



Island Link Forum

7th December 2023, Fishbourne

Presenting from Wightlink:

Phil Delaney, Commercial Director

Sam Woodman, Marketing Partnership Manager

Sara Howden, Head of Customer Experience

David Williams, Head of Marketing

Also attending from Wightlink:

Captain Sam Mitchell, Head of Fleet Operations

Martin Gulliver, Island Operations Manager

Prakhar Singh, Head of Revenue Management

Format:

5pm-6pm

Meet the Wightlink team, an opportunity to talk 1-2-1 to a range of people from different job functions within Wightlink.

6pm-7.30pm

Your comments on the agenda, Phil Delaney

Update and Actions from the previous meeting, Phil Delaney

Service Performance, David Williams

Discounted Travel, Phil Delaney

Assisted Travel Improvements, Sara Howden

Wightlink in the Community, Sam Woodman

After each presentation, members of the audience were given the opportunity to put questions to the Wightlink team.

Following the presentation, a Q&A session was hosted by Chairperson, Tom Stroud.

Your comments on the agenda, Phil Delaney

During the process for people to indicate that they would like to attend, we also asked what the subjects are you would like to cover during the forum.

The top three topics that came through were transport connections, timetables/service, and ticket costs. A slide was presented to the attendees providing a full break down of the types of topics suggested.

Update and Actions from the previous meeting, Phil Delaney

When Hovertravel are off, how do we prioritise our own customers?

Martin Gulliver (Island Operations Manager) responded that we always try to check in WL customers first. If customers arrive within 15 minutes of the scheduled departure, then this should not be an issue.

Can WL engage with SWR to further improve train connections?

We continue to engage with SWR, speaking most weeks,

Lymington – Yarmouth

Feedback provided about an individual customer who had to catch a 6.20am ferry at the weekend from Yarmouth to be able to get to work.

This is due to the winter timetable coming into effect, unfortunately it is difficult to design a timetable that will work for 100% of customer's needs.

Day Return v Period Return

Question was raised over a customer searching for a quote for a period return in late May 2024. He queried why it was more expensive to do a period return (out 23rd May – back 28th May) than a day return on 23rd May.

As Wightlink price per leg and on a demand basis, prices at different days/departures will vary. In this instance the return leg was during the May ½ term/Bank Holiday week, and it is likely that availability would be more limited which would in turn impact the return price. The best way to ensure customers received the lowest price is to plan and book ahead as far as possible.

Multilink Availability

Several members of the audience questioned why there was sometimes no availability for ML pass holders on certain crossings?

Fifteen percent of space is reserved for ML pass holders on every crossing. Wightlink review this three times a week and release additional allocations where possible. As a result, during this year and average of 36% of all space has been available for ML pass-holders to book.

Multilink Flexibility

Can more members of the same household use a multilink pass (currently restricted to two per household)

Currently this is set at two per household, but Wightlink will review this and feedback at the next forum.

Can multilink passes be used by family on the mainland?

Multilink is a product that has been designed to give Island Resident access to strongly discounted fares. Were we to then offer the equivalent discount to Mainland customers it would negate the value of the product for Island residents.

Wightlink also highlighter behaviours from some ML customers where they would book multiple return or outward journeys on the same day, either cancelling them very close to travel or neglecting to cancel. This in turn has a negative impact on other ML holders as space that would normally be open to them is blocked out.

Cancellation

Wightlink presented the latest figures regarding reliability and cancellation. Questions were asked around lack of essential crew.

Essential crew would be the higher-grade crew, such as a Master or Chief Engineer. Wightlink build redundancy into their staffing to allow for planned absences (annual leave, refits, training, occasional sickness) however there are some occasions when unplanned absence can lead to cancellations.

Connections with public transport

This topic was raised a few times particularly with reference to the Southern Vectis No9 bus no stopping or waiting for passenger at Fishbourne. Whilst out of Wightlink's control they will speak to Southern Vectis about this issue.

Island Line trains connectivity was also raised as an issue. Unfortunately, it is not possible to the Island Line train to be held if the FastCat is even a few minutes late, due to the Island Line track going to single track at certain points.