

Independent Disability Advisory Group

Thursday 20th January 2022

14.30 – 16.30

These minutes are an aide memoire for all parties attending the IDAG meeting.

Attendees	
[REDACTED]	IDAG Member (Chair)
[REDACTED]	IDAG Member
[REDACTED]	IDAG Member
[REDACTED]	IDAG Member
[REDACTED]	IDAG Member
[REDACTED]	IDAG Member
[REDACTED]	IDAG Member
[REDACTED]	IDAG Member
Karen Venn	D&I Team
Kate Hagan	MD Advisor Special Projects Fire Safety Plan
[REDACTED]	Crossrail
[REDACTED]	Crossrail
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Apologies	
Simone West	D&I Team
[REDACTED]	IDAG Member
[REDACTED]	IDAG Member

1. Minutes of the Last Meeting and Action Tracker

There were no conflicts of interest.

The minutes from the last meeting were approved with some minor tweaks.

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3. Banning of Scooters/Unicycles on the network

On 13 December 2021, TfL banned all e-scooters and e-unicycles from the network following two incidents of privately owned powered transporters catching fire whilst on TfL services or infrastructure. The causes of both fires, which involved an e-scooter and an e-unicycle respectively, have been attributed to defective lithium-ion batteries. In both incidents the batteries ruptured without warning and were not on charge.

Although privately owned e-scooters and e-unicycles are illegal for use on public pavements, cycle lanes and roads, -a notable increase has been seen in their use across London, and carriage of them on TfL services was allowed - although customers must be able to carry them and may be asked to fold e-scooters.

The London Fire Brigade (LFB) has also recorded an increase in fires involving e-scooters powered by lithium-ion batteries, attending to over 60 such incidents this year.

Because e-scooters and e-unicycles are illegal to use on public roads, they are not regulated to the same safety standard as other legally allowed items such as e-bikes and mobility scooters.

In December 2021, Transport for London (TfL) announced that all privately-owned e-scooters and e-unicycles, including those that can be folded or carried, were banned on London's transport network with effect from Monday 13 December 2021).

Customers in possession of such devices are not be permitted now to enter any premises on TfL's network or travel on any of its services, including on the Tube, buses, Overground, TfL Rail, Trams and DLR.

We have received a small number of complaints from members of the public with disabilities regarding the e-scooter ban as they see these as a mobility aid.

Feedback from IDAG

- Can you clarify what you mean by e-unicycles?

This is a central wheel with a footplate – like a Segway but without the handlebars

- The use of micro mobility as a term has lots of definitions and include all e-bikes for which the rules are not the same. Air lines look at the size of batteries and what regulations they fulfil or don't and there is an overlap with mobility scooters. What options were considered, what was and what wasn't allowed?

The decision was made with the LFB, these are classified as e-scooters or unicycles which are not to be used on the public roads, unless they are mobility aids.

- Not all mobility aids are strictly legal, it may be worth finding out what they did on the airline. They banned lithium batteries at one stage and that caused a lot of problems for some disabled people.
- The EQIA is pretty comprehensive and looks at direct impacts arising from blocking the use on the network.
- Discussion around whether power chairs could fall victim to the perception that lithium batteries are dangerous per se.
- Most power chairs use lead acid batteries not lithium batteries. There is an increasing number of smaller folding scooters that do use lithium batteries but most of them have the safer type of battery. There are some people who do use wheelchairs that have the less safe type of battery.
- It was noted that people also carry lithium batteries as a power source for laptops. Are there records of fires?

The DFT are looking at reviewing standards around micro mobility and what is possible in terms of accessibility. We reserve the right to remove the ban or amend the ban. We have had no incidents on the London underground where a wheelchair catches fire.

- Have the fire brigade pinned down what it is that makes it safe or unsafe? have they said what it is about them that makes those batteries the unsafe ones?

Don't have all the technical info but in terms of size, they come without the right chargers and often people use incorrect chargers which increases risk. When their charge runs down, they are more at risk. Also where the batteries are situated increases risk as they are under the footplate which is more prone to damage compared to e-bike.

- Not sure what the solution is on this; am uncomfortable with the distinction you are making as there are some wheelchair and scooters that are unsafe with their batteries but can see the need to do something so not to have unsafe batteries on the network.

- Many mobility scooters have lithium batteries. I am reassured to see that these are acceptable on the grounds of safety and regulation. But I am concerned that these might be considered unsafe by extension in future, so urge a clear and cautious approach / messaging around this.
- IDAG understands the context for taking the immediate action that you did. However, IDAG now recommends reviewing this decision by cross referencing what airlines do, and looking at batteries in general.
- With the e-scooter rental trial - why do we not let rental e-scooters on the underground? It might also help establish a difference between the legal and illegal scooters in the eye of the public.

The geo-fencing means these are not able to be taken onto the underground. In terms of safety, these are maintained on a regular basis and checked for battery safety.

- Need to think about consistency. The wider rail network in the UK doesn't have a ban so you could have a situation that someone travelling from Birmingham to London with their e-scooter as part of their mobility to find they are not able to take this on the network. This needs to be factored into the communication plan.

We have been discussing people transferring from one network to another. Our understanding is that the rail advisory board may be considering banning them. The Thames Clipper did allow them on the ferry service, but these have now been banned. There are other travel modes looking into this issue and the LFB have said they are supportive of a ban across the rail network.

- Did you look at rules around bikes and e-bikes while looking at this?

We looked at the EQIA for bikes and e-bikes but decided not to ban e-bikes as we have not had an incident on the network, the battery is housed in a safer area and they are legal for use on public roads.

- A lot of disabled people use e-bikes as a mobility aid but are not allowed to use them at peak times, one of the mitigations could be to allow disabled people to use bikes on the network during peak times.
- We suggest that you explore the possibility of an exemption for disabled people.
- Worth having a joint communication piece with a landing page from different modes and providers all saying the same thing.

Airline link

After the meeting it was established that airlines require batteries in wheelchairs or scooters to have passed a set of tests defined under UN38.3. Battery manufacturers should provide test certificates for each model they produce.

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