



Imtac statement about travel with assistance dogs post-Brexit transitional arrangements

(June 2020)

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Michael Lorimer
Imtac
Titanic Suites
55-59 Adelaide Street
Belfast BT2 8FE

Telephone/Textphone: 028 9072 6020

Email: info@imtac.org.uk

Website: www.imtac.org.uk

Twitter: @ImtacNI

About Imtac

The Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (Imtac) is a committee of disabled people and older people as well as others including key transport professionals. Its role is to advise Government and others in Northern Ireland on issues that affect the mobility of older people and disabled people.

The aim of Imtac is to ensure that disabled people and older people have the same opportunities as everyone else to travel when and where they want.

Imtac receives support from the Department for Infrastructure (herein after referred to as the Department).

Background

Imtac has developed this statement in response to concerns raised with us by assistance dog owners. The statement provides a summary of potential barriers to travel for assistance dog and more broadly pet owners¹ living in the UK and Ireland resulting from Brexit and in particular the ending of current transitional arrangements in December 2020. It reflects an understanding of the information available to the Committee at the end of May 2020.

Current position

Under the post Brexit transitional arrangements currently in place assistance dog owners from the United Kingdom (UK) can still travel under the existing Pet Passport arrangements as set out in EU Regulation 507/2013².

¹ The same restrictions and barriers will apply to pet owners of cats, dogs and ferrets.

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013R0576&from=EN> and <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013R0577&from=EN>

Post transition there are three potential options for continued arrangements between the UK and European Union (EU). These are:

- The UK can apply for Part 1 Listing with the EU that largely replicates current arrangements
- The UK can apply for Part 2 Listing with the EU which will involve some additional restrictions on assistance dog owners including requirements to report to a Travellers Point of Entry (TPE) and a new form of pet passport or equivalent new documentation
- In the event of no future deal between the UK and EU, the UK will be treated as an unlisted Third Country which places prohibitive additional restrictions on assistance dog owners including one off blood tests and tape worm treatments before every journey (including both outbound and return legs of journeys)

Under the terms of the Withdrawal Agreement, in the event of a No Deal between the UK and EU, the Northern Ireland Protocol will be enacted and arrangements should be put in place to ensure existing travel arrangements are maintained for people living in Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland. People living in Northern Ireland and travelling to the rest of the EU should be able to travel on without additional restrictions if travelling through RoI. However, if travelling to the EU through GB, they are likely to be subject to further restrictions.

As part of current negotiations with the EU the UK has requested Part 1 Listing. As of mid-May 2020 we understand there has been no agreement on a way forward and given the timescales involved, Northern Ireland officials are now making preparations for implementing the NI Protocol and the UK / EU future relationships operating under Third Country listing.

Implications of Third Country or Part 2 listing

The detailed implications for assistance dog (and pet owners) across the whole UK remain unclear. However, both Third Country and Part 2 listing will place restrictions on assistance dog

owners and if not dealt with all owners in the UK will be severely disadvantaged

For assistance dog owners in Northern Ireland the NI Protocol should mean that direct travel between the RoI and then the wider EU will remain similar to current arrangements, although how this will work in practice still remains unclear. However, people living in Northern Ireland are likely face additional restrictions travelling to and from Great Britain, including being restricted to a limited number of Travellers Points of Entry (in essence a small number of airports and ferry ports). These restrictions will also apply to assistance dog owners resident in RoI, travelling to and from Great Britain.

For assistance dog owners in the rest of the UK the implications of Third Country listing are significantly worse. People living in Great Britain will not only face prohibitive restrictions travelling to and from mainland Europe, they will also face similar restrictions travelling to and from both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

At this stage it is unclear what travel documentation will be required by assistance dog owners living in Northern Ireland and other parts of UK.

Conclusion

Imtac is extremely concerned that all assistance dog and pet owners are in danger of being collateral damage in the changes introduced because of Brexit. In the result of a No Deal between the UK and EU or a deal which involves Part 2 listing, assistance dog owners will face restrictions in freedom of movement not only between the UK and the EU but also between different regions of the UK itself. Restrictions will also apply to assistance dog owners from the Republic of Ireland travelling to Great Britain.

The Committee views the prospect of travel restrictions on assistance dog owners from the UK and Ireland as completely unacceptable. Not only does it run counter to common travel arrangements that will continue to be enjoyed by all other residents of the UK and Ireland, it is also a clear breach of the rights and

freedoms set out in the articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

Imtac calls on everyone with influence to work to ensure that assistance dog owners living in the United Kingdom continue to enjoy the same rights and freedoms to travel as everyone else after current Brexit transitional arrangements end.