

Public Transport Links to Ferry Ports 2013

Report of a survey of ferry users from October 2012 to September 2013



Preface

This survey was commissioned by **railfuture**, which is the campaigning name of the Railway Development Society Limited.

railfuture is organised in 12 regional branches in England and 2 national branches for Scotland and Wales. We work with all levels of national, devolved and local government, train operators and like-minded voluntary bodies to promote the interests of rail users and secure improvements to rail services. We are completely independent of political parties, trades unions and railway management.

The survey was prepared for the International Group of **railfuture** by Damian Bell, Trevor Garrod, Simon Hope, Julian Langston and Peter Walker, with assistance from Dick Clague (Isle of Man Travelwatch), to whom we give our sincere thanks. It was published by the Media, Marketing and Communications Group (MMC).

We are grateful to all members of **railfuture** and others who contributed their experiences.

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Peter Walker, Billingham, 28 November 2013

Photographs

Portsmouth Harbour: This is how it should be done. Frequent train services at platforms in the shadow of the Spinnaker Tower connect with ferry services at the adjacent quay. At the time, the only vessel at the quayside was the Gosport ferry. Photograph by Uli Harder, reproduced under Creative Commons license.

Stranraer Harbour: How not to do it. Ferry services were switched to Cairnryan, 5 miles along the coast, in 2011. Although just a short walk from Stranraer Harbour station there is a bus connection giving a 10 minute journey to Cairnryan, rail passengers intending to take the ferry are advised to connect at Ayr for a 75 minute bus journey to Cairnryan. Photograph by The Turfburner, reproduced under Creative Commons license.

Fishguard Harbour: A local campaign in 2011 succeeded in winning an additional 5 daily train services at Fishguard Harbour. Photograph courtesy of Sam Faulkner, Mount Pleasant B&B, Moylegrove, Pembrokeshire SA43 3BW.

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Public Transport Links to Ferry Ports 2013

How easy was it?

Introduction

The 2012/13 ferry questionnaire was a follow-up to the 2010 publication, by Railfuture, of a UK-wide study of ferry crossings linked by rail and serving European destinations, including Ireland, the Channel Islands, and the Isle of Man. At that time, the eruption of a volcano in Iceland had caused cancellation of air services across the UK and mainland Europe for several weeks, during which the rôle of ferries took on increased importance. We hoped for signs that improvements to rail connecting services made then would still be in evidence, across 2010's range of ferry crossings, and others, too, if possible.

Our 2013 survey also attracted responses from users of ferries to Scottish islands, as well as the Isle of Wight. These revealed interesting experiences, but we had to limit, and in some cases disregard, some of the more isolated ferry services when drawing the conclusions that follow, especially if they had no rail connection at either end, and/or if the land journeys were entirely by car.

The survey lasted a year, from the beginning of October 2012 to the end of September 2013, and it elicited some 150 replies, either on paper or on line. As some people were kind enough to send reports on more than one sea journey in the stated period, the total number replying is 125. These give a fair cross-section of members and supporters across the UK, as well as further afield, one being from New Zealand! Some of our respondents varied their outward and homeward routes, including those who used Eurostar one way and ferry the other, or who came home by air. As a result, the outward and return trip figures for some routes will be different, and calculating the overall total of ferry journeys is not a simple matter of multiplying 125 by 2, especially as some correspondents reported on as many as five separate ferry trips during the one year.

We received reports on over 50 different routes, whose operators and destinations are listed in the appendix. These range in length from Brittany Ferries' Portsmouth-Santander services to that between Portsmouth and Ryde (Pier Head). Some of those in the remoter areas of northern Scotland have not been included in this list. On the other hand, several respondents, including some from those areas, usefully draw attention to unsatisfactory connections (or, more accurately, maddening near-misses) between ferry and train in and around Scotland, as well as in southern England.

The most 'popular' crossings were those linking Holyhead with Dublin. Harwich-Hoek van Holland came a close second: it is still, thankfully, rail-connected at each side of the North Sea, which those using it clearly appreciate. Other crossings are not so well linked, by rail or even in some cases by bus. Those that are have at times fallen short of what might reasonably be expected, as several responses have told us, a particular cause for concern being links at Dublin Port. On the other hand, the value of combined rail and sea-crossing fares has been mentioned, in some cases to the evident surprise of those booking the journeys! Glad though we are to read of this, there seems to be unnecessary reluctance by some ferry and rail operators to publicise "Rail/Sail" and its' like more widely. We would like to see an early increase in such publicity, preferably well before next summer's sailing season.

Analysis of responses in detail

We thank all who responded - not just Railfuture members, but non-members, in the UK, Ireland, and the Netherlands. Thanks also to those who expanded their answers helpfully at many points, whether directly invited to do so or not! A tick-box approach can never anticipate every kind of reply that needs to be given, and much useful insight into the shortcomings of official information (where it was given at all, on or off ships) was supplied by these comments, many of which we reflect in sections C and D, below.

Section A: Booking the ferry

1 (*How did you find out about and book the journey?*)

In many cases, two separate methods came into play: first the investigation and then the booking. A substantial number used personal knowledge and/or memory, or else used timetable information that they already had. But nearly half those responding (69) used the Internet to find out about their crossings. Other methods were travel agencies (12), station booking-offices (21, some following earlier internet research), phone/call centre (7), or in person, either at the ferry terminal or on board ship (34, of which four were made by one person and three by another, each on different dates). One or two found out by word of mouth, or from a newspaper advertisement; others were part of an organised party, so had no need to research their journey themselves. One other simply said 'used my own initiative'.

It is worth pointing out that many Railfuture members are experienced in using public transport. Others, who only use it occasionally, may well have more difficulty in finding out about, and then using, such transport to reach ferry ports. It is to help these, in particular, that we point out shortcomings in procedures, and in how to get information in advance, some of which could be crucial to making or marring a sea crossing.

2 (*Did you have any problems in the process?*)

Not surprisingly, given the answer to question 1, some mentioned problems with the Internet. It was not always clear if these arose from the nature of the Internet itself - one complained that an on-line booking form had changed its layout since he last used it, for instance - or from misleading information about conditions on board that the net had given, such as whether seat reservations did or did not come as part of the deal. The net said one thing, the ferry staff said another.

But, whatever their method of booking, very few had had any trouble, some being pleasantly surprised at how easily they could buy combined rail and ferry tickets on demand, as hinted earlier.

Section B: Reaching the ferry

3 (*Did you use public transport to reach the UK port?*)

4 (*If so, what was the main mode?*)

5 (*If by train, from which station did you start?*)

Most said that they did use public transport for this, and 106 such journeys were by train. 28 came by car, at least one of them apologising for doing so, explaining that the public transport links were so deterringly grim! Very few used a bus (4 in all), though 5 others got there by coach as part of an all-in package. Some of the rail journeys implied by question 5's replies were adventurous to put it mildly, and we congratulate particularly those starting at Bare Lane, Llandrindod Wells, Lymstone Village or Maesteg in the UK, and Amersfoort, Fromista or Interlaken on the continent.

6 (*What was your final destination after disembarking at the ferry port?*)

Here again, some very ambitious continental targets were hit, such as southern Sicily, Prague, Malaga or Cologne.

7 (*How long did the ferry journey take, from station or ferry check-in?*)

Answers to this took different factors into account when reaching the total time. Those calculating from their starting station produced figures far in excess of the expected length of the ferry journey alone (e.g. London to Dublin [*sic*], 7 hours - which, actually, is quite speedy, if it includes how long they took to check in at Holyhead). Those who referred solely to the time on board usually gave a realistic figure, though for some routes we found interesting slight variations, possibly indicating unusual conditions, such as (in the case of some Isle of Man journeys) slower speeds to save fuel.

A specific point that would affect overall journey-times from Dublin to Holyhead was made about provision of bus connections from central Dublin to the port early in the morning. Even in mid-July, a

7.15 departure is intended for all non-motorists going on the 8.05 *and* the 8.45, the latter being the "Fast" ferry!

8 (*After reaching the ferry's destination, how did you go on to finish your journey?*)

As was to be expected, some crossings are better served by connecting rail services than others. The point here lay mainly in how easily a 'foot' passenger could continue by land after spending from 20 minutes (Portsmouth-Ryde) to 20+ hours (Portsmouth-Santander) on board ship. Interestingly, both of these crossings have easy and speedy disembarkation, with quick and convenient rail links, the one to Sandown and Shanklin, the other (formerly FEVE, now run by *Adif*, Spain's "Network Rail") to as far on as Oviedo.

Connections from the Hoek are also fairly convenient, and usually quick once a ship has docked. More is the pity, therefore, that elsewhere opportunities to use onward rail connection are almost systematically denied, the worst instance being in the Dublin area, where what could be a virtually seamless connection into the frequent electric trains run by DART through Dun Laoghaire is destroyed by the shipping lines' continuing insistence on using Dublin Port for the majority of their sailings, with a decidedly unsophisticated bus link arrangement awaiting the uninitiated. (See further under questions 12 and 13.)

9 (*Did you take a bicycle with you?*)

10 (*If so, did you find the arrangements satisfactory?*)

Surprisingly few respondents took bicycles, even folded ones, on these journeys, despite the comparative ease with which a heartening number of operators allow you to do this. Again, specific comments below give a better picture of what such travel entails when embarking and disembarking, but even these drawbacks did not discourage some from cycling half way round Europe for several weeks - in one case en route to and from a family wedding!

11 (*How long did it take from disembarking to continuing your journey?*)

This question applied to all who travelled, not just cyclists, and, not surprisingly, figures quoted varied quite a lot, as did the conditions under which foot passengers used separate exits or jostled with cars and lorries for space. (See Section D, below, for details that apply to each main ferry operator.)

Section C: On board ship

As already stated, we found the most significant and useful comments in the more open-ended questions later in this survey (15 and 16).

12 (*Did the vessel have information about trains to or from either port?*)

13 (*Was it possible to find out about buses available at either port?*)

Some passengers were so well organised that they already knew exactly what to do at each end of their journey, so replies of "I didn't notice" need not surprise us. Those who were travelling more on a whim - which, almost by definition, implies the shorter routes, such as Isle of Wight or Scottish Highlands and Islands, where tickets can, or must, be bought only at a port booking office or even after boarding - did report on this in various ways.

On the longer routes, we noted some variation in how much information was on display, even on journeys involving the same route and the same company. Broadly speaking, Calmac scored well on bus and train information - despite reports of its absence on routes to Brodick - as if lapses earlier in the season had been made good later. However, nobody found any such information on either the Castlebay or the Armadale sailings, both of which link with rail-served ports - Oban and Mallaig respectively.

Good practice was noted on routes linking the Isle of Wight to the mainland (Red Funnel and Wightlink), despite their comparatively limited catchments for much of the year. Indeed, through rail bookings are offered between Shanklin and stations via Portsmouth to London if not beyond - though publicity for them seems minimal.

Brittany Ferries, despite the enormous length of most of their crossings, seemed to be the opposite of this, unless our respondents had planned their entire journeys so carefully before they reached the port that no need for help on buses or trains arose. Even so, some respondents wished that they could have found information on board about bus routes in and around the vast areas of Portsmouth's range of landing-stages and departure-points - a puzzle in their own right, buses or no buses. Others lamented the complete absence, in Plymouth, of any mention of buses between rail station and port, never mind of guidance on how to reach one from the other without resorting to a taxi. Yet we know that such links exist - as they do at Southampton, between the station and Isle of Wight ferries to Cowes, and, unusually for the UK, running at no charge to users of the ferries. In addition, some users commented on the striking contrast between Portsmouth and Santander in the proximity of buses to the ports, and on the availability on board ship of leaflets, including a map of Santander, for the asking.

Stena Line runs so many routes that its performance here varies quite a bit, but Harwich-Hoek van Holland was always found to offer rail information, plus a ticket-booking facility, at least when heading eastward. Their Belfast-Cairnryan services vary in what they tell passengers, as do those to Dublin, though one respondent did speak very highly of the food they served on board compared with that of Irish Ferries! This operator also received varying reports, and although some sailings gave information on board about bus connections from Dublin's port to the bus station, it was not always made clear that these buses were 'exact fare' only, and quite expensive at that. This situation is not satisfactory: indeed the facilities at Dublin were almost always the subject of highly critical comments.

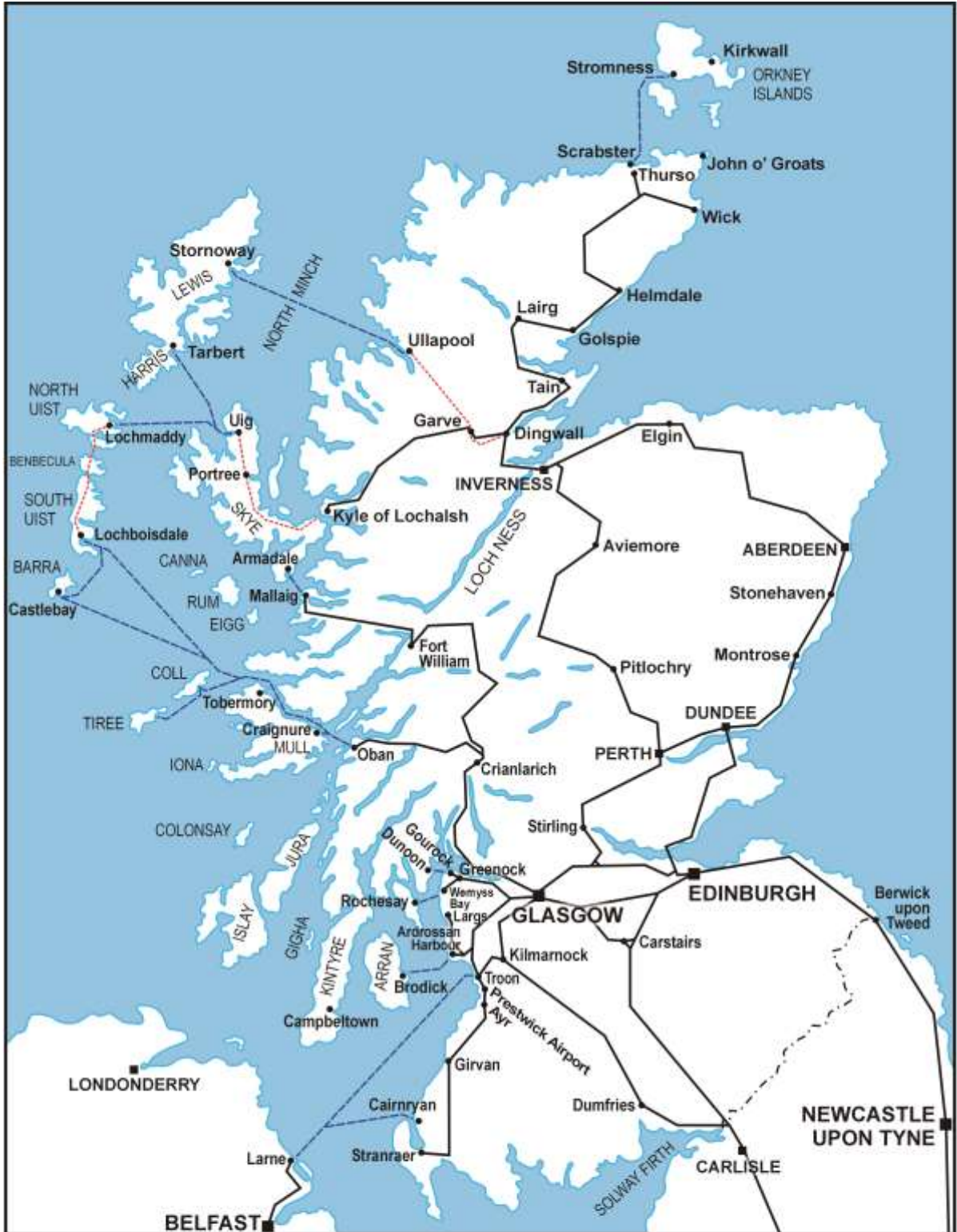
The Isle of Man Steam Packet Company seems to vary in provision of on-board information. Onward travel tickets for the island itself were often available, but not necessarily bus service information. It would be very useful to have this, and even steam and Manx Electric train schedules, on board as well, since by no means all who use these services are veteran holidaymakers in the way that was so evident in decades past. Furthermore, the aim is to provide connecting transport so good that it is seen as a realistic alternative to a car, and that it includes facilities convenient for foot passengers, as well as for motorists. So we are glad to hear that Sail/Rail tickets are on sale at the Douglas terminal for those travelling towards England, and to see that this company often allows foot passengers to disembark before motorists, in welcome contrast to what several other operators do.

Sad to say, P & O ferries seem hardly ever to notice that foot passengers may need onward travel advice, as we saw little sign on any of their routes - Hull to Zeebrugge, Dover to Calais, or Larne to Troon - of this information. For comparison, Stena between Belfast and Cairnryan is beginning to provide this, especially now that a more localised bus service to link both the Cairnryan shipping lines' ports with Stranraer town and railway station is operating - with electrically-powered vehicles! We congratulate the local authority in Scotland that is funding these services, and hope that, with wider publicity, especially on ferry operator websites, they will be increasingly used, in preference to the lengthy Scotrail coach journey now offered to and from Ayr railway station.

14 *(If it was possible to buy train or bus tickets on board, please give brief details)*

Once again, it is clear that many of our ferry-users had all their travel documents well before boarding, so would have no need to look for such possibilities. This apart, no reasonable person would expect a vessel making a 25-minute trip across, say, the Solent to carry a full rail or bus ticket agency on it: but some of the longer ferry crossings might benefit from a willingness at least to give onward travel hints, if not actual tickets, at some stage in their journey. This actually happens on Harwich-Hoek sailings, and we hope that the facility will long remain available for rail journeys on both sides of the North Sea. But we did hear that one user of this route found, too late apparently, that the sea/rail ticket-booking that he had printed out for his Netherlands-London journey required him to obtain another part of the ticket while en route at Hoek van Holland!

Similarly, the evident need to use a bus at Dublin leads us to urge a more pro-active attitude from the Irish Sea operators in reminding passengers of this service and in selling tickets for it, rather than (as we heard from several respondents) leaving them to find an out-of-order ticket machine at the port, in sight of a waiting exact-fare bus. This leads smoothly on to.....

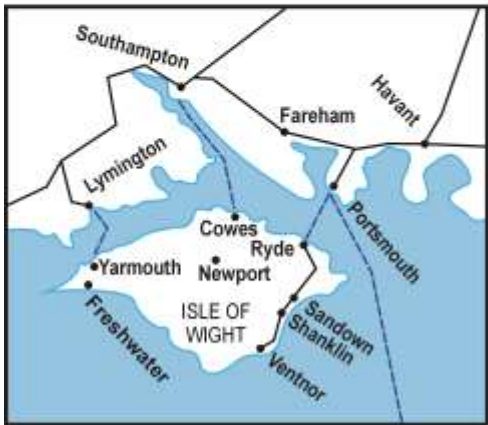
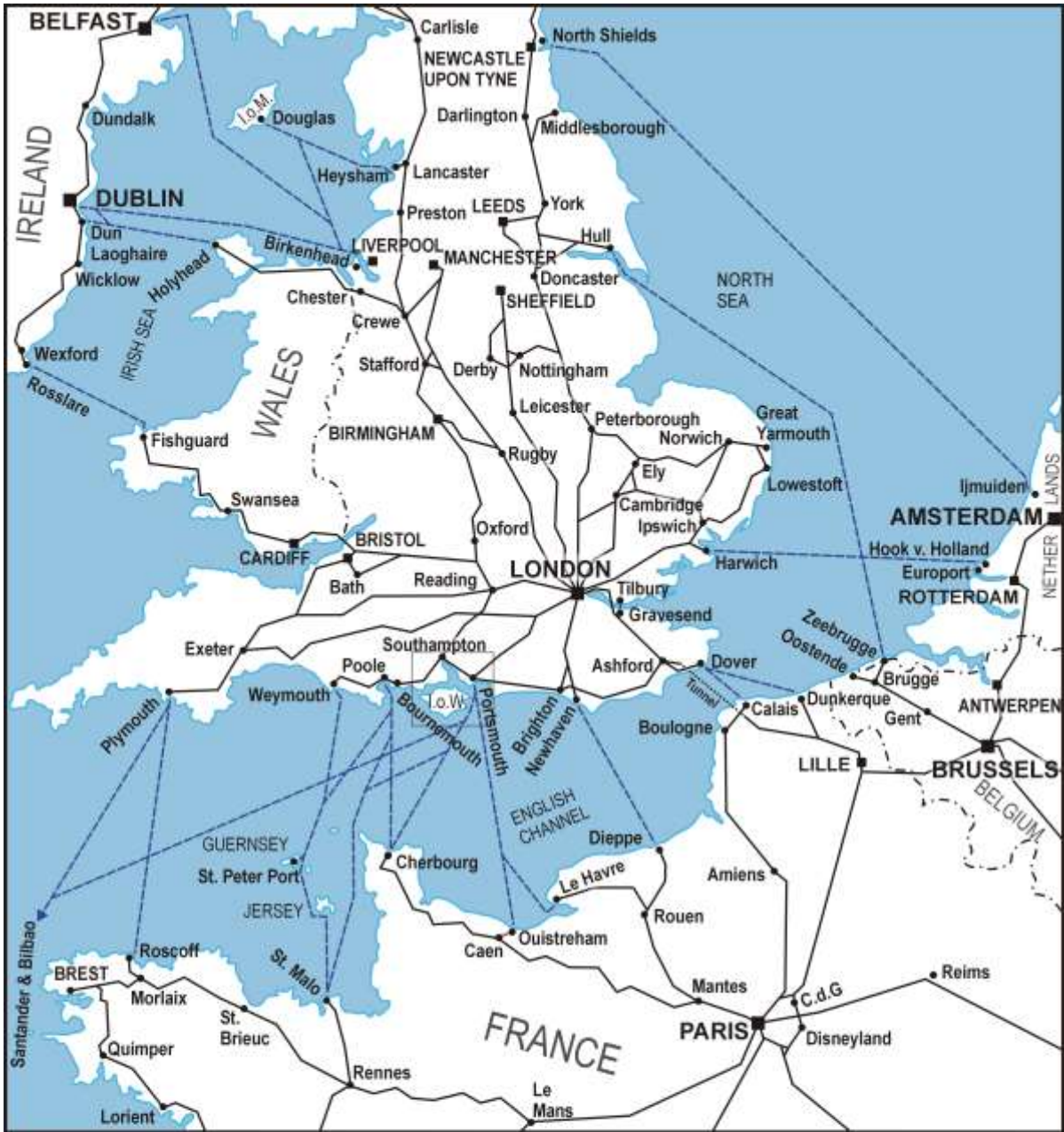


Ferries - - - - -

Railways ————

Bus link ······

Map of ferry routes: Scotland



- Ferries -----
- Railways -----
- Bus link (dotted red)

Map of ferry routes: England, Wales, Ireland and the Continent

15 (*Is there any other information that you would have liked on this journey?*)

As foreshadowed, this produced a good selection of considered and often acutely critical replies, not least arising from different interpretations of "on this journey". Requests for a more audible public address system (DFDS, Portsmouth to Le Havre), and for clearer directions at ports (Holyhead, on procedure for Irish Ferries passengers) or on ships (apparently there were leaflets explaining Dublin Port bus services on Irish Ferries vessels, but only if you knew where the on-board information office was) are of wide relevance. So too is the request that ships coming into Holyhead provide up-to-date information on whether or not booked rail connections will wait, if the ship is later than expected, or takes longer than usual to unload. Similarly, aboard Stena line boats to the Hoek, an announcement of changes to connecting NS train services, especially on Sundays if engineering on some lines means bus replacements (yes, these happen in the Netherlands, too!) would be useful to a large proportion of the travelling public, especially if backed up by well-based advice on alternative routes to take to their ultimate destination.

On a smaller scale, we heard of misleading and/or nonexistent information at some ports, e.g. where to pick up pre-booked hire cars (Lochboisdale), or - at Gravesend, of all places - how to get off its landing-stage ramp!

Section D: After arrival at ferry destination16 (*Please comment, favourably or critically, on procedure for disembarkation*)

Opinions were often divided on this, so we list replies by Ferry company (in alphabetical order), and then by route (again, arranged alphabetically by starting-point in the UK). Not surprisingly, those who used cars were almost always fulsome in their praise for the speed and efficiency with which they moved off their ships: but some even of these recognised that foot passengers on these sailings were not always handled well, to put it mildly.

Argyll Ferries

<i>Gourock-Dunoon</i>	The passenger gangway ends in a disused car ramp, so no shelter available for foot passengers.
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Brittany Ferries

<i>Cork-Roscoff</i>	"Cyclists should have....been allowed off first"
<i>Plymouth-Santander</i>	"Great! Public transport is then immediately outside [Santander's] port" "Very efficient - didn't take long at all!" "Efficient" (at both ports)
<i>Poole-Cherbourg</i>	"Foot passengers were kept waiting more than the usual 25 minutes"
<i>Poole-St Malo</i>	"Cyclists had priority over motor traffic, and were asked to walk, not ride, up the ramp off the ship"
<i>Portsmouth-Caen</i>	"[Disembarkation] very smooth for cyclists"
<i>(Ouireham)</i>	"Rubbish" (at Portsmouth): lorries and cars went first, foot passengers had to wait accordingly.
<i>Portsmouth-Cherbourg</i>	"Unclear how to find a bus to the town"
<i>Portsmouth-Santander</i>	Cyclists should not have to share on-board space with revving-up motorbikes when it is time to disembark. Strongly suggests that all operators should load and then unload bicycles first, on basic health grounds - "I couldn't wait near the sea, where the air was fresh, as it would be against harbour regulations", one cyclist was told, in all seriousness.

Calmac (*alias Caledonian MacBrayne*)

<i>Brodick-Ardrossan</i>	Foot passengers had to wait until all the cars were off - and this at a rail-connected port, with a connecting train waiting. However, this pulled out at the very moment a would-be passenger was running up for it - ostensibly, ScotRail claimed later, because of a 'busy section
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near Paisley'. In fact, it is quite a walk from landing-stage to Ardrossan station, so priority for foot passengers here would help.

Condor

- Poole-St Peter Port* A reluctant motorist mentioned the delay in disembarkation caused by a broken-down car ahead!
- Weymouth-St Peter Port* An easy walk off the fast ferry and along the (lengthy) pier, but 15 minutes' walk to the promenade bus station.
[Some island buses do stop along the promenade, nearer to the pier, but, if you do not know which route you want, this is not of much use to those arriving off a ship.]

DFDS

NB - The two operators of this service, LD lines and Transmanche, have now combined as DFDS.

- Portsmouth-Le Havre* Cars given priority: steps only for several decks, then signposting [for foot passengers) not clear (and there had been little choice of seats or recliners for foot passengers, as motorists were dealt with first).
 "Cars first out, pedestrians afterwards.... absence of pedestrian gangplank made this inevitable". However, a bus arrived in due course for these foot passengers.

Irish Ferries

- Holyhead-Dublin Port* "Off the boat into a bus to the 'terminal', then another bus thence to Dublin city centre".
 In contrast to the closeness of Stena line vessels, a bus journey between station and embarkation is needed at Holyhead, something that Irish Ferries' web-site does not make at all clear.
 "All 50 foot passengers crowded on to one bus, including several elderly people who had to stand in a lurching, bouncy bus."
 "At Dublin Port, quite slick. At Holyhead, awful....2 buses crammed with people ferried us to the terminal, half a mile through the port."
 Foot passengers have to wait at Dublin for motorists to leave the ship. Inadequacies of the connecting bus-service to the centre of Dublin include lack of luggage space on board, plus unreliable estimate of journey-time to the Bus Aras (bus station) and nearby Connolly railway station. In one reported instance, the designated bus had to wait over half an hour until all foot passengers had time to reach it, causing several on board to worry about catching their intended rail connections from Connolly.
 At Holyhead, arriving foot passengers had to use the car deck - after all vehicles had left it - and then wait in the 'harbour' bus until it was full. It then took a long route to the station, by which time some people's intended train connection had left (mid-September 2013).

Isle of Man Steam Packet Co

- Heysham-Douglas* Clear instructions on procedures, plus "superb layout of the vessel", made disembarkation a simple process.
 (May 2013) "Quick and straightforward, though it would [help] if foot passengers were permitted to disembark before vehicle passengers"
 (July 2013) "like rush-hour on the tube to get to the coach deck"
 (mid-September 2013) "excellent: no longer do foot passengers have to wait for motorists as formerly."
- Liverpool-Douglas* (in 2012) foot passengers on "SeaCat" had to wait for cars to leave, then faced a long walk to the terminal exit. (Douglas has two dedicated berths, one for each type of ship.)

"Foot passenger disembarkation at Liverpool is slow, and baggage collection area inadequate".

P & O Ferries

<i>Dover-Calais</i>	Foot passengers must wait until all vehicles have disembarked, and then get a bus to the ferry terminal: no direction is given to cyclists about how to reach the cycle path immediately outside Calais port.
<i>Hull-Zeebrugge</i>	Poor facilities for foot passengers in Belgium: a bus for Bruges station is not much help to those who wish to reach a destination such as Ostend on the coastal tramway. They are faced with a 2-mile walk just to the tram stop. A 'motorised' user comments on variation in time taken, on one occasion a 'documentary problem' at the passport check-point delayed dozens of vehicles who had had the ill-luck to use the queue concerned.
<i>Larne-Troon</i>	No foot passenger gangway at Troon, so pedestrians must wait until all vehicles have left.

Stena Line

<i>Birkenhead-Belfast</i>	"Very quick at Belfast for cyclists" (This one would have used P & O Liverpool-Dublin, but found that cyclists were not admitted to it.)
<i>Cairnryan-Belfast</i>	"Stena do not encourage rail passengers by this route": at Belfast only those who prebooked it could have a bus to the city centre.
<i>Fishguard-Rosslare</i>	"Not informed that our luggage could be transferred from port to ship by motor vehicle, so carried cases some 300 yards at each port" "Transfer between rail and sea at Rosslare Harbour is awful - a lengthy walk for foot passengers, especially in the rain!" The foot passenger gangway being under repair at Fishguard, Stena put on a bus between station and ship. Prompt disembarkation at Rosslare via 'elevator'.
<i>Harwich-Hoek van Holland</i>	Mainly good for foot passengers, who can leave the vessel promptly, but comment made on the increasing distance from ship to railway station, thanks to increasing size of vessels and hence their need for deeper water at the landing-stage. "Excellent - ship's staff superb" (A temporary bus link between Harwich station and the ship lasted until the end of July, by which time the walkway had been repaired.)
<i>Holyhead-Dublin</i>	Once off the ship [at Dublin], foot passengers had to stand in a narrow space while cars and lorries drove off. The resulting exhaust fumes practically choked them - "appalling and dangerous".

Transmanche

<i>Newhaven-Dieppe</i>	"Had to go down to the car deck (there was a lift in the ship) with my (folded) bike, and then cycle out of the ship." A motorist very public-spiritedly commented that "for foot passengers, disembarkation at Newhaven is a disgrace. If pouring with rain, you and your luggage will get....soaked as.... you wait in the open air at the end of a queue for passport control". There was information on board ship about the bus between Dieppe ferry terminal and the railway station.
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We also received comments about Red Funnel and Wightlink crossings, but frankly these are so short that they do not involve any real delay at either port. Car traffic on them is rarely heavy. On the other hand, one user mentions overcrowded trains at Ryde Pier Head on an August Saturday (not really Wightlink's fault, we would think).

Another bone of contention arises at Lymington, from the Yarmouth route vessels: the new ones are described as "so monstrous" that "disembarkation..... has become an ordeal". However, the winter timetable on this route indicates ferries running hourly, rather than every 40 minutes (a summer season frequency, perhaps?), so that, for now, their rail connections are not quite so problematic.

Section E: European maritime passengers' rights

17 *(These have been in force since 18 December 2012. Did you see or hear any information about them, for example, before or during the journey? If so, please give brief details)*

Few indeed were those who knew about this legislation, and, from the replies we have seen, on-board information (or its lack) would not have increased their number. Again, this may simply indicate that our respondents had planned their onward journeys to the point where there would be no risk of having to invoke such rights - e.g. those whose final destinations were within walking distance of the port concerned. Very few of our respondents reported any cancellation or serious delay in their ferry journey. There was, however, a small-print reference to these rights at the end of the collective ferry ticket issued for the RDS Study Tour visitors to Eire in mid-September - a ticket presumably held by the party leader and not necessarily seen, never mind read, by the other passengers.

Conclusions

We single out for particular comment the repeated complaints about buses and/or trains that seem deliberately timed not to meet with ferries. We recognise that, at times, respondents were asking for more than a bus operator on a remote Scottish island could be expected to provide, but - still in Scotland - we do share the unanimous disquiet over the non-publicising of local bus links between rail services at Stranraer and ferry ports at Cairnryan, as explained earlier. The all-line British railways timetable shows details of only a fraction of the boats available, the year round, to and from Larne and Belfast. This works to the detriment of rail operators, ferry operators, and would-be foot passengers alike.

This is one area for improvement. Another is around the Dublin Port area, for reasons already described. A third is in the Belfast/Larne area, where, again, deficiencies have been cited. The continuing existence of hourly train services to and from Larne Harbour, although not always at times convenient for Cairnryan sailings in or out, points to a ready, but little-advertised, facility for foot passengers not obviously catered for by road transport.

We have been told of several instances of poor ferry/bus/rail connections, e.g. Lymington - Yarmouth ferries not easily dovetailing with branch trains that connect at Brockenhurst with the London-Bournemouth service: ferries and buses from the far north of Scotland, including the Orkneys, not linking well into trains towards and beyond Inverness: and difficulties with Ullapool-Inverness bus connections off the Stornoway ferries, causing delays to an already lengthy journey to or from Glasgow. Ship links at Oban are usually quite reasonable, considering that the winter rail service runs just 3 times daily; but clearly those going to the remoter, sparsely-populated islands will be faced with excessive waits in one direction, if not the other, no matter how ingeniously the ferry operator tailors its varied sailings one to another.

In Wales, it is good to see that some improvement to the Fishguard-Rosslare connections has been possible on both sides of the Irish Sea, but we think that the respondent who complained of having to wait over an hour for an ongoing train at Fishguard, while justified in expressing his discontent, may not be allowing sufficiently for unforeseen delays to boats as a result of adverse weather conditions. Similar grumbles have arisen from Isle of Man Steam Packet workings that have run more slowly than expected because of fuel economy measures: in the world of passenger shipping, there is no clear answer to this conundrum, or indeed to quite a few others, but we urge ferry users to keep pointing out the problems that confront them, so that workable improvements can be suggested based on experience.

Recommendations

To sum up, therefore, we make five recommendations for immediate action by rail and ferry operators alike:

1. Improve the scope of information about rail and bus services that connect with shipping services around the UK and beyond, where appropriate. These include shuttles between a railway station and different parts of the nearby port (Plymouth and Portsmouth, in particular, need their bus links far better and more widely known):
2. Give more emphasis to publicising RAIL and SAIL tickets and their variations, ensuring that they are available and clearly advertised in all on-line material relating to ferry services, as well as being advertised at railway stations. We know that much has been done on this already by some shipping lines, but on-line bookers have sometimes had difficulty in finding the information they needed. Meanwhile, we are glad to find that such tickets, often at very competitive prices, are there for the asking at rail booking-offices, even in the most unlikely places (Hartlepool to the Isle of Man, for instance), but some respondents told us of annoying gaps in places:
3. Make sure that, in national rail timetable books and on line, the full story is told, in one place, of all ships plying between destinations served by more than one operator: and that all connecting rail or bus possibilities are shown on the same table, no matter how far they are theoretical competitors. This arises particularly now that there are much-improved local bus services between Stranraer and both its Cairnryan area ports:
4. Do something positive about the currently unsatisfactory conditions for non-motorists at both ends of the Holyhead - Dublin Port route, about which we have received quite the most telling number and range of complaints. We recognise that larger ferries need deeper water, and so cannot dock as conveniently as was possible before, but we think that bus connections need to be more user-friendly for foot passengers of Irish Ferries and Stena Line sailings alike:
5. Similarly, look to better facilities at Belfast, Larne, and Liverpool for those connecting between boat and train. At Larne, in particular, this would need little extra publicity, but could increase use of Larne Harbour station considerably, to the benefit of very many ferry passengers.

Actions

Railfuture members can, and will, play their part in such action, to help the non-motorised ferry user:

1. by recommending in our publicity the www.greentraveller.co.uk on-line Ferry Guide for foot passengers, first issued in 2010:
2. by means of the forthcoming Railfuture webpage, to help those wanting virtually up-to-the-minute news on ferry crossings throughout the UK, which we shall aim to update as frequently as is necessary: and
3. publicising the fact that, from February 2014 if all goes to plan, a European Rail timetable on the lines of Thomas Cook's guide, but now produced independently, will begin publication. We hope that this will continue the tradition of including summarised ferry services and times.

The more non-motorists can be encouraged to use ferry services, the better for us all - and for the environment.

Appendix

Ferry operators and ferry services featured in responses

As several respondents varied their outward and homeward routes, and even modes of travel, this list gives each direction of all routes used, arranged alphabetically with name(s) of operator and numbers of reports received. If you do not spot your favourite ferry route among them, this is because none of our informants used it in that direction.

1	Ardrossan to Brodick	Calmac	3 responses
2	Ardrossan to Campbelltown	Calmac	1 response
3	Armadale to Mallaig	Calmac	2 responses
4	Belfast to Birkenhead	Stena Line	3 responses
5	Belfast to Cairnryan	Stena Line	2 responses
6	Birkenhead to Belfast	Stena Line	4 responses
7	Brodick to Ardrossan	Calmac	5 responses
8	Caen [<i>alias</i> Ouistreham] to Portsmouth	Brittany Ferries	2 responses
9	Cairnryan to Belfast	Stena Line	2 responses
10	Cairnryan to Larne	P & O	1 response
11	Calais to Dover	P & O	1 response
12	Castlebay to Oban	Calmac	1 response
13	Campbelltown to Ardrossan	Calmac	1 response
14	Cherbourg to Poole	Brittany Ferries	1 response
15	Cherbourg to Portsmouth	Brittany Ferries	1 response
16	Cowes to Southampton [East] [West]	Red Funnel	4 responses
		Red Funnel	1 response
17	Craignure to Oban	Calmac	3 responses
18	Dieppe to Newhaven	Transmanche	2 responses
19	Douglas to Heysham	IoMSPC	5 responses
20	Douglas to Liverpool	IoMSPC	2 responses
21	Dover to Calais	P & O	3 responses
22	Dublin to Holyhead	Irish Ferries	21 responses
		Stena Line	1 response
23	Dunkerque to Dover	DFDS (no foot passengers)	1 response
24	Dunoon to Gourock	Argyll Ferries	1 response
25	Fishbourne (IoW) to Portsmouth	Wightlink	4 responses
26	Fishguard to Rosslare	Stena Line	4 responses
27	Gourock to Dunoon	Argyll Ferries	1 response
28	Gravesend to Tilbury	Lower Thames & Medway Passenger Boat Co.	1 response
29	Great Cumbrae to Largs	Calmac	1 response
30	Harwich to Hoek van Holland	Stena Line	15 responses
31	Heysham to Douglas	IoMSPC	6 responses
32	Hoek van Holland to Harwich	Stena Line	16 responses
33	Holyhead to Dublin	Irish Ferries	20 responses
		Stena Line	2 responses
34	Hull to Zeebrugge	P & O	5 responses
35	Ijmuiden to North Shields	DFDS	1 response
36	Kennacraig to Port Askaig	Calmac	2 responses
37	Largs to Brodick	Waverley Steam Navigation	1 response
38	Largs to Great Cumbrae	Calmac	1 response
39	Larne to Troon	P & O	2 responses
40	Le Havre to Portsmouth	Direct Lines/ DFDS	1 response
41	Liverpool to Douglas	IoMSPC	2 responses
42	Lyminster to Yarmouth (IoW)	Wightlink	7 responses

43	Mallaig to Armadale	Calmac	2 responses
44	Newhaven to Dieppe	DFDS	2 responses
		Transmanche	2 responses
45	Oban to Castlebay	Calmac	1 response
46	Oban to Craignure	Calmac	3 responses
47	Oban to Lochboisdale	Calmac	3 responses
48	Oban to Tiree	Calmac	1 response
49	Plymouth to Roscoff	Brittany Ferries	1 response
50	Plymouth to Santander	Brittany Ferries	3 responses
51	Poole to Cherbourg	Brittany Ferries	1 response
52	Poole to St Malo	Condor	1 response
53	Poole to St Peter Port	Condor	3 responses
54	Port Askaig to Kennacraig	Calmac	1 response
55	Portsmouth to Caen (Ouistreham)	Brittany Ferries	3 responses
56	Portsmouth to Cherbourg	Brittany Ferries	2 responses
57	Portsmouth to Fishbourne	Wightlink	3 responses
58	Portsmouth to Le Havre	Direct Lines/ DFDS	2 responses
59	Portsmouth to Ryde	Wightlink	4 responses
60	Portsmouth to St Malo	Brittany Ferries	1 response
61	Portsmouth to Santander	Brittany Ferries	1 response
62	Roscoff to Plymouth	Brittany Ferries	3 responses
63	Rosslare to Fishguard	Stena Line	5 responses
64	Rothesay to Wemyss Bay	Calmac	2 responses
65	Rotterdam to Hull	P & O	3 responses
66	Ryde to Portsmouth	Wightlink	4 responses
67	St Malo to Portsmouth	Brittany Ferries	3 responses
68	St Peter Port to Poole	Condor	3 responses
69	Santander to Plymouth	Brittany Ferries	2 responses
70	Santander to Portsmouth	Brittany Ferries	2 responses
71	Scrabster to Stromness	Northlink	1 response
72	Southampton to East Cowes	Red Funnel	5 responses
73	Stornoway to Ullapool	Calmac	2 responses
74	Stromness to Scrabster	Northlink	1 response
75	Tilbury to Gravesend	L T & M Passenger Boat Co.	1 response
76	Tiree to Oban	Calmac	1 response
77	Ullapool to Stornoway	Calmac	3 responses
78	Wemyss Bay to Rothesay	Calmac	3 responses
79	Weymouth to St Malo	Condor	1 response
80	Yarmouth (IoW) to Lymington	Wightlink	7 responses
81	Zeebrugge to Hull	P & O	2 responses

In addition, we received reports of some more remote crossings in the far north of Scotland that were not rail-connected at either end, so, while thanking those who sent them, we have had to disregard these. However, a "Railwatch" correspondent has kindly drawn our attention to a narrowly-missed morning rail/ship connection at Mallaig, towards Lochboisdale, otherwise unused by any of our respondents. Remedying it might not be as straightforward as our contact assumed, but it does underline yet again the unnecessarily casual treatment of foot passengers, as opposed to those in cars, which is just what surveys such as this one aim to highlight.