

TravelWatch **ISLE OF MAN**

Media Release

15 October 2009

TravelWatch will be holding its autumn **Public Meeting on Saturday 24 October** in the Promenade Suite at the Villa Marina – starting at 10.00 (doors open from 09.30).

At this meeting we will be updating supporters on current passenger travel issues – air, bus and sea – and inviting feedback from passengers on their travel experiences – both good and bad. **Air travel** is an ever-changing scenario with the loss of two operators in recent months – offset by the efforts of manx2.com in particular to fill some of the gaps. **The bus review** is on-going and we look forward to news from the Bus Management team of the progress being made.

Sea travel is inevitably an on-going issue for any Island community and following the completion of the Tynwald Select Committee's work we look forward to having its chairman The Hon S Rodan SHK at the meeting. We will also be discussing the TravelWatch submission to the current Office of Fair Trading enquiry into Steam Packet fares.

In that submission our main conclusions are that:

1. Those unable to benefit from the lowest of Special Offer fares feel that fares are too high
2. More transparency over the availability of Special Offer fares, particularly day returns is needed.
3. The issues of late booking, changed bookings, day-return and stand-by fares and extra charges need further consultation and discussion.
4. Fares need to be established at levels which will both encourage passenger travel and enable the operator to make a return on capital benchmarked to the rest of the ferry sector.

We specifically have suggested that:

1. With the arrival of the *Manannan*, with its substantial capacity, the possibility of offering stand-by tickets should be examined.
2. When passengers miss a sailing due to road or public transport delays the Company should only seek to recover the administrative costs associated with the change.
3. Travel needs to be encouraged by increasing the availability of the lower levels of Special Offer fares.
4. An independent passenger opinion exercise be considered to establish the level of satisfaction with available fares and the degree of stimulus which lower fares might provide.
5. Further investigation is required before 2010 fares are settled as to why the maximum increase allowed under the User Agreement has always been allowed.
6. Service level provision v pricing requires proper debate, consultation and discussion before 2010 services and fares are finalised. Ways of keeping fares down which fall short of reducing the number of services need to be explored.

A copy of the full TravelWatch submission to the Office of Fair Trading can be found on our website <http://www.travelwatch-isleofman.org/html/publishemedia.html>

Enquiries to:

TravelWatch ISLE OF MAN chairman Brendan O'Friel

01624 833636

brendanofriel@manx.net