

TravelWatch- **ISLE OF MAN**

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Representing and promoting the interests of Isle of Man Passengers

INFORMATION BULLETIN 15 – July 2009

TravelWatch Meetings:

- Our next Supporters' meeting will be held in the Committee Room at the National Sports Centre on Monday 14th September at 19.30. Anyone wishing to come and raise passenger travel issues with us is welcome at that meeting.
- Please note the date of our next Public Meeting – Saturday morning 24th October at the Villa Marina. Details of programme and speakers will be provided nearer the time.

Air travel:

- VLM London City flights have been suspended between 20th July and 1st September due to low demand for business travel in that period. Passengers already booked are being offered transfers to Aer Arann or full refunds.
- Flybe/Loganair Blackpool flights have proved short-lived – but some IOM-Belfast City flights will still operate.
- Manx2.com have increased their Blackpool and Belfast schedules to compensate, so that in capacity terms the routes remain well served.
- A positive meeting was held with Manx2.com Chairman Noel Hayes on 3rd June following his appearance with TWIOM on Manx Radio's "Talking Heads" programme.

On Island travel:

- An introductory meeting has been held with Ian Longworth, the newly appointed Director of Transport (in the Department of Tourism and Leisure). Apart from wide bus and coach experience in NW England, he has a keen interest in tramways and light rail systems.

Sea Travel:

- Our vice-chairman Bernard Arrowsmith represented TravelWatch at the naming ceremony of the new Steam Packet fast craft *Manannan*. The seating, facilities and internal layout of the passenger areas on the craft have been widely welcomed. The access arrangements, particularly at Liverpool, are challenging for the less fit who do not qualify for "boarding assistance". There are a number of minor issues which we hope to discuss with the Company.
- Having requested it in our submission to the Select Committee, we welcome the publication on the Steam Packet website of Punctuality (93.9%) and Reliability (94.2%) figures for the 12 months to end May. These figures are across the fleet and in the case of punctuality refer to departures within 15 minutes of the scheduled time – but make no mention of arrival times. We would wish to discuss this further with the Company.
- A new formula for the calculation of fuel surcharges has now been agreed between the Dept of Transport and the Steam Packet Company, which has resulted in a small reduction in passenger fares. We are pleased to report that the Department have consulted with both TravelWatch and hauliers before finalising the agreement. Fares will now be reviewed every 3 months.
- Steam Packet fares are still under investigation by the Office of Fair Trading and a TravelWatch / OFT meeting is scheduled for mid July.
- A further public meeting of the Tynwald Select Committee on the Steam Packet Company has examined the finances and costs arising from the group structure. The resultant report (but not the substantial appendices) is available on the Tynwald website www.tynwald.org.im – look under "Official Papers" and then under "Reports". The report will be debated in the July sitting of Tynwald, starting on Tuesday 14 July. The Select Committee notes that the company requires a high level of sustained operating profit to service the financial model associated with the group structure. They also note that the substantial financial demands on the group, and its ability to meet same, could affect service levels in the future, remains an open question.

UK Connecting Travel:

There have been minor changes in the UK National Railcard scheme.

- Most Railcards are now £26 per year - up by £2
- Railcards do not get a discount on travel before 9.30 on weekdays in S.E. England. (N.B. "Network Railcards" only cover SE England and are only available to residents of that area).
- Railcards can be bought for 3 years at £65 - good discount plus protection against future rises – but have to be bought on line via www.railcards.co.uk
- Disabled persons railcard £18 - or £48 for 3 years - can be bought at stations.
- UK railcards, UK rail tickets and Sail & Rail tickets can be purchased in person from the Steam Packet Company at the Sea Terminal.

There are concerns that the Steam Packet late afternoon/early evening timings at Liverpool are now sometimes later than the last bus between Princes Parade and Lime Street station, thereby making onward connections difficult to achieve. These have been drawn to the attention of the Department of Transport who are responsible for approving Steam Packet schedules.

Passenger Information Sheets:

- Copies of all our Passenger Information Sheets can be downloaded from http://www.travelwatchisleofman.org/html/useful_information.html and are also available in Local Libraries and at the Welcome Centre in the Sea Terminal

Website:

- The please see our website www.travelwatch-isleofman.org for access to a wide range of travel information. We welcome feedback from anyone using Isle of Man services – particularly when changes affecting passengers are noted.

Membership:

- TravelWatch is keen to recruit more members We have prepared A4 posters about our work suitable for display on noticeboards. If you would like a poster to display please let us know.
- Membership Application forms can be downloaded from http://www.travelwatchisleofman.org/membership_for_website.pdf
- Do please encourage your friends and colleagues to join us – subscriptions of £ 10 (or more) are most welcome. Subscriptions are our main source of income.