

TravelWatch- **ISLE OF MAN**

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Representing and promoting the interests of Isle of Man Passengers

MEDIA RELEASE

15th November 2011

NEWS FROM TRAVELWATCH

TravelWatch Isle of Man were pleased to welcome David Sidebottom from **Passenger Focus** in UK, and Peter O'Mara from **Aer Arran** to their well-attended Autumn Public Meeting on 12th November.

Although **Passenger Focus** concentrate on bus and rail travel in UK, most of the findings from their extensive research are applicable to other modes of transport, and many are of relevance to us here on the Island.

Amongst the points arising from their UK passenger research findings, that David shared with us were:

- 66% did not find it acceptable to make service changes more than twice a year
- 62 % want at least four week's notice of major service changes
- 76% would like to be informed about major changes by notice at the bus stop
- 82% want to know an exact date when service changes come into effect
- Punctuality and reliability of services are very important
- Passengers, particularly in rural areas, are concerned about service cut-backs in response to Government cost-cutting.

David also told listeners that **Passenger Focus** deals with appeals where the passenger is not satisfied with the response to a complaint made by the train or bus operator. Although PF has no powers of enforcement, many appeal complaints that they took up produced a better result for passengers.

Recently **Passenger Focus** published a report on passengers' needs during unplanned disruption:

- accurate, timely and consistent information is critical because it allows passengers to make informed decisions about what they do
- passengers do not always trust the information they are given, particularly the reasons offered for delays and cancellations – they want more honesty
- the attitude and empathy of staff towards passengers during disruption is a key factor
- passengers want operators to actively tell them if there are problems, particularly cancellations or if a temporary timetable is being introduced

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Peter O'Mara assured his audience of **Aer Arran's** long term commitment to Isle of Man services, whilst acknowledging that existing services required improvement.

- Across their network 90% of departures are on time but they plan to improve this by putting a second aircraft on standby in Dublin.
- They want to increase traffic on the London City route and would provide a larger aircraft if passenger numbers justified it. This is the most expensive airport they use and runway restrictions mean that their planes have to take off with empty seats.
- It was pointed out from the floor that the IOM/Dublin route has development potential for IOM passengers travelling further afield.
- Information on Aer Arran complaint procedures will be provided for publication through our website - as will information about the availability of advertised lowest fares.

Under general questions, the issue of a **bus interchange** in Douglas to provide shelter, seating, information and access to toilets was discussed. The primary purpose of this would be for passengers changing from one bus to another, rather than to replace any existing facility. The need for the new Administration to address this issue urgently was made very clear.

The next **TravelWatch Public Meeting** and AGM will be held on Saturday 17th March 2012 – but there will be an informal **Supporter Meeting** in the Committee Room at the NSC on Monday 30th January at 7.30 pm.

Full details of how to join **TravelWatch-ISLE OF MAN** - as well as the **information** and **guidance** we provide for passengers - can be found on our website: www.travelwatch-isleofman.org

Issued on behalf of **TravelWatch-ISLE OF MAN**
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NOTES for Editors:

In the four years since it was formed **TravelWatch ISLE OF MAN** has become widely recognised for effectively putting the Passenger Perspective to our transport providers and Government Departments. We also organise Public Meetings twice a year to give passengers an opportunity not only to air their ideas and concerns, to be updated on our work but particularly to meet the people who have responsibility for providing and ensuring the availability of passenger transport to, from and on the Island