

NEWSPRINT CARRIAGE

Since 1964, newsprint/magazines have come to Scilly by helicopters and, overall, this 49- year-old practice has worked smoothly and well and has even become routine.

The withdrawal of BIH means The Paper Shop - which has been retailing newsprint to islanders continuously since 1904(108 years) - has no alternative to casting its lot with the lone existing alternative the Steamship company's Islander and Twin Otter fleet.

Without wishing to prejudge the reliability/viability of this avenue it should be noted the helicopters started in 1964 at Land's End and moved into a purpose - built heliport in Penzance precisely because the former was often either fog bound or waterlogged or both precluding flying.

In this particular respect a return to Land's End is turning the clock back 50 years .

Certain aerial sophistications since been patented, one suspects, but the uncertainty relating to weather vulnerability remains. There will be days when the airfield is out of action meaning no papers.

In summer, when the ship runs, there is always the back - up of a sea conduit to Scilly the harbour at Penzance being conveniently close to the Heliport, but in winter the ship is laid up and there is no regular scheduled sea operator to the islands.

So when fog / waterlogging rules out Land's End flying operations - as past experience and history suggest they assuredly will - there is no alternative newsprint carrier.

The papers will be left behind and won't make the islands.

This October week there had been a run of four successive days of fog/waterlogging that grounded flying. The papers came each on the ship meaning a lunch - time sale but at least we got 'em!

If those four days were in a no - ship winter then four days' papers would be stranded at a fog -bound cliff - top airfield.

If held over for the next day it would be a double load needing to be shifted putting pressure on weight. Some islanders will want a day old paper, most will not. That applies to some off islands which the Paper Shop has supplied for years.

Daily newsprint is my business's lifeblood, its very *raison d' etre*. In fact I hazard a guess that the product which defines my business is the only one in the islands which depends wholly on daily receipt and daily sale.

The cost of daily newsprint carriage is offset by assistance from the newspaper industry otherwise no retail paper business would be able to function without adding a colossal and prohibitive surcharge on each paper.

Some sort of subsidised transport relief would also go some way, I suspect, to alleviating the shop's burden of having to pay for the £500-a-month carriage of magazines(as distinct from papers) which for the past two years has necessitated the business reluctantly imposing a surcharge on each magazine – which it hates having to do but has no alternative.

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("The Paper Shop")