

Accessibility 4 Nations (A4N) Meeting

26/04/21 11.00 – 14.00

Attendees:

Scotland

Linda Bamford (MACS), David Hunter (MACS), Hilary Stubbs (MACS), Karen Armstrong Transport Scotland(TS), John Maxwell (TS), Alexis Ferguson (Secretariat).

Northern Ireland

Michael Lorimer Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC), June Best (IMTAC), Stuart Gilmore Department for Infrastructure and Roads (Dfi), Sam Bell (IMTAC – Session two only)

England

Keith Richards Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC), Paul Nash Department for Transport (DfT), Rajesh Mistry (DfT).

Apologies:

Wales

Suzanne Pomeroy (Welsh Government)

Bert Baillie (IMTAC).

Key Points and Actions:

1. Remit of the meeting, housekeeping and introductions

Linda, as Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting and let members know of apologies. She explained the remit and structure of the meeting, discussion points and reminded everyone of virtual meeting etiquette i.e. raise your electronic hand if you wish to speak, stay on mute etcetera.

2. Agreement of minutes from previous meeting and matters arising

Linda Bamford asked everyone if they were happy to sign off on the previous meetings minutes (October 2020). Everyone agreed they were happy to do so.

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There were however two matters arising from April 2020, that hadn't been covered in October 2020 and a further two from August 2020. Linda explained Motability and Travelling with Assistance Dogs Post Brexit would be taken under matters arising and she had scheduled in the two remaining outstanding matters arising in the short session after lunch as they may open up a wider discussion.

2.1 Motability – DH explained that he had redrafted the letter to Motability following publication of the Motability Operations Annual Report and suggested that in the first instance the letter should be sent to Barry Le Grys (Motability – Chief Executive). DH explained that he was looking for agreement of the content and sign off for the draft letter, which is asking for the continuation to reform value for money and governance of Motability arrangements, following scrutiny by the National Audit Office and Westminster Parliamentary Select Committees in recent years. The letter also states disappointment in relation to the lack of progress in these areas.

2.1.1 The letter also asks for two specific changes to policy, firstly that in future any surpluses generated by Motability operations in excess of operational needs are returned to customers each year as an annual dividend, rather than passed on to the Motability Charity, or being added to reserves; and secondly that customers who lease power wheelchairs, mobility scooters and similar personal mobility aids are permitted to keep them at the end of the lease period, rather than return to Motability for second hand sale and generation of further profits to the organisation. This would assist with the affordability of the lease scheme and be of great benefit to Motability customers, many struggling on low incomes or living in poverty.

2.1.2 MACS asked that their Secretariat share the most up to date version with IMTAC and DPTAC for their review and agreement.
(See Action List)

2.2 Post Brexit Transition Travel with Assistance Dogs – IMTAC update.

2.2.1 IMTAC updated that due to the NI protocols put in place, they now have different protections from the rest of the UK. NI will have their own pet passport, which will enable people to travel without barriers between the UK and EU.

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However, there are major issues for those in the rest of the UK who have to abide by a different set of protocols which will require travellers to have an animal health certificate for every journey they make. This will be impracticable for most travellers including in terms of financial implications. HS asked if KA/JM could raise this again with Transport Scotland officials and as it is a reserved matter, ask Transport Scotland Officials to put pressure on UK Government. **(See Action list).**

2.2.2 IMTAC also updated that there is a lot of mis-information being shared. A meeting is taking place on 27 April 2021, where they will seek to gather more information on this issue, but the long and short of it is from a NI perspective people can at least travel with assistance dogs, however rest of UK remains a major issue. IMTAC offered to assist their 4 Nations colleagues where they could by sharing their experiences in gaining improvements that worked for people travelling with guide dogs and assistance dogs.

3. Session One - Updates from advisory bodies and government organisations.

3.1 Each organisation provided updates on its work programme since the previous 4 Nation meeting in October 2020.

3.2 For MACS, Linda Bamford highlighted that:

3.2.1 This year MACS have produced and agreed both their Strategic Plan and Work Plan. The Strategic Plan sets the roadmap for the next 3 to 4 years. This includes 5 high level objectives, which may span more than one year but is reviewed annually to align with progress and ministerial priorities. The Work Plan is revisited annually as well.

3.2.2 MACS have also confirmed their themed Development Days scheduled for April and August 2021, this offers an opportunity to gain a better understanding in particular areas, which align to the annual Work Plan.

3.2.3 November is when MACS prepare their draft work plan and also hold their annual Scoping Day, where they generally hear from the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity.

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This leads to discussions and amendments to the draft Work Plan before further full discussions in January to agree the following years Work Plan and then seek agreement and sign off from their work by the Cabinet Secretary in February. MACS also receive an update from Transport Scotland's Accessibility Policy Team on progress with the Accessible Travel Framework Annual Delivery Plan in November.

3.2.4 This year MACS also introduced "Knowing me, Knowing you" Team sessions where guest speakers were invited to discuss areas of interest to MACS. This helps to deepen their understanding and build relationships with other organisations. This years' themes have focussed on hidden disabilities.

3.2.5 Finally MACS have just completed a selection process and recruited 6 new Committee members.

3.3 For Transport Scotland, Karen Armstrong highlighted that:

3.3.1 Accessible Travel Policy Team had been pivoted into Covid-19 priority areas with the team returning to TS around October. Since that time the team have worked on various different strands of priority areas, including publishing a progress report on the 2019-2020 Annual Delivery Plan [ADP progress report](#) in January.

3.3.2 She stated that the Convener of MACS had asked her to focus on the team's engagement with disabled people to ascertain the priorities for the coming year. This had involved a 6 month period that included face to face and group discussions, a series of webinars including Returning to Public Transport, 20 Minute Neighbourhoods through an equalities lens and spaces for people, as well as weekly polls undertaken by Disability Equality Scotland.

3.3.3 The outcome of these discussions has resulted in the following draft priorities, which have still to be agreed by the Accessible Travel Steering Group:

Passenger Assist: Continuing to raise awareness of Thistle Assistance and Passenger Assist and explore opportunities for similar offerings with Bus Operators.

Door to Door Journey Planning: Promote and raise awareness of technology and initiatives that provide passengers with timely and up to date information to help them to make informed decisions and thus, ensuring they feel safe, confident and equipped with the information they need to complete their journey.

Transport to Health and Social Care: As we transition out of lockdown we will work with Health colleagues and key stakeholders to ensure that multi agency transport initiatives continue to operate to good effect in transporting disabled people to receive medical treatment. We will continue to push for change and ensure that collaborative working is at the heart of this policy; making sure that the patients' needs are at the forefront of activity.

Demand Responsive Transport: what is their role/what gaps are they filling – possible research piece.

Training and awareness: Work with Transport providers to ensure that all front line staff (or just drivers) are provided with up-to-date, regular disability awareness / equality training

Rural: We need to be aware of the impacts on transport in a rural setting. We know that a one-size fits all approach will not work. We are therefore exploring what a solutions might look and feel like.

3.3.4 Additionally an update was given in relation to the recent social media launch of the Hate Crime Charter on public transport in Scotland launched on 24 March, a day before the pre-election period. The Charter supports a zero tolerance to all forms of hate crime on public transport and information on how to report it.

This was undertaken in partnership with Police Scotland, British Transport Police, People First, SESTRan and DES. It also followed a pilot undertaken in December 2019 in both rail and bus depots with around 1.2 million viewing the Charter over an 8 week period.

3.3.5 It encourages people to recognise and report hate crime. Information about how to report it is contained on the Accessible Travel Hub website where there is a dedicated page:

www.accessibletravel.scot/hate-crime

3.3.6 On launch day the materials shared via Disability Equality Scotland social media channels (Facebook and Twitter) reached a total of **55,954** people and has since risen to **90,573**.

3.3.7 When taking into consideration the social media activity of DES's partner/network organisations, it is estimated that the campaign materials received an organic reach of over **300,000 individuals**.

3.3.8 DES received **1,115 page views on the Accessible Travel Hub on launch day this has since rose to 3,435 page views in total**. The Hate Crime page features key campaign messages, including how to recognise and report hate crime in a variety of accessible formats.

3.3.9 TS Comms shared the press release with **382 media contacts**

3.3.10 The success of the Charter will be monitored through baseline surveys with three, key providers and followed up to gauge increased awareness and understanding of hate crime.

3.4 For IMTAC, Michael Lorimer highlighted that:

3.4.1 Focus has been on re-opening town and city centres and ill thought out pedestrian spaces. One concern has been in relation to pavement parking and a letter has recently been sent to Ministers to consider 3 options – utilising existing Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs), civil enforcement and Scottish approach to ban pavement parking. Agreement has now been reached on a meeting.

3.4.2 In the process of developing a NI Disability Strategy, June Best is part of the co-design group as transport is a large part of this work going forward, including the built environment. Further engagement work is required with the wider sector and likely to have a draft strategy out for consultation in the summer.

3.4.3 IMTAC also referred to consultation on Programme for Government (PfG) draft outcomes framework and the absence of inclusion and human rights, looking at taking the Scottish Government approach to take forward rights based approach. IMTAC also mentioned recent discussions with Translink and Department for infrastructure and Roads(Dfi) regarding vehicle design and procurement.

Also discussed was a new low floor design coach being introduced by the National Transport Authority in the Republic of Ireland and agreed to share with the group. (**See Action List**).

3.4.4 Finally, IMTAC too have undertaken a recruitment process.

3.5 For DPTAC, Keith Richards highlighted that:

3.5.1 No recruitment process for them, but had been busy responding to Covid-19, especially in relation to face coverings and social distancing, working closely with the Department for Transport (DfT) to ensure messaging was clear particularly in relation to exemptions. Hate Crime incidents had increased and although people's behaviours can't be changed, messaging needs to be clear that enforcement is not for other passengers. DPTAC produced a position statement on this issue.

3.5.2 DPTAC have also been commenting on the recently published national Bus Strategy, and were pleased to see that a review of PSVAR had been brought forward to 2023, this will be challenging but DPTAC will work closely with DfT on this issue. They have also published a position statement on rail replacement and home to school transport.

3.5.3 Other areas of focus have been the Wheelchair Reference Review and the Williams Rail Review or as it is now known Williams/Shapps Review. This is likely to include more focus on accessibility at railways and quality customer service.

3.5.4 Also awaiting the publication of the National Strategy for Disabled People and Inclusive Mobility and Tactile Paving and are also keeping a watching brief on e-scooter trials.

3.5.5 Finally, Keith mentioned a fatality at Eden Park and that DPTAC are meeting with Network Rail's Chief Executive to discuss this issue especially around lack of consistency of signals, signs, tactile edge, lighting and maintenance.

3.6 For DfT Paul Nash highlighted that:

3.6.1 Like many other policies areas work on the Inclusive Transport Strategy was scaled back due to Covid-19, however progress has been made on a couple of areas particularly the high level disability training produced last year and grant funding to support accessible travel, with the outcomes of this likely to be announced next month.

3.6.2 Mention was also given to the National Bus Strategy and the National Strategy for Disabled People being led by the Cabinet Office and likely to be published in the Spring and the publication of the Inclusive Mobility and Tactile Paving Research.

3.6.3 Reference was also given to "It's Everyone's Journey" looking to change people's behaviours as they return to public transport, aimed at a launch around 17 May 2021.

4. General Discussion from Four Nations Feedback

4.1 The Chair asked if there were any specific questions in relation to the updates from the Nations.

4.1.1 MACS mentioned that pavement parking provision may not come into force in Scotland until 2023 but this was not a confirmed stance.

4.1.2 DPTAC mentioned that they had been working closely with the Williams Review and were optimistic about its outcomes.

4.1.3 IMTAC stated that they shared frustrations coming across in relation to the human rights approach with particular focus on the service agreement with NI's sole operator of public transport.

This is an opportunity to mainstream accessibility and inclusion into the process, especially in relation to moving beyond the minimum requirements and moving to what people actually need. Meeting legal requirements on vehicle design is one thing but there are other things in terms of legal requirements – most train operating companies have an accessible alternative NI doesn't. IMTAC expressed that there were lots of opportunities through PfG but they needed to hard wire into system not an “add on”.

5. Session Two - General Discussion from Four Nations Feedback. Sam Bell joined the meeting at this time.

5.1 Changing Place facilities at key transport termini - Northern Ireland are currently looking to amend Building Regulations to require Changing Place facilities with major developments but there is some suggestion transport infrastructure will not be included. It was stated that NI provision was not as good as that across the rest of the UK. They are looking to amend building regulations but there has been resistance from key transport terminals. IMTAC wanted to ask what approach other nations have taken.

5.1.1 MACS had previously forwarded IMTAC a copy of the Planning Circular 1/2020: Changing Places Toilets Regulations - Guidance on the requirements for Changing Places Toilets, introduced by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. IMTAC stated that they found this a very positive step by the Scottish Government and understood how this would be useful.

MACS stated that Scotland has a Directory/Map of Changing Places toilets and asked that this be shared with the group (**see Action list**) and reinforced that progress has been seen since the introduction of the Planning Scotland Act 2019 which made specific recommendations and is a good lever especially in relation to funding bids such as at transport termini and the recent accessible ferries fund where grants were given to include changing places facilities on ferries.

5.1.2 DfT updated that there is no legal requirement for changing places toilets but they have tried to encourage through grant funding. The majority of motorway stations now have them. The Inclusive Transport Strategy set out an aspiration by 2030; that all transport hubs and terminals will meet the needs of disabled people including toilet and changing facilities, it was disappointing to note that there was no mention within the recently published Bus Strategy.

5.2 Cycling Infrastructure and Bus Stop Design – Given the increasing policy prominence given to promoting walking, wheeling and cycling there is merit in discussing how we ensure inclusivity is at the heart of measures.

IMTAC are particularly keen to learn if there are examples of where disabled people, policy makers and the active travel lobby sector have worked well together as conflict rather than consensus appears to be the norm.

5.2.1 NI updated that their Assembly is going to plough ahead with this, however there was a consensus that current design standards did little to clarify who had right of way at points where pedestrians and cyclists interact and that more required to be done to influence behaviour. Solutions from active travel organisations had included changes to infrastructure, changes and clarification to rights of way in the Highway Code, better cycle training programmes and targeted engagement through social media, press and face to face. In that vein “the ask” to the wider group was around examples of good practice approaches.

5.2.2 MACS recognised the issues being faced and mentioned that in Scotland a walk, wheel, cycling group have tried to build bridges particularly with sight loss organisations to find a way to accommodate inclusive design to improve the situation, they are however unaware if a solution has been found. Other issues have also arisen in relation to pop up cycle lanes removing Blue Badge spaces. MACS updated that the Scottish Sustainable Transport Hierarchy sent the right message with walking and wheeling at the top. IMTAC confirmed that they had now reached agreement with their Ministers etcetera to also adopt “Walking, Wheeling and Cycling”.

5.3 Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) and Mobility As A Service (MaaS) - To update on MACS current work around DRT and MaaS and seek examples of good practice from the UK.

5.3.1 MACS gave an overview of the definition and concept of MaaS. Its main purpose is about modernising and making access to public transport easier and simpler for all. Also, encouraging model shift to public transport, reduce reliance on private cars and support key Government agendas to reduce carbon emissions for healthier more sustainable travel and build on innovation and digital skills. MaaS supports this agenda as an enabler, using digital solutions to improve people's access to travel information, allowing them to make informed decisions on journey options. This includes platforms to gather personalised travel requirements into a single app. It will provide solutions for improved end-to-end journey planning and travel information, including smart ticketing, apps, integrated fares and retailing.

5.3.2 Phase one projects are currently running with Regional Transport Partnerships and partners in local government. HITRANS in the Highlands and Islands region, are looking at bringing real time data together in one app, which is due to be launched shortly and TACTRANS which is developing a pilot in their area and working with NHS Tayside looking at transport to a particular hospital unit. The final project is based in Dundee looking at active travel options for ticket purchasing to public events etcetera.

5.3.3 Second phase of MaaS applications has been launched. MACS sit on the panel and critique the applications from an accessibility point of view. There has been a large increase in the number of applications received in this phase and DRT is the theme in many of them. They have included different ideas including replacing normal public transport routes with DRT. MACS asked if there were any similar ventures in the other nations.

5.3.4 DPTAC stated that DRT is mentioned in the DfT National Bus Strategy and gave examples of projects in Teesdale and Seven Oaks. DPTAC raised issues around the financial viability of these schemes and also the reliance on app based smart phone technology, which not everyone has access to.

5.3.5 IMTAC stated that door to door travel has been their focus for a long time, particularly in a rural setting, however the number of successful DRT schemes in NI are relatively modest and they have been struggling to get it on the agenda due to high costs. However they would be happy to take away any learning points from the Scottish models.

6. Session Three - National Strategy for Disabled People. Keith Richards provided an update on the National Strategy for Disabled People (England) in response to matters arising from the previous meeting.

6.1 DPTAC updated that they are currently awaiting final publication of this document after the election period. This is being led by Cabinet Office but has a cross government approach looking at the issues disabled people face. DPTAC have fed into the built environment section. They raised staff training and awareness, access to infrastructure and accessible environments including things like signage, more staff at railway stations, passengers rights and regulations, particularly in relation to driving forward better enforcement, leading to better behaviours. Another key point to have come from this is whether similar bodies to DPTAC should sit within other areas of Government.

6.2 DPTAC also raised the Centre for Social Justice Disability Commission's response to the Strategy, which can be found here:

<https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/library/now-is-the-time-a-report-by-the-csj-disability-commission>.

They have dedicated a chapter to transport, with one of the main issues focussed on the lack of consistency in redress when things go wrong for disabled people.

6.3 It is hoped that the Strategy will be published middle/late May.

6.4 MACS referred to the 2019 Scottish Poverty and Inequality Commission’s Transport Poverty in Scotland report that has a human rights based approach highlighting the role transport plays in enacting your human rights.

<https://povertyinequality.scot/publication/transport-and-poverty-in-scotland-report-of-the-poverty-and-inequality-commission/#:~:text=The%20Poverty%20and%20Inequality%20Commission%20has%20published%20a,consulted%20on%20what%20issues%20it%20should%20focus%20on.>

7. Session Four - Accessibility Four Nations Liaison Group –Terms of Reference - To gain “sign off” to the Terms of Reference for the Four Nations Forum. This is a matter arising from a previous meeting and has been amended to reflect previous comments.

7.1 Linda updated that she and Bert had collated all previous comments and included them within the amended document. She was now seeking agreement for sign off.

Hilary asked if a line was required in relation to calling for an extraordinary meeting, however it was agreed that there was enough flexibility to allow for this. It was noted that **Version 1 of the Terms of Reference was agreed.**

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No	Action	Status
1	Share draft Motability letter with DPTAC and  Motability (3 nations) letter v3.doc IMTAC	Completed
2	Share Changing Places Toilets Directory	Complete – KA has circulated
3	Terms of Reference Agreement	Completed – this was agreed at the meeting
4	Consideration to be given by IMTAC colleagues to amend the August agenda to allow for updates of 10 minutes at the updates from Advisory bodies and Government Officials section – Session One	Ongoing
5	ML to share details of new low floor coach design to other Nations.	Completed
6	In relation to travelling between UK and EU with assistance dogs HS asked if KA/JM could rise with the relevant officials to put pressure on UK government.	Ongoing