

3.15 Deputy J.H. Young of the Minister for Economic Development regarding the impact of the withdrawal of air services to Guernsey by Aurigny:

Will the Minister give assurances that there are no adverse effects on activity between the Channel Islands, whether for business, cultural, sporting, tourism or private family purposes, as a consequence of the significant reduction in inter-island flights following the withdrawal of services to Guernsey by Aurigny and advise what action, if any, he will take to maintain services to an adequate level to properly serve our 2 communities?

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

There is no public service obligation in place between government and any airline to provide a minimum level of service, as Jersey operates an open skies policy which allows airlines to choose routes, frequencies and timings. This has led to an extensive growing and competitive network of air routes serving the Island. There are many code share services around the world which allow airlines to co-operate on operational efficiencies that compete in the commercial markets. The code share between Aurigny and Blue Islands helps to secure inter-island services, stabilises the market and maintains competition on the inter-island route. Both airlines are free to set their own price points and have agreed allocations. However, I am aware of some possible teething problems with the new code share arrangements. I have therefore spoken to C.I.C.R.A. about possible capacity issues and they are closely monitoring the situation.

[11:00]

3.15.1 Deputy J.H. Young:

Accepting the market theory that the Minister gave us about route freedoms and so on, would he not accept that traditionally for many years our community has been used to being able to make day trips to Guernsey for working purposes, family or sporting events and achieve an effective working day, a practical day in our sister island? When one looks at the current availability, one is likely to find the early flights out and late flights back and reverse are all booked. Therefore, would he not accept that that is a practical problem, particularly where we are doing agreements in Guernsey, to work co-operatively with our sister island, that those links are essential?

Senator A.J.H. Maclean:

I would certainly agree that the links are essential. The first flight out of Jersey is 7.55 a.m. The return last flight is 6.50 p.m. so a day trip is perfectly feasible. There does appear to be a capacity issue potentially with the code share arrangements at weekends and that is a matter the Competition Authority are monitoring. I am also pleased to say that the airlines themselves have responded to capacity issues by laying on extra services. It is an evolving position; this new code share has only been in place for a matter of weeks. As I have said, we continue to monitor the situation. I thank the Deputy for his question. It is an important question and, as I say, it is under review.