

TravelWatch- **ISLE OF MAN**

Arrey Troait – Ellan Vannin

Representing and promoting the interests of Isle of Man Passengers

Information Bulletin 19 – November 2010

1 - Travel Consultative Group (TCG) – this is the new name for the proposed Consultative Body for Air and Sea Transport, the establishment of which was recommended by the Tynwald Select Committee on the Steam Packet Company. The proposal is to establish a non statutory Consultative Group which would report to the Minister for Infrastructure.

The draft terms of reference, membership and responsibilities for the TCG have now been published for public consultation and are available via the Government Consultations web page

<http://www.gov.im/ConsultationDetail.gov?id=201>

– the actual document for comment may be found on

<http://www.gov.im/lib/docs/transport/harbours//drafttermsofreferencetravelcons.pdf>

Paper copies are also available from the Dept of Infrastructure Reception on the Ground Floor in the Sea Terminal - 01624 668800

Responses should be made, no later than 24 December, to

Captain Michael Brew, Director of Harbours, Harbours Division, Department of Transport, Sea Terminal Building, Douglas, IM1 2RF Email: enquiries@harbours.dot.gov.im

TravelWatch will be responding formally to this Public Consultation and we would invite your comments to assist us in that process (by 5 December please) although we hope that as many of you as possible will respond directly. We would also ask you please to draw the attention of your friends, colleagues and any organisations with which you may be associated to this Public Consultation – and invite them to make their own comments to Captain Brew.

The proposal to establish the TCG is something we very much welcome as it will be the first time there will be an official Government established passenger travel group. We look forward to playing our part in this alongside Chamber of Commerce the Hospitality trade and others. Once the consultation on the terms of reference etc of the group has been completed, the Department of Infrastructure will consider the submissions before coming to a final decision on how best to establish the group. This is a real chance for you to have your say – please use it!

One shortcoming of the TCG terms of reference is that it is confined to Air and Sea, thus cannot address directly some of the joined-up-transport issues that might have been possible had on-Island transport been included. This arises because Public Transport – and Tourism – fall outside the remit of the Department of Infrastructure. In order that the TCG can hopefully be established and running before the next General Election we believe that this shortcoming can best be addressed at this stage through the proposed ability of the group to “*extend ad-hoc invitations to further organisations or individuals, as appropriate depending on the nature of the issues that it wishes to consider*”. We would however encourage those writing in to suggest that the links with on-Island transport need to be covered, and that it should be done in this way. It is proposed that there should be a Commercial Haulage representative on what is a passenger travel group – there may be some advantage in this if it enables passengers and hauliers to discuss common interests in approaching carriers. Similarly the inclusion of a Passenger Handling Agent (who acts as an agent for airlines in dealing with passengers) might be seen as a Trojan Horse in the Group. These are topics on which we would encourage your comments - either in your response to Captain Brew enquiries@harbours.dot.gov.im and/or to us web@travelwatch-isleofman.org

2 - Regulation of Air and Sea Transport – at our Nov 6 Public Meeting Captain Michael Brew talked to us about the User Agreement for the government linkspan in Douglas Harbour, and Mike Bathgate about the Open Skies policy at the Airport. Copies of their talks are now available on our website

http://www.travelwatch-isleofman.org/User_Agreement_MB_final.pdf

http://www.travelwatch-isleofman.org/Open_Skies_handout_MB.pdf

3 - Another Consultation – the format of our Public Meetings is now well established with knowledgeable speakers informing us about significant travel issues – and plenty of time allowed for questions and discussion. As John Hines put it on Manx Radio after our last meeting we generate “more light than heat” on the topics covered. However we would welcome your views on future subjects that you would like to see discussed – and on the format of meetings. We are, for example, considering trying out a “Question Time” sort of panel approach. If you have any views on the please let Brendan O’Friel know. chair@travelwatch-isleofman.org

4 – Buses - At our public meeting Director of Public Transport Ian Longworth provided an update on public transport issues and answered a wide range of questions. He confirmed that one important outstanding issue - raised by TravelWatch - is the provision of a proper bus interchange with facilities for passengers in Douglas. Achieving progress on this issue will require continuing lobbying by TravelWatch and members who feel strongly about the issue are encouraged to raise it with our politicians.

5 - Air matters –

- **Aer Arann** – new investors have put money into the company and the airline is no longer in examinership and continues to trade normally.
- **Airport Improvements** – two improvements for which TravelWatch has been pressing for some time are now being addressed. A nominated desk is being provided in the Departures Lounge for dealing with passenger queries in the event of delays, and a new bus shelter is in the current plan of improvements. It is also intended that the one-hour free parking zone will be moved to the eastern car park adjacent to the Terminal Building – currently used for returning hire cars. The exact timing for implementing these changes and improvements is not yet clear.
- **Lack of seating at Liverpool Airport** – our very preliminary enquiries suggest that it appears to be policy to try and keep people in the retail area until their flights are called and provide little seating in the departure areas. Problems arise after a flight is called and people are left standing for some time before boarding actually commences. That seems to be regarded as the fault of the airlines so the airport may not be keen to incur costs improving the situation. This may require political intervention to progress.

6 - Sea travel –

- **Steam Packet** – it is unclear what, if any, passenger service changes may be proposed as a result of the freight competition which the company is now facing. It is difficult to see outcomes, even within the scope of the current user agreement, which will not be detrimental to passengers but until there are firm proposals to be discussed the way forward is unclear.
- **Sea Terminal Catering** – the Department of Infrastructure are seeking a new tenant capable of establishing a viable business in the Sea Terminal – hopefully to be open in time for Easter 2011, although no contracts have yet been agreed. In the meantime vending machines are provided.
- **Heysham Passenger Gangway** – the investigations by the Health and Safety Executive and the Marine Accident Investigation Branch into the collapse of the boarding ramp and gangway last March have now reached a stage when work to re-instate the facility can start. We are advised that the port, Steam Packet personnel and engineering consultants are to meet at the end of November to finalise the project. In the meantime use of the yellow school buses to move foot passengers on and off the ship continues.

7 – Dates for Travelwatch Meetings –

- **Monday 10th January – 7.30 pm - Supporters’ Meeting** – in the Committee Room at the National Sports Centre – an informal opportunity to come and talk about issues which concern you.
- **Saturday 19th March – (morning) – Public Meeting and AGM** – Villa Marina – details nearer the time.