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PRESS RELEASE FROM HOLIDAYTRAVELWATCH™

TO PACKAGE OR NOT TO PACKAGE: THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE CONSUMER DETRIMENT & PETITION

Regular visitors to HolidayTravelWatch will be aware of our continuing campaign to protect holidaymaker's rights within the Package Travel Regulations. Since 2005 we have actively written and lobbied for those rights to be protected and strengthened, in light of the growing internet based holiday and travel market. In 2007 we created a petition on the No 10 Downing Street Website, calling for urgent action to protect those rights, or at the very least, create the conditions which would force airlines and tour operators to identify which travel arrangements attracted the protections of an ATOL licence and the protections of the Package Travel Regulations.

HolidayTravelWatch would like to thank everyone who supported our campaign and signed our petition.

The Government has now responded to the petition. They state:

"The Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992 (SI 1992/3288) implement the Package Travel Directive (90/314/EEC). The Directive is in the early stages of review by the European Commission and the Government has made representations to the effect that significant developments in the leisure travel industry and the way in which many consumers choose to book their travel arrangements means that increasing numbers of them do not travel on packages as defined in the directive. Those travellers do not therefore benefit from the protections provided by the directive. The Government has asked the Commission to undertake research into consumer preferences and possible problems experienced by consumers in the

non-package sector in order to better inform the shape of the regime into the future.

Following the Court of Appeal judgment mentioned in the petition, the Government has issued revised guidance on the definition of a package, which seeks to clarify for business when the products they are selling are covered by the Regulations. *As yet the Government is not aware that the judgment has triggered any significant change by package holiday organisers to no longer sell protected packages* (Our emphasis).

The growth in non-package arrangements is largely the result of activity by other participants in the leisure travel market such as airline and hotel accommodation websites. In the course of the review, the Government and the Commission will be considering whether there is a case for suppliers of individual components to be required to provide protections along the lines of those currently in the Directive. The Government will also be pressing the case for better information for consumers as to when their particular arrangements fall within the scope of the directive and when they do not".

HolidayTravelWatch has created a new petition on the Number 10 website, and would urge all supporters to visit the following link and add their names to the petition - http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/Package-Travel/

Frank Brehany, the MD of HolidayTravelWatch, commenting on the Governments response states;

"We are aware of the growing concern within Government circles of the financial protection issue. However, we would warn the Government and the EU Commission that they should not seek to confine its own definition as to what amounts to Consumer Detriment, by reference to any singular issue. The problems experienced by holidaymakers, both through traditional Packages and through so called DIY packages, are wide and varied. I have noted that in its response, the Government states that it is not aware of significant change following the Court of Appeal decision. This is quite remarkable; they were provided with our own report to the EU Commission which highlighted 160 typical holidaymaker experiences in 2007 (there were too many to include within the report), civil servants have discussed such issues directly with us, they are clearly not following the debate within the travel press, and finally, we continue to highlight Consumer Detriment through press releases on our own website. How much louder do we have to shout, and how much more Consumer Detriment must be experienced before the Government will acknowledge the extent of Consumer Detriment?"

All Holidaymakers affected by any of these issues should call the National Helpline 08450179229 or make contact through the Organisation's website –

www.holidaytravelwatch.com

HolidayTravelWatch is a National Consumer Organisation which provides information, advice and assistance to the holidaymaker or independent traveller, who experiences problems with their travel arrangements. In eleven years 130,000 people have benefited from the help provided by HolidayTravelWatch, with over 46% being empowered to resolve their own claims by the information the organisation provides on their consumer rights.

HolidayTravelWatch has campaigned in the past for improvements in travel safety and is proud to have been associated with some of the leading broadcast and print media projects aimed at informing the consumer. HolidayTravelWatch continues with that campaigning spirit and continues to work closely with the media and government departments alike.

Full details of the work of HolidayTravelWatch can be found on www.holidaytravelwatch.com

For further information on this press release and any other associated matters please contact Frank Brehany on 08450179229

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