



The future of Sea Services

In early July TravelWatch contacted all Members of Tynwald in the belief that there could be merit in a negotiated agreement with the Steam Packet rather than have years of delay followed by complexities and uncertainties of competitive tendering.

TravelWatch acknowledged the benefits produced by the User Agreement, and the potential merit of a negotiated agreement. However, progression from an offer to fully documented contract would require attention to numerous details and concerns, as summarised in the 18 March Briefing Note, which can be found on this website as "***TW Sea Services Update***"

A possible alternative, at some future date, of competitive tendering would involve preparation of very detailed specification and criteria for assessment of tenders on service quality and costs. This would be far more complex than any negotiated agreement, with less certainty of outcome and with the danger of unexpected consequences. July Tynwald decided not to accept the Steam Packet's Offer, and instructed the Department of Infrastructure to seek further discussions with the Steam Packet. Although it is understood that Steam Packet's Offer is no longer on the table, TravelWatch is hopeful that discussions will continue, which might then lead to serious negotiations.

TravelWatch's overriding priority is that the interests of passengers are adequately reflected in any new agreement. Difficult strategic decisions will need to be made, and it is essential that those responsible have the time, expertise and resource to address these issues. TravelWatch is seeking to continue to assist and play a constructive role.