



**SELECT COMMITTEE  
OF  
TYNWALD COURT  
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**RECORTYS OIKOIL  
BING ER-LHEH TINVAAL**

**PROCEEDINGS  
DAALTYN**

**FREE TRAIN AND TRAM TRAVEL  
(PETITION FOR REDRESS)**

**HANSARD**

**Douglas, Thursday, 1st December 2016**

**PP2016/0167**

**FTTT, No. 1**

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**Members Present:**

*Chairman:* Mr W C Shimmins MHK  
Mr R E Callister MHK  
Ms J M Edge MHK

*Clerk:*

Dr J D C King

*Assistant Clerk:*

Miss F Gale

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## Select Committee of Tynwald on Free Train and Tram Travel (Petition for Redress)

*The Committee sat in public at 2.30 p.m.  
in the Legislative Council Chamber,  
Legislative Buildings, Douglas*

[MR SHIMMINS *in the Chair*]

### Procedural

**The Chairman (Mr Shimmins):** Good afternoon everyone and welcome to this public meeting of the Select Committee on the Free Train and Tram Travel Petition for Redress.

I am Bill Shimmins MHK and I chair this Committee, and with me are Rob Callister MHK and  
5 Julie Edge MHK.

Please can you ensure that your mobile phone is off or on silent so that we do not have any interruptions. For the purposes of *Hansard* I will be ensuring that we do not have two people speaking at once.

This Committee was established by Tynwald on Tuesday, 18th October 2016 with a remit to  
10 consider and report on the Petition for Redress of Carol Quine, Lynn Sirdefield and Richard Halsall. This Petition was presented on Tynwald Hill in July 2016 and it asks us to enquire into ways in which residents of the Isle of Man who are of state pension age be entitled not to pay for train and tram travel on the Island's heritage railways.

By way of background for anyone listening to this who is not familiar with the Isle of Man,  
15 there are a number of heritage railways in the Island and three of these have been operated by the Island's central Government for many years: the Isle of Man Steam Railway, the Manx Electric Railway and the Snaefell Mountain Railway. The Manx Electric Railway and the Snaefell Mountain Railway are often referred to as 'the electric trams'.

Before Monday, 29th March 2015, travel on the three Government railways was free for  
20 everyone over 60. Since that date, people over 60 have had to pay the full fare to travel before 9 a.m. and half fare to travel after 9 a.m. Alternatively, they can buy an annual pass. Such is the background to the Petition we are investigating.

Today we are going to hear from one of the Petitioners, Carol Quine, and also she is accompanied by another Petitioner, Lynn Sirdefield.

### EVIDENCE OF Ms C Quine and Ms L Sirdefield, Petitioners

25 **Q1. The Chairman:** Perhaps I could ask the Petitioners if they would like to make any opening statements?

**Ms Quine:** We wish to see the return of free train travel for pensioners. Grandparents should be able to afford to take their grandchildren for a day out. These children are our future. We

30 need to encourage them to enjoy and respect their heritage and to take pride in what we have  
in our nation. We are unique and to keep what we have we need to promote our culture and  
community across the generations. MNH do this already with free child passes to their sites.

Getting these free train and tram passes is not just a case of getting from A to B. It is taking  
the children out to show them more of their heritage. It also creates more finances at the end  
35 destinations, because if the pensioners can save the money on the tickets they will spend at  
their end destination.

Lots of these grandparents have their children during school holidays and when you have a  
grandma and a grandpa and two or three grandchildren it can be quite expensive, so we would  
like to see the decision reversed.

40 **The Chairman:** Okay, thank you, Carol.

**Ms Quine:** Do you want to add anything?

45 **Ms Sirdefield:** No.

**The Chairman:** If I could ask my colleagues, do you have any questions? Who would like to go  
first?

50 **Q2. Ms Edge:** Free travel for pensioners on the railways was ended in March 2015. Why did  
you choose to wait until July 2016 before bringing the Petition to Tynwald Hill? Did you make  
any representation prior to that?

**Ms Quine:** No, the Manx Labour Party did, through the Party, ask some questions but it was  
55 me that decided that perhaps we should make it more public and highlight the fact by doing the  
Petition at Tynwald.

Could I also mention that lots of pensioners do still pay – those that can afford to pay will  
probably continue to pay. It is really those that are struggling because they have limited income.  
It is a static income and when the price of living keeps going up and up and up, I think it is just ...  
60 If we cannot care for them, then it is a poor thing.

**Q3. The Chairman:** Okay.

In terms of the Department of Infrastructure, they said in a media of release of March 2015  
that:

The decision was ... taken to implement half fares for resident pensioners on our heritage rail services to reflect  
that this is overwhelmingly a leisure activity.

65 Do you accept that this is a leisure activity?

**Ms Quine:** No, I think it is more than a leisure activity. It is part of our heritage, our culture,  
and we need to be sharing that with our future generations. If they do not have an interest in  
that, we are just going to ultimately lose it, so it is to encourage the future generations as well.

70 **Q4. The Chairman:** Okay, I think that the point that was being made is the heritage railways  
are not an essential public transport service – that is where the bus services comes in – and  
making a distinction between a leisure activity rather than a journey of necessity.

75 **Ms Quine:** Well, I suppose for some people it might be. I cannot give an example of how ...  
No, I cannot give an example, sorry.

**Q5. Mr Callister:** Mr Chairman, Carol, could I ask you both, in the scheme of the challenges facing this Island – and the list is long – where would you rank this as a priority?

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**Ms Quine:** Socially, I would rank it high.

Just to give another example of the Steam Railway: we have a counterbalance where I know personally that single parent children actually have two season tickets because the dad has one when he takes the child on the train and the mum has one, so they are paying double for that and they do not mind paying double for that.

85

Socially: it is a social injustice that has been done to the pensioners. (**Ms Sirdefield:** Another!) Another social injustice.

**Q6. Mr Callister:** Can I have an additional? (**The Chairman:** Of course.)

90

You mentioned the season tickets there: unlimited travel on all three railways at the moment is £37.50 per annum. Do you think this represents a fair price at the moment?

**Ms Quine:** It is the what, sorry?

95

**Mr Callister:** Do you think it represents a fair price at the moment?

**Ms Quine:** It does, but there are lots of people out there that cannot afford that kind of extra money. There are an awful lot of people out there that cannot afford it. There are a lot of people that can and there are lots of people that would be entitled to benefits and the ones that could claim their bus passes, but they choose not to use them. I and the Labour Party are looking out for those that cannot, so we are a voice for them.

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**Q7. The Chairman:** Just so I am clear, you presented a Petition for Redress. Are you seeking redress for a grievance which you yourself have suffered or are you acting on behalf of a political party?

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**Ms Quine:** I personally started it and then the Manx Labour Party ... we are doing it together. I have not suffered because of it, but we are speaking on behalf of others.

110

**The Chairman:** Okay. Thank you.

**Q8. Ms Edge:** When the Department, in their media release in March 2015:

The decision was ... taken to implement half fares for resident pensioners on our ... rail services ...

You do not accept that that is a leisure activity; you feel that it is an essential activity. Obviously they changed the pricing structure and limited the times that people could travel. Is it the limited time that has caused the issue or the whole aspect?

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**Ms Quine:** The limited time affects the bus travel, it does not affect the trains. The first train runs at 10 o'clock and the last train runs at 4 p.m.

120

**The Clerk:** Exception of TT.

**Ms Quine:** Except for TT, and the commuters. I do the commuters for two weeks – it is wonderful.

Outside those hours, the likes of the evening dining trains or whatever, yes, you would expect to pay full price for those.

125

**Q9. Mr Callister:** Offering free rail on all three facilities: do you think it is part of an inclusive society in the future of getting people out? Is that what you are asking, in a sense?

130 **Ms Quine:** Yes.

At the moment, it is discriminating against those that cannot afford to take the children out on the trains. If you have got a granddad and two or three children – or themselves ... A granddad and three children is £27 and that is before you get to your end destination and the children want an ice-lolly and you want a cup of tea. £27 is a lot of money out of a limited amount of income.

**Q10. Mr Callister:** Does the Labour Party see railway on the Isle of Man as a luxury form of transport?

140 **Ms Quine:** I do not know. I cannot comment.

**Ms Sirdefield:** We have not tabled that question.

**Ms Quine:** No, we have not.

145

**Ms Sirdefield:** But I will do.

**Ms Quine:** Yes.

150 **Q11. The Chairman:** Okay, in terms of subsidising rail travel for pensioners, that represents an increased cost to the Government and we are facing a number of financial pressures. I guess the question is how would you prioritise that against other needs for Government expenditure?

**Ms Quine:** I do not know, but like I have already said there are lots out there who are pensioners who already pay because they can afford to; there are lots of children out there who have got two tickets instead of one ticket.

I do not know what you would have to recoup because I do not know the numbers that do go on the trains, that use the trains that are pensioners. It could be 10, it could be 30 a week.

160 **The Clerk:** May I ask a question?

**Ms Sirdefield:** Sorry – and we would not know how many more would use it if it was available to them, so without that sort of information that is a difficult question to answer.

165 **Q12. The Clerk:** I was going to ask a question which was related to that: if the fares are too high, would it not follow that the trams and trains would be empty?

**Ms Quine:** It is not a case that they are too high. I pay £75 for my season ticket. I do not think that is too high and I have just renewed my season ticket, even though the trains are not running, but it will run through for next year. It is not a case of that, it is a case of some of those people out there cannot afford £3 for a train trip. 'Do I go to the shop and get my potatoes and my bread, or do I put that £3 aside to pay my gas bill when it comes in?' Do you know what I mean?

175 **Ms Sirdefield:** There is a wider picture as well, it impacts ... That generation of people, we should not be limiting their access to things. It impacts on mental health, as well, which impacts on health. There is a bigger picture as well.

180 **Q13. The Clerk:** If you are concerned about people above a certain age not being able to afford things, have you considered advocating policy levers which apply to people above that age throughout the Island, not those who happen to live near the train and tram network?

**Ms Sirdefield:** Sorry, I do not see what you are getting at.

185 **The Clerk:** Well, you are talking about a policy development which would improve the lot of people over 60 who like to go on a tram ride, but if you live in Peel, for example, you cannot go on a tram ride, so why aren't you instead advocating a change to the benefit system, the state pension, for example?

190 **Ms Sirdefield:** Good idea, we will do that!

**Ms Quine:** That is a good idea.

**The Clerk:** We will have that as well.

195

**Ms Quine:** Or we could petition to have the Douglas to Peel line reinstated. That is another ...

**Ms Sirdefield:** You have opened up a can of worms here!

200 **The Chairman:** Perhaps I could ask that we could just keep focused on the question that we face today, which is the steam train and the trams.

205 **Ms Quine:** Not every pensioner applies to get benefits. There are lots of pensioners ... We have very proud pensioners and lots of them will not go and get benefits, so if you have a benefit system that applies to all, it is not going to get to all. What we are asking for is something that was free for these pensioners that has been taken away, could they please have it back?

210 **Q14. The Chairman:** Okay, you have asked for a return to free travel throughout the season; if we do not recommend that, is there anything else that we could recommend which would go some way to addressing your concerns?

**Ms Quine:** Perhaps if it is not free travel – I do not know – a minimum charge of £1 or something, perhaps.

215 **Q15. The Chairman:** And would you think it would be helpful for the Committee to perhaps do some analysis of what pensioners pay on other heritage railways in the UK and Ireland and use that as a comparable?

220 **Ms Sirdefield:** No. Why would we do that? We are talking about our pensioners here. We want to look after our pensioners. Things have been cut over –

**Ms Quine:** The last administration, it was cut, cut, cut.

225 **Ms Sirdefield:** And the vulnerable and the pensioners were the ones hit with everything.

**Ms Quine:** The cost of living is dearer here than the UK.

**The Chairman:** Okay. Any more questions?

230 **Q16. Mr Callister:** I have one, if possible, Mr Chairman.

Looking at the Island's tourism market – which is obviously a priority to the Isle of Man in the future – what sort of timetable would the Labour Party like to have imposed? Are you looking for free travel full stop? Are you looking for some sort of restriction on times to fit in with the Island's tourism agenda?

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**Ms Quine:** Well, the free train travel would be from the season, which I think is March through to the beginning of November. Obviously, when there are cruise ships in, which happens now – they get bused to the trains – if the trains are full, those extra people then get on a bus to go to the next destination or the train puts extra carriages on.

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**Ms Sirdefield:** It could be revisited though. If our tourist trade takes off, that is brilliant, then we revisit it, of course.

**Q17. Mr Callister:** Can I ask a question because you obviously ... Just to clarify your point there, Carol: are you actually saying that the tourists should go onto the bus (**Ms Sirdefield:** No, no.) or should they be given –

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**Ms Quine:** That is what happens now. If the train is too full, then the extra people, if they want to, can get a bus to the destination, or if there are extra carriages, they put extra carriages on.

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**Q18. Mr Callister:** Okay, but the pensioners should not have priority over the tourists?

**Ms Quine:** No, because the tourists are already pre-booked.

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**The Chairman:** Okay, are you done?

**Mr Callister:** I think so, yes.

260

**Q19. The Chairman:** Before we close, is there anything else you would like to say?

**Ms Sirdefield:** Just, we really like you. You made the right decision.

**Ms Quine:** Yes, hopefully you have made the right decision.

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**The Chairman:** Okay, well listen, thank you very much for coming and helping the Committee. The Committee will now sit in private.  
Thank you.

*The Committee sat in private at 2.50 p.m.*