



13 February 2018

SR/GB (10476)

Andrew Hodgson
Chair - Friends of the Ferries
c/o 39 South Parade
West Kirby
Wirral CH48 0QG

Dear Andrew

Re: Future of the Mersey Ferry *Royal Daffodil*

I am writing in relation to your letter of 24 January sent to me by Frank Field MP.

You ask about the future of the Royal Daffodil Ferry. I have sought the following response from Liam Robinson, Chair of the Merseytravel Transport Committee and the Portfolio Holder.

"Merseytravel, as the governing body for the Mersey Ferries operations, endorsed a long term strategy for the Mersey Ferries in January 2016 - which very much had the aims to ensure the Mersey ferries as a service remains in place for future generations to enjoy, whilst recognising at the time the need to reduce the public funding required annually to meet operational costs.

As part of this long term strategy, a range of key interventions were identified in order to meet those objectives above, and two of the key interventions recommended at that time were the renewal of the current vessels fleet, moving from three vessels that are all approaching 60 years of age, to two new vessels. The strategy indicated that in doing so, there is potential cost savings available for the Mersey Ferries, as well as much greater certainty over the operational costs - recognising that operating any service with vessels in excess of 60 years old will be both costly, and risky in terms of on-going reliability. The organisation remains committed towards this strategy and we are working hard towards this aim.

In determining a strategy of this nature, it is recognised that any decision to proceed with the procurement of new vessels, must be accompanied by a decision of what happens to the existing vessels. It is not financially viable, nor best use of public money, to purchase new vessels and retain the existing fleet at the same time. Indeed, one of the key reasons why the Mersey ferries service has been in place for hundreds of years, is the very fact that it has evolved and developed over those years - and it is critical that we do so again.

Steve Rotheram
Metro Mayor
Liverpool City Region
Mann Island, PO Box 1976, Liverpool, L69 3HN



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Officers have worked hard over the past 2 to 3 years in order to identify a long term option for Royal Daffodil, speaking with many organisations to explore different options. In considering the available options, we must also be mindful of the reputational risks this organisation still faces following the disposal of the former Royal Iris, current in a poor state of repair in the River Thames. Despite selling her over 30 years ago now, the organisation still faces regular requests to return her to Liverpool and comments regarding her poor condition. In effect, in reaching a decision on the future of Royal Daffodil, or any other vessels, we must learn from the past and ensure our disposal does not introduce similar risks for the future.

At the time of writing, whilst no final decision has been made on her future, we are still to find a viable home or potential re-use for Royal Daffodil. You will have seen she has been in warm lay up for some time now, and will take considerable investment to return her to service. Despite your suggestions to return her to service, even if we saw an increase in demand of over 500% for our Mersey Ferries charter/ corporate hire, this demand could still be met from our current two operating vessels.

Moving forward, the long term strategy did review demand, and it is always our intention to grow the business where possible. Indeed, aligned to the new strategy, if demand does increase to this extent moving forward, and it would be a nice problem for the organisation to have, then consideration could be given to grow the fleet - but this decision must be evidence based and current indications are that we have sufficient capacity in the two operating vessels to meet future demand.

I do hope this response helps to demonstrate our approach and address the concerns raised."

On your request for a meeting with me on this issue, I get many requests on a weekly basis to meet from organisations across the City Region and my diary is filled for several months in advance. I am unable to meet with you at the present time.

Yours sincerely

Steve Rotheram
Metro Mayor, Liverpool City Region

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