

GREATER MANCHESTER HIGHWAYS & DISABILITY GROUP

Brief Notes of the Meeting held on 19 July at The St Thomas Centre, Ardwick Green North, Manchester M12 6FZ.

Present:	Alf Parsonage Dorothy Birch Christine Darlington June Maelzer Edna Hughes Frank Whitfield Bert Marsden Wilfred Barnett Joan Shawcross Isobel Fearn Gerald Mills Maureen Donahue Dorothy Whitaker	Tameside Disabled Motor Club Stockport Assoc Physically Handicapped People Wigan Access for the Disabled Committee Manchester Disability Forum Trafford Federation of Clubs for Disabled People Sale Wednesday Club Bolton Access Group Oldham Disabled Drivers Bolton Access Group Rochdale Mobility & Access Group Disabled Motorists Association Greater Manchester CVS
Apologies	Ken Lumb Mrs T Levine Sharon Hughes	Rochdale Mobility & Access Group Bury & District Disabled Advisory Council Greater Manchester Transport Consultative Committee

1. Dorothy asked whether those present felt there was a need for the GM Highways & Disability Group to continue. If it was to be effective she felt it ought to have a regular pattern of meetings and keep itself well informed of relevant GMC and National policy. Alf Parsonage commented that as the Government has recently established an advisory body on Transport/Highways and allied issues - local groups would be a natural progression. Christine Darlington proposed that Greater Manchester Highways & Disability Group should continue, meeting on a bi-monthly basis, acting as a ginger group for disabled people on issues concerned with Highways in Greater Manchester in their broadest sense. This proposal was seconded by Bert Marsden and carried unanimously by the meeting.
2. Members present then gave a brief resume of the situation in their area where Highways policy affected the lives of disabled people.

Rochdale - The campaign to have the special parking permit for Yorkshire Street stopped and the Orange Badge accepted was continuing. There had been public demonstrations, petitions etc at which help had been received from disabled people in other areas of GMC. One recent disturbing factor was the public survey conducted by GMC on Yorkshire Street which belied the current situation stating "Open only to disabled vehicles as it is now". The final decision on the future of the permit would be made by GMC in October and as many objections as possible to the permit directed to the County Legal Department would be useful.

Stockport - After suggestions had been made by the Stockport Association for Physically Handicapped People, on certain current Highways developments, alterations had been satisfactorily made but negotiations with GMC to have consultation on the Warren Street development were proving difficult.

Oldham - There was still inadequate parking for disabled people in the area adjacent to the main shopping precinct, and often the few parking spaces that had been allocated were constantly abused. But the proposed plans for the next phase of town centre development were to be available for viewing and then consultation at the initial stages so it was hoped improvements on parking and access could be made.

Bolton - Disabled people had been consulted about the Deansgate pedestrianisation plans but at a late stage. The outcome of their consultation was still to be announced.

Wigan - Fortunate to receive plans well in advance so could comment constructively on Highways, access and parking. But the GMC experimental pedestrianisation of Standishgate had been one of the less successful negotiations and disabled drivers were still not allowed into the scheme although further parking places had been provided.

Trafford - Letters had been recently sent to the Highways authorities reference the problems of:

- a) disabled people having to park in multi-storey car parks with lifts liable to closure or breakdown
- b) increased shop furniture on pavement areas
- c) a need for the length of bleep on pelican crossings to be increased to enable elderly and disabled persons to cross in safety.

Tameside - Queries recently raised with Highways authorities included scepticism about a taxi displaying an orange badge and constantly using it when the driver did not appear disabled. The possibility that Greater Manchester was not providing the correct width of disabled car parking spaces despite the correct width stated in their policy document, also the quota of parking spaces for disabled people was being investigated.

Manchester - The pedestrianised areas of the City Centre are not accessible to disabled drivers although car parking spaces on off-side streets have been provided but these are not well signposted and constantly out of use due to roadworks.

3. The future direction and priority of the Highways Group was then discussed. Edna Hughes suggested there might be a coalition with the possible new GM Group on Public Transport for Disabled People but as this group was still in the steering group stage it was felt premature to suggest a coalition.

Alf Parsonage thought the Highways Group should either appoint or co-opt a member(s) of the relevant GMC committee(s), but Christine Darlington suggested that the Highways Group needed to be more organised and aware of policies and priorities before meeting GMC Councillors and even then serious consideration should be given to GMC permanent representation.

Gerry Mills was very keen to pursue an offer made to him by a producer of video films to make a film showing the problems that badly thought out pedestrianisation and parking schemes could cause for disabled people. Those present agreed with this in principle but there was concern expressed by some members that if the video became too personal in its criticism future negotiations with GMC might be seriously jeopardised. Gerry agreed to bring a more detailed idea of the video plus possible budget to the next meeting.

4. The question of officers for the Group was then discussed. Dorothy explained that although GM CVS would be prepared to service the Group for the next year at least, she did not wish any written communiques, other than those circulated internally among the Group to be signed by herself as she wished outside authorities to be aware that disabled people were capable of organising their own campaigns. Therefore it was decided GM CVS would provide the secretariat for the Group but initially a Chairman and Vice-Chairman would be appointed who would be seen "outside" as correspondent and representatives of the Group. Various nominations were suggested for Chairman but most people were currently over-committed to feel they would do justice to the Chair. Edna Hughes offered to serve as Chairman in a temporary capacity until the Group felt organised enough to have an election and Christine Darlington and Dorothy Birch offered to serve as the Vice-Chairmen.

5. Date, time, place of next meeting - Tuesday 13 September at 2.00 pm in the main hall of The St Thomas Centre, Ardwick Green North, Manchester.

Suggested Agenda:

- a) Highways Group Policy on Pedestrianisation and future action on same.
 - b) Review of current Orange Badge legislation
 - c) Video proposals.
6. Attached please find three documents:
- a) Draft document on Parking for the Disabled, to be submitted to GMC by Greater Manchester Transportation Consultative Committee. (Sharon Hughes is the disabled persons representative on this committee.) This was also circulated at the 19 July meeting but any members not present could send comments on it to Nina Keshishian, c/o Greater Manchester CVS or Sharon Hughes.
 - b) Two documents circulated on Ken Lumb's behalf.
 - c) Address list of those people currently involved with the GM Highways Group.