

Sandpiper CI Submission – 19th December 2025

1. Since the change of operator in March 2025, the reliability of the daily lifeline ferry service has significantly deteriorated. Not long after the changeover, we became so concerned that we began to keep a log of performance. I'm attaching the detailed schedule for your information. In summary since the end of March 2025, we have experienced 37 days of problems with deliveries, including 13 days of boat cancellations. Historically, the Arrow boat used by Condor as a back up and now being used by DFDS has proven particularly unreliable. It is worth underlining that every delay results in increased food waste due to diminished shelf life. These are further costs which have to be covered.
2. It's patently clear that the ferry service is not aligned in any way with the needs of business, residents or visitors. I think this has already been well documented in the media with the lack of inter island provision, limited fast ferry sailings, longer journey times to St Malo and inadequate support to business per the schedule above. When the Minister decided to cancel food ferry sailings because of the Muratti (no doubt viewed as a vote winner), it encapsulated his complete lack of understanding of the complexities of importing food into the island.
3. The impact to date has been an incremental increase in the price of food by 2%, solely down to increased ferry costs due to the introduction of flat rate fees. Further mooted cost increases relating to Port charges due next year will result in further increases. These are not costs being borne in our Guernsey operations, serviced by Brittany Ferries.
4. The whole process of trying to understand what costs were going to be charged (and which costs had been missed by DFDS in their costings), has resulted in significant incremental workload).
5. The flat rate fee is in effect a tax on Food. As Food is the biggest volume of goods that are imported to the island, the removal of volume discounts has by default impacted onto the cost of bringing food into the island and resulted in cost increases.
6. I believe the issue of ferry resilience is covered by the schedule of performance issues experienced in the last 8 months. Resilience is not a term that comes to mind when describing our daily ferry service !

7. As above
8. The Minister responsible has freely admitted that he didn't feel the need to consult with business on this contract. Since its introduction he's been spending time trying to justify his action and putting the best possible spin to justify his actions. He has subsequently engaged with business only under duress when it became clear that there were significant issues with the new ferry provider. He eventually agreed to publish a redacted version of the contract. He initially claimed that prices would rise by c1% and when it became clear that increases were much greater, he advised business that these increases were 'a price worth paying for a reliable ferry service'.
9. As above
10. In our view the contract needs to be retendered, with both bidders treated on a level playing field. It is obvious common sense that one provider to both islands must be able to provide the best service at the cheapest possible price.

We have now been advised that our ferry prices will rise by c£400k this coming February due to the omission of port dues which are now being charged. Further price rises will be necessary to cover these unbudgeted costs

We have also just been advised that the Tuesday evening ferry is to be cancelled from 13th January until 7th April and then again from 4th October until an unspecified date in December. This will result in shortages on shelf for customers and yet again demonstrates the cavalier way in which DFDS seem to be allowed to cancel ferries at will irrespective of the consequences.

As per recent media statements and further to DFDS's decision to introduce port dues which were 'missed' in their original tender submission. As Sandpiper's costs will rise by a further several hundred thousand pounds following this decision, the key issue is - 'what is the total cost of the 'missed' element of port dues and how does this sit with the competitive tender process'? Further as the contract was awarded for 20 years what does this error amount to for the life of the contract?

It seems to me that islanders have the right to know the significance of this miscalculation which they will now all be paying for and underlines the need for the AG to open a formal investigation.