

4.6 Deputy S. Power of the Minister for Economic Development regarding airlines' limits on hold baggage at holiday times:

Would the Minister consider that a 20 kilogram limit on hold luggage is unreasonable at holiday times and if so would he undertake to persuade those enforcing such a limit to increase it to 30 kilograms during these times as part of the conditions to operate in and out of Jersey Airport?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean (The Minister for Economic Development):

I have delegated responsibility for the airport to Senator Routier, my Assistant Minister. I wonder if I could ask him to take the question? Thank you.

Senator P.F. Routier (Assistant Minister for Economic Development - rapporteur):

Hold baggage allowances vary from airline to airline and the amount people are entitled to before charges are incurred is dependent upon the type of aircraft used on a route and the maximum load a particular aircraft can carry. Airlines therefore apply network-wide baggage allowances and do not differentiate between varying routes. This is not a Jersey-specific issue and as a result Jersey Airport has limited ability to influence these global or even European baggage policies. Passengers are advised when making a booking what their permitted baggage allowance is and excess baggage charges imposed are also well documented. It remains the passenger's freedom of choice in selecting a flight and whether to keep within the permitted allowance or be prepared to pay any subsequent excess costs. While I am certainly prepared to contact our airline partners I realistically expect it to have little or no impact on their network-wide policies. Furthermore I would also urge caution in seeking to impose a different baggage limit specifically on Jersey routes which could have a serious impact on the airline's assessment of the Island as a financially viable destination, particularly in the light of the current instability and fragility of routes and services we are currently experiencing right now.

4.6.1 Deputy S. Power:

The Minister alluded to different types of aircraft and different airlines having different rules. There are airlines that only allow 10 kilograms on a 737 or an Airbus 320 and there are airlines that allow an unlimited amount. Is the Minister aware that a suitcase can weigh as much as 2 kilograms and that the net amount that is available would then be something that is between 15 and 16 kilograms? I would like the Minister to give an undertaking that he will hold discussions with those airlines that are restricting hold baggage limits to Jersey passengers. I would like him to give that undertaking.

Senator P.F. Routier:

I think in my answer I said that I was prepared to have those discussions. Each airline makes their commercial decision about the charges which they make. Certainly there are some airlines that advertise very low fares and then make up their costs through charging for bags and charging for paying for their seats or choosing the seats, so I mean everybody is aware when they book a seat of the conditions of the airline and I think to a certain extent it is 'buyer beware.'

4.6.2 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Would the Minister not agree that further discussions are required with the airlines, for instance if you have a family travelling, a family of 4 with 4 suitcases and 2

suitcases are overweight and 2 are underweight you get charged for the 2 that are overweight, they do not net the whole thing into a family group. If you are ongoing and you are changing flights in London then you are given the higher allowance that the ongoing flight takes. Does the Minister not think that it is time to have a sensible discussion with the airlines about their attitude to baggage and the way the weights are applied?

Senator P.F. Routier:

The Senator makes a point which is very open in the way that the airlines do charge for their services for carrying bags. There are some airlines that do aggregate the weight of the bags and not everyone does, I understand that, but it is literally, as I said earlier, when you are buying a ticket for a particular airline you need to look at all the circumstances of the way that people charge. Some do charge as the Senator would prefer and others do not, but as I said earlier I am certainly prepared to speak to the airlines.

4.6.3 Connétable D.W. Mezbourian of St. Lawrence:

The Senator in his first response said that it is not a Jersey-specific issue, the baggage allowance. However I think for our university students it is a Jersey-specific issue and I am concerned that they are facing excess baggage when they go to university or return from it, particularly in view of the books that they need to carry with them, and I would ask the Senator whether there has been any discussion with the airlines and indeed with the Education Department or certainly the Minister regarding allowances for our university students?

Senator P.F. Routier:

I have had a discussion with one of the airlines about this particular issue and the response that I have had was that they advertise their fare structure and their baggage allowances and that is well known, and particularly in the case for university students Members may be aware that many students are taking the opportunity to post their extra luggage to the university ahead of the time that they are travelling. They keep within the airline limit when they take their luggage but if they are aware that they are going to be outside of the particular airline's baggage limit they arrange to post their excess luggage forward on.

4.6.4 The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

A supplementary if I may. The Senator knows full well that I discussed this with him recently. The fact is that the airport has an advertising feature for the posting of baggage to the U.K. particularly aimed at students and yet when I spoke to one of the airport personnel they told me that it could not be displayed prominently because it would upset the airlines because they see it as competition to them and so frankly bearing in mind that Economic Development ...

The Deputy Bailiff:

Yes, the question.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Okay, I am coming to my question, Sir. Will the Assistant Minister confirm that this has been reviewed and that in fact the advert is now being made more prominent at Jersey Airport?

Senator P.F. Routier:

The advertising of the postal service at the airport has been carried out in several ways. Certainly on local commercial radio there has been advertising and also in our evening paper. The control of the advertising around the airport is a contentious issue for all the airlines, not only the postal service but the competing airlines. We need to get some balance and fairness to the amount of adverts which are placed around the airport because if one service has priority over another there is obviously some controversy with that so I know that even between the airlines that is an issue, so we have to play fair to ensure that everybody has a fair crack of the whip, that they do have the ability to know what services are available and I think Members have it in their own hands to pass on that message that all the varying services are available within the airport building.

4.6.5 The Deputy of St. John:

One of my parishioners recently had to attend the U.K. for medical treatment. He on returning to Jersey was asked to pay because he was given a certain piece of equipment, similar to a shoe, and he had to carry this in his wheelchair. Will the Minister please take up through the airport, but also with the hospital, that people who attend the U.K. for treatment, if they are given special equipment, should not have to pay a fee for carrying that additional equipment back?

Senator P.F. Routier:

I will certainly ask the airlines involved if that is the case and see what can be done.

4.6.6 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Will the Assistant Minister for baggage handling or the airport inform Members whether the airport is now being run for the benefit of residents or for the benefit of airlines?

Senator P.F. Routier:

The airport is a strategic asset of the Island and it is there for the Island to benefit as a whole.

4.6.7 Deputy J.B. Fox:

I would ask if the Assistant Minister could arrange a meeting for those States Members wishing to attend because clearly we are not going to get down to the bottom of this subject today. The only thing guaranteed is the excess baggage policy. Everything else is subject to variation and therefore I would ask if we could have a meeting with the Assistant Minister and indeed the Minister to look at this in much more depth for the benefit of the public.

Senator P.F. Routier:

I am very happy to meet with any Members at any time.

4.6.8 Deputy S. Power:

I preface the question by saying Channel Islanders do not have the choices or availability of flights at U.K. mainland airports, and I suggest to the Minister that we are drifting into the area of absolute farce when somebody going on a camping holiday has to post their tent; somebody going on a motorcycle holiday has to post their helmet and some student based in the Channel Islands has to forward their books.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Coming to your precise question, Deputy.

Deputy S. Power:

The question is; would the Minister please comment? **[Laughter]**

Senator P.F. Routier:

I think we do take for granted ... we do have for the size of our community we have a superb network of airline services. **[Approbation]** To compare ourselves to the sister islands, we have a tremendous network service and we should be really pleased that we have that and we are very fortunate to have that. The contentious issue of excess luggage applies to every jurisdiction. If you look at the airline companies, which I have done in preparing for this question, if you look across all of their services across Europe they have conditions and, I repeat again, the conditions are there, open and people can see them and they need to, when they book a flight, abide by those conditions or pay the extra costs.