

GD:2026/0069



Report to Tynwald on Lower Douglas Bus and Passenger Facilities

June 2026



Executive Summary

This report by the Department of Infrastructure is in response to the Tynwald Motion in July 2024, moved by the Honourable Member for Douglas East, *Mrs Faragher. The Motion, as amended, reads:*

'That Tynwald is of the opinion that the reestablishment of facilities for bus passengers in the Island's capital city is a priority; should not await the completion of the Lord Street site; and that accordingly the Department of Infrastructure should work up a detailed plan of how facilities – including but not limited to: route and timetable information; protection from weather; toilet services; appropriate lighting; appropriate seating; accessible Wi-Fi and availability of refreshments – will be provided; and that the Department should submit this plan for debate at the December 2024 sitting of Tynwald.'

Five options for the provision of bus facilities were considered by the Department of infrastructure and briefed to Tynwald Members. The Department has a clear understanding of the Lord Street site developer's obligations to provide permanent bus facilities as part of the Lord Street Development. The five options considered by the Department were:

1. Sea Terminal Front Carpark- additional stands;
2. Sea Termina Rear Carpark- additional Stands;
3. Victoria Street additional Stands and Shelters;
4. Bottleneck shelter Improvements; and
5. Bottleneck waiting Room and Public Facilities.

Options using the Sea Terminal were operationally constrained, less safe, and disproportionately expensive. The Bottleneck waiting room option provided greater amenity, but at a capital cost that is not proportionate to the need given the Lord Street Development.

A value-for-money is achieved by progressing a combined package comprising Option 3, Victoria Street, and Option 4, Bottleneck shelter improvements, although these do not fully meet the requirements of the Tynwald Motion.

The total development cost estimate including contingencies and PDF is £735,000.

The principal delivery risks relate to statutory approvals, budget approval, market conditions, and the interface with the horse tram extension.

Strategic Context

The Lord Street development site was sold to a developer with a contractual requirement to build within the development bus passenger waiting facilities. The Department will install these facilities including those identified in Mrs Faragher's Tynwald Motion. The recently approved planning application includes the bus waiting area. However, the development is significantly overdue, and it is not clear when the construction will begin, and there is an expectation that it will take several years to complete.

During the construction of the Lord Street Development, bus operations at the Lord Street site will be disrupted or stopped; therefore, there is an operational need to find alternative bus stop locations.

Until this development is complete, there is a political desire to establish bus passenger facilities in lower Douglas, and this has created an expectation that the Department of Infrastructure should make arrangements for improved passenger as expressed in the Tynwald Motion.

In April 2024, Project Development Fund of £150,000 to develop options for short- to medium-term solutions for bus passenger facilities was approved (The Lord Street development will meet the longer-term need). That funding enabled the Department to develop and consider a range of options.

Options

Sea Terminal- Front

Redevelop the Sea Terminal building front carpark to build two bus stops. Using the Sea Terminal building for a waiting area where lighting heating, seating, information, toilets and refreshment are located (the building has limited opening hours). Drawing 1.

Sea Terminal- Rear

Redevelop the Sea Terminal building rear carpark to build four bus stops. Using the Sea Terminal building for a waiting area where lighting heating, seating, information, toilets and refreshment are located (the building has limited opening hours). Drawing 2.

Victoria Street

Install additional bus stands and Kassel Kerbs to create a total of four bus stops with bus shelters, which would include, real time information, lighting, shelter, seating and WIFI.

Bottleneck Bus and Tram Shelter

Build bus shelter facilities that will service bus passengers and tram passengers. This facility will include real time information, lighting, shelter, seating and WIFI. In addition, there are 24 hour toilets at the nearby café.

Bottleneck Bus and Tram Waiting Room

Develop a building containing a waiting area with real time information, lighting, shelter, seating, WIFI, toilets, refreshments and driver welfare facilities. Drawing 3.

Following a briefing to Tynwald Members and the feedback received during the discussion, the Department's objective has been to identify a practical cost effective intervention that materially improves passenger facilities without committing disproportionate capital expenditure.

Summary of Options

Option	Comment	Comparative Cost
1. Sea Terminal Front	Results in parking loss, loss of passenger drop-off area and introduces safety issues associated with revised crossings and vehicle circulation. The Sea Terminal building is not open 24 hours per day, so access will be limited in the evening and morning.	£936,000

	Creation of two bus bays and related infrastructure means that it would have to be in conjunction with another option to obtain the desired 5 stops. The facility would serve a limited purpose after the Lord Street development as the stops are not located close enough to the town centre.	
2. Sea Terminal Rear	Results in significant parking loss that would undermine the operation of the Sea Terminal as a ferry port. The Sea Terminal building is not open 24 hours per day, so access will be limited in the evenings and morning. Creation of four bus bays and related infrastructure means that it would have to be in conjunction with another option to obtain the desired 5 stops. The facility would serve no significant purpose after the Lord Street development as the stops are not located close enough to the town centre.	£2,300,000
3. Victoria Street	Provides a central and convenient location for bus passengers which is close to retail and business areas. It has been used successfully before as the operation centre of the bus service when Lord Street was being resurfaced. Facilities will continue to be of use and in service after the Lord Street Development.	£420,000
4. Bottleneck Shelter	Two existing bus stops withing 30 metres of the Sea Terminal facilities. Will continue to be used after Lord Street is developed and could be used for a future tramway extension. Would have to be developed in conjunction with another option to meet the operational need for 5 stops.	£315,000
5. Bottleneck Waiting Room and Public Facilities	Large public waiting room including toilets, driver facilities, refreshments as well as WIFI, lighting, heating, seating information screens.	£2,400,000

Option/ Tynwald Requirement	Route and Timetable Information	Weather	Toilets	Lighting	Seating	WIFI	Refreshments
Sea Terminal- Front	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sea Terminal- Rear	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Victoria Street	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
Bottleneck Shelter	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Bottle Neck Waiting Room	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Department's Intentions

The Department intends to progress with a combined package comprising, Option 3: Victoria Street and Option 4: Bottleneck shelter improvements. Together, these options provide the best balance of passenger benefit, deliverability, affordability, and network coverage, though they do not achieve all of the facilities identified in the Tynwald Motion. Neither option provides directly for refreshments and Victoria Street does not include toilet facilities, however, toilet facilities are available near the Bottleneck Carpark and, depending on the time of day, refreshments can also be found near both locations. This combination also provides the five stops required when bus operations cannot take place in Lord Street because of construction and they will be used after the Lord Street Development.

This combined approach avoids the disproportionate costs and operational disadvantages associated with the Sea Terminal options while still delivering a visible and practical improvement to the passenger experience in Lower Douglas. It also complements future development on Lord Street.

Each shelter and waiting room will be equipped with lighting and a display screen showing journey information including the next services due at that shelter.

In addition, at the Sea Terminal Building, multiple information screens will be installed showing real time information for each stop and details of stop locations for visitors. This information will include estimated arrival times. This information will be a live location feed from the buses' onboard ticketing system.

Cost

The Department has prepared preliminary high-level budget estimates for the intended options. The combination of option 3 & 4 creates a cost estimate of £735,000 inclusive of PDF funding and contingency.

Value For Money

Proceeding with Options 3 & 4 offers greater value for money than the other options, which were considered during the development of the project. Additionally, the facilities will continue to be used after the new bus facilities at Lord Street are completed. The bottleneck facilities will service both buses and, if extended in the future, the horse tram passengers. Out of the options considered the Department feels this offers the best value for money

Programme

The Department intends to follow the Financial Regulations and bid for funding in the 2027/2028 budget process and, if approved will seek to complete the work in the same fiscal year.

This project will be managed and delivered by the Highway Services Division of the Department of Infrastructure on behalf of *bus vannin*.

Risks

The principal risks at this stage are:

- Failure to secure approvals, particularly planning consent in the conservation area
- Programme and design implications linked to the horse tram extension
- Uncertain economic outlook leading to significant price increases and lead time delays
- Technology deployment and cost
- Scope creep

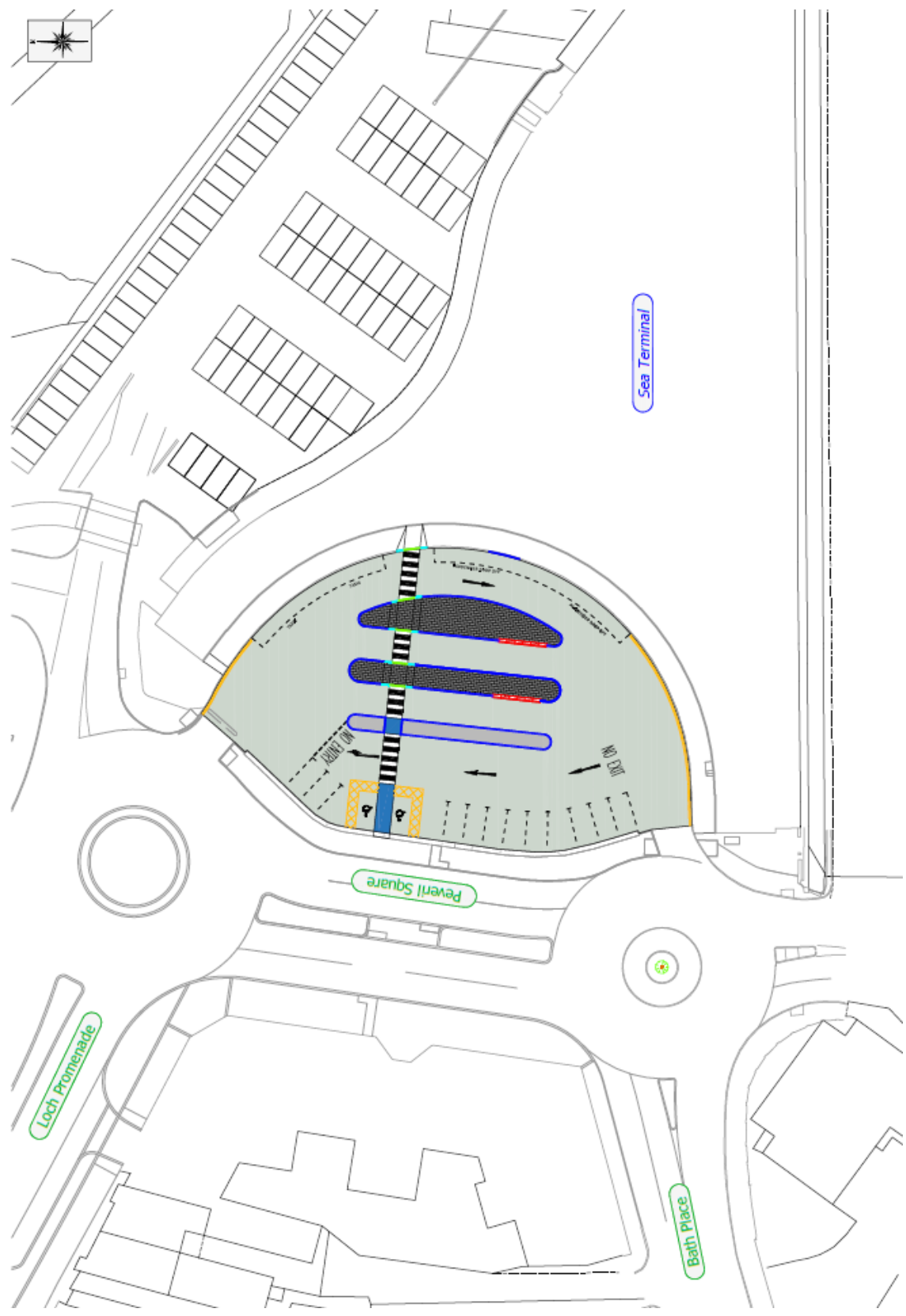
Conclusion

The assessment undertaken at this stage shows that the Sea Terminal options are not the most proportionate response to the current requirement. They carry greater operational and safety risks, have a more significant impact on existing parking and circulation, and require materially higher expenditure. However, live bus information can be installed within the Sea Terminal Building along with toilets and refreshments.

By contrast, the combined Victoria Street and Bottleneck package provides a practical, affordable, and deliverable set of improvements that directly address the need for better passenger facilities in Lower Douglas and provide facilities for when the horse tramway to the Sea Terminal Building is built.

The Department therefore considers this approach to be the most appropriate basis for progression.

Sea Terminal Front



Sea Terminal Rear

