

TravelWatch Isle of Man are working with operators, authorities and Government Department on a number of issues which are causing anxiety or concern to passengers.

We welcome the recent Office of Fair Trading investigation into charges for using debit and credit cards when purchasing travel tickets and have taken an active part in the follow up to the publication of their initial report. We will also be asking them to investigate the use of premium rate (0871) telephone numbers by carriers where the cost of calls is not displayed in advertising as is legally required in advertising to the UK market.

On Island Transport

TravelWatch Isle of Man is preparing a submission to the Bus Timetable Review that we will be publishing in due course. We are greatly encouraged by the opportunities being offered to us to contribute to this.

We are pleased to see that Commuter Trains will run during the TT on the Steam Railway and particularly that arrangement and pricing have been finalised and publicised in good time. We are naturally disappointed at the curtailment of MER services north of Laxey and are particularly surprised that the timetable has not been adjusted to provide better connections with the bus service over the closed section of the line.

Off Island Transport

We have been encouraged by the willingness of Flybe and Manx2.com to discuss service developments with us. We are concerned about the level of disruptions experienced by passengers, particularly with Flybe, in the early part of April and the handling by airlines of the consequent difficulties which arise for passengers. We need to explore these issues further and expand our links with other carriers.

Our relationship with the Steam Packet Company has been over-shadowed by the work of the Tynwald Select Committee to which TravelWatch has given evidence and has attended all their public hearings. Despite the Company's efforts to appear more passenger-friendly, we are concerned that during the bad weather disruptions at Easter and in the arrangements made for passengers arising from the Ben-my-Chree's delayed refit, the benefit of some helpful provisions that were made was reduced by the company's lack of understanding of the passenger perspective and need for timely information. Front line staff were sometimes unaware of the revised arrangements. Communication with passengers who had booked through travel agents appears to be a particular area of difficulty. TravelWatch awaits the Company's response to the specific issues which passengers have drawn to our attention.

Our study of the User Agreement, together with the evidence we have listened to from both Government and Company Officers, has led us to make a supplementary submission to the Select Committee which is available on our website <http://www.travelwatch-isleofman.org/> . This suggests that

- Some mechanism is required to ensure that proper consultation with passenger representatives takes place.
- The Department of Transport or the Office of Fair Trading should be made responsible for ensuring that this takes place.
- An annual report on such consultations, perhaps as part of a wider report on performance against the User Agreement, be presented to Tynwald and be made available to the public

- Issued by

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<http://www.travelwatch-isleofman.org/>

Notes for Editors:

TravelWatch ISLE OF MAN was founded in January 2007 in order "To represent and promote the interests of Isle of Man passengers"

Our key objectives are:

- To provide opportunities for passengers to express their concerns and needs
 - To influence Public Transport Authorities and Operators to improve services for passengers
 - To provide Public Transport Authorities and Operators with a passenger organisation to consult
 - To encourage integrated public transport provision both on and off the Island.
 - To co-operate with other bodies in the interests of passengers.
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