dowd and an invitation to brief the Infrastructure Committee on taxis.

- 2.2 BB briefed members about other developments including the conclusion of the recruitment process, discussions with DfI around Pavement Café licensing, discussions with Translink about bus and coach procurement and the hosting of the A4N meeting by Imtac in April. BB thanked ML for input into the development of a CIHT paper entitled “Creating a Public Realm for All”.
- 2.3 BB updated members recent meetings of the Business Committee including the finalisation of the annual accounts and Annual Report in preparation for the AGM. He highlighted ongoing work to review and update the Policy & Procedures Manual and the recommendation that June Best be the Imtac Representative on the IMNI Disability Forum. Members approved this recommendation.
- Action 1: ML to circulate an updated Policy & Procedures Manual to all members before the next meeting.**

3. Observer updates

- 3.1 In the absence of ABr, ML highlighted comments from Disability Action on the DfI Budget EQIA Consultation highlighting the significant funding reductions experienced by community transport operators over recent years and the impact of a static budget during times of rising costs.
- 3.2 BD updated members on current relevant consultations which are to be considered and discussed later in the agenda. He highlighted that JB has been appointed as chairperson of the IMNI Forum. Finally, Brian updated members on the recent publication of CRPD Committee report into the UK Government, highlighting work to promote the report has been restricted during the election period.
- Action 2: ML to circulate the most recent Equality Commission newsletter with details of the CRPD Committee report.**

3.3 MK updated members about the development of a report by the Consumer Council following the recent survey about assistance services at airports. She highlighted the recent high-profile incident involving disabled people at Belfast International Airport and next steps in dealing with issues around the incident. Finally, MK informed members about a likely upcoming meeting of the Electric Vehicle Consumer Sub Group.

3.4 RJ updated members about the recent visit to York Street station, a visit to the Wayfinding Centre in Dublin, the ability to use Alexa for journey planning and plans to test the loop systems on Foyle Metro buses.

Action 3: Members are invited to test and feedback on the Translink journey planning function on Alexa.

3.5 RJ highlighted the priority being given to accessibility around the changes to bus services and the closure of the rail line to facilitate the ongoing works at Grand Central Station in Belfast.

3.6 RJ concluded by highlighting the recent delivery of DET to the Senior Leadership Team and the Infrastructure Team, thanking members for their assistance with guided journeys. Another session is planned for October. RJ confirmed Chris Conway plans to attend the Imtac meeting in September.

3.7 DC updated members on the development of a new guide for Grand Central station. She thanked CMc for assistance in procuring a sensory pod and equipment. Finally, DC highlighted ongoing work around finalising the design for tactile guidance surfaces and the procurement of the NaviLens wayfinding system.

3.8 ML highlighted some of the positive changes being included in Phase 2 of Grand Central including WAV parking, an Assistance Dog spending area and inclusive cycle parking. Members also highlighted the need to inform the public about the new Translink mobile ticketing app. Members also asked about whether the video about using the Half Fare Smartpass has been completed.

Action 4: RJ / DC to check on the status of the Half Fare Smartpass video.

- 3.9 SMc highlighted the recent positive meeting between Imtac members and the Minister. He explained that indicative budget allocations have been made, with final budget decisions to be made following the current consultation. Responses submitted by the 9th July will be considered in making final decisions.
- 3.10 SMc highlighted ongoing work identifying priorities for the Department for inclusion in the Imtac Work Programme. It is hoped to conclude discussion and agree the Work Programme in coming weeks.
- 3.11 SMc informed members that the first phase of the review of community transport was complete and a report was with Minister for decisions on next steps.
- 3.12 SMc indicated that the Department was monitoring arrangements for line closures and bus services connected with Grand Central Station works. Members expressed concerns about the accessibility of arrangements particularly for journeys where there are multiple wheelchair users and other disabled people, connections between Lanyon Place station and the Europa and more broadly the promotion of the changes being introduced.
- 3.13 In response RJ assured members that arrangements were in place to ensure that transport would be available to accommodate more than one wheelchair user, she highlighted the shuttle bus between the Europa and Lanyon Place (also stopping at City Hospital and Botanic) and the comprehensive communication plan in place to make people aware of changes. ML said it is was impossible to do the works involved without some disruption, he urged members to provide feedback on issues when the changes are introduced so adjustments can be made.

Action 5: Members to provide feedback to ML about the impact of changes to bus and rail services in July.

3.14 BB asked about the situation around the use of private operators to deliver bus substitution services and the accessibility of services. RJ explained that fleet / operational requirements require the use of external operators who do not have any PSVAR compliant vehicle. BB indicated there needed to be further discussion about resolving PSVAR compliance issues.

Action 6: ML to facilitate further discussion involving Imtac, Dfl and Translink around PSVAR compliance and bus substitution services.

3.15 BB welcomed JA, Director of Public Transport Operations in Dfl, to the meeting. JA thanked BB and introduced herself to members, acknowledging the importance of the advice that Imtac gives.

4. Updates on Work Programme 2024 / 2025, working groups and other work

4.1 ML briefed members meetings with Translink about bus balancing and the future strategic direction of bus services. He also highlighted engagement with DfC around public realm in Belfast including a pause on plans for some of the 5Cs Streets while the Dfl ETP is being developed and Dfl Active Travel about cycle lanes around bus stops.

4.2 ML updated members on correspondence with Minister Lyons regarding the Disability Strategy and the subsequent briefing by disabled people to the Communities Committee. He explained that despite further correspondence from Minister O'Dowd to Minister Lyons there is no clarity about how and if the Disability Strategy will be progressed. ML thanked JB for her leadership on this issue.

5. Update on Access to Health and Transport task

5.1 RB gave members an overview of progress in developing the health and transport task including a framework document setting out milestones, the formation of a Steering Group and the

development of a draft survey. ML gave an overview of the Steering Group membership. Members asked whether the Public Health Agency are represented on the Steering Group. RB thanked BB, TMc and JB for their support in the development of the project.

Action 7: ML to check regarding PHA representation on the Steering Group.

5.2 ML asked for members support and feedback in developing and user testing the survey over the next few months.

Action 8: ML to circulate the latest draft of the health and transport survey for comment.

6. Current Consultations

6.1 ML briefed members about the background to the Executive Call for Evidence on gaps in equality legislation including the disparity between Northern Ireland and Great Britain in legal protections for disabled people. He highlighted the work of the Equality Commission on this issue. BD gave members an overview of the Commission's work on this issue.

Action 9: Members agreed Imtac should liaise with the Equality Commission in developing a submission.

Action 10: ML to circulate draft submission for comment.

6.2 ML briefed members on the potential impact of proposed budget decisions not only from DfI but also all Government Departments. He indicated that if implemented will result in regression in making travel easier for Deaf, disabled and older people. Members highlighted the importance of transport in doing everyday things and the likely addition costs on Government associated with making travel more difficult. Members noted the tight deadline for response.

Action 11: ML to draft a response to the EQIA consultation as a matter of urgency with the aim of submission by the 5th July.

6.3 ML briefed members about proposals from the UK Government to reform Personal Independence Payment (PIP), highlighting the negative consequences the proposals will have on the lives of disabled people including in getting round and access to wider benefits such as the Blue Badge Scheme.

Action 12: ML to draft a response to the DWP consultation and circulate to members for comment.

7. Minutes of the last meeting / matters arising

7.1 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

Proposed: Terry McCorry Seconded: Dermot Devlin

7.2 BB asked ML and ABo to liaise about progressing ABo's paper on Half Fare Smartpasses.

Action 13: ML and ABo to discuss progressing the Smartpass paper.

9 Any other business

9.1 There was no further business.

11 Date, time and venue of next meeting

11.1 The next meeting and Imtac AGM will be held on the 25th September 2024, at 1pm in the Crescent Arts Centre.

List of actions

Action 1: ML to circulate an updated Policy & Procedures Manual to all members before the next meeting.

Action 2: ML to circulate the most Equality Commission newsletter with details of the CRPD Committee report.

Action 3: Members are invited to test and feedback on the Translink journey planning function on Alexa.

- Action 4: RJ / DC to check on the status of the Half Fare Smartpass video.**
- Action 5: Members to provide feedback to ML about the impact of changes to bus and rail services in July.**
- Action 6: ML to facilitate further discussion involving Imtac, Dfl and Translink around PSVAR compliance and bus substitution services.**
- Action 7: ML to check regarding PHA representation on the Steering Group.**
- Action 8: ML to circulate the latest draft of the health and transport survey for comment.**
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- Action 12: ML to draft a response to the DWP consultation and circulate to members for comment.**
- Action 13: ML and ABo to discuss progressing the Smartpass paper.**