



Report to Solent Transport

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Subject: Isle of Wight Transport Infrastructure Task Force

Purpose of the Report

This report summarises the final report and recommendations of the Isle of Wight Transport Infrastructure Task Force, and seeks approval for Solent Transport to continue to support a number of the recommendations put forward by the Task Force in the areas of cross-Solent connectivity, travel information, integrated ticketing and the future of the Island Line rail service.

Recommendations

That the Joint Committee:

- (a) approves Solent Transport becoming a member of the proposed Cross-Solent Partnership Board.
- (b) approves Solent Transport continuing to work alongside Isle of Wight Council, South Western Railway and Network Rail in developing proposals to the Department for Transport which seek to secure the long term future of the Island Line.
- (c) approves that Solent Transport continues to work with the Solent's bus, rail and ferry operators to develop proposals to extend existing integrated ticketing schemes and multi-modal travel information systems to the Isle of Wight.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Isle of Wight Transport Infrastructure Task Force was established in July 2016, chaired by Christopher Garnett OBE. Groups represented

on the Task Force included Department for Transport, Solent Transport, Solent LEP, Isle of Wight Council, Business stakeholders, Chamber of Commerce and Tourism representatives. The Task Force sought to consider the transport infrastructure challenges to economic growth for the Island.

- 1.2 The primary aim of the Task Force was to assist the Isle of Wight Council in preparing an integrated Transport & Infrastructure Development Plan, ensuring that transport services to/from and on the Island are safe, secure, accessible and affordable.
- 1.3 The Task Force held evidence hearings with thirty-seven organisations including cross-Solent ferry transport operators, bus operators, major employers, supermarkets, NHS, the Fixed-link campaign group, Island Roads and tourism bodies.
- 1.4 The Task Force has now presented its full report and recommendations to the Isle of Wight Council. This is available at Appendix 1. The report is being considered by the Council during the autumn of 2017.
- 1.5 The Task Force commissioned a separate piece of work to understand the changing nature of ferry operations between the year 2000 and 2015 in an attempt to understand the impact of ferry services on the Island's economy. The full assessment is shown at Appendix 2.

2. Recommendations of the Task Force

- 2.1 The recommendations of the Task Force focus on four key areas and are summarised below:
 - Cross-Solent Links;
 - Island Gateways;
 - Reducing Congestion;
 - Sustainable Transport; and
 - Greater Use of Technology.
- 2.2 **Cross-Solent Links.** The Task Force recommends establishing a Cross-Solent Partnership Board which will seek to provide meaningful engagement between ferry operators, local authorities and Island businesses. The Board would aim to address key issues that came forward during the evidence hearings, e.g. the potential for increased off-peak services, improved offers for people in education or training and those accessing key medical facilities on the mainland. The Task Force recommended that the Board should develop and deliver a ferry strategy for the Island.
- 2.3 The Task Force also recommends that an independent study be carried out to assess the feasibility, costs, benefits and impacts of a fixed link across the Solent, linking the Isle of Wight with the mainland.

2.4 **Island Gateways.** The Island gateways create valuable first impressions of the Island for visitors, and many of those attending the hearings expressed concern about the quality of the current gateway. In addition, they provide for the opportunity to improve connectivity and integrated transport options for those travelling both within and to/from the Island. The Task Force recommends that the transport interchanges at Ryde Esplanade, Cowes and East Cowes are improved.

2.5 **Reducing Congestion.** A consistent issue that emerged from the hearings was that traffic congestion remains a significant problem, particularly on the Newport – Cowes and Newport – Ryde routes. Whilst the Task Force is aware of plans to address some of the worst areas, keeping traffic free flowing is critical to the performance and the growth potential of the local economy. Therefore, the Task Force recommends that:

- The funding for Newport junction improvements is welcomed, but should include signalling improvements to ensure improved traffic flows; and
- A longer-term strategy for congestion in and around Newport is needed.

2.6 **Sustainable Transport.** It was recognised through the hearings that considerable investment in sustainable transport related projects has been undertaken in recent years and in the interests of enabling the development of a continued multi modal approach to transport, the Task Force recommends that:

- In order to secure the long term future of the Island Line, the Council should work closely with South Western Railway, the Department for Transport and Network Rail to develop options;
- The Council should develop a local cycling and walking investment strategy, to include the completion of the Newport – East Cowes route; and
- Assess the feasibility of corridor improvements for bus services.

2.7 **Greater Use of Technology.** The Task Force's view is that the Island is home to a number of world class digital businesses putting the Island in a position to take advantage of the expertise that is locally based to drive economic growth. The Island has the potential to offer more environmentally friendly transport services, including the provision of electric car and bicycle charging points. Improvements to digital services will remove current barriers to the introduction of integrated travel information and smart ticketing. Recommendations in this area include:

- Work with the digital sector to explore how and where the delivery of improved digital services can be accelerated;

- Improve accessibility across transport modes through the introduction of integrated travel information for bus, train and cross-Solent operators, including wi-fi on all public transport;
- Work with mobile technology companies to improve network coverage across the Island;
- Work with transport operators to deliver smart ticketing, (for example, Solent Go) and in particular multi operator smart payment opportunities; and
- Investigate future investment opportunities for alternative transport modes e.g. hydrogen fuel and other low-carbon fuels; innovation in sustainable transport and/or autonomous vehicles.

2.8 The complete list of recommendations can be found in the full report at Appendix 1.

3. Evidence based Assessment of Cross-Solent Ferry Operations

3.1 In order to support the work of the Task Force, an evidence-based study was commissioned to analyse cross-Solent ferry services, where available data permitted, covering the period from 2000 to 2016. A number of the key findings are shown below.

3.2 **Operations.** Volumes of ferry sailings have reduced between 2000 and 2015. Sailings on the Fishbourne – Portsmouth route have reduced by 23.8%; Yarmouth – Lymington by 53.1% and Southampton – East Cowes by approximately 8.7%.

3.3 **Changes to capacity.** Whilst some individual craft have increased capacity, overall capacity on crossings has reduced broadly in line with the reduction in volume. For example, between 2012 and 2015, the annual vehicle capacity across the two Wightlink routes reduced by 21.4%. As a result of the reduction in volume of sailings, utilisation has increased on vehicle ferries.

3.4 All three operators have a programme of fleet upgrade or replacement. In 2016, Red Jet 6 was launched by Red Funnel, Hovertravel launched two new hovercrafts, and Wightlink will launch a new flagship vehicle ferry in 2018.

3.5 Performance

- Passenger volumes in 2016 are the same as in 2001;
- It is estimated that tourists account for approximately 50% of crossings;
- Southampton – East Cowes has experienced significant growth. Between 2004 and 2015, volumes of cars carried on this route increased by 31.9% and commercial traffic by 34.5%; and
- The most recent filed accounts for Red Funnel and Wightlink are summarised in Appendix 2.

3.6 Customer Experience

- Using in-house customer survey methodologies, Red Funnel and Wightlink achieve a rating of above 90% for customer satisfaction; and
- Analysis of Trip Advisor reviews indicates that the majority of customers have a positive experience. Only 4% and 7% are dissatisfied with Hovertravel and Red Funnel respectively, whilst 21% of reviewers are dissatisfied with Wightlink.

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 The work of the Isle of Wight Transport Infrastructure Task Force is now complete. Evidence was gathered from thirty seven wide-ranging organisations, supplemented by a study into cross-Solent ferry services. The report identifies a number of key areas where opportunities are available to improve the prospects of economic growth for the Island, namely Cross-Solent Links, Island Gateways, Reducing Congestion, Sustainable Transport and Greater Use of Technology.
- 4.2 The findings have been presented to Isle of Wight Council, and it is anticipated that the Task Force report will provide a framework to inform the development of an Island-wide Transport Infrastructure and Services Development Plan.
- 4.3 Going forward, Solent Transport is ideally placed to assist with a number of these areas of work particularly those relating to cross-Solent movements, which would provide enhanced transport connectivity and economic benefits not only to the Isle of Wight, but also to the mainland Solent communities.
- 4.4 Therefore, the recommendations in this report focus on areas where Solent Transport and its mainland constituent authorities have the relevant experience and expertise to potentially play a positive role, i.e. Cross-Solent Partnership Board, integrated ticketing and real time multi-modal travel information systems, and option development for the future of the Island's rail line.

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background papers

The following documents disclose facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and has been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report.

NB the list excludes:

1. Published works.
2. Documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.

TITLE	LOCATION
Report of the Island Transport Infrastructure Task Force July 2017	Strategic Transport, Hampshire County Council. Isle of Wight Council
Evidence Based Assessment of Cross-Solent Ferry Operations June 2017	Strategic Transport, Hampshire County Council. Isle of Wight Council