

2.11 Deputy S. Power of St. Brelade of the Minister for Economic Development regarding charges for debit card and cash purchases imposed by certain airlines

Would the Minister confirm whether certain airlines at Jersey Airport charge a fee for the use of debit cards used to buy an e-ticket online and for the cash purchase of a ticket at the airport, and if so what action, if any, does he propose to take?

Deputy A.J.H. Maclean of St. Helier (Assistant Minister for Economic Development - rapporteur):

The Deputy will be aware that the answer to the first part of his question is contained within airlines' websites and literature. I can therefore confirm that a number of airlines apply a charge for the purchase of airline tickets. Such charges vary between airlines and indeed the method of payment. It must, however, be emphasised that these charges are not unique to Jersey residents as airlines apply them across their network. Furthermore, as this is essentially a commercial matter, Jersey Airport would not seek to influence such charges.

2.11.1 Deputy S. Power:

If I might follow up on that is the Assistant Minister aware that only 3 airlines at Jersey Airport do not charge for debit cards, as my understanding is: Blue Islands, British Airways and BMI? Can the Assistant Minister ensure that in any further or future negotiation on a service level agreement with an airline that he will ask the airline to not charge for a debit transaction on a debit card and to not charge for a cash transaction at the airport?

Deputy A.J.H. Maclean:

Yes, I thank the Deputy for that supplementary question. I am well aware of what airlines charge and which ones do, in fact, charge. I have a list here which Members may be interested in having a copy of in due course. I think the Deputy is somewhat confused because in fact we do not operate service level agreements with airlines at the airport. We operate an Open Skies policy. We are trying to encourage airlines to fly to Jersey. We are trying to maintain our existing air links. We are trying to develop them, and I think to date have been reasonably successful. Imposing conditions on airlines with regard to additional charges is not going to be conducive to that form of development, particularly if we are out of step with other airports around the U.K. and elsewhere in the world.

2.11.2 Deputy S. Power:

Can I ask the Assistant Minister to comment on whether he thinks it is pretty disgraceful that one particular airline charges a debit card transaction per person, per leg? In other words, if you are a family of 4 flying somewhere, that they will charge 8 transactions to and from Jersey Airport? Can the Minister comment on that, please?

Deputy A.J.H. Maclean:

Airlines have a range of different charges and different methods of charging. It is, as I said earlier, a commercial matter. I favour the lowest possible charges. We work very hard to ensure that Jersey consumers benefit from low charges and airfares from and to Jersey. We will continue to work to that aim and individual cases are not matters that I wish to discuss.

2.11.3 Deputy S. Power:

Is the Assistant Minister aware that there is a lot of public dissatisfaction with these charges at the airport for the use of debit cards and cash purchases of airline tickets?

Deputy A.J.H. Maclean:

I am aware of that and I am aware that residents of the United Kingdom and airports around the world who also have to suffer such charges. It is not unique to airlines, I might add. It is an issue that applies to many online transactions where debit card charges are made. It is an unfortunate

way in which industries have moved in recent times. It is not something I am necessarily satisfied with, however we have to look at the greater aim, which is the development of our air links and delivering the lowest cost fares we possibly can for the benefit of local residents. That is an aim that we are continuing to work towards.

Deputy S. Power:

The Assistant Minister proposes to throw his hands in the air and do nothing.