

TravelWatch- *ISLE OF MAN*

Arrey Troailt – Ellan Vannin

Representing and promoting the interests of Isle of Man Passengers

MEDIA RELEASE

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TravelWatch Response to new Bus Network and Timetables

TravelWatch Isle of Man cautiously welcomes the introduction of the new bus network and timetables after more than two years of public consultation, information gathering and planning. The new bus timetables can be downloaded from

<http://www.iombusandrail.info/downloads/BusRail-Timetable-Sept2010.pdf>

We are encouraged by the consideration given to the many points raised during the consultation process although we recognise that not all community aspirations have been met. The expressed willingness of Bus Vannin to review the effectiveness of changes in the light of actual experience is however to be welcomed.

In our original submission to that consultation we highlighted a number of areas that needed to be addressed:

1. Improved services to the hospital
2. Improved service timings to connect with Ferry and Aircraft departures and arrivals
3. A properly equipped bus interchange in Douglas
4. The development of a long term plan for integrated transport for the Island
5. Substantial improvements in information for passengers
6. A clear complaints system for when problems occur.

We are also aware that Village Commissioners and groups in various parts of the Island have suggested service improvements to their own areas covering late night buses, gaps in services and adjustments to service timings and we are pleased to note that some (but inevitably not all) of these suggestions have been incorporated.

The new timetables represent some progress against the first two objectives - so there is much still to be done. We are disappointed, but not surprised, that an economic way of providing a greater range of direct services to the hospital has not been found. The absence therefore of any progress over a proper interchange facility in Douglas therefore condemns passengers changing buses to waiting either at Lord Street or at other interchange points in shelters which at best could be described as cold and draughty. We are however pleased to see that most long distance services will depart from Lord Street. However it appears that at certain times of day significant numbers of passengers will require to change buses away from Lord Street and we have some concerns over how this may be handled in the event of any delays.

We welcome the earlier services which will enable more passengers to use public transport to reach the Airport and Sea Terminal for early morning flights and sailings – as indeed we welcome improvements in the Sunday evening bus services from Ronaldsway. TravelWatch is also pleased to see the provision of late night buses from Douglas on Fridays and Saturdays. Improved public transport should enable passengers to save money on their journeys. The recently announced order for new state of the art single-deck buses should lead to improved passenger comfort on the services on which they are deployed.

The changes in timings and routings on some services will take time for people to become used to – and we are concerned at the short period between the announcement and availability of new timetables and their introduction on 13th September. It is TravelWatch's intention to study the new timetables with a view to identifying and highlighting the new opportunities which they will provide for resident and visiting passengers alike. With changes as substantial as these it is likely that not everything will work out as intended, so we welcome the commitment to make further adjustments to services in the light of experience.

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