

Edinburgh Accessibility Commission - Inaugural Meeting

Wednesday 6 March 2024, 1.30 – 5pm, Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

Zara Todd (Chair), Councillor Scott Arthur ((Vice Chair, City of Edinburgh Council (CEC)), Councillor Christopher Cowdy (CEC), Amanda Whitfield (Sight Scotland), Robin Wickes (Edinburgh Access Panel), Elizabeth Campbell (HCL Transport), Alan Dudley (Equality and Rights Network), Caitlin McPherson (Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living), Tawanda Mukada (Lothian Buses), Kirstie Henderson (Royal National Institute of Blind People), David Hunter (Living Streets Edinburgh Group), Lesley Munro (Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living), Michael Tornow (Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland), Nicoletta Primo (Sight Scotland & Sight Scotland Veterans), Rachel Goater (Sustrans), Euan Hamilton (Equality and Rights Network), Michael Moore ((The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association (Scotland)) Ruth White (Secretariat, CEC), Michael Mackenzie (Technical Support, CEC).

Apologies:

Antonia Lee-Bapty (Euan's Guide), Susie Fitton (Inclusion Scotland), Councillor Danny Aston (CEC), Jo Kyrsti (People First (Scotland), Councillor Kayleigh O'Neil (CEC), Councillor Kevin Lang (CEC), Julie Murray (Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living), Chiquita Elvin (Sustrans), Jon McCulley (Edinburgh Trams), Amy Bailey (The Scottish Assembly), Nico Ferguson (Sustrans), Sandy Taylor (National Federation of the Blind Scotland), Chiquita Elvin (Sustrans), Colette Walker (Sight Scotland), Daisy Narayanan (CEC).

Summary of Meeting and Actions Arising

1. Welcome and Introductions

Zara Todd (ZT) welcomed everyone to the meeting and each member introduced themselves.

Each member shared individual access needs relevant to contributing to this and subsequent online meetings. These are summarised as follows:

- Ensure verbal descriptions are given to material (slides etc) being presented especially visual material such as images and diagrams
- Enable 'captions' tool
- Share papers, including slide presentations, at least 1 week in advance

2. Purpose of the Meeting

ZT outlined the purpose of the meeting, which would be shaped initially around small group discussions on both what is and isn't working well for disabled people when using Edinburgh's public streets and spaces.

ZT confirmed that discussions would then focus on developing the Commission's Work Plan.

ZT stated the final part of the meeting would focus on Commission membership.

3. Getting to know each other

Each member outlined the groups they represent and their **hopes for the Commission**. The hopes are summarised as follows:

- **ZT** - by the end of the Commission's lifespan Edinburgh will be a lot more accessible for disabled people.
- **Scott Arthur (SA)** - Edinburgh will go through a lot of change in the coming years change, particularly in the transport domain. Hope is that Edinburgh will become a more accessible city for everyone.
- **David Hunter (DH)** - to understand all the barriers and the importance of accessible pedestrian space, roads crossing etc.
- **Caitlyn McPherson (CMcP)** - to ensure that the work of the Commission can make Edinburgh accessible for everyone.

- **Elizabeth Campbell (EC)** – aware of what their passengers tell them and their experiences, hope that she can reflect this, learn and take something away from the meeting. Commission provides a good opportunity to bring experience together so HCL can influence and reflect what service users tell them, in terms of the services provided.
- **Alan Dudley (AD)** – hope that issues associated with tactile paving and crossings are discussed and better arrangements put in place.
- **Amanda Whitfield (AW)** - assist with building confidence for people to travel on public transport again especially those with visual impairment.
- **Christopher Cowdy (CC)** - provides positive and practical guidance to CEC officers so that they can make a real difference in providing accessibility around Edinburgh.
- **Euan Hamilton (EH)** - it has tangible recommendations and outcomes for things that can be changed and made better to make Edinburgh the most accessibility city.
- **Kirsty Henderson (KH)** - is an effective vehicle for blind and partially sighted people and addresses challenges and concerns they have on accessing public streets. Commission should be an effective vehicle for change and improvement.
- **Lesley Munro (LM)** - it achieves joined-up strategy and safer environments for children and independent travel.
- **Michael Tornow (MT)** - it makes Edinburgh a more accessible place for all people to move around in, particularly disabled, and that barriers to this are understood and not repeated.
- **Nicoletta Primo (NP)** - an opportunity to ensure that lived experience is at the forefront of development plans and also gives an opportunity to learn from others e.g. planning officers, architects and designers on how we work together to design places that meet the needs of people that need more accessible spaces.

- **Rachel Goater (RG)** - it acts and an effective approach to bring together and co-ordinate views, experience and expertise to inform decisions taken, particular attention to walking and cycling that an inform Sustrans's work.
- **Robin Wickes (RWi)** - look forward to working with all organisations and hope that the Commission can prove the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, and that the Commission maximises the quality of what can be achieved by working together.
- **Twanda Mukada (TM)** - positive discussions will enable the Commission to develop accessible public space and make sure that this works for all people who have access requirements.
- **Michael Moore (MM)** – it can achieve a safer and more accessible city for all who live here and for people with disabilities.

4. Commission Framing – Why are we here?

Ruth White (RWh) gave a short summary of the origins of the Commission and why it has been established.

As set out in the Commission's agreed Terms of Reference, RWh confirmed the Commission's role is to provide independent advice to the City of Edinburgh Council on the challenges, opportunities and actions required to ensure the city's public streets and spaces are as accessible as possible to disabled people.

Further details can be found on the Commission's [dedicated webpage](#).

5. Small Group Discussions

Questions posed to each group:

- a) What is not working well for disabled people when using Edinburgh's public streets and spaces?
- b) What is working well and what should we do more of?

Group 1

Summary of what is not working well – general clutter and trip hazards on pavements, bins being left on pavements on collection days; not enough time for pedestrians to cross the road; non-blue badge holders using blue badge spaces; volume of cars parked on streets, not enough drop kerbs; conflicts between users at floating bus stops.

Summary of what is working well – establishment of this Accessibility Commission; pavement parking ban; 'A' board ban.

Group 2

Summary of what is not working well – lack of clarity on who is accountable for what at CEC (suggested a hotline to allow people to report issues etc); lack of paracycling infrastructure, bins not being put back in right place following collections causing street clutter; need many more drop kerbs delivered more quickly; roadwork co-ordination and common standards; general street maintenance; delineation between roads and pavements unclear in certain areas; shared path conflict with cycles and pedestrians; tactile cones and audible crossings needed; share more good practice on considerate cycling.

Summary of what is working well - Edinburgh compares better than other cities in terms of road and pavement delineation; 'A' board ban, pavement parking ban; establishment of Accessibility Commission and other processes to support awareness on accessibility; placement of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure, accessibility of buses and trams.

Group 3

Summary of what is not working well – floating bus stops; road and pavement delineation; designs not being consistent across the city; access to amenities in new developments/new communities; narrow pavements; potholes on the outskirts of the city; effective management of conflict between cyclists and pedestrians especially where are cyclists using pavements; acknowledging hierarchy of access bearing in mind, that for some, the car is their only mode of travel into the city; lack of paracycling infrastructure.

Summary of what is working well – Pavement parking ban, 'A' Board ban; de-cluttering of pavements generally; the [Future Streets – Edinburgh's Circulation Plan](#) and process that has informed it; transport

infrastructure and how that works for people; level of information provided on low traffic neighbourhoods; buses and trams;

6. Commission Work Plan

Small group discussions were undertaken on developing the Commission's Work Plan based on the following key themes:

- Design
- Communication
- Engagement

The discussions focussed on actions that could be undertaken to make the city's public streets and spaces as accessible as possible:

The outcome of those discussions is summarised as follows:

Design

- Review design guidance so the needs of disabled people are fully considered.
- Deliver greater design consistency.
- Ensure effective monitoring of projects once delivered.
- Deliver effective enforcement to maintain benefits.

Communication

- Ensure communications are easy to understand.
- Ensure communication outputs support a range of needs.
- Deliver communication via a range of mediums.
- Ensure communication is sited and designed to maximise awareness.
- Provide clear points of contact to support understanding.

Engagement

- Create more opportunities for local input to project designs.
- Embed engagement through the life of key projects.
- Ensure use of a wide range of accessible engagement tools. Support the facilitation of two-way conversations to deliver shared outcomes.
- Embed 'You Said We Did' reporting so feedback on how consultation has impacted outcomes is clear.
- Improve access to decision makers
- Support how the Council manages decision-making where there are conflicting views.

- Ensure sufficient time is allocated to do meaningful engagement

RWh confirmed that the Draft Work Plan will be developed using this feedback for review and discussion at the next Commission meeting.

7. Commission Membership

The Commission agreed that membership requests would be considered from representative groups only, with one representative per group.

The Commission considered three membership requests from:

- Spokes
- Taxi (Black Cab) trade
- Private Hire Car trade

It was agreed that representatives from these groups would be sought for inclusion in the Commission membership before the next meeting.

8. Meeting Close