

APPENDIX 1

From

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[REDACTED]  
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Via email only

Date: 31 March 2020

Dear [REDACTED]

Re: Cross Solent Transport and COVID-19

The Isle of Wight Transport Infrastructure Board (IW TIB) [REDACTED] has been meeting regularly throughout the COVID-19 emergency. IW TIB was set up by the Isle of Wight Council over two years ago and brings together the Council represented by the Assistant Chief Executive, the transport operators which includes Southern Vectis and Island Line as well as the three ferry operators and IW Council cabinet member for Transport and Infrastructure and/or Leader of the IW Council.

We have already been discussing what plans might have to be introduced in the event of staffing capacity and resilience and financial pressures on the Cross Solent Operators, whilst at the same time ensuring that the critical lifeline service for the Island is maintained.

Following your discussions with the operators and your email of March 30th we have had further discussions and whilst it is for each operator to provide you with their relevant financial items along with their carryings and projected carryings, the IW TIB can give an overall view on what are the services that the Island needs (as also discussed with the three operators). We are all fully cognisant of the cost of providing these services to the public purse, but it is clear that this is the required bare minimum lifeline service that can sustain essential goods, medical and key worker services for the Island.

In recognising the cost of this proposal, the operators have already not only closed the Wightlink Lymington - Yarmouth service, but reduced sailings on Red Funnel's Red Jet Service and the Hovertravel services, concentrating on providing a service for key workers who travel to and from the Island every day. These are mostly NHS staff at present, with some Police and Fire Service staff as well.

These discussions between the operators have taken place since the competition regulations were relaxed to allow plans to be made to support the best schedule to support the Island.

Set out below is the service that the operators have proposed and with which the IW TIB agrees, and is the minimum that meets the Island's key transport objectives of:

- Maintaining the lifeline deliveries of supplies, freight, medicines and post;
- Ensuring connectivity is maintained for NHS staff, Emergency Services and other essential key worker journeys;
- Ensuring rapid and reliable transfer onto and off the Island for patients to and from Southampton and Portsmouth hospitals;
- Ensure the Island Infrastructure has the resilience for all emergency preparedness, linking directly to the work or the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local resilience Forum (HIOW LRF).

The only way to achieve this is by producing an integrated timetable for car ferry and fast ferry (passenger) services utilising all three operators.

The proposal is set out below:

A: Car Ferry (a detailed timetable is included at Appendix A of this letter)

| Company    | Route                    | Normal Status   | Current Status  | Minimum Agreed   |
|------------|--------------------------|---|---|--|
| Red Funnel | East Cowes – Southampton | 3-boat service operating hourly, 2 boat service 2100-0430   | 2-boat service operating every 1.5 hours                            | 1.5-boat service operating every 3 hours, with frequency increased to 1.5hrs 0600-1630 |
| Wightlink  | Yarmouth – Lymington     | 2 or 3 boat service operating hourly or every 45 minutes during the summer. Day time only.            | Suspended as from 31.3.20   | None   |
| Wightlink  | Fishbourne – Portsmouth  | 3 boat service operating half hourly peak 2 boat hourly off peak. 1 boat service at night two hourly. | 2 boat service operating hourly 1 boat service at night two hourly. | 1 boat service operating two-hourly during the day and three-hourly at night.          |

The rationale in this plan in keeping a basic service run by both Wightlink and Red Funnel is driven by several factors:

1. If sickness levels reach a level where either company could not operate it is not possible to transfer either ships or crew between the two principle routes. The ships are designed to fit the berths on their route, also staff are trained to work on their own company's ships.
2. Frequency of sailing is an essential and critical element of the Island lifeline support.
3. Were only one ferry to operate to the Island and through sickness that had to stop, the Island would quickly run out of basic essentials. Due to minimal on-Island storage, the supermarkets require frequent delivery of products throughout each and every day, and the largest receives around 10 lorries per day. Any interruption in this supply would lead to a shortage of food on the Island within hours. The same situation applies to fuel.
4. In the event of only one ship operating, if available the other ferry company would need several days to un-furlough crew and support staff in order to resume operations.
5. There are many key workers who work shifts and need to use the car ferry service as well as those who use the Fast Ferry services.
6. The service must run at night with low loads and no passengers to carry goods that cannot be carried on normal services such as dangerous goods. Also, if special loads must be moved on non-passenger services this can be done at night.

7. Freight arrives from different parts of the country and goes to different locations on the Island so the need for the two routes is vital. It also arrives at greatly varying times throughout a 24-hour period.
8. Throughout the day there are emergency ambulance transfers from the Island to either Southampton or Portsmouth. Currently each operator is transferring about 10 ambulances each day at random times, and this is likely to increase in the coming days. Such a service does need a minimum frequency of service and gaps of 2 hours on Portsmouth - Fishbourne and 90 minutes on East Cowes - Southampton is considered to be the minimum.
9. If there was only one ferry company operating the journey time to the either the QA Hospital in Portsmouth or Southampton General would be increased by about 60 minutes in each direction. Given the shortage of ambulances this would be a serious waste of resources.
10. The two ferry operators in the time period 0700 to 1800 on services based on last week's carryings from both Portsmouth and Southampton to the Island had available on Wightlink 5040 lane meters and on Red Funnel 7703 lane meters, but a large proportion of both operators' available capacity was height restricted.  
In that period the combined carryings were the equivalent of 5172 lane meters. This demand could not be carried solely by either operator in isolation when allowance is made for height restrictions

**B: Foot Passenger Services** (a detailed timetable is included at Appendix A of this letter)

| Company     | Route                       | Type                    | Normal Status   | Current Status                                | Minimum Agreed  |
|-------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|---|---|---|
| Red Funnel  | West Cowes - Southampton    | Hi-speed foot passenger | 2-boat service operating half-hourly at peak and hourly out of peak 0515-2345   | 1-boat service hourly between 0545 -2115      | None  |
| Hovertravel | Ryde – Southsea/ Portsmouth | Hi Speed Hovercraft     | Every 30mins 0615-2200  | Every hour 0615-1915                          | Every Hour 0615-1915 Mon-Fri<br>Every 2 hours 0815-1815<br>Plus 24/7 as required for critical emergencies |
| Wightlink   | Ryde – Portsmouth           | Hi Speed foot passenger | 2 boat service operating half hourly at peak and hourly off peak. Daytime only. | 1 boat service operating hourly Daytime only. | None  |

The cessation of the Red Funnel Red Jet and Wightlink's Fast Cat service will cause some challenges to some critical workers moving on and off the Island, but this should be mitigated in the case of those travelling to or from Portsmouth by Hovertravel's service and by Red Funnel's car ferry service from East Cowes.

The Hovertravel service can also ensure a rapid transfer of patients and stretcher cases, in the event of a shortage of ambulances. Plans for this are already developed and in place.

The hourly Hovertravel service allows essential workers to get to and from the Island rapidly and the delivery of Royal Mail and pharmaceuticals across the Solent (this is the key route for both services). The Hovercraft service will also offer those critical & key workers without access to a car to have direct link into the transport infrastructure hubs of Ryde & Portsmouth for connectivity into and including the National Rail & Local Bus Network.

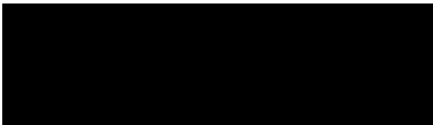
There is also the option of using the Hovertravel craft to Southampton in an emergency.

In summary these proposals meet the needs of the Isle of Wight and at the minimum cost.

The detailed financial information, as requested in your letter, is being provided directly from the operators to you.

Finally, the financial pressures on all three operators are very real and a rapid decision is requested. With current usage rates, there is no solely financial case for providing any service to the Isle of Wight, but the operators recognise their responsibilities to keep the lifeline open; however, they cannot do this for much longer. It would be catastrophic for the Isle of Wight if the ferries were to stop operating in normal operation, let alone in the crisis in which we currently find ourselves, and for the good of the island, I implore you to work with the operators to ensure the survival of the Isle of Wight.

Yours sincerely,

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## **APPENDIX A: Isle of Wight COVID-19 Essential Ferry Timetable**

### **HOVERTRAVEL Pax & Fast Freight & Passenger Service**

| <b>Monday – Friday</b> |                        | <b>Saturday &amp; Sunday</b> |                        |
|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| <u>Ryde – Southsea</u> | <u>Southsea – Ryde</u> | <u>Ryde – Southsea</u>       | <u>Southsea – Ryde</u> |
| 0615                   | 0630                   | <b>0815</b>                  | <b>0830</b>            |
| 0715                   | 0730                   | <b>1015</b>                  | <b>1030</b>            |
| 0815                   | 0830                   | <b>1215</b>                  | <b>1230</b>            |
| 0915                   | 0930                   | <b>1315**</b>                | <b>1330</b>            |
| 1015                   | 1030                   | 1415                         | 1430                   |
| 1115                   | 1130                   | 1615                         | 1630                   |
| 1215                   | 1230                   | 1815                         | 1830                   |
| 1315                   | 1330                   |                              |                        |
| 1415                   | 1430                   |                              |                        |
| 1515                   | 1530                   |                              |                        |
| 1615                   | 1630                   |                              |                        |
| 1715                   | 1730                   |                              |                        |
| 1815                   | 1830                   |                              |                        |
| 1845*                  | 1900                   |                              |                        |

**\* Fast Freight Only**

**\*\* Fast Freight Only (Saturday only)**

## WIGHTLINK Vehicle Ferry

| Trip No           |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| <b>Ship No</b>    | 1    | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5    | 6    | 7    |
| <b>Gunwharf</b>   | 2359 | 0300 | 0500 | 0700 | 0900 | 1100 | 1300 |
| <b>Fishbourne</b> | 0046 | 0340 | 0540 | 0740 | 0940 | 1140 | 1340 |
|                   | N1   | N1   | N1   | E1   | E1   | E1   | L1   |
| <b>Fishbourne</b> | 0100 | 0400 | 0600 | 0800 | 1000 | 1200 | 1400 |
| <b>Gunwharf</b>   | 0140 | 0440 | 0640 | 0840 | 1040 | 1240 | 1440 |
| <b>Ship No</b>    | 8    | 9    | 10   | 11   |      |      |      |
| <b>Gunwharf</b>   | 1500 | 1700 | 1900 | 2200 |      |      |      |
| <b>Fishbourne</b> | 1540 | 1740 | 1940 | 2240 |      |      |      |
|                   | L1   | L1   | L1   | N1   |      |      |      |
| <b>Fishbourne</b> | 1600 | 1800 | 2000 | 2300 |      |      |      |
| <b>Gunwharf</b>   | 1640 | 1840 | 2040 | 2340 |      |      |      |

## RED FUNNEL Vehicle Ferry

| <b>Ship</b> | <b>Southampton</b> | <b>East Cowes</b> |
|-------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| A           | 0300               | 0430              |
| A           | 0600               | 0730              |
| B           | 0730               | 0900              |
| A           | 0900               | 1030              |
| B           | 1030               | 1200              |
| A           | 1200               | 1330              |
| B           | 1330               | 1500              |
| A           | 1500               | 1630              |
| B           | 1630               | 1800              |
| A           | 1800               | 1930              |
| A           | 2100               | 2230              |
| A           | 2359               | 0130              |