

Note of a meeting with Martin Gulliver (MG), Wightlink Port Operations Manager for Fishbourne and Ryde on 5th May 2026

Councillor Fontana and I met MG at Wightlink's Fishbourne Terminal

MG informed us:

The May Bank Holiday weekend just finished was operationally problematic: several issues arose some of which caused delays to the ferry operations and a consequent heavy build up of traffic along Fishbourne Lane.

- The previous Thursday St Clare suffered an engine coolant problem
- On the Friday a Yarmouth – Lymington ferry had a problem with the fire alarm panel
- Staff absence through sickness hit 6.5% compared with an average of 3%
- On Bank Holiday Monday the console on the left-hand wing of Victoria of Wight, which is used to berth the vessel at Fishbourne, failed and an entire round trip of 160 vehicles was lost. Traffic was backed up on Fishbourne Lane to the junction with Elenors Grove/Kite Hill

An update on the new ferry to replace St Faith is expected this week. It will be squatter and lower than Victoria of Wight but with the same capacity. It will be capable of running 100% of the time on electricity but as the power infrastructure to do so in Fishbourne and Gunwharf is inadequate to the task it will not be fully electric. All the ferries are charged overnight using shore-based power.

Councillor Fontana asked if the Government surcharge to be introduced from 1st July would cover Multilink passes which had already been paid for. MG did not know and said he would find out. It subsequently transpires that the charge applies when the crossing is made so it will be an extra charge on Multilink bookings. MG said it would be an additional £1 million cost if Wightlink absorbed it instead of charging it on. Initially it will affect crossings on St Clare and Victoria of Wight. The Yarmouth – Lymington ferries and Red Funnel ferries are exempt at present but will fall into the scope of the tax in 2027.

We asked about the impact of the Hormuz closure. MG said forward contracts for fuel in the next few months hedged some of the increased price risk but the problem will be less one of price and more one of availability if the situation continues. Wightlink are contingency planning their response to a fuel shortage – essential services, food supplies, medical treatment will be priorities.

We again raised the concerns of a parishioner in Ranalagh Drive with MG, specifically illegal parking, traffic build-up and only having one booth open at busy times.

MG said traffic was “actively managed” by Wightlink terminal staff, and ferries were currently getting away earlier as recent low tide levels could add 10 minutes to the journey across the Solent. He said he’d be happy to welcome anyone who had concerns to spend time at the terminal with himself and the staff to gain an insight into the operational activities and perhaps a better understanding of how the terminal works.

MG also said he’d be happy to add more people to the group he has set up for Fishbourne Lane residents to send them text alerts when there are problems. They just need to send him a text asking to be added.

The last topic discussed was the frequent road works and closures in 2026 so far and the impact on the business. MG said Wightlink were working with other Island-based organisations to express their dissatisfaction, and an open letter had gone to Island Roads.

The next meeting is scheduled for 9.30am on Wednesday 22nd July in the Victoria room, Fishbourne.

Carolyn Dugdale

11th May 2026