

Edinburgh Accessibility Commission – Minutes

Wednesday 12 June 2024, 14.00 – 16.00, Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

Zara Todd (Chair), Councillor Scott Arthur (Vice Chair, CEC), Gregor Hardie (People First Scotland), Kevin Wood (Edinburgh Black Cabs rep), Matthew Freckleton (Uber – Edinburgh Private Hire industry rep), Douglas Reid (Edinburgh Access Panel), Rachel Goater (Sustrans), Fiona McDonald (Sight Scotland), Kirstie Henderson (RNIB), Amanda Whitfield (Sight Scotland), Jon McCulley (Edinburgh Trams), Tawanda Mukada (Lothian Buses), Alan Dudley (Equality and Rights Network), Euan Hamilton (Equality and Rights Network), Jo Kyrtsi (People First Scotland), Michael Tornow (Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland), Caitlin McPherson (Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living), Amy Bailey (The Scottish Assembly), David French (Spokes), Roger Colkett (Living Streets Edinburgh Group), Michael Moore (The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association Scotland), Elizabeth Campbell (HCL Transport), Ruth White (Secretariat, CEC), Tim Sanford (Secretariat, CEC)

Apologies:

Councillor Danny Aston (CEC), Councillor Kayleigh O'Neil (CEC), Councillor Kevin Lang (CEC), Councillor Christopher Cowdy (CEC), Lesley Munro (Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living), Nicoletta Primo (Sight Scotland & Sight Scotland Veterans), Susie Fitton (Inclusion Scotland), Julie Murray (Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living), Chiquita Elvin (Sustrans), Nico Ferguson (Sustrans), Sandy Taylor (National Federation of the Blind Scotland), Chiquita Elvin (Sustrans), Colette Walker (Sight Scotland), Francis Newton (CEC Secretariat)

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 Commission meetings.

Several members asked for the meetings and documentation to be made in a variety of accessible formats as a matter of routine, noting the following:

- Use of slow delivery during the meetings.
- Use of simple language, avoiding jargon and acronyms
- Easy Read works well, use of simple text, large font and images to help understanding.
- Alt text image descriptions need to be improved.

Actions

- Minutes of future meetings to put in Easy Read style.
- Accessible papers should be circulated before meetings.

2. Review/agree Minutes from the last meeting (6/3/24)

ZT outlined the purpose of the meeting was to primarily to discuss the Draft Work Plan.

Previous actions

- Invite representatives from Taxi (Black Cab) and Private Hire trades to join the Commission membership – completed.
- Invite Spokes to join the Commission membership – completed.

The Minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

3. Overview of the Commission's Draft Work Plan

Ruth White (RW) gave an overview of the Draft Work Plan.

Previous meetings have informed the Draft Work Plan.

The Commission's Draft Work Plan is based on the following priorities:

- Design (3 priorities)
- Communication (2 priorities)
- Engagement (3 priorities)

Key points from the discussion:

- The Draft Work Plan overview included a proposed change to the statement summarising the Commission's role, to add the word 'physically', as follows:

Advice will focus on the actions needed so the city's public streets and spaces are as *physically* accessible as possible to disabled people.

- Concern that the term 'physically' accessible could be misunderstood and prioritise certain impairment groups and narrow down scope of the Commission.
- Need to emphasise access in a way which is supportive of those with different needs and disabilities.

Actions

- Council to remove the word 'physically'.
- Council to look at simplifying the wording in the Work Plan.

4. Key Questions for Commission on Draft Work Plan:

a. Do actions/priorities meet the needs of disabled people; and

b. Is there anything missing – where does it fit in the work plan?

Points from the discussion:

- The importance of celebrating best practice, learning from others beyond Edinburgh and sharing best practice were all highlighted.
- Priority 1 - Should this refer to infrastructure?
- Priority 5 – This is ambiguous – 'understanding' of what? Need to state in relation to proposed changes
- Priority 6 – Engagement sessions need to be accessible and this should be reflected in the wording.
- The Commission provides a space for people's experiences to be echoed.

- The Commission voiced the ambition to be seen as leading the movement to make streets and spaces safe and accessible. Edinburgh should guide other places and champion accessible design.
- The Commission's remit is not just relevant to the city centre, but the whole of Edinburgh, including residential areas and new developments. Accessibility is for all, not just tourists.
- The Commission wants to make sure the Council is learning from its experiences and those of disabled people accessing and using streets and spaces in the city.
- The Commission members are anxious to have their voices heard and their concerns considered as early as possible in the process.
- The Commission is keen to influence development plans at an early stage to ensure they are as accessible as possible.
- The Commission's view is that lived experience is vital to make sure that street and space designs are as accessible as possible.
- Additional wording about safety is to be added to the Work Plan. If a space is not safe it is not accessible.

c) Will the actions deliver the outcomes; and

d) What are the indicators of success – Key Performance Indicators (KPI's).

Points from the discussion:

- Monitoring and measurement were a significant part of the discussion. Measures should be both quantitative and qualitative.
- Some KPI's are included in the updated City Mobility Plan (CMP) and the National Transport Strategy. These may provide a good starting point.
- What data collection is already included in surveys? Could questions relevant to the work of the Commission be added to annual Council surveys? The Edinburgh Partnership Survey replaced the previous

Edinburgh People Survey which was last held in 2018. The Partnership is still to decide whether another wave will be carried out in 2025.

- KPI's are quantitative. Other measures are needed that capture lived experience.
- The Commission asked whether there are any third-party groups or organisations that could help define KPI's and measurements that are appropriate and effective.

Actions:

- The Council is to explore possible KPIs and available baseline data on which measurements can be based to gauge whether accessibility is improving or not.
- The Edinburgh Partnership Survey to be investigated further by Council officers. Discussion with the Strategy and Insight Team to see what could be reasonably included in the survey.

e) What role should the Commission have?

Points from the discussion:

- The Commission will seek to input strategically, for example influence systems, structures, and procedures to support long term accessibility improvement.
- The Commission will seek to make the best use of the skills and resources of the Council to achieve impact across all schemes.
- The Commission will not respond to individual projects and development proposals, with this role being covered by the Edinburgh Access Panel.
- Consultation for individual projects has resulted in numerous consultations, often with the same organisations involving the same area of the Council. This has created consultation fatigue. Can the Commission assist strategically in the design of projects and create better understand overall accessibility needs and reduce the need for consultation on individual projects?

- The Commission would like to use organisations represented on the Commission to better understand the lived experiences of disabled people when planning and designing streets and spaces.
- How are the Council learning lessons? What has the Council done well, less well? Strategically there are issues which should not be replicated, for example Leith Walk cycleways situated within pavements. Leith Walk cited as the basis for a 'How not to' guide which some members think is important as the best practice guide for accessibility measures.
- The Edinburgh Street Design Guidance reflects best practice and achieves consistent detail across all schemes.
- Several members expressed an interest in being briefed on specific issues that affect accessibility from current guidance through to more strategic issues.
- Representation from Council teams responsible for roads maintenance, adaptations, for example dropped kerbs, signage. Focussed discussion could provide greater understanding of what is achievable.
- Greater understanding of the role of agencies, statutory bodies, and contractors carrying out work on behalf of the Council would be helpful. This can be confusing externally. How could the Commission influence such bodies, organisations?

Actions:

- Council to consider the role for the Commission in streamlining consultation requests to disability organisation for individual projects.
- Council to invite relevant officers to present to future meetings to discuss their work area / key projects
- Council to consider opportunities to invite external experts to discuss relevant element of the Work Plan.

5. Any other business

None

6. Meeting Close

ZT thanked everyone for their time and energy, making for a valuable and fruitful discussion.

The date for the next meeting will be communicated as soon as possible.