

16 January 2026 - Jacqueline Lois Garnier

To: Scrutiny Communications <Scrutiny@gov.je>

Subject: DFDS Not a Suitable Fit for Jersey

I would like these points to be considered in relation to DFDS which I do not feel is a good fit for Jersey

Concerns Regarding DFDS Jersey–St Malo Ferry Services

Purpose

This submission sets out concerns regarding the suitability of DFDS to operate ferry services between Jersey and St Malo, with particular reference to sailing frequency, journey times, affordability, and the condition and suitability of vessels deployed on the route.

a) Limited Frequency and Inconvenient Timing of Sailings

DFDS operates the Jersey–St Malo route only four days per week outside peak season, significantly limiting flexibility for residents, businesses, and visitors.

Notably, most Monday sailings depart St Malo at between 6.30 and 7.30 am, which is inconvenient for both foot passengers and vehicle users, reduces accessibility for short-stay travel, and limits the practicality of weekend or extended-weekend trips.

Scheduling constraints, including berth availability in St Malo, further restrict DFDS's ability to offer passenger-friendly departure and return times.

b) Increased Journey Times and Reduced Competitiveness

Published DFDS schedules show typical Jersey–St Malo crossing times of around two hours, with some advertised journeys extending to approximately 2 hours 55 minutes.

These journey times are longer than those previously offered by fast ferry services, diminishing the competitiveness of the route and weakening Jersey's connectivity with France.

c) Lengthened End-to-End Travel Experience

In combination with longer crossing times, limited sailing days, and unfavourable departure times such as the early Monday morning sailing, the overall travel experience is perceived as lengthy and impractical.

Sporting bodies and community users have reported that same-day or short-notice travel has become increasingly difficult under the current timetable.

d) Cost and Pricing Issues

DFDS fares continue to attract criticism for being high and unpredictable, particularly for vehicle-based travel and family groups.

Comparative evidence indicates that journeys from Jersey to St Malo are more expensive than equivalent routes from Guernsey, even when discounts are applied.

DFDS has acknowledged public concern regarding its pricing structure and has stated it is reviewing how fares are calculated.

e) Condition and Suitability of Vessels

The fast ferries used on the Jersey–St Malo route are not purpose-built new vessels, with at least one dating back to the late 1990s and repurposed from other short-haul routes.

Early technical and accessibility issues have raised concerns about vessel reliability, passenger comfort, and overall suitability for Channel Island operations.

f) Confidence and Governance Concerns

The scale of concern from islanders, businesses, and representative bodies has prompted a formal scrutiny review of the DFDS concession agreement within its first year.

This early intervention raises questions as to whether the service currently delivered meets the expectations set during the tender process.

DFDS Jersey–St Malo Ferry Route: Key Issues

Overview

The DFDS Jersey–St Malo ferry service presents a number of operational and strategic concerns affecting island connectivity.

Key Points

Operates only four days per week outside peak season

Monday sailing departs St Malo between 6.30 and 7.30 am, limiting accessibility and passenger convenience

Crossing times of 2 to nearly 3 hours, longer than historical fast ferry benchmarks

Reduced feasibility of day trips and short-notice travel

High and variable fares, particularly for cars and families

Use of older, repurposed fast ferries with early operational issues

Issues significant enough to trigger early States scrutiny of the contract

Impact

Damaging to tourism and visitor numbers

Restricts sporting, educational, and business travel

Raises concerns about long-term value for money

Summary

For much of the year, the route operates only four days per week, with sailings scheduled at times that are difficult for passengers — including between 6.30 and 7.30 am departures most Mondays from St Malo. Combined with longer journey times and high fares, this has made travel to France and from France less convenient and less attractive for residents and visitors alike.

The service relies on older fast ferries, and early technical and accessibility issues have further undermined confidence. These problems have contributed to widespread dissatisfaction among islanders, businesses, and community groups.

The seriousness of these concerns is reflected in the fact that the ferry contract has been placed under official scrutiny within its first year of operation.

Reliable, frequent, and affordable ferry links are vital to Jersey's economy and way of life. Many now question whether the current St Malo service delivers what the island was promised.