

LIVERPOOL CITY REGION COMBINED AUTHORITY

To: The Chair and Members of the Transport Committee

Meeting: 7 March 2019

Authority/Authorities Affected: All

EXEMPT/CONFIDENTIAL ITEM: No

REPORT OF MERSEYTRAVEL

MERSEY FERRIES UPDATE MARCH 2019

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report is aimed at supplementing the regular corporate quarterly performance report submitted to the Transport Committee, providing a summary of key activities within the Mersey Ferries, including an update on progress of the long term Mersey Ferries Strategy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Transport Committee note the contents of the report.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The details within this report provide an update of key activities at Mersey Ferries since our last update report in October 2018. For details on specific performance on passenger numbers and financials, please refer to the corporate quarterly performance report.

Operational Update and Performance

3.2 Whilst members will receive details around the Mersey Ferries patronage, reliability and punctuality measures in the standard corporate performance reports, it is also recognised that an update in other key activities and operational matters would raise awareness of the work on-going within the Service Area.

3.3 Members of the Transport Committee will be aware that following a range of service loss during the 2017 season, officers introduced a range of initiatives in 2018 aimed at improving vessel availability – which in turn proved successful. This is evidenced by a 99% availability rate during the 2018 key summer period.

3.4 One of the key operational changes supporting this improvement was to berth the vessel on the river, overnight, on a Friday and Saturday evening instead of placing her within the Liverpool Docking system. This not only improved reliability, but also

created further commercial opportunities to provide evening cruises of a Friday and Saturday evening – traditionally popular nights for such events. Whilst this arrangement did incur additional staffing costs of around £17k, this was easily offset by a significant increase in income linked to reliability, and also additional evening cruises. This process generated an estimated additional £140k for Mersey Ferries in income. As a result, it is proposed this model will be adopted moving forward and continually assessed.

- 3.5 In December 2018, during a routine inspection of our assets, Engineers identified a range of concerns with the condition of one of the two link span bridges in Seacombe terminal. As a precautionary measure, and on the basis we have two link span bridges in Seacombe, the North bridge was taken out of service pending further investigation and inspections. This did not impact on operational service as passengers were diverted to use the South bridge. A subsequent more detailed report has highlighted a number of essential urgent works, which are scheduled to be completed during February 2019 – ensuring the bridge is returned to service ahead of our busy summer season.
- 3.6 It was expected that Snowdrop would be returned to her original livery in February 2019, following 4 years as the “Dazzle” vessel. However, due to the popularity of the Dazzle scheme, agreement has been reached with all partners to maintain the Dazzle colours and design whilst Snowdrop remains in service. As a result, following out of water survey in March 2019, the vessel will return to service with a refreshed Dazzle paintwork.

Ferries Strategy Update

- 3.7 In terms of the new Vessels, on 14 December 2018 the procurement process was formally advertised with initial submissions requested by end January 2019. This procurement process will be progressed as efficiently as possible and formal announcements made as appropriate.
- 3.8 An application for European ESIF funding as a contribution towards a low emission vessel(s) has been successful, and we are pleased to confirm that a £1.9m contribution towards the cost of these new vessel(s) has been secured. Further applications for funding, specifically through the Transforming Cities Fund, are being actively progressed by officers.
- 3.9 Members will recall the Ferries Strategy assumed the future of the Royal Daffodil would be resolved and key decisions taken alongside any decision to proceed with the procurement of new vessels. Detailed discussions continue in respect of the future for Royal Daffodil and it is hoped that these discussions can be concluded this financial year.
- 3.10 The Strategy also identified a range of key interventions for the Landing Stages, in particular the two landing stages in Wirral at Seacombe and Woodside. In terms of Seacombe, the strategy assumed a necessary investment in both the landing stage and terminal in the first 5 years of the programme, and officers continue to review a range of feasibility options on the development of the landing stage and link span bridges. The most recent activities have seen development of a feasibility study for the bridges themselves, which appear to be the most critical infrastructure in terms of timescales. It is currently assumed the subsequent investment, subject to

available budget, will be in 2019/20. We are now in the process of commissioning, through Royal Haskoning, the design and project methodologies to assess and determine the optimum solution for both bridges and landing stage at Seacombe. A number of options have been provided along with an 'Option Decision Matrix' to assist in the process of arriving at the best conclusions.

- 3.11 In respect of the Woodside terminal, a lease has been signed with the Wirral Chamber of Commerce for the catering offer in the terminal and officers are contributing to a growth development workshop, commissioned via Wirral Council, to drive further footfall to the Woodside area.

4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

4.1. Financial

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. The details of financial performance are reported corporately in the quarterly performance report, aimed at supplementing this report. The Mersey Ferries Programme Board continues to ensure long term planning to fund the various interventions identified within the strategy. Any formal approvals for expenditure will be via the Merseytravel meeting as required.

4.2. Human Resources

There are no HR related issues associated with this report. Staff will of course be fully engaged with any new vessel proposals during the procurement process.

4.3. Physical Assets

Projects associated with the assets within Mersey Ferries are summarised within this update report and Asset Management colleagues are key members of the project teams.

4.4. Information Technology

There are no issues associated with Information technology within this report.

4.5 PMO Implications

The Mersey Ferries long term strategy is a key project for Merseytravel and the Combined Authority, and so the programme is monitored in detail through regular monthly dashboard reports.

5. RISKS AND MITIGATION

- 5.1 The increasing risk linked to the Mersey Ferry operations is the reliability of the existing vessels. Both are now 59 years old, and despite investment and effective maintenance over their life, the vessels performance had shown a worrying trend of loss of service for technical faults. Whilst this issue has been addressed in the short term, the Ferry strategy aims to mitigate many of these risks in the longer term.

During the 2019 season, the level of service provision will be monitored closely to ensure service reliability.

- 5.2 The second key risk, partly realised in the last quarter, is the reliability and condition of the two Wirral based landing stages and link span bridges. Regular inspections are in place on all assets and necessary remedial works are being undertaken whilst longer term options are explored in greater detail.
- 5.3 The Ferries long term strategy has a Programme Board, with a specific risk register aimed at understanding and mitigating the key risks associated with the identified interventions. Officers review this monthly to monitor changes and ensure appropriate responses to any change.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

As the report is for noting only and does not require any formal decisions, an Equality Impact Assessment has not been completed in this case. However, a key element of the design process will involvement engagement with a diverse range of service users, aimed at ensuring appropriate views are taken into account for all protected characteristics. In particular, work has already commenced via the organisations Access Officer on outline design of the new vessels, and this will continue during the design and construction phase.

7. COMMUNICATION ISSUES

The information contained within this report is linked closely to communication plans in key projects to ensure key customer and stakeholder engagement where relevant.

8. CONCLUSION

This report summarises key activities within the Mersey Ferries to ensure Members are aware of topical and relevant issues, along with progress of activities included within the relevant service plan and strategy.

Gary Evans
Head of Customer Delivery

Contact Officer(s):

Gary Evans, Head of Customer Delivery, Merseytravel, 0151 330 4502

Dil Masters, Head of Asset Management, Merseytravel, 0151 330 4500

Liz Storey, Corporate Communications Manager, Merseytravel, 0151 330 1430

Appendices:

None

Background Documents:

None