

**4. Select Committee on Free Train and Tram Travel (Petition for Redress) –
Report and recommendation –
Amended motion carried**

The Chair of the Select Committee on Free Train and Tram Travel (Petition for Redress) (Mr Shimmins) to move:

That the Report of the Select Committee on Free Train and Tram Travel (Petition for Redress) [[PP No 2017/0042](#)] be received and the following recommendation be approved:

That the Department of Infrastructure should consider offering an advance purchase discount on annual passes for the Isle of Man Steam Railway and Manx Electric Railway, but not for the Snaefell Mountain Railway.

[[GD No 2017/0018](#)] is relevant to this Item.

The President: Item 4, Select Committee on Free Train and Tram Travel, Petition for Redress. I call on the Chair of the Select Committee, Mr Shimmins, to move.

The Chairman of the Select Committee on Free Train and Tram Travel (Mr Shimmins): Thank you, Mr President.

The Report of the Select Committee on Free Train and Tram Travel was laid before Tynwald Court in March. This Committee was set up by the Court in response to a motion raised in October 2016. This followed a Petition for Redress from three individuals presented at the midsummer Court at St John's in July 2016.

Until March 2015 all Isle of Man residents over the age of 60 were entitled to a concessionary travel pass that allowed them to travel for free on all bus, tram and train services. In that year, the Department of Infrastructure introduced half-fares for the train and tram services and also introduced a staged increase to move the age of eligibility to retirement age.

The wording of the Petition asked the Committee to inquire into ways by which the residents of the Isle of Man be entitled not to pay for train and tram travel on the Island's heritage railways. As such, it is relatively narrow in scope.

At times, the Committee found itself wandering into wider subjects, including the optimal operating model for the railways, the impact of ageing population demographics and the concept of intergenerational fairness. You may be relieved to hear that I do not intend to cover these points. I will instead cover the salient aspects.

The first conclusion that the Committee agreed was that the heritage railways should be considered a leisure activity and not an essential means of public transport. They are not journeys of necessity, they are journeys of desire. It is clear that we have a strong affection and emotional attachment to the railways, but should they be free for pensioners? The Committee looked for comparables. An extensive survey of heritage railways in the UK and Ireland was undertaken and this showed that while some railways provided concessions for pensioners, none provided free travel.

Heritage was cited as an important aspect by the petitioners. As such, the Committee looked at the pricing operated by Manx National Heritage, and this is also included in the Report in front of you. This shows that at the sites which charge – for example, the House of Manannan, Castle Rushen, the Grove, Laxey Wheel, the Nautical Museum – pensioners do have to pay. The Government also owns and operates other leisure facilities – the Wildlife Park, the National Sports Centre, the Villa Marina, the Broadway Cinema and the Gaiety Theatre come to mind. None of these facilities offer free pricing for pensioners. Therefore, on what basis could free travel apply to the heritage railways? This was the question that the Committee asked itself.

There is a suggestion that free travel could be provided if there were spare seats for services that were running anyway. In practice, the Committee found that this was problematic from an operational perspective and raises further questions around the funding and viability of Government leisure attractions, especially those which are popular with mature people. The Committee looked into this in some detail, requesting additional information from the Department. Passenger numbers have risen over the years. On the Steam Railway and the Manx Electric Railway they rose last year, on the Snaefell Mountain Railway they decreased following repairs due to storm damage, and improved marketing and other initiatives have contributed to this positive trend in passenger numbers. This does mean that there are fewer empty seats.

Income is also up from £1.3 million to £1.6 million in the last year, but the railways continue to incur significant losses. It is many millions every year. Of course, this is not a spreadsheet operation; there are other aspects. The weather can play a big part. For example, on the Snaefell Mountain Railway on a rainy day in April only 75 to 80 passengers may venture out, whereas on a warm sunny day in April we may see 800 to 1,000. All of these facts led the Committee to conclude that capacity was a consideration and that there is no compelling case to reverse the decision of March 2015.

We also concluded that the concessionary fares are reasonable and that the annual Go Platinum Railcards in particular offer very good value for money. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) The Committee felt it was better to encourage the uptake of these cards. The Committee recommended that the Department of Infrastructure should consider offering an advance purchase discount on the annual rail passes with the exclusion of the Snaefell Mountain Railway, which has the most regular capacity constraints. The Department has accepted the Report and the recommendation. In their response, you can see the proposed specific pricing for this year. Overall, the Committee was more focused on the general approach, in that if you renew a season ticket early you can get a small discount, and it was felt that this was common practice to encourage loyal customers to renew their season tickets.

Before I move the Report I would like to thank my fellow Committee members, Ms Edge and Mr Callister, the Hon. Members from Onchan. We had some excellent debates and it was constructive that we were able to agree the final Report unanimously. None of us had served on a Tynwald Committee before, so we were most grateful for the support provided by the Clerks.

Mr President, I beg to move.

The President: Hon. Member for Onchan, Ms Edge.

Ms Edge: I beg to second.

The President: Hon. Member of the Council, Mr Cretney.

Mr Cretney: Thank you, Mr President.

I have an amendment which adds to the proposal of the Committee, in my opinion, and has been circulated. I believe it is very straightforward and I will explain it in a moment.

Firstly, though, I have had correspondence with the Chairman of the Committee and it would be wrong if I were not to emphasise my concern that the public were denied the opportunity to appear before the Committee to express a view on this policy matter; I had a number of people contact me after the Committee was established who wished to do so. As the mover of the original resolution, which was not discussed in here in any depth, I believe this would have assisted their consultations and considerations.

I stated at the time of the original discussion I very much welcome the increasing numbers of passengers using all the heritage railways, which are so important to our Island's tourism offering in particular. However, any observer with even a passing interest in our railways will note that on a number of occasions there are plenty of spare seats, particularly on off-peak services, and if Hon. Members have not witnessed that I will quite happily send them round a video I took recently where the complete rear carriage of the tram that was being used was completely empty.

I have compromised from my original position on this matter, which was that all retired people should have free travel afforded to them at all times. This was a policy I introduced as Minister, which was removed subsequently by a Department Member under a different Minister. This matter was included in the Chief Minister's policy document in his application for the position, where he stated:

We need to stop penalising pensioners and re-examine various charges such as charging pensioners for train travel.

It could be argued, as a result of the petition, that this Committee has indeed re-examined such matters. However, my position is that it should not be beyond the brains of the Department of Infrastructure Heritage Railways Division to assess the off-peak and peak journeys and to introduce a policy which would allow full utilisation of the fleet by the provision of free travel for retired persons on such services, which could be highlighted for customers. The benefits of such policy would be that the various local economies of Castletown, Port Erin, Port St Mary, Ramsey and Laxey, for example, would benefit from pensioners often with grandchildren over five who would be paying customers and would fill empty seats and spend money in the various areas described. Indeed, it is clear that such a policy could be introduced on a similar basis to the present concession which applies to two children under five being allowed to travel free when accompanied by an adult providing they do not occupy a seat at busy times. So the brains are in place to add to the area that I am suggesting.

I think the bottom line is I am being realistic about off-peak services, just as applies on bus services. I do not want to see empty carriages going round, which can be witnessed all too often. Maybe Members are content for that to happen, but I am sure they are not really, and with a bit of imagination and political will we can resolve that situation to the benefit of all by accepting my amendment, which I move:

To add at the end the words 'And that retired people be allowed off peak travel free of charge on the railways'.

The President: Hon. Member for Douglas East, Mr Robertshaw.

Mr Robertshaw: Thank you, Mr President.

This summer's must-read book: *Journeys of Passion and Desire*, by Bill Shimmins, co-edited by Rob Callister and Julie Edge. I won't be buying this book though. I am one of those pensioners and I think we have got to the stage now where we have to differentiate between those pensioners who can afford and those who cannot.

I am reminded that the MiCards developing on one side and the ... I do not know what it is called ... the railcard on the other, have the same pockets, the same potential in the future, and I am going to say no to this at this stage because I think we need to wait and push on with our potential for being able to identify between those pensioners who can afford to go on a journey of desire and those who cannot afford it. I think we need to move on from these old-fashioned clunky definitions of an entire group because they are a pensioner or not.

With that, Mr President, I will be voting against. Thank you.

The President: Just to be clear, you are not seconding the amendment?

Mr Robertshaw: No, I am not seconding the amendment.

The President: Thank you.

Mr Cretney: He'd have loved to! (*Interjection*)

The President: Hon. Member for Garff, Mrs Caine.

Mr Robertshaw: I didn't. I didn't speak to him.

Mrs Caine: Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Mrs Caine, you have the floor.

Mrs Caine: I rise to oppose the recommendation of the Committee and wish to propose another amendment to the motion.

I am flabbergasted that the Department of Infrastructure is minded to support the Select Committee's recommendation and has actually come forward with a proposal to offer a discount on concessionary railcards purchased at a certain time of year, which I think is a nonsense and fundamentally misunderstands the discounted railcard product on offer.

The Committee recognised that the Manx Electric Railway is an important means of transport for residents in Groudle Road, as residents there are otherwise reliant on the very limited bus service in that area. Overall they accepted the premise that Isle of Man heritage rail journeys are mainly journeys of desire rather than necessity. For the majority of travellers I agree it is leisure travel. However, for pockets of pensioners in the Garff constituency the MER offers an enhanced public transport service for nine months of the year that is not available to them via the bus network. For those pensioners who do not have access to private cars it is an essential service. This is not the case in the south, where a frequent bus service runs parallel to the steam train, and obviously it is not available to other parts of the Island that no longer have a rail service, but for a small number of residents on the east coast the Manx Electric Railway reaches parts of the Island other services do not reach.

I would suggest that until such time as demand-responsive transport or other bus services are provided the Department of Infrastructure should consider granting free tram travel to pensioners in outlying areas of Onchan and Maughold to enable them to access the public transport service that does not operate more regularly to their area.

Perhaps the concessionary Go Platinum cards could be offered at cost price of production, so £5 per card, for pensioners. The details of that, I feel, should be left to the DoI, but providing free tram travel would seem significantly more logical for pensioners who have limited access to public bus services than the Department's proposal to offer a discount to all purchasers of concessionary annual rail passes bought in September and October. That is something that would seem to fly in the face of every efficiency saving that Government is attempting to make. Firstly, it would mean that the discount applies to children as well as pensioners, as the same concessionary card serves both. This is without a hint of means-testing or needs-testing. If this recommendation is accepted, everyone who purchases an already highly discounted annual railcard for £37.50 for unlimited travel on all the railways will receive a further unspecified discount – I think it is £2.50 – just for purchasing it in September or October. The fact is that when the railway season passes were changed – the season passes were changed to annual railcards a couple of years ago – the season price was held, so no matter what time of the year the annual card is now purchased it lasts for a full year from purchase instead of expiring when services cease in the autumn. That spread the demand of purchasing and gave buyers equal value for money if purchasing it later in the year. However, to offer a discount on the Go Platinum annual cards will require either the Public Transport Division to make changes to its online prices during September and October or, more likely, require those wanting to obtain the tiny discount to purchase them at the Welcome Centre. So it would seem this recommendation would be incentivising people to purchase cards at a discount that will cost more in administration terms to issue. Why would the Department do that? It surely will not comply with the Government's Digital Strategy, apart from anything else.

Additionally, the Committee's recommendation was for advance purchase discounts on annual passes for the Isle of Man Steam Railway and the Manx Electric Railway, but not for the Snaefell Mountain Railway, acknowledging that Mountain trams run at capacity on many occasions, but the Department of Infrastructure says it will be offering a discount on all concessionary Go Platinum Rail, Go Platinum Steam and Go Platinum Electrical annual cards purchased in September and October. Two of those, the Go Platinum Rail and Go Platinum Electric cards, include unlimited travel on Snaefell trams. To remove the Snaefell service from the annual cards would require the cards to be changed – again, an unacceptable organisational expense, to my mind.

I can sympathise with the Committee wanting to find a way of pleasing the public, but I feel a policy to discount all concessionary cards for two months of the year is not the way forward. I would seek Members' support instead to my amendment to the recommendation. By deleting all the words after 'consider offering' and replacing them with the following, the recommendation would read: 'That the Department of Infrastructure *should consider* offering free annual Electric Rail passes to pensioners residing in areas bordering the Manx Electric Railway that do not receive frequent bus services.'

The Committee accepted that, for the vast majority of residents, travelling on our heritage railways is a leisure activity. In my opinion the Department should not seek to discount its already excellent value for money annual cards, considering the additional administrative cost of doing so.

I would not support either the Hon. Member of the Council, Mr Cretney's recommendation and amendment because I feel that it would be giving away too much in terms of the capacity on the railways to have unlimited travel, even off peak, for pensioners when, although the trams might go one way and appear to be empty, there could be hoards awaiting them at the next stop that then makes them full, and if pensioners are already riding on them it becomes a very awkward situation and a lack of capacity.

However, the Committee accepted that for the vast majority of residents it is a leisure activity and I would ask this Hon. Court to support the view that the Department should look at a more targeted concession for pensioners who reside along the Manx Electric Railway and who have otherwise limited access to bus services. Although they do not run year round, tram travel would provide improved access to public transport for a small number of Garff constituents in Onchan and in Maughold. I would suggest it would make a very positive impact on pensioners in these areas that far exceeds the token amount of saving suggested in the Committee's recommendation. Again, the detail of issuing them and at what cost should be a matter for the Department of Infrastructure to determine once they have considered whether to implement this policy, and it could be reviewed when other transport services come on stream.

Suggesting the discounted concessionary card should be available to all pensioners and children simply lacks logic. That is like a crumb thrown to those with a full picnic. I can appreciate the will of the Committee to offer a crumb of compassion to the petitioners, but the Department's recommendation is not a sensible solution. Surely better to offer enhanced access to public transport services to a handful of pensioners who otherwise have limited or no bus services.

Mr President, I beg to move the amendment standing in my name:

To leave out all the words after 'consider offering' and add the words 'free annual Electric Rail passes to pensioners residing in areas bordering the Manx Electric Railway that do not receive frequent bus services.'

The President: Hon. Member of Council, Mr Coleman.

Mr Coleman: Thank you, Mr President. I rise to second Mr Cretney's amendment.

The President: Hon. Member for Garff, Mr Perkins.

Mr Perkins: I rise to beg to second the Hon. Member for Garff's amendment.

The President: Hon. Member, Mr Moorhouse.

Mr Moorhouse: Thank you, Mr President.

I welcome the Report but neither amendment. The concept of free access to the Island's historical rail network does sound good. In fact, it is something that has been tried with only limited success but clear cost implications.

The heritage railway is not an essential means of transport. It should be seen as a special day out. The Department has closely looked at the Committee's recommendations and acted on them. The Department does recognise that local pensioners should have the opportunity to access the network at a reduced rate and this will be welcomed by many.

On Saturday morning one of the Electric Railway carriages I saw passing through the Dhoon was full, with some passengers having to stand. Every person was a paying passenger. To start talking about off-peak concessions becomes a nonsense when the service is assessed in terms of provision and hours of operation. On occasions, there is underuse of provision, but we need to ensure that all seats are available for paying passengers. The reason for the changes was this exact situation. The seats were being occupied by those paying nothing. The service is only operational for part of the year and we need to be ready for the cruise ships and those people who recognise that we have a really special, unique service on the Island. The network operates at a deficit and we need to reduce this.

Again, Mrs Caine's amendment does sound good, but when assessed from an operational perspective it becomes near impossible. The heritage railway should not be seen as a commuter facility. That service cannot be provided. Advancements such as demand-responsive transport will seek to resolve this issue.

The trains must be recognised as a unique feature of the Island's heritage and the discount scheme available in the autumn will hopefully be welcomed across the Island. The Department has been able to satisfy the exact demands of the Committee and that is excellent news.

The President: Hon. Member for Douglas North, Mr Ashford.

Mr Ashford: Thank you, Mr President.

Again, the way this debate seems to be going we seem to be spending a lot of time talking about a service that at the end of the day is not an essential service. It is something that people use as a leisure activity and I think we seem to be spending a lot of time talking about it as if it is an absolutely essential travel service.

I welcome what the Committee has done and I welcome what the Committee has come back with and I believe they have looked at it thoroughly.

Turning to the two amendments we have tabled, I have great sympathy with Mr Cretney's and where he is coming from with it, but I do not quite get my head round what is being determined as off-peak travel and how we are actually going to decide. If off peak is between September and May when it is not running, then there is no need for the discount in the first place. But I also worry that we are still going to be giving something free, on what is to my mind a leisure activity, to people who can well afford, in some instances, to actually pay for it. So I am not 100% certain I will be supporting that amendment.

In relation to the Hon. Member for Garff, Mrs Caine's amendment, I think, to be perfectly honest, I can see where she is coming from with it, but the way it is worded here would cause absolute mayhem if it were to be implemented by the Department. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) That the Department of Infrastructure should consider offering free annual electric rail passes to pensioners in areas bordering the Manx Electric Railway that do not receive frequent bus services: well, what are we going to determine as being frequent bus services, first of all? So, every time the

Department gets someone applying, they have to check and prove that the person is in an area bordering the Manx Electric Railway and that they have not got a frequent bus service. Equally, you could have someone sat in a multi-million-pound mansion out in the back of beyond but it is close to the tram tracks without a frequent bus service, and under this amendment, if the Department took this up, they would actually be entitled to a free pass, but some of my constituents who perhaps cannot afford one would not because they have got bus services in and around Douglas. So I certainly cannot support that amendment.

I am hoping and I think there will be an amendment being circulated in a moment that I might be able to support because equally with the Department's response to this the discount would go ... the £37.50 price for the concessionary Go Platinum annual pass would be reduced to £35, so £2.50, and the normal price of £30 would go down to £28. At the end of the day we are arguing over buttons here and I think ... In fact, I have just seen what is being circulated: I think I will probably be supporting that, Mr President, and I will leave it at that.

The President: Hon. Member for Onchan, Ms Edge.

Ms Edge: Thank you, Mr President.

I would find it extremely difficult to support either of the amendments. The reason for this is I do believe that we should be given the opportunity for the demand-responsive transport initiative to take place. There are a number of people in urban areas, particularly in Onchan, who cannot even get to Noble's Hospital for services, so I think that we need to look at the overall demand-responsive service and make sure that is in effect before we start offering people free trams because they live on a track.

Thank you, Mr President.

Mr Cretney: Near a track!

Ms Edge: Near a track, sorry! *(Laughter)*

Mr Ashford: As long as we keep everything on track!

The President: Hon. Member for Douglas East, Miss Bettison.

Miss Bettison: Thank you, Mr President.

I rise today to thank the Committee for their work and to submit an amendment for your consideration. I move that we should remove all words after 'be received.' So the motion would read: 'That the Report of the Select Committee on Free Train and Tram Travel (Petition for Redress) [PP No 2017/00421] be received.'

This is a simple amendment and a simple motion but, I believe, effective in allowing our services to remain responsive to demand. I appreciate the sentiment of offering free travel, but this should not simply be based on age or location, and at present we have no way of measuring this based on people's means.

I am more than happy for the DoI to consider discounts as per specific demand on services in the future and my motion would enable them to do that. They could consider advance purchase discounts or other methods. This would allow review season by season, so if the Electric and Steam Railways saw a sudden demand they would be able to act responsibly.

I am fiercely keen to support our heritage services and I believe this is best achieved by allowing flexible management led by demand, not by specific focused motions and amendments that very much nail us down to something that I believe is unsustainable. **(A Member:** Hear, hear.)

Thank you. I move:

To leave out all the words after 'be received'.

A Member: Hear, hear.

The President: Hon. Member, Mr Harmer.

The Minister for Infrastructure (Mr Harmer): Thank you, Mr President.

My Department welcomes the findings and recommendation of the Select Committee into Free Train and Tram Travel.

The way in which my Department intends to meet the recommendation from the Committee is set out in full in the Council of Ministers' response. To summarise the response, I am pleased to announce that my Department is able to meet the recommendation from the Select Committee. An advance purchase discount will be available to those residents in receipt of their old age pension who wish to purchase an annual pass for travel on the Island's heritage railways. The scheme would be trialled from 1st September 2017 until 31st October 2017 with the intention that, subject to review, it will be repeated in future years. During the advance discount period the cost to an eligible resident of the Go Platinum Rail annual pass will reduce from £37.50 to, as we have heard, £35, and for Go Platinum Steam or Electric passes the price would reduce from £30 to £28.

The Isle of Man's vintage transport systems are an important part of our national heritage and visitor offering, and my Department continually reviews its ticket costs and events programme to ensure that it continues to provide good value for passengers.

Just turning to the two amendments – (**Mr Malarkey:** Three amendments.) three amendments now, the first two I cannot support. The basic premise is that they are journeys of desire, they are not essential journeys and it should not be defined by how close you live to a track, as lots of people do not. It is only there for nine months – not even nine months of the year, six months of the year. We would need to involve means-testing and so forth rather than to all passengers. The annual card is really effective and we need to be looking forward rather than back in terms of where we go with the needs of passengers, and that is why we are looking at demand-responsive transport, and my hon. friend has got an action to do that and that is essential.

So I think it is very important that we do not look backwards, we look forwards, and in addition we need to also understand that the railways are improving. We are improving the revenue, but remember it is essentially massively loss-making and if we want to expand it for other functions, such as cruise ships and other tourist opportunities, we need to make it available for that. And how on earth do you define off peak? How on earth do you define where somebody lives in terms of the annual pass? It is also about time. I want to focus our time on moving forward, on demand-responsive transport.

I would say that, with regard to the Member for Douglas East, Miss Bettison's, I am content with that amendment because it does give us flexibility to –

The President: Miss Bettison's amendment has not as yet been seconded.

Mr Harmer: – if it is seconded. (*Interjections*) I am happy to second that one. (**Several Members:** Hurray!) (*Laughter*) I am happy with that amendment.

So in essence I would not support the two amendments from the Hon. Member of Council, Mr Cretney, or Mrs Caine, but I am happy to support the other amendment.

Thank you.

The President: Hon. Member for Onchan, Mr Callister.

Mr Callister: Thank you, Mr President.

I was not actually going to speak on this but I felt that I needed to, because during the Committee I was quite vocal in where I sat on this particular topic. I actually stood by my election pledge which was to support free transport for over-65s on the Island to get them out and about and to see some of the Island. But I also struggled quite strongly with my tourist hat on, and since taking up that role I have actually got out and I have been on the buses and on the trams and I am actually doing a lot more to see what tourism we have around the Island at the moment. So I really did struggle with this.

But I did find that the recommendation the Committee came up with was satisfactory and I felt it was quite an easy thing for the Committee to come up with at the time because myself and the Chairman were completely at ends of the compass. But in the end I felt the recommendation was a half-way point. Unfortunately what caused the problem on that is the Council of Ministers' recommendation, which I felt has not gone anywhere near where I had hoped it would be. I originally asked within the Committee that I was hoping that the Department ... and this was speaking with officers within the Department, that I hoped a discount ticket of around 20% to take the ticket price down to £30 a year, but it enabled people to buy that ticket in advance of the season ahead.

So I was hoping that this offering of 20% would actually be made available in January or February before the season started in March. I know 20% sounds quite a lot, but when you take it from £37.50 it takes the price down to around £30, and I am almost certain that it would have actually brought back the 150 people that we have lost since these costs have come in place.

That said, Mr President, I will be supporting the amendment brought by Mr Cretney to start with, thereafter I would support the Committee's recommendation, which is a step in the right direction to actually giving free bus and tram travel to pensioners. But I am also happy enough if there is an element of means testing attached to that because I always have been a big supporter of means testing.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Hon. Members may remove jackets if they wish; indeed some have already done so.

Hon. Member for Ramsey, Mr Hooper.

Mr Hooper: Thank you, Mr President.

I was rising to second Miss Bettison's motion, so that is unnecessary. But seeing as I have gone to all the effort of writing this little speech I will go for it!

The President: Right, are you seconding?

Mr Hooper: I was rising to second Miss Bettison; however that has been done now by the Hon. Member from Peel and Glenfaba.

The President: Was it?

Several Members: Yes! *(Laughter)*

Mr Hooper: If not, I am happy –

The President: Is that so? *(Laughter)*

A Member: Keep up!

Mr Hooper: – I am happy to second it myself, Mr President,

So far I have not been convinced by anything said today that pensioners should be treated differently just because they are pensioners. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) If the focus was on low-income groups that is different, but that is not what we are talking about here.

Mr Cretney, the Hon. Member of Council, is arguing we should provide a free leisure activity to pensioners. I am just wondering if he feels that should extend to all the other leisure facilities on the Island, or if its focus is specifically on just train and tram travel?

And again, why only pensioners? Why not young people? Let's get people enthusiastic about our heritage, let's start it when they are young. But again, we are not talking about that here.

The discount suggested by the Infrastructure Department, as the Hon. Member for Douglas North has clearly set out, is buttons – £2.50 or £2.00 as a discount. That is not going to incentivise people to buy a train ticket. (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) It is ridiculous!

And unfortunately the same goes for Mrs Caine's amendment. Originally I did think it was sensible, but actually on reflection it does not make a lot of sense; and if there is an issue with public transport in Garff let's fix the public transport in Garff, not tinker with the MER prices which in reality is going to help anyone.

It is time this Hon. Court stopped making policy without evidence to back it up. The Committee has done its work, collected evidence and made its Report, which to my mind is a very good summary of the issue it was asked to look at. The recommendation in the Report unfortunately does not follow the conclusions which are unanimously agreed by all three Members, so it is interesting to hear Mr Callister's change of view today. (*Laughter*)

Mr Callister: I haven't changed my view.

Mr Hooper: Those three conclusions state clearly: train and tram travel is a leisure activity not an essential activity. Concessionary fares are reasonable and very good value for money and there is no compelling need to change the policy.

So if there is no compelling need to change the policy, why are we talking about changing the policy? (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) That is the recommendation of the Committee and that is why I am supporting Miss Bettison's amendment.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Can I just make sure everyone has a copy of Miss Bettison's amendment in their hands? (**Several Members:** Yes.) Thank you.

Hon. Member of Council, Mr Cretney.

Mr Cretney: Yes, I just wanted to refer to Mrs Caine's amendment but unfortunately I will not be able to support it.

I just want to make the point that what she has spoken about in relation to her response, of 'travel to out-of-town areas' ... 'buses where there is very little demand' ... 'but for social reasons that would be a good thing to do' ... was being spoken about when I was Minister of Community, Culture and Leisure, but very little has happened.

I just want say I sympathise very much with the point she is making but I think it is a wider Island issue and I just hope the Department gets on with doing something about it at last.

The President: I call on the mover to reply.

Several Members: Hear, hear.

Mr Shimmins: Thank you, Mr President, and may I thank all the Members for the wide range of comments and contributions that we have heard; the level of engagement has really been first class. *(Laughter and interjections)*

Perhaps if I first turn to the Member of Council, Mr Cretney, and the question of why no additional call for public evidence; and I do take on board the points that he has raised. The Committee did debate whether or not to go down this route. It was a unanimous decision and I understand why you are questioning that, but I guess if you conclude that this is fundamentally a leisure facility it is quite difficult to come back from that in terms of the framing of the question. We were also aware and we did take some advice that some Select Committees do go down this route, but not all do, so there was no clear precedent. I would stress that public evidence was of course taken and others did avail themselves of the opportunity to write to us and we published all the correspondence that we got.

Perhaps if I could turn to Mr Cretney's amendment, which I think is absolutely well-intentioned, but is flawed in terms of how we define 'off-peak'. In most railways off-peak is on a commuter basis, so it is before half past nine in the morning, and potentially between four o'clock and half-past six when you see very large flows of passengers going to and from work. That is not really appropriate for our railways, because actually they do not generally get going until just before 10 o'clock and outside TT very few people use them to commute, and it goes back to the crux in terms of this is a leisure facility. But we did consider this in some detail, as you can see from the Report, in terms of how could we look at this issue in terms of some of the trains and trams are actually very full, and others less so.

I think the challenge that we have is the weather aspect, and the 10-fold increase in passengers was actually quite surprising for the Committee in terms of the facts that the Department of Infrastructure provided to us. Members might wish to reflect that this just confirms perhaps the discretionary nature of our heritage railway travel – why travel on an inclement day when you can wait a few days for the weather to improve? And that just confirms perhaps that it is a leisure activity and it really is difficult to define off-peak as a wet and windy day. *(Laughter)* **(A Member:** Hear, hear.) And others I think mentioned the impact of coach trips and cruise ship visitors and these call on different days of the year.

So those are the key issues I think in terms of the suggestion about off-peak travel, and I would just ask Members to consider the unintended consequences of some of that proposed change. The heritage railways would receive a bit of a double whammy that not only would you see people who are currently paying for a ticket not paying, going forward, but also you would remove capacity for paying customers. Since the change was introduced in 2015 we have seen some very positive trends, passenger numbers and income both going in the right direction and we want to see this trend continue, not reverse.

So for these reasons I do recommend that Members reject the amendment, especially as I would stress again the annual season ticket represents very good value.

Turning to Mr Robertshaw: I was slightly confused by the Member for Douglas East's comments, that he would be voting against because he was inferring means testing was appropriate. Means testing, I think, is –

Mr Robertshaw: In the future.

Mr Shimmins: – in the future, in terms of a work in progress. So the Free Train and Tram Committee took the view that means testing was inappropriate because it was a leisure facility

Turning to Mrs Caine, the Member for Garff, and her comments: thank you very much for those and I do take on board the comments about the Committee's recommendation. I would stress again it was the concept of an early renewal of a season ticket discount, rather than the detail, that we were looking at. Mrs Caine mentioned it was a small number of residents in Onchan and Maughold who are impacted by this and we understand the impact. I guess the point that I think others have

made is why should some pensioners ... some of whom are very wealthy in comparison to others of less advanced age, and perhaps they are on the same street in Maughold. Why should they receive free travel while younger people on lower incomes – perhaps with children, in the next house in the same street – do not? So I do struggle with that.

I also struggle with the fact that the service does not run all year round, it runs between 9th March and 5th November. So if it is an essential public service what happens in that four-month gap? I would ask Members to consider those points, amongst others that people have raised, and reject Mrs Caine's amendment.

Turning to comments made by other Members. Thank you to Mr Moorhouse and he confirmed that demand-responsive transport is a more appropriate solution to meet the essential public transport needs for people, rather than heritage railways.

Thank you to Mr Ashford and his strong view that this was a leisure activity. He also queried the 'off-peak' definition and potentially the difficulty in running the proposed amendment about people living close to the tracks. So thank you to Mr Ashford.

Thank you also to Ms Edge, and she again raised the issue of what about people who do not live close to the railway tracks? I think that is a key point that Members should consider when looking at the second amendment from Mrs Caine.

Miss Bettison made some very good points about age and location. Her amendment is straightforward and to the point. I am also comfortable with that and would suggest that if Members wish to vote for that, then that would be a good way forward.

Mr Harmer: thank you very much for his remarks. He stressed the need to look forward, not to look backwards, and I would absolutely support the comments that he made.

Mr Callister: thank you very much for Mr Callister's remarks. Yes, I thought it was very helpful that he stressed the tourism importance of the heritage railways. I was not quite sure about the ends of the compass and I hope we were talking about a directional compass rather than a mathematical pointy compass (*Laughter*) when we have that analogy.

Mr Hooper made some very good remarks about the nature of the leisure facility, which I would stress to Members is really the crux of this debate. It is for this reason that I beg to move and request that Members reject the amendments from Mr Cretney and Mrs Caine, but may wish to accept the amendment from Miss Bettison.

Thank you, Mr President.

The President: Hon. Members, the motion before the Court is that set out at Item 4, that the Report of the Select Committee be received and the recommendation as set out be approved. To that there are three amendments. The first amendment by Mr Cretney appears to me to add to the recommendation; the second one by Mrs Caine replaces the recommendation; and the one from Miss Bettison removes the recommendation altogether. So that is the order we will take them in.

Starting with Mr Cretney's amendment: those in favour, please say aye; against, no. The noes have it.

A division was called for and electronic voting resulted as follows:

In the Keys – Ayes 2, Noes 22

FOR

Mr Callister
Mr Perkins

AGAINST

Dr Allinson
Mr Ashford
Mr Baker
Mrs Beecroft
Miss Bettison
Mr Boot
Mrs Caine
Mr Cannan

Mrs Corlett
Mr Cregeen
Ms Edge
Mr Harmer
Mr Hooper
Mr Malarkey
Mr Moorhouse
Mr Peake
Mr Quayle
Mr Robertshaw
Mr Shimmins
Mr Skelly
Mr Speaker
Mr Thomas

The Speaker: Mr President, 2 votes for, 22 against in the Keys.

In the Council – Ayes 3, Noes 4

FOR

Mr Coleman
Mr Cretney
Mr Turner

AGAINST

Mr Anderson
Mr Corkish
Mr Crookall
Mr Henderson

The President: In the Council, 3 for and 4 against. That amendment therefore fails to carry.
Turning to Mrs Caine's amendment: those in favour, please say aye; against, no. The noes have it.

A division was called for and electronic voting resulted as follows:

In the Keys – Ayes 2, Noes 22

FOR

Mrs Caine
Mr Perkins

AGAINST

Dr Allinson
Mr Ashford
Mr Baker
Mrs Beecroft
Miss Bettison
Mr Boot
Mr Callister
Mr Cannan
Mrs Corlett
Mr Cregeen
Ms Edge
Mr Harmer
Mr Hooper
Mr Malarkey
Mr Moorhouse
Mr Peake
Mr Quayle
Mr Robertshaw
Mr Shimmins
Mr Skelly
Mr Speaker
Mr Thomas

The Speaker: Again, Mr President, 2 votes for and 22 against in the Keys.

In the Council – Ayes 0, Noes 7

FOR

None

AGAINST

Mr Anderson
Mr Coleman
Mr Corkish
Mr Cretney
Mr Crookall
Mr Henderson
Mr Turner

The President: And in the Council, none for and 7 against. So that amendment fails to carry. Finally Miss Bettison's amendment: those in favour, please say aye; against, no. The ayes have it.

A division was called for and electronic voting resulted as follows:

In the Keys – Ayes 22, Noes 2

FOR

Dr Allinson
Mr Ashford
Mr Baker
Mrs Beecroft
Miss Bettison
Mr Boot
Mrs Caine
Mr Callister
Mr Cannan
Mrs Corlett
Mr Cregeen
Mr Harmer
Mr Hooper
Mr Malarkey
Mr Moorhouse
Mr Peake
Mr Perkins
Mr Quayle
Mr Robertshaw
Mr Shimmins
Mr Skelly
Mr Thomas

AGAINST

Ms Edge
Mr Speaker

The Speaker: In the Keys, 22 votes for and 2 against.

In the Council – Ayes 5, Noes 2

FOR

Mr Anderson
Mr Corkish
Mr Crookall
Mr Henderson
Mr Turner

AGAINST

Mr Coleman
Mr Cretney

The President: And in the Council, 5 for and 2 against. Miss Bettison's amendment therefore carries.

I put the motion as amended by Miss Bettison's amendment. Those in favour, say aye; against, no. The ayes have it.

A division was called for and electronic voting resulted as follows:

In the Keys – Ayes 24, Noes 0

FOR	AGAINST
Dr Allinson	None
Mr Ashford	
Mr Baker	
Mrs Beecroft	
Miss Bettison	
Mr Boot	
Mrs Caine	
Mr Callister	
Mr Cannan	
Mrs Corlett	
Mr Cregeen	
Ms Edge	
Mr Harmer	
Mr Hooper	
Mr Malarkey	
Mr Moorhouse	
Mr Peake	
Mr Perkins	
Mr Quayle	
Mr Robertshaw	
Mr Shimmins	
Mr Skelly	
Mr Speaker	
Mr Thomas	

The Speaker: In the Keys, 24 votes for and none against.

In the Council – Ayes 5, Noes 2

FOR	AGAINST
Mr Anderson	Mr Coleman
Mr Corkish	Mr Cretney
Mr Crookall	
Mr Henderson	
Mr Turner	

The President: And in the Council, 5 for and 2 against. The motion as amended therefore carries.