

### 3. Concessionary Travel Schemes Bill 2016 – First Reading approved

Mr Corkish to move:

*That the Concessionary Travel Schemes Bill 2016 be read a first time.*

**The President:** We move to the Concessionary Travel Schemes Bill for First Reading.  
I call on the Hon. Member, Mr Corkish.

**Mr Corkish:** Thank you, Madam President.

I am pleased to be able to promote this very short Bill on behalf of the Department of Infrastructure.

The Concessionary Travel Schemes Bill's main objective is to regularise the current position by conferring a statutory power on the Department of Infrastructure to enable that Department to make concessionary travel schemes for passengers travelling by public road or rail transport. This objective will be achieved by the insertion of a new section 23A in the Isle of Man Passenger Transport Act 1982 so as to enable the Department to make concessionary travel schemes.

The Department is currently working on the details of the travel scheme and hopes to be able to issue the draft scheme for public consultation in the near future.

One of the objectives of the new scheme will be to ensure that any concessions will be targeted to the groups in society who are most in need. That is why the Department is currently working closely with the Treasury Social Services Division to refine the details of the new scheme.

By way of recap, Madam President, I would like to emphasise to Hon. Members that this Bill is purely inserting new enabling powers in the Isle of Man Passenger Transport Act 1982, which will introduce new provisions which will allow the Department of Infrastructure to make concessionary travel schemes.

I can also advise Hon. Members that whilst the origins of the original travel concessionary scheme can be traced back to 1974, that scheme was classified as a non-statutory scheme, although the scheme did require Tynwald approval. The original 1974 scheme was actually made by the former Board of Social Security, and that scheme has been revised over the years to take account of the introduction of the government department system and subsequent name changes and restructuring of those Departments.

Having outlined the broad principles of the Bill, I hope that Hon. Members will now give it support.

Madam President, I beg to move that the Concessionary Travel Schemes Bill 2016 be read for a first time.

**The President:** The Hon. Member, Mr Henderson.

**Mr Henderson:** Gura mie eu, Eaghtyrane.  
I beg to second and reserve my remarks.

**The President:** The Hon. Member, Mr Turner.

**Mr Turner:** Thank you, Madam President.

I support the Bill but I would just like to make some comments.

We are trying to go for a more simple Government. I find it quite extraordinary that we actually need something like this to put these schemes together, because if we were running the bus company as a ... if it was a private operator they would be free to set whatever tariffs, discounts, concessions they wished to put on their tariff rate card.

Obviously, this is not about privatisation, corporatisation, of the bus company, and I accept that on the Isle of Man the viability of running a privatised service just is not there, so we have to have this in Government ownership, but I would have thought that the Department should be taking the opportunity to maybe simplify this completely, and whatever tariffs and charges, subject to oversight by the regulator, which I believe is still the RTLC ... then I do wonder why it requires primary legislation to enable them to do this. Are we not tying up these organisations in red tape, when really we should be allowing them to get on with it and do these things? Is the Department not considering a bit of a revamp in this area so that these sort of things are not necessary in future and they can get on and offer the services that they wish to offer for people?

**The President:** The Hon. Member, Mr Crookall.

**Mr Crookall:** Thank you, Madam President.

Just a couple of queries, really.

In section 9 of the explanatory note, it does say, and I quote:

This will allow the Department to ensure that any travel concessions do not apply at times when, for example, the buses are carrying lots of commuters.

I hope there is some allowance made for those who are concessionary ticketholders, whether they be pensioners or whatever who are attending Noble's Hospital or whatever, to get there using that. Are they going to stop them from using them? In which case, they need to work with DHSC with regard to appointment times so they do not clash.

Also, just on section 23A(5), it says:

A concessionary travel scheme may provide for the modification or revocation of any concessionary travel scheme relating to the carriage of passengers by road or rail established in the Island and in operation when this section comes into operation.

This is purely a hypothetical query, I suppose, at this time, but one that needs to be taken into consideration: should the Department of Infrastructure take over the horse trams, timing will become an issue as to when they take over, whether they are included in this, because this says 'when this comes into effect'. It may well be that they are outside, so it is just purely hypothetical but it is something they might need to think about.

Thank you, Madam President.

**The President:** The Hon. Member, Mr Cretney.

**Mr Cretney:** Yes, I was just wondering if the mover can expand a little bit on the terms of the discussions he is having with the Social Security Division in terms of the area of concession.

All I would say is that the concessions in particular for retired people were hard fought to achieve and I would hate to see us going backward in that area.

**The President:** The mover to reply.

**Mr Corkish:** Thank you, Madam President.

I thank Hon. Members for their interest in this short Bill.

I reply to Mr Turner regarding simpler government that indeed that is the wish of Government in general. This really is a tidying-up exercise which, at the end of the day, will make it much clearer because of ... Going back to when Departments have been redefined, there is a great deal of grey area around concessionary travel. This Bill is designed to tidy that up, and indeed, as I said in my opening remarks, there will be a degree of public consultation on this which we very much hope will

iron out and bring to the fore the needs. At the end of the day, this is for people who are in need of concessionary travel.

Mr Crookall, yes, public consultation is proceeding and, indeed, working with Social Security and will continue to, bearing in mind that of course that is the most important part of this Bill.

The query 'should the Department of Infrastructure have dominion over the horse trams, should it come – it is hypothetical and I am sure that will be taken on board as and when the times comes. Indeed, we have an officer from the Department here now.

To Mr Cretney – Social Security, pensioners – of course the first time that this concessionary travel was brought in was indeed in 1974 for the benefit of pensioners and those over pensionable age. The Department will have recourse to remember that, Mr Cretney, and your remarks are taken on board by the Department.

Madam President, I beg to move.

**The President:** The motion is that the Concessionary Travel Schemes Bill 2016 be read a first time. Those in favour, please say aye; against, no. The ayes have it. The ayes have it.