



**Our ref:** CHAIR/LR/CT\* 16/113342

**Contact:** Liam Robinson

**Your ref:**

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Andrew Hodgson  
Chair Friends of the Ferries across the Mersey

By e-mail: [adhodgson@talktalk.net](mailto:adhodgson@talktalk.net)

Dear 

**Re: Mersey Ferries and Royal Daffodil**

It is good to hear from you and thank you for sharing the views of your committee. If I may address each of your points in detail for the record:-

#### Royal Daffodil

Your letter seems to make specific reference to a problem with Royal Daffodil's engine. We are not aware that this is the case. We are aware that the engine differs slightly from the other two vessels, but not of specific problems that prevents her service. Our decision to place her into "warm lay-up" was based around demand from our service schedule - which clearly shows that demand can be met from two vessels. We remain of this view. Obviously, the most recent service failure has cast doubt on such a view, but the availability of Snowdrop has largely been driven by our desire to ensure she is available for the planned rail works in early 2017.

You state in your letter how the Royal Daffodil could perhaps be used to draw in income. If I may challenge this - you indicate an income of £200k per annum from 40 x 5 hour charters. Assuming this was right, and there are significant barrier to achieve this target, this would still be less income per annum than it costs to run Royal Daffodil annually. Each vessel costs approximately £250k per annum to keep in service, excluding crew and fuel costs. Our view remains that a reliable, efficient new fleet of two vessels will more than service demand and our 20 year long term strategy is the right approach to adopt.

#### Planned Rail Works

We have, as you would expect, considered all of our options associated with the planned rail closures in the early part of 2017 across all of the planned phases. This approach, as you would expect, considers the wider travel impacts for all people in Merseyside as well as the opportunity this creates for Mersey Ferries.

In the first instance, we must be open to understand we simply do not have sufficient crew resource to put in place a two vessel operation from Woodside and Seacombe during these works. Whilst Mersey Ferries have two operational vessels in our fleet, the vast majority of time we operate with one vessel, apart from key times in the summer period. Our staffing resource is based on this model, and we simply lack a crew resource to provide two vessels continually over a 24 hour period for a period of 6 months.

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Cllr Liam Robinson, Chair of Merseytravel Committee



Therefore, based on the one vessel approach, we did consider the option to divert the commuter service during these works to call at Woodside. However, doing so would result in a move from the current 20 minute service, which takes 10 minutes to cross the river, to a 30 minute service which takes 20 minutes from our main commuter point, Seacombe. This change will also see our hourly capacity reduce from 1,950 passengers per hour to 1,300, something we are anxious to avoid when demand is expected to be high. Instead we have decided to maintain service levels as they are with an understanding that the increased capacity will allow us to manage cross river travel more effectively, and with a desire that by being able to demonstrate our usual 10 minute cross river service, we will be able to attract new customers to our commuter service in the long term.

What I would state is that I share all of the above with a clear understanding that it is based on evidence available at this time, including detailed transport modelling on modal shift. Our operational teams will be monitoring the arrangements early in 2017 and if we need to change these arrangements and react to customer demand then we will do. As I am sure you are aware, during January/ February each year is the time we would normally undergo our annual maintenance on both vessels. This year we have amended our schedule to ensure both vessels are available, particularly during phase 1 of the rail works so we may react in the short term should demand necessitate such.

Thank you for contacting me and expressing the comments of the Friends of the Ferries across the Mersey and I do hope these detailed responses help you and your committee to understand our approach in more detail. As always should you have any further comments in relation to this or any other matter please contact me and I will endeavour to assist.

Yours faithfully



Liam Robinson  
**Chair of Merseytravel Committee**

Cllr Liam Robinson, Chair of Merseytravel Committee

