

Wightlink Partnership Meeting Tuesday March 10th

Present: Martin Gulliver, Island Ports Operations Manager; Councillor Sarah Talbot and Councillor Cheryl Fontana.

1. Martin said that he could not comment on traffic queues as he had not been made aware of them when they happened. He said that build up of traffic recently may have been because there had been cancellations on the Fast Cat. This meant that lanes 6 and 7 were filled with cars trying to pick up displaced foot passengers. This should not be a recurring problem and he apologised for any disruption. He is happy to help when these queues are building up and provided his contact mobile number and email address so that anyone aware of a build up of traffic in Fishbourne Lane can contact him directly and immediately. His contact details are: **07971396182** and martingulliver@wightlink.co.uk
2. The company has been trialling LED signs in the Gunwharf terminal and is now trying to acquire signs to use in Fishbourne at the top of the booths saying "Lane Open". These would be switched off whenever the lane was closed. He estimated that it might take a couple of months to source and install these signs.
3. The ANPR system is working well and the average time spent by vehicles on check-in is only a few seconds. If there are any issues the company tries to alert passengers by email or WhatsApp to warn them.
4. If there are cars or lorries which are regularly parking in or by Ranalagh Drive, then again he advised use of the contact details so that Wightlink can let the freight companies know. Wightlink has no authority to police parking in the Lane. Councillor Talbot mentioned the Isle of Wight Distribution Vans which regularly gather together in the Lane opposite the Fishbourne Garage. Their depot is actually in Merstone. A phone call to their depot and a decision to use the lay-by in Elenor's Grove might help to improve the situation.
5. After the heavy berthing incident, St Clare has been limited to a reduced capacity of 45 vehicles on each of the lower and upper decks, making 90 in total. This is a considerable reduction from the 160 vehicles that can normally be accommodated. The service is fully operating but has a reduced capacity on Thursday, Friday, Sunday and Monday. Because the service is fully operating, albeit on reduced capacity, they would not update their website to let passengers know. Reduced capacity has meant that the ferries are all fully booked. The St Clare sustained a crumpled prow and a hole had to be welded to make it watertight. Then the Maritime Coastguard Authority and Lloyds had to both sign off on the damage so that the ship could be certified safe for use again. Victoria has been in refit in Falmouth. St Clare will be removed from operation between 16th March and 26th March so that the prow can be removed and rewelded. There has to be a load test with 80 tons at Portsmouth International Port and it is hoped that she will be back in service on 27th March.
6. The company is hoping to sign off on the new boat this week. She will probably have the same footprint as Victoria but a reduced number of levels. The number of vehicles she will be able to accommodate is 160.
7. There will be piling done in the future but as yet there is no date.
8. Comments about the prices of multilink crossings will be fed back to the relevant department.