

TravelWatch - *ISLE OF MAN*

Arrey Troait – Ellan Vannin

Representing and promoting the interests of Isle of Man Passengers

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Irish Sea Zone Development Manager
Celtic Array Limited
Millstream
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Dear Development Manager

Proposed Irish Sea Zone Offshore Windfarm Development

We write on behalf of passengers who travel by ferry between England and the Isle of Man, to formally express our objection to certain aspects of your proposed Irish Sea Wind farm development. Passengers are a group who appear to have been completely omitted from your extensive consultations. There are around 550,000 Isle of Man passenger journeys made by sea each year via the ports of Heysham and Liverpool. Approximately 55% of these are made by visitors from UK or further afield. These ferry services are regarded as the Island's Lifeline and any disruption is detrimental to both the Island's population and visitors.

TravelWatch Isle of Man (TWIOM) is a well-established voluntary organisation founded to represent the interests of passengers using all aspects of public transport to, from and on the Isle of Man. We have links with other TravelWatch organisations in the UK. TWIOM aims to have good working relationships with, but is totally independent of, transport operators and governments. Our recent enquiries of both IOM Harbours and Isle of Man Steam Packet Company (IOMSPC) have confirmed that your latest location proposals fail to take adequate notice of the many concerns already expressed, many of which are listed in your ZAP Document.

We neither support nor oppose wind farms. Our objection arises because of the adverse effects of your current proposals on ferry passengers between the Isle of Man and the ports of Heysham and Liverpool. These impede existing shipping routes and restrict bad weather diversion options, with potentially damaging consequences for Isle of Man passengers, as we will demonstrate below.

IOMSPC have provided a service between the Island, which has a rising population of 85,000, and ports in North West England for over 180 years. At present, IOMSPC provide a passenger service every day – except Christmas Day – between Douglas and North West England, consisting of a minimum of two daily return sailings rising to four return daily services in the summer. IOMSPC also conveys vehicles and freight. For passengers, reliability of service and the costs of the service are very important. This is particularly so for IOM passengers because of the high number ferry passengers connecting to/from UK rail services and other forms of public transport. Over 200,000 (36.5%) of passengers on these routes travel without cars. It should also be noted that no other Irish Sea passenger ferry routes are likely to suffer significant disruption as a result of these proposals.

There are also significant peaks of demand during the year of which the most acute is the annual TT festival when the IOMSPC undertake additional sailings to convey very large numbers of passengers, vehicles and bikes to and from the Island in a very restricted time frame.

IOMSPC advise that *TT2012 saw 35,172 passengers travel to the Island on ferries between May 23 and June 8, up 4.3% on the comparable period for last year.*

Although the TT is in the summer months, adverse weather can effect operations. Any further constraints on the Steam Packet's operations would have a very serious effect on the TT Festival, causing great concern not only to the large community of motorcycle enthusiasts who come from many parts of the UK and from the wider world but also to the Island's tourist economy.

Under normal operating conditions, these latest proposals are unacceptable as they would obstruct the long established direct routes between Douglas and the ports of Liverpool and Heysham resulting in:-

- Increased journey time with increased fuel consumption and crew costs leading to pressure to increase passenger fares. Current transport investment across the British Isles is substantially aimed at reducing journey times which leads to increased passenger numbers. Conversely previous short-term disruption of IOM ferry services in recent years has led to falling patronage, which is not easily recovered, and in the case of any permanent lengthening of voyage times would not be recoverable. This would not only affect individual passengers but would prove a disincentive both to tourism and future investment in the ferry services.
- Scheduling and timetabling problems at weekends in winter as it may not be possible for a vessel to undertake two return trips in 24 hours. This could also require less convenient departure and arrival times and affect onward connections especially in the UK.

Under adverse weather conditions, they are even more unacceptable as they would obstruct weather routing options resulting in:-

- substantial increase in additional journey times and increased fuel and staff costs
- additional passenger discomfort resulting from worse routes for longer journey times
- disruption to timetable with consequent risk of missed connections to/from onward destinations
- increased likelihood of service cancellations, to prevent discomfort, and for safety margin in restricted sea lanes, with consequent disruption to passengers including costs of overnight accommodation and even cancellation of journeys and holidays

For the reasons set out above, Travelwatch Isle of Man register our objection on behalf of Isle of Man passengers to your current proposals. TWIOM consider that Celtic Array should amend, or be required to amend, the proposed layout within its licensed area so that there is no obstruction of either the direct routes or the adverse weather routes between Douglas and the ports of Heysham and Liverpool.

We understand that representatives of Celtic Array Limited will be visiting the Island for further consultations in July. We therefore request a meeting with Celtic Array Limited to discuss these important issues on behalf of Isle of Man passengers, and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully

Brendan O'Friel
Chairman
TravelWatch-ISLE OF MAN