

Policy resolution: Barrier-free access to ferry landings for people with impaired mobility

iTransfer (Innovative Transport Solutions for Fjords, Estuaries and Rivers) aims to make ferry transport more freely accessible and sustainable, and encourage more people to travel by water. In areas in the North Sea Region (NSR) there are opportunities to replace existing vehicle routes with passenger ferries as a viable alternative. Travelling by ferry is more sustainable, easier and quicker. It can also provide lifeline services to remote communities.



The new pontoon landing at Gravesend

The following EU regulation is of direct relevance and should be taken into consideration in the ferry procurement and tendering process:

Regulation (EU) No 1177/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council (November 2010) concerning the rights of passengers when travelling by sea and inland waterway: Rights of disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility:

Carriers, travel agents and tour operators must not refuse to accept reservations, issue tickets or embark persons on the grounds of disability or of reduced mobility, and nor must tickets be offered at an additional cost. Reservations and tickets may, however, be refused to disabled persons or persons with reduced mobility in order to meet applicable safety requirements and where the design of the passenger ship or port infrastructure and equipment makes the safe embarkation, disembarkation or carriage of disabled persons impossible. In the case of such a refusal, carriers, travel agents and tour operators must make all reasonable efforts to find an alternative means of transport for the person concerned.

Hal över have been looking at accessibility and problems encountered by people with impaired mobility under some circumstances when embarking and disembarking from their vessels in the Bremen area. There is a tidal change of 4.5 metres on the river. This changes the slope of ramps to the landing pontoon and it can get very steep. They have considered providing longer ramps and platforms for resting (In Germany there is a recommendation for rest-points every 6 metres) but the length and widths start to be a problem. They have been seeking a solution to this and had been unable to find much policy guidance. However, they have found much useful information from the work undertaken by Gravesham Borough Council within the iTransfer project.

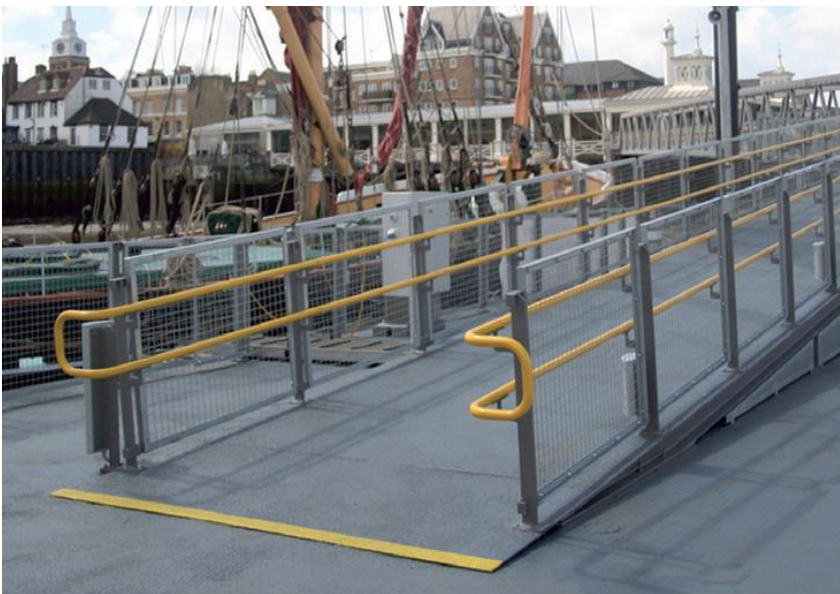
Based on their experiences in providing a new pontoon landing at Gravesend (part-funded by ERDF through the iTransfer project), Gravesham Borough Council (GBC) have covered such issues in their accessibility report *North Sea Region Accessible Ferry Landing design, concepts, quality checklist and recommendations* <http://www.itransferproject.eu/media-lib/1.-Pontoon-Report-March-20141.pdf> which addresses the different regulations in the UK. The relevant sections of the report are based on an initial *Design and Access Statement* delivered to them by consultants in 2010 (available as an annex to the accessibility report). A section of this statement specifically addresses 'access for passengers with restricted mobility'. This set out requirements based on British Standard BS 6349 Part 8 2007, such as that the maximum gradient of the pontoon brows should be 1 in 12 at the lowest tide level. Even with a gradient this shallow the British Standard recommends that supplementary provision is made for disabled persons. Likewise, consideration should be given to the ease of access between the pontoon and passenger craft for those with limited mobility.

In *North Sea Region Accessible Ferry Landing design, concepts, quality checklist and recommendations*, GBC have looked at the policy context and concluded that there is no European standard for any marine structures. BS 6349 is used internationally for such structures and is currently being re-written to reflect the use of Eurocodes. GBC have also given consideration to EU Regulation 1177/2010 (above) as well as UK regulations on DDA compliance (Disability Discrimination Act, 1995).

The report identifies a number of barriers to accessibility that need to be addressed:

- A large tidal range often necessitates positioning of pontoons some way off shore to ensure adequate draught at all states of the tide. This can result in long access linkspan brows whose length and steepness at some states of tide are difficult or prohibitive to mobility impaired passengers.
- Access routes can be too narrow for wheelchair and pushchair users.
- Access routes include changes in levels, presenting barrier to mobility impaired passengers.
- Infrastructure colours can be unclear to visually impaired, posing unnecessary risks
- The transfer between pontoon and ferry often involves changes in levels and too narrow gangways which are difficult or prohibitive to mobility impaired passengers.

To address these barriers and address existing policy, GBC have set out a quality checklist with a number of recommendations. These are set out in the report and summarised in Section 7 'Quality checklist and recommendations for accessible ferry landing infrastructure and design in the North Sea Region'. This concludes with key recommendations for pontoon infrastructure design to provide full accessibility by all passengers at all states of the tide including: access routes, dimensions, gradients, surfaces, colours/visibility, perimeter guarding, handrails, shelter, resting/waiting facilities, and simplicity of layout. To comply with the regulations alternative access provision should also be considered, for example a lift for users with restricted mobility in situations with an extreme tidal range. If conditions preclude this provision, the operator should ensure some sort of personal assistance is available.



Gravesend pontoon access ramp with coloured guiderails

As well as being of assistance to iTransfer partners such as Hal över, the report and the quality checklist experience derived from the design factors encountered by GBC and their design team can be used for accessible landings throughout the NSR, and potentially contribute to policy resolution in this area.

The full Gravesham report and all supporting documents can be viewed and down-loaded at: <http://www.itransferproject.eu/itranfer-impact/project-results/accessible-ferry-landings-and-new-routes/>

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