

Application for Development Consent to complete the Heysham to M6 Link Road

Reference TR010008

Unique reference no: XXXX

Response to Ferry Companies May 2012

This response is primarily to the Written Representation by Seatruck Ferries (email from Alistair Eagles, MD Irish Sea). The third point to be made also applies to the response to ExA's questions by the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company:

1. The evidence of Seatruck Ferries, far from making the case that a Heysham Port to M6 link road is essential, highlights how successful the company has been at Heysham without needing a link road. Seatruck has increased its business by over 400% in the past decade, at a time when volumes were declining on Irish Sea routes, and by 85% in one year alone (2011). This does not suggest that road hauliers are deterred from using Seatruck at Heysham because of the time taken to reach the port from the M6. The fact that Seatruck established its operations at a time when the link road was no more than a policy ambition suggests that the presence of the link road, or even a future promise that could only have been tentative, was not a significant determinant in the decision to locate at Heysham.
2. It is implausible to argue now, with the near-halving of forecast journey time savings accruing to the link road, that the time saved if the road is built will have a significant effect on road hauliers' willingness to use Seatruck Ferries operating from Heysham when it clearly has not been a significant factor up to now. It would appear that the service model of unaccompanied trailers, and presumably competitive rates, outweigh considerations of the journey time between the M6 and the Port of Heysham. The projected average time saving is now only 5 or 6 minutes even at peak hours, perhaps 3 minutes in the Interpeak, and is negligible in the evening and night periods when most of the freight ferry services operate.
3. The support of Seatruck Ferries and the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company for HM6L is easy to offer, since it is cost- and commitment-free. The IoMSPC has previously indicated a strong possibility of relocating to Liverpool, and its belated reassurances about using Heysham are not reassuring when it is not contributing to the scheme cost and is not making a cast-iron commitment to continue using Heysham should the link road be built.

Alan James

19 May 2012