

Basic guidelines for the development of inclusive walking, wheeling¹ and cycling infrastructure in response to COVID-19

General principles

- Imtac welcomes the announcement of measures by the Minister for Infrastructure to make it easier for people to walk, wheel and cycle during the COVID-19 crisis, particularly given the requirement for people to maintain social / physical distancing.
- In line with a recently published statement² from the Committee it is essential that measures are accessible and inclusive, designed to reflect the requirements of everyone including disabled people and older people. There is also a need to consider measures for both urban and rural areas of Northern Ireland.
- Imtac acknowledges that the nature of these measures makes full consultation at this stage difficult, however the Department and local Councils must still consider their statutory equality duties in undertaking these initiatives. Following these basic guidelines and inclusive design guidance³ should be the cornerstone of these considerations.
- In the current circumstances there is a need for measures to be developed and delivered quickly. While the schemes are being implemented as temporary pilot trials their overall performance must be subject to review to ensure they are meeting the requirements of inclusive design.
- In addition to considering guidance, consultation with Imtac, disabled people, older people and carers should be

¹ Language around active travel must be inclusive. Wheeling recognises that wheelchair users and mobility scooter users should have equal access to any active travel measure.

² <https://www.accessibletravelni.org/your-experiences/imtac-statement-on-living-with-covid-19/>

³ See Inclusive Mobility and BS 8300 (Design of an accessible and inclusive built environment).

undertaken during the design and implementation of each scheme.

- It is essential that inclusive design principles are factored into all elements of the opening of lockdown. This will include detailing requirements for access to broadened footways, access to parking, access to public transport and access to retail or other premises where queuing may be required.

Basic design principles

When developing specific measures, including extended footways and “pop up” cycling infrastructure, these design principles should be followed:

- Additional space for pedestrians and cyclists should be separate, preferably using physical separation such as a kerb. Under no circumstances should measures include shared usage between pedestrians and cyclists or shared space between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles.
- Measures should include maximising the benefits of existing pedestrian infrastructure by removing obstacles and clutter from footways. Removal of unnecessary signage, refuse or storage bins, A Boards, shop displays and pavement cafes as well as cutting back encroaching vegetation must be undertaken to maximise opportunities for people to social / physical distance.
- Extended footways must be designed to be accessible to all disabled people ensuring a safe, step free, accessible route from the existing footways to the extended footways for all including wheelchair users. Surfaces on the extended footway should be level and even. Where there is no kerb separating the extended footways and carriageway a continuous separating barrier should be provided, easily detectable to people with a visual impairment using a long cane.
- Where extensions of footways are likely to be in place for some time consideration should be given to raising the

extended footway to the same level of existing footways and providing a new kerb at the carriageway edge.

- Pop up cycling facilities must be designed to be accessible to all cyclists including disabled people who use accessible and adapted cycles. Due in part to the cost of such equipment the numbers of disabled people and older people able to access cycling is not as high as it could be. This should never be used as a justification for not making cycling infrastructure accessible.
- Particular care needs to be taken with the provision of cycling infrastructure and footway extensions around pedestrian crossings. Crossings (including tactile paving) should remain free of obstacles and barriers. Pedestrians should retain priority at crossings at all times.
- Particular care must be taken around the provision for cycling infrastructure and footway extensions at or near bus stops and other public transport infrastructure. It is essential that buses can always access a kerb if services are to remain accessible to disabled people and older people. Under no circumstances should bus passengers be asked to embark / disembark onto the carriageway or onto a pop up cycle lane.
- Designs also need to account for any additional space that may be required to ensure that social/ physical distancing is not compromised where specific measures are introduced to ensure the safety of boarding/alighting passengers at bus stops.
- Design should take into account all existing provision and use of parking. Areas, where significant numbers of accessible bays have been provided or where bays have existing high levels of use by Blue Badge holders, should not be considered for schemes. Removing accessible bays should only be considered where alternative bays can be provided close by.

- Signage associated with any walking or cycling measures should not obstruct access to footways, crossings or cycle lanes.
- Measures must be accompanied by increased enforcement of contraventions including obstructions such as pavement parking and pavement clutter.
- Measures must be accompanied by a communication plan to publicise and inform members of the public of changes being made. Particular consideration needs to be given on how to make communication accessible to everyone.
- Proposals for re-opening of retail outlets having access from a street with the requirement to queue outside will create additional problems for social/ physical distancing. This must be a factor when considering access along all footways and not just those where additional width is being proposed.

June 2020