



Deputy Montfort Tadier,
Chair, Economic and International Affairs Scrutiny Panel,
States Assembly

BY EMAIL

16 January 2025

Arm's Length Bodies, Grants and Subsidies Review

Dear Deputy Tadier,

Thank you for your letter dated 16 December 2025 regarding the Ferry Service: Concession Agreement Review

Please see below the Jersey Consumer Council's responses to your questions.

Yours sincerely,

Carl Walker,
Chairman
Jersey Consumer Council

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1. Since its commencement in March 2025, how have you/your organisation found the ferry service compares with previous operators?

Broadly speaking, Council Members think DFDS has been about as reliable as Condor Ferries – certainly no worse. There doesn't seem to have been any noticeable increase in avoidable, non-weather-related disruption.

The Council notes that both operators cite Regulation (EU) No 1177/2010 and seem to include similar provisions in their passenger charters.

When there has been disruption, some consumers have told us that DFDS have been easier to deal with and more accommodating with refunds or rebooking. However, others told us that – for example, when ferries were cancelled at short notice in the summer due to engine failure – communication was poor, and that the way passengers were dealt with was inconsistent (some were automatically rebooked at no charge, others weren't and had to pay for a second trip which they then had to claim back for; some received regular updates, others didn't). Following this incident, many consumers also contacted us at a later date to say they were still waiting for refunds, which took longer than customers were told they would take.

Council Members feel that one notable improvement has been DFDS' participation in cashback/offer/deal schemes for passengers – in some cases offering as much as 15% off for early bookings or 10% cashback when booking via one of DFDS' partners.

The Council feel that it remains yet to be seen whether the DFDS contract has lived up to what was promised – not necessarily through any fault on their part. When they were announced to be taking over Jersey's sea routes, Islanders were told that "A partnership with DFDS will deliver new investment, including new highspeed vessels, more sailings in peak periods and a reliable and resilient service for Islanders, visitors and businesses." This has yet to be delivered.

One Council Member commented: "I have witnessed the staff being very helpful and supportive of travellers with additional accessibility needs."

Another Council Member commented: "In the summer I had to change my date of return from the UK at short notice (within two weeks of original date). It cost an additional £100 + to change the date for us to return with the car. When I asked the staff in the terminal building why the charge was so much, they politely explained I had to take this up with the UK office. This was disappointing."

2. How aligned do you feel the ferry service is with the needs of businesses, residents and visitors?

Council Members feel that the ferry timetable appears more geared toward French visitors to Jersey than vice versa. Members wondered if this was part of the contract negotiations.

Anecdotally, we've heard from some Jersey business owners and managers that French visitors haven't had much impact on their businesses last summer.

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Council Members say they miss the frequency and convenience of day trips to Saint Malo previously offered by Condor. They would like to see vast improvement in this area. Many consumers have said that the amount of time they actually ended up getting in France on a day trip put them off rushing to book another one. The extension of day trips to include an overnight stay was welcomed, however the fact that the full trip had to be completed within a 24-hour period put Members off booking these trips, as the timings of the sailings would mean either a late arrival in France, or a very early departure. A better offer for this deal would be to allow passengers the opportunity to leave one morning and return the following lunchtime (rather than having to get the early sailing back, which consumers wouldn't want to do after enjoying their one night in France).

3. What has been the initial financial and operational impact of the flat-rate freight fee on your business/businesses?

N/A

4. Do you believe that the flat-rate fee has simplified or complicated the freight planning and budgeting process?

N/A

5. Do you consider the flat-rate fee to be fair compared to previous pricing structures? Please explain your reasoning.

Some Council Members feel that having a flat rate for freight is objectively going to be fairer than the previous system, where deals were agreed behind closed doors and no one knew how much logistics firms were being charged, and in turn, how much they were charging retailers. However, Members point out that "fair" and "cheap" aren't necessarily the same thing, and large operators like Ferryspeed who may have previously had a preferential rate with Condor are having to pay a standardised rate, passing on price increases to its customers who are passing it on to theirs. The Council worry about the knock-on effect that this will have on grocery prices.

The Council is also concerned about possible unintended consequences, such as smaller logistic companies who, in order to make their businesses profitable, must either increase costs or cut staff and services.

6. To what extent do you believe the ferry provision offered by DFDS ensures supply chain resilience for the Island?

One Council Member commented: "To me, introducing a larger operator which operates a wider range of routes (with less emphasis on extracting money solely from the Channel Islands) seemed to be a sensible choice for the long-term."

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7. Do you feel that any concerns you or your organisation has raised to DFDS about your concerns have been adequately addressed? If not, what gaps remain?

There was some talk early on about introducing a loyalty scheme for frequent passengers travelling to the UK/France with DFDS. Is that still planned or operational?

8. How transparent do you feel DFDS and the Government have been in communicating updates or changes related to the concession agreement?

The Council feel that these have been transparent. No doubt that will have presented challenges for both parties, but we feel it was essential, given the lifeline nature of these links.

9. What improvements would make the service more aligned with your operational requirements?

The issues we hear about the most from consumers, and that Council Members themselves hear anecdotally, are:

- Frequency of sailings to Guernsey
- Loyalty scheme for frequent passengers
- Significant improvement needed to day trips
- Accessibility of interim vessels (lifts being out of order for prolonged periods)

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