

Note of a meeting with Martin Gulliver (MG), Wightlink Port Operations Manager for Fishbourne and Ryde on 23rd July 2026

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

MG distributed a "Fast Facts document – July 2026" containing current information on Wightlink operations. A copy is attached to this note.

MG informed us:

Current operations

Overall business was 5% lower than expected. Fastcat usage has been very much affected by passengers working from home with a decline in regular passenger numbers. Freight business is steady.

During busy times a second booth for checking in using ANPR is opened. They are able to predict likely loadings for vehicles, and the team have had someone directing the traffic at the entrance to the terminal during busy periods.

MG advised that separate signage on each of the entrance booths to indicate when they are open would be trialled in the future.

MG also emphasised that anyone interested would be welcome to spend an hour or two with the team at the entrance to observe operations as vehicles arrive and depart.

There were no significant issues during the period with even the Festival traffic not causing major issues.

There have been staffing issues caused by last-minute absences for sickness.

Crossings have to be cancelled if there is no Captain or no Chief Engineer available.

Not enough staff have had modal training for emergencies. The same applies to the Yarmouth – Lymington route.

New vessels

The replacement ferry for St Faith will have the same capacity as Victoria of Wight and likely enter service in 3 years' time. The current 15-minute turnaround time for unloading/loading vehicle ferries at Fishbourne is under review. Given larger capacity ferries a 20-minute turnaround is likely – also larger ferries means fewer ferries with obvious timetabling implications.

At 18 years old, the 2 Fastcats are nearing the end of their 20-year useful life. Their replacements will not be built here as the Island no longer has the requisite shipbuilding skills. A tendering process has begun for all-electric vessels.

The new owners of Red Funnel are in the process of contracting new ferries.

Electronic signs

The roadside electronic signs belong to the Isle of Wight Council and are maintained by Island Roads. The green-coloured signage is the latest and eventually all the signs will be this colour.

Closure of Ryde Pier

MG advised that Ryde Pier will be completely closed to vehicles and foot passengers from 11.30pm on Friday 25th September until 05.00 on Monday 28th September for works. Access to the Fastcat service will be by train. (See further information attached)

Sheet piling at Fishbourne terminal

This is still planned but no dates have been set.

The next meeting is scheduled for 9.00am on Wednesday 21st October in the Victoria room, Fishbourne.

Carolyn Dugdale