

Section 75 and Schedule 9
The Northern Ireland Act 1998

**Belfast Transport Hub
and**

Wider Masterplan

Equality Impact Assessment

Final Decision Report

3 February 2022

Belfast Transport Hub and Wider Masterplan Equality Impact Assessment

FINAL DECISION REPORT

Contents

1.	Introduction	3
	1.1 Section 75 and the Statutory Duties	3
	1.2 NITHCo and Translink	4
	1.3 Belfast Transport Hub and Wider Masterplan	4
	1.4 Project Aim	6
	1.4 The Hub, Section 75 and Engagement	7
2.	Consideration of Available Data and Research	9
	2.1 Population Data	9
	2.2 Preliminary Consultation (2016)	9
	2.3 Public Engagement	10
	2.4 Community Committee	11
	2.5 Disability Issues and IMTAC	11
3.	Consultation	13
4.	Findings	25
5.	Conclusions and recommendations	16
	5.1 Monitoring Arrangements	17
	Appendix One: List of Consultee Representative Groups	31

Belfast Transport Hub & Wider Masterplan

An Equality Impact Assessment

1: INTRODUCTION

Under the statutory duties contained within Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHCo), trading as Translink, gave an undertaking to carry out an equality impact assessment (EQIA) on each policy or group of co-joined policies where screening had indicated that there may be significant implications in relation to one or more of the nine Section 75 categories.

This Final Decision report has been made available further to the formal consultation stage of the EQIA relating to the proposed development of the Weavers' Cross Integrated Transport Hub, and including associated works and projects, up to and including the final build stage of the project.

If you have any queries about this document, and its availability in alternative formats (including large print, Braille, disk and audio cassette, and in minority languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English) then please contact:

Jennifer Carmichael
Belfast Transport Hub
Floor 5, 22 Great Victoria Street
Belfast BT2 7BJ
Freephone: 028 90 258130
Textphone: 028 90 387505
E-mail: belfasthub@translink.co.uk

This Final Decision Report will be made available on Translink's website at 3 February 2022

1.1 Section 75 and the Statutory Duties

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires each public authority, when carrying out its functions in relation to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between nine categories of persons, namely

- between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status, or sexual orientation.
- between men and women generally.
- between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- between persons with dependants and persons without

Without prejudice to its obligations above, the public authority must also have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, or racial group.

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland approved the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHCo) revised Equality Scheme on 27 February 2013. The Scheme outlines how NITHCo aspires to fulfil its statutory duties under Section 75. Following

approval of the Scheme, existing policies were screened to assess impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity or the duty to promote good relations using the following criteria:

- Is there any evidence of higher or lower participation or uptake by different groups?
- Is there any evidence that different groups have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the particular policy issue?
- Is there an opportunity to promote equality of opportunity between the relevant different groups, either by altering the policy, or by working with others in government or in the larger community, in the context of the policy?
- Have consultations with relevant groups, organisations or individuals indicated that policies of that type create problems specific to any relevant group?

In line with the statutory duties as outlined above, to date Translink has completed two Section 75 screening exercises on the project and the Draft EQIA Consultation Report was made available on 5 May 2021, with the consultation period ending on 27 July 2021.

1.2 NITHCo and Translink

The Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHCo) is a public corporation established under the Transport Act (NI) 1967 to oversee the provision of public transport in Northern Ireland. NITHCo is accountable to the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) which develops transport strategies for Northern Ireland and determines public transport policy. NITHCo's responsibilities include holding and managing property assets and the oversight, in terms of support, control and supervision, of its private limited subsidiary companies. It is expected to operate commercially and has a duty to operate in line with Ministerial policy.

The NITHCo Board is responsible for approving the strategies of its subsidiary companies (see below) and the annual Corporate Plan and for their proper governance. It meets on a regular basis to review the implementation of policy objectives and to monitor financial performance. NITHCo also owns a portfolio of property investments that generate funds for capital investment throughout the Group.

Translink is a trading name used by any one or more of the companies under the ultimate ownership of NITHCo. The Group comprises NITHCo as the parent company which owns Citybus Limited (which also trades as 'Metro') (NI009039), Flexibus Limited (NI006724), Ulsterbus Limited (NI006725), Translink (NI) Limited (NI006673), NIR Networks Limited (NI017638), Northern Ireland Railways Company Limited (NI006929) - each of which is registered in Northern Ireland and has its registered office at 22 Great Victoria Street, Belfast, Co. Antrim, BT2 7LX; and NIR Operations Limited (NI021091) - which is registered in Northern Ireland, with its registered office at Lanyon Place Station, 47 East Bridge Street, Belfast, BT1 3NR.

1.3 Belfast Transport Hub and Wider Masterplan

The Belfast Transport Hub (BTH), at Weavers Cross, is situated close to Belfast city centre. The eight hectare site will contain a modern high capacity transport hub (developed on the site of the existing Europa Bus Centre and Great Victoria Street Train Station), together with impressive mixed-use developments for the local community. BTH is one of Europe's only fully integrated transport Hub which incorporates rail, bus, and coach modes of transport into a single location and under a unitary integrated management structure (Translink). This enables simplified and easier transitions between different modes of transport and facilitates

easier transmission of travel information and choices, particularly for physically disabled or passengers with learning difficulties.

This flagship project has been prioritised by the NI Executive and developed in the context of the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) Regional Development Strategy 2035 along with the draft NI Executive Programme for Government. There is due recognition that public transport has a key role to play in developing competitive cities and regions and is important for a successful economy, promoting social inclusion, health, education and improving the environment.

The draft Programme for Government has identified a number of strategic outcomes which set out the ambition for Northern Ireland society. Providing a high quality public transport system impacts on many of the programme's outcomes and directly links to the outcome, 'We connect people and opportunities through our infrastructure'. One of the key indicators for this outcome is to, 'Increase the use of public transport and active travel'.

The Belfast Transport Hub lies at the heart of this enterprise and will be a catalyst for the regeneration of the local area as an important gateway to Belfast, 'a modern, confident and progressive city, stimulating economic opportunities for the city and Northern Ireland'.

The proposed Belfast Transport Hub involves the redevelopment of the Europa Bus Centre, Great Victoria Street Railway Station, and land (c. 20 acres) at Grosvenor Road. The integrated transport interchange will comprise: station concourse, 26 bus stands, eight railway platforms, bus maintenance and parking, car parking and a new public square. The remaining land is proposed as a phased commercial development to be known as Weavers Cross.

The wider Weavers Cross development is a transport led regeneration project supporting the Belfast City Council's Agenda, a new vision for Belfast in 2035, setting out the ambition to attract 50,000 new jobs and £1bn investment to regeneration projects in the city.

In line with best practice, Translink has endeavoured to ensure that Section 75 considerations have continued to be mainstreamed into the project at successive stages of implementation, and in particular with regard to disability.

By way of example, at the initial design stage of the Hub, all private sector companies that tendered for the project were required to indicate how Section 75 considerations had been integrated into their designs.

Translink invited submissions in July 2013 to prepare a masterplan for the whole site and to then take forward the preferred design solution. John McAslan + Partners, together with Arup, were duly appointed in July 2014 as the lead architect and designer, together with Juno Planning as the planning consultant and Kennedy Fitzgerald Architects as local supporting architects.

In partnership, these organisations then progressed options for The Hub, as outlined in the Stage Two Report (8/4/16). This outlined three preferred options for the Hub, and formed the basis for an extensive first round of public consultation that ended on December 2nd, 2016.

As part of the Transport Hub enabling works, John Tinnelly and Sons Ltd demolished the vacant warehouse buildings at Grosvenor Road during March – May 2016.

The Infrastructure Minister announced in January 2017 that when the planning application for the Transport Hub was submitted it would be processed by DfI and the final decision

would rest with the Infrastructure Minister. Further to this announcement, Translink then hosted a public information event in February 2017¹.

The Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company (NITHCo) submitted the Transport Hub planning application ([LA04/2017/1388/F](#)) in June 2017. The application proposed a, 'new integrated transport interchange comprising; station concourse, 26 bus stands, 8 railway platforms, bus maintenance and parking, track and signaling enhancements, bus access bridge, cycle and taxi provision, car parking, new public square, public realm improvements, highway improvements, infrastructure improvements, temporary structures for bus operations during construction and temporary site construction compounds'. The application was approved in March 2019.

Graham Construction was awarded the Transport Hub enabling works contract in November 2019. The works are scheduled to complete during early 2021. The main build phase is expected to commence in 2021 on completion of the enabling works.

Graham submitted a Noise Management Plan and Dust Management Plan in December 2019. The documents provide an overview of proposed activities and indicative dates:

Dec 2019 – June 2020: construction of temporary staff mess facilities.

Jan 2020 – Sept 2020: ground remediation works.

June 2020 – July 2020: demolition of two bus maintenance garages and a staff mess facility.

Aug 2020: demolition and replacement of an existing bridge over the railway.

May 2020 – Jan 2021: re-alignment of an existing culvert running through.

Further information on the Belfast Transport Hub and wider Weavers Cross development can be found at the official website: www.translink.co.uk/bth

1.4 Project Aim

The overall purpose of the masterplan is to create an accessible, safe, comfortable and attractive environment for the Hub's customers, visitors and employees alike that is functional and practical to operate, cost-effective to maintain, commercially attractive, efficient and sustainable. This includes the commercial development of adjoining lands in partnership with local businesses and government agencies.

The primary function of the Hub is to enable circulation of passengers with diverse needs safely around the concourse, to pay fares, board buses or trains with ease and equally to alight services and exit safely through the proposed masterplan area in comfort and with convenience.

In combination, the intended aim is:

Operating within available resources and working in partnership with both public and private sector bodies, to provide a state-of-the-art integrated transport hub for Belfast and the wider community in Northern Ireland that meets the diverse needs of all travelers, that offers facilities which are welcoming and accessible to all, that is sensitive to the history

¹ Information presented at the event is available online at www.translink.co.uk/bth

of the area, and that enhances local business, the environment and community.

1.5 Belfast Transport Hub and the Wider Masterplan, Section 75 and Public/Staff Engagement

Public Engagement

Overall, Section 75 issues have been fully integrated into public engagements through successive rounds of public consultation, during which time stakeholder groups, locally and regionally, have continued to show a healthy level of engagement with the project and continue to provide positive and constructive feedback. It is recognised and appreciated that full public engagement throughout the design and build phases of the project is in the best interests of all potential users and local communities, and has already helped to identify and mitigate a variety of potential adverse impacts from an early stage².

Social value /community objectives have been central to the project from the outset of its life-cycle, for example with community engagement commitments included as a requirement in the Project Brief and Scope of Services issued to the Integrated Design Team.

Ongoing dialogue and engagement with local communities has been taking place since 2014 with early discussions on the need to tie in training and employment opportunities with more general community benefits. These fledgling commitments to social value gained traction and substance during the design, development and planning approval process, with early ideas progressed further through three rounds of interactive pre-application community consultation, with feedback and formal commitments evident through the planning application process.

This commitment continues to be made manifest in various tangible ways and including the following:

- A commitment to some form of 'buy social' approach – embedded into the Enabling Works Contract and within the contractor procurement process. This has evolved into a joint Belfast City Council/Translink Construction Employment Academy. (This work has been ongoing throughout the project life-cycle.)
- A commitment to provide a dedicated Translink resource for community engagement – delivered through the appointment of a BTH Community Engagement Manager in March 2017. (This position is active and ongoing.)
- A commitment to work with local schools and young people. This has included 'on the ground' practical help for local nursery and primary schools and support of community family fun day events. (This work has been ongoing throughout the project life-cycle.)
- A commitment to improve public open space. This has involved working collaboratively with local residents and business community to develop the extension of BTH public realm improvements along Sandy Row and Grosvenor Road. One example is the introduction of a pedestrian colonnade supported by an Arts and Heritage programme through the design development and planning process. In partnership with Belfast City Council it is also proposed to deliver plans for Blythefield Park following community consultation. (This work is ongoing.)

Staff Engagement

² For further details go to <https://weaverscross.co.uk/neighbourhood/community-connections/>

From 2017 onwards, a series of 'Operational Workshops' have been held with operational staff (not only senior managers) who have been engaged in the day to day, public facing delivery of different aspects of service delivery to passengers.

At these workshops, individuals have been encouraged to articulate their views of the type of facilities that they feel are required to deliver a seamless passenger experience and to identify possible barriers to successful delivery. This has enabled the design team to access the views of expert practitioners, as opposed to academic theorists, and has been an invaluable asset in the design process.

Section 75 Screening

In line with statutory duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and a Section 75 strategy for the hub as originally drafted in 2018, two Section 75 screening exercises have been completed to date.

The first, entitled, 'Proposed Development of Integrated Belfast Transport Hub (Weavers Cross)³', reflected the work up to that time (2018). Based on available data, the screening report concluded:

'Translink remains confident that its significant investment in public consultation and engagement has ensured that issues relating to Section 75 have already been mainstreamed into the project design, and that those tasked with bringing the project forward have good awareness of responsibilities under Section 75, including private sector contractors.

A number of mitigating measures have already been introduced as a result of public engagement, and this work will continue to inform the project through to full implementation. As the project continues to evolve so due consideration will continue to be paid to the need to carry out an EQIA, and to screen particular elements of the project as and when necessary.

At this, the Stage 2 design phase, the need for an EQIA is not immediately apparent and in particular given that the specifics of the Hub design have yet to be finalised. **Instead, it is proposed that an EQIA will be scheduled during completion of the enabling works for the Hub (e.g. site clearance and ground works) and prior to the commencement of the main works on the buildings themselves, and this is likely to be in the second half of 2018.'**

In June 2018, a Sense Check Report was produced summarising the information included in the screening exercise and also including reference to a Disability Audit undertaken at that time.

From 2018 significant delays relating primarily to planning permission have impacted on the progression of the project and while site clearance and ground works continue, the procurement stage of the final build phase of the hub is only now underway.

During 2018 it was also identified that arrangements in and around the site during construction would impact on city-wide access for local residents in particular, and hence a

³ A copy of the initial project screening report is available at [belfast-hub-project-screening.pdf \(azureedge.net\)](https://www.azureedge.net/belfast-hub-project-screening.pdf)

further screening was carried out ('Integrated Belfast Transport Hub (Weavers Cross): Transition Arrangements 2018 – 2021'⁴). This screening report concluded:

'Translink remains confident that its significant investment in public consultation and engagement, together with professional experience of related projects, has ensured that issues relating to Section 75 have already been mainstreamed into the transition phase of the project, and that those tasked with bringing the project forward have a clear understanding of responsibilities under Section 75, and this extends to private sector contractors.

A number of mitigating measures have already been considered during the transition phase of the project in order to minimise disruption and inconvenience to staff and the public alike, and this work will continue to inform the project through to full implementation.'

'At this time, it is not anticipated that a further screening (of transition arrangements) will be required. However, if the phases and stages of the construction programme change significantly then this decision will be reviewed.'

2: CONSIDERATION OF AVAILABLE DATA AND RESEARCH

In order to carry out the Equality Impact Assessment, various sources of information were relied upon, and these are summarised briefly below.

2.1 Population Data

Statistical profiles by Section 75 grounds of Northern Ireland and Belfast gave some indication of the wide diversity of potential users of the hub, and in turn highlights the need to accommodate these various identities and their accompanying needs and priorities at the design and build stage of the project. The Hub adjoins Blackstaff Ward, which at the time of the last census (2011) comprised 91.4% Protestant, 4.2% Roman Catholic and 4.4% Other/None.

2.2 Preliminary Consultation (2016)

In an earlier round of consultation (November – December 2016), 1,845 responses were obtained, and including a questionnaire. In summary, the consultation highlighted:

- The importance of pedestrian connections to the city centre (both routes and signage);
- Preference for the station to be located as close to the city centre as possible, and concern regarding any additional walking distance;
- Appropriate provision for people with mobility issues both to and within the hub;
- Appropriate provision for people with visual and hearing impairments both to and within the hub;
- Access points designed to accommodate large flows of people safely and efficiently;
- Requirement for adequate seating provision – sheltered seating areas, quiet seating areas;
- Include child friendly spaces and family areas;

⁴ A copy of the transition arrangements screening report is available at [belfasthubprojectscreeningq2.pdf \(azureedge.net\)](https://www.azureedge.net/belfasthubprojectscreeningq2.pdf)

- Desire for building to be designed for hearing and visually impaired individuals;
- Desire for building to be designed for people with dementia;
- Desire for building to be designed for the elderly;
- Desire for the inclusion of sensory features and quiet areas;
- Desire for inclusion of covered areas and child friendly spaces;
- Desire for public realm to be designed for the visually impaired;
- Desire to retain the Boyne Bridge in situ;
- Suggestions for multilingual signage for tourists;
- Request for the design to promote the design which addresses safety and security.

2.3 Public Engagement

A significant commitment has been made to public engagement throughout the duration of the project. This work has been supported by a full-time designated Community Liaison and Communications Manager within Translink, who continues to co-ordinate a wide range of engagement activities⁵. For example, as of January 2020,

- Nine community projects have been supported;
- Over 50 community events have been attended or hosted;
- Over £9,000 has been donated to local projects;
- 1,250 hours have been volunteered for local community and schools' projects;
- Over 2,000 local people have been directly engaged with the project;
- Over £25,000 of social value has been generated for the local community.⁶

Arts and Heritage Project

The Hub's Arts and Heritage programme began in December 2019⁷, and has since been completely reconfigured to address the challenges posed by Covid-19, including online delivery, via digital platforms etc. The consultancy firm, Haller Clarke (HC), with the assistance of the Hub team, has worked innovatively to address issues such as the digital divide and to ensure that as many people as practically possible could be included within the engagement process. To date the consultation process has involved;

- 56 one-to-one consultations with stakeholders from across society (Community, Business, etc.), delivered over 150 consultation hours;
- Five online focus groups (representing cross community and intergenerational sectors) delivered over 30 consultation hours;
- An online Survey;
- A Media 'Call for Stories' using traditional media routes;
- Digital Engagement via Instagram, Facebook and Twitter request a 'Call for Stories' and 'Digital Photobooth Exhibition';
- 2,000 Community Activity Packs, designed to capture young people's stories distributed to addresses within the Shaftsbury & Blackstaff Super Output Area (SOA's) in an effort to access households that may not be digitally connected;

⁵ For further details go to <https://weaverscross.co.uk/neighbourhood/community-connections/>

⁶ For further details go to <https://weaverscross.co.uk/neighbourhood/connecting-people-with-place/>

⁷ For further details go to <https://weaverscross.co.uk/news-items/translink-calls-for-stories-to-celebrate-local-heritage-as-part-of-the-belfast-transport-hub-plans/>

- Community Committee members acted as ‘Envoys’ to gather additional community stories;
- Translink undertook internal consultations with staff members to ascertain their own stories and historical recollections.

A draft report strategy outlining emerging themes, art recommendations and an arts programme to Translink has been developed by HC, who are recommending that a further round of consultation and community engagement is undertaken with the Community Committee and local stakeholders on draft strategy key issues. The additional consultation phase of the Arts & Heritage process will be integral in ensuring that local communities and stakeholders remain engaged in the evolving Arts & Heritage process, ensuring that social and local cultural value continues to be embedded in the process.

2.4 Community Committee

Central to embedding social value in the community engagement process was the convening of a ‘Community Committee.’ The primary role of the ‘Community Committee’ has been to ensure that community heritage is represented and aligned with the outputs and themes identified by the Arts and Heritage Strategy facilitators (HC), the Advisory Panel and the communities themselves.

Community Committee participants have been encouraged to fulfil the role of critical friend and were encouraged to take part in debate and discussion in the design of the Arts and Heritage (Placemaking) strategy. All members signed up to ‘Community Committee’ terms of reference with a stated ambition that participants should engage in process, reviewing and offering advice on community participation and feedback. The members also committed to act as ambassadors and advocate for the BTH Arts and Heritage strategy process and undertook a role as project envoys to gather additional stories from their local communities.

The Community Committee is cross community, inter-generational with representatives from the business and cultural and arts sector in Belfast. The Committee is comprised of representatives from;

- NOW group;
- Northern Ireland Youth Forum;
- Prince’s Trust;
- Translink • Forward South;
- QUB PhD Student, Planner;
- Grosvenor Rd resident;
- Linen Quarter BID;
- Greater Village Regeneration Trust;
- Belfast South Community Resources;
- Sandy Row resident;
- Greater Falls Neighbourhood;
- Arts Ekta • Belfast Exposed;
- West Belfast Partnership Board.

The Community Committee has continued to meet on a monthly basis throughout the duration of the project.

2.5 Disability Issues and IMTAC

From 2017 onwards there has been a series of regular face-to-face meetings with staff and members of the Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC)⁸. These meetings have been invaluable in ensuring that the design of the Hub accommodates the needs of those with all forms of disability.

As one recent example of this type of engagement, on 3 June 2020, an online Zoom meeting was attended by various representatives of the design team and Translink, together with staff and members of consultee representative bodies including IMTAC.

The initial presentation by members of the design team provided detailed information on the proposed design and related features, including the following:

- The hub will provide a level, step free 150m concourse, with easy access to both bus zones and train platforms;
- The first floor will accommodate various food outlets and will be accessible by both stairs and lifts;
- Information will be provided via 12m x 2.25m display boards, 6m from ground level;
- Universal images/signage will be used wherever possible;
- Bluetooth beacons will be positioned throughout the hub;
- Freestanding emergency help points will be located at strategic points within the hub;
- Platform surfacing will include appropriate texturing and contrast toning/shading;
- An open access ticket/travel office will be located close to the entrance to the hub, together with a manned information point;
- Ticket vending machines will be designed to accommodate those with different sensory needs;
- Benches and rest areas will be located throughout the hub.

Following the presentation, consultees highlighted a number of issues for further consideration including the following:

- Appropriate staffing deployment levels to aid direction and to offer portering;
- Wheelchair assistance to be available within the hub
- Access to the hub, as well as within, including taxis and car parking, must be afforded due consideration;
- Use of appropriate types of tactile flooring to aid movement to and within the hub;
- Provision of accessible support dog spend areas;
- Contrasting tones to be incorporated into the final design;
- Catering facilities to be available at ground level;
- Responsiveness to Covid-19 considerations, e.g. distancing.

The Boyne Bridge

Development of the hub will involve the removal of the existing Boyne Bridge, Durham Street, BT12 5AB. Although the current road bridge was built in 1936, the brick structure incorporates two arches from an earlier bridge known as Saltwater Bridge, with historical links going back over 400 years. In 2017 a local campaign was started to 'Save the Boyne Bridge'⁹, together with a petition that has been signed by 1.039 people¹⁰ to date.

⁸ <https://www.imtac.org.uk/>

⁹ <http://www.boynebridge.co.uk/>

¹⁰ https://www.change.org/p/iain-greenway-to-have-the-oldest-existing-bridge-in-belfast-the-historic-site-listed?recruiter=979274020&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=copylink&recruited_by_id=fe2cf240-992c-11e9-b895-5318054af170

While an application for listed status at that time was unsuccessful, Translink maintains a commitment to, 'Preserve the remains of the older Saltwater Bridge' and intends to 'reuse and integrate elements of the Boyne Bridge into the contemporary design'.

3: CONSULTATION

(For further information regarding consultation on the project, please refer to: <https://weaverscross.co.uk/belfast-transport-hub/consultation-feedback/>)

With regard to the EQIA itself, in order to consult as widely as possible on the findings, together with the preliminary recommendations, the following actions were taken:

- A press release was prepared and submitted to various media outlets;
- Prominent advertisements inviting the public to comment on this matter were placed in the main local newspapers, in accordance with normal practice;
- This report will be issued to all of the consultees listed in our equality scheme and to any member of the public on request;
- A copy of the draft EQIA consultation report was posted on the website;
- Individual consultation meetings were offered with representatives of particular interest groups;
- Consultation meetings for the general public were arranged at suitable, accessible venues in the city;
- Publicity material was made available at each operational location;
- The report was made available, on request, in alternative formats including braille, disk and audiocassette and in minority languages for those who are not able to access written English.

The closing date for responses was 27 July 2021.

4: FINDINGS

The Draft EQIA Consultation Report examined an array of data in order to assess whether or not there was an adverse impact on any of the nine Section 75 categories, and to determine if action could be taken to further promote good relations. A summary of the main findings is provided below.

Religious Belief

The project should generally have a positive impact on the area through a range of social and physical initiatives, in the short, medium and longer term. For example, bi-social clauses will guarantee at least 116 construction jobs locally, and the overwhelming majority of local residents have shown positive engagement to date. The new hub will be marginally closer to West Belfast (which is predominantly Roman Catholic) than the existing stations, but slightly further from the city centre, which is mixed. The future status of the Boyne Bridge within the scope of the project continues to generate concern among some local residents.

Political Opinion

The project should generally have a positive impact on the area through a range of social and physical initiatives, in the short, medium and longer term. For example, bi-social clauses will guarantee at least 116 construction jobs locally, and the overwhelming

majority of local residents have shown positive engagement to date. The new hub will be marginally closer to West Belfast (which is predominantly nationalist/republican) than the existing stations, but slightly further from the city centre, which is mixed. The future status of the Boyne Bridge within the scope of the project continues to generate concern among some local residents.

Racial / Ethnic Group

Signage should be universally accessible to address the needs of those accessing the hub whose first language may not be written English. The design should consider the adoption of universal pictorial signage and alternative language formats as and where appropriate.

Age

Easy access is necessary to and within the hub for those older people with mobility issues, and in particular access and egress routes to bus zones and train platforms. Level access will be provided, and lifts to upper floors that can accommodate wheelchairs.

Marital Status

Those who are married are more likely to have dependants (see below).

Sexual Orientation

Safety in public spaces is often cited as a priority for those from the LGB community. The facility should provide 24 hour safety within the Hub and its environs. The design of the building and its surrounding must take public safety into account, for example with regard to lighting, security and monitoring.

Men & Women Generally

Separate male and female toilets, shower & changing facilities are currently proposed, along with gender-neutral accessible facilities.

Re: Transgender Community:

It is not always easy for transgender people to use the gender toilet they feel comfortable with, depending on their stage in the process of transitioning. A gender-neutral toilet could be used by anyone, and would stop transgender people from feeling isolated and stressed about going to the bathroom.

However, 'mixed' gender-neutral facilities are not always ideal: it can increase waiting time/queues for female users; and there are issues for some women of certain faiths using mixed bathrooms.

Single, self-contained gender-neutral cubicles would address this issue, and would also not be detrimental to women's safety. Alternatively, consider providing a separate gender-neutral toilet alongside existing gendered toilet facilities. People such as carers looking after someone of the opposite gender would also benefit from gender-neutral space.

Disability

Engagement with IMTAC and sector representatives generally has been invaluable in helping to inform the design process to date. By way of example, this has highlighted the need to:

- Consider the layout of 'changing places' facilities;
- Include the provision of 'fire lifts' that enable the safe evacuation of disabled staff and passengers in the event of a fire (as opposed to 'disabled refuges');

- Modify customer information screen' to automatically display evacuation messages for those with hearing loss in the event of an emergency;
- Slope platforms inwards to prevent wheelchairs and buggies rolling on to the track;
- Design and locate customer information points to enable passengers with learning difficulties and dementia to obtain -face-to-face travel information from an easily identifiable and accessible point (where wheelchair assistance may be obtained);
- Incorporate taxi ranks immediately adjacent to the main station entrance/exit with level access;
- Ensure that the bus waiting area seating can accommodate those with a range of disabilities (e.g. Differing heights and furniture).

More generally:

- Trained staff will be available for immediate advice and support;
- Appropriate general staff training will support the proper use of all available adaptations;
- Level access will be provided where appropriate, and lifts operating to upper floors that are able to accommodate all types of wheelchair;
- Signage will represent current best practice and be universally accessible to address the needs of the blind and visually impaired, along with those with literacy concerns;
- Visual contrast recommendations will be adhered to when choosing final finishes/colours;
- Obvious access routes, clear signage, suitable colours and contrasts, and acoustic measures, will all assist in achieving a calm environment that users will feel confident to explore.

In addition to these measures a recent review of the Hub design has been undertaken in order to accommodate issues arising from the recent Covid-19 epidemic. The review is ongoing and has already identified a number of design features for further consideration and adoption (e.g. automatic doors to avoid the need for touching; numerous hand sanitising stations; accessible ticket machines to minimise face-to-face interaction).

Dependency

For those with caring responsibilities for either young children, older people or those with a disability, accessing the hub, using its facilities and boarding/disembarking transport safely and easily will be of critical importance.

Level access will be provided, and lifts to upper floors to accommodate prams, buggies etc.

Sufficient seating should be provided throughout the concourse for visitors to rest.

4.1 Consultation Feedback

In addition to general calls for feedback (see above), key stakeholder consultees, as listed in Appendix 1 were asked to provide written comments on the EQIA. Four responses were received, as detailed below:

Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Council: Report accepted, no further comments

Causeway Glens and Coast Council: Report accepted, no further comments.

Alliance Party: The Alliance Party has met with Translink to discuss the new Belfast Transport Hub on numerous occasions. The party welcomes the work that Translink has done with IMTAC to ensure that the new transport hub is accessible for those with disabilities. Translink must be particularly cognisant of making sure that people of all ages and abilities can safely access the new Transport Hub, particularly as it is located next to busy roads with fast-moving vehicles, and there will be large numbers of pedestrians travelling between the hub and the city centre. Translink should also ensure that it has consulted widely and adopts an appropriate policy regarding the provision of facilities that are LGBT inclusive. Finally, we recognise Translink's engagement with the local community regarding the preservation of Boyne Bridge, and welcomes the commitment to preserve the remains of the older Saltwater Bridge. Alliance has no further comments on the report at this stage.

Sinn Féin: The Transport hub is a flagship project within the Executive and seeks to improve the public transport infrastructure in the north. Equality of access is a priority for Sinn Féin in all public services. Section 75 requires public authorities to address inequalities and demonstrate measurable positive impact on the lives of people experiencing inequalities when developing and implementing their policies. In order for the Belfast Transport Hub to be inclusive of, and accessible to, everyone in our society it is vital Section 75 duties are fulfilled.

Translink is confident that these concerns have already been addressed in the Draft EQIA Consultation Report.

5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As the project continues to move towards the final build stage, comments and general feedback provided by consultees will continue to inform the hub's design, along with ongoing engagement with various representative groups (e.g. IMTAC).

The consultation feedback has confirmed that the development of a modern, integrated transport hub must take cognisance of the diverse needs of those who may choose to use the hub, and travel to and from the hub. Many of these issues relate to mobility and access, for example in relation to disability and age, while others could involve caring responsibilities, for example, children and older people.

Over time, consultees have prioritised a number of concerns (see above), and these are summarised below.

- Internal and external signage must recognise that written English may not be accessible to all users, for example those of different nationality, those with visual impairment or those with literacy problems more generally. Various Section 75 grounds can relate to these issues.
- Travel information will be immediately available in a format that accommodates the diverse needs of potential users, and this will extend to appropriate staffing deployment levels and training.
- At some time in the future it is likely that the hub may be in use 24 hours each day, the issue of safety for those who are vulnerable will be given due consideration at that time (e.g. lighting, CCTV, alarms). In the meanwhile, the opening of a small section of the hub as a safe area for those waiting for 'night buses' is being given due consideration.

- Facilities (e.g. catering, toilets) that are available within the hub will be designed and located mindful of the diverse needs of potential users.
- Surface design features (e.g. texture, colour, tone, shade) will aspire to accommodate the needs of all potential users, including those with sensory and motor disabilities.
- When replacing the existing bus and train stations at Great Victoria Street, the hub will increase the distance to the city centre by approximately 150 metres. While this may be unavoidable due to logistical and planning constraints, easy access to and from the hub will be afforded ongoing attention to ensure that it is seen as welcoming to all those of different identities.
- The historical status of the site of the Boyne Bridge within the project will continue to be afforded due and proportionate regard; ongoing engagement with the local community will aim to ensure that good relations are maintained and enhanced.
- Design features will take into account the long-term impact of Covid-19 (e.g. safe distancing).
- Contractual obligations written into tendering documentation will ensure that Section 75 continues to be afforded due regard by all relevant parties (and including private sector contractors) at all stages of development.

These measures, when implemented, should further equality of opportunity generally, in compliance with the NITHCo's obligations included in its Equality Scheme and with its obligations generally under Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Monitoring Arrangements

The masterplan will be regularly monitored to ensure that no adverse impact occurs and where it is identified then appropriate remedial action will be taken.

It is suggested that monitoring should include regular consideration of:

- Complaints, comments and other forms of feedback;
- The results of research/surveys relating to the promotion of good relations both in the workplace and shared facilities;
- Any EQIAs of related policies carried out by Translink or other public authorities;
- Any relevant research carried out by public authorities or independent bodies.

This Final EQIA Decision Report will be made publicly available via hard copy, in the press and also on the website at www.translink.co.uk/bth

APPENDIX ONE
List of Consultee Representative Groups

GENERAL	
1	CO3 (Chief Officers 3rd Sector)
2	Belfast Harbour Commissioners
3	CBI Northern Ireland
4	Committee on the Administration of Justice
5	Community Relations Council
6	Equality Coalition
7	Federation of Small Businesses
8	Londonderry Port & Harbour Commissioners
9	NI Committee Irish Congress of Trades Unions (NIC - ICTU)
10	Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA)
11	NI Anti-Poverty Network
12	Simon Community (NI)
13	The Institute of Directors
14	Local Government Staff Commission for NI
15	UNISON
16	Warrenpoint Harbour Authority
17	Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
18	Ards and North Down Borough Council
19	Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council
20	Belfast City Council
21	Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council
22	Derry City and Strabane District Council
23	Derry City and Strabane District Council
24	Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
25	Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council
26	Mid and East Antrim District Borough Council
27	Mid Ulster District Council
28	Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
29	Department for Infrastructure (DfI)
30	Department for Communities (DfC)
31	Department for Economy (DfE)
32	Department for Education (DE)
33	Department of Finance (DoF)
34	Department of Health (DoH)
35	Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs (DAERA)
36	Department of Justice (DoJ)
37	The Executive Office (TEO)
38	Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
39	Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

40	Northern Ireland Assembly
41	Education Authority (EA)
AGE	
42	Age NI
43	Age Sector Platform
44	Barnardo's
45	Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI)
46	Children's Law Centre
47	Northern Ireland Youth Forum
48	NSPCC (NI)
49	Warrenpoint Harbour Authority
50	Save the Children (NI)
51	Youth Council For Northern Ireland
POLITICAL PARTIES	
52	Alliance Party of NI
53	Democratic Unionist Party
54	Progressive Unionist Party
55	Social Democratic & Labour Party (SDLP)
56	Sinn Fein
57	The Green Party (NI)
58	Ulster Unionist Party
59	The Workers Party
DISABILITY	
60	British Deaf Association (NI)
61	Disability Action
62	Down's Syndrome Association
63	Employers for Disability NI (EFDNI)
64	The Consumer Council
65	Inclusive Mobility Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC)
66	Mencap
67	North West Forum of People with Disabilities
68	INSPIRE
69	Autism Northern Ireland
70	Royal National Institute for the Blind Northern Ireland (RNIB NI)
71	Action on Hearing Loss (trading name of RNID)
72	The Cedar Foundation
73	Guide Dogs (NI)
74	The Omnibus Partnership
GENDER	
75	Women's Aid Federation NI
76	Women's Resource & Development Agency
77	Women's Support Network

LGBT+	
78	Cara-Friend LGBTQ + Youth Gay and Lesbian Youth NI (GLYNI)
79	Cara-Friend Lesbian Line
80	Cara-Friend
81	Coalition on Sexual Orientation
82	Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association (NIGRA)
83	Press for Change
84	Queer Space
85	The Rainbow Project
DEPENDANTS	
86	Carers Northern Ireland
87	FPA NI (Family Planning Association NI)
ETHNICITY	
88	Indian Community Centre
89	Bryson Intercultural+A33+A33
90	African Cultural Centre (NI)
91	Irish Traveller Movement
COMMUNITY BACKGROUND	
92	Church of Ireland
93	Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
94	Methodist Church in Ireland
95	North West Community Network
96	Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE)
97	Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA)
98	Presbyterian Church in Ireland