



20 July 2018

## **TRAVELWATCH URGES GOVERNMENT TO LEARN FROM GUERNSEY'S MOVE ON AIR SERVICES REGULATION**

The provision and control of air services to and from Guernsey was debated in their States Parliament on Thursday 19th July. TravelWatch IOM noted their decision to open up most air routes to the Island to full competition, whilst at the same time maintaining a regulatory approach to those few services considered most vital to the Bailiwick's economic or social needs.

For many years TW IOM has been attempting to persuade the Isle of Man Government to adopt precisely this approach, which we know as 'light touch regulation' - allowing open competition in almost all cases, but with the Government reserving the right to intervene on certain critical services which may be under threat.

The airline industry thrives on competition, but small and sometimes comparatively isolated communities which are so dependant upon a stable structure of certain core routes will always require some sort of limited input from the community to ensure that totally uncontrolled competition does not put vital services at risk. Slightly surprisingly, the Isle of Man Minister for Enterprise, when positively briefing a Guernsey States Member about 'Open Skies' before their debate, failed to mention at all the eleven air routes lost completely to the Isle of Man; the drastic loss of frequency on services to Birmingham, Belfast, and London Gatwick; and the extreme dissatisfaction which we understand has recently been voiced by businesses throughout the Isle of Man over the inadequacy of air services to London and the South East.

Notwithstanding this intervention, Guernsey rejected the adoption of an 'Open Skies' policy, deciding that 'light touch regulation' covers all its needs. We urge our own Government to waste no time in adopting a similarly progressive approach to safeguard vital services before further damage is done to our route network and the Island's businesses.

For further comment or information:

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