

2. Concessionary Travel Schemes Bill 2016 – Second Reading approved

Mr Corkish to move:

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

The President: We turn now to Item 2 on our Order Paper, the Concessionary Travel Schemes Bill 2016. I call on the Hon. Member, Mr Corkish to take the Second Reading and clauses.

Mr Corkish: Thank you, Madam President.

I would firstly like to thank those Members who supported the Bill at the First Reading earlier this month. I would also take the opportunity to cover a couple of queries that Hon. Members raised at the First Reading stage.

Mr Turner made a point that this appeared as unnecessary red tape and cited the wish for simpler government regarding concessionary fares. However, such a concessionary fare is providing a benefit to qualifying members of the community and legislation is required to do that. A private bus company would be reimbursed for each passenger carried. However Bus Vannin, as a publicly owned undertaking, receives an annual subvention from which such costs are covered.

Mr Crookall mentioned the powers to adjust the times the concession is offered, particularly in respect of hospital appointments. The current arrangements see half fare paid until 9 a.m. and again in the evening peak period. I can say there is no change proposed to those existing arrangements, or indeed would be without public consultation.

Finally, Mr Cretney sought reassurance that the concessions were not being diluted. I can say the same in answer to Mr Cretney.

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

Mr Crookall: I beg to second Madam President, and reserve my remarks.

The President: The motion is that the Bill be read a second time. Those in favour, please say aye; against, no. The ayes have it. The ayes have it.

Concessionary Travel Schemes Bill 2016 – Clauses considered

The President: Clause 1.

Mr Corkish: Thank you, Madam President.

This clause gives the Act resulting from the Bill its short title. The Bill does not have any commencement provisions so all its provisions will come into force upon the passing of the Bill.

Madam President, I beg to move that clause 1 do stand part of the Bill.

Mr Crookall: I beg to second, Madam President.

The President: The motion is that clause 1 stands part of the Bill. Those in favour, please say aye; against, no. The ayes have it. The ayes have it.

Clause 2.

Mr Corkish: Thank you, Madam President.

Clause 2 amends the Isle of Man Passenger Transport Act 1982 by the insertion of a new section 23A into Part V of that Act.

The new section 23A will comprise seven subsections covering the following: subsections (1) and (2) will enable the Department of Infrastructure to make concessionary travel schemes for eligible persons travelling on eligible services. The meaning of 'eligible services' and 'eligible persons' is defined in subsection (7).

Subsection (3) provides that a concessionary travel scheme must include provision for determining the rate for all rates of travel concessions and for specifying the days and times during which travel concessions apply. 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.

Subsection (4) provides that a concessionary travel scheme may allow a person to publish background information relating to the scheme and for the electronic transmission of any information or documents that may be referred to in the scheme. The new subsection (4) also allows a person to exercise discretion in dealing with any matter in the scheme and to make provision for other matters that the Department may consider appropriate – for example, requesting certain documentation, perhaps proof of identity, address etc., in order to verify the validity of the information on the application form. Provision is also included to allow the Department to levy a fee under the scheme, for example, to cover the administration costs involved in the processing of any applications for concessionary travel.

Subsection (5) provides for the modification or revocation of any concessionary travel scheme which is currently being used by the Department at the time this new section comes into operation. The current scheme provides for concessionary travel for persons over a certain age limit and persons who are substantially and permanently handicapped and in need of assistance towards travel costs.

Subsection (6) provides that the Department must consult with the Treasury before making any scheme. As some Hon. Members may already be aware, the Department is currently consulting with the Treasury about the details of a new concessionary travel scheme and, whilst it is not a statutory requirement, the Department does intend to consult publicly with all interested parties on the details of this new scheme.

Subsection (7) provides the meaning of certain terms that may be referred to in any scheme. As well as defining 'eligible person' and 'eligible service' the Department will also be able to define what level of travel concession will apply to a journey. At the moment the current scheme allows for eligible persons to either pay half the standard adult fare, or no fare at all.

Madam President, I beg to move that clause 2 stands part of the Bill.

Mr Crookall: I beg to second, Madam President.

The President: The motion is that clause 2 stands part of the Bill. Those in favour, please say aye; against, no. The ayes have it. The ayes have it.

Clause 3.

Mr Corkish: Thank you, Madam President.

Clause 3(1) provides the Act to cease to have effect on the day after its promulgation.

Subclause (2) also provides for a transitional provision so that subclause (1) does not affect the ongoing validity of the amendments made by clause 2.

Madam President, I beg to move that clause 3 stands part of the Bill.

Mr Crookall: I beg to second Madam President.

The President: The motion is that clause 3 stands part of the Bill. Those in favour, please say aye; against, no. The ayes have it. The ayes have it.